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Coping strategies of new school principals

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COPING STRATEGIES OF NEW SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

by

BRENT PETER FRANCOIS BRUINTJIES

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

**Magister of Technologiae:
Educationis**

In the Faculty of Education and Social Sciences
at the

Cape Peninsula University of Technology

Supervisor: Dr. B. P. Thuynsma

Cape Town
December 2007

DECLARATION

I, Brent Peter Francois Bruintjies, declare that the contents of this thesis represent my own unaided work, and that the thesis has not previously been submitted for academic examination towards any qualification. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

B. Bruintjies.....

Signed

.....01.12.07.....

Date

ABSTRACT

Currently any Post Level One Educator in South Africa may be appointed to the position of School Principal with only the basic qualification, i.e. matric and a three-year teaching diploma (REQV 13). As per the Educators Employment Act (1998), the minimum teaching experience required for a principalship range from 3-7 years depending on the grading of the school (P1- 4 for primary schools and S1 - 4 for secondary schools). According to these stipulations, a qualification in management or another form of validation to ensure that candidates have the ability to cope with the demands of the management of a school is not a requirement.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the challenges experienced and coping strategies new school managers (school principals) employ to manage their institutions. It also addresses the common challenges and obstacles faced by new school managers.

The study was conducted in the Western Cape using a mixed method qualitative approach to investigate the research questions. After the development of the data collecting instruments, data was collected using semi-structured questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaires were sent to thirty school managers in primary and secondary schools in the seven Education Management Development Centres. The data collected was used to ascertain what the challenges are school manager's face. Subsequently five new school managers were interviewed to find what coping strategies they use. A second set of questionnaires were sent to 100 new school principals to ascertain the challenges experienced and coping strategies employed.

The research reveals the following aspects: (1) there is a lack of support from the Western Cape Education Department for new school principals; (2) research respondents identified a need for mentoring to assist them to cope; (3) there is a need for a management qualification to help principals to manage their schools as educators are only trained to become classroom teachers; (4) the Western Cape Education Department need to consult with schools regarding, among others, schools' year programs as this clash with dates of departmental programmes.

This thesis then examines analyzes and discusses these findings with recommendations that follow in Chapter 5.

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- A big thanks to the new school principals, who opened up, participated and assisted in the research.
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- The financial assistance of the National Research Foundation towards this research is acknowledged. Opinions expressed in this thesis and the conclusions arrived at, are those of the author, and are not necessarily to be attributed to the National Research Foundation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	v
Glossary	vi

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Motivation and background to this study	1
1.3	Statement of the problem	2
1.4	Statement of aims and objectives	3
1.5	Research Methodology	3
1.6	Significance of this study	3
1.7	Limitations of the study	4
1.8	Ethics	4
1.9	Overview of this research report	4

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1	Introduction	6
2.2	Workload of principals	8
2.2.1	General administration duties	9
2.2.2	Personnel	9
2.2.3	Teaching	10
2.2.4	Extra- and Co-curricular	10
2.2.5	Interaction with stakeholders	10
2.2.6	Communication	10
2.3	Skills of principals	11
2.4	The challenges that new school principals face	13
2.5	Coping mechanisms principals employ	17
2.6	Conclusion	19

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

3.1	Introduction	21
3.2	Research design	21
3.3	Data collection method	21
3.3.1	Data sources	22
3.3.2	Sampling	22
3.3.3	Ethical issues	23
3.3.4	Data collection procedures	23
3.3.5	Research techniques	23
3.3.5.1	Questionnaires	24
3.3.5.2	Administering the questionnaire	24
3.3.5.3	Interviews	25
3.3.5.4	The reason for semi structured interviews	26
3.4	Triangulation	27

3.4.1	Data analysis method and data presentation	28
3.4.2	Data preparation	28
3.4.2.1	Describing the data	29
3.4.2.2	Interpreting the data	29
3.4.3	Interviews	29
3.4.4	Questionnaires	30
3.4.5	Conclusion	30

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF DATA

4.1	Introduction	31
4.2	Presentation of the data collected by means of questionnaires	31
4.3	Presentation of the data collected of new school principals	48
4.3.1	Presentation of challenges of new school principals	48
4.3.2	Discussion of challenges of new school principals	49
4.3.2.1	Constantly changing educational policies	50
4.3.2.2	Public's attitude and understanding of the role of schooling	52
4.3.2.3	Administrative workload	52
4.3.2.4	Pupil misbehaviour and discipline	54
4.3.2.5	Shortage of resources	54
4.3.2.6	Lack of support from education department	55
4.3.2.7	Financial management	55
4.3.2.8	Lack of educator support	55
4.4	Presentation of interviews with new school principals	56
4.4.1	Reason for principalship	56
4.4.2	Duties of principal	57
4.4.3	Challenges of principalship	57
4.4.4	Management experience	58
4.4.5	Preparation for principalship	58
4.4.6	Additional skills	58
4.4.7	Training for principals	59
4.4.8	Coping strategies	59
4.5	Discussion of the interviews with principals	60
4.5.1	Duties of principals	60
4.5.2	Profiles of principals	60
4.5.3	Challenges of principalship and departmental support	61
4.4.4	Conclusion	62

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 64

5.1	Introduction	64
5.2	Summary of findings	64
5.3	Recommendations	65
5.4	Further research	66
5.4	Conclusion	66

BIBLIOGRAPHY 67

LIST OF FIGURES

The following graphs were used to display data from Principal questionnaires.

Fig. 4.2.1	The gender of the principals [Question 1 of Appendix D]	31
Fig. 4.2.2	The age range of the principals [Question 2 of Appendix D]	32
Fig. 4.2.3	Educational experience of principals [Question 3 of Appendix D]	33
Fig. 4.2.4	Experience in different management positions [Question 4 of Appendix D]	34
Fig. 4.2.5	Strategy for absenteeism [Question 5 of Appendix D]	34
Fig. 4.2.6	Qualities a principal should display [Question 6 of Appendix D]	35
Fig. 4.2.7	Training opportunities offered by WCED [Question 7 of Appendix D]	37
Fig. 4.2.8	Attendance of training offered by WCED [Question 8 of Appendix D]	37
Fig. 4.2.9	Provision of support [Question 8.1 of Appendix D]	38
Fig. 4.2.10	Which of management or instructional leadership take the time [Question 9 of Appendix D]	39
Fig. 4.2.11	Total class visits per annum [Question 10 of Appendix D]	40
Fig. 4.2.12	Spokesperson of group [Question 11.1 of Appendix D]	40
Fig. 4.2.13	Listen to group ideas [Question 11.2 of Appendix D]	41
Fig. 4.2.14	Communicate expectations to group [Question 11.3 of Appendix D]	42
Fig. 4.2.15	Individual freedom in group [Question 11.4 of Appendix D]	42
Fig. 4.2.16	Accurate decision making [Question 11.5 of Appendix D]	43
Fig. 4.2.17	Friendly and approachable [Question 11.6 of Appendix D]	43
Fig. 4.2.18	Give credit to group [Question 11.7 of Appendix D]	44
Fig. 4.2.19	Autocratic decision making [Question 11.8 of Appendix D]	44
Fig. 4.2.20	Principals consulting with groups [Question 11.9 of Appendix D]	45
Fig. 4.2.21	Anticipation of problems [Question 11.10 of Appendix D]	45
Fig. 4.2.22	Major satisfiers of principals [Question 12 of Appendix D]	46
Fig. 4.2.23	Major dis-satisfiers of principals [Question 13 of Appendix D]	47
Fig.4.3	Challenges of new school principals	48

APPENDICES

Appendix A - Letter of application to the WCED	73
Appendix B - Letter of approval from the WCED	74
Appendix C - Covering letter requesting participation	75
Appendix D – Principals questionnaire	76
Appendix E – Interview Schedule	80
Appendix F - Questionnaire of new school principals	82

GLOSSARY

- **EMDC** – Educational Management Development Centre hosts all the departmental officials responsible for all the primary and secondary schools in the Metropole.
- **Principal** - Person who have been appointed to manage a primary or secondary school
- **New school principal** – Principals who have been appointed to the position of principal for a period less than four (4) years in a primary or secondary school.
- **WCED** – Western Cape Education Department, provincial body responsible for curriculum and management of primary and secondary schools and further education and training institutions.
- **REQV** – Assigning Relative Education Qualification Values to qualifications that are recognised for employment in education.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

According to Beckard and Harris (1987) the world in which educational organisations exist and will be operating in the future is continuously in flux. These changes include changes in relationships among stakeholders and communities; change in the make-up of “haves” and “have nots”; change in the dominant values and norms governing society and our institutions; change in the character and culture of education; change in how work is done; and change in priorities about how we spend our time and lives.

In such a world, the acute dilemma facing educational leaders is how to maintain stability in the organizations and, at the same time, provide creative adaptation to political and economic demands; stimulate innovation; and change assumptions, technology, working methods, roles and relationships and the culture of the educational system itself (Beckard and Harris, 1987: 1).

The educational leaders’ ability to lead is tested by the demands of the school’s organizational structure, as well as outside influences.

According to a report in The Cape Times (26 January 2004), Don Pasqualie (Provincial Secretary of the South African Democratic Teacher’s Union) ascribes bad management of schools to the fact that a qualification in management is not a pre-requisite to becoming a principal. Therefore it is not uncommon to find schools that are disorganised at the beginning of the year.

1.2. Motivation and background to this study

Currently any Post Level One educator in South Africa may be appointed to the position of school principal; with the basic education qualification i.e. Matric and a three-year teaching diploma (REQV 13). According to the Employment of Educators Act (1998), the minimum teaching experience required for a principalship ranges from 3 – 7 years, depending on the grading of the school (P1 – P4 for primary schools and S1 – S4 for secondary schools). The document does not recommend that a newly appointed principal needs any management qualifications obtained at a higher education institution to qualify for a principalship,

according to the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) document (Department of Education: 1996).

Should any person apply for a principalship, the only selection criteria he/she has to meet are:

- Medical fitness
- Soundness of character (applicants who have been found guilty of misconduct during the two years preceding the application do not qualify for appointment)
- Teaching experience
- Recognized teaching qualifications (the required Relative Educational Qualification Value, REQV 13)
- Language proficiency

Other requirements a prospective candidate should meet for appointment are:

- (1) The sifting process that takes place at the education department to ensure that a candidate has complied with the basic requirements, namely the prescribed format of the application document
- (2) The short listing process where the Governing Body of a school draws up the profile of their ideal candidates
- (3) The interviewing processes
- (4) The Governing Body should determine the experience of candidacy during the interview sessions (Western Cape Education Department: List of vacancies: No.1/2007)

Should the candidate meet the above-mentioned criteria and follow the required procedure he/she has a chance of being appointed as a school principal.

The Education Department gives principals the task of being responsible and accountable for educators, learners and the school as a whole. According to Ndibalema (1997: pg 241-257) educational management literature often draws a relationship between the principal's behaviour and student achievement. The progress and/or failure of a school's educational activities are immediately linked to the roles and contributions of the school principal. Therefore it is important to look at how principals deal with the variety of issues that face them.

1.3. Statement of the problem

The main purpose of this research is an investigation into the challenges that new school

principals face, and the coping strategies new school principals use; in order to develop or improve the training of principals. The target group for the study were new school principals. Fullan (1997) in his discussion of strategies for success in principalship, points out “principals can make more long-lasting contributions by broadening the base of leadership of those with whom they work – teachers, parents, students”, thus helping them to plan what coping strategies they should use. Portin and Shen (1998) point out that although new models of shared leadership and teacher empowerment have cast leadership responsibilities more widely, the principal remains the singular individual at the nexus of leadership in schools that have shared leadership. The principal is held accountable for whatever occurs in the school. The principal has to ensure that the education taking place in the school is of a high standard, and that the school remains effective in this task. Though the principal can delegate some of the tasks, the person who remains accountable for the performance and standards of the school is still the principal.

1.4 Research questions that will focus the research are:

1. What are the challenges that new school principals face in managing and leading their schools?
2. What coping strategies do new school principals use to lead and manage their schools?

1.5. Research Methodology

The literature under review helped to shape the direction of the research methodology to reflect a qualitative and quantitative approach. Questionnaires were issued to experienced principals to ascertain the challenges that principals face in general. The responses helped the researcher to formulate the interview questions for new school principals. The interviews focussed on the challenges of new school principals and the coping methods they use. A second set of questionnaires were then issued to new school principals to investigate the challenges they experience and the coping strategies they employ.

1.6. Significance of this study

This research will help new school principals gain insight into different challenges that they face, and coping strategies that they can use. The research will develop an understanding of the problems that new school principals face. The research will also be helpful to training developers and practitioners when developing support structures that strengthen the new

school principals' coping mechanisms and skills. Higher education institutions may use this study to inform curriculum planning of school leadership programmes.

1.7. Limitations of the study

The study will only focus on the experiences of five new school principals. There are two sets of questionnaires, namely a set for principals in general, and a set specifically for new school principals. The study will not deal with the role of management teams, nor with school managers that have more than three years experience as a school principal.

1.8. Ethics

Permission was obtained from the Western Cape Education Department to participate in the research, so as to use the data collected for research purposes. Informed consent was obtained from the principals who agreed to participate in the research, to allow the data collected to be used for research purposes.

A copy of the research will be made available to the Research Directorate of the Western Cape Education Department.

1.9 An overview of this research report

This research report comprises of five chapters.

Chapter 1 introduces the study. In this chapter a situation is introduced where managers only had to meet the basic requirements to be promoted or appointed to the post of principal. Educators who are inexperienced as managers can be promoted whilst having no management degree or certification.

Chapter 2 surveys the literature on what the primary task of a principal is, the challenges that new school principals face, and the coping strategies that principals use to overcome these challenges.

Chapter 3 focuses on the methodological issues that would impact on the research. In the exploration of the task and roles of principals, mixed method qualitative research approaches were used. The research instruments used in the study include both semi-structured

questionnaires and interviews. This chapter also examines the advantages and the limitations of the selected methods and instruments designed for data collection

In chapter 4, the empirical data from principals regarding the principals' perceptions of their roles, the challenges that they face, and the coping strategies that they use, is presented and discussed. The data is captured in graphs and excerpts of the responses from the interviews.

Chapter 5 presents a summary of the recommendations after analyzing and reflecting on the research findings of the main research questions.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter an overview is given of the research conducted on challenges new school principals experience and the coping strategies they use. In this chapter the researcher reflects on the different literature, emphasizing some of the challenges that face new school principals and the coping methods they use.

The National Education Department gives principals the task of undertaking the professional management of the school under the authority of the Head of Department (South African Schools Act 84) (1996: B11). According to Ndibalema (1997) educational management literature often draws the relationship between the principal's behaviour and student achievement. When one talks about the progress and/or failure of a school's educational activities, it is immediately linked to the roles and contributions of the school principal. Therefore it is important to look at how new school principals cope with the variety of issues that face them.

In many schools teachers, principals, students and sometimes parents or communities are in conflict and the school has become a battle ground. Each group blames the others for the breakdown in the culture of teaching and learning. There is a mutual lack of respect in many schools. Principals may claim that students and teachers are failing to do their job. Teachers complain that the principal is both incompetent and authoritarian, while students accuse teachers of sexual abuse, harassment, corporal punishment and of being unprepared and uncaring (Donahue, 1997:214).

The onus therefore lies on the educational leader to ensure that management of these challenges is successful to the degree that an impasse is prevented. This will demonstrate the principals' ability to cope with the challenges. This solution should enable the educational leader to demonstrate their ability to adapt and utilize the skills they have in their toolbox, therefore illustrating that he/she has acquired the skills and the knowledge to apply these skills in any situation. Daresh and Playko (1993) state that even though principalship may be exciting, challenging and often personally rewarding, there also exists a great deal of anxiety, self-doubt and loneliness. Unfortunately, the principalship has its own challenges: in a new school it is the establishing of systems, work ethos, and so on; and in other schools the principals success demonstrates their competency. Whatever the challenges, new school

principals usually find themselves alone to face the onslaught, as they are solely responsible for the school's performance.

The Dictionary of Contemporary English of Longman (1995) defines coping as the "ability to succeed in dealing with a difficult problem or situation", meaning that some effort should be made by a person to influence the outcome of the solution. Coping can be defined as "the constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" (Cohen & Lazarus 1979: 217). The important fact here is that coping has to do with the ability of a person to deal with the demands of the task at hand. In the research of Buettner (1999) it is mentioned that effective school leadership is critical to the operation of a good school, thus stating that the quality of education is somehow connected to the qualities of the leadership of a particular school. This in itself pressurizes the new school principal to be the best, or at least better than his/her predecessor.

According to Fleming (2000) inability to cope may lead to stress; i.e. stress at work is a process that can occur when there is a mismatch between perceived pressures of the work situation and the individual's ability to cope with it. Fleming defines stress as the ability of the mind and body to adapt and have the capacity to handle the demands made on it. He also notes that the ability or capacity of a person to handle challenges or stress can either be an enjoyable experience, which makes the experience helpful and welcome, or, if the demands are too much to handle, then it is not helpful or welcome. This definition is useful because it shows stress is either positive or negative. How a person perceives the stressor will illustrate, whether they can cope or not. It also emphasises that attitude determines how the person copes with challenges.

The Educators Employment Act (1998) defines the workload of all educators. Though the principals' roles and responsibilities are also set out in this document, it does not always prepare the principal for all the challenges of the school which face them. Calabrese, Short and Zepeda (1996:4) state that in the 21st Century, the principal as leader will be far different from the principal of previous generations. The 21st Century principal as leader will have to face a far different set of problems. These problems will require a whole different set of answers, and new ways of thinking.

In the past the education department ascribed ownership of a school to a principal. Bennett (1995) states that the majority of the official documents prior to 1987 speak of a primary

school as if it is the property of the head teacher. The principal was therefore solely responsible for his/her school. This practice also existed in the South African schools, where the principal made decisions on behalf of educators, learners and the parent community with little or no input from them. The Education Department tried to remedy this situation when they introduced the South African Schools Act (1996) to capacitate school governing bodies and school management teams to assist with the management of schools. The School Act of 1998, however, shows a clear distinction between management and governance. Governance is seen as the responsibility of school governing body, and management that of the principal under the authority of the Head of Department. Although the Schools Act distinguishes between whose responsibility it is to govern and who is responsible for the management of the school, it still places the accountability and responsibility at the door of school principals.

The Educators Employment Act (1998:c64) emphasizes that the aim of a principal should be “to ensure that the school is managed satisfactorily and in compliance with applicable legislation, regulations and personnel administration measures as prescribed; and to ensure that the education of learners is promoted in a proper manner and in accordance with approved policies.” Thus the National Education Department gives principals the task of being responsible and accountable for educators, learners and the school as a whole. The principal once again becomes solely responsible for the school, though help and advice is given by the management team and school governing body.

2.2 Workload of Principals

According to the Employment of Educators Act 76 (1998) the workload of principals can be described as primarily to ensure that a school (institution) is managed satisfactorily and in compliance with the applicable legislation, regulations, and the personnel administrative measures as prescribed. Furthermore their duty entails promoting the education of learners in accordance with the collectively negotiated educational policies. In the midst of aforementioned, the principal’s management style and ability to interpret policies will ensure that they will be able to cope with the challenges.

Fullan (1997:46) in his discussion of strategies for success in principalship points out that “principals can make more long-lasting contributions by broadening the base of leadership of those with whom they work – teachers, parents, students”. Delegation of leadership tasks empowers more people to become leaders, as well as giving them a sense of ownership.

According to the National Department of Education as per the Educators Employment Act(1998), the duties and responsibilities of the principal are individual and varied, depending on the approaches and needs of the particular school, and include, but are not limited to, the following:

2.2.1. General/Administrative duties

The principal is responsible for the professional management of a public school:

- To give proper instructions and guidelines for timetabling, admission and placing of learners in classes.
- To have various kinds of school accounts and records properly kept and to make the best use of funds for the benefit of learners in consultation with the appropriate structures.
- To ensure a School Journal containing a record of important events connected with the school is kept.
- To make regular inspections of the school to ensure that the school premises and equipment are being used properly, and that good discipline is maintained.
- To be responsible for the hostel and all related activities, including staff and learners, if one is attached to the school.
- To ensure that Departmental circulars and other information received which affect members of the staff are brought to their notice as soon as possible and are stored in an accessible manner.
- To handle all correspondence received at the school.

2.2.2 Personnel

- Provide professional leadership in the school.
- To guide, supervise and offer professional advice on the work and performance of all staff in the school and, where necessary, to discuss and write or countersign reports on teaching, support, non-teaching and other staff.
- To ensure that workloads are equitably distributed among the staff.
- To be responsible for the development of staff training programmes, school-based,

school-focused and externally directed; and to assist educators, particularly new and inexperienced educators in developing and achieving educational objectives in accordance with the needs of the school.

- To participate in agreed school/educator appraisal processes in order to regularly review their professional practice with the aim of improving teaching, learning and management.
- To ensure that all evaluation/forms of assessment conducted in the school are properly and efficiently organized.

2.2.3 Teaching

- To engage in class teaching as per the workload of the relevant post level and the needs of the school.
- To be a class teacher if required.
- To record and assess the attainment of learners taught.

2.2.4 Extra-& Co-curricular

- To serve on recruitment, promotion, advisory and other committees as required.
- To play an active role in promoting extra and co-curricular activities in the school and to plan major school functions and to encourage learners' voluntary participation in sports, educational and cultural activities organized by community bodies.

2.2.5 Interaction with stake-holders

- To serve on the governing body of the school and render all necessary assistance to the governing body in the performance of their functions in terms of the SA Schools Act, 1996.
- To participate in community activities in connection with educational matters and community building.
-

2.2.6 Communication

- To co-operate with members of the school staff and the school governing body in maintaining an efficient and smooth running school.

- To liaise with the Circuit/Regional Office, Supplies Section, Personnel Section, Finance Section, etc., concerning administration, staffing, accounting, purchase of equipment, research and updating of statistics in respect of educators and learners.
- To liaise with relevant structures regarding school curricula and curriculum development.
- To meet parents concerning learners' progress and conduct.
- To co-operate with the school governing body with regards to all aspects as specified in the SA Schools Act, 1996.
- To liaise with other relevant Government Departments, e.g. Department of Health & Welfare, Public Works, and so on, as required.
- To co-operate with universities, colleges and other agencies in relation to learners' records and performance as well as INSET and management development programmes.
- To participate in departmental and professional committees, seminars and courses in order to contribute to and/or update professional views/standards.
- To maintain contacts with sports, cultural and community organizations (Educators Employment Act (1998: c64).

2.3 Skills of Principals

Blumberg and Greenfield (1986:236) make a point that principals are expected to do everything well. This is further emphasized by Thomas and Hornsey (1991:74) who conclude that everyone expects complete knowledge and expertise from day one of their taking office, even when it is known that it is the new incumbent's first principalship. It is expected that the beginner principal's knowledge should surpass that of his predecessor, should know every aspect of what the job entails, and should fulfil the expectations of the Department of Education, parents, learners and educators.

In the research of Sennet (1973:22), he states "A poor man... has to want upward mobility in order to establish dignity in his own life, and dignity means, specifically, moving towards a position in which he deals with the world in some controlled, emotionally restrained way. People who have been educated, on the other hand, are supposed to already possess this capacity. They are supposed to have developed skills for taming the world without force or passion." It is expected of principals to portray that they have self-control and that they are able to handle the challenges in their schools. The principal should display assertiveness,

knowledge, and never reveal to the outside community that the challenges are getting the better of him.

Critical skills for the principalship that Daresh and Playko (1997) identified can be classified into three different types: technical and managerial skills, socialization and self-awareness, and role awareness skills. Being skilled with such administrative and managerial qualities will assist to cope with “with many kinds of problems during a typical day” (Renihan and Leonard 1999). It is therefore expected of new school principals to display excellent managerial, good interpersonal, and superb communication skills. Ceffrey (2000:23) is of the opinion that leadership skills may be divided into three categories:

- Diagnostic skills: critical and creative thinking and problem-solving.
- Perceptual skills: communicating well through good verbal skills.
- Behavioural skills: teamwork, negotiating, delegation, motivation, coaching and counselling.

These skills are needed to help leaders in their task of effective people management and therefore helping them cope with human resource challenges.

Portin and Shen (1998) point out that although new models of shared leadership and teacher empowerment have cast leadership responsibilities more widely, the principal remains the singular individual at the nexus of leadership in these schools, therefore emphasising the fact that the principal is accountable and responsible for whatever occurs in the school. In their research Hollinger and Heck (1996) support the abovementioned notion that there is a connection between the existence of a strong, responsible, visible principal and school effectiveness.

Over the past 10 years the Department of Education changed many of its policies to ensure the decentralization of power and accountability, and in order to enable school communities to take ownership of the schools in their respective communities. These changes have been supported or brought about by policies and legislation to transform the schooling system in South Africa. One of these policies is the *Educators Employment Act 76 of 1998*. This Act emphasizes the different roles or duties of educators as well as that of the principal.

Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson & Hann (2002) state that because of the rationalization programme of the South African National Education Department that started in 1993 an exodus of experienced managers occurred. This resulted in a situation where educators inexperienced in management had to fill these vacancies. Bush and Middlewood (1997) state

that educators received teacher training to be well-versed in curricular and pedagogic skills. The principal of the future will be far different from the principal of previous generations, as they have to manage schools and therefore a need arises for managerial skills. The 21st century principal will have to face a far different set of problems. These problems will require a different set of answers and new ways of thinking. This raises the question whether principals can cope and manage the challenges that they face, and also if they are prepared for the task.

Sergiovanni (1991) points out in his research, that the success of effective schools is connected to responsible, assertive and visible leadership in the school. The life of newly appointed school principals is now being complicated, as not only do they need to adapt in their new position, but they also need to either improve the school's achievements or at least maintain the current standard. Howley and Eckman (1997:91) state that a school principal can dramatically change what happens in a school. The new school principal has to exercise his influence as a leader and adapt to his new position.

2.4 The challenges that new school principals face

Fields (2005) in her study of patterns of stress and coping mechanisms for novice principals, states that first year administrators are faced with problems that are unique because of their transition in roles. Educators are trained to do a roll-out of the curriculum, and not to manage schools. One of the first challenges for new school principals according to Duke (1984) has been that the first administrative entry year is marked by considerable anxiety, frustration, and self-doubt. This was corroborated by Sussman (1985) and Diederich (1986). Weindling and Earley (1987) noted in their studies of first year secondary head teachers in the United Kingdom that a major problem faced by head teachers has been isolation from peers. Michel (1996) states, that in many situations, new administrators are poorly trained to assume their new role. This statement is corroborated by Ricciardi (2000), who found that the overwhelming job demands and time constraints made job adjustment difficult for new principals. She further found that volatile conflicts with faculty further hindered job adjustment. The new administrator not only starts in a new role, but must also adjust to the new environment without proper training or support. For every new administrator that starts in a new post there are also two or more other 'wannabe' candidates in a particular institution that place a principal under pressure to perform at peak all the time.

Sametz (1996) describes the principal's job as characterized by constant interruptions and dilemmas. This is further enhanced by conflicting demands (Renihan, 1985); lack of planning time, fragmentation of activities, and the burden of roles and regulations (Portin & Shen, 1998). Peebles (1994:114) reflects on his encounter with the multiple tasks and time-demands of the principalship as:

“The constantly ringing telephones, the unending flow of people with problems, the feeling of uncertainty and approaching deadlines, which was the reality of school administration – which can only be appreciated by on the job experience.”

Fullan & Hargreaves (1991:1) state that in a study of school principals in which they asked them whether the expectations for the work had increased or decreased, that 90% of them reported an increase in expectations in all the dimensions of their work, whether it be administratively or the curriculum. They found that time demands have increased in the areas of community relations, trustee requests, administrative activities, staff and student involvement, and social services. Time management becomes a problem as the incumbent changes from a curricular role to a manager.

Fullan (1991:156) cites Evans finding that the explosion of demands decreases school leaders' sense of efficiency and heightens their feelings of isolation, insecurity and inadequacy. This leaves the new incumbent with a feeling of being an outsider, and of not belonging. They also experience a sense of inefficiency.

In a study in the United Kingdom of head teachers and the stressors or conditions under which they worked researchers, Cooper & Kelly (1993) listed the following as challenges of principals:

- Work overload
- Handling of relationships with staff
- Resource management
- The local education authority, and
- Handling poor performance of staff

Carr (1994) in a study of 94 head teachers in South Australia revealed that the three main factors that caused stress to them were the following:

- Feeling a lack of support from the Education Department
- Coping with heavy work demands and expectations of the employer; and
- Difficulty in interpersonal relationships with other staff

Ostell and Oakland (1995) grouped the problematic situations that principals face under the following headings:

- Organizational
- External conflicts/complaints
- Behavioural /special needs
- Internal conflicts/complaints
- Personnel performance
- Motivation/morale
- Recruitment
- Intrapersonal

The afore-mentioned researchers also found that educational change was reported more frequently as the main difficulty in head teachers. On the other hand, Chaplain (2001) groups the many difficulty areas of stress under the following headings:

- External factors (e.g. legislation, governors, inspectors)
- School structures (e.g. maintaining standards and budgets)
- Interpersonal processes (e.g. relationship with teachers and parents) and
- Personal factors (professional activities and lifestyle)

These factors were noted in the study of Thomas & Hornsey (1991:65), that within the kaleidoscope of things to be done “the new principals found administrative overload a major stressor which result because of meetings, paperwork and interviewing employment applicants (nominated by high school principals) and lack of clerical assistance and staff related issues”. Thus most of the stressors or challenges that new school principals or administrators need to deal with are related to intrinsic factors. Though there are extrinsic factors that cause some of these challenges, most of the time they deal with the skills and abilities of the principal.

Harvey & Swartz (1989:24) note in their report of the study of Western Australian principals, that one of the difficulties faced by newly appointed principals in Western Australia was the lack of feedback about performance by the staff. They further note that teachers might feel reluctant to provide open and honest feedback to the newly appointed principal about his ability to manage and deal with issues. This leaves the incumbent without relevant information as to how they are adapting to their new role as principal.

According to Harvey & Swartz (1989:17) another challenge faced by new school principals is that the new school principal is immediately held responsible for all aspects of school operations and is subjected to a constant and prolonged stream of administrative demands. McAdams (1998:39) supports this viewpoint in his analysis of the principal "shortage" in the United States. He notes that the impact of democratic governance and the enhanced power of students, teachers and parents have steadily diminished the principal's authority, despite the fact that the principal is increasingly held accountable for student performance. According to McAdams (1998), this 'middle management bind of responsibility without commensurate authority' leads many principals to increased frustration, increased stress, and diminished job satisfaction.

According to Fleming (2000:147) in a survey of the causes of stress in teaching or school management the following main causes of stress were found and listed:

- Heavy workload
- Constant change
- Not enough time to do things thoroughly
- Supervision responses
- Being unable to satisfy the conflicting demands of parents, pupils and community
- Negative media coverage of education/schooling
- Lack of respect from society
- Increasing accountability but decreasing professional freedom
- Not knowing how colleagues rate you
- Not feeling valued for all the time devoted to the job

Fleming continues by saying an unresolved mismatch between a personal philosophy of education and the organization's educational philosophy is also a potential source of stress. The outcome of many of these challenges lies in the hands of the principal.

2.5 Coping mechanisms principals employ

Gmelch and Swent (1981) suggest that "if principals are better equipped to deal with the pressures of the job, both their own health and that of their staff members and students will benefit". According to Swent (1983) the individual is the most important variable and no one coping technique will be successful for any one person in all situations; therefore, it is important for an individual to experiment with alternative coping techniques. This is supported by Gmelch (1988) when he states that administrators need to develop comprehensive sets of coping strategies. Though there is not one specific solution, by having these sets of coping strategies administrators can lessen the effect that institutional challenges have on their ability to manage the institution.

According to Martin and Robertson (2003) all school leaders agree that prospective administrators can learn just so much in a classroom, and that internships provide the type of hands-on experiences that they need for the position. This is supported by Fullan, Anderson and Newton (1986) stating that "the days of the one-shot workshop at the local level are numbered". They suggest that workshops are developed for longer periods to give principals the opportunity to experiment, and gain insight from other principals. This will also help them to reflect on challenges and solutions. Hargreaves and Fink (2006:268) observe that sustained and successful principals "renew their own energy by attending to their own learning". Principals should therefore not wait on outside agencies, like Unions and Education Departments, to empower them.

Sergiovanni (1987) states clearly that principals would do well to engage in conscious and continual reflection on their practice. Continuous critical reflection or reflection-in-action by professionals in all areas including education was first presented by Schon (1983). Critical reflection will be helpful for the newly appointed principal in the assessment of the effectiveness of interventions or programmes. They can also ascertain if further intervention is needed.

Dardick (1990:32, 34) believes that the use of humour is critical as a coping mechanism. This is supported by the response of first year principals of the professional development cadre of USF Lakewood in a study done by Fields (2005). In the study when asked for recommendations for coping mechanisms for stress, 53% of the respondents suggested the use of laughter or humour.

In the beginning principals can use personal and community coping strategies which are practical and within their control, like sharing the burden of challenges. Delegation gives them the time to deal with the strenuous tasks. They should be aware of who they are and know their strengths and weaknesses, since the more self-awareness they have, the more they can control their responses to the challenges. According to Dewe (1985) by being more self aware new school principals can attempt to overcome difficulties in order to avoid stressful situations. Personality clashes with the staff can be minimised.

Kyracou (1980) suggests that trying to keep things in perspective - meaning that they should deal with the challenge with due regard to what happened - is another coping action that new school principals can use. They should try to see the stressful situation from a different perspective.

Dunham (1992) suggests that principals should avoid doing everything at once. They should rather try to spread their work as this can also be seen as being efficient. Planning therefore helps as a coping strategy.

Tsiakkios & Pashiardis (2002) report that the seeking of support and discussion of sources of stress with various individuals (spouses, friends, colleagues, supervisors) constitutes the most frequent strategy that teachers and head teachers used. According to Fields (2005) 50 % of the first year principals in her research said that they voiced their frustrations and concerns to their spouses, other first year principals, and occasionally their secretary. Many mentioned that they opened up to those that they trusted to be discreet. Using others as a soundboard assists principals to effectively cope with challenges, and gives them the opportunity to tap into experiences of others.

According to Hoy & Miskel (2001) and Moriarty, Edmonds, Blatchford & Martin (2001) head teachers or principals should try to delegate duties fairly among teachers, and all should participate in the life of the school and activities. This means that they should involve all

teachers in the process of decision making and taking co-ownership. Tsiakkios & Pashiardis (2004) support the idea collective ownership by suggesting that a good communication system be developed throughout the school through regular staff meetings, circulars or individual discussions. Moreover, new school principals should establish a friendly and co-operative working environment, where all teachers would be free to express their opinions.

Clement & Vandenberghe (2000) note that teachers are more likely to implement ideas in their classrooms when principals are willing to share their beliefs and philosophies about teaching, provide supportive and constructive feedback about their teaching practices, and afford teachers adequate learning space to experiment with new ideas. When principals share their ideas and personal vision with the staff, it will create collective ownership and a relationship of mutual trust. Educators perceive the principal as part of the group who struggles with educational changes.

Hewitson (1995) note that a lot can be achieved if the principal-elect can arrange to spend some time at his new school before the school year starts. The incumbent thus gets the opportunity to orientate him/herself in the new environment, gaining knowledge about the policies that are in place, structures and mechanisms that are used, as well as what activities have been planned for the coming term. This helps the incumbent to implement programmes without wasting time on plans that are already in place.

2.6 Conclusion

The quality of an organization, according to Dalin (1993), is often reflected in the relationship among people, between groups, and between the leaders and those who are led. Mauriel (1989:22) says more than ever schools need skilful educational leaders who are compatible with the job of managing processes of working with communities and a variety of individuals in constantly examining goals and purposes, mission and delivery. Some people in leadership in public schools have not received the kind of training that might equip them for the leadership task of dealing with community involvement. The duty of a principal is to ensure that they acquire the necessary skills to manage a school.

For me the question remains: how do the newly appointed school principals cope with the many difficult tasks and challenges before they've been trained in or gained the necessary

skills? In the next chapters I will thus outline how I approached the research to try and answer this question and what I have learned from the principals who participated in this study.

The next chapter then deals with the methodological issues of the investigation and in chapter 3 the data is presented. In the last chapter the findings are presented and some ideas are shared as recommendations.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter a study of relevant literature is used, to delineate the challenges that new school principals face, and the coping methods or strategies they use. This chapter deals with the research methodology selected for the study and the research instruments used to collect the data for the study. A mixed method approach was utilised. The instruments used were interviews with new school principals, and questionnaires. Gilham (2000) states, that a multi-method approach has the potential of enriching as well as cross-validating research findings. The design includes a qualitative instrument (questionnaire) to identify the challenges and coping mechanisms that new school principals use. A qualitative approach was also used (interviews), as the intention was to emphasize the coping strategies employed for specific challenges. All interviews were recorded on audiotape.

3.2 Research design

According to Bell (1993:6) the nature of the research inquiry and the type of information required influence both the approach the researcher adopts and the method of data collection. The researcher used predominantly a qualitative approach as a means of investigating the research questions. Strauss and Corbin (1998:10) state that the term 'qualitative research' means any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or by means of quantification. The study focussed on participants' experiences, feelings, views, and attitudes, as stated by Bell (2001:7), as well as their perceptions of the functioning of their schools. It allows the researcher to gain insight from the subjects' perspective and not only from the researcher's perspective.

3.3 Data collection method

Various methods of data collection can be used. A questionnaire was sent to principals in general, as well as interviews with new school principals. Marshall and Rossman (1995) state that the fundamental methods relied on by qualitative researchers for the gathering of information is participating in the setting, direct observation, in-depth interviewing and document review. Although I personally observed the real situations of the schools and the

new school principals in their natural settings, the body of data was collected through semi-structured interviews to investigate the perceptions of principals towards the challenges they face and how they cope. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998:10) qualitative research assumes that systematic inquiry must occur in a natural setting. Being in natural settings helps the researcher to go beyond his own perceptions, allowing for new realities to emerge.

3.3.1 Data sources

Other School Principals:

Questionnaires were sent to thirty primary and secondary school principals, of whom eighteen were returned, in the different Education Management Development Centres in the Western Cape by means of random selection, to assess the challenges that they face.

New School Principals:

Principals of four primary and one secondary school, who made themselves available for the research, were interviewed, to investigate their understanding of school leadership and management, as well as how they cope with challenges.

A second set of questionnaires were sent to one hundred new school principals, of whom nineteen were returned, to gain insight in the challenges they experience and the coping strategies they used. The principals were identified using a list of newly appointed principals ranging from 2004 – 2006.

Academic sources:

By using academic literature an understanding could be gained of the views of previous writers on the skills, knowledge and understanding that new school principals should have.

3.3.2 Sampling

Five schools were selected, consisting of four primary schools and one secondary school. Mouton (1996) state that unless the sample represents the population from which it was drawn, we have no reason to believe that the population has the same properties as those of the sample. The schools represent different socio economic settings, namely urban, semi-urban and rural areas. The schools were handpicked because their managers were new school principals that suited the study. As could be expected newly appointed principals were

normally inundated with the stress of the new job and I was fortunate that some availed themselves.

According to Vermeulen and Shaw (1996) sampling is taking any portion of a population or universe as representative of that group or universe.

3.3.3 Ethical issues

I sought permission from the Director of Research, Western Cape Education Department, to execute the investigation. The questionnaire was accompanied by a covering letter (Appendix B). The letter was drafted taking into consideration the suggestions of Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000), which include the aim of the research; to convey to the respondents its importance, to assure them of confidentiality, and to request their participation.

The following correspondence that outline the procedures are included as appendices:

- Letter to WCED requesting permission to conduct the research – Appendix A
- Permission was granted from WCED subject to conditions as specified in Appendix B
- Covering letter requesting participation – Appendix C
- Questionnaire to principals – Appendix D
- Interview questions to the principals – Appendix E
- Questionnaire to new school principals – Appendix F

3.3.4 Data collection procedures

Meetings were arranged telephonically with principals of the target schools to discuss the nature of the research and to obtain their cooperation and permission. The letter from WCED to the school principals stating the Education Department's terms and conditions were presented. The time frames for scheduling the interviews were then discussed.

3.3.5 Research techniques

Data was collected by means of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with principals, as well as field notes. Questionnaires were sent to school principals in the Western Cape. A second set of questionnaires was sent to 100 new school principals.

3.3.5.1 Questionnaires

Reaves (1992) stated that a survey is a set of standard questions asked of people. According to Babbie and Mouton (2002) questionnaires may be used for descriptive, explanatory and exploratory purposes. The researcher therefore needs to determine the purpose of a particular questionnaire. The purpose of this research was to identify the challenges and coping mechanisms that new school principals use. The semi-structured nature of the questions allowed it to be used for exploratory purposes.

Macmillan and Schumacher (2001) state that a good questionnaire is relatively economical, has the same questions for all subjects and can ensure anonymity. Babbie and Mouton (2002) supports this by stating that questionnaires are excellent vehicles for identifying attitudes and orientations. Knowing that their anonymity is preserved helps principals to give their own views.

As with all research methods there are certain rules that you need to adhere to, to ensure the effectiveness of your questionnaire. Babbie (1998) suggests the following guidelines for writing effective questions or statements, namely

- Make items clear
- Avoid double-barrelled questions
- Questions should be relevant
- Short simple items are best
- Avoid negative items, avoid biased items or terms.

According to Macmillan and Schumacher (2001) there are different ways questions and statements may be asked and answered, namely (1) the open and closed form and (2) scaled items. For the purposes of this research the open and closed forms were utilised in order to get more depth.

3.3.5.2 Administering the questionnaire

Originally the 30 questionnaires to principals in primary as well as secondary schools were delivered via post and hand delivered some to familiarise myself with the school environment. Schools were randomly selected from a list of all the schools in the Western Cape, as per the

seven Education Management Development Centres (EMDC). There was an initial poor response rate (5) from principals, and the questionnaire had to be re-sent. Some of the reasons given by principals for not returning the questionnaire are that they are overloaded with administrative duties; a few were off due to health reasons; whilst others were still trying to 'find their feet'.

A Second set of questionnaires were sent to 100 new school principals, of whom 19 were returned.

From the responses to the questionnaire, interview questions for new school principals were developed.

3.3.5.3 Interviews

A set of questions was drawn up using the responses gleaned from the first set of questionnaires, through which an understanding was gained into how the new school principal's cope with challenges. According to Keeves (1997) the interview is a controlled conversation in which the interviewer obtains information from the respondent. Therefore the objective of constructing interview questions is to create a collective understanding between the respondents (principals) and the researcher in order to enable respondents to give accurate, uninhibited information in the interview time. Principal's thus had the opportunity to express themselves.

Face-to-face semi-structured interviews with five new school principals were conducted in rural, semi-urban and urban areas. Semi-structured interviews allowed respondents to clarify certain points and at the same time control the tendency of deviation from the content of the question. According to Cohen and Manion (1980) the purpose of an interview is to provide access to what the participants are thinking, as well as their past experiences. It also builds confidence and mutual trust between the interviewer and respondent.

Babbie and Mouton (2002) state that if a respondent misunderstands the intent of a question or indicates that he or she does not understand, the interviewer can clarify matters, thereby obtaining relevant responses. This will ensure that the interviewer acquires the information that he or she needs to complete the research.

As with any research instrument in data gathering interviews has its advantages and

disadvantages. Marshall and Rossman (1995:101) and Middlewood, Coleman and Lumby (1999:146) suggested the following advantages and disadvantages of interviews:

Advantages

- Face-to-face encounter with informants
- Obtains large amount of expansive and contextual data quickly
- Facilitates cooperation from research subjects
- Facilitates access for immediate follow-up data collection for clarification and omissions
- Useful for discovering complex interactions in social relationships
- Data are collected in natural settings
- Facilitates analysis, validity, checks and triangulation
- Facilitates discovery in nuances in culture
- Provide for flexibility in the formation of hypothesis
- Provides background context for more focus on activities, behaviours and events
- Great utility for uncovering the subjective side of organizational processes.

Disadvantages

- Data is open to misinterpretation due to cultural differences and lack of skills
- Dependent upon the cooperation of a small group of key informants
- Difficult to replicate, procedures are not always explicit or are dependent upon researcher's opportunity or characteristics
- Can cause danger or discomfort for researchers
- Especially dependant upon the honesty of those providing the data (respondents)
- Highly dependent upon the ability of the researchers to be resourceful, systematic and honest to control bias, and
- Bell (2000:135) warns that interviews are time consuming

3.3.5.4 The reason for semi-structured interviews

According to Coleman and Briggs (2002:148) and Fontana and Frey (1998:48) there are three kinds of face-to-face interviews: namely the structured, semi-structured and unstructured

interviews. The researcher thus has to select a research instrument that will help him to obtain the information needed.

Coleman and Briggs (2002) say that a semi-structured interview is an important tool for investigation if the area under investigation requires more profound deliberation. It is also a convenient tool with which to probe. Middlewood, Coleman & Lumby (1999:146) and Johnson (1994:45) purport that semi-structured interviews are flexible, provided valuable qualitative data, provide frank discussion, reveal unanticipated points, and provide valuable insights. Further, Coleman and Briggs (2002:149) posit that a semi-structured interview schedule tends to be the most favoured by educational researchers as it allows respondents to answer them at length, but offers enough shape to prevent aimless ramblings.

For the above-mentioned reasons I believe that the semi-structured interviews helped respondents to express themselves clearly, and provided whole school insights. It also helped respondents to synthesize their views, feelings, opinions, attitudes and experiences to enable me to gain in-depth information about the issue. All of the five respondents were asked the same questions, though some follow up questions were asked to gain more understanding. Interviews were conducted in Afrikaans and/or English depending on the language preference of respondents to gain in-depth and detailed information from them.

Each of the interviews was recorded on an audio tape recorder with permission from the respondents. Blaxter, Hughes & Tight (1997) suggest that if one decides to carry out a number of interviews for his/her research project, one of the decisions is whether to tape the interview or to take notes. It was explained to the respondents that a tape recorder will be used during the interviewing session to ensure that my notes capture the gist of the interview; and to use as reference during data processing. Each interview was transcribed to internalise the conversation, to start forming categories, and to identify themes. Thereafter copies of all transcribed interviews were made and numbered sequentially.

3.4 Triangulation

Both questionnaires and an interview were used to gain insight into the challenges that the school principals face, and what strategies they used to cope with the challenges. According to Cohen and Manion (1994:233) and Middlewood, Coleman. & Lumby (1999:143), triangulation may be defined as the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study

of some aspects of human behaviour. Using more than one type of method enables the researcher to study the same subject from more than one point of view, and hence give greater confidence in the findings. Kane and O'Reilly (2001:108) state that triangulation means comparing many sources of evidence to verify the accuracy of information. They further suggest that there are two types of triangulation. These are:

1. Methodical triangulation – using several methods to explore the same issue; and
2. Respondent triangulation – using the same question to many respondents.

The researcher used both methods of triangulation, as interviews and questionnaires were combined to collect data.

3.4.1 Data analysis method and data presentation

Goulding, Bell, Bush, Fox, & Goodey (eds), (1984) state that data collected by questionnaires, interviews, diaries or any other method means very little until the data has been analysed and assessed. All the data collected, whether by interviews or questionnaires, were analysed in descriptive format identifying specific challenges and then looked for strategies used to cope in the new positions as school principals.

3.4.2 Data preparation

Munn and Drever (1990) articulate that the aim of data preparation is to make the mass of information in the questionnaire more manageable. This is a process where “raw” data is translated onto a grid so that one can see what people’s answers are to a particular question without leafing through a huge pile of questionnaires. Two main stages in data preparation can be identified, namely preparing the grid, and coding the questions. Once the data had been collected, it was analysed by coding and scoring (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison 2000). Kerlinger (1970) has defined coding as the “translation of question responses and respondent information to specific categories for the purpose of analyses”. The questionnaires were pre-coded so that each response could immediately and directly be converted into a score in an objective way.

A summary sheet was created onto which all questionnaire responses were transferred. The first column of the summary sheet was for the respondent’s number. The horizontal numbered lines or columns were used for recording answers to the questions. Each horizontal line

represented the answer of one respondent to the questions on the questionnaire. In using this method it was possible to ascertain where there were similarities and differences in the responses. Before the grid could be filled in, all data was coded in preparation for analysis.

According to Munn and Drever (1990), closed questions are the easiest and the quickest to code; hence the closed questions were the first to be coded. The categories of responses are pre-set and all that is needed is to give each category a letter or a number. A yes/no response could be coded as a 1 or 2. e.g. male = 1 and female = 2. The Likert scale was used to ask respondents to indicate levels of agreement or disagreement with a given statement. Answers were scored from 1 (always) to 5 (never) and thus a measure of respondents' feelings could be produced.

Once the completed questionnaire had been coded, the responses were transferred from the questionnaire to the summary sheet by using ticks. Once the information from the questionnaires had been recorded on summary sheets in a systematic way such as has been described, it was unnecessary to consult the questionnaire again. Munn and Drever (1990) warn however that "the questionnaire should not be discarded until the report is finalised just in case checking is needed".

3.4.2.1 Describing the data

Mostly, it is a matter of counting the number of times each code appears in a column and checking that all respondents are accounted for. As Goulding, Bell, Bush, Fox, & Goodey, (1984) suggest, the frequencies in the different categories were counted, and calculated proportionately through using Excell.

3.4.2.2 Interpreting the data

After recording the data, the column totals were interpreted, e.g. on summary sheet the "male" responses (code 1) and the female responses (code 2) were counted. Tables and graphs were used to present the data in a clear and simple manner.

3.4.3 Interviews

Qualitative data analysis was used to interpret and represent interviews with principals. The

data was represented in a descriptive format as themes emerged. Interviewees' transcripts were subjected to content analysis to identify the essential skills required by school principals. Miles and Huberman (1984) state data needs to be reduced by selecting, focussing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the raw data from the interviews. A preliminary list of coding categories was formed, then coding categories were developed; thereafter a list of themes was developed, and each one assigned a number. All of the data was analysed, and each unit marked with the appropriate coding category number. This involved scrutinising sentences carefully and judging which code the materials pertained to.

3.4.4 Questionnaires

After the questionnaire (18) data were received, it was checked for completeness, accuracy and uniformity. There are three main stages in analysing questionnaires: data preparation, describing the data and interpreting the data (Munn & Drever, 1990). Each questionnaire was numbered alphabetically to maintain the confidentiality of the respondents. Thereafter all responses were coded, and the codes written as per question on an A3 page. The responses per question were calculated in order to draw the graphs. A second set of 19 questionnaires were received from new school principals, which were also checked for completeness, accuracy and uniformity, and then coded for analysis.

3.4.5 To Summarise

This chapter focused on the methodical issues that would impact on the research. In the research on the challenges and coping strategies of new school principals, a mixed method approach was used. The research instruments used in the study were questionnaires and interviews. This chapter also examined the advantages and disadvantages of the selected method of data collection. Furthermore, there is a description of how the data was collected. In the following chapter the data that were collected will be presented, analyzed and discussed.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE DATA

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focussed on the methodology and the instruments used to conduct the research. In this chapter, the data collected by means of questionnaires to principals and interviews with new school principals is presented and discussed. The data collected by means of questionnaires is presented in the form of graphs in Section 4.1, while the data of the interviews is presented thematically in section 4.2. The discussion of the results follows in sections 4.3.

4.2 Presentation of the data collected by means of questionnaires

In this section the data collected by means of questionnaires to school principals is represented. Eighteen of the 30 respondents were returned yielding a response rate of 60 percent. The responses reflect the nature of what a school principal's work is and what challenges they face in doing their work. In the data the responses also reflect the coping strategies these principals use. The data are presented in the form of graphs. The second set of questionnaires were sent to 100 new school principals of which 19 were returned, yielding a response rate of only nineteen percent. Data of information gathered is presented in the form of bar graphs. The y-axis gives the percentage of respondent in any given field.

4.2.1 The gender of the principals [Question 1 of Appendix D]

This question wants to display the percentage of males and females that is appointed in the position as principal. The results are displayed in Fig. 4.2.1.

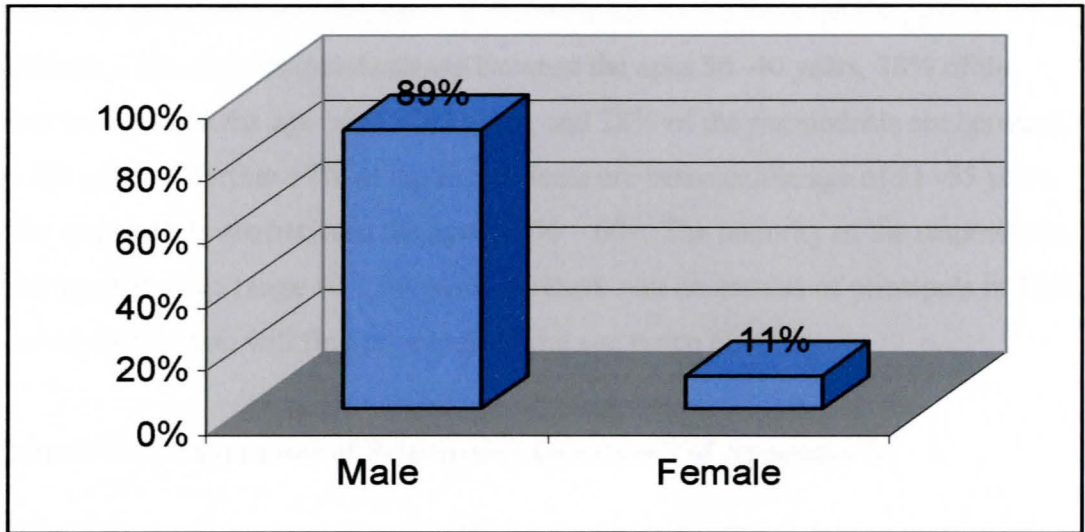


FIG. 4.2.1 The gender of the principals

According to the data, collected by means of questionnaires, it is apparent that 89 % of the respondents are male and 11% are female (Fig. 4.2.1). The findings indicate that the principals in the sample are predominantly male and that the females are a minority group. The appointment of female educators in management positions is due to a change in policy, namely the Employment Equity Act 5 of 1998.

4.2.2 The age range of the Principals [Question 2 of Appendix D]

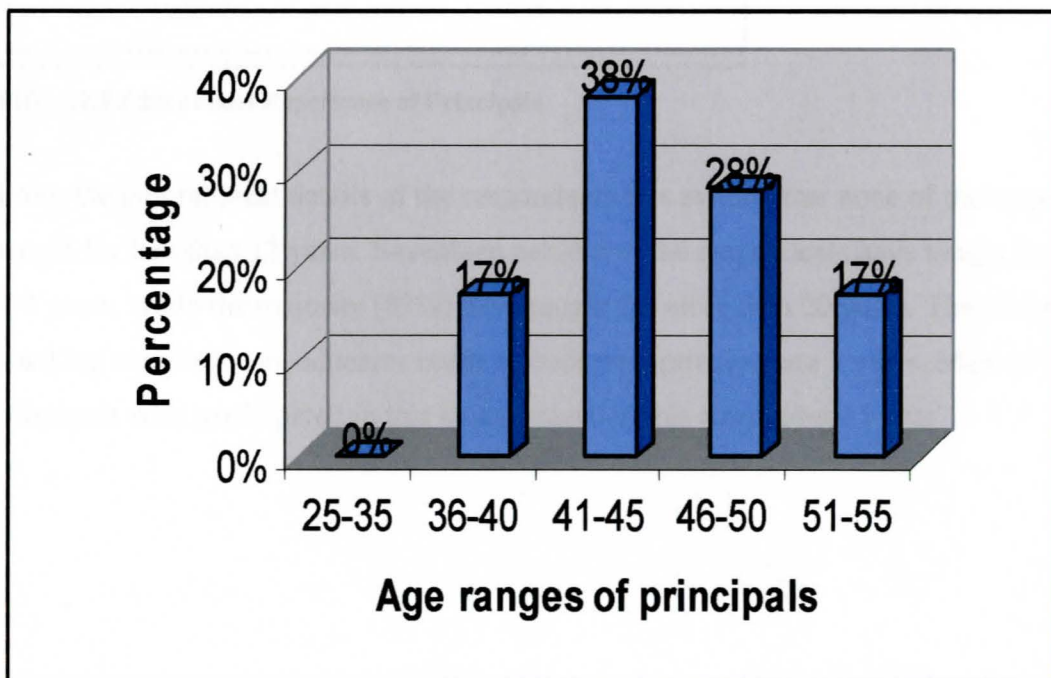


FIG. 4.2.2 The age range of the Principals

The graph in Fig. 4.2.2 indicates that none of the respondents are between the ages 25 – 35 years. However, 17% of the respondents are between the ages 36 –40 years, 38% of the respondents are between the age of 41 – 45 years, and 28% of the respondents are between the age of 46 –50 years. A further 17% of the respondents are between the age of 51 –55 years. None of the respondents are between the ages of 56 – 60+. The majority of the respondents (principals) are in the age range 40 – 50 years. As there was an exodus of principals in 1996, it is very unlikely that you will find principals in the age range 60 +.

4.2.3 Educational Experience of Principals [Question 3 of Appendix D]

This question wanted to display how long principals have been teaching. According to the Employment of Educators Act (1998) the minimum teaching experience required to become a principal range from 4 – 7 years. The results are displayed in Fig. 4.2.3.

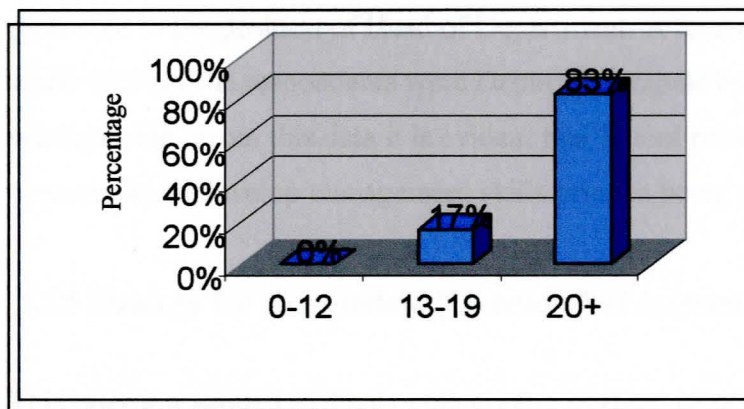


FIG. 4.2.3 Educational Experience of Principals

From the biographical details of the respondents it is evident that none of the respondents has taught for less than 12 years. Seventeen percent of the respondents have taught for between 13 –19 years, while the majority (83%) have taught for more than 20 years. The minimum years teaching experience an educator needs to become a principal are 7 years. Most of the principals who participated in this study exceeded this requirement by far.

4.2.4 Experience in different management positions [Question 4 of Appendix D]

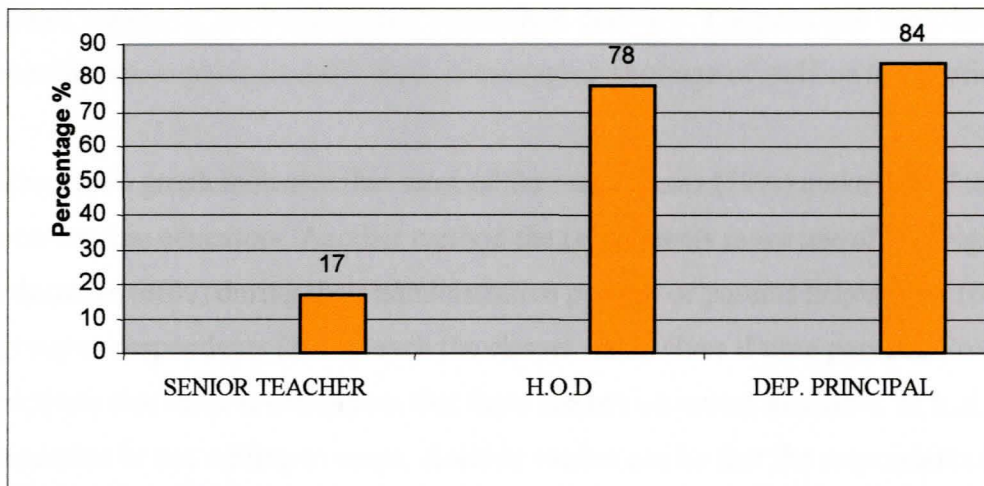


FIG.4.2.4 Experience in different management positions

The graph indicates that 17% of the respondents became senior teachers before they were promoted to the position of Head of Department. A total of 78% were Heads of Department, while 84 % of the respondents were Deputy Principals before they were promoted to principalship. From this data it is evident that school principals in general have had opportunity to develop management skills prior to being appointed as school principals.

4.2.5 Strategy for absenteeism [Question 5 of Appendix D]

This question wanted to display the coping strategy principal's use for absenteeism of teachers. The results are displayed in Fig. 4.2.5.

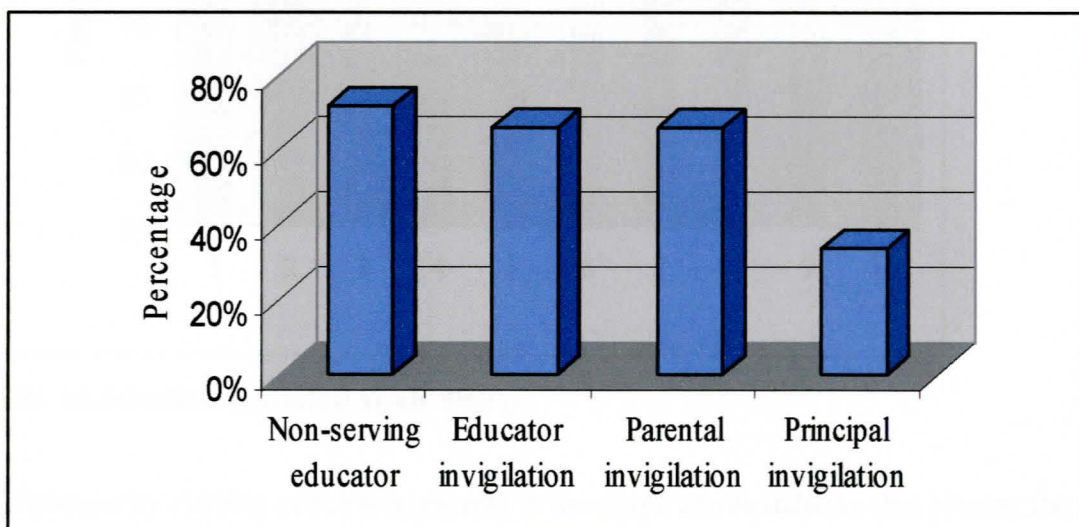


FIG. 4.2.5 Strategy for absenteeism

Part of the principals' task is to manage the challenge of teacher absenteeism as this has a direct impact on the learning and curriculum delivery. The principal therefore has to have a mechanism in place to assist them in managing shortage of staff on any particular school day.

The above graph indicates that most of the respondents (72%) make use of the services of non-serving educators. Another method the respondents make use of is invigilation by educators (66%) during their administrative periods or parents helping out (66%). Another group of respondents (34%) teach the classes themselves if time permits. Sometimes it happens that there are instances that there are not educators available, or that parents are not available or not willing to come. Another reason can be that the respondents found themselves in a situation that there are too many educators absent and not enough help to invigilate in the classes. The strategy to make use of non-serving educators is a good choice, as this allows the school to continue with the curriculum, whilst by using the parents there is an adult to supervise the learners.

4.2.6 Qualities a principal should display [Question 6 of Appendix D]

This question wanted to determine the qualities a principal should display. The responses of the principals are shown in Fig.4.2.6.

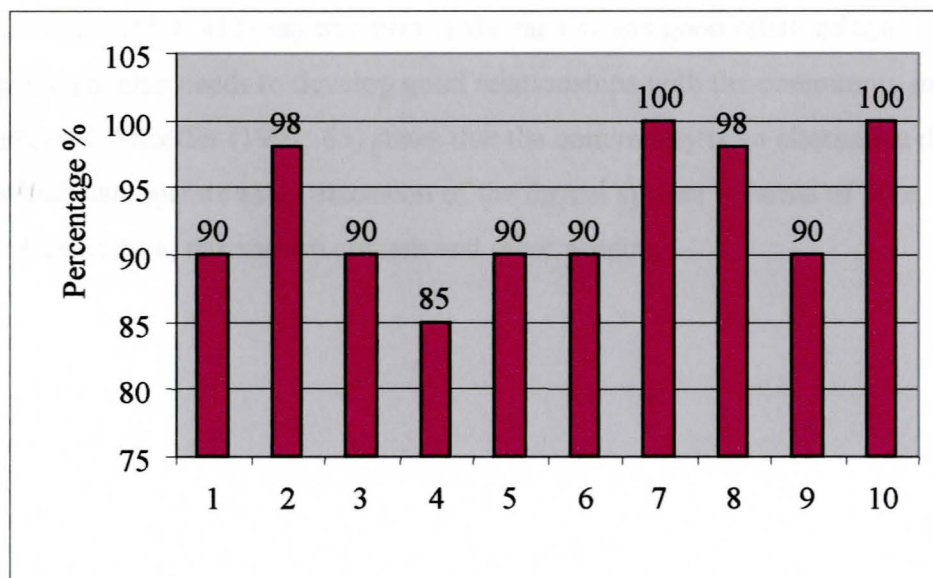


FIG. 4.2.6 Qualities a principal should display

The majority (100%) of the respondents in the graph above indicate that placing the learner needs first and being a good role model as a leader are important qualities that a principal

should display. Being a good listener and acknowledging the success of others (being that of learners or personnel) is seen by most of the respondents as the second most important quality that principals should display (98%).

The respondents (90%) indicated that good communicating skills, interpersonal relationships, being well organized, self reflection and effective delegation as the third most important quality that a principal should display. Most of the respondents (85%) indicate that they do not perceive being familiar with curriculum developments as one of the most critical characteristics to display.

The fact that principals indicate that being familiar with curriculum developments is the least important quality that a principal should have, is very contradictory; as the WCED places it as one of the top priorities of school managers in the managing of the school curriculum. The qualities listed as first and second by the respondents reflect that good interpersonal skills are important for most of the school managers. A good relationship is imperative as this will help motivate the good teams and teamwork is essential in creating an effective school. According to McEwan (1998:6) an effective principal needs to establish clear instructional goals, have a knowledge base, create a school culture and climate conducive to learning, communicate the vision and mission of his/her school, set high expectation for him/herself, develop teachers and learners, and maintain positive attitudes towards students staff and parents. Theron & Bothma (1990: 113) say that principals must create good relationships. At the same time the principal also needs to develop good relationships with the community in which the school is situated. Shaeffer (1991: 65) states that the community is an alternative delivery system, which can operate as an extension of the formal system in terms of time, facilities, infrastructure, curriculum content and other aspects.

4.2.7 Training opportunities offered by WCED [Question 7.1 of Appendix D]

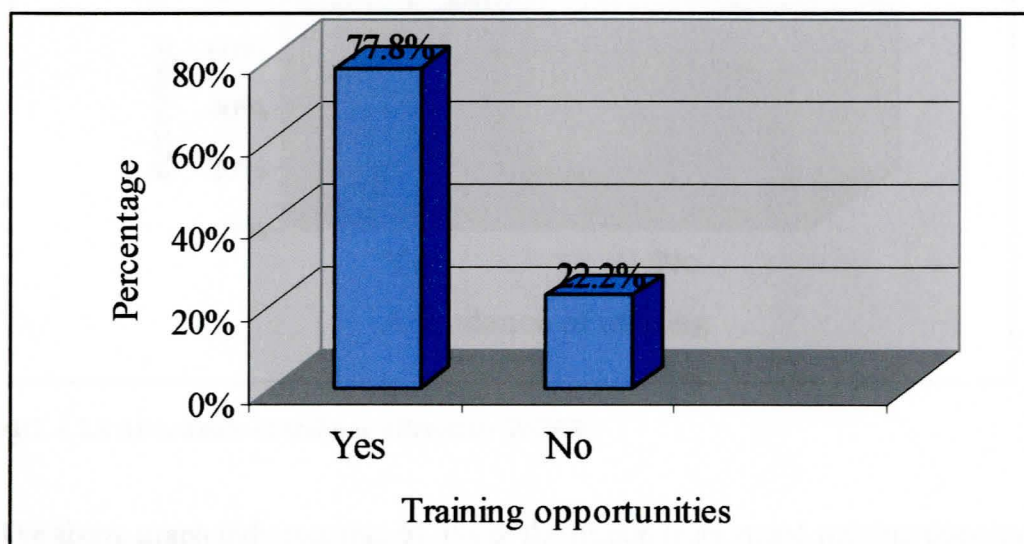


FIG. 4.2.7 Training opportunities offered by WCED

The responses in the graph reflect that 77,8% of the respondents indicate that the Western Cape Education Department does offer training opportunities for principals, while 22% of the respondents disagreed. Whilst the majority indicates that there are training opportunities, some indicated that the training mostly prepares them to fulfil the demands as set out by WCED, and not to cope with the challenges in their schools. Leithwood (1996: 419) suggests that in order to be successful an educational organization must provide effective professional development programmes for employees over the entire course of their career. In the study it was found that due to a lack of training principals face some challenges in performing certain activities effectively and systematically.

4.2.8 Attendance of training offered by WCED [Question 7.2 of Appendix D]

The question wanted to determine if school principals attended training sessions conducted by the Western Cape Education Department. The results are portrayed in Fig. 4.2.8.

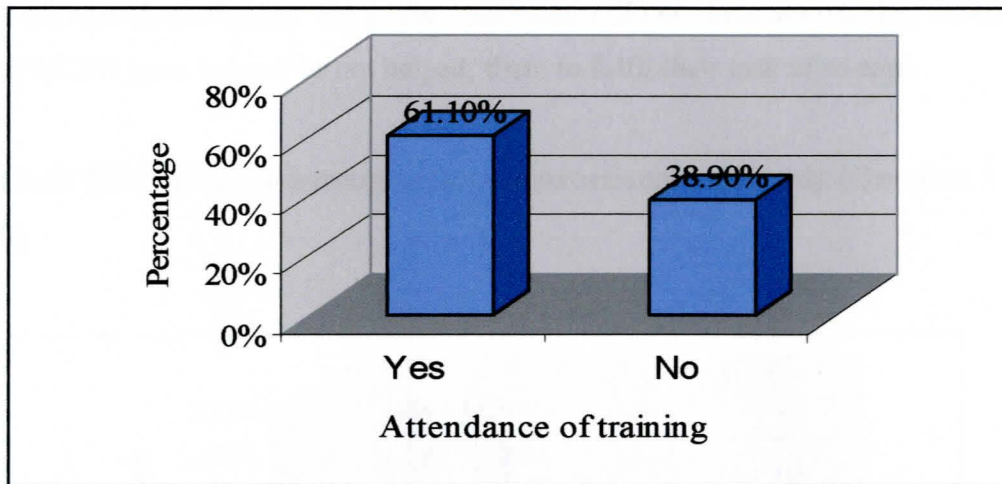


FIG. 4.2.8 Attendance of training offered by WCED

The above graph indicates that 61.1% of the respondents attend training opportunities presented by the WCED, while 38,9% of respondents do not attend training opportunities as provided by the WCED. The lack of interest can be ascribed to the respondents' belief that the training provided does not develop them professionally to deal with the challenges that they face every day.

4.2.9 Provision of support by WCED [Question 8.1 of Appendix D]

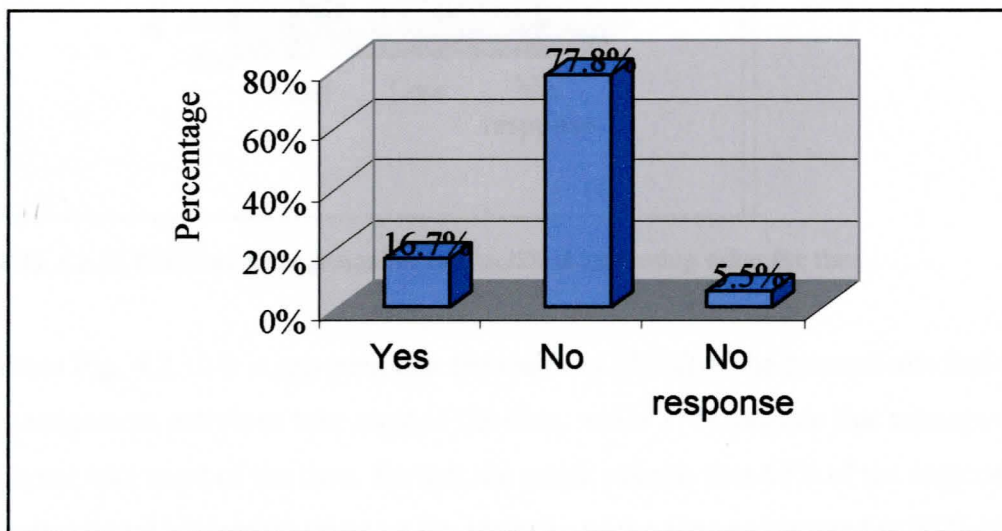
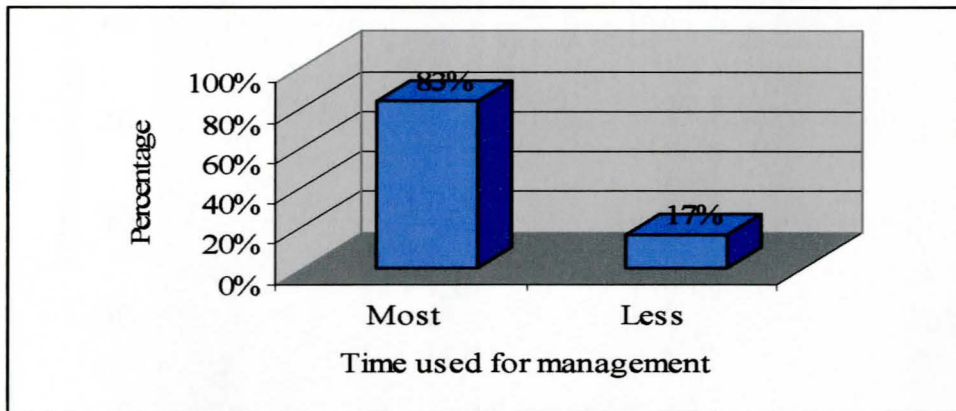


FIG. 4.2.9 Provision of support by WCED

It is apparent from Fig. 4.2.9 above that 16,7% of the respondents feel that the WCED support systems helped them to fulfil their task as managers, while 77,8% of the respondents indicated that the support systems of WCED did not assist them to fulfil their task or to cope with the

challenges thereof. Only 5% of the respondents did not indicate whether the support structures of WCED have helped, or not helped, them to fulfil their task or to cope.

4.2.10 Time spent on management or instructional leadership [Question 9 of Appendix D]



Time spent on instructional leadership

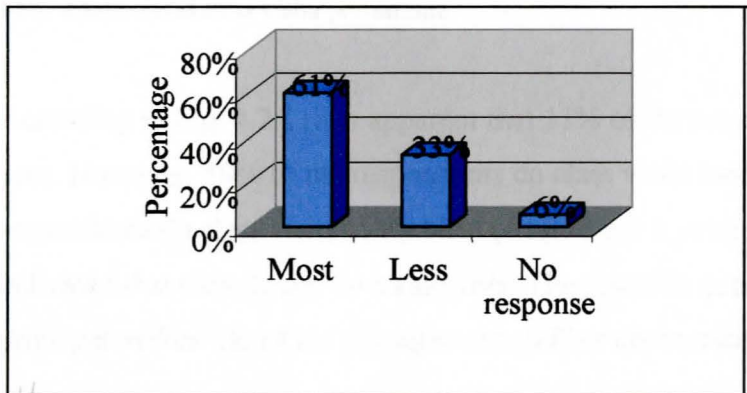


FIG. 4.2.10 Which of management or instructional leadership takes the time

From Fig. 4.2.10 it is apparent that the majority (83%) of the respondents feel that management activities take most of the time, while 17% indicate that management activities do not take most of the time. Further the graph reflects that 61% of the respondents feel that instructional leadership takes up the majority of the time as opposed to 33% of the respondents that do not feel instructional leadership takes up the majority of the time. About 6% of the respondents did not indicate if instructional leadership takes up their time.

4.2.11 Total class visits per annum [Question 10 of Appendix D]

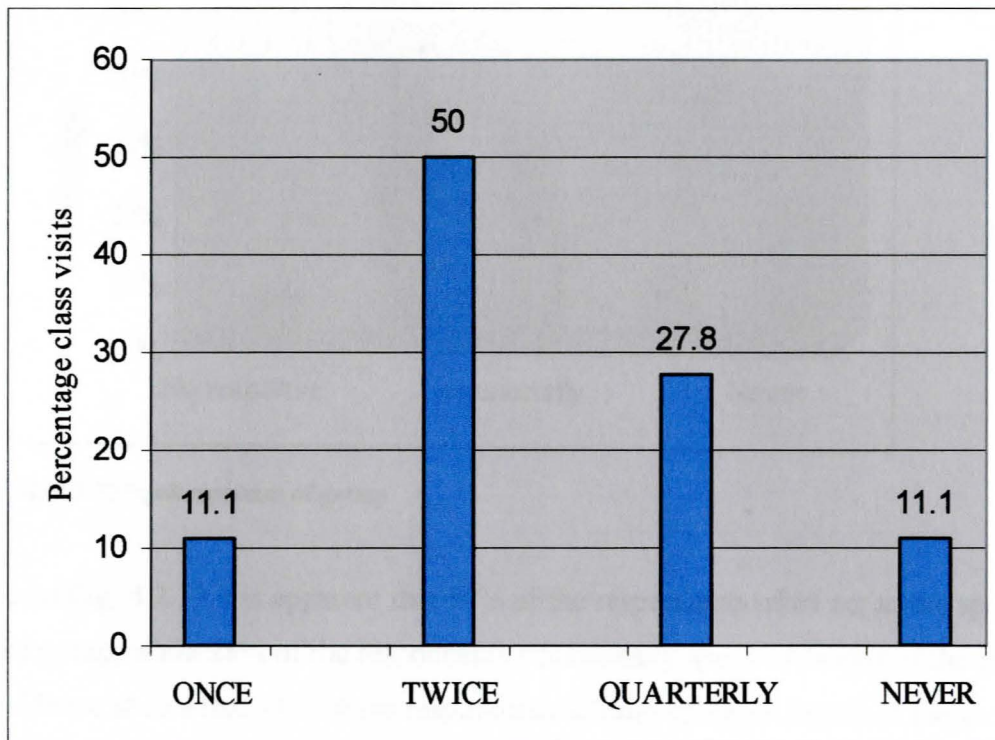


FIG. 4.2.11 Total class visits per annum

According to Fig. 4.2.11 it is apparent that 11% of the respondents do class visits once per year. However, 50% of the respondents do class visits twice a year, while 28% of the respondents do class visits every term (4 times per a year). Only 11% of the respondents indicated that they do not do class visits. The research questionnaire does not ascertain if the principal makes use of his management staff or not to assist him with these class visits.

Supervision is one of the most important activities that enhance the teaching and learning process. It helps principals to identify the weaknesses and strengths of their educators, as well as investigating how successful the school is in implementing the curriculum. Currently school management visits educators mainly to ensure that education is delivered at the required standard, using the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS), as this is connected to pay progression.

4.2.12 Spokesperson of group [Question 11.1 of Appendix D]

This question wanted to determine if the principal is the spokesperson of the staff. The responses to this question are portrayed in graph in Fig. 4.2.12.

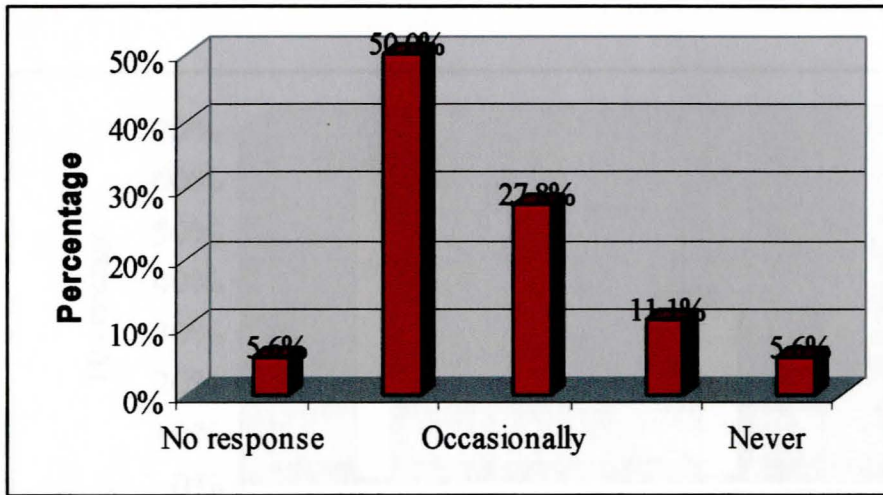


FIG. 4.2.12 Spokesperson of group

From Fig. 4.2.12 it is apparent that 50% of the respondents often act as the spokesperson of the group, while 28% of the respondents occasionally speak on behalf of the group. Further evidence shows that 11% of the respondents seldom speak on behalf of the group, while 6% of the respondents indicated that they never speak on behalf of the group

4.2.13 Listens to group ideas [Question 11.2 of Appendix D]

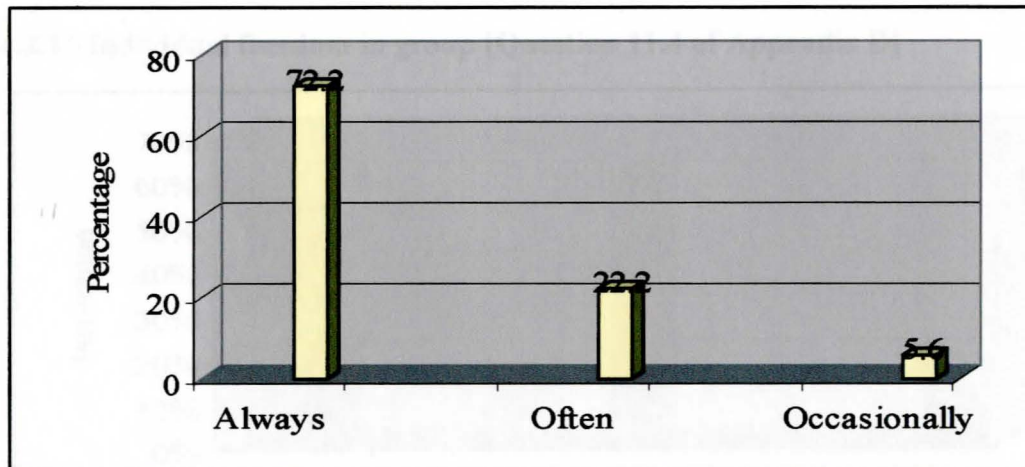


FIG. 4.2.13 Listen to group ideas

The data presented in Fig. 4.2.13 indicated that 72,2% of the respondents always listen to the ideas that their staff has, while 22,2% often listen to the ideas of the group. Further 5, 6 % indicated that occasionally they listen to the group.

4.2.14 Communicate expectations to group [Question 11.3 of Appendix D]

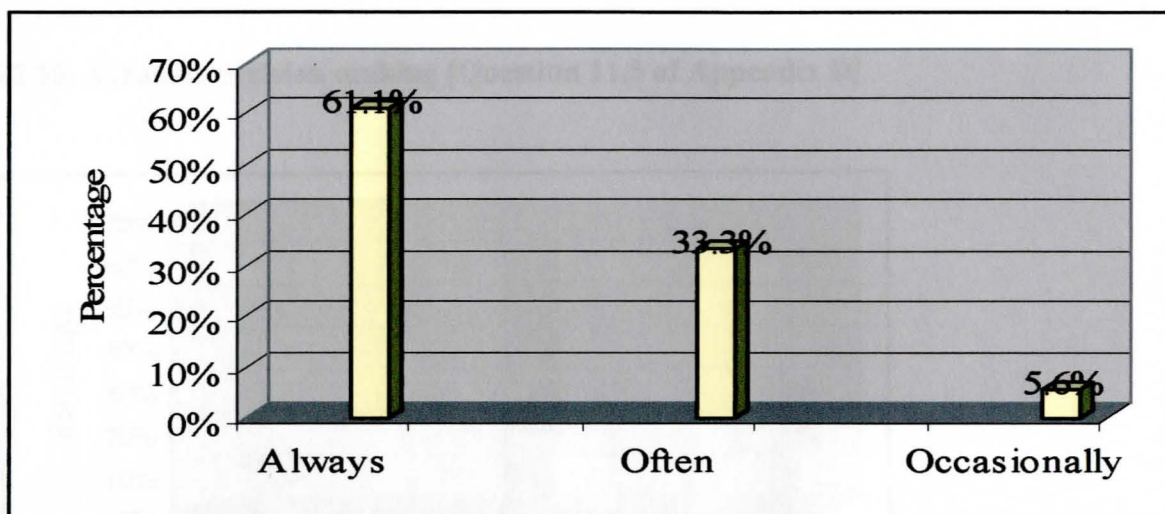


FIG. 4.2.14 Communicate expectations to group

It is apparent that the majority (61,1%) of the respondent always communicate what they expect of their group to the group, while 33,3% indicated that they often communicate expectations to the group. However, 5,6% of the respondents occasionally communicate their expectations. From the data therefore could be ascertained that the majority of respondents sees communication as an important tool to get the groups assistance.

4.2.15 Individual freedom in group [Question 11.4 of Appendix D]

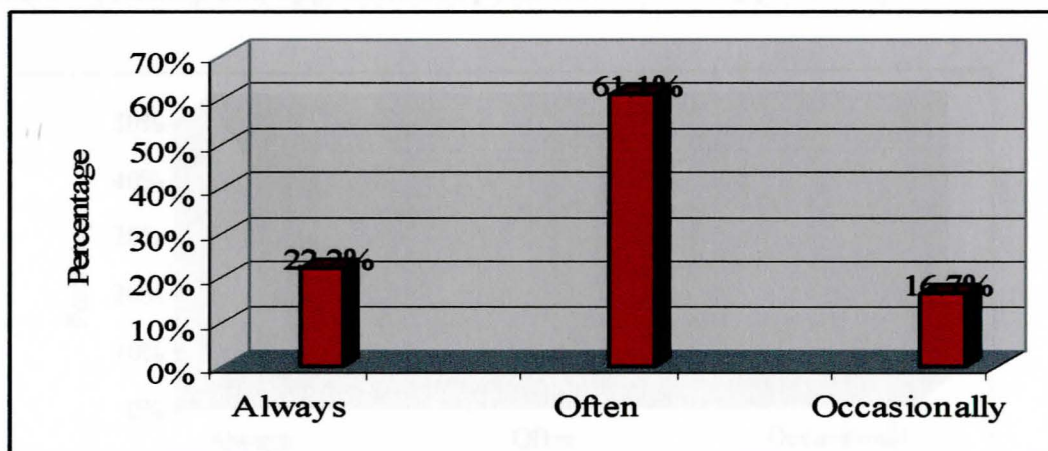


FIG. 4.2.15 Individual freedom in group

In the graph Fig. 4.2.15, 22,2% of the respondents allow the members of the group complete freedom to act and speak for themselves, while the majority (61,1%) of the respondents often

allow the group members some freedom. Another 16,7% of the respondents occasionally allow group members their individual freedom in the group.

4.2.16 Accurate decision making [Question 11.5 of Appendix D]

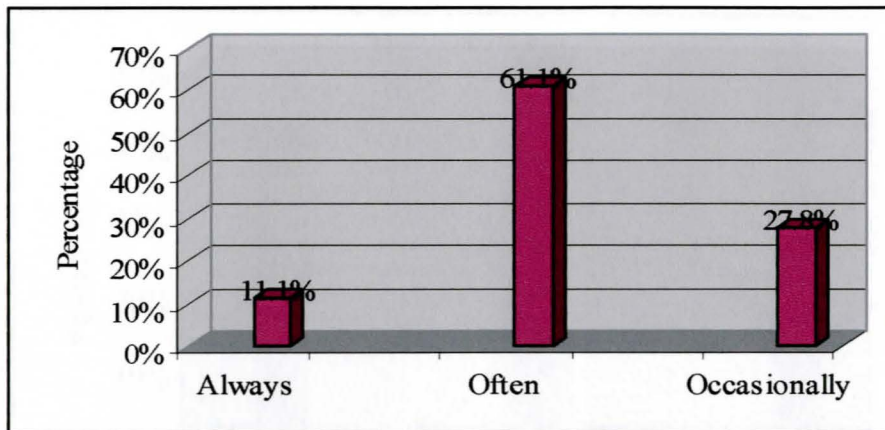


FIG. 4.2.16 Accurate decision making

According to the graph Fig. 4.2.16 about 11% of the respondents reflect that they make accurate decisions, while the majority (61%) of the respondents indicated that they often make the right decisions. Some (27%) of the respondents indicated that they occasionally make the right decisions.

4.2.17 Friendly and approachable [Question 11.6 of Appendix D]

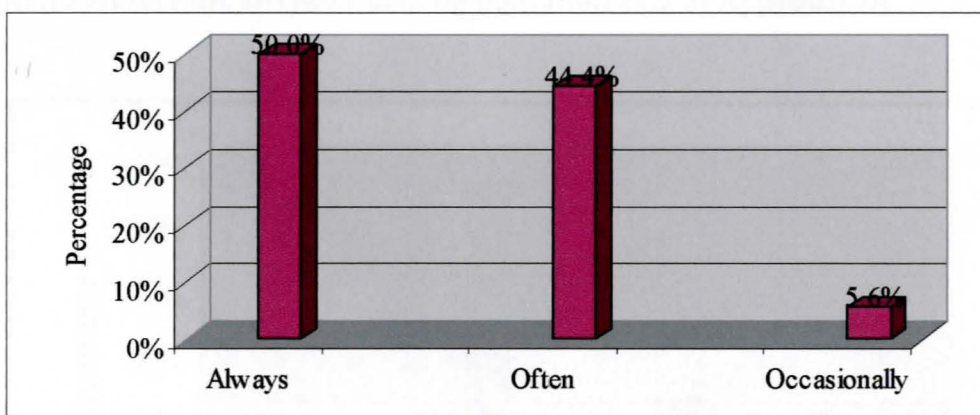


FIG. 4.2.17 Friendly and approachable

The graph indicate that most of the respondents (50%) are always open and approachable to their personnel, while 44,4% often create an atmosphere where they are approachable by

personnel. Another group of respondents (5.6%) occasionally try to create an atmosphere that is open and non aggressive.

4.2.18 Give credit to group [Question 11.7 of Appendix D]

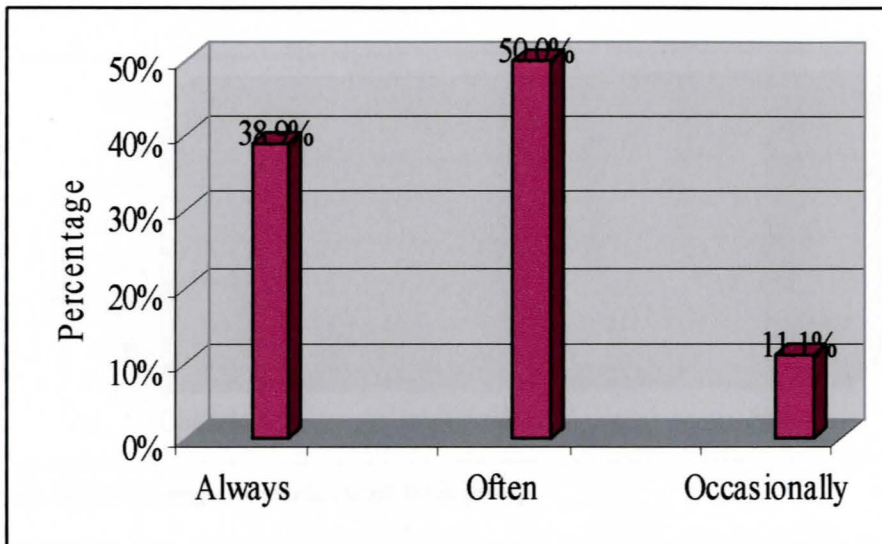


FIG. 4.2.18 Give credit to group

Of the respondents 39% indicated that they always acknowledge the performances of the group, while 50% of the respondents often praise their group. Only 11% of the respondents occasionally praise their group.

4.2.19 Autocratic Decision making [Question 11.8 of Appendix D]

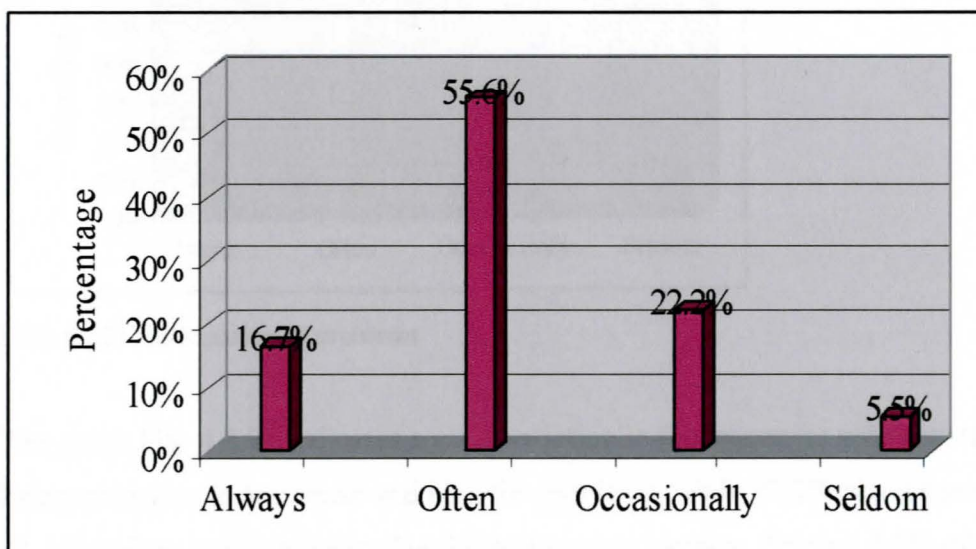


FIG. 4.2.19 Autocratic Decision makin

The graph above reflects that 16,7% of the respondents always make decisions on behalf of their personnel, while 55,6% of the respondents often make autocratic decisions. Of the respondents (22.2%) occasionally, while 5,5% seldom make decisions on behalf of their personnel.

4.2.20 Principal's consultation with group [Question 11.9 of Appendix D]

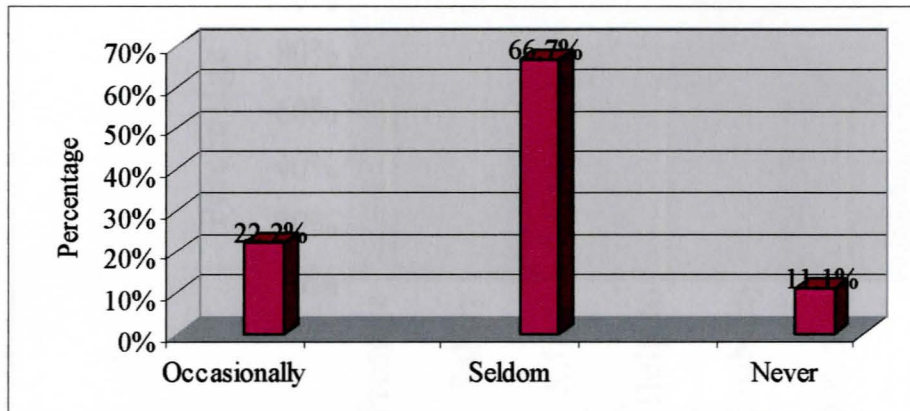


FIG. 4.2.20 Principal's consultation with group

From Fig. 4.2.20 it apparent that the majority (66.7%) seldom consult their colleagues when making decisions, while only 11,1% never consult their group. In addition a mere 22,2% of the respondents occasionally consult their personnel when making decisions.

4.2.21 Anticipation of problems [Question 11.10 of Appendix D]

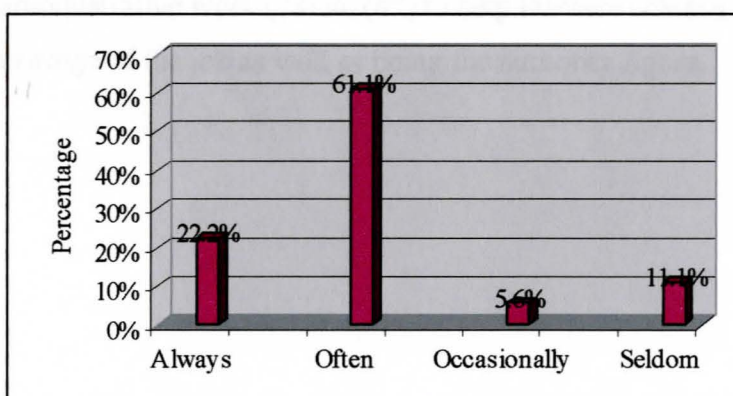


FIG. 4.2.21 Anticipation of problems

The graph Fig. 4.2.21 indicates a great variation in the responses with regard to principal being proactive to anticipate and plan for problems; while 22,2% always pre-empt problems, 61,10% often anticipate and plan for problems to happen. Another 5,6% of the respondents

occasionally anticipate and plan, while only 11,1% of the respondents seldom anticipate and plan.

4.2.22. Major satisfiers of principal's job [Question 12 of Appendix D]

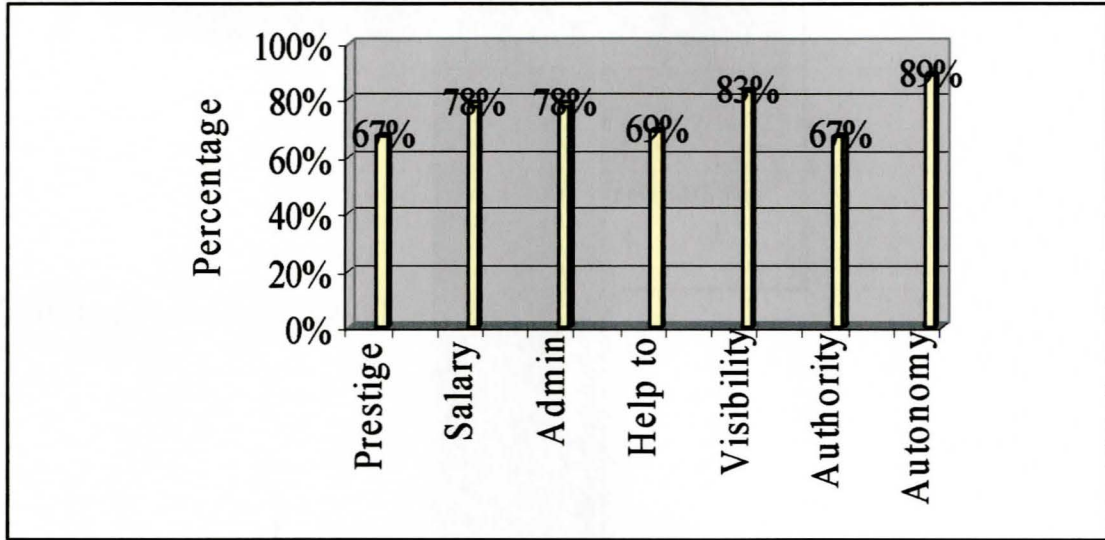


FIG. 4.2.22 Major satisfiers of principal's job

In this graph Fig. 4.2.22 the respondents rate the factors that really make it worth their while being school administrators. The percentage was calculated using the percentage of respondents who listed these factors from highest ranking to lowest: (1st) being autonomous (89%), (2nd) having a high visibility as administrator (83%); (3rd) a good salary and doing administrative work (78%); (4th) to help learners achieve the best (69%), and last they rate the prestige of the job as well as being the authority figure.

4.2.22 Major Dis-satisfiers of Principals job [Question 13 of Appendix D]

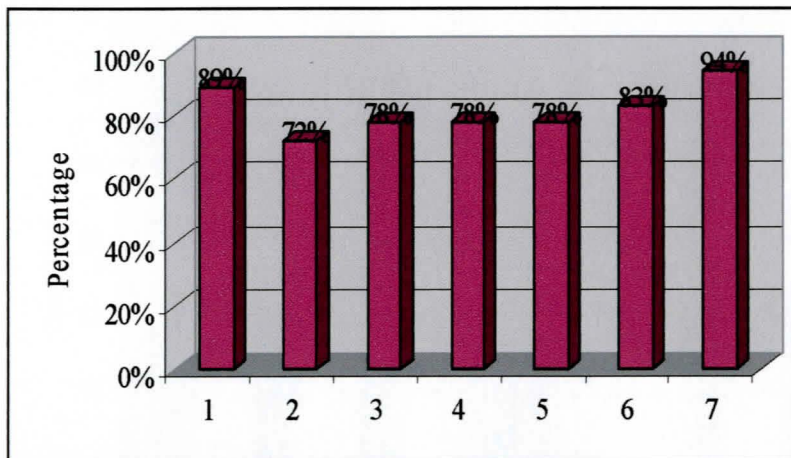


FIG. 4.2.23 Major Dis-satisfiers of Principals job

- Key**
- 1 = Time constraints
 - 2 = Staff-parents
 - 3 = Community politics
 - 4 = Learner discipline
 - 5 = Balancing between teaching and admin
 - 6 = Departmental support
 - 7 = Departmental demands

In the graph principals list the factors that are challenging and make being a principal difficult in ranking order: from the challenges that affect their lives the most, to the factors that have less of an impact on their lives. Percentages were calculated using the the total of responses per factor. Principals indicated that departmental demands (94%) make their life unbearable. About eighty-nine percent of the principals indicated that the time constraints under which they have to fulfil their task is a problem. The lack of departmental support was also indicated as a major dis-satisfier (83%). Other factors included in the dissatisfaction with their work conditions were community politics, learner discipline and balancing between teaching and dealing with administrative tasks (78%); and lastly staff-parent conflicts (72%).

4.3 Presentation of data related to the questionnaire of new school principals

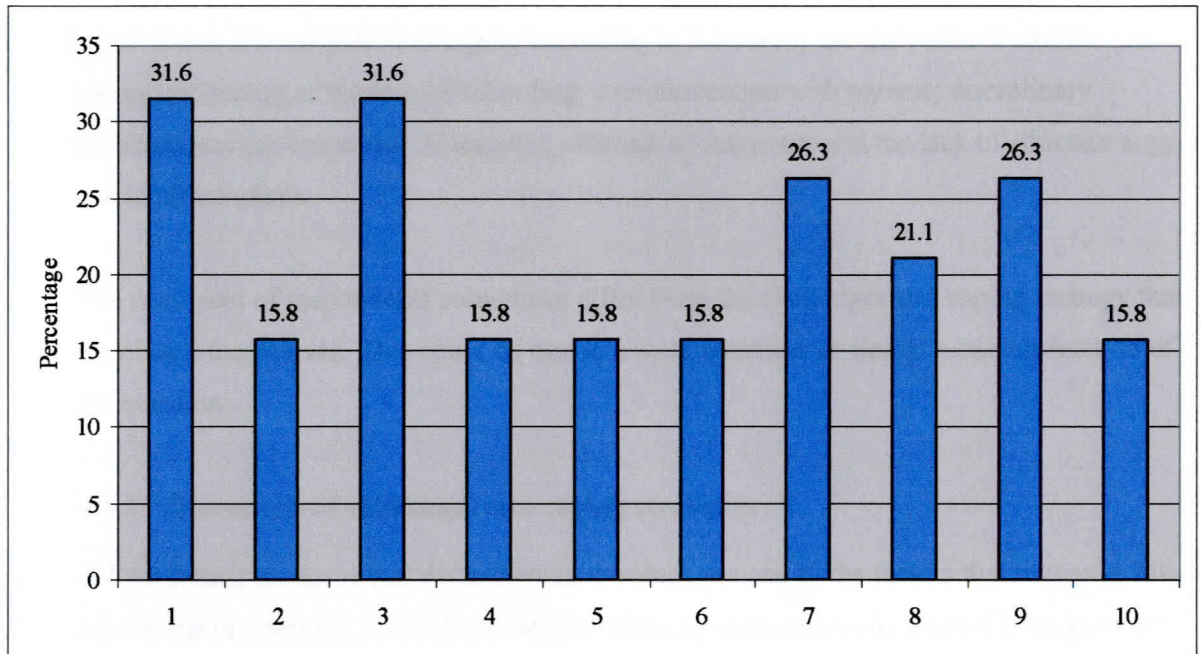


FIG. 4.3 Challenges of new school principals

A questionnaire was sent to 100 new school principals of whom nineteen were returned, yielding a response rate of 19 percent, to gauge the challenges they experience and the coping strategies they employ. Respondents had to list two challenges that they perceive as major in their task and they then indicated what coping strategies they employed. The afore-mentioned challenges are:

- Key**
1. Constantly changing education policy
 2. Public attitude and misunderstanding about role of schooling
 3. Administrative workload
 4. Communication with parents
 5. Pupil misbehaviour & disciplinary problems
 6. Shortage of resources
 7. Lack of support from the Education Department
 8. Financial management
 9. Supervisory responses
 10. Lack of Educator support e.g. absenteeism

4.3.1 Presentation of challenges of new school principals

31.6 % of the respondents listed the constantly changing education policy and administrative workload of the principals as a major stressor in their every day life. The second stressors

(26.3%) listed are lack of support from the Education Department, and supervisory responses. Another factor (21.1%) that challenges principals is financial management. The factors (15,8%) that are the least challenging according to the survey are the public's attitude and misunderstanding of the role of schooling; communication with parents; disciplinary problems and the behaviour of learners; shortage of resources and the lack of educator support due to absenteeism.

The responses of respondents sometimes differ from the challenges and coping strategy that they listed themselves. This could be due to a work overload or simple misinterpretation of the question.

4.3.2 Discussion of challenges and coping strategies

All the principals agree that departmental demands are one of the factors that make the life of a principal unbearable. Everything the Education Department needs is always 'as soon as possible', without considering the school's programme. The researcher suggests that the education department should ask schools to send the school's year plan to the EMDC so that planning can be done with the schools activities also taken into consideration. Together with the above-mentioned factor the respondents also listed time constraints as an obstacle to fulfilling their tasks. The frequently requested submission of data without really having enough time to handle day-to-day affairs makes life unbearable, and has an impact on efficiency.

Respondents complained about the lack of departmental support. One of the respondents mentioned a scenario where the respondent had to deal with the newspapers, television station and the community at the same time. The response of the Education Department official was to request a report of the matter, whilst the principal actually needed support to deal with the crisis at hand. Another respondent who was appointed at a newly built school said that they had to act as the 'building inspectors' on the site, without requested departmental support. It is then expected of these principals to submit building reports on the structural condition of the school. The education department should let the Department of Works handle this sort of matter, as they are more qualified to deal with them. An annual inspection of all schools should be done. This would give principals more time to deal with curricular matters. According to the Personnel Administrative Measures, principals must teach for at least 10% of their time. About 78% of the respondents found it difficult to balance their time between teaching and administration. It would really help if the education department, when

establishing staffing ratios, would take away the principal as part of the total of teacher learner ratio, as this forces them to be in the class whilst their expertise is needed to manage.

The Second Questionnaire:

In the second questionnaire the emphasis was to identify the challenges that new school principals faced, and the coping strategies that they used. According to Daresh and Playko (1993), there is a great deal of anxiety, frustration, self-doubt and loneliness among new school principals.

Respondents were asked to list the challenges that they perceive as the ones that are more important in their situation. They were also asked to list the coping strategies that they used. Of the ten that were listed, the respondents selected the following eight challenges as major stressors.

4.3.2.1 Constantly changing educational policies

Eleven of the nineteen respondents indicated that they experienced the constant changing educational policies of the Department of Education and Western Cape Education Department as a stressor that impacts on their tasks as principals.

- **Networking**

Mallia (1992:18) notes the high value principals' place on their networks, through which shared concerns in policy and curriculum development provided regular sources of advice and support. In their study of newly appointed principals in Western Australia, Harvey & Swartz (1989:17) notes the principal 'acknowledges a need for networks to spread their influence'. Respondent 1 and respondent 9 used networking with other principals in their principals' forum as a coping mechanism to gain more opinions of interpretation of educational policies and insight into implementation strategies of afore-mentioned policies. Principal forums have monthly meetings where discussions are held of area related problems, e.g. gangsterism and safety issues. Respondent 17 and 19 also used cluster meetings to discuss the latest policy changes and to acquire other opinions to inform their own. Cluster meetings usually discuss curriculum related policies and directives, e.g. assessment; how to implement curriculum policies, and how to set up joint

training sessions for staff members. These meetings are in conjunction with curriculum advisors and circuit managers of the WCED. This is supported by respondent P3 who contacted other principals when the challenges became too much to bear.

- **Workshops**

Respondents 9 and 12 also regularly attend workshops held by Teacher unions who inform them of labour legislation, conditions of service that impact on educators; and the WCED, who have Road shows to enhance their understanding of the educational policy changes. These external inputs compliments the knowledge acquired in principal meetings. Respondent P5 supports the idea of attending workshops will help with the interpretation of educational policies.

- **Personal study**

Though principals attend meetings and workshops they do not entirely rely on these external inputs only for information. Respondents 9 and 12 stated that they read up on the latest policies and they then study the policies intensively. Respondent P1 supported the idea that principals should read extensively and said “principals should master their own destiny”. According to Dean (1991) professional management development assist a person in his/her personal development, which will help them to tackle new tasks. They then further their knowledge through legal entities to understand the legal impact of these policies on the school curriculum as well as the governance by the school governing bodies. Respondent P4 indicated principals are duty bound to know information contained in circulars. The best way to comply and remain on top of the latest developments would be to “visit WCED websites and other educational bodies who have a vested interest”.

- **Capacity building**

Respondents 8; 11 and 16 build their own school’s capacity through interaction and equipping themselves to adapt to change. Strategies used in some of these schools are to inform staff of policy changes, and have discussions, or to ask NGO’s for assistance. This places the burden to affect change in schools not only on principals, but collectively. This is advanced through effectively communicating to the staff about changes, implementation of latest policy and guiding them through this process of change. Crowther *et al* (2002:9)

suggests that principals who want to see their schools develop as learning organizations should empower the educators in meaningful ways. Respondent P1 emphasized the need to be sensitive to the needs of learners, educators and the community. Some of the other respondents (P1, P2 and P5), see regular communication sessions with the staff as a coping strategy to counter departmental demands.

4.3.2.2 Public's attitude and understanding of the role of schooling

Three of the nineteen respondents indicated that they found the public's attitude and their understanding of the role of schooling as a stressor. In his study of leadership in rural schools Arnold (1995:92) found poor attitudes of parents as a major constraint in the effectiveness of principals. The cultural values of parents deviate from that of school and therefore they do not support values of the school; and parents do not see a need for social interaction with the school. Three respondents, namely respondents 2; 4 and 18, used closer interaction by means of regular parent meetings as a coping strategy to change parental roles, perceptions and attitudes. Respondent 18 strengthens this interaction by following it up with regular newsletters about the school's role. Tsiakkiros & Pashiardis(2002) support the notion of a good communication system in the school. This is supported by respondent P4 who suggested that school principals should use regular communications of school and community events to motivate interactions in these events. Through house visitations the school tries to change the perceptions of the parents. Respondent 14 used parents to help with invigilation when educators are absent. Other ways to lighten the workload of educators through involvement of parents in extra-curricular activities like coaching of sports, running of projects like the school garden, cleaning of school and its school grounds. Respondent P1 embraces the idea of taking community organizations on board to take care of the school. This may be in the form of soup kitchens, pastoral care and maintaining safety of learners and staff through organizations like Bambanani. The success is reflected as respondent P2 puts it in 'no vandalism of school and no graffiti on walls'.

4.3.2.3 Administrative workload

Eight of the nineteen respondents listed their administrative workload as a challenge that hampers their effectiveness. In their study Harvey & Swartz (1989:17), found 'the new principal is subjected to a constant and prolonged stream of administrative demands'. . Ricciardi (2000) agrees that overwhelming job demands and time constraints make school administrators' job difficult. Respondent P1 also stated "demands of the education

department are too much". Four of the eight respondents (50%), namely respondents 1, 10, 11 and 16 employ strategies like sleep deprivation to get more time to handle their administrative workload; as well as working "harder" and longer every day. These include adhering to planning schedules, making every minute count in the school day, as well lengthening their working day by using personal time. Respondent P5 feels that the attendance of leadership and management workshops will assist dealing with time management challenges. According to the study of Fields (2005), when first year principals need to juggle between multiple tasks at once, they tend to spend more time at work or bring work home. Respondents P1 & P2 mention that moving up in the chain of command can also be seen as a coping strategy.

- **Strategizing**

Of the eight respondents three indicated they use strategies to alleviate the plight of their workload. Respondent 11 uses as a mechanism balancing between the needs of staff, learners, parents and their administrative workload to ensure that they give attention to everyone. Respondent 15 prioritizing tasks, whilst respondent 14 described the accurate management of information and documentation as essential to cope with the administrative workload. This is then supported through immediate follow-up processes so that tasks do not increase to a level where it becomes too much.

- **Planning**

An effective, creative secretary helps with the workload, according to respondent 11. Five of the eight respondents, namely respondents 11, 13, 14, 16 and 19 support the notion of delegating work between personnel and insisting on accountability for these tasks. Delegation of all members of staff is seen by respondent P1 as a means of empowering them, whilst respondent P2 feels that the process of delegation should be managed by the principal as the person who is accountable for all activities on the school. Respondent 14 also reasons that developing clear communication lines are also a means of coping. Respondent 19 make use of a timetable to effectively use time available to deal with administrative tasks. According to Dunham (1992) principals should avoid doing everything at once, suggesting that they should plan. An interesting coping strategy is the use of technology by respondent 11 by means of remote access via electronic mail to complete tasks.

4.3.2.4 Pupil misbehaviour and discipline

Seven of the nineteen respondents listed societal attitude towards discipline as a challenge for their role as principal. Respondent P3 also identified discipline as a major stressor, because parents 'cover up learner transgressions'. The respondent expresses the idea that many parents have 'given up' on their children.

- **Parental involvement**

Respondent 9 indicate building good relationships with parents help to improve discipline in general. Respondent 5 found that one-on-one meeting with parents improve relationships. Parental involvement is therefore seen as pivotal in dealing with behaviour problems. According to respondent 6 and 15 a well-oiled discipline structure is important to instil discipline. Whilst all of the respondents agree for the necessity for a code of conduct, respondent 7 advises being consistent in the use of the code of conduct is important. Respondent 5 suggests using the assistance of learners to draw up the code of conduct, which will give them co-ownership for the process. The ownership is supported when all learners sign a contract of obedience. Other avenues that the respondents implore to help with disciplinary problems are the involvement of community structures like the police, social and psychological services as per responses of respondents 2 and 5.

Respondent 12 also use parents to present character building classes to change the attitude of learners towards punctuality and neatness.

4.3.2.5 Shortage of resources

Rhodes (2001), state that the quality of learner education is linked to good resource management. Though the shortage of resources is listed as a challenge, only two of the nineteen respondents experienced it as a challenge. As a coping strategy respondent 4 writes correspondence to the Western Cape Education Department for assistance, in the form of things needed at the school. Another avenue the respondent explores is to ask the community for financial assistance by means of donations. This is supported by inviting the corporate sector to visit the school to experience first hand the conditions in the school. Respondent 18 uses the constraints of the budget to inform decision making. The respondent also plans for the unexpected.

4.3.2.6 Lack of support from the education department

Only one of the respondents listed lack of support from the education department as a challenge. This is supported by respondent P5 of the principals interviewed where the respondent says 'the WCED is not very visible in schools'. This is supported by the other respondents, namely P4, P2, P3 and P4. Respondent 8 tries to build the school's capacity through interaction with colleagues. Efforts are also made by the respondent to access and better understand new legislation. However, some of the respondents P1, P2 see the lack of support as an opportunity to create infrastructural systems without "bureaucratic" interference.

4.3.2.7 Financial management

Two areas that are emphasized by two of the respondents as challenges are financial management and fundraising. Respondent P2 state in the interview that, due to poverty, parents cannot always pay the school fees; and this places a burden on the principal to ensure that ends meet.

Respondent 2 indicates a coping strategy used by him is to employ people who can raise funds as well as having the necessary financial management skills. This is supported by respondent 7. Another coping strategy is to approach the corporate sector and ex-learners for financial assistance. Respondent P1 supports the idea of raising funds by contacting the private sector. The respondent feels that these efforts will be successful through intensive marketing of the school. This will encourage the community and private sector to become involved in the socio-economic situation of the community.

4.3.2.8 Lack of educator support

Two of the nineteen respondents see absenteeism of educators as a big challenge as this impacts on the provisioning of education. Respondent 14 indicate one of the coping strategies used is to inform staff of departmental regulations and guidelines with regard to absenteeism. Respondent 17 however has constant meetings and motivational sessions to minimize absenteeism in the school. Practical solutions used by respondent 14 are the insistence of personal contact with the principal through phone calls. Another solution is to share the workload between the colleagues who are present, whilst respondent 17 also does the invigilation. As a last resort learners are given tasks without supervision.

In response to the public's misunderstanding of the role of schooling, respondent 4 also uses the parents to invigilate in classes to help with the workload. Four of the five respondents P2–P5 use personal interaction with transgressors by means of counselling to understand the reasons for absenteeism, and to find a solution to the problem. However, they all indicated that, should they find a recurring pattern, the procedure of progressive discipline be used as means to manage absenteeism.

4.4 Presentation of the interviews with new school principals

In this section the content of the transcribed interviews of the five principals is presented. Eight themes were identified which are discussed under the headings: reason for principalship, duties of principals, challenges of principalship, coping strategies, Management experience, preparation for principalship, additional skills, and departmental support.

The principals were designated P1, P2, P3, P4 and P5, and in some cases their direct responses are reflected using the above-mentioned symbols to protect their identities. Their responses will now be summarized and presented.

4.4.1 Reason for the principalship

All five of the respondents were of the opinion that they had the necessary experience and skills to apply for a principalship. One respondent (P1) believed “I had the qualities to be a principal”, while another (P2) “..needed a new challenge”. Another respondent (P4) mentioned that ‘..the knowledge of community and challenges’ is also a factor in applying for a principalship. Another respondent (P3) commented that starting at a newly built school is a better challenge, as there are “no systems and traditions” and it gives you the opportunity to really take ownership of the school. All stakeholders, namely the personnel, learners, parent community and the corporate sector, should participate in the decision making and the building of a school culture. Whilst starting at an established school for some principals would be better, one of the respondents felt starting at a new school places the principal and community on an equal footing, as they need to learn to know one another as well as working with each other. Not one specific group of stakeholders will then be able to say whatever development took place happened because of their intervention.

4.4.2 Duties of principals

All of the respondents mentioned that the Educator Employment Act of 1998 describes the duties of principals, and that it is the first document a new school principal should know. This document mentions the administrative tasks of the principal: namely finances, maintenance of school premises and ensuring that staff members are informed of the latest curricular development in the education department. One respondent (P1) believed that a principal should create a “stress free environment”, while another (P5) believes that his job is to “manage curriculum, finances, personnel and different policies”. Another respondent (P2) feels that the principal should “ensure survival of school in these times”, while another respondent (P3) feels that the principal should not only manage, but “coordinate activities, e.g. sport, social and culture in the school”. Another respondent (P4) indicated that the principal should “motivate involvement of school in the community and vice versa, by communicating regularly about school events”.

4.4.3 Challenges of principalship

All of the respondents identified the lack of support from the Western Cape Education Department as a challenge that they as new school principals face. One of the respondents (P4) says “the WCED is not very visible in school”. Another respondent (P3) mentioned that the “Circuit Manager does not understand the challenges the school faces in the community”, while another respondent (P2) said “after the school was built, WCED moved out” and left the principal as “building manager to deal with repairs”. Another challenge that the respondents identified is the departmental demands of the Education Department on principal’s time. Most of the respondents identified the lack of resources in the school as a challenge, while (P4) added that the School Governing Bodies “lack of understanding their role and involvement in school activities” was also a challenge. Another challenge that was identified by most of the respondents was time constraints and the impact it has on the school. The time constraints were linked to “demands of the Education department” and the effect they have on the school programme, e.g. sport and culture. The respondents indicated that the Department of Education arranges workshops without considering the school programme, and that notices are most of the time late. Another respondent (P4) mentioned the expectations of temporary staff to become permanent as a challenge that the new principal faces. Other challenges are the impoverished community who struggle to pay school fees, and a community that cannot deal with the building problems. Another respondent (P3) mentioned

the lack of discipline of learners and some parents had “given up” on their children and the role that they can play to assist the school. Lack of recreational resources also affects discipline, as learners participate in activities that are detrimental to their health, e.g. frequenting shebeens and practising gangsterism.

4.4.4 Management experience

Most of the respondents were Heads of Department before they moved further up in the chain of command. One of the respondents (P4) became principal thereafter. The other respondents were deputy principals before they became principals.

4.4.5 Preparation for principalship

All of the respondents identified knowledge of National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and the implementation of curriculum as one of the skills that principals need. Respondent (P2) said “the learners should be priority”. Another respondent (P3) feels that the principal to be should “learn as much of management as possible” through moving up the ranks, e.g. from Head of Department to Deputy Principal before applying for a principalship. Another respondent (P1) said that anybody interested in becoming a principal should “read extensively about management”, while another (P5) feel that the ‘prospective principal’ should attend leadership and management training workshops, which will help the principal with stress management and dealing with labour issues.

4.4.6 Additional skills

Some of the respondents (P1) and (P5) identified conflict resolution skills as essential. Another respondent (P2) felt that good interpersonal skills are a must, while one of the respondents (P3) emphasized good communicative skills as very important. Knowing and understanding, and interpretation, of the information contained in circulars and legislation is an additional skill that prospective principals should acquire according to one of the respondents (P4).

4.4.7 Training for principals

According to all of the respondents the Western Cape Education Department does not do enough to prepare principals for their task. One of the respondents said that “the Western Cape Education Department does not really fill the gap”, with their training workshops. Another respondent (P5) said that refresher training courses for principals should be done annually.

4.4.8 Coping Strategies

Some of the respondents (P1), (P2) and (P5) identified their communicating to and empowering staff as a possible solution to counter the demands of the education department. These principals shared all departmental correspondence with the staff, and get them to assist with the task or duties that the Education Department demands. One respondent said he called a staff meeting to address the challenge by staff members against his appointment. The respondent ascertained that some of the staff members were disgruntled with his appointment. He solved the problem by explaining to them what the procedure for appointment was. Another respondent said that he appreciated the lack of support from the Education department as this allowed the school and its stakeholders to create systems without interference of the “bureaucratic system”. This enables them to test other means of dealing with challenges, e.g. dealing with delinquents. One of the respondents (P2) used introspection and reflecting on a day and its challenges as a coping strategy. After a strenuous day the respondent would try to work out how he could have handled the situation better by using a diary, and discussing the challenges with the deputy principal or in some instances with his wife or secretary. Some of the respondents (P3) and (P5) contacted other principals for assistance when the challenges became too much. They also indicated that they are usually forced to regularly contact neighbouring principals as most of the time the experienced principals have dealt with these situations before. Most of the respondents used prayer or confiding in their wives as a coping mechanism. One of the respondents (P4) tried to do something different to school work, e.g. ‘because I write programmes, I work on my computer for stress release’; while another respondent (P5) did exercise as a coping mechanism.

4.5 Discussion of the interviews with the principals

In the following section the interviews with the principals will be discussed. Interviews of the principals will be under the following themes:

4.5.1 Duties of principals

Principals are responsible for all activities in the school, and they are the persons who should motivate their personnel to do the activities, delegate to capable persons, and monitor that the tasks are completed. According to Handy and Aitken (1990) principals set the priorities and define responsibilities and duties for colleagues to follow. Some of the interviewees indicated that they rely on the assistance from the staff. Sterling and Davidoff (2000) identify some of the roles and responsibilities of principals as “to inspire a shared vision, to create a moral purpose like trust and honesty, decision-making, delegating of duties and team-building”. They further argue that leaders should motivate and encourage people. According to Hoyle (1981), Sterling and Davidoff (2000) and Yukl (1981) principals need an adequate capacity or skills of management to lead their schools effectively. The authors recommend that for further efficiency it is important for an appointed principal to undergo training in order to gain knowledge and skills about how to lead and manage a school. Thus it is important for principals to be equipped with the theoretical and practical skills to accomplish their responsibilities. According to a few respondents (P2), (P3) and (P5) prospective principals should do a certificate course in management at an Institution of Higher Learning in preparation to become a principal.

4.5.2 Profiles of principals

There is a great variation in the profiles of each of the respondents, namely respondent (P1) has 25 years teaching experience, went through the ranks, head of department, deputy and then principal. The respondent only has a teaching diploma.

Respondent (P2) has 16 years teaching experience, also went through the ranks; has a teachers diploma, a Bachelor of Arts degree, B Ed. Honours degree and a M.Tech Business. The respondent indicated that he believes that it is necessary for principals to run schools like a business, as the responsibility of the schools finances lies on the shoulders of the principal. Respondent (P3) has 24 years experience, and also went through the ranks. The respondent’s qualification’s includes a teacher’s diploma and B Tech Ed. Management degree.

Respondent (P4) has 13 years experience. The respondent moved from teacher to principal.

The respondent has a teacher's diploma and a B Ed. Prim degree.

Respondent (P5) has 17 years experience, but the respondent also moved through the ranks.

The respondent has a Higher Diploma of Education 4th year teacher's diploma and certificate in management and leadership.

Throughout their interviews the principals with management diplomas and degrees indicated that the knowledge they gained in doing the courses helped them to manage their school.

4.5.3 Challenges of principalship and Departmental support

All of the respondents identified the lack of support from the Western Cape Education Department as a challenge that they face as new school principals. One of the respondents (P4) says 'the WCED is not very visible in school'. The respondent mentioned that, when he had a situation where the National media (newspapers and television stations) surrounded the school, because of an incident that happened to a learner in the community, and he asked an official of the Education department to assist, nobody came to help. Instead of giving assistance they wanted a report of the incident.

Another respondent (P3) mentioned that the 'Circuit manager does not understand the challenges the school face in the community', while another respondent (P2) said 'after the school was built, WCED moved out' and left the principal as 'building manager to deal with repairs'.

Another challenge that the respondents identified is departmental demands of the Education Department on principal's time.

Another respondent (P2) identified the lack of resources in the school as a challenge, while another (P4) added that the School Governing Bodies 'lack of understanding their role and involvement in school activities' was also a challenge.

Another challenge that was identified by most of the respondents was time constraints and the impact it has on the school. The time constraints were linked to 'demands of the Education department' and the effect it has on the school program, e.g. sport and culture.

Another respondent (P4) mentioned the expectations of temporary staff to become permanent as a challenge that the new principal face. Other challenges are the impoverished community who struggles to pay school fees and a community that cannot deal with the building problems.

Another respondent (P3) mentioned the lack of discipline of learners, and that some parents had 'given up' on their children and the role that they can play to assist the school. Lack of

recreational resources which affects discipline, as learners participates in activities that are detrimental to their health, e.g. frequenting shebeens and participating in gangster related activities.

Kreitner(1986) state that principals face challenges to introduce change in their schools. This is supported by Sterling and Davidoff (2000) that state principals face problems in performing different activities in their schools. The study reveals that newly appointed school principals face many problems and challenges when beginning at a newly built school, or any school for that matter. Some of these challenges are more severe in an impoverished community, than in a partially affluent community. Whilst they deal with these problems, most of these principals have not received adequate departmental support as per respondent (P2).

The respondents all agree that teaching and learning should be at the heart of the school and that the principal should coordinate all the activities in the school to provide the best possible learning opportunities for learners. Hopkins (2002:26) notes: "Teaching is the skill that makes educators and schools unique... we exist to promote learning".

Yukl (1981: 85) argues that principals need considerable skills to be effective leaders.

Therefore the researcher believes that to ensure that schools really service community and societal needs, principals need more support and understanding from stakeholders like the Education department. To appoint individuals in the position is a simple job, but to supply these individuals with the required capacity and skills are most crucial. Doing a job by trial and error does not help to build the esteem of the principal nor does it strengthen the trust that learners, parents and staff have in the principal for making the right decisions. The researcher further is of the opinion that if an individual is appointed as principal then that person needs to be trained or orientated for a certain period on how to lead and manage the school before he/she starts the job. It is after this that one can determine how effective he/she is in performing the roles and responsibilities expected of him/her.

4.5.4 Conclusion

The respondents, while indicating their coping strategies, also suggest that they have a definite need for assistance. By contacting more experienced principals than themselves, principals indicate a need for mentorship. The difficulties that arise from the post, the lack of time, support, discipline issues, the problems that are outside the control of the principals illustrate the need for assistance in coping with the challenges. As far as coping with the

challenges, principals mainly use personal, interpersonal and organizational strategies and techniques (Tsiakkiros & Pashiardis, 2004).

According to Renihan and Leonard (1999) to be able to cope with the challenges, they advise aspiring principals to “seek a mentor, develop a support system, spend some time as a vice principal, reflect, learn to juggle, and take every opportunity to sharpen your proverbial administrative saw”.

In the next chapter the findings of this study after analyzing and reflecting on the research findings are presented and some ideas are shared as recommendations.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

Many educators prefer to spend their careers as class teachers, while others prefer to climb the corporate ladder in schools (Everard & Morris, 1990). Any educator that wants to move to a more senior level does not only need the skills of a teacher, but also various other types of management skills. Undoubtedly, the leadership role of the school principal has become much more complex. Rather than to be the 'dumping grounds where communities drop their children', schools have become an integral part of their respective communities and are therefore also open to public scrutiny (P2).

In the previous chapters I reflected on the literature and presented some of the challenges new school principals experience and the coping strategies they employed; an outline was given of my approach to the research; the data collected by means of questionnaires to school principals were presented and the results were discussed.

In this chapter I will present my findings and give some ideas as recommendations.

5.2 Summary of the Research Findings

The following research findings could be drawn from the questionnaires and interviews:

- The different respondents have problems with departmental support that is not always forthcoming.
- The initial teacher training diploma prepares educators to become classroom teachers and not to deal with the challenges of the office of the principal.
- Many principals feel that they have the necessary experience to become the principal of an institution, but that they feel that they need formal training in management of an institution, conflict resolution, financial management and managing the school as a business.
- Although regular workshops are conducted, they do not prepare principals for the challenges, but most of the time only to fulfil administrative tasks of the education department. Whilst governance is the responsibility of school governing bodies, the administrative tasks remain the responsibility of school principals.

- Networking with other principals is imperative.
- Principals need the assistance of all role players if they are to meet demands of their roles w.r.t. financial management, labour, etc.
- The Education Department need to recognize the certainty of challenges and the need to supply support to their principals.
- Principals need to vent their feelings and frustrations and discuss their ideas and alternatives with someone who will be able to act as a sounding board.
- The Education Department should further pay attention to and address the damage that stress can do to future and current principals.

5.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations have been drawn from the participants in this research study, as well as the research literature on the stressors and the coping strategies that principals can use to survive:

- The use of mentors to assist newly appointed principals on how to deal with the demands of their task.
- Principals should be given an opportunity to work alongside the outgoing principal.
- Newly appointed principals should be given opportunities to shadow experienced principals.
- School principals assisted to become competent in use of information technology, e.g. planning software packages, electronic diary, e-mail, remote accessibility, etc.
- Education Department create a website where principals get online assistance from educational professionals as well as a place to test their own ideas.
- In order for managers to perform their management and leadership role effectively, a suggestion is made that managers should have a management degree or certificate done at an Institution of Higher Education. A further suggestion flowing from the research would be the making use of mentors for new school principals as there is a definite need for them.
- Promote peer interaction and collegiality among principals.
- Convince the Education Department to question the assumption that principals can do more; and to more clearly define the principals' role and responsibilities.
- School principals should be given the tools to reflect on the priorities, the areas of

conflict and tension.

- Educators who aspire to become principals should undergo management training before they are appointed in management positions.
- Regular assessment of principals at risk would alleviate many problems, as support can be given to those who need it most.
- Establishment of assessment centres to:
 - Develop management skills
 - Identify the educators who have management potential
 - Provide training
 - Give career counselling
- Education departments should include assessment of candidates' decision-making and problem solving competencies as an important part of the screening process.
- Regular refresher in-service training for principals to ensure that they stay abreast of the latest developments in education.

5.4 Further research

Research on the impact of the attainment of formal management education qualification on the management style and coping strategies of new school principals, and challenges and coping strategies of women as school principals, might be of interest in the South African context.

5.5 Conclusions

A review of the literature and the results of the research conducted emphasises

- the need for certified management training at Higher Education Institutions
- the improvement of departmental support through refresher courses
- ensuring that the courses are relevant

In that way many of the challenges could be faced with less uncertainty that could improve principals' morale and strengthen their efficiency as school leaders in an ever changing school environment.

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Faint text: Five schools in the Western Cape.

Faint text: I am currently a student at Pretoria Technikon, where I am doing the Master's Programme. As part of the fulfilment of my degree, I need to do research and write a report on my findings.

Faint text: The title of my research is The Coping Strategies of New School Principals.

Faint text: My study focuses on how new school principals cope in schools with the emphasis on management and leadership. I would like to investigate what impact higher education qualifications (management degrees) have on the new school principal's ability to cope with problems in the school and I would like to evaluate the leadership styles principals portray.

Faint text: The research will entail questionnaires, interviews with principals, observations and field notes to enable me to investigate what coping strategies principals use and what challenges they face. The intended period of research should take place in third and fourth terms.

Faint text: It would be of great benefit to me if I can have your permission to conduct my research and make use of any material that is the intellectual property of the WCED.

Faint text: Thanking you in anticipation.

Faint signature
B.P.P. Branstetter

B.P.F. Bruintjies
1 Blue Gum Avenue
Rustdale
Blackheath
7580
e.mail: admin@ppp.wcape.school.za

Western Cape Education Department
Directorate: Education Research
P. O. Box 9114
Cape Town
8000

Attention: Dr. R. Cornelissen

Dear Sir,

Permission to do research at:

Five schools in the Western Cape.

I am currently a student at Peninsula Technikon, where I am doing the Master's Programme. As part of the fulfillment of my degree, I need to do research and write a report on my findings.

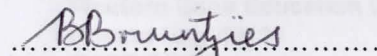
The title of my research is **The Coping Strategies of New School Principals.**

My study focuses on how new school principals cope in schools with the emphasis on management and leadership. I would like to investigate what impact higher education qualifications (management degrees) have on the new school principal's ability to cope with problems in the school and I would like to evaluate the leadership styles principals portray.

The research will entail questionnaires, interviews with principals, observations and field notes to enable me to investigate what coping strategies principals use and what challenge they face. The intended period of research should take place in third and fourth term.

It would be of great benefit to me if I can have your permission to conduct my research and make use of any material that is the intellectual property of the WCED.

Thanking you in anticipation.


B.P.F. Bruintjies

Navrae
Enquiries **Dr RS Cornelissen**
IMibuzo

Telefoon
Telephone **(021) 467-2286**
IFoni

Faks
Fax **(021) 425-7445**
IFeksi

Verwysing
Reference **20040921-3086**
ISalathiso



Wes-Kaap Onderwysdepartement

Western Cape Education Department

ISEBE leMfundo leNtshona Koloni



Mr Brent Bruintjies
Symphony Way
BELLVILLE SOUTH
7537

Dear Mr B. Bruintjies

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: COPING STRATEGIES OF NEW SCHOOL PRINCIPALS.

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **21st September 2004 to 24th March 2005.**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December 2004).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr R. Cornelissen at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the Principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the following schools: **Delft South No 3 Primary, Hoofweg Primary, Nooitgedacht Primary, Prospect Primary, Spurwing Primary and Wesbank Secondary.**
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Education Research.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

**The Director: Education Research
Western Cape Education Department
Private Bag X9114
CAPE TOWN
8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Ronald S. Cornelissen
for: **HEAD: EDUCATION**
DATE: 21st September 2004

B.P.F. Bruintjies
1 Blue Gum Avenue
Rustdale
Blackheath
7580

Fax: 021 - 904 5787
Tel: 021 - 904 5794

E.mail: admin@ppp.wcape.school.za

The principal

Dear Sir,

Re: Request to you to answer this questionnaire

I am currently a student at Peninsula Technikon, where I am doing the Master's Programme. As part of the fulfillment of my degree, I need to do research and write a report on my findings.

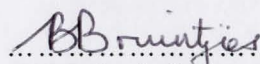
The title of my research is **The Coping Strategies of New School Principals**.

My study focuses on how new school principals cope in schools with the emphasis on management and leadership. I would like to investigate what impact higher education qualifications (management degrees) have on the new school principal's ability to cope with problems in the school and I would like to evaluate the leadership styles principals portray.

The information gathered will be regarded as highly confidential and in no way would you or your school be identified in the final report.

It would be of great benefit to me if you participate in this research. I also want to thank you for taking time to complete this questionnaire. **Would you also be so kind to return your completed questionnaire by post or sending it to fax number: 021-9045787.**

Thanking you in anticipation.


.....
B.P.F. Bruintjies

Title: **COPING STRATEGIES OF NEW SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**

Instructions:

1. Mark your preferred response with X in the appropriate block.
2. Answer question 11 by drawing a circle around one of the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

A. Biographical Information

1. Gender

Male		Female	
-------------	--	---------------	--

2. Age

25-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46-50	51-55	56-60+

3. How many years have you been in teaching?

0-4 Years	5-7 Years	8-12 Years	13-19 Years	20 + Years

4. How long have you held the following positions?

	0-4 Years	5-7 Years	8-12 Years	13-19 Years	20 + Years
Teacher					
Senior Teacher					
HOD					
Deputy Principal					
Principal					

B. Management Duties

5. What do you do to ensure that teaching takes place if there are educators absent? Mark as many blocks as you see fit, by indicating in % your preferred mode of action.

Get services of non-serving educator	
Invigilation by educators during admin period	
Get parents to help out.	
Teaching by yourself	
	100%

Other: (Not more than two ideas)

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.....

6. What do you think are the basic qualities that a principal should display? Indicate in %.

Good communicator	
Good listener	
Builds rapport with staff/students	
Is familiar with curriculum developments	
Well organized	
Self-reflective	
Puts children first	
Acknowledges success	
Delegates effectively	
Good role model/leads by example	
	100%

7.1 Does the Education Department offer training opportunities for principals?

Yes	
No	

7.2 Have you attended any such training sessions?

Yes	
No	

7.3 If you attended training sessions for principals, list the service providers that were used?

	Type of Training	Service Provider
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

8.1 Do you feel that your education department has provided you with the necessary support systems to help you fulfill your task?

Yes	
No	

8.2 List the support structures that you know of. Indicate services you used with a X.

No.	Support structures of WCED	Services you used
1		
2		
3		
4		

9. Which part of your job takes up more of your time, management activities or instructional leadership? Indicate in %.

Activity	Percentage
Management	
Instructional Leadership	
	100 %

10. How many times does class visits occur per year or per term in your school?

Once per year	Twice a year	Every term	Never

11. The following statements are things that may be used to describe how you behave as a leader. Read each item carefully. Think about how frequently you would display the behaviour as described. Decide whether you, (1) Always, (2) Often, (3) Occasionally, (4) Seldom or (5) Never act described per item. **Draw a circle around one of the five numbers (1 2 3 4 5) FOLLOWING THE ITEM TO SHOW THE ANSWER THAT YOU HAVE SELECTED.**

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| 1. I act as the spokesperson of the group | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. I listen to the ideas of the group | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. I let group members know what is expected of them | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. I allow members complete freedom in their group | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. I make accurate decisions | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 6. I am friendly and approachable | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 7. I publicize the activities of the group and allow members to use their own judgment in the group | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 8. I decide what shall be done and how it shall be done | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 9. I act without consulting others | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 10. I anticipate problems and plan for them | 1 2 3 4 5 |

12. Below record your perceptions as to the major satisfiers of the job by indicating by **writing the percentage** of importance you feel it is in your life.

Satisfiers	Percentage
Prestige	
Good salary	
Administrative work	
Helping learners to achieve their best	
Visibility	
Authority	
Autonomy	
	100%

13. Below record your perceptions as to the **major dissatisfiers** of the job by indicating by **writing the percentage** of importance you feel it is in your life

Dissatisfiers	Percentage
Time constraints	
Staff-parent conflicts	
Community politics	
Learner discipline	
Balancing teaching and administration	
Departmental support	
Departmental demands	
	100%

Interviews

Introduction: Dear principal, I would like to extend my appreciation to you for allowing me to conduct an interview with you. The purpose of this interview is to gather information about the coping strategies used by new school principals in their schools. I would therefore like to acquire information about the situations in your school and how you deal with these problems. Thanks again for your kind cooperation.

1. What encouraged you to apply for the principalship of your particular school?
2. What do you think are the duties of a principal?
3. If any, what would you say are the leadership roles that you fulfill in your institution?
4. What factors impact negatively on your leadership role and how do you deal with these constraints?
5. Do you delegate some of your responsibilities to your colleagues?
6. How regularly do you delegate some of your decision-making responsibilities to your management team?
7. Does your school have a Mission and Vision statement and what is it?
8. How long have you been an educator?
9. In what other managerial positions were you, before becoming principal?.
10. What are your qualifications?
11. How would you describe your management style?
12. In your opinion what constitutes a good school?

13. How do you deal with problems at your school, e.g. Educator not coming to school regularly?

14. What can any person who is interested to become a principal do to prepare them for the task?

15. What are the skills you think principals should be equipped with to make them effective leaders?

16. Did you attend any leadership, management or principals training?

17. How do you feel about training for principals?

3. How many years have you been in education?

0-4 Years	5-7 Years	8-11 Years	12-15 Years	16+ Years

4. What are your qualifications? Indicate your highest qualification.

Teacher diploma	
B.A degree	
Honours degree	
Master's degree	
Doctorate	

5. Do you have a qualification in management?

YES	
NO	

6. What type of school are you the principal of?

Primary 02	Primary 03	Primary 04	Comprehensive school

Secondary 02	Secondary 03	Secondary 04

Title: **COPING STRATEGIES OF NEW SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**

Instructions:

1. Mark your preferred response with X in the appropriate block.

B. Biographical Information

1. Gender

Male		Female	
-------------	--	---------------	--

2. Age

25-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46-50	51-55	56-60+

3. How many years have you been in education?

0-4 Years	5-7 Years	8-12 Years	13-19 Years	20 + Years

4. What are your qualifications? Indicate your highest qualifications.

Teachers diploma	
B A degree	
Honours degree	
Masters degree	
Doctorate	

5. Do you have a qualification in management?

YES	
NO	

6. What type of school are you the principal of?

Primary P2	Primary P3	Primary P4	Comprehensive school

Secondary S2	Secondary S3	Secondary S4

7. What other management positions were you appointed to before you became principal?

Senior Teacher					Head of Department					Deputy Principal				
0-4 Yrs	5-7 Yrs	8-12 Yrs	13-19 Yrs	20 + Yrs	0-4 Yrs	5-7 Yrs	8-12 Yrs	13-19 Yrs	20 + Yrs	0-4 Yrs	5-7 Yrs	8-12 Yrs	13-19 Yrs	20 + Yrs

B. Challenges

8. The principal job is very stressful. How do you manage your stress?

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9. The following statements are things that may be used to describe the areas, that a principal can find challenging. Rank them in order of 1-10 as 1 indicates the area which you find the most challenging and 10 as the area that you find the least challenging.

1. Constantly changing education policy	
2. Public's attitude and misunderstanding about role of schooling	
3. Administrative workload	
4. Communication with parents	
5. Pupil misbehaviour & disciplinary problems	
6. Shortage of resources	
7. Lack of support from the Education Department	
8. Financial management	
9. Supervisory responses	
10. Lack of Educator support e.g. absenteeism	

10. Indicate which of the above-mentioned is your biggest challenge and how do you cope with it?

10.1 Biggest challenge	
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10.2 Strategy to cope with the challenge:

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.....

11. Indicate which of the above-mentioned is your second highest challenge and how do you cope with it?

11.1 Second biggest challenge	
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11.2 Strategy to cope with the challenge:

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C. Requirements and skills for the job

12. What do you think are the basic qualities that you think a principal should have? Rank it in order of importance 1: very important – 10: least important. Indicate whether you had any training in these areas offered by the Education Department

	Rank order	Training Yes/no
Communication skills		
Good administrator		
Builds rapport with staff/learners		
Is familiar with curriculum developments		
Well organized		
Self-reflective		
Computer & other technical skills		
Acknowledges success		
Delegates effectively		
Good role model/leads by example		

13. To what extent did you use the structures of EMDC. Indicate on a scale which of these structures was most helpful: 1 - 10 least helpful.

No.	Support structures of WCED that you used.	Indicate 1 - 10
1	Special Learning and Educational support service (SLES)	
2	Institutional Management and Governance (IMG)	
3	Curriculum	
4	Administration.g.Finance, labour, etc.	

14. Indicate the following coping strategies from those that you used and found most useful to least useful by ranking them from 1: most useful to 10: least useful.

1. Communicating to: spouse another principal colleague	
2. Regular meetings with Senior management	
3. One on one sessions with staff	
4. Attending workshops/ meetings with other principals	
5. Collective decision making process	
6. Continual reflection and introspection	
7. Spending time at school before assuming position	
8. Delegating more effectively	
9. Spiritual time-out	

15. List the five (5) challenges that you had when you started at the school in your position as principal.

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