

**THE EFFECTS OF TEACHER ABSENTEEISM IN
KWAZULU NATAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS.**

By

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: DURBAN**

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that **"The effects of teacher absenteeism in KwaZulu Natal secondary schools"** represents my own work both in conception and in execution. All sources and material used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged.


B.B. MKHWANAZI
DECEMBER 1997

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents the late Nhlambayozalo and Lethiwe Mkhwanazi, my wife, Cebelihle (uMaNtombela), my son, Mthokozisi, and my daughter, Nokuthokoza. May it be a source of inspiration throughout their lifetime.

SUMMARY

The aims of this study were :

- to investigate the effects of teacher absenteeism on secondary school pupils in KwaZulu Natal.
- to suggest in the light of the findings obtained didactically justifiable guidelines for reducing the absenteeism rate among secondary school teachers.

To address these problems information was collected from school principals through interviews and questionnaires. Analytical methods were also used to collect information regarding the effects of teacher absenteeism on secondary school pupils. In order to curb the problem of disjunction caused by an overemphasis on empirical research, this study also concentrated on a literature review in which recent sources on classroom management were used to identify criteria for effective classroom management, with specific reference to disruptive behaviour caused by the absence of teachers in the classroom. The study identified the following didactic criteria: democracy, conflict resolution, effective learning environment, motivation and order. These theoretical findings were blended with the empirical findings to analyse the effects of teacher absenteeism on the quality of teaching-learning actions in the schools included in the sample.

The findings revealed that teacher absenteeism had the following major effects:

- ignorance of pupils' names and achievements
- demotivation among pupils
- fighting and other forms of violence such as intimidation, defiance and vandalism
- truancy
- incomplete work programmes and poor performance
- drunkenness and other forms of substance abuse by pupils

- failure to do homework and assignments
- an increase in the drop-out rate
- cheating in the examination

The recommendations flowing from the research included, *inter alia*, that the Department of Education should establish a clear code of conduct regarding teacher absenteeism and a definite procedure to ensure that principals as well as teachers honour this code of conduct. Measures should be introduced to (a) combat the problem of teachers who fake sickness to absent themselves from duty and (b) compel principals to be more strict in keeping attendance registers, not only for pupils, but also for teachers. Since three of the most common causes of teacher absenteeism appear to be the attendance of funerals, part-time studies and long distances teachers travel between homes and schools, the dissertation contains several recommendations to alleviate problems in these areas.

OPSOMMING

Die doelstelling van hierdie studie was :-

- Om die uitwerking van onderwysers se afwesigheid op hoërskoolleerlinge in Kwa-Zulu Natal te ondersoek.
- Om voorstelle te maak in die lig van didaktiese verantwoordbaarheid met betrekking tot die vermindering van afwesigheid onder hoërskoolonderwysers.

Om hierdie probleme aan te spreek is inligting ingesamel van skoolhoofde met behulp van onderhoude en vraelyste. Analitiese metodes was ook gebruik om informasie in te win oor die uitwerking van afwesigheid van onderwysers op hoërskoolleerlinge. Ten einde die ontwrigting te betuel wat veroorsaak word deur oorbeklemtonning van navorsing wat op ervaring gegrond is, konsentreer hierdie studie ook op 'n literatuur-oorsig, waarin onlangse bronne oor klaskamerbestuur gebruik word om die maatstawwe van effektiewe klaskamer bestuur te identifiseer, met spesifieke verwysing na die steurende gedrag wat veroorsaak word deur die afwesigheid van onderwysers in die klaskamer. Die studie identifiseer die volgende didaktiese kenmerke :- demokrasie, oplossing van konflikte, effektiewe leeromgewings, motivering en orde. Hierdie teoretiese bevindings het saamgevloei met die proefbevindings om die effek van die afwesigheid van onderwysers te analiseer op die gehalte van onderrig-leer handelinge in die skole wat ingesluit is in die voorbeeld.

Die bevindings openbaar dat die afwesigheid van onderwysers die volgende effekte het :-

- onkunde oor die leerlinge se name en prestasies
- demotivering tussen leerlinge

- bakleiery and ander vorme van geweld soos intimidasie, uitdagings en vernielsug
- stokkiesdraai
- onvoltooide werksopdragte en slegte prestasies
- dronkheid en ander vorms van misbruike by leerlinge
- nalatigheid om huiswerk te doen asook projekte
- vermeerdering in die druiping van leerlinge en
- kul in eksamens

Die aanbeveling na die ondersoek bevat, inter alia, dat die Departement van Onderwys 'n duidelike kode van bestuur implementeer, ten opsigte van die onderwysers se afwesigheid en 'n definitiewe proses om te verseker dat hoofde sowel as onderwysers hierdie gedragkode eerbiedig:

Maatstawwe moet voorgestel word om :-

- die probleem te verhoed van onderwysers wat siek speel om hulle te verskoon van hulle taak en
- die hoofde te dwing om meer streng om te tree met die aanwesighedsregister nie net vir leerlinge nie maar ook vir onderwysers

Die drie mees algemene redes vir onderwysers om afwesig te wees is, om 'n begrafnis by te woon, deeltydse studie en die afstande tussen hulle huise en die skool, hierdie proefskrif bevat verskeie aanbevelings om probleme in hierdie gebiede te bekamp.

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CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

It is generally known that teacher absenteeism is a growing problem in most KwaZulu Natal schools. Preliminary research conducted in preparation for this study indicated that an average of 18% of secondary school teachers in Northern KwaZulu Natal habitually absented themselves from school once or twice per week in 1994. This is obviously disturbing. If, for example, a similar pattern exists in all black schools of KwaZulu Natal, about 1800 of the approximate 10321 black teachers in this province are regularly absent from school (Department of Education and Training, Annual Report, 1990:208). This would mean that, with an estimated teacher-pupil ratio of 1:41, the education of approximately 78000 high school pupils in KwaZulu Natal could have been adversely affected by teacher absenteeism in 1994. However, the scope of the problem seems to be even larger than this. In high schools each teacher teaches several classes, not just one. It would therefore be reasonable to state that the academic competence of hundreds of thousands of pupils is severely compromised by the lack of a co-ordinated policy to curb the rising incidence rate of teacher absenteeism.

From a didactic perspective the task of the teacher is to direct the child towards adulthood and towards reality "by communicating or imparting knowledge with a view to unfolding the child and reality" (Duminy and Söhnge, 1980:7). How can this task be fulfilled if a

large proportion of teachers are frequently absent? Not only are their pupils confronted with a distorted image of adulthood, but the reality unfolded to them is morally questionable. Instead of experiencing the school as a place where "education is performed in a structured, systematic and professional way" (Fraser *et. al.*, 1990:14) these pupils are exposed to a didactic situation which is unstructured, unsystematic and unprofessional. Such pupils may grow up with the same weak sense of responsibility which they observe in their teachers. These effects may be even more harmful if the administrative authorities fail to address the problem, or, as sometimes happens, are prone to absenteeism as well. The pupils then encounter a "reality" in which teachers blatantly put their own interests above the interests of the child resulting in a situation which is didactically unacceptable.

On the basis of arguments such as these, this investigation is directed at discovering and articulating the didactic effects which teacher absenteeism has on the moral values, classroom behaviour and scholastic performance of secondary school pupils in the sample schools. It is hoped that the evidence which emanates from this research will lead to the formulation of effective strategies that would reverse the trend among teachers to be increasingly absent from schools.

This chapter will commence by a statement of the problem, followed by a demarcation of the study field. Subsequently, arguments will be presented regarding the hypothesis generating nature of the research and the research methodology.

1.2 **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

1.2.1 **Background**

As in most school systems, principals appoint class teachers and subject teachers at the beginning of each year. Classes are allocated to teachers and they are expected to teach as effectively as possible. They are supposed to establish good relationships by using good communication styles, to maintain discipline and to display exemplary conduct. What is often overlooked, however, is that a high absenteeism rate among teachers can demoralize the pupils and teachers in a school to such an extent that all the above didactic goals are placed in jeopardy.

Teacher absenteeism is one of a range of disruptive school-related behaviours that has come under increasing scrutiny in recent years in South Africa. While many views about teacher absenteeism exist, no scientific studies could be traced regarding the disturbing effects this phenomenon has on pupils and pupil achievement. It would appear as if the effects of absenteeism are largely ignored. The majority of principals and parents seem to locate the primary determinants of teacher absenteeism in individual teachers. Not surprisingly, such approaches have led to the problem becoming intensified instead of being addressed.

The main thrust of this study is to show that the pupils in the sample schools are the principal victims when teachers are frequently absent. It can be argued that a 'blame the victim' culture is being generated because, when pupils fail their examinations, or end up being unemployable, society tends to criticize the pupils themselves for being lazy,

irresponsible or unwilling to learn, instead of investigating the adverse conditions under which they were expected to study - for example, those caused by frequently absent teachers.

1.2.2 **The problem**

In the course of the preliminary research conducted in preparation for this study, it became evident that teacher absenteeism and classroom management are serious handicaps in helping pupils to realize their potential.

To bring the underlying rationale on which this study is based into closer focus it is useful to glance at three reasons for the study, namely : to revive the culture of learning, to combat violence and to pave the way for outcomes-based education.

(a) **To revive the culture of learning**

The culture of teaching and learning seems to be gradually dwindling in KwaZulu Natal. It is obviously an oversimplification to claim that teacher absenteeism is a major cause of the current depressing climate in most KwaZulu Natal schools, but it is feasible to say that a drastic reduction in the teacher absenteeism rate will make a considerable contribution to the revival of a culture of learning.

One of the chief causes of the school crisis is that teachers are severely demotivated - a situation which had its origins in the 1980's during the liberation struggle when most black teachers were torn between their allegiance to the education departments on the one hand and, on the other, a call by the community especially their pupils, to identify with the struggle. This caused such confusion in the minds of most black teachers that many good teachers resigned while others became increasingly defiant in their attitude towards the government of the day. By the time the first democratic government was elected, demotivation among teachers was an entrenched reality and an unacceptably high rate of teacher absenteeism had reared its head.

Another historical cause of a demotivated teaching force is the realization that, due to limited subject choices, even successful pupils will probably end up being unemployed. A large proportion of high school teachers in KwaZulu Natal are only qualified to teach Zulu, History and/or Biblical Studies - subjects which have restricted employment potential. Such teachers feel they are sending their pupils on a road to nowhere.

Of special importance for a revival of a culture of learning, and a highly motivated teaching corps, is the provision of adequate resources and facilities at secondary schools. It is common knowledge that, apart from the Northern Province, KwaZulu Natal has the highest number of weak and very weak schools. According to the *School Register of Needs Survery* (1997) there are only 15 very weak schools in the Western Cape and 123 in Gauteng. In KwaZulu Natal, however, a staggering 1237 schools fall into this category (Sunday Tribune, 10 August 1997:11). This means that a very large percentage of rural schools in KwaZulu Natal do not have electricity, telephones, flush toilets or water within

walking distance. In addition, there is a severe shortage of textbooks, stationery, desks and classrooms. It stands to reason that teachers find these conditions daunting and, consequently, that teacher absenteeism shows a steady increase.

Another formidable obstacle in efforts to revive the culture of learning is the shortage of funds available for schooling. In KwaZulu Natal, for instance, massive cutbacks on education were necessary in 1997 when the province overspent its budget by more than one billion rand. Not only could the province not fill the 34000 vacant teaching posts, but many teachers fear possible retrenchment.

Under these circumstances the teachers, undertrained and overwhelmed by the huge numbers of pupils in their classes, are often unreliable or absent. In the words of one teacher : ‘Our schools are hothouses filled with non-caring, unmotivated people, struggling, enervated, towards meaningless and fluctuating norms’. The difficulty which is felt by some teachers is that they want the circumstances to improve first, before they would be willing to improve themselves. I would argue, however, that the two types of improvement go hand-in-hand and, therefore, that anomalies such as high teacher absenteeism should be addressed as a matter of urgency. It will be one of the most important factors leading to a revival of a culture of learning.

(b) To combat violence

In settling questions of effective teaching in KwaZulu Natal, one of the main problems educators face is school violence. Many pupils as well as teachers have been brought up to believe that violence is the only way to deal with problems. The pupils who commit violent acts such as bullying, vandalism, assault, rape and murder, often are male adolescents who came to believe that it is brave and admirable when they commit violence under the guise of a political party such as the African National Congress or the Inkatha Freedom Party. During the many years of conflict between these two political parties, pupils frequently threatened, attacked and sometimes even murdered teachers, with the inevitable result that some teachers started to absent themselves out of fear. In certain areas pupils even advocated the false belief that “democracy” entitled them to take over the reins of the school. Thus there were teachers who felt they were forced to abdicate their responsibilities as teachers and, therefore, that the act of teaching had lost its meaning. However, the more the teachers abandon their classes, the more violent such classes are likely to become. For this reason a prime objective in combating violence among pupils should be to investigate the problem of teacher absenteeism.

It must be admitted that teachers themselves are not always merely innocent victims of violence. There are, unfortunately, some teachers who also perpetuate violence in as far as that they frequently administer corporal punishment to the pupils in their care. Such conduct can aggravate the problem of teacher absenteeism because pupils acquire, a negative attitude towards teachers who abuse them; a power struggle may develop which may escalate to the point that the teacher frequently absent himself or herself from school.

The irony is, however, that teacher absenteeism causes school violence to gain momentum rather than to eliminate it. The key issue, once again, is whether it is morally acceptable for teachers to wait for pupils to first stop the violence by themselves or whether the teachers should take the lead by, firstly, changing their own behaviour and, secondly, attending school regularly to help pupils comply with the anti-violent norms of society. It seems obvious that the latter option is more realistic and desirable. What is now needed is to take a closer look at the problem of teacher absenteeism as a contributory factor in school violence.

(c) To pave the way for outcomes-based education (OBE)

How does teacher absenteeism relate to OBE? Some people propagate the fallacy that the constant presence of teachers is not as essential in an OBE system as in the traditional system because teachers merely act as facilitators and little or no full-(class) teaching is done. Nothing can be further from the truth. If anything, a high rate of teacher absenteeism will sound the knell of failure in an OBE system.

OBE is an approach to teaching and learning in which all school programmes and teaching efforts centre upon desired outcomes which learners should demonstrate when they leave school. It is evident that the presence of teachers will be vital to assist the learners in following the programmes and in achieving the desired outcomes.

One of the key concepts on which OBE is based is that children learn through active involvement with each other, with adults and other children serving as informal tutors. This is a drastic deviation from the traditional teacher-centred approach. The learners, their parents and the community at large will need continuous guidance from teachers to make the transition to active involvement methods of learning, especially since OBE requires that: "All students will organise and participate in a community service team that monitors major community issues and problems... and explains potential solutions to key community groups" (Spady, 1994:16). In most black communities local teachers will not only be crucial members in this team, but will act as leaders to spearhead the activities of the team. It seems likely that communities with dedicated teachers will succeed in solving their community problems whereas the problems of communities with high rates of teacher absenteeism will remain unsolved.

Another aspect of OBE is that teachers must keep careful records of the outcomes each student has attained. Teachers are expected to be thoroughly versed with the progress and achievements of each child - an expectation that cannot be fulfilled if the teacher is frequently absent.

As stated earlier, OBE consists mainly out of learning programmes which are implemented through projects, learning centres, play activities, excursions, discussions and independent research. In the process teachers will probably work even harder than they do in the traditional system. For example : projects have to be designed and communicated to learners; learning centres must be created; excursions and discussions need to be planned and organised; research skills have to be taught; projects and outcomes must continuously

be assessed, and so on. It is therefore, unrealistic to say that the presence for teachers is not important in an OBE system.

To pave the way for OBE, teacher absenteeism needs to be cut down to the bare minimum. Every teacher will be needed to provide the necessary guidance to the learners, especially in teaching the learners to express their emotions and to develop their critical thinking. Without such guidance rebellions by pupils may occur. Moreover, OBE is directed at unfolding the learner as a “whole person” and teachers who are prone to absenteeism will provide the learners with very poor role models. That is, why this research on the effects of teacher absenteeism on secondary school pupils is as relevant today as it was in the previous dispensation.

1.2.3 **Formulation of problem**

The aims of the study are:

- a. To investigate the perceptions of principals regarding the effects of teacher absenteeism on classroom management in a sample of secondary schools in KwaZulu Natal.
- b. To suggest, in the light of findings obtained, steps to be taken to reduce the absenteeism rate among teachers at schools in the sample.

1.3 **DEMARCATON OF STUDY FIELD**

1.3.1 **A classroom management perspective**

In this study the primary focus will be on classroom management aspects. Bearing in mind that managerial and instructional facets of teaching are closely interlinked and, in fact, often inseparable, instructional realities will of necessity be discussed but the main argument will centre upon the classroom management implications of teacher absenteeism. The study field would be too wide if instructional and other curricular considerations are permitted to distract from the major concern, which is classroom management.

1.3.2 **Teacher absenteeism**

Teacher absenteeism lies at the heart of the study, and the study will therefore revolve around this concept. This is not to say that other classroom management constructs and patterns will be disregarded, since some of them go hand in hand with teacher absenteeism. Indeed, many managerial problems flow naturally from teacher absenteeism and these will be the anchoring points of the analysis. However, teacher absenteeism will be the chief determinant in deciding which classroom management theories enter the ambit of the research. If theories unrelated to teacher absenteeism are included, the scope of the research will become unmanageable and the quality of the analysis may suffer.

1.3.3 **The effects of absenteeism:**

While teacher absenteeism lies at the heart of the study, it is important to note that next to it lie the effects of absenteeism. The study will concentrate on the effects of absenteeism, not on its causes and the incidence rate, although possible causes and incidence rates will be considered where relevant.

1.3.4 **Secondary schools**

The study will only concentrate on secondary schools and not on pre-primary and primary schools. The decision to focus on secondary schools was based partly because it is the schooling phase with which the researcher is most familiar and partly because the effects of teacher absenteeism appear to be more damaging to adolescent learners than to learners in other age groups.

1.3.5 **KwaZulu Natal**

The study will deal with sample schools in the province of KwaZulu Natal only. To include schools from other provinces would have caused the study to be too general to explore specific situations.

1.3.6 **Black schools**

The study will concentrate on black schools and not on other racial or multiracial schools.

These are the schools with which the researcher is most familiar and it appears as if teacher absenteeism is more prevalent in black schools than in other schools found in the province.

1.3.7 **Government schools in rural areas**

This study will focus on government schools in rural areas because it seems as if schools in these areas are often neglected when educational research is conducted and teacher absenteeism is a growing problem.

1.4 **HYPOTHESIS GENERATING RESEARCH**

"Educated guesses" about possible differences, relationships or causes are called hypotheses. Borg (1983:87), and Gay (1992:53) view a hypothesis as a tentative explanation for certain behaviours, phenomena, or events that have occurred or will occur... a hypothesis is the most specific statement of a possible solution. In view of these definitions and in relating them to the two aims of this study, it is clear that this research does not lend itself to a hypothesis. Both aims are directed at exploring the phenomenon of teacher absenteeism in order to provide the groundwork for further research which may be more specific and hypothesis-based. At this stage, therefore, it is seen as hypothesis-generating research.

1.5 **METHODOLOGY**

A combination of investigative methods of research were used in the study namely, literature study, interviews, and questionnaires.

1.5.1 **Literature study**

Relevant literature on the role of classroom management in secondary schools was studied with the emphasis on sources related to classroom management. The study of literature provided the researcher with the necessary background knowledge to construct a theoretical framework regarding classroom management principles to serve as a basis for analysing the empirical data emanating from the study.

Gay (1992:36) asserts that the major purpose of reviewing literature is to determine what has already been done that relates to one's problem. This knowledge not only avoids unintentional duplication but it also provides the understanding and insights necessary for the development of a logical framework into which one's problem fits. This statement suggests that the literature review is not conducted for the sake of being read but it is a major and a necessary step to be undertaken when researching any problem.

1.5.2 **Interviews**

An interview may be defined as an oral type of questionnaire designed to enable the respondent to answer questions verbally in the presence of the interviewer (Vockell

1985:86; Best, 1965:167). Hopkins (1992:145) agrees with this definition when he states an interview is a face to face meeting of a questioner and a responder or oral presentation of an opinion or attitude scale. The great advantage of the interview as a method of gathering information is in the flexibility of approach which it permits. The interviewer is able to explain the purpose of the study and ensures that the responder understands what is required of him. If the interviewee misunderstands a question the interviewer can add clarifying remarks and can encourage him if he appears to lack interest or motivation (Lovel and Lawson, 1971:115-116). The researcher regards this method as one which creates a good rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee since the topic of absenteeism might offend some principals. Best (1965:182) says the interview is often superior to other data gathering devices, one reason being that people are more willing to talk than to write. During this investigation in-depth interviews were conducted with twelve principals of secondary schools in three different rural circuits of KwaZulu Natal (see further details in the section on *Questionnaires* below)

1.5.3 **Questionnaires**

1.5.3.1 **Questionnaires as a research method**

Sibaya (1992: 70) and Vockell (1983:78) define the questionnaire as any scientific data collecting instrument for measurement and collection of particular kinds of data which has been obtained from a set of specific questions to which the respondent directly supplies answers. Keeves (1988:478) asserts that a questionnaire is a self report instrument used for gathering information about variables of interest to an investigator. It consists of a

number of questions or items on paper that a respondent reads and answers. These definitions imply that a questionnaire is not merely a list of questions or items formulated to be filled in, but a device which is specifically constructed for the sole purpose of measuring and collecting data supplied by the respondent in which the researcher is interested with regard to a specific empirical investigation.

The chief advantage of open-ended questions is that they demand few words from the mouth of the respondent, and as such they are more effective in revealing his or her own definition of the situation. If the respondent does not understand the question, this will be revealed through his or her answer. Phrasing of an open-ended item is similar to that used in ordinary conversation and as a result it may encourage spontaneity on the part of a respondent and motivate him or her to communicate effectively and properly (Sibaya, 1992:71).

Keeves (1988:480) points out that one weakness of open-ended questions is that they are time-consuming. Sibaya (1992:71) gives yet another weakness of these questions when he says many answers are not useful in testing a specific hypothesis. He further asserts that analysis of open ended question is complex and difficult.

Closed-ended or structured questions are used for the following advantages, as discussed by Sibaya (1992:72).

- They are standardisable
- They are simple to administer.
- They are quick and relatively inexpensive to analyse.

- The information given by the respondent is always relevant to the purpose of the inquiry
- they produce greater uniformity among respondents along the specific dimensions in which the investigator is interviewing.

Sibaya (1992:73) has this to say regarding the shortcomings of close-ended questions:

- It may force a statement of opinion on an issue about which the respondent does not have any opinion.
- Even when a respondent has a clear opinion, a fixed alternative question, may not give an adequate representation of it because none of the choices correspond to his position or they do not allow for qualifications.

1.5.3.2 **Questionnaires as used in this study**

(a) Representativeness of sample

Since the study investigated the effects of teacher absenteeism in secondary schools in KwaZulu Natal, it would have been advantageous if a representative sample of high schools in the province could have been used. Unfortunately this would have made the project too complex, time-consuming and expensive. It was, therefore, decided to conduct a *qualitative* study in which a relatively small sample of rural secondary schools were interviewed. Although this made the study unrepresentative, valuable information was obtained which would not have been uncovered if the project were purely quantitative.

It is clear that the findings are not generalizable. They merely reflect the perceptions of a specific sample of principals which may or may not be typical of the majority of principals in KwaZulu Natal.

(b) Size of sample

Interviews were conducted with twelve secondary school principals whose schools are situated in three different rural circuits of KwaZulu Natal, namely Ubombo (four schools,) Nongoma (four schools) and Hlabisa (four schools).

(c) Modus operandi

An interview questionnaire was designed and appointments were made with each of the twelve principals. During the preliminary visit the co-operation of each respondent was obtained by explaining to him the research topic and research design. Principals were requested to set aside a period of approximately two hours, at a future date, for the interviews to be conducted. They were also shown the letter from the KwaZulu Department of Education and Culture in which the Acting Secretary approved the project (See Appendix B). Upon request from the principals, each one was supplied in advance with a copy of the interview questionnaire, to prepare themselves for the interview (See Appendix A).

The interviews took place over a period of twelve weeks - roughly one interview per week, since the researcher is full-time employed and could spend only one day per week

on the empirical part of the research. To ensure that the principals were properly prepared for the interview, the researcher encouraged them to complete the questionnaires beforehand. During the actual interviews a tape recorder was used to capture the details of the conversation which was mostly done through the medium of Zulu. Using the questions in the questionnaire as well as the responses written by the principal, the researcher discussed each point covered in the questionnaire in great detail.

After all the interviews had been conducted, the researcher categorized and analyzed the data from the questionnaires and from the tapes.

(b) Format of the interview questionnaire

A copy of the questionnaire appears in Appendix A.

The questionnaire consisted of 25 questions which can be subdivided as follows:

Factual Questions

Eight questions (Numbers 1-8) were asked to obtain factual information regarding the school population, distance travelled by teachers and teacher absenteeism rates.

Closed-ended questions

Seven question (Numbers 9,11,13,15,17,19 and 22) were Yes/No questions regarding the effects of teachers absenteeism. The objective of these questions was to collect data that were clear-cut, quantitative and suitable to identify general trends.

Open-ended questions

Ten questions (Numbers 10, 11, 14, 16, 18, 20, 21, 23, 24 and 24) were exploratory questions aimed at discovering the respondents deeper perceptions regarding the effects of teacher absenteeism. To encourage principals to talk about their experiences and the underlying reasons for their viewpoints, seven of these questions prompted principals to give practical examples of cases in which teacher absenteeism resulted in negative behaviour by pupils. The last two open-ended questions (Number 24 and 25) dealt with steps that can be taken to reduce the teacher absenteeism rate.

1.6 TERMINOLOGY

In this dissertation the following working definitions of key terms are recognised:

Absenteeism: The practice of not being present at school. In this study teacher absenteeism is defined as a teacher is absent from school for ten percent or more of the school year.

Classroom management: The development of effective classroom organisation and a predictable system of relationship. Classroom management involves co-ordination, organization, modelling a positive attitude towards the curriculum and school learning, helping children to achieve their own educational objectives and planning various components in the classroom set-up.

Conflict Resolution: The curbing of unwanted, aggressive and abnormal behaviour in relationships through discussion and negotiation. The relationships most pertinent in the context for this study were pupil-pupil, pupil-teacher and teacher-teacher relationships.

Democracy: A form of government which aims to include in its decisional channels a decidedly high number democratic agents (Zolo, 1992:5) involves concepts such as equal opportunity, freedom of expression, accountability and mutual respect between pupils and teachers.

Didactics: The scientific study of teaching-learning actions in formal situations.

Failure : To be unsuccessful and/or unable to attain goals. In teaching it implies a pupil receiving a failing mark and a refusal by school authorities to promote the pupil from one grade to a higher grade. The pupil is expected to repeat the grade which he/she failed.

KwaZulu Natal: A province in the east coast region of South Africa. Traditionally this province consisted of two parts : KwaZulu, which was governed by the Zulus, and Natal, which was government by whites. In 1994, when the first democratic government was elected, the two regions were combined to form the province of KwaZulu Natal.

Motivation: The process of arousing, sustaining and regulating activity. It leads students into experiences in which learning can occur, energises and

activates students and keeps them reasonably alert and their attention focussed in one direction at a time (Hammacheck, 1968:3).

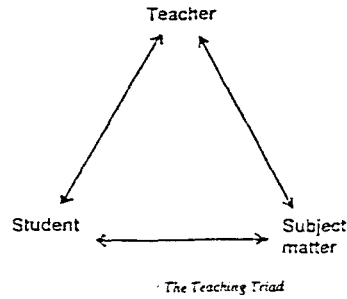
Order: A state of peaceful harmony under a constituted authority. In this study order usually relates to desirable conditions which should exist in a school or a classroom that will create an atmosphere which is conducive to learning and which discourages people from violating the rights of others.

Secondary Schools: Institutions which cater for the formal education of children who study at a post-primary, pre-tertiary level. In the South African context “secondary school” refers to both junior and senior secondary schools. They are sometimes called high schools.

Teaching: A deliberate series of classroom-related actions aimed at the achievement of self realization by helping learners to learn desirable knowledge, skills and values (Jacobs, 1991:17).

1.7 **CONCLUSION**

The basic structure of teaching is the teaching triad which is often graphically illustrated as follows :



(Jacobs, M. 1991)

In this triad the teacher is such a vital component that the entire teaching situation collapses when the teacher is literally or figuratively absent, just as it collapses when either the student or the subject matter is absent. It is for this reason that a high degree of teacher absenteeism in schools is such a disturbing factor that it needs to be analysed and addressed. Various important aspects need to be researched, such as pupils' perceptions of absent teachers, the causes of teacher absenteeism, etc. In this dissertation, however, there will be a concentration on the *effects* of teacher absenteeism as perceived by a sample of high school headmasters in KwaZulu Natal. For reasons of time and space, no attempt will be made to investigate all effects of teacher absenteeism; the focus will be entirely on the effects of teacher absenteeism on *classroom management* and *moral education* in black secondary schools.

The dominating objectives in this chapter were two-fold. Firstly, to sketch the important linkages which exist between teacher absenteeism and three current needs in education, namely to revive the culture of learning, to combat violence and to pave the way for OBE. Secondly, to describe the research methodology used in this study. In the next chapter the didactic criteria for effective classroom management, which will later be used to analyse the empirical research evidence, are formulated and explained.

CHAPTER 2**DIDACTIC CRITERIA FOR EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT**

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CHAPTER 2

DIDACTIC CRITERIA FOR EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Didactic literature deals extensively with didactic criteria for effective classroom management but it appears that didactic criteria often differ from study to study and that there are no universally accepted criteria for classroom management. For the purposes of this study the following didactic criteria shall be discussed: democracy, conflict resolution, effective learning environment, motivation and order. These criteria shall be applied in chapter four when analysing the results of the empirical study.

2.2 DEMOCRACY AS A DIDACTIC CRITERION FOR EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

This section will cover seven aspects of democracy: credibility; rules; modelling; good manners; equality; learning pupils' names; and getting to know pupils.

2.2.1 Definition

Before discussing democracy as a didactic criterion for effective classroom management it is necessary to define the concept democracy. In broad terms, democracy can be

considered a form of government which aims to include in its decisional channels a decidedly high number of agents (Zolo, 1992:55) Held (1992:10) states that democracy is a remarkably difficult form of government to create and sustain. Ranney (1993:100) categorically states that the meaning of democracy, like that of any other word, depends upon the degree to which it is generally understood and accepted. He, however, defines democracy as the form of government organised in accordance with the principles of popular sovereignty, political equality, popular connection, and majority rule.

The above authors consider democracy as government of the people for the people by the people, and emphasises that the sovereign power is held and further exercised by those representatives elected by the people. These authors agree that democracy means the freedom to choose. In a democracy social order, mutual respect and balance should prevail. From the above definitions it becomes evident that success and failure of democracy depends primarily on the people.

In the context of this study, democracy will be related to the classroom situation. Democratic teaching is more than expressing views or freedom to choose and Jacobs (1991:92) argues that in teaching children to verbally express themselves competently democratic teachers spend ample time in classrooms on discussions. She further states that in democratic classrooms teachers create opportunities for pupils to maintain a sense of objectivity and scepticism when, for instance, they read newspapers, advertisements, books, articles and other printed materials.

This dissertation is based on the belief that democratic classroom managers have fewer disciplinary problems in their classrooms because there is mutual respect and trust between the teacher and the pupils and because pupils are exposed to critical thinking and freedom of expression. It is obviously important that classroom managers should always be in their classrooms to attend to their pupils' interests and, if the teacher is frequently absent from the class, democratic teaching is out of the question as there is nobody to protect pupils' rights, maintain order and demonstrate democratic values.

Democratic teaching includes credibility, rules, modelling, equality, good manners and trust. Fontana (1985:105) has this to say about democratic classes and democratic teaching:

- a) children should be given realistic and appropriate opportunities to have their say in how they learn and in how the class is organised and run.
- b) Children should be assisted to judge objectively and fairly where a particular attribution actually lies, who is actually responsible for a particular event and what can be done to put these events right, if they prove to have undesirable results.

This means that there are two basic components of classroom democracy: firstly, the degree of democracy in the classroom and readiness by the teacher to listen to individual childrens' points of view and credit them for knowing what is best for them. Secondly, the degree of development of discrimination and the ability to examine issues without undue emotional involvement.

Good classroom management therefore includes democratic teaching and features as among the most important of didactic criteria.

2.2.2 Credibility

If the teacher is to maintain credibility this means that she/he practices what she/he preaches. Credibility is established largely by ensuring that words and actions coincide. Good and Brophy, (1991:198) and Dreikurs (1982: 68) concur when they say co-operation in a democracy must be based on consideration for others' rights and interests whilst also standing up for one's own rights. This is the formula for equality; mutual respect is its premise. Credibility therefore goes hand in hand with modelling. If teachers are often absent from the class, their credibility is greatly damaged because they tell their pupils to attend school regularly and to work hard but themselves fail to carry out these actions.

An inevitable consequence is that the pupils come to disbelieve and to distrust such teachers and it is logical to expect that many pupils will emulate this irresponsible behaviour. It is crucial for a teacher to gain credibility as it plays a major role in a democratic system when people vote for leaders in whom they believe. If a politician, for instance, promises to build houses, then he must put this promise into action otherwise people will not believe him in the future and they would surely not vote for him again. Thus, when he loses credibility, he also loses power. In the same way teachers lose power in the classroom if they say for instance "I shall teach you how to speak English" and yet they fail to arrive to teach the English lesson. In their hearts the children no longer have

a desire to “vote” for such teachers because they have lost credibility.

2.2.3 **Rules**

Clarizio (1980:44) defines rules as being any task the student must perform or any decision regarding what may or may not be done. He further states that rules must be definable, reasonable and enforceable. Smith and Laslett (1993:17) agree with Clarizio when they state that rules define the boundaries for behaviour within the classroom. Good and Brophy (1991:193) also argue that rules define general expectations or standards for classroom conduct. Arends (1994:531) specifies that there are “rules for behaviour” which he defines as statements which specify expected classroom behaviours and define behaviours which are forbidden. Fontana (1987:116) posits that rules should be the subject of democratic debate with the children themselves taking partial responsibility for their formulation and therefore also for upholding them. Classroom rules ought to be compatible with the school policy in order that they do not clash with the normal procedures and routines of the school. Effective classroom managers, in their advance planning at the beginning of the year or term, consider and incorporate the routines and procedures to be followed in their classes. These include, inter alia, matters such as punctuality, neatness, order, medium of communication and expected behaviour and in this manner rules facilitate a healthy learning atmosphere in the classroom. Good and Brophy argue that rules should be kept to a minimum and be stated clearly using convincing rationales.

The above definitions all emphasise that rules should guide students' behaviour in the classrooms and that they require a joint effort between teachers and pupils. Rules need to be defined, should be reasonable and enforceable and they ought to be explained to pupils in a democratic fashion in order that pupils can follow them willingly and that classroom managers are able to enforce them. Some teachers and pupils fail to understand the didactic implications of democratic classroom management as they associate such a practice with pupils dictating to the teachers and teachers being dependent upon the pupils. This is clearly not the case as there are many decisions in which pupils cannot participate and the teacher still remains in authority and has final say on what is allowed and what is not allowed in their classrooms.

Rules play a significant and conspicuous role in a democratic system because they act as directives for any behavioural patterns. If a leader of country democratically states as a rule "that drunken driving is forbidden", she/ he must be the first one to respect and obey this traffic rule, otherwise she/he will fail to put an end to drunken driving. People will not respect such leaders' rules. By the same token, if classroom managers state as one of their rules that "pupils must stop absenting themselves from school without valid reasons", and they in turn fail to be in class every day as expected, pupils may stop coming to school regularly as expected of them. Colin and Laslett (1993:17) also emphasise the importance of stating clearly and precisely the boundaries of the permissible. Once rules are stated the teacher's credibility hinges upon the ability to enforce them..

2.2.4 **Modelling**

Modelling is, according to Kerr and Nelson (1983: 347), an instructional procedure by which demonstrations of desired behaviour are presented in order to prompt an imitative response. Clarizio (1980:108) states something similar when he explains that modelling procedures can provide a shortcut to learning new beliefs, attitudes and practices, as well as regulating those previously acquired. The person initiating the behaviour is the model and Spaulding (1992: 340) states that the act of modelling or providing models consists of showing learners how they are expected to behave and such actions lead to teachers being "role models". Teachers are therefore expected to demonstrate desired behaviour so that their pupils can emulate it, thereby promoting and enhancing good classroom management.

Lemlech (1988: 6) argues that teachers learn new skills and refine existing skills by working with colleagues who model the desired skill and that in the classroom situation a whole group of students can be influenced by the teacher's behaviour. He identifies two phases required for modelling to be successful: the acquisition of the desired behaviour and the performance of the desired behaviour. Bull *et. al.* (1992:75) tend to be more specific when he says: "Those with whom children spend a great deal of their time are candidates of modelling since children are likely to imitate their behaviour". He further states that teachers' behaviour is likely to be imitated by children as a teacher has high status and, from the child's point of view, has a great power and influence over events during school time. Since modelling by the teacher is an effective method for teaching behaviour, it is essential that the teacher's behaviour is consistent with that desired from

the children (Bull *et. al.* 1992:75). According to Axelrod (1983:41), modelling is similar to imitation as he holds that "imitation is a process in which an individual learns a behaviour by observing another person perform that behaviour".

Modelling plays a significant role in a democratic state because leaders are expected to demonstrate desired behaviour to their subordinates. If the leader for instance wishes his subordinates to engage themselves in actions as a means of bringing peace to their country; i.e. to follow desired behavioural patterns, he is expected to do everything which shows that he is also striving for peace. If he does not demonstrate such peace-bringing actions, his subordinates are unlikely to practice these actions and this could lead to violence remaining unchecked. For the same reasons, teachers should always strive to model desired behaviour. School pupils may emulate the behaviour of an absentee teacher by also absenting themselves as they believe that the teacher is displaying desirable behaviour and the image of the teacher thus becomes distorted.

2.2.5 **Good Manners**

Classroom managers should be catalysts in producing responsible and cultured citizens. Van Zyl and Duminy (1976:102) argue that an educated person ought to be courteous and show good manners in all situations. Children cannot always distinguish between good and bad manners and they therefore need educators to teach them how to conduct themselves in different situations. For the attainment of such an important educational aim, it is crucial for the teachers to be vigilant and to be faithful in class attendance as this is no doubt an important component of the democratic classroom. Lindhard *et.al.* (1994:73) argue that

good manners express formal consideration for others in a caring way.

Manners differ from society to society. For instance, in some cultures it is considered to be good manners for a pupil to look the teacher in the eye when talking because it shows that the person is honest and has nothing to hide – an example of a Eurocentric belief or view. Yet another culture will expect a pupil to lower her/his eyes as a mark of respect – an example of an African belief. If teachers are not familiar with the traditions and beliefs or different cultures they might misinterpret such behaviours and consider the pupil to be displaying bad manners.

Good manners, as well as the norms which determine them, should be incorporated in the democratic concept and they should therefore be considered within the classroom rules and procedures. Pupils should know exactly what is considered to be good manners and what is considered to be bad manners. If, for instance, the teacher and the pupils agree that it is good manners to greet each other every day, then the teacher and the pupils must practice this by greeting each other daily. The pupils must then also be encouraged to greet each other daily. Whilst good manners are vital in the classroom, no child must be forced to behave in a manner which is against their culture or traditions and the teacher must respect such differences.

2.2.6 Equality

Percival (1952:9) regards equality and equal rights as freedom within which each person has the right to think, to feel, to do and to be as she/he wills without force, pressure or

restraints. He further says that one cannot usurp the rights of another without invalidating his own rights. Birth and breeding, habits, customs, education, speech, sensibilities, human behaviour and inherent qualities make equality impossible among human beings. Gildenhuis *et. al.* (1994:16) are of the opinion that equality is moral self determination. In radical terms this refers to the total inviolability of the adult person, except in terms of his own insight and his own actions. Equality, according to Dreikurs (1982:67), is a concept which includes social equality where every person, regardless of religion, wealth, education, heritage, physical appearance or age enjoys the same dignity and the same respect. According to this definition all people should be given equal opportunities because we are all equal before God.

Teachers should ensure that all pupils are given equal opportunities as they should be regarded as tools to bring about social harmony, peace and stable social relationships. If teachers or classroom managers fail to consider this element of equality in classrooms, disharmony and unnecessary conflict could result in their classrooms. It is imperative that teachers should, therefore, try to engineer or catalyse this important aspect of democratic values in classrooms. McQuoid-Mason, *et. al.* (1995:16) hold that societies which are democratic emphasise the principle that all people are equal, with equality meaning that all individuals are valued equally, have equal opportunities, and may not be discriminated against on the basis of their race, age, religion, ethnic group, gender or sexual orientation. They further contend that, in a democracy, individuals and groups still maintain their right to have different cultures, personalities, languages and beliefs.

As equality refers to equal opportunities, sharing views, ideas, decisions, facilities and other resources, pupils should be encouraged to view others in this light and to respect each other regardless of age, ability, ethnic group, etc. The teacher, for instance, should consider all pupils as equal in dignity, whilst considering their individuality and differences. An understanding of the different capabilities of the pupils is important when they are, for example, allocated written work. A teacher who is aware of the capabilities of each pupil and who knows them will consider the principle of differentiation with regard to abilities in areas of psychomotor, affective, emotive and motor skills. Through allocating work on the basis of the individual's abilities the teacher is more likely to achieve better results, but, in order to accomplish this, she/he needs to know the pupils thoroughly. Equality and democracy are pillars in the management of the classroom. In a democratic classroom the teacher, for instance, provides equal opportunities to all the pupils. The teacher leads the process to democratically elect the class prefects. These prefects must, likewise, afford fellow pupils with equal opportunities and, if this is practised, it is rare to find pupils rebelling against their prefects, thereby bringing harmony and order to the classroom.

Boyd (1989:14) is of the opinion that equality of educational opportunities necessarily focuses on school achievements since equal access to education is a shame unless it is accompanied by equal opportunities to achieve. He further contends that the notion that equality of opportunity through education is based on the principle that children should not only have equal access to bodies of knowledge but also an equal right to achieve in school. It is essentially a meritocratic, rather than an egalitarian approach, when achievement is defined narrowly in conventional academic terms. Equality is essentially

a practical principle that has everything to do with rights being established over the fair distribution of valued resources.

In the context of this investigation, democratic classroom teachers should consider children to be equal, simply on the basis that each one is an individual human being. Being human implies that pupils, in their humanness share similar characteristics and they therefore should merit the same treatment in order that their needs be met. Their humanness also implies individuality and differences and the teacher must recognise and acknowledge these and allocate equal rights on the grounds which take these into consideration.

Succinctly, it entails that equals be treated equally and unequals unequally Boyd (1989:43) and Dreikurs (1982:6) are of the opinion that the child's potential for learning is greatly enhanced when the child is viewed with equal respect and when she/he is given a sense of equality and of equal responsibility along with an acknowledged role in decision making.

Although the child seems to be small in size, limited in physical ability, irresponsible, immature and uncultured, the teacher should give them the social status and respect they deserve and give them the consideration of being a potential equal.. Pupils should not be deprived of the respect and equal expression which they deserve and to enhance good harmony and peaceful resolutions in classrooms, teachers need to respect pupils' rights.

Dreikurs (1982:68) argues that everyone has the right and obligation to say what he or she thinks and also the obligation to listen to what others say and to try to understand what the other person feels and thinks. The implication here is that teachers, as adults, have the right and obligation to give direction to pupils and to assist them to become involved in group settings, and the child has the right to express his/her views and ideas and the teacher should give those views the necessary consideration.

2.2.7 Learning pupils' names

Democracy is built on the balance between liberty and equality. An important pillar in democratic classrooms is that of knowing pupils names. Pupils need to be recognised as individuals. If teachers do not know pupils by their names, it amounts to a rejection of their pupils as unique personalities. Pupils feel proud and honoured when called by their names because they are given concrete proof that their teacher cares for them. De Witt (1981:98) states clearly that "to know every pupil in his class individually is an almost axiomatic requirement for the ideal teacher". It is also well known that pupils tend to refrain from misbehaviour when they know that their teachers know them by their names. The ability to address each pupil by his/her name is therefore, an important professional skill, if a teacher wants to influence pupils' conduct and, at the same time, also improve their academic performance. In similar vein Lemlech (1988:39) states that the first task is to learn pupils' names and to establish a seating chart as soon as possible. He also emphasises that knowing students' names establishes a more personal relationship which facilitates effective learning.

This will be the same when giving written work to pupils. A teacher who knows his class, will consider the principle of differentiation, will consider psychomotor, affective, emotive and motor domains. In this way all pupils will be able to finish off their written work. This solely depends on the teachers' knowledge of their pupils.

It is imperative that people should know each other. In a democratic society, knowing pupils by their names is a social aspect that enhances human relations. It promotes friendship, caring and a loving spirit. Treatment of each other is based on knowing each other. Democratic teachers should know their pupils for the assignment of specific tasks, reinforcements, rewards, punishment and motivation. If a teacher for instance, does not have knowledge of his/her pupils, the principle of motivation cannot be applied effectively, for instance, if a student has scored high marks in Geography, he needs to be praised, but if the teacher does not know that child, this becomes impossible.

2.2.8 Getting to know pupils

Merely learning pupil's names is by no means enough and it is the responsibility of the teacher to also know pupils as well as he/she reasonably can. It is obviously impossible for teachers with large classes to make full case studies of the multitude of pupils whom they teach or to visit pupils at home and they cannot be expected to fulfil the role of psychologists or social workers. Their main focus is on helping pupils to learn the prescribed knowledge, skills and values stated in syllabuses in the classroom. However, teachers should make constant efforts to know as much as possible about the pupils= ability, academic achievement, interests, weaknesses, strengths and learning problems.

This naturally implies that they should also keep track of pupils' marks and progress.

Pupils have the right to be called by their chosen names and when their names are used they feel that they have been recognised and that the teacher cares. De Witt (1981: 98) clearly states that “to know every pupil in the class individually is an almost axiomatic requirement for the ideal teacher”. Therefore, the ability to address each pupil by name is an important professional skill which can be used to influence the conduct of the pupils, whilst simultaneously, through motivation, may also improve their academic performance. On this theme, Lemlech (1988: 39) states that the first task of the teacher is to learn each pupil's name and establish a seating chart.

The practice of equality requires that people have knowledge of each other. In a democratic classroom, knowing pupils by their names is a social respect which enhances human relations as it promotes friendship, caring and a loving spirit. Knowledge plays a crucial role in the allocation of tasks and assignments, as well as in reinforcement, rewards, punishment and motivation. If a teacher lacks knowledge of pupils, the principle of motivation cannot effectively be applied – if, for example, a pupil has scored a high mark in a Geography test, the praise deserved is unlikely to be forthcoming if she/he cannot be addressed by name.

When facing a new class, teachers tend to divide the pupils into three categories: the “good” pupils who conform to their expectations; the “bad” pupils who deviate and the “in-betweens”. The teacher will learn the names of the pupils in the first two categories almost immediately, whilst the names of the pupils allocated to the third group will be

learnt more slowly, with the teacher often experiencing difficulty in connecting the name to the face (Behr, *et. al.* 1986: 110)

From the above arguments about teachers' knowledge of their pupils, it is clear that teachers should know as much about their pupils as possible in order to give them equal opportunities. As indicated earlier, the teacher will be in a position to trace a pupil's track record easily if she/he knows the pupils.

2.3 **CONFLICT RESOLUTION AS A DIDACTIC CRITERION FOR EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT**

2.3.1 **Definition**

Within the context of this dissertation, conflict resolution has to do with the curbing of unwanted, aggressive and abnormal behaviour amongst pupils in the classroom, through discussion and negotiation. The most prevalent conflict among pupils is fighting. However, the teacher's main task is to reduce and/or resolve conflicts between him/her self and the class. Dreikurs (1982:299) has this to say about conflict resolution: "Teachers can no longer resolve conflicts by fighting or giving in". He suggests four basic steps in the resolution of conflict:

- ★ establish mutual respect

- ★ pinpoint the issue
- ★ explore alternatives
- ★ come to a new agreement by shared decision making.

These four steps suggest that conflicts between teachers and pupils can be resolved if teachers approach their pupils in a democratic spirit. It is therefore extremely harmful if a teacher is frequently absent because conflicts remain unresolved and there is a build-up of tension and the teacher fails to implement even the first step suggested by Dreikurs, namely, to establish mutual respect. Good and Brophy (1991:237) offer the following steps in resolving a conflict.

- define the problem
- generate possible solutions
- evaluate which is the best
- determine how to implement the best solution
- assess the effectiveness of this solution.

Good and Brophy (1991:237) provide a ten-step approach which they state is intended

for use with students who persistently violate rules that are reasonable and are administered fairly by teachers who maintain a positive, problem solving stance dealing with those students. The ten steps are as follows:

1. List your typical reactions to the students' disrupting behaviour.
2. Analyse the list to see what techniques do or do not work, and resolve not to repeat the ones that do not work.
3. Improve your personal relationship with students by providing extra encouragement, asking the students to perform special errands, showing concern or implying that things will improve.
4. Focus the students' attention on the disruptive behaviour by requiring the student to describe what he or she has been doing. Continue until the student describes the behaviour accurately and then request that it be stopped.
5. Call a short conference and again have the student describe the behaviour; then have the student state whether or not the behaviour is against the rules or recognised expectations and ask the student what she/he should be doing instead.
6. Repeat step 5, but this time add that the student will have to formulate a plan to solve the problem. The plan must be more than a simple agreement to stop misbehaving, because this has not been honoured in the past. The plan must

include commitment to positive actions designed to eliminate the problem.

7. Isolate the student from the class until he/she devises a plan for ensuring that the rules will be followed for the future, get the plan approved, and make a commitment to follow it.
8. If this does not work, the next step is school suspension. Now the student must deal with the principal or someone other than the teacher but this person will repeat learner steps in the sequence and urge the student to devise a plan that is acceptable.
9. If students remain out of control or do not comply with in-school supervisory rules, their parents are called to take them home for the day, and they resume in-school supervision the next day.
10. Students who do not respond to the previous steps are removed from school and referred to another agency.

In view of Dreikurs', Gordon's and Glasser's approaches, conflict can be resolved, but due to disrespect and anarchy at many Zulu schools, such steps often lead to serious violence followed by a high rate of teacher absenteeism. Teachers urgently need in-service training in conflict resolution in collaboration with parents.

2.3.2 Truancy

A 'truant' is a child who is often absent from school without the consent or knowledge of his or her parents. Such a truant can be distinguished from, for example, a parental condoned absentee or a school refusal case. Behr *et.al.*, (1986:149) argue that truancy may be the response of a child who comes from an unsupportive home background where school is not valued by the parents. They go on to say that 'many truants' claim that they absent themselves because of a conflict with a teacher at school, but in many cases this may be a rationalisation to explain their alienation from school, but it might indeed be that there are poor relationships with teachers.

Truancy causes many problems because idleness may lead to behaviour problems such as vagrancy, dishonesty, and misconduct, not to mention the problem of falling behind in schoolwork Lindhard *et. al*, (1994:123 and 126). These authors further explore possible causes of truancy, which may be that it could be as a result of boring, unimaginative and unenthusiastic teaching or the wrong choice of subjects. The teacher should try to discover the cause of a student's truancy and solve that problem rather than applying punishment.

Truancy occurs when a child stays away from school for unacceptable reasons (Naudé and Bodibe 1990:86), and possible reasons include:

- The child is bullied by other children

- The child fears a teacher
- The child has had only negative experiences and failure and refusing to go to school is a way of protecting her/his self esteem
- The school may be either too difficult (resulting in failure) or too easy (with resulting boredom)
- The child is involved with drug-taking or some sort of delinquent activity.

Among young children truancy is usually a result of school phobia. Among older children truancy is normally due to a dislike of school, frustration and a disillusionment of what it has to offer, usually because of poor achievement, constant failure, rejection by peers and punishment (Aardweg and Aardweg, 1988:235). They further distinguish between two types of truancy:

- a. When children absent themselves from school without the necessary permission and go where they will not be seen by concerned adults and leave school on the pretext of "not feeling well" or for some other reason or never arrive at the school at all.
- b. When the child stays away from school with parental consent. This is often the case in the lower socio-economic groups where parents place little value on education and would rather the child drop out of school and help the family by

earning a living or assisting on the plot or in the workshop or business.

Aardweg and Aardweg (1988:53) also point out some educational possible solutions to truancy, namely:

- a. Teachers should recognise every child and take an interest in each one, noting any disruptive behaviour, excuses and defiance.
- b. The curriculum should meet individual needs. School work should be attractive, there should be special classes for the less successful and indiscriminate mass education should be counteracted.
- c. A change of school may help, but it does not get to the root of the problem. A thorough investigation with the co-operation of the parents is required.

2.3.3. **Serious Problems**

An ineffective leadership style in the classroom often leads to serious problems. One of the most common problems is fighting amongst the pupils. In the absence of the teacher, pupils often engage themselves in fights and other serious conflicts. Lemlech (1988:80) rightly argues that if students lack a sense of purpose and of caring about one another, there is bound to be conflict and friction. He continues by saying that effective group discipline is dependent on the leadership capabilities of the teacher in stressing positive and desirable behaviour. It is clear that for teachers to prevent serious problems, they need

to be in their respective classrooms as planned in the school composite time table.

Lemlech (1988:81) suggests the following steps in dealing with serious disciplinary problems.

- take immediate action
- if what is happening is not clear, talk quietly to the misbehaving group.
- determine what is wrong, why it is happening, what needs exist.
- if members of the group need to be separated from one another, do it quickly and efficiently.
- the very best technique for handling misbehaviour is to monitor the classroom and inhibit misbehaviour before it occurs.
- some misbehaviours ought to be ignored.
- evaluate group work.

2.4 **EFFECTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AS A DIDACTIC CRITERION FOR EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT**

2.4.1 **Definition**

An effective learning environment is, according to Good and Brophy (1991:83) to “keep the class attentive to lessons and involved in productive, independent activities”. Arends (1994:530) contends that a learning environment is the overall climate and structures of the classroom which influence how students respond to and remain engaged in learning tasks, that is, the context in which teaching acts are carried out. Good and Brophy (1991:85) further state that an effective learning environment helps to instil basic lessons and work routines quickly by using relatively simple formats and tasks that students are likely to be able to accomplish successfully.

The above clarification emphasises that an effective learning environment makes it easier for the pupils to learn and for teachers to manage classrooms.

2.4.2 **Keeping pupils active**

Teaching is an activity which means that both parties involved should be active, but that pupils, as recipients, should be kept more active by the teacher concerned through giving, co-operation and friendliness and guidance on how to learn.

2.4.3 **Guidance on how to learn**

It is extremely important for children to know how to learn and they need to be given guidance in this direction. This is synonymous with motivation (Arends 1994:10). Learning is not an automatic or spontaneous ability but the outer forces or factors which influence it should be directed by the teacher. It stands to reason that a high teacher absenteeism rate seriously jeopardises the ability of the teacher to give pupils guidance on how to learn and indeed robs them of any chance of learning – even if haphazard.. Pupils, as human beings coming from different places, have different attitudes and behaviours; and it is therefore the duty of the classroom manager to recognise and reinforce desirable behaviour and eradicate those behaviours that are not desirable or which impede learning.

2.4.4 **Co-operation**

Co-operation involves relationships, conflict management and learning. Co-operation is particularly effective for tasks in which a collective or group effort is a pre-requisite (Aardweg and Aardweg 1988:52). These authors further state that co-operation teaches selflessness, friendliness, sharing and nurture feelings of belonging, worth, being at ease and successfulness. Co-operation, in conjunction with competition, is used as a motivational factor in the classrooms.

According to Dreikurs (1982:68), co-operation is based on consideration for the rights and interests of others while standing up for one's own rights. He continues that in such an atmosphere, one is not concerned with what others do but accepts responsibility for

what one does oneself. Sprinthall and Sprinthall (1990:532) are of the opinion that co-operation and competition are acquired motives that have importance for the teacher. Arends (1994:341) points out that many studies conducted across diverse settings suggest that under co-operative conditions, individuals are rewarded for group success.

2.4.5 **Friendliness**

Friendliness is an important pre-requisite in the creation of an effective learning environment in democratic classrooms. Pupils need to be accepted and loved, however, some teachers feel that this is degrading and feel a need to assert their authority. A friendly yet firm teacher can win over the pupils without too much conscious effort. (Dreikurs, 1982:92). Dreikurs sees friendliness as a tool to win over children. Once the teacher has gained the confidence of the pupils, an effective learning environment is easily created. Warmth of personality, kindness and friendliness are very important, but these qualities cannot be learned and must come from within (Dreikurs 1982:93).

Lindhard *et. al.*, (1994:74) say that if you like people, they will almost always like you. You can show your liking by being friendly, smiling, and doing things for people. Friendliness is rooted in accepting someone else's right to a different opinion which is an indication of recognising that someone has a right to be different from you. Teachers should try to accept pupils as they are and give them the recognition they deserve which will not only create a friendly relationship between the teacher and the pupil but will also contribute towards a healthy learning environment in the classroom. Lindhard *et.al.*, (1994:75) are of the opinion that the basis of good friendship is trust. This means that

pupils will be relaxed if they feel that there is a mutual atmosphere of trust. Trust has several faces including loyalty, dependability and responsibility (Lindhard et.al., 1994:75). Loyalty means supporting someone through both good times and bad; dependability means that a person can expect you to be the same towards him even though his/her circumstances may have changed. Friendliness is a desired quality of an ideal teacher. As De Witt (1981:98) puts it: "the ideal teacher must love his pupils - including the badly-behaved ones at their difficult stages, the stick-in-the muds and the less gifted".

Dreikurs (1982:93) says that friendliness implies good relationships between the teacher and the pupils and means that the teacher displays proper respects for the pupils and treats each child with dignity. Acceptance implies a sincere teacher-positive attitude towards children whilst ignoring all incapacities and shortcomings of the student.

Ngcobo (1986:122) says something similar when he says that friendliness, however, should not create an impression in the minds of the pupils that it is synonymous with familiarity and cheap popularity because this is pedagogically dangerous. Some teachers tend to be friendly towards their pupils simply because they want to be popular and, this too, is pedagogically dangerous. Friendliness can do more good than harm in the creation of an effective learning atmosphere, provided it is used with great tact.

It is evident that it is important that an effective learning environment be created in order to promote effective classroom management. Keeping pupils active and giving guidance towards the attainment of co-operation and friendliness are crucially important in this regard.

2.5 **MOTIVATION AS A DIDACTIC CRITERION FOR EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT.**

2.5.1 **Definition**

Fraser *et. al.*, (1990:55) define motivation as an urge which mobilises and directs the intensity of mans' involvement in a specific activity. Hammacheck (1968:3) defines motivation as a process that leads students into experiences in which learning can occur, energises and activates students and keeps them reasonably alert and their attention focussed in one direction at a time. Arends (1994:530) sees motivation as the process by which behaviour is directed toward important human goals or towards satisfying needs and motives. Most didactic sources distinguish between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Hamacheck's definition is more specific to the child and he regards motivation as being when the child is eager to learn.

2.5.2 **Extrinsic Motivation**

According to Duminy and Söhnge (1980:29) extrinsic motivation is derived from factors outside the learning situation, such as the granting of marks, credits, free lesson hours, diplomas, certificates and prizes. Krüger and Müller (1988:178) agree with Duminy and Söhnge when they write that extrinsic motivation is a motivation stimulus which lies outside the content and even outside the physical life of the pupils". They divide this into negative sanctioning, affiliative motivation, status motivation and achievement motivation.

According to this definition extrinsic motivation can be inculcated by the teacher or any other educational authority who wants to energise and incite the pupil. In this dissertation extrinsic motivation is viewed as being a positive process providing that the boundaries are recognised and heeded. Examples of such motivation are:

- a. Negative sanctioning- refers to all forms of negative conduct in lesson situations which are intended to evoke a positive reaction.
- b. Affiliative motivation - refers to a situation where children learn because they want to satisfy the teacher or parent.
- c. Status motivation - refers to a motivation where some pupils are strongly stimulated by challenges which are related to status.

2.5.3. **Intrinsic motivation**

Duminy and Söhnge (1980:29) see intrinsic motivation as a process in which the subject matter and everything which belongs to the teaching-learning situation directly appeals to a pupil resulting in the child showing a spontaneous interest without further outside encouragement being necessary. Krüger and Müller (1990:180) agree in that they regard intrinsic motivation indicates that the pupil wants to master the content for the sake of its interesting qualities and meaning. In instances, intrinsic motivation manifests when children learn out of curiosity or inquisitiveness.

Well-designed didactic actions make provision for intrinsic motivation to occur. Without a good classroom manager, it is unlikely that the pupils will be offered intrinsic motivation as a teacher's effective classroom control, management and organisation are the pillars for this type of motivation.

These two types of motivation advance at least six techniques to motivate pupils, namely; reinforcement, praise, homework, recognition, encouragement and rewards. Each of which will be dealt with below in greater detail.

2.5.3.1 **Reinforcement**

The divergent views of various researchers regarding reinforcement will be considered. Reinforcement falls within the ambit of motivation in that it enables pupils to experience a feeling of success when knowledge and skills become firmly entrenched. Moore (1995:236) defines reinforcement as being similar to rewarding desired student behaviour and he further classifies reinforcements into two types:

- a. Positive reinforcement occurs when teachers use a rewarding stimulus to motivate some action or behaviour – with the rewards including: good grades, giving free time, praise, being named class leader, etc.
- b. Negative reinforcement involves using an unpleasant stimulus such as detention or the threat of punishment e.g. sitting in their seat until the pupil is ready to participate in an activity, or staying in at the recess until their required work is completed.

Axelrod (1983:23) defines reinforcement as a procedure to increase the rate of behaviour, while Good and Brophy (1991:209) consider that social learning theorists and behaviourists view reinforcement as essential in providing both motivation and guidance to learners.

Arends (1994:531) views reinforcement as the consequences administered by teachers to encourage and strengthen certain desirable behaviours. Stones (1983:11) stresses that reinforcement is used for the presentation of a stimulus after a particular activity, leading to the repetition and learning of that activity. Barnes *et. al*, (1984:209) argues that reinforcements refers to a teacher's use of tangible rewards or punishments in relation to a performance on an achievement of a task.

In Didactics, reinforcement is usually taken to be when a person learns something for the second or third or more times so that the material is increasingly learned and retained. Yet, within the context of motivation in classroom management, reinforcement is aimed at making knowledge stronger, such as when a teacher's words or actions stimulate or encourage pupils to learn.

Good and Brophy (1991:209) take extrinsic reinforcement to mean the rewards given to pupils (such as the star in the book or high marks) so that the pupils will to learn is strengthened or reinforced, yet these authors do not support extrinsic reinforcement. They believe, for instance, that if you give a child money after she/he has studied, they could then become interested in the money and not in the learning. The child could cease to learn for enjoyment and out of curiosity and would learn only for the financial reward

offered. For this reason extrinsic reinforcements are discouraged as a primary motivating means.

2.5.3.2 **Praise**

Good and Brophy (1991:211) contend that praise is usually described as a form of extrinsic reinforcement. Although it might not always have this effect, Dreikurs (1982:108) is of the same notion when he states: “praise is usually given to the child when a task or a deed is well done or when the task is completed so the behaviour that is desirable or the work that he has done so well and completed can be reinforced”. Arends (1994:531) cites praise as positive verbal and non-verbal statements offered by teachers as reinforcers to encourage and strengthen desirable behaviour.

Praise could be regarded as a humanising and socialising agent in the classroom situation, especially if it stresses positive rather than the negative behaviour and it is used in place of criticism. Good and Brophy (1991:212) are of the notion that effective praise calls attention to a student’s learning progress or skill-mastery and they list three steps for effective praise:

1. Praise should be simple and direct, delivered in a natural voice without gushing or dramatising.
2. Praise should be given in straightforward, declarative sentences.
3. Specify the particular accomplishment being praised and recognise any noteworthy effort, care or perseverance.

Praise is a means of showing that the teacher cares about the pupils and their performance and that their actions and deeds are recognised and acknowledged. Praise can be considered a form of feedback regarding the progress of the pupil, which further motivates the pupils as they will strive for praise for future accomplishments. During the monitoring process of the pupil's behaviour or on the completion of such behaviour, the pupil should know whether his actions were desirable or not and teachers should thus be frank and fair when praising pupils.

There is the opinion that praise should usually be given privately to avoid animosity and unnecessary clashes amongst the pupils in the class. The teacher must take into account that the pupils' academic performances might not be in accordance with their expectations due to their inability to perform adequately or because of other problems. Therefore, when the student is praised publicly, it might endanger their relationships with other students, and such a result will not serve to motivate the pupil.

2.5.3.3 **Homework**

Homework is an extension of classwork and pupils must know what to do and how to do it (Landman *et.al.*, 1988:109). Lubbe (1976:140) states that homework is an important aspect of school work and he feels that homework must, therefore, reinforce and supplement the work given in class. In a similar vein, Arends (1994:85) is of the opinion that one way to achieve extended learning time is to give students homework and he suggests three general guidelines:

- a. Students should be given homework that they can perform successfully.

- b. Parents should be informed of the level of involvement expected of them.
- c. Feedback should be provided on the homework. Many teachers simply check to determine whether the homework was performed.

In support of this Lindhard *et.al.*, (1994:136) say that “one reason for giving homework is to help pupils to practice some skills, such as mathematics, typing, handwriting and the ability to reproduce thoughts in writing, drawing or spelling”. Lindhard *et.al.*, believe that teachers should mark and return homework as soon as possible.

The above arguments and views regarding homework suggest that it should always aim at motivating pupils to learn. The majority of pupils regard homework as punishment, unnecessary and time consuming. It is true in certain cases that the pupils are overloaded when they are given work by all their teachers as each teachers considers their own subject to be important and, as they struggle to complete the work, it can hardly be expected for them to be motivated. Overloading them will also result in tiredness, not a situation conducive to motivation. It is vital that the teachers consult and draw up a homework time-table and abide by it so that such overloading can be avoided and, with the aim of stimulating and motivating students, all teachers must ensure that the assigned work is well defined, the instructions clear and the learning material accessible. Such considerations reduce the likelihood of frustration and lack of enthusiasm during the completion of homework. Pupils are more likely to be motivated to do homework if it is based upon the work already covered in class and if the reasons for the allocation of such work is valid and relevant.

After the homework has been marked, feedback provided by the teacher can be a strong motivational factor for the pupils as it offers them clear guidelines on how they approached the task and could encourage them to try harder the next time. Even if the performance of some pupils was not good, the teacher's comments should be of such a nature that they encourage these pupils. Criticism should never be used under any circumstances in a classroom, as each child is being the best they can be at a particular time, and if they are behaving incorrectly it is because they are still children and learning, which is why they are at school and any form of criticism will undercut and destroy all motivation.

2.5.3.4 Recognition

The type of recognition related to motivation is defined as: *the act or an instance of being recognised or of recognising* (The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1995:103), and recognise as: *to identify (a person or thing) as already known; know again. Synonyms include: identify, reidentify, recall, recollect remember, call to mind , understand, perceive, acknowledge, own, respect and appreciate.* Within this context this author encompasses all of these to be relevant to the motivation of the child as they include the myriad aspects of recognition which children require for their encouragement. All humans, but especially children, because they have not yet developed a complete concept of themselves, need recognition and it motivates them if they are treated as individuals and as human beings.

Motivation will be inevitable if they are appreciated for, inter alia, their original ideas, creativity, specific accomplishments, personal qualities and traits, and for all their efforts and attempts – even when they fail. Someone very wise once said: “It is so very hard for people and teachers need to remember this in the use of their authority which can destroy – their pupils are merely regarded as little people with a learner’s licence, and each one is trying their best in their own way and they need recognition for this”. They resemble a prism of needs: physical; their general health; their emotional level and outside influences; their self-esteem; whether they can see clearly; their comfort; home problems; personal problems; whether they are hungry or cold, etc.

It is imperative that a teacher be polite and address pupils in the correct manner and always with courtesy and respect and recognises the dignity of the child. It is startling that many teachers do not consider themselves required to regard the basics of manners with their pupils – please and thank you. The child is more likely to be motivated if the teacher shows that they are noticed and recognised as individuals and that their efforts are recognised. Children feel heard if they are able to make a contribution without interruption or without criticism, or if they are allowed to ask questions without being made to feel their questions are irrelevant or stupid.

The worst insult anyone can give another person is that of indifference – and that applies equally to children. Recognition of pupils means that the teacher shows them that they are noticed and their efforts they make to learn. For example, if a teacher checks whether the pupils completed their homework (without praising - just looking), then the teacher recognises the time and effort which the pupils gave. Even if the teacher says nothing, the

pupils feel that the teacher, at least, acknowledges their work. Foremost in recognition is that the teacher be able to call the pupil by name, which indicates that they have been recognised as a human being and as an individual – no pupil can be motivated by a teacher who cannot name them. Children will be motivated if they are recognised and acknowledged as they deserve, and the teacher will, in return, be amply rewarded.

2.5.3.5 **Encouragement**

Encouragement is a complex process and its development is dependent upon a number of minute circumstances which continuously shift and, as a result, a precise definition is impossible (Dreikurs 1982:103). Dreikurs (1982:103) also states that encouragement is an action which conveys to children that the teacher respects, trusts, and believes in them and thinks that their present lack of skills in no way diminishes their value as human beings. Encouragement relates to other important attributes like warmth, enthusiasm, and expectations for success. Through encouragement and support, the teacher can assist the students to achieve the required expectations for their success, regardless that they might experience some difficulty along the way (Cruickshank; 1995:322). Dreikurs (1982:109) regards encouragement as vital when a child fails; a view supported by Cruickshank (1995:322) who states that “encouragement can motivate students to attempt tasks that they may be reluctant to start and to continue working at tasks when they are struggling or becoming frustrated”. Moore (1995:246) argues that encouragement differs from praise in that encouragement stimulates the efforts and the capacity of the individual e.g. “how nice that you figured that out yourself, and that praise and encouragement are effective teaching aids when used with care”.

Encouragement can be described as those actions or techniques aimed at giving pupils confidence and hope. When a teacher encourages pupils, they gain new courage and strength to continue or renew their efforts to learn. Praise can take various forms, for example:

- a. **Approval:** The teacher can express approval about something the child is doing or trying to do e.g. "Busi, I admire that you persevere with that calculation which is giving you difficulty. I am sure you will solve it".
- b. **Questioning:** To encourage a pupil who is a slow learner or a shy person, the teacher can ask the pupil a question to which they are likely to know the answer or use prompting (giving clues about the answer) until the pupil answers correctly.
- c. **Reassurance:** New confidence can be instilled when the teacher reassures the child that he/she is on the right track, e.g. "Don't look so worried, Sipho - so far you are doing well – carry on and you will get it right."
- d. **Urging:** Pupils feel encouraged when a teacher urges them to exert themselves as they learn new facts or skills, for example, "Class, I know it's difficult to remember all these biological names, but if you study hard I am sure you will memorise them. Just keep on and on until you can identify them."
- e. **Team Spirit:** The teacher can encourage a class or a group by appealing to them to use team spirit, for example, "I can see this class is working very well

altogether. I am glad you are helping each other and are not fighting. This is a very pleasant class.”

Classroom managers should be courteous when encouraging pupils and pupils should experience a feeling of being rewarded. The task of motivation requires that the teacher recognises which tasks have been well done and completed.

2.5.3.6 **Reward**

Reward is regarded as a common form of motivation and serves as an incentive for students to improve their academic performance or to behave well. Good and Brophy (1991:290) posit that rewards are one proven way to motivate students to put forth effort, especially when the rewards are offered in advance as incentives for striving to reach specified levels of performance. Rewards can take the form of material rewards (money, prizes, trinkets, consumables, activity rewards and privilege. Bull *et. al.*, (1989:108) see rewards as “best guess” at what events or activities may act as reinforcers for particular children. They further classify rewards into: social rewards, material rewards, activity rewards and token rewards.

- a. Social rewards: These involve pleasant interactions with other people - adults or children, for example, teacher praise, smiles, feedback.
- b. Activity rewards: These may be arranged as part of the natural sequence of classroom activity; for example, any activity which children enjoy.

- c. Token rewards: These are more tangible signs of success or approval e.g. stars in children's books or on a wall chart or badges given to wear for the day.
- d. Material rewards: These include consumables of all kinds - sweets, trinkets, toys and so on.

Behr *et. al.*, (1986:72) classify rewards used at schools as being symbolic or concrete. Concrete rewards are prizes, exemption from homework or reduction in workload, while symbolic rewards take the form of verbal praise, good marks, favourable reports to parents and promotion to higher standards. They group rewards and punishment as extrinsic motivators. This assumption is further supported by Smith and Laslett (1993:97) who say that all teachers use rewards and punishments. Even teachers who would vehemently reject the idea of giving prizes use praise, affection and attention in a rewarding way and withdrawal of such favours can be as punishing as a hearty smack. Clarizio (1980:18) believes that the giving of rewards constitutes one of the most valuable aids teachers have at their disposal. Teachers have long recognised the importance of rewards and often use them to recognise desired behaviour.

The above authors have a similar view concerning rewards in that they think that rewards should be offered to students with great caution, because, at times, they may create animosity amongst the pupils. Although it is good to reward students for certain desired behaviours, it must be borne in mind that some lack the ability to achieve the desired standards. Classroom managers should always bear in mind the possible negative effect of extrinsic motivation.

2.6 ORDER AS DIDACTIC CRITERION FOR EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Order, according to Dreikurs (1982:91), occurs in a classroom where there is flexibility and also a proper arrangement or sequence of things to do, such as keeping the floor free of litter; arranging a variety of art works in an artistic fashion; grouping the children in small groups and working on unit projects. He has witnessed that there is an animated look on the children's faces and that they are free to move about and explore their environment. Chairs are shifted from one activity to the next and children work together and talk quietly about their project – a result of teacher-pupil planning and co-operation.

It is evident from Dreikurs' view that order should be initiated by the teacher and she/he must ensure what was introduced to maintain order is followed. Order can only be maintained by stimulation from within and not by pressure from without in the form of punishment.

Effective teaching and learning takes place in orderly classrooms, but where there is disorder and chaos teaching and learning becomes strenuous and trying, if not impossible.. Democratic classrooms strive for orderly conditions, but their order is not imposed and pupils are guided by rules and regulations with which they are happy and there is peace. They are not forced to maintain order but they see the need and fruits of having an orderly situation.

Dreikur's view is that order should not revolve around rigidity but flexibility and that it is a prerequisite for the creation of an effective learning environment. Order should, ideally, come from the pupils following the example of their teacher, and, as such, order and discipline are inseparable.

2.6.1 **Investigation**

Investigation deals with the close examination of a problem which has led to the disorder, instability and disharmony in the classroom Lemlech (1988:147) is of the opinion that investigation requires willingness to allow students to sit next to each other and eyeball each other" and that investigation teaches democratic decision- making. He tabulates the following merits of group investigation:

1. Group process skills.
2. Democratic governance.
3. Inquiry skills.
4. Constructionist view of knowledge.

The solution, of course, lies with the classroom manager and he/she must give the proper time and effort to dealing with the problem, and it is imperative that they have extensive knowledge of the pupils. If their knowledge is insufficient and the situation remains

unclear, then the students must be questioned regarding the facts of the situation – this is best done in private and the students must be allowed to speak without interruption. If there appear to be discrepancies in the replies, the teacher must not make judgements, but must point these out and state which statements they query and invite further responses.

During the investigation, the teacher must make it clear that they expect the truth at all times, that they are seeking the best for all concerned and are not merely out to place guilt, but rather seek to clear the situation and establish guidelines for future problems to be effectively dealt with.

At times, the teacher will need to accept that a situation is unable to be resolved and they should tell the pupils this and, although she/he tried to treat them fairly, there is no point in further discussion. They must then tell the students exactly what is expected of them regarding their future behaviour (Good and Brophy 1991: 235).

2.6.2 **Punishment**

Punishment is a highly controversial issue which has resulted in many heated debates and this will always be the case – naturally there are various arguments for and against. Axelrod (1983:244) defines punishment as “any change in the environment following a behaviour that decreases the future rate of the behaviour. Events that often serve as punishments include reprimands and reducing a child’s opportunity to earn reinforcers”. Punishment is a consequence stimulus which often decreases the misbehaviour and is seen by many “punishers” as an action to modify pupils’ behavioural patterns. Clarizio

(1980:129) states "Punishment has been widely used by parents and teachers in their attempts to modify behaviour when it is frequent and/or intense".

Although the use of punishment has been disavowed on the grounds that it produces a variety of undesirable side effects, the fact remains that punitive measures often succeed in modifying pupils' behaviour. However, when considering punishment, the teacher needs to exercise great care and skill. Pupils must be in a position to see that they deserve punishment and they can only understand this if the teacher explains clearly why such punishment needs to be administered, and discuss it with the pupil. Punishment should be fair and just, which Lemlech (1988:82) supports with his view that penalties need to be appropriate to the seriousness of the misbehaviour. The penalty should be used to deter recurrence of the violation of classroom rules and procedures, which means that the students need to be aware of the rules and procedures and which of these they have violated. Students should recognise that certain behaviour such as failure to complete assignments, aggressiveness, destruction of property, abusive language and so on will be punished. Lemlech believes that penalties should be standard so that all students are treated equally.

The controversy of punishment is related to corporal punishment and Good and Brophy (1991:238) indicate that, in the United States, corporal punishment is used only in response to repeated misbehaviour and that it is a last resort for students who persist in misbehaving despite expressions of concern. They discourage the use of corporal punishment as it places the teacher in the position of attacking students; physically and personally and it might cause injury. Not only does it undermine the teacher's chances of

dealing with the students effectively in the future, but is mostly used ineffectively and counterproductively by inexperienced or poorly trained teachers who have not learned effective alternatives.

The argument against corporal punishment is supported by Aardweg and Aardweg (1988:53) who point out that when a teacher uses the cane he is admitting his failure as a teacher and that it becomes a crutch which supports poor teaching, as good teachers do not need to resort to corporal punishment. Such measures are a teacher convenience and it permits the continuance of the authoritarian concept. Force and coercion should not be used as they break the child's spirit and tend to weaken the sense of guilt on which hope of improvement depends. These researchers consider this punishment to increase the pupil's feelings of anxiety, hostility and inadequacy and that pupils should rather understand that education is intrinsic in value and fear will never be a motivating force.

Fear and pain do not teach children to behave better but leads to feelings of insecurity, restricting their emotional development.

Aardweg and Aardweg (1988:53) point to the following arguments in favour of corporal punishment in that they say that a large number of children are sent to school with neglected and immature habit development and that the only way to correct this is corporal punishment. They believe that knowledge that a caning will follow some act has stopped children from pursuing such an action and that it often removes the desire on the part of the student to repeat the misdemeanour. Many teachers regard corporal punishment as being quick, effective and available.

In the previous dispensation corporal punishment was permitted to be administered only in cases of gross neglect, truancy, insubordination, wilful damage to property, flagrant lying, theft, dishonesty, assault, bullying, indecency or similar offences (Guide for Principals of Schools (1977:50)). Despite the existence of this guide, many teachers abused this and it was a commonly used method to mete out punishment for even minor infringements, but it has since taken on legal implications. Although it is no longer an accepted method of punishment, there are, however, many schools in which corporal punishment is still used. It has been found that in South Africa corporal punishment is meted out on a massive scale and mostly by male teachers.

Teachers should rid themselves of the view that the only form of punishment available is corporal punishment and should consider other methods, although it must be stressed that all forms of punishment should only be used as a last resort. One alternative is to exclude the child from the group – but this should only be for a very short time and the child must be given an opportunity to redeem her/himself by, for example, asking: “Are you now ready to rejoin the group?” Teachers are not trained in alternative means of punishment and often flounder when trying to deal with certain situations and are likely to either use corporal punishment or use school work to punish. This means of punishment must be discouraged as children are expected to enjoy school work and, if they are given lines, essays, extra work or projects when they have misbehaved or not completed work, they are hardly likely to enjoy school or be motivated.

Although punishment must be sparingly used and corporal punishment, especially, discouraged the real situation must be faced and that is that it is being used extensively in some schools. In many classrooms, teachers face armed children as they are not allowed to search the pupils for weapons and the teachers are unable then to control and bring order to the classroom situation as they fear for their safety and the safety of the other pupils. The reality in the classrooms often leads to teacher absenteeism as teachers are unable to discipline their classes, so they rather stay away. It is well and good to take into consideration the solutions of American and British authors, but these cannot be applied to violent South African situations. It is blatant that extensive research needs to be conducted in this area in the future in order to find solutions for our situation.

2.6.3 **Firmness**

Firmness, according to Kounin (1970:66), means the degree to which the teacher conveys an “I-mean-it” and a “now” in her/his desist order. Firmness encourages conforming in children and usually leads to order in the classroom as it decreases the rate of disruptions.. Lemlech (1988:16) states clearly that “... a teacher cannot be firm without also being alert to students’ needs, aware of developmental progress and precise in language habits”. He further posits that there are two important principles related to firmness which should be considered namely: (a) Firm teacher behaviour is related to the establishment of rational enforceable rules which must be interpreted and enforced equitably for all children and (b) firmness should be communicated to students in the form of the teacher’s expectations for students’ behaviour and student accomplishments (Lemlech, 1988:16).

In this study firmness is seen as the key to achieving order in the classroom in order that instructional activities be more likely to be successful and, for this to happen, teachers need to be regularly present in their respective classes.

2.6.4 The Role of the Teacher

To achieve effective classroom management, it is necessary that the teacher play the correct role and address the pupils appropriately according to their level. The younger the child, the more they turn to the teacher and the more guidance they require and this obviously entails greater attention to classroom management. In the higher grades the students are more able to handle their responsibilities themselves and rely less heavily on the teacher and classroom management.

Jones is quoted by Good and Brophy (1991: 245) as forwarding that teachers should use research-supported methods in classroom management. These methods include the development of positive personal relationships with students that indicate high teacher expectations and concern for the students. Teachers must, at all times, closely monitor the pupils' academic performance and behaviour, initially using brief, nondisruptive forms of intervention and avoid power struggles by calmly handling conflicts. It must be clear to the pupils that they are responsible for their own behaviour and its effect on others and that the teacher will use effective listening skills to assist in the identification of problems. Teachers must take a proactive role in the classroom and negotiate behavioural and academic issues with the students.

2.7 **CONCLUSION**

In this chapter various didactic criteria for effective classroom management have been discussed which provide a theoretical background of the study and which will assist the researcher when analysing the results of the empirical work conducted during the investigation.

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CHAPTER 3

RESULTS OF EMPIRICAL STUDY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter quantitative and qualitative results of the empirical study are presented. Before the presentation of the results, some background information as well as the prevalence of absenteeism among teachers will be discussed.

3.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

It must be emphasised that the data obtained in this study revolves around the subjective perceptions of principals and not around proven factual knowledge. The research was aimed at exploring principal's views regarding the effects of absenteeism. Unfortunately the study could not use a representative sample of high school principals in KwaZulu Natal due to temporal and financial constraints. Consequently only twelve principals were interviewed - four from the Hlabisa circuit, four from the Nongoma circuit and four from the Ubombo circuit. The main interviews were conducted by the researcher and lasted approximately 90 minutes each. Although an interview questionnaire was used to obtain comparable data, much information which fell outside the scope of the questionnaire was obtained and discussed. The purpose of the research was to obtain qualitative data, not quantitative.

A fair idea of the sizes of the schools being managed by the principals interviewed can be gleaned from Table 1. The average number of pupils per school was 732 and there was an average of 20 teachers per school: 11 male teachers and 9 female teachers. It will be noticed, however, that there were important differences between the schools: the largest number of pupils was 1 200 (school 11) whilst the smallest school had 345 pupils (school 3). Similarly, there was one school with 32 teachers (school 7) and one with only 7 teachers (school 3). The remainder of the schools varied in size between these two extreme poles. Divergent trends can also be observed if one compares the different teacher-pupil ratios in the twelve schools. In School 1 the ratio was as high as 1:65 while in School 2 it was only 1:20. The average teacher-pupil ratio was 1:36.

Table 1 reflects the number of pupils and teachers Table 11 indicates the frequency of teacher absenteeism and Table 111 deals with the distances teachers travel to the schools.

TABLE I: NUMBER OF PUPILS AND TEACHERS IN PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

School	Circuit	Number of Teachers			Number of Pupils	
		N=246			N=8783	
		Male	Female	Total	Pupils	Ratio
1	Ubombo	5	5	10	650	1:65
2	Ubombo	12	8	20	400	1:20
3	Nongoma	4	3	7	345	1:49
4	Hlabisa	21	7	28	978	1:35
5	Hlabisa	6	12	18	810	1:45
6	Nongoma	13	12	25	800	1:32
7	Nongoma	20	12	32	1000	1:31
8	Nongoma	9	20	29	800	1:28
9	Hlabisa	8	8	16	500	1:31
10	Ubombo	10	8	18	700	1:39
11	Hlabisa	10	12	22	1200	1:55
12	Ubombo	19	2	21	600	1:29
Total		137	109	246	8783	
Average per School		11,41	9,08	20,49	731,92	1:36

TABLE 11 : TEACHER ABSENTEEISM RATES IN SAMPLE SCHOOLS

N = 246									
School	Number of Teachers in School			Number of Teachers Absent 20 Days or More Per Year			Percentage of Teachers Absent 20 Days or More Per Year		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Average
1	5	5	10	3	1	4	60	20	40
2	12	8	20	6	2	8	50	25	40
3	4	3	7	2	0	2	50	0	29
4	21	7	28	4	2	6	19	29	21
5	6	12	18	4	2	6	67	17	33
6	13	12	25	0	4	4	0	33	16
7	20	12	32	0	0	0	0	0	0
8	9	20	29	4	3	7	44	15	24
9	8	8	16	3	6	9	38	75	56
10	10	8	18	4	2	6	40	25	33
11	10	12	22	2	3	5	20	25	23
12	19	2	21	2	0	2	11	0	10
Average	137	109	246	34	25	59	399	264	325
Total	11	9	20	3	2	5	33	22	27

As can be seen from the figure in the bottom right-hand corner, the average percentage of teachers who were reported to be absent for 20 or more days per year was 27%. A rough estimate of the absenteeism rate at a school with an average staff component would be five habitual absentees out of 20 teachers (see bottom row of Table 11). It will be

noticed, however, that there are significant differences between the twelve schools in the sample: the principal of school 7 reported that none of the 32 teachers on his staff were absent for 20 or more days in the year preceding the research (1995). An explanation for this could be that 66% of the teachers at this particular school lived on the premises and the principal also kept an attendance register in his office which all teachers had to sign at the beginning and end of each school day. In contrast, the principal of school 9 reported that 56% of the teachers on his staff were absent for 20 or more days per year - the highest absenteeism rate among all the schools in the sample. Two other schools with fairly high absenteeism rates (40%) were schools 1 and 2. Although the accuracy of these figures may be questioned due to the subjective method used to obtain the data - most principals did not keep accurate records and some principals may have been biased against their staff - the table gives a rough estimate of how principals in the sample perceived the absenteeism rate.

According to the figures supplied in Table 11 the absenteeism rate among male teachers is higher than that among female teachers: 33% of male teachers appeared to be habitually absent compared with 22% of female teachers. At seven of the twelve schools males were habitually more often absent than females (school 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 10 and 12), while in four schools the female absenteeism rate seemed higher than that of the males. Although the sample is too small to make generalisations, the table provides tentative evidence that absenteeism may be slightly higher among male teachers than among female teachers.

TABLE 111 DISTANCE TEACHERS TRAVEL BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL

School	Circuit	Number of teachers travelling this distance to school during the week [average km]							Number of teachers travelling this distance to home during week-ends and holidays [average km]							
		0 k m	6 k m	16 k m	41 km	61 km	Total Distance	Average distance per teacher	0 k m	11 k m	41 k m	91 k m	161 km	201 km	Total Distance	Average distance per teacher
4	Hlabisa	20	4	4	-	-	176	6,28	3	4	7	12	2	-	3490	124,64
5	Hlabisa	8	4	-	6	-	540	30	4	4	7	3	-	-	1208	67,11
9	Hlabisa	3	-	13	-	-	416	29	-	3	5	5	3	-	2352	147
11	Hlabisa	18	-	-	-	4	488	22,18	-	2	4	10	-	6	4604	209,27
Sub Total		45	8	17	6	4	1620	19,29	7	13	23	30	5	6	11654	138,74
3	Nongoma	4	1	2	-	-	76	10,86	2	-	2	-	-	3	1370	195,71
6	Nongoma	17	8	-	-	-	96	3,84	3	5	17	-	-	-	1504	60,16
7	Nongoma	21	2	9	-	-	312	9,75	4	9	4	4	6	5	5196	162,38
8	Nongoma	3	26	-	-	-	312	10,76	3	15	1	-	-	10	4432	152,83
Sub Total		45	37	11	0	0	796	8,56	12	29	24	4	6	18	12502	134,43
1	Ubombo	3	2	5	-	-	184	18,4	3	-	-	1	-	6	2594	259,4
2	Ubombo	2	10	8	-	-	376	18,8	3	1	-	6	-	10	5134	256,7
12	Ubombo	17	4	-	-	-	48	2,29	-	3	6	12	-	-	2742	130,57
Sub		30	21	13	0	5	1278	18,52	8	4	6	22	0	29	16242	235,39

3.3 PREVALENCE OF ABSENTEEISM

To gain focus of the problem of teacher absenteeism in the schools in the sample, principals were requested to report the number of teachers in their schools who were absent for twenty or more days per year. Since the school year consists of approximately two hundred days per year, twenty days constitutes 10%. Thus absenteeism was defined as 'being absent for 10% or more of the school year'. The number of teachers falling into this category (according to principals) is shown in Table 11.

3.4 **DISTANCES TEACHERS TRAVELLED**

It will be recalled that principals in the sample were requested to report the distances which teachers in the relevant schools travelled (a) during the week and (b) during week-ends (See appendix A). This information was requested to establish whether there was a significant correlation between absenteeism and distances teachers travelled to schools.

Here, again, we have to bear in mind that the data obtained is not objective and precise since it would have been too time-consuming to obtain the travelling distance from teachers themselves. The distances were verbally reported by teachers to the principal of each school who in turn wrote the information on the questionnaire. It is possible that some principals did not report the distances accurately. Nevertheless, the data provided a fair idea of the average distances teachers travelled between their homes and schools. There does not seem to be reasonable grounds for principals to distort the figures deliberately since they had nothing to gain from such distortion.

The estimates of distances which teachers in the sample schools were travelling to work appear in Table 111. To simplify calculations only the mean averages are shown which were calculated as follows:

a. *DISTANCES TRAVELLED DURING THE WEEK*

Distance Range	Mean Average
2 - 10 km	6 km
11-20 km	16 km
21-60 km	41 km
61 km or more	61 km

b. *DISTANCES TRAVELLED DURING WEEK-ENDS AND/OR HOLIDAYS*

Distance Range	Mean Average
2 - 20 km	11 km
21 - 60 km	41 km
61 - 120 km	91 km
121 - 200 km	161 km
201 km or more	201 km.

It will be noticed that the above mean averages are used as demarcation points in Table 111.

3.4.1 **Discussion of Distances Travelled During the Week**

The teachers in the Nongoma circuit appear to travel the shortest distances between their homes and schools, viz. an average of 8,56km per teacher per day. Teachers in the Ubombo circuit travelled on average 18,52 km per day, that is, approximately 9km to work and 9 km to their homes after work. In the Hlabisa circuit the average distance teachers travelled daily was approximately 19,29km - in other words, 9.5km to work and the same distance back. It would appear that these distances are by no means excessive

and therefore it is unlikely that there is a clear connection between absenteeism and daily travelling distance. However, if one focuses on individual schools there are indications that daily travelling distances may be a contributory cause to teacher absenteeism. It is noticeable, for example, that the school which reportedly had the highest absenteeism rate - school 9, with an absenteeism rate of 56% (See Table 11) - also showed an above-average travelling distance per teacher per day of 26km. Similarly, the highest daily travelling distance per teacher shown in Table 111 was reported in school 10 (37 km per day) which also reported an above-average absenteeism rate of 33% (See Table 11). Another example of a similar trend is School 5, which reported an above-average daily travelling distance (30km) as well as a high absenteeism rate (33%). In contrast to this, however, there were schools with below-average travelling distances but fairly high absenteeism rates, such as school 3 (travelling distance 11 km per day, absenteeism rate 29%) and school 1 (travelling distance 18km per day, absenteeism rate 40%). Moreover, the school with the lowest absenteeism rate (school 7 with 0% habitual absentees) reported an average travelling distance per teacher of 10km - almost the same distance as school 3 which had a high absenteeism rate of 29%.

No doubt a more detailed statistical analysis of Tables 11 and 111 would yield a more precise identification of possible correlation patterns between average daily travelling distances and absenteeism, but in the present study such an analysis is not warranted. This study revolves around the effects of teacher absenteeism and not its causes. It would therefore suffice to say that the data revealed a possible link between daily travelling distances and absenteeism rates among teachers, but further research is needed to discover more detailed evidence.

3.4.2 Discussion of Distances Travelled During Week-ends and/or Holidays

It is common for teachers teaching in rural areas to work far from their homes. The main reason for this is that there is usually a shortage of teaching posts in urban and semi-urban areas while there are many vacant teaching posts in rural areas. Consequently many posts in rural schools are filled by teachers who live in urban or semi-urban areas. Such teachers usually find lodging during the week at a place near to the school and only go home for week-ends and holidays.

One can argue that the absenteeism rate among teachers may be high at schools where there are high percentages of teachers whose schools are so far from their homes and families that they can only go home for week-ends and holidays. Table 111 provides tentative evidence that this may indeed be the case, although more in-depth research is obviously required before we can come to a definite conclusion. What is noticeable in Table 111 is that the distances which teachers in the Ubombo circuit reportedly travelled on week-ends were much higher than those of teachers in the Nongoma circuit: the average distance per teacher per week-end in Ubombo schools was 235,39 km but only 134,43 km in Nongoma schools. This suggests that teachers in Ubombo lived on average 118 km away from school while those in Nongoma lived on average 67 km away - a difference of 51 km per teacher per week-end. If one compares these distances in Table 11 it seems as if there may be a link between absenteeism and distances teachers travel during week-ends because the average absenteeism rate at Ubombo schools (31%) was considerably higher than that of Nongoma schools (17%).

Although the causes of teacher absenteeism fall outside the scope of this study, the questions on distances were included in the questionnaire to gain insight into possible solutions to the problem of absenteeism. In retrospect it seems as if the whole study would have been more useful if it revolved around causes rather than effects, but this awareness came too late for the focal point of the study to be changed. As it is, the investigation into the effects of absenteeism yielded much evidence regarding the extremely harmful consequences of this anomaly. It also enabled the researcher to identify directions for further research regarding the causes of absenteeism.

3.5 **DATA OBTAINED FROM INTERVIEWS**

Criticism can be raised due to the fact that only 12 schools were involved in the study, therefore relying on the perceptions of 12 principals, resulting in a small sample which is not representative. However, the scope of the sample broadens when one considers that these 12 principals spoke on behalf of 246 teachers employed at their schools as well as 8783 pupils who were reportedly affected by teacher absenteeism.

- i. In the interpretation of the data the focus will be on the responses of the principals and these responses will be discussed under the following headings: Violence, Truancy, Substance Abuse, Sexual Problems, and Management of Teacher Absenteeism. Where references are made to specific respondents, the number of respondents coincide with the number of the school as indicated in Table, viz. respondent 1 was the principal of school 1, Respondent 3 the principle of School 3, Respondent 10 the principal of school 10, etc.

When considering the responses it must be stressed that the researcher is not analysing teacher absenteeism, but merely the principals' perceptions thereof and how they view the consequences of teachers absenting themselves.

3.5.1 **TEACHER ABSENTEEISM AND VIOLENCE**

Almost all the principals interviewed reported experiences of violence in their schools and related it, *inter alia*, to teacher absenteeism. Although question 15 was especially directed at fighting, the issue of violence also arose in response to other questions and it was mentioned in 18 instances. Principals' interpretations of violence ranged from minor arguments to actions with fatal consequences. The researcher, having being a headmaster himself can testify that incidents such as those described by respondents, can easily occur in a classroom if a teacher is not present to restrain pupils with volatile temperaments.

When a teacher is frequently absent, gangster elements in a class tend to grasp the opportunity to bully and intimidate well-behaved pupils for two reasons: firstly, they are bored; and secondly, there is no supervision. After a few incidents of this nature even some well-behaved pupils may join in the fray in order to avoid being labelled as 'sell-outs'. In this way, perpetual fighting (verbal or physical) increases until it becomes the main focus of attention in the classroom. The need to concentrate on academic achievement vanishes. In the long run teacher-absenteeism is a breeding ground for violence with grave consequences for the life-world of pupils – in the present and in the future.

“One day the principal was inspecting his school and came across a serious fight in this class where two girls were quarrelling over their boyfriend” [Respondent 10].

More serious incidents of violence were revealed by other respondents:

“Pupils get an unplanned free period and are given no work to keep them busy. They sometimes become impatient and in one case two boys fought to such an extent that one was stabbed to death” [Respondent 4].

Another principal related an occasion when fighting led to the death of a pupil:

“Earlier this year a certain boy intimidated another boy with a gun and this led to serious violence. The school was closed down and later reopened. All teachers were away. Only one teacher and the principal were at school” [Respondent 2].

During the interview it was revealed that teachers were absent from school due to serious violence and they stayed away because their lives were in danger. It would then appear that this incident was not a direct result of teacher absenteeism as being dealt with in this study, but rather that the absence of teaching staff was an aggravating factor. One can hardly blame teachers if they stay away from their duties because they fear for their lives. In such instances it is often that violence leads to teacher absenteeism rather than vice versa, and that the violence then escalates because there are then no teachers to control the situation. The fighting and violence mentioned by the principals can be categorised as: Amongst Pupils, Against Teachers and Political.

3.5.1.1 **Fighting and Violence Amongst Pupils**

Most respondents cited disruption and fighting due to teacher absenteeism in only one instance and did not experience it as an ongoing problem.

“During the absence of a teacher from school in Std. 9 class, two boys fought against each other and consequently there was turmoil” [Respondent 6].

“Two girls in Std. 8b fought each other in the presence of other pupils last year” [Respondent 9].

A few respondents mentioned fight, yet their responses were vague and general as they could not give specific incidents or examples when prompted.

“One common example of disciplinary problems is that of fighting” [Respondent 5].

“If there is no teacher in the classroom the pupils have a tendency to fight in such a way that school properties are damaged e.g. windows, doors and even cupboards”. [Respondent 3].

Yet it was revealed that fighting amongst pupils was an “accepted” problem with which all principals had had occasion to deal. Perhaps the researcher could have explored this in greater depth in the interview.

3.5.1.2 Fighting and Violence Against Teachers

Judging from what the principals said in this regard, it would seem that, when pupils felt that the school authorities did not take action against an absent teacher, their frustration led them to take it upon themselves to discipline the teacher. In some cases, such action resulted in the death of a teacher.

“Two years ago a teacher from Umlazi was chased away by students because of drunkenness. A substitute was promised, but in vain. A march was organised to the premises of the inspectorate. Disciplinary problems led to a teacher being chased away” [Respondent 2].

It was not too clear how this principal connected this incident to teacher absenteeism as the students themselves chased the teacher away. Within the context of the interview in which this remark was made it was explained that the “drunkenness” being referred to here was pupil drunkenness which resulted from a teacher being absent. In their intoxicated state the drunk pupils returned to school and chased away another teacher whom they disliked. As is clear in this case, teacher absenteeism usually has a ripple effect which can impact negatively on other teachers. So the consequence of teacher absenteeism is not only harmful to pupils but also to other teachers. Although the percentage of respondents reporting such incidents was low the case illustrates the domino-effect of teacher absenteeism. The interview disclosed that teacher absenteeism was a result of no substitute being sent and that the class was without a teacher for some considerable time.

In the following case it is clear that pupils had tolerated this situation for a period of time before taking action. Once more, and again understandable, the pupils caused the teacher to be permanently absent.

“The teacher used to give pupils homework and then absent himself from school. One day pupils refused to sent in the homework. Finally the teacher was attacked and chased away by pupils” [Respondent 11].

One principal gave an instance of violence quite alarming in its consequences.

“The teacher was absent for two weeks, sitting where pupils could see him. One day he returned to his class and pupils stoned him to death because they were angry about his action.” [Respondent 10].

In all instances the principals responded to questions within the context of teacher absenteeism and it is evident that they held the teachers responsible for these occurrences. As the study is aimed at the principals’ perceptions of teacher absenteeism and its consequences, the researcher was unfortunately limited in the interviews and unable to question the principals on their own actions. Yet, the most obvious question which arises is that of why the principals themselves did not intervene before the situation became so serious.

In all the above cases the problems had been long standing : Respondent 2 – The teacher had “often” appeared drunk before the class; Respondent 11 – this particular teacher had been behaving in this way for most of the year; Respondent 10 – the teacher was absent for “two weeks”. Surely it is the responsibility of the principals to discipline such teachers and make alternative arrangements immediately and not allow the situations to become so out of hand, and had action been taken timeously, such drastic consequences could have been avoided. Yet principals perceived that the teachers alone were to blame. Another study which had the general behaviour of principals as its focus will be valuable in shedding more light on the real situations at schools.

3.5.1.3 **Political Fighting and Violence**

Responses considering the political influence on fighting and violence give evidence that this is a fairly wide-spread problem. Although teacher absenteeism can be regarded as one factor leading to violence and fighting, it cannot be blamed for this being political in nature.

“In one school whilst teachers were holding a meeting the pupils were arguing about political organisations. They quarrelled and ended up shooting one another, many were injured and the school was bombed” [Respondent 3].

Although the teachers were not absent from school, the principals perceived it as teacher absenteeism as the teachers were not in the classrooms. In this case the principal must be criticised as one queries why he called a staff meeting in school hours, thus causing all

classes to be unattended. Teachers are employed to teach in school hours and not attend meetings which ought to be arranged after school hours.

“Yes pupils were engaged in fighting. Because of the teachers’ absence they became involved in political arguments. There are often fights in this class and the pupils should be kept busy” [Respondent 9].

As the principal was aware that there were “often” fights one would assume that the matter would have been investigated and attended to instead of allowing the class to so frequently be left unsupervised. He ought to have discovered why the teacher was so often away and organised a substitute. Yet, it is a major problem in most black schools that substitute teachers are never assigned and this tendency results in pupils being left to their own devices with no learning taking place.

The following case again emphasises the consequences of principals being aware of a situation, and not acting.

“In this class where the teacher was always absent from school a certain group of boys were IFP members. They organised their meeting and ANC members did not like that, they fought and eventually shot at each other. One boy died” [Respondent 11].

This is once more an instance in which a teacher’s absence was permitted and not dealt with and the pupils were left unattended. Further to this must be questioned why pupils were left to hold a political meeting in school hours and on school premises.

“There was a teacher who was always absent from school. My attention was drawn to this problem when there was a serious fight between two boys. One was trying to discipline the class in the absence of the teacher and the other did not want to listen” [Respondent 11].

Although the teacher was “always” absent from school, the principal claimed to be unaware of this until this incident.

As both the above cases were cited by the same respondent one can conclude that teacher absenteeism is a serious problem with severe consequences at that school.

An initial examination of the responses with regard to fighting and violence indicated teacher absenteeism as being the cause. Yet, the interviews made it clear that, whilst teachers being absent made way for pupils to engage in activities other than learning, the fact that these activities were fighting and violence cannot be blamed on teachers. In many instances it was as a result of principals failing to discipline absentee teachers or organising substitutes, especially when they were aware of friction.

3.5.2 ABSENTEEISM AND TRUANCY

Truancy is defined as a pupil being absent from either the school or classroom without the permission of the teacher, headmaster or parents. Demanding that pupils produce letters from parents to explain their absence from schools is not feasible as many parents in the rural areas are illiterate. Truancy takes many forms: habitual truancy when the pupil is

absent for several days or is periodically absent on a continual basis; they attend school for the morning and then absent themselves; they attend schools only in the afternoon; or they are absent in the middle period, attending only the first and the last periods. In some cases pupils leave the school grounds and at other times they leave the classroom but remain at school.

Regardless of the influence of teacher absenteeism, truancy has always been a problem and will remain so. Some pupils will naturally take advantage of any opportunity possible to play truant, but this study brings to light that in the particular schools involved, teacher absenteeism in the majority of cases aggravated the truancy rate. Truancy was mentioned on questionnaires in 19 instances.

A few respondents discussed truancy in general terms but were unable to give specific examples of when this was as a result of an absentee teacher.

“This happened in my school when students were absent because of teachers”
[Respondent 1].

“Pupils used to take French leave” [Respondent 2].

“Some pupils have always taken advantage of teacher absenteeism in the sense that they also absent themselves” [Respondent 5].

Due to the percentage of respondents reporting truancy being so high, the reliability of this data seems to be certain. It is logical to suppose that pupils, who find it tedious to sit in an overcrowded classroom with nothing to do because Mr X is once again absent, may opt for escapism in the form of truancy. Some habitual truants and absconders may not even turn up for a lesson, because the news that Mr X is absent could have spread to them prior to the lesson. Disillusioned by the perceived immoral behaviour of the teacher, pupils may abscond quite early in the day, particularly if they can do so without fear of punishment because their parents think they are at school.

Yet the consequences of truancy are obviously extremely damaging to the pupils' future school performance because they miss lessons in which important material is taught, thus leaving gaps in their knowledge which severely impinge on their examination achievement. Truancy as a consequence of, or reinforced by, teacher absenteeism is, therefore, misbehaviour with serious long-term effects on pupils' future self-realisation.

3.5.2.1 **Teacher example**

During school hours teachers are responsible for the welfare of their pupils and besides teaching them teachers are also required to be an example as pupils often emulate teacher behaviour. The quotes below are examples of teachers neglecting their duties and pupils behaving likewise.

“When pupils saw that a teacher was absent from school and he then started to absent himself too because he said teachers had not come regularly to school.” [Respondent 8].

The principal said that this teacher had been absent on numerous occasions. If pupils are willing to learn but have no teacher, it is natural that they become demotivated, especially if the teacher is frequently absent.

“A teacher has to set an example. One child saw a teacher playing truant so he did the same. I caught him red-handed and he said he was following the teacher’s example” [Respondent 6].

At times the helplessness of the principals to deal with truancy became obvious. If teacher absenteeism cannot be contained it follows that truancy also cannot be addressed and this has led to a situation which has become unmanageable in certain schools; with principals being aware of and concerned about the truancy rate, but feel there is little they can do. In the cases below the behaviour of pupils can be considered as logical and it seems as if there is no reasonable argument or explanation to encourage them to remain at school.

“Pupils simply go away before the school comes out and don’t report because they say there is no-one to whom they can report” [Respondent 8].

“Pupils copied this truancy from the teacher who used to leave school early. They all followed suit immediately he had left” [Respondent 10].

“When pupils are in assembly they check whether the teacher is absent; after assembly they take their books and leave the school premises. Eventually there is no-one in the class” [Respondent 11].

Pupils know that when the teacher is absent there will be no learning as no substitute is arranged and that they will be idle with nobody to check on them, so it makes sense that they too leave; knowing that they will not be punished.

3.5.2.2 Registers

It is clear that there should be a system to deal with truancy, because, at present, there seems to be no solution to the problem. Most principals in the sample tended to ignore that there are no steps which they followed to deal with the matter and the classes were merely left unsupervised with pupils being expected to amuse and discipline themselves and accept that they will not learn. Neither were, apparently, there any channels available for pupils to complain, so they coped with the situation in their own way.

The interviews brought to light the matter of registers which, at most of these schools, were ignored or neglected. In the first instance, no registers are kept for the teachers as they resent this. Yet they also take advantage of the lack of registers and absent themselves, thereby contributing to the confusion in the schools. The only means whereby a principal can monitor teacher attendance is to physically walk around the school.

Naturally, if teachers are absent they cannot keep a record for pupils. Even when they are at school teachers often refuse to keep registers, or, if they are kept they are incomplete or inaccurate as teachers say they do not have the time for this. A result of this is that the seriousness of both teachers absenteeism and truancy cannot be gauged. Another

exacerbating factor is that of principal absenteeism. A sad fact is that the researcher had to repeatedly visit some schools for the interviews as principals were not available – in all, principals were available 40% of the time of the total visits. They either did not arrive for interviews and broke appointments and often no staff member knew where they were. This is not to say that principals do not have valid reasons for being absent as they might have been attending meetings, or at university attending classes, or at head office trying to sort out school and staff matters.

3.5.3 **ABSENTEEISM AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

The problem of substance abuse is increasing at an alarming rate throughout the country and has, in recent years, become more widespread in all schools. This practice no doubt exists in any event, but this study has found that it is related to truancy in that pupils far more frequently indulged themselves when their teachers were absent. Substance abuse was mentioned by only four principals yet it must be remembered that there is no record of what pupils do outside school hours.

“Pupils used to take French leave. There was drunkenness, a high rate of pregnancy, high drop out rate and violence” [Respondent 2].

“Some people have always taken advantage of teacher absenteeism in the sense that they also absent themselves and indulge themselves in drugs and intoxicating liquor due to their frustration of not learning” [Respondent 5].

“Subject teacher or class teacher absenteeism leads to pupils being absent. Boys were found drinking at the nearby shebeen” [Respondent 2].

“There is a common case of pupils taking advantage, especially amongst boys who also develop a habit of absenteeism and indulge in intoxicating liquor which, in turn, is associated with telling lies when asked about their absenteeism” [Respondent 5].

3.5.3.1 **Substance abuse and truancy**

In most instances, substance abuse was related to truancy and pupils had not abused any substance on school premises. What is interesting is that principals consider this to be due to teacher absenteeism and do not perceive it as being due to truancy remaining unchecked or teacher absenteeism undisciplined. Only one principal [Respondent 12] gave a specific example of his experience, whilst the others were aware of substance abuse as a general background problem, but did not concern themselves with it as using these substances occurred outside of the school grounds. The crux of the matter is again that of pupils being left with no supervision because there is no system in place to cope with this situation.

Substance abuse is all too often considered to be a problem in urban schools only where programmes are implemented in an effort to reduce the abuse, whilst rural schools are generally neglected and pupils left uneducated in the dangers thereof.

3.5.4 **SEXUAL PROBLEMS**

Only two principals commented on sexual problems; Respondent 2 in 3.5.3 above and Respondent 4 had this to say:

“During the absence of a teacher pupils take advantage of his/her absenteeism by ignoring their responsibility, not doing their work or assignments and proposing sex with other people.”

It is not surprising that so few principals mentioned sexual problems as they are not directly related to teacher absenteeism, but – school premises are hardly the ideal place to initiate sexual liaisons and pupils would undoubtedly find more comfortable and safer surroundings to indulge in such activities. Teacher absenteeism perhaps contributes in that pupils are left alone, play truant and then engage in sexual activities. Although this problem falls outside the direct scope of this dissertation, the seriousness thereof must not be overlooked. The incidence of teenage pregnancies, the ruined lives, heartache, financial burdens and infectious diseases from within our schools remain tragic, and every possible means must be employed to curb the occurrences.

Pupils rely mostly on the teacher's guidance and they usually respect and honour his/her presence in the classroom. The problem of sexual promiscuity is not common in the presence of the teacher. Pupils usually indulge themselves in sexual misbehaviour after absconding from classrooms. They are also sure that their parents are not going to find out because parents think pupils are at school. So some pupils become freely involved in

sexual promiscuity.

3.5.5 **TEACHER ABSENTEEISM AND PERFORMANCE**

An obvious direct effect of teacher absenteeism is the performance of pupils as it stands to reason that if teachers are not there to teach, pupils cannot learn and are therefore not adequately prepared for the examination and consequently have to repeat a year. If pupils do not perform well they become demotivated and lose interest in school, spending much of their time engaged in other activities. Eleven of the twelve principals cited performance and motivation problems due to teacher absenteeism.

3.5.5.1 **Performance and teacher knowledge of pupils**

A further factor influencing performance is the teacher's knowledge of pupils, their needs and potential. An absentee teacher was in most case unaware of the requirements and details of her/his pupils; a situation which results in the teacher losing credibility and respect of the pupils.

"The parent came to school and asked about his/her child who was often absent from school. It was very difficult to remember the name of the child, yet the child was in his class. He could not report to the principal about the achievement of the child when asked to report" [Respondent 4].

This is surely a disheartening situation for the parent who was obviously interested in the achievement of the child and wanted to help. Yet it also discredits the teaching staff and principal as it is blatant that the teacher did not keep records and that the principal never checked whether such records were complete and up to date. It implies that a teacher can do as she/he wishes in the classroom and nobody is any the wiser.

“Because of his absenteeism a teacher marking the register was not sure of the regularity of a scholar. This led to a clash with the parents” [Respondent 6].

Parents have no option but to turn their children over to school staff for security and safe keeping during school hours and teachers are fully aware of this responsibility. Any parent has the right to become alarmed if the teacher is unsure of where a child is spending his or her time or in what activities. Not only is that a shirking of responsibility but also a betrayal of trust which the community bestows on the teachers. Again we are confronted with how vital it is for accurate registers to be completed, accurate and up to date as emphasised by this response:

“One day I was visited by a parent whose child was always absent and who does not perform well. His teacher was sent to bring the child to me. He did not bring the child because he did not know him or how he was getting on in class” [Respondent 11].

We see from responses that 50% of the principals who were interviewed could cite real-life incidents in which teacher absenteeism led to teacher ignorance regarding specific pupils. This provides empirical evidence to prove that absenteeism had severe managerial

consequences. One of the most basic functions of a teacher is to know the names of his/her pupils. Yet the above responses reveal that 25% of the teachers mentioned in questionnaires did not even know the names of the pupils in their classes. In addition 33% of the respondents mentioned cases in which the teacher apparently had no inkling about the achievement of particular pupils. The remark by Respondent 6 also suggest that frequently absent teachers do not mark class registers regularly.

The consequences of teachers' unfamiliarity with pupils' achievements may result in a greater number of drop outs and poor examination results because pupils rightly feel that their efforts are not recognised. If the teacher is frequently absent from class, the chances of knowing his/her pupils' progress are slim. Pupils soon realise that the teacher is indifferent to them and such an attitude is didactically unacceptable. The impression is created that the teacher does not see his/her pupils as human beings, but as machines. Pupils feel demotivated and may even drop out of school.

3.5.5.2 **Preparation for examinations**

It is known that teachers have supplied pupils with answers to examination questions, at times due to force. However, the following case is an extreme example of a teacher failing in his duties and being aware of it.

“The Std. 10 Afrikaans teacher was always away from the class – pupils’ performance was bad. A certain teacher had to hunt goats for his class because he wanted to please his class. Because of absenteeism he gave pupils the answer during exams.” [Respondent 2]

The sadness of this case is that the teacher's absenteeism was allowed to continue and that he then tried to make amends and regain his credibility by "hunting goats" for the pupils. The expression hunting in colloquial Zulu is often use as an euphemism for telling pupils the questions that will be in the examination paper. At any level it is deplorable that a teacher provide pupils with answers, but at Std. 10 level it is tragic as pupils are clearly not adequately prepared for the most important examination of their school careers – the required level of learning has not taken place.

"Pupils are negatively effected. Pupils are demotivated and teaching drags. The teacher cannot finish the syllabus. Work programmes are not completed. Dates are not honoured for the completion of work. Remedial work is not done. Hence pupils fail at the end of the year, with sometime only a 20% pass rate" [Respondent 2].

Although this respondent perceived the situation to be due to teacher absenteeism, it is in fact evidence of an inadequate, collapsing system which provides no channels for correct procedures and no support for definite steps for action in specific circumstances. The pathetic figure of 20% pass rate is an indication of far more serious problems as well as the urgent need to upgrade and tighten the system in rural schools in order that pupils be afforded a fair and genuine opportunity of a proper education.

3.5.5.3 **Motivation**

"Pupils develop hatred towards the teachers and the subjects as such. They become less motivated. They know that their work will not be marked. They are not easily managed."

[Respondent 3].

Two important issues are raised by this respondent. As illogical as it may seem to adults, it is well known that pupils lose interest in a subject if they cannot respect the teacher, and it is difficult to respect a teacher who is repeatedly absent. In this regard the teacher plays a vital role in motivating pupils through example and this includes regular attendance and thorough knowledge of the subject. It can hardly be expected of the pupils to be motivated if the teacher is not. The logic of the second issue raised is easier to understand – pupils will realise the futility of doing work expected of them if it is never assessed. They have experience of the teacher her/himself not doing the required work so they also stop working. The teacher loses credibility and respect and the pupils become demotivated and struggle for an education through which they hope to improve their lives and which will provide a secure future. This situation is emphasised by Respondent 5 who said: “Pupils become demotivated and lose interest in their schoolwork and attendance because the teacher who should be motivating them to improved achievement is often absent from school.”

Perhaps a further consideration is why the teachers themselves are not motivated, why the morale at certain schools is so low that teachers cannot even keep adequate records. It is perhaps easy to point fingers at teachers, but this study has revealed, through responses and interviews that there are more deep-rooted problems which need to be solved.

It is impossible to quote every response in which a decline in motivation was mentioned, although it would serve to stress the scope of the problem, as it was expressed by every

respondent. What is clear is that many respondents have no idea what to do regarding motivation of pupils or teachers.

“Teacher absenteeism has a negative effect on pupil motivation. The teacher is there to guide and motivate pupils through his behaviour and teaching, but if he is absent who would do his task?” [Respondent 10].

Once again the absence of a step-by-step backup system becomes apparent and principals seem to be alone in their attempts to handle this matter. Clearly, teacher absenteeism must be controlled yet it emerged through the interviews with these principals that they were left afloat in this regard. On paper guidelines exist, but in reality there is no support and follow through.

3.5.5.4 **Assessment**

It is common that if pupils’ work, homework and assignments are not assessed the pupils become demotivated, rebellious and neglect to do their work. Such a situation worsens due to teacher absenteeism when nobody checks whether the work was done, let alone evaluate it.

“Pupils were given homework but the teacher did not check the homework because he was absent. When he came back, he gave other homework but did not check the work. Pupils finally decided not to do homework because it was never checked.” [Respondent

Eleven principals were concerned regarding pupils not doing homework and that, when they did complete it, it remained unmarked on many occasions. Although it can be understood why pupils become disinclined to work, they are the eventual victims of this process.

“In Std. 7a a teacher gave the class homework and seeing as he was inclined to absenteeism, the majority of pupils neglected their homework which led to a high failure rate among pupils” [Respondent 20].

An initial reading of the responses gave the impression that principals perceived teacher absenteeism to be the sole cause of pupils not working. However, the interviews revealed that it was due also to a breakdown of the system – teacher absenteeism being both a result of the breakdown and also a contributing factor. Often many principals, teachers, pupils and parents in schools are floundering and it is an effort to merely keep reasonable order and functioning. Pupils have nowhere to turn to vent their frustrations in suitable ways and this leads to them occupying their free time with activities which can lead to serious consequences.

Parents who are desperate for their children to succeed and who make sacrifices to this end at a cost not known to us are secondary victims. They sent their children to school for an education and in return face a high failure rate, an addition to the family, a drug problem or behavioural problems. Due to the high emigration of skilled people from this country we require educated and dedicated youth to ensure the future upliftment and growth of the nation.

It is well and good to pose and interpret questions on a academic level, but in this process one cannot ignore or dissociate oneself from the human element, the value of life and hope which gives meaning to the life of each individual. Principals remain humans, struggling to cope in a system which is failing and which offers no hope in a future to those who gave themselves to it in expectation, but instead have before them broken dreams.

The personal interviews all too often revealed the burden of futility and frustration and the struggle of each individual. Not only will a transformation and revision bring about smoother administrative running, the reduction in teacher, pupil and principal absenteeism, a raising of morale and renewed learning enthusiasm, but it will also lead to an injection of hope for the future and for the country.

3.5.6 **THE MANAGEMENT OF ABSENTEEISM**

The central issue of teacher absenteeism is the management thereof. Questions 24 and 25 dealt with management as it is dealt with in the practical situation, and how principals suggest it could be managed. Due to the importance of this matter, every response to those questions will be considered.

3.5.6.1 **Question 24 – What do you do when a teacher is repeatedly absent?**

Respondent 1: “It is important to discuss with that particular teacher the dangers of the future of the students. If he does not want to listen I can be forced to report him to the department and parents.”

Teachers are already aware of their influence on the future of the students yet continue to absent themselves. This principal had not attempted to discover the reason for the absenteeism and neither had he ever reported a teacher as he felt that nothing would come of it.

Respondent 2: “Nothing is done to absentee teachers. Principals feel threatened due to political upheaval.”

This respondent felt helpless as he was expected to control the situation yet feared for the lives of the pupils, teachers and himself. The crossing of educational and political boundaries should not exist within our schools, but it has become a reality, with pupils, outsiders and teachers being instigators of violence. In such circumstance to insist upon procedure can cost lives and principals must use their discretion in dealing with these situations.

Respondent 3: “He/she has to fill in leave forms stating the reason for being absent. Suspension for at least three months will be a good disciplinary measure.”

The only action taken by this principal was that leave forms were completed and thereafter filed.

Respondent 4: "I call him to the office and investigate the matter of absenteeism. Finally I request him to write a letter and sign the leave forms, but only after constructive discussion with him."

This principal said he was aware that the leave forms would serve no purpose or deter the teacher in any way. The strongest disciplinary method available to him was lengthy discussion with the teacher and he believed that this worked in most instances.

Respondent 5: "I usually call him to my office and tell him about the implications his absence is going to have on his work and also on the pupils he teaches. I also explain that it may effect his chances of promotion. I then end by making him fill in leave forms ET1 or 2GI whatever the case may be; in this way I will ensure that I have a continuous record of his absenteeism."

This respondent had experience that teachers did not heed the warning regarding promotion and again had to resort to having the absenteeism on record with nothing further being achieved and the record never used.

Respondent 6: "Firstly, I warn him or her against absenteeism. I record his absenteeism. I call the school committee and if necessary the matter is forwarded to the inspectors."

The procedure to be followed by principals is provided by this respondent, but when asked in the interview whether this had ever been followed through in practice, the principal replied in the negative. On one occasion he took a teacher before the school committee and political chaos ensued and he was forced to drop the matter.

Respondent 7: “I warn him/her that it affects people a lot.”

The principal concerned here was the only one to have not one single case of teacher absenteeism in his school.

Respondent 8: “He fills in leave forms and they are sent to the department of education.”

Although this principal was meticulous in forwarding each form, in the majority of cases the forms were “lost” in the administrative process. Neither did he ever follow up as he reported his work load to be too heavy.

Respondent 9: “When a teacher is repeatedly absent I give him leave forms to be completed and ask him write a letter to explain the reasons for his absenteeism.”

These leave forms and letters were filed and no further measures were taken.

Respondent 10: “Peaceful talks, control book, log book, and later refer to the school committee and the C/O.”

During the interview it came to light that there were in fact no control or log books. Teacher absenteeism was ignored and the principal stated that the Department provided no back up in controlling the situation.

Respondent 11: “I warn him against his absenteeism and when he continues I log him down. I give him leave forms and if this fails I report him to the school committee and the local government of the school.”

The committee of this school had once had a teacher before them and had issued him with a warning, after which his absenteeism decreased.

Respondent 12: “I try to make him aware of the dangers of absenteeism, fill in the leave forms and he is finally brought before the school committee. I have not had a case that went beyond these stages.”

Leave forms at this school are not completed in every instance, but only after there is evidence that talking has not brought a change in behaviour.

Whenever a teacher is absent, for whatever reason and regardless of the number of days involved, they are supposed to complete leave forms. Not only is this not done as a matter of routine, but also ignored in cases involving repeated absenteeism, evident from the

responses that most principals do not insist upon it. Many teachers flatly refuse to sign the forms and nothing is done. In many cases where leave forms had been completed, principals merely filed them, thereby rendering such a step ineffective and useless.

In reality principals in the sample perceive that, beyond discussions and leave forms, there is little they can do to control repeated teacher absenteeism. This is as a result of having no back-up or support from the authorities, leaving principals in a void to cope as best they can in keeping their schools functioning, despite the myriad of problems, of which teacher absenteeism is only one.

3.5.6.2 **Question 25 – What do you think the Department of Education can do to reduce teacher absenteeism?**

Respondent 1: “The Department must not show mercy to such people, they must be severely punished. The Department can even expel them.”

Teachers are aware that in reality principals have no real authority over them and they can do as they please with impunity. This principal was very irate in his inability to act, but felt strongly that the Department ought to take the situation more seriously.

Respondent 2: “The inspectorate encourages seminars. Principals must encourage teaching and learning. Apply discipline. Training institutions must encourage teachers to develop a culture of learning.”

The breakdown in the learning process and attitude was the concern of this respondent and he envisaged that one solution lay in the involvement of all concerned to restore the learning culture. He mentioned training institutions and suggested that the courses focus more seriously on encouraging this culture of learning and also that there should be a selection process when admitting students. Presently students are admitted on the basis of marks but it should include discovering why they want to teach and their commitment to their task.

Respondent 3: “They must not get annual increment bonuses. They should not get promotions. No study leave should be granted.”

Withdrawal of benefits was a solution suggested by this principal as the only way to stop teacher absenteeism. According to him there was no other way to bring teachers to carry out their duties and to encourage teaching and learning as it was too late.

Respondent 4: “The Department must devise a strategy whereby salaries of teachers who absent themselves from work will not be paid for the period they were absent. This does not imply that their absenteeism will affect their pension because this strategy does not work. A no work, no pay system must be adopted without failure.”

Again the suggestion of punishing the teachers financially was raised. The principal could not explain why this strategy affecting pensions does not work, but felt that pensions should remain untouched.

Respondent 5: “A teacher is like a doctor looking into the welfare of patients. Should this doctor not do his work properly his patients will die and he will have to be charged or lose his work. Teachers cannot do their work properly if they are often absent without sound and acceptable reasons. If teachers absent themselves through their laziness or drunkenness they must be fined. I think the Department of Education must draw up a clear code of conduct which must be implemented in all schools. Approval for any teacher absenteeism must be granted by the head of the department and disciplinary measures must be instituted by a panel organised by the head of the Education Department.”

This respondent felt that teaching had lost credibility as a profession due to the behaviour and attitude of the teachers and in order to restore this credibility they should be as accountable for their actions as are members of other professions. He was of the opinion that teachers should be dealt with in the same way in which staff of the private sector are disciplined and should not be protected merely because they work for the government. He was adamant that the Department had a greater and more responsible role to play than that which it was presently playing, and that there should be a special section within the department dealing with the conduct of all teachers, incorporating an investigative/disciplinary panel.

Respondent 6: “The Department, after some investigation must charge the teacher for his misconduct.”

Responsibility for teacher absenteeism should be carried solely by the Department leaving principals free to cope with other problems was the view of this principal. He said that principals had too much on their shoulders and that the Department ought to take responsibility for a great deal more.

Respondent 7: “He/she must be made to sign leave forms.”

During the interview this respondent stated that he had no idea of how to deal with teacher absenteeism other than leave forms as he had never experienced this problem. According to him, the entire responsibility lies with principals and it is their fault if they experience any problems.

Respondent 8: “I think the Department must deduct money from their salaries.”

Respondent 9: “The Department must deduct payment from the teacher’s salary.

During a month of absence, monies should be deducted from the teacher’s pension fund.”

Respondent 10: “The Education Department should make leave forms effective.

Payment should be withheld from absent teachers and they should not be given promotion.”

Respondent 11: “Teachers who absent themselves from school without valid reasons should not be paid, should not be given bonuses not increments, promotions and

transfers.”

All four of the above principals felt that they had been stripped of all their authority due to lack of support from the Department. Even in cases where they reportedly attempted to discipline teachers, the only means available for them to do this was via leave forms and they said that such forms were ignored by the Department. The only method of establishing control was if the Department started viewing the situation with the seriousness it requires and gives principals support by financially depriving these teachers.

Respondent 12: “The Department is unable to do anything as far as I am concerned because teacher absenteeism is not reported to it. Principals are too lenient in this regard. It should simply be a matter of No work, no pay if such cases are reported.”

This honest respondent stated that principals were lax in dealing with absentee teachers and forwarded the weight of all the other responsibilities to which they have to attend as an excuse. He suggested that inspectors collect all leave forms from principals, thereby forcing them to keep registers and do their duties and also to ensure that these teachers lose from their salaries for the time absent.

It is evident that principals feel that the Department must deal with teacher absenteeism. The issue of a vast increase in administration to ensure follow through seems inevitable and necessary if anything is to be done; yet very unlikely. Principals must be honest and thorough in recording absenteeism, ensuring leave forms are signed and completed and

submitted, but that will only be effective if the Department continues the process to completion.

3.7 **CONCLUSION**

Teacher absenteeism is undoubtedly a serious problem contributing to the turmoil in many of our schools, but it is only one contributing factor and not the cause. In many instances, teacher absenteeism is as a result of disturbances where teachers are undermined due to pupils not wanting to learn and causing disruption and teachers being afraid of going to school. The principals are concerned with dealing with the situation but apparently feel that they do not have the time to attend to leave forms, let alone other related tasks. An atmosphere of learning must be restored in the schools. These results will be analysed in chapter 4 using the literature review given in Chapter 2 as a frame of reference.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 ANALYSIS OF RESULTS OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

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CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter analyses the results of the empirical study and relates the research findings, as far as possible, to the theoretic study as given in Chapter 2. The five didactic criteria which will be discussed are: democracy, conflict resolution, effective learning environment motivation and order. These criteria will be correlated with the results of the empirical research of Chapter 3.

It was found that the majority of literary research available pertains to other countries, therefore the conclusion will incorporate the South African Constitution, Bill of Rights and Schools Act.

4.2 DEMOCRACY AS A DIDACTIC CRITERION

Although democracy is defined in Chapter 2 [2.2.1] as a form of government, it is later in the same section given a broader definition to include the freedom to choose, social order, mutual respect and balance. This implies that democracy can be applied to smaller modules of the nation such as schools and classrooms. The Constitution and the Bill of Rights must be respected and adhered to, even within the smallest of modules. Good classroom management must therefore consider all aspects of democracy.

Prior to South Africa becoming a democratic state, there was discrimination on many levels and one area of neglect was the education of blacks. Since the Constitution was drawn up in 1996, it was realised that education must change, yet this study will show that the effects of the apartheid system were far reaching and, because of this, change cannot be brought about as quickly as people would like. The mere existence of a Constitution and Bill of Rights is not enough to bring about changes – attitudes and values regarding education also have to change, money and equipment are needed, teachers and other staff have to be retrained to incorporate democratic values and methods into teaching and the atmosphere of violence as a means to an end has to stop – only then can effective teaching and learning on a democratic level be achieved.

4.2.1 Ignorance of Pupils' Names, Achievement and Progress

A] Ignorance of Pupils' Names

Educational aims include producing citizens who are courteous and well-mannered, regardless of the situation. Children are still learning what is correct and need the guidance and role-model of the teacher to enable them to function in society and be accepted. As manners can be considered a cultural issue, it is important that the teacher respect this and lead all pupils to behaviour which is acceptable to their specific culture and to take care not to instil their own culture and beliefs upon the children.

The changes in the country have led to a merging of cultures in many of our classrooms and democracy requires that, to respect each individual, the pupils must be included in the process of formulating guidelines and in the defining of good manners [Chapter 2: 2.2.5]. In any culture it is considered a breach of good manners not to keep an appointment, not to offer an excuse or to provide a substitute to keep the appointment. Children also deserve the respect of good manners. For every school day of the year, a teacher has an appointment with each child in her/his classroom and, if the teacher is frequently absent this infringes upon the ethics of good manners and upon the requirements of a democracy. None of the principals interviewed considered it a necessity that an absentee teacher offer any apology or reason for the absenteeism to their pupils. It can therefore be presumed that the pupils are ignorant as to whether the teacher was absent for legitimate reasons or not. In this regard the pupils are not being recognised as individuals.

Democracy states that the dignity of each person be upheld in all circumstances. To meet this requirement as well as the code of good manners, it is vital that each learner be known by their given or chosen name as this is closely related to their identity. Unfortunately, in this country it became the norm that when dealing with whites, blacks would use a "white" name. This situation is changing as blacks become more comfortable with using their given names and more comfortable with asserting their identity.

Due to the link between identity, individuality and name, if a teacher cannot identify a pupil by name, it is tantamount to a rejection of the individual as a person [Chapter 2: 2.2.7]. If a teacher is unable to recall the names of the pupils, it suggests to them that they have not been

recognised. When a pupil is called by name they perceive it that their dignity is being considered, whilst at the same time, the personal relationship between the teacher and pupil and also between the participants in the classroom are enhanced when they follow the example of the teacher in respecting individuality. Such a display of democratic behaviour will teach the children the importance of addressing people by their correct title or chosen name in a social context, thereby enhancing their social skills, manners and dignity.

The interviews and questionnaires revealed that some absentee teachers were at times not able to identify a pupil by name – "The parent came to school and asked about his/her child who was often absent from school. It was very difficult to remember the name of the child, yet the child was in his class" [Respondent 4 – Chapter 3: 3.5.5.1].

In the same section it is noted that 25% of the teachers were not familiar with the names of their pupils (Section 3.3.5.5.1). Such behaviour not only violates the prescriptions of democracy, but also the unwritten code of ethics for teachers in that they are expected to be familiar with their pupils if they are to guide them to adulthood. This is an alarmingly high percentage of teachers who are not familiar with their pupils, but teachers alone cannot carry the brunt of the blame for this and the majority of the principals in the interviews expressed little concern about this, except when placed in a compromising position with a parent. Principals ought to clearly state in the expected code of behaviour for their school that teachers are required to know and use the names of their pupils.

B] Ignorance of Pupils' Progress

In order that teachers lead pupils to ultimate achievement, it is necessary that they cultivate as much knowledge regarding each pupil as they are able. This knowledge includes their abilities, academic performance, interests, strengths and learning problems [Chapter 2: 2.2.8]. Such knowledge is vital to all activities in the classroom as it is used for motivation, praise, rewards, discipline, task allocation and expected achievement. The more knowledge a teacher acquires, the more able she/he is of treating the children as equals and meeting their needs.

Chapter 3 [Section 3.5.5.1] offers proof that frequently absent teachers often have limited knowledge of their pupils – "One day I was visited by a parent whose child was absent and who does not perform well, his teacher was sent to bring the child to me. He did not bring the child because he did not know him or how he was getting on in class" [Respondent 11]. This incident leads towards empathy for the parent and the pupils concerned, but also brings strong condemnation for the teacher as well as the principal concerned. It was the responsibility of the teacher as well as the principal to have investigated the poor performance of the pupil before the parent had cause to visit the school. If both the teacher and principal display ignorance concerning the child, the parent is left floundering with nowhere to turn for guidance and assistance regarding the education of the child.

C] Ignorance/Indifference to Pupils' Achievements

When, for whatever reason, the syllabus is not completed it leads to the temptation for both the teachers and pupils to cheat in the examinations [see Chapter 3: 3.5.5.2]. When a teacher is frequently absent it stands to reason that deadlines for the completion of work are compromised and that, in instances, either the teachers or the pupils takes steps in order to ensure that students pass the examinations. The news which circulated the country in 1996 is evidence of the severity of this problem when principals, officers in authority in the Department, teachers and pupils were found selling examination papers. Such disgraceful behaviour brings discredit to our education system and does nothing to encourage the pupils to learn or to enhance the culture of teaching and learning. Such action merely teaches the pupils that there is an easy way out and a reward for not working is a pass symbol.

One respondent cited that "A certain teacher had to 'hunt goats' for his class because he wanted to please the class" (see Chapter 3:3.5.5.2). This case involved a teacher who was often absent and the phrase 'to hunt goats' means that he provided the class with the examination paper prior to the examination as he was aware that they had not completed the syllabus and that the pupils were inadequately prepared.

It needs to be instilled upon pupils that cheating of any form is unacceptable and undemocratic. It is a sad fact that some teachers and others in authority, who should know better, also need to learn this as this practice is not isolated to schools but has also been exposed at certain of our tertiary institutions. To date there has been no investigation as to how this cheating

occurred on such a large scale or who shouldered the responsibility. Yet it would be naïve to presume that absentee teachers alone carry the responsibility for such irregularities.

Knowing the names, progress and academic potential of pupils assists in eradicating disruptive behaviour as it is evidence for the learners that they are recognised, known and that their actions are being monitored. An indifference to this knowledge is didactically and democratically unacceptable. If a teacher has little or no knowledge regarding the pupils, it is rational to conclude that their guidance will not be as effective as it could and ought to be.

4.2.2 **Teacher's Failure to Mark Attendance Registers**

For teachers to complete attendance registers, they have to know their pupils and their names. Only one of the 12 principals insisted upon attendance registers for teachers and followed through on checking to see that teachers had completed attendance registers for pupils. It is clear that, whilst principals attempt to exonerate themselves, they can do a great deal more in ensuring that these registers are completed as this is within their job description.

Non-existent or incomplete registers are merely one factor which contributes to the many problems within our education system, but that doesn't imply that it is insignificant – no single factor is insignificant as all factors compound toward the whole.

Perhaps one solution is to start with teachers themselves having to complete attendance registers, and thereafter ensuring that they keep accurate and up to date records for the learners.

Regarding the register there is no enforced routine for all schools and this leads to serious problems in which the safety of the pupils, management and academic problems are implicated.

In the cases quoted in 4.2.1 above, ignorance of a pupil's progress, attendance and personal details led to clashes with the parents concerned. In the subsequent interviews both the principals were unable to explain how these issues were resolved or what the teachers were instructed to do in the future.

It is a disturbing reality that some teachers mark the attendance registers whilst sitting in the staffroom and therefore do not record the real situation in the classroom. One respondent revealed an example of the consequences of this procedure: "A student was absent from school but was marked present because the teacher was absent from school but marked the register the next day in the staffroom. The same student was found shoplifting in a certain shop and was arrested." Naturally, the discrepancies between the police records and the school records were blatant, and when this was brought to light in court, the school was brought to disrepute as it was evident that the school information was false and that neither the teacher nor the principal had knowledge of the pupil placed in their care.

4.2.3 Negative Attitude Towards Teachers

Teachers are expected to demonstrate desired behaviour in order that the learners may emulate their behaviour in learning new beliefs, values and attitudes. In a democratic classroom this modelled behaviour is important in that the teacher, as a leader, is placed in such a position as to behave as the pupils, as subordinates, are expected to behave [Chapter 2: 2.2.4].

It is likely that, when a teacher is often absent and no action is taken, a degree of anger because of frustration moves certain pupils to act – to do something rather than sit idle in a teacherless classroom. "Free time", due to teacher absenteeism and the fact that substitute teachers are not allocated, leave pupils to engage in activities other than learning, which can lead to life becoming more bleak as pupils compound their problem of not learning.

The conditions of democracy advocate positive relationships between people. Frequent absenteeism implies that it is unlikely that positive relationships, based on respect, equality and dignity can develop. Yet, teacher absenteeism alone is not the only cause of the negative attitude toward teachers. In recent times many teachers have been attacked and schools closed due to violence and unrest, even when teachers have been present. Democracy entails more than a "we demand" and "are entitled" attitude. Never before have our youth required more guidance, positive modelling and credibility than at present.

It is understandable that pupils develop a negative attitude towards a continually absent teacher and perhaps refuse to do work assigned to them. Yet, such a reaction is unacceptable. The following examples in Chapter 3 [3.5.1.2] cite cases of such reactions – "Finally the teacher was attacked and chased away by pupils" [Respondent 11], and "One day he returned to his class and pupils stoned him to death because they were angry about his actions" [Respondent 10]. No matter what the behaviour of the teachers or how the pupils feel in response to this, they have no right to take the law into their own hands.

As this dissertation is focussing on the perceptions of principals, it is disturbing that in the interviews the principals considered the behaviour of the pupils in these circumstances to be almost normal. They perceived the blame to be entirely at the feet of the teachers and exonerated themselves. In this light it must be considered what principals perceive their duties to encompass and what these duties are in reality. It is against the law to attack a person and it is disconcerting that some principals seem to accept this response as warranted. Democracy does not condone violence, no matter what the circumstances. There is a legal system to be followed and there must be a system in place which pupils can follow if they are discontent with circumstances.

When teachers undermine the code of good manners and democracy it leads to pupils developing a negative attitude towards the teacher, certain subjects and school in general [Chapter 3. 3.5.2]. The research found that in 17% of the cases, pupils developed a strong dislike for a teacher who is frequently absent and that pupils experience difficulty in cultivating respect and in following a teacher about whom they feel negatively. Once a pupil has developed a dislike for a subject it is extremely difficult to reverse and this attitude might jeopardise the future of the child in that she/he might drop the subject in favour of another and thereby limit future career choices. One respondent reported in the personal interview that a group of pupils from the school decided to change to another school because they were not learning. This had serious implications for the reputation of the school, yet when questioned, the principal reported that no investigation was undertaken into the reasons for the non-learning or for the high rate of teacher absenteeism. Principals therefore also need to examine their responsibilities and their perceptions of democracy, including the right for the pupils to learn.

Unfortunately, of late we have come to accept the unacceptable term of 'African time'. This is a sleight against the blacks who arrive late or not at all for an appointment. Such an attitude and terminology needs to be eliminated, but this can only take place if everyone behaves in a democratic and credible manner and by showing due respect to all persons. Only through true democratic practices can positive relationships and attitudes be built and the required changes in education become real.

4.2.4 **Defiance by Pupils**

The behaviour of pupils as described in the research can hardly be seen as defiant. In the majority of the cases [Chapter 3.5.5.4] pupils failed to do work assigned to them because it was never checked. This can be regarded as a normal reaction from anyone – adult or child – in response to work not being assessed.

No actual cases of defiant behaviour were evident, although 83% of the principals cited instances in which pupils were no longer prepared to follow the instructions of the teacher. 53% of the respondents stated that pupils were willing to complete the work assigned to them, but stopped doing so because teachers were not doing their work and marking assignments or giving feedback. The researcher interprets this as a normal response under the circumstances and that some pupils eventually give up trying.

4.3 **CONFLICT RESOLUTION AS A DIDACTIC CRITERION**

Due to discrimination, undemocratic practices and negative attitudes which have eroded the climate of learning, serious conflict has arisen within many of our schools. It soon became clear that the guidelines and literature available pertains to other countries and not really to South Africa's unique situation and problems.

Chapter 2 [2.3.1] deals with conflict between teachers and pupils, but often the conflict which a teacher has to face is of a political and violent nature and therefore, the steps offered by Dreikurs (1982:299) and Good and Brophy (1991:237) cannot be applied as these steps deal with conflict within the classroom which are not too serious.

4.3.1 **Fighting**

Unless a teacher uses the correct methods for managing the classroom, serious and disruptive behaviour can develop which inhibit learning as the teacher loses teaching time in trying to gain control. Lemlech (1988:80) says that if students lack a sense of purpose and caring about one another, there is bound to be conflict and friction.

Evidence from the interviews suggested that teachers who are frequently absent are more likely to be unable to develop a positive regard for their pupils and, consequently, the pupils are also unlikely to have empathy for one another. A teacher who is often absent will perhaps not be as

conversant with the methods for inculcating a sense of purpose and an atmosphere of mutual caring as is required. Thus, when left unattended, pupils can become engaged in fighting as a result of friction because there is no one to teach and reinforce positive attitudes and behaviours.

The instances of fighting reported ranged from minor arguments to serious physical fighting. "Pupils get an unplanned free period and are given no work to keep them busy. They sometimes become impatient and in one case two boys fought to such an extent that one was stabbed to death" [Respondent 4 see section 3.5.1]. Yet another principal stated: "Earlier this year a certain boy intimidated another boy with a gun and this led to serious violence" [Respondent 3.5.1].

It is a sad fact that at schools there are the two categories of fighting and violence and that it is difficult to distinguish between the two. In the two examples given above there was fighting, but the researcher considers there to be an overflow into the category of violence as well because there were weapons involved and because of the serious nature of the consequences.

4.3.2 **Violence**

Teachers with a history of absenteeism are more likely to take longer in developing effective classroom management skills. The data in Chapter 3 [3.5.1] indicates the dire results and effects of the fighting and violence experienced at some schools. In some cases there was the 'normal' squabbling and differences between pupils – "Two girls in Std. 8b fought each other

in the presence of other pupils last year" [Respondent 6: 3.5.1.1]. This principal revealed that this incident was not really serious as the two girls became involved in an argument and that there was no physical fighting involved.

In the same section Respondent 5 gave the following example of pupil reaction to an unattended classroom – "One common example of disciplinary problems is that of fighting." During the interviews the discussion brought out that fighting was a general problem, even when teachers were present in the classroom. It is disturbing that in many instances in South Africa, the fighting has turned to violence due to political differences and due to the pervading atmosphere of unrest and expectation. This violence is, therefore, not a result of ineffective classroom management and it would be unwise to expect teachers to step in and attempt to control the situation. In some schools where there is violence and where discipline is out of control, teachers do absent themselves because they are afraid. Even if they were brave enough to face the situation, they know that there would be no possibility of teaching or carrying out their duties as class and school functioning is disrupted and the students are not concentrating on school work at such a time.

"In one school where teachers were holding a meeting the pupils were arguing about political organisations. They quarrelled and ended up shooting one another, many were injured and the school was bombed" [Respondent 3, see section 5.1.3]. Yet another principal cited an example in which firearms were used – "In this class where the teacher was always absent from school a certain group of boys were IFP members. They organised their meeting and ANC members did not like that, they fought and eventually shot at each other. One boy died." [Respondent 11: 3.5.1.3].

In the light of the seriousness of the fighting and violence which our teachers face, the guidelines given by Lemlech [Chapter 2: 2.3.3] have little practical value for them. It is evident that pupils must not be left unattended and that substitute teachers have to be provided. Although the principals perceived the teachers and pupils to be to blame, in these instances it was the principals who were remiss and they should perhaps examine their own responsibilities and neglect. The principals were aware that the classes were without teachers and could have intervened, perhaps by combining classes in order that the pupils have supervision and engage in some form of learning. It is again seen that the teachers alone do not carry the sole responsibility for the behaviour of the pupils.

From the examples given in the research it seems that, at times, pupils go to school to engage in violence and to learn methods of violence and that teachers are powerless to stop them. In situations where violence is involved it may be better if pupils did not attend school at all. The available literature provides no guidelines on how to resolve conflict which is so extreme. It is illegal for children to carry weapons, yet they blatantly carry them onto school premises and sometimes use them to solve issues. The present crime rate in the country and the increasing violence is teaching children that the only means of solving problems and getting where you want in life is through using violence and this is flowing over into the classrooms. It is wondered what has led to the children wanting to carry weapons in the first instance and why they take them into a schoolroom.

In an atmosphere of unrest it is unfair to expect teachers to exert a positive influence or to display caring and dedication. When students go on the rampage, there is no protection for teachers other than for them to leave the premises and remain absent until peace is restored. This reaction cannot be interpreted as absenteeism, despite the perception of some principals to classify it as such.

In recent years our newspapers have carried reports of disruption, violence and unrest at many of our schools and teachers cannot cope with the level of violence in their classrooms. No matter how dedicated teachers might be, they are unable to enforce order when confronted with angry and armed pupils. Other means of conflict resolution need to be investigated where fighting and violence is concerned. It used to be the norm in African culture that children would not fight in the presence of an adult, but this is obviously no longer the reality. Old methods of maintaining order and resolving conflict no longer work because culture and traditions are changing and this is resulting in a new set of problems.

4.3.3 **Truancy**

Although truancy as such was not investigated, some principals gave examples of truancy when pupils emulated the behaviour of a teacher [see section 3. 3.5.2]. Whatever the reason for the truancy, if left uncurbed, it can lead to the permanent dropping out of some pupils before they finish their school careers. Due to the unrest and disruption at schools, some pupils change school yearly in their search for a good education, whilst others give up altogether and drop out.

Dropping out does not only have bearing upon the child's school career, but also upon her/his future prospects in life. The high unemployment rate in the country makes it difficult to earn a living without education and skills and the drop out rate increases the problem of violence, unemployment and crime.

All too frequently, many of our youth, due to the history of the country, do not receive the required support from home as either one or both parents are absent, conditions at home are often not conducive to learning or the parents are unable to assist because they were forced to face life uneducated or illiterate – yet they desire a better life for their children through education. In this regard, it is often left to teachers to be the only inspiration available to these children. When one considers the number of street children in South Africa and their bleak futures, it is imperative that something be done to keep our children in the classrooms. All possible means must be employed to encourage our youth to attend school and gain an education. They must be motivated and an attitude of learning must be instilled upon them in an atmosphere which proves learning to be beneficial. Naturally this atmosphere must be safe and conflict free. A method of recording attendance must be implemented in every classroom and when it is noticed that a student is absent it must be investigated and followed through.

4.4 **EFFECTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AS A DIDACTIC CRITERION**

The criteria for the creation of an effective learning environment includes keeping pupils active, guiding them how to learn and the principles of co-operation and friendliness [Chapter 2: Sections 2.4.2 – 2.4.5].

4.4.1 **Work Programmes and Poor Performance**

Eleven of the principals experienced poor achievement as a serious problem [Chapter 3: 3.5.5]. The responses of the principals [3.5.5.1] indicate that teacher ignorance of details of the pupils influences their performance. Teachers must assist all children in the reaching of their full potential and this means that teachers must know what all pupils are capable of, their strengths, their weaknesses and in which areas they require help. Each teacher is given a teaching schedule as covered in the subject curriculum or in the syllabus and this provides guidelines on dates for the completion of specific tasks or units. The research showed that some absentee teachers were unable to complete the work within the stipulated time, with one principal reporting an appalling pass rate of 20% [3.5.5.2].

Pupils need to feel that their work will be completed with sufficient time allocated for revision and learning. If the syllabus is not covered or if there is 'cramming' pupils will not be confident about facing the examinations and will not be able to give of their best. This situation can result

in conflict between pupils and teachers and there seems to be no fair means of dealing with this as nothing can make up for the wasted year for those pupils who fail. During the interviews the discussions brought out that many teachers do not complete the syllabus, not only absentee teachers – some do not even follow a teaching schedule. In cases this was as a result of disruption and unrest and teaching not being possible. When teachers were able to teach, they therefore fitted in as much as they were able.

In the following case the teacher is clearly guilty of not carrying out the task required of him – "The Std. 10 Afrikaans teacher was always away from the class – pupils' performance was bad. A certain teacher had to hunt goats for his class because he wanted to please his class. Because of absenteeism he gave pupils the answer during exams." [Respondent 2: 3.5.5.2]. Although the teacher was guilty, the principal shares this guilt in that he did not ensure that those children received the learning to which they were entitled, despite being aware of the situation. Through no fault of their own, when this was uncovered, those pupils were failed – is that fair? The teaching/learning environment must be brought under control in order that teachers can teach and pupils can learn.

4.4.2 **Substance Abuse**

Although substance abuse used to be regarded in relation to boys, this has changed as more girls are now increasingly indulging. The problem of substance abuse is increasing as more of our youth are being exposed to a variety of temptations. Many abusers and dealers regard the school situation as an ideal place to entice potential users because they have access to a

great number of people in one place and they consider that if the children can become addicted at an early age, they will use the substance for a longer period, ensuring an extended length of income. Especially amongst adolescents the influence of peer pressure is relied upon.

Section 3.5.3 gives cases where pupils were found to be under the influence of addictive substances – the most common being alcohol. The use of alcohol and dagga have unfortunately become increasingly acceptable to our youth without them having knowledge of the consequences – the physical, personal, financial and health implications. The social spheres of the youth have expanded over the years with children gaining greater freedom than previously. The extension of the social barriers has brought an increased exposure to many temptations such as alcohol, sex and drugs. This though, cannot be confined to being a social problem as education is the only means of informing the children of the choices which they must make and that the consequences do not only involve them as individuals, but also their families, friends, their future, their health, their financial circumstances and their functioning and acceptance in society.

Many institutions have programmes which they take to the schools in an attempt to inform the children, but each school and each pupil needs to be informed. Perhaps a solution would be to bring into the syllabus a section to deal with substance abuse and sexual conduct. In the interviews most principals stated that they considered these problems to be beyond their influence and responsibility. This approach is didactically unacceptable as educators are expected to view the child as a whole.

4.4.3 **Pupil-Teacher Relationships**

If a teacher is continually absent with no valid reason, they can do little toward creating the required learning environment as this implies that they have knowledge of and caring for their pupils. Although teacher-pupil relationships were not directly dealt with in the questionnaire, they came to light within the context of knowledge of pupils [Section 3.5.5.1] and preparation for the examination [Section 3.5.5.2]. It is clear that, in the given examples, some teacher/pupil relationships were unhealthy.

In an unsupervised classroom children are not kept busy and therefore receive no guidance on how to learn and there is no emphasis on schoolwork. Because they do not have the constant example and guidance of the teacher, they are left to develop relationships at random and experience difficulty in cultivating co-operation. They perceive it that the teacher is unwilling to co-operate in their education and they therefore, find it difficult to co-operate or assist each other as they lack direction. The co-operation acquired through a dedicated, responsible and effective teacher is not constant and they struggle to achieve success as individuals or as a group. The examination results from many schools are a reflection of the inability of some teachers to develop effective classroom and learning environments.

The concept of friendliness requires consideration and a degree of acceptance for others. If a teacher cannot gain the respect and confidence of the pupils, there is little chance that they will be able to guide the pupils to learn effectively. If a teacher is frequently absent from the classroom, there is unlikely to be an atmosphere of unity, warmth, kindness and friendliness and the vital element of trust.

Children need to feel that they can depend upon the teacher and that they will be accepted, recognised and respected. Although it is left to the teachers to create an effective learning environment, this is difficult for teachers who face pupils who are carrying weapons and who can turn violent at any moment. Before teachers can be expected to create the correct learning environment, first the correct climate has to be created for the whole of education and throughout the schools.

4.5 **MOTIVATION AS A DIDACTIC CRITERION**

As discussed in Section 2.5.1 motivation encompasses the concepts of reinforcement, praise, homework, recognition, encouragement and rewards.

4.5.1 **Demotivation**

Reinforcement enhances motivation in students in that it encourages them to strive to repeat the feeling they experienced through success. Although there are both the positive and negative reinforcement techniques, it is usually the positive method which leads towards the required behaviour being repeated. Reinforcement can be given through words, through rewards such as stamps, stars or a written remark or through the offering of a material reward or treat.

This study takes the view that material rewards should not be used as the child might learn to seek the reward rather than developing an intrinsic love for learning and see the purpose thereof in life and in the future. For the teacher to be able to offer reinforcement, it is necessary that they know their pupils and the progress they are making with their work, their efforts and the areas in which they need the most encouragement.

The data from the interviews in Chapter 3 [Section 3.5.5.1] shows that teachers who are often absent are frequently ignorant regarding their pupils and their work and that these teachers were therefore, unable to provide reinforcement. Pupils who fall under the influence of these teachers are not likely to receive the recognition or the encouragement to propel them forward to higher achievement and they can become demotivated and lose interest in schoolwork. Section 3.5.5.2 carries evidence of this in that some classes were not prepared for the examination and achieved poor results. These pupils are also deprived of a good example as they face a teacher who is not motivated, yet they find themselves in a situation in which they need motivation and reinforcement in order to be able to progress.

Praise is a form of reinforcement which aims to promote desired behaviour and learning. The giving of praise assists in developing a good learning environment and in ensuring good relationships in the classroom as it provides pupils with the message that they are recognised and cared for and that their efforts have been noticed. If teachers are not in the classrooms regularly they will find it difficult to establish areas for praise or support for their pupils as individuals or for the class as a group. Such a lack of empathy and recognition can lead to some pupils giving up altogether as they see no hope in achieving the learning they desire.

4.5.2 **Homework**

A natural extension of schoolwork is homework. Many pupils struggle to complete their homework due to adverse home conditions and it is imperative that all their efforts be recognised. It is especially motivating for pupils to be praised for work which they have completed on their own. Naturally, for teachers to be able to provide support and motivation, they are required to mark and assess the given work and provide feedback to guide the pupils on their progress. Pupils need to learn that homework is not a form of punishment but that it is necessary to improve their knowledge, success and achievements. If they do well in this, receive praise and feedback, then they will realise that homework can be a motivating factor in their learning process.

In the cases mentioned in Section 3.5.5.4 it was found that, because teachers set homework and did not bother to check whether it was completed before assigning additional homework, pupils finally gave up and thereafter refused to do any homework. In the final instance it is the pupils who suffer, but it is also irrational to expect them to pump out work for its own sake if they are not given direction.

A basic need of all human beings, especially with children, is that of recognition. Recognition leads to motivation in students when they perceive that they are seen as individuals and as human beings. Motivation is partly as a result of acknowledging all efforts, personality traits, weaknesses, strengths and needs. Recognition, without the use of caustic and negative remarks

can lead to a peaceful atmosphere which encourages learning as the pupils will see that the teacher speaks to them correctly and treats them with dignity; even when they fail in their attempts, they will experience the support and encouragement of the teacher.

Encouragement is vital, especially when a child has attempted a task and has failed or done badly. In such a case they need encouragement to motivate them to try and try again until they succeed to the best of their ability, despite the obstacles and frustrations they might encounter in the process. It must be remembered that the students are still learning to become the best people they are capable of being and this means that their positive aspects must be recognised and reinforced so that they can develop a strong self image.

Many tasks which the students face are new and difficult for them and they need sustained encouragement for them to build the confidence to tackle these tasks and then to progress beyond. Encouragement is more strongly motivational if it is directed at the group as well as at individuals as the pupils will also learn to encourage each other and this will promote learning and pride in their success.

The teacher needs to know and to be alert to the achievement of the pupils and to which tasks have been completed, how the pupils achieved and in which areas they are experiencing difficulty and are requiring help.

Each child is an individual and has different needs and therefore, requires forms of motivation. What might work for 40 children might not work for the one who needs an alternative form of motivation – this might be in the form of listening to what the child has to say without any interruption. Children, especially adolescents, have a strong need for social acceptance and to be seen as one of the crowd, and the teacher must therefore avoid humiliating the child, but must rather attempt to gain the confidence of each child through pleasant interactions, relations and trust.

Deeper and more meaningful learning will take place if the students enjoy the activities in which they are involved and children are more likely to enjoy the learning tasks if they are part of the group and feel accepted. If a class does well in a task they can be rewarded as a group by being allowed to choose an activity which they enjoy. Such a reward will motivate them in the future to do well in all tasks and individuals will do their best not to let the class down. Motivation is crucial to learning and the teacher carries the burden of providing this and it also requires that the teacher be motivated. The research did not uncover the reasons for teacher absenteeism, but it is evident that lack of motivation, for whatever cause, is the root problem. The confusion and changes in the education system have led to demotivation becoming more entrenched in teachers, pupils, principals and inspectors. Perhaps future research can investigate the reasons why many teachers are not motivated.

4.6 **ORDER AS A DIDACTIC CRITERION FOR EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT**

Order in the classroom requires precise planning for the best conditions for pupils to learn. This means that the teacher must know what the pupils require and need and it also means that the learners must be involved in creating this order. It was said in section 2.6 that in a democratic classroom, order is not imposed upon the pupils, but that the children are rather guided by rules and regulations because they see the need to have an orderly situation in which to learn. Requirements for order in the learning situation include a positive, receptive and non-threatening atmosphere with friendliness to facilitate good teacher/pupil relationships. In Chapter 3, 67% of the respondents stated that teacher absenteeism resulted in poor teacher-pupil relationships.

Through trust and mutual respect the teacher is required to transmit the values and norms of the society she/he represents. Society has bound each teacher to develop the full potential of every pupil and, to achieve this, the teacher needs to develop good relationships and order in the classroom. It is clear from the investigation that many classrooms are undemocratic and disorderly. There are no uniform rules and regulations which are applied. It has become clear that the situation in South Africa requires unique guidelines, pertinent to our unique situations.

4.6.1 **Discipline**

The maintenance of order requires the necessary discipline from the teacher, where necessary. In classrooms where there is no teacher present it has been seen that fighting and violence erupts and that involvement from an authority figure is needed to bring order. Teachers must be seen to follow the rules of the school and also be seen to be disciplined if they break them before it can be expected of pupils to follow rules.

The needs of the pupils differ depending upon their level, yet even the oldest pupils require input and the attention of someone in control. Positive co-operation and relationships are required for learning and order and these cannot be cultivated by teachers who themselves are not motivated and orderly.

4.7 **THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS ACT**

At the time this study was undertaken the Constitution and the Bill of Rights were still in the process of being written. On the basis of these the South African Schools Act was released in July, 1997 and offers a few guidelines on some of the problem areas discussed above, but as this is a very new document, the researcher decided not to incorporate it into the discussions above and to see what changes will take place in the country on the grounds of what it contains.

This document contains the following aims of education:

- The Constitution sets out the important values on which the democratic state is based and that these values apply equally in the governance of schools. The values which are specifically mentioned are: human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms, non-racism and non-sexism. Within this democracy, everyone has the right to a basic education and this requires that teachers be trained and paid, that books and materials be purchased and that good standards of education are maintained [page 5].
- Democratisation of education includes the idea that stakeholders such as parents, teachers, learners and other people such as members of the community near the school must participate in the activities of the school [Page 6].
- A further aim of the Schools Act is that the quality of education of all learners must be improved. Learners must be better motivated and disciplined to take their education seriously and to use the opportunities that are now open to them [Page 6].
- The Schools Act promotes democratic practices in school education. It wants to see a type of education through which the talents of learners can be developed for their own benefit as well as for the benefit of society as a whole. Good education is the first step to eliminating poverty [Page 7]. The Schools Act recognises that there are many cultures and languages in our country. This Act creates a school system in which the various cultures and languages are respected, protected and advanced [Page 8]. All stakeholders in education must accept their responsibilities concerning the organising, governance and funding of the schools. In business, partners must be able to trust one another, similarly this should be the aim of the new partnership developing in education

[Page 8].

- Learners have a constitutional right to basic education. This right must be respected, protected, promoted and fulfilled by all involved in education to the extent of their responsibility [Page 8].
- Professional management refers to the day-to-day administration and organisation of teaching and learning at the school and the performance of the departmental responsibilities that are prescribed by law. It includes the organisation of all the activities which support teaching and learning [Page 11].
- The professional management of the public school must be undertaken by the principal, under the authority of the Head of Department. This means the principal has delegated powers to organise and control teaching and learning at the school effectively [Page 12].
- Responsibilities of the principal includes the management of personnel and finances [Page 14].
- Good school discipline is an important feature of effective schools. Learners learn best in an orderly and safe environment. Discipline is therefore one of the most important management functions in a school. Principals and teachers have a duty to maintain proper order and discipline. To achieve good discipline, every school must have a written code of conduct [Page 59].
- Although the principal and teachers are responsible for the day-to-day discipline at the school, the governing body has a duty to make sure that the school adopts the code of conduct. The Schools Act stipulates that learners, parents and teachers must be allowed to become involved in drawing up the code [Page 59].

- Learners must know what is expected of them and what actions will be taken against them if they disobey school rules. They must know what sanctions or types of punishment will be used if they behave in an unacceptable way. The type of punishment used must be lawful, fair and reasonable. When learners are punished, the right to human dignity must not be infringed. The use of corporal punishment is forbidden [Page 60].

4.8 **CONCLUSION**

It remains to be seen how these aims of education will be implemented and what difference they will make to the education in the country. Although no specific mention is made to classroom management and teacher absenteeism, it is hoped that there will be a snowball effect and that the improvements envisaged will permeate all areas. Perhaps it is the field of research for future studies to examine the effects of the Schools Act. Chapter 5 will deal with recommendations and the conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER 5

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

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CHAPTER FIVE

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter closes with the recommendations and a conclusion on the findings of this dissertation. It will be recalled that the aim of this study was to look at the effects of teacher absenteeism in KwaZulu Natal Secondary Schools. These effects were identified by the respondents [school principals] in the sample.

5.2 EFFECTS OF TEACHER ABSENTEEISM

This investigation illustrated various effects of teacher absenteeism on classroom management in a selection of secondary schools in KwaZulu Natal and, upon this basis, the following twenty effects were identified [see Chapter 4]:

Ignorance of pupils' names and achievements [see Chapter 3: 3.5.5.1]

Failure to mark attendance registers [see Chapter 3: 3.5.2.2]

Negative attitude amongst pupils [see Chapter 3: 3.5.5.3]

Defiance by pupils [see Chapter 3: 3.5.1.2]

Fighting [see Chapter 3: 3.5.1]

Intimidation [see Chapter 3: 3.5.1]

Truancy [see Chapter 3: 3.5.2]

Violence [see Chapter 3: 3.5.1.1]

Incomplete work programmes and poor performance [see Chapter 3: 3.5.5.2]

Drugs [see Chapter 3: 3.5.3]

Drunkenness [see Chapter 3: 3.5]

Pupil teacher relationships [see Chapter 3: 3.5.5.1]

Demotivation [see Chapter 3: 3.5.5.2]

Homework [see Chapter 3:3.5.5.4]

Cheating in the examination [see Chapter 3:3.5.5.2]

Sexual promiscuity [see Chapter 3:3.5.4]

Drop-out rate [see Chapter 3:3.5.5]

Punishment [see Chapter 1:1.2.2]

Rowdiness [see Chapter 3: 3.5.1]

Vandalism [see Chapter 3:3.5.1.1]

5.3 **CAUSES OF TEACHER ABSENTEEISM**

The causes of absenteeism amongst teachers were obtained through the personal interviews with the principals of the schools in the circuits concerned. The interviewees identified these eight causes of absenteeism [according to their perceptions]: illness, memorial services, teacher stress, party politics, transportation, cultural activities, excessive use of liquor and the upgrading of teacher qualifications.

5.3.1 **Illness/sickness**

Sickness and illness are natural processes which no human can control. It became apparent that many teachers absented themselves from school due to illness or sickness which was beyond their control, even though they might have been willing to carry out their tasks. Yet, even if this reason is justified, the pupils are affected by this absence. Although sickness is an acceptable reason for absence, alternative arrangements must be made under these circumstances.

5.3.2 **Memorial/funeral services**

A considerable number of teachers absent themselves from school because they are expected to attend memorial services which are held during working hours. This has become an acceptable tradition, yet one which adversely affects the pupils. In African culture it is imperative that relatives, friends and colleagues mourn for the deceased and hold a memorial service. In African context this entails that, for a few days, mourners gather to communicate away from work and other activities as it is regarded as taboo to work before the deceased is buried.

When a teacher has passed away, it is the norm in most Black Secondary Schools that the department of Education holds a memorial service where all the teachers of the circuit gather for the solemn occasion to offer religious respect for the bereaved family. Although such reverence shows respect for both the deceased and the family, it means that pupils are left unattended for the period of the memorial service.

In many instances it was found that this resultant lack of supervision left pupils with time to engage in violence and left them to indulge in many forms of misbehaviour – political meetings, sexual harassment, derogatory and insulting language, fighting and truancy. Principals found that many pupils played truant because they knew beforehand that teachers would be absent for a memorial service and that they would have no supervision and that no learning would take place.

Although death is an emotional and sentimental event, the authorities should bear in mind that the main focus of the learning process is the learner, whose needs must be attended to and satisfied by the teachers. One need of the learners which requires recognition is that of educational fulfilment through knowledge, which is why they attend school.

Through my personal observation in different schools in the two circuits in which I worked as a teacher and principal, I saw that memorial services were normally held on a Thursday. What was found to be interesting in this practice was that 40% of the teachers from each school in the area would attend the memorial service for a teacher who had passed away and all the neighbouring schools closed completely for that day. According to African culture, if your neighbour lost a relative, everyone would support them morally and spiritually, therefore the neighbouring schools, as families of the community, support each other in the case of a death in the neighbourhood.

Memorial services must be held during suitable times and days outside of school hours, otherwise alternative arrangements must be made for all pupils to be supervised and kept busy.

5.3.3 Upgrading of teacher qualifications

It was stated by one of the principals in a personal interview that one of the major causes of teacher absenteeism is the emergence of tertiary institutions which offer evening courses, allowing teachers to upgrade their qualifications. This opportunity has encouraged many teachers, who hold diplomas, to register for degrees in order to improve their qualifications and future benefits. This manifestation has led to many teachers, principals and inspectors bettering their qualifications leading them to promotions. An example given by one of the interviewees was that the Cecil Renauld Extramural Division at the University of Zululand which was founded mainly for evening classes to provide opportunity of further study to those who worked during the day. In this regard, principals revealed that many teachers often absent themselves from schools due to a need to complete their assignments or to study for tests and examinations. The research concluded that many pupils fail their examinations because teachers absent themselves in order to improve their qualifications. The logic of this is that either the teacher or the pupils pass the examination, and teachers choose that they themselves pass. In these instances, the teacher does not guide the pupils, give them individual attention, attend to their needs or motivate them to pass at the end of the year.

The upgrading of teacher qualifications has proved a stumbling block in the progress and achievement of the pupils and a means must be devised to find balance.

5.3.4 **Teacher salaries**

One interviewee highlighted that the delay in the payment of teachers' salaries was a significant cause of teacher absenteeism. The Department of Education employs teachers through the principal and the school committee. The new teacher signs a contract and these forms are sent to the Department concerned for processing, which takes from three to nine months before the first salary is paid. Naturally, due to the struggle to survive and the expectation of effort being recognised, the teacher becomes demotivated and frustrated and absents her/himself from school. Such absenteeism is accepted by the principal, parents and inspectors as they empathise with the teacher. Yet, the result is that pupils come to school and find themselves without a teacher, so they in turn are affected.

The department needs to streamline this process which is causing major frustration for the teachers and the pupils concerned, who need to be faced by a motivated teacher.

5.3.5 **Teacher stress**

Education of the Black child in this country has become highly politicised to the extent that teachers tend to suffer from 'burn out'. This politicisation and resulting stress levels have had a negative impact upon the Black Secondary School pupils and teachers. One consequence is that some pupils have learnt not to respect the political feelings and rights of other people. Many teachers in the schools in which the research was conducted, that is, in the three Northern circuits, were found to have absented themselves due to party politics which was prevalent in the schools. Teachers were threatened because of their

political affiliations and many absented themselves from school until emotions and feelings cooled down, whilst others suffered from emotional stress. Such depressing and stressful conditions led to teachers permanently leaving the school in which they were teaching to seek a less stressful situation. Unfortunately, these stressful circumstances, emanating from political intolerance, is, in most cases, supported by parents. In the attempt to try to teach under these conditions, teachers become demotivated and, due to the stress, suffer from 'burn out' – finding themselves unable to continue teaching. In some schools, where the investigation was conducted, it was found that the teacher stress which accelerated teacher absenteeism, was as a result of the loss of the culture of learning amongst pupils who simply refuse to learn or do homework. The teachers absent themselves from school and the pupils become victims of the circumstances which they themselves created. Teacher stress and 'burn out' are not excuses, but a reality which needs to be recognised.

5.3.6 **Teachers' accommodation**

In some rural areas it has become the practice that accommodation is provided for teachers. This accommodation is usually in the form of cottages or houses situated within the vicinity of the school. In some schools the teachers are expected to pay rent to contribute toward the maintenance of these buildings. Due to financial constraints of the community and lack of support from the government, many schools do not have suitable accommodation to offer. Many schools visited during the course of this project did not have any accommodation for the teachers. Parents tend to concentrate on the provision of classrooms and other facilities and resources, and overlook the needs of teachers. They

do not realise that without teachers the schools cannot function.

Teachers who are not offered suitable accommodation, are forced to seek accommodation away from the schools in the townships and to commute long distances to and from their homes, using public transport, which in most instances is not reliable. Travelling this distance daily becomes cumulative and stressful and, eventually, these teachers begin to absent themselves from school due to transport problems and its associated stress. The conditions of the roads, being muddy and slippery, bring difficulty in the rainy season with some teachers being unable to reach their schools.

5.3.7 **Excessive use of liquor**

It will be recalled from Chapter 3:3.5.3.1 that the excessive use of liquor by some teachers was mentioned as a contributory factor to teacher absenteeism. If teachers use liquor in excess, especially during weekdays, it is likely to adversely affect the pupils. According to principals many teachers used liquor during and after working hours. This overindulgence is not only detrimental to the teachers on a social level, but is harmful to the morals and values of the pupils. Teachers who indulge in excess are likely to behave in an unacceptable and irresponsible manner. Witnessing a teacher in a state of insobriety, some pupils emulate the behaviour of the teacher and might regard such excess as fashionable and desirable behaviour from those they regard as models of required behaviour.

This excessive use of alcohol can corrupt not only the morals and values of the pupils and teacher concerned, but also the whole education system. It is a contributory element to the loss of the culture of learning when pupils are aware that some teachers come to school drunk and that other teachers absent themselves because they have overindulged.

5.4 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.4.1 **Introduction**

This section presents the recommendations regarding teacher absenteeism on the basis of the findings of the study. Should these recommendations be implemented they might reduce the absenteeism rate, which is an underlying purpose of this study. These recommendations need to be pursued by the relevant authorities within the education system and each party concerned has to attend to the various causes of absenteeism and seek the relevant solution.

5.4.2 **Illness/sickness**

Sickness and illness are inevitable, but, in many cases, they have been used by teachers as an excuse to absent themselves from their duties. This practice has taken place for a long time and is continuing today. It has become so widespread that some teachers bribe doctors, using their medical aid benefit to obtain false medical certificates. This falsification has led to principals becoming reluctant to accept absenteeism due to illness and it also means that honest teachers who are absent due to genuine illness fall under

suspicion.

The researcher suggests that in order to curb this dishonesty and misconduct, the Department of Education employ or appoint doctors from all fields. These doctors would be stationed in all the educational regions so that all staff would have access to an official doctor. If a teacher happens to fall sick when away from her/his region, they would be admitted to any surgery of an appointed doctor. These doctors would report directly to the Department of Education, giving details of the sick leave given to each member of staff seen in that particular month. An alternative to sick leave could be a recommended reduction in work load if it is found that the teacher is experiencing undue stress.

The Department of Education could also encourage regular attendance from the teachers by introducing incentives for those teacher who have carried out their duties for X number of years without being absent. These incentives could be in the form of money, a certificate or a gift. All teachers should be aware of the recognition for good service and that the awarding of such an incentive would be announced in the media. The award ceremony would be on a regional level, with all teachers from that region attending to give recognition to the service. At the end of each year, the school having the lowest teacher absenteeism rate should be given a bonus of some sorts, which might result in schools competing for this award and recognition.

After investigation, any teacher found to have been dishonest about illness should forfeit their salary for that month and their names must be announced in the media.

a] **Principals**

Principals, as the appointed heads of schools, must give the absentee teacher leave forms and ensure that these completed forms are submitted to the department, with the medical certificate attached. Principals must be held responsible for the submission of these forms.

At the beginning of each school term, the principal must stress the importance of regular school attendance to staff and pupils alike. All teachers must be aware of the possible consequences [as identified in this study] of their absenteeism. The written school policy must clearly state that teacher absenteeism, without good reason, will be considered as gross misconduct, will not be tolerated and that steps will be taken against any teacher found guilty thereof.

All principals must keep attendance registers for the teachers [and for the pupils] and see that they are kept up to date. If a teacher is absent, the reason for this must be noted in the attendance register [with discretion]. This will hopefully discourage absenteeism before it becomes serious or habitual.

b] **Parents**

At present parents are ill informed and kept ignorant of what the real situation at the school is. Often the only source of information is the pupils, who themselves are not informed, or who carry their own version of the truth to their parents. If, for any reason, a teacher is absent for a considerable length of time or is often absent, the school

committee must be informed. A special team may be instituted to monitor and investigate absenteeism. It is then the duty of the school committee to advise the parents of the situation and what arrangements have been made for the education of their children in these periods and to allow the parents, if they wish, to meet to offer their suggestions.

c] **Teachers**

Teachers should motivate each other in the necessity for regular attendance. A competitive attitude toward their school work could be a key and teachers could compete with regular school attendance. More important, teachers must develop a pride in their work to once more be afforded the recognition of teaching being a profession. As students have to re-establish a culture of learning, so, too, do teachers have to re-establish a culture of teaching.

d] **Teacher education**

Of the educational literary sources available, very few, if any, discuss teacher absenteeism which means that training institutions ignore this important aspect of what teaching entails. This study has, therefore, found that future publications address this lack and incorporate it, stressing the implications and the impact it has on education as a whole.

5.4.3 **Funeral and memorial services**

During the course of this investigation it was revealed that many teachers are absent from school because they are attending funeral or memorial services which are held during working hours. Although death is to be respected, empathised with and sympathy shown, this should not be at the expense of the students. It is therefore recommended that these services be held during the weekend or after school hours. If a teacher is a member of a bereaved family, the compassionate leave should not extend beyond two working days.

In African culture, friends, colleagues and relative come together to praise the Lord at a solemn occasion for the deceased. It was found in the schools included in the research, that the schools closed because of memorial services, leaving the pupils to their own devices for that time. Such a practice is accepted by the inspectors because they too attend these services. This support is morally and spiritually beneficial for the family involved, but detrimental to the students.

If a district loses six teachers during the course of a year, it means there will be six memorial services held per year. The compounded implication is that a vast number of pupils are left without lessons or supervision during those times. It is a sad fact that many teachers do not attend these services, but use them as an excuse to absent themselves to visit the shebeen or bottle store to drink and involve themselves in senseless activities. These teachers can get away with this behaviour because there is no control of the attendance of teachers at the services. The holding of the services at weekends or outside of school hours would also afford the students the opportunity of attending the services

and paying their respects.

5.4.4 **Cultural activities**

The Department of Education has reconsidered its status and has recognised that education also incorporates culture. In this respect the principles of culture have to be upheld. Although this country comprises a variety of cultures and the respect and acknowledgement of them is afforded, the focus of this dissertation is on African culture and the customs at the schools researched. In order to meet this function, the department has earnestly embarked on the promotion of cultural activities where pupils participate in activities like African dance, music, gospel, African attire, praise and poems. These activities have educative and informative value as they assist the teachers in developing pupils to their full potential. Yet, they require a great deal of time, especially during training, workshops and courses, meaning that teachers are required to leave school for some considerable days.

a] **Department of education**

The department must have a clear code of conduct regarding the training sessions, workshops and courses in which the teachers promote these cultural activities. This code should outline the time of year when these activities will be conducted and the duration of these courses as well as include an allocation of the quota per school for teachers to attend workshops and training to avoid a large number of teachers being absent from one school. The inspector and school committee should approve this attendance.

b] **The principal**

The principal must use discretion and have final control over the number of teachers who attend workshops, courses and training sessions for cultural activities. Teachers attending these events should be chosen from the junior classes and substitutes must be appointed for this time to avoid pupils being idle and free to indulge in disruptive activities. The students must be told that the teacher is absent for official reasons, but that they will be kept occupied with productive and educational activities.

c] **Teachers**

Teachers must understand that these cultural activities are an aspect of education and, therefore, part of their teaching responsibilities. Cultural awareness is a way of unfolding and moulding the child's character and potential and personality. Teachers should consider these activities a means of instilling love for mankind and the environment.

5.4.5 **Upgrading of teacher qualifications**

The upgrading of teacher qualifications is imperative and a step towards the improvement of the overall quality of education. The present problem which results in students being left alone whilst teachers attend to their studies has to do with timing. In many situations, teachers leave schools before the end of the school day to deal with their private studies. In the sample used in this research, it was found that the upgrading of qualifications and its ramifications contributed to a large extent towards the high rate of teacher absenteeism.

The establishment of the Cecil Renauld unit at the University of Zululand has caused problems for the schools in the area – some schools have produced poor results because some teachers tend to regard their studies as more important than the students' achievements and neglect the fact that their professional task is to guide the students.

The researcher is of the opinion that more in-service courses must be provided by the Department of Education for practising teachers. Although there are some courses available, they should be increased in number to allow a greater volume of teachers access to improving their skills. The content of such courses should be similar to that of the courses offered at universities and should be available either by correspondence or in vacation times where teachers attend classes in January before the schools open and then continue in the winter holidays. Such courses are offered by Umlazi College for Further Education and are efficient in that these teachers are seldom absent from school. The Department can use existing schools and colleges for this purpose and attach themselves to universities for recognition purposes.

Teachers prefer to attend a university rather than a college because at a college they can only obtain a certificate and most teachers study further to obtain a degree. Many teachers, for instance those who come from all over Zululand to attend ordinary BA courses at the University of Zululand, can improve their qualifications through colleges in their vicinity, provided they are awarded the higher status offered by universities. Perhaps colleges should be given the authority to award Bachelor's degrees.

For a long time the Department of Education afforded teachers the benefit of study leave with full pay, dependant upon the number of days a teacher had accumulated through service. This benefit was suspended in 1997, which has led to an increase in the number of teachers who are both full time employees and, at the same time, students at universities. The researcher suggests that the granting of study leave be re-instated.

Unfortunately, many teachers further their studies merely for the increase in the financial benefits which await them at the end, and not because they seek further knowledge, experience and improvement of skills. Many dedicated and responsible teachers are ignored and never given recognition simply because they cannot afford to study further or because they choose to put the interests of the pupils before their own.

In order to identify the real situation, the department should introduce a form of assessment for all practising teachers, assessing their work, their results, their skills, their organisational and managerial abilities, etc. Those teachers who meet the required standard and earn a certain number of points should be given a salary increase. This will motivate teachers to attend to their duties with responsibility and dedication, give them a means whereby they can improve their salaries whilst, at the same time, also improve the competitive spirit and restore the attitude of teaching. All pupils will clearly benefit from such an arrangement.

Such an assessment system was initiated during the early eighties, but discontinued due to political complications through the introduction of the trade unions and the policy of liberation before education. The researcher strongly recommends the reintroduction of

this system.

a] **Principals**

Principals can contribute much towards the positive upgrading of teacher qualifications. They must stress to all teachers that the upgrading of qualifications is a private matter and should not interfere with their functioning and that they should not presume to leave school early on the grounds that they have to attend lectures at university. If a teacher is, for exceptional reasons, allowed to leave school early, the principals must ensure that pupils have been given work to do and that a substitute teacher is allocated.

Principals can motivate teachers to register for courses through distance education institutions, even for degree purposes, so that they may study in their own time which will not require them to absent themselves from school. Perhaps all universities can be encouraged to offer some courses through the distance education method.

5.4.6 **Teacher salaries**

The delay in the payment of teachers' salaries has had a dire impact upon attendance of teachers at school. Teacher, like any other workers, expect to be paid at the end of a stipulated period and when they don't receive their salaries, they become frustrated and demotivated. They adopt the attitude of 'why work when I am not getting paid?' and absent themselves from school.

Although there are many factors which contribute to this delay in payment, major causes of the delay have been found to be due to principals neglecting to submit forms promptly, a post not being cleared timeously, the inefficiency of the Department of Education and incoming teachers failing to submit all the required documentation. To streamline the process to ensure the prompt payment of all salaries, clear steps must be laid down and followed by each principal who will carry the final responsibility.

a] **Department of education**

The Department of Education should raise funds to provide each school with a computer and a network system to link all information between the schools and the department. Upon the resignation of an incumbent, the processing should be efficient and immediate, allowing adequate time for a new teacher to be interviewed, employed and processed. It is impossible to fill a post if the outgoing teacher has not officially vacated the position due to a cumbersome system and 'unknown' delays.

The department must establish and abide by a clear code of conduct regarding the vacating and filling of posts. This code should take into consideration the advertising of vacant posts, recruitment, interviewing and the filling of a post, as well as all the necessary requirements of both the outgoing and the newly employed teacher. If all staff follow this code, it might contribute towards the decrease in the unnecessary delays presently experienced which leads to teacher absenteeism because it is common that a newly appointed teacher will not receive a salary for the first three months of employment. Often principals bear the brunt of this delay and, if the department can expedite the process, the

relationships between the principal and staff will improve, as well as the general teaching/learning atmosphere of the schools.

Perhaps the department could introduce winter schools for principals wherein all the administrative functioning and requirements of a school are outlined. These courses could stress the importance of the submission of documentation, which documents are required for a specific situation and principals could also be made aware of the consequences of the late submission of forms – for both the teachers and the learners. Refresher courses must be ongoing to keep principals informed of any changes which take place.

c] **Principals**

As previously mentioned, principals are mostly blamed for the delay in the payment of salaries as they are seen to be responsible for the employment of a teacher and the processing of the forms. Indeed, many principals are guilty as they misplace forms or simply neglect to submit them. This could be due to the lack of secretaries or other administrative assistance, a heavy work load or a poor filing system. Such poor management and administrative skills mean that many pupils are left without teachers, either because the teachers are not yet officially appointed, because they absent themselves because they have not been paid or because they leave the school to attend head office in an attempt to clear the matter up and receive their salary. The researcher believes that all officials involved should treat all documentation with the importance they require, considering the consequences. The principals must do whatever necessary so that all the staff of the school receive a salary and no class is left without a teacher.

d] **Teachers**

All too often, teachers themselves are to blame for the delay in the payment of their salaries. It is logical that a post has to be cleared before a new appointment can be made as two people cannot occupy one position. Resigning teachers must be aware that their outstanding salary and pension cannot be paid unless all the required documentation is received upon resignation. Likewise, new teachers must realise the implications if they fail to provide the required papers upon their appointment.

5.4.7 **Teachers accommodation**

In the course of this investigation it became clear that many teachers are absent due to the great distances they travel between their dwelling place and the school. In most cases this was because there was no accommodation available for teachers within the vicinity of the school, but it was also due to the fact that, when cottages are available, they are often not safe for teachers to occupy due to the high rate of crime or political unrest. Teachers are then forced to seek accommodation in safer areas in surrounding townships which are often a considerable distance from the school, which then affects pupils adversely as the teachers are often absent due to transport difficulties.

The department, principals and school committee should encourage the building of accommodation for teachers. Such a strategy might encourage more teachers to the rural areas and avoid absenteeism due to transportation problems. Such accommodation should be supplied with electricity and water and provide safety for the teachers.

a] **Parents**

Parents need to be recognised as key elements of the school and they should be kept informed of the functioning of the school, including the difficulties which teachers experience and the reasons therefore. Parents must realise that teachers are more important than any other facility a school may provide, without teachers there is no school and there is no learning. Parents must be allowed and encouraged to play a more active and contributory role in the functioning of the school. When a teacher is absent or a class unattended, for whatever reason, parents can be consulted and can either be substitutes or offer possible solutions.

5.5 **CONCLUSION**

This study has uncovered some of the serious effects of teacher absenteeism on the secondary school pupils in KwaZulu Natal. The didactic criteria used indicated that every child has the right to be guided and taught by a teacher for each school day. It is evident that the future of each student as well as the future of the country rests upon regular attendance from the teachers in order that they may carry out their tasks.

The findings indicate that the study has achieved its two main purposes:

- a) an account of the perceptions of principals in the sample regarding the effects of teacher absenteeism, and
- b) steps which can be taken to reduce the absenteeism rate among teachers.

In addition, a number of possible causes of teacher absenteeism were identified. This dissertation provides 20 effects of teacher absenteeism and the detrimental consequences on the lives of students affected by this absenteeism. It was revealed that teacher absenteeism is more prevalent under male teachers than under the females. Perhaps a further study could explain the reason for this. The distances which the teachers travel and the problems they experience were studied in order to offer possible solutions to the causes of teacher absenteeism and to address factors which are not often considered. It appears that there is no direct, available means to deal with truancy because both principals and teachers seem to feel powerless to address it.

It became obvious that very little is being done to control teacher absenteeism and that all parties concerned with education need to address the causes, effects and control of teacher absenteeism. Although the findings revolved around the subjective perceptions of the principals, they provided us with new insights and many suggestions of how the problems can be addressed. Certain aspects of the South African Schools Act given in Chapter 4 provide the ideals of an education system. Yet, no indication is given on how changes are to be made towards realising these ideals and aims. This study generated specific examples, views and recommendations on only one area where change is needed, namely procedures to deal with teacher absenteeism, but if the many other aspects of the Schools Act are also investigated in systematic, scientific ways, and findings are properly implemented, secondary schools in KwaZulu Natal can become true centres of learning. Gradually there can be a transition from turmoil to order, from procrastination to productivity, from states of immorality to the inculcation of human values.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE**THE EFFECTS OF TEACHER ABSENTEEISM IN KWAZULU NATAL
SECONDARY SCHOOLS.****Number of respondent****Date of interview**

1. How many teachers are there in your school?
2. Approximately how many pupils are there?
3. How many male teachers are there?
4. How many female teachers are there?
5. How many teachers stay at the following distances from the school during the week?

1 km or less	<input type="text"/>
2 to 10kms	<input type="text"/>
11 to 20kms	<input type="text"/>
21 to 60kms	<input type="text"/>
61 kms or more	<input type="text"/>

6. How many teachers stay at the following distances from the school during holidays and/or weekends?

1 km or less	
2 to 10kms	
11 to 20kms	
21 to 60kms	
61 kms or more	

7. Please indicate the approximate number of male teachers who are absent for following rates.

5 days of less per year	
6 to 15 days per year	
16 to 25 days per year	
26 to 35 days per year	
36 or more days per year	

8. Please indicate the approximate number of female teachers who are absent for following days.

5 days of less per year	
6 to 15 days per year	
16 to 25 days per year	
26 to 35 days per year	
36 or more days per year	

9. Do you think teacher absenteeism affects the moral values of pupils?

Yes	
No	

10. Can you give a practical example of a case when the absenteeism of a teacher led to immoral behaviour of a pupil?

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.....

11. Do you think teacher absenteeism affect the teacher's knowledge of the pupils names, achievements and personalities?

Yes	
No	

12. Can you give a practical example where a teacher who was often absent from school showed a poor knowledge of the pupils' names or achievements?

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13. Do you think teacher absenteeism affects truancy?

Yes	
No	

14. Can you give me a practical example of a case where a teacher absenteeism led to an increase in truancy?

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.....

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15. Do you think teacher absenteeism affects fighting between pupils in the classroom?

Yes	
No	

16. Can you give a practical example where teacher absenteeism was the cause of a fight in the classroom?

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17. Do you think teacher absenteeism increases disciplinary problems in classes?

Yes	
No	

18. Can you give a practical example when a teacher was absent and severe disciplinary problems occurred?

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19. Do you think absent teachers are more lenient or more strict?

Lenient	
Strict	

20. How does teacher absenteeism affect pupils' motivation?

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21. Can you give a practical example of a case in which teacher absenteeism demotivated one or more pupils?

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22. Do you think teacher absenteeism affects pupils' willingness to do homework?

Yes	
No	

23. Can you give a practical example of a case where teacher absenteeism caused a class to stop doing homework?

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24. What do you do when the teacher is repeatedly absent?

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25. What do you think the Department of Education can do to reduce teacher absenteeism?

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION.

APPENDIX B

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Private Bag X21
Ulundi
3838

25 January 1995

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to confirm that Mr B.B. Mkhwanazi has been granted permission to interview principals in the following circuits: Hlabisa, Nongoma and Ubombo.

Mr Mkhwanazi is conducting research under the auspices of the University of Zululand regarding the topic:

The effects of teacher absenteeism on secondary school pupils in KwaZulu-Natal.

Kindly assist him to complete this important study in the interests of education.

Yours faithfully

As objection provided this does not happen during school time.

Name of official(block letters):

Dr S. J. Mkhwanazi

Rank of official :

Acting Secretary

Date: _____

KWAZULU GOVERNMENT SERVICE	
UNOBHALA WEMPINDO HEMPUCIKO SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND CULTURE DEPARTEMENT VAN ONDETHWYS EN KULTUUR	
1994 -01- 27	
ISIKHWAMA SEPOSI	
PRIVATE BAG / PRIVAATSAX	X04
ULUNDI	3838
KWAZULU	GOVERNMENT SERVICE REGERINGSDIENS

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