

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The data collected for this study address the relevant research questions, which are as follows: The main research question is:

- What is the role of the principal in managing work-related stress among secondary school educators?

The secondary research questions are as follows:

- What are the causes of work-related stress among secondary school educators?
- How does the leadership style of the principal motivate educators?

To be able to answer these research questions, the participants' responses were classified according to the following topics that emerged from this study:

- learners' discipline;
- standard of education;
- workload;
- policy changes;
- promotions, rewards and recognition;
- leadership style of the principal;
- organisational effectiveness; and
- personal factors.

The above topics emerged from consideration of the research questions dealt with in this study. The interview questions were structured to gather data to answer the said questions (main as well

secondary).

The analysis and discussion of the data will focus firstly on the role of the principal in managing work-related stress, causes of work-related stress among secondary school educators and how the leadership style of the principal motivates educators. These discussions will take place within the context of the dominant themes that emerged from the study.

## **5.2 LEARNERS' DISCIPLINE**

The data that were collected and analysed to understand the role of the principal in managing work-related stress among secondary school educators show that principals can directly or indirectly shape the intensity and levels of stress experienced by the educators. The data on learner discipline show that participants employed various methods to discipline learners in the classroom. The levels of inconsistency and ineffectiveness in the maintenance of classroom discipline by some participants are apparent from the data. Ineffective and inconsistent measures to discipline learners are a source of stress among educators. Some of the methods employed by the participants are as follows:

- to stand and stare at the learners in the classroom until they are quiet;
- disruptive learners are sent out of the class;
- disobedient learners are sent to the office;
- use of the detention system;
- use of corporal punishment.

The data also show that participants have different views on the methods used to discipline learners at their institutions. Some participants are of the view that the detention system for learners is effective in maintaining discipline while the majority is of the view that the detention system is ineffective. A participant said: "The detention system is effective to a certain extent. Some learners can go for detention every week but it does not make a difference to them, while other learners do not like it. The detention system does not help those who are disrespectful." Schmid (1990:1) found that black students are likely to be severely affected by a repressive environment and inadequate

educational experience such as detention. Other participants supported the use of corporal punishment although it is contrary to the South African School's Act No.84 of 1996. Another participant said: "If a learner challenges my authority by being aggressive, I give him or her back what they deserve, a good hiding."

The data showed that the majority of the participants supported guidance and counselling to assist learners with discipline problems. One participant's account is as follows:

"Guidance and counselling should be brought back into the curriculum. We need a full time or part-time guidance counsellor. In the past these services were helpful." Counselling involves caring, listening and prompting. Schmid (1990:1) found educators who attended programmes on guidance and counselling were better able to manage and respond to learners with problems. Kruger (1993:1) found the following in this regard:

"Stress is a pervasive phenomenon that occurs in the lives of people of all age and is even prominent in the lives of adolescents. Too much stress in the life of the adolescent may therefore exert a negative influence on his or her scholastic performance in that it may lead to underachievement, concentration problems, absenteeism, disinterest in class, homework, lowered student satisfaction and self-esteem."

Most participants supported greater parent involvement to discipline learners. An account of one of the participants (educators) shows the following: "There is a lack of parent support. Parents need to teach their children respect for their elders."

According to one of the respondents, participants (educators) serving as 'beginner educators,' temporary and *locum tenens* showed a high level of stress stemming from lack of learner discipline. A participant employed as a temporary educator showed a high level of stress according to the account she gave at the interview. She said: "Learners don't want to listen because I speak softly. I feel very stressed, therefore I am going to resign from teaching."

A comparison of data showed that female participants experienced more discomfort than males with learner discipline. According to the researcher, one possible explanation for this phenomenon is the stereotyped attitude adopted by learners towards female educators. This means that learners are in conflict with the role of female educators as an enforcer of discipline.

It's the opinion of the researcher that the principal needs to create effective disciplinary structures at their schools for the proper management of learners. Consistency in the application of disciplinary measures is important.

The well-being of educators depends on how they (the educators) perceive the effectiveness of the disciplinary structures and the role of the principal at school. The principal needs to create the perception among educators that learners' discipline is a priority and firmly under control. Principals need to create a supportive environment for educators against any form of stress arising from learner's lack of discipline.

Lack of discipline among learners is one of the prevalent causes of stress in participants. Most participants experienced negative feelings such as: "frustration," "annoyance," "anger", "despair" and "headaches" as a result of learners' lack of discipline. These probably reflect work stress (Smith and Bourke 1992: 31).

An analysis of the data shows that most participants feel most stressed when learners:

- display an indifferent attitude to class and homework;
- are noisy in the classroom;
- 'backchat';
- are disrespectful;
- abuse their rights in the classroom.

Participants perceive that learners are not adequately disciplined, and have more rights than educators. A participant said, for example: "Learners are disrespectful and they backchat. They don't know where to draw the line because they have more rights than educators." It is the view of the researcher that the principal needs to correct the perception that learners have more rights than

educators are able to assert through appropriate intervention. Most participants expressed negative emotions towards learners who are apathetic. A participant said: “I feel sad, sad because I have been working my heart out and learners are not prepared to listen to what I say.”

Participants on ground duty found that learners commit a more serious type of offence when they are outside the classroom. They (the educators) observed that, when the learners are outside the classroom, they smoke cigarettes, experiment with drugs and alcohol. The school office record book on pupil discipline shows, “learners in possession of large knives, smoked and sold dagga on the school premises, were intoxicated, played truant and were involved in fights.” A report in the *Daily News* (29 August, 2002) showed a case at Maqumbi, North West of Kwa Dukuza on the North Coast, “where a secondary school had become a violent playground of drug peddlers and liquor vendors, with armed pupils threatening teachers and fellow pupils.” The emerging pattern shows, that secondary school educators experience stress as a result of learner’s ill discipline. It is the view of the researcher that principals need to protect educators against stressful working conditions caused by learner’s ill discipline.

### **5.3 STANDARD OF EDUCATION**

An analysis of the data shows the majority of the participants felt stressed because they (the educators) perceived the standard of education at their institutions was dropping. It is the researcher’s view that the principal’s role is to understand why educators perceive a drop in the educational standards and modify the situation appropriately.

Most participants perceived inappropriate language policy as one of the causes of falling standards. The medium of instruction at their institutions is English and the majority of learners are Isizulu first language users. Learners therefore cannot concentrate, follow instructions and answer questions adequately. In the *Sunday Times* (22 September 2002) the Deputy Minister of Education stated that: “African children do worse than other population groups in mathematics, science and other content subjects because one of the greatest barriers to success is language.” The Deputy Minister proposes to solve the problem by teaching children in their mother tongue. In response, Professor Jean-Philippe Wade in the *Sunday Times* (29 September, 2002) maintains that: “South

Africa needs to promote a proper regional bilingualism, which means the teaching and encouragement of both local African languages and English.”

The governing body of a public school may determine the language policy of a school to suit the needs of the learners (South Africans Schools Act No.84 of 1996). This implies that the present single-medium language policy at their (the educators’) school need to be converted to regional bilingualism to suit the needs of the learners. Brown (1998: 58) found that school governing bodies are the key partners in the pursuit of appropriate language policies.

There is a perception among the participants that classrooms are overcrowded. A participant said: “There is overcrowding in the classroom and a one educator to one learner relationship in a class of forty to forty-five is impossible; hence a drop in standards of education is inevitable.” It is the view of the researcher that the principal’s role is to create an equitable distribution of learners in all classes. The number of splits and combinations makes it difficult to distribute learners evenly, therefore some classes may have as few as eight (8) learners while others have as many as forty (40) to forty-seven (47) learners. Class sizes based on provincial norms should be encouraged. The present teacher-learner ratio in Kwa-Zulu Natal is 1:36 while the national average is 1:32. Principals should endeavour to restrict class groups to a maximum of 45 learners.

Most participants are of the view that poverty causes a drop in educational standard. A participant said: “Learners who come from the informal settlements do not have adequate food, shelter or clothing, therefore they cannot cope with the demands and challenges of secondary school.” According to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, lower order needs such as food, water and shelter must be provided for self-realisation to occur (Connacher 1998:7).

A report in the *Sunday Times* (28 July, 2002) shows low socio-economic condition as one of the factors that inhibits “learning and cognitive” development among learners. The report shows that one in five South African children suffer from chronic malnutrition. HIV/AIDS and job losses have contributed to starving children admitted to hospitals.

It is the view of the researcher that principals of schools need to get involved in community programmes, which are aimed at alleviating poverty. The burgeoning poverty in the geographical area of the study has prompted civic organisation, councillors and members of the community to launch a programme that will:

- bring relief by formulating and implementing strategies to provide social relief to affected individuals;
- provide permanent employment for unemployed people.

The principals of schools should make use of the feeding schemes offered by the Department of Education and Culture. In *The Educators' Voice* (6 September, 2002) Professor Kader Asmal said: "School feeding is undoubtedly the most direct attack on poverty, and we cannot afford to let the scheme fail any child."

The majority of the participants is of the view that: "learners cannot cope adequately with secondary school tasks because they have not acquired the relevant outcomes at primary school level." It is the view of the researcher that the principal should facilitate a process to establish the levels of competency for each learner before the commencement of a grade so that appropriate intervention programmes can be introduced if necessary. It is also the view of the researcher that primary and secondary schools should work together in matters of curriculum planning.

It is the view of most participants that if learners were differentiated into grades, standards would improve. The present post-provisioning norm may not allow for the differentiation of learners into different grades, but educators feel unfairly treated when some learning areas are separated into higher and standard grades while others have 'mixed' groups. It is the researchers' view that there should be consistency in the differentiation of learners in all learning areas.

Of interest, one participant felt that the standards of mathematics at matric level had improved but saw the introduction of Outcomes-Based Education leading to the lowering of standards in mathematics in general. One of the participants said: "Standards have increased at matric level mathematics, but with the introduction of Outcomes-Based Education, learners at the Further

Education and Training Certificate band (FETC) will study sections in which they have no grounding, therefore will not be able to cope effectively.” One possible explanation for the improvement in mathematics at matric level, according to the researcher is the implementation of intervention classes during weekends, after school and during the school holidays.

The *Daily News* (15 July, 2002) supports the participants’ view that the implementation of Outcomes-Based Education is in crisis for learners and educators in grade ten. The Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal, announced that the curriculum for grade ten learners (first year of Further Education and Training Certificate band) would only be ready in March 2003. This means that learners who will be in grade ten in 2003 will not follow the Outcomes-Based Education curriculum they have been following for the last three years.

A participant said: “The new development has serious implications for grade nine learners and educators, since learners will have to choose courses for which they have no grounding.” Many schools offering economic and management science are not teaching the learners accounting skills *Daily News* (15 July, 2002). This situation has serious implications for the standards of education at secondary schools. It is the view of the researcher that principals of secondary schools need to modify the Outcomes-Based Education curriculum for grade nine learners so that a major part of the old syllabus is incorporated.

There is also a perception among participants that the standard of education is dropping as a result of absenteeism among learners especially after a controlled test or an examination. Information from the school register at the site where the research was conducted shows a pattern of significant increase in absenteeism immediately after learners have completed controlled tests and examinations. It is the view of the researcher that the principal needs to modify this situation through appropriate intervention such as talking to learners and parents about the absenteeism.



An analysis of the data on the causes of stress among secondary school educators show that the majority of the participants felt overwhelmed as a result of the lowering of educational standards. The participants cited the following reasons for the lowering of the education standard:

- inappropriate language policy;
- overcrowded classes;
- poverty;
- inadequate collaboration on curriculum matters between primary and secondary schools;
- Outcomes-Based Education;
- absenteeism.

The criteria used by participants to determine a drop in the education standard are as follows:

- Learners could not concentrate in the class, follow instructions and answer questions adequately.
- Learners could not cope with questions that require higher cognitive skills such as comprehension, evaluation and application.

Most participants felt pressurised about the deterioration in the performance of learners because they are held accountable for the results. Some of the participants' responses are as follows: "The standard of education at this institution is dropping. I had to lower the standard of testing. The questions are made easier in the tests and examinations."

Other participants made the following comments regarding this issue: "Generally the education standard has dropped. If I take a paper that I had set up five years ago and give it to the learners in the same grade today, they won't be able to answer it."

Most of the participants expressed negative feelings towards the perceived lowering of the educational standard. Some of the participants' feelings are reflected in the following response:

“I worry because at the end of the day when learners do not perform well in the class, I will be held accountable. I sometimes feel very angry and have to raise my voice to get them to do what is required. In some cases pupils cannot write a simple sentence, add or spell correctly, but they are in grade nine and ten.”

The participants recognise that learners are not performing according to the expected educational standard, which is a stressful experience. According to the researcher, the demands made on the educators are excessive because they are expected to ‘produce’ good results despite the problems of learners who do not perform according to the expected education standard.

The next category that will be examined is workload.

#### **5.4 WORKLOAD**

In a report in the *Daily News* (15 July 2002) Professor Cary Cooper explains that: “Employees who work long hours are at high risk of stress, ill health, sickness, absence and family problems. In the *Daily News* (15 July 2002) Dr Ying Liu adds that: “Chronic stress resulting from extensive overtime work causes a state which may induce heart or psychological symptoms, such as chest pain and fatigue.” According to Dr Ying Liu in the *Daily News* (15 July 2002) working hours should be restricted to forty hours or less a week.

According to Van Dick and Wagner (2001:243) excessive workload is a cause of stress among educators. Spending more hours on school work at home causes stress and burnout among educators (Capel 1992: 197). According to the researcher chronic stress can be fatal, therefore a working schedule of forty hours a week is considered safe.

An analysis of the data in this investigation shows that the majority of the participants worked more than sixty hours a week, which includes lesson preparation, classroom instructions, marking, curricular and extra-curricular activities. This means that most of the participants are at risk of chronic stress and ill health as a result of extensive overtime work. A participant described his workload as follows:

“I find my workload very heavy. With the large numbers in the classes I cannot keep pace with the marking of class work and tests. This calls for working after school hours and well into the night. I try to keep the weekends to myself and to my family but it is impossible.”

Further analysis of the data shows there are four groups of participants who experienced excessive stress because of their workload. They (groups of participants) are as follows:

- female educators;
- beginner educators;
- matric educators;
- Heads of Departments.

According to the researcher it is the role of the principal to provide the necessary social support for the groups identified as at risk. This social support involves frequent interaction with groups who are at risk, providing emotional support and guidance on how to prioritise and share workload with colleagues. In this study, female educators experienced greater physical discomforts such as headaches, migraines, back and neck pains than male participants. Some of the female participants were undergoing physiotherapy for stress related illness at the time of this study. Greenglass, Pantony and Burke (1988:317) found a potential source of stress may result from role conflict. Employed women face demands, which stem from emotional and practical considerations associated with the dual role. When women enter employment, they assume the role of employee, while maintaining their traditional role of being a housewife and a mother. Leman (2002:147) found that the double workload carried by single mothers in gainful employment also doubles the stress load they have to cope with.

The data showed that some of the beginner educators were highly stressed as a result of their inability to cope with the demands made by the workload. During the interview most beginner educators expressed a need for orientation to the policy changes in education and other aspects of school life. Some beginner educators were very ‘timid’ and did not respond adequately to the questions. Cooledge (1992:29) found that principals could build self-confidence in their beginner

educators and create a climate of trust by alerting them to ‘pitfalls’ and providing strategies to help the beginner educators to avoid these pitfalls. It is the view of the researcher that principals play an important role in the success or failure of beginner educators.

The data show that matric educators experienced high levels of stress as a result of increased workload. One of the participants of grade twelve expressed the following view:

“With grade twelve there is a lot of pressure. You are expected to get one hundred percent pass even if the learners are not doing their work. At the end of the day I become answerable.”

Most participants expressed the view that increased workload is a cause of stress among secondary school educators. The participants were asked to describe how they experience the workload at school. Most participants reported that they felt “dissatisfied with the high volume of workload.” Some participants even displayed characteristics of excessive stress when they felt “drained out at the end of the day.”

One participant explained his feelings (emotion) regarding this issue as follows: “The cluster moderation is burdening the educators. Cluster meetings are held after school and there is so much of paper work to be done.” Most participants felt that serving relief is a very frustrating experience. Staff meetings without notice are also a frustrating experience because female educators have to collect their children after school, go home and cook for the family.

Heads of Departments described their workload as excessive, and felt that their tasks should be reduced. One of the participants made the following comment:

“In the past there was one Head of Department in charge of each learning area. With rationalisation, the Department of Education and Culture has grouped four to five different learning areas into one department. Take for example, the Head of the Department of mathematics is in charge of mathematics, physical science, biology, computer science and technology. The time allocated for administration is very little. We have to go on ground duty; have sports duties and also involved with the general administration of the school.”

The excessive workload on educators is further exacerbated by demands of external examinations. One participant said: “This year we have external examinations in grade nine, eleven and twelve. This means that we have to be at a certain point in the syllabus at a certain time.”

The *Daily News* (4 July, 2002) reported that learners were disadvantaged because certain sections in their grade eleven accounting paper were not taught, but tested in the common assessment task set by the Department of Education and Culture, Kwa-Zulu Natal.

Of interest, no participant complained about his or her involvement in sport. Every educator is responsible for at least one code of sports at the institution studied. A negative case of discrepant data was identified with one of the participant. He made the following comment: “I feel dissatisfied about not being adequately challenged at my workplace.” This comment of the participant confirms that people need eustress; the feeling one gets when facing a challenging, yet positive situation (Gray & Starke 1998:89).

## **5.5 POLICY CHANGES**

Change is a major factor among current sources of stress for teachers (Travers & Cooper 1994:143). It is the researcher’s view that the responsibility of the principal of the secondary schools is to try to manage change at their schools effectively. One of the most difficult activities of the principal is introducing and carrying out changes in the organisation.

Kendall (1989:23) outlines the strategies to manage change as follows:

Firstly, the manager needs to check the state of his or her organisation. Change always creates stress, tension and conflict unless the organisation is in ‘good health.’ The principal needs to ask the following questions as a prerequisite for change:

- Is there a general agreement on the aims and purposes of the institution?

- Are people clear as to what their duties and responsibilities are in terms of delegated authority for decision-making?
- Does the communication system work with reasonable efficiency?
- Is the morale and social cohesiveness of the staff generally good?
- Are staff either over-worked or under-used?
- Is it generally accepted that power is fairly distributed?

It is suggested by Kendall (1989:23) that if there is a serious weakness according to any one of the above points, then it must be dealt with before any innovation is made.

- Secondly, the principal must work out a staff development programme related to proposed change.
- Thirdly, the principal must work out carefully what information he or she will need for the many decisions to make as the innovation is implemented (Kendall 1989:23).

According to the researcher, change can only be carried out successfully if it is accepted by most of the staff members.

Managing change involves participation, compensation and training (Kendall 1989:23).

- **Participation:** Those who are affected by the implementation of the innovation should be involved from the beginning in the planning process. Whoever makes the final decision, the staff must feel that they were consulted as a group as well as individuals and that their opinions have had some influence on the final decision. This will ensure commitment to the success of the innovation.
- **Compensation:** No matter how it is arranged, there are often staff members who lose out by the change, and some kind of compensation must be given.

- Training: Resistance towards change can be reduced by training which aims to make staff more flexible, honest and open with each other and to increase the ideas circulating among them. Training could include role-playing, use of case studies and simulation. It should have the effect of drawing out individuals from entrenched positions, forcing them to look at the problems from several angles and making them more receptive to change.

The researcher's view is that the principal should aim to keep the organisation as flexible as possible as change is introduced. Once the programme of change is under way, it must be evaluated. Clear criteria need to be identified to measure the success of the change.

The implementation of policies is a cause of stress among participants. Most participants were dissatisfied with the implementation of Outcomes-Based Education because of 'inadequate training.' Participants described their experience at Outcomes-Based Education workshops as 'frustrating' because they were 'quite lost' at the end of the workshops. One participant, for example, said: "I am a qualified Outcomes-Based educator, but I find it very difficult to implement Outcomes-Based Education because of the large class sizes."

Some participants felt that the policy on Developmental Appraisal System (DAS) has caused them much distress. While some participants did not have a problem with the implementation of DAS policy at school, most expressed dissatisfaction with the process. Some of the reasons for their dissatisfactions were as follows:

- There is a perception among the participants that they were not involved adequately in implementing the Developmental Appraisal System.
- There are no incentives with Developmental Appraisal System. One of the participants said: "I have been through the appraisal process but I did not develop in any of my weaker areas."
- The appraisal system is a source of conflict among staff members. One participant made the following comment: "Educators find it an insult to be given an 'A' rating which means that they can improve. Educators begin to question the ratings they receive. You are doing someone else's job and you are now at loggerhead with your colleague. I have a problem with this system."

- The appraisal process is not clearly understood by the participants especially newly appointed educators. One of the participants said: “I don’t know what is expected of us as educators.”

The data on the process of the Rationalisation and Redeployment policy show that educators were traumatised, especially if the process was unfairly implemented. A participant described his experience as follows: “It was highly stressful when I was declared in excess. I should not have been declared in excess. The criteria that were used to declare me in excess were unfair.” Although only certain participants experienced the rationalisation and re-deployment process, many of the participants felt threatened by the idea of rationalisation and re-deployment.

A participant described her feelings towards the process of rationalisation and redeployment as follows:

“The rationalisation and re-deployment process makes me feel insecure. I feel scared that I may be a victim of the rationalisation and re-deployment process because the learning area where I am involved with, is being phased out. After twenty two-years of teaching you are more or less at the ending line of your career and now I have to be thinking about moving to another school. This is very stressful. I begin to worry about it constantly.”

Schiller (1996:8) said to be made redundant is a traumatic event in any person’s life. Loss of income, loss of self-esteem, cessation of familiar work and reduced contact with work colleagues make redundancy a dramatic change in lifestyle. According to the researcher, it is the role of the principal to see the process of rationalisation and re-deployment is carried out fairly and according to set criteria.

## **5.6 PROMOTION: REWARDS AND RECOGNITION**

In a study conducted by Smith and Bourke (1992:43), the highest levels of teacher stress were found to be arising from a lack of reward and recognition and a chance to be promoted. With a lack of promotional opportunities, it’s the researcher’s view that principal needs to play a significant role



in motivating educators. His or her leadership style should meet the needs and aspirations of every member of the staff.

The researcher's view is that the principal should know every member of the staff by their full names; give recognition to educators for a task done well; involve members of staff in important decisions; provide opportunities for members of staff to grow professionally and encourage staff to get involved in community work and research.

When the participants were asked to describe how a lack of promotional opportunities caused them distress, most said that: "there is something lacking with the present education system and there are no opportunities for career advancement and promotion. Teaching is a dead end job." A participant who was frustrated with the promotion process made the following comments regarding this issue:

"I don't see any prospects for me to be promoted in the near future. I acted, as Head of Department for six months at my school but was not short-listed. Yet, I was shortlisted at another school. I feel very disappointed. The person who was appointed for the commerce post at our school is a humanities specialist. The post was disputed but nothing came of it. I know of some very senior and experienced candidates in accounting who came for the interview but was sidelined during the interview process. I have nothing against the candidate but a lot against the incompetence of the School Governing Body. The governing body use inconsistent criteria to short list and recommend staff for promotion."

Another participant made the following comment:

"Promotion is a subjective process and largely unfair because it is often manipulated in favour of a candidate. I have been teaching for twenty-two years and still in level one. This is very frustrating."

## 5.7 ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The researcher is of the view that an effective school should comprise of effective structures and that a breakdown in any one of the structures listed below will cause educators to experience stress. The researcher considers the following structures important for the smooth functioning of the school:

- effective and efficient district offices;
- supportive subject advisors;
- principals who motivate educators;
- school management teams that provide valuable leadership to their subordinates;
- a fully constituted school governing body that fulfils its legal and moral obligations;
- a site committee that addresses the needs of its members;
- staff representatives that has been democratically elected to represent the interests of staff at the school governing body meetings; and
- organised representative council of learners.

It is the view of the researcher that the role of the principal is to work with the important role-players in the various structures so that the school can function effectively.

The participants were asked to explain which structures in school caused them stress. Some of the participants interviewed encountered problems with the Provincial Administration of the Department of Education and Culture. One participant said:

“We (as educators) were not informed of the changes that were made in the grade twelve quarterly papers. Learners were given one and half-hours to complete a two hours paper. This has put us under a lot of pressure.”

In an article that appeared in the *Daily News* (4 July, 2002), it was reported that:

“Hundreds of schools in Kwa-Zulu Natal hoping to improve their matric results through the writing of quarterly examinations, have questioned the quality of papers set by the

department's subject advisers. This occurred after grade 12 educators and learners complained that common papers in almost every learning area were riddled with errors, inaccuracies and omissions."

Some of the other problems experienced by the participants were as follows:

- Certain sections in the accounting paper were not taught but tested in the examination.
- The Department of Education and Culture, Kwa-Zulu Natal misinformed educators regarding the scope of the Accounting paper.
- The memorandum of the accounting paper did not show the allocation of the marks and teachers were left speculating.
- The duration of the mathematics paper incorrectly reflected one hour when two hours should have been reflected.

Although the principal, according to the researcher do not have any direct control over the quality of external examination papers, problems arising from these papers can cause undue stress to the educators.

It is the view of the researcher that the principal needs to work closely with the superintendents of education management and the subject advisors so that the educators are properly guided in their professional duties. Most participants felt the school management team could provide more support. Others participants felt that Heads of Departments need to be better equipped to assist. According to the Department of Education and Culture, Kwa-Zulu Natal, this implies that the following matter regarding the management policy of Heads of Departments should be brought to the attention of educators during the first meeting of each year (Teaching and Learning Services: Ladysmith Region 2002:7):

Policy in respect of:

- year planning;
- quarterly planning;
- daily planning;

- lesson preparation;
- quantity of class work and homework;
- syllabus for each grade;
- procedures for the issuing of text and prescribed books and other equipment. A time table for issuing must be worked out;
- monitoring by Heads of Departments of learners' written work; dates for submission of books to be included in the curricular year planner;
- policy with regard to monitoring Developmental Appraisal System of educators;
- dates of monitoring to be included in curricular year planner;
- continuous assessment (practicals /orals), testing and examinations: who sets paper and who moderates; time schedules: when paper must be ready to be moderated, typed and handed in to be duplicated;
- brief discussion on the general approach /method in teaching the subject;
- policy with regard to class discipline;
- availability of audio-visual and other teaching aids and procedures for accessing these;
- departmental circulars and other applicable informative subject documents.

It is the view of the researcher that school management teams should provide educators with subject policies of the learning areas and convene regular meetings, at least once per quarter, to discuss subject and management matters.

Most participants that were interviewed expressed their dissatisfaction with the School Governing Body. One participant said: "There is no support coming from the School Governing Body. They (School Governing Body) are not involved in any fundraising. Fundraising is one of their duties. It is the educators that are burdened with fundraising activities." It is the view of the researcher that the principal should guide the School Governing Body by conducting regular meetings and workshops.

There were 'mixed' responses when participants evaluated the effectiveness of the site committee. One participant said: "The site is quite effective. We (the educators) do get the co-operation of the principal when the site is involved." Another participant said: "We (as educators) know that there is

a site committee but they are not visible. When I need help from the site committee I don't know how to get it."

The participants were asked to describe how they perceived the staff representatives to the governing body. One of the participants responded as follows:

"Staff representatives don't take mandates from the staff and they don't report back. I feel that they should report immediately after a meeting, but this never happens. We don't even see the minutes of the meetings. Staff members need to know what is happening at the School Governing Body level."

It is the view of the researcher that principals should encourage staff representatives on the School Governing Body to carry mandates from the staff members and serve the interest of the educators.

Most of the participants were of the view that, the Representative Council of Learners (RCL), can play a greater role than they are presently playing. One of the participants expressed the following view regarding this matter: "There is no support coming from the Representative Council of Learners."

It is the researcher's view that an organised Representative Council of Learners will be able to reduce the workload of educators by getting involved in the various sub-structures. For example, learners could organise sports fixtures and assist with ground duty. The researcher's view is that the role of the principal is to see that the RCL structures are effectively in place to carry out their functions.

At a more personal level, participants confessed experiencing stress at the workplace. One of the participants said: "With my current job I feel very stressed. I have an appointment with a physiologist this evening." Another participant made the following comment:

"I suffer from very severe headaches every morning. I have gone for a thorough medical examination and was hospitalised for ten days but the doctors could not come up with

anything concrete. The doctors concluded that I was suffering from a very high level of stress.”

Most of the participants were dissatisfied with teaching as a career because of the excessive demands made on them. Some participants have planned to retire early; take up appointments overseas and to apply to be medically boarded. Some of the responses of the participants are as follows: “I am thinking of resigning. Personally, I want to resign because I am burnt out. I have given twenty-one years of service and I have nothing more to give to my learners.” One participant said: “I am going to resign and am leaving for the United Kingdom in September 2002. The salary that we (as educators) are receiving is pathetic.”

Symptoms of chronic stress were also evident in the following response of one of the participants: “I have such a severe headache every morning that I feel like staying away from school. I feel that I have not been recognised for the work that I have done. I am considering medical boarding.” Another participant said: “I love teaching but the job is too demanding. I sleep at eleven and get up at four in the morning to continue with my schoolwork. I cannot go on like this.”

It is the researcher’s view that principals need to organise the structures in their school to carry out allocated functions effectively. This will improve the working conditions of the educators thereby reducing the levels of stress experienced by the educators. The functioning of these structures need to be monitored closely to ensure success.

## **5.8 LEADERSHIP STYLE**

Littrell et al. (1994:298) found that supportive principals are likely to have a positive effect on the educators’ commitment, job satisfaction and retention. Educators who characterised their principals as supportive felt more motivated than those who described their principals as non-supportive. When educators receive principals’ support, they are likely to decrease stress and burnout. Principal support includes four broad dimensions of behaviour. They (principal support) are as follows:

- emotional support;
- instrumental support;
- informational support;
- appraisal support.

Littrell et al (1994:297) found emotional support is provided when the principal consider educators to be esteemed, trusted professionals and worthy of concern by practices as maintaining open communication and taking an interest in their welfare.

Most participants described the principal as caring and compassionate. One participant said:

“The one thing that I admire most in the principal is his humane qualities. When it comes to personal or family problems; he is ever willing to help. The principal is very supportive when educators are experiencing personal problems. I have a lot of respect for him because of his compassion.”

Most participants were satisfied with the compassionate nature of the principal.

Most participants expressed the view that the principal helped them with their work-related tasks, by providing the necessary material, space, resources and adequate time for teaching and non-teaching duties. One participant said: “Whenever I needed anything for my Department, the principal is ever willing to provide.” These characteristics satisfy the criteria for instrumental support by the principal.

The participants expressed both positive and negative feeling towards the principal on providing informational support such as authorising teachers’ attendance at in-service workshops, offering practical information about effective teaching practices and providing suggestions to improve instructions and classroom management. One participant said: “The principal is very supportive. He allows us time off to attend workshops without hesitation.” Another participant said: “I find it very difficult to implement Outcomes-Based Education in the classroom because of the large class sizes.”

Most participants were dissatisfied with the appraisal support they received from the principals. It is the view of the researcher that principals need to ensure that the professional growth takes place within the Developmental Appraisal System.

Littrell et al (1994: 298) show that principals are instructional leaders who need to provide ongoing personal appraisal, such as frequent and constructive feedback about educator's work, information about what constitutes effective teaching and clear guidelines regarding job responsibilities. Van Wyk (1984:85) shows that secondary school principals in South Africa spend too little time on the function of instructional leadership.

In a study conducted by Hoy and Sousa (1984:320) found that principals who shared decision making with subordinates had more loyal teachers, more satisfied teachers and teachers who described the authority structure as flexible than principals who did not share decision-making. The majority of the participants expressed the need to be involved in the decision-making process on matter that concerns them. One of the participants said: "Sometimes we are consulted at staff level while at other times we are not." Another participant said: "Most of the times we are informed and not consulted. By the time decision comes down to staff it is already made. We are merely informed what the school management team has decided."

Contrary to the perception that the school management team makes the decision on important issues before getting to staff, a participant said:

"We are concerned that Heads of Departments are not part of the decision making process of this school. I feel this school uses a top-down approach. The principal does not consult management before the matter is brought to staff. Sometimes out of the blue we as management are hearing things for the first time."

There is a general perception among the participants that the principal uses a top-down approach in the decision making process. According to Hoy and Sousa (1984:322), the advantages of shared decision-making are as follows:



- Educators gain a greater sense of job satisfaction, which tend to produce improved attitudes towards their work and the people with whom they work.
- Educators are less likely to perceive a strong authority structure and may thus be more apt to identify with the goals and the objectives of the school.
- Educators are more inclined to exhibit loyalty to their principals.
- Educators who are granted authority to make important decisions, will feel a greater sense of self-attainment and increase their job satisfaction.

The study by Hayward (1997:143) shows that undue teaching stress occurs when the leadership style of the principal is inappropriate to the historical period in which the school is situated. Therefore, South African educators of the post-apartheid era will be unlikely to tolerate a management style, which is rigid, authoritarian and does not permit the free flow of ideas.

## **5.9 CONCLUSION**

The research data indicate that the principal of a secondary school plays a significant role in managing work-related stress among secondary school educators. The factors that were identified to cause stress among secondary school educators are learners' lack of discipline, drop in the standards of learners' performance, excessive workload, changes in education policies, lack of promotional opportunities, inappropriate leadership style, lack of effective organisational structures and personal matters.

The research data also show that the principal can motivate educators by involving them in the decision making process of the school.

The findings and recommendations of the study will be discussed in chapter six.

