**CHAPTER ONE**

**INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH**

**1.1        Introduction**

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

The corresponding **research questions** guiding this study are the following:

- What do members of governing bodies of public primary schools situated in middle-class contexts expect of educators with respect to educator workloads?
- What are the rules and regulations governing educator workloads as established in prevailing education labour law and other relevant law?
- To what extent is there alignment or divergence between governing body expectations of educator workloads and what is expected within prevailing education labour law and other relevant law as it affects the work of educators?
- Which core duties appear to contribute most to the intensification of educators' workloads?
- What are the reasons for the apparent intensification of educators' workloads?

**1.2        Rationale**

In theory, decentralisation in education shifts power and authority from the state at national level to the school community at local level. In South Africa, a decentralising initiative in education was the promulgation of the South African Schools Act, No 84 of 1996 (SASA), which provided parents with an opportunity to have a voice in school governance. SASA enabled parents to elect a group of parents who would represent them on the school governing body. In this context, it appears that members of governing bodies hold unique sets of expectations when serving on a school governing body. Expectations may influence the nature and type of education to which a particular school community aspires and may consequently influence the workloads of the educators at that school. A primary search of national and international literature on governing bodies

provides numerous descriptions of governmental intentions with respect to governing bodies but the expectations that governing body members have of educators, appears to be a neglected field of empirical enquiry. This study therefore examines school governing body expectations and functions in the light of prevailing education labour law and other relevant law.

## 1.3        Conceptual Framework

In this section, I shall elucidate the **core concepts** governing this study, their meanings and relationships as they apply to an education labour law analysis of teacher workloads.

The Review of School Governance (2004:22) states that centralisation and decentralisation are fundamentally about questions of authority and accountability. Governance in a centralised structure produces the centralisation of power at the centre or the highest level of government, while decentralised governance structures provide for the distribution of authority and accountability at various levels of the system.

In other words, decentralisation involves the devolution of power, authority and accountability from a centralised structure, which is government, to a decentralised structure at local level, such as a school. The South African Schools Act, No 84 of 1996, states that a school governing body exists within a relationship. The relationship includes the parents and learners on the one hand, and the school, principal and educators on the other. The primary function of school governing bodies, in terms of section 16(2), involves the governance of the school and is limited to the functions listed in the various sections of SASA.

The South African Schools Act, No 84 of 1996 (SASA) sets out its objectives in the Preamble of the Act as follows:
- To provide for a uniform system for the organisation, governance and funding of schools;
- To amend and repeal certain laws relating to schools;
- To provide for matters connected herewith.

Government's main intention with SASA was not only to lift education out of its historically divided and unequal past but to ensure the devolution of power, authority and accountability to parents and simultaneously promote the principles of access, redress, equity and democratic governance in South African schools. In light of this, the parents of a school elect the members of the governing body to represent them in decision-making processes and governance functions. The manner in which the members interpret and implement SASA, as unique individuals

and as a composite group, may have an effect not only on the ethos and organisation of the school but on the workloads of the educators too.

Although there appears to be limited empirical data available on what members of school governing bodies expect of educators, one may assume that members will uphold personal and specific sets of expectations of what it means and entails to serve on a school governing body, owing to their heterogeneous personalities, experiences, prospects, demands, requirements or wishes. It may be plausible that members contemplate different agendas or aims of what they aim to achieve in the school during their term of office. This study, therefore, takes into account that multiple settings, contexts and compositions of school governing bodies may exert a profound influence on the expectations a governing body may hold of educators.

In this regard, Creese & Earley (1999), refer to research conducted by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) on school governance in England in 1998. The Effective Governing Body Exercise of the Oxfordshire Local Education Authority 1998 (LEA) as demonstrated by Creese & Earley (1999:8), groups governing bodies into four distinct categories: the abdicators, adversaries, supporters club and partners. The Effective Governing Body Exercise indicates that one way of considering the performance of a school governing body is to assess it on two criteria. The first criterion is the level of support it gives to the school and the second is the level of challenge it provides. I understand the concept "challenge" to imply that somebody is required to do something. The Collins English Thesaurus (1992:71) lists "demand", among others, as a synonym for the noun "challenge". It is in this sense that I equate challenges with expectations. It is clear that all four of Creese & Earley's categories demand high expectations of educators, but in different ways.

### 1.3.1 The Abdicators

A key phrase of this category of governing body members is, "We leave it to the professionals" (Creese & Earley, 1999:9). The abdicators neither support nor challenge their schools. They maintain limited contact with the school and educators. It appears they hold high expectations of educators because they expect educators to manage all the facets of education and teaching. They believe that educators know everything about education and leave most of the decision-making to them.

### 1.3.2 The Supporters Club

According to Creese & Earley (1999:9), the supporter club's key phrase is, "We're here to support the head". These governors have delegated

control to the head who takes all the decisions. They do not know many of the educators and spend a lot of time discussing the school environment. They offer a lot of support and advice, but little challenge. In other words, they hold extremely high expectations of the principal and educators.

### 1.3.3 The Partners

The partners offer the staff a great deal of support but are not afraid to ask educators to account for their actions. There is mutual trust and respect. The school governing body works in partnership with the principal and educators, and all have a clear understanding of their respective roles. In this way, conflict may be minimised. One may view the partners as the ideal governing body.

### 1.3.4 The Adversaries

Adversaries offer little support but challenge educators at every opportunity. They visit the school often and keep a close eye on all aspects of the work of school. They are frequently critical of what they see and seek to make all the decisions about the running of the school. The expectations of these governing body members appear to be so high, that they may have a detrimental effect on educators and learners. It also appears that these types of expectations may border on interference.

The typologies of Creese & Earley are relevant to this study since they provide a framework by which one is able to identify a number of the characteristics of school governing bodies. The most striking characteristic, which all the categories appear to share is that school governing bodies comprising abdicators, supporters and adversaries hold high expectations of educators. High expectations may directly contribute to the intensification of educators' workloads.

### 1.3.5 School Governance in the South African Context

In this section, I refer to empirical research conducted in South Africa in 2004, which focused on school governance. The task group that conducted the empirical research published its findings in the Review of School Governance (Soudien Report, Department of Education, 2004). Significant aspects that pertain to school governance emerged from the review report. One of the most prominent aspects relevant to this study is **Roos' typology of school governing bodies**, in which he describes four categories of school governing bodies, which have emerged since 1994 and that are similar to the categories expounded by Creese & Earley. He categorises them as follows:

- The **traditional type** of governing bodies, which existed in schools before 1994. They had little authority and merely acted as a rubber stamp for the principal.
- A small number of governing bodies are **working in the spirit** of the legislation and creating new relationships between parents and school managers.
- Governing bodies emerging mainly in ex-HOA schools that operate according to a **corporate discourse**. They see themselves as boards of directors that, as in any other enterprise, have the job of setting the direction of the school. In this model, the principal is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) with the responsibility of day-to-day operations.
- Governing bodies, also mainly found in ex-HOA schools, where the discourse is essentially that of micro-management. These governing bodies operate like **boards of control** (Review of School Governance, 2004:98).

In Table 1.1, I present a tabulated comparison between the typologies of school governing bodies identified and described by Creese & Earley in the international context and Roos in the South African context.

**Table 1.1   Comparisons of Typologies of School Governing Bodies Identified and Described by Creese & Earley and Roos.**

| CREESE AND EARLEY | Description | ROOS | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| The Abdicators | Believe that educators know everything about education and leave most of the decision-making to them. | Corporate type. | Boards of directors that have the job of setting the direction of the school. |
| The Supporters Club | Delegate control to the head who takes all the decisions. | Traditional type. | Existed before 1994. They had little authority and merely acted as a rubber stamp for the principal. |
| The Partners | Offer the staff a great deal of support but are not afraid to ask educators to account for their actions. | Working in the spirit type. | Create new relationships between parents and school managers. |
| The Adversaries | Offer little support but challenge educators at every opportunity. | Boards of control type. | Discourse is essentially that of micro-management. |

A second prominent aspect that emerged from the Review of School Governance (2004) is that in the South African context there appears to be a dichotomous type of inactive, uninvolved parents in certain communities who have abdicated their parental roles in the education of their children entirely to educators. It appears that socio-economic and historical factors may play a significant role in this perceived lack of parental support. According to the Review of School Governance (2004: viii) parents serving schools in poverty-stricken and rural areas of our country may lack competencies concerning the key dimensions of school governance. Consequently, problematical relationships between educators and under-educated parents may arise. Some parents may avoid involvement in the school community owing to deficient knowledge or

feelings of inadequacy. It follows that deficient knowledge, competencies and experience on the part of parents may be a source of misconceptions and conflicts between parents and educators around the meanings of governance and the professional management of the school.

Kirss (2004:8) asserts that "disconnected parents, generally working-class" are often unfairly accused of not being interested in the education of their children. This is not an accurate assumption. They "do care very much". They appear "detached from the market owing to their possessing much less cultural capital".

In contrast to the parents described above, it appears that some parents who reside in relatively affluent contexts may become excessively involved in the administration, governance and management of the schools in their communities, which supports my claim that school governing bodies of public primary schools in middle-class contexts hold high expectations of educators. I include the following significant citation:

> Ex-HOA[1] (House of Assembly) school governing bodies are very different in so far as they have large numbers of middle-class and professional people represented on them. In the seven schools studied in this category, all the parents were educated. Most of the school governing bodies had business people and professionals, such as lawyers and accountants. Important about this phenomenon in these schools, is that not only do these schools have a capacitated layer of parents to draw upon, but these kinds of parents are actually running their school's governing bodies. Again, it is hardly a surprise that this is the case. Middle-class parents, as any sociology textbook will make clear, place a great deal of store in the process of education (2004:55).

In the following two sections, I present a brief social profile of the South African middle-class and explain what I mean by the concept "middle-class" in the South African context and its implication for this study.

### 1.3.5.1    The Conceptual Definition of "Class"

The concept "class" refers to style or sophistication. It is the social, structural position groups hold relative to the economic, social, political and cultural resources of society. Class determines the access different

---

[1] Ex-HOA (House of Assembly) refers to the department responsible for white schools in the pre-1994 period.

people have to these resources and puts groups in different positions of privilege or disadvantage. Class standing determines how well social institutions serve the members of the class. Prominent indicators of class are income, wealth, education, occupation and place of residence. (Andersen & Taylor, 2006:214-215).

The Collins English Dictionary (1979:933) defines the concept "middle-class" as a "social stratum that is not clearly defined but is positioned between the lower and upper classes. It consists of businesspersons, professional people and their families who hold a certain set of values.

### 1.3.5.2    The Emergence of South Africa's Middle-Class

According to the Internet website www.southafrica.info (29 January 2007:1), South Africans are among the most upwardly mobile people in the world. It appears that definitions on social class no longer centre on issues of race as they traditionally did in the past. The findings that emerged from studies conducted by the University of Cape Town's (UCT) Unilever Institute indicated that 45% of the roughly 2 500 adults surveyed see themselves as middle-class. These respondents were described as ambitious and optimistic about South Africa's future. "They see there has been huge progress economically and they see an abundance of opportunities and facilities available to them". It would be plausible to consider many of these opportunities and facilities to be educational in nature. The findings from this survey therefore suggest that middle-class South Africans may, as averred by the Review of School Governance, "place a great deal of store in the process of education" (2004:55).

### 1.3.5.3    The Implications of Class for School Governance

The following statement by Roos in the Review of School Governance (Soudien, Department of Education, 2004:99) has a sense of urgency about it:

> Troubling though, are the school governing bodies, particularly in ex-HOA schools, but also in other schools, where the professionals have seized control of the schools and have begun to dictate to the educators how they should manage their professional responsibilities. This is not acceptable and calls for urgent attention. (Soudien, Department of Education, 2004:99).

If Roos' allegations are true, I need to conduct research, firstly to investigate what governing body members who represent the parents of middle-class school communities expect of educators with respect to their

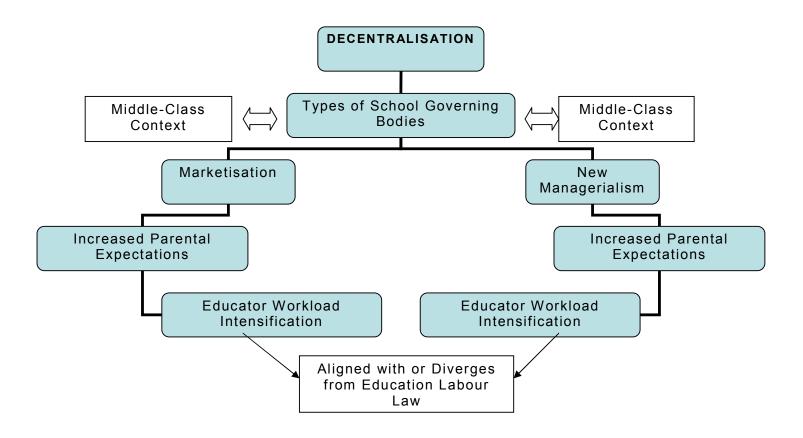workloads. Secondly, I need to examine the rules and regulations governing educators' workloads to determine whether they are in alignment with education labour law. In other words, I need to determine the extent to which educator workloads correspond with or diverge from education labour law.

Figure 1.1 below demonstrates the manner in which the core concepts that I have discussed relate to and link with the purpose of the study.

**Figure 1.1    Core Concepts in Relation to the Study**

```
                              ┌─────────────────────┐
                              │   DECENTRALISATION  │
                              └─────────────────────┘
                                         │
┌──────────────┐      ⟷       ┌─────────────────────┐      ⟷       ┌──────────────┐
│ Middle-Class │              │ Types of School     │              │ Middle-Class │
│   Context    │              │ Governing Bodies    │              │   Context    │
└──────────────┘              └─────────────────────┘              └──────────────┘
                                    │           │
                        ┌─────────────┐       ┌─────────────┐
                        │Marketisation│       │    New      │
                        └─────────────┘       │Managerialism│
                                              └─────────────┘
                ┌──────────────────┐             ┌──────────────────┐
                │Increased Parental│             │Increased Parental│
                │  Expectations    │             │  Expectations    │
                └──────────────────┘             └──────────────────┘
                   ┌──────────────────┐       ┌──────────────────┐
                   │Educator Workload │       │Educator Workload │
                   │ Intensification  │       │ Intensification  │
                   └──────────────────┘       └──────────────────┘
                              ┌─────────────────────────┐
                              │ Aligned with or Diverges│
                              │ from Education Labour    │
                              │ Law                      │
                              └─────────────────────────┘
```

## 1.4       Research Questions

I formulated and stated the research questions that guide this study in par. 1.1 above.

## 1.5       Aims of the Study

In this section, I state the overall aims of the study as they crystallised during my preliminary reading and thinking about the research problem. My specific aims for this study include:

- To investigate what members of governing bodies of public primary schools situated in middle-class contexts expect of educators with respect to educator workloads.
- To examine the rules and regulations governing educator workloads as established in prevailing education labour law and other relevant law.
- To determine the extent of alignment or divergence between governing body expectations of educator workloads and that, which is expected within prevailing education labour law and other relevant law as it affects the work of educators.
- To identify the core duties that appear to contribute most to the intensification of educators' workloads.
- To explore the reasons underpinning the apparent intensification of educators' workloads.

## 1.6       Working Assumptions

My primary working assumptions are that members of governing bodies of public primary schools situated in middle-class areas generally tend to enjoy a high social standing within the community because they are often well educated and people perceive them as successful. A large number of parents are experts in their professions and are aware that high standards and quality education are of paramount importance to the future of their children, and they therefore tend to place high demands on educators to deliver high quality teaching and learning.

However, some members of a school governing body tend to appear adversarial in their approach and in respect of their expectations of educators. They may frequently visit the school and appear to "check up" on educators. The educator may interpret their frequent visits as interference in the professional management of the school, which may result in uncalled for conflict. It is reasonable and acceptable for parents to expect educators to be totally dedicated and fully involved in all aspects of teaching and learning but excessive expectations and demands may negatively affect the quality of education we strive to improve.

Another working assumption, which I intend to explore in this study, is that the apparent broadening and increase in governing body and parental expectations has necessitated educators who teach at public schools situated in middle-class contexts to devote more time to administrative duties and extra-mural activities than they did in the past. The apparent intensification of their work in these areas leaves them less time to plan and prepare lessons with the necessary care and interest and to mark and assess learners' work. Educators may attribute the increase in the time they devote to administrative duties to frequent curriculum changes and new methods of lesson planning, preparation, presentation and assessment. They may attribute their increased involvement in fundraising activities to the need for self-managed schools to maximise their income because of reductions in state funding and subsidies. Educators also appear to devote a large portion of their time to extra-mural activities owing to the importance placed on sport in many middle-class schools. In South Africa, sport may be regarded as a lucrative "industry" in its own right. Middle-class parents appear to believe that sport offers employment opportunities and may therefore expect their children to have access to a variety of sports and high standards of coaching. In light of the above-mentioned assumptions, governing bodies and parent associations in some schools plan fundraising, cultural and sporting activities, which often involve the participation of educators.

Educators are sometimes responsible for the administrative and organisational aspects of fundraising, cultural and sporting activities, which may be time-consuming and may encroach on scheduled teaching and learning time. My assumption and concern is that if educators commit themselves to too many activities their workloads will intensify and they may in future devote less time to teaching and classroom management, which is their primary function. Significant intensification of educators' workloads may hold negative effects for educators and learners, as well as for education.

It is unfortunate that learners may ultimately bear the negative effects of the intensification of educators' workloads. The most compelling negative consequence will be the decline in the quantity of teaching time and the quality of learning. In addition, unlike most other professions, educators do not have an official lunch hour and many extra-curricular activities and staff development courses begin directly after school and continue until late afternoon or early evening. Once at home, educators need to prepare lessons or mark and assess learners' work for the following day. This means that educators often work more than 12 hours per day. The threats and repercussions of educator burnout and stress have received much attention in the literature dealing with educator workloads (See § 2.3).

The second negative effect of educator workload intensification is that overworked educators may become disillusioned and seek employment opportunities in other sectors, outside of education, which could result in a loss of experienced educators and high educator turnover. High educator turnover could hinder and delay the development of teamwork in the school, as "old staff" and "new staff" members need time to know and understand each other, in order to work together effectively. Learners' routines may be disrupted and their sense of security affected, as they will constantly need to adapt to different ways of working and establish new relationships of trust with replacement educators. A further negative effect of high educator turnover is that schools may lose the services of experienced or talented educators, which is detrimental to the maintenance of quality in education, the ideal for which partners in education continually strive. It would seem, therefore, that current South African labour law creates a space in which governing bodies could influence the workloads of educators. I therefore argue that 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.

## 1.7 Research Design and Methodology

This section of the chapter covers the research design, approaches, methodology, data collection instruments and strategies and data analysis procedures, which I intend implementing in my research.

It is important to note that one should refrain from viewing the research design as being rigid or "cast in stone". The research design needs to be flexible to accommodate changes or alterations, should the circumstances require it.

Mouton (1996:108) is of the opinion that the rationale of a research design is to plan and structure a research project in such a way that the eventual validity of the research findings is maximised through either minimising or, where possible, eliminating potential error.

### 1.7.1 Data Collection Approaches and Methods

I justify my decision to use qualitative inquiry as opposed to quantitative methods as follows: I intended to explore and understand the expectations that school governing bodies have of primary school educators at public schools in middle-class contexts and compare them to the actual duties and responsibilities performed by educators on a daily basis. I therefore do not intend implementing a quantitative research paradigm since a quantitative inquiry would prove to be unsuitable for my research. I shall, should the need arise, include some quantitative and

statistical data gathered by means of one of my data collection instruments, namely the educator time-use diary (See § 1.7.7).

### 1.7.2        Ethical Clearance and Considerations

In compliance with the ethical considerations, I firstly completed and submitted the ethical documents required by the Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria for their consent. In these documents, I undertook to ensure that the names of the schools included in the sample, as well as all the participants in the study, remain confidential. I assured the participants that I would keep their names, the names of their schools and their responses to the open-ended questionnaires and educator time-use diaries anonymous and confidential in the letters of informed consent, which they would need to authorise.

### 1.7.3        Approval for the Research

I obtained permission from 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.

### 1.7.4        Gaining Access to the Research Samples and Sites

I compiled a list of the names, telephone numbers and addresses of public primary schools situated in middle-class contexts, which I identified as potential participants. The primary schools, which I identified, were located in middle-class contexts of Paarl and Wellington, Durbanville, Bellville and Cape Town, Stellenbosch and Somerset-West, and were situated in the Western Cape Province. I selected the schools in these areas for convenience reasons because they are middle-class areas and because I reside and work in the area. I contacted the principals of these schools telephonically to make appointments with them. On the appointed day and time, I briefly explained the purpose of my research to the principals and asked their consent for me to conduct my data collection at their schools. I made appointments with as many principals as possible to ensure that I was able to collect adequate and meaningful data, since I anticipated that there might be principals who might be unwilling to assent for various reasons.

### 1.7.5        Obtaining the Participants' Consent

At my initial appointment with the school principals, I firstly introduced myself and explained the reason for my visit. I explained my intentions with my research and handed them the letters of consent for the Principal (Addenda C and F on attached CD-Rom) for their perusal. If the principals

approved and granted me permission to collect data at their schools, I provided them with the letters of informed consent for the members of the governing body (Addenda A and D on attached CD-Rom) and the educators (Addenda B and E on attached CD-Rom) to sign. Thereafter, I handed them the open-ended questionnaires (Addenda G and H on attached CD-Rom) and the educator time-use diaries (Addenda I and J on attached CD-Rom), which the participants would complete.

### 1.7.6 Sampling

The first component of the purposive sample comprised members of middle-class public primary school governing bodies, who represented the parent community of the school. The second component of the sample comprised five post level 1 educators, who taught at each of the schools. It would have been ideal if the educators could have been of both genders, teaching in the Foundation, Intermediate and Senior Phases of the schools. I did not intend including promotion post educators in the sample, as heads of department and deputy principals have increased workloads due to the nature of their management positions. I asked the school principals to select the sample educators on my behalf for three reasons. Firstly, I did not intend to undermine the principals' authority as heads of the schools, by approaching the educators directly. Secondly, I needed to work strictly according to the ethical considerations set out in my informed letters of consent. Thirdly, I assumed that the principals knew the educators well and would therefore select reliable educators in each phase that would provide me with meaningful data.

### 1.7.7 Data Collection Instruments

I collected empirical data using two data collection instruments, namely an open-ended questionnaire and an educator time-use diary.

### 1.7.7.1 The Open-Ended Questionnaire

I asked the members of the school governing body to complete open-ended questionnaires. The primary goal of the open-ended questionnaire was to collect data on the expectations that members of school governing body hold of educators.

The questions I formulated and included in the questionnaire specifically focused on the following core duties of educators:
1. Planning and preparation of lessons.
2. Teaching lessons, marking learners' work, feedback and assessment
3. Classroom management and discipline.
4. Extra-mural and co-curricular duties.

5. Pastoral duties (playground, detention, scholar patrol, etc.).
6. Administrative duties.
7. Professional duties and development (meetings, workshops seminars, conferences, etc.).

A secondary purpose of the open-ended questionnaire was to identify and describe characteristics within the members of the governing body, which would enable me to compile a professional profile, which I might be able to link to the typologies of Creese & Earley and Roos previously mentioned in the literature review.

### 1.7.7.2     The Educator Time-Use Diary

I asked educators[2] to record time-use diaries detailing the time they spent on all their duties and responsibilities for a period of two weeks. I structured the educator time-use diary according to the same core duties and responsibilities, which I included in the open-ended questionnaire.

In support of my choice of time-use diaries as a data collection method, I cite Naylor (2001:3), who reports that a quite different perspective is contained in data gathered from studies, in which educators recorded their time-use in diaries as opposed to estimating time-use in surveys. Naylor found that when educators estimate their time-use, as compared to actually recording it, workload estimates appear consistently lower than time-use diaries reveal. Naylor (2001:3) suggests that educators appear to underestimate their own workload when they complete surveys or questionnaires.

### 1.7.8     Management of the Raw Data

I initially managed the raw data by opening separate folders or files for each of the theme topics based on the core duties I wished to explore and which I expected the participants would refer to in the raw data.

### 1.7.9     Data Analysis

I analysed the data by means of content and document analysis. I began the data analysis by reading all the open-ended questionnaires and educator time-use diaries to gain an overall impression of the data.

Once I had read the questionnaires and studied the time-use diaries, I colour coded and highlighted units of meaning contained in key phrases or sentences. I also wrote key words and brief notes in the margin on the same page. I expected themes to emerge from the data. There was a

---

[2] In this study, the term educator included both male and female genders.

possibility that unexpected codes and categories might occur, which I had not considered. Once I completed the process of reading and coding, I intended to conduct member checks whereby participants would be able to verify my notes and comment on my interpretation, to ensure that they agreed with the meanings I assigned to the codes and categories.

### 1.7.9.1    Content Analysis of the Data

I used content analysis as an initial procedure of data analysis. I translated all the questionnaire responses that I needed to quote from as all the participants responded to the questions in Afrikaans. I began the initial content analysis by attentively reading the questionnaires to ensure that I understood their contents. Next, I identified and grouped semantically related words or themes in the raw data, which appeared under each of the core duties. I categorised the related words and themes by colour coding each of them. I followed the same procedure with the educator time-use diaries.

### 1.7.9.2    Document Analysis of the Data

After the initial content analysis, I continued with the document analysis, which required an in-depth description of the deeper meaning of the data. I scoured and mined the data, looking for striking similarities, differences, relationships, peculiarities, clusters of data and patterns in the data. During the analysis of the questionnaire and time-use diary data, I tried to achieve a thick description by asking and answering the following questions:
- What are the relationships in meaning between the categories?
- What do they say together?
- What do they say about each other?
- What appears to be missing?
- How do they address the research question?
- How do these categories link with what I already know about the topic?
- What is in the foreground?
- What has moved to the background?
- Do I need to gather any additional data?

### 1.7.9.3    Data Interpretation

Once I was satisfied, that the data analysis was complete and that I could no longer add to the categories, I commenced with the data interpretation. Data interpretation is a complex process, as it requires the researcher to question what is important in the data, why it is important, and what the researcher can learn from it. In order to interpret the data, I needed to assign meaning to the various similarities, differences, peculiarities, relationships and patterns evident in the data and use it to form an

argument and discussion. The argument and discussion centred on each category, with support from the literature review and theoretical framework. I needed to justify and substantiate my arguments to prove that I had explicitly linked my findings to my research questions.

## 1.8 Reliability and Trustworthiness

The two most important questions asked of any research project often relate to the reliability and trustworthiness of the research findings. In an attempt to maximise the reliability and trustworthiness of my research, I implemented an audit trail and kept a journal in which I recorded memos and details of the manner in which I collected, organised, analysed and interpreted the data. I tried to, as far as possible, conduct member checks with the participants during the data analysis and interpretation phases of the study, to confirm that I had captured the context, tone and meaning of their responses correctly, as they intended.

## 1.9 Significance of the Research

Findings from empirical research conducted by the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) in collaboration with the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and which was published in The Report on Educator Workload in South Africa (2005), point to a gap or silence in the scholarship on educator workload in South Africa:

> These debates are well rehearsed in the South African literature, where many parallels have been drawn. There is a well-known body of South African literature that has drawn attention to the impact of post-apartheid curriculum, assessment and teacher policy change on educators' working lives. But neither this literature, important as it is in identifying the problem, nor the large number of unpublished theses by students that suggest that workload is a key concern, explicitly address the relationship of workload against national and international policy on workload or examines the latter in relation to actual workloads carried in day-to-day practice. Nor do they theorise and explain it. Amongst the sixteen theses on the topic since 1994, for example, there is an emphasis on stress levels and coping styles of educators in secondary, township schools dealing with outcomes-based education and special education, but little examination of the reasons for and content of increased workload, how this might vary across different provinces, types of schools, age and experience of educators, what the impact is on time-use

and what educators themselves propose as solutions (Report on Educator Workload, 2005:42).

The findings arising from this study are likely to contribute to a narrowing in the scholarship gap described above. It will be the first of its kind in South Africa to examine the possibility that labour provisions could enable school governing bodies to impact on the labour rights, work lives and workloads of educators as well as the expectations of school communities. It may be significant for the governing bodies and educators of self-managed schools overseas, which are managed in a similar way to South African public schools. This study may hold international significance for theories regarding educator workloads and labour law.

**1.10      Conclusion of Chapter One and Preview of Chapter Two**

The primary purpose of Chapter One is to introduce the reader to my study and to clarify the intellectual puzzle, which has motivated me to pursue this research theme.

Secondly, Chapter One serves to present the research question arising from the intellectual puzzle and which guides this study.

Thirdly, this chapter also explained the rationale, conceptual framework and working assumption underpinning this study, as well as the research design and methodological procedures, which I intend to utilise in the research.

In Chapter Two, I shall present my "Three Domain Model of Literature with Foci on Educator Workload", in which I review international and South African literature with specific focus on educator workloads. I also review pertinent prevailing education labour law and other relevant law, which relates to my research question.