TEACHER ABSENTEEISM IN SCHOOLS WITHIN THE
EKURHULENI SOUTH DISTRICT EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Justice S Mthombeni

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Supervisor: Prof D. de Villiers

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this research study was to investigate the underlying causes of teacher absenteeism. A sample of fifteen [15] schools in the Ekurhuleni South District Office of the Gauteng Department of Education were used in the investigation.

The investigation was motivated by an analysis of recent statistics of teacher absenteeism. This analysis suggests the abuse of the various leave privileges provided for in the conditions of employment of teachers. These conditions were negotiated between the Department of Education and the teachers’ representative trade unions, and are supported by the minimum provisions with regard to leave contained in labour legislation but exceed, the requirements set out by the said provisions.

This apparent abuse of the various leave privileges, albeit authorised, seems to be exacerbated by the unacceptably high incidence of unauthorised absenteeism by teachers. This includes tardiness in respect of work hours, a high incidence of generally poor time keeping, early departures from (work) school premises and absenteeism during working (school) hours. Another finding was that teachers neglect core work activities such as teaching, in order to attend to, inter alia, personal matters, as well as, other authorised activities like trade union meetings.

The aforementioned trends in absenteeism are explained by teachers who give ‘reasons’ for their absence or who rely on the fact that the negotiated conditions of service give them the ‘right’ to make use of all the leave privileges. The reasons given by teachers to justify their absenteeism include, inter alia:

(a) a complete lack of, or non-functionality of, public transport to and from their place of work,

(b) the geographic distance between their places of residence and work,

(c) the lack of or absence of service facilities such as clinics,

(d) stress,

(e) depression,
(f) an excessive work load,

(g) a lack of motivation,

(h) a low morale,

(i) poverty,

(j) alcoholism,

(k) criminality, and

(l) extramural activities.

Many of the reasons given by teachers for absenteeism are in fact reflective of the negative attitude present in many teachers and demonstrate perceptions of a lack of development and professional opportunities within the teaching profession. The so-called “abuse” of privileges that is perpetrated under the pretext of the teachers exercising their ‘rights’ is characterised as such because the teachers exhaust all the leave provisions irrespective of there being actual cause/justifiable reason for them to do so.

This trend towards excessive and unjustified absenteeism, both authorised and unauthorised, has indisputably had a negative impact on the delivery of quality education. This underlies the well-documented phenomenon of school-level learner under-performance, and consequential functional illiteracy manifested in many learners. The manifestations of teacher absenteeism, learner under-performance and poor quality education are clearly closely interrelated, and are recognised as key factors that have contributed to a crisis of epidemic proportions in education.

The investigation was carried out by means of a quantitative analysis of nominal data solicited from a sample of teachers, principals, and officials from the district office. The data was solicited from the sample of respondents by means of a structured, self-administered questionnaire. The data that was collected was analysed by means of various inferential statistical methodologies after an analysis of the descriptive statistics in the form of frequency tables. The analysis evaluated the significance of the findings.
The envisaged value of the research investigation is perceived to lie in the probability that, a proper understanding of the underlying causes and dynamics of the unacceptable trend toward absenteeism will facilitate the development of policy, as well as the management of teacher absenteeism. The presumption on which the investigation is based, is that if suitable policy is developed that will obviate the underlying causes, and absenteeism is properly managed, both at the school level by the principals of the schools and also at the district level by the relevant officials, the quality of education delivered to learners at school will improve, which it is presumed will result in improved learner performance, which in turn will result in substantial benefits to South Africa in terms of educational outcomes, increase of the knowledge and skills base and increased competencies that will enhance economic performance.
DECLARATION

I, Justice S. Mthombeni, South African Identification Number 6710295329088, hereby do declare that the mini-dissertation entitled ‘Teacher Absenteeism in Schools within the Ekurhuleni South District Education Department’ is my own work and that this research investigation has not been formally submitted to another University for conferment of a degree.

I further declare that the work presented in this mini-dissertation is authentic and original, unless clearly indicated otherwise and in that such instances full reference to the source is acknowledged and I do not pretend to receive credit for such acknowledged quotations, and that there is no copyright infringement in my work. All sources that I have utilised or quoted are therefore, acknowledged by means of complete references.

Justice S Mthombeni
November 2010
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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE INVESTIGATION

1.1 Introduction

It is common knowledge that South Africa is facing an ongoing crisis of considerable proportions in education. According to Roberts (HSRC Review, (6), 1, 2008, pp.10-11) there is a steady decline in public confidence and mistrust in the public schooling system. The general perception of the public in South Africa seems to be that the entire education system is in a severe and deep crisis.

The extensive debate around this matter has resulted in a multitude of suggestions of underlying causes for the crisis. The opinions are that the crisis emanates from, *inter alia*, a lack of political resolve to take action against teachers (who are public servants and who refuse or fail to exercise their obligations as the educators and trustees of the education of the next generation of South Africans). Other issues that undoubtedly play a role are ill-considered public policy, a lack of sufficient budgetary provisions, shortages of school facilities, shortages and sometimes a total lack of learning materials, and finally, poorly paid and demotivated teachers.

Another underlying cause of this perceived crisis, highlighted by commentators is that the policy of “affirmative action” has resulted in a great many competent (mainly white) teachers leaving the educational field. Inadequately trained black teachers subsequently replace these employees. The result is that less competent educators are tasked with the onerous duty of teaching instruction, which requires, *inter alia*, discipline, motivation and a sense of fiduciary duty towards the learners.

Equally, the media has been increasingly ready to point to the repeated incidents of corruption (reported in the press) both in schools and within the Department of Education itself, as a reflection of the quality of personnel who are currently employed by the Department of Education. In inviting commentary on this association by the media, an over-arching, yet distressing pessimistic speculation is that the expectation of a good quality of education from teachers is a futile exercise since a great deal of educators are mainly concerned with end objective.
of personal gain as oppose to a realisation of the fiduciary obligation owed to learners.

There is also a widespread trend, pointing to the correlation between the introduction of the system of Outcomes Based Education (OBE), and the decline of quality education in South African schools. Commentators point out that in many cases teachers were ill prepared to manage or to function within this Outcomes Based Education system. A prevalent view is that this approach to education was poorly designed to start with, and that there was a lack of appropriate learning material to assist teachers when this approach to education (OBE) was introduced. This lack of resources and planning resulted in teachers doubting their skills and training - thereby causing them to fear for their careers and future prospects, which in turn resulted in a lowered morale within the profession. Researchers have also pointed out that a significant cause of absenteeism within the teaching profession is, in fact, this perceived low morale that emanated from the introduction of the new approach to education (OBE).

A more in-depth scrutiny of this debate as well as research in this regard (both in South Africa and internationally) however suggests, that to understand the crisis properly, all the factors influencing the system have to be considered. It is suggested, therefore, that these factors should be considered as interrelated and inter-dependant parts of an integrated system, notwithstanding that each factor should be considered on its own, as well.

It follows that, for example, there is a substantial body of opinion that it is not merely the Outcomes Based Education (OBE) system, as such, that underlies the crisis. It is widely held that the educators tasked with the teaching of learners within this ‘new’ system, as well as the learners who are the supposed beneficiaries of this system, were insufficiently prepared to function within this new system. Whilst it is alleged that the system is in itself, problematic; the lack of proper preparation of teachers and learners entering the system has resulted in significant negativism towards the method. This negativism has, undoubtedly been communicated to the parents of learners, and by extrapolation to the general public. It is the combination of all these factors, working together, that has led to strong opposition to and even rejection of this system of Outcomes Based Education (OBE).
What has therefore become sufficiently clear from the debate about the crisis in education is that none of the causes perceived to underlie the crisis exist in isolation. To understand the crisis and the possible resolution of the crisis, it is necessary to understand the reciprocal interdependence between the various causes. What is equally apparent is that these underlying causes, either on their own or in conjunction with all of the other causes, contribute either directly or indirectly to negative perceptions and attitude by all role players in the education environment, and that this negativism manifests itself in various unacceptable, unconstructive behavioural traits.

An added dimension of the debate is that, although the crisis in education is manifest in most schools in South Africa, it seems that the schools (previously classified as Model C schools) which exist largely in the so-called ‘white’ residential areas seem to be less affected by the perceived crisis. The crisis seems to be more serious in the classrooms of the so-called ‘black’ schools, and more so in rural ‘black’ schools than in urban ‘black’ schools.

A logical explanation for this seems to be that the so-called former ‘Model C’ schools have been well provided for, in terms of infrastructure and learning aids by virtue of their historical advantage. They are better staffed, by more competent educators, and better provisioned than their counterparts. Equally, the Model C schools are usually based in affluent residential areas. It follows that, since schools usually limit their intake of learners to the suburb where they are situated and from the surrounding suburbs, that parents (who can afford to live in such affluent areas) are financially able to contribute to the supplementary funding of the schools. This funding contributes to the acquisition of facilities and additional resources that are not provided by the Department of Education. Often, such schools are also able to provide supplementary remuneration for specialist educators in subject areas where there is a scarcity of such educators, for example, in subjects such as mathematics, science, business economics and computer sciences.

The crisis is exacerbated in the so-called ‘Black’ schools, especially in rural ‘Black’ schools, by a wide variety of extraneous and environmental factors. These include HIV/AIDS, poverty, geographic distance between the location of the schools and the place of residence of both the learners and the educators, lack of proper or sufficient transport, criminal activity, drug and alcohol abuse, the absence of
parents who live and work in the cities while learners reside with grandparents, and various cultural influences.

The most serious of the behavioural manifestations resulting from the perceived negativism mentioned above, as cited by various education analysts, is both unauthorised and authorised teacher absenteeism. This is aggravated by poor work performance by teachers which emanates in part from the said teacher negativism and the poor work attitudes that result from it, and to another extent from inadequate training.

According to statistics provided by the Department of Education, an inordinately large amount of teaching time is lost through absenteeism, which includes work behaviour manifestations such as poor timekeeping and a lack of punctuality by principals, teachers and learners within the school environment. It is, for example, quite commonplace in many so-called ‘black’ schools, that little or no teaching takes place after mid-morning on a Friday, the day before a public holiday, on a pay day or during the last week of the school term.

It is also a commonly held view that certain negative factors such as, a lack of political will to act against absentee teachers as well as, amended educational policies that are unclear to teachers and principals, the introduction of new structures and systems within the Department of Education, inadequate budgetary provision for educator remuneration, a lack of facilities and equipment all contribute to the poor quality of education in general.

Many commentators have expressed the view that correcting these structural and systemic inadequacies and problems in isolation will not bring about a transformation of the public education system. It is understood, that a holistic approach needs to be followed in addressing poor quality education in general and teacher absenteeism in particular.

It has also been suggested that the problem of negativism of all of the role players in the public education system, which manifests, *inter alia*, in aberrant behaviour such as teacher absenteeism, is exacerbated by a high level of trade unionism and fuelled by self-centred educators who act in a self-serving manner. This has led to a blatant disregard by many teachers (as well as principals) of the legislative provisions and departmental regulations and policies related to discipline in general.
and teacher absenteeism in particular. For example, educators often leave their
teaching posts and simply abdicate their teaching responsibilities during working
(school) hours to attend union activities, such as meetings and rallies.

The conditions of employment negotiated between the Department of Education
and the unions - which provide that only union office bearers, such as formally
appointed officials and Shop Stewards, have this facility, then too, that these
employees may only leave their workplaces after having followed specified
procedures, and obtained the requisite permission to do so. It is noted with
compunction, that certain teachers continue to blatantly ignore these injunctions
and abscond, despite a non-entitlement to attend union activities and in addition,
they do so without prior permission.

Inspection visits by principals and district officials to teachers in their classrooms,
which are carried out with the intent of ensuring uniformity within the educational
environment and to confirm that a good quality of education is provided to learners,
are discouraged by the unions. Teachers often use this stance of the unions to
reject any inputs from the authorities with regard to the quality of their teaching.

There can be little doubt that teacher absenteeism coupled with the resultant
negative behaviour of teachers in this highly unionised school environment, will
serve to compound the already troubled learning climate in the public schools.

The negative climate, which clearly exists in public schools, more especially in the
so-called ‘black’ schools, is greatly augmented by the poor response by district
officials to teacher concerns and grievances. The failure, for example, of the district
officials to address the developmental expectations of teachers’ in regard to their
personal growth and school improvement plans, etc. all add to the crisis. There is a
seeming lack of commitment and diligence on the part of government officials to
execute their duties and obligations, coupled with ineffective performance
management systems and diminished accountability for one’s actions.

All the above factors, coupled with absenteeism, impact negatively on the climate
of learning and teaching in public schools. According to Whelan (2008), just ten
days of teacher absence in a school year in a single learner group or classroom,
can lead to a significant loss in learner achievement in general, especially in
subjects such as mathematics and science, to the extent that the percentage of learner failures could double or even treble.

In recent years, the increasing rate of absenteeism amongst teachers has been attributed to worsening physical and socio-emotional conditions in South African schools. This is reflected in, inter alia, the substantial increase in crime and violence in schools, the rising rate of substance abuse, teenage pregnancies, and the growing rate of depression and anxiety related to medical conditions reported in teachers, learners and principals, due to work-related stress and these socio-emotional factors www.worldhealthorganisation.2000.com.

It follows that the issue of teacher absenteeism in South Africa is rapidly becoming a topic of critical importance in the matter of quality education delivery. It needs to be noted that the consequences of teacher absenteeism is not limited to short term proceedings relating to the discipline of teachers or the failure of learners in their examinations at the end of the immediate learning period or school year.

It must be understood that teacher absenteeism has many long-term consequences, for example, learners who are ill prepared for further education at a tertiary level. It is specifically stated that the long-term effect of teacher absenteeism at the school level could conceivably manifest in students who are not functionally literate or equipped to handle mathematics and science at university level, and consequently that it is a contributing factor to the large number of dropouts at tertiary level, across the country.

Teacher absenteeism in township and rural schools is regarded by Whelan op cit. as an indicator of teacher morale and of institutional stress. Moreover, where there is high teacher absence amongst certain teachers, it tends to lower the morale of the remaining teachers who have to carry the teaching burden of the absent teachers. Bruno (2008) suggests that this could, inter alia, be the cause of the failure of these schools to attract teachers that are more committed.

It was also found by Bruno, ibid, that a secondary outcome of teacher absenteeism and the negativism, which is presumed to underlie it, is that students eventually lose motivation and the desire to learn. The research by Whelan op cit. has also revealed that if the teaching instruction is carried out by an array of substitute teachers, inconsistencies tend to arise. Presumably, because teachers tend to use
different approaches to teaching a subject and have varying levels of competency in the subject being taught, it follows that learners tend to become confused, learning decreases and the frustration leads to negativism which could end in learners ‘giving up’.

Another finding is that learners who are left to their own devices when teachers are absent also become frustrated and the same negativity (as mentioned above) arises. Other teachers tend to feel more burdened because they may have to plan for and adapt their own schedules to accommodate the absentee colleague.

It is axiomatic therefore that teacher absenteeism has important implications for learner achievement, quality of education, teacher training and development, educational leadership, and a multitude of other matters related to the promotion of excellence in education at school level.

1.2 Objectives of the study

Given the background to the investigation (discussed in section 1.1 above), the summary of the aims of the research investigation are as follows:

- To identify the causes of teacher absenteeism from previous research and from the literature on the subject.

- To determine whether the causes of teacher absenteeism identified from previous research and the literature are relevant to the school environment in which the investigation was carried out.

- To determine the underlying causes of teacher absenteeism within the selected schools.

- To identify discernible trends in teacher absenteeism.

- To determine if there are significant levels of negativism amongst teachers in the schools included in the investigation.

- To determine if there is a positive correlation between the levels of negativism, and the incidence of teacher absenteeism in the schools.
• To determine if there is a correlation between teacher absenteeism and structural and systemic causal factors.

1.3 Motivation for the Study

The initial motivation for the research investigation stemmed, *inter alia*, from an original statement by Freeman and Grant (1987, p.31) which was quoted in a policy report, published by Uehara (1999), on teacher attendance in the Pacific Region. It said, “…you can revise [the] curriculum, toughen graduation requirements, and sing the song of excellence until you are hoarse: if teachers fail to show up for work, all your good intentions will wither on the boardroom floor…”

Another motivation by an article in *The Sunday Times* newspaper (24 of May 2009), based on a report commissioned by the former Minister of Education, Dr. Naledi Pandor, that characterised South African schools as “…dysfunctional…” The report reflected the time lost because of absentee teachers, incompetent principals, and ill-prepared district officials and suggested that it was indicative of a crisis in education in South Africa today. This report also stated that the culture of teaching and learning had essentially disappeared in rural and township schools.

The above-mentioned report may be interpreted as suggesting that high teacher absenteeism negatively affects learner performance as well as the general perception of the public with regard to public educational institutions and authorities. It drew attention to the supposition that adherence to the theoretical model for quality education specifies that there should be effective instruction, guided by a competent teacher. This report, *supra*, suggested that there was no sign of any adherence to this theoretical model for quality education in South African schools. The report further alleged that because of the high rate of teacher absenteeism, students were being denied educational opportunities, resulting in a negative effect on student achievement levels, and eventually seriously affecting the South African economy.

It is common wisdom, that teachers serve as role models for learners and that they influence students’ perceptions about what is acceptable or unacceptable behaviour, by both their speech and example. It can therefore be supposed with a high degree of certainty that chronic teacher absenteeism sends a strong but
subtle and indirect message to learners, to the effect that school attendance is not important.

In the emerging democracy of South Africa with its shortage of skills and productive competencies, there is undoubtedly a dire need for teacher professionalism, which is one of several important qualities of a good and efficient teacher, and which is characterised, inter alia, by consistent and sustained attendance at school and in the classroom.

This investigation was directed towards developing a better understanding of the underlying causes of teacher absenteeism. Specifically and more importantly, the research investigation aimed at understanding the propensity of teachers to use all of the available sick leave, study leave, family responsibility leave and special leave provisions for teachers negotiated in the conditions of employment of teachers. This predisposition for exhausting the various leave provisions to the limit, irrespective if the use thereof was necessary or justified or not, indicates that teachers considered these leave provisions as having established an entitlement or as an inalienable ‘right, rather than viewing the leave provisions as ‘privileges’.

From a financial perspective, teacher absenteeism is extremely expensive, *inter alia*, because substitute teacher salaries have to be paid in addition to those of the regular teacher. This adds to the cost of education. In essence, the school resources are exhausted by unbudgeted and unplanned teachers’ remuneration, so that there are no monies left to finance additional and much needed instructional programs and extracurricular learning opportunities at these schools. Such a situation would not be tolerated at predominantly white suburban or former “Model C” schools.

### 1.4 Value of the Study

This research study is directed at developing a better understanding of the problem of teacher absenteeism within the context of the Ekurhuleni South District Office. The knowledge and information gained from the study will assist the schools and the district office in devising measures to guard against the specific misuse of leave provisions and to manage positively, the concern of unauthorised and incidental absenteeism amongst teachers.
It will also provide information that could be used by the district and the national department of education to influence future negotiations of the collective agreements on conditions of employment in general, and of leave provisions specifically.

The insight gained from the study will also assist school principals and district officials in setting up systems and developing strategies to manage teacher absenteeism more effectively. This in turn, will impact on the interest of the learners’ right to basic quality education as envisaged by section 28(2) and 29(1) of the Constitution of the RSA Act 108 of 1996, that provides that, “…a child’s best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child…”, and that, “…everyone has the right to a basic education…”.

Teachers are the key role players in ensuring that the ‘right to basic education’ will be enjoyed by all learners, and are also undoubtedly the custodians of the “…child’s best interests...” referred to above. Therefore, teacher absenteeism undermines and negatively influences the children’s’ right to enjoy a sound basic education.

1.5 Problem statement

It is clear that while there has been a substantial improvement with regard to schooling for a great many learners and that change also manifested in the rural and urban formerly ‘black’ schools (that were deprived of proper schooling under the previous system of Bantu Education), many public schools are still not providing adequate quality education. This lack of quality education seems to be increasing, to the extent that the general public as well as the Department of Education consider the situation to be reaching crisis proportions.

The debate on the crisis in education suggests that failure to achieve quality education in public schools can be correlated to a large extent to teacher absenteeism. Absenteeism in rural and township schools can be related, both directly and indirectly, to the negativism about the education system that emanates from a complex interaction between various causal factors.
It has been suggested in the reports of many research investigations into the education crisis, and by other commentators concerning the causes of the education crisis that a possible solution lies in regular attendance by teachers in the classroom for all the periods scheduled for teaching. The inculcation of positive attitudes within the teaching environment would almost certainly have a positive effect on the delivery of quality education in the public education system.

Therefore, an innate understanding of the underlying causes of authorised, unauthorised and incidental absenteeism by teachers could conceivably assist the Department of Education with addressing these causes of absenteeism. An underlying consequence of addressing the root causes would be the promotion of a more positive attitude, based on the presumption that a more positive attitude will give rise to more positive behaviour that in turn would lead to a substantial decrease in absenteeism, which in turn will result in better quality of learning in general.

Equally, the rebuttable presumption underlying this investigation is that a better understanding of the causes of absenteeism will aid the officials in the district offices in the Department of Education, as well as school administrators and principals, to apply departmental rules and regulations in an effective manner to govern the management of leave by teachers and principals. It will also assist with the approval of leave, and the management of the legislative and regulatory provisions for the management of leave. An improved management of the conditions of employment, with specific attention to the conditions of leave, will undoubtedly curtail misuse/abuse, and will clearly improve on teacher absenteeism.

Relying on the above discussion around teacher absenteeism and specifically the rebuttable presumption mentioned in the above paragraph, it is scientifically justifiable to propose the following postulates, which can then be relied upon for the formulation of the problem statement for this investigation:

Postulate 1: Various structural and systemic factors such as budgetary constraints, political will, policy, the newly introduced Outcomes Based Education system, inadequate training of teachers for the implementation of this system, all contribute to the crisis in
education by causing substantial negativism in most, if not all, the role players in the education system.

Postulate 2: The negativism of the role players, especially the teachers and the learners, manifests itself in aberrant behaviour such as teacher and learner absenteeism.

Postulate 3: Whereas teachers serve as role models for learners, learner absenteeism is more often than not a function of teacher absenteeism.

Postulate 4: Teacher absenteeism, exacerbated by learner absenteeism, is a major factor in negating the delivery of quality education in public schools.

Postulate 5: Teacher absenteeism is the result of the abuse of legislative provisions, departmental rules and regulations, and the negotiated conditions of employment of teachers, which is promoted by the trade unions.

Postulate 6: Principals and school administrators do not manage teacher absenteeism properly, because they have not been properly trained or empowered to manage absenteeism, and because they lack an adequate understanding of the underlying causes of this absenteeism.

1.6 Research problem statement

Based on the above-mentioned six postulates, it is possible to formulate the following problem statement for this research project.

*There is a positive correlation between teacher absenteeism and the negativism of teachers, emanating from underlying structural and systemic causal factors.*
1.7 Summary

There can be little doubt that a crisis is perceived to exist in education at present. The consensus seems to be that if the dynamics of this crisis are not properly understood and consciously addressed by those in authority, then the crisis will probably worsen. This could conceivably culminate in a catastrophe, in the sense that the perceived crisis would manifest in the delivery of poor quality education to the detriment of South Africa.

Research findings as well as the recent literature on this matter suggests that this perceived crisis is caused by both structural and systemic factors, and that the crisis is the result of the interaction between these various factors.

The structural and systemic causes of the crisis include, but are not limited to:

- a lack of political will to address the underlying causes of teacher absenteeism;
- inadequate public policy;
- the premature introduction of Outcomes Based Education (OBE);
- the inadequate preparation of both teachers and learners to function within this new (OBE) educational system;
- budgetary constraints that severely limit the proper compensation of teachers and also restrict the availability of facilities and learning materials; as well as
- inadequate training of and support for teachers, and various others.

There seems to be a substantial body of information that shows that these various, related and interdependent factors have resulted in a significant degree of negativism in all the role players in the education environment. It follows that this negativism has concomitantly led to an increasing tendency for teachers to be absent from their workplaces on both authorised and unauthorised leave (the latter includes also what has been described as incidental absence from the workplace).

It is held by many commentators on this subject that the leave privileges for teachers, negotiated by the trade unions as improved conditions of employment, are abused by many teachers and that this abuse is indicative of the negativism of teachers. The opinion is that this negativism and the abuse emanate from the
structural and systemic causes mentioned above, and that this negativism is the underlying cause of the excessive absenteeism.

In conclusion, it can be said that the investigation of teacher absenteeism will contribute substantially to a proper understanding of the dynamics underlying the perceived crisis in education, and will facilitate the delivery of quality education in South Africa.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

It was suggested by Martocchio and Judge (1994) that the definition of absenteeism as a construct regularly used in the management sciences; especially in the arena of human resource management is quite straightforward. They go on to state that has changed very little since the subject was first debated in the post-World War II era that was characterised by rapid industrial and commercial development, and the concomitant phenomenon of absenteeism.

Gerber, Nel and van Dyk (2002, pg.84) mirror the definition for absenteeism used by all previous and earlier authors in the field of human resources management, by asserting that, “…absenteeism refers to any circumstances where an employee fails to attend his or her workplace for whatever reason, when he or she is supposed to in terms of his or her contract of employment …” and “generally speaking where the failure to attend the workplace is not authorised by the employer…”

To facilitate a proper discussion of the matter of employee, and more specifically teacher absenteeism, an analysis of the construct (cause) seems appropriate. Sikorki (2001) defines employee absenteeism as the employee not being present or attending his or her normal workplace during the scheduled working hours as per agreement or employment contract. This definition encompasses two other scenarios:

(i) the employee being temporarily missing from his or her workplace for some or all of his or her contracted working hours,

(ii) as well as the employee in fact being present at his or her workplace during the scheduled working hours but not being fully engaged in the work related activities for which he or she was originally employed.

The case where a teacher is in fact at work, but engages himself or herself in activities not related to the teaching of school learners, such as being engaged in a
trade union meeting or trade union activities, or spending time discussing personal matters on the telephone, could be construed as absenteeism.

Beira (2009) suggests that it is an truism in the management sciences that employee absenteeism is one of the major management problems faced by many, if not all, modern organisations. Two decades ago, Weiss (1994) pointed out that absenteeism has many and varied implications for all organisations, but that the most critically important, is the economic impact it has on the organisation itself, and on the environment.

Both, Beira op cit. and Weiss op cit., expound that employee absenteeism results in a direct financial loss for the organisation. Either due to the loss of production or sales characterised as a loss of income, or because alternate temporary employees replacing the absent employees have to be remunerated. They also suggested that in addition to having to pay the replacement employees, these employees are more often than not, less efficient and productive, than the absent employees, with the result that the decreased productivity leads to a further, indirect loss.

It is the opinion of Gerber et al. (2002) that absenteeism is clearly a problem in all organisations that rely on people to execute the functional activities for which those organisations were established. He develop this argument further by alleging that absenteeism has held the attention of the management of those organisations for many years because of its’ significant impact on the economics of the organisation. In addition, it has encroached on the organisation’s ability to deliver the products or services that constitute its core business. Because of the importance of absenteeism to business organisations, it has been the subject of substantial research in the management sciences, and especially in the human resources management field.

2.2 Absenteeism in schools

Absenteeism has been the subject of a substantial amount of research and debate in publications relative to business organisations because of the management problems that it gives rise to, as well as its economic implications. It follows that, non- business organisations such as schools are impacted equally as much by
absenteeism, primarily because of the effect it has on service delivery, which is usually the core business of such organisations.

The problem of absenteeism is especially serious for organisations such as schools whose core business is the delivery of quality education to learners who have a constitutional right to quality education. In schools, teacher absenteeism results in a loss of learning opportunity for the learners, failure to deliver quality education, which is the core business of the schools, and an indirect denial of the above-mentioned Constitutional rights of the learners.

A further consequence of teacher absenteeism is that the failure to deliver quality education results in poorly educated persons leaving the school system, often unable to access tertiary education opportunities. These poorly prepared persons enter the job market, lacking proper and adequate education, a drawback that has ensued from teacher absenteeism. These persons lack the basic competencies required to become productive employees who can sustain the economy of the country. This, in turn, has destructive, long-term consequences such as the inability to maintain global economic competitiveness as well as resulting in widespread negative social and societal breakdown.

Absenteeism in schools, as is the case in many other types of organisation, can affect the school’s very existence. Loss of teaching time due to teacher absenteeism that negatively influences the learning performance of the learners, could conceivably lead to the closure of a school. The poor performance of learners in acquiring the requisite knowledge and skills resulting, inter alia, from teacher absenteeism, could damage the school’s reputation as a learning institution. This reputational damage could grow to the extent that learners may choose to leave the school to find another school where proper and adequate teaching takes place, thereby ensuring them of quality education.

Absenteeism in organisations not only causes problems for employers or the managers of the organisation in terms of costs, inefficiency, lack of productivity and service delivery, but also more often than not leads to negative attitudes in the management as well as within the ranks of the remaining employees. Various research studies have shown that employees feel that they have to carry the
burden of the workload as a result of the other employees being absent, for the most part without any additional compensation.

Equally, research findings reported by Gerber, Nel and van Dyk *op cit.* (pg.86) of research done in a large number of business organisations, has shown clearly that these negative attitudes developed in employees as a result of the absenteeism of other employees and the excessive workload that needs to be shouldered by the remaining employees. This negativism often leads to a decrease in their concentration on their work, carelessness and wastage of materials and time, workplace accidents, low morale among co-workers, poor work performance, inefficiency and a loss of productivity. The same negative consequences of employee absenteeism can be extrapolated to organisations such as schools. Teacher absenteeism can also be seen to lead to a lowered morale in other teachers as well as amongst learners, lowered concentration levels of the remaining teachers on their work, a lack of due care in their teaching instruction resulting in poor quality teaching, and a waste of resources such as teaching time.

It is a long-standing understanding in the management sciences, as is attested to by Wexley and Yukl (1984) in their classical text on organisational behaviour, that absenteeism can never be eliminated from any organisation completely as there are many legitimate reasons for employee absenteeism.

Some typical legitimate and unavoidable reasons for absenteeism include, *inter alia*, illness, urgent private matters that require immediate attention, urgent family responsibility matters, transport problems, medical conditions (see Beira, 2009) and stress related incapacity as was noted by Essewein (2005).

The fact that these authors together with many others other in the American and United Kingdom environments recognised these realities, shows unequivocally that South Africa and more specifically the teaching environment in South Africa is not unique in its struggle with the management of absenteeism. Albeit that, South Africa does have unique problems such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic contributing to absenteeism as pointed out by Johnson (2004) in his research into teacher absenteeism. This perception applies equally to the South African teaching environment where the above-mentioned “legitimate” reasons for absenteeism also exist.
Additionally, as pointed out by Kasooha (2008) who studied the phenomenon of teacher absenteeism in Uganda, Bruno (2002), Beira (2009), Stedi (2009), Kassiem (2007) and Parsee (2008), there are many cultural dynamics that contribute to employee absenteeism in an employment work environment such as that of South Africa, with its great cultural diversity.

An example of this cultural diversity at work is illustrated by the following scenario - an employee originating from a rural, tribal environment may, for instance, feel obliged to visit a traditional healer for the treatment of personal or a family member’s ailment. This healer may reside in a rural area that is geographically remote from the workplace, causing the employee’s absence for an extended period. Equally, the transport and communications facilities in rural areas are not always reliable, making it impossible for the employee to return to work in time or making the whereabouts and the return date of the employee uncertain, as he or she may not be able to keep the employer informed.

Three research investigations over a period of five years by Kassiem (2007), Pitkoff (2003) and Parsee (2008) all found that employers, (directed by the provisions in labour legislation and Collective Agreements with trade unions on conditions of employment), may find themselves in a quandary with regard to (a) employing replacement labour or (b) instituting disciplinary action which could ultimately end in the termination of the employment relationship. The situation in the school employment environment does not differ significantly from this scenario.

The management of both authorised and unauthorised teacher absenteeism in a unionised environment is very complex and requires considerable knowledge and experience. Such an environment is rife with instances of employees ostensibly exercising their ‘rights’ as provided for in collective bargaining agreements and as per the conditions of employment where substantial and various types of legitimate leave are allowed for.

In investigating the problem of teacher absenteeism, Stedi (2009) found that in many cases, school principals and district office officials might not have adequate knowledge of the legislative provisions or the departmental rules and regulations. For the same reason, they may not have the experience to manage the approval or granting of leave where it is justified and putting measures in place to avoid the
abuse of leave privileges (by refusing to grant leave where appropriate or not justified).

Bruno (2002) pointed out that in a unionised environment where the unions regularly exert pressure for principals to allow teachers to exercise their rights; that refusal by a principal to grant any type of leave provided for could have serious consequences. The result, according to Parsee (2008) who also investigated this matter, is that school principals often choose to ignore the teacher’s absence rather than risk a confrontation with the trade union.

The structural and systemic forces underlying absenteeism clearly makes this a complicated matter to debate and resolve. The legislative framework, departmental regulations and legally enforceable provisions of collective agreements that form the context within which teacher absenteeism has to be considered, complicates this multifaceted dynamic further. Although an in-depth analysis of this context is not possible in a research report of this nature, this matter will be touched on below.

2.3 Legislation, departmental regulation and collective agreement provisions

Employees have, according to Rabe (2001), a legal and enforceable duty in terms of their Common Law contracts of employment, to render a teaching service to the learners entrusted to them, and their employers have a commensurate right to expect them to do so. Wilful, unauthorised absence from work, seen in the wider context discussed above, constitutes a breach of the employment contract. According to Grogan (2007, pg.289) this could, in terms of both the Common Law that underlies such employment contracts and the relevant labour legislation, legitimise both disciplinary action and even dismissal.

A basic consequential element of this duty to render a teaching service is that teachers are expected to be at their workplace during working hours, otherwise they will not be able to render such a service. According to Grogan op cit. (pg.291) in the normal Common Law contract of employment, even absence for reasons beyond the control of the employee, may constitute grounds for severe discipline and even dismissal, if the period of absence which may under normal
circumstances be condoned, exceeds what (at law) would be considered to be reasonable.

Whilst absenteeism usually entails the complete physical absence of employees from the workplace, it can be that absenteeism can take place if an employee is in attendance the workplace, but not at his or her actual workstation. An example from case law to illustrate this principle was the dismissal of a security guard for being absent from his workplace in the matter of Ndlovu v Supercare Cleaning (Pty) Ltd (1995) 4 LCD 338 (IC). The Court found that the employee’s absence from the workstation assigned to him, although he was, in fact, present at the workplace, was tantamount to being absent from work and the Court found also that a disciplinary penalty for this absence was justified. In this matter, the Court ruled however that the dismissal was too severe a disciplinary penalty, and that it was therefore, unfair because the employee had been instructed to execute another task by his supervisor, albeit only for a short period.

Another finding, at law, is that an employee can be seen to be physically present at his or her workplace but “...mentally absent...” In this context the finding at law was that “…mental absence...” could conceivably result in an employee being incapable of rendering the services that he or she contracted for. This was the finding where an employee was charged with sleeping on duty in the matter of CWIU v Boardman Brothers (Natal) (Pty) Ltd (1995) 16 ILJ 619 (LAC).

Employees cannot be found to be guilty of absenteeism and therefore of failing to render the service they contracted to perform, at times and under circumstances when they are not contractually obliged to render such service. This would be the case according to Grogan (2007, pg.292) where an employee is absent on authorised annual sick or maternity leave, and is entitled [legally] to be away from work for the duration of the authorised period.

Absence without permission, usually referred to as “unauthorised absence’ or absence without a valid reason, is regarded at law as misconduct in terms of section 186 of the Labour Relations Act, no. 66 of 1995. This unauthorised absence is generally held to be a ‘breach of the employment contract’ and in the widest possible sense, as a dismissible offence according to Grogan op cit. Such an offence or act of misconduct may however, not be dealt with as a serious
disciplinable offence that will inevitably lead to [summary] termination of an employee’s contract of employment. Grogan, *ibid.*, points out that the law requires a specific investigative process to be followed, the application of the *Audi Alteram Partem* rule of administrative justice, and taking into account of mitigating circumstances in determining the severity of the offence and consequently of the disciplinary penalty.

In the case of misconduct in the form of unauthorised absenteeism, which may lead to dismissal, the employer is guided by the provisions of the Code of Good Practice on Dismissal, as reflected in schedule 8 of the Labour Relations Act, *supra*, and in particular, by item 7.

Within the educational sector however, section 18(1)(j) of the Employment of Educators Act, no. 76 of 1998, regulates the matter of teacher absenteeism where it provides that, misconduct refers to a breakdown in the employment relationship and an educator commits misconduct if he or she absents himself or herself from work without a valid reason or permission.

This piece of legislation, which is specific to a distinct group or type of employee in a very specific employment environment, supported by a collective agreement with the relevant trade union on the dealing with this type of misconduct, takes precedence over the Labour Relations Act, *op cit*. Furthermore, the above legislative and regulatory provisions are supplemented by a Gauteng Department of Education circular, no. 65 of 2007, which deals with the management of discipline by school principals in schools within the Gauteng Education Department.

The Gauteng Department of Education Circular 65 of 2007 Annexure E (guidelines for determining sanctions) provides that:

- Isolated incidents of absence with little effect on the employer’s operations or absence of limited duration warrants a written warning.
- Reporting late for duty and failing to improve the practice after verbal reprimands and final written warning warrants a formal disciplinary enquiry.
- An extended absence from duty in excess of 14 consecutive working days should be treated as abscondment (desertion).
• A wilful or prolonged absence, which affects orderly function of the employer’s operations, warrants formal disciplinary enquiry.

• Absence that displays disregard for agreements or procedures where dishonesty or insubordination underlies the absence (e.g. fraudulent medical certificate), warrants formal disciplinary enquiry.

In spite of the clearly defined, legislative and regulatory framework for the management of teacher absenteeism mentioned above, it is disheartening to note that various reports such as those of Pitkoff (2003), Kassiem (2007) and Beira (2009, have found that there exists a trend of escalating absenteeism in schools in rural so-called ‘Black’ schools generally, and in schools in the Ekurhuleni South Education District Office in particular.

The said reports also suggest that this negative trend stems *inter alia*, from the failure by school principals and administrators to enforce the department regulations for exercising discipline in these cases of misconduct (in the form of unauthorised teacher absence).

The matter of unauthorised absence by teachers in the form of leave taken outside of the provisions of the collective agreement on conditions of employment and relevant legislation is clearly problematic. Most cases processed by the Labour Relations Units of the Gauteng Department of Education District Offices, are related to incidents of unauthorised teacher absence (in the form of absence without permission), without adherence to the prescribed procedure for taking leave, or taking sick leave without a valid, justifiable reason.

Where this unauthorised absence extends over a longer period and the defaulting educator fails to make contact with the department or the school principal, then the educator is considered to having either absconded or deserted.

Circular 19 of 2004 entitled ‘New Leave Provisions for CS Staff Employed in terms of Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998 provides for a leave dispensation for institution-based teachers. In terms of this circular, teachers are entitled to a total of 36 days paid sick leave in a three-year or 36-month leave cycle. The circular also stipulates that the department is not obliged to pay the teacher if he or she is absent for longer than two consecutive working days without having submitted a
proper medical certificate, issued by a registered medical practitioner. This provision is in accordance with the relevant provisions on sick leave in the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, no. 75 of 1997 that applies to employees in commerce and industry.

The Department is not obliged to pay the absent teacher his or her salary if he or she is absent on more than two occasions during an eight [8] week period. Teachers whose normal sick leave credits for a three year sick leave cycle have been exhausted and who, according to a medical practitioner, requires to be absent from work due to proven incapacity for medical reasons which are not permanent, may however be granted additional sick leave with full pay.

According to the Conditions of Employment for teachers, ‘occupational injuries and diseases leave’ may be granted for the duration of the period that the teacher cannot work, on condition that the leave of absence due to an occupational injury or disease is recommended by a medical practitioner. Additionally, a teacher may be granted special leave for ‘quarantine purposes’, that is, if he or she has been exposed to a medical condition that warrants him or her having to be placed under quarantine.

Teachers are entitled to four [4] consecutive months ‘maternity leave’ with full pay for each confinement. A teacher, who adopts a child that is younger than two years, qualifies for ‘adoption leave’ to a maximum of 45 working days.

Teachers also qualify for five [5] working days per annum paid leave in the case of the death in the family member, plus an additional three [3] days with regard to the birth of a child, or illness of spouse. This is often referred to in industry as ‘Family Responsibility Leave’.

Finally, teachers are allowed a total of three [3] working days leave on full pay for professional development. This so-called study leave may be granted for a period approved by the employer and on conditions as determined by the employer, which for purposes of this provision means the principal of the school, in his or her sole discretion. A teacher may also be granted special leave for examination purposes and any unauthorised absence by the teacher is regarded as special leave in extraordinary circumstances and is granted by the employer for any reasonable
period. Teachers also qualify for three [3] days leave on full pay for religious observance.

Teachers are considered to be on annual leave during school holidays or periods of school closure, that are outside of scheduled working time. Teachers may however, not accrue any annual leave, and are not entitled to be paid out for annual leave not taken.

Principals of schools are obliged to forward all application forms, for all types of leave, to the relevant administrative offices of the district department of education for processing within one month of the commencement of leave. This is a statutory requirement, which is audited through a random sampling done during an annual regulatory audit by the office of the Auditor-General. Non-compliance with this statutory requirement is a breach of the Public Finance Management Act of 1999, and is therefore tantamount to a disciplinable misconduct.

2.4 Causes of teacher absenteeism

The various research reports referred to in the previous section of this chapter, also found that there are various underlying causes for the escalating trend of teachers attempting to exhaust their leave allowances, whether the reason for the leave is justifiable or not. All commentators who have looked at this matter suggest that this escalating teacher absenteeism creates a threat to a particular school’s success and to the delivery of quality education in general.

Research into teacher absenteeism also established beyond any shadow of doubt that it negatively influences both teacher and learner morale. Uehara (1999), Plimmer (2003), Parsee (2008), Kasooha (2008) and Beira (2009) all expressed in some way or other the findings that Esswein (2005) formulated so elegantly when he held that the lowered morale emanating in various ways from teacher absenteeism caused many of the other teachers to become despondent and depressed, and eventually to demonstrate the symptoms of chronic stress that often lead to chronic ill health. This negative response was found in many research findings to be the indirect result of the remaining teachers’ perception of a general failure by principals and school administrators to effectively control or manage teacher absenteeism. Pitkoff (2003) found that many, if not most, principals and
school administrators failed to report either the authorised or the unauthorised absence of teachers, which puts to question both the ability and preparedness of school principals to manage teacher absenteeism in accordance with the provisions of the legislative and regulatory provisions in this regard.

Employees (more often those with a strong trade union background or affiliation) seem to consider sick leave as a [fundamental] ‘right and an ‘entitlement’ to be absent for the maximum number of days of sick leave provided for in the regulations, whether they are in fact, sick or not. These employees choose not to admit or accept that sick leave is a privilege, and a ‘conditional right’, which is understood to mean that they are [only] entitled to sick leave when they are genuinely sick. The same finding is visible in research reports regarding the taking of family responsibility leave, and even study leave.

Although the above findings suggest that trade union involvement in the teaching environment contributes to teacher absenteeism, it is a well-documented fact - see for example Kassiem (2007), Whelan (2008) and Stedi (2009) - that teacher absenteeism is a matter of great concern for teacher unions. The teacher Unions themselves report that the number of teachers on sick leave is influencing the delivery of quality education. In the Western Cape Province, more than a 1000 out of a total of about 33000 teachers, were absent from work over a period of seven weeks between the start of the school year, and the end of February 2007.

The unions in this province have also reported an increase in the number of teachers who during medical examination, manifested symptoms of stress and were overworked, and were thus, advised by their doctors to take sick leave. Research by Johnson (2004) found that HIV/AIDS was a prominent reason for teachers taking sick leave, while the research by Esswein (2005) identified stress as a significant cause of teachers taking sick leave.

The unions have also reported that teachers increasingly tend to view their classrooms as hostile and threatening [work] environments. This pessimistic view is in many cases due to gang activity and criminality amongst learners, whilst in other cases is ostensibly due to criminal involvement of fellow teachers. The research by Beira (2009) found that criminality within the immediate environment of the school and not within the school as such (often in the form of drug distribution
and sales to school learners by adult ‘pushers)’ caused many teachers to view the school as a hostile and threatening work environment.

This perception of the school environment as a hostile and threatening workplace gave rise to the teacher unions reporting that many teachers are leaving the profession because of this perception, resulting in teacher shortages, which in turn contribute to the inability of the school system to guarantee learners a quality education.

It is noteworthy that some teacher unions are concerned about the level of teacher absenteeism since it indicates that they recognise that they hold an equal responsibility for addressing the matter of absenteeism with their members. It is therefore important to understand the unions’ perspective on the causes of teacher absenteeism and their view on how this epidemic can be addressed effectively.

A number of interrelated variables are central to understanding the underlying causes of absenteeism. These variables include an absence of job satisfaction in teachers, the perceived non-availability of career opportunities, failed teacher aspirations, personality characteristics resulting in the unsuitability of certain individuals for a job as a teacher, locus of control, self-efficacy, workplace stress, depression, HIV/AIDS, job expectations, personal safety and a latent fear of being killed.

2.5 Summary

It is very clear that teachers in South Africa can avail themselves of extensive leave privileges to which they are entitled by way of statute, departmental regulation or collective agreement entered into between the trade unions and the department of education.

Where teachers develop negative attitudes or where they begin consider these privileges as “…rights…” it follows that it presents no problem for any teacher to be absent from the classroom or their workplace, for extensive periods with permission. It is very difficult for principals and district officials to refuse official requests for such leave. The opportunity for abuse of these privileges is clearly great. It is not unreasonable to suggest that in the light of such extensive leave
privileges, which could hardly be refused, the need for unauthorised absence should, by extrapolation, not exist.

The supposition made above regarding unauthorised leave was addressed by the researchers Martocchio and Judge (1994) in the United States of America who found that most teachers in that country consider absenteeism as an integral part of the individual teacher’s broader conceptualisation of what his or her work role entails. This conceptualisation of absenteeism includes avoidance of work, withdrawal from the work role, and adaptation to a work environment that will involve persistent lateness, excessive breaks, various kinds of work sabotage, and engaging in or inciting industrial disputes.

This means that teachers, as much as many other employees in commerce and industry, would generally seek and probably find a possible, legitimate, excuse not to be at work, without any difficulty. By way of extension, it may be assumed that teachers in South Africa also subscribe to this conceptualisation of work to a certain degree. An example could be teachers who would cite as a reason for being absent or coming to school late, or leaving school early, the strike action by taxi-drivers, taxi breakdowns, general transport problems and traffic congestion, which may be factually true or not.

A number of earlier research investigations such as that of Yolles (1975), Weiss (1994) and Rabe (2001) have described absenteeism as a “…workplace epidemic…”, and have found that management is generally unable to manage this absenteeism or do anything to curb it or its’ effects on the effectiveness of the business organisation. Rabe, *ibid*, is of the opinion that high absenteeism rates are due to the inability of management to control this phenomenon. He suggests that it is part of a self-generating phenomenon in the sense that, management often fails to curtail or avoid absenteeism, which occurs within the context of legislative and regulatory provisions, emanating from the labour legislation dispensation in South Africa.

Rabe, *ibid*, also suggests that absenteeism that is not consistently monitored and addressed by means of, *inter alia*, disciplinary action, tends always to escalate. The rebuttable presumption is that once problem employees realise that they can get away with absenteeism they tend to continue to stay away from work for the
slightest reason or sometimes for no reason at all. Equally this presumption suggests that ‘good’ employees, that is employees who would not of themselves embark on such unacceptable behaviour, who see that the problem employees are getting away with absenteeism without any effective reprisals by management, sometimes also try to follow suite, resulting eventually in rampant absenteeism.

This supposition is supported by Plimmer (2003, pg.2), who adds that research conducted in a number of large public organisations in the United States of America, has shown that these organisations have little or no idea of either the cause or the long term consequences of absenteeism within their establishments. This lack of knowledge manifests irrespective, of whether the consequences are financial or if they affected efficiency or productivity.

According to Yolles et al. (1975, pp.5-7) it is important when discussing absenteeism, to see the organisation as a social system that provides for the accommodation or adjustment for a variety of individual members of that system. This accommodation or adjustment can be described as a process of fusion of the various sub-systems, with a reciprocal influence. This, in turn, implies that the organisation has a unique culture and set of goals from which it generates job descriptions for individuals. The individual who enters this organisation also functions within a pre-determined personal culture, with his or her own attitudes, values, stereotypes and prejudices, and his own special goals. The two sub-systems have to merge and if there is a high degree of fusion, there is a maximum degree of goal achievement for both sides. In such a setting, he suggests, absenteeism would be extremely low and conversely, if there is inadequate fusion there will be a tendency for increased absenteeism.

The most cited research report on absenteeism is that by Steers and Rhodes (1978). They used a multi-variant approach that encompasses both the psychological as well as personal characteristics of teachers. Based on the model they developed from their research findings, demographic variables such as personal and family-related variables, as well as psychological variables like job satisfaction, and the motivation to stay away from work versus the ability to attend work, are the root causes of employee absenteeism. The model emphasises that work attendance is influenced by the practices of the organisation, the absence of a suitable workplace culture, and employee attitudes, values and goals.
An absence of job satisfaction as the reason for absenteeism is considered to result from situational factors such as compensation, job design, and human relations practices. Martocchio and Judge (1996, pg.57) suggest however that absenteeism is also predicted by negative attitudes toward the job, and more especially towards the content of the work. The more satisfied employees are with the workplace, the less likely they are to be absent and conversely, the more dissatisfied employees are with the workplace, the more likely they are to be absent. Punnett et al. (2007, pg.215) supports these findings where they report that “…three meta-analyses of the relationship between employee absenteeism and job satisfaction showed that job satisfaction was found consistently to be associated with absence…”

The construct referred to as “Withdrawal Theory” has been used by various authors, such as Punnett, *ibid*, to account for the job satisfaction-absenteeism relationship. This theory suggests that when individuals become dissatisfied with their jobs, it reduces their motivation to attend work, culminating in absence behaviour. The effects of all other job-related and organisation variables on absence would ultimately work their way through to job satisfaction.

The results of studies in North America, as reported by Punnett, et al (2007, pg.216), found that the more loyal and committed employees are, the more satisfied they seem to be, and the less likely they are to absent themselves from work. This suggests that loyalty and commitment are positively correlated with job satisfaction, and in turn, that as organisational commitment increases, so job satisfaction will increase and consequently absenteeism will decrease, or conversely, that as organisational commitment decreases, so absence from work will increase.

It is clear from the above that job satisfaction is one of the keys to understanding absenteeism. In terms of this investigation, job satisfaction is clearly an area, which requires in-depth analysis to be able to assess its influence on teacher absenteeism. It is considered, *prima facie*, to be one of the critically important underlying causes of absenteeism within the Ekurhuleni South District Education Department within which this investigation was undertaken. According to Punnet *op cit.*, the matter of job satisfaction also needs to be understood in the context of
how the teacher defines it and its importance in contributing towards high levels of teacher absenteeism.

Punnett et al., *ibid*, indicated that personality characteristics could be closely linked to absenteeism. According to them, three personality characteristics that have received considerable attention in research investigations are (a) the need for achievement in individuals, (b) the person’s Locus of Control, and (c) his or her self-efficacy.

A high need for achievement means that individuals work hard to achieve the goals they set for themselves, and that failure to achieve their goals correlates positively with absenteeism.

A person’s ‘locus of control’ can be either internal or external. Internal locus of control means that an individual’s characteristic is a cause of their behaviour, whilst an external locus of control means that the individual attributes the cause of their behaviour to factors that lie outside of their personal sphere of control. The more internal the person’s locus of control, the more likely they are to attend work in the face of difficulties, whilst it follows the more external the person’s locus of control, the more likely they are to be absent because they feel they have little control over external factors.

Finally, self-efficacy refers to the degree to which a person feels that he or she is capable of achieving what they set out to achieve. A high sense of self-efficacy is expected to be negatively correlated with absenteeism, as the employee wants to demonstrate their capability at work and is therefore reluctant to absent him/herself from the work environment where he or she believes that they can prove him/herself.

It has been suggested by various authors such as Yolles (1975, pp.4-5) that employees can be classified into two categories. Firstly, there are those for whom job activity is central to the way in which their personalities and their daily activities are organised and secondly, there are those for whom work is an unavoidable and “necessary evil…” and something which they are forced to be involved in to be able to earn an income.
It is self-evident that absenteeism will be much higher within the group that considers work to be a ‘necessary evil’ and probably, but not necessarily, lower in the other group. This is a critical aspect to consider in any investigation of absenteeism in South Africa. It raises questions about employees entering the teaching profession because of economic reality and thereby making good of the only available job opportunities at any given point in time. The truth is that financial constraints often make teaching seem an obvious choice of career, as opposed to teaching being preferred because it is an area of interest and passion.

Whereas workplace stress has already been suggested as being an important cause of absenteeism, it is important to refer to the research report by Stredwick and Ellis (2002, pg.168), where they found that lack of control over working time and methods is an important contributor to stress. They suggest that it “…becomes a psychic prison… from which ‘inmates’ are tempted to use any devise to escape…”. It has also been found in many research reports that stress in the teaching environment in the United States of America can also be triggered by the increase in crime and violence within the teaching environment. It is clear that this could also be true of South Africa.

It is apparent from various research findings such as that reported by Rabe (2001) that, the stressors mentioned above are exacerbated by (a) increasing pressure to perform and to meet learner achievement targets, as well as (b) the high cost of living and (c) competition in the workplace. Rabe, ibid, also suggests that, at best, work stress can be a source of great excitement and a stimulus for those teachers whose personalities make them inclined to competition, whilst, at worst, it can seriously impair an individual’s quality of work life and reduce both their personal and job effectiveness, if their tendency is to react accordingly, because of their personality make up.

A very important finding by Blum and Kirchner (1997) is that depression is the most frequently found mental health reaction in the American employee population, linked to absenteeism. They state that each year 10% to 20% of this population, or about 17 million people, suffer from and have to be treated for depression. Depression does not only take its’ toll on its victims, but it costs society more than $43 billion a year, of which $17 million is the cost of job absenteeism alone. Thus,
it affects the workplace in terms of lowered productivity, decreased quality of work, poor decision-making, workplace accidents, and higher health care costs.

South African organisations are currently experiencing devastating levels of absenteeism due to HIV/AIDS, according to various research findings. Bennell (2005) in his report held that the same is true of the teaching environment. He says that by the end of 2005, there were five and half million people living with HIV in South Africa, with almost 1000 AIDS-related deaths daily. The impact on business organisations in general, has been devastating, with some companies losing as much as a month’s production each year, for each employee affected by HIV/AIDS. According to Bennell, *ibid*, population-based testing shows that the incidence of HIV/AIDS among teachers was 12.7% in 2004. This report finding shows that teachers who are HIV positive are slightly less likely to be absent as opposed to teachers who are HIV negative, which is the opposite of what would be expected.

In a recent study by Whiteside and Sunter (2000), operational costs for companies as a result of employees affected by Aids, are exacerbated by factors such as (a) soaring health care costs, (b) increasing death benefits, (c) lower company income attributed to a loss of productivity by those in good health that are obliged to care for sick relatives.

In spite of these findings, many organisations have still not acknowledged HIV/AIDS as a threat deserving of their attention, and therefore, they have not put in place any measures to deal with the problem, despite that HIV/AIDS has already taken its toll, by the infection of a significant number of skilled workers. The education system is no exception, and it needs to be more flexible in responding to the challenges of teachers who are affected by HIV/AIDS.

There are clearly various aspects of organisational and managerial practices, which may, in some way, contribute to employee absenteeism, whether through induced illness or injury or through contributing to low levels of employee motivation. These could, according to Johns (1997, pp.115-174), include the way in which tasks or the work in general is organised, the structure of the organisation, the nature of the management hierarchy, low levels of employee responsibility, autonomy, and organisational commitment. It was also found that where there is a permissive culture within an organisation regarding absenteeism, certain
employees tend to consider sick leave as a benefit that must be fully exploited, irrespective of whether the employee is actually sick or not.

Death is one of the life events that has a unique cultural implication for South African employees. A funeral, for example, is an event in which participation is considered a cultural obligation. When there is a funeral for a relative or in-laws, family members are duty-bound to attend. In some instances, mourning the death of a family member can take three to five days or longer. This cultural responsibility inevitably results in an employee's absence from work. The same is true for teachers as was found by Stedi *op cit.* in his report on teacher absenteeism.

Based on the research of Unicomb et al. (1992) in a study of short-term teacher absenteeism in nine Nova Scotia schools, gender and age level was found to play an important role in determining the profiles of teachers who are absent from work. It was discovered that female teachers tend to be absent from work more often as their age increases. Male teachers tended to be absent more during their thirties than at any other time in their teaching career.

Porwell *op cit.* believes that novice teachers with two to four years of experience and veteran teachers, who have worked within the educational environment between twenty-three and twenty-five years, miss the least number of school days. Novice teachers still in the beginning phase of their careers and who have fewer personal responsibilities, such as those related to child-rearing show the least tendency to be absent from work.

In the study by Pitkoff *op cit.*, teachers who received low work performance scores tended to miss a larger number of work days than those who did not. Teachers with low marks seem not feel a connection to the workplace, and believe that they are ineffective in the classroom.

It appears that in the USA the rate of unscheduled absenteeism reached an alarming 24% in 2004 and most employees who failed to show up for work were not physically ill. Only 38% of unscheduled absences were due to personal illness, while 62% were for “…other reasons…” These included family issues, personal needs, stress and an entitlement mentality. Once again it is not difficult to draw a parallel between these findings and the situation in South Africa.

(www.cch-humanresourcemanagement-and trends.iowa.com)
Minor illnesses such as colds and flu remain the most important causes of sick leave being taken by United Kingdom workers. Stress is a growing cause of absenteeism, with 52% of employers reporting an increase. The main causes of stress-related absenteeism are identified as workload, management style, organisational change and pressure to meet targets, as was found by Esswein (2005).

Expanding and improving basic education in developing countries requires, at a minimum, teachers who are present in the classroom and motivated to teach, but this essential input is often missing. A report by Jameel (2008) shows that unscheduled, surprise visits by district officials reveal that teachers are absent at high rates in countries such as India, Indonesia, Uganda, Ecuador, and Zambia. This decreases both the quality and quantity of schooling for children, especially in rural, remote, and economically poor areas. More broadly, poor teacher management and low levels of teacher accountability afflict many developing-country education systems, as much as it is true for South Africa.

It was found by Jameel (2006) that, on an average day in rural Udaipur, India, 44% of teachers are absent from school. In general, it seems that the poorer the country the higher the absenteeism rates. On an average day, 27% of teachers are not at work in Uganda. This can be compared to with an average of 5% of teachers in New York State being absent on any single work day. Uganda has the highest rate of teacher absenteeism in Africa, according to a survey by Kasooha (2008), which showed that in a school of ten teachers at least four were absent at any given point in time, and that this absenteeism is one of the causes of poor academic standards.

2.6 Conclusion

The above-mentioned findings indicate the need to conduct scientific research in order to understand the dynamics of teacher absenteeism in South Africa in general, and specifically within the Ekurhuleni South district of the Gauteng Department of Education.

Many questions have been raised and many divergent opinions expressed with regard to how teacher absenteeism should be addressed. The questions that have
been mooted include whether the absentee teachers should be severely disciplined or even discharged; whether the Ekurhuleni South District Office should hire a mental health team to deal with the many problems that are manifested in teachers as discussed; whether a social worker be employed who will enter the homes of the absentee teachers to learn more of the socio-psychological dynamics resulting in teacher absenteeism; or whether the setting of stringent standards of work performance will result in less absenteeism.

The above review of the literature on teacher absenteeism shows unequivocally that this is not a simple problem. There are clearly a great number of factors, which have been shown to contribute to the matter of teacher absenteeism.
3.1 Introduction

According to Bentz and Shapiro (1998), research is, without exception, influenced by the personal values and perceptions of the researcher. They propose that the design of a research investigation is, of necessity, determined by the researcher’s fundamental beliefs about what constitutes knowledge, and the appropriate manner through which that knowledge can be acquired and interpreted.

Consequently Bentz and Shapiro, *ibid*, (pg.32), suggest the following pertinent questions that the researcher must address when embarking on research include:

(a) what is science,
(b) what is knowledge,
(c) what is reality,
(d) does knowledge mean being able to predict,
(e) does this include intuitive knowledge that a researcher may have about the subject at which the intended research is directed,
(f) is this knowledge generalized or specific, and
(g) is the knowledge only a collection of facts, or has it been synthesized into a ‘Body of Scientific Knowledge.

Another question that needs to be asked is whether the ‘reality’ that one researcher perceives, is the same as that of another researcher and how this perception of reality will influence the research and its’ findings.

In the realm of scientific research, answers to these questions reflect what are called the researcher’s epistemological beliefs. In this context, according to Bentz and Shapiro, *ibid*, (pg.33-35), “…. Epistemology is that branch of philosophy that interrogates the basis of the claims about the nature and extent of the knowledge gained or the so-called grounding of the knowledge...”
Clearly therefore the researcher’s distinctive and unique ideas and views of what constitutes knowledge and how it is attained and validated, have an impact on the research design that should be utilised when conducting research. In this regard, the epistemological inclination of the researcher would impact on both the ideological foundations on which the research is grounded as well as the preferred research approach and analytical methodologies.

In the domain of the social sciences, these beliefs essentially translate into a set of theoretical ‘beliefs’ about how knowledge is constructed, as well as the specific, critical choice, according to Wessels (1999, pg.384), of using either qualitative or quantitative research methods.

According to both Bentz and Shapiro op cit. and Neuman (2000), the fundamental difference between quantitative and qualitative research methods and techniques, is that quantitative research is concerned with the “what”, “where” and “when” of the fund of knowledge, while qualitative research is concerned with the “why” and “how” of human behaviour. This distinction between qualitative and quantitative research design was best described by Van Maanen et al. (1982, pg.32), where he says that “….Quality refers to the essential character or nature of something; quantity on the other hand is the amount of that something. Quality is the ‘what’; quantity is the ‘how much’…”

According to Schurink, (2008, pg.5), the concept ‘Qualitative’ in the context of research refers to the meaning, the definition, analogy, model or metaphor ‘characterising’ something, while the concept ‘quantitative’ assumes the meaning, and refers to the ‘measure’ of it. Thus, the qualitative researcher is primarily concerned with finding deeper meaning and the intricacies of explaining human behaviour. Quantitative research on the other hand, is concerned with describing the properties of human behaviour and the relationships between phenomena.

The epistemological inclinations of the researcher and other considerations in choosing between the two methodological approaches are also dependent on the nature of the study. A research study interested in the description of the properties and the measure of a phenomenon would probably be best served through a quantitative research design. Conversely, a qualitative research approach would
be better suited in circumstances where the research involves uncovering the deeper meaning, nuances and intricacies of the phenomena being studied.

It is suggested that in circumstances where the researcher seeks to understand both the properties of phenomena, as well as the meaning behind the phenomena under study, the research design should include the use of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. This is referred to by both Bentz and Shapiro *op cit.*, and Neuman *op cit.*, as the “…blended approach to research…”

The approach of blending two research approaches is widely accepted as the methods that are viewed as being complementary. They also suggest that at one point or another, “…all social researchers systematically collect and analyze empirical data, and carefully examine the patterns in them, to understand and explain social life…and human behaviour…” while at the same time, examining the “‘meaning’ and implications of such behaviour…”

Bentz and Shapiro *op cit.*, warn however that this ‘parallel’ use of quantitative and qualitative research approaches cannot be done willy-nilly. This is so because the manner in which the researcher poses the research question is in itself loaded with “…value statements…”, and already suggests the researcher’s views about what constitutes knowledge, and the most proper routes to obtain that knowledge. They say that it is, therefore, not merely a matter of posing the research question and thereafter searching for the right research approach. In essence, the research question must be posed to suggest that one approach would be more appropriate and the other inappropriate.

It is important at this point to note that the results obtainable from a qualitative research study are largely anecdotal, relying on the subjective accounts of behaviour or events obtained from the research participants, about the phenomena being studied. Qualitative research studies could rely on approaches such as ‘grounded theory’, ‘narrative’, case studies’, ‘story telling’, ‘participant observation’, ‘ethnography’ and ‘focus groups’ assert both, Neuman *op cit.* and Schurink *op cit.*

Bryman and Bell (2003) expand the discussion on the choice of research approach by pointing out that there are basically two types of quantitative research studies, to whit, ‘descriptive’ or ‘causal’ studies. As the names suggest, descriptive studies are focused on describing a phenomena and the characteristics of the research
population in question, while causal studies are focused on determining the “....cause and effect relationship(s) between the variables being studied....”.

Neuman op cit. suggests that quantitative research is appropriate in addressing one or more of the following research objectives:

- Descriptions of phenomena or the characteristics of the subject being studied.
- Estimates of the proportion of the population that display these characteristics
- Unearthing associations and relationships among the variables being studied.
- Discovering causal relationships among variables.

Qualitative researchers often start with general research questions rather than a specific hypothesis, collect an extensive amount of verbal data from a small number of participants and organise this data into some form that gives it coherence and meaning. Qualitative researchers operate under the assumption that reality is not easily divided into discrete, measurable variables.

Qualitative researchers often describe themselves being the mechanism to be used to collect the research data, characterising themselves as the ‘research instrument’. This description is based on the fact that the bulk of the data they collect is dependent on their personal involvement, usually by means of approaches such as personal interviews or direct personal observations. Rather than using a sample of a large number of respondents who have to answer questions in a questionnaire, qualitative researchers tend to select a few respondents who can best shed light on the phenomena or event under investigation because of their personal knowledge, experiences or observations. Qualitative researchers make considerable use of inductive reasoning both in managing data collection and in data analysis.

This approach was considered for this research project because qualitative methodologies provide a means of accessing data that is not open to quantification such as opinions or perceptions or attitudes. Qualitative methodologies also allow the researcher to share in the understanding and perceptions of others, and to explore how people structure and give meaning to their daily lives. According to Berg (1998, pg.7), researchers using qualitative techniques examine how people learn about and make sense of themselves, others and the environments in which they function. In the context of this investigation, this methodology would assist the
researcher to unpack and explore the underlying causes of teacher absenteeism that may not have been measurable by means of quantitative methodologies.

Consideration was given to the use of the blended approach to the investigation as discussed above, where qualitative methodology would be used to solicit sufficient data from a sample of respondents from within the education sector regarding the underlying causes of teacher absenteeism in South Africa, to construct the research instrument that would be used for the main body of the quantitative investigation. On reflection, this option was rejected however, because a substantial body of research already exists with regard to the causes of absenteeism internationally in general and teacher absenteeism specifically. This body of international research findings show clearly that the causes of teacher absenteeism is very consistent with little if any difference found between countries, except that in some countries such as Uganda, Zambia, Nigeria and South Africa cultural influences play an important role which is not the case in countries such as Britain and America. Consequently, it was decided to rely only on these research findings for constructing the research instrument and not to undertake the qualitative research initially considered.

Consistent with the title of the investigation therefore, a descriptive, quantitative research design was considered the most appropriate approach as the first part of the investigation clearly intended primarily to assess the quantum of knowledge and understanding of the causes of teacher absenteeism.

The second part of the envisaged investigation, which also suggested that a quantitative approach would be the most appropriate, was thereafter to assess the possible cause and effect relationship between the dependent variable of ‘teacher absenteeism’, and the independent variables of the various ‘underlying causes’ of teacher absenteeism. In both the parts of the investigation the term ‘assess’ should be read to mean ‘measure’ which confirms the decision to follow a quantitative approach to the investigation.

Therefore, a causal, quantitative research design seemed to be the most appropriate approach where the correlation between knowledge and understanding on the one hand and perceptions of fairness and justice on the other hand, will be determined.
Eldabi, Irani, Paul and Love (2002) as well as Babbie (1999, pg.51) suggest that quantitative research typically has a logical and linear structure, in which the research hypotheses takes the form of a statement of the expectations which the researcher has with regard to the outcomes of the research, or about likely causal relationships between the constituent constructs, usually characterized as the variables, identified in the hypothesis.

Thus, the determination of the causal relationships specified by the hypotheses will result in the acceptance, or rejection of the theoretical proposition, in quantitative research usually characterized as a ‘Null Hypothesis’. Relying, *inter alia*, on Eldabi et al. *(ibid)* this investigation therefore, used a quantitative design in an attempt to build on the foundation laid by previous researchers internationally.

### 3.2 Research Population

The research population, often referred to as the ‘universum’, selected for any research investigation is generally described as that group of people or part of the general population, about whom the researcher intends to draw inferences.

The research population in this investigation was circumscribed as all the employees of the Ekurhuleni South District of the Gauteng Department of Education. This comprised of all the teachers, school principals, district office officials and teacher union officials, within the Ekurhuleni South District Office of the Gauteng department of Education. They are all employed in their respective institutions, sub-departments, or sections within the Department, in terms of the Employment of Educators Act, no. 76 of 1998.

Ekurhuleni South District Office has a total of 165 schools, at both the primary and secondary school levels, and it has a total number of 10300 teachers, school principals and school administrators of which 210 are district office personnel. As the department has a number of replacement principals and vice principals the numbers in these employment categories exceed the number of schools.

Equally, it needs to be noted that not all schools have an equal numbers of Heads of Department and therefore the number of employees in this category will not be divisible by the number of schools; larger schools may have as many as three
employees in this category, while smaller schools may have none or only one. Finally, all employees in the district offices were grouped together in one employment category and not into the various levels of employment represented of the various job grades. The reason for this is that all persons in the district office are engaged in overall departmental administration and should rebuttably all view teacher absenteeism from that perspective.

3.3 Sampling

It is axiomatic that researchers are seldom able to include all the members of the research population which they intend to investigate, in their research. Consequently, a researcher is usually obliged to select a ‘representative sample’ of respondents from which to solicit sufficient and appropriate data to facilitate appropriate statistical analysis, from which to draw conclusions and inferences about the research population.

To ensure that the research sample will be representative without compromising the results by inadvertently introducing a bias, Marlow (2005, pg.56), suggests that a researcher usually has to rely on a definitive methodology such as ‘non-probability’ or ‘purposive’ sampling technique. The selected sampling methodology should assist the researcher to select a sample according to the nature of the research problem, as well as the phenomenon under investigation.

This view is supported by Cresswell (2003), who suggests that purposive sampling requires the researcher to identify, (a) the setting or environment in which the research will take place, (b) the actors or role players who are involved, (c) the events, and (d) the process by means of which the research will be conducted.

Neuman *op cit.* (pp.198-201), suggests that, in many cases the sample should be based on a pre-determined proportion or percentage of the research population using the structure of the research population to determine the structure of the sample thereby contributing to the representative character of the research sample, an approach to sampling that he refers to as “....quota sampling ....”.

Accordingly a random, quota sampling methodology relying on a non-probability sampling procedure was decided on to select a representative sample of teachers,
school principals, district officials and labour union officials for the research sample to be relied on in this research investigation.

It was decided to conduct the research investigation in 15 of the 165 schools in the district, which would represent approximately 10% of the total number of schools in the research population. The sample was structured to include 7 primary and 8 secondary schools in order to approximately reflect the structure of the research population as there was roughly a 50-50 split between primary and secondary schools in the district.

Both Neuman *op cit.* (pg.220) and Leedy (1989, pg.152) point out that in this approach to sampling there can rarely be an exact, pre-determined sample size and that there is usually no way of ensuring that each element in the research population will be represented exactly in terms of numbers in the research sample.

A sufficient number of questionnaires were distributed in the 15 schools selected for the investigation, so that every staff member at every school would receive a questionnaire and be able to participate in the investigation. Equally, a sufficient number of questionnaires were sent to each district office so that each employee there would receive one and be able to participate.

Whereas a 10% sample was aimed for, as this would presumably be representative and would rebuttably produce representative data, the selection of 15 schools out of the total of 165 in the district served this purpose. The aim was to rely on a random, quota sampling procedure to pursue this aim of a 10% sample, and therefore a target was set of selecting 1030 respondents for the sample.

Adherence to the principles for obtaining a random sample it was decided initially that the first 1030 completed questionnaires received back from the employees would be included in the sample and the rest would be rejected, so that the respondents included in the sample would be selected randomly.

However, the further decision to obtain a quota sample meant that the decision to include the first 1030 completed questionnaires in the sample would not be acceptable without further structuring. Consequently, the questionnaires that were returned were first grouped according to the job categories of the employees in the department and simply placed in a file. Once it was clear that no more completed
questionnaires would be received, the questionnaires in the file were shuffled. Thereafter every second completed questionnaire in the pile was extracted and placed in a separate pile that would eventually constitute the sample.

This process was continued until the number of randomly selected questionnaires equalled the number required, to ensure a least a 10% quota sample. Because whole numbers had to be relied on, that is, use could not be made of a fraction of a questionnaire, only whole numbers had to be employed which resulted in the researcher not being able to obtain sample that was exactly 10% of the entire amount of questionnaires, but this threshold was exceeded marginally for each category in the sample as can be seen in Table 1. The total number of completed questionnaires returned by the deadline set by the researcher, exceeded 1650.

Because the number of responses from teachers were so much larger than from the other categories of respondents, the other categories were first selected on the basis of a 10% sample for each category other than teachers, and the responses from teachers were then selected until the total number of responses selected by way of the completed questionnaires was equal to the total target figure of 1030 which would be 10% of the research population.

The structure of the sample and numeric size of each category of respondent included in the final sample is shown in table 1 against the structure of the research population and the numeric size of each category in the research population.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job category</th>
<th>Total number in research Population</th>
<th>Total number in research sample</th>
<th>Percentage number of research sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principals</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice Principals</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOD’s</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>10.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>9130</td>
<td>908</td>
<td>9.90 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School administrators</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Officials</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>10300</strong></td>
<td><strong>1030</strong></td>
<td><strong>10.6 %</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Research population and sample structure
The sample structure and numeric size per category allows the rebuttable presumption that the sample was representative of the research population. Equally, the sampling procedure that was followed could with a high degree of certainty be said to have produced a random, quota sample.

Knowing that 67% of all the employees in the department under investigation, were female and only 33% males, and that the greater majority of teachers were female while the majority of principals and vice principals were male, that the heads of department were about evenly split between males and females, that the majority of school administrators were females and finally that the majority of district officials were male, suggested an unnecessary complexity if the proportion of females to males in the various employment categories were to be pursued in the structuring of the research sample. There was a concern that if this division between females and males were to be pursued in the sample, the randomness of the sampling procedure could be compromised. Consequently, it was decided not to neither include, nor exclude completed questionnaires selected for the research sample based on gender. As it turned out, the structure of the selected sample nearly reflected the gender division of the research population, as can be seen from table 2 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Research population</th>
<th>Research sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>67 %</td>
<td>72 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>33 %</td>
<td>28 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2: Gender distribution of the sample and the research population**

The positive outcome, in terms of, gender division in the research sample, was a fortunate occurrence. This, in spite of the decision not to interfere with the random sampling process because it was realised that there could possibly be a statistically significant difference between the genders with regard to the underlying causes of teacher absenteeism. This realisation was based on the culturally defined roles of females versus that of males, especially in those with a rural background and upbringing, as well as due to the socio-economic dynamics of South Africa.

This realisation emanated from the understanding that females are traditionally regarded as the guardians of children, and therefore the medical or psychological
inability of a child would more readily result in the absence of a mother than a father. Similarly, fathers, more often than not, work far away from their families and it is a common occurrence that the mothers assume the care of their children, this in spite of the fact that they are obliged to work.

Finally, it was also decided not to use racial classification in the structuring of the sample notwithstanding the fact that the research instrument included a biographical question about the race of the respondent. The reasoning behind this decision was that it was thought that the underlying causes for teacher absenteeism would not differ significantly between respondents from the various race groups, although it was recognised that culture and socio-economic circumstance could influence the responses of for example Black versus White teachers.

3.4 Research Instrument

The decision to conduct this investigation using a quantitative research approach implied the need for a research instrument that could be used to collect the ‘measurement’ of the various components of data required for the intended quantitative analysis. This instrument had to allow for the defining of trends and patterns and thereafter the drawing of inferences from the data about teacher absenteeism. It was determined that a self-administered questionnaire would be the most suitable research instrument for this purpose.

On the proposition suggested by, inter alia, Eldabi op cit., Neuman op cit. and Zandamela (2007), the questionnaire was constructed from the findings of previous research on the causes of teacher absenteeism, both nationally and internationally. Zandamela ibid, suggests that questionnaires are a “neutral” means of extracting information, as all respondents have to respond to the same questions, under circumstances that exclude any influence by the researcher, other persons from the research population or the external environment. He adds that by using self-administered questionnaires, the researcher can determine in advance, not only the overall focus of the investigation, but also the main areas from which data needs to be solicited, the sequence in which questions should be asked given the climate in which the investigation will take place, as well as the probable perspectives and attitudes of the respondents.
It was resolved that the questionnaire be constructed as a Likert-type scale as defined by Neuman *op cit.* (pg.270) and Likert (1976, pp.149-158), that would provide nominal data. To obviate the well documented possible ‘statistical bias’ referred to by, inter alia, Neuman *op cit.* (pp.269-270), and to avoid the so-called “…centralizing tendency…” often found in statistical analysis (that would result from the typical five point structure proposed in the original Likert Scales), it was decided to construct the questionnaire with six [6] intervals.

The questionnaire was constructed in the following sections to establish the database for analysis and interpretation, aimed at addressing the research statements formulated as postulates, and eventually the research hypothesis. These sections noted below are largely self-explanatory.

1. Biographical information about the respondent.
2. Knowledge of the statutory and regulatory provisions for various types of leave available to teachers.
3. Knowledge of the procedures required at law and regulation to be followed before leave may legitimately be taken.
4. Knowledge of the intentions underlying the various form of leave that may be taken i.e. why this form of leave was provided for.
5. Perception of the extent to which teachers adhere to the prescribed procedures for taking leave.
6. Perceptions regarding unauthorised leave taken by teachers.
7. A section of open-ended questions soliciting responses regarding the perceived reasons for absenteeism.

Certain problems were expected with regard to the last section of the questionnaire, which aimed at soliciting the perceived reasons for teacher absenteeism, firstly because of the additional time that would be taken while respondents were thinking about their responses, a possible fear of there being repercussions to their responses, and a possible bias.

Cognisance was also taken of the warnings given by Zandamela *op cit.* that draws attention to a few of the problems that may occur when respondents react to the questions in a questionnaire, specifically where opinions or perceptions are solicited:

- Eagerness of the respondent to please the interviewer.
• An antagonism that sometimes arises between the interviewer and the respondent.

• A tendency by the interviewer to seek out the answers that supports his or her pre-conceived notions.

• Factors that may contribute to bias in data obtained from the interview.

Questions relied on in a questionnaire developed by a researcher to solicit the data required for a research investigation, are usually developed from the researcher’s understanding of the research topic, a basic knowledge of the research subject, and knowledge of what is happening within the research population in relation to the research topic. Various research theorists such as Zandamela op cit., suggest however that care has to be taken that in the formulation of questions for a research questionnaire that ‘meaning’ and ‘context’ is not lost, and in practical terms that the respondent has the same understanding of words, terminology, theoretical constructs and the context of concepts. (see also the course notes for the subject ‘Advanced Research Methods’ in the Employment Relations programme, PP-MM, 2007, at the University of Johannesburg).

Saunders (2003) suggested that the following checklist could be used to check the wording of questions, to address the above-mentioned matter:

1. Does the question collect data at the right level of detail to answer the investigative question, as specified in the data requirements?

2. Will the respondents have the necessary knowledge to answer the questions?

3. Do the questions talk down to respondents? (they should not)

4. Are the words used in the questions familiar to the respondents, and will all respondents understand them in the same way?

5. Are simple words and sentence construction used, and is jargon and abbreviations [including mnemonics] used?

6. Can the questions be shortened? (Long questions are often difficult to understand, as the respondents need to remember the whole question. Consequently they often result in a failure to respond)

7. Is more than one question asked at the same time?

8. Do the questions prevent certain answers from being given?

To get clarity on appropriateness of the questions for the questionnaire to be used in this investigation, a focus group of colleagues in the Labour Relations as well as
in the Policy and Planning Units in the district office of the Ekurhuleni South Department of Education, were requested to comment on their understanding of the meaning and intent of each question. Questions were revised until the focus group members indicated the same understanding of the meaning and intent of the questions, and the probable data that would be solicited by the respective questions.

The above-mentioned process used to ensure proper understanding of meaning and intent of the research questions relied on the proposition by Babbie and Mouton (2001) that, the reliability of the data solicited by a question in a questionnaire can be assured when the same question renders the same data in repeated use. Welman and Kruger (2001), also suggest that validity can be assumed if the uses of the same questions with different, but comparable samples render the same data.

Because the intention was however to ‘test’ for statistical reliability by means of the Cronbach’s Alpha methodology, all questions were asked at least twice in different and sometimes unrecognisable fashion in the various sections of the questionnaire.

The questions developed for inclusion in the questionnaire were extracted from the literature discussed in Chapter 2 above. Cognisance was taken of the various causes of teacher absenteeism identified in the many research investigations already referred to and included questions about the structural and systemic systems in which teachers function in South Africa including those that relate to political and departmental policy, questions relating to legislative and regulatory provisions relating to various forms of leave and the taking of leave, probable socio-economic causes that could conceivably impact teachers in South Africa, psycho-social causes of absenteeism, and possible geographic and societal causes such as physical distance between the residential areas in which teachers live and their places of work.

Every attempt was made to research whether the findings of teacher absenteeism in South Africa correlated to any extent to teachers absenteeism in other African countries such as Zimbabwe, Uganda and Nigeria, as well as to Europe and America by using the findings of research on teacher absenteeism in these various
countries in developing the individual research questions and constructing the research questionnaire.

3.5 Data collection

The investigation was initiated by collecting the administrative reports, statistical records and leave registers reflecting authorised leave taken by teachers in the schools in the research sample, as well as records of unauthorised absence obtained from the schools and the district office of the Ekurhuleni South District Department of Education.

These records and registers were analysed to search for trends in:

- The type of leave and other absenteeism that seemed to be prevalent, that is, whether the absence or the leave taken was authorised or unauthorised.
- The duration of absences.
- Possible discernable trends with regard to which days of the week, month or the school term were most often taken as for sick leave, or for any other type of leave.
- The costs of the leave of absences to the school in terms of time and money.

Subsequent to the said analysis of recorded information, an attempt was made to solicit data regarding teacher late coming after the start of the school day, absence during the school day to attend to any activity not scheduled in the teaching programme, early departure from school and various other forms of absence characterised as ‘incidental absence’. It was almost impossible to gather data on such incidental absence that could be verified, and therefore the data that was in fact collected could not be used for purposes of research as it was, in fact, hearsay and perception rather than proven fact, despite that every person that was questioned, confirmed that such incidental absence was the order of the day rather than the exception.

In the main body of the investigation, sufficient copies of the structured and self-administered questionnaires were produced and distributed to all the teachers at the 15 schools selected for the research investigation, in bundles, via the principals of the various schools. Questionnaires were not sent personally to individual teachers, principals or school administrators. Equally, a sufficient number of
questionnaires were prepared and distributed within the district office, so that every employee of whatever rank employed in the district office would get one and be able to participate in the investigation on a voluntary basis.

The questionnaires were accompanied by a letter of permission from the Chief Director of the Gauteng Department of Education to indicate that the Department supported and condoned the investigation. The letter confirmed that the findings would be made available by means of a generalised report to the Department, which would be made available to all employees of the Department on request. The potential respondents were given written assurance of anonymity and total confidentiality, as well as that, the Department assured each and every participant protection against persecution even if the findings were attributed to a specific person or group by default. This is an imperative for research findings, which was intended to ensure a proper and neutral response, and would assure all potential respondents that the questionnaires are anonymous. Assurance was also given that all data would be treated with confidentiality and ensured the full protection of individual respondents.

All the respondents to whom questionnaires were supplied were requested to complete these questionnaires in their own time, without discussing their response with other teachers or their principals or superiors. They were also requested to place the completed questionnaires in a cardboard box provided for this purpose in either the office of the secretary of the various school principals, or in a suitable place that was easily accessible, located in or near the respondents’ work environment.

The completed questionnaires were collected from the various workplaces on the third day after the initial distribution of the questionnaires. The completed questionnaires were then grouped according to job title and role, but not by school or other place of work. Therefore, all the completed questionnaires from teachers were grouped into one bundle, those from principals and vice principals into separate bundles, and so forth.

Once all the completed questionnaires had been received, the questionnaires were shuffled repeatedly to obviate any person being able to identify the school or workplace from which the questionnaire originated. The researcher then selected
every second completed questionnaire from the bundle, i.e. he selected the top questionnaire in the previously shuffled bundle, then the third from the top and then the fifth from the top and so on. This process continued until a minimum of a 10% sample of the total number of employees in each employment category in the research population had been obtained.

As stated before it was virtually impossible to select a sample of exactly 10% and therefore, the process continued until a sample that consisted in roughly 10% was obtained, and as can be seen from table 1 above most category sample exceeded the 10% threshold, ending up as 10, 4% samples for example. Where the bundle has been exhausted before the threshold of a 10% sample was reached by means of the process described above, the researcher started at the top of the bundle again, until the threshold was obtained or exceeded.

Each questionnaire included in the sample by means of the above-mentioned process was then scrutinised to ensure that it was valid in terms of a set of criteria such as that all the questions in the questionnaire had been answered, no unsolicited remarks had been included that could bias the analyst, and that there was no other factor that could invalidate the data contained in the responses to the questions. Where invalid questionnaires were identified, [only three] were in fact identified, replacement questionnaires were randomly selected from the bundle of questionnaires.

The completed questionnaires were then submitted for coding and statistical analysis to the appropriate facility at the University of Johannesburg that renders this service to the academic candidates.

3.6 Data analysis

Data analysis [merely] involves organising the data that the researcher has collected so that it can make sense, according to Neuman op cit. To make sense of data, the researcher must categorise, synthesise and search for patterns in the information collected. The analytical tool used for this purpose was the SPSS statistical package, and the data was subjected to various analytical methodologies.
In the first place, the data was subjected to a simple factor analysis, designed specifically for nominal data, to determine the significance of each factor or reason for teacher absenteeism identified by the sample of respondents. The Chi-Square test of significance between small groups or sample sets was then used to determine the level of significance of the difference between the responses of the various groups or sample sets.

Secondly, the Spearman Correlation Co-Efficient technique was used to determine the significance and the direction of the association between the variables, between groups or categories of respondents.

The significance of the difference between pairs of groups or sample sets was then determined by means of the use of the Mann Whitney test, and to determine the significance between the non-paired groups or sample sets, the Kruskall Wallace test was applied.

To analyse the data solicited by the open ended questions in section 7 of the questionnaire, the ‘Content Analysis’ methodology was used, by means of which the researcher attempted to search for similarities and dissimilarities, as well as trends and patterns in the data. In other words, data was coded and sorted into classifications in terms of topics, themes and issues.

The task in content analysis of data, according to Babbie (2001, pg.86), is one of reducing a wide variety of items of information to a more limited set of attributes composing of variables. Social science involves the study of variables and the attributes that compose them. Attributes or values are characteristics or qualities that describe an object, which in this case could be a person. Anything said to describe oneself or someone else involves an attribute, for example a ‘dishonest teacher’.

3.7 Reliability

Zandamela op cit., states that data is reliable “…if two versions of data collected produce equivalent patterns .... from those responding…” He continues to elucidate this statement by saying that “…when using standardised methods of data collection, it is feasible to get some reasonable reassurance about reliability....”
According to Henning et al. (2004, pg.54), if many interviews are conducted with different people, or with the same person at different times, there may be more and more reliability of data collected. Further inter-subjectivity and [greater] understanding of different subjects may be achieved thereby.

In this instance, another technique that could have been used is that of ‘Triangulation’ which, in applied social research, means that it is better to look at something from several angles, than to look at it in only one way, according to Neuman (2006, pg.149). He also holds that “…the use of triangulation can also help as it is about collecting data by different methods, from different informants and from different types of informants….” In the context of this investigation, triangulation was used as a way of obtaining inputs from various sources placed at different levels within the district.

The primary means of assessing the reliability of the data solicited by the questionnaire in this investigation however, was the statistical determination of the data reliability by means of the Cronbach’s Alpha Index.

### 3.8 Validity

Validity is about whether or not something actually measures what it claims to measure. Ensuring the validity of data requires that the researcher must assess the data collection and sampling methods to avoid issues of bias. In the case of this investigation, the researcher would assess the interpretation of the open-ended questions. The researcher would then verify whether these questions, solicit from the respondents, the information relevant to the research topic, research problem and the postulates from which it was developed.

According to Babbie (1995, pg.325), whenever research is based on an analysis of data that already exists, such as in the leave registers and records of the Ekurhuleni South district office, it is demarcated by and limited to what actually exists. More simply, he suggests that the researcher can only analyse what exists and draw inferences, only as far as the existing data will allow for the drawing of such inferences. Oftentimes, the existing data does not cover exactly what the researcher is interested in, and the inferences that are drawn may not be valid or
an exact representation of the variables and concepts the researcher intends to draw conclusions from.

Time is always a major factor influencing the acquisition of valid data. Time at the researcher’s site, time spent interviewing, and time to build sound relationships with respondents all contribute to the validity of the data. When a large amount of time is spent with respondents, they tend to become more eager to participate in an investigation and to provide the researcher with the data he requires, and equally, the better the inter-personal relationships between the researcher and the respondents, the more eager the respondents usually become to give the researcher the responses he or she would like to have, which could quite conceivably result in “....fabricated....” data, simply to please the researcher. Such data may or may not satisfy the requirements for valid data in scientific terms. Moreover, respondents are more likely to be frank and comprehensive about what they tell a researcher if they trust him or her, especially where the data that is solicited has an emotional component.

This understanding may be relevant, in the sense that, the respondents in this investigation might have feared exposing the improper behaviour of their colleagues and friends, or creating a negative impression about their schools and the district office. They may, therefore, not have provided a true picture of teacher absenteeism in their respective workplaces, either in the main body of the questionnaire or section 7 in response to the open-ended questions.

In this investigation, therefore, the researcher made every attempt at convincing the probable respondents that the investigation has been sanctioned by the department since the department was eager to know about and understand the underlying causes of teacher absenteeism, in order to be able to address the causes thereof. The researcher also made an effort to convince the respondents that ‘honest’ responses would be the best way to assist the Department to achieve its objectives in this regard, and that if this was achieved, then the solutions developed by the Department would ultimately be to the teachers’ advantage.

Finally, the researcher attempted to communicate to the respondents that if the department failed to achieve its’ objectives because they provided ‘invalid’ information or deliberately biased the data they provided, thereby contributing to
the failure to deliver quality education in the long term, it would be to their detriment even to the extent that it may put their job, as well as careers, at risk.

3.9 Summary

The researcher had determined, in terms of the relevant theoretical requirements, that the envisaged research investigation into teacher absenteeism within a defined geographical area and education structure would be conducted using a quantitative approach which was supported by a number of open-ended questions that would allow what could be defined as a qualitative interpretation. Therefore, it was possible to define exactly the research population in terms of demarcation and numbers.

Having demarcated the research population, it was possible to select a quota sample, selected randomly, that was by definition representative and would ostensibly produce representative data from which scientifically defensible inferences could be drawn by means of standardised statistical analysis. Using the Cronbach's Alpha methodology, the researcher could determine that the data was reliable and by extension, the inferences drawn from this reliable data could be extrapolated to the research population and probably to the entire South African educational environment with impunity.
CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, the data that was subjected to statistical analysis to produce the findings presented below was solicited by means of a self-administered questionnaire consisting of 58 questions that was distributed to a representative sample of employees of the Ekurhuleni South District of the Gauteng Department of Education. The questionnaire structure was as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECTION</th>
<th>LIST OF QUESTIONS</th>
<th>NO. OF QUESTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Biographical Questions</td>
<td>Q 1 - Q 9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Knowledge about statutory leave provisions.</td>
<td>Q 10 - Q 17</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Knowledge of when leave may be taken</td>
<td>Q 26 - Q 33</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Adherence to leave procedures by teachers.</td>
<td>Q 34 - Q 41</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Unauthorised absenteeism</td>
<td>Q 42 - Q 46</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Reasons for absenteeism</td>
<td>Q 47 - Q 58</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Structure of the research instrument

The last section of the questionnaire, being questions 47 to 58, consisted of open-ended questions. These questions aimed at soliciting data that could not be subjected to quantitative statistical analysis, but would have to be interpreted using the ‘Content Analysis’ methodology. This section was intended largely to solicit
data to supplement and support the quantitative data solicited by the first sections of the questionnaire, as well as to add value to the quantitative statistical findings.

4.2 Findings with regard to the biographical questions

The following frequency or distribution statistics, which is for the most part self-explanatory, reflect the responses solicited by the biographical questions in the research questionnaire.

The data solicited by question 2 (How many people are employed in the school/office where you work), question 4 (How many people work for you) and question 3 (To which job grade do you report), was found to be without any value for this investigation, as they did not add any knowledge or understanding of the rest of the solicited data, or to the understanding of the causes of teacher absenteeism. The responses to these questions were discarded, therefore, not dealt with in the discussion below.

As indicated in the sample structure 72 % of the respondents were female and 28 % were male which demonstrates a substantial kurtosis in the gender distribution of the responses, and a possible bias in the data solicited from these responses.

The biographical question about the age of the respondents showed the following distribution of the respondents. A total of 40.9% of the respondents were from the age group 36 to 45 years of age, while 35.1 % were from the age group 46 to 55 years of age. Therefore 76 % of the respondents were aged between 36 and 55 years of age. None of the respondents was less than 35 years old, and only 22.6 % were older than 55 years of age. A total of 1,4 % of the completed questionnaires were either left blank with regard to the question of age or spoiled by way of the respondent marking more than one age group in response to the question.

Whereas approximately 98.6 % of the responses originated from what can be assumed to be mature employees, who presumably have had extensive experience of teaching and therefore of the leave provisions and rules for taking leave of the department, this biographical data allowed the rebuttable presumption that the findings from the rest of the data is valid and reliable, and reflects fairly accurately the feelings, perceptions and attitudes of the employees in the
department. The presumption about a correlation between age and years of service in the department was born out by the responses to the question about years of service with the department, as was expected and premised in this paragraph.

It is clear that the respondents were heavily biased in favour of persons from the Black race group. This racial bias was understood however, not to have had any consequence for either the reliability of the data, or the conclusions that may be drawn from the data because the leave provisions and rules for taking leave applied equally to all racial groups, in spite of the understanding mentioned previously that cultural influences and socio-economic circumstances may have had an impact on the data. No skewness or kurtosis was found to have occurred due to the numerical distribution of the respondents on a racial basis.

The last biographical question about a division of the responses between persons employed in an urban versus a township environment did not produce usable data, presumably because many respondents did not know what the nature or intent of the question was, and could therefore not differentiate between a township, which most respondents probably regarded as being an urban environment in any case, especially in the Ekurhuleni geographic region. The data solicited by these questionnaires was therefore also discarded.

4.3 Reliability of the data

One of the most critically important considerations in any research project relates to the reliability of the questions in the research instrument, and therefore also of the data solicited by those questions. The first objective in the statistical analysis of the data solicited in this investigation was therefore to determine the reliability of the research questions and of the data, and concomitantly of the findings, which would determine the scientific basis of the recommendations that are shown at the end of this research report. Research theorists point out that the test of reliability also reflects the item, content and construct validity of the research questions.

Reliability, in the context of research questions can be defined as the degree to which a particular measure or test which is applied repeatedly to the same sample of respondents, or applied simultaneously to similar and directly comparable
samples of respondents, would yield the same or similar results, at the same level of confidence. Concomitantly Babbie *op cit.* (pg.121), suggests that reliability can be interpreted as being a reflection of the ‘stability’ of a test score, when the test is repeated or replicated. Other authors such as Neuman *op cit.* (pp.166-167), holds that reliability is an indication of test consistency, or consistence of response.

The Cronbach’s Alpha Reliability Index was relied on in this investigation as a statistical measure of reliability, to indicate both the internal consistency of the test and also the overall test reliability.

The section of the questionnaire that surveyed the knowledge of the respondents regarding the statutory provisions for leave, and the taking of leave was contained in 8 questions, being questions 10 to 17. The findings with regard to the reliability of the questions in this section as well as the data solicited by these questions are shown in table 4 below.

In this table, the first column from the left shows what the average score would be if the item [question] were excluded from the table. For example, in item 10 the averaged scored would reduce to 20.54. In the third column, referred to as the “…Corrected item – Total Correlation…” the Pearson’s Correlation Co-efficient is shown between the score of the specific item score and the sum of the scores on the remaining items of this section. In this case the Pearson’s correlation co-efficient is 0.616. The Cronbach’s Alpha index for this item is shown as 0.866 in the last column, which confirm the reliability of the question and the data it produced.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cases Valid</td>
<td>991</td>
<td>99.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excluded</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1030</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4: Case processing Summary*
### Table 5: Reliability Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
<th>No of items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.878</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 6: Item Total Statistics for section 1 of the questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Scale mean</th>
<th>Scale variance if item deleted</th>
<th>Corrected item – total correlation</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha if item deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>20.54</td>
<td>18.870</td>
<td>0.616</td>
<td>0.866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>20.81</td>
<td>17.631</td>
<td>0.773</td>
<td>0.850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>20.62</td>
<td>17.523</td>
<td>0.724</td>
<td>0.854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>20.06</td>
<td>18.746</td>
<td>0.597</td>
<td>0.867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>20.29</td>
<td>17.520</td>
<td>0.678</td>
<td>0.858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>20.81</td>
<td>18.297</td>
<td>0.490</td>
<td>0.881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>21.28</td>
<td>17.491</td>
<td>0.695</td>
<td>0.857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>21.27</td>
<td>18.057</td>
<td>0.591</td>
<td>0.868</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The relationship between a specific item in a specific section of the questionnaire, and the rest of the items on that section, expressed as a correlation co-efficient, is a prediction or probability that the respondent’s score on this item would be similar to his or her score on the other items. In other words, it reflects the so-called ‘congruence’ between the items, and therefore the ‘item reliability’.

Whereas, a perfect correlation or 100% relationship between the specific item and the rest of the items would be 1.0, a co-efficient of 0.300 suggests a low level of congruence but, one which is still acceptable, indicating that this item is ‘reliable’.
even if only marginally so. Usually a reliability index of 0.5 generated by the Cronbach's Alpha measure is regarded as the threshold for statistical reliability. By extrapolation, therefore the Cronbach's Alpha index of reliability of 0.866 for this item suggests a statistically significant level of reliability.

The responses to the questions in the second section of the questionnaire, excluding the biographical section, which surveyed the respondents' knowledge of the departmental provisions and processes for taking leave, also relied on 8 questions and are shown in table 7.

The overall Cronbach’s Alpha index for this section is very slightly lower than that for the previous section of the questionnaire at 0.859, as opposed to 0.878 as shown above. The difference is so small however as not to be statistically significant. Therefore, the items in this section as well as the data that was solicited by these questions must be regarded as equally reliable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cases Valid</td>
<td>997</td>
<td>99.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excluded</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1030</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Case Processing Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.859</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Reliability Statistics
### Table 9: Item Total Statistics for the section 2 of the Questionnaire.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Scale mean</th>
<th>Scale variance if item deleted</th>
<th>Corrected item total correlation</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha if item deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>20.60</td>
<td>16.196</td>
<td>0.644</td>
<td>0.837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>20.90</td>
<td>16.116</td>
<td>0.721</td>
<td>0.828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>20.66</td>
<td>16.158</td>
<td>0.679</td>
<td>0.832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>20.14</td>
<td>18.188</td>
<td>0.500</td>
<td>0.853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>20.31</td>
<td>17.135</td>
<td>0.601</td>
<td>0.842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>20.91</td>
<td>17.233</td>
<td>0.484</td>
<td>0.856</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>21.14</td>
<td>16.303</td>
<td>0.664</td>
<td>0.834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>21.20</td>
<td>17.176</td>
<td>0.544</td>
<td>0.848</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses to the questions in the third section of the questionnaire that surveyed the respondent’s knowledge of when and under what circumstances leave, may be taken are shown in table 10 below. The overall Cronbach’s Alpha index for this section is again very similar to that of the previously discussed sections at 0.866, which again means that the questions and the data solicited by them must also be regarded as being of a statistically significant level of reliability.

### Table 10: Case Processing Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cases valid</td>
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<td>99.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excluded</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1030</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Scale mean</td>
<td>Scale variance if item deleted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>20.96</td>
<td>16.725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>21.34</td>
<td>16.870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>21.06</td>
<td>16.508</td>
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<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>20.55</td>
<td>17.941</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>20.59</td>
<td>17.126</td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>21.31</td>
<td>17.266</td>
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<td>32</td>
<td>21.56</td>
<td>16.106</td>
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<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>21.61</td>
<td>16.717</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12: Item Total Statistics for section 3 of the questionnaire
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Scale mean</th>
<th>Scale variance if item deleted</th>
<th>Corrected item-total correlation</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha if item deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>21.70</td>
<td>16.284</td>
<td>0.601</td>
<td>0.773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>21.82</td>
<td>15.064</td>
<td>0.771</td>
<td>0.747</td>
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<td>36</td>
<td>21.54</td>
<td>15.936</td>
<td>0.594</td>
<td>0.773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>20.73</td>
<td>18.008</td>
<td>0.309</td>
<td>0.812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>20.90</td>
<td>17.147</td>
<td>0.434</td>
<td>0.796</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>21.73</td>
<td>16.201</td>
<td>0.465</td>
<td>0.794</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>22.02</td>
<td>15.397</td>
<td>0.555</td>
<td>0.779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>22.06</td>
<td>16.804</td>
<td>0.454</td>
<td>0.794</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13: Item Total Statistics for section 4 of the questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cases valid</td>
<td>991</td>
<td>99.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excluded</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1030</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14: Case Processing Summary
**Table 15: Reliability statistics**

Finally, the responses to the questions in the fifth section of the questionnaire, excluding the biographical section, are shown below in table 19. The overall Cronbach’s Alpha index for this section is also very similar to that of the previously discussed sections at 0.915, which again means that the questions and the data solicited by them must also be regarded as being reliable at a statistically significant level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Scale mean</th>
<th>Scale variance if item deleted</th>
<th>Corrected item-total correlation</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha if item deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>10.66</td>
<td>15.354</td>
<td>0.774</td>
<td>0.898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>11.01</td>
<td>14.448</td>
<td>0.868</td>
<td>0.878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>11.67</td>
<td>15.718</td>
<td>0.755</td>
<td>0.902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>10.92</td>
<td>15.545</td>
<td>0.780</td>
<td>0.897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>11.47</td>
<td>15.171</td>
<td>0.741</td>
<td>0.905</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 16: Item total statistics for section 5 of the questionnaire**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cases valid</td>
<td>992</td>
<td>99.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excluded</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1030</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 17: Case Processing Summary**
Table 18: Reliability statistics

The conclusions drawn from all the above-mentioned tables with a significant degree of certainty, is that the item content and construct reliability is significantly high in statistical terms. Therefore the conclusions drawn and proposals made based on these conclusions are, *mutatis mutandis*, valid and scientifically reliable.

The relationship between test items or the correlation co-efficient that predicts the replication probability of a specific test item score is determined by calculating a multiple regression equation between the specific item as the dependant variable and all the other test items, as the independent variables. The multiple regression score from the regression equation is usually shown as a ‘multiple correlation score’.

4.4 Descriptive statistical findings

The analysis of the findings with regard to the trends and patterns shown by the data in respect of the respective biographical and data variables surveyed in the five [5] sections of the body of the questionnaire are captured in frequency statistics that reflect, *inter alia*, the distribution of the responses to the questions that are contained in the respective sections of the questionnaire.

Frequency statistics can be regarded as summaries of the distribution of the responses with regard to a specific test item or variable by interpreting the number of cases or rather the number of responses in each category allowed for by the structure of the questionnaire.

Frequency statistics can be viewed as an integral part of the overall descriptive statistics. They can be seen as a form of classification and description of the number of responses, in each category of data, which the researcher wishes to examine. These frequency statistics are used usually to assist the researcher with the interpretation of the data, and with an understanding of the trends and patterns that are suggested by the data.
As can be seen in the various frequency statistics referred to below, cumulative percentages are given. They are obtained by successively adding the individual percentages and calculating the percentage representation with regard to the complete respondent sample.

Table 19 shows the distribution of respondents according to position within the structure of the Ekurhuleni South Department of Education. It was found that 908 of the respondents out of the total sample of 1030 respondents are educators or rather teachers. Concomitantly, the sample included a total of 18 Vice Principals and 19 Principals. A total of 56 respondents were in positions as Head of Department while 12 were in positions as ‘district officials’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Valid %</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educators</td>
<td>908</td>
<td>88.2 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>88.2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOD’s in school</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>5.4 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>93.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice Principal</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.7 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>95.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.8 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>97.2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School administrators</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.6 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>98.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District officials</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.2 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>100.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1030</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 19: Distribution of respondents according to position**

This table suggests that a total of 1001 out of the 1030 respondents were in teaching or directly related positions where the respondents would have personal and direct knowledge of the matter of teacher absenteeism. This was, irrespective of whether, they could be expected to respond ‘honestly’ to the relevant questions or not. Equally, the other 29 respondents were in positions of governance where they would at least be aware of the matter of teacher absenteeism and would deal with the problem in terms of the application of the departmental rules and regulations or the disciplinary system of the department.

The respondent sample distribution in terms of the length of service of the respective respondents indicates that the majority of the respondents have been in the service of the department for between 6 and 16 years. Therefore, they can be
safely assumed to be knowledgeable of both the legislative provisions and departmental regulations in respect of leave. Similarly, the age distribution of the respondents suggest that the majority of the respondents are of an age that would allow the presumption of the possession of a sense of responsibility, which in turn suggests, a social and psychological maturity that would cause them not to succumb to the irresponsible use of either authorised or unauthorised leave. This presumption is even more relevant when it is noted that, 76% of the respondents are between the ages of 36 and 55 years of age, and a total of 98.6% between the ages of 36 and 65.

It was found that the distribution of responses in terms of the other biographical questions did not seem to show any significant trends or patterns, and also seemed to be of no value. It, therefore, seemed unnecessary to include all these distribution tables here.

The frequency distributions indicate unequivocally that almost all (98.8%) of the respondents have a very sound and thorough knowledge of the statutory and regulatory provisions with regard to taking leave, as was established by the responses to questions 10 to 17. Since a very substantial percentage of the respondents consisted of educators or teachers, it suggests that any breach of these provisions, does not occur due to a lack of knowledge or by default, but must be understood to be wilful, conscious, and premeditated. It can therefore be assumed that, as it is not a lack of knowledge that drives the perceived teacher absenteeism, there must be alternative forces or factors that cause teachers to behave reprehensibly by their absenteeism, whether with permission or not.

An almost identical finding was made with regard to section 2 of the questionnaire where questions 18 to 25 tested the respondents’ knowledge and experience of the departmental procedure for taking leave. Again, the findings that 98.2% of the respondents had a thorough and in-depth knowledge of Departmental procedures and regulations for taking all types of leave, suggests that teacher absenteeism does not happen due to ignorance or by default, but takes place wilfully and with pre-mediation.

In the third place, the responses to section 3 where questions 24 to 33 surveyed the respondent’s knowledge and understanding of the circumstances or conditions
under which, when, and for what ‘reasons’ leave may be taken, rendered the same
finding, allowing the same conclusions to be drawn and presumptions to be made.
It was found that 98.6% of the respondents had an adequate knowledge and a
good understanding of this matter. The significant similarity of the finding in these
three sections confirms, *prima facie*, the validity of the research data and the
reliability of the findings.

These findings should be a matter of grave concern for the Department of
Education as they suggest that there exists an underlying serious malady that
needs to be addressed immediately. Where the greatest majority of the
respondents seem to have a good knowledge and understanding of the statutory
and regulatory provisions related to the leave policy and yet there is clearly gross
abuse of the leave provisions, as suggested by an inordinately high level of teacher
absenteeism, there should be a definite and immediate cause for concern.
Whereas, the findings indicate wilful abuse or rather over use of the leave
provisions by teachers, the indications are clearly that there must be one or more
underlying reasons why leave privileges are abused in this manner.

The above findings, solicited from sections 1 to 3 of the questionnaire are further
supported by the findings solicited from section 4 of the questionnaire where
questions 34 to 41 surveyed the extent to which teachers adhere to the procedures
for taking leave. The majority of the respondents indicate that teachers adhere to
these procedures ‘sometimes’ or ‘not often’. This is a predominantly negative
response. Again, these findings are supported by the findings solicited by section 5
of the questionnaire where questions 42 to 46 surveyed the respondents’ views of
the extent of teacher’s tendency to take unauthorised absence. Again, the majority,
being 979 out of the 1030 or 95.45% of the respondents, indicated that teachers
‘mostly’ or ‘sometimes’ took unauthorised leave. This indicates a strong bias to a
positive response to the question indicating a propensity to take unauthorised
leave, thereby supporting the overall findings discussed above.

The responses to the open ended questions in section 7 of the questionnaire which
surveyed the respondents perceived ‘reasons’ for teacher absenteeism, did not
really produce patterns or trends in the sense that neither a hierarchy nor rank
order of perceived reasons for absenteeism could be synthesised from the
responses. In spite of this lack of showing trends and patterns, the responses to
the open-ended questions were very valuable in the sense that they suggested a strong correlation with the findings of other research (internationally), as can be ascertained from the literature review discussed in Chapter 2 above.

A very important finding from the responses to the open ended questions was that 891 out of the 1030 respondents (86.5 %) seem to suggest that the teachers who took the various types of leave provided for in legislation and as set out in the collective agreement entered into between the department and the union, were exercising their rights. This view seemed to be based on two premises, i.e.

(a) they applied for each type of leave, be it maternity, study, special, family responsibility, compassionate or any other leave and the leave was granted in each instance by the principal or vice principal of the school, and

(b) these were leave privileges that had been negotiated and were therefore privileges that the department had agreed to provide to the teachers. This finding correlates quite strongly with the proposition by Grogan _op cit._ in this regard.

A high proportion of the respondents, being 783 out of the 1030 or 78.3 % cited ‘medical reasons’ as underlying a substantial portion of teacher absenteeism, while 711 out of 1030 or 69 % cited depression and 752 out of 1030 or 72 % cited stress, as underlying teacher absenteeism. In addition, a total of 891 or 86.5 % of respondents said that family responsibilities including problem with the care of children were the reasons for teacher absenteeism. 976 or 94.7 % cited poor remuneration, 756 or 73.4 % cited lack of job opportunities and 686 or 66.6 % cited lack of career development opportunities as the causes of teacher absenteeism. Finally 910 or 88.3% cited lack, breakdown or irregularity of transport as the underlying cause of absenteeism, and 789 or 76.6 % suggested that the geographic distance between their places of residence and their workplaces were the causes of teacher absenteeism. These findings are shown in table 20 which follows.
Table 20: Summary of the responses to the open-ended questions in section 7 of the questionnaire

All of the above, except the last three reasons cited by the respondents, demonstrated a strong correlation with the reasons for teacher absenteeism found in international research by, *inter alia*, Esswein *op cit.*, Uehara *op cit.*, Plimmer *op cit.*, and Kasooha *op cit.* who all found that the low morale was a strong contributory factor in teacher absenteeism, and that low morale emanated from other causes such as lack of job opportunities, lack of career progress, low remuneration, fear of criminality (see Beira *op cit.*), and depressive policies. The findings in this investigation about medical reasons, a tendency to depression and stress as reasons underlying teacher absenteeism correlates strongly with the findings of, *inter alia*, Johnson about the role of HIV/AIDS and other debilitating sicknesses and medical conditions as the cause of teacher absenteeism.

The findings relating to the lack or breakdown of transport, and the findings about the geographic distance between workplace and place of residence seems to be a uniquely African factor contributing to teacher absenteeism, as a similar finding was obtained by Uehara *op cit.* in his studies in Uganda, Nigeria and Zimbabwe, but did not seem to be factors in studies done in America and Britain.
In summary, it appears that the respondents have an adequate knowledge and understanding of the various leave provisions and the rules for taking leave, and yet wilfully and ostensibly with pre-meditation take leave because they view it as their ‘right’ to do so, or are motivated by a plethora of extraneous reason that emanate from their environment rather than the original reasons for the leave provision being provided for in the first place. This is clearly tantamount to an abuse that is either condoned or at least tolerated by those in authority who are empowered or authorised to approve this leave.

4.5 Inferential statistics

The first step in inferential statistical analysis, was to do a factor analysis if the quantitative data generated by sections 2 to 6 of the questionnaire, as the first step in determining the views of the respondents about the causes of teacher absenteeism. This was also done to test the veracity of the causes of teacher absenteeism identified by the respondents in answer of the open-ended questions in section 7 of the questionnaire.

Because the intention was to identify clusters of causes of absenteeism such as ‘medical’ which could include causes such as HIV/AIDS, chronic sickness such as high blood pressure, kidney failure and intestinal disorder such as irritable bowel syndrome, rather than a large number of isolated factors in isolation it was decided to use the Principle Component Analysis format of factor analysis.
### Table 21: Varimax rotated component structure matrix

NB. The underlining of scores indicates values that exceed the Eigen value threshold and are therefore indicative of the statistical significance of a score. This indicates that the particular cause of absenteeism is statistically significant and that it is an integral part of the component.

**Legend for table 21**

- **Medical** includes all medical conditions including MIV/AIDS, chronic medical condition, Tuberculosis, intestinal conditions.
- **Pay** refers to all forms of remuneration
- **Job Opportunity** refers to job and promotional opportunities.
- **Career** refers to career development and employment mobility.
• **Transport** refers to all aspects of transport including availability, reliability, costs etc.
• **Distance** refers to the geographic distance between the school and the places of residence of teachers and learner.
• **Fear** refers to all aspect of physical security including gangsterism at school, criminality, drug and alcohol trading, fear of intimidation and any other source of perceived threat to physical safety.
• **Training** refers to lack of proper initial training for teachers and equally lack of developmental opportunities.
• **O.B.E.** refers to all aspects of preparation for and management of Outcomes based education.
• **Budget** refers to all constraints on financing from central and provincial government and the consequences thereof such an inability to increase remuneration, lack of finance for facilities and learning materials.
• **Policy** refers to political policy and its consequences for education
• **Politics** refers to party politics and all its’ consequences for the delivery of education.

Two important findings emerged from the Principle Component Analysis matrix shown in Table 21. The first was that all of the causes of teacher absenteeism identified by the content analysis methodology (which was applied to the responses to the open ended questions in section 7 of the questionnaire) excepting two, were again indentified as having a statistically significant loading in the matrix in that the relevant values exceeded the Eigen values set for the analysis. The two causes of absenteeism that did not score a statistically significant loading were Policy and Politics. This means that the factor analysis confirmed that the underlying causes of teacher absenteeism that respondents identified in an open-ended response were supported by the factor analytical analysis. It is also important to point out that for the most part, these findings corresponded almost exactly to the causes of teacher absenteeism identified in previous international research reported in the literature review.

The second important finding in the Principle Component analysis was that, the causes that were identified as having statistically significant loadings, were
grouped into ‘components’ of ‘factors’ on the basis of associative relationship. These components were:

Component 1
Medical
Depression
Stress

Component 2
Family responsibility
Transport
Geographic distance

Component 3
Pay
Job Opportunities
Career
Budget

Component 4
Training
O.B.E.

Component 5
Fear
Criminality

Having determined the perceived causes of teacher absenteeism by means of the Content Analysis and then having had this confirmed by means of the factor analysis reflected above in Table 21, a t-test and F-test was done to determine the significance of the difference between the means of the paired gender samples. The findings of these tests are visible in Table 22 on the following page.

In order to be able to draw inferences or conclusions from the solicited data, it was decided to rely on two additional sets of statistical measures, i.e., the use of the Mann Whitney test for the significance of difference for the means between paired groups or variables, and the Kruskall Wallace Test for the significance of the difference between the means of multiple groups or variables.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>F - value</strong></td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Significance</strong></td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>0.983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>t - value</strong></td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>2.917 2.938</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>df</strong></td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>67 59.539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Significance (2 tailed)</strong></td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>0.005 0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean difference</strong></td>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>0.51945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard error of difference</strong></td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>0.17806 (0.17683)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>95 % level of confidence</strong></td>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>0.16405 (0.16568)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 22: F and t-test values for gender-paired groups**

These F – and t-test scores shows quite clearly that there is no significant difference between the findings for female and male respondents, which were the only paired groups that could be subjected to this comparison. This finding, in itself, suggests a high level of consistency in the data solicited by the research questionnaire and that all the respondents hold similar views with regard to the underlying causes of teacher absenteeism. For all the other sub groups, other inferential analysis was carried out to determine whether significant differences existed in the sub-group responses. For the paired sub-groups based on gender the Mann Whitney test was done, and for the non-paired sub-groups the Kruskall Wallace test was used.

The Kruskall Wallace test is a *de facto* measure of the ‘null hypothesis’ which suggests that there is no statistical significant difference between the means or average scores of the various groups that could be derived from, and are then representative of, the research sample. As such, this is an associative technique,
which assumes that the respective variables show an underlying, continuous, normal distribution.

The various sections of the research questionnaire, containing questions relating to the employees’ knowledge, understanding of the legislative and regulatory provisions, and the departmental procedures for taking leave, were subjected to the Kruskall Wallace test. In this test, the various job categories were characterised as the independent variables, and the questions contained in the five sections of the questionnaire as the dependant variables. The findings of this Kruskall Wallace test are shown below in Table 23 below.

The findings from the Kruskall Wallace test indicates that there is a significant difference at the 0.05 level of significance, between the four job groups with regard to managements’ handling or administration of discipline, as shown in table 23. The Chi-Square values in Table 24 support this finding.

It is unequivocal that the associative relationship between the respondents in the various positions and all the questions relating to the respondent’s knowledge of the various aspects of taking leave is not statistically significant as reflected in the asymp significance range between 0.457 and 0.861.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions / Positions</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Q 10-17</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>47.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOD</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>45.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice- Principal</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>44.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>37.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>43.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1030</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| <strong>Q 18-25</strong>           |     |           |
| Educator              | 350 | 43.32     |
| HOD                   | 149 | 53.46     |
| Vice- Principal       | 118 | 44.77     |
| Principal             | 118 | 41.05     |
| Official              | 304 | 42.98     |
| <strong>Total</strong>             | 1030|           |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions / Positions</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Q 26-33</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>45.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOD</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>50.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice- Principal</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>45.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>38.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>42.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1030</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Q 34-41</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>49.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOD</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>43.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice- Principal</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>47.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>38.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>38.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1030</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Q 42-46</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>34.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOD</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>44.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice- Principal</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>31.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>53.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>57.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1030</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 23: Kruskall Wallace test for significance**

There are however statistically significant differences between the perceptions of the teachers, principals and vice- principals on the one hand, and the respondents from all the other positions on the other hand. With regard to the questions pertaining to the teachers taking unauthorised leave, the Chi Square value for this comparison is 15.795 and the asymp. significance is 0.003. In summary, it can be said that teachers do not think that they have a propensity to take unauthorised leave, while the respondents in positions of authority think that they do.
Table 24: Chi Square test scores

Whereas the only paired set of variables from the biographical section was the gender distribution between males and females, the Mann Whitney test was applied to the distribution of the responses from the respondent sample with regard to the five [5] data sections of the questionnaire in terms of the gender distribution. The findings from this test are shown in table 25.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sections of the questionnaire</th>
<th>Chi Square</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of statutory and regulatory provisions about leave</td>
<td>1.301</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of prescribed procedure</td>
<td>1.826</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of conditions for taking leave</td>
<td>1.404</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers adherence to procedures for taking leave</td>
<td>3.637</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unauthorised absenteeism</td>
<td>15.795</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.0003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions / Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
<th>Sum of Ranks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q 10 - 17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>742</td>
<td>43.97</td>
<td>1671.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>44.90</td>
<td>2245.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1030</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 18 - 25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>742</td>
<td>45.76</td>
<td>1739.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>43.53</td>
<td>2176.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1030</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 26 - 33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>742</td>
<td>47.97</td>
<td>1823.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>41.86</td>
<td>2093.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 25: The Mann Whitney test for the gender distribution

The findings of the Mann Whitney test shown in table 25 produced almost identical findings to those produced by the Kruskall Wallace test discussed above.

In summary, it was found that there was no significant difference between the responses of males and females with regard to all the questions in all sections of the questionnaire, except section 7 which were the open-ended questions, which relate to the respondent’s knowledge of all the statutory, regulatory and procedural provision for taking leave. Once again, this indicates that teacher absenteeism cannot be found to be the result of ignorance of the provisions and procedures.

In order to test the findings of the Mann Whitney test with regard to the findings shown in Table 25, these findings were compared to the results of the well-known Wilcoxon test. It was found that there was a strong correlation between the results of the two sets of scores mention above.

Table 26: Comparison of the Mann Whitney and Wilcoxon tests.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions/Sections</th>
<th>Mann Whitney</th>
<th>Wilcoxon</th>
<th>WZ</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q 10 - 17</td>
<td>930.000</td>
<td>1671.000</td>
<td>0.169</td>
<td>0.866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 18 - 25</td>
<td>901.500</td>
<td>2176.500</td>
<td>0.410</td>
<td>0.682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 26 – 33</td>
<td>818.000</td>
<td>2093.000</td>
<td>1.116</td>
<td>0.265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 34 - 41</td>
<td>908.000</td>
<td>1649.000</td>
<td>0.198</td>
<td>0.843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 42 - 46</td>
<td>605.500</td>
<td>1880.500</td>
<td>2.910</td>
<td>0.004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These findings also confirmed the conclusion that teacher absenteeism occurs because of deliberate, pre-meditated and wilful decisions by teachers to be absent from work and the behaviours resulting from these decisions. Conversely, it confirmed that a significant difference exists between the perceptions of the teachers who perpetrate absenteeism, and those in authority who have to deal with absenteeism.

In summary, it could be stated that these findings suggest that teachers think that their behaviour is legitimate and ‘normal’. In fact, there are indications that teachers regard it as their ‘right’, legal or otherwise, to take all the leave that is provided by both legislation and the collective agreement between the Department and the union.

The teachers also seem to consider it as legitimate to take all the leave allowed, either with or without permission. The view of those employees that are in positions of authority, and who are tasked with the administration of leave (in accordance) with the provisions and procedures specified, is clearly in contradiction to the stance taken by the teachers on this point.

This suggests a serious variance between the educators and the administrators that requires immediate and critical attention, and probably justifies extensive and specific training as well as proper communication, in addition to proper disciplinary action. The envisaged training and communication should be aimed at creating fresh, positive perceptions of and attitudes to the matter of whether leave is an absolute ‘right’ as opposed to it being a privilege.

Finally, a correlation analysis was done, and this is reflected in table 27. As can be seen from this table a positive correlation was found between a number of sets of variables. The first was between section 1, questions 10 to 17 and section 2, questions 18 to 25 of the questionnaire. The second was between section 1, questions 10 to 17 and section 3, questions 26 to 33. The third positive correlation was between section 3, questions 26 to 33 and sections 2, questions 18 to 25 and section 3, questions 26 to 33.

All the sections between which a positive correlation was found, dealt with the knowledge of the statutory and regulatory provisions for taking leave, and the
presumption is that a good knowledge of one would automatically ensure a good knowledge of the other.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Q 10-17</th>
<th>Q 18-25</th>
<th>Q 26-33</th>
<th>Q 34-41</th>
<th>Q 42-46</th>
<th>Q 5</th>
<th>Q 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q 10-17</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson's Corr.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.680</td>
<td>.649</td>
<td>.418</td>
<td>.046</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>.208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.672</td>
<td>.426</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1030</td>
<td>1030</td>
<td>103088</td>
<td>1030</td>
<td>1030</td>
<td>1030</td>
<td>1030</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Q 18-25   | .680   | 1      | .860   | .515   | -.060  | .095| .140|
| Pearson's Corr. | .000   | .000   | .000   | .579   | .380   | .193|
| Sig. (2-tailed) | .000   | .000   | .000   | .579   | .380   | .193|
| N         | 1030   | 1030   | 1030   | 1030   | 1030   | 1030| 1030|

| Q 26-33   | .648   | .860   | 1      | .616   | -.100  | .039| .101|
| Pearson's Corr. | .000   | .000   | .000   | .355   | .716   | .351|
| Sig. (2-tailed) | .000   | .000   | .000   | .355   | .716   | .351|
| N         | 1030   | 1030   | 1030   | 1030   | 1030   | 1030| 1030|

| Q 34-41   | .418   | .515   | .616   | 1      | -.157  | .254| .109|
| Pearson's Corr. | .000   | .000   | .000   | .147   | .018   | .314|
| Sig. (2-tailed) | .000   | .000   | .000   | .147   | .018   | .314|
| N         | 1030   | 1030   | 1030   | 1030   | 1030   | 1030| 1030|

<p>| Q 42-46   | .046   | .060   | .100   | .157   | 1      | .134| .014|
| Pearson's Corr. | .672   | .579   | .355   | .147   | .212   | .212| .900|
| Sig. (2-tailed) | .672   | .579   | .355   | .147   | .212   | .212| .900|
| N         | 1030   | 1030   | 1030   | 1030   | 1030   | 1030| 1030|</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Q 10-17</th>
<th>Q 18-25</th>
<th>Q 26-33</th>
<th>Q 34-41</th>
<th>Q 42-46</th>
<th>Q 5</th>
<th>Q 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q 5</td>
<td>Pearson’s Corr.</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>.095</td>
<td>.100</td>
<td>.254</td>
<td>.134</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.426</td>
<td>.380</td>
<td>.716</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>.212</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>1030</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 6</td>
<td>Pearson’s Corr.</td>
<td>.208</td>
<td>.140</td>
<td>.101</td>
<td>.109</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td>.193</td>
<td>.351</td>
<td>.314</td>
<td>.900</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>1030</td>
<td>1030</td>
<td>1030</td>
<td>1030</td>
<td>1030</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 27: Spearman’s Correlation Co-Efficient for non-parametric data.

4.6 Summary

The findings emanating from the statistical analysis of the data solicited by the research questionnaire, show that the perceived causes of teacher absenteeism in South Africa identified in this investigation, are almost identical to those found in the many research investigations internationally. Even the culturally and socio-economic based causes of absenteeism in South Africa identified in this investigation shows a high level of correspondence with the concomitant reasons for absenteeism found in investigations of this phenomenon in other African countries such as Uganda, Nigeria and Zimbabwe presumably because similar cultural and socio-economic forces are at work in those countries as well.
The findings of this investigation confirm that teacher absenteeism is a complex phenomenon. There is a high level of vicarious reciprocity and inter-dependence between structural and systemic factors, psycho-social factors, socio-economic factors and cultural factors that have resulted in a complex dynamic, which has to find expression in a highly unionised environment. An additional problem is that people have recently emerged from a disadvantaged background to feel that they are entitled to certain benefits, which they view as rights rather than privileges.

There can be no doubt that the phenomenon of teacher absenteeism is complex and will require concerted effort, based on scientifically defensible research and well considered public policy, to address. It is suggested, that without in-depth, concerted communication and even proper education the problem of teacher absenteeism cannot be resolved.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The summary at the end of the previous chapter suggests that teacher absenteeism is a problem that justifies serious consideration by the Education Department authorities, since it appears that the underlying causes for teacher absenteeism that have been identified in this investigation are numerous, complex and intimately interrelated. There may even be causes of teacher absenteeism that have not been identified, and that could conceivably exacerbate the problem.

No direct data was generated that allowed the evaluation of the negativism or morale of the respondents. Because of this omission, this issue had to be deduced from the teacher responses to the various questions based on prior international research. The research in question, suggested that certain causes of teacher absenteeism are the consequence of their negativism, which in turn emanates from other deeper lying factors such as a perception of lack of job and career opportunities, inadequate remuneration, frustration, personal circumstances and other socio-psychological factors.

This failure to be able to directly assess the intensity of teacher negativism obviated the possibility of either accepting or rejecting the research hypothesis.

It is very clear that all the respondents, including teachers, on the one hand and those in authority regarding the administration, the granting, the management and the discipline of teachers who misuse or abuse the leave provisions, on the other hand, have a sound knowledge of both the statutory and the regulatory provisions in relation to leave. There can, therefore, be no suggestion that the taking of leave without authority or permission is due to a lack of knowledge, or a misconception of what leave is allowed or officially recognised, what the procedures for taking leave are, and finally, under what circumstances or condition, the of the various types of leave taking are permitted. Consequently, there can be no presumption that unauthorised leave is taken by default. Accordingly the presumption must be, by
way of the application of deductive logic, that unauthorised leave is taken wilfully and with pre-meditation.

These findings suggest serious underlying ‘reasons’ why teachers are taking unauthorised leave or are said to be misusing or abusing the leave provisions of the Department of Education. The question that could be asked is whether this behaviour would be curtailed by immediate, severe and consistent discipline (to the extent of invoking dismissal for repeated or consistent offences) as a consequence of the misuse or abuse of leave or the taking of unauthorised leave.

It is understood from a general knowledge of human behaviour however, that this type of negative behaviour is often, if not always, accompanied by negative attitudes and negative emotions. Therefore, it would be imperative to investigate these attitudes or emotions prior to the application of discipline.

The research findings also point to teacher absenteeism as being a system-wide problem. This implies that the reasons for teacher absenteeism are likely to be systemic in nature. Examples of such systemic problems could include causes of teacher absenteeism such as the failure to hold persons in authority such as school principals and district officials accountable, low levels of pay, poor transportation for teachers, or simply low expectations of teacher performance across the district.

The above findings also indicate that there is no simple answer to curbing absenteeism. The best method for combating teacher absence and encouraging better performance by teachers in any given school system will depend on the contextual factors, including the profile of teachers, the general quality of school governance in the district, the amount of support and monitoring by the district office, and the extent of community involvement in school governance.

5.2 Recommendations

As alluded to above, there is no single recipe to the eradication or containing of teacher absenteeism. The principal and the district officials can choose, *inter alia*, from the following strategies to address teacher absenteeism.
1. Improving teacher attendance and performance by changing how teachers are monitored and evaluated. A suggestion is that there should be an independent body, free from political influence, which will be endowed with authority to carry out performance assessment and to enter schools and classrooms at any given time to ensure that the teachers are present at work, that effective teaching and learning is taking place and that general school discipline is being maintained.

2. District officials can contribute to teacher attendance and performance by the provision of non-monetary incentives. These can range from providing teachers with increased support in the classrooms, to increasing quality training opportunities (which are not limited to one or two day workshops that are usually poor in quality, and do not address teacher needs), to improving the infrastructure of schools as well as the availability of teaching materials.

3. It is a challenge to attempt to resolve a problem without having actually measured it properly, and so district officials need to measure teacher absence accurately. Regular administrative records of attendance can provide some indication of where the problem areas are. If there are any indications of an attendance problem, district officials should commission independent surveys of schools to monitor absence directly. These surveys serve both a verification of the accuracy of administrative records, and perhaps, a means for increasing the accuracy thereof if principals understand that a finding of systemic inaccuracies has consequences.

4. Reduction of class sizes and teacher's workload. Teachers are supposed to be implementing policy and curriculum. This requires a lot of group work as well as individual attention. Dealing with many learners and their OBE portfolios makes it difficult for the teacher to progress and teacher assistants are sometimes required to deal with diverse classrooms in terms of learners’ educational backgrounds and differing learning capabilities.

5. The district should focus largely on the wellness of teachers. Managing sick leave absence provides an insight into genuine medical needs, which can be, supported through well-structured, effective, employee health, lifestyle and wellness programmes.
6. Personal leave (special/urgent leave required to deal with private affairs included herein) is often considered an entitlement rather than a privilege reserved for matters of urgency. The number of days for this leave should be specified and limited as well as closely monitored. Personal leave should be re-titled “Emergency Leave Days”. Teachers should be required to provide a *bona fide* and justifiable reason for their absence, otherwise such leave should be recommended as leave without pay.

7. Teachers should be required to report their absence, late coming and leaving early directly to their principal rather than colleagues, head of department or administration clerks. Whilst the acknowledgement of good attendance is valuable and to the credit of employees, it follows that, ‘wielding a stick’ against those with bad attendance is also important. Teachers, need to understand that abuse, mismanagement of privileges and the blatant disregard of rules has negative consequences, and that they will be admonished for tardiness and the like.

These interventions may not only have direct effects on student learning, but also improve the motivation of teachers by feeding into their sense of professionalism and efficacy.

The aim of any intervention should not ultimately be narrowed down only to the eradication or curtailing of teacher absenteeism, but should be focussed on the longer term objective of improving teaching and learning and thereby to ensure that quality education is delivered in the longer term and wider ranging interests of ensuring that South Africa will become and remain globally competitive economically.

Sight should also not be lost of the fact that proper, quality education is the key to individual growth and development, as well as social and societal health.

### 5.3 Shortcomings of the investigation

The first and most obvious shortcoming of this research investigation was that the biographical questions, specifically questions 2, 3 and 4 in section 1 of the research questionnaire did not produce much, if any, usable data, and did not
contribute anything to the overall findings of the investigation. Presumably, the failure to pre-test the questionnaire contributed substantially to this shortcoming. It is also understood that these biographical questions were ill considered as they did not relate to the hypothesis or address the research problems.

Another shortcoming of this investigation was that although the questionnaire solicited various factual and perceived knowledge and understanding, it did not directly address the matter of teacher negativism or morale. Whereas the hypothesis proposed a direct correlation between the knowledge and understanding of the teachers and their negativism, attitudes and morale, this failure to directly solicit data in this regard, must be accepted as a major shortcoming, albeit that teacher negativism and morale could be deduced from the responses to certain questions.

Finally, yet another shortcoming that was indentified was that, although the various questions addressed knowledge and understanding, and a high level of item construct and content validity and statistical reliability was found between the questions suggesting internal consistency, it follows that the suitability of the data solicited by the various questions for testing the hypothesis must be put to question.

Whereas, there is clearly a need for proper scientific data on which the Department of Education can rely to develop strategies to addressing teacher absenteeism in order to facilitate the delivery of quality education (in the interest of ensuring global economic competitiveness and societal development), future research should carefully consider that data required for underpinning such strategies.
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LEGISLATION AND CIRCULARS


CASE LAW


2. CWIU v Boardman Brothers (Natal) (Pty) Ltd (1995) 16 ILJ 619 (LAC)
ANNEXURE A

Research Questionnaire

TEACHER ABSENTEEISM IN SCHOOLS WITHIN THE EKURHULENI SOUTH DISTRICT EDUCATION DEPARTMENT.

Dear Respondent

It would be greatly appreciated if you could take a few minutes to complete the following questionnaire for a research project for a Masters Degree at the University of Johannesburg.

You are assured that the Gauteng Department of Education fully supports this research, and that they encourage your participation.

You are further assured that all your responses will be treated with the greatest respect and confidentiality, and for this reason the questionnaire is anonymous—your responses can therefore never be traced back to you.

You are also encouraged to keep your responses confidential and not to discuss them with any other person in your school or in the Department of Education.

The findings of this project/investigation will be made available anonymously to the Department of Education as well as to all respondents who wish to have them.

The Department of Education gives all employees the assurance that no person will be victimised as a result of the findings of this research project.

Thank you very much for your quick response, it is greatly appreciated.
**Personal/Biographical information**

1. What position do you occupy in the Department?

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educator</th>
<th>HOD</th>
<th>Vice Principal</th>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Official</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
```

2. How many people are employed in the school/office where you work?

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0-5</th>
<th>6-10</th>
<th>11-15</th>
<th>16-20</th>
<th>21+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

3. To which job grade do you report (job-title)?

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vice Principal</th>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>IDSO</th>
<th>Deputy Director</th>
<th>Director</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

4. How many people report to you?

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>1-5</th>
<th>6-10</th>
<th>11-15</th>
<th>16+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```
5. How long have you been working in the Department of Education?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0-2 yrs</th>
<th>3-5 yrs</th>
<th>6-10 yrs</th>
<th>11-15 yrs</th>
<th>16 + yrs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Into which of the following age groups do you fall?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0-25 yrs</th>
<th>26-35 yrs</th>
<th>36-45 yrs</th>
<th>46-55 yrs</th>
<th>56 + yrs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Please indicate your gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Please indicate your race grouping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Coloured</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9. Please indicate the location/area of your school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Township</th>
<th>Suburb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Knowledge regarding statutory / regulatory leave provisions

10. How well do teachers know departmental provisions regarding sick leave?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Not well</th>
<th>Reasonably</th>
<th>Very well</th>
<th>Completely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. How well do teachers know the departmental provisions regarding special leave?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Not well</th>
<th>Reasonably</th>
<th>Very well</th>
<th>Completely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. How well do teachers know the departmental provisions regarding family responsibility leave?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Not well</th>
<th>Reasonably</th>
<th>Very well</th>
<th>Completely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13. How well do teachers know the departmental provisions regarding maternity leave?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not well</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasonably</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very well</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completely</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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14. How well do teachers know the departmental provisions regarding study/exam leave?

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15. How well do teachers know the departmental provisions regarding leave for Union activities (time off)?

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16. How well do teachers know the departmental provisions regarding adoption leave?

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17. How well do teachers know the departmental provisions regarding temporary incapacity leave?

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<th>Not at all</th>
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</table>

Knowledge regarding the prescribed procedure for taking leave

18. How well do teachers know the procedure for applying for sick leave?

<table>
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<th>Not at all</th>
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19. How well do teachers know the procedure for applying for special leave?

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<th>Not at all</th>
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20. How well do teachers know the procedure for applying for family responsibility leave?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Not well</th>
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</table>
21. How well do teachers know the procedure for applying for maternity leave?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
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22. How well do teachers know the procedure for applying for study/exam leave?

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<th>Not at all</th>
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23. How well do teachers know the procedure for applying for leave for Union activities (time off)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
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24. How well do teachers know the procedure for applying for adoption leave?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Not well</th>
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</table>
25. How well do teachers know the procedure for applying for temporary incapacity leave?

<table>
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<th>Not at all</th>
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Knowledge regarding when and under what circumstances leave may be taken

26. How well do teachers know and understand when sick leave may be taken?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
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27. How well do teachers know and understand when special leave may be taken?

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<th>Not at all</th>
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28. How well do teachers know and understand when family responsibility leave may be taken?

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29. How well do teachers know and understand when maternity leave may be taken?

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<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
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30. How well do teachers know and understand when study/exam leave may be taken?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
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</table>
31. How well do teachers know and understand when leave for Union activities (time off) may be taken.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
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32. How well do teachers know and understand when adoption leave may be taken?

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<th>Not at all</th>
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33. How well do teachers know and understand when temporary incapacity leave may be taken?

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</table>
Teacher adherence to procedure for taking leave

34. Do teachers adhere to the procedure for taking sick leave?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never</th>
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35. Do teachers adhere to the procedure for taking special leave?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Never</th>
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36. Do teachers adhere to the procedure for taking family responsibility leave?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Never</th>
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37. Do teachers adhere to the procedure for taking maternity leave?

<table>
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38. Do teachers adhere to the procedure for taking study/exam leave?

<table>
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39. Do teachers adhere to the procedure for taking leave for Union activities (time off)?

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40. Do teachers adhere to the procedure for taking adoption leave?

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41. Do teachers adhere to the procedure for taking temporary incapacity leave?

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Unauthorised absenteeism

42. Do teachers stay away from work for 1 day without permission?

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<th>Never</th>
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43. Do teachers stay away from work for more than 1 day without permission?

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44. Do teachers abscond from work for lengthy periods?

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45. Do teachers come late for work without permission?

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46. Do teachers leave their school/classroom during the school day without permission?

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Reasons for absenteeism

Please comment on the following questions in your own words.

Do you think teachers take sick leave only when they are really sick?
__________________________________________________________________
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Do you think teachers take maximum allowable sick leave because they think it’s their: ‘Legal right’ or ‘a condition of employment’.
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Do you think teachers take special leave for the reasons for which it was instituted?
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Do you think teachers abuse the special leave provision? Please explain.

________________________________________________________________________
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Do you think teachers take family responsibility leave for the reasons for which it was instituted? – please explain.

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Do you think teachers exploit maternity leave? – please explain.

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Do you think teachers exploit study/exam leave? – please explain.

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What do you think are the reasons for teachers late coming to school?
__________________________________________________________________
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What do you think the reasons are for teachers leaving the school/their classroom without permission during the school day?
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What do you think the reasons are why teachers leave the school before the end of the school day without permission?
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Why do you think teachers abscond from work for long periods?
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How do you think can teacher absenteeism be reduced or better managed?

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__________________________________________________________________
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Thank you for your participation!