



D U R B A N
INSTITUTE of
TECHNOLOGY
LIBRARY

INDUMISO CAMPUS LIBRARY
TEL.: 033-845 8965/4

Accession no.

Shelf no.

2005-0347

T371.14 MBE

RETURNED
2005-08-05
22 AUG 2005

RETURNED
2009-06-17

RETURNED
2005-10-03
2005

15/06/2014
RETURNED
10/2011-2016 7

2006-09-15

2007-09-13

2007-10-29

2007-12-03

2008-07-30

2009-06-15

This item must be returned by the last date stamped
above. Fines will be levied on overdue items

***The role of the school principal in
reducing teacher absenteeism in
selected primary schools in the
Umbumbulu area***

By

NKOSIKHONA JEFFREY MBENSE

Dissertation submitted in partial compliance
with the requirements for the
MASTER'S DEGREE IN TECHNOLOGY:
EDUCATION (MANAGEMENT)
in the Department of Education
DURBAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY


SUPERVISOR: MRS J.J. PROSSER
FEBRUARY 2004

N.J. MBENSE

***The role of the school principal in
reducing teacher absenteeism in
selected primary schools in the
Umbumbulu area***

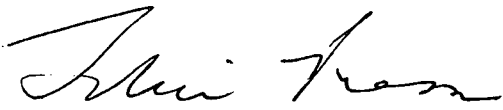
DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own work and all sources I have used or quoted have been acknowledged by means of completed references.


.....
N.J. MBENSE

15.04.2004
.....
DATE

Approved for Final Submission


.....
J.J. PROSSER (Mrs) ^{M.Ed.}
(Supervisor)

15.4.2004
.....
DATE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the following persons:

- Mrs J.J. Prosser, my supervisor, for her professional guidance, encouragement and support in ensuring that this study was successfully completed.
- My wife, NONHLANHLA and children, PHUMELELE and SANELE, for their patience and understanding.
- Mrs Val van Rooyen for doing all the typing of this research work.
- Principals whose participation made this study possible.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to:

1. My late parents
2. My family.

ABSTRACT

This research examined *The role of the school principal in reducing teacher absenteeism in primary schools*. The study is confined to teacher absenteeism that has a negative impact on teacher performance. It investigates whether teacher absenteeism is a management issue by examining its impact on the work performance of teachers at school. It also looks at the effects of teacher absenteeism on learner performance.

The researcher made use of interviews: five principals were interviewed in the Umbumbulu area. It presents a set of recommendations that can be used by school principals to reduce teacher absenteeism in schools.

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A Schedule of structured and unstructured questions to principals.

APPENDIX B Copy of a letter addressed to the District Manager at Umbumbulu District requesting permission to do research in the area.

APPENDIX C Copy of a letter from the District Manager at Umbumbulu District granting permission to do research in the area.

APPENDIX D Copy of a letter addressed to principals of primary schools in the Umbumbulu Area.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE	PAGE
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 OVERVIEW OF TEACHER ABSENTEEISM IN SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE UMBUMBULU AREA	2
1.3 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY	3
1.4 AIMS OF THIS RESEARCH	4
1.5 METHODOLOGY	5
1.6 ANALYSIS OF THE TERM "ABSENTEEISM"	6
1.7 SUMMARY	7
1.8 REFERENCES	9

CHAPTER TWO	PAGE
2.1 INTRODUCTION	11
2.2 REASONS FOR TEACHER ABSENTEEISM	11
2.2.1 Stress in teachers promotes absenteeism	11
2.2.2 Morale and teacher absenteeism	15
2.2.3 Sick leave and its problems	15
2.2.4 Teachers' leave policies influence absenteeism	16
2.2.5 School policies	17
2.2.6 Conflict in schools	18
2.2.7 Alcohol abuse	19
2.2.8 Gender and age affect teachers' absenteeism	20
2.2.9 Relationships at work as a cause of absenteeism	21
2.2.10 Absence culture	22
2.2.11 Employees' attitudes, values and goals	23
2.2.12 Transport problems	24
2.3 EFFECTS OF TEACHER ABSENTEEISM	24
2.4 WHY TEACHER ABSENTEEISM IS A MANAGEMENT ISSUE	27

2.5	SUMMARY	31
2.6	REFERENCES	32

CHAPTER THREE**PAGE**

3.1	INTRODUCTION	38
3.2	INTERVIEWS	38
3.3	SAMPLE	39
3.4	ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	39
3.5	DATA ANALYSIS	40
3.6	FINDINGS	52
3.7	SUMMARY	53
3.8	REFERENCES	54

CHAPTER FOUR**PAGE**

4.1	INTRODUCTION	55
4.2	RECOMMENDATIONS	55
4.2.1	Stress reduction	55
4.2.2	Resolve conflicts	57
4.2.3	Drinking problems	57
4.2.4	Organizational practices	58
4.2.5	Improve staff morale	60
4.2.6	Mentoring of educators	61
4.2.7	Two way communication	61
4.2.8	Reward	61
4.2.9	Reduce educators' workload	62
4.3	SUMMARY	62
4.4	REFERENCES	64
4.5	BIBLIOGRAPHY	67
	APPENDICES	76

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Employing institutions are facing the problem of increased absenteeism of employees from work due to various reasons. This is evident in industries, business and education. A major area of concern in schools is increasing teacher absenteeism, which has resulted in increasing frequency of interruptions in the teaching process in classrooms. This has forced management to make *ad hoc* decisions to replace absent teachers, has adverse effect on the morale of the staff and generally lowers the overall standard of performance in the organization (Butler, 1995:8).

Little educational research has been done into possible solutions to the problems of teacher absenteeism in primary schools. Solutions applied in industries are often not applicable in school settings. Educational researchers should be involved in developing practices and programmes to promote better attendance and by so doing reduce teacher absenteeism.

This dissertation focuses on the role of the principal in reducing teacher absenteeism in public primary schools in the Umbumbulu area. It investigates factors that promote teacher absenteeism and examines the effects they have on education. In

addition recommendations for principals to assist teachers with absenteeism problems are provided.

1.2 OVERVIEW OF TEACHER ABSENTEEISM IN SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE UMBUMBULU AREA

Five primary schools have been chosen because of their large enrolment of learners. As enrolment of learners determines the number of teachers that are allocated to a school, choosing these schools has ensured an adequate sample for this research. Another reason for the selection of these five schools is that they are close to the school where the researcher teaches and it is easy to gain access to them. It is, therefore, not time-consuming to travel from school to school.

The total number of learners in the five selected primary schools in the Umbumbulu area is 4,510 and the total number of educators, including school principals, is 115. Two to three educators are absent from each school on most days. This level of teacher absenteeism is very high. Considering the total number of learners in the sample that would mean that ± 500 learners are without teachers each day.

According to principals, some teachers are absent from school at least twice a month, which means that a class loses

approximately 18 school days of the school calendar year. The same teachers are often frequently absent and this creates problems for principals. As principals are often tempted to make light of the situation (so that their schools do not look as bad as they are) what they report may not be the true reflection of what is actually taking place in their schools. Yet the researcher, as a teacher in the Umbumbulu area, has observed that on some days almost one-third of the entire teaching staff is absent from some schools.

1.3 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

Based on personal observation and experience as a primary school teacher, the researcher has noticed that primary schools in KwaZulu-Natal, like most historically Black schools in South Africa, experience teacher absenteeism.

Although much has been written on the subject of teacher absenteeism, there is only limited research into the management of teacher absenteeism in primary schools in KwaZulu-Natal. The reason that the researcher has chosen to examine the role of principals in reducing teacher absenteeism in primary schools is because principals are the most senior managers in schools and they are responsible for ensuring that their schools function efficiently and effectively (Hall and Hord, 1987). Principals must

be able to manage issues such as teacher absenteeism, which impacts negatively on the work performance of teachers and on the school as a whole.

The researcher is of the opinion that a scientific study of teacher absenteeism in the five selected primary schools can provide data, which can be used to make constructive recommendations for solving the problems of teacher absenteeism and so help principals, who are the chief managers in the administration of their schools. Accordingly, this investigation is confined to the role of the principal in reducing teacher absenteeism in the five selected primary schools in the Umbumbulu Area.

1.4 AIMS OF THIS RESEARCH

The focus of this study is to examine the role that principals can play in reducing and solving the problems of teacher absenteeism. The objectives of this study are to:

- define the concept of teacher absenteeism;
- examine teacher absenteeism in the five selected primary schools;
- identify the causes of teacher absenteeism;

- recommend strategies that may be adopted by principals to reduce teacher absenteeism;
- design programmes that enhance teacher attendance.

1.5 METHODOLOGY

The researcher has chosen to conduct a qualitative research study in order to obtain data. Qualitative methodology means research that produces descriptive data – people's own spoken or written words and observable behaviour (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998:7).

Qualitative research is both inductive and deductive. Qualitative researchers develop concepts, insights and understanding from patterns in the data. In qualitative methodology the researcher looks holistically at a situation. Qualitative researchers are concerned with how people think and act in their everyday lives (Taylor and Bodgan, 1998:9).

The researcher has chosen to use an interview schedule of unstructured (open-ended) and structured questions. Structured questions make the comparison and analysis of data easy (Maxwell, 1996:64). Open-ended questions give the interviewer the opportunity to understand the whole picture since they do

not limit the respondents to particular responses. Open-ended questions do not restrict the respondents' opinions to predetermined responses (Sapsford and Jupp, 1996:101).

Interviews in a research method are those that involve a "two person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research relevant information and focused on the content specified by research objectives" (Cohen and Manion, 1989:307). Interviews are characterized by direct verbal, face-to-face interactions between individuals (one being the interviewer and the other, the interviewee) as well as flexibility and simplicity (Johnson, 1994:43; Poweney and Watts, 1987:7-9).

Interviewing "is one of the most effective methods of data collection as it gives the interviewer ample opportunity of giving respondents full and detailed explanations of the purpose of study" (Soer, 1997:106). For example, the respondent might not understand what the question requires of him, but with this research method the researcher can clarify further so that the respondent does understand (Soer, 1997:106).

1.6 ANALYSIS OF THE TERM "ABSENTEEISM"

Absenteeism is the practice of regularly staying away from work or school without good reason (Pearsall, 1999). Milkovich and ✓

Boudreau (1994:188) see absenteeism as the frequency and/or duration of work time cost when employees do not come to work.

Plunkett and Attner (1992:494) see absenteeism as the percentage of an organization's workforce that is absent from work on a given day. Grossett (1999:8) defines absenteeism as ✓ any unauthorized absence from work during specified working hours: "unauthorized" in that no medical certificate or acceptable reason is provided.

According to Redman (1995:21) absenteeism means the number of days lost through illness. Cherrington (1995:71) distinguishes between two types of absenteeism: the first voluntary absenteeism occurs when employees have a choice of working or not working and they intentionally decide to miss work. The second is involuntary absenteeism, which occurs when employees miss work for reasons beyond their control.

1.7 SUMMARY

In this Chapter the writer outlined the purpose of the research and provided information concerning the background to the problem. Chapter Two will focus on the generally accepted reasons for teacher absenteeism, the effects of teacher

absenteeism and examine the responsibilities of the principal in improving teacher attendance.

1.8 REFERENCES

1. BUTLER, J. 1995. Autocrats Accelerate Absenteeism. *Productivity SA*. 21(2):8-10.
2. CHERRINGTON, D.J. 1995. *The Management of Human Resources*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.
3. COHEN, L. and MANION, L. 1989. *Research Methods in Education*. London: Routledge.
4. GROSSETT, M. 1999. *Discipline and dismissal: A practical guide for South African Managers*. Johannesburg: Thomas Publishing.
5. HALL, G.E. and HORD, S.M. 1987. *Change in School: Facilitating the Process*. New York: State University of New York Press.
6. JOHNSON, D. 1994. *Research Methods in Education Management*. London: Longman Publishers.
7. MAXWELL, J.A. 1996. *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. London: Sage Publications.

8. MILKOVICH, G.T. and BOUDREAU, J.W. 1994. *Human Resources Management*. Illinois: Irwin Inc.

9. PEARSALL, J. 1999. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*. New York: Oxford University Press.

10. PLUNKETT, W. and ATTNER, R.E. 1992. *Introduction to Management*. Boston: PWS-Kent Publishing Company.

11. POWENEY, J. and WATTS, M. 1987. *Interviewing in Education Research*. London: Routledge and Kogan Page.

12. REDMAN, W. 1995. *Counselling your staff*. London: Kogan Page Ltd.

13. SAPSFORD, R. and JUPP, V. (eds). 1996. *Collection and analysis*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

14. SOER, J.W.A. 1997. *Research Methodology*, National Higher Diploma: Educational Management (notes), Azaliah College of Further Education: Pretoria.

15. TAYLOR, J.S. and BOGDAN, R. 1998. *Introduction to Qualitative Methods*. New York: John Wiley and Sons Inc.

CHAPTER TWO

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this Chapter, the reasons for teacher absenteeism will be examined. The effect of teacher absenteeism on teaching and learning will also be examined.

2.2 REASONS FOR TEACHER ABSENTEEISM

Absenteeism can have many causes: work related situations, health or medical conditions, alcohol, drug problems or other personal problems (Robey, 1994:105).

2.2.1 Stress in teachers promotes absenteeism

Seyfarth (1996:199) states, "Like most human service occupations, teaching is stressful work". Educators should experience some stress, otherwise their tasks "would be exceedingly dull" (*ibid*). However, excessive and prolonged stress affects performance and productivity. The school principal should be aware of the fact that "some stress is desirable for optimal performance, but exposure to unrelenting stress results in a marked decrease in performance" and absenteeism (Seyfarth, 1996:200).

According to Travers and Cooper (1996) poor health, especially poor mental well-being, which is affected by stress, is a major cause of absenteeism. They suggest that there is a positive relationship between the stress level at work and the frequency and duration of absenteeism and a tendency for the progression from absenteeism to increased labour turnover.

Many experts believe that teacher absenteeism is a direct manifestation of teacher stress. An individual who is “subjected to prolonged stress experiences fatigue, reluctance to go to work, withdrawal, hypersensitivity to criticism and shows hostility and aggression toward others” (Seyfarth, 1996:200). Travers and Cooper (1996) state that stress shows itself through absenteeism and teachers leaving the profession. The costs of reduced productivity and loss of trained teachers results in the Department of Education losing millions of rands.

Simpson (1976), in Travers and Cooper (1996:30), suggests “that sickness absence is a way that teachers can allow themselves time to temporarily withdraw from stress at work, without having to make a definite break. It is believed this then allows teachers to continually readjust to stressful work situations by such occasional withdrawals, and at the same time, develop skills necessary to deal with the sources of stress that they face”. Absence is viewed as one of the means of withdrawal from

stressful work situations (Steers *et al.*, 1996:409). Travers and Cooper (1996:30) argue that there is a significant association between stress and job dissatisfaction, the total days absent and intention to leave teaching. Norton (1998:99) states “stress and stress-induced illness is lower among teachers assigned to ✓ schools where the principal is seen as supportive”. A supportive principal treats teachers “as equal and shows concern for their well-being” (Seyfarth, 1996:193).

According to Ironside and Seifert (1995:17) “Stress increases absence rates, poor quality in task completion and a reduction in non-teaching duties all diminish the education of learners, weaken national standards of attainment and reduce teacher-effectiveness”. But they further state that this does not prove that satisfaction causes a more effective school performance. Arnold and Feldman (1986) suggest that absenteeism is closely related to job satisfaction. Teachers who are dissatisfied are more likely to be frequently absent from their schools.

High absenteeism may also be an indication of dissatisfaction in the organization (Nel *et al.*, 2001:586). These authors also argue ✓ that lack of job satisfaction influences absenteeism. When job satisfaction is positive, staff personnel are motivated toward serving the organization and goal achievement; such an attitude leads to improved attendance (Hoy and Miskel, 1996). Many

sources indicate that personal factors contribute to absenteeism, but that job dissatisfaction may be the real cause of a large percentage of teacher absences. Coller (1975:53) supports the view that "job dissatisfaction is the real cause of many absences that are ostensibly the result of illness, family responsibilities or other personal reasons".

Research has pretty well demonstrated an inverse relationship between satisfaction and absenteeism. When satisfaction is high, absenteeism tends to be low, when satisfaction is low; absenteeism tends to be high (Luthans, 1995:129). Steyn and Van Wyk (1999) state that there is a link between job satisfaction and performance, reasoning that a happy teacher is a productive teacher. Kreitner and Kinicki (2001:228) contend that satisfaction leads to higher performance and argue that such higher performance leads to satisfaction. Travers and Cooper (1996) state that poor working conditions lead to frustration and dissatisfaction, which in turn leads to absenteeism.

According to Norton (1998) teachers who receive low performance rating, are linked with higher levels of absenteeism. Teachers rated unsatisfactory are absent significantly more days than those rated satisfactory. Steers *et al.* (1996) state that job satisfaction is highly related to frequency of absence. Dubin (1991:28) maintains that the principal needs to balance the

organizational goal attainment with teacher satisfaction in order to improve teacher attendance. Principals should show that they care for teachers.

2.2.2 **Morale and teacher absenteeism**

Coller (1975:52) maintains that absenteeism is related to morale. He further indicates that, in fact, absenteeism is one of the indices of morale: one of the obvious signs of low morale is absenteeism. According to Coller (1975:54) satisfied teachers have low absence records and dissatisfied teachers have high absence records: "Low morale teachers" miss more school days than do "high morale teachers". Seyfarth (1996:195) writes ✓
 "teachers' morale is high in schools in which principals provide support by offering constructive suggestions" to counteract low morale.

2.2.3 **Sick leave and its problems**

The abuse of sick leave benefits is a general problem in many schools because teachers call in sick when they want to avoid work (Cherrington, 1995:499). Bramham (1997:48) states that ✓
 long-term absence is not much of a problem but the problem is usually the large number of days lost due to relatively short absences. In McGoldrick (1996:105) Allen and Torrington share

the same sentiment when they write that “it’s not the people who take weeks off, it’s the people who take one or two days off at a time who are abusing the system. Longer absence will be more obviously sickness whereas a one day is more likely to be a hangover”.

According to Ehrenberg *et al.* (1991) school sick leave and other leave policies influence teacher absenteeism. Teachers use sick leave both for serious illness and minor illnesses. In the absence of requirements for doctors’ notes certifying short illnesses they use sick leave for additional paid vacation on days when they actually have no health problems. Imants and Van Zoelen (1995) support Ehrenberg by stating that teachers sometimes misuse sick leave by taking sick leave when they are not really sick. Like employees in other contexts, teachers are not always completely honest in such matters and seek, in fact, some extra vacation time.

2.2.4 **Teachers’ leave policies influence absenteeism**

Teachers’ absenteeism depends only on the leave provisions found in their contracts. Contracts include the annual number of leave days permitted, whether a sick leave bank is present, the number of days for bereavement and leave permitted per one family member (Norton, 1998). School policies governing the

annual usage of teachers' leave days that appear in teachers' contracts clearly do influence teachers' usage of leave days. If teachers are allowed to bank the unused sick leave days, they will keep their sick leave days for future use. If they are not allowed to bank their leave days, they will take sick leave even if they are not sick, rather than lose them (Norton, 1998).

Teachers, who have accumulated the maximum number of sick leave days, tend to use additional days randomly rather than lose them. Ehrenberg *et al.* (1991) found that some teachers, older than age 55, reduce their usage of sick leave days. This is due to the fact that they will be paid for unused leave days when they retire. This infers that school districts, that allow for unlimited accumulation of unused leave, have lower usage of sick leave.

2.2.5 **School policies**

Steers *et al.* (1996:416) maintain, "Organizational practices have a major influence on attendance. These practices either encourage or discourage attendance. These practices are the nature of an organization's absence control policies, the work design or task interdependencies that characterize a particular job, organizational recruitment and selection practices and expressed job expectation" by school management team.

According to Levy (1995:35) “personnel policies or lack of them, encourage or even condone absenteeism”. Inadequate personnel policies are seen in the following:

- the principal does not measure levels of teacher absenteeism;
- the principal does not demand medical certificates when these are required; ✓
- the principal only takes action after the teacher has been absent at least three or four times; and
- the principal accepts the fact that the teachers take the odd day off as sick leave, even when they are not ill.

According to Dekker and Lemmer (1993:226) the principal has responsibility for managing a school. He has to draw up a school attendance policy and procedures of reporting when a teacher is absent from school. This helps to enhance attendance and discourage absenteeism.

2.2.6 **Conflict in schools**

Frequent conflict can have a harmful impact upon the behaviour of people in schools. Educators respond to conflict in various ways: sometimes, educators become alienated, apathetic and indifferent. ✓ A widely occurring response is “absence, tardiness and turnover” (Owens, 1998:232).

Principals should avoid conflict in their schools or, if it cannot be avoided, should try and deal with it as soon as possible. If conflict is allowed to continue it can destroy the morale of ✓ teachers. Unresolved conflict is detrimental to productivity, performance declines and absenteeism increases.

Nathan (1996:153) maintains “if conflicts are not resolved they are likely to escalate, moving from minor disagreement to a major battle. The principal must be able to resolve conflict and reconcile ✓ the worrying parties” because, if the conflict continues, it “adversely affects the moral and performance of other staff members” and increases absenteeism.

2.2.7 Alcohol abuse

Alcohol abuse is responsible for a high level of absenteeism: male teachers often miss Mondays because they are drunk on Sundays. The researcher has observed that alcoholism is a problem in KwaZulu-Natal schools. The researcher has also observed that absenteeism occurs after paydays. Norton (1998:98) states that although studies of teacher absenteeism indicate high absenteeism on Mondays and Fridays, teachers are ✓ absent on Wednesdays more than on any other day.

2.2.8 Gender and age affect teachers' absenteeism

Age and sex play a role in the absence rates of teachers. Travers and Cooper (1996:70) state "young female teachers have a higher voluntary absenteeism than their colleagues, in particular their married female colleagues with children". Steers and Porter (1975:370) maintain that women, as a group, are absent more frequently than men, the reason being traditional family responsibilities assigned to women. They expect female absenteeism to increase with family size. However, "the available evidence suggests that absenteeism rate for women declines throughout their careers (possibly because the family responsibilities associated with young children declines)" (Steers and Porter, 1975:370). It is evident that "unavoidable absenteeism increases with age (apparently because of health), while avoidable absenteeism does not" (Steers and Porter, 1975:380). Steers and Porter (1975) maintain that gender; age and family responsibilities do appear to place constraints on the attendance behaviour of some teachers.

Norton (1998:97) agrees that women and men show different patterns of absenteeism with age. The number of absences claimed by females increases with age. Male teachers claim more days in the "thirties than at any other age". Norton notes that there is a significant difference in the occurrence of absence for

men between the ages of 21 and 39. Taken as whole, male teachers have fewer absences than female teachers. Norton ✓ reports that teachers with two to four years' experience and those with 23-25 years have fewer absences.

Norton (1998:97) also states that primary school teachers miss school far more often than do secondary school teachers. According to his study primary school teachers averaged 6,63 days of absence per year, compared to 3,32 days for secondary ✓ school teachers. The reason for this difference is that primary school teachers do not specialize and this may promote absenteeism because when they are absent any teachers available on that day can teach their classes. Unlike teachers in primary schools, secondary school teachers specialize in their subjects, so when a teacher is absent nobody teaches his subject.

2.2.9 Relationships at work as a cause of absenteeism

Travers and Cooper (1996) maintain that teachers experience stress as a result of their relationships with colleagues, head teachers and learners. They argue that the dominant source of stress is the quality of interpersonal relationships and good social relationships are of great value when providing support, which may alleviate stress. They suggest that schools should try to enhance the social support received by staff and that a great deal

of the responsibility for doing this must lie with the principal. Norton (1998:99) states, "Unlike the supportive school principal, supportive colleagues do not reduce the level of stress-induced illness". Teachers are afraid to protest about their workload when ✓ they are overloaded, because they do not want to let their fellow teachers down. Unfortunately, the way to cope with this overload may be absenteeism (Travers and Cooper, 1996). Although absenteeism may enable some teachers to cope, it may have a resulting negative impact on relationships because classes of absentee teachers have to be taught by others on the staff.

Travers and Cooper (1996:53) identify "learners' attitude and behaviour as causing teacher stress and absenteeism". According to Norton (1998:100) in schools where learners perform ✓ badly and are often absent, teachers tend also to be absent more often. It is discouraging to teach a class with some of the learners absent, because the teacher has to repeat the lessons taught when the learners were absent.

2.2.10 **Absence culture**

Steers *et al.* (1996:416) state, "the amount of absences taken is influenced by the prevailing absence culture". They further state that employees withhold their presence from work to make up for pressures, stress or the constraint imposed by fixed schedules.

Teachers might take turns in being absent: “If you were absent last week, it’s all right for me to be absent tomorrow”.

In Steers *et al.* (1996:416) absence culture is defined as “the beliefs and practices influencing the totality of absences – their frequency and duration within an institution”. Absence culture “sets limits on the appropriate levels of absence”, because the absence of one teacher affects other teachers in the school (Steers *et al.*, 1996:416). Absence culture can influence attendance motivation and subsequently attendance. Steers *et al.* (1996:416) further state “absence culture can be distinguished both in their culture salience and in their trust”. High cultural salience means that the group members have similar views about what constitutes an acceptable level of absence: low salience means that far less homogeneity exists. It is important to note, “high salience does not imply a norm of low absenteeism, but denotes a shared sense of what level of absence is acceptable” (Steers *et al.*, 1996:416).

2.2.11 **Employees’ attitudes, values and goals**

Over and above the absence culture in determining attendance motivation is employees’ attitudes, values and goals (Steers *et al.*, 1996:417). When teachers have positive attitudes and values towards their work, they will always be present at school, but if

they have negative attitudes, they will frequently absent themselves from school.

2.2.12. **Transport problems**

Steers and Porter (1975:37) suggest that difficulty in getting to work can at times influence actual attendance. The researcher has observed that teachers, who work in schools where transport is poor, tend to be absent more often than teachers who work in areas with good transport. In some areas there is no public transport and teachers organize their own transport. When the teachers miss organized transport, they will not be able to get to school and this increases absenteeism.

22/08

2.3 EFFECTS OF TEACHER ABSENTEEISM

According to Imants and Van Zoelen (1995) a high rate of sickness absenteeism is associated with high costs for any institution and has a negative impact on workplace conditions. Scott and Wimbush (1991:506) write "interruptions in the continuity of learners' regular instruction contribute to lower achievement scores and increases the remedial costs of education". It is not just about increasing costs but providing remedial assistance because of disruptions in teaching.

Armstrong (1995:839) thus maintains that teacher absenteeism is ✓ disruptive and costly.

A high rate of teachers' sickness absence is supposed to affect the quality of education in schools in a negative way. Scott and Wimbush (1991) state that absenteeism among teachers jeopardizes the quality of education that children in our society receive. Norton (1998) maintains that teacher absenteeism adversely affects learners' achievement and has a negative impact on student learning. Ehrenberg *et al.* (1991) argue that teacher absence from the classroom does not appear to be associated with learners' academic performance, but further state that one should not conclude that teacher absenteeism has no impact on student learning. Milkovich and Boudreau (1994:188) state that performance is very important and they further elaborate by mentioning that even the best performing employees are not valuable if they miss work frequently.

Teacher absenteeism is also a problem in school because of its effects on the job performance of teachers (Cole and Walker, 1989:29). According to Redman (1995:22) "the results of absenteeism add up to poor work" by both teachers and learners. This does not mean that regular attendance will increase the educator's performance but frequent absenteeism, according to Matteson and Ivancevich (1987:71), "is a major contribution to

lost productivity". Seyfarth (1996:199) states, "excessive and prolonged stress saps any teacher's energy and sharply reduces productivity". If absenteeism reaches high levels, it can destroy organizational performance and weaken organizational effectiveness. This emphasizes the importance of attending even to trivial things because in the long run they can grow and affect the whole school. ✓

Most principals regard absence as a "planning headache". An absence of one day is a major problem because the school management team knows of it only on the morning it occurs and this forces them to run around trying to get a teacher to replace the absent teacher (McGoldrick, 1996:104). ✓

Teacher absenteeism has a negative impact as it can worsen relationships when classes of an absent teacher have to be taught by others on the staff (Travers and Cooper, 1996:52). The burden of covering for absentees often falls on the rest of the staff who must "apply extra effort and suffer the additional strain of trying to do more than one thing at once" (Betts, 1993:247). ✓

Teacher absenteeism has an adverse effect on the morale of the staff (Gool, 1996). Absenteeism does not end with the lost time of individuals who are absent, but increases many times because of the more extensive repercussions it has on the work of others. ✓

Principals in primary schools often have to, themselves, replace absent teachers and this takes them away from their duties (Ironsides and Seifert, 1995). Betts (1993:247) emphasizes that teachers who have avoidable reasons for absenteeism should be interviewed and given a clear understanding of the effects of irresponsible action. Principals when interviewed highlighted the problems of learners roaming about, fighting in classrooms, damaging school property, such as school furniture and disturbing other classes if teachers were absent and the school did not have anyone to replace them.

2.4 WHY TEACHER ABSENTEEISM IS A MANAGEMENT ISSUE

According to Dubin (1991:18) teacher absenteeism can be a difficult problem if principals and their school management teams allow it to continue. Regardless of the size of the school an effective attendance policy and practice should and can be enforced. It takes a strong commitment by principals, schools' management teams and staff involved to maintain a good attendance record. Principals and their school management teams should provide support to educators by involving educators and parents in the resolution of school problems, such as absenteeism. Principals and school management teams should

give all the information to teachers to determine the need for increased support (Dubin, 1991:39).

It is the duty of principals and their management teams to see to it that schools function effectively and efficiently. Although all the members of school management teams have this responsibility, accountability remains with principals. However, principals alone cannot reduce teacher absenteeism. They need the support and assistance of deputy principals and heads of department. Pitkoff (1993:40) states that teachers should if possible report their impending absence to their heads of the department, who are their immediate superiors.

Armstrong (1995:839) maintains, "in order to reduce ✓ absenteeism, there must be a total commitment on the part of the management". According to Sergiovanni (1987:16) principals and their school management teams must be concerned with the actual development and articulation of educational programmes, but if teachers are frequently absent these cannot be implemented. Sergiovanni (1987:16) argues that because principals are in the position of leaders, they are best suited for staff motivation. Principals should be the focal point for staff motivation and staff morale booster. Hall and Hord (1987) say principals are the key to what happens in their schools and this includes teacher absenteeism.

Morale promotion is the responsibility of all the members of staff, but it is particularly important that principals and deputy principals are active in its development: without their visible encouragement and participation, it is unlikely to develop (Humphreys, 1993:68).

Dennison and Shenton (1987:216) argue that more centralised and formalised schools tend to produce educators with less loyalty to their principals and their institutions. In such situations interpersonal relationships will be characterized by mistrust, lack of both confidence and supportive behaviour. This eventually may lead to hostility and absenteeism.

The researcher believes that principals and their management teams should have sound relationships with their subordinates. Principals who lack human skills are bound to encounter endless problems in their administrative and management tasks, one of which is controlling teacher absenteeism. The basic reward for principals, who succeed in human relations, is well explained by Bennet *et al.* (2003:152). They argue, "if interpersonal relationships are positive and harmonious, every school member will instinctively want to give his/her best contribution towards the realisation of the organizational goals". The strongest preventer of teacher absenteeism can be the cohesiveness and

commitment of the whole staff, which is dependent upon individual effort.

Human resources in school are the most important kind of resources there are. It is important that principals and school management teams manage these resources in such a way that quality learning and teaching is guaranteed (Sacred Heart College, 1999). It is the responsibility of principals and school management teams to make sure that educator absence causes as few negative feelings as possible among other members of staff (Sacred Heart College, 1999). To achieve this, school principals must accept their own responsibility and carry out their duty of disciplining educators when necessary.

If teachers are frequently absent from school, this may result in parents withdrawing their children from the school. When the number of learners is reduced, the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture will reduce the school's financial support and some educators will become surplus in the school's Post Provisioning Norm. This does not only affect Post Level One educators, but even Post Level Two (head of department) and Post Level Three (deputy principal) can be affected and become surplus. Although principals can never be considered surplus in their school establishments, their salaries may be reduced if their

schools are regraded to a lower level because of a drop in learner numbers.

2.5 SUMMARY

This Chapter explored the reasons for teacher absenteeism and its effect on teaching and learning and on education as a whole. Finally, it explored why teacher absenteeism is a management issue.

2.6 REFERENCES

1. ARMSTRONG, M. 1995. *A Handbook of Personnel Management Practice*. London: Kogan Page Limited.
2. ARNOLD, H.J. and FELDMAN, D.C. 1986. *Organizational Behaviour*. Singapore: McGraw-Hill Inc.
3. BENNETT, N., CRAWFORD, M. and CARTWRIGHT, M. (eds). 2003. *Effective Educational Leaderships*. London: Open University Press.
4. BETTS, P.W. 1993. *Supervising Management*. London: Pitman Publishing.
5. BRAMHAM, J. 1997. *Human Resources Planning*. London: Routledge.
6. CHERRINGTON, D.J. 1995. *The Management of Human Resources*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.
7. COLE, M. and WALKER, J. (eds). 1998. *Teaching and Stress*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.

8. COLLER, R.D. 1975. An Analysis of Teacher Absenteeism and its Relationships to Teacher Morale and Demographic Characteristics of Teachers. *Unpublished PhD. Thesis*: University of Michigan.
9. DEKKER, E.I. and LEMMER, D.M. (eds). 1993. *Critical Issues in Modern Education*. Durban: Butterworths Publishers.
10. DENNISON, B. and SHENTON, K. 1987. *Challenges in Educational Management: Principles into Practice*. London: Croom Helm.
11. DUBIN, A.E. 1991. *The Principal as Chief Executive Officer*. London: Falmer Press.
12. EHRENBURG, R.G., EHRENBURG, R.A., REES, S.I. and EHRENBURG, E.L. 1991. School District Leave Policies, Teacher Absenteeism and Student Achievement. *The Journal of Human Resources*. 26(1):72-105.
13. GOOL, S. 1996. Absenteeism Nightmare. *Productivity SA*. 21(1):15-18.

14. HALL, G.E. and HORD, S.M. 1987. *Change in School: Facilitating the Process*. New York: State University of New York Press.
15. HOY, W.K. and MISKEL, C.G. 1996. *Educational Administrative Theory, Research and Practice*. New York: Random House.
16. HUMPHREYS, T. 1993. *A different kind of teacher*. London: Cassell.
17. IMANTS, J. & VAN ZOELLEN, A. 1995. Teachers' Sickness Absence in Primary Schools, School Climate and Teachers' Sense of Efficacy. *School Organization*. 15(1):77-86.
18. IRONSIDE, M. and SIEFERT, R. 1995. *Industrial Relations in Schools*. London: Routledge.
19. KREITNER, R. and KINICKI, A. 2001. *Organizational Behaviour*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
20. LEVY, A. 1995. *The Complete Guide To Employee Absenteeism*. Kenwyn: Juta.

21. LUTHANS, F. 1995. *Organizational Behaviour*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.
22. MATTESON, M.T. and IVANCEVICH, J.M. 1987. *Controlling Work Stress: Effective Human Resource and Management Strategies*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
23. MCGOLDRICK, A.E. (ed.). 1996. *Cases in Human Resources Management*. London: Pitman Publishing.
24. MILKOVICH, G.T. and BOUDREAU, J.W. 1994. *Human Resources Management*. Illinois: Irwin Inc.
25. NATHAN, M. 1996. *The Headteacher's Survival Guide*. London: Kogan Page.
26. NEL, P.S., GERBER, P.D., VAN DYK, P.S., HAASBROEK, G.D., SCHULTZ, H.B., SONG, T.I. and WERNER, A. 2001. *Human Resources Management*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
27. NORTON, M.S. 1998. Teacher Absenteeism: A growing dilemma in education. *Contemporary Education, Winter*. 69(2):95-104.

28. OWENS, R.G. 1998. *Organizational Behaviour in Education*. London: Allyn and Bacon.
29. PITKOFF, E. 1993. Teacher Absenteeism: What Administrators can do. *NASSP Bulletin*. 77(551):39-45.
30. REDMAN, W. 1995. *Counselling your staff*. London: Kogan Page.
31. ROBEY, G.P. 1994. *In charge: Supervising for the first time*. London: Pitman Publishing.
32. SACRED HEART COLLEGE. 1999. *Human Resources Management*. Johannesburg: College Press.
33. SCOTT, K.D. and WIMBUSH, J.C. 1991. Teacher Absenteeism in Secondary Education. *Educational Administration Quarterly*. 27(4):506-529.
34. SERGIOVANNI, T.J. 1987. *The Principal: A reflective practice perspective*. Newton: Allyn and Bacon.
35. SEYFARTH, J.T. 1996. *Personnel Management for Effective Schools*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

36. STEERS, R.M. and PORTER, L.W. 1975. *Motivation and Work Behaviour*. Singapore: McGraw-Hill Book Company.
37. STEERS, R.M., PORTER, L.W. and BIGLEY, G.A. 1996. *Motivation and Leadership at Work*. Singapore: McGraw-Hill Book Company.
38. STEYN, G.M. and VAN WYK, J.N. 1999. Job satisfaction: perceptions of principals and teachers in urban black schools in South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*. 19 (1):37-43.
39. TRAVERS, C.J. and COOPER, C.L. 1996. *Teachers Under Pressure: Stress in the Teaching Profession*. London: Routledge.

CHAPTER THREE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This Chapter presents a discussion of the data collection that was employed in this research. There is also an analysis of the data that was collected.

3.2 INTERVIEWS

Interviewing is one of the most effective methods of data collection as it gives the interviewer ample opportunity of gathering the respondents' full and detailed answers to the questions set. Respondents are afforded an opportunity to understand what is required of them: for example, respondents might not understand what the question requires of them but with this research method, the researcher may clarify further (Soer, 1997:106). It is highly flexible in that respondents can answer in their own words.

Another advantage of using an interview schedule is that the interviewer has the opportunity of persuading respondents to participate in the project, by emphasizing the significance of their roles in the study, which otherwise would not have been possible had the study been undertaken, for instance, by using posted

questionnaires. Interviews ensure maximum participation by interviewees/respondents and control of the process remains with the interviewer, unlike questionnaires where the control rests with the respondents (Johnson, 1994:44). Interviews also allow for greater depth than is the case with other methods of collecting data.

3.3 SAMPLE

It was decided to interview five primary school principals in the Umbumbulu area because the researcher teaches in this area and would thus be able to collect information fairly easily, as the schools are in close proximity to one another. The schools that were selected are representative of primary schools in the Umbumbulu area in terms of learners, staff demographics and issues of concern.

3.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Permission to conduct research in the areas studied was requested and granted by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture through the offices of the Umbumbulu area (Appendices B and C). Principals were also requested and informed about the study when the researcher visited their schools. The interviewer assured the principals of his adherence

to the confidentiality principle, also that participation in the study was voluntary (Appendix D).

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

The structured and unstructured interviews that were used to obtain the data for this study, comprised ten questions. Five principals of selected primary schools in the Umbumbulu District were interviewed. The researcher conducted the interviews and took notes of the responses that were received. The responses that were obtained will be presented in this Section. The data will be analysed question by question. Each question will be listed in the order that it appears in the interview schedule. This will be followed by a list of the responses made to the question. The interviewees will be designated as A, B, C, D and E and their responses will be presented in this sequence. The data will then be analysed.

Question One

Is teacher absenteeism a problem at your school?

Responses

A: Yes, but not a big problem.

B: Yes.

C: Yes

D: Yes.

E: No, but sometimes one or two teachers are absent due to some reasons.

Data Analysis

80% of the respondents answered "yes" to this Question and 20% of the respondents answered "no".

Question Two

Are the same teachers absent more than once a month?

Responses

A: Yes.

B: Yes.

C: Yes.

D: Yes.

E: Usually the same teachers absent themselves more than once a month.

Data Analysis

100% of the respondents answered “yes” to this Question. This proves that the same individuals in most cases affect a school’s attendance.

23/08

Question Three

What problems do you experience when teachers are absent?

A: Learners are uncontrolled; this results in poor results at the end of the month or year.

B: Learners roam about, fighting in the classrooms and learners damage school property.

C: Learners turn to disturb other classes. Learners have a right to learn and if one teacher is absent, they are disadvantaged. Unoccupied classes may even disturb occupied classes and educators from concentrating in their classes.

D: Nobody to teach learners.

E: Teachers get upset for accommodating learners who are without a teacher due to absenteeism. Teachers find it difficult to control a big number of learners in their classes. Some learning areas are not taught and the timetable is not followed.

Data analysis

80% of the respondents mentioned that learners are left alone and have no one to teach them and further mentioned that unoccupied classes disturb other classes because they make a lot of noise. The teachers have from time to time to stop teaching their classes to try and control the classes without teachers. 20% of the respondents mentioned that teachers are not happy to accommodate the learners of absent teachers and it is difficult to teach properly when two classes have been combined in one classroom. If the school allows for specialization, the learning areas or subjects assigned to the absent teachers are not taught, and forces teachers to change the timetable or not follow the timetable.

Question Four

When teachers are absent, how do you manage their classes?

- A: The class teacher of the other class combines the classes. The principal looks after the class whose teacher is absent, and if the principal cannot occupy the class for some reason, the class is dismissed early.
- B: The principal occupies the classes. The class is given work and monitored by the head of department. The class is divided into other classes of the same standard.
- C: We combine the classes of the same standard and give them work to do and see to it that the work is monitored.
- D: I combine the classes of the standard or I (principal) supervise the class whose teacher is absent.
- E: The class is divided into other classes of the same standard.

Data Analysis


100% of the respondents maintained that they combined the classes of the same standard.

20% of the respondents mentioned that classes were given work that they could do without being supervised.

20% of the respondents said they dismissed classes of absent teachers and learners so they went home early.

Question Five

When teachers return after being absent, do you ask for medical certificates if they claim that they were sick?

- 
- A: Yes, I do, for submission of the leave forms to the Department.
- B: Yes, if he/she has been absent for more than two days.
- C: If an educator is absent from school for one day no medical certificate should be produced. If it is more than that, then it should be demanded.
- D: Yes.
- E: Yes, if he/she has been absent for three consecutive days the medical certificate is produced by the teacher concerned. Leave forms are issued. He/she also signs the leave register.

Data Analysis

80% of the respondents answered yes to this question.

20% of the respondents responded by saying that if the teacher was absent for one day no medical certificate should be produced. The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture's policy on leave states that the medical certificate should be produced when a teacher has been absent from school for more than two days. But the principal is expected by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture to demand a medical certificate, even if the teacher has been absent for only one day, if the principal has established that this has become a pattern. A day's sick leave more than once a month can amount to more than twenty days in a year.

Question Six

According to your records, were female teachers absent more than male teachers in the year 2002?

A: Yes.

B: Yes.

C: Yes.

D: No.

E: Yes.

Data Analysis

80% of the respondents responded by saying "yes" to this question. 20% of the respondents said "no".

This could result from the fact that female teachers teach mostly in primary schools and there are far more female teachers in the teaching profession. This could also be the result of the traditional belief that women are the ones who have to look after sick children in families. Not all female teachers became teachers because they wanted to, but it was the only profession they could pursue. Most of the male teachers became teachers because they wanted to.

Question Seven

Which age group is absent most frequently?

20-34 years;

35-47 years;

48-60 years.

- A: 20-34 years.
- B: 35-47 years.
- C: 35-47 years
- D: 35-47 years
- E: 20-34 years

Data analysis

60% of the respondents chose the 35-47 years as the group, which absented themselves most frequently.

40% of the respondents chose the 20-34 years as the group, which absented themselves most frequently.

Question Eight

What penalties should be suffered by frequent absentees?

- A: The Department must deduct money from educator's salary when he/she is absent from work.
- B: Docking of salary.
- C: Disciplinary hearing must be conducted.

D: The educator should receive no payment on the days he/she was absent.

E: The days on which an educator is absent from school should be counted against his/her leave gratuity.

Data Analysis

60% of the interviewees suggested that the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture should not pay educators for the days on which they were not at work.

20% of the interviewees suggested that the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture must conduct disciplinary action.

20% of the interviewees mentioned that the days on which an educator did not turn up for work should be subtracted from leave that the educator had accumulated.

Question Nine

Does the Department help principals to enforce teacher attendance?

- A: No.
- B: No.
- C: No.
- D: No.
- E: Yes. The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture is trying very hard. People from the Regional Office visited Umbumbulu District twice to empower principals as to how to handle teacher absenteeism in our schools and a new leave dispensation was issued by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture.

Data Analysis

80% of the interviewees said “no”. It was assumed that principals were not satisfied with the way the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture handled the problem of teacher absenteeism.

20% of the interviewees said “yes”.

Question Ten

If the answer to No. 9 is “no”, how do you think the Department should assist principals?

- A: The Department should properly control the leave forms, design control registers of absentees and visit schools to check and speak to culprits.
- B: The Department should do follow-up to frequent absentees, scrutinize medical certificates and contact the doctors who issued them.
- C: The Department should apply the principle of “no work, no pay” and it should intensify this principle.
- D: The Department must assist principals by not paying educators if the principal has recommended “leave without pay” or has not recommended the leave.
- E: No response.

Data Analysis

40% of the principals who responded to this Question said that the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture should apply the “no work, no pay” principle.

40% of the respondents said that the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture should scrutinize the medical certificates and contact the medical practitioners who issued them.

20% felt that the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture should tighten the control of leave and design a control register of frequent absentees.

20% of the respondents did not respond to this question.

3.6 FINDINGS

Teacher absenteeism is a problem in primary schools. The high level of teacher absenteeism is in most cases influenced by the same individuals. When teachers are absent from schools, principals experience various problems, like controlling their classes, learners fighting and sometimes damaging their desks. Principals dismiss classes and learners go home early. It is a fact that the quality of education given to the learners is compromised. Principals are inconsistent when dealing with absenteeism. Female teachers have higher absence rates compared to male teachers. Principals feel that frequent absentees should not be paid for the days on which they did not turn up for work. The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture does not help principals in enforcing teacher attendance. Lack of commitment on the part of teachers is the main contributory factor and stress is the second contributory factor.

3.7 SUMMARY

In this Chapter the researcher examined and discussed the data collection procedures that were used in the study. The data that had been collected from structured and unstructured interviews was then presented and analysed. The next Chapter deals with recommendations and programmes that the researcher believes principals could introduce to reduce absenteeism in primary schools in the Umbumbulu area.

3.8 REFERENCES

1. JOHNSON, D. 1994. *Research Methods in Education Management*. London: Longman Publishers.
2. SOER, J.W.A. 1997. *Research Methodology*, National Higher Diploma: Educational Management (notes), Azaliah College of Further Education: Pretoria.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this Chapter the researcher will provide recommendations to solve problems highlighted in Chapter Two and findings from Chapter Three.

4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Absenteeism is a symptom in a school, the causes of which may originate in or out of the school. Principals should first identify the causes of teacher absenteeism. Once the causes have been identified they can start addressing the problem of teacher absenteeism.

4.2.1 Stress reduction

Principals should look at their leadership styles as it is said that teachers who work under supportive principals do not experience much stress. The school management team should design programmes to alleviate teacher-stress. Superiors should treat their subordinates as equals (Arnold and Feldman, 1986:131). School management teams should be "trained to give better performance appraisals, to listen to employees' problems

effectively and to communicate job assignments and instructions more clearly" (Arnold and Feldman, 1986:478).

Principals and educators must make sure that they prevent stress by planning and controlling their personal time effectively (Bittel and Newstrom, 1990:542). Travers and Cooper (1996:51) suggest that schools should try to enhance the social support received by educators. Principals have lower performing subordinates when they show little consideration, but higher performing subordinates when principals show a great deal of consideration.

Supervision is a moderately important source of job satisfaction (Arnold and Feldman, 1986:88). Supervision styles seem to have some impact on teacher job satisfaction. Principals who establish a supportive personal relationship with teachers and take a personal interest in them contribute to their job satisfaction. Principals should treat all educators fairly and equitably.

Boredom is a source of dissatisfaction in teachers. Principals can help relieve boredom by providing staff development programmes. School management teams should be "fair, considerate and competent" to create positive feelings of satisfaction with supervision (Cherrington, 1995:70). Principals should help to

establish the right climate for teacher job satisfaction (Bittel and Newstrom, 1990:252).

4.2.2 **Resolve conflicts**

Conflict is disruptive and should be avoided (Owens, 1998:236; Arnold and Feldman, 1986:210). If conflict cannot be avoided it must be resolved “in a way that enhances organizational effectiveness without creating further hostility or destructive behaviour” (Arnold and Feldman, 1986:211). Principals should resolve conflict and reconcile the warring parties (Nathan, 1996:154).

Conflict affects the functioning of the school as teachers will resort to absenting themselves from school to avoid the situation at school (Owens, 1998:232). Effective management of conflict “can lead to outcomes that are productive and enhance the health of the organization” (Owens, 1998:283).

4.2.3 **Drinking problems**

Principals should confront drunken teachers and encourage them to explain why their attendance is deteriorating. “This can provide an opportunity to question the use of alcohol” (Bittel and Newstrom, 1990:328). Alcoholics should be offered the

opportunity for treatment and rehabilitation (Bittel and Newstrom, 1990).

4.2.4 **Organizational practices**

At school level a prevention of absenteeism policy consists of three related domains. First absenteeism records should provide a clear basis for diagnosing the problem at school level (Imants and Van Zoelen, 1995:85; Norton, 1995:104). According to Armstrong (1995) a documented attendance policy, which spells out the school's views on absenteeism, must be issued to all educators in each school. The absence policy and absence reduction strategies should not be developed by the school management team alone: teachers and union participation is crucial to make sure the policy works (Finnemore, 1996:28).

Finnemore (1996) further emphasizes proper measurement and keeping of individual teacher and group records. According to Butler (1995:9) "accurate recording of absenteeism is a prerequisite for meaningful measurement, which forms the basis of analysis and control". Correct reporting procedures help to identify the school's absenteeism level. Imants and Van Zoelen (1995) state that the rules for reporting sick and to whom the report should be addressed must be known. Norton (1998:104) suggests that absenteeism is reduced when teachers are required

to report their absences directly to an immediate superior, for example Post Level One educators report to their heads of department.

Recording absenteeism percentages, the frequency of absenteeism, the number of teachers reporting sick, the duration of absenteeism, the specific groups involved and the specific time of the year with the highest frequencies of absenteeism, can help principals to find out the real causes of absenteeism in their schools. Written records of absenteeism are most useful for management planning in the future.

Principals should conduct a formal teacher interview after every absence (Tylczak, 1990:19). In the case of long-term absenteeism formalised follow-up activities are essential, for instance a progress report at specified times (Imants and Van Zoelen, 1995:85). Other teachers should be informed about an absent teacher.

Principals should check up on absent teachers with a visit or a phone call to their residences (Tylczak, 1990:19). Miner and Miner (1995:522) contend that spot checks at homes and visiting nurses can be useful in correcting the abuse of sick leave.

One solution to teacher absenteeism would be for schools to provide childcare facilities on school campus (Phillips, 1993:193). Butler (1995:10) states that crèche facilities should be provided in order to help female teachers with young children. Providing such service to teachers can reduce absenteeism because teachers will not have the problems of baby-sitters not reporting for work.

A school policy should be used to control absenteeism. It is no use having a policy unless it is implemented. Principals should discipline teachers, but at the same time provide counselling to members of staff with problems or they can help teachers by letting qualified counsellors counsel them (Butler, 1995:10).

4.2.5 **Improve staff morale**

Principals should promote and encourage the creation of positive staff morale (Humphreys, 1993:68). There should be interaction between staff to improve morale. Principals should approach teachers who absent themselves from staff interaction (Humphreys, 1993:69). The availability and approachability of the principal and deputy principal are crucial factors in the creation of positive staff morale.

4.2.6 **Mentoring of educators**

Principals should provide induction programmes for newly appointed educators. Once a teacher has been appointed a mentor should be assigned to him/her. The mentor should help and guide the new teacher in preparing and presenting lessons. Principals should make it a point that beginning teachers do not “end up with only the courses and students more senior teachers do not want” (Seyfarth, 1996:123).

4.2.7 **Two way communication**

Communication should be a two-way process. Teachers should not be afraid to approach principals with their problems. Principals should not hold back information that is intended for teachers. Communication should be open where teachers communicate freely without any hindrance (Bush and West-Burnham, 1994:245),

4.2.8 **Reward**

Teachers with good attendance records should be rewarded (Seyfarth, 1996:95). According to Arnold and Feldman (1986:344) a reward system reduces absenteeism and provides rewards to teachers for regular attendance.

4.2.9 Reduce educators' workload

Workloads should be equally distributed amongst teachers. Increased workloads lower the morale of teachers. The number of learners per class should at most be 40. If the number of learners exceeds 40 per class, principals should request school governing bodies to employ teacher assistants.

Many factors contribute to teacher absenteeism. Principals have an obligation to identify and attend to these factors in order to improve teacher attendance. Principals alone cannot reduce teacher-absenteeism without the involvement of all the stakeholders such as the Department of Education, teacher unions, school management teams and teachers themselves. Each of the stakeholders should be committed to reducing teacher absenteeism.

4.3 SUMMARY

In this Chapter the writer outlined recommendations that principals should employ in order to reduce teacher absenteeism in public primary schools in the Umbumbulu area. The principal of each public primary school has the obligation to improve teacher attendance and should attend to all factors which fall within his/her power, that hinder teacher attendance. The writer

recommends that all principals implement the aforementioned measures in their schools in order to reduce teacher absenteeism.

4.4 REFERENCES

1. ARMSTRONG, M. 1995. *A Handbook of Personnel Management Practice*. London: Kogan Page Limited.
2. ARNOLD, H.J. and FELDMAN, D.C. 1986. *Organizational Behaviour*. Singapore: McGraw-Hill Inc.
3. BITTEL, L.R. and NEWSTROM, J.W. 1990. *What Every Supervisor Should Know*. Singapore: McGraw-Hill Book Company.
4. BUSH, T. and WEST-BURNHAM, J. (eds). 1994. *The Principles of Educational Management*. Harlow: Longman Group Ltd.
5. BUTLER, J. 1995. Autocrats Accelerate Absenteeism. *Productivity SA*. 21(2):8-10.
6. CHERRINGTON, D.J. 1995. *The Management of Human Resources*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.
7. FINNEMORE, M. 1996. A Healthy Sick Leave Policy. *People Dynamics*. 14(3):26-29

8. HUMPHREYS, T. 1993. *A different kind of teacher*.
London: Cassell.

9. IMANTS, J. and VAN ZOELLEN, A. 1995. Teachers' Sickness Absence in Primary Schools, School Climate and Teachers' Sense of Efficacy. *School Organization*.15(1):77-86.

10. MINER, J.B. and MINER, M.G. 1995. *Personnel Industrial Relations: A Managerial Approach*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

11. NATHAN, M. 1996. *The Headteacher's Survival Guide*.
London: Kogan Page.

12. NORTON, M.S. 1998. Teacher Absenteeism: A growing dilemma in education. *Contemporary Education*, Winter. 69(2):95-104.

13. OWENS, R.G. 1998. *Organizational Behaviour in Education*. London: Allyn and Bacon.

14. PHILLIPS, B.N. 1993. *Educational and Psychological Perspective on Stress in Students, Teachers and Parents*.
Brandon: Clinical Psychology Publishing Company.

15. SEYFARTH, J.T. 1996. *Personnel Management for Effective Schools*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
16. TRAVERS, C.J. and COOPER, C.L. 1996. *Teachers Under Pressure: Stress in the Teaching Profession*. London: Routledge.
17. TYLCZAK, L. 1990. *Attacking absenteeism*. Los Altos: Crisp Publications.

4.5 BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS

1. ARMSTRONG, M. 1995. *A Handbook of Personnel Management Practice*. London: Kogan Page Limited.
2. ARNOLD, H.J. and FELDMAN, D.C. 1986. *Organizational Behaviour*. Singapore: McGraw-Hill Inc.
3. BENNETT, N., CRAWFORD, M. and CARTWRIGHT, M. (eds). 2003. *Effective Educational Leaderships*. London: Open University Press.
4. BETTS, P.W. 1993. *Supervising Management*. London: Pitman Publishing.
5. BITTEL, L.R. and NEWSTROM, J.W. 1990. *What Every Supervisor Should Know*. Singapore: McGraw-Hill Book Company.
6. BRAMHAM, J. 1997. *Human Resources Planning*. London: Routledge.

7. BUSH, T. and WEST-BURNHAM, J. (eds). 1994. *The Principles of Educational Management*. Harlow: Longman Group Ltd.
8. CHERRINGTON, D.J. 1995. *The Management of Human Resources*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.
9. COHEN, L. and MANION, L. 1989. *Research Methods in Education*. London: Routledge.
10. COLE, M. and WALKER, J. (eds). 1998. *Teaching and Stress*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
11. DEKKER, E.I. and LEMMER, D.M. (eds). 1993. *Critical Issues in Modern Education*. Durban: Butterworths Publishers.
12. DENNISON, B. and SHENTON, K. 1987. *Challenges in Educational Management: Principles into Practice*. London: Croom Helm.
13. DUBIN, A.E. 1991. *The Principal as Chief Executive Officer*. London: Falmer Press.

14. GROSSETT, M. 1999. *Discipline and dismissal: A practical guide for South African Managers*. Johannesburg: Thomas Publishing.
15. HALL, G.E. and HORD, S.M. 1987. *Change in School: Facilitating the Process*. New York: State University of New York Press.
16. HOY, W.K. and MISKEL, C.G. 1996. *Educational Administrative Theory, Research and Practice*. New York: Random House.
17. HUMPHREYS, T. 1993. *A different kind of teacher*. London: Cassell.
18. IRONSIDE, M. and SIEFERT, R. 1995. *Industrial Relations in Schools*. London: Routledge.
19. JOHNSON, D. 1994. *Research Methods in Education Management*. London: Longman Publishers.
20. KREITNER, R. and KINICKI, A. 2001. *Organizational Behaviour*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

21. LEVY, A. 1995. *The Complete Guide to Employee Absenteeism*. Kenwyn: Juta.
22. LUTHANS, F. 1995. *Organizational Behaviour*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.
23. MATTESON, M.T. and IVANCEVICH, J.M. 1987. *Controlling Work Stress: Effective Human Resource and Management Strategies*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
24. MAXWELL, J.A. 1996. *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. London: Sage Publications.
25. McGOLDRICK, A.E. (ed.). 1996. *Cases in Human Resources Management*. London: Pitman Publishing.
26. MILKOVICH, G.T. and BOUDREAU, J.W. 1994. *Human Resources Management*. Illinois: Irwin Inc.
27. MINER, J.B. and MINER, M.G. 1985. *Personnel Relations: A Management Approach*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

28. NATHAN, M. 1996. *The Headteacher's Survival Guide*. London: Kogan Page.
29. NEL, P.S., GERBER, P.D., VAN DYK, P.S., HAASBROEK, G.D., SCHULTZ, H.B., SONG, T.I. and WERNER, A. 2001. *Human Resources Management*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
30. OWENS, R.G. 1998. *Organizational Behaviour in Education*. London: Allyn and Bacon.
31. PEARSALL, J. 1999. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*. New York: Oxford University Press.
32. PHILLIPS, B.N. 1993. *Educational and Psychological Perspective on Stress in Students, Teachers and Parents*. Brandon: Clinical Psychology Publishing Company.
33. PLUNKETT, W. and ATTNER, R.E. 1992. *Introduction to Management*. Boston: PWS-Kent Publishing Company.
34. POWENEY, J. and WATTS, M. 1987. *Interviewing in Education Research*. London: Routledge and Kogan Page.

35. REDMAN, W. 1995. *Counselling your staff*. London: Kogan Page Ltd.
36. ROBEY, G.P. 1994. *In charge: Supervising for the first time*. London: Pitman Publishing.
37. SACRED HEART COLLEGE. 1999. *Human Resources Management*. Johannesburg: College Press.
38. SAPSFORD, R. and JUPP, V. (eds). 1996. *Collection and Analysis*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
39. SERGIOVANNI, T.J. 1987. *The Principal: A reflective practice perspective*. Newton: Allyn and Bacon.
40. SEYFARTH, J.T. 1996. *Personnel Management for Effective Schools*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
41. SOER, J.W.A. 1997. *Research Methodology*, National Higher Diploma: Educational Management (notes), Azaliah College of Further Education: Pretoria.
42. STEERS, R.M. and PORTER, L.W. 1975. *Motivation and Work Behaviour*. Singapore: McGraw-Hill Book Company.

43. STEERS, R.M., PORTER, L.W., and BIGLEY, G.A. 1996. *Motivation and Leadership at Work*. Singapore: McGraw-Hill Book Company.
44. TAYLOR, J.S. and BOGDAN, R. 1998. *Introduction to Qualitative Methods*. New York: John Wiley and Sons Inc.
45. TRAVERS, C.J. and COOPER, C.L. 1996. *Teachers Under Pressure: Stress in the Teaching Profession*. London: Routledge.
46. TYLCZAK, L. 1990. *Attacking absenteeism*. Los Altos: Crisp Publications.

JOURNALS

1. EHRENBURG, R.G., EHRENBURG, R.A., REES, S.I. and EHRENBURG, E.L. 1991. School District Leave Policies, Teacher Absenteeism and Student Achievement. *The Journal of Human Resources*. 26(1):72-105.
2. IMANTS, J. and VAN ZOELLEN, A. 1995. Teachers' Sickness Absence in Primary Schools, School Climate and Teachers' Sense of Efficacy. *School Organization*. 15(1):77-86.

3. NORTON, M.S. 1998. Teacher Absenteeism: A growing dilemma in education. *Contemporary Education*, Winter. 69(2):95-104.
4. PITKOFF, E. 1993. Teacher Absenteeism: What Administrators can do. *NASSP Bulletin*. 77 (551):39-45.
5. SCOTT, K.D. and WIMBUSH, J.C. 1991. Teacher Absenteeism in Secondary Education. *Educational Administration Quarterly*. 27 (4):506-529.
6. STEYN, G.M. and VAN WYK, J.N. 1999. Job satisfaction: perceptions of principals and teachers in urban black schools in South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*. 19(1):37-43.

PERIODICALS

1. BUTLER, J. 1995. Autocrats Accelerate Absenteeism. *Productivity SA*. 21(2):8-10.
2. FINNEMORE, M. 1996. A Healthy Sick Leave Policy. *People Dynamics*. 14(3):26-29.

3. GOOL, S. 1996. Absenteeism Nightmare. *Productivity SA*. 21(1):15-18.

(UNPUBLISHED) THESIS

1. COLLER, R.D. 1975. An Analysis of Teacher Absenteeism and its Relationships to Teacher Morale and Demographic Characteristics of Teachers. *Unpublished PhD. Thesis*: University of Michigan.

APPENDIX 'A'**SCHEDULE OF STRUCTURED AND UNSTRUCTURED
QUESTIONS TO PRINCIPALS**

1. Is teacher absenteeism a problem at your school?
2. Are the same teachers absent more than once a month?
3. What problems do you experience when teachers are absent?
4. When teachers are absent, how do you manage their classes?
5. When teachers return after being absent, do you ask for medical certificates?
6. According to your records, were female teachers absent more than male teachers in the year 2002?
7. Which age group is absent most frequently?
20-34 years
35-47 years
48-60 years

8. What penalties should be suffered by frequent absentees?
9. Does the Department help principals to enforce teacher attendance?
10. If the answer to No. 9 is "no", how do you think the Department should assist principals?

APPENDIX 'B'

PO Box 413
WINKELSPRUIT
4145
27 June 2004

The District Manager
Umbumbulu District Office
Private Bag 1022
UMBUMBULU
4105

Dear Sir

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

I am presently registered for the M.Tech. Education Degree (coursework and mini-dissertation). The topic is "The role of the principal in reducing teacher absenteeism in selected primary schools in the Umbumbulu area". This study will use structured interviews with principals.

I would therefore like to appeal to you for your assistance in permitting me to conduct interviews in some of the primary schools in your area. You are assured that the study will not in any way interfere with the normal running of the school.

Thank you in advance.

Yours faithfully

NJ MBENSE

Contact telephone numbers

Home :	(031) 907 1194
Work :	031) 900 0964
Cell :	082 321 4109

APPENDIX 'C'

PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL
ISFUNDAZWE SAKWAZULU-NATAL
PROVINSIE KWAZULU-NATAL

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE
UMNYANGO WEMFUNDO NAMASIKO
DEPARTEMENT VAN ONDERWYS EN KULTUUR

DURBAN SOUTH REGION ISIFUNDA SASENINGIZIMU NETHIKU DURBAN SUID-STREEK

Address : Next to Private Bag : X1022 Telephone : (031) 9150036
Ikheli : Magistrate's Court Isikhwama Seposi : UMBUMBULU Ucingo
Adres : UMBUMBULU Privaatsak 4105 Telefoon
4105 Fax : (031) 9150189

Enquiries : W.M. Sibiya
Imibuzo
Navrae

Reference
Inkomba
Verwysing

Date :
Usuku
Datum

MR N. J MBENSE
P.O BOX 413
WINKLESPRUIT
4145

DEAR SIR

**YOUR REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT
EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH**

1. Your letter dated 27 June 2003 refers.
2. Your topic of research is of interest to us and the result will benefit education as a whole.
3. I hereby authorize to conduct research in our schools as per your request especially because this will not disturb the day to day running of the schools.
4. May I take this opportunity to wish you well in your research and hope that it will contribute positively towards the advancement of education.

Yours faithfully

M. M. Sibiya

CIRCUIT MANAGER

APPENDIX 'D'

LETTER OF INFORMATION

Technikon Natal
Department of Education

**THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL IN REDUCING
TEACHER ABSENTEEISM IN SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS
IN THE UMBUMBULU AREA**

Dear Principal

I am presently registered for the M.Tech. Education Degree (coursework and mini-dissertation). This study will use structured interviews with principals.

I would therefore like to appeal to you for your assistance in permitting me to obtain information, which will only be used for research purposes. No names of persons or institutions will be used.

Your willingness to co-operate will be most helpful.

Yours faithfully

NJ MBENSE

Contact telephone numbers	
Home :	(031) 907 1194
Work :	031) 900 0964
Cell :	082 321 4109