# RHODES UNIVERSITY

## Where leaders learn

**EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**

**HORNS OF DILEMMA: DEPARTMENT HEAD AND SUBJECT TEACHER**

**A case study of Heads of Department in a public secondary school, northern**

**Namibia**

A thesis submitted by

**ROBERT NATUKONDYE NAUNDOBE**

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# ABSTRACT

The accountability and responsibilities of school leaders have intensified greatly over the past decades and school leadership has become a strong focus of research. Meanwhile, Bush (2003) asserts that "school leaders [experience] tensions between competing elements of leadership, management and administration" (p. 7). This study uses observations, questionnaires, interviews and document analysis to unpack the perceptions of four Heads of Department (HoDs), the principal, and eight teachers on the tensions inherent in balancing the responsibilities of department head and subject teacher for HoDs in public secondary school. The study goes beyond the mere task of influence in its attempts to unpack how the leadership and teaching practices of HoDs may, or may not, be in conflict with each other. Using distributed leadership as a theoretical framing and drawing in particular on the work of Spillane and colleagues (2001; 2004), the study examines the roles HoDs enact; the challenges HoDs encounter in enacting their responsibilities as department head and subject teacher; and the strategies HoDs employ to combat the emerging challenges.

The study found that the roles of HoDs are extensive and stretch across the classroom, the department, the whole school and beyond. However, the majority of these roles are biased in favour of management systems and processes and opportunities for leadership are rare. The many and extensive management responsibilities of the HoDs limit both their classroom teaching as well as their agency as leaders. The weight of their management work thus restricts their leadership, resulting in an authorised form of distributed leadership (Grant, 2010).

The data also revealed that HoDs struggle to balance the responsibilities of department head and subject teacher due to both inter-role and intra-sender conflict. However, the study also found that the HoDs strategically adopt a range of strategies to assist them in doing their work, these include: compensatory teaching; delegation; and planning and prioritizing.

# DECLARATION

I, **ROBERT NATUKONDYE NAUNDOBE,** declare that the entirety of the work contained herein is my own original work, which I am the sole author thereof, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and duly acknowledged as complete references.

Signed: -------------------------------

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This thesis is lovingly dedicated to my entire family:

To my parents, Martha 'Hinambwedi' Nghitewa and Lazarus 'Haukongo' Naundobe, for believing in me and for all your support and motivation since grade one. I owe it all to you mom and dad. I love you! To my grandma, Selma 'Shafondjodi' Hamata, who retired studying, you motivate me in so many ways. To all my brothers, cousins and sisters, please follow suit. To my beautiful daughter, Tulela, whose very existence gave me a strong reason to pursue and complete this degree to set an example for her!

# List of Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| **ACEL** | Australian Council for Educational Administration |
| **BELMAS** | British Educational Leadership, Management & Administration Society |
| **CCEAM** | Commonwealth Council of Educational Administration and Management |
| **CPD** | Continuous Professional Development |
| **DoE** | Department of Education |
| **EMASA** | Education Management Association of South Africa |
| **HoD/s** | Head/s of Department |
| **MGSLG** | Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Management |
| **MoE** | Ministry of Education |
| **NCSL** | National College for School Leadership |
| **NEMAS** | Namibia Educational Management and Administration Society |
| **NESE** | National External School Evaluation |
| **NIED** | Namibia Institute of Education Development |
| **SMT** | School Management Team |

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# CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

## 1.1    Introduction

This chapter introduces the study which explores the tensions in balancing the responsibilities of department head and subject teacher as experienced by Heads of Department [HoDs] in a public secondary school in northern Namibia. I begin this chapter by expounding on the context and rationale of this study; and then indicate my research goal and questions as well as the potential value of this study. Next I highlight the paradigm and methodologies used in this study and finally conclude the chapter by presenting the layout of the entire thesis.

## 1.2    Context of the study

The position of HoD has received sufficient research attention especially in Europe, the United States of America and Australia. Research and literature in these countries has long explored and broadened this leadership terrain and continues to indicate the important role HoDs play in the management of the school curriculum.

In the sub-Saharan context, South Africa and Namibia specifically, the post of HoD is an under-researched area of school management. It is yet to receive the attention and critical engagement it deserves. A systematic review of the literature on school management in South Africa (Bush, Bisschoff, Glover, Heystek, Joubert, and Moloi, 2005) found very few sources on this topic and none offered a

comprehensive view based on empirical work (Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu and van Rooyen, 2009).

In a study on the role, importance and effectiveness of HoDs done in the Gauteng Province in South Africa, Ali and Botha reveal that although large amount of work concerned with managing the teaching and learning process takes place on the middle management level in schools, development programmes and management development often occurs at the senior management level, whilst the HoD appears to remain on the forgotten tier in South African public schools (2009, p. 8). Equally, from a South African context, Rajoo notes that:

> Even in the Department of Basic Education's vision towards the realization of schooling in 2025, none of the 27 goals highlighted includes targeting middle management for improved education. Learners, teachers and the school principal are recognized as key to realizing this plan and no mention is made of the HoD and their role in knowledge production (2012, p. 21).

In Namibia, this study seems to be the first of its kind as I could not find any, literature and policy or legislation on HoDs besides job descriptions and Staffing Norms. Most of the studies on school leadership in Namibia slants towards the principal, then recently teachers (teacher leadership) and learners (learner leadership) including parental involvement, forgetting the critical HoD post.

Like Turner, I believe that the post of Head of Department "lies at the very heart of the educational process, it is directly related to teaching and learning" (2000, p. 205), and it deserves empirical research to help improve school leadership and management as well as learner performance.

## 1.3    Rationale of the study

"If the head of a department is to give most of his time to teaching, then he/she is

head in name only" (**Axley, 1947, p. 274).**

Heads of Department and teachers in South Africa are required to spend a minimum of 85% of their time on teaching, and the rest of it on preparation and planning, assessment, extra-mural activities, management and supervision, professional development, pastoral duties, guidance and counselling and administration (Chisholm, Hoadley, wa Kivulu, Brookes, Prinsloo, Kgobe, Mosia, Narsee and Rule, 2005, p.ix). Similarly, HoDs in Namibia are expected to spend 75% of the time on teaching and 25% on management and administrative duties (Kankondi, 2010). Thus according to legislation, HoDs are allocated the majority of their work allocation to their teaching responsibility with only one quarter of their job description left for the management of teaching and learning in their departments, liaising between senior management and colleagues. In addition, their relational expertise extends beyond school borders into the community and the entire society. With all these responsibilities, expectations and demands on HoDs, one cannot help but question, *how do they [HoDs] balance all these tasks and responsibilities with such a heavy teaching load?*

In light of all the above, and with the ever-increasing complexity of school management and leadership over the past seventy years in mind, the responsibilities of HoD has imaginably became even more arduous. Gold (2000) admits that the position of HoD can be "really tough at times, and even the most committed and effective Heads of Department can find that their sense of

direction becomes submerged by difficult and mundane administrative tasks" (p. xv). I also agree with Harris (2013) who asserts that, "in an era of greater accountability and ever more stringent measures of performance those in formal leadership roles in schools face a demanding and some would argue daunting task" (p. 552). These views validate Axley's 1947 description of department headship as "a devil of a job" (p. 276). This should compel educational leadership and management scholars into research and innovation to expound new ways of coping with the challenges and tensions extant in this position.

This study seeks to explore the tensions experienced by HoDs in balancing the responsibilities of leading and managing a department with their own teaching demands. These two responsibilities are the most crucial in the post of department headship – one's ability to oversee smooth operations of quality teaching and learning in his/her department, and one's own teaching (subject performance). Hammond (2000) notes that:

> The department heads seek to influence the quality of teaching of others and may find it a challenge to devote enough time and energy in preparation for their own. The department head is not thought to have the moral authority to monitor standards if his/her own are lacking in rigour (p. 2).

In this light, HoDs ought to keep on top of these two responsibilities because, if the departmental leadership and management are poor, the whole school performance will be affected. On the other hand, if the manager's own teaching is not exemplary, this creates another vision in the departmental team and questions the HoD's ability to support and oversee others' teaching and learning practices.

Drawing from personal experience, as a teacher, I was a departmental member in two school departments during my teaching career. I was surprised to see a calendar year of teaching go by without a single classroom observation from either of my two department heads. At the beginning of the year, when everybody's morale was up, teachers were requested to hand in their daily lesson preparation files every week to their respective department heads. Sadly, the files came back without a single comment or feedback. Sooner than expected, the practice of handing in files eventually died. Another observation made was on individual subject performance of the department heads that was no different from those of other teachers, sometimes even worse, especially in one particular department. Their responsibility of leading and promoting the efficiency of their department was not visible, and they did not perform exceptionally in their respective subjects either… I was left wondering what the problem was.

Frequently, the blame of not leading and managing teaching and learning was placed on the teaching overload and great harassment by voluminous management and administrative work – in short, balancing teaching and managing. This led me to the assumption that; in an attempt to meet the demands and expectations of departmental leadership and management as well as their own teaching demands, HoDs experience numerous tensions. Therefore, this study is needed to expose the conflicting forces in balancing the responsibilities of department head and subject teacher. Heads of Department are very much in the front line and, to improve the teaching and learning process effectively and efficiently, we ought to study and understand their work in detail and help improve it.

## 1.4   Potential value of the study

This study has the potential of uncovering the challenges and constraints to balancing department headship and management with subject teaching for current and aspiring department heads. This study also has the capacity to unveil the implications of department headship for subject teaching and vice versa. Apart from informing department heads' practice, the findings of this study can assist policy-makers, especially those at the Namibia Institute of Education Development (NIED) and the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) unit in Namibia, in identifying professional needs and developing relevant training programmes for heads of department.

## 1.5   Research goal

The purpose of this study was to unpack the tensions experienced by HoDs in balancing the responsibilities of department head and subject teacher in a public secondary school in northern Namibia.

To this end, the study addressed the following three research questions:

(a)    How do HoDs see their roles as department heads?

(b)    What are the challenges in balancing the responsibilities of department heads and subject teacher?

(c)    What strategies do HoDs have for addressing the challenges that arise?

## 1.6    Research Methodology

This study is situated in the interpretivist research paradigm with its emphasis on participants' experience and interpretation. According to Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004), the "interpretive paradigm focuses on the understanding of individual participants' experience and perceptions of their professional roles as experienced in their day-to-day working environment, from the standpoint of their unique contexts and backgrounds" (p. 21). This ties in with the focus of this research, as its purpose is gaining understanding of the tensions experienced between the responsibilities of department head and subject teacher by HoDs in a public secondary school, in northern Namibia.

A case study methodology was used to frame the investigation of the questions in this study. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011) note that case studies "provide unique examples of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly" (p. 289). This study sought to explore and report on the real-life practices of HoDs in the unique context of their school. Therefore, and because of its proven track record in exploring leadership practice, distributed leadership (Spillane, Halverson and Diamond, 2004) was applied as a theoretical framing.

The study's sample consisted of all four HoDs, the principal and eight teachers at the case study school. In order to enhance the validity of my study, I collected data with four instruments (observations, questionnaires, interviews and document analysis) to allow for triangulation.

## 1.7　Thesis outline

This thesis is structured as follows. In this first chapter, I present the context of the study, its rationale, its research goals and methodology. In Chapter Two I present what has been researched by other scholars and published in the area of department headship and teaching within the context of a school, as well as the contemporary leadership theory of distributed leadership. In Chapter Three I present the methodology employed in data collection and analysis. Chapter Four presents, discusses and weaves the main findings with relevant literature. In Chapter Five, the conclusion, I present a summary of my findings, and offer recommendations for research and practice. I also discuss the limitations and implication of the study in the final chapter.

# CHAPTER TWO

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1    Introduction

Many parts of the world, including South Africa and Namibia, have recognized the role of leadership in providing the best possible education for their learners (Bush, 2007, p. 391). School middle leadership has been an important focus of attention for research and development. Research has long shown how middle leaders and managers such as Heads of Department [HoD] play an indispensable and pivotal role in contributing to department and overall school performance. In executing their designated duties, role conflict can emerge for the HoD.

The expectations and demands on the HoD may well give rise to a conflict of responsibilities. For instance, in the art of balancing the responsibilities of department head and subject teacher; various tensions may or may not arise. Tensions may exist within the HoD's responsibilities and between his/her own responsibilities and those of other school personnel. The conflict may exhibit itself in a number of key 'tensions', in response to which the HoDs may (or may not) develop strategies for dealing with these tensions. It is against this background that this chapter seeks to acknowledge the pivotal nature of a role that combines subject expertise (teaching) with management, administration and leadership to bring out the knowledge in other people, and to unpack the inherent tensions that dominate this scope of educational practice.

This chapter is a presentation of what has been researched by scholars and published in the area of department headship and management within the institution of a school, and forms the basis on which my research is built.

This chapter starts by defining the broad concepts of educational management, administration and leadership as major concepts framing department headship to explore what they represent in the practice of HoDs in schools and also to explain how they relate to each other. This is followed by a brief history of the post of Head of Department. I then discuss the types of departments in secondary schools according to Busher and Harris (1999) and their applicability to my study. Next is a discussion of the importance and responsibilities of HoDs both in the United Kingdom and Wales, South Africa and Namibia contexts where I highlight the main duties and responsibilities of HoDs in school as perceived by different scholars.

Thereafter, I discuss the ways in which role conflict can exist in the practice of a department head and subject teacher. Since the essence of this study is about the tensions in balancing the responsibilities of department head and subject teacher by HoDs, I explore briefly the tensions existent in the role of department headship in general, providing background of what conflicting forces are extant to this position. Finally I define, discuss and briefly critique the distributed leadership perspective (following Spillane, Halverson and Diamond, 2004) as a theoretical framing and a practice as it pertains to department units.

## 2.2 Defining the broad Concepts of Educational Management, Administration and Leadership

Much has been written on management, administration and leadership; there are as many definitions as there are publications on these concepts. Educational research has long examined the application and significance of these concepts in school contexts, and continues to broaden this scope through organisations such as Namibia Educational Management and Administration Society (NEMAS); Education Management Association of South Africa (EMASA); Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance (MGSLG); British Educational Leadership, Management & Administration Society (BELMAS); Commonwealth Council of Educational Administration and Management (CCEAM); and Australian Council for Educational Administration (ACEL), at local and international levels respectively to mention a few. Aspects of innovation and continuous improvement of the teaching and learning environment are dependent on the application and manifestation of correct managerial, administrative and leadership skills by those in charge. In light of the above, it is very important for this study to provide a retrospective of definitions explaining what and how the concepts of management, administration and leadership represent themselves in the practice of department heads in schools.

In this chapter, department headship is explicated from a managerial standpoint. It is increasingly recognised, internationally and in South Africa, that managing teaching and learning is one of the most important activities for principals and other school leaders like HoDs (Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu and van Rooyen, 2009,

p. 1). In Namibia, the job description of HoDs is dominated by management and administrative tasks in comparison to leadership activities. It is upon this premise that I define department heads as teacher leaders who manage the teaching and learning within a subject unit.

### 2.2.1 Defining Educational Management

Some authors view management as an organisational and positional concept that is more concerned with managing people or things, and routine maintenance of the status quo. For instance, Christie (2010) defines management as "an organizational concept that relates to structures and processes by which organizations meet their goals and central purposes" (p. 696). She emphasises that it is more likely to be tied to formal positions than to persons. For van der Westhuizen (1991), management is the type of work which comprises regulative tasks or actions executed by a person or body in a position of authority in a specific field or area of regulation. Holding the same positional stance is Bush (2008) who views management as "an executive function for carrying out agreed policy" (p. 1). Similarly, Moelanjane (2004) notes that management is more concerned with setting up systems and administering them and about structures needed to achieve the direction and vision (p. 13). Leadership sets the vision, which is the influence and driving force towards the desired outcomes. The *how* of getting to this vision is what defines management.

Drawing from Gous (2006), the key words noteworthy in management are:

> planning – developing schedules to integrate and co-ordinate activities; organising
> – bringing order, remove conflicts; monitoring – ensuring that activities are

accomplished as planned and free of deviations; as well as actuating and controlling organisational operations to accomplish the outcomes (p.1).

The prime purpose of education management is the improvement of the quality of teaching and learning. In the context of South Africa, for example, the Report of the Task Team on Education Management Development highlights that "it is the purpose of education management development to build the capacity of the system, beginning at the school level, to effect transformation in terms of improving the quality of teaching and learning (South Africa. Department of Education, [DoE], 1996, p. 28). Thurlow (2003) shares a similar view that education management should aim to improve the organisational performance of structures in the education system primarily that of schools – school effectiveness, school efficiency and school relevance (p. 33). To summarise, management is about "doing things and working with people to make things happen" (South Africa. Department of Education, [DoE], 1996, p. 27). Although management falls within a positional hierarchy, it is a process to which all contribute and in which everyone in an organisation ought to be involved.

The task of managers, such as HoDs, at all levels in the education system therefore; "is ultimately the creation and support of conditions under which teachers and their students are able to achieve learning" (South Africa. Department of Education, [DoE], 1996, p. 27).

### 2.2.2  Defining Educational Administration

Both long-term and short-term management tasks like planning and monitoring require that day-to-day activities be achieved. Furthermore, as we shall see in a

later section on responsibilities of department heads, their core responsibilities involve a lot of administrative tasks such as recording, distributing and assessing. It is therefore important to shed light on what is meant by administration in the context of department headship.

The concept administration is prominent in United States literature, and is generally defined "as a process of working with and through others to accomplish school goals effectively and efficiently" (Sergiovanni, Kelleher, McCarthy and Wirt, 2004, p. 58). This is very close and relates well to the management definition discussed earlier, except in the sense that there is a performance quality – *effectively* and *efficiently*, to the definition of administration. Sergiovanni *et al* (2004) believe that this is due to limitation in resources, and best decisions as to how to allocate these resources efficiently is an additional quality. In a much broader context, and from a British perspective, Bolam (1999) uses educational administration in a "generic sense to cover educational policy, leadership and management activities at all levels" (p. 194). In essence, administration lies in executing tasks and implementing policies that govern the day-to-day operation of schools – a duty that rely on efforts of competent and committed professionals such as principals, HoD and teachers. In a nutshell, I view administration as the arrangements and tasks needed to control and execute the operation of a plan or organization. For example, HoDs as administrators have to constantly monitor the quality of teaching and learning by checking teachers' lesson planning and preparation, recording progress and targets, writing reports, as well as distributing and deploying resources.

### 2.2.3 Defining Educational Leadership

Another important concept encapsulating the practice of HoDs is leadership – the ability to influence people. While management is more concerned with maintenance of routine activities and tasks of organising, planning, and other repetitive operations that keep the school going; I contend that leadership is a force that creates the capacity among a group of people to do something that is different or better. In short, it is about bringing change and improvement. McKenna (1995, in Leask and Terrell, 1997) gives a classic definition of leadership, that "leadership is an agency of change, and could entail inspiring others to do more than they would otherwise have done, or were doing" (p. 95). According to Christie (2010), leadership is a "relationship of influence directed towards goals or outcomes, whether formal or informal" (p. 695) and within or outside the school. She argues that, whatever its basis, leadership is characterized by influence and consent rather than coercion; and that "leadership in schools is not the preserve of any position, and can be found and built throughout the school" (p. 696). People are not compelled into it; it is a matter of freewill directed toward a common goal or outcome.

Furthermore, leadership is detached from positional authority, and "may arise anywhere in the organisation and is not confined to formal leaders" (Bush, 2013, p. 543). For Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2004), school leadership is "the identification, acquisition, allocation, co-ordination, and use of the social, material and cultural resources necessary to establish the conditions for the possibility of teaching and learning" (p. 11).

### 2.2.4  The relationship between Management and Leadership

Leadership and management are two different concepts, but most often they are used interchangeably. It is noteworthy to mention here that a school principal may exhibit leadership but lack management skills, and vice versa. Therefore, it is inappropriate to use these concepts interchangeably. Although they are different, leadership and management are interdependent and cannot be separated. According to Coleman (2005), in practice it is often the same people who are both leading and managing, for example principals and HoDs (and of course teachers) in school settings. Another reason is that leadership and management are closely associated functions which cannot be attended to separately (Thurlow, 2003). As noted earlier, "the main difference between leadership and management is that leadership relates to mission, direction and inspiration, whilst management involves designing and carrying out plans, getting things done and working effectively with people" (Botha *et al*, 2013, p. 9). Therefore, educators (HoDs) must possess and combine both leadership and management expertise to successfully run educational institutions.

Heads of Department are expected to manage, administer and lead the operations of their school and departmental plans. As middle 'leaders' (with distributed responsibility and accountability for securing improvement), and middle 'managers' and 'administrators' (responsible for implementing school policies), their role is viewed by Greany (2014) as "the engine room for change" (p. 2). Having discussed these central concepts, I now focus on a brief account of the history and birth of the HoD position.

## 2.3    A brief history of the post of Head of Department

It is imperative to explore the origin of the position of Head of Department in this study to shed some light on when and why the position came into existence, which may help with understanding the role of HoDs in schools better. The post of HoD, or 'middle manager' as it is called, has long been the focus of research in the UK and other countries, unlike in Namibia where this study seem to be one of the few if there are any at all.

According to Hammersley-Fletcher and Kirkham (2007), in the context of the UK, posts involving additional responsibility in primary schools can be dated back to the Board of Education Handbook (1905) which recommended making use of individual teachers' expertise. Hammersley-Fletcher and Kirkham believe that:

> more explicit role differentiation and professional stratification began first in grammar schools, moving through the secondary sector between 1906 and 1956 Role differentiation meant that there was an extension to the teacher's role beyond that of class teacher, and professional stratification referred to increased status or salary levels (p. 424).

In 1998, the Teacher Training Agency in the UK drew up a list of standards for Subject Leaders that encouraged teachers to take a leadership stance in respect of their subject responsibility in curriculum areas. Bell and Ritchie (1999) argue that the inclusion of 'leader' in the nomenclature of such post-holders was indicative of a change of emphasis from that of maintaining the status quo to that of being an active participant in bringing about change, thus increasing teachers' potential contribution to school development and practice.

Promotion to the HoD position is usually achieved by an experienced member of staff with a proven track record of successful classroom teaching. Bennet notes that "subject leaders' authority comes not from their position but their competence as teachers and their subject knowledge" (2003, p. 4). Normally, he/she would be interviewed for such a post by the senior management in a school, in competition with other candidates. As the post carries the overall responsibility for the standards of teaching and learning in the department, HoDs generally receive extra salary increments in recognition of their additional managerial burden (Turner, 2000, p. 300). This meant that besides their class teaching responsibilities, additional leadership and managerial tasks are assigned to certain teachers to bring about change and improvement, and to maintain and execute directions within a subject unit.

## 2.4 Types of Departments

In this study, the term department refers to individual department units within a public school that is responsible for a specific learning area such as Languages (all indigenous and foreign languages) and Commerce (commercial and financial subjects) in a Namibian context. In secondary schools different departmental structures can be easily defined by size, configuration, and staff-membership and subject expertise, notes Busher and Harris (1999). They identify five types of departments (federal, confederate, unitary, impacted and diffuse) and argue that:

> Departments in secondary schools range from multidisciplinary departments such as design and technology departments, or science departments with many staff in them, to departments staffed by one or two people or even one person (the subject

leader) and several part-time staff (e.g. a music department or history department) (p. 309).

These different departmental structures inevitably affect the leadership approaches of a head of department.

For the purposes of my study, the first two (**'federal'** and **'confederate'**) have relevance and I discuss these now. Federal and confederate are the largest departments, containing many staff and possessing generous resources. These are type of departments such as science faculties or humanities departments. These are likely to contain and support the teaching of several subject areas. The departments of Commerce, Natural Sciences and Social Sciences at the case school all have five or more subjects while the Languages' department has two – English and Oshikwanyama. They all have plenty of resources, both capital and human with the least number of educators per department being six in Commerce.

Larger departments may well have several subject leaders (referred to as subject heads in the case study school), each with a particular subject specialism, responsible for creating an inspiring vision in their area which fits within the overall vision of the department area (Busher and Harris, 1999, p. 309. Due to the multiplicity of subjects within a department, HoDs cannot be expected to have expertise all of them, thus the position of subject heads becomes a logical alternative. In such departments (e.g. a humanities, or science department), the HoD may supervise the work of a specialist subject area and also have responsibility for co-ordinating the work of the other subject leaders in the area.

## 2.5 The Heads of Department in schools

### 2.5.1 Importance of the Head of Department in schools

The HoD has a direct influence upon the quality of teaching and learning within a subject area and the whole school. Sharing in this view is Rajoo (2012) who concurs "that subject leaders can make a difference to departmental performance in much the same way head teachers contribute to overall school performance" (p.21). This is in line with Huberman (1990) who suggests that at the department level there is both the opportunity and the possibility to influence whole school development and performance. In addition, Turner (2000) asserts that "the vital importance of the head of department is that it lies at the very heart of the educational process; it is directly related to teaching and learning; whether a pupil achieves or underachieves is largely dependent on the quality of planning, execution and evaluation that takes place within individual departments" (p. 205).

### 2.5.2 The responsibilities of Heads of Department in schools

The responsibilities of HoDs in the UK context according to Gold may include: "developing a set of principles which underpin learning and teaching; sharing that development with the rest of the department; ensuring that the department's aims and principles match those of the school; knowing the legal requirements for learning and teaching the relevant subject; successfully supporting the rest of the department in the learning and teaching; contributing to the direction and educational values of the whole school; and representing the department within and outside the school" (2000, p. xiii). Meanwhile, Hammersley-Fletcher and

Brundrett (2005) note some leadership responsibilities of subject leaders such as providing clear direction; building good working relationships; encouraging and ensuring participation; and monitoring and evaluating progress of learners and teachers.

From a South African perspective, the report on Educator Workload states that:

> Heads of department and teachers are required to spend a minimum of 85% of their teaching time, and the rest of their time on preparation and planning, assessment, extra-mural activities, management and supervision, professional development, pastoral duties, guidance and counselling and administration. (Chisholm, Hoadley, wa Kivulu, Brookes, Prinsloo, Kgobe, Mosia, Narsee and Rule, 2005, p.ix).

Above all else, HoDs have teaching commitments and other "routine administrative tasks that often become the dominant role they perform" (Rajoo, 2012, p. 22).

In the Namibian context, the job description of HoDs points out four main responsibilities. These responsibilities include but are not limited to assisting the principal in managing the school operations and promoting the education; maintaining total awareness of the administrative procedures and functions. It also states that HoDs should engage in class teaching and be responsible for the effective functioning of the department, and organise curricular activities to ensure that the subject, learning area or phase and the education of the learners is promoted in a proper manner. Furthermore, the job description stipulates for HoDs to be involved in school management with responsibilities relative to

implementation, evaluation, teaching, supervision, administration and in-service development, inspection and guidance of teachers at the school (p. 5). These responsibilities are further broken down into core duties namely: accountability, promoting a positive school climate, creating an effective learning environment, leading and managing the staff, staff development, effective deployment of staff and resources, interactions with stakeholders, and administrative tasks.

The probability of these various and nebulous responsibilities contradicting, clashing or hindering each other is very high. It is in this assumption this research emerges that leading and managing a department impinges on the HoD's own subject teaching; and vice versa. This means that, in balancing the role of department head and subject teacher, tensions emerge.

### 2.5.3 Role conflict for the department head and subject teacher

Role conflict considered here is part of a large framework – role theory that draws from classical organisational theory. Role conflict occurs when there are incompatible demands placed upon an employee such that compliance with both would be difficult (Rizzo, House and Lirtzman, 1970, p. 155). People experience role conflict when they are pulled in various directions as they try to respond to the many statuses and responsibilities they hold.

Many role-conflict situations are temporary but certain positions constantly visit conflicting role pressures upon their incumbents (Rizzo *et al,* 1970). The best known of such positions, according to Rizzio and colleagues, is that of the foreman, who is often caught in the middle between conflicting demands from superiors and subordinates (1970, p. 153). This is similar for HoDs [middle

managers] who are constantly caught in a web of actors (Spillane *et al,* 2004) such as inspectors, principals, teachers, parents and learners. The position of HoD assumes various socially constructed statuses (mentor, teacher, head, administrator, leader, supervisor, follower, representative and so on) that may result in role conflict.

According to Rizzo *et al* (1970, p. 155), role conflict can manifest itself in the following four ways. Firstly as **person-role or intra-role conflict** – this is conflict between the focal person's (HoD) internal standards or values and the defined role behaviour. Secondly, **intra-sender conflict** – conflict between the time, resources, or capabilities of the focal person and defined role behaviour or where one other person in a related role generates the incompatibility. Thirdly as **inter-role conflict**, when there is conflict between several responsibilities for the same person which require different or in-compatible behaviours, or changes in behaviour as a function of the situation i.e. role overload. Lastly, when there are **conflicting expectations and organizational demands** in the form of incompatible policies, conflicting requests from others, and incompatible standards of evaluation.

Role conflict for HoDs may emerge in their pursuit to meet the demands of department head and subject teacher. The HoD struggles conform to both the expectations of department head and subject teacher, simultaneously. Heads of Department might well be forced to choose one of several alternatives (Getzels and Guda, 1954): they may abandon one role and cling to the other, they may attempt some compromise between the responsibilities, or they may withdraw either physically or psychologically from the responsibilities altogether.

Heads of Department are caught in the middle of responsibilities (department head and subject teacher) and in a web of actors. The demands of these responsibilities and expectations of other actors may result in possible tensions. To keep abreast with the interest-point of this study which are the tensions in balancing the responsibilities of department head and subject teacher – let us look at some of the existing tensions for HoDs emerging from the literature.

## 2.6    Tensions inherent in school department headship

The concept 'tension' herein refers to a state of being between two or more forces, which are acting in opposition to each other. The expectations and demands on HoDs give rise to conflict of responsibilities. Firstly within the HoD's responsibilities and secondly between his/her own responsibilities and those of other school personnel. The conflict exhibits itself in a number of key tensions. As middle managers, HoDs are at the centre of numerous forces that may or may not drag them in opposite directions.

Bush (2003) asserts that "school leaders [experience] tensions between competing elements of leadership, management and administration" (p. 7). In carrying out these responsibilities and more, HoDs experience varying demands in balancing the responsibilities of department head and subject teacher. These demands are experienced as HoDs engage with their own and others' educational purposes, the power relationships of secondary schooling that their intermediary position highlights, and their relationships with others around them. In her study on emotions of teaching and educational change with teachers and HoDs from a

range of schools in Canada, Schmidt (2000) "findings reveal tensions between teaching and leading" (p. 827).

Hammond (2000, p. 2) recognises five major tensions that affect how HoDs define and carry out their responsibilities. The first tension he argues is whether the HoD is a **class teacher or subject leader?** Heads of Department ought to influence the quality of teaching of others and most often find it a challenge to devote enough time and energy in preparation for their own. The HoD cannot have the moral authority to monitor standards if his/her own are lacking in rigour (p. 2). This also includes **urgent tasks vs. important tasks.** According to Hammond (2000) short-term 'urgent' tasks, that are often administrative in nature, distract or make it hard for HoDs to work on 'important' long-term planning tasks. Many times HoDs have to abandon their teaching for days or even a week to attend workshops or certain meetings. Most often, HoDs miss classes on a daily-basis due to urgent management tasks, for instance when the HoD has to attend to a parent urgently.

Among Hammond's tensions is **whole-school view vs. department view.** He believes that there are times when representing the department and 'fighting one's corner' won support for the HoD from his subject colleagues. On occasions this was a necessary action for the effective HoD, for example when an unworkable scheme is being foisted on the department (p. 2). However, Hammond argues that the effective practitioner also needs to be able to see proposals (even those that might disadvantage the department in the short-term) from a whole-school perspective, despite criticism 'back home'. This view is shared by Bennett (2003)

that senior staff expect the middle leader to play a whole-school role and a common belief among middle leaders is that their loyalty is to their department or subject responsibilities (p. 5).

Another tension associated with the HoD post is **monitoring or surveillance?** Middle leaders' growing accountability for the quality of their departmental work created an expectation that they would monitor their colleagues' work. Heads of Department find the tasks of observing colleagues teach and inspecting workbooks threatening to departmental relationships (Hammond, 2000, p. 3). It is felt to replace trust with surveillance. Similarly, Bennet (2003) supports this view that "middle leaders show great resistance to the idea of monitoring the quality of their colleagues' work, especially by observing them in the classroom" (p.4). He adds that observation is seen as a challenge to professional norms of equality and privacy, and sometimes as an abrogation of trust (p. 4). Therefore, informal strategies and collaborations are employed to monitor colleagues' work, such as looking at assessment results, pupil records and displays of pupils' work, but monitoring through classroom observation tends to be resisted by leaders and colleagues (Hammond, 2000 and Bennet, 2003).

Lastly, Hammond (2000) points out **maintenance vs. development** as another tension. He argues that time and energy expended by the HoD on maintenance tasks did not make the optimal use of their abilities.

Having discussed the tensions, I now move on to discuss distributed leadership, the theoretical framing through which I am examining the practice of balancing of leadership and managing a department with teaching.

## 2.7 Distributed Leadership

### 2.7.1 Defining this nebulous concept

Distributed leadership is in vogue and continues to gain popularity in the ELM literature. Gronn (2010) notes that "there has been an accelerating amount of scholarly and practitioner attention" (p. 70) associated to this theory. In this light, various understandings and definitions of distributed leadership exist. Gamage (2006) defines distributed leadership as:

> A form of collective agency incorporating the activities of many individuals in a school, who work towards mobilising and guiding other teachers in the process of instructional change. It extends the boundaries of leadership significantly to increase the levels of teacher involvement to encompass a wide variety of input, skills and expertise (p. 113).

This collective and inclusive narrative of distributed leadership resonates with Grant's (2005) definition that distributed leadership is "a form of collective leadership where all people in the organisation can act as leaders at one time or another (p. 44). Later in 2008, Grant advances on this view by drawing on Gronn (2000) to argue that distributed leadership is "a group activity work where influence is distributed throughout the organisation and where leadership is seen as fluid and emergent rather than as a fixed phenomenon" (p. 87). Meanwhile, Harris and Muijs (2005) understand distributed leadership as "multiple sources of guidance and direction, following the contours of expertise in an organisation, made coherent through a common culture" (p. 31).

The constant messages surrounding the concept distributed leadership resonate with collectivism, empowerment, sharing of responsibilities and focusing on a common vision. It implies shifts in power, authority and control (Harris, 2013, p. 551). Harris further notes that the work of Spillane *et al* (2001; 2006; 2011) has shown that it is perfectly possible to research distributed leadership practice (p. 549). Since the main interest-point of this study is the tensions that exist between the leadership and management of department with the teaching practice of HoDs, it is appropriate to explicate it within the distributed leadership perspective (Spillane *et al*, 2004).

### 2.7.2   A brief critique of Distributed Leadership

The theory of distributed leadership may have become the theory of choice, but Harris warns us to recognise that it is "not devoid of controversy or critique" (2013, p. 548), and Lumby notes that its "literature is littered with contradictions" (2013, p. 588). More criticism of distributed leadership lies in issues of power and inclusion. As it appears from the extract of Spillane *et al* (2004)'s definition of distributed leadership below, the theory's original intent was to 'empower others' and transform leadership:

> This definition supports a transformational perspective on leadership, defining as 'the ability to empower others' with the purpose of bringing about a 'major change in the form, nature and function of some phenomenon' (Spillane *et al*, 2001; 2004, p. 24).

What is currently happening in the field is what Lumby (2013) refers to as utopian depictions. Firstly, some authors are using distributed leadership to mean any model that engage more than one individual in decision making or practice such as shared and participatory approaches. Harris argues strongly that distributed leadership is a "more palatable way of encouraging gullible teachers to do more work, a way of reinforcing standardisation practices, a way of reinforcing the status quo" (2013, p. 548). Secondly, most researchers takes distributed leadership on a normative stance (Lumby, 2013; Bush, 2013) simply advocating distributed leadership without full insight of what it entails, and end up abusing it or using it as a cover up. An example given by Lumby (2013) of the 'evangelic tone' and normative stance is a statement from the NCSL publication by Bowen and Bateson (2008) which reads:

> In order to allow all children to reach potential in terms of attainment and the wider Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda, leadership *should be distributed* throughout the school (p. 582).

How does the distribution contribute to attainment? This brings me to the third and most important criticism of distributed leadership, on results and outcomes, "*whether and how* distributed leadership influences organisational performance that matters most of all" (Harris, 2013). Harris further argues that advocating for distributed leadership without adequate consideration of what is being distributed is much more than ideological point scoring. This concurs with Hartley who notes that:

But what is to be 'distributed' remains very much within the strategic parameters and targets set by government. It is the tactics, not the strategy, which are available for distribution. Hierarchical forms of accountability remain (2010, p. 211).

Clearly what is to be distributed is limited to individual expertise, and the fact that accountability remains hierarchical. Lastly and more importantly, is the argument along masculinities and femininities, that distributed leadership avoids issues of power and gender inclusion.

Despite these criticisms, I chose to use distributed leadership as a theoretical and analytical lens (particularly the work of Spillane et al, 2004) because of its proven track record in studying and exploring leadership practice. By drawing on Harris (2013), I support her claim that "distributed leadership is without question an alternative way of understanding leadership practice" (p. 548). Distributed leadership is a good tool to explore the nature of leadership in terms of its practice – joint interactions of school leaders, followers and aspects of their situations in the case study school.

### 2.7.3 The theoretical underpinnings of Distributed Leadership (following Spillane and colleagues, 2001, 2004)

Distributed leadership has become a popular site for research and theorising over the last decade (Gunter, Hall and Bragg, 2013, p. 555)

Distributed leadership as a "theorisation draws mainly on distributed cognition and activity theory, with reference to micropolitics, and Bourdieu's thinking tool of habitus" (Gunter *et al*, 2013, p. 561). The interactive elements (subject, tools,

community, rules, division of labour and the object) of Engeström's activity system aligns and relates well to a distributed leadership perspective's "interactive web of leaders and followers, and the situation" (p. 27) using various artefacts (tools) to execute a leadership task. Pierre Bourdieu's various habitus (social, economic and cultural) which translate in symbolic capitals is also represented in the pre-requisites of Spillane and colleagues' framework.

The focal point of distributed leadership as a theoretical lens is the *leadership task/activity* – which examines leaders' thinking and action *in situ* (p. 10). In this essence, we cannot detach human cognition and action from the environment or situation it occurs. Spillane *et al* (2004) believes that human cognition is not entirely dependent on mental capacity because "sense-making is enabled (and constrained) by the situation in which it takes place" (p. 9). Therefore, the effectiveness of actors' (leaders and followers) thinking and response are intertwined with the artefacts (tools and resources) at their disclosure and the situation/context.

The availability, abundance or lack of, resources/tools can impact (positively or negatively) on the agency of the leader. Spillane *et al* (2004) argue that the appropriate unit of analysis of leadership practice in not leaders or what they do, but it is rather the leadership activity which is constituted in the interaction of leaders, followers, and their situation.

### 2.7.4 Applying a Distributed Leadership perspective to the HoD practice

In school departments, the HoDs have positional authority and power over their teachers due to organisational hierarchy and their cultural capital – knowing more of what works in various contexts or fields for instance. In this light, they are expected to take charge in leading and managing the department affairs with and through teachers and groups of teachers (a committee), and other resources (tools) to achieve whole school and department objectives and goals. In school departments, the constituent elements of a distributed leadership perspective are – multiple leaders and followers (HoD and teachers), artefacts (resources and tools), and the situation.

The radial cycle in Figure 1 below is a modification of Spillane *et al* (2004)'s leadership practice constituting elements (p. 11). I modified it with a sole purpose of simplification to help explain the distributed leadership perspective in a department unit.
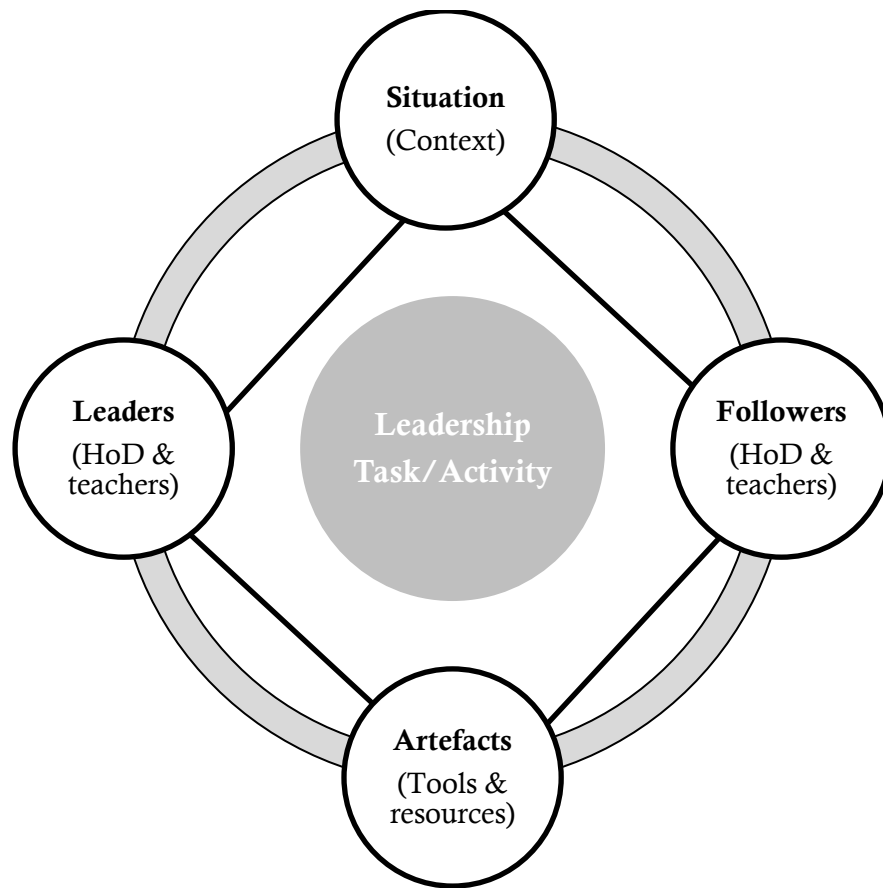
Figure 1: **Pre-requisites of distributed leadership practice** (adapted from Spillane *et al,* 2004).

Spillane and colleagues emphasises the *interdependencies* among the constituting elements of leadership tasks – leaders, followers and situation. The HoD and teachers interact and act using tools to execute leadership tasks.

For example, during a department meeting, the HoD and teachers occupy the conference room stuffed with various **artefacts** such as chair and tables, air-conditioning, documents (agendas, memos, reports, and minutes of previous meeting) and refreshments. This represents a part their **situation** – also known as the context or environment, it is not merely the medium or vessel (classrooms and

offices) in which leadership tasks are enacted and executed, it is the entire sphere encompassing all artefacts - tools and resources of all kinds that can enable or constrain leadership activities. In brief, their situation is simply the whole school and all the designed artefacts in it.

To execute and accomplish the purpose of the meeting **leaders and followers** – the collection of all persons involved in the leadership task (principal, parents, HoDs, teachers, learners and others) must interact, bringing to the task their various cultural capitals such as expertise. Due to the relational nature of leadership, leaders are dependent on the followers they lead – meaning that they not only influence the followers, but are also influenced by them (Spillane *et al,* 2004, p. 19). In executing tasks, power is shifted and shared among persons of different authorities and positions, a development called *negotiated order* (Spillane *et al,* 2004, p. 19). In other words, the actors (leaders and followers) divide among themselves the labour needed to execute the leadership task. For instance, one of the teachers/parents may chair the proceedings, while the HoD is the secretary; the principal welcomes all and gives feedback on the workshop he/she attended; another HoD reports on the departmental progress and presents their targets; another teacher reports to the team on the successful excursion they had with grade 8s. In essence, a web of leaders and followers share labour and interact to attain a task – discussion of various agenda points. Tasks can vary from macro such as parents' meeting or prize giving ceremony to micro ones such as class visits or one-on-one interventions.

Another pre-requisite element of the leadership task are the **artefacts** – defined as "externalised representations of ideas and intentions that are constitutive of leadership practice" (Spillane et al, 2004, p. 23), these are all the *tangible* (memos, policies, books, charts and others) and the *intangible* (language, computer programs, expertise) tools that are utilised by leaders and followers to execute tasks.

This is how leadership is distributed in a web of actors and artefacts in their respective situation, from a department unit's perspective. The endless interplay between these elements is what enacts, shapes actions and bring up innovation in leadership. These elements are highly intertwined, and in their interactions and collaborations leadership practice emerges.

## 2.8   Conclusion

School subject departments are complex environments with competing priorities and multiple points of focus. The role of HoDs echoes from department units, throughout the whole school, the community and beyond. Heads of Department work with staff, School Management Team, and the community in utilizing their expertise and initiative to benefit the school as a whole. High quality middle leadership is about more than managing a subject or an aspect of school life. Cladingbowl (2013) sums up "middle leaders as enthusiasts for their subject, good managers and administrators - but to be truly effective they embrace the more challenging characteristics of leadership, which are to do with vision, strategy and a drive towards improvement" (p. 6).

This chapter is a presentation of what has been researched by scholars and published in the area of department headship and management in the institution of a school, and forms the basis on which my research is built. Heads of Department are confronted by numerous tasks and expectations that are conflicting at some point, thereby hindering the execution of both department head and subject teacher simultaneously. In juggling to meet the demands and expectations of department head and subject teacher, HoDs may or may not experience tensions. This study was built on a premise to expose these conflicting forces. The next chapter looks at the methodology employed to frame the investigation of the questions in this study.

# CHAPTER THREE

# RESARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

## 3.1    Introduction

This chapter explains the research paradigm, design and methodologies employed in this study. To remind the reader, the aim of this study was to expose the tensions existing in balancing the responsibilities of department head and subject teacher for HoDs in a public secondary school in northern Namibia.

## 3.2    Research paradigm

This study is situated in the interpretivist research paradigm with its emphasis on perceptions and experience. According to Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004), the "interpretive paradigm focuses on the understanding of individual participants' experience and perceptions of their professional responsibilities as experienced in their day-to-day working environment, from the standpoint of their unique contexts and backgrounds" (p. 21). Interpretive research is fundamentally concerned with meaning and it seeks to understand participants' perceptions and understandings of situations. This is in line with the focus of this research, which was concerned with exploring the tensions experienced in being a departmental leader and subject teacher by HoDs in a public secondary school.

## 3.3 A case study approach

A case study methodology was used to frame the investigation of the questions. Key (1997) defines case studies as detailed investigations of individuals, groups, institutions or other social units. The principle difference between case studies and other research studies is that the focus of attention is the individual case and not the whole population of cases (Key, 1997). This case study did exactly that by unpacking the tensions in balancing the responsibilities of department head and subject teacher for HoDs from one case study school. This is in line with Yin's sentiments that a case study is a study of a case in a context and it is important to set the case within its context (2009, p. 18). Of late, Nieuwehuis (2010) defines a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context ...and in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (p. 75). Furthermore, Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011) note that case studies "provide unique examples of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly" (p. 289). These views are in line with the goal of this study which sought to explore and report on the real-life practices of HoDs in balancing their responsibilities of department head and subject teacher within their unique context of the case school.

Case studies have advantages. They portray what it is like to be in particular a situation; they catch close-up reality and thick descriptions of participants' experiences of thoughts and feelings, for a situation. Case studies involve looking at a case or phenomenon in its real-life context with a narrow focus and combining subject and objective data (Cohen *et al,* 2011, p. 290). For these

reasons, a case study design was found appropriate for this study where HoDs practices of department head and subject teacher were units of analysis.

### 3.3.1  Research site

The research site was a public secondary school in the Ohangwena region, northern Namibia. The site is within a walking distance from my house, in other words, the school was conveniently selected. This site was also opportunistically selected because I taught at the case study school for a period of two years prior to my year of full-time university study for my Masters' degree. In other words, I belonged to the community (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009) in which I conducted my study. I believe therefore, that my insider role status granted me more rapid and more complete acceptance by my participants. I agree with Dwyer and Buckle (2009) that "one's membership automatically provides a level of trust and openness in your participants and participants are typically more open with researchers so that there may be a greater depth to the data gathered" (p. 58). Naturally, this poses a validity threat. I expounded more on this issue in section 3.7, trustworthiness of my study.

The school has a population of 1062 learners, 39 state-employed teachers, one Japanese volunteer teacher and 30 state-employed institutional workers. Four additional staff; a librarian, a handy-man, tuck-shop attendant and the cook for the feeding scheme, are employed by the school. The school has four departments/subject areas, namely: Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Commerce and Languages across all grades (8-12) and Computer Studies in one of the 3

grade 8s up to grade 10 only. I served as a teacher in two departments, Natural Sciences and Social Sciences where I taught Biology and Geography respectively.

The School Management Team (SMT) serves as the think-tank of the school. It comprises the principal, four Heads of Departments (HoDs), the hostel superintendent (a teacher), and one School Board member who is also a teacher.

The school boasts an administration building with Wi-Fi connection, 28 classroom groups (ten grade 12s, ten grade 11s, two grade 10s, three grade 9s, and three grade 8s), ten offices, three laboratories (computer laboratory with Broadband connection, biology and physics), a library, staff room, a conference hall, sports fields and sport kits, and a feeding scheme is in place. There are 14 teachers' houses that are shared among the 40 teachers. The school is well fenced and the classrooms are also fenced off and separate from the hostel section.

### 3.3.2 Participants and Sampling

Maxwell (2008) sums up sampling as "what times, settings, or individuals you select to observe or interview, and what other sources of information you decide to use" (p. 234). As is customary, qualitative research samples comprise a few information-rich respondents studied in their context and in-depth.

The sample of this study was purposefully selected. Merriam (1998) highlights that "purposive sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which most can be learned" (p. 61). In this study, the sample constituted all four HoDs at the school as primary participants, for it is their leadership practices I was

interested in. The HoDs are qualified people who are in possession of first-hand information concerning tensions they experience in being a secondary school department head and subject teacher. The sample had additional participants, the principal and eight teachers. The principal and teachers helped in giving an 'outsider' view on their HoDs' practices of balancing the two responsibilities. Furthermore, the teachers serve under the stewardship of the HoDs and HoDs under that of the principal; it is very appropriate to examine the views of these actors on the responsibilities of their middle managers. This sample was selected in order to have balanced views on the study phenomenon and to enable triangulation.

## 3.4    Data collection instruments

The data gathering process took a period of six weeks, and during this six week period I spent every day in the case study school. According to Maxwell (2008) "qualitative studies generally rely on the integration of data from a variety of methods and sources of information; a general principle known as triangulation (p. 236). Similarly, Nene (2010) asserts that "multiple sources of evidence must be used in a case study" (p. 53). In this light, I used a number of methods to collect data, namely: interviews, questionnaires, observation and document analysis. This was done to enable me to triangulate, thus enriching the validity of my data. With observations, questionnaires, interviews and document analysis, I was able to unpack *what* and *how* departmental leadership intersects with subject teaching. The data collection methods are explained in detail in the following sub-sections. These methods are presented in order relative to the amount of data collected with

each tool. Nonetheless, the presentation and discussion in Chapter Four is heavily influenced by my research questions, as well as the order of the data sets and people from whom data have been collected (Cohen *et al,* 2011, p. 539).

It is vital to highlight here that time was another constraint in terms of data collection. I had limited time to collect my data because schools were about to go on holiday.

### 3.4.1 Observations

The first method of data collection was informal observations of HoDs in practice. Observations were 'semi-structured' (Cohen *et al,* 2011) and 'indirect' in nature – "non-participant observation of the natural setting and the target individuals in situ" (Yin, 2009, p. 109). Observation Schedules (Appendix A) were aimed at bridging the gap between what the HoDs claimed through interviews, and what I saw as a researcher. An observation, according to Cohen *et al* (2011), provides the opportunity to gather live data from naturally occurring social situations and is very useful in capturing "non-verbal behaviour" (p. 298). In this way, notes Cohen *et al* (2011), the researcher can look directly at what is taking place *in situ* rather than relying on second-hand accounts (p. 456). This means of data collection is also "less reactive than other types of data-gathering methods" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 298).

It is worth stating here that amidst data collection observations proved unsuccessful because HoDs were most often seated in the office, or in class teaching, and sometimes not at school at all due to various commitments. As a

result, I introduced self-completion questionnaires (discussed in section 3.4.2) not only to teachers as was the initial plan, but for the HoDs as well. Nevertheless, I managed to capture some data through my observations. Through observations I managed to capture live actions such as a HoD missing a certain class or going to class late due to a managerial task, or not being able to supervise and render support because s/he had to go teach.

### 3.4.2 Self-Completion Questionnaires

Self-completion questionnaires (Phellas *et al*, 2012, p. 184), Appendix B, were administered to the primary participants [four HoDs] and to eight teachers (four male and four female), two from each department. I gave the questionnaires to teachers to get outsider views on the three research questions and help in indicating prevailing conditions or particular trends in the HoDs' practices of department head and subject teacher. The questionnaire comprised closed-ended (closed questions) for participants' biographical information and open-ended (open questions) on the research questions. Here I exercised caution to prevent teachers' from expressing opinions on how effective their HoDs were by setting precise and straightforward questions.

This instrument was selected because it is easy to standardise, cheap to administer, and allows for a greater geographical coverage than face-to-face interviews. The absence of the researcher also provides greater anonymity for the respondent (Phellas et al., 2012, p. 184).

Questionnaires on the other hand are generally low in validity because they do not explore questions in any detail or depth. Complex issues which require

participants to explain their reasons for believing something are difficult to explore using this method. Lastly, where closed questions are used the respondent is restricted to answering questions using the categories provided by the researcher. That is why I used face-to-face interviews with primary participants to compensate for this limitation.

During data collection, I learned that researchers are at the mercy of their participants. These persons have their tight work schedules and finding time for interview sessions or to complete questionnaires can be challenging, as was the case in my study. I had to drop two participants (teachers) and find their replacements at the last minute for reasons such as 'I lost the questionnaire' and 'I do not have time' respectively, despite their having consented to participate in the study. Despite these challenges, the questionnaire return from teachers and HoDs was 100% and 50% respectively. Two HoDs did not return the questionnaires, for they were busy marking mock examinations and could not complete the questionnaires.

### 3.4.3 Face-to-face interviews

Face-to-face interviews were administered with the primary participants (each of the four HoDs) and the principal, to gain deep insights into the research questions. Interviews are a systematic way of talking and listening to people to collect data from individuals through conversations (Cohen, 2011). For Oatey (1999), an interview as "a purposeful conversation in which one person asks prepared questions (interviewer) and another answers them (respondent)" (p. 1). Recently, Yin (2009) defines an individual interview as a "type of interview in which the

person is interviewed for a short period of time, an hour, for example" (p. 107). This is done to gain information on a particular topic or a particular area to be researched.

The interview design adopted open-ended questions which enabled participants to talk freely and to tell their stories, allowing me to gather rich data. The interview schedule, Appendix C, comprised only open-ended questions, revolving around what, who and how, allowing the participant to answer without presented or implied choices. Interviews also allow the interviewer to control the context and the environment in which the interview takes place, as well as more scope to ask open-ended questions since participants do not have to write in their answer (Phellas, Bloch & Seale, 2012). Although there was an interview schedule, I was flexible in asking questions. I found myself diverting from the order of questions on my interview schedule to probe and request clarity but still kept to the topic and logic.

Interviews have disadvantages, usually in terms of the amount of time needed to collect and analyse the responses (Oatey, 1999). Although I managed to record the HoDs and the principal during our interview sessions, one HoD was adamant about recording the session but after reassuring her of the anonymity, privacy, and importance of recording the data for my study, she granted me permission. Heads of Department and the principal are most often busy and preoccupied with something; it was another hurdle to book a session of 45 minutes or more with them. We had to cancel many sessions due to urgent and unforeseen circumstances. After the interviews, recorded conversations were transcribed into

written conversation for analysis, and the findings are presented and discussed in Chapter Four.

During interviews, all participants alluded to time as a big challenge in balancing the responsibilities of department and subject teacher. While making arrangements and booking interview session with HoDs, I had to follow their timetables and find free time slots. I found these timetables intriguing especially with regard to the amount of free/non-teaching time they have. This led to me to draw on documents as another data gathering tool.

### 3.4.4 Document analysis

The last data collection method I drew on was document analysis. As a research method, notes Bowen (2009), "document analysis is particularly applicable to qualitative case studies – intensive studies producing rich descriptions of a single phenomenon" (p. 29). Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents – both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material (Bowen, 2009, p. 27). Like other analytical methods in qualitative research, document analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). For this method, three sets of documents were reviewed in my study, the timetabling policy (D1), the timetables of HoDs (D2) and the job description of HoDs (D3). These additional documents spoke to responsibilities of department head and subject teacher. The analysis of the timetabling policy and timetables of HoDs was done to review times allocated to subject teaching and time left for department headship and management

responsibilities for HoDs. The job description was viewed to analyse what responsibilities HoDs were expected to fulfil.

Document analysis requires data selection, instead of data collection. Furthermore, document analysis is less costly than other research methods, less time-consuming and therefore more efficient than other research methods, and documents are 'unobtrusive' and 'non-reactive' (Bowen, 2009, p. 31). The information contained in documents can suggest some questions that need to be asked and situations that need to be observed as part of the research, as will become evident in the next chapter. Document analysis also has its shortcomings. Because documents are not specifically produced for research, they may provide insufficient details. Also, documentation is sometimes not retrievable or retrievability is difficult, access to documents may be deliberately blocked, and an incomplete collection of documents suggests 'biased selectivity' (Bowen, 2009, p. 32).

## 3.5 Data analysis

Data analysis, Cohen *et al (*2011) state, refers to "making sense of data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities" (p. 537). Data analysis started very early immediately after my data capturing began. This is motivated by Silverman (2010) who notes that "unless you analyse data more or less from day one you will always have to play 'catch-up'" (p. 219). In favour, Cohen *et al* (2011) adds that "early analysis reduce the problem of data overload by selecting out significant features for future focus" (p. 539).

The interview data was transcribed and colour-coded, and sorted out into themes and categories in relation to the research questions. I used content analysis and thematic analysis techniques to examine my data. Bowen (2009) states that "content analysis is the process of organising information into categories related to the central questions of the research" (p. 32). Thematic analysis is a form of pattern recognition within the data, with emerging themes becoming the categories for analysis (Bowen, 2009, p. 32). In favour of content analysis, the Creative Commons [CC] (n.d) defines content analysis as "a procedure for the categorisation of verbal data, for purposes of classification, summarisation and tabulation" (p. 4). In other words, categorizing strategies such as coding and thematic analysis were applied to questionnaire data, and connecting strategies such as narrative and content analysis were applied to interview data. The data from all instruments were compared for patterns of similarities and differences and in developing the emerging themes and categories presented and discussed in the next chapter.

All emergent themes were explicated under the theoretical scope of a distributed leadership perspective (following the works of Spillane *et al*, 2004, Spillane, 2006, and Harris and Spillane, 2008).

The findings of research question one on the responsibilities of HoDs were discussed and interpreted using Grant's (2008) model of teacher leadership.
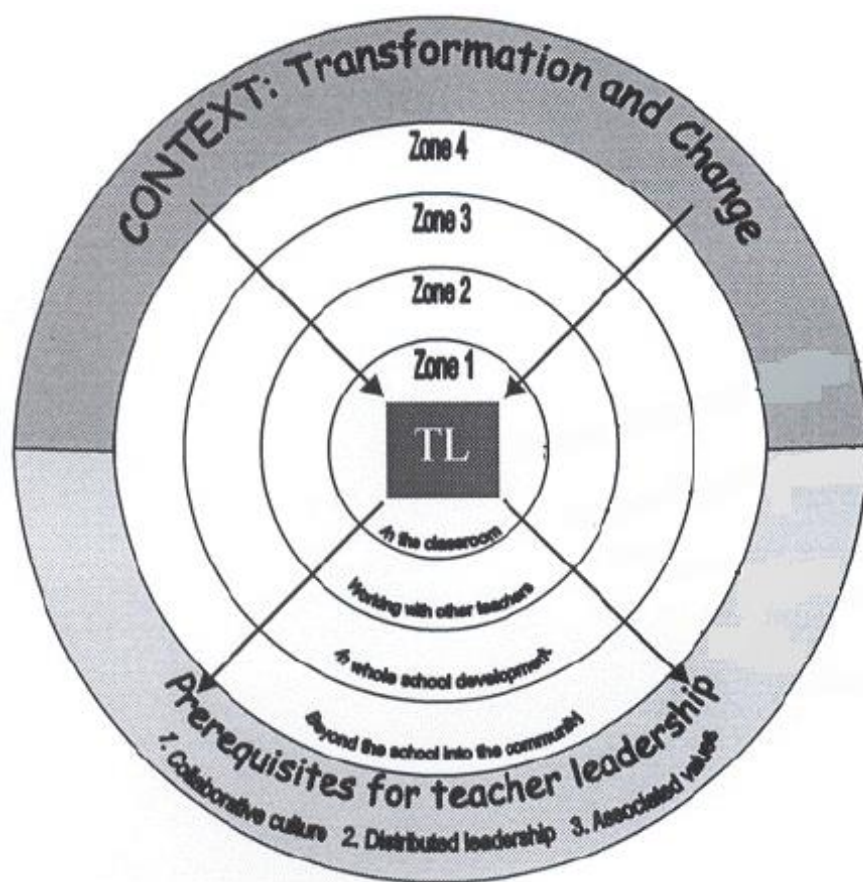
TEACHER LEADERSHIP

| First level of analysis:<br>Four Zones | Second level of analysis:<br>Six Roles |
|---|---|
| Zone 1<br>In the classroom | One: Continuing to teach and improve one's own teaching |
| Zone 2<br>Working with other teachers and learners outside the classroom in curricular and extra-curricular activities | Two: Providing curriculum development knowledge<br>Three: Leading in-service education and assisting other teachers<br>Four: Participating in performance evaluation of teachers |
| Zone 3<br>Outside the classroom in whole school development | Five: Organizing and leading peer reviews of school practice<br>Six: Participating in school level decision-making |
| Zone 4<br>Between neighbouring schools in the community | Two: Providing curriculum development knowledge<br>Three: Leading in-service education and assisting other teachers |

Figure 2: **Model of teacher leadership** (Grant, 2008, p. 93)

In brief, the model has two levels of analysis, four zones and six responsibilities under which educators can exercise leadership. It was initially developed for Post Level One teachers, and I applied to the responsibilities of HoDs in my study. In **Zone One: Teachers leading in the classroom situation,** it is about teachers "continuing to teach and improve their own teaching" (Role One). **Zone Two: Teachers working as leaders outside the classroom with other teachers and learners in curricular and extra-curricular activities;** in this zone, according to Grant (2008, p. 93), teachers often exercise three leadership responsibilities, namely "providing curriculum development knowledge (Role Two), leading in-service education and assisting other teachers (Role Three) and participating in performance evaluation of teachers (Role Four). In **Zone Three: Teachers leading outside the classroom in the whole school development,** teachers are involved in organizing and leading peer reviews of school practice (Role Five) and participating in school level decision-making (Role Six) (Grant, 2008, p. 93). Lastly, **Zone Four: Teachers leading between neighbouring schools and into the community,** the teachers' responsibilities have to do with the link between teachers and the neighbouring schools in the community (Grant, 2008, p. 93), and the involvement for teachers at the circuit and regional level.

Data in response to research question two, challenges extant between the responsibilities of department head and subject teacher, were interpreted and discussed with the help of Rizzo *et al* (1970)'s categories of role conflicts. Conflicting role demands can exist within the internal standards or values of the HoD – **person-role or intra-role conflict;** between responsibilities of HoDs (i.e.

department head and subject teacher) – **inter-role conflict**; between the time, resources, or capabilities of HoD and other educators' responsibilities – **intra-sender conflict**; or when there are **conflicting expectations and organizational demands** in the form of incompatible policies, conflicting requests from others, and incompatible standards of evaluation.

## 3.6   Ethical considerations

Conducting qualitative research "inevitably involves contact with human subjects in the field" (Silverman, 2010, p. 154) and it is therefore important that ethical principles are upheld in all situations throughout the entire study. I ensured that ethical principles regarding research were followed. First, I obtained consent (Appendix D, E and F) from the various gatekeepers – such the Directorate of Education in the region and principal of the school. This aligns with Cohen *et al* (2011) who assert that "social research necessitates obtaining the consent and cooperation of subjects who are to assist in investigations and of significant others in the institutions or organisations providing research facilities" (p. 77). At the beginning of the research process, I briefed the entire staff at the case school about my study's goal and potential participants. With regard to issues of 'access and acceptance' by participants (Cohen *et al*, 2011), I wrote invitations to all potential participants (Appendix G), to participate in the study where I informed them of their rights to confidentiality, anonymity, and right to refuse to participate or withdraw from the study whenever and for whatever reason they wish, free from any coercion or consequences thereof (Silverman, 2010).  For the key participants – the HoDs and principal – I requested their permission to audio record the

interviews. They also signed a declaration form (Appendix H) stating their willingness and voluntary participation in the study.

## 3.7  Trustworthiness of the study

According to Creswell (2006), trustworthiness is about the credibility of the research findings. Credibility is concerned with the integrity of the conclusion which is generated from the research findings (Bryman, 2008). In order to enhance the credibility of my research, I used different data collection methods such as observing, questionnaires, interviewing, and document analysis. In brief, the trustworthiness of this study was enhanced by triangulation and formulation of questions carefully to achieve clarity as seen in Appendices B and C. While interviewing the participants, our conversations were recorded to capture things that may have been omitted to cover the actual primary responses, and I took some notes while observing the HoDs to have a sort of balanced empirical evidence for my findings.

I agree that issues of consistency, are very debatable in case study research, but I relate to Mason (1996 cited in Silverman, 2010) who argues that "qualitative research should produce explanations which are generalizable in some way, or which have wider resonance" (p. 140). Therefore, as is customary with case study research; the potential to generalise lies with the reader rather than the researcher.

### 3.7.1  Insider status

Furthermore, to study a case that is directly linked to my work posed a unique challenge, in that participants might have concealed important information

because of my insider position. According to Dwyer and Buckle (2009), drawing on Kanuha (2000) and Asselin (2003), insider research, "refers to when researchers conduct research with populations of which they are also members so that the researcher shares an identity, language, and experiential base with the study participants" (p. 58). Asselin (2003) further observes that role confusion can occur in any research study, but noted that there is a higher risk when the researcher is familiar with the research setting or participants through a role other than that of researcher. This specifically speaks to my case, for I was both researcher and member of the research setting. On further reflection as I was presenting and analysing the data, I realized I sometimes shared experiences, opinions, and perspectives with my participants because the research setting and experiences were familiar to me.

Although this insider status can be very beneficial as it affords access, entry, and a common ground from which to begin the research, notes Dwyer and Buckle (2009), it has the potential to impede the research process as it progresses. They argue that "it is possible that the participants will make assumptions of similarity and therefore fail to explain their individual experience fully; and it is also possible that the researcher's perceptions might be clouded by his or her personal experience and that as a member of the group he or she will have difficulty separating it from that of the participants" (p. 58). Furthermore, its undue influence might affect the analysis, leading to an emphasis on shared factors between the researcher and the participants and a de-emphasis on factors that are discrepant, or vice versa (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009, p. 58). With the above in mind, I did my best to be as objective as possible during data analysis and avoid

subjectivity at all cost by presenting the data in the narrative form with lots of raw data and by means of participants' quotations.

Meanwhile, I aligned myself to Dwyer and Buckle who note that "disciplined bracketing and detailed reflection on the subjective research process, with a close awareness of one's own personal biases and perspectives, might well reduce the potential concerns associated with insider membership" (2009, p. 59).

## 3.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I explained my rationale for the paradigm, design and methodologies for my research. The methods I used for data collection are clearly detailed in this chapter, and consisted of focused interviews, self-completion questionnaires, observations, and document analysis. I indicated how I selected the participants and how my data analysis was carried out.

The next chapter presents and discusses the data I collected.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

## 4.1    Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the main findings of my study in light of the relevant literature. The leading data in the presentation is that obtained from the interviews with HoDs and the principal. The data from questionnaires, my observation fieldnotes and document analysis are used as complementary data.

This chapter begins with a brief outline of the 'code names' of the participants and collection instruments. I have organised the presentation and discussion section according to my three research questions. It is worth mentioning again that the study sought to investigate the tensions experienced by Heads of Department when balancing their responsibilities of department head and subject teacher. The presentations and discussions in this chapter are organised around these research questions, which serve as themes to guide my interpretation:

- ✓ What roles do Heads of Department enact?
- ✓ What are the challenges faced as they enact these different roles?
- ✓ What strategies do they employ to address these challenges?

## 4.2    Coding and data presentation

A code name in my context refers to a special word or name which is used instead of the real name of someone or something to keep the real name secret. For ethical reasons thereof, and in line with Cohen *et al* (2011)'s principle of ensuring

anonymity by "not using the names of the participants or any other personal means of identification" (p. 91), the names used for participants are pseudonyms. For ease of reading when presenting data, participants have been coded as: **HoD1, 2, 3** and **4**, for the four Heads of Department; **P** for the principal; and **T1** to **T8** for the eight teachers.

During the analysis process, I corroborated findings across various data sets to increase trustworthiness of my study. Where I used the acronym "Q", I am referring to self-completion questionnaire data from teachers. The acronym OS represents the Observation Schedule and the documents I used are referred to as D1 - 3 respectively.

Because this is an interpretive study, I used the narrative form as a way of portraying the participants' perceptions and experiences of HoDs balancing their responsibilities as department head and subject teacher. It is important in case studies, Cohen *et al,* (2011) argue, for events and situations to be allowed to speak for themselves, rather than to be interpreted, evaluated or judged by the researcher. Thus I allowed the voices of participants to be heard throughout by way of quotations so that the reader is able to experience the participants' context.

There was considerable unanimity in the responses of the participants to most research questions. I now move on to present and discuss my data. I begin by discussing the different roles of HoDs as they emerged from the data in response to my first research question.

## 4.3    The roles of Heads of Department

In this section, I present and discuss the findings in response to research question one on the roles of HoDs at the case study school using Grant's (2008) model of teacher leadership developed in the context of South Africa. It is important to note that the model was initially developed for Post Level One teachers as leaders. As subject teachers, HoDs carried out similar or related roles to Post Level One teachers, and Grant's model has been successful in examining teachers' leadership roles. Furthermore, the model's versatility and wide resonance to various educator roles speaks to many different purposes and activities, including those of HoDs. Therefore, I found the model useful as a conceptual tool to describe and interpret the roles of HoDs in the case study school. I now discuss the tasks of the HoDs in my study according to each of the four zones of teacher leadership as described in Grant's (2008; 2012) model.  Hereafter, for ease of reading, I call Grant's model 'the model'.

### 4.3.1    Zone One: Leading in the classroom

#### 4.3.1.1 Allocation of teaching time

Subject leaders' authority comes not from their position but their competence as teachers and their subject knowledge (Bennet, 2003, p. 4).

The tasks of HoDs in subject teaching resonate with **Zone One** of the teacher leadership model: **Teachers leading in the classroom situation.** According to the model, this is a zone which is about a teacher "continuing to teach and improve

one's own teaching" referred to as 'role one'. This resonated well with the findings of my study.

The National External School Evaluation policy document (D1) on timetabling indicates that the teaching time allocation for HoDs is 75% of the total periods of timetabling in school (Namibia. MoE, 2011, p. 1). It is comparable to South Africa, where the HoDs are expected to spend a minimum of 85% of time teaching, and the rest of their time on preparation and planning, assessment, extra-mural activities, management and supervision, professional development, pastoral duties, guidance and counselling, and administration. (Chisholm, Hoadley, wa Kivulu, Brookes, Prinsloo, Kgobe, Mosia, Narsee and Rule, 2005, p .ix).

When asked about how much teaching HoDs engaged in and if they had special class allocations, HoD2 responded that:

> We don't have special class allocation, because according to the document national policies, the HOD should have 75% of teaching. That means we have to teach like other teachers. You find that our timetable is full and so on (I).

On the same question, HoD4 reiterated a similar view that "according to the policy we are supposed to have 75% of teaching time – but at this point in time I am at 57% teaching time. I actually have four class groups, that per day is roughly 5 – 6 periods" (I).

However, an analysis of the HoDs' timetables, (D2) showed their respective teaching time percentages as follows: HoD1 50%; HoD2 48%; HoD3 54%; and

HoD4 52%. This roughly translates into a non-teaching time of 50% (HoD1), 52% (HoD2), 46% (HoD3), and 48% (HoD4). This finding concurs with HoD3 and HoD1 who indicated fewer teaching times of "four" and "three, or two" (I) classes per day respectively. This would seem that these HoDs actually had more than 25% of their job description time that they could devote to the role of department head for carrying out management, administrative and leadership duties.

### 4.3.1.2 HoDs as expert teachers

As classroom practitioners and subject teachers, the HoDs faced competing demands in terms of exemplary teaching practice and had to work extra hard to perform exceptionally well in their subjects. This view was stressed by HoD1 who noted that:

> In the first instance, you are a teacher, and secondly you are a management member. Now, teaching is demanding. And when you teach, there is always a comparison, people want to compare. In our department we have the HoD, how are the kids performing in his subject? You have to make sure that challenge, you always came on top. Otherwise, if you are performing lower than the teachers under your department, it creates another vision to them. That's demanding and challenging, you have to always be on your toes that at least I have to do any extra mile (I).

The principal supported this claim that as a HoD, one has "to prove to the other colleagues in the department since you are heading it, that you have to pull your socks up and be the exemplary colleague" (P, I). In relation to Spillane's theory of distributed leadership (2001, 2004), HoDs served as "leaders" in their classrooms

"situations" where they were involved in the "interactions" with their learners as "followers" throughout the process of teaching and learning. In other words, HoDs led in zone one of the model.

It is this teaching experience that led to HoDs being selected as department heads in the first place. This view is supported by Turner (2003) who asserts that "department heads are usually appointed on the basis of their track record as a successful classroom practitioner and their potential ability to lead a department" (p. 44). According to Gold (2000), HoDs begin with knowledge of one set of skills (associated with classroom teaching) and then develop a different set, which encompass managing and leading a department. In leading a department, HoDs have to interact with and lead other teachers within the school – zone two of the model.

### 4.3.2 Zone Two: Leading outside the classroom with other teachers and learners in curricular and extra-curricular activities

As with the model of teacher leadership, the HoDs' task of department head in subject leadership and management included working as leaders outside the classroom with other teachers and learners in curricular and extra-curricular activities (zone two). In relation to Spillane's (2006, p. 2-4) theory of leadership practice from a distributed perspective, the HoDs were "leaders" in their department "situation" where they led and "interacted" with teachers as "followers". In this zone, according to the model, teachers often exercise three leadership roles, namely "providing curriculum development knowledge (Role Two), leading in-service education and assisting other teachers (Role Three) and

participating in performance evaluation of teachers (Role Four). In my study the HoDs engaged all three roles of zone two of the teacher leadership model, but in a very managerial manner.

### 4.3.2.1 Providing curriculum development knowledge (role two)

In relation to 'role two' of the model, three HoDs alluded to distributing resources and teaching materials, and subject allocation to the teachers in their departments as well as engaging in extramural activities with learners. HoD2 stated that:

> My core roles on these subjects is to make sure that my department has the syllabi for all those subjects, materials, I have to make sure that all the teachers have the syllabus and also the scheme of work. And then also, I have to make sure that these teachers they are following the syllabus that means I use to guide them and motivate them so that they can stick to the basic competencies, and also to influence, and motivate them not to teach in isolation, teach groups, assist each other (I).

Similarly, HoD1 went further to touch on subject allocation when he indicated that:

> The first thing that you as a HOD have to do, at the beginning of the year, you have to allocate subjects to teachers in your department, you have to make sure that necessary material are there, and if not, you have then to request your teachers to give you list of prescribed books and other additional things that they need so that you will order them, or request from the region or nearby schools. Those are the roles you have to play (I).

Equally, HoD3 supported this claim that she made sure that the latest syllabi were available for all subjects, and also if the teachers were using the right Continuous Assessment (CA) forms (I). One teacher participant confirmed these claims when she pointed out curriculum support through moderation. She noted that "when I set a test or exam paper, he [HoD] actively moderate it for me, tell me in a polite way to correct mistakes and also give me supporting materials, old question papers of past years and notes for learners" (T7, Q, p. 2).

Lastly in this zone, HoD1 asserted that he engaged in "extramural activities by taking learners here and there to participate in sports events, debating, or social events that are happening outside of the school" (I). Moving on, the HoDs in the case study school also engaged in in-service practices and practices and assisted others; i.e. role three.

### 4.3.2.2 Leading in-service education and assisting other teachers (role three)

The principal alleged that the HoDs supported teachers by coordinating the teaching and learning of subjects in the correct and proper manner in relation to zone three of the model. The principal reiterated that:

> The role of the HOD is to manage a department in a school, mostly related to the execution of the subjects as well as coordinating the teaching and learning of subjects under him/her that is the main role of HOD. The ability to ensure that teaching and learning of subjects under his/her department is working (P, I).

To execute this role properly, HoDs were engaged in their own in-service education upon appointment in order to develop themselves as professionals.

*In-service training for HoDs*

All HoDs were found to engage in in-service training initiatives that expanded both their leadership and subject expertise. HoD1 explained this as follows:

> When you become a member of management you are being trained how to manage the school, but not necessarily a specific subject or field but you are just managing the whole school. You become a manager, you get the training, but this normally is just done by the principal or either by the HoDs that are there at the school (I).

In the same vein, the regional office of education took responsibility for giving training to newly appointed HoDs: "once you are appointed as a HoD, the regional office takes the responsibility of giving you a workshop. Now, this is to give you more and even to tell you the specific job that you have to go and do" (HoD1, I). HoD2 stated a similar view when he highlighted that:

> I got only training after I was appointed. That's formal training organised by the region, via the circuit – whereby we gather at a certain place for two or three days, and we were trained how to induct new teachers and those kind of things, and to implement the policies (I).

This concurred with observation data that HoD1 missed classes from Tuesday the 15th to Friday the 18th of July 2014, due the induction workshop of all the HODs that were recently appointed in the region (OS and HoD1, I). For HoDs to successfully assist teachers, and to help with in-service development, they too needed the necessary training in this regard. However, in relation to role three of

the model, not only did the HoDs receive in-service training and assistance, they also offered in-service training to teachers in their departments.

### *In-service training for teachers*

HoD3 raised the point of staff in-service development which relates to 'role three' of the model – leading in-service education and assisting other teachers. She asserted that beside class visits, "the other thing is also to make sure that a certain teacher attends necessary training workshop when it come to that particular subject – so you disseminate information" (HoD3, I). In addition, I observed HoD2 "briefing and inducting a new teacher intern in his department, and also giving her teaching materials" (OS, 11/07/2014).

### 4.3.2.3 Monitoring teaching practice (role four)

In relation to 'role four' within the second zone of the model, three HoDs indicated that they were involved in observing and guiding or motivating teachers; what Hammond (2000) would call monitoring or surveillance. HoD1 explained that:

> Even though you are not well specialised in all the subjects, you have to guide your teachers on how to fulfil the tasks given to them. And you have to class visit them, whenever you are observing them while they are teaching you have to appreciate what they do and if you see something has been left out, you have to call that teacher, to talk to him, and you guide (I).

Sharing a similar view was HoD3 who stated that "the other thing is now that issue of monitoring, class visits" (I). For one of the teachers, her HoD was

engaged in 'role four' by keeping an eye on subject performance. She stated that the HoD "do make sure that she manage how teachers are doing by looking at the subject performance, and whether teachers are teaching" (T6, Q, p. 2).

The roles exhibited by HoDs in Zone Two of the model, corresponded with the roles of HoDs stipulated in the job description of the HoD (D3) and the ministerial policy (D1) (Namibia. MoE, 2011). The roles stipulated in the job description document are, for example, monitoring quality teaching and learning, supervising teachers, participating in extra-curricular involvement as well as managing resources and supplies of equipment in the school.

In this regard, according to Spillane's (2006) theory of distributed leadership, it was the 'interaction' between the HoDs, teachers and learners towards the accomplishment of teaching and learning processes in the case study school which was important. The interactive web of actors was important because the purpose of coming to school was to improve these teaching processes in order to achieve good school performance.

Worth noting at this stage is the focus on management systems and processes that HoDs undertook throughout this zone. I now move on to discuss zone three of the model that speaks to whole school development.

### 4.3.3 Zone Three: Leading whole school development

According to the model, this is the zone where teachers are involved in "organizing and leading peer reviews of school practice" (Role Five) and "participating in school level decision-making" (Role Six) (p. 93). According to

Grant (2012), "school practices such as fundraising, policy development, staff development, professional development initiatives as well as whole school evaluation initiatives" (p. 58) fall under indicators of roles five of the model in zone three.

In relation to this fourth zone, HoDs engaged in whole school leadership and management primarily through the School Management Team [SMT]. This is the top decision making body in a public school and, in the case study school, comprised the principal, the four HoDs, the hostel superintendent, a teacher representative as well as a School board representative. As members of the management team, the HoDs' responsibilities went beyond their own department across the whole school, making them inspirational managers at the higher levels of management. The HoDs engaged in role five in two ways.

### 4.3.3.1 Organizing and leading peer reviews of school practice (role five)

*Maintenance of school infrastructure*

Heads of Department in this study utilised the authority and power vested in them as SMT members to engage in whole school leadership and reviewing others' works or practice. As members of the SMT, HoDs had a whole school view on leadership and management, and maintenance of school infrastructure. Their roles on the SMT were summed up by the principal as:

> School management, school development – taking the school from point A to point B, obviously to make the school better, the physical infrastructure of the school, the mood of the teachers in the school, the relationship of the school with

stakeholder, partnerships with either the community or the ministry or the police, and lastly to make sure that discipline is maintained also in the school (I).

Equally, HoD1 stressed that the role that he played as a member of the SMT was managing the whole school. He reiterated that:

> You have to look into all the corners of the school and be a caretaker, you have to see where the problems are; whether at the hostel, the school part, and even the kitchen staff, you are responsible of even taking care of them, and also to supervise" (HoD1).

This sentiment leads me to the next point of whole school supervision.

### *Supervision of school personnel*

Issues of supervision of teachers and other school personnel also emerged. HoD1 highlighted sentiments in line with 'role five' of the model when he talked about supervising and seeing "whether they [school staff such as teachers, cleaners, cooks] are fulfilling their job, whether they come on time, whether they are doing what they are supposed to do at the kitchen, and also about taking stock of everything that is happening" (I). In a way, this showed some degree of review of teachers' and other school personnel's works. HoD1 added that:

> You have to look after them, and if they are having a problem, they will come to you and in absence of the principal, you must be well equipped with some of the things so that you will be answerable to them and be able to guide also there (I).

Not only did the HoDs in the study enact role five but there were examples of role six. The data has shown that HoDs in the case study school exercised more of 'role six' than 'role five'.

### 4.3.3.2 Participating in school level decision-making (role six)

As whole school leaders, the HoDs in the case study alluded to school level decision making that resonates with 'role six' within the third zone of the model. Participation in school level decision making emerged in various ways from attending to parents and other stakeholders, to leading disciplinary hearings as part of their SMT function. HoD2 pointed out that "I can attend to the parents, parent come to me I attend to them and so on" (I). This is in line with my observation on the 11th and 14th, July 2014, HoD2 briefed the staff in the absence of the principal and missed class at 09h45 while attending to a parent. (OS, 11 & 14/07/2014).

In addition, the principal alleged that HoDs were involved in building "relationship of the school with stakeholder, partnerships with either the community or the ministry or the police, and lastly to make sure that discipline is maintained also in the school. Those are other roles they have to play apart from managing subjects" (I). Heads of Department were involved in different school decision making processes, including the following:

### Reprimanding teachers

In relation to teacher discipline, as members of the SMT, HoDs were expected to reprimand teachers. This appeared to be a challenge especially with colleagues or teachers who were older than the HoDs. HoD1 confessed that:

> People want creativity from you, people are expecting that at least you handle everything, apart from being a teacher as a parent, even though some of the people in the department are older than you, you have to take that as a challenge. It is always difficult now for example to advise an elderly person, who is older than you, or to even call him to order when something is going wrong. Traditionally even, you find it very difficult but as a member of management you just have to do it (I).

This was supported by HoD3 who noted that "department heads also attend some of the disciplinary hearings" (HoD3, I).

### Leading in various committees

Furthermore, some HoDs also alluded to division of labour among the SMT members. Various tasks were distributed across the SMT members whereby they took major decisions that impacted on the entire school. According to HoD3,

> every member of management was also given tasks, some of the things to do like on my cases is that side of finance, on the, looking at the whole issue of the income of the school – we look at that one, fundraising – coordinating that one the fundraising activities and also looking after registers when it come to that – teachers, learners and summary register (I).

Other task allocations that emerged included involvement on the admission committee and oversight of student cards. HoD2 pointed out that:

> The HoDs or the management team, they were allocated tasks to do, like for example I am in charge of student cards – to make sure that the learners have student cards so that they can look smart, and also in charge of the admission committee – to make sure that the admission goes through in the right procedures, and in the admission committee we have may be, it comprise of six teachers, those teachers they are under my leadership (I).

### *Acting on behalf of the principal*

Yet another aspect regarding school decision making that became evident in this zone were delegation and acting on behalf of the principal or even the inspector. HoD2 narrated that:

> The principal can delegate me to represent him in a certain meeting; those are the roles I am talking about. I can be in charge of the school when the principal is not around, therefore I can move around class by class to check whether the teachers are presenting their lessons or not, those are the roles which I am talking about.

Similarly; HoD4 highlighted that:

> In most cases you find that most of the time you are not at school. Either the principal requested you stand in for him at a particular meeting, and you are going to lose out the whole of that week. And then, when you come back, you will be behind.

HoD1 also stated that "some activities come automatically when you are delegated to do them" (I). He explained further that "the inspector may look

around the schools and select one principal or HoD to act in his office, or even the principal can delegate HoDs" (HoD1, I). This claim was cemented that "in case of the principal, he can also delegate you with some of the other things. You are also there to be delegated some of the work by the principal in case of his absence, some of the things mostly you can also attend to parents and other things" (HoD3, I).

It also emerged that in the absence of the principal, HoD1 took the lead of the morning assembly at school level. HoD1 narrated that "here this morning, when the principal was not around I took over at the morning assembly to address the learners what should be done. So, that's now the power given after the training at least now you know what to do" (I).

There was thus clear evidence that the HoDs were involved in school-wide decision-making processes (Role Six). The fulfilment of these roles of the model is in line with Harris and Spillane's claim that "a distributed view of leadership incorporates the activities of multiple groups of individuals in a school who work at guiding and mobilizing staff in the instructional change process" (2008, p. 32). Heads of Department had the capacity to influence decision-making formally through their interactions in committees, with each other and with other people in the school. Leadership in this formal sense, Harris and Muijs (2005) suggest, is a dynamic between individuals, a "by-product of social interaction and purposeful collaboration" (p.14).

Many of the examples of department responsibilities emerging from this zone constituted management rather than leadership functions. Although management

tasks dominated this zone, leadership examples did emerge through labour division within the committee structures. Having concluded the discussion on leadership in zone three, I now move to zone four and make the point that schools cannot exist in isolation. They interact with communities and stakeholders who share relational expertise and interest in raising well groomed citizens.

## 4.3.4 Zone Four: Leading between neighbouring schools and into the community

Heads of Department's leadership and management are not restricted to their departments and schools. Zone Four of the model concerns the link between teachers and the neighbouring schools in the community (Grant, 2008, p. 93) and the involvement of teachers at the circuit and regional level. The data indicated that two HoDs at the case study school were moderately active in this zone. There was some evidence with regard to interactions with neighbouring schools and circuit.

It was found that HoD4 played an important role at circuit and cluster levels. This was evidenced by HoD4's account of his leadership involvement:

> I am part of the circuit examination committee – we organise circuit based examinations – there is always a programme, we meet and look at general examinations as far as the circuit is concerned. We also develop up the timetable for the circuit. Apart from that, I am also a mathematics regional setter – mostly at the beginning of the year we always meet and set up the mock examination (I).

Furthermore, HoD1 noted that the inspector of education in the circuit may ask a HoD or principal to stand in the office while he/she attends to crucial matters.

During such time the HoD acted in the inspector's office, "now you are looking at all the schools in the circuit" (HoD1, I). This participant further highlighted that "most of the tasks that you are doing outside the school, they are depending on delegation" (I). This implied that department heads did not act on their own initiative to engage in community or neighbouring school projects without permission from a higher authority.

I agree with Harris (2000) who asserts that HoDs are agents who work on behalf of the whole staff in the interests of students, parents and other stakeholders. Their agency involves building mutually beneficial relationships with all stakeholders; liaising with neighbouring and feeder schools and other institutions; participating in community activities; maintaining contact with community organisations; as well as participating in ministerial initiatives.

### 4.3.5 Summary

In summation, the responsibilities of subject teacher were prominent in zone one where HoDs led in their classrooms as expert teachers. The rest of the zones were dominated by their department head responsibilities, which slanted towards a more managerial stance such as monitoring, supervising, deploying resources and so on. Leadership, by contrast, featured very little, mainly through committees. In other words, the HoDs maintained the status quo of the school, ensuring that policies were adhered to and that effective systems and processes were in place. Having discussed the roles that HoDs enacted in the case study school when fulfilling their department head and subject teacher responsibilities, I now move on to discuss the challenges that emerged when balancing these responsibilities.

## 4.4 The challenges in balancing the responsibilities of department head and subject teacher

This section presents and discusses the findings on the second research question; the challenges in balancing the HoD's responsibilities of department head and subject teacher, using Rizzo, House and Lirtzman (1970)'s role conflict categories where necessary.

### 4.4.1 Balancing responsibilities: a daunting task

The data has shown that it was a daunting task to balance the often conflicting responsibilities of department head and subject teacher, as T5 acknowledged:

> It is not easy because the HoD is overseeing all the activities of the department and at the same time teach. Sometimes, he/she has to forgo some lessons to do administrative work or class visits or attend to disputes. While at the same time expected to [teach] perform exceptionally well because he/she is the HoD (Q, p. 2).

Supporting this view, T7 claimed that "it's challenging to manage teaching and learning, guide leaners, plus teachers, and also do administrative works" (Q, p. 2). The principal alleged that balancing the responsibilities of department head and subject teacher was double-edge sword, for it has both negative and positive sides in terms of teaching and time. He commented that balancing the two roles:

> It can affect you both ways (positive/negative). Number one, it might make you a better teacher in a sense that you might want to prove to the other colleagues in the department since you are heading it, that you have to pull your socks up and

be the exemplary colleague. That's one aspect, the positive one. The other one might be the fact that time might be limited, so your subject might suffer again. So, I think it is a double-edge sword in a way, it can be good, and it can be bad (I).

Given the daunting nature of the task, it is imperative to unpack and understand the challenges experienced by HoDs in balancing the responsibilities of department head and subject teacher. It was evident from the data that this resulted in two major role conflicts, namely: inter-role and intra-sender conflicts.

### 4.4.2 Inter-role conflict

Heads of Department experienced role conflict when they were pulled in various directions as they tried to respond to the varying challenges which they faced as department head and teacher.

*Department head vs. Subject teacher: which one is stronger?*

The responsibilities of department head and subject teacher resulted in **inter-role conflict** – that is conflict between several roles for the same person which require different or incompatible behaviours, or changes in behaviour as a function of the situation i.e. role overload (Rizzo *et al,* 1970).

The HoD's agency in teaching was constantly hampered by his/her responsibilities of department head. It was found that HoDs tended to focus on one of these two roles neglecting the other. T4 stressed that:

> The HoDs focuses on teaching for good results, paying little/less attention to other department activities or school activities. Lack of training/effective training for newly appointed HoDs and even old HoDs are not trained on administration,

forcing them to focus on teaching, because that is the area they know better (Q, p. 2).

This concurs with Getzel and Guba (1954) that since the actor cannot realistically conform to both roles simultaneously, he/she is then forced to choose one of several alternatives: he may abandon one role and cling to the other, or he may attempt some compromise between the roles (p. 165).

Inter-role conflict persisted between these two responsibilities as HoDs had to work extra hard to perform exceptionally well as subject teachers because of their position of department head, to set the right example. In short, they were fighting to be better teachers. HoD1 gave an account of this:

> ...when you teach, there is always a comparison, people want to compare. In our department we have the HoD, how are the kids performing in his subject? You have to make sure that challenge, you always came on top. Otherwise, if you are performing lower than the teachers under your department, it creates another vision to them.

This is in alignment with Hammond (2000) that "the department head is not thought to have the moral authority to monitor standards if his/her own are lacking in rigour" (p. 2). This is an example of both inter-role (headship and teaching) and intra-role (the HoD as a teacher) conflicts. As department heads, policy dictates that HoDs should teach exemplary (Namibia. MoE, 2011) and set the mark for exceptional performance; and as subject teachers, they are expected to perform well in their individual subjects.

*Contributing to the conflict: Delegation by Multiple authorities*

Another form of inter-role conflict emerged from delegation by multiple authorities with conflicting requests and demands. The superiors of the HoDs, such as the principal, inspector or education officers, requested HoDs to do tasks that were not harmonious with their teaching role. HoD2 stated that sometimes "you are supposed to prepare to teach your lesson tomorrow, and then you are told that tomorrow you must be in the meeting from 07:00 to 17:00, now there your teaching is distracted" (I). Similarly, HoD4 asserted that "in most cases you are not at school either the principal requested you stand in for him at a particular meeting, and you are going to lose out on teaching the whole of that week. When you come back, you will be behind" (I).

Some role conflict emerged when HoDs were delegated by their superiors/senior leaders, namely the principal and inspector. While HoDs were attending to this duty call, their role of subject teacher was affected. It was found that "some of these activities come automatically when you are delegated to do them", says HoD1 who added that:

> Say for example the inspector will be having some job to do apart from his normal job at the office; he may delegate you to go and sit in his office, now you are looking at all the schools in the circuit. Most of the job that you are doing outside the school they are now depending on delegation. If the inspector delegate you, or him as an inspector will be called somewhere and he feels that he's having something to do, crucial, he cannot attend there, he may have to look around all the schools and select one, either a principal or HOD, you must be ready to do that (I).

Different sources of authority caused further role conflict by delegating department heads to do tasks outside of the school, such as acting on behalf of the inspector or attending workshops.

### 4.4.3 Intra-sender conflict

Heads of Department also experienced **intra-sender conflict** when the responsibilities of department head were interjected by some departmental demands and by other educators.

*Managing a multitude of subjects*

As mentioned earlier in section 2.4 of this thesis, three of the departments in the case study school, Commerce, Natural Science and Mathematics, and Social Sciences, were federal. In other words, they were large departments consisting of many staff members, with a generous supply of resources and supporting the teaching of several subject areas. Although different subjects had **subject heads** – a teacher designated to help in leading and managing a subject area, the burden providing support and curriculum guidance still fell on HoDs. The data indicated that intra-sender conflict emerged concerning the number of subjects HoDs were managing.

HoD3 noted HoDs specialised in two subjects during teacher training; "we are only trained on two subjects but then here you are looking at four or five subjects" (I). But, as leaders of teachers, they managed and oversaw operations of many subjects (five in the case of HoD4), some of which they had little or no expertise in. This posed a great intra-sender conflict when it came to moderating papers,

and assisting teachers in these subjects. This was indicated by HoD3 when she stated that:

> One major challenge can be that of moderating papers of the subjects you are not really well equipped when it comes to knowledge because we are only trained on two subjects but then here you are looking at four or five subjects (I).

She admitted that "sometimes your teacher can come to you with a question that you also don't understand" (HoD3, I). This led to another intra-sender conflict about the capabilities of HoDs to manage a multitude of subjects they had no training in. T3 felt that his HoD struggled to give "regular and effective feedback after classroom observation in different subjects in which he/she may not be good at" (Q, p. 2). This is less likely to be the case in small departments with two or one subject area.

### Lack of cooperation from teachers

The hierarchical and bureaucratic chain of command in schools represents varying degrees of power. Despite their positional authority, HoDs battled to fully enforce and get their colleagues to complete tasks. This is reportedly because "managing people is a difficult exercise – because when you request your teachers to bring in something they don't always adhere to your request" (HoD4, I). Although being a HoD afforded one authority over and through colleagues, T3 asserted that HODs were challenged with "reprimanding teachers who are breaching the school department subject policy" (Q, p. 2). When one other person in a related role generated the conflict, this is viewed as intra-sender conflict (Rizzo *et al*, 1970, p. 155).

As deputy managers of the school, HoDs had to make sure that teachers taught their lessons. Heads of Department had to remind teachers in the staffroom to go to lessons, and also chase learners into classes which delayed their teaching agency. HoD2 stated that as a HoD,

> You cannot leave teachers in the staffroom and go to your lesson. You have to make sure that those teachers that have lessons they have to go and attend their lessons. You have to make sure learners are in classes, teachers attend the lessons and by telling teachers to go to lessons it delay your teaching time and the teaching process will be affected (I).

More intra-sender conflict emerged when T1 narrated that "having colleagues who don't want to cooperate in your department is a big challenge" Q, p. 2). This was also raised by HoD4 that managing people is difficult because "some will challenge you, some will cooperate with you, and others will not cooperate with you – thus the need to be patient and tolerant" (I). Similarly, HoD3 noted that "for example when you do class observations, it may take ages for teacher to bring some documents like Continuous Assessment forms, preparation files. You can give due dates like, by this date let's submit our subject files but the teachers don't bring" (I).

In such cases, the department heads' responsibilities of completing school targets were incomplete because the completion of such activity was entangled in a web of actors, some of whom were not cooperative. These findings validate Bennet, Woods, Wise and Newton's (2007) claim that "although the middle leaders possesses some sort of formal responsibility for an area of the school's work, it is

clear that this formal position is not the basis of their authority as they attempt to fulfil their extensive responsibilities with such limited formal authority" (p. 460).

Harris (2000) note that tensions arise for those in leadership positions as they are faced with competing demands. She points out that this raises important issues about the leadership role of HoD in schools and how they deal with the tensions between different functions of their role (p. 84).

### *Shortage of time which leads to HoD overload*

Another major challenge to balancing the responsibilities of department head and subject teacher was time. Although the job description (D3) allocated 25% and 75% of the time to management and teaching roles respectively, it was found not to be enough. The principal highlighted that "time management is a big issue – dividing oneself in terms of fulfilling the role of HOD as well as fulfilling the role of being a teacher" (P, I). This correlated to what Rizzo *et al* (1970) refer to as intra-sender conflict – conflict with time.

Heads of Department struggled to meet the demands of these two responsibilities within the set time allocation. This forced HoD4 to come to work earlier than colleagues and leave much later. HoD4 noted that "as a HoD I have to arrive at school first and looking at all the administrative tasks, like this main register – I will be forced to leave very late as well. Time is just another problem" (HoD4, I). On the same point, T6 argued that:

It happens that one doesn't get enough time to attend to their lessons because of management issues and meetings. Secondly, if you are teaching grade 10 and 12 you don't have enough lessons to cover your syllabus on time (Q, p. 2).

This could mean that the 75% teaching time (Namibia. MoE, 2011) allocation for HoDs who teach grade 10 and 12 is very little, keeping in mind that these grades write their end of year exams as early as September. In response to this T6 suggested that "they [HoDs] should not teach grades that write external exams, because it hinders them from fulfilling or balancing leading their departments and subject teaching" (Q, p. 2).

### *Open access to HoDs which seriously disadvantages the classroom teaching and learning*

Further intra-sender conflict regarding time emerged when three HoDs revealed that they had to forgo teaching to attend to management tasks. HoD1 highlighted that unpredictable events posed a challenge to teaching activities because HoDs have to avail their time for more administrative matters. He gave an example that:

A person comes to you with a problem, and that's the time you were just supposed to stand up and go to your class. Now, you have either to sacrifice the class and attend to the person. This leaves the learners hanging and not being taught, because the HoD has to attend to the problem before it burst into flames" (I).

In a similar time conflict ordeal, HoD3 expressed role conflict regard time for attending to specific management roles, such as parents. She stated that:

Parents may be told to come to school; they can come anytime from early in the morning. Then sometimes you are supposed to go attend your class during that time but now you cannot attend it because there is a parent you have to attend to. That one can also be a problem because your learners can also be negatively affected (I).

Sharing this view is HoD2 who said that:

Some of the time you find that while you are teaching a parent came in asking something, or may be a phone call come from the regional office says come and attend to this phone call, it is very urgent. And imagine you were in the lesson and you have to go (I).

It appeared from the data that at any given time, the management tasks were given priority over teaching and HoDs were expected to forgo subject teaching to respond to management tasks. In another instance, it was observed that HoD2 missed an 08h30 class/lesson as he was busy inducting a new student intern in his department, and providing her with teaching materials and timetable (OS, 11/07/2014).

Still on the issue of open access, HoD3 highlighted that "we don't have a specific time for attending to some cases" (I). This meant that, at any given time, a HoD was required to be ready to attend to both teaching and management tasks which in most cases "you might find out that one aspect might suffer because time always is just not there to complete all in one" (P, I). As a way of compensating for the teaching time lost to management and administrative demands, HoDs taught during weekends which impacted on their personal life as HoD2 reckons

that "by teaching during studies or weekends, you have no time to attend to your family responsibilities, personal life – you just dedicate yourself to teaching and learning" (I).

Evidently, due to lack of specificity as to what time HoDs should attend to either teaching or leadership and management tasks, the two roles clashed endlessly making them difficult to fulfil simultaneously. Thus the Heads of Department in my study were trapped within a hierarchical chain of command – with people pulling from the top and bottom.

### 4.4.4   Summary

To sum up, two main challenges emerged from the data namely: inter-role and intra-sender conflicts. Balancing the tasks of department head and subject teacher resulted in various inter-role and intra-sender conflicts. To top it all, limited or insufficient time burdens down the HoDs. Having presented and discussed the challenges that emerged from balancing these roles; I now move on to present and discuss the findings in response to research question three, the final question in my study.

## 4.5   Strategies HoDs employ to address these challenges

This section presents and discusses the findings in response to research question three on the coping strategies that HoDs at the case school employed to address the above challenges. The findings revealed that HoDs balanced their roles by distributing some labour to other colleagues through delegation, or through other coping mechanisms like compensatory teaching. Other suggestions included

reducing and minimising teaching loads, more training and workshops, and planning and prioritising tasks for HoDs.

### 4.5.1 Compensatory teaching

All HoDs alluded to compensatory teaching as the major technique for making up for the teaching time lost to management and administrative demands. Since "our school is a boarding school, you even teach during evening study – that's from 18:00PM to 20:00PM, then also I can teach during the weekend and afternoon studies" (HoD2, I).

Similarly, HoD3 stated that "for compensating on the teaching that you lose, that one sometimes after school, you teach from 15:00 to 16:00 PM or in the evening. But I mostly do it in the afternoon" (I). On the same note, HoD4 who alleged that "in cases where my teaching time is disturbed – I always have to sacrifice and then teach in the afternoon to catch up with other colleagues, I remember last year I had to teach in the holiday" (I).

### 4.5.2 Delegation

A second coping mechanism was delegating some of the work to capable colleagues. For HoDs to better cope with their roles' demands, T1 contended that "they must learn to share tasks and skills with their colleagues" (T1, Q). Equally, T5 argued that "they [HoDs] should also delegate more" (T5, Q, p. 2).The value in delegation was also raised by the principal:

> Most of the HoDs that are coping well are the ones that learned the art of
>
> delegating other aspects to other capable colleagues, through that, it makes it

easier for one to cope with being HoD as well as being a teacher at the same time"
(I).

The principal further stated that "if one makes it a point of wanting to juggle all by
him/her-self, time will always be limited". Similar views were shared by HoD2
who stressed that:

> If you are HoD, don't' try to do everything in your department, try to delegate
> teachers, try to share the action of the people. For example if you have a meeting,
> teachers they must be the chairperson, or secretary. You can delegate that today a
> teacher be in the department while you are concentrating on teaching and other
> things (P, I).

Equally, some teacher leaders alluded to delegation. By delegating some tasks to
various departmental teachers, the workload of HoDs is reduced (T3, Q). For T8,
by promoting a spirit of teamwork both inside and outside the school, department
heads can enhance performance.

### 4.5.3  Minimal teaching loads

It was also felt that the number of subjects and lessons that Heads of Department
teach be limited to give them more time to carry out mundane management and
administrative tasks. The principal stated that

> the number of subjects that they have should be limited again, and they should
> also receive training on how to manage subjects better, and they should always be
> refreshed as to what are the tasks that they have to carry out (P, I).

Four teachers (T2, T4, T5 and T6) shared this view that HoDs should be relieved from teaching so that they can focus on administration and managing the department (fulltime managers). For T5, "HoDs must be given less workload in terms of teaching so that they can concentrate more on administration work and searching for best strategies for their teachers". T4 went further and proposed that "the number of lessons allocated to HoDs be reduced from 75% to 20 – 30% so they would be able to have time for department and staff development" (Q, p. 2). Equally, T2 suggested that HoDs should only supervise and manage the department but not teach. These suggestions are in line with the report on Educator Workload in South Africa which suggests that "educators should be released from administrative task and other activities that increase their workload and distract their attention from teaching (Chisholm *et al,* 2005, p. 44). T2 suggested that:

> Heads of Department also have their teaching loads to cover up; therefore, their time to fulfil the role of leading and managing teachers in all aspects is of limit. This would only be successful only if the work of the HoD is only to supervise and lead the department.

T7 proposed that both the teaching and administrative workloads be reduced. She also believed that HoDs can do better and they are capable to work under pressure thus why they were entrusted with this position in the first place. They just needed more motivation and self-confidence, she added.

### 4.5.4 Training and workshops

Knowledge is a powerful tool in helping to deal with our challenges. Although all HoDs alluded to receiving an induction workshop upon appointment (HoD1, 2, 3 and 4), the principal felt it was not enough to keep them on top of their tasks. This induction workshop focused on the HoD job description, the expectations of the position, how to handle people including conflicts that might arise in the department, how to help the principal or act on behalf of the principal, and how to induct new teachers and to implement the policies (HoD1,and 2; I). This is what the principal had to say about the induction:

> They only get it once they are being appointed, and from there they are left on their own. My opinion is that they should be refreshed on and on, because it helps and there are always new things that one has to learn and you need to be trained on them. So I feel that having regular trainings or workshops will always keep HoDs on their toes, in terms of knowing what exactly we must do to make sure that the department is fulfilling its role (P).

The conflicting demands of the HoD responsibilities could lead to stress, to which T2 suggested "enough induction workshops on how to handle stress which they may encounter during the process" (Q, p. 2).

### 4.5.5 Planning and prioritising

Planning and prioritising tasks as a fifth coping strategy was suggested. One HoD suggested "allocating time to a set task and avoid doubling tasks at one time" (HoD1). It was also found that planning and prioritising tasks enabled HoDs to better meet their dual responsibilities of department leader and subject teacher.

This involved "allocating time to a set task and avoid doubling tasks at one time" (HoD1). With regard to well scheduled events, HoD1 planned his time well as noted below:

> some of the things that are well scheduled, like the workshop, you get the invitation beforehand, what you do, you try to arrange tasks that kids have to do while you are absent. You give them tasks ... during the 1st period on this day complete this task, keep yourself busy with this task, the next day you do the other part and so on. You guide them. And upon your coming, you will collect the work, mark and teach (HoD1, I).

HoD1 felt that department heads must be informed early about events like workshops and meetings so that they can make arrangements and plan tasks for their learners in advance. He noted that "proper planning and prioritising activities gives a person a good chance to know what to be done and at what time in order to have a good balance of work to be done well" (Q, p. 2).

## 4.4    Conclusion

This chapter presented and discussed the roles of HoDs and the challenges they experienced in balancing their responsibilities of department head and subject teacher, as well as the strategies they employed in coping with the tensions. Moving on, in the fifth and final chapter, I summarise the main findings of the study and conclude the thesis.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

## 5.1    Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to summarise the key findings of this study and discuss their implication for research. It seeks to highlight the contributions of the study to knowledge about the application of Grant's (2008, 2012) model of teacher leadership to other studies. The chapter also illuminates the challenges and conflicts extant in balancing the responsibilities of department head and subject teacher for HoDs. This chapter is divided into four sections. First, it summarises the research purpose, research questions and findings. Second, it highlights the contributions of this study to knowledge and implications. Third, it makes recommendations for both practice and future research. Fourth, limitations of the study are outlined.

## 5.2    Research purpose, questions and findings

### 5.2.1    Research purpose

This study aimed to explore the tensions in balancing the responsibilities of department head and subject teacher for HoDs in a public secondary school in northern Namibia. The concept 'tension' herein refers to a state of being caught between two or more forces, which are acting in opposition to each other. The expectations and demands of department head and subject teacher on HoDs gave rise to responsibility tensions. The primary purpose of my study was therefore to

unpack these challenges within the responsibilities of department head and subject teacher of the HoDs in the case study school.

### 5.2.2 Research questions

The investigation sought to find answers to three research questions. The first research question explored the participants' perceptions and understandings of HoDs' roles in the case study school. The second research question expounded the challenges in balancing the tasks of department head and subject teacher for HoDs in the case study school. The third question unpacked the coping strategies for HoDs in balancing the conflicting responsibilities of department head and subject teacher. The study employed observations, questionnaires, interviews and document analysis with 13 participants to collect data. The participants were four Heads of Department, the principal and eight teachers from a public secondary school in northern Namibia. The interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed and analysed. By using interviews and questionnaires, the study was able to capture rich narrative accounts from participants about their experiences and perceptions about the HoDs' practices of balancing the tasks of department head and subject teacher.

### 5.2.3 Research findings

The data revealed that HoDs knew their roles very well. It also indicated that the tasks of department head and subject teacher conflicted at certain points, and HoDs experienced two main challenges in keeping up with these not so harmonious demands. However, HoDs at the case study school employed different strategies to cope and balance these responsibilities. Below is a brief

summary of the main threads running through the data in response to the research questions.

### (a) What roles do Heads of Department enact?

As per Grant's (2008, p. 93) model of teacher leadership in the context of South Africa, the study found that HoDs in the case study school engaged actively within the four zones of leadership where they adopted all six roles.

Across the four zones, it was unanimously evident that HoDs in the case study school were involved in the zone of the classroom where they were involved in instructional activities such as "continuing to teach and improve one's own teaching" (Grant, 2008, p. 93). Their involvement in the second zone included taking initiative in curricular and extra-curricular activities such taking learners to participate in sports, debating, or social events that happened outside the school. Heads of Department engaged strongly in managerial duties such as mentoring other teachers, assisting teachers on subject related matters, distributing and deploying of resources and so forth. In short, HoDs overwhelmingly engaged in zone two and all its three roles.

The involvement of HoDs in whole school development (Zone Three) was prominent. Being members of the SMT, HoDs engaged in whole school leadership and management by monitoring, supervising and doing peer reviews such as class visiting and observations, and inspecting operational files. School-wide decision-making in the case study school was another domain of the HoDs' leadership practices. Heads of Department also acted on behalf of the principal, both inside and outside the school. They also led in various ways such as

attending to parents, stakeholders and to disciplinary hearings, and heading various committees and projects such as the admission committee, fundraising, student cards and so forth.

Zone Four appeared as the weakest area in the case study school with regard to the involvement of HoD leadership. The study indicated relatively few examples of HoD leadership emerging from this zone in comparison with the other zones in the case study school. The study revealed that HoDs' involvement in leadership between other neighbouring schools in the community as well as at the circuit and cluster levels was largely limited to delegation by either the principal or inspector.

In summation, the responsibilities of subject teacher were prominent in zone one where HoDs led through the classroom as expert teachers. The rest of the zones were dominated by the department head responsibilities, which slanted towards a more managerial stance such as monitoring, supervising, deploying resources and so on. Leadership on the hand appeared very little, mainly through committee structures in zone three. In other words, HoDs maintained the status quo with little leadership initiative.

### (b) What are the challenges faced by the HoDs as they enact these different roles?

The data has shown that it was a daunting task to balance the conflicting tasks of department head and subject teacher. Two major challenges emerged from the data namely: inter-role and intra-sender conflicts.

Heads of Department experienced inter-role conflict when they were pulled in various directions as they tried to respond to the varying challenges they faced as

department head and teacher. The HoD's agency in teaching was constantly hampered by his/her responsibilities of department head. This was intensified by superiors of the HoDs such as the principal, inspector or education officers through delegation which requested HoDs to do tasks that were not harmonious with their teaching role. HoD4 asserted that *"in most cases you are not at school either the principal requested you stand in for him at a particular meeting"* (I).

Conflict with persons in related roles, for example teachers, is known as intra-sender conflict. The HoDs had to manage and oversee the operations of a multitude of subjects when they only majored in two. Equally, policy requests that HoDs support, supervise and monitor a department unit that comprise many subject areas. It was difficult for HoDs to moderate a multitude of subjects that they had no expertise in, and to provide feedback and support to teachers in these subjects. Meanwhile, teachers failed to submit needed paperwork, files or missed deadlines and this, jeopardised the fulfilment of the HoD's responsibility of department head. Lack of cooperation was a root cause to such tension.

In addition, time to complete tasks presented another challenge. Time proved a major concern in fulfilling the demands of these two responsibilities. The time available to meet the demands and expectations of such arduous responsibilities was just not enough. The principal highlighted that *"time management is a big issue – dividing oneself in terms of fulfilling the role of HoD as well as fulfilling the role of being a teacher"* (P, I). This led to HoDs working on weekends and holidays, and having to come to work early and leave late. Also, the lack of specificity as to what time

HoDs attended to management tasks presented an open access scenario to stakeholders that disrupted the teaching responsibilities of HoDs.

**(c) What strategies do HoDs employ to address these challenges?**

Heads of Department employed a few strategies that helped them cope with these demands such as delegation, planning and compensatory teaching. The data showed that HoDs taught during weekends, holidays or after school and in the evenings to make up for the lost teaching due to department head demands. Passing down some tasks to capable colleagues was another mechanism that helped HoDs in this regard. Delegation allowed them to focus on other activities and have both responsibilities fulfilled. Setting clear priorities as to what should be completed and at what time also helped HoDs deal with their conflicting responsibilities of department head and subject teacher.

Other coping suggestions that emerged from the data include more trainings and workshops to bridge the capability gap, and a reduction in the teaching schedules of HoDs. This would allow them more time to fully oversee the teaching and learning process in their departments.

In applying the above, HoDs were able to fulfil their central mission in the school, that of improving teaching and learning. In this regard, Rhodes and Brundrett (2010) have argued that learning is "the reason for their existence and leaders in education have no more important role than that of enhancing the learning outcomes of the students in their care" (p.153).

## 5.3 The contributions and implications of this study

Through careful analysis and interpretation of data, the above section summarised the main findings of this study. It is also possible to widen knowledge from this study. This study proposed several contributions to the body of knowledge on HoDs/middle managers' practice especially in the Namibian context. The study made five major contributions outlined below:

i) The study provides a starting point in exploring middle leadership practices especially in Namibia where this topic is under researched. Middle leaders and managers are at the forefront of education practices in the context of a school, and very central in school improvement. Improving their practice will immensely contributes to student outcomes. Despite its small size, this study does provide a basis upon which a picture of HoDs' practices of department head and subject teacher emerges as the data was collected from practitioners who are directly engaged in these practices. The findings from this research can further inform the research agenda and add to the literature on middle leadership and management.

ii) The management role of HoDs dominated, both in policy and in the practice of the HoDs in the case study school leaving leadership questions unanswered. The workload and policy emphasis has reduced the space and importance of leadership and this is problematic. As discussed earlier in section 2.2.3, leadership is about bringing change in the school, not simply maintaining the status quo. In this study, few leadership practices emerged from across the zones. The many and extensive management

responsibilities of the HoDs limited their agency and restricted their leadership, resulting in an authorised form of distributed leadership (Grant, Gardner, Kajee, Moodley and Somaroo, 2010). In this light I agree with Hatcher (2004) when he suggests that responsibilities have been delegated down to middle managers without power to effect decisions autonomously. However, as "the engine room for change" (Greany, 2014, p. 2), it is my firm view that HoDs are responsible and accountable for securing improvement, and for implementing school policies, therefore, they ought to engage in *both* management and leadership activities in the school.

iii)  This research therefore offers useful insights into what necessary changes can be made to harmonise the practices of department head and subject teacher such as reducing HoD teaching loads or minimising the subject areas under each department unit. Current and aspiring HoDs can benefit from the findings of this study and assist in providing suggestions on strategies for better practices of department head and subject teacher. Policy-makers and government agents at the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Unit at the Namibia Institute of Education Development (NIED) in Okahandja can carefully examine the findings of this study in coming up with better policy and programmes that will eliminate these role tensions.

iv)  In cases of federal and confederate departments that contain many subject areas, teachers and abundant resources, HoDs experienced challenges in terms of supporting and coordinating teaching and learning of subject areas they had no expertise in. Therefore, this study recommends reducing the

number of curriculum/subject areas in departments to manageable numbers by introducing new department units to dissolve federal departments into unitary ones, with one or two subject areas. Teacher training institutions as well as CPD agencies need to start catering for this challenge through special training programmes and to develop subject heads, especially in the fields of Information Communication and Technology as well natural sciences.

v) Grant's (2008) model's versatilities and possibilities are broad and resonate with a wide variety of educator roles including HoDs. Therefore, it is imperative to expand the model beyond Post Level One teachers, and include other educators' leadership roles that may have been excluded such as maintenance of school infrastructure and supervising hostel personnel.

Beside these contributions, the study proposes further recommendations for improved practice.

## 5.4   Further recommendations for practice

The study illuminated challenges regarding the practices of department head and subject teacher for HoDs in the context of a school. On the basis of the findings and for improved practice, the following recommendations are made:

i) Since we cannot detach HoDs from subject teaching to fully focus on leadership and management, I recommend protecting the teaching time and emphasising the role of HoDs as teachers. This is to set straight that the role of subject teacher is equally important as the role of department

head. I further recommend that schools and stakeholders should value and respect the role and work of HoDs as subject teachers. Parents and stakeholders should make appointments and be attended to during free periods. Thus why principals and department officials should know the free periods of their HoDs, be prohibited from pulling an HoD out of his/her class, and only allowed to draw on those HoDs during free periods.

ii) There is a need for improving administrative support for HoDs through various training courses and initiatives to help curb the alleged neglect of administrative tasks due to lack of expertise. This kind of support can start with teachers and principals in school through various strategies as outlined in section 4.5 of this thesis.

iii) Time emerged as a major challenge for the practices of department head and subject teacher. I can therefore speculate that the HoDs were unable to exercise leadership activities successfully because their time was limited. This issue needs to be addressed by all the stakeholders in education, including the Ministry of Education, Directors of Education, Inspectors of Education, the SMTs of schools and the HoDs themselves, to create spaces and time for HoDs to enact leadership activities.

## 5.5 Limitations of the study

I must state here that this research study, like any other, is not free of shortcomings. Qualitative research projects, and more specifically, the results yielded by case studies, are known to be difficult to generalise. The fact that the participants came from the same school, coupled with the small sample size limit

the generalizability of the findings. This is because of the subjectivity underlying the information provided by respondents and the small sample size.

Limited literature on HoDs in the case of Namibia led to inadequate information to contribute to strong scientifically based arguments and more reliable evidence rooted in scientific research on this topic in the Namibian case. Financial implications in terms of travelling between the University and my case study school were huge challenges especially to a self-funded scholar. Therefore, travelling expenses limited my interaction with my participants as it exceeded my budgets in this exercise.

## 5.6    Conclusion

In summation, this study revealed that HoDs endure two major role tensions, namely: inter-role and intra-sender conflict in their practices of department head and subject teacher. In other words, the HoDs are caught up between the 'horns of dilemma' – the two responsibilities, that demand their attention at the same time causing various conflict. I concur with Muijs and Harris (2006), that it is crucial to work in collaborative ways to generate knowledge and to transfer knowledge. I believe that a culture of collaboration and support from the principal and teachers can help ease the burden on these middle managers. I agree with Ali and Botha (2009, p.8), that HoDs remain on the forgotten tier of research.  There is a need for research to illuminate challenges and provide solutions in this leadership terrain. Heads of Department are the catalysts for quality teaching and learning in schools, and play key roles in managing, leading and administering whole school operations.

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# Appendix A: Observation Schedule Form

**OBSERVATION SCHEDULE FOR HEADS OF DEPARTMENT**

**Date:** 2014/07/___                          **HoD:** 1 | 2 | 3 | 4

| OBSERVATION | CREATES TENSION BETWEEN: (CLASS TEACHING & LEADING) | DETAILS |
|---|---|---|
| **Administrative/Management Duties** (acting/standing in for principal, workshops, management tasks, dev. internal policies, supervising, role on SMT) | | |
| **Class Teaching** (lesson preparation, daily teaching, marking and assessing learners) | | |
| **Creating an Effective Learning Environment** (support teachers, monitor quality teaching, regular meetings) | | |
| **Effective Deployment of Staff and Resources** (deploy & dev. staff, monitor & maintain resources, extra-mural) | | |
| **Interaction with Stakeholders** (liaison, ministerial & professional committees, contact with orgs., community activities, cluster activities, build relationships) | | |
| **Leading and Managing Teachers** (class visits, advice & guiding staff, consulting & coordinating, evaluating, address poor performance, resolving conflict) | | |
| **Promoting a Positive School Climate** (disciplinary, support staff, monitoring study, motivation) | | |
| **Staff Development** (in-service dev., induction, mentoring & probation prog., appraisals) | | |

**Summary of the Day:**

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# Appendix B: Questionnaires

**SELF-COMPLETION QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS**

BIOGRAPHIC INFO (tick all that apply)

| SEX | Male | | Female | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| DEPARTMENT | Commerce | Languages | Science | Social | |
| EXPERIENCE | 0-3 years | 4-7 years | 8-11 years | 12+ years | |

Two core responsibilities of HoDs are department headship and subject teaching. Rate how well is your HoD in balancing these core responsibilities? (**tick the best option & support your choice**).

| Fair | | Good | | Very good | | Excellent | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

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In your view, what are the challenges of being a department head and a subject teacher?

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What strategies do you think can be applied to overcome the challenges that HoDs face in balancing their responsibilities of department head and subject teacher?

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## SELF-COMPLETION QUESTIONNAIRE FOR DEPARTMENT HEADS

BIOGRAPHIC INFO (tick all that apply)

| SEX | Male | | Female | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| DEPARTMENT | Commerce | Languages | Science | Social | |
| EXPERIENCE | 0-3 years | 4-7 years | 8-11 years | 12+ years | |

Two core responsibilities of department headship are leading & managing teachers, and subject teaching. Highlight any challenges you encounter in balancing these roles.

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What strategies do you apply to overcome the challenges that you face in balancing department leadership and subject teaching?

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What recommendations and suggestions do you have for confronting and addressing the challenges that arise in balancing department leadership and subject teaching?

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# Appendix C: Interview Schedules

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR HEADS OF DEPARTMENT.**

1. How long have you been a Head of Department?

2. Have you had any training to be a HoD? Elaborate …

3. What are your core roles as a Head of Department?

    a.      As subject leadership

    b.      As SMT member

    c.      Any broader leadership involvement (outside school)

4. How much teaching do you still do? How many classes …?

5. How are you able to department head and subject teacher?

6. Do you experience any challenges in being both a department head and teacher?

7. [What are these challenges … what are the main challenges …?]

8. How do cope with these challenges? Can you give concrete examples … actual experience …

9. [If necessary …] How does being a department head affect your teaching…?

10. [If necessary …]What difficulties do you encounter as subject teacher that clash with department headship?

11. What advice would you give a teacher who wants to be a HoD?

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR THE PRINCIPAL.**

1. Were you a Head of Department before principalship?

2. What do you look for in a HoD? What are the qualities a HoD should have?

3. Can you please shed some light on the core responsibilities of your HoDs?

4. In your opinion, what are the challenges to being a department head and subject teacher?

5. Do you think HoDs are able to be both effective department heads as well as subject teachers?

6. In your opinion, how is being a department head affecting the duty of subject teacher? [**vice versa**]

7. What might be the challenges in balancing the responsibilities of department head and subject teacher?

8. How do your HoDs cope with the duties of department head and subject teacher?

9. What recommendations do you have for confronting and addressing the challenges that arise?

10. What do you recommend for the smooth operations of department head and subject teacher?

# Appendix D: Letter of Permission to the Director



**RHODES UNIVERSITY**
Grahamstown • 6140 • South Africa

**EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**
Tel: +27 (0)46 603 8383 • Fax: +27 (0)46 603 8028 • PO Box 94 Grahamstown 6140 • E-mail: education@ru.ac.za

23 June 2014

Miss Sanet Steenkamp
Director of Education
Ohangwena Education Directorate
P Bag 88005
Eenhana
NAMIBIA

Dear Sanet

Permission for post-graduate study

**Robert Naundobe** is a registered Master's student in the Faculty of Education at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa. He is doing a degree in Educational Leadership and Management. Robert has reached the stage where he needs to collect data in order to write his thesis. The purpose of this letter is to obtain your permission and support for his research

Robert is investigating the tensions experienced by middle management (Heads of Department) between leading their subject teams as well as teaching. This is a very under-researched topic and I believe the study is likely to provide interesting and valuable findings. Robert will need access to the school of his choice – Ponhofi Secondary School – where he will need to interview staff members, carry out observations and administer a questionnaire to the staff.

I humbly request that you open doors for this researcher as research is hard work and he will need all the help he can get!

Sincerely

# Appendix E: Permission to Conduct Research (from Director)

**REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**
**OHANGWENA REGIONAL COUNCIL**
**DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION**

Tel. 264 65 290200, Fax. 264 65 290224, Private Bag 88005, Eenhana

**Enquiries:** Fenni Silas
**E-mail:** tweenikumwe@gmail.com
**Ref:** 12/2/6/1

21 July 2014

To:  Mr. Robert Naundobe
     P. O Box 60
     Ohangwena

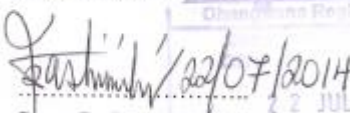## SUBJECT: PERMISSSION FOR POST GRADUATE STUDY

The subject above refers.

Ohangwena Education Directorate feels privileged to be selected as your research site. It is our belief that the research outcome will produce insights and recommendations that will benefit Heads of Department since the study investigates a topic that is currently under-researched.

Therefore, permission is hereby granted to you to conduct research at Ponhofi SS in Ohangwena region. Your attention is drawn to the fact the research should be conducted in an ethical and professional manner hence, normal lessons should not be interrupted. The Education Directorate of Ohangwena will also appreciate it if a final copy of the research report (thesis) is made available to us upon completion of the study.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely yours,

22/07/2014
2 2 JUL 2014

Sanet L. Steenkamp
Director of Education
Ohangwena Region

# Appendix F: Letter of Permission to the Principal

Enq: R.N. Naundobe (Sir)  
Cell: +264 812 008 770  
Email: sirrobertnn@gmail.com

11 Hills View  
Grahamstown  
South Africa  
23rd June 2014

To: The Principal

Dear Sir/Madam

## REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY

I am a fulltime Masters of Education student in the field of Educational Leadership and Management at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa. I am presently engaged in a research project which aims *to explore tensions in balancing departmental leadership and subject teaching for HoDs in your school.* In this regard I have, for the purpose of convenience, selected your school for my research study which I plan to undertake from 7th of July to 22nd of August 2014. I would very much like to work with you, the principal, all HoDs in your school as well as 8 teachers.

Please note that this is not an evaluation of performance or competence of your teachers. It is purely an academic exercise and it is my hope that the study will generate useful data, which will be valuable to different stakeholders in education. I further hope that participating in this study will be a learning opportunity for the participants. I undertake to uphold the autonomy of all participants and they will be free to withdraw from the research at any time without negative or undesirable consequences to themselves. In this regard, participants will be asked to complete a consent form.

It is against this background that I am requesting your permission to conduct research study at your school. Please feel free to contact me at any time should you have any queries or questions you would like answered. Attached please find a copy of the confirmation letter from my supervisors, Prof. Hennie van der Mescht and Dr. Callie Grant who can be contacted as follow: Hennie Tel: 046 6038384 email: h.vandermescht@ru.ac.za and Callie Tel: 046 6037508 email: c.grant@ru.ac.ca

Yours sincerely  
...........................  
Robert Naundobe, Sir

# Appendix G: Letter of invitation to participants

Enq: R.N. Naundobe (Sir)                                    11 Hills View
Cell: +264 812 008 770                                      Grahamstown
Email: sirrobertnn@gmail.com                                South Africa
                                                            23rd June 2014


Dear Mr/Mrs........................................


**INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A STUDY**

I am hereby inviting you to participate in a research study. I am a fulltime Masters of Education student in the field of Educational Leadership and Management at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa. I am presently engaged in a research project which aims to *explore tensions in balancing departmental leadership and subject teaching for HoDs in your school*. In this regard I have, for the purpose of convenience, selected your school for my research study which I plan to undertake from 7th of July to 22nd of August 2014. I would very much like to work with you, the principal, all HoDs in your school as well as 8 teachers.

Please note that this is not an evaluation of performance or competence of your teachers. It is purely an academic exercise and it is my hope that the study will generate useful data, which will be valuable to different stakeholders in education. I further hope that participating in this study will be a learning opportunity for you as a participant. I undertake to uphold your autonomy and free-will to withdraw from the research at any time without negative or undesirable consequences. In this regard, you will be asked to complete a consent form.

It is against this context that I am humbly inviting you to participate in this research study at your school. Find attached and complete the ***Declaration form*** upon accepting this invitation. Please feel free to contact me at any time should you have any queries or questions you would like answered.


Yours sincerely
............................
Robert Naundobe, Sir

# Appendix H: Declaration Form

I................................................................................ (**full names of the participant**) hereby confirm that I understand the content of this document and the nature of the research project. I am willing to participate in this research project. I understand that I reserve the right to withdraw from this project anytime.


...................................          ..............................

Signature of participant                      Date