CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY: IMPLEMENTING THE RESEARCH PLAN

3.1 Introduction

Chapter Three serves to elucidate the manner in which I planned and designed the research. In regard to research design, Henning (2004:146) states that the function of a research design is to ensure that the evidence obtained enables the researcher to answer the initial research question as unambiguously as possible. The evidence is used to support the main argument, which will form the basis on which knowledge claims will be made.

In this chapter, I also describe the data collection instruments and the manner in which I gained access to the samples and sites. I discuss the merits and limitations of the data collection instruments and the challenges I encountered during the data collection procedures.

3.2 Research Philosophy and Theory

Simplistically stated, philosophy has to do with explaining, by means of theories, why things are the way they are. Henning (2004:15) states that it is evident from Knobel & Lankshear's (1999) model that theoretical perspectives constitute interrelated sets of assumptions, concepts and propositions that constitute a person's view of the world. In my research, it was my intention to understand and interpret the different ways in which parents who serve on school governing bodies in middle-class contexts view the world and make meaning in their lives. In other words, I need to understand the ways in which governing body parents construct and give meaning to education, teaching and learning.

My assumption is that the unique way in which each member of the governing body views and values education will be manifested in the expectations they hold of the education system in general and of educators in particular.

This research is therefore situated within an **interpretivist research paradigm**, which emphasises experience and interpretation, as opposed to a positivist paradigm, which emphasises experience and observation. In my research, I am fundamentally concerned with understanding and interpreting governing body parents' personal definitions, perceptions,

experiences and interpretations, which collectively determine the expectations they hold of educators.

3.3   Knowledge Claim

In formulating a knowledge claim, I firstly clearly need to define what knowledge is. I view science as the search for knowledge and truth and the means for understanding phenomena within my world. I acknowledge that the search for complete knowledge and truth can never be achieved and perfected by any researcher, owing to the multiple meanings and interpretations applied to the concepts "knowledge" and "truth" by different people. Like me, people assign their own meanings to knowledge and truth to assist them in their understanding of phenomena. In my capacity as researcher, I am therefore limited to researching a relatively small sample of reality, namely the expectations that members of primary school governing bodies in middle-class contexts expect of educators.

In light of this, Henning (2004:20) is of the opinion that knowledge does not only consist of observable phenomena but also of descriptions of people's intentions, beliefs and values. People tend to acquire their knowledge regarding these phenomena through mental processes of understanding and interpretation, which are influenced by and interact within different social contexts. Therefore, the world consists of multiple perspectives and realities of knowledge and truth. Since the methodological aim of my study is to understand and interpret some of these perspectives and realities of knowledge and truth, namely the expectations that members of school governing bodies in middle-class contexts hold of educators, the theoretical underpinning of my study is situated within the **qualitative interpretive paradigm.**

3.4   Qualitative Research

Based on the premise that the world consists of multiple realities and that individuals experience these realities in uniquely different ways, this study would be best suited to the qualitative research paradigm. Airasian & Gay (2003:163) are of the opinion that qualitative disciplines strive to capture the human meanings of social life as it is lived, experienced and understood by the research participants. Merriam (2002:3) concurs by stating that to understand qualitative research the researcher needs to examine the meaning, which is socially constructed by individuals while interacting with their world. Henning (2004:5) affirms by stating that when we refer to qualitative research, we use a term, which denotes a type of inquiry in which the qualities, characteristics and properties of a phenomenon are examined for a better understanding and explanation.

The intellectual puzzle that guides this research pertains to the expectations that members of public school governing bodies in middle-class contexts hold of educators.

In view of the above citations, a quantitative approach proves to be unsuitable for this research, since the primary aim of this research is not to count and statistically quantify the responses of participants but to understand and interpret their responses. In support of my choice, I refer to Merriam's (2002:5) recommendation that in qualitative research "words and pictures rather than numbers are used to convey what the researcher has learned about the phenomenon". This citation accurately sums up the qualitative nature of my research.

3.5　　　　Working Assumptions

The purpose of this research is to determine the expectations that public school governing bodies in middle-class contexts hold of the work of educators judged in the light of prevailing education labour law as well as other relevant law. Specifically, this study examines governing body expectations with respect to educator workloads and the degree of alignment between such expectations, prevailing education labour law and other relevant law as it applies to educators. My working assumptions include the following:

- The workloads of educators who teach at middle-class, public primary schools are intensifying particularly in respect of administrative and extra-mural duties.
- Members of public primary school governing bodies situated in middle-class contexts tend to hold high expectations of educators.
- High expectations intensify educators' workloads.
- Prevailing South African education labour law creates a space in which governing bodies are legitimately able to increase the workloads of educators.
- High expectations and increasing workloads lead to high educator attrition and turnover.
- High educator attrition and turnover negatively affects the quality of education we strive to improve.
- Certain duties and responsibilities expected of educators by members of school governing bodies in middle-class contexts diverge from prevailing education labour law and other relevant law.
- The degree of alignment or divergence between governing body expectations of educators and the rules and regulations prescribed by prevailing education labour law and other relevant law is very similar in public, middle-class schools.

- It also appears there is a possibility that governing bodies' use of such space might militate against children's right to education and even the best interests of children.
- The types of school governing bodies operating in public schools situated in middle-class contexts will precisely fit the descriptions contained in Creese & Earley and Roos' models.

3.6   Style of the Research

This research firstly seeks to explore, understand and interpret the expectations that members of public school governing bodies in middle-class contexts hold of educators. It may therefore be described as interpretive research. According to Henning (2004:45), this style of research allows individuals and groups the opportunity to form symbols of reality and meaning by means of pictures and language. The data collection techniques include documents and interviews.

3.7   Ethical Clearance and Considerations

In compliance with the ethical requirements of my research, I completed and submitted appropriate documents to the Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria, which approved my application and issued a certificate, which remained valid for three years.

3.8   Approval for the Research

I obtained the necessary approval and consent of the Western Cape Education Department to conduct this study before commencing with the data collection. I E-mailed a letter in this regard to the Head of Research at the Western Cape Education Department.

3.9   Data Collection Approaches and Methods

Once the ethics requirements were in order and the WCED had approved the research, I compiled a list of the names, addresses and telephone numbers of nineteen public primary schools situated in middle-class contexts, which I identified as potential participants. The schools, which I identified, were situated in middle-class contexts of Paarl and Wellington, Durbanville, Bellville and Cape Town, Stellenbosch and Somerset-West.

I selected the public schools in these middle-class areas of the Western Cape Province because I reside and work in these areas. I contacted the school principals telephonically and asked for an appointment to meet briefly with them to explain the purpose of this study and ask their consent to gather data at their schools. I scheduled appointments with nineteen principals as I anticipated that there might be, for various

reasons, a number of principals who would be unwilling to participate in the study. I photocopied, stapled and packed neat packages of all the documents I required, which included the letters of informed consent, open-ended interviews and time-use diaries, prior to my appointments with the principals.

3.10 Gaining Access to the Research Samples and Sites

It took two days to conduct my appointments and discussions with the nineteen school principals. I originally allocated approximately forty-five minutes to meet with each principal, which I considered adequate time for me briefly to explain the purpose of my research and what my expectations were regarding the completion of the questionnaires and time-use diaries.

I planned the route I needed to drive in such a way that I would be able to travel to each school in the minimum time. I drove a "practice run" during the weekend prior to the appointments to orientate myself in the various suburbs and to find the exact location and main entrance gate of each school. Strict security measures enforced by the Western Cape Education Department in the form of electronic gates at schools make access to schools a relatively time-consuming and complicated procedure. I confirmed the appointments telephonically on the day prior to the appointments to ensure that there were no alterations to the arrangements.

3.11 Obtaining Participants' Consent

I met the nineteen principals. They were all interested in my research and extremely helpful and accommodating. During my meeting with the first principal, I realised that my in-depth, unstructured interview with this enthusiastic and knowledgeable person constituted an unexpected but valuable third data collection instrument.

The principal's information regarding the background of his school, the relationship between him and the governing body, himself and his educators and the governing body and educators, together with his particular management style, provided me with valuable and meaningful data, which I recorded as key words on a notepad during our unstructured and informal interviews. I conducted interviews with all nineteen principals. Fifteen of the nineteen principals agreed to participate in my research and granted their consent for me to collect data by means of the open-ended questionnaire and teacher time-use diary at their schools, by signing the enclosed letters of informed consent.

In addition to the interviews, a number of principals took me on a tour of their school to show me the well-equipped facilities and the manner in which the educators, parents and learners utilise the facilities. This was an enlightening and valuable experience, as they showed me how the most recent technological innovations and equipment are used to enhance the obviously excellent standards of teaching and learning that exist in these schools.

3.12 Sampling

Merriam (2002:12) states that since a qualitative study is designed to understand the meaning of a phenomenon from a participant's perspective, it is important that the researcher should select a sample, which will be rich in information and from which the researcher will learn a great deal. The sampling must therefore fulfil a purpose. To render the sampling **purposive**, the first component of the research sample comprised members of public school governing bodies. The principals immediately agreed to forward the open-ended questionnaires and the enclosed letters of informed consent to the various members of their governing bodies. The parent component of the sample comprised approximately five to seven school governing body members. The second component of the research sample comprised five post level 1 educators at each school. I also conducted the informal, unstructured interviews with nineteen school principals, which constituted **convenience** sampling.
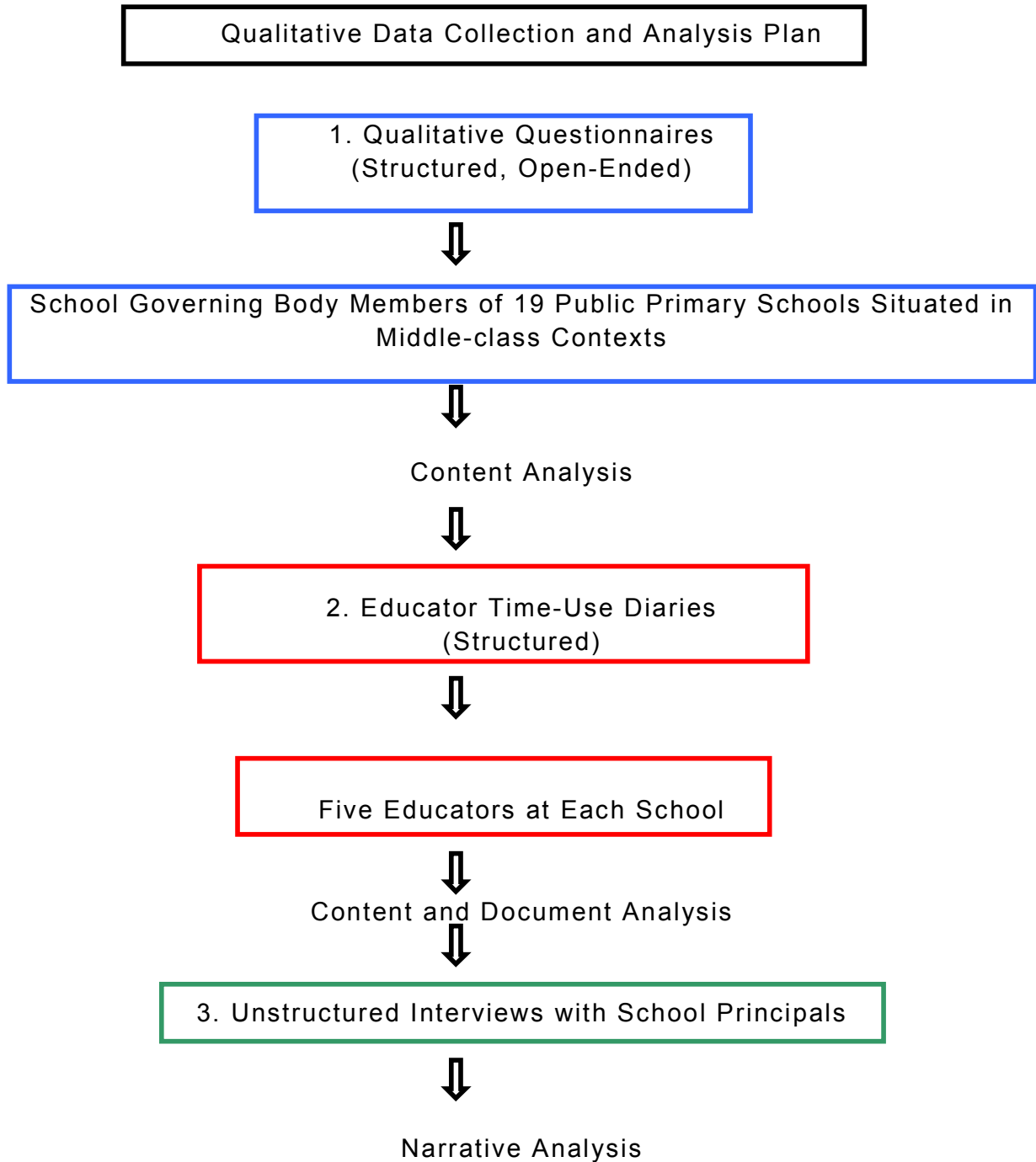
Since it was my intention to gather rich and meaningful data to answer the research question of my study, I asked the principals if they would ask male and female educators in the different phases to complete the educator time-use diaries.

This method of sampling would enable me to compare and establish whether there are differences between the workloads of male and female educators as well as whether there are differences in the workloads of educators in the various phases of the public primary school. I asked the principals to select the sample educators on my behalf, as I did not wish to undermine their authority as head of the school. I was confident that they knew their educators well and that they would select reliable and experienced educators in each phase that would provide me with meaningful data. A number of the principals mentioned this to me before I needed to explain it to them, which made the explanation of my sampling procedure a great deal easier and in some instances, unnecessary.

3.13   Data Collection Instruments

I initially planned to collect data by using two data collection instruments. Firstly, I needed to ask the members of the schools' governing bodies to complete **open-ended questionnaires** (Addenda G and H on attached CD-Rom), which would enable them to state clearly what they expect of educators. Secondly, I needed educators to record all their daily duties and responsibilities on a **time-use diary** (Addenda I and J on attached CD-Rom), which would enable me to determine the number of hours and minutes educators spend on their various teaching and other duties and responsibilities over a period of two weeks. The idea of the third data collection instrument, namely the unstructured **interviews** with the school principals, came to mind after my productive and interesting discussion with the first school principal I met.

Figure 3.1 Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis Plan

Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis Plan

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1. Qualitative Questionnaires (Structured, Open-Ended)

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School Governing Body Members of 19 Public Primary Schools Situated in Middle-class Contexts

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Content Analysis

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2. Educator Time-Use Diaries (Structured)

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Five Educators at Each School

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Content and Document Analysis

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3. Unstructured Interviews with School Principals

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Narrative Analysis

3.13.1   The Open-Ended Questionnaire

The questions I included in the questionnaire for the members of the governing bodies (Addenda G and H on attached CD-Rom) specifically focused on the following core responsibilities of educators:

Teaching Responsibilities
1.   Planning and preparation of lessons
2.   Teaching lessons
3.   Marking of learners' work and feedback
4.   Keeping record of learners' assessment and profiles
5.   Assistance to learners with learning problems
6.   Enrichment of bright learners
7.   Progress reports to parents
8.   Other

Classroom Management
1.   Creation of a positive teaching and learning environment
2.   Maintaining discipline
3.   Other

Extra-mural Activities
1.   Coaching and involvement in sport
2.   Involvement in cultural activities
3.   Involvement in fundraising activities
4.   Involvement in the school's social functions
5.   Involvement in school committees e.g. PTA and Governing Body
6.   Other

Pastoral Duties
1.   Playground duty
2.   Bus / gate duty
3.   Scholar patrol
4.   Sick learners
5.   Other

Administrative Duties
1.   Collection of money in class e.g. school fees, fundraising money, etc.
2.   Handing out newsletters
3.   Keeping attendance registers
4.   Other

Professional Duties
1.   Attendance at meetings, workshops, courses, etc.
2.   Other

3.13.2 The Educator Time-Use Diary

I asked the consenting school principals to select one post-level 1 male educator in the Senior or Intermediate Phase, two post-level 1 female educators in the Senior or Intermediate Phase and two post-level 1 female educators who teach in the Foundation Phase. They were required to record time-use diaries (Addenda I and J on attached CD-Rom) detailing the time they spent on all their duties and responsibilities for a period of two weeks. The time-use diaries, like the questionnaires, focused on precisely the same core responsibilities of educators.

3.13.3 Interviews with Principals

During the interviews, the principals shared their opinions on governing body expectations of educators with me and expressed their thoughts on whether expectations might influence the workloads of educators.

3.14 Methodological Limitations

The epistemology underpinning my research is the interpretivist paradigm. I therefore tend to construct my own understanding and perceptions of the expectations that school governing body members hold of educators according to my own realities and teaching experiences. I am, therefore, unable to claim complete objectivity, which may be considered a limitation to my research.

The focus of my research was ex-HOA public primary schools situated within middle-class contexts of the Western Cape. It follows that my research findings cannot be considered valid for ex-HOA public primary schools situated in other contexts, ex-HOD (House of Delegates) schools, ex-HOR (House of Representative) schools, private schools or high schools situated either in the Western Cape or in any of the other provinces of South Africa.

3.15 Summary of Research Design

In Table 3.1, I present a summary of my research question, assumptions, data collection instruments and the type of analyses I utilised in analysing the data.

Table 3.1   Summary of Research Design and Methodology:
Implementing the Research Plan

Research Question: What do members of primary school governing bodies situated in middle-class contexts expect of educators?		
Assumptions	**Instruments**	**Analyses**
1. Members of public primary school governing bodies situated in middle-class contexts tend to hold high expectations of educators.	Open-Ended Questionnaires	Content and Document
2. The workloads of educators who teach at middle-class public primary schools are intensifying.	Educator Time-Use Diaries	Content and Document
1. and 2. above	Unstructured Interviews with Principals	Document and Narrative
3. Certain duties and responsibilities expected of educators by members of public primary school governing bodies in middle-class contexts are not in alignment with prevailing education labour law and other relevant law.	Education Labour Law and Other Relevant Law	Content and Document

3.16   Conclusion of Chapter Three and Preview of Chapter Four

In Chapter Three, I explained the manner in which I designed the research plan and the manner in which I intend to implement it.

In Chapter Four, I present and describe the raw data collected by means of my data collection instruments. The initial data analysis proceeds with a content analysis by means of coding. Coding is followed by the formulation of categories, which are compared and linked by thematic patterns and relationships. After I have defined the thematic categories, I apply document analysis, which yields an in-depth description of the deeper meaning of the data. Following this, I interpret the data by formulating my findings, main argument and discussion with support from my literature review and conceptual framework, to answer my research question.