

INTERPERSONAL STAFF RELATIONSHIPS AND THE HEALTHY SCHOOL: EDUCATORS' EXPERIENCES

BY

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this assignment is my own original work and that I have not previously, in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

.....

Signature:

.....

Date:

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ABSTRACT

My study aims to ascertain whether interpersonal staff relationships have a role to play in the healthy development of a school as an organisation. My specific focus is on how educators experience these relationships, and how they impact on the educators' commitment to a particular school. My research design consisted of three case studies. I used a semi-structured questionnaire with each case and at a later date had a group discussion. My analysis of the questionnaires' data provided tentative themes for inclusion and further exploration in the group discussion. The combination of two data production phases resulted in the confirmation and expansion of the data. My study shows that various factors impact on interpersonal staff relationships within a school. These interpersonal staff relationships have a bearing on the continuance, moral and alienative dimensions of commitment, and impact on staff retention and job performance. They also impact directly on the health of the educators. Thus interpersonal staff relationships would seem to have an important role to play in the development of healthy schools. I conclude by acknowledging the limitations of this study, and recommending further research.

SAMEVATTING

My ondersoek is daarop gemik om vas te stel in watter mate interpersoonlike personeelverhoudinge 'n rol in die gesonde ontwikkeling van 'n skool as organisasie speel. My spesifieke fokus is op hoe opvoeders hierdie verhoudinge ervaar en die uitwerking daarvan op hul toegewydheid tot 'n besondere skool. My navorsingsontwerp bestaan uit drie gevallestudies. 'n Semi-gestruktureerde vraelys is op elke proefpersoon toegepas waarna hulle op 'n latere datum ook by 'n groepbespreking betrokke was. Data-analise van die vraelyste het my voorsien van tentatiewe temas wat as besprekingspunte tydens die vermeldde groepsessie verder toegelig kon word. Die integrering van twee datavoorsienende fases het tot die bevestiging en uitbreiding van my data gelei. My ondersoek toon dat 'n verskeidenheid faktore 'n beduidende invloed op interpersoonlik personeelverhoudinge binne 'n skool uitoefen. Laasgenoemde verhouding het betrekking op die toewydingsdimensies van deursetting, begeesterdheid en ontvreembaarheid wat 'n inslag op personeelverhoudinge het. Dit speel dus 'n belangrike rol in die ontwikkeling van funksioneelgesonde skole. Ten slotte wil ek, in die lig van sekere tekortkominge wat by hierdie studie ervaar is, verdere navorsing op hierdie terrein aanbeveel.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE:	
INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 THE STUDY IN CONTEXT.....	1
1.3 THE RESEARCH QUESTION	2
1.4 THE PARADIGM	5
1.5 THE RESEARCH DESIGN	6
1.6 ASSUMPTIONS.....	7
1.7 A REVIEW OF THE KEY CONCEPTS.....	8
1.7.1 Educator.....	8
1.7.2 Interpersonal Relationships.....	8
1.7.3 Organisational Commitment.....	10
1.8 REFLECTION	10
1.9 AN OUTLINE OF THE FOLLOWING CHAPTERS	10
CHAPTER TWO:	
LITERATURE REVIEW	12
2.1 INTRODUCTION	12
2.2 THE SALIENT CONCEPTS.....	12
2.3 HEALTH PROMOTION.....	14
2.3.1 Promoting Healthy Schools through Interpersonal Relationships.....	17
2.3.2 Healthy Schools and Organisational Commitment.....	17
2.4 WHOLE-SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT	17
2.5 INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS AND DYNAMICS.....	22
2.5.1 Understanding Social Interactions in the Workplace	22
2.5.2 The Role Played by Interpersonal Relationships.....	23
2.5.3 Influential Factors in Fostering Interpersonal Relationships.....	25
2.5.3.1 <i>Interpersonal conflict</i>	26
2.5.3.2 <i>Venue for interactions</i>	27
2.5.3.3 <i>Formal interpersonal school practices</i>	27
2.5.3.4 <i>Modes of interaction</i>	28
2.5.2.5 <i>Patterns of group relationships and dynamics</i>	29

2.5.3.6	<i>Possible Power Dynamics</i>	30
2.5.3.7	<i>Professional jealousy</i>	31
2.6	ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT	32
2.6.1	Describing Organisational Commitment	34
2.6.1.1	<i>Affective Commitment</i>	35
2.6.1.2	<i>Continuance Commitment</i>	36
2.6.1.3	<i>Moral Commitment</i>	37
2.6.1.4	<i>Alienative Commitment</i>	37
2.7	REFLECTIONS	38

**CHAPTER THREE:
RESEARCH DESIGN.....40**

3.1	INTRODUCTION	40
3.2	PARADIGM	40
3.3	THE RESEARCH DESIGN	43
3.3.1	Case Study	44
3.3.2	The Context of the Study	46
3.3.3	Selection of Case Individuals	47
3.3.4	The Selection Process	48
3.4	DATA PRODUCTION.....	49
3.4.1	Individual Interviews	49
3.4.1.1	<i>The interview process</i>	50
3.4.1.2	<i>Varieties of structured interviews</i>	51
3.4.1.3	<i>Structuring the interview questions</i>	52
3.4.2	Group Discussion.....	53
3.4.2.1	<i>The group discussion process</i>	54
3.5	CREDIBILITY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH	55
3.6	DATA VERIFICATION	56
3.6.1	Triangulation.....	57
3.6.2	Audit Trial.....	57
3.6.3	Member Checks	57
3.7	DATA ANALYSIS.....	58
3.8	ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	61
3.9	SUMMARY	62

**CHAPTER FOUR:
THE STUDY64**

4.1 INTRODUCTION64

4.2 PREPARING FOR THE STUDY64

4.3 THE INITIAL PHASE66

4.3.1 Biographical Data67

4.3.2 The Individual Semi-Structured Interview (Appendix A).....68

4.3.3 Between Interview Similarities and Differences78

4.4 THE SECOND PHASE86

4.4.1 The Group Discussion (Appendix B)86

4.5 INTRA-INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW-GROUP DISCUSSION
COMPARISON100

4.6 SUMMARY102

**CHAPTER FIVE:
DISCUSSION AND FINAL REMARKS104**

5.1 INTRODUCTION104

5.2 FACTORS POSSIBLY INFLUENCING INTERPERSONAL STAFF
RELATIONSHIPS.....105

5.2.1 Venue for Interactions105

5.2.2 Modes of Staffroom Interaction and the Staffroom Atmosphere109

5.2.3 Formal Interpersonal School Practices109

5.2.3.1 *Staff meetings*110

5.2.3.2 *Circulars*.....111

5.2.3.3 *Intercom announcements*.....112

5.2.3.4 *Team building activities*112

5.2.3.5 *Interpersonal conflict and staff discipline*.....113

5.2.3.6 *Staff orientation*.....114

5.2.4 Informal Group Relationships and Dynamics115

5.2.4.1 *Group formation*.....115

5.2.4.2 *Sense of belonging*.....116

5.2.4.3 *Support*117

5.2.4.4 *Professional jealousy*119

5.2.4.5 *Possible Power Dynamics*.....119

5.2.5 Management.....121

5.2.6 Gender Differences122

5.3	THE ROLE OF INTERPERSONAL STAFF RELATIONSHIPS IN EDUCATOR COMMITMENT	124
5.4	INTERPERSONAL STAFF RELATIONSHIPS AND STAFF TURNOVER	126
5.5	INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS, ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A HEALTHY SCHOOL	128
5.6	POSSIBLE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF HEALTHY SCHOOLS	131
5.6.1	Venue for Interactions	132
5.6.2	Formal School Practices	132
5.6.3	Management's Role in Interpersonal Staff Relationships.....	133
5.6.4	Awareness of Different Gender Needs	134
5.6.5	Concluding Comments	134
5.7	INDIVIDUAL CASE REFLECTIONS.....	134
5.7.1	Case One (P1)	134
5.7.2	Case Two (P2)	135
5.7.3	Case Three (P3)	135
5.8	AN OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY	135
5.9	Constraints and Criticisms	140
5.10	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY	141
5.11	CONCLUSION.....	142
REFERENCES		143
APPENDIX A: SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS		151
APPENDIX B: GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS.....		155

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1:	Diagram of Relationship Between Key Concepts in this Study	14
Figure 2.2:	Model of School as Organisation.....	19
Figure 3.1:	Differences Between the Three Major Paradigms	41
Figure 3.2:	Possible Influential Factors used to Formulate Semi-Structured Interview Questions	52
Figure 3.3:	My Process of Data Production and Analysis.....	59
Figure 3.4:	Key for Coding Categories Used in Transcription of Interviews and Group Discussion	60
Figure 4.1:	Record of Contact with Cases and Interview Schedule	66
Figure 4.2:	Comparison of Interview Data between the Three Cases	79
Figure 4.3:	Causal Network of Themes Emerging from Individual Interviews.....	85
Figure 4.4:	Record of contact with Cases regarding the Group Discussion.....	86
Figure 4.5:	Causal Network for Themes Emerging from the Group Discussion	99
Figure 4.6:	A Comparison of Themes Emerging in Both Phase One and Phase Two of the Data Production.....	101
Figure 5.1:	Themes that emerged from both phases of data collection.....	139

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In South Africa, education is a field where a great deal of transformation has occurred since the first democratic elections in 1994. However, there is still much to do as far as transformation and development of education is concerned. The National Department of Education (1997) claims that ensuring a quality education for all learners is of primary concern. Thus ensuring that the schools in South Africa are functioning effectively in order to achieve this is imperative. Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:xvi) suggest that the challenge lies in developing effective, healthy schools, capable of delivering quality education in this period of transformation. This thus provides a context for this study, which explores whether interpersonal staff relationships have a role to play in the healthy development of a school.

Chapter One begins by providing a context for this study. This is then followed by the research questions, the paradigm in which this study is situated and the research design. The chapter then provides the assumptions of this study, a review of the key concepts and an overview of the subsequent chapters.

1.2 THE STUDY IN CONTEXT

De Jong (2000:339) points out that in South Africa, our attempt to cultivate social and economic development and transformation has placed emphasis not just on developing the school as an effective site of learning, but on also recognising the function of the school as a site for health promotion (places which foster a sense of well-being) This would imply that there is possibly a need to investigate ways in which to encourage this process.

Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:xvi) support this. They suggest that understanding a school as an organisation is central to our explorations of how schools operate and of how to encourage improved school functioning. This would imply that the many aspects of a school that combine to make a school function optimally should be of primary interest to the educational

psychologist, whose role should include that of whole-school development practitioner. De Jong's (2000:349) argues that educational psychologists need to accept health promotion as a focus of their school development work, particularly since schools are such potent sites of psychosocial development.

Basing my view on De Jong (2000), I contend that the whole-school development practitioner therefore has a vital role to play in ensuring that a school delivers a quality education within an environment deemed to be health-promoting. In order to achieve this the educational psychologist may need to have insight into both how development may occur, and into what factors may be preventing a specific school from achieving these developmental goals.

In a study informed by health promotion and whole-school development I explore one particular area of school life, namely interpersonal staff interactions and relationships, and investigate how certain aspects of these may impact on the overall school environment. This particular focus is informed by the work of Komote (1987:77), who claims: " During the entire career of a teacher, he will be confronted with two main issues: the task he has to perform and human relations".

My experiences as an educator, my general interest in creating enabling school environments and my literature review, further strengthened my decision to focus on educators' experiences of interpersonal relationships and the social interactions between educators.

1.3 THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The primary question that informs this study is:

➔ How do educators experience interpersonal staff relationships?

Following from this are the secondary questions:

- **How do educators see certain factors within a school environment as impacting on interpersonal staff relationships?**
- **Do educators believe that interpersonal staff relationships influence their commitment to the school?**
- **How do educators experience interpersonal staff relationships and commitment to the job as impacting on the overall development of a healthy school?**

These questions therefore, aim at focusing more closely on the interpersonal aspect of human resources within a school as an organisation.

Blythe Schütte and McLennan (2001:17) suggest there is no such thing as a "people-less organisation". This suggestion informed my assumption that human resources are a very important component in any organisation. Perhaps this is even more the case in the school as an organisation. Here human resources (the staff) play a pivotal role in ensuring the success of what is ultimately the primary role of the school – the learning process. It would seem that the success of the learning process rests on the effective and healthy functioning of the staff, which in turn impacts on the effective and healthy functioning of the whole school. This is in line with the view that a healthy, effective school delivers a healthy opportunity for learning (Davidoff & Lazarus, 1997).

It would seem that a healthy functioning school recognises its staff as a valuable resource that is vital to the school's success and which, like other resources, needs to be developed and maintained.

Mowday, Porter and Steers (1982:1) note that *Fortune* (February 9, 1981) reports that the average corporation could expect to lose 50% of its recruits within five years. In similar vein, Billingsley and Cross (1992:453) reveal that teacher retention is an area of growing concern. Harris and Associates (1988 as cited in Billingsley & Cross, 1992:453) conducted surveys in USA in the 1980s suggesting that 34% of teachers surveyed planned to leave teaching in the following five years.

Information received from the Western Cape Education Department's (WCED) Personnel Department states that at the beginning of the period 1 April 2002 to 31 March 2003, 28 646 educators were employed by the WCED. At the end of that period 13010 educators had left the department, for a variety of reasons. That implies that 46% of the educators had left and needed to be replaced. Thus it would seem that our current situation in the Western Cape is also a matter of concern and that staff bodies are constantly changing.

Billingsley and Cross (1992:453) are among those who recognise the need to explore the problem of staff turnover. They argue that factors which contribute to an unsettled, unhealthy staff and to regular staff departures need to be explored and, where possible, addressed. This is particularly so, if a school wishes to hold onto the human resources it has, building a stable

and competent staff, and in doing so ensuring its overall healthy functioning and effective development as an organisation.

It seems that there are a number of reasons for educator turnover. Billingsley and Cross (1992:453) cite many different sources when listing possible problems such as a lack of upward mobility compared to other professions (Chapman, 1983), the undesirable working conditions (Billingsley & Cross, 1991) and the low status associated with the teaching profession (Darling-Hammond, 1984).

Following from this, it would seem that to improve teacher retention, it is important to identify possible factors that influence teacher commitment positively. This is because as Billingsley and Cross (1992:453) suggest commitment to an organisation has been linked to an individuals' tendency to leave their occupation. A thorough review of the available literature suggests that one factor that has, possibly, been neglected in research is the role that relationships between educators in the workplace may play in the commitment of these educators to their specific school.

However, much research has been conducted in the private sector, to ascertain other benefits of co-worker relationships. Research by Buüink and Verhoeven (1991:243) suggests that quality co-worker relationships have a vital role to play in the lives of all employees. They suggest that these interpersonal relationships reduce negative affect at the end of the workday, and that this in turn has a valuable role to play both in the individual's mental well-being and perception of effectiveness in the workplace. Buüink and Verhoeven, (1991:246) conducted research to investigate the role that social interaction in the workplace may play in the reduction of work-related stress. The pressing question is how this affects staff commitment, and particularly commitment within the education sector.

Research has also been conducted in the private sector to explore what the benefits of organisational commitment may be. Gellatly (1995:470) claims that commitment to the workplace is one way of encouraging a stable staff and lowering the rate of turnover. Instability and high turnover are, according to Gellatly's (1995:472) research, two factors that negatively influence the effectiveness of an organisation and the morale of the remaining staff members. It follows therefore, that understanding the factors that contribute to an unstable staff and a high turnover are important if these are to be overcome.

Thus, one could assume that understanding the possible role of social interactions in staff retention could be extremely helpful to any management team – particularly to a school management team striving to retain its staff, and in doing so, develop its school by building a long-serving, healthy staff.

In view of this, it is important to note that educators will not all experience a situation in the same way. Blythe Schütte and McLennan (2001:21) claim that the way an individual experiences and perceives a situation often has greater meaning for understanding the behaviour than does the situation itself.

In view of this it is therefore important to establish how educators personally experience interpersonal staff relationships, and to understand how they, as individuals see these social interactions impacting on their commitment to a particular school. This study therefore focuses specifically on educator experiences of staff relationships.

1.4 THE PARADIGM

This study was conducted within an Interpretive/Constructivist paradigm. The interpretive/constructivist paradigm, which combines complementary elements of interpretivism and constructivism, is explained by Mertens (1998:11).

According to Mertens (1998:8), the concept of Interpretive/Constructivist suggests that the nature of reality is constructed. Thus the ways in which individuals give meaning to their personal experiences is central to understanding those experiences. In terms of research therefore, Mertens (1998:12) suggests that this concept recognises the interactive link between the researcher and the researched. The researcher's subjective role within the research process is recognised, giving credit to his/her contribution to that process. This creates space for the researcher's own experiences and the meaning that these experiences bring to the research. One of the implications for my study was that I had to recognise that in my role as researcher my thinking and interpretation of the data would be influenced by my experiences. A more detailed discussion of the Interpretive/Constructivist paradigm is provided in Chapter Three (3.2).

1.5 THE RESEARCH DESIGN

This study constitutes three instrumental case studies bounded together by a common school context. As Stake (1994) suggests, this is when the context itself is of secondary importance to the actual issue that is being investigated. The context of this study merely supports the understanding of the issue and is in itself not of great importance.

I chose to do three case studies as I felt that this would be more practical for a study of this size. I then adopted, as Mouton (1996:133) suggests, a *contextual strategy* for these case studies because I have no intentions of generalising my research findings. Instead I hope to highlight the need for further consideration of human resource issues, particularly interpersonal relationships, in the process of whole-school development and health promotion.

Because this study was done from an Interpretive/Constructivist perspective, Mertens (1998:12) claims that the desired space for the subjective interpretation of personal educator experiences was created. Qualitative data, in keeping with the Interpretive/Constructivist paradigm and the research design, were therefore produced. These were produced through the use of semi-structured interviews conducted with each of the individual cases and followed six months later with a group discussion.

The interview questions were informed by an extensive literature review and my personal experiences as an educator, while the group discussion questions were guided by the findings of the interviews and further literature review.

The group discussion was the second technique for data production and the purpose was to confirm the findings of the interviews and to see if anything new emerged. Maykut and Morehouse (1985) claim that often, new information or a new slant on information is exposed when informants are questioned under different conditions. As Morgan (1997) suggests, the group discussion revealed perspectives on aspects that were under-represented in the individual interviews.

The group discussion, which was my preferred choice of research validation, served as a checking device, where more than one data production technique was used to measure the same concern and the data were then compared. As Maykut and Morehouse (1985) point out,

using more than one technique for data production leans away from validating research by the use of statistics and other quantitative means. The group discussion questions, which merely guided the discussion initially, were formulated as a result of what emerged in the semi-structured interviews.

The units of analysis in this study were the individual cases and their personal experiences of interpersonal relationships within a specific school. The individual case selection was done primarily for convenience. I included three individual cases in my study. All three cases were known to me and agreed to be part of the study. They were also chosen for the fact that they had recently (in the last 2 years) left the teaching profession. The primary reason, however, for choosing them was that they were readily available.

The data produced were thematically analysed by writing transcriptions of each of the tape-recorded semi-structured interviews and by coding of each of these interviews according to categories. Themes, informed by both literature and personal experience within the field of education, were then extracted. Devising a coding system and clustering emergent ideas under broad categories before looking for themes ensured that this was achieved. Maykut and Morehouse (1985:177) suggest that this is a non-mathematical procedure that is designed to identify patterns and themes in text. These themes then further informed the questions, which I used to guide the group discussion. The group discussion was also tape-recorded and transcribed before being analysed and coded further for similar themes and new themes that may have emerged.

1.6 ASSUMPTIONS

Throughout this study I assume the use of the first person "I". Le Guin (1998:68) argues that the use of the active voice in academic writing suggests to readers that the writer is willing to take responsibility for the ideas and thoughts that are presented. Jones (1992:18) further supports this idea by suggesting that what is reflected in research is the subjective constructions of the particular researcher's reality and as such should be presented in the first person. By using the first person in this study, I hope to recognise and own the role that my own constructions have played in the interpretation of the experiences of others.

1.7 A REVIEW OF THE KEY CONCEPTS

In this study I make use of a number of key concepts, which require further explanation to ensure that the context in which I use these terms is fully understood.

1.7.1 Educator

For the purpose of this study, I am limiting my definition of an **educator** to a basic description of the individuals who constitute the sample of my study. I have also used Komote's (1987:12) description and my personal understanding of the concept "educator". An educator is someone without managerial rank. It is someone, who has a tertiary diploma or degree in teaching and who has, in the case of secondary education, specialised in at least one specific subject area. An educator is someone who teaches according to a subject specific curriculum within a school to a group of learners. I also recognise, however, that as Lindgren (1962) points out, most educators today have many other roles to fulfil within a school besides that of just "instructor".

1.7.2 Interpersonal Relationships

The description of **interpersonal relationships** that I am using assumes that relationships result from interactions that occur between people. Research suggests that interactions are composed of two different aspects: help-orientated exchanges and rewarding interactions, which include companionship and intimacy. Rook (1987 as cited in Buünk & Verhoeven, 1991:243-245) suggests that often these two aspects are interrelated and not easily prised apart.

According to Komote (1987), Moonsamy and Hassett (1997) and Davidoff and Lazarus (1997) there are many different factors that may influence interpersonal relationships in the workplace. These are the factors that may help or hinder the fostering of meaningful, health-inducing social interactions. The specific factors of interpersonal work relationships that will be explored more specifically in this study were informed primarily by this literature. These include:

- **Venue for interactions.** Most schools have a staff-room where educators can interact in a formal and informal way. Makin, Cooper and Cox (1996:208) suggests that the

atmosphere and the designated use of the venue all have a bearing on the interactions that occur there. Fisher, Katz, Miller and Thatcher (2003:128) comment on the role that ergonomics plays in influencing workplace relationships.

- **Formal interpersonal school practices.** I understand this to refer to organised opportunities for, or methods of, educator interaction. I have included as Komote (1987) did, such things as staff meetings, circulated notices, intercom announcements and organised social or team-building activities.
- **Informal patterns of group relationships and dynamics.** Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:135) explain "*informal patterns*" as a natural process of forming social group relationships. I understand this to imply that this natural process of relationship formation may occur in a regular way, resulting in the establishment of accepted, group friendships. The term "dynamics" when applied to relationships refers to the motive forces, physical or moral that exist within the relationship (Sykes, 1982).
- **Modes of Interaction.** Often certain patterns of interaction become evident within a school staff. Some staff members interact in a formal, stiff manner while perhaps others interact in a bantering or playful way. Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:135) propose that you may even find a staff room where sexual innuendo or aggression is the normal mode of interaction. I believe that all modes of interaction have aspects, which are both healthy and foster good relationships, and aspects, which are unhealthy and may distort reality leading to a break down in interpersonal staff relationships.
- **Possible lateral power dynamics within the staff.** Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:135) claim that often issues such as gender, race and age become issues of power between people. They suggest that these dynamics influence interpersonal relationships and, are considered lateral because they do not consider qualifications or positions of authority which tend to give rise to more anticipated hierarchical power relationships.
- **Professional Jealousy.** Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:136) state that interpersonal dynamics at a school are often affected by a professional jealousy – innovative educators are resented and undermined as they are thought to show up other staff members. They claim this can result in, "contracting into mediocrity" – as educators try not to be innovative as it alienates them from fellow staff members.

1.7.3 Organisational Commitment

As Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison and Sowa (1986:500) point out the word **commitment** is often used, in everyday terms, in the way that the dictionary defines it. This definition suggests that the word **commitment** denotes a sense of being emotionally or intellectually bound to some course of action (Sykes, 1982). Eisenberger *et al.* (1986:500) provide another perspective. They suggest that the understanding of the word **commitment** can be applied to a person's relationship with another individual, a group or even an organisation. It is in the context of a person's relationship with a school, that I will be using this word.

Eisenberger *et al.* (1986:500) also point out that as organisations have become more concerned with the various factors that might influence an individual's dedication to their place of work so an interest, in **organisational commitment**, has grown. Research in this area is explored in Chapter Two.

1.8 REFLECTION

I began Chapter One with a brief introduction to the research and placed the study in context. Next, I briefly presented the research question and indicated why I felt that it was significant. I then described the paradigm and research design that informed this study. I also touched on the assumptions that were implicit throughout the writing up of the study and I reviewed the key concepts that were referred to. I concluded this chapter with an outline of the chapters.

1.9 AN OUTLINE OF THE FOLLOWING CHAPTERS

In Chapter Two I review available research literature in the relevant areas pertinent to this study. A discussion of my understanding of how the various concepts related to each other open the chapter. Next the construct of health promotion is explored in as far as it provides an understanding of the need for healthy functioning schools. This is followed by a brief exploration of whole-school development, which provides a framework for interpersonal relationships within human resource development. The interpersonal relations and dynamics, and previous research in this area are then reviewed, followed by a closer look at

organisational commitment, and the importance of this in overall school development. The role of personal experience is highlighted where relevant.

In Chapter Three I look at the research design in more detail, focusing on the paradigm, design and methodology. This includes a closer look at the various aspects comprising my research namely, the individual cases in the study, data production, implementation and verification techniques and my means of data analysis. I conclude Chapter Three by discussing the credibility of the research and the ethical considerations that guided procedure.

Chapter Four describes the research process in detail and presents my research findings.

Chapter Five consists of a discussion of my research findings. This includes the limitations of this study, as well as some recommendations for future research areas on the role interpersonal staff relationships play, in the developing of a healthy school.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a review of literature related to the seminal concepts and central issues in this study. In this review I attempt to describe and define how the seminal concepts are seen in this study and how they inform my research. It is important to note that my understanding of these concepts has been shaped by both my personal interpretation of the literature and the meaning I have made of my own experiences. I also acknowledge the individually constructed meaning that particular authors have given to these concepts as they attempt to make sense of their own worlds.

2.2 THE SALIENT CONCEPTS

The following concepts are viewed as seminal: health promotion, whole school development, interpersonal relations and dynamics and organisational commitment.

Health promotion is discussed in detail in (2.3). As an essential part of interpersonal relationships, it is axiomatic that health promotion should inform this study.

Dalin and Rust (1983:22) suggest that **whole-school development** is an educational strategy that can be used by educational management teams and consulting educational psychologists, for improving and promoting the development of healthy, functioning schools. Whole school development, as the name suggests, covers a variety of aspects, which together make up a whole school environment. This approach to school development is based, as Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:36) point out, on approaches used more widely in the private sector by those concerned with organisational development. Consequently, this approach has been adopted and embraced by many in the educational management and psychology fraternity as a model for developing schools.

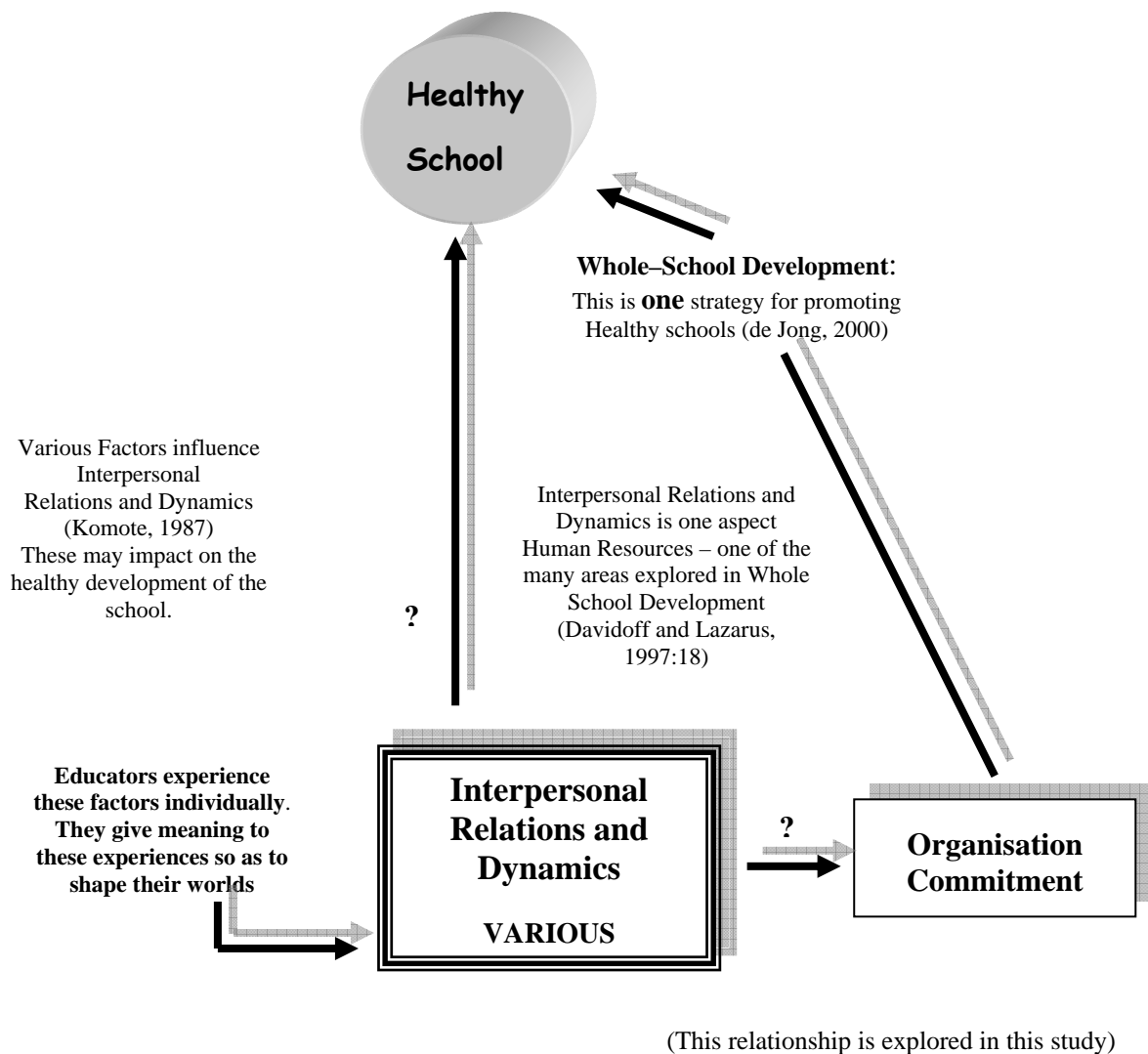
Although the term organisational school development is used synonymously with the term whole-school development according to Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:36), I have chosen to use only the term whole school development in this study. This is discussed in greater detail later in this chapter (2.4).

In their model of a school as an organisation, Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:18) combine the two concepts, **interpersonal relations** and **dynamics**, into one area, which is then explored in whole-school development under the broader auspices of human resources. Many factors, which possibly influence interpersonal relationships and dynamics, could be explored. For the purpose of this study I have limited myself to those mentioned in Chapter One (1.7.2) and detailed further in this chapter (2.5).

Within the context of human resource issues, organisational commitment is a concept which is strongly related to the interpersonal relationships and dynamics between people. This concept is used most widely in the field of industrial psychology, but it can be applied to any organisation. The concept and its relevance to this study are examined in more detail in (2.6) of this chapter. My research aims to explore what (if any) impact educators feel that interpersonal relationships have on organisational commitment. In this way I hope to explore whether there is a link between relationships and organisational commitment.

The above explanation thus attempts to sketch the framework within which my research falls. The following diagram (Figure 2.1) attempts to show how I have linked the key concepts of this study. This diagram was developed from the work of Davidoff and Lazarus (1997), Dalin and Rust (1983), De Jong (2000), Johnson and Braum (2001) and Komote (1987).

Figure 2.1: Diagram of Relationship Between Key Concepts in this Study



2.3 HEALTH PROMOTION

The concept of health promotion is important to my study as it helps provide an overall context for my study, justifying the relevance of such research. Therefore understanding the concept of health promotion is important.

Health has been identified as a key component of social and economic development and has been defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO), in the Ottawa Charter, as "*a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease*" (WHO, 1986:3).

According to Wright, Bonett and Sweeny (1993) dysfunctional health means a serious cost for organisations in terms of both human and financial consequences. In the case of schools, as in most organisations, much can be done to promote health and prevent such costs. In line with this view, The Department of Education (1997:72) states that health plays a key role in educational development. Healthy schools are pivotal to the provision of quality education for all and understanding how health can be promoted and developed in schools is thus a necessary part of the provision process.

In order to understand the process of health promotion, Reddy and Tobias (1994:19) suggest that a distinction should first be made between the philosophy of health education and health promotion. Reddy and Tobias (1994:20) outline how early efforts focused on health education as a means of finding ways of placing the onus on individuals to make choices that would ultimately improve their own health status. However, they go on to suggest that this approach failed to recognise the influence that social, economic and political contexts, in which an individual functions, may play in an individual's health. Consequently, as Reddy and Tobias (1994:20) report, the approach was broadened to consider the socio-cultural environments of individuals and to focus rather on empowering individuals to make appropriate choices by ensuring that their environments are suited to these choices.

The broad consideration of the systems within which an individual operates, without losing sight of how an individual makes meaning of these systems, forms a large part of what became known as the health-promotion strategy. Reddy and Tobias (1994:20) point out, however, that health education as a concept has not been lost, and is now incorporated into the broader service of health promotion.

Reddy and Tobias (1994:21) quote Dr Green, formerly of the USA Office of Health Promotion. He defined health promotion as "... any combination of health education and related organisational, political and economic interventions designed to facilitate behavioural and environmental changes conducive to health."

It is this definition of health promotion that I have used to inform this study.

As a strategy, health promotion was formally given recognition at an International Conference meeting in Ottawa on 21 November 1986 (WHO, 1986:1). The Ottawa Charter, which resulted from this conference, laid the foundations for health promotion, and highlighted the key elements required for the effective promotion of health. The charter listed

the "... fundamental conditions and resources for health (as) peace, shelter, education, food, income, a stable eco-system, sustainable resources, social justice and equity" (WHO, 1986:1).

Therefore, as Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (1997:83) suggest, the promotion of health, is the process of enabling people to increase their control over their own environment and health and, where necessary, to improve their health. As Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (1997:83) suggest, this has become an important part of health development and therefore of overall development – including educational development.

In line with this thinking, St Leger (1998:223) suggests that schools can be powerful health promoting sites (places which foster a sense of well-being), and are indeed emerging as comprehensive sites for the enhancement of the health status and potential of both learners and educators. In almost every community the school is a place where many people live, learn and labour. The World Health Organisation (WHO), in the Ottawa Charter (1986:1), acknowledges that health is compounded and lived by people in the settings of their everyday life – where they live, learn and labour. Schools are therefore one of the most important institutions and settings in which changes conducive to health can be created.

Reddy and Tobias (1994:19) emphasise that health, is not just concerned with an "absence of disease". Therefore, in order to promote health within a school and create a healthy school organisation, one needs to address how the environment, both physically and mentally, the satisfying of needs and coping with environmental changes, may need to be altered to foster a complete sense of well-being for all – educators and learners alike.

St Leger (1998:223) also goes on to recommend that educators need to be proactive in a number of areas beyond the curriculum if a school is to be a successful site of health promotion. He further suggests that this success rests heavily on the knowledge that teachers have about what constitutes a health promoting school and on how they understand the concept of health. It is thus important that educators understand what healthy schools are and what their role in the health promotion process may be. This is particularly relevant in view of the claim made by St Leger (1998:223) that research findings suggest that educators have little knowledge of certain key issues and that professional development may be necessary.

Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (1997:83) also suggest that the health promoting process requires that individuals, or groups of people must be able to identify and obtain goals, satisfy needs and, cope with change within their environment.

2.3.1 Promoting Healthy Schools through Interpersonal Relationships

Reddy and Tobias, (1994:22) argue that strengthening social networks and emotional supports is an essential way of contributing towards the promotion of health for educators within a school. They claim that social networks are a valid source of emotional support and from this I would then infer that relying on relationships with fellow staff members for emotional support could be a vital way of coping with the school environment. Hartman Ellis and Miller (1994:77) also suggest that social support has a positive role to play in countering some of the adverse influences on health. This supports a notion that interpersonal staff relationships are essential in the promotion of individual, educator health, and therefore in the promotion of the health of the whole school.

2.3.2 Healthy Schools and Organisational Commitment

Johnson and Braum (2001:281) conducted research in health promoting hospitals in Australia, and suggest that there is a possible link between health promotion and organisational commitment. They claim that for the successful creation of a health promoting environment there has to be strong sense of organisational commitment, supported at multiple levels of the organisation.

What one could possibly infer from Johnson and Braum (2001:281) is that encouraging organisational commitment among employees within a school may assist in creating a healthy environment, capable of successfully delivering a service. In the field of education this service would be the provision of a quality education for all.

2.4 WHOLE-SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT

There are many different descriptions of whole-school development. For the purpose of this study I will be using the definition offered by Dalin and Rust (1983:22). They describe whole-school development as "... a self-correcting, self-renewing process, undertaken by the members of an organisation, although external support usually exists in the form of consultants".

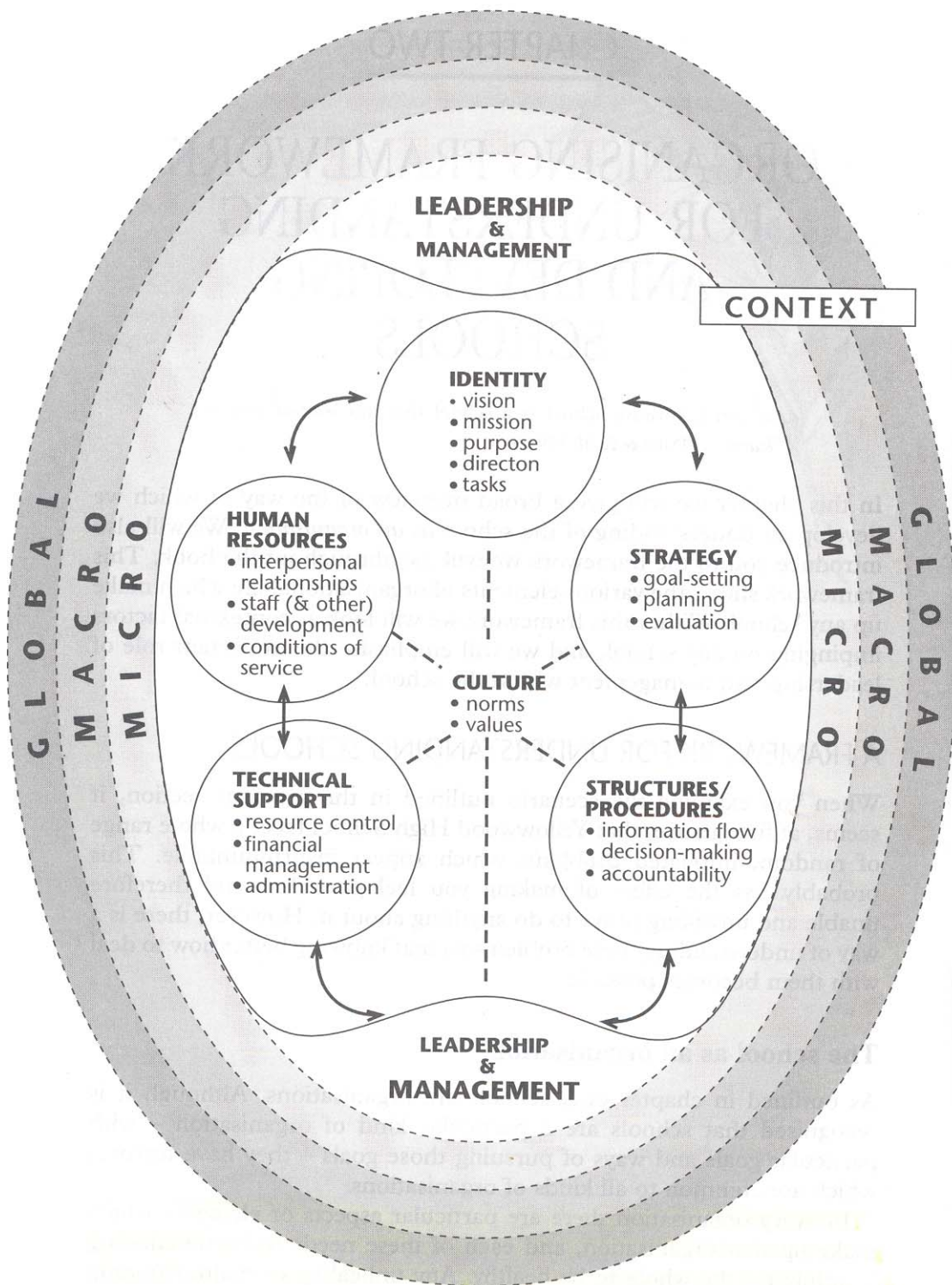
In view of this description, De Jong (2000:339) points out that in our present transformational climate, many school development practitioners, view whole school development as a potent

strategy for managing change, and for enhancing the school's progress into a healthy learning environment. Donald *et al.* (1997:85) suggest that health promotion in schools requires an approach that tackles whole-school development comprehensively.

This strategy also requires one to view the school as an organisation, consisting of many different elements. Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:18) present the school as an organisation consisting of many different elements, which together operate as a whole, and if operating successfully, give rise to a healthy learning and teaching environment.

What follows is the model of the school as an organisation suggested by Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:18) and a brief discussion of this model.

Figure 2.2: Model of School as Organisation



Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:17) The Learning School: An Organisation Development Approach

From a constructivism perspective, this model can possibly be understood as an attempt by Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:18) to make sense of the 'world' that is the school. This model suggests that the school is a complex system made up of many inter-relating parts. Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:17) believe that these parts are intertwined and can seldom be separated in reality. They suggest that these parts influence each other – if any of these parts is not functioning effectively, or is unhealthy, there is a ripple effect throughout the system. For the purpose of this study I have used this model, but I have split it into its various components. I offer a brief description of each of these separate elements using Davidoff and Lazarus' (1997) work as a point of departure.

- **The Context:** Davidoff and Lazarus' (1997:33) model aims to recognise the broader context within which the school system is entrenched. This therefore acknowledges the influences that social, political and economic dynamics, to mention but a few, may have on the way a school functions. Aspects to the school system often reflect the issues of the broader context.
- **Culture:** Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:20) place this at the centre of their model, as they understand this to determine and reflect the development of the life at the school. They claim that it is the school culture that reflects the values and norms of the broader context. In their opinion, it is these values and norms that underpin the daily school practices.
- **Identity:** According to Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:22) a school's identity is guided by the purposes of the school and, this is determined by how the school sees itself. This is reflected in the school's vision and mission.
- **Strategy:** This aspect of the school system is said to relate directly to all other aspects of school life. Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:23) describe the school's strategy as the process of developing and evaluating goals that have been set for the school. They go on to suggest that the specific educational nature of the school – delivering a quality education – is highlighted in the school's strategic planning.
- **Structures and Procedures:** This aspect describes how the various systems within the school interrelate coherently. Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:25) claim that "structures" refer to the lines of responsibility and authority, and of departments and how they relate to each other. They also propose that lines of communication and accountability are also

accommodated for within the structures and procedures of the school. Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:25) see "Procedures" as referring to the rules and regulations which frame the way the structures relate to each one another.

- **Technical Support:** In Davidoff and Lazarus's (1997:28) model technical support includes administration, financial structures and the allocation and control of other resources. Again this aspect is closely linked with others.
- **Leadership and Management:** Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:32) suggest that management members have both a guiding role (leadership) and a containing role (management), placing these individuals at the heart of the school. Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:32) argue that it is this aspect that holds together and develops all other aspects, impacting heavily on all other elements. Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:32) also acknowledge that this aspect relates to the school's hierarchical system and refers to those in positions of hierarchical power.
- **Human Resources:** This aspect of Davidoff and Lazarus' (1997:29) model is pertinent to this study and will be discussed in more detail. The model places this aspect on an equal footing to the other aspects. In their model (Davidoff & Lazarus, 1997:18) categorise "people issues" as elements relating to human resources. They go on to present the human resources aspect of a school as involving matters pertaining to the members of staff (teachers, non-teaching staff and the principal), as well as any other stakeholders at the school. They suggest that it can be divided into three broad areas:
 - Human resource development,
 - Conditions of employment
 - Interpersonal relations and dynamics

It is the aspect of **interpersonal relations and dynamics** that is of specific focus in this study. The interactions that occur between educators and the relationships that develop are not to be underestimated in the development process of healthy schools.

2.5 INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS AND DYNAMICS

Following from this description of Davidoff and Lazarus' (1997:18) whole school development model, I take a closer look at the combined element of interpersonal relations and dynamics. Senge (1990:19) supports the importance of this focus suggesting that "if you want to improve a school system, before you change the rules, look first to the ways that people think and interact together".

In fact, Senge (1990:19) claims that organisations function the way they do because of the way the people working there think and function. If this is the case, then focusing on the people involved is paramount. As De Jong (2000:341) goes on to stipulate, the goals of whole school development should therefore be two-fold, and should encompass meeting the needs of the individuals (quality of life for all stakeholders) and, improving the overall functioning of the school as a whole.

In light of both Senge's (1990) and De Jong's (2000) views, I believe that any negative aspect of the school, particularly any "people related" aspect, will adversely impact the learning process – preventing it from being effective. This again influences the health promotion abilities of the school. Whole-school development is one possible way in which malfunctioning can be identified and rectified. This would thus help the school, and the learning process, to remain healthy.

The area of interpersonal relations and dynamics is explored in quite some detail in this section. I have subdivided this area, focusing on specific factors, which may impact on interpersonal staff relationships. I have used the work of Komote (1987), Davidoff and Lazarus (1997), and Moonsamy and Hassett (1997) as a guide, focusing primarily on the factors that they made reference to in their work. I wish to note, however that not **all** aspects of interpersonal relations and dynamics are covered here. A comprehensive survey of this vast area would not be appropriate for the limited focus of this study.

2.5.1 Understanding Social Interactions in the Workplace

Moonsamy and Hassett (1997:39) are quick to point out that not enough attention is paid to the importance of adult relationships within schools. They claim that much vision, optimism

and vigour is lost as a result of unhealthy and conflictual relationships. Hartman Ellis and Miller (1994:80) furthermore suggest that despite the wealth of research on social interaction and the resultant support for it, confusion seems to abound with regards to what it is and how it functions.

Understanding the social interactions that result from interpersonal relationships with work colleagues may then rely on looking closely at how these interactions may be defined. I believe that a distinction needs to be made between the different elements that make up these interactions. Rook (1987 as cited in Buñk & Verhoeven, 1991:245) stresses that interactions need to be separated into help-orientated exchanges and rewarding interactions. Rewarding interactions include companionship and intimacy.

Research by House (1981 as cited in Buñk & Verhoeven, 1991:245) suggests that interpersonal relationship interaction and communication is a multidimensional construct. He suggests that emotional concern (empathy); information (advice, suggestions, directions), appraisals and instrumental aid (assistance, financial aid) are all elements of help-orientated interactions that occur within workplace relationships. House (1981) also adds to these the further dimensions of companionship and intimacy (rewarding interactions).

Following from this it would seem that all interpersonal relationships are composed of a mixture of these different types of interactions.

2.5.2 The Role Played by Interpersonal Relationships

In light of the above, literature, dealing with the role that social interactions play within the work place, has also been reviewed. Hartman Ellis and Miller (1994:80) suggest that much of the literature confirms that social interactions and support resulting from co-worker relationships seems to have positive benefits on the employee's mental well-being and ability to deal with stress and resist burnout.

Hartman Ellis and Miller (1994:80) do, however, recognise that no social relationship comes without stress of its own, but still imply that globally, social interactions are perceived as being supportive and beneficial. Fiske and Taylor (1984, cited in Hartman Ellis & Miller, 1994:80), suggest that this may be due to biases in memory and cognition. Ware and Sherk (1981 cited in Hartman Ellis & Miller, 1994:80) offer personality determinants as a possible

reason. Whatever the reason may be, Sarason and Duck (2001:15) suggest that social interactions in the workplace are invaluable for maintaining, restoring and promoting health.

In fact, Buüink and Verhoeven's (1991) research suggests that rewarding interactions, as an aspect of interpersonal relationships, do indeed seem to have a positive health outcome, in that they seem to make an individual more resistant to stress by providing positive feelings. Albrecht (1982 as cited in Hartman Ellis & Miller, 1994:79) also suggests that interpersonal relationships in the workplace, and the support that these relationships provides have also proved to be effective in helping reduce burnout.

Milstein, Golaszewski and Duquette (1984:293) draw attention to the role of interpersonal relationships in the workplace. They highlight the fact that there is a direct relationship between the trust demonstrated in relationships between workers in a particular organisation and their feelings of job satisfaction and well-being. If this is the case, then encouraging trusting interpersonal relationships is part of a health promoting process.

Moonsamy and Hassett (1997:42) also talk about how essential trust is in the process of growing positive relationships within schools. They also mention that a climate of trust encourages positive relationships by reducing fears of betrayal and rejection and by promoting acceptance, support and confirmation. If this is indeed the case, then a climate of trust is one vital ingredient in encouraging healthy interpersonal relationships within a school, and by default then increasing educators' feelings of job satisfaction and well-being.

Much research has been conducted into the role that relationships between various stakeholders within an organisation play. Earlier research by Miller *et al.* (1990 as cited in Hartman Ellis & Miller, 1994:81) suggests that supervisors and superiors may be useful in reducing job-related stress. Earlier Billingsley and Cross (1992:453) made a similar point when they stated that principal support had been linked to teacher retention and attrition. Furthermore, Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison and Sowa's (1986:500) research suggests that in organisations where the organisation itself seems to be supportive, valuing an employee's contributions and caring for their welfare, employee absenteeism and retention is also improved. However, some research suggests that it is co-workers who are best able to provide this support (Jayaratne & Chess, 1984; Morch & Chestnut, 1984 cited in Hartman Ellis & Miller, 1994:81).

Therefore, when dealing with stresses resulting from work, it is likely that organisational sources will be able to provide better support than friends and family outside of the workplace. Hartman Ellis and Miller (1994:81) support this view, pointing out that work colleagues have a greater understanding of the nature of the stress. And, as Burke and Greenglass (1993:371) point out, teaching has been acknowledged as a particularly stressful occupation. They go on to state that psychological burn-out results in many educators leaving the profession. Burke and Greenglass (1993:378) confirm that although research shows that social support has been identified as a resource for coping with stress, the effects of social support from various sources, including supervisors, co-workers and family and friends may be varied and further qualitative research in this area may shed more light on these relationships.

Buüink and Verhoeven (1991:245), on the other hand, challenge the positive role that social interactions play in the workplace, arguing that the professional element of work relationships prevents an individual from feeling completely free to disclose feelings that may make them appear incompetent. They also argue that work relationships are often exchange relationships. This could lead to feelings of indebtedness on the part of the individual receiving support. Buüink and Verhoeven (1991:246) also go on to suggest that social interactions in the workplace often occur at moments when they are not needed, or may interfere with productivity – making these interactions undesirable.

In a school environment, however, it would appear that social interactions may be limited to break and lunch times when staff gather together. The nature of a school environment thus limits interaction between staff, as during lesson time educators are usually in separate classrooms. In fact, Moonsamy and Hassett (1997:40) suggest that relationships between educators are often characterised by too much isolation, preventing educators from interacting, actively assisting each other and sharing knowledge. This lack of interaction is therefore possibly experienced as counterproductive. Educators possibly keep away from the very people who may help them to do things better. Thus it becomes apparent that fostering interactions between educators could have benefits.

2.5.3 Influential Factors in Fostering Interpersonal Relationships

Blythe Schütte and McLennan (2001:15) argue that "people issues" are often described by management as being a block to effective, healthy organisational functioning. This lends

support to Moonsamy and Hassett (1997:40) who contend a lack of educator interactions prevents a sharing of expertise, which has a direct effect on the quality of the learning process, the primary function of the school.

The role that interpersonal relationships play in promoting worker well-being and stress management also cannot be overlooked because, as Buüink and Verhoeven (1991:255) advise, it is the "well worker" who is more inclined to stay in a particular work environment. Understanding factors, influential in interpersonal staff relationships, is thus invaluable.

Previous research by Cassel (1976 as cited in Sarason & Duck (2001:17) focused on the role that social support, stemming from close personal relationships, plays in counteracting the influences of stress and the physiological processes that result. He focused on the effects of the presence or absence of social contact without considering the factors or aspects of close personal relationships on which social support may be based. In commenting critically on his work, Sarason and Duck (2001) point out that, in addition, that factors that could influence the support provided by a particular relationship were not considered.

2.5.3.1 Interpersonal conflict

When understanding the various factors that influence interpersonal interactions and relationships, I feel that an often overlooked, aspect is that **everyone is different**. Blythe Schütte and Mc Lennan (2001:17) suggest that this uniqueness in personality, perceptions, life experiences, attitudes and aspirations can be both a blessing and a curse for a school. They go on to imply that this uniqueness brings to the school a wide variety of skills and abilities but also brings with it the chance of conflict; people with differing ideas and perceptions are more likely to disagree over issues. Moonsamy and Hassett (1997:80) also touch on this issue, pointing out that conflict within a school is not necessarily a bad thing and that it is mistaken to assume that a healthy school with healthy interpersonal relationships will be conflict free. Making a related point, Bush and Middlewood (1997:26) argue that building and developing relationships in any workplace, like anywhere else, is a constructivist process of trying to match the unique elements of our own worlds with the worlds of other.

Within the work context, the conflicts that may result from uncomfortable interpersonal work relationships, if not handled correctly, can influence an individual's sense of worth in an

organisation (Moonsamy & Hassett, 1997:80). Thus mismanagement of interpersonal conflict can be a major cause of ineffective schools. What Moonsamy and Hassett (1997:80) only hint at is explored in this study: how the management, good or bad of such conflict may directly influence staff relationships, and commitment.

2.5.3.2 *Venue for interactions*

Sarason, Levine, Goldenberg, Cherlin and Bennett (1966:76) point out that schools are unlike other work environments, which may have open-planned work areas, where groups of individuals work, or a canteen where workers can eat and relax together. Instead they suggest that in schools, teachers tend to remain isolated within their individual classrooms for most of the day and canteens, if they exist, are primarily for use by the children.

Many schools do have a staff or faculty room where staff can gather. However, as Sarason *et al.* (1966:76) point out, although schools technically do have a venue for staff interactions, the teacher's lounge or staffroom is too small to serve any real purpose. They also suggest that in some schools the staff-room is used for formal staff meetings and, informal staff gatherings during breaks or lunch-time are discouraged. In these cases no real venue for informal interpersonal interaction exists, hampering the development of healthy interpersonal relationships.

Thomas (1995:12) also comments that where staffrooms do exist, they can be terrifying places, particularly for new staff members. She talks of how territorial educators can be in their staffroom, making specific mention of how educators tend to have their preferred seats and coffee cups.

2.5.3.3 *Formal interpersonal school practices*

Sarason *et al.* (1966:74) also point out that although a teacher is in a room all day with numerous children, teaching can be a lonely profession. It is rare that a teacher has opportunity to share his/her successes or problems in teaching with anyone else. In fact in any working day contact with like-minded adults may indeed be very limited. Sarason *et al.* (1966:77) also claim that family and friends are not always able to understand or relate to the specifics of a teacher's experiences, and management do not usually serve as confidantes as this can conflict with their other roles.

So, it then becomes apparent that teachers must turn to each other for support. However, this begs the question of how and when this takes place. One might suggest that staff meetings may be a possible forum for co-worker support, through the sharing of experiences and possible solutions. Komote (1987:19) points out that staff meetings should provide an opportunity for educators to share ideas and vent frustrations. He claims these should be creative decision-making events. However, as he suggests, staff meetings are by and large devoted to whole-school practices and policy issues. No opportunity is provided for staff to seek support. In fact, as Moonsamy and Hassett (1997:11) suggest, it may even be the case that these staff meetings, rather than encouraging positive interactions actually have the opposite affect and erode the interpersonal relationships that exist between staff.

Moonsamy and Hassett (1997:11) go on to point out that staff often complain about the haphazard way in which meetings are conducted, stressing that the main problems seem to be that people don't listen to each other and often treat each other in a way that discourages open discussion of problems. This can then create animosity between educators and management alike. Earlier Sarason *et al.* (1966:75) made a similar point stating that depending on the school and management, staff meetings may offer greater or lesser prospects for open interchange of ideas. If these meetings are not the appropriate opportunity for positive staff interaction, and no other formal forum exists, then an alternative needs to be found. Informal gatherings seem to be an alternative.

Komote (1987:35) talks of circulated notices and intercom announcements as another means of formal communication often employed by schools. These allow management to communicate with educators without gathering everyone in a central venue. The invention of email has also contributed to this means of sharing information.

2.5.3.4 Modes of interaction

Komote (1987:17) alludes to the fact that the mode of interaction, within a school, influences the atmosphere. He also reports that 85.2 % of the educators in his research sample consider a healthy atmosphere to be imperative.

In view of this, Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:135) point out that patterns or tones of interaction become evident within a school staff. As mentioned in Chapter One, Lindgren (1962) suggests that often it is management who set this tone. Tone of interpersonal

interaction may range from formal and stiff to playful banter. Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:135) suggest that all modes of interaction have aspects, which are both healthy and foster good relationships, and aspects, which are unhealthy and may distort reality leading to a break down in interpersonal staff relationships.

2.5.2.5 *Patterns of group relationships and dynamics*

Despite limited opportunities and venues for social interaction, educators can not exist as isolated units. Instead, I believe that educators need to interact with each other and seek opportunities to form part of an interrelating group. Group formation would seem to be a natural, workplace phenomenon. Makin, Cooper and Cox (1996:209) suggest that informal groups in the workplace are often not that different from formal groups. They claim that groupings that start out formally often result in strong informal relationships.

Following from this, Blythe Schütte and McLennan (2001:25) claim that in any social or working environment the formation of informal groups provides the opportunity for a wide range of needs to be met. Makin *et al.* (1996:208) support this claim adding that these needs are primarily of a psychological nature.

Blythe Schütte and Mc Lennan, (2001:25) then go on to identify some of the important factors of group formation. These include:

- **Need satisfaction** - People believe that belonging to a particular group helps them to get certain needs met. Self-esteem and security are two such needs that may be met through a sense of "belonging to a group". Sarason *et al.* (1966) also suggest that the need for support can be met through the "belonging" to a social group within the workforce. Makin *et al.* (1996:209) add that the group also provides security, which in turn reduces anxiety.
- **Interpersonal Attraction** - Physical attraction, location and similarity in race, beliefs or personality traits influence group formation and often individuals join groups because they are attracted to other group members.
- **Group Activities** - The activities of a group may fulfil needs.

- **Group Goals** - If the interests and goals of the group are desirable this may encourage an individual to join that particular group.
- **Social Identification** - A social identity may be obtained, along with companionship, by joining a group (Blythe Schütte & Mc Lennan, 2001:25).

The group of individual educators in the work place, with whom one can identify and feel "a sense of group belonging" play an integral part in providing a source of social identification and affiliation for staff and can affect an individual's performance at work. Blythe Schütte and Mc Lennan (2001:25) claim that individuals whose needs are not being satisfied within a particular group will search out others who can fulfil these needs. This raises the possibility of whether this may result in individuals, who are unsuccessful in getting their needs met by a social group within a particular school, leaving a school in search of more favourable group membership at another school.

2.5.3.6 Possible Power Dynamics

Blythe Schütte and Mc Lennan (2001:12) claim that power is very often the foundation on which the nature of relationships is based. Within an organisation – in this instance a school – Fisher; Katz; Miller and Thatcher (2003:19) talk of two possible ways in which power may be experienced and which may influence the way we make sense of our relationships. These are:

- **Hierarchical Power:** This is a vertical power existing as a result of the authority system within an organisation. A person would experience this power from their position with the organisation.
- **Lateral Power:** This power manifests when defined areas of responsibility are not clearly evident to all members of the organisation. This means that different people, within the same level of an organisation have power of each other.

Following from this, Foucault (as cited in Blythe Schütte & Mc Lennan, 2001:12) views power as rooted in relationships, operating through the way we understand and experience the world and ourselves. Blythe Schütte and Mc Lennan (2001:12) suggest that as a result of this sort of power, individuals develop a way of acting and knowing that makes sense to them, contained by the structures within which they live and work.

Following this, both types of power referred to by Fisher *et al.* (2003:19) are possibly embedded in the relationships within schools as organisations. Blythe Schütte and Mc Lennan (2001:12) go on from here to suggest that how educators experience power in relationships with work colleagues can influence how they perceive themselves and this in turn may affect how they view their role within an organisation. If this is the case, then one can deduce that unhealthy or uncomfortable power dynamics can lead individuals to question whether they are indeed happy within an organisation and this in turn, may contribute to staff turnover. Blythe Shütte and Mc Lennan (2001:12) support this argument, thus suggesting that power dynamics are an important factor in determining whether certain relationships are healthy and supportive, and in determining whether these relationships contribute to employee commitment.

2.5.3.7 Professional jealousy

Moonsamy and Hassett (1997:41) point out that relationships within schools do tend to be competitive. They suggest that educators may want their school to perform better than another, but personal achievement seems to over-ride this and so somehow educators manage to create enemies within their own school. Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:135) thus suggest that professional jealousy is a phenomenon, which can greatly affect interpersonal work dynamics. Pioneering and enthusiastic educators are often resented and undermined as they are seen as "showing up" other staff members. This results in, "contracting into mediocrity" (Davidoff & Lazarus, 1997:136) – as educators try not to be innovative as it alienates them from fellow staff members. Moonsamy and Hassett (1997:41) also talk of the reluctance to appear as if "showing off" and of how this prevents a sharing of knowledge and can lead to guarded and distant relationships. They highlight an attitude among educators that in order for one to win, another must lose.

Lindgren (1962:548) contends that an authoritarian style of school management, which is not uncommon in some schools today, can also have a very negative affect on interpersonal relations between educators by actually creating professional jealousy. He claims that management may distribute workloads unfairly, or be seen to favour certain educators, for a variety of different reasons.

Moonsamy and Hassett (1997:41) also cite examples of educators bad mouthing other staff members to management in order to gain favour. They mention evaluation systems, which

require demeaning one educator in favour of another, to illustrate the role that management may play in the professional jealousy arena. Lindgen (1962:548) also implies that an unclear and non-transparent system is another factor that may actually create jealousy amongst colleagues.

2.6 ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

Steers (1977:46) suggests that the concept of employee commitment to an organisation has received increased attention over the years, both in the actual workplace and in the literature. This is because managers have sought to find ways to improve employee retention and performance. Johnson and Snizek (1991 as cited in Kamfer, Venter & Boshoff, 1994:1) argue that this is because organisational commitment leads to positive behavioural consequences and counters such negatives as increased turnover and absenteeism.

The literature suggests therefore, that organisational commitment is a good predictor of staff turnover, absenteeism and job performance (Porter, Steers, Mowday & Boulian Porter, 1974 cited in Steers, 1977:46; Marsh & Mannari, 1977). It has also been suggested by Steers (1977:46) that organisational commitment is a good indicator of an employee's intent and desire to stay with a particular organisation, and of the effectiveness of an organisation as a whole.

But, it is not just the organisation that is concerned about linkages between organisations and its employees. Mowday, Porter and Steers (1982:1) claim that employees also have concerns about whether to leave or stay with an organisation or, whether to get actively involved in and committed to the organisation. These are all very real experiences for many individuals and can interfere substantially with everyday job performance and satisfaction. These concerns also then create stress for individuals, which in turn can affect an individual's mental and physical health.

Therefore, this may have useful implications for a whole-school development practitioner, who may be looking for ways in which to assess the general effectiveness of a school as organisation, and ways to retain and promote a healthy school staff.

Organisational commitment, and the various variables that may influence it, is thus an important consideration when developing a healthy, effective school. As suggested, by Porter

et al. (1974:608), one of the results of low organisational commitment is high staff turnover and poor job satisfaction. Research by Reichers (1985 as cited in Billingsley & Cross, 1992:454) confirms this by demonstrating that commitment is negatively associated with staff turnover and to a lesser extent also with increased absenteeism and decreased job performance.

Porter *et al.* (1974:608) argue therefore that the significant correlation between organisational commitment and turnover suggests that one of the positive outcomes of increased commitment is a more stable, and more productive workforce. I feel that this then has serious implications for a school hoping to hold onto its staff – a resource of primary importance in its overall effectiveness. Exploring ways in which to encourage commitment then becomes imperative.

In view of this, then, the question is, what role do interpersonal relationships in the workplace, play in the commitment of an individual to a particular school? Sheldon's research (1971 as cited in Steers, 1977:47) suggests that increased opportunity for social interaction is a factor that may well influence commitment. He does not, however, focus on the nature of these social interactions, the factors that influence these interactions, or how employees may perceive their experiences thereof.

Research by Abraham (1999:440) has also shown that social support provided by interpersonal work relationships lessens the negative impact of emotional dissonance on organisational commitment. She also comments that social support is viewed as countering the emotional demands of the organisation and consequently, results in less erosion of organisational commitment. This would warrant further examination of the role that social support plays in encouraging commitment in the field of education.

Hochschild (1983) adds to the sense of the importance of social support by making reference to how informal interactions between flight attendants allowed them to express feelings of anger and frustration about difficult passengers. This research suggests that venting their true feelings with like-minded colleagues helped the people involved counter the negative aspects of the emotional dissonance. Abraham (1999:441) points out that one example of eroded commitment is an intention to leave the job.

Rafaeli and Sutton (1987 as cited in Abraham, 1999:441) describe emotional dissonance as resulting when an individual's expressed emotions conform to organisational norms but

conflict with true feelings. They claim that this internal conflict threatens psychological well-being in two ways. Individuals who resist organisational pressure may find themselves subjected to increasing levels of pressure from the organisation until they feel obliged to give in. Abraham (1999:441) also claims that those who comply with the organisational directives may experience feelings of fickleness.

Thus it seems that social workplace interactions can have a positive impact on the psychological health of individuals. For example, it would seem that by countering emotional dissonance staff turnover might be reduced. This is an invaluable insight for the whole-school development practitioner concerned with both staff health and the development of healthy, functional school.

2.6.1 Describing Organisational Commitment

In order to further explore the impact of social interactions and interpersonal relationships on organisational commitment, as experienced by educators, one needs to have a concrete understanding of what organisational commitment is.

Kamfer *et al.* (1994:1) claim that originally there was much dispute over whether it was an attitudinal or behavioural phenomenon. But today there seems to be some agreement across the literature that commitment is multi-dimensional in nature. However, consensus over what these dimensions are, or how they are combined continues to be elusive.

Porter *et al.* (1974 as cited in Steers, 1977:47) define organisational commitment as the relative strength of an individual's involvement in and identification with a particular organisation. They go on to suggest that it is characterised by:

1. A strong belief in and acquiescence of the organisation's values and goals
2. A strong desire to preserve membership in the organisation
3. A willingness to wield effort on behalf of the organisation.

Following years of research into the work of such pioneers as Porter *et al.* (1974), and Steers (1977), among others, Allan and Meyer (1990:2) conclude that organisational commitment is a complex construct that reflects three broad aspects. They referred to these aspects as:

1. Affective Commitment
2. Continuance Commitment
3. Normative Commitment

Myers and Miller (1997:52) maintain that there are three components to organisational commitment. These components reflect the traditional themes in Porter *et al.* (1974 as cited in Steers, 1977:47). Allan and Meyer (1990:2) recognise that together these themes are responsible in some way for binding an individual employee to their place of work.

However, following this, Kamfer *et al.* (1994:1) have taken the work of Allen and Meyer (1990) and integrated it with previous research to conclude that there are actually four basic dimensions, which together comprise organisational commitment. They refer to:

- Affective Commitment
- Continuance Commitment
- Moral Commitment
- Alienative Commitment

It is these four dimensions that have informed my understanding of organisational commitment.

2.6.1.1 Affective Commitment

This first dimension is also referred to in the variety of literature as attitudinal commitment. This outlook can be traced to work by Kanter (1968, cited in Kamfer *et al.*, 1994:1), who defined commitment as the willingness of individuals to give both loyalty and energy to the organisation, resulting in forming of an emotional bond with that organisation.

Affective commitment is associated with the work by Mowday *et al.* (1982) and is said to be the strength of an individual's identity with and involvement in the organisation. It can be characterised, according to Kamfer *et al.* (1994:1) by at least three aspects, namely:

1. A strong desire to maintain membership with the organisation;
2. An acceptance of and belief in the organisation's value system;
3. A willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organisation.

2.6.1.2 *Continuance Commitment*

Also known as behavioural or calculative commitment, the second dimension refers to the circumstances in which an individual feels obliged to commit to the organisation because of the costs associated with leaving. According to Kamfer *et al.* (1994:2) these costs could be financial, social or psychological in nature.

They go on to suggest that the individual becomes bound to an organisation because they have invested in the organisation and cannot "afford" to separate themselves, resulting in an "exchange relationship" of sorts. It would seem that the degree of continuance commitment shown by an individual to the organisation is determined by how much this "exchange relationship" actually favours the individual.

Allen and Meyer (1990:4) argue that continuance commitment is not so much behavioural as it is attitudinal. Their reasoning is based on the premise that individuals recognise the cost associated with discontinuing a specific action. This type of identification is classified as "a psychological state reflecting the employee's relationship to the organisation" (Allen & Meyer, 1990:4).

This is therefore not something that is acted on behaviourally. Research by Turton (2001) suggests that the particular variables that influence the development of continuance commitment are rewards, organisational actions, financial opportunities and personal characteristics. It is the aspect of reward that is particularly pertinent to my study.

Mottaz (1988:467) found that intrinsic reward, namely job content is the most powerful determiner of continuance commitment, followed by extrinsic and social factors. It is these social factors that I wish to examine more closely in this study. This is because the role that interpersonal staff relationships play in organisational commitment seems to fall within this dimension of the overall concept. Allen and Meyer (1990:3) speak of the individual's relationship to the organisation and the role that this plays in commitment but what of the individual's relationships with other individuals within the organisation? The role that social interactions may play in an individual's work life, and the perceived loss of these relationships that would be experienced if one were to leave the organisation, might play an important role in determining how "committed" the individual is to staying with that organisation.

2.6.1.3 Moral Commitment

Allen and Meyer (1990:4) describe the third dimension of organisational commitment as normative. According to Angle and Perry (1981 as cited in Kamfer *et al.*, 1994:2) this aspect is also known as value commitment. This can be described in terms of an individual's feelings of obligation to the organisation and on the internalisation of the norms thereof.

Therefore, a morally committed individual is someone who feels he or she ought to stay with the organisation because of an obligation influenced by an earlier familial or cultural socialisation, the effect of which may be a perceived sense of loyalty. Allen and Meyer (1990:4) suggest that this sense of loyalty or obligation is usually assumed to be towards the organisation. But, what if the individual feels a sense of loyalty towards his/her fellow employees? And what if this loyalty, borne out of close interpersonal relationships with work colleagues is enough to convince an individual to remain with a particular organisation?

2.6.1.4 Alienative Commitment

Kamfer *et al.* (1994:2) claim that the fourth dimension of organisational commitment is often overlooked or neglected. They suggest it represents a negative orientation towards the workplace, particularly to be found in situations where individuals find their behaviour extremely constrained. It would seem that alienative commitment may be linked to emotional dissonance, as individuals struggle with internal emotions, which may conflict with the way they are allowed to behave. In this case, the role that interpersonal relationships play, by offering opportunities for social interaction, which according to Abraham (1999:441) negate the negative effects of emotional dissonance, could be linked to the dimension of alienative commitment.

Together these four dimensions combine to give us a multi-dimension view of how an individual and his/her place of work could be linked. This has given rise to two multi-dimensional models of organisational commitment. Both of these models were proposed by Allen and Meyer (1990:14). Kamfer *et al.* (1994) investigated these two models to determine whether they did indeed represent the commitment linkage between an employee and their place of work. They concluded that organisational commitment is a multi-dimensional construct.

It is important to emphasise at this stage that although my study investigates just one possible factor that influences the commitment process, I acknowledge that many other factors could be at play. And, since organisational commitment is explained multi-dimensionally, any combination of dimensions could influence an educator's perceptions of his or her own commitment to the school within which he or she works.

This suggests that showing that educators do see interpersonal staff relationships as having a bearing on their commitment to a particular school may not be enough to address the overall situation. In fact, in order to address organisational commitment, a whole-school development practitioner may need to explore many other factors which influence the commitment process.

2.7 REFLECTIONS

This literature review has only really begun to touch on the many different aspects that I am endeavouring to cover in this study. I first examined the key concepts in education, which provide a context for this research as an educational psychologist concerned with whole-school development. The concept of organisational school development and health promotion provides this context by outlining how the aspect of interpersonal relationships plays a role in the overall field of education and of educational psychology more specifically.

Following from this was a closer look at interpersonal relationships within the workplace. Literature on the role that support plays within the workplace is plentiful. A lot of research has been conducted on whether support from work colleagues is indeed desirable. Findings present a mixed picture, with Buünk and Verhoeven (1991) in particular, questioning whether support within the workplace has a positive role to play. However, most of the literature presents a positive portrayal of support within the workplace, noting that co-worker support is far more effective than that provided by management, which has, in itself, been recognised by Littrell and Billingsley (1994) as having a positive role to play in teacher retention and attrition. In light of this, it was necessary to examine the concept of organisational commitment, and to review whether a connection between this and interpersonal staff relationships might exist.

The literature review on organisational commitment that followed, highlighted what Billingsley and Cross (1992:453) claimed, which was the scarcity of research on issues

pertaining to organisational commitment among educators. Generally, it would appear as if this research has been done in the private sector, with some done in the field of health. As Turton (2001) suggests, much of this has been conducted in the context of working populations of the United States of America, with a few studies conducted in Europe or Australasia.

Researchers have concluded that organisational commitment is a complex construct consisting of numerous dimensions (Allan & Meyer, 1990; Kamfer *et al.*, 1994). The dimensions in Kamfer *et al.* (1994) are discussed in some detail in my review. I have also attempted to place the role of interpersonal relationships within these dimensions in an effort to suggest which dimensions of commitment might be directly influenced by the nature of the interpersonal relationships within a school environment. I argued that, based on the literature, interpersonal relationships influence continuance, moral and alienative commitment. It was Mottaz (1988:467) who noted that social factors do indeed have a role to play in continuance commitment. I, however, have attempted to link interpersonal relationships to moral and alienative commitment based on my understanding of the literature and concepts that I have reviewed.

Because research on emotional dissonance has revealed that social interaction with work colleagues can negate the negative impact thereof, one might also be able presume that interpersonal relationships, which provide opportunities for these interactions, may also combat alienative commitment, which represents a negative orientation towards the workplace.

If whole-school development practitioners in South Africa are to work from an organisational school development model in schools, then the area of research covered in this study is very valuable. Protecting human resources is vital in most, if not all sectors. This is even more important in a profession where it is human resources that drive the entire service delivery – that of education. Understanding the various aspects that need to be considered in order to protect this valuable resource is essential.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents my research design. First it provides a description of the research paradigm. This is followed by a closer look at both the design and methodology of the study. I am using Mouton's (2001:56) understanding of the term *research design*, which refers to the aims and data needed to address the research questions. This is thus "the research plan". I am also using Mouton's (2001:56) notion of *methodology*, which refers to the processes and actions used in the implementation of the data production. This thus distinguishes between the planning and implementing stages of my research. A description of the data analysis process concludes the chapter.

3.2 PARADIGM

Maykut and Morehouse (1985:20) suggest that the way a researcher views the world is reflected in his/her research design as well as the methodologies of data production that s/he chooses when conducting a research study. Mertens (1998:2) goes on to state that the precise nature of the definition of the research is in fact guided by the researcher's paradigm.

In light of the above, this study has been done from an Interpretive/Constructivist perspective. This reflects the basic tenet of my worldview, which is what reality is, as Dovey and De Jong (1990:1) suggest. They claim that individuals are in control of creating their own worlds and they go on to propose that this is achieved by attaching meaning to one's own personal experiences.

The Interpretive/Constructivist paradigm is a term used by Mertens (1998:11), who points out that this term is more commonly used now in research literature. Mertens (1998:21) explains how traditionally research method literature made only a distinction between quantitative methods (research which, makes use of methods which measure variables in quantifiable ways) and qualitative methods (research which, attempts to capture holistic pictures using

words). But, Mertens (1998) suggests that these terms are very broad and can be overly simplistic, and so attempts have been made to refine these terms.

Mertens (1998:7) instead, notes a distinction between three different research paradigms, namely Positivism/Postpositivism, Interpretive/Constructivist and Emancipatory. What follows is a figure detailing the essential differences between these three major paradigms.

Figure 3.1: Differences Between the Three Major Paradigms

Basic Beliefs	Positivism/ Postpositivism	Interpretive/ Constructivist	Emancipatory
Nature of Reality	One reality	Multiple constructed realities	Multiple realities shaped by societal values
Nature of knowledge – relation between the knower and the would – be known	Objectivity is important	Interactive link between the researcher and the researched	Interactive link between researcher and the researched
Approach to systematic inquiry	Quantitative	Qualitative	More emphasis on qualitative but quantitative methodologies could be used

Adapted from Mertens (1998:8)

This figure highlights the ways Mertens (1998:8) understands the three major paradigms as differing. She outlines the three basic beliefs that she feels underpin research and then shows how she sees the three paradigms as relating to these basic beliefs.

Mertens (1998:11) explains that the Interpretive/Constructivist paradigm grew out of the constructivist approach of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology, and Wilhelm Dilthey's, among others, study on interpretive understanding called hermeneutics.

Following from this is a brief discussion on the constructivist approach. Gergen (1994 as cited in Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 1997:40) points out that constructivism, as a theoretical approach to learning and development, has been receiving a lot of consideration in the field of psychology. Donald *et al.* (1997:40) suggest that constructivism is considered as an alternative to the theory of positivism, which has guided research and thinking in the field for a long time. Positivism assumes that scientific method can establish "the truth" about human behaviour, but this then assumes that an exact truth actually exists. Constructivism challenges this position. Ernst von Glasersfeld (1990:37) supports this challenge. He claims that

positivism requires an essential reality prior to experience. Instead, he claims that individuals personally construct knowledge as they try to make meaning of their experiences.

Following from this, Boudourides (1998:2) points out that educational, or psychological constructivism as it is also known, can be divided into personal and social constructivism according to whether it is an individual or a group who does the constructing. In the case of this research it is the constructions of individuals that are key. Thus according to Boudourides (1998:2) this study is concerned with personal constructivism.

As already stated, Dovey and De Jong (1990:1) emphasise that individuals are indeed in control of creating their own worlds. They suggest that constructivism holds that individuals construct, or make meaning of their own reality by attaching meaning to their individual experiences. Donald *et al.* (1997:40) add that individuals are responsible for shaping their own development and this occurs through experiences within the social and physical environment.

Based on this, I understand constructivism as recognising the powerful importance that personal experience plays in shaping an individual's understanding and perception of their environment.

A closer look at interpretivism is also warranted. This philosophy also forms part of Mertens's (1998:11) combined term of Interpretive/Constructivism. Earlier Feinberg and Soltis (1992:75) had suggested that interpretivism has a context specific orientation. This means that it concerns itself with frameworks of particular contexts and the way that individuals understand and act within these particular contexts. This paradigm therefore acknowledges and emphasises the subjective nature of a constantly developing reality influenced by the environment in which an individual exists.

Feinberg and Soltis (1992:75) also point out that educational researchers, working within this interpretive paradigm, consider their main task to be describing what is going on in particular schools, relying on interpretation of the ways people think and act in schools.

Following this, Mertens (1998:11) explains that the basic assumptions of the Interpretive/Constructivist approach to research are therefore underpinned by the belief that knowledge is constructed by people in the research process. Thus research should attempt to understand the multifaceted world of experiences from the perspective of those who live it.

Babbie and Mouton (2001:28) support this thinking, stating that this paradigm recognises the individual participants' active ability to continuously construct their own meaning and develop and change their everyday interpretations of their own worlds.

According to Mertens (1998:12), the Interpretive/Constructivist paradigm also recognises that the researcher and the researched are interlocked in the research process and that one influences the other. Research is a product of the researcher's values and cannot be totally independent from them. Babbie and Mouton (2001:33) suggest that this then accepts a more personal, interactive method of data production. This in turn, creates space for subjective and transactional interactions between myself the researcher, and the case individuals.

In the context of what Mertens (1998) and Babbie and Mouton (2001) say, my understanding is that the Interpretive/Constructivist paradigm has created opportunity for this study to produce a subjective interpretation of how educators experience interpersonal staff relations, and for the subjective understanding of how they understand these to impact on their commitment to the school as an organisation, and to the school as a healthy organisation.

3.3 THE RESEARCH DESIGN

Mouton (2001:55) proposes that once you have formulated your research question your next step is to select an appropriate research design. In my study I felt it necessary to clarify my research paradigm before selecting my research approach.

Mouton (2001:55) describes a research design as, "a plan or blueprint of how you intend conducting the research". This plan, along with the research paradigm then informs the specific research methodologies. The research design chosen for this study includes qualitative methodologies. Creswell (1994:162) suggests that research using qualitative methodology is based in a particular paradigm and sets out to obtain data that is in agreement with the paradigm. In the Interpretive/Constructivist paradigm, according to Mertens (1998:14) qualitative methodologies, which rely on techniques of data production such as interviews, observations and document reviews predominate. The data produced relies on descriptions, which focus on the cases' unique experiences. These qualitative methodologies are then applied in the knowledge that the construction of reality in this research can only be conducted through interaction between the researcher, and the individual case units.

Eichelberger (1989 as cited in Mertens, 1998:14) makes the point that the qualitative methodological work of Interpretive/Constructivist researchers attempts to describe what meaning people attribute to experiences and how this is related to their behaviour.

Babbie and Mouton (2001:279) suggest that there are three main qualitative design types – ethnographic studies, case studies and life histories. They go on to claim that all three share the following characteristics:

- A comprehensive encounter with the object of study
- The selection of a limited number of cases to be investigated
- An openness to various sources of data
- Flexibility.

Babbie and Mouton (2001:279) point out that the differences lie in the boundaries of these studies. They claim that ethnographic studies usually focus on larger units of analysis, such as communities. Case studies tend to examine more specific units of analysis, such as individuals while, life histories research does as the name suggests and focuses on life histories of individuals. I have elected to use a case study research design.

3.3.1 Case Study

Babbie and Mouton (2001:281) suggest that the defining feature of the case study is its emphasis on the individual. However, Vera (1990 as cited in Babbie & Mouton, 2001:281) points out that case study research can also explore more than one individual unit. Adelman, Jenkins and Kemmis (1996:2) go on to describe a case study an "umbrella term" for research, which focuses on enquiry around an instance. They then illustrate how case study research can be set up in two different ways. These are as follows:

- An issue presents itself and the cases are selected as instances drawn from a context where this issue is present.
- The case is given within issues are indicated so that a full understanding of the case is possible.

This particular study is made up of three instrumental case studies. According to Stake (1994) an instrumental case study suggests that the cases were of secondary importance to the actual

issue that was being investigated. This would appear to refer to the first description of a case study as described above by Adelman *et al.* (1996:3). However as Adelman *et al.* (1996:4) go on to explain cases are embedded in their real life situations and are each unique. However, the emphasis on this uniqueness is limited by the purpose of the study. This study does not intend to generalise the findings. Therefore, although the uniqueness of the cases is recognised, it is of secondary importance to the issue being studied.

Related to this, Merriam (1998:27) points out that there are various definitions of what constitutes a case study. She goes on to say that some researchers focus on the process of the research, some on the unit of analysis and others on the end product. She also explains that the case study is defined by the interest in the individual case and not by the methodologies of inquiry. Neuman (1997) tends to support this claim and suggests that the case study tends to focus on what can be learned exclusively from the individual case, and is perhaps more interested in the unit of analysis as a point of focus.

Adelman *et al.* (1996:2) concur that case study methodology is eclectic. However, they claim some techniques of data production are commonly used. These include among others: interviews, field notes and discussing the accuracy of what is recorded with those in question. My selection of data production techniques took this into consideration.

I chose to do case studies as I felt that research that analyses personal, individual experiences in the field of education was a vital way of learning what the needs are of those in the field. Adelman *et al.* (1996:8) emphasise the number of possible advantages of case study research. They suggest these advantages make the case study an attractive qualitative research design to educational researchers. These include:

1. Case study data is 'strong in reality' because case studies are down to earth and attention-catching. This means they are in keeping with the reader's own experiences and allow the reader to employ ordinary processes of judgement for understanding the case.
2. Case studies recognise the role of 'social truths'. Thus individual interpretations are offered supported by case studies.
3. Case studies provide a wealth of descriptive material, which may be open to reinterpretation. Thus a data source is provided for other researchers whose purposes may be different.

4. Case studies present research in a more accessible form than many other forms of research. The language and presentation are accessible to multiple audiences as less specialised interpretation is needed. Case studies also allow the reader to judge the implications of the study for him/herself.

3.3.2 The Context of the Study

Although, the context of the study, merely supports the issue being researched, from an Interpretive/Constructivist perspective it is still important. Babbie and Mouton (2001:282) also point out that in order for researchers to interpret case studies, the context needs to be well understood. As already mentioned according to Adelman *et al.* (1996:4) the cases are embedded in their context and therefore context does have a role to play – however small. For this reason, details of the context are relevant.

The context in which this study was done is a co-educational high school in the northern suburbs of Cape Town in the Western Cape. In this study I refer to this school as School X.

All three, individual cases described School X as being a young (approximately 15 years old) high school catering for a learning population of approximately 1200 learners. This population was viewed by the cases as being made up of primarily middle to working class white learners, with a small proportion of black and coloured learners. Case 1 also observed that most of the learners came from single parent homes, while Case 2 felt that although the learners were primarily from an average middle class, white, English speaking community they might view themselves as being upper income earners.

When asked about the staff population, Case 1 and Case 3 described it as being made up of approximately 60 educators, mostly from the local community for the school catered. Case 2 felt the educator population was about fifty educators, also mostly from the community.

Information about this school was thus gathered as part of the interview process. It is important to note again, that at the time of the study, the cases were no longer educators at School X. It is their particular experiences while at this specific school that I was interested in.

3.3.3 Selection of Case Individuals

Following from the overall case context, came the process of selecting case individuals. Riffe *et al.* (1998:83) propose that at its most basic level, selecting a group of units to analyse is known as sampling. Mertens (1998:4) suggests that those making up a sample are usually referred to as the subjects or the participants. Mouton (1996:132) provides an important caveat. He cautions that the way sample selection is made greatly affects the conclusions that can be drawn from analysing that content. Mouton (1996:133) draws attention to the distinction between two types of research strategies that pertain to the process of selecting a research sample – namely, what he refers to as, **generalising strategy** and **contextual strategy**.

Mouton (1996:133) explains that **generalising strategy** studies focus on objects or phenomena and how they are representative examples of a larger population. He explains that **contextual strategy** studies focus on the essential and immediate contextual significance of the phenomena, concentrating on a single event or instance. It is important to note that no one strategy is more important than another and that both strategies are equally legitimate methods of research Mouton (1996:133).

With this in mind, I chose to adopt a **contextual strategy** for this study. I did not intend to generalise my research findings. Instead I hoped to use the three cases to highlight the need for further consideration of human resource issues, particularly interpersonal relationships, in the process of developing healthy schools. Because I adopted a contextual strategy, I refer, as suggested by Mouton (1996:133), to my participants as "*the selection of individual cases*" chosen for this study. Thus my participants will be known as the *cases*.

For the purpose of this study, I chose to use a non-probability technique of individual selection. Riffe, Lacy and Fico (1998:84) point out that this technique can be used under certain circumstances. It is often used when an adequate selection frame is not available. Riffe *et al.* (1998:84) suggest that there are two popular non-probability techniques of individual selection. These are convenience selections or purposive selection.

3.3.4 The Selection Process

My case selection was done primarily for convenience. This relies on the individuals being readily available. Riffe *et al.* (1998:84) comment that if all the individuals in a population being studied were available the study would be a census, but this is very rare. Instead they suggest that one thinks of a convenient selection as a population, defined by convenience rather than by research questions.

Convenient selection of cases has an obvious limitation in that the results cannot be inferred to a larger population. However, Riffe *et al.* (1998:85) claim that convenient selection can be justified on three conditions. The first condition they mention is that the material being studied or the case individuals selected for the study must be difficult to obtain. In this study difficulty lay in getting the necessary departmental permission to involve currently employed educators in research projects. It was for this reason that the first criteria for selection was, that educators no longer in the profession be specifically chosen.

If the researcher's resources limit the ability to randomly generate the selection of individuals, this is, according to Riffe *et al.* (1998:85), considered the second condition. In this study both time and money were limited resources and therefore directly impacted on my ability to select cases randomly.

Riffe *et al.* (1998:85) contend that the third condition exists when a researcher is exploring some under-researched but important area, and suggest that when little is known about a particular area of research, even a convenient selection can generate worthwhile hypotheses, providing a possible starting point for further study. A review of the literature suggests that the specific focus area of my research may perhaps be under-researched and that even a small convenient case selection may be sufficient to raise questions which could promote the need for further research in this area.

It was in light of the above that I then set about selecting my cases. I included three cases in my study. All three cases were known to me and agreed to be part of the study. They were easy to reach as they lived in the local community. They had also worked at the specific school together. Therefore they had all experienced interpersonal relationships within the same school environment. This common context thus bound them together (Stake 1994).

They were not randomly selected and are therefore, according to Riffe *et al.* (1998:81), not statistically representative of the teaching population at large.

3.4 DATA PRODUCTION

I have chosen to make use of the term *data production* rather than *data collection*. I have done this in light of the Interpretive/Constructivist paradigm that outlines this study. As Gough (1999:264 in Le Grange, 2001:80) argues, this reflects the notion that one ultimate reality does not actually exist, but instead is constructed according to one's own unique perceptions and experiences. Thus the researcher produces the data. As the researcher, my own subjective reality is thus framed by the individual life experiences that I have had, and these experiences then shape the way that I produce the data.

In keeping with this approach to the data production, I have chosen to make use of two qualitative data production techniques, namely interviews and a group discussion.

My data production thus comprised of two phases:

1. The first phase consisted of my obtaining of data from semi-structured interviews (including a biographical section) conducted individually with each case at either their homes or mine at a convenient time.
2. The second phase of the data production consisted of a group discussion, where the group was made up of all three cases and facilitated by myself. The questions I used to guide this discussion were informed by both the thematic coding of the interview transcripts and the literature I had reviewed.

3.4.1 Individual Interviews

In this study individual semi-structured interviews were the initial technique of data production.

Babbie and Mouton (2001:289) claim that the individual interview is one of the most common qualitative techniques of data production. The interview relies on the fact that people are able to give information regarding their practices, actions or experiences to those who ask questions. As Babbie and Mouton (2001:289) suggest, the qualitative interview is

therefore, essentially a conversation between the interviewer (in this instance me) and the case individuals.

Walker (1995) clearly points out that a major advantage of interviews is that misunderstanding is greatly reduced because clarification can be made immediately and one is able to expose subjective definitions of experiences. He does, however, acknowledge that disadvantages do exist and may include bias, problems of objectivity and problems in the identity of the interviewer. I did not anticipate these problems as this study allowed for the subjective interpretation of personal experience. I was also well known to the cases and had established a relationship of trust with them. I could also relate to their experiences as I had worked alongside them within the same school environment. It can be argued that this contributed in some way to bias in the study. However, this must be seen within the context of a study that is subjective in nature. I was interpreting the experiences of others and was doing so from my subject point of reference. In this way, the bias becomes an acknowledged part of the study.

Following this, Robson and Foster (1989:51) also acknowledge that in interviews, there is the tendency for questions to follow on too quickly. The interviewer must therefore, be aware of this and allow enough time for the interviewee to think in comfort. I feel that I was able to do this successfully.

3.4.1.1 The interview process

Appointments were made with each of the three cases at a time that was convenient to both them and myself as I interviewed each individual case separately. I anticipated each interview being approximately between half an hour and an hour in length and recorded the interviews for the purpose of transcription, as it was the content of the interviews that needed to be analysed.

The venue was selected in accordance with the preference of the particular case. In two of the cases these took place at their homes, while in the third instance the interview occurred at my home. Robson and Foster (1989:52) suggest that the interviewee be put at ease over refreshments and be greeted in an informal manner to help relieve any anxiety. They also suggest that seating should be arranged in such a way as to avoid continual eye contact. As Robson and Foster (1989:52) suggest, this can be achieved by placing the seats at right angles

to each other. I made use of both of these abovementioned suggestions in all of the interviews conducted.

When choosing the type of interview approach one is to use, it is important to note that there are many different types of interviews that a researcher may choose.

3.4.1.2 Varieties of structured interviews

The descriptive term for interviews seems to have changed over the years. Wagner (1949), as cited in Guion (1998:611), referred to the structured interviews as *standardized* interviews, but these terms cannot be used interchangeably as they are by no means synonymous. As Guion (1998:612) points out, structure, given to an interview by no means guarantees standardisation.

Following from this it seems that structure is uniquely determined for every interview situation. Every time an interviewer decides what questions will be asked, what meaning will be made and how this information will be recorded, some degree of interview structure is created. Guion (1998:612) suggests that this structure is fitted to the individual interview and may be difficult to recreate in another interview situation. Interviews are therefore tailored. However, as he goes on to say, it is for the purpose of the interview and the research questions to be answered that this tailoring occurs, rather than for the individual interview candidate.

Different people therefore, appear to have different ideas about how this structuring process should occur. Guion (1998:612) describes four general procedures. Two of these procedures are firmly structured allowing for little deviation. The third is tightly structured, yet remains flexible, permitting interviewers to ask different questions if necessary. The fourth modus operandi uses minimal structure, guiding rather than dictating an interviewee's progress through the interview process.

I made use of semi-structured interviews as the primary mean of data production in this study. This is the third mentioned interview procedure. Thus it was closely structured while remaining flexible enough to incorporate questions that arose within individual interview situations. Babbie and Mouton (2001:289) claim that in the interview, the interviewer has a

general plan of investigation but allows the conversation to progress in no specific order, although specific areas of interest are raised.

3.4.1.3 Structuring the interview questions

I made use of specific guiding questions, which cover a general outline of specific topics that I wanted to raise. These topics were determined from a thorough literature review of the key factors in the area of interpersonal relationships. However, it was the literature of Komote (1987), Moonsamy and Hassett (1997), and Davidoff and Hassett (1997) that primarily informed my selection of key factors.

The questions were based on these key factors and were grouped accordingly in the interviews. I also used the interviews to pose questions directly relating to my research questions. These particular questions also helped establish the cases' understanding of the concept of "healthy schools". This understanding helped create a context within which to interpret the cases' experiences. During the interviews I did also allow for unplanned topics. The following figure presents the key factor areas that were addressed within the semi-structured interviews.

Figure 3.2: Possible Influential Factors used to Formulate Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Biographical Details
Specific School Context
Venue for Interactions
Modes of Interaction
Formal Interpersonal School Practices
Informal Patterns of Group Relationships and Dynamics
Professional Jealousy
Issues of Power
Understanding of concept of "Healthy School"

After a standard introduction, the interview questions covering these factors, forty-seven in total, were presented in four broad categories. Before a new category was presented, the purpose or definition of the salient key concept in that broad category was offered. This structure was adhered to for all three interviews. See **Appendix A** for all the interview questions.

Category One consisted of nine questions pertaining to biographical information. Category Two consisted of six questions about the specific school context. The third category explored the venues for interactions and interaction modes. This category consisted of seven questions. Category Four dealt with further factors possibly relating to interpersonal staff relationships. This category was composed of twenty-five questions in total which were further sub-divided into more specific categories as follows: formal interpersonal school practices (four questions); informal patterns of group relations and dynamics (two questions); group relationships (six questions); individual relationships (six questions); professional jealousy (two questions); possible informal power dynamics within the staff (four questions); and other (one question). All three cases answered all forty-seven questions without any omissions.

My specific questions were presented in a structured format (**Appendix A**). The purpose of this was to ensure that each case was posed the exact same questions, thus increasing the reliability of the data production process. I attempted to keep the questions as open-ended as possible. This allowed the cases to talk freely on the topic.

3.4.2 Group Discussion

A group discussion was my second data production technique. The purpose of this was to see if anything new emerged, and to see if what emerged differed in any way from the individual interview data. Morgan (1997 as cited by Turton, 2001:51) suggests that often, new information or a new slant on information is exposed when questioned under different conditions. He also suggests that each data production technique should be used so that it adds value to the researcher's understanding of the subject matter being researched. I found the group discussion an invaluable technique of data production, adding immense value to the data produced by the interviews.

Following from this, I have chosen to use the term "group discussion" as used in the literature by Robson and Foster (1989:25). They use this term to refer to smaller groups of five individuals or less. Since the group in this study consisted of the three cases, I chose to refer to this as a "group discussion". Robson and Foster (1989:25) comment further on group size, suggesting that it influences the data produced. They suggest that, smaller groups of five people or less, allow for more equal participation and provide higher levels of consensus and satisfaction for the group members. Much of the literature, however, refers to the group

discussion as "focus groups" (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Morgan, 1997). But, Babbie and Mouton (2001:292) suggest that a focus group should consist of between eight and twelve respondents. The term focus group, therefore, does not apply to this study.

Robson and Foster (1989:25) suggest that group behaviour differs greatly from that of the individual and what is said in the group relates to the people's experiences in the group. In this way, they suggest that group discussions become an excellent way of revealing people's thinking. Morgan (1997) as cited by Turton (2001:51) also claim that this method of data production allows the group to control the discussion and this may reveal more about perspectives that may have been under-represented in the individual interviews.

Robson and Foster (1989:25) usefully comment on how group size influences the data produced. They suggest that, although research results do not all reach this conclusion, smaller groups, of five people or less, allow for greater and more equal participation and provide higher levels of consensus and satisfaction for the group members.

3.4.2.1 The group discussion process

The discussion group was composed of the three individual cases. Turton (2001:55) suggests that the less structured one's group discussion is, the more groups one will need to conduct. Since I had only one group I had to ensure that this group discussion was extremely structured.

Prior to the actual running of the group discussion I returned the interview transcripts to the cases for validation. This method of data validation is known as a "member check" and is discussed in detail in (3.6.3). Following this I explained the purpose of the group discussion in detail and again explained that like the interviews this discussion would be recorded, with their permission. This would allow me to capture all their ideas as opposed to only a few when writing them down. The cases were again assured that the information would be treated strictly confidentially. The group discussion was scheduled to last 90 minutes and before officially beginning tea and snacks were served. Turton (2001:53) cites Greenbaum (1998) when explaining that the purpose of serving a snack during a group discussion is that is expected to improve the effectiveness of the session.

I also used this informal group discussion as a checking device, to help validate the data produced from the individual interviews. Turton (2001:56) suggests that, if differences emerge, these should then be recorded and possible reasons for this explored. Maykut and Morehouse (1985) point out that this leans away from validating research by the use of statistics and other quantitative means, by providing another way of validating research findings. This is discussed in further detail in (3.6.1).

The questions I therefore used to frame the discussion were based primarily on the individual interview data produced. I also again used my literature review to guide my choice of questions. Categories and themes that emerged in the initial data production phase, I was then able to further explore. I also used this opportunity to further validate my understanding of how the key concepts and factors covered in this study relate to each other by opening this up for discussion within the group.

3.5 CREDIBILITY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Validation of research findings is important. Babbie and Mouton (2001:273) make it clear that research designs, that make use of quantitative methodologies, primarily aim to control the various sources of error that might affect the ultimate validity of the research results. Objectivity in this case, is thus achieved by controlling the extraneous variables.

Research based on qualitative methodology also aims to ensure that the results are valid. However, the way in which this is achieved differs somewhat from the methods employed in quantitative practise.

Mertens (1998:21) claims that the Positivist/Postpositivist paradigms, which rely on quantitative methodologies, have in the past launched numerous attacks on the Interpretive/Constructivist approach based on what they viewed as a loss of objectivity. Mertens (1998:21) cites Krathwol (1993) to explain that because the Positivist/Postpositivist approach relies on quantitative experiments as its data production technique of choice, the emphasis is placed on using science as a means of eliminating/reducing the biases that may result from personal values on observations. Consequently, as Babbie and Mouton (2001:274) note, researchers making use of qualitative methodologies, have struggled to hold their own in the social sciences research debate because often they could not meet the requirements set by researchers using quantitative methodology. For this reason I feel that it

has become important to understand that in qualitative methodology, as used by Interpretive/Constructivist approaches, "objectivity" is understood slightly differently, and validity and reliability are ensured in other ways.

The Interpretive/Constructivist researcher faces the primary challenge of getting close to the "research subject" in order to create genuine and candid "insider" descriptions. As Babbie and Mouton (2001:273) explain, objectivity takes on a different meaning – referring instead to gaining trust and establishing rapport. Objectivity is thus more about generating honest and credible inter-subjectivity.

As Mertens (1998:22) makes it very clear, the Interpretive/Constructivist approach acknowledges that the researcher's interpretation will to some extent be subjective, rather than completely objective. Guba and Lincoln (1989 as cited in Mertens, 1998:22), defend this position by arguing that subjective values actually filtrate all paradigms, because paradigms are, after all, human constructions and therefore cannot be entirely value-free.

3.6 DATA VERIFICATION

In light of all the above, it was vital that my study be credible. Reliability and validity are important means of establishing credibility. However, as Babbie and Mouton (2001:276) point out, absolute validity, objectivity and reliability will never be obtained and therefore remains a goal towards which we strive.

Rubin and Rubin (1995:85-92) go on to claim that credibility consists of a number of notions. Transparency is one such aspect that I feel is pertinent to my study. Rubin and Rubin (1995:85) suggest that credibility is aided by transparency. This is achieved when the reader of a qualitative study is able to see the basic process of data production. I have attempted to achieve this by systematically presenting each step of the data production and analysis process.

Babbie and Mouton (2001) argue firmly that an Interpretive/Constructivist study, must further attempt to ensure that there is compatibility between the constructed realities that subsist in the minds of the cases and those ascribed to them by the researcher. This is what then makes the study valid and reliable, thus increasing credibility. There are a number of

procedures that can be used to achieve this. I have attempted to make use of three such techniques in this study, namely **triangulation**, **audit trials** and **member checks**.

3.6.1 Triangulation

According to a definition used by Babbie and Mouton (2001:275), triangulation is the use of more than one data production technique to raise researchers above the biases that may result from using a single technique. It is thus one of the best means of enhancing validity in qualitative research. Creswell (1994:174) cites Jick (1979) to make a similar point.

Triangulation was achieved in my study by using a group discussion to validate the data produced in the semi-structured interviews. In this way I made use of sequential triangulation. According to Morse (1991) as cited in Creswell (1994:182) there is a difference between simultaneous and sequential triangulation, with the latter relying on the essential completion of a first phase of data production for the planning of the next phase. In my study the cases completed interviews while in the second phase they were part of a group discussion based on the interview data.

3.6.2 Audit Trial

Babbie and Mouton (2001:276) point out an audit trial, as a technique of validation, is the process of giving all one's theoretical ideas, notes, data and interpretations to be studied in great depth by an independent examiner. This examiner then points out the flaws of the study. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:276) the process of thesis supervision is like the audit trial. As this study, was conducted for the purpose of a thesis, it was supervised and therefore one could argue that it was further validated by the process of audit trial. An expert in Industrial Psychology from Natal University also reviewed this study regularly and provided input where necessary.

3.6.3 Member Checks

Member checks, according to Babbie and Mouton (2001:275) occur when the researcher takes the transcripts back to the cases and checks with them that what has been constructed is actually what they said. Babbie and Mouton (2001:276) suggest that individual cases respond

honestly and openly and do not use the opportunity to disagree with what they think others may disapprove of.

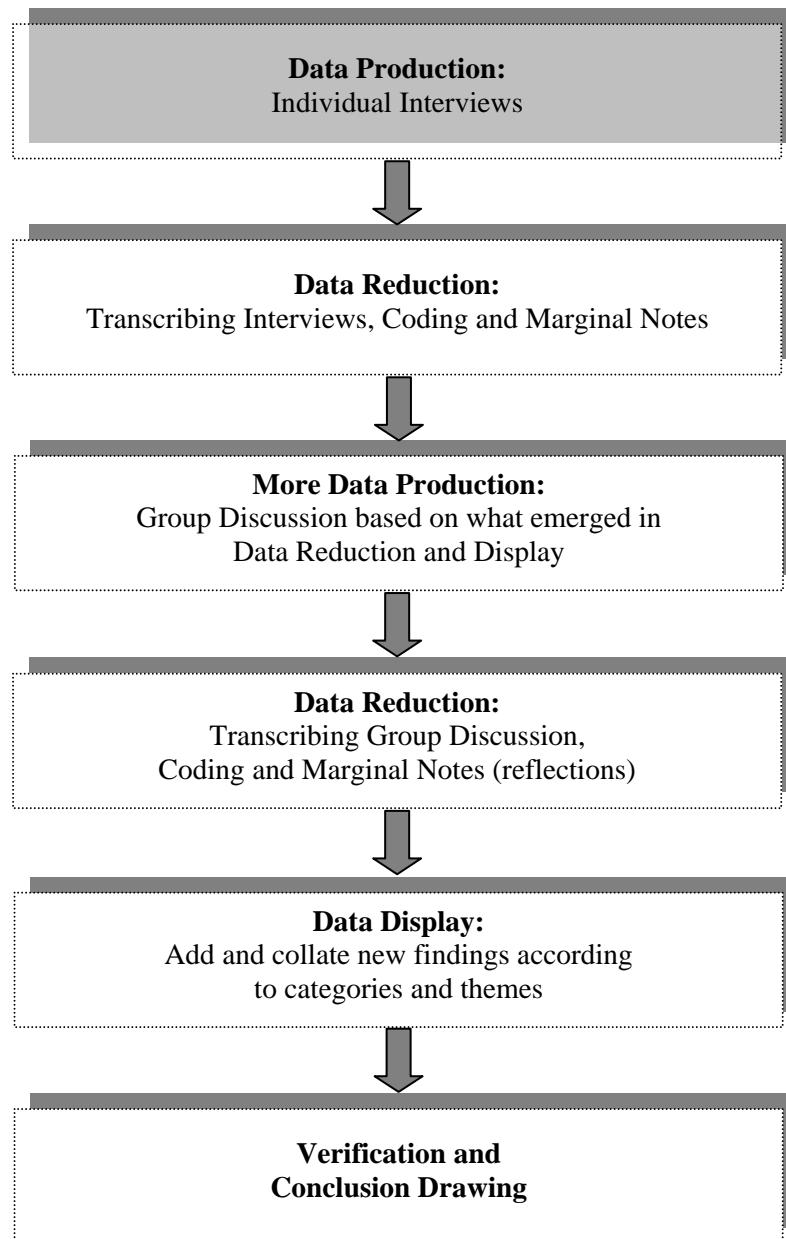
Before the group discussion took place, time was provided for each of my cases to read through the transcript of their interview and to comment on both the actual interview and my coding of the data. This provided them with an opportunity to validate my interpretation.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Complex designs and state-of-the-art methods of data analysis are sometimes necessary to answer complicated research questions effectively. However, Wilkinson and Task Force on Statistical Inference (1999:602) suggest that simpler, classical approaches can often provide "smart and sufficient answers to vital questions". They suggest that if the assumptions and strength of a simpler method of analysis are appropriate for one's research question then this simpler method should be used. I have thus attempted to use a simple method of thematic analysis.

The simple method of analysis that I adopted was based on a description of data analysis given in Miles and Huberman (1994:11). They suggest that following from data production, the analysis consists of three activities: data reduction, data display and verification. These three activities occurred concurrently and required interaction between the three areas and the data production process. The following diagram attempts to represent the route that I undertook:

Figure 3.3: My Process of Data Production and Analysis



Adapted from Miles and Huberman (1994:11)

Aronson (1994:1) describes the process as beginning with the production of data. Thus my process of analysis began with the data being collected from the interviews. This involved first taping and getting all the interviews transcribed. I then compared and recorded the biographical data of the three cases and their descriptions of the specific school context.

Aronson (1994:1) then claims that the next step is to identify patterns of experiences. The patterns I looked for related directly to my research questions. Following from this, Engelbrecht, Swart and Eloff (2001:258) suggest this is the process of identifying units of

meaning. This allows the researcher to identify categories within these broader patterns. Finally through a process of clustering, this allows for themes to emerge. The following figure (figure 3.4) provides the pattern codes for identifying categories that I used in my initial analysis of the interviews.

Figure 3.4: Key for Coding Categories Used in Transcription of Interviews and Group Discussion

IC	Influences Commitment
HP	Impact on Health Promotion/Health of school
OD	Role played in Whole School/Organisational Development
IS+	Positive Influence on Staff Relationships
IS-	Negative Influence on Staff Relationships
NI	No Influence/ Not used to Influence Staff Relationships
BR	Benefits of Staff Relationships

I thus systematically sorted through the data, comparing the various interview transcripts and coding them according to patterns of experiences. I also made marginal remarks as I went. Miles and Huberman (1994:66) suggest that these marginal remarks serve as a means of reflection, keeping you alert during the coding process. These remarks point toward new questions and issues which one could then follow up in the next wave of data production.

Following from this, the questions I formulated, drawing on marginal remarks and emerging themes, were used to produce more data in the group discussion. Data produced in this way were further reduced by transcribing, and coding, primarily using the same codes that were used for the interviews. Where necessary new codes were introduced. In this way, the primary data production process was validated and new themes were revealed.

After this I displayed the data according to the summarized themes and patterns that emerged across the experiences of the individual cases. This was first done by means of a summarised version of each interview and the group discussion. It was also necessary for me to display the differences and similarities between the individual interviews.

Once this was completed, the emerging themes were finally presented in two causal networks – one for each phase of data production. Miles and Huberman (1994:153) describe a causal network as a display of the chief independent and dependant themes (or variables) in a field

study and the relationships between them. The themes are presented in boxes and arrows are used to show the relationships.

Finally the themes from both phases of data production were compared and then presented diagrammatically in order to depict the relationships between the core concepts of this study. This is presented in Chapter Four.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Mertens (1998:23) suggests that ethical considerations, in any research study, should be a fundamental part of the research design and should be an integral part of the entire research process. This is to prevent the recurrence of some of the iniquities, which occurred in the past in the guise of research Mertens (1998:23). In his view, research should be guided by the three ethical principles and six norms for research identified 1978 in *The Belmont Report* by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects in Biomedical and Behavioural Research (Mertens, 1998:24).

In this study I used these principles and norms to determine the ethical considerations. I tried to ensure that my cases were treated with the utmost respect and that the cases were fully aware that their participation was voluntary consent well before the study started. In line with the recommendation Babbie and Mouton (2001:521) make, their consent to participate was freely obtained.

Following from this is the issue of informed consent. Mertens (1998:24) points out that deception of cases, by cloaking what is being investigated is prohibited unless absolutely necessary. In this study no deception occurred, and, when asked to participate, the cases were fully informed about the nature of the study. Before each interview, they were again informed about the nature of the study and the confidentiality surrounding the study was explained.

The name of the school where the cases taught and their personal identifications remained anonymous. The Western Cape Education Department requires detailed knowledge of any study being undertaken in any of their schools or involving any teachers in their employment, and has to grant permission before any research can be done. Because these cases were no longer in the teaching profession it was not necessary to get permission from the Education Department.

3.9 SUMMARY

The way that researchers view their world dictates how they will conduct a research study. In light of the fact that I view reality as being individually constructed, I chose to conduct this study from an Interpretive/Constructivist perspective. This implies, as Eichelberger (1989 cited in Mertens 1998:14) suggests, I have attempted to describe what meaning the cases attribute to interpersonal experiences within a school.

This Interpretive/Constructivist perspective provided a framework for my research, which can best be described as three instrumental case studies bounded by a common context. This is because, as Stake (1994) suggests, the cases were of secondary importance to the actual issue that was being researched.

The paradigm guiding my research also informed my choice of research methodology and data production techniques. I chose to use semi-structured interviews and a group discussion as my data production techniques. According to Mertens (1998:14) these are qualitative techniques favoured in Interpretive/Constructivist research. The notion of sequential triangulation also highlighted the need for more than one technique of data production and further informed my decision to use these two techniques.

The individual cases were selected for convenience and consisted of three individual educators from the larger Cape Town area who had taught at the same co-educational high school in the northern suburbs of Cape Town. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of these cases. The interview questions were based primarily on my literature review. In the interviews I also requested biographical and specific school context details.

I analysed the data from the interviews by comparing the data both inter-individually and between cases in order to trace common themes. I then based the group discussion on the data that materialised from the interviews. Before the group discussion commenced, the cases were given an opportunity to validate their own interview transcripts and comment on my codes and emerging themes.

Following the group discussion I further analysed the new data and compared it to that from the interviews. Once this final process of data reduction was completed I set about displaying the data. This was done in a variety of ways and included:

- Summaries of the individual interviews
- A figure showing inter-interview similarities and differences
- A causal network of themes emerging from the interviews
- A summary of the group discussion
- A causal network of themes emerging from the group discussion
- A diagrammatic comparison of themes emerging from both phases of data production

These served to find possible links between the various themes and key concepts. During the group discussion the cases were also asked to comment on these key concepts and any links that they believed existed.

The ethical issues had to be considered before the research process began. I needed to be aware of these considerations throughout the entire process. Once the research design was implemented findings were produced. These findings are presented in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE STUDY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I present a detailed description of my research process incorporating the data analysis. My study comprises two phases: 1) the participation of the cases in individual semi-structured interviews, and 2) the participation of the cases in a group discussion.

I begin this chapter by detailing how I prepared for this study. Following this description, I give a detailed account of the first phase of the study. As part of this account, I present the process of setting up the interviews in tabular form before providing the biographical data obtained from the questionnaires and the findings from the interviews. In the brief summary that follows I indicate the main concerns of each case and provide a figure comparing the answers by the three cases to the interview questions. This provides an overview of the findings. A causal network displaying the main themes and categories that emerged and their relatedness to the key concepts of this study completes the presentation of the first phase.

In the next section, I present a detailed description of the second phase. This includes a figure documenting the procedure of preparing for the group discussion and a summary documenting the primary concerns of the group discussion. A causal map showing the themes that emerged during this discussion follows this summary.

Finally I have attempted to merge the data produced in both phase one and phase two in a final causal network in order to present the overall themes that emerged from and were confirmed in both phases. The aim is to reflect the categories relating to interpersonal relationships that were pertinent to this research.

4.2 PREPARING FOR THE STUDY

Initial interest in the research area was driven by my professional and personal experiences as an educator and my interest in developing enabling school environments. A thorough review of available literature to ascertain what existing literature in this area might exist was a natural next step in preparing for the study.

The process of literature collection and review included a number of extensive searches at the libraries at The University of Stellenbosch and The University of Cape Town. This included searches of the books and journals housed in the libraries as well as searches using the electronic databases available on-line. In addition, resources were obtained from UNISA and The University of Natal through inter-library loans. The on-line American library Questia (Questia.com) provided me with additional access to journals and books found abroad. Finally, internet searches using a variety of subject-related key words also provided me with some, although limited, material.

It was as a result of my own experiences as an educator and with the help of this literature that I made an initial list of the possible factors that could influence interpersonal relationships between educators, as well as a short list of possible categories that these factors might fall into. These key factors and the categories that I used as part of the data analysing process are presented in Chapter Three.

To ensure that my understanding of the possible role of an educational psychologist in whole-school development and health promotion, and that my understanding of the relevant terminology was adequate, I consulted an expert from the Educational Management Department at Stellenbosch University. The assistance of a consulting expert with a background and knowledge of industrial psychology was also sought, to provide the necessary input regarding my interpretation of organisational commitment. An expert in industrial psychology from the University of Natal agreed to consult in this capacity telephonically and via email.

Once this had been done, the process of case selection began. As described in Chapter Three, this selection was based on convenience. I planned to approach three former colleagues with whom I had previously worked and who I knew were no longer practising educators. Initially I chose three male former educators, as I had decided to rule out gender as a possible variable in the data analysis process. However, one of them had left the Western Cape so a female former educator completed my selection of three cases. This initial selection took place six months before the actual interviews were scheduled, allowing me time to continue with my literature review and formulate my interview questions.

As a result of this time delay, one of the two males cases returned to the Eastern Province for a holiday. This meant I had to substitute a female ex-educator colleague at the eleventh hour. The final selection thus consisted of two female cases and one male case.

4.3 THE INITIAL PHASE

What follows is a presentation of the initial phase of data production. This includes information on the data production process as well as the presentation of the data produced.

The following figure documents the process of arranging and confirming interviews with the three cases. The dates of contact are documented, as are the reasons for contact. Numerous telephone calls ensured that the three cases were able to give informed, voluntary consent to participate in the initial phase of this study.

Figure 4.1: Record of Contact with Cases and Interview Schedule

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1/04/02 – Have identified three prospective cases who I would like to approach with regards to participating in my research study – chosen for convenience.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13/05-02 – Made contact with two of the three prospective cases telephonically [individually], asking them if they are willing to participate – The third case no longer resides in the area and will need to be replaced by someone else. Both those contacted agreed to participate. Agreed that I would make contact with them again once my proposal had been accepted.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 26/07/02 – Have located and contacted a third case who has agreed to make up my research sample. Informed her that the proposal had been submitted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12/08/02 – Proposal still not finalised – called individual cases to maintain contact – they assured me that they were still available.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23/10/02 – Have decided to go forward with the process. Interview dates will be finalised for the last week of November/ first week of December. Made telephonic contact with two of the cases who have agreed to this time. The third case seems to have a new telephone number.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25/10/02 – Managed to track down case - he is still willing to participate in the process.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14/11/02 – Contacted cases to set up dates for interviews in the first week of Dec. One of individual cases will no longer be able to participate as he will be in the Eastern Cape on holiday– will need to find a replacement. Will be seeing Case 2 (P2) on 9/12/02, Case 3 (P3) on 12/12/02.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15/11/02 – Have located another willing individual who is willing to participate – set up an interview date for 10/12/02 at 4pm (Case 1: P1).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 29/11/02 – Confirmed with the three cases that times and places for interviews were suitable.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9/12/02 – P2 phoned to postpone interview-work commitments! Rescheduled for Wednesday 11/12/02 at 5pm.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10/12/02 – Interview with P1 at 4pm at her home. Interview: 35 minutes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11/12/02 – Interview with P2 at 5pm. Interview: 1hr.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12/12/02 – Postponed interview with P3 – unable to meet due to work commitments – rescheduled for 22/12/02 at 10am.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22/12/02 – P3 interviewed at her home at 10am. Interview: 40 minutes.

4.3.1 Biographical Data

The biographical data obtained from the semi-structured interviews indicated the following: the cases' ages, professional qualifications, teaching subjects, their educator experience and information relating to when they left the teaching profession, why, what they were currently doing and whether they intended returning to the education field. I already knew the cases' gender, marital status and home language.

Two of the cases were female. One of these was English speaking and one was bilingual, choosing to speak Afrikaans at home. The third case was an English-speaking male. All three of the cases were aged between 25-31 years old, with only one of the cases married, while the other two were single (one of the cases became engaged during the research study process).

In terms of professional qualifications, all three cases had university degrees and postgraduate teaching diplomas. One of the cases also had an honours degree in Business Administration, and would obtain a Master's degree in Business Administration upon the completion of a thesis. The group were qualified to teach English (primary and first additional language), Biblical Studies, Business Economics, Accounting, and Travel and Tourism.

In terms of teaching experience the three cases had between 3 and 8 years' experience. Two of them had taught at a number of different schools, while one case had taught at only one school (the school that provided a mutual context for this study). All three cases left the profession from the same school. Two of the cases left the profession in December 2002, while the third left in February 2002.

The reasons given for leaving the teaching profession at the time of the first interviews varied. One of the cases had left to become a full time mother, one had left to enter the business sector as a marketing analyst, and the third was unsure of what she would be doing at the time. The first case has subsequently returned to teaching on a part-time basis, the second remains in the private sector as a marketing analyst while the third has returned to full-time study.

4.3.2 The Individual Semi-Structured Interview (Appendix A)

The interviews took place at the homes of case one (P1) and case three (P3), and at my home for case two (P2). The interview schedule was based on both the literature review and my personal and professional experiences as an educator. The cases are numbered according to the sequence in which I conducted the interviews. These numbers are used throughout this chapter and used consistently in all data presented. The cases are referred to by their code identity in each interview description. In this way anonymity is furthered ensured.

What follows is a summarised version of each of the three interview transcripts. Key words and/or phrases, that emerged have been highlighted in bold. These words and/or phrases gave rise to the themes used.

**Case 1 (P1): Tuesday 10 December 2002
16h00-16h45**

P1 was initially concerned that her son would interrupt the interview and so the interview was delayed ten minutes until he had left the house with a babysitter.

After providing biographical information and contextual information on School X, P1 set about answering questions as they were presented. She described the main venue for formal and informal staff interaction as being a staff room arranged so that six or seven **table groupings** were formed. Staff were said to have their own seats.

P1 also pointed out that all educators with the exception of "the upper echelons of management" used this room. The atmosphere in the staff room was described as **varying according to the time of day, use of the venue and who was leading the meeting**. During break time the atmosphere was **relaxed** and **informal** with bantering between educators, while during meetings led by the principal it would be very **formal** and staff interaction was described as **formal** too. When asked if she felt the staff room dynamics were healthy she responded that they were not "natural". She felt that spontaneity was limited and that there were no specific **channels for discussing and resolving issues**. She also commented that there were undercurrents and staff felt unsatisfied.

When questioned about formal interpersonal school practices, the educator described these as consisting of a morning meeting of approximately twenty minutes and infrequent afternoon meetings too. She described the reason for these meetings as being general ("household

matters"), but more often it was "**people**" **checking** on how or what you were doing. She describes the **meetings** as being like a "classroom situation more than a grown up interaction". These afternoon meetings increased in frequency during exam times. The educator pointed out that although the meetings did not contribute to whole staff unity they did in some way unite staff because "we felt it was **us against them**," and one would have "the staff cowering together almost". The meetings were also described as not being an opportunity for much staff contribution. There was no **two-way communication**; instead staff were told that "this is what you will do". She also describes the use of circulars and intercom announcements.

P1 could *not* really remember any team building activities but did mention two staff functions. She did make reference to one or two seminars that may have been organised for the purpose of "building team spirit" during her stay at School X. She did, however, make it clear that these were rather ineffectual and criticised the fact that these activities were facilitated by "the people who themselves were part of the whole problem and therefore it did *not* lead to a solution".

As far as staff discipline was concerned, P1 mentioned that the principal handled this formally. She then referred to one specific incident of absenteeism.

As far as informal patterns of interpersonal staff relationships, P1 referred to "the **table where I was sitting**" as an example and spoke of how what started as purely professional colleague relationships over time spent together grew to **friendship**. She made reference to spending **time** with these **friends** "out of school" and also mentioned that relationships with administrative staff became less formal "**after a year**".

P1 spoke of first arriving at the school and having an orientation day where the principal had "a few words to say". She had no recollection however of being welcomed by anyone into the staff room. When asked if she felt that she belonged to the staff, she found this question difficult to answer. But eventually said that she did feel as if she was part of the staff and as if what she did there was important. She went on to define a sense of belonging as knowing that you are **valued** and **appreciated**, and recognised for the contribution that you make. She then pointed out that the sense of belonging came "not from senior staff, it was actually from my colleagues".

She went on to talk about how friendship groups among the staff were formed and mentioned **gender** and "being in the same place in our lives" as two reasons for group formation and made reference to the fact that the group provided opportunities for "**shared** unhappiness and **shared** happiness" and "a word of **comfort** or a word of excitement". She also pointed out that age played no role in the group formation process, and when asked mentioned that group members all **taught the same subject**.

P1 then spoke of how this group of friends provided invaluable **support** and influenced her **ability to work effectively**. She spoke of how they welcomed her in the mornings and were useful in that one "**could swap resources**". She spoke of how these friendships helped her to be professional and gave her the **security** she required in order to **perform at her best**. She also commented that she felt that colleagues as opposed to management best provided this support.

When asked if the group had any influence in her decision to leave that particular school her response was "Yes, definitely" and she went on to explain that if she had not made friends at the school in the first year, she would have left much sooner, saying that "**because you had good friends, not only colleagues you manage to bite the bullet for another year or another month**". Interestingly she also commented that she felt her decision to leave was "**also influenced by people in the friendship group deciding to leave too**".

As far as professional jealousy was concerned P1 spoke of how this impacted negatively on one's ability to perform and **did influence** her decision to leave. She made reference to the specific example of feeling that **management** were somewhat jealous and felt threatened by certain younger staff members who were "maybe more in touch with the pupils".

When questioned about the possible existence of power issues between people and the impact that she felt this may have on interpersonal relationships she spoke of how this did exist and how it appeared to be based on **gender**. She spoke of how she never experienced it personally but that it seemed that at "some of the other **table groupings** ... some of the **male** teachers were definitely competing for positions of seniority".

Finally P1 gave her understanding of the concept of a healthy school. She felt that in order to be healthy, a school needed to have **sound** discipline, management and financial **principles** and "**channels of communication between teachers, and pupils and senior staff**". She

made reference to the fact that a healthy school should allow people to grow and to **voice their opinions** and where there is **transparency** in relationships.

The last question provided P1 with a chance to make any final comments. She spoke of she considered it "invaluable to teach in a school where you feel loved". And where criticism is handled professionally. She again made reference to the need for **channels of communication**, where issues can be aired and dealt with professionally. She closed by commenting that "**if you are not happy with the people around you, you are not going to be an effective teacher**".

**Case 2 (P2): Wednesday 11 December 2002
17h00-18h00**

The second interview also began with questions relating to biographical and school context information. Following this, P2 answered the questions as they were presented according to the broad categories I used.

P2 referred to the staff room as a venue utilised for both formal and informal gatherings. He described it as arranged in **groups of tables and chairs**, with staff "territorial" about their seats. He put this seating arrangement down to space restrictions. He also mentioned that it was *not* always set out like this and gave an example of how at the beginning of term the chairs were arranged in rows, so one could "sit next to whomever you felt and **you would not be cut off from anyone**". He went on to say that when the staff room was set up on **table groupings**, it was *not* ideal, as at one time or another, you would have your back towards people. He also commented that management did *not* usually sit in the staff room, unless there was a staff meeting.

As far as modes of interaction were concerned, P2 commented that the mode of interaction related to the "tune of that **group**". This could mean the conversation was **formal**, mature, family orientated or even playful. He was quick, however, to clarify that generally he felt the staff room atmosphere was not playful, carefree or **trusting**, but rather **careful, cautious and controlled**. This he explained meant that one did *not* really look forward to spending time in the staff room, despite the fact that there were one or two jokers who would attempt to lighten things up. He also commented that the atmosphere was determined by whom you were relating to and that given the size of the staff, this could vary greatly. He also mentioned that

high staff turnover made it difficult to build long-term **friendships**. The staff room, therefore, became just a place to eat one's lunch.

When asked if he found the staff room dynamic unhealthy P2 commented that they were very unhealthy, as there was no regard for the right or wrong way of doing things in terms of "**people relations**". He gave an example of how meetings became personal rather than general and that personal interest held sway. This then led to **apathy** and **resentment** because **many people in the meeting would not participate, as the discussion was not directly relevant to them**.

As far as formal interpersonal school practices where concerned, the educator commented that there were frequent meetings and some of them he felt were **pointless**. He described the atmosphere of these meetings as very **tense** with an element of **apathy**. Other practices he made reference to included circulars, which he described as "lots of pieces of paper", and intercom announcements. He felt there was no real formal use of these practices, pointing out that whether you got the "piece of paper" or heard the announcement was one's own problem.

He went on to talk about team building activities as being merely a formality, creating the perception that "**we** do care about our staff". He pointed out that **they** tried to create the perception that staff members were allowed to interact, but in fact you were "guided as to how you should interact and what you should say". He felt that this stunted peoples' **creativity** and was very **controlled**.

When asked whether he had been officially welcomed into the school upon arrival he commented that, although the principal had formally welcomed him, he had not been introduced to the individuals he considered relevant. He went on to add that he did *not* feel as if he "belonged" to the staff but added that that was not one of his priorities for being at the school. He defined a "sense of belonging" as being part of a **team**, and again reiterated that he did *not* feel that educators were at school primarily to socialise or form friendships, but that rather this was a result of **working together as a team**.

He felt that there was no **team spirit** amongst the staff but rather a feeling of a "**them and us**" – between management and staff, and between various departments. He commented that there was **inter-department fighting**, which he felt was pointless as competing was useless as the various departments were actually "various functions of the same organ".

On the topic of staff discipline, P2 felt this was *not* handled very well and pointed out that opportunity for debate should be provided. He felt that opportunities for debate and disagreement were *not* really managed well and that people were almost afraid to do so. He also felt that it should *not* be the top manager chairing meetings all the time.

With regard to informal staff relationships P2 commented that **friendship groups** did exist, but felt that management created **a staff room atmosphere, which was not conducive to nor encouraged interaction amongst staff members**. He felt there was a general atmosphere of **mistrust**, and of the feeling "I am not free to discuss my business with you". However, he did point out that where staff members found **common backgrounds, interests or similarities**, then small groups of **friends** were formed. He felt these groups crossed racial barriers but did depend somewhat on **age**. He also found it interesting that groups were formed not because of school, but because of outside interests. He did *not* see this as extending to the entire staff though and felt that there was *not* much socialising amongst the whole staff outside of school hours.

When asked how these friendship groups supported one at work, he commented that "you could **moan** all the time to this group" as this provided the perfect forum for **venting** one's feelings. He felt the group could **understand the situation** and therefore you could **express yourself** without having to defend your position. He did *not*, however, feel that the group influenced his ability to work effectively beyond **providing moral support**, as they did *not* have enough clout to take on the system. He again mentioned that it was social interests that held the friendship groups together, so one did *not* spend all one's time just moaning about the school.

As far as influencing his decision to leave or stay with the school, P2 did *not* feel that the friendships group played a role for him. He mentioned that leaving the school had always been in the back of his mind and was rather, for him "a means to an end".

With regards to individual friendships P2 describes a friend as "someone whom you feel comfortable with". He went to say that it is someone you can be with and **talk to and confide in**. He remarked that he did have friends on the staff with whom he socialised, but that he did *not* think that they influenced his professional life. He was adamant that these friends had not influenced his decision to leave the school as he had always planned to leave the profession at some time.

When asked about professional jealousy, P2 agreed that this did exist but could *not* say whether it applied to the entire staff. He felt that the "smaller the group, the more **trust** there was," and that when it came to the larger staff body resentment and "all sorts of funny things came into play". He spoke of how this jealousy had been a problem for him. He made reference in particular to one of his colleagues, whom he also considered a friend, saying that he felt that this colleague was resentful towards him, although he could probably never prove it. P2 said this affected his ability to perform, as he did *not* want to **be open** with this colleague for fear of his **disclosing the information**.

P2 commented that power dynamics did exist and put this down to expectations placed upon colleagues. He felt this resulted in an abuse of power because they "were made to believe" that tasks they were given came with "power". He spoke of how there were no clear guidelines given with regards to responsibilities, and so this was open to interpretation and led to a "license to just manage". He made reference to his personal experiences of this remarking that less experienced staff members would reprimand him, feeling that they needed to "direct me and advise me as to what I should and should not have done within my own classroom situation".

When giving his definition of a healthy school, the educator thought that this should be a school with **clear objectives** focusing on education, as this was the school's primary function. He felt that other areas such as finances or sport should be recognised but not prioritised. He also mentioned that a healthy school allows for **creativity**.

He remarked that getting caught up in micro-politics made for an unhealthy school as it wasted time and other resources. He also pointed out that **an unhealthy school did not look after its resources**, which he felt were key to achieving its primary goal. When asked what this key resource was he responded that in his view "the key thing is your teacher" as they fulfil many different roles within a school, and without them the school would fall apart.

Finally the educator had an opportunity to comment openly on anything pertaining to interpersonal staff relationships that he felt was relevant. P2 stressed again that he felt the staff needed to be considered as a **team** and not divide themselves into small **competing groups**. He also felt groups should have different objectives to **discourage competition**. His final comment alluded to his feeling that if "the **team** is united" this could lead to a stronger school.

**Case 3 (P3): Sunday 22 December 2002
10h00-10h40**

After providing biographical and school specific information P3 set about answering the questions that I presented. With regards to venue for interactions, P3 confirmed that there was a staff room, used for both formal and informal gatherings. She described the furniture as consisting of tables and chairs, and as being set out in **groups of tables**. She also made reference, while laughing, to the fact that everyone had a "designated seat" and to the fact that not all of management sat in the staff room.

As far as mode of interaction was concerned, P3 commented that it was **formal**, adding "**they did not want us to socialise there**". She also added that some staff members used sexual innuendos, but generally a **formal** atmosphere prevailed. She specified that "**we were not allowed to socialise there unless it was break-time**" and again made reference to the fact that "**management** wanted a **formal** environment".

P3 went on to clarify that the staff room atmosphere varied according to whether it was **break-time**, in which case it was "very **relaxed**," or in use for meetings, where she described the atmosphere as "**tense**". She further remarked that staff room atmosphere was determined by whether **management** were there or not. "If **they** were there, I think people were very much on their guard, but without them, I think **we** all became a lot more relaxed".

When asked about formal interpersonal school practices, P3 made reference to approximately seven meetings a week, noting that the purpose of the meeting seemed to be to inform staff of that day's activities. She felt that "**we did not** really know what was happening in advance". She also commented that the meetings were "very much just a **management** meeting" because "it's **not like anyone else was able to contribute**". For this reason, she felt that these meetings, instead of contributing towards building staff unity, **merely created more tension**.

When questioned further about other formal school practices, P3 mentioned that notices were used to inform staff of things, but mainly information was disseminated orally during meetings. She referred to departmental and grade team meetings and how the intercom system was used by the headmaster if, for example, staff needed to use more assertive discipline.

As far as team building was concerned, P3 remarked that nothing formal had been organised by **management**. Instead, an "overzealous" staff member had organised something. P3

described it as "**you and your table** would ... run around and find things" She went on to mention external Education Departmental and National Educators' Union conferences as possibilities for team building, although she said that these were *not* really team building.

The deputy headmaster dealt with disagreements and staff discipline, according to P3.

As for being welcomed into the school upon first arrival, P3 felt that she had been welcomed in the staff room and in front of the whole school. She did *not* remember being welcomed by her department, but commented that she probably was.

With regard to professional jealousy, P3 commented that she did *not* feel that she was jealous of anyone because she was *not* trying to climb the **management** ladder. She felt that professional jealousy had no influence on her ability to perform her job or her decision to leave the school. She did, however, mention an "overzealous" educator that "everyone tended to get a little irritated with ... [but] I do *not* think that is jealousy".

When asked about power dynamics within the staff, again P3 felt that she did *not* really notice any, adding that if one excluded all of **management**, then the "people that were *not* **management** were just really laid back people" who were able to delegate tasks without making an issue of it. She felt that she did *not* notice anyone using length of service, or race as a means of power.

When asked about informal interpersonal patterns of group relationships within the staff, P3 commented that groups did form, and referred to **the ergonomics** of the **table settings** as having a role. She explained that in schools, one started out getting to know the people within one's **department** first. She then added again that she thought that "**people tended to become friends around the group that they sat**", commenting that she was *not* sure "which can first though, **the friends or the tables**". She summed up her thinking by stating that group relationships developed because of one's **department and the staff room arrangement**. When asked if the way the group was formed was based on anything else, she then added **age**, stating that "with the people that I became **close friends** with, it was definitely **age**".

As far as staff room atmosphere was concerned P3 remarked that she enjoyed the staff room and found everyone to be **relaxed**, adding that people had fun and that she had become "**good friends** with my colleagues in the **department** where I sat".

P3 commented that she felt that she belonged more to **the group** than to the whole staff and that she felt this during her entire time at this particular school. She then went on to describe what it meant to her "to belong" mentioning that it meant being able to have people to **chat to, ask your opinions and give an opinion**. She then added that "it is really ... just **communication**", and commented that she felt she had more **communication** within the **English department** than with any other staff member.

When asked whether this group may have supported her at work, P3 agreed that the group positively influenced her ability to work effectively, and spoke of how she was able to "**let off steam, able to moan**" and "**tell anecdotes**" about what had happened in the day. She added that it was about being able to **communicate**, pointing out that "Because you can *not* really come home and talk about it, the person does *not* understand the situation, so to be able to **talk to someone** who is in the same position as you really helps".

When asked if the friendship group influenced her decision to leave or stay with the school, she commented that "**once they sort of also started leaving, that was a factor that helped me**". When asked if individual friends influenced her decision to leave the school, she added that it was a factor because "**they were the ones that really made it worth while ... so when they were *not* there anymore ...**".

P3 then went on to define 'a friend' as someone that you can "**talk with, someone you can say things to that you would *not* be able to say to anyone else**". She added that she did have friends like this on the school staff and although she struggled to answer at first how they contributed to her professional life, she then described how she stayed with such a friend, and they were able to "**bounce ideas off each other more**" and assist each other with **lesson preparation**. She was unable to think of how these friendships may have detracted from her professional life.

On the question of healthy schools, P3 defined a healthy work environment as an environment with **open communication** "an **open door policy**". She also felt that **respect** was vital. When asked if she felt the staff room dynamics were healthy she commented that **informally** there was nothing wrong with it, but that "**formally ... in meetings and stuff I do *not* really see it as being healthy**".

As a final comment of interpersonal relationships among educators, P3 remarked that on the issue of power she wished to add that the only Black educator, the Xhosa teacher seemed to

lack power. P3 added that this could have been as a result of her colour or maybe **communication**.

She then added that she really valued her relationships in the work place and felt that more effort should be made to **close the gap between management and the rest of the staff**, because "when it comes down to it, a teacher is just a teacher" whether you have an extra portfolio of responsibility or not.

4.3.3 Between Interview Similarities and Differences

The following figure (Figure 4.2) shows a comparison of interview data between the three cases. The data are compared and presented according to the possible, key or influential factors that were used to formulate the questions. Possible common themes that emerged are represented in bold. How the data links to the key concepts of this study, in terms of the coded categories is also represented in this figure. These codes are also a guideline for possible interpretation of the data. The codes used for this column correspond to those used in **Chapter Three, Figure 3.2**.

Figure 4.2: Comparison of Interview Data between the Three Cases

	Case 1 (P1)	Case 2 (P2)	Case 3 (P3)	Coded Categories for Analysis (Possible Interpretation Options)
Venue for Interactions	Staff room for formal and informal meetings. Arranged in groups of tables , with self-designated seating. Upper management did not sit there, only HODs etc did.	Staff room for formal and informal meetings. Arranged in groups of tables , but were options (beginning of year arranged in rows). Educators were very territorial over seats. Management did sit there.	Staff room for formal and informal meetings. Arranged in circular like positions – groups of tables ("to promote work"). Everyone had a designated seat. Top management did not sit there, unless for a meeting.	IS+ [Appeared to encourage interaction between those at the table, led to the building of friendships] IS- [Split staff into groups, led to mistrust between " us and them "]
Modes of staff room interaction and staff room atmosphere	Depended on the time of day: Atmosphere relaxed during break times, formal during meetings, particularly if led by principal.	Mixture of modes, depending on the group – some were formal , some family orientated, some playful. But generally atmosphere was careful and controlled . Not a carefree, trusting atmosphere. Management created an atmosphere not conducive to socialising.	Atmosphere formal . Management did not want staff to socialise there , unless it was break time. If management were not there then educators were relaxed and able to socialise.	IS- [formal atmosphere, socialising not encouraged] IS+ [At break times and without management atmosphere appeared relaxed – possibly encouraging staff interaction]
Formal interpersonal school practices 1. Meetings, Circulars and Intercom Announcements	Many unnecessary meetings, used to check up on staff. Treated like children . No two-way communication . Not used to share ideas etc. Lots of circulars and intercom announcements also used. Meetings contributed to staff unity by creating an " us against them " scenario between staff body and management , but not whole-staff unity .	Frequent meetings, some of which were pointless . Tense, controlled atmosphere and staff apathy abounded, as there was no opportunity for interaction . Lots of pieces of paper and intercom announcements – not a formal system of use though.	Many meetings, used to inform staff of days events. Very much a management meeting only – rest of staff might as well have not been there, as no one else was able to contribute , therefore no unity .	IS- [Tense atmosphere and inability to contribute did not seem to encourage whole staff interaction or build positive relationships, instead widening divide between management and other educators]. IS+ [Meetings appeared to Unit fragments of the staff against management]

2. Team Building Activities	<i>Cannot</i> remember any thing formal. Two annual staff functions and a seminar, but facilitated by the very people who were the problem, therefore not helpful.	Team building was created as a formality to give illusion that management cared about staff. It did not achieve its objective.	Nothing formal was organised last year. Something was organised by another educator. It was not really team building , as it consisted of table groups competing against each other.	NI [Nothing influential was used for team building] IS- [Groups of staff competing against each other appeared to negatively impact whole staff relationships].
3. Disagreements and Staff Discipline	Handled formally by principal	Not handled well. No room for debate, or discussion. No objective chairperson.	Deputy principal would diffuse situations where possible and find solutions.	NI [Did <i>not</i> seem to impact staff relationships much, more a formality than anything else].
4. Staff Orientation	An orientation day was had, and the principal said a few welcoming words. <i>Cannot</i> recall being welcomed informally into the staff room.	No real orientation. Only welcomed by the principal. I was not introduced to the relevant parties or to the broader school staff body.	She was both welcomed in the staff room and in front of the entire school. She could <i>not</i> remember being welcomed by the department, but I was introduced to these specific staff members and became part of that group.	NI [It appears as if no real orientation programme seemed to be used to welcome new staff members and give them a sense of belonging. Only brief welcoming words from various key individuals.
Informal Group relationships and Dynamics 1. Group Formation	Groups formed as a result of seating arrangements and time spent together. Relationships became a lot less formal after a year. Groups were formed also on the basis of gender and phase of life. Shared happiness and unhappiness also resulted in "bonding".	Atmosphere created in staff room by management did <i>not</i> encourage interaction. Generally a feeling of mistrust. But groups formed as result of common interests and background , while age played a minimal role.	Goes back to ergonomics, table settings. You first meet the people in your department , and then you become friends with the people with whom you sit. Therefore the key factors are: departmental and staff room arrangement. Felt that age seemed to play a role, as everyone in her group was of a similar age.	IS+ [Seating arrangements possibly encourage the formation of friendship groups.] IS+ [Common interests, including common teaching subjects, seems to encourage group formation.] OD [Time spent together seems to encourage relationships, therefore possible benefit of staff retention.]

2. Sense of Belonging	To feel that one belongs is to feel valued and appreciated. It was co-workers rather than management who provided this and thus she did feel that she belonged.	He did <i>not</i> feel that he belonged. But belonging means to feel part of a team . Instead he felt more a sense of " us versus them ". This existed between departments and between the general staff and management.	Felt she belonged to the group. This meant feeling able to communicate, ask advice and simply chat .	<p>BR [A sense of belonging is a possible benefit resulting from co-worker relationships].</p> <p>HP [Experiencing belonging has possible mental health benefits for educators and impacts on their performance].</p> <p>IS- [Splits in staff may create a sense of "us versus them", which in turn prevents a sense of belonging].</p>
3. Support	Friendship groups provided support by showing care and concern, and offering comfort when needed. Opportunities to share a word of support or excitement. Also provided opportunity to share resources. Definitely influenced her ability to work effectively.	<p>Provided opportunity to moan. The friends could identify with situations, allowing one to express oneself without justification. The group provide moral support.</p> <p>Although the group provided moral support they did <i>not</i> carry enough influence to alter circumstances.</p>	The friendship group allowed one to let off steam . One could communicate and share anecdotes , as the group understood situations unlike people at home. Talking with someone in the same situation helps. The group influenced her ability to work in a positive way.	<p>BR [Relationships with groups of co-workers possibly allows one opportunities to vent, and share with people who understand the situation.]</p> <p>HP [Group may provide an outlet for frustration and offers support, thus helping to counteract stress.]</p> <p>OD [Staff performance is possibly improved by group relationships within the workplace.]</p>

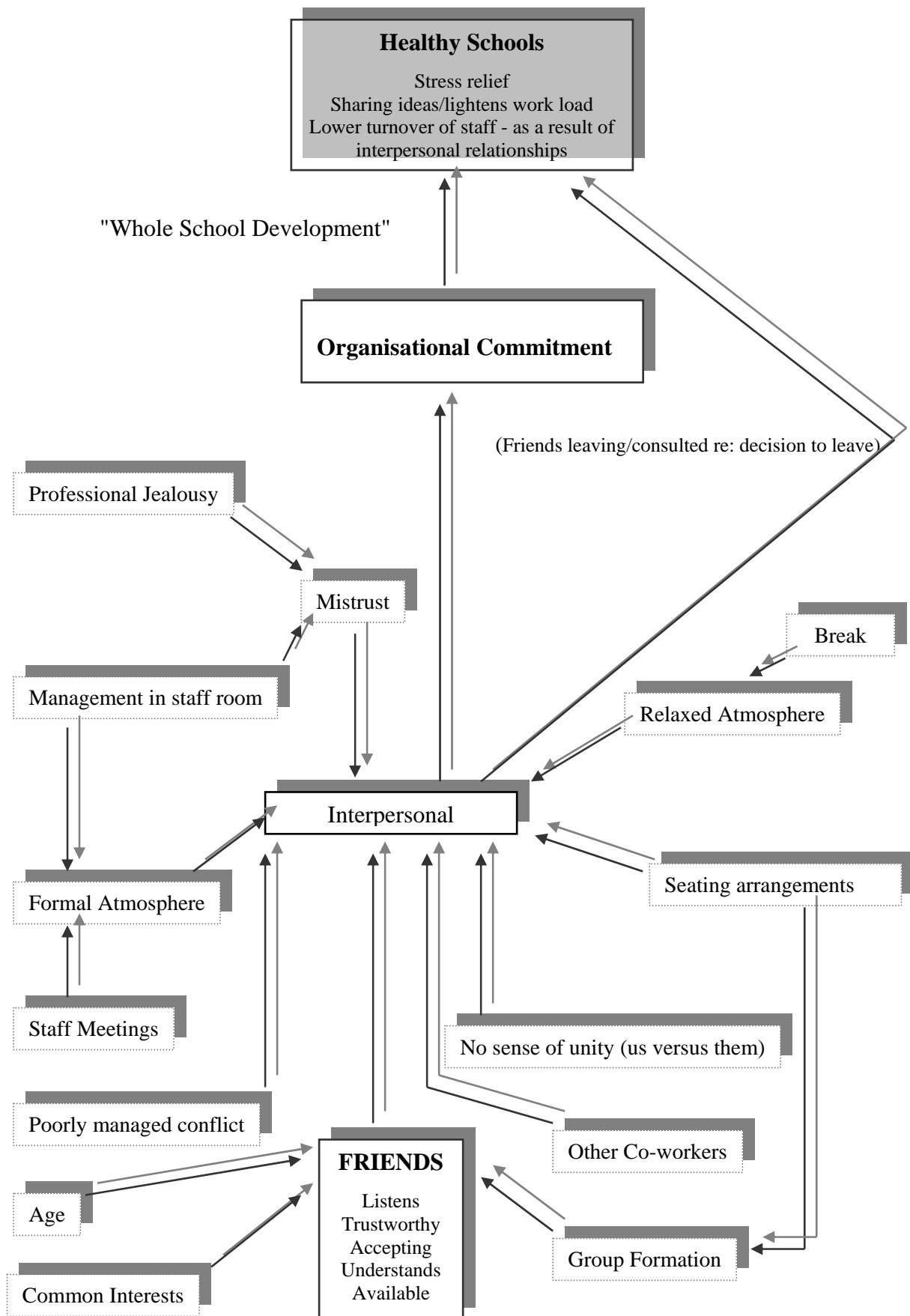
4. Professional Jealousy	Reported that there were jealousy issues – regarding younger staff members whom management appeared to view as a threat because they related well to the pupils. Influenced her negatively as these are people she knew has something positive to offer and they were being undermined.	Could <i>not</i> speak for the entire staff, but definitely noticed it within his department. Felt it probably did exist within larger staff body, resulting in resentment . He also commented that the smaller the group the more trust there probably was. Felt this was a problem for him and made reference to a particular colleague who he felt resented him, and this resulted in mistrust , as he could <i>not</i> be open with this colleague.	She felt that she was <i>not</i> guilty of jealousy, as she was <i>not</i> trying to "climb the management ladder". However she did make reference to an "overzealous" staff member that others tended to get irritated with . She was <i>not</i> sure if this classified as jealousy. She also felt this did <i>not</i> impact on her ability to perform or her decision to leave.	IS and OD [jealousy may impact negatively on interpersonal relationships by creating resentment , feelings of being undermined and mistrust , and in turn this impacts on the functioning of the organisation as a whole]
5. Possible power dynamics	Did exist . Felt that power dynamics were gender based and referred to the fact that it was subtle, but evident as other table groups , where some male teachers were competing for positions of seniority.	Did exist . He explained that certain colleagues were given tasks, which they felt placed them in positions of power, and this led to abuse. Management did <i>not</i> provide clear guidelines and so this led to a "licence to manage".	Did not notice . She felt that everybody, except management was fairly "laid back".	OD [Issues of power may have interfered with ability to perform.] NI [If not noticed then no real influence.]
Influence of group on decision to leave	Yes. Would have left sooner without friends. She feels that her decision to leave also influenced others within the group to leave.	Did <i>not</i> really influence my decision to leave, as being at that school was always a temporary thing.	Once the group started to leave it was a factor that contributed to her decision to leave.	IC [Group relationships may influence an educator's decision to remain or leave a particular school.]

Individual Friendships – Existence and Definition	Claims to have had definite friends within the school staff. And defines friends as those that unconditionally accept you and are there for you . She also adds that they value you, are forgiving, trustworthy and provide a sounding board . Contact with these friends took place outside of school hours and still continues.	Feels that he did make quite a few friends on the staff and defines a friend as someone you feel comfortable with and are able to talk to . Someone you can confide in and share personal things . Contact with these friends took place outside of school hours and still continues.	Did have friends and defines a friend as someone you can talk to, confide in and spend time with. Contact with these friends took place outside of school hours and still continues.	IS+ [friendships can develop as a result of interpersonal staff interaction.]
Influence of friends of professional life	Helped her to be professional by providing security and value , so that one could move from secure personal relationships into the unknown of the classroom. It is important to get this from one's colleagues.	Did <i>not</i> really influence his professional life, they were "merely friends"	Contributed as one was able to discuss school matters more often and share ideas and information	BR [Possibly provided opportunities to share information/lesson preparation and provided confidence to perform job well.] NI [If viewed as just friends, then no real influence results.]
Influence of friends on decision to leave/stay at school	Acted as a sounding board and therefore gave valuable input when she was deciding whether to leave or not.	Adamant that friends played no role. Had always planned to leave the profession, so just waited for the right opportunity to present itself.	They were factor in decision to leave because they were the ones that made staying worthwhile.	BR [may help in decision making process by providing advice and sounding board.] NI [May have no real influence.] IC [Have possible opportunity to influence decision to leave or stay, if given the chance.]

<p>Understanding of the concept of "a healthy school"</p>	<p>A school that has sound principles, management and financial practises and a sound structure for discipline. Open channels of communication between teachers, and pupils and senior staff are also vital. A healthy school is one where people can grow and can voice their opinions. Channels for feedback are also important. It is also vital that there is transparency in relationships, without "undercurrents".</p>	<p>A healthy school has clearly defined and grounded educational objectives. Everything else has to be a secondary function, as things need to be prioritised so that education remains the primary function. A healthy school does <i>not</i> get caught up in micro politics or wasting time and resources on things that do <i>not</i> contribute to learner success. A healthy school allows for creativity and looks after teachers – the primary resource.</p>	<p>A healthy school is open to communication, has "an open door policy" and promotes respect.</p>	<p>HP [the need for open communication between all stakeholders within a school seems to be paramount to a healthy school</p>
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The highlighted key phrases, and/or words, in the above figure served to inform the following causal network. In this I attempt to illustrate further the connections between the various concepts and the way that educators may experience the various possible categories of factors that are explored in this research.

Figure 4.3: Causal Network of Themes Emerging from Individual Interviews



4.4 THE SECOND PHASE

The second phase of data production took place six months after the initial phase. The reason for this was practicability. I was living abroad in London for those six months and therefore was unable to complete the second phase of data production any sooner. This phase served to help validate the data produced in the initial phase and, gave me an opportunity to further explore the research questions and the nuances thereof.

The following figure documents the process of arranging and confirming a date and time for the group discussion that would suit all three cases. The dates of contact are documented, as are the reasons for contact. Numerous telephone calls ensured that the three cases were able to attend on the given date. The group discussion was scheduled to take place at my home.

Figure 4.4: Record of contact with Cases regarding the Group Discussion

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11/08/03 – Have made telephonic contact with all three of the cases and have invited them to join me for the group discussion scheduled for Saturday 20 August 2003. All three cases have confirmed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 19/08-03 – P2 has telephoned to inform me that he has a work function that weekend and has suggested 13 September 2003 as an alternative. I have told him I need to confirm with the other two cases and will text him to reconfirm.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20//08/03 – Have contacted both P1 and P2 and they have agreed to reschedule the group discussion for Saturday 13 September 2003. Sent P2 a text confirming this date. He replied that it was confirmed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13/09/03 – Group discussion takes place at my home, following tea and cake at 9h30. Discussion lasts 90 minutes in total.

4.4.1 The Group Discussion (Appendix B)

The group discussion questions are presented in **Appendix B**. The group discussion involved the three cases I interviewed and took place at my home. There was only one group and therefore I had to ensure that this group discussion was extremely structured and produced relevant data.

As mentioned in Chapter Three, prior to the actual running of the group discussion I returned the interview transcripts to the cases for validation via a "member check".

Following this I started the discussion with a detailed introduction. In this introduction I explained the purpose of the group discussion in detail. This included detailing how the discussion was not a conversation and that there were no right or wrong answers. I also requested that the cases feel free to disagree and to understand that they would be asked whether or not they disagreed with ideas proposed by the other group members. It was also explained that all opinions were important and that all three cases needed to participate. I then again explained that like the interviews this discussion would be recorded, with their permission and I again guaranteed that their identities would be kept confidential.

I then asked the cases to introduce themselves by their first names and the number allocated to them. The number allocated corresponded with the individual case interview number. I explained that their names would then be removed during the transcribing process and was only there so that the transcriber could substitute names with numbers where applicable to guarantee anonymity.

The group discussion was scheduled to last 90 minutes. Before officially beginning tea and snacks were served.

The questions that I used to frame the discussion were based primarily on the individual interview data gathered, but I also used my literature review to guide my choice of questions. The discussion consisted of 28 structured questions. These questions were not grouped according to categories but rather were as a direct response to the interviews. In this way I was then able to further explore the categories and themes that emerged in the initial data production phase. I therefore used this opportunity to "flesh out" some of the issues raised in the initial phase and to clarify some of the responses, where necessary. I also used this opportunity to further validate my understanding of how the key concepts and factors covered in this study relate to each other by opening this up for discussion within the group.

What follows is a detailed summary of the group discussion. I have highlighted, where applicable, key words or phrases that related back to previous themes and any new themes that seemed to materialise during this second data production phase.

**Group Discussion Summary: Saturday 13 September
 9h30 – 11h00**

The first question referred directly to my research question and explored whether interpersonal relationships have any role to play in the overall development of a healthy

school. P1 began the discussion by answering that interpersonal relationships definitely have a role to play and went on to explain that she "**does not think that you can work well if you do not feel well**" or are happy in a particular school. She went on to elaborate that she felt this was especially the case for **female** educators. P3 agreed with P1 and added that in education one "**does not work alone**", but rather educators **support** each other. She also added that this was especially true for **departments**. P2 strongly agreed with P3 and then commented that interpersonal relationships were essential because they impact on an educator's **performance**. He also added that he did *not* think this was very different for **men** although he admitted that **men** might respond to a situation in a different way.

When asked about the role that co-worker relationships play in an educator's life P2 responded that the **support** offered is invaluable and that **performance** is influenced by how motivated and inspired one feels. He also added that work issues – which ultimately involve co-worker relationships, influenced this motivation and inspiration. P1 and P3 agreed and P3 added that **performance** was also mood related and that one's mood is affected by co-worker relationships. She commented that "if you do *not* have people around you to **support** you, to **talk** to ... you do *not* **perform** well". P1 then reiterated that teaching is a "people business" and that she felt that interpersonal relationships with co-workers are the primary relationships within the field of education, influencing ones **output**. P3 then referred again to the need for interpersonal relationships within **departments** stressing that within departments there is a need to **support** one another, as **performance** is department based.

This led to the question of negative consequences of interpersonal relationships. All three cases felt that departmental closeness could fragment a staff, and that close relationships with some educators could lead to poor relationships with others. P3 added that she did *not* make an effort with educators outside of her department but recognised that one should get to know the **whole** staff. P2 added that "we should **all play together**". He also mentioned that departmental closeness could lead to **envy** by those outside of a particularly close department and this could create opportunities for "**micro-politics**" to creep in. He also felt that it was **management's** responsibility to foster comfortable relationships between all staff, recognising that close friendships between individuals or groups of individuals would still occur. P1 then commented that the need to **belong** is essentially human and that **departments** by their nature tend to fulfil this need.

The question of the role of context in friendship formation led to an interesting debate. P2 was adamant that friendships form anywhere while P3 definitely disagreed. P3 supported this by adding that situations facilitate friendship. P1 then expanded, recognising P2's point and suggesting that personalities and environment both had a role to play, citing an example of friendships forming out of shared experiences. P1 then spoke of "**us and them**" explaining that suffering together with others creates a sense of **unity**, which in turn leads to the formation of friendships. The feeling was unanimous.

A question about how the sense of belonging could influence how one perceives interpersonal relationships was then posed to the group. P1 responded that co-worker relationships are only important if you feel that you belong. This then gives one a "**vested interest** there and you want to work and you feel as though this is **my organisation**" She went on to add that if one feels that one belongs then one **takes responsibility for one's work**. P2 agreed emphatically, adding that it was vital to feel a sense of **commitment** to any organisation and linked this to a sense of belonging. P3 went on to add that if you do *not* have relationships with your co-workers and you do *not* like **management** then what is one working for. She went on to say that a sense of belonging within a group of co-workers gives one **purpose** as one does *not* want to let others down. In this way she suggested that there is a **commitment** to the **group**.

This then led to a discussion on how a sense of belonging could be fostered within a school. P1 felt that this lay with **management**, adding that **team building**, **unity** and a **sense of belonging** are all closely linked and should be a **management** initiative.

P3 added that the "**us and them**" division needed to be broken down and that perhaps small **group** relationships also had to be addressed in favour of **whole staff unity**. She explained that the "**us and them**" divide led to **mistrust** and thus resulted in the formation of smaller "trustworthy" **groups**. By addressing this, a shared vision and goals could lead to a sense of belonging for all staff members and could eradicate the feeling of hidden agendas. P2 agreed with P3 wholeheartedly and went on to stress the need for **management** to spearhead the process and the need for **transparency**, agreeing that **whole school unity** is important for **transparency**, so that everyone is well informed of what is going on within the school.

P2 felt that an effective, official orientation programme has a role to play in creating a sense of belonging within a school. He went on to explain his understanding of an effective

programme. P1 and P3 agreed, P3 adding that it needed to be a continuing programme, not a once off session. She also then went on to speak of this orientation being a **two-way** process, allowing new staff to give input.

The issue of gender within education was then raised. P2 felt that in South Africa there are clearly defined **gender** roles. He explained that in education the "foot-soldiers are often **female** ... and the decision-makers, the glory-takers are often **male**". P3 agreed adding that teaching is often viewed as a "mothering" job and possibly appeals more to women, while management jobs take one out of the classroom – thus defeating the "mothering" role. P1 went on to suggest that women do *not* necessarily see teaching as a primary career – instead is often just a second income in many households. She also mentioned that women often do *not* market themselves as aggressively as their male counterparts, preferring to give their home lives priority.

What followed was a discussion on whether the seating arrangement in the staff room influenced interpersonal relationships. P1 began by describing how the principal had his own allocated seat and table at the head of the room. She felt that this gave her a good indication of "the ideas of **power**". She also mentioned how **groups of educators sat around the tables**, and how you tended to converse only with those at your immediate table. She felt that this did *not* allow for a "free flow of friendship". P3 then added that the seating arrangement had positives and negatives as it did indeed encourage the development of **small group relationships**. It allowed an opportunity to **chat** with colleagues and to **talk about problems**. However, she also mentioned that it did *not* allow for interaction with other co-workers outside of the **immediate group**, and it did *not* foster a feeling of freedom as one only felt **secure** within the area of the staff room that one felt was one's **territory**. She felt that this once again probably affected an educator's **performance**. P1 and P2 both agreed and then P2 added that the seating arrangements certainly did *not* "help the big picture". He felt that there should be **departmental** rooms to serve as a **territory** of sorts and that the staff room should be a **general meeting area** where staff can discuss and debate issues freely, without the issue of who sits where.

On the question of the possible informal role of a staff room the feeling was that it definitely had a role to play beyond **meetings** and that it should be a **comfortable** place for all educators. One should *not* feel only **comfortable** at a **departmental table**. He again mentioned the fact that the principal had his own designated area, as did the deputy who

chaired staff meetings. He felt that this immediately gave rise to the idea of **separation** and **isolation**. P3 added that one felt **insecure** when one was outside of the **group situation**. She explained that this was because within the **group** there was **trust** and the ability to **confide**. P1 confirmed this as she continued to explain that if one felt more **comfortable** with **management** then perhaps the feeling of "**designated seating**" and **insecurity** would not be the case. P2 then went on to comment that the main objective of a staff room is a **meeting** place, but that this required an environment which allowed **debate** and **free discussion**. He did, however, acknowledge that the staff room did have social role to play too. P3 agreed saying that this was often the only place where staff members saw each other – and in this way **departments** interact, thus preventing further **separatism**.

Following this P2 went on to explain that at School X the staff room was arranged like a restaurant, and that in this way individuals were made to feel unwelcome at other **tables**. He felt that the staff room should more like a boardroom so that everybody could participate **together**.

This led to a discussion on the varying staff room atmosphere, and the possible impact that this might have on interpersonal relationships. P3 commented that when certain **management** members entered the room **groups** "closed up" and were on their guard. When P2 asked if she meant **defensive**, she agreed adding that **management** eventually announced that the staff room was no longer a **social area**, and could be used only for staff meetings and for eating lunch. She said this definitely led to **defensiveness** on the part of the staff and, she added, to the "**us and them**" division.

P2 then commented that this made it sound as if the **group** was some sort of **refuge**. P3 and P1 agreed emphatically adding that it became a **safe place** where one could be **free**. P1 then added that the **furniture arrangement** had a very profound effect on the people sitting there, but that one should *not* lose sight of the fact that the staff room is an inanimate venue. However, she recognised the influence that the **atmosphere** could have on one. She noted that a morning meeting could give the venue a **terrible** and **stressful** atmosphere while an evening function could be **relaxed**. P3 said that on one hand the staff room was a "**safe haven**" but that on the other hand, depending on the function it could be a dreadful place to be.

When questioned on formal interpersonal school practices P1 felt that in a way they bonded staff, as often staff were reprimanded via intercom announcements, and that "**suffering together**" united people. P3 added that these are important school practices but how it is done influences staff relationships with **management**. She felt that often these were "**one-way**" means of communication and definitely eroded relationships with **management** while fostering group relationships with co-workers who were often compelled to **vent** their feelings on this matter.

Following this was a discussion on the possible benefits of being able to **vent** their feelings to fellow co-workers. P3 spoke of how it was **comforting** to know others were in the same boat, and that it was important to have people who understood as family and friends could not relate to this. P1 added that it provided **validation** for one's feelings. While P2 agreed with both P1 and P3, he also added that venting one's feelings should be constructive and that without **power** to change things this is pointless. He felt that in the private sectors there are systems in place for constructive **venting** such as workers forums, for example. In School X one **felt** that there was *not* an outlet for this and this could contribute to people "**constantly leaving**". He then added that this then led to inconsistencies in the way educators did things, adding that you "**cannot replace experience**".

This comment led to a dialogue on the possible impact of high staff turnover on interpersonal relationships. P2 felt that staff who had been in service longer often had a sense of superiority. He added that new staff often felt incompetent because of their **inexperience**. P1 spoke of how in the staff handbook "years of service" appear next each educator's name adding that this was interpreted as a subtle way of introducing hierarchy, making newer teachers feel inferior.

P2 then spoke of how high staff turnover **impacted negatively on departmental performance**. Both P1 and P3 agreed as he went on to add that it put **pressure** on those who remain, as they were constantly "carrying passengers" – assisting new staff. P1 then mentioned that high staff turnover also **impacted negatively on administration issues** because new staff members were not familiar with the operational systems and practices of the school. The systems were then regularly redesigned as they were viewed as being ineffective, whereas often it was just a case of uniformed staff members. She also spoke of how reprimanding of staff then became a more regular thing, and this in turn **impacted negatively on co-worker relationships** because the entire staff would be reprimanded for

ineffectually carrying out certain whole-school practices – for example, discipline. This would make the longer serving staff resent newer staff, who were often unaware of how these practices worked and so not really to blame. P3 then picked up the discussion by commenting that this all led to a lot of "**finger pointing**" when really it was a lack of **communications channels** that was to blame. She went on to comment that more experienced staff got **resentful** and **tired of training** up new staff so frequently and so had stopped doing so. This further eroded interpersonal relationships as it developed attitudes of "**every man for himself**" P2 also felt that this led to a **resistance of change** because systems were then changed so regularly and people **resented** this.

The question of professional jealousy was then raised. P3 felt that this resulted from people being favoured for their **relationship with management** rather than for their capabilities or efficiency. P2 reworded this as "**their ability to obey instruction**" while P1 referred to this as "**flying below the radar**". P1 felt that jealousy was a part of human nature and could *not* really be totally eradicated. She also felt that it could have positive spin-offs, actually **motivating** individuals. P2 agreed, adding that it should, however, be controlled. P1 joined in, saying that if **interpersonal relationships were sound** to begin with jealousy would be curbed. She therefore felt that one needed to start with addressing **interpersonal relationships**. P3 added to that that where there is **bad staff morale**, educators would find reasons to complain or moan about each other. P2's comment was that **management** needed to develop themselves in terms of **interpersonal** skills and **conflict resolution**, as often **they created** the jealousy by **comparing educators** openly in meetings. In this way **they undermined co-worker relationships**. P3 agreed emphatically adding that there needed to be **trust**, to which P2 added **trust from management** that individuals were able to do the job, even if their method differs from that of someone else. P3 felt that without this, **no one was able to do the job properly**.

The influences of management on co-worker relationships then became the focus of the discussion. P2 referred again to **inconsistencies** in the way management treated individual staff members. P3 spoke again of how this led to **resentment** and **dislike** for favoured individuals who seemed to get special treatment, thus eroding relationships. P2 went on to speak of **unfair practices** and the need to rectify this. He felt **transparency** in the way decisions were reached would be helpful in this matter, **empowering** individuals with knowledge and alleviating **mistrust** between people.

P3 then moved on to how **mistrust** was created within the school. She spoke of a **lack of transparency** and **hidden agendas**. She mentioned that these agendas might in fact not even exist, but there was no **trust**. P1 added that **lack of communication** also played a role – stating that written instructions could be helpful. She also felt that "**communicating with the staff**" was vital. She went on to emphasise the need to be **told** how things need to be done in detail, including the aim and motivation for various actions. She then emphasised the need to "**really open the floor to discussion**". P3 then questioned P1's use of the word "**tell**" arguing that being "**told**" to do things was mostly the problem, and that instead there was a need for "**conversation, you know, communicating**".

The way staff members were disciplined, and its possible influence on co-worker relationships was then put to the group. P2 spoke of a punitive system and of how staff members could use this system to their benefit by reporting on others and gaining **favour with management**. The others agreed with this, also agreeing that this again exacerbated **mistrust**, as one did *not* know who the "**us and them**" were.

The next question explored the formation of co-worker relationships, looking further at the role that shared "school experiences" might play. P1 felt that friendships between co-workers within a school were definitely based on shared school experiences initially and grows from there. P2 added that school experiences led to the beginnings of friendships, which then either grew or did *not*.

An understanding of the term "commitment" within the school context was then discussed. P3 felt that this meant giving, as much as one could of one's **time, effort and knowledge**. P1 summed this up as "you give it your **commitment**". P2 mentioned that for him **commitment** was about "**taking ownership of tasks or responsibilities**". He went on to cite many examples of when educators need to show commitment, adding that one also needs to be **efficient**. P1 then added that **commitment** is also about **loyalty**, and that one is called to present the school in the best possible light. If one is **loyal**, then one has a certain **ownership** of the school and is **proud** of it. She felt that **commitment** was "**central to everything that you do because it puts the enthusiasm in your work. It puts spark in your work**". All three individuals then agreed that it was vital for an organisation, in this case a school, to **foster commitment if it wants to be a healthy, functioning organisation**.

This led to the central research question of whether positive interpersonal relationships have any bearing on an educator's commitment to a particular school. P1 responded that this was definitely the case, while P3 felt that positive interpersonal relationships fostered **commitment** to the **job**, not to the **school**. She explained that she **separated the job from the school** as she felt that she gave her best in her job for her **department** - "**not to let anybody in your team down**". She explained that this did *not* necessarily mean **loyalty** to the school. P2 agreed with this, adding that he definitely saw good relationships between educators at School X, but that did *not* mean they were **loyal** to the school. He did *not* feel that the one necessarily led to the other, then going on to say that "**if you have good relations from the top right down to the bottom** then, yes, you can say" that good relationships possibly influence commitment. P3 suggested that this was because "**management** decides the organisation".

P1 then interjected that she felt, however, that the reverse was true. She felt that "**you will not be committed to an organisation if you are not happy in your personal relationships there**". She went on to explain that without **friends** and without a **feeling of belonging** and the ability to **vent** one's feelings one would not be **committed** to that organisation. And therefore with these things, there was a chance of **commitment**. P3 then added that this was probably why there was **high staff turnover**. She explained that in her case a deciding factor in leaving School X was the fact that her close co-workers had also left and so she had no reason to stay. P2 then changed his earlier position somewhat, saying that it actually seemed **as if co-worker friendships do influence your commitment to the school** – "maybe not a whole lot but do some degree". P3 then compared her situation at School X to her most recent work environment, saying that in her most recent job she had *not* developed close relationships and that made it easier for her to leave. P1 agreed, saying that it was **human relationships that make one feel rooted** and if one did *not* develop these, there was no **loyalty** and therefore it would definitely be easier to leave a work place.

On the question of the possible benefits of a committed school staff, P3 felt there were definite benefits, which P1 explained by saying that "**a committed, school staff is prepared to go the extra mile**". She also felt that it was easier to work with **committed people**. P2 agreed saying that when one is committed one gives a **different level of quality of performance**.

When asked whether it was better to have a united staff or groups of close friends within the workplace P1 felt that the ideal would be to have both. P2 disagreed. He argued that it was more beneficial to the school to have a united staff. He added though that close friendships are also beneficial, what a school needs is not necessarily about friendship. He felt that it was about being a **team** and that within an organisation one needs to be **united** and **committed**. P3 picked up on this. She commented that this was just evidence of one more difference between **men and women**. She recognised that for P2 it was about being a **team** as he was more task oriented, whereas for her, she felt it was a primary need to "**feel I'm loved** and I want to **have friends I can speak to**". She felt it was perhaps a **female** response to want to **feel connected to the people around one**.

P1 continued, saying that she too felt that women want to "**connect to the individuals around them**" while men "**connect to the task**" She also commented that although the school staff was three-quarters **female**, the **management style is geared towards men**. P2 agreed, saying that as a **male** he did view friendships in the workplace differently, but argued that these **gender differences** were about **diversity** and that there was no right or wrong way of viewing things. However, it means that the **management style** also needs to be **diverse**. He felt that at School X, **management** was probably not catering for the needs of all staff. P3 agreed, saying that **management** needed to recognise that "**close relationships might play a different role for different people**".

Stemming from **gender**, the question of the role that "**a sense of belonging**" might have played in the way things were viewed was posed. P2 felt that this probably had played a role in the fact that he had answered questions so differently from P1 and P3 in the interview. He felt that he had nothing to lose at School X, but recognised that if he had been in the same **department** as the other two, he might have felt the same way as they did about the importance of interpersonal relationships. But, he commented that because of **where he sat in the staff room** and because of the **department** he was in, he had no **sense of belonging** to the school. He also mentioned that the staff members were so **territorial** in the staff room that he felt that he was never able to change where he **sat**. He then reiterated the role that the **seating arrangement** played in terms of **creating relationships** and a **sense of belonging**.

At this point P3 expressed gratitude that she had been able to join the **table** that she had, as a result of another staff member leaving. P1 admitted that if they had *not* been **sitting at the same table** they probably would *not* have become friends. P3 then stated that she felt that

management definitely **did not pay enough attention** to the role that **seating in the staff room** plays in the overall interpersonal dynamics within a school. P1 felt that **management** probably **were not aware** of the vital role it played. P3 then cited an example of where a staff room was designed so that the chairs formed a u-shape around the room, and mentioned that, at that school, occasionally the principal insisted that staff members sat in different places with different people. She felt that this was extremely **healthy** and resulted in better **dynamics**.

With regards to whole-school development P3 felt that **interpersonal relationships were very important** and that at School X this had been lacking. She mentioned that "**the school only develops by having good co-worker relationships**". She also felt that coupled with this was the need to be empowered as a **happy staff**. Having a staff who are unable to change anything and keep "**hitting management**" would *not* lead to school development. P1 agreed with P3 that **relationships were important** but added that there was a bigger picture – the need for **sound communication channels** for one thing. P2 also agreed with the **importance of healthy relationships** in whole-school development but added that it had to be an **entirely happy staff** – one or two unhappy individuals would not be good enough. He therefore felt that there had to be **close relationships between all staff members "not a few at the table because that does not benefit the rest of the school"**.

P3 strongly agreed with P2 and went on to make a valuable point. She spoke of how having only **group relationships** could also have negative implications. P2 agreed as she went on to explain that **groups** became **isolated**. P2 added that they were **envied** by others, and were often perceived as **cliques**. P3 felt that this was definitely not good for the entire staff.

Finally the group were asked if there was anything that they would like to add pertaining to co-worker relationships. P1 wanted to mention that one should *not* underestimate the importance of relationships with the administrative staff as poor relationships could really impede ones work.

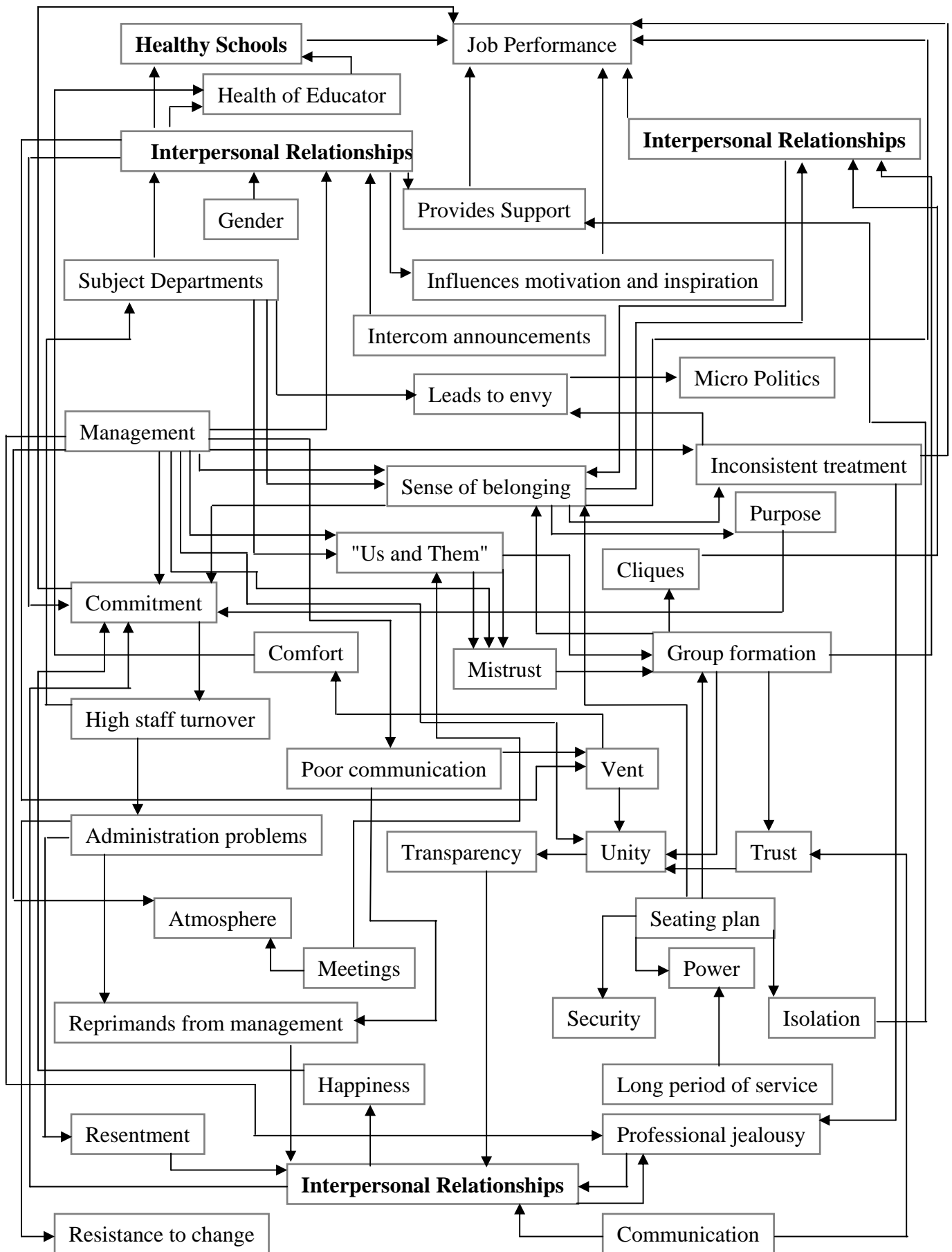
P2 wanted to reiterate that co-worker relationships are a "**vital ingredient in a successful organisation**" He felt that if there was **discrimination** or **differentiation** between staff members, divisions would be created. He added that **management** needed to be aware of how important this was. He also added that **management** needed to accept that **emotions** and **personal relationships** could *not* always be separated in "people jobs". He also spoke of how

at School X the social highlight of the year – the matric dance – was used as a further means of separating staff. This was done by only inviting matric educators and long-serving educators, despite the fact that many other educators were involved in the fundraising and preparations. P3 added that this gave the impression of an **elitist club**, when in fact this event could have served as a **team-building** occasion. P2 strongly agreed while P3 continued that it felt as if "**management wants to divide themselves from us**". She explained that a few individuals were selected for "**this club**" and the impression was given that the school's success was due to these few individuals. She felt that a school could only function successfully if everyone was regarded as a co-worker, as colleagues. She added that the divide between **management** and staff needed to be closed, as at the end of the day all parties should be educators at heart with a common goal of providing the best possible education for the learners. She also felt that **respect** needed to be an integral factor in relationship building.

P2 then closed the discussion by talking of the "**preferred boys' club**" that exists in South Africa across workplaces. He mentioned how "white males" often set themselves apart from the rest, indicating that this had also been the case at School X.

Following this summarised version of the group discussion I have presented the themes that emerged in the second phase of data production in a causal network diagram. In this way, I hope to show how the various concepts, that guide this study, and the themes that emerged during the study impact on each other, as presented by the cases. Thus, what follows is a causal network diagrammatically showing all the themes that emerged during the second phase of data production and their links to each other and to the framework of concepts that guided this research.

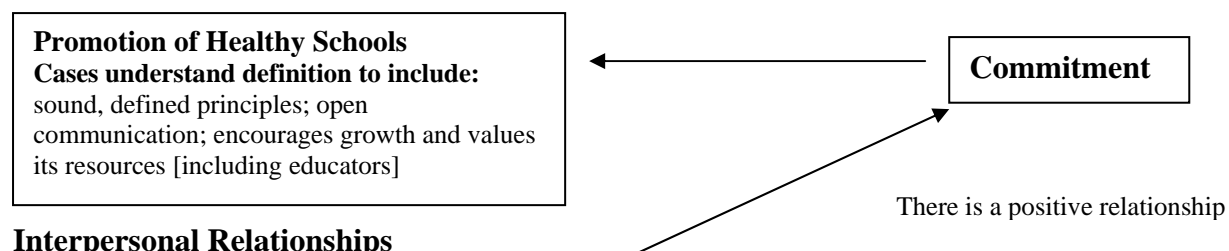
Figure 4.5: Causal Network for Themes Emerging from the Group Discussion



4.5 INTRA-INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW-GROUP DISCUSSION COMPARISON

As already mentioned, the group discussion served as a means of triangulating the data produced in the initial phase of data production. It also provided an opportunity to flesh out the themes raised in the initial phase and to see if any new themes emerged. What follows is a diagrammatic presentation of these the themes.

Figure 4.6: A Comparison of Themes Emerging in Both Phase One and Phase Two of the Data Production



Interpersonal Relationships

Themes from the Initial Phase	Themes from the Second Phase
Sit in groups Group formation based on: Age Common interests / teaching subjects	Seating plan in staff room leads to: Separation & Isolation Power dynamics Cliques & group formation Security Envy Group formation influenced by subject departments
Relaxed atmosphere – break-times & in absence of management Formal – meetings	Relaxed atmosphere during breaks & in absence of management Meetings influence atmosphere
Meetings often pointless Meetings divided staff from management " us versus them " No two-way communication Lots of circulars	"Us versus them" – created by management Management impacts on commitment & staff turnover Staff turnover leads to admin problems & influences power dynamics Poor communication with management Intercom announcements impact negatively on relationships
Team building not helpful Sense of belonging to group not to whole staff – " us versus them "	Need to unite whole staff – group formation breaks this down
Disagreements & Staff discipline has no real impact on relationships – seen more a formality Professional Jealousy has negative influence on relationships & Causes mistrust	Punitive system – exploited by educators and Inconsistent treatment by management leads to: Professional jealousy Negative impact on Job performance Mistrust Micro-politics
	Gender impacts on how interpersonal relationships are viewed
	Transparency
	Health of educator & Healthy Schools
Friendship groups offer: Comfort Moral support Opportunity to vent Communication opportunities Friends provide: Acceptance Sounding board for sharing Sense of self-worth & value	Friendship groups offer: Unity Opportunity for venting Support Comfort Motivation & inspiration Trust Sense of Belonging which leads to purpose Happiness Communication
	Admin Problems lead to: Resentment Resistance to change Reprimands from Management

4.6 SUMMARY

In this chapter I have attempted to present my research process, incorporating both my research findings and the data analysis. I have given an account of the research preparation that I undertook, and I have given accounts of both phases of data production that made up this study. These two phases comprised:

1. *The Initial Phase* - Individual semi-structured interviews, and
2. *The Second Phase* - A Group Discussion.

I have also presented the data produced in each phase in more than one way. In the section dealing with the initial phase, I presented each interview in summarised form before presenting this data again in a comparative figure showing inter-interview similarities and differences. Finally, the themes that emerged across interviews were presented as a causal network. In this way I have attempted to indicate the sequence of topics / categories that were covered as well as the key notions that arose in each case. The intra-individual interview comparison that followed revealed that in certain areas P2's experience had differed from P1 and P3. The causal network showed the themes that emerged and how these themes relate to each other within the context of the concepts and relationships guiding this study.

In the section dealing with the second phase, I again presented a summarised version of the data produced from the group discussion. This served to indicate how the themes emerging from phase one were further explored and how new themes and relationships emerged. In this phase, the intra-individual interview differences were also explored as the cases detailed and explained, wherever possible, the differences in their experiences. These themes were then presented in a causal network, detailing the relationships between these concepts as presented by the cases.

Following the presentation of both phases of data production was a diagram showing a comparison of themes that emerged in both phases. This figure confirmed the first phase themes, and showed the emergence of new themes as certain factors were explored in more detail.

The emergent themes and concepts that have been described in this chapter are clustered, and presented in Chapter Five in accordance with the influential factors in interpersonal educator relationships highlighted in Chapter Two with reference to the literature. Other influential

factors that emerged during the study are also discussed in detail and related to literature where possible. These influential factors are discussed according to whether they are interpreted as impacting positively or negatively on interpersonal staff relationships. This discussion is then followed by further discussion on the impact that these factors have on the concepts of organisation commitment, health promotion and whole school development.

In Chapter Five I return to the research questions, which directly and indirectly emerged throughout the data production. Where appropriate I attempt to show the relationships between the emerging themes and the concepts that guide this study.

Chapter Five concludes with an overview of the preceding chapters and dialogues on the constraints, and criticisms of this study. Recommendations for further research follow. Finally, I present the general conclusion.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND FINAL REMARKS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I first discuss the findings of the study and relate the data to the literature. The main focus is on exploration and interpretation of the themes common (or different) that emerged in the data produced during the interviews and group discussion. These themes are discussed according to the categories of influential factors, as presented in the individual interviews and in Figure 4.2.

Where relevant, other influential factors that have surfaced during the study are also discussed, and interpreted in relation to the literature and in relation to their influence on interpersonal staff relationships. The following categories guide the discussion:

- Venue for Interactions
- Modes of Staffroom Interaction and Staff Atmosphere
- Formal Interpersonal School Practices
 1. Staff Meetings
 2. Circulars
 3. Intercom Announcements
 4. Team Building Activities
 5. Disagreements and Staff Discipline
 6. Staff Orientation
- Informal Interpersonal School Practices
 1. Group Formation
 2. Sense of Belonging
 3. Group Support
 4. Professional Jealousy
 5. Possible Power Dynamics
- Management
- Gender Differences

These factors are discussed in terms of whether they were experienced as having an impact or not, positive or negative, on interpersonal staff relationships. Where certain factors were experienced as impacting both positively and negatively, the discussion reflects this.

This dialogue on possible influential factors is then followed by a discussion of the connections between positive interpersonal relationships and the following concepts:

- Organisational Commitment
- Health Promotion
- Whole School Development.

It is vital to note that, in keeping with Mertens (1998:12), this chapter is a record of my subjective interpretations of the experiences of the cases as shaped by their own constructs. One should also recognise that the personal experiences of interpersonal staff relationships at School X have shaped the meaning that is given to these experiences by the cases. The findings are thus presented within this Interpretive/Constructivist paradigm.

The discussion of the findings is followed by possible recommendations that emerge from the data for both whole-school development practitioners and school management teams interested in pursuing the development of healthy schools.

An overview of the contents of the preceding chapters, and a discussion of the constraints and criticisms of my study follow this. The chapter closes with recommendations for further research and my final conclusion.

5.2 FACTORS POSSIBLY INFLUENCING INTERPERSONAL STAFF RELATIONSHIPS

As already mentioned, the selection of these factors was informed primarily by the work of Komote (1987), Moonsamy and Hassett (1997), and Davidoff and Lazarus (1997), which was discussed in Chapter Two.

5.2.1 Venue for Interactions

Within the group discussion one of the cases commented that within the teaching profession one is not an island, adding that "you do not work on your own, you can't do it independently

... you help each other". This view is supported by Sarason *et al.* (1966), outlined in Chapter Two, who comment that teachers spend too much of the working day in isolation from their colleagues. This is detrimental to the development of interpersonal staff relationships and suggests a need for a suitable venue for interactions between educators. The cases also suggested that there was a need for a venue where all the educators within the school can be together at the same time.

At School X, the cases all described the staffroom as a venue for both formal and informal staff interactions. They suggested that this was a venue where all the educators within the school could be together at the same time. This suggests that the staffroom is the ideal place for fostering interpersonal relationships between educators. However, the lay-out of the staffroom at School X was described as being "like a restaurant," with a number of round tables and chairs, discouraging easy mixing between the groups. Makin *et al.* (1996:209) argue that physical layout plays a role in group formation in that distance has a powerful impact on who interacts with whom. Based on this, it is possible to claim that sitting in small table groupings is likely to encourage relationships between those sitting together and discourage relationships between those sitting far apart at other tables.

Thomas (1995:12) suggests that teachers are territorial, consistently sitting in the same seats. The cases confirmed that this is the case at School X. Makin *et al.* (1996:209) claim that the more frequent the interpersonal interactions, the more likely informal relationships are to develop. The converse is also true. This would seem to be the case at School X in the staff room.

The cases described how subject departments tended to sit together around a table. Consequently, new staff would automatically join a table occupied by members of the same subject department. This then led to interpersonal relationships being developed "within departments" among people with teaching subjects in common. This is consistent with Makin *et al.* (1996:209) who claim that formal groupings often lead to informal friendships forming. Their comment, "as well as being a department, it may be a department of friends", seems to support this (see Makin *et al.*, 1996:209). The cases also comment that sitting in a designated seat, with colleagues perceived as friends had other advantages. One would seem to be the 'sense of belonging' created by the formation of stable groups, as suggested by Sarason *et al.* (1966), which in turn has other positive spin-offs. The other would be the feeling that one has

a 'personal space' within the staffroom – a place one where can leave personal belongings if so desired.

Two of the cases related that this had a positive impact on interpersonal relationships as this led to close relationships developing between those who sat together regularly, and this then led to the formation of "friendship groups". They felt that these friendship groups then provided the much-needed opportunities for sharing problems and information, and gaining both professional and emotional support. As Sarason *et al.* (1966) point out family and friends are often unable to relate to educators' experiences. Two of the cases also clearly spelled out how they experienced this as impacting positively on job performance. This is consistent with the findings of Reddy and Tobias (1994:22) who suggest that educator interactions impact on educator health and job performance. This is also in keeping with the model showing conceptual links that I have used throughout my study.

The other case (P2), however, acknowledged that there were possible positive spin-offs to sitting at the same table regularly, but only for those who recognised those that they sat with as friends. He commented that his experiences at the table where he sat had not led to the same positive interpersonal relationships although he had seen this occur at other table groups. This reflects clearly Mallory and New's (1994) view that each individual experiences the environment in a particular way.

The other two cases acknowledged that they had been lucky enough to sit with educators of a similar age, and with common interests, and this may have played a role in the formation of "friendships groups" too. Interestingly enough they also alluded to the fact that there were aspects about the staffroom at School X which were experienced as impacting negatively on interpersonal relationships.

They were all quick to point out that while the seating arrangement possibly encouraged small group formation, this in turn could give rise to cliques, which negatively impacts on whole-staff relationships.

Sitting in small groups also seems to lead to isolation and separation. One case commented that one becomes very "dependent on their group" as you come to trust only those that you know well. Another case commented that "it doesn't allow you the opportunity to interact with other co-workers", again suggesting separation amongst staff members. He also felt that these groups could lead to envy. He explained that this was the case where educators saw

strong friendships developing at other table groups but did not experience it themselves. This in turn could lead to "micro-politics" which he felt would be damaging to the health of the school. Again, in keeping with a constructivist position, it would seem that personal experiences of the staffroom shape the meaning that is given to these experiences.

This was especially the case because there was an unspoken agreement on the designation of seating. One did not feel free to sit where one wanted or join other table groupings. The comment was made that "the seating arrangement does not ...create an environment for anybody to feel free. You only feel free in that area that you feel is now your territory". This was experienced as leading to divisions among the staff, as there was only conversation and relationship building between small groups of people. This then resulted in mistrust, leading to a feeling of an "us and them", further eroding whole-staff interpersonal relationships.

It would also appear that the seating arrangement in the staffroom fed the hierarchical power dynamics that were perceived to exist amongst the staff. Senior management tended to sit together around one table, and the principal, when in the staffroom, sat at a head table alone or with his deputy principal. This was experienced as having a negative effect on whole-staff relationships, drawing attention to the hierarchical divides.

In light of all of this, one case felt that it would be healthier for staff relationships if the furniture were arranged like that of a boardroom – around one large table, where everyone could sit together. It is interesting to note that this is the case who described his personal experiences of the seating arrangement as particularly negative.

All this suggests that there is merit in having a staffroom for educators to interact together in. Arranging the furniture in a particular way, in this case in table groups, also seems to have a potential positive or negative impact on interpersonal relationships.

This also suggests that it is important to recognise again how one's own experiences shape one's perceptions of whether something has a positive influence or not – reiterating Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (1997:40), claim that individuals make meaning of their own reality based on their personal experiences.

5.2.2 Modes of Staffroom Interaction and the Staffroom Atmosphere

All three cases were in agreement that the atmosphere of the staffroom varied according to the time of day and the function of the venue at that time.

During break times the atmosphere of the staffroom was described as relaxed. During this time, the staffroom atmosphere was conducive to informal staff gatherings, thus encouraging interpersonal relationships. The cases reported that during break times the staffroom was used for informal staff interactions. This would thus seem to dispute Sarason *et al.*'s (1966:76) claim that staffrooms tend to have formal functions only. The fact that during the group discussion it was revealed that the management at School X had at one point decided that the staffroom "was no longer a social area ... it's only for meetings" strengthens the point. Despite this decision, educators still spent their break-times in the staffroom. So, it would appear that limited socialising – restricted to break-time still occurred in the staffroom.

The cases also reported that the staffroom was used as a venue for staff meetings, and that this occurred very regularly – sometimes up to twice a day. During staff meetings the staffroom atmosphere was described as "tense", "controlled" and "formal". It would appear that the atmosphere of these meetings did not encourage interpersonal staff relationships positively. Educators did not feel able to contribute freely to the meeting, reporting that there was no opportunity for discussion or "two-way communication". This would suggest that these meetings were in no way supportive of collaboration.

The cases unanimously commented that management's presence, particularly the principal, in the staffroom also influenced the atmosphere of the room and impacted negatively on interpersonal relationships. The following comment illustrates this: "when certain managers would walk in, there would be a sort of group closing-up ... everyone on their guard". This appears to support Lingren's (1962:548) suggestion that management tends to influence the tone of interpersonal interactions.

5.2.3 Formal Interpersonal School Practices

Using the literature as a departure point I selected the following as formal interpersonal school practices:

- Staff Meetings
- Circulars
- Intercom Announcements
- Team building Activities
- Interpersonal Conflict and Staff discipline
- Staff Orientation

5.2.3.1 Staff meetings

As Komote (1987:19) suggests, staff meetings should allow educators an opportunity to share ideas and vent pent-up emotions. In addition, Lingren (1962:549) makes the point that interpersonal relationships are fostered when educators are permitted to be part of the decision-making process. At School X this did not seem to be the case. Instead, what the three cases had to say supported Komote's (1987) suggestion that staff meetings were mostly dedicated to whole-school practices and policy issues. However, they did later add that at School X there were daily staff meetings dedicated to "daily events". They all reported though, that many of these meetings were unnecessary and did not allow educators an opportunity to contribute to decision-making or to communicate openly. As Komote (1987:21) suggests, communicative freedom is vital if one is to encourage collaboration. It would seem then that these meetings did not encourage collaboration or foster interpersonal relationships.

As mentioned in (2.4.2.6) the work of Fisher *et al.* (2003:19) suggests that hierarchical power would exist within the school as a result of the school structures. It is important to note that these cases' experiences of these meetings were shaped by the fact that they were perceived from the position of "disempowered" educator.

Moonsamy and Hassett (1997:11) also commented that the way a meeting is conducted can discourage open discussion. This seems true of meetings at School X, which were not experienced by these educators as providing a forum for open, two-way communication as they were controlled entirely by management.

This lack of communication was described as leading to mistrust within the staff body. One case really felt that "opening the floor to discussion," rather than simply being told what to do would go a long way in countering the mistrust that existed amongst staff at School X. Another case commented that a "lack of transparency and hidden agendas" were perceived to exist at staff meetings and added that, "It might not have even been there but then there was no trust".

It would seem therefore, that educators experienced these meetings as primarily counterproductive. This would seem to support Moonsamy and Hassett's (1997:11) findings that staff meetings tend to erode existing interpersonal relationships between staff members rather than encouraging positive ones.

However, it was interesting to note that the cases did comment that these meetings tended to unite the staff against management – bringing together the smaller groups against "one common enemy" so to speak. The comment, "herded together with the people that you feel are suffering the same", highlights this viewpoint. The "us versus them" scenario in this instance was perceived as being beneficial to interpersonal staff relationships.

5.2.3.2 *Circulars*

As with staff meetings it would seem that the use of circulars, or short written messages, as a means of communicating information and instructions to the staff, seemed to have both a positive and a negative impact on the interpersonal relationships between staff at School X.

It would seem, that from the reports given, that the practice of using circulars as a means of interpersonal communication was unilateral. This practice was experienced as the passing down of information from management to the necessary staff without opportunity for discussion or debate. These practices did not therefore, seem to allow educators a chance to be part of the communication process and as a result, were not a means for fostering healthy social interaction or building positive interpersonal relationships. The comment, "blasting one away the whole time and we were just meant to absorb. Absorb and follow and do and do", clearly illustrates the way one-way communication was experienced.

One of the cases did recognise, however, the importance of these circulars to the internal functioning of School X. But she also added that the way one responded to the instructions

given in circulars "affects your relationship with management". This in turn influenced relationships with other educators. She explained that it would seem that management placed a lot of emphasis on responding to written circulars and the administration arising from them, and used this as a means of rating staff competency.

The cases then reported that if management was unhappy with the way an individual had carried out a written instruction the reprimands would occur during the general staff meetings. It would seem that if management were unhappy with the way the staff had responded to a circular, reprimands would result and "everybody would kind of feel hurt together". It would seem therefore, that this, like the staff meetings, would unite the staff – positively impacting on whole-staff relationships.

However, this was also experienced as impacting negatively on staff relationships. The cases described how, in some instances, this seemed to lead to jealousy of those who were praised by management and dislike for those who instigated whole-staff reprimands.

5.2.3.3 *Intercom announcements*

Komote (1987:35) suggests that in schools where intercom systems are used as a means of communication between management and educators, this needs to be done with tact so that resentment does not result. It would seem that at School X the cases experienced the intercom, as "a weapon". One case described how the intercom was used to reprimand staff who were late for meetings, or who had not completed an instruction correctly. He also experienced the intercom as a means of "spying" on classroom activities – describing how the intercom was used to identify noisy classrooms. Again it was felt that this had the potential to impact negatively, not only on relationships with management, but with other educators who perhaps perceived themselves to be in possession of what Fisher *et al.* (2003:19) describe as lateral power.

5.2.3.4 *Team building activities*

Only one of the cases could recall an event that she would refer to as a "team building activity" However, her experience of this event was that it pitted groups of staff against each other. Groups of educators – based on the table groups from the staffroom – competed against each other in a "treasure hunt" of sorts. This could possibly be interpreted as having a

negative effect on whole-staff relationships, further dividing the staff body into smaller groupings.

However, one could also claim that this activity strengthened the interpersonal relationships between the group members. It would thus depend on how one made sense of this experience and whether one valued whole-staff relationships over those of the smaller group.

Two of the cases reported that no formal team building activities were part of the School X staff development program and therefore had no impact on interpersonal staff relationships. One of the cases did make the comment that whole-staff team building was vital as a way of encouraging positive interpersonal staff relationships.

It is important to note therefore, that what was experienced as being a team building activity was open to individual interpretation. However, it also suggests that no "formalised" team building programme existed at School X. Therefore, in a more formalised programme, or as experienced by other individuals, team building activities may be experienced as having an impact of one sort or another. The cases did acknowledge that this could be so, and that team building activities could have a positive impact on interpersonal relationships if formalised and managed successfully.

5.2.3.5 *Interpersonal conflict and staff discipline*

It is important to note that as the literature suggests conflict is not necessarily a bad thing (Moonsamy & Hassett, 1997:80; Makin *et al.*, 1996:227). It is how it is handled that determines whether it is beneficial or not.

Following from this, in the first phase of data production two of the cases reported that the principal handled formal disagreements and discipline issues while the deputy-principal defused situations where possible. The third case agreed, adding that he felt that disagreements were not handled well by management, as there was no forum for debate or discussion.

In the second phase of the data production the cases elaborated on the issue of discipline. They described how the system of discipline was punitive and had the potential to be exploited by staff members. They described how staff members could further their own interests by reporting disliked educators and gaining favour with management. This would

again suggest the possible presence of professional jealousy and unhealthy rivalries between educators that further fuelled mistrust amongst educators thereby breaking down interpersonal relationships. This is consistent with the claim made by Makin *et al.* (1996:227) that conflict is most often caused by competition.

The cases also reported that they experienced management as treating staff inconsistently. As a result interpersonal staff relationships were again negatively affected, because this inconsistent treatment led to issues of professional jealousy and mistrust. Lindgren (1962:548) suggests that management often aggravate conflicts between educators, which detrimentally affect the whole school. At School X, for instance, the cases felt that inconsistent treatment and the conflict it generated impacted negatively on job performance. This would thus seem to support Moonsamy and Hassett (1997:80) who argue that it is the mismanagement of staff discipline and conflict that is a major cause of ineffective schools.

5.2.3.6 Staff orientation

None of the cases experienced an effective, formalised orientation programme upon arrival at School X, and each reported what they experienced individually. These experiences ranged from what was described as an "orientation day of sorts" to a few words from the principal and general introductions to the staff body. No information on staff procedures or introductions to relevant administrative or departmental staff occurred. It would seem from these reports that School X did not use an official orientation programme as a means of integrating new educators into the school system and staff body. As a result one could determine that this factor was not influential in interpersonal relationships.

However, the cases did feel that an orientation programme did have potential benefits for interpersonal staff relationships. They felt that if formalised and effective, an orientation programme would go a long way in creating a "sense of belonging" for new staff members, which would foster interpersonal relationships. They explained that an effective program would include relevant introductions to other staff members and school systems, and allow space for questions, two-way communication and for mistakes to be made. This description was probably shaped by their own experiences of the orientation programme – and accounts for what they feel was possibly lacking.

5.2.4 Informal Group Relationships and Dynamics

This section covers a number of factors, which I have clustered together because of the informal nature in which they occur. They have been clustered together for convenience and in keeping with how they were presented in the individual interviews. These include:

- Group Formation
- Sense Of Belonging
- Support
- Professional Jealousy
- Possible Power Dynamics

5.2.4.1 Group formation

As Fisher *et al.* (2003:34) point out, groups play a vital role in organisational settings. Besides the formalised groups related to departments or teams, informal social groups also develop. It would appear that at School X, informal groups were experienced as resulting primarily from the seating arrangement in the staffroom. Educators teaching a particular subject tended to sit together around small tables when in the staffroom. This would support Makin *et al.*'s (1996:209) premise that formalised grouping, in this case departments, often leads to informal groupings. This would also support the position taken by Blythe Schütte and Mc Lennan (2001:25), and Makin *et al.* (1996:209) who suggest that location and shared interests are two possible influential, group formation factors. The cases also reported that gender, age, and/or background similarities might have played a role. This is in keeping with the work of Blythe Schütte and Mc Lennan (2001:25).

The cases also reported that "shared suffering" and shared school experiences tended to further cement group relationships. They also spoke of feeling safe within their group while in the staffroom, as already mentioned in (5.2.1), and added that a sense of self-worth and value was found within the group. Thus, it would seem that to some degree the formation of group interpersonal relationships were beneficial and satisfied some of the needs of the educators, again supporting the findings of Blythe Schütte and Mc Lennan (2001:25), and Makin *et al.* (1996:209).

On the other hand, it is important to note, that as discussed in (5.2.1), there were many possibly, negative results of group formation reported at School X. These included: separation, isolation, and envy. This supports the views of Makin *et al.* (1996:227) who report that competition between groups can develop and this can lead to counter-productive feelings within the workplace.

In conclusion, it would seem that the cases felt that while group formation had positive benefits for the individuals who experienced these groups positively, for others it was a negative experience. They also agreed that despite the possible, positive benefits the formation of groups had for individuals, there was also the possible negative impact on whole-staff unity.

5.2.4.2 *Sense of belonging*

As discussed in (5.2.1), the cases reflect the findings of Sarason *et al.* (1966:77) in their claims that regularly sitting together with a group of colleagues provides one with a sense of belonging. They claim, like Blythe Schütte and Mc Lennan (2001:25) that being part of a friendship group within the workplace provides this, which in turn helps to give one purpose and effects one's job performance. One of the cases also pointed out that belonging to the group created "commitment to the group, to your co-workers". Thus it would seem that there are some whole-school development benefits to creating a sense of belonging amongst educators.

One of the cases pointed out that he did not feel that he belonged to the staff group at School X. "I understand that if I was in the English department, I would probably feel the same way P1 and P3 felt – the sense of belonging". Interestingly enough this was the same case who also did not experience close interpersonal relationships (see 5.2.1). Here it would seem, that he was clearly identifying the role that subject departments played the formation of groups and a sense of belonging. This would seem to lend credence to the work of Blythe Schütte and Mc Lennan (2001:25) and Sarason *et al.* (1966:77) with regard to the role of common interests in group formation and the role that groups play in providing a sense of belonging.

When questioned further, this case individual also felt that the fact that he had not experienced a "sense of belonging" might also explain why he placed less value on the role that interpersonal staff relationships play in the workplace, particularly with regard to the

issue of commitment. In this way, we can see how his personal experiences of not belonging have shaped the meaning that he gave to these relationships. This could also suggest that, in order for interpersonal relationships to be beneficial to the educator, and to influence his/her commitment to the school, a sense of belonging is imperative.

Following this was a discussion on how a "sense of belonging" could then be fostered within a school environment. It was felt that "it primarily starts with management", who need to set the tone and take the initiative. This is echoed in the work of Lingren (1962:548). It was also felt that a "sense of belonging" could only be fostered in the absence of the "us versus them" phenomena. This would seem to mean that whole-staff unity needed to be developed. It was also suggested that both team building, and a formal orientation process would help create a "sense of belonging" for all staff members.

5.2.4.3 Support

The role that interpersonal staff relationships played in providing support for educators was recognised by all three cases – although only two felt that they had experienced this personally. This is in keeping with Sarason *et al.*'s (1966) findings. In this study, the cases felt that support was provided by the friendships groups who

- showed care and concern
- showed acceptance
- offered comfort
- provided opportunities for communicating and venting
- provided moral support
- allowed for the development of trust
- provide professional support

As Rook (1987 cited in Buünk and Verhoeven, 1991:245) suggests, interpersonal interactions in the workplace seem to have two components namely: help-orientated interactions and rewarding interactions, which I feel are intertwined. It would appear that the cases refer to both types of interactions as necessary components of support. This would seem to support the notion that they are intertwined, and that one cannot be beneficial without the other.

With reference to the 'help-orientated interactions', one of the cases mentioned that this support was vital as it "influences your output". Another added that support was vital in the field of education, as you work together with your colleagues. She felt that teamwork was vital as you "are only as strong at the weakest link within the department". This would appear to support Moonsamy and Hassett's (1997:40) view that positive educator interactions, provide professional support such as sharing of expertise, which impacts directly of the educator performance and the delivery of quality education. It would also seem to contradict Buünk and Verhoeven's (1991:245) concern that these are counterproductive exchange relationships, impacting negatively on an individual's feelings of competence.

Following from this, many suggestions were made regarding the benefits of the 'rewarding' aspect of these interpersonal staff interactions. The cases repeatedly made reference to being able to vent pent-up emotions within the friendship group. As Hartman Ellis and Miller (1994:81) argue only insiders are able to offer appropriate support. One of the cases commented, "To go home and vent to a spouse or a friend is one thing, but they don't know what's going on. It's not the same". Thus it would seem that the group members are able to identify with each other and thus offer necessary support. Hochschild (1983) also claimed that venting pent-up feelings helps to counter emotional dissonance. This would suggest that venting had definite benefits for the educator's psychological well-being.

The cases also pointed out that in an environment of mistrust (School X), the interpersonal relationships that exist within the friendship group provided an opportunity to build and experience trust. This they felt was extremely supportive. Milstein, Golaszewski and Duquette (1984:293) as already mentioned, suggest this has a direct relationship with feelings of job satisfaction and well-being. Billingsley and Cross' (1992:453) propose that job satisfaction is linked to commitment and to an individual's propensity to leave. In light of this, it would seem that interpersonal relationships do have a role to play in commitment: supportive interpersonal relationships lead to job satisfaction, which in turn is linked to commitment.

The findings of this study do seem to support this. The cases report that supportive interpersonal relationships provide affirmation and validation and help to counteract stress, "stopping you from losing your mind". This would thus seem to confirm the findings of a number of the authors discussed in the literature, including Hartman Ellis and Miller (1994:80), Burke and Greenglass (1993:371), and Sarason and Duck (2001:15).

This would thus suggest that the support that results from positive interpersonal relationships is crucial in maintaining, restoring and promoting health in educators – contributing to a health-promoting school.

5.2.4.4 Professional jealousy

All three cases acknowledged that professional jealousy did exist at School X, although they experienced differently. One case spoke of a jealousy that certain management members had of some younger staff members who were popular with the learners. Another spoke of the resentment of a colleague, whom he felt he could not trust. The third case felt she was not guilty of professional jealousy but went on to describe an "over zealous educator" who organised a team-building activity. This may hint at an element of professional jealousy, echoing Davidoff and Lazarus' (1997:136) claim that pioneering and eager educators are often seen as "showing off".

Thus it would seem that professional jealousy does impact on the way educators view each other and the management at School X, and this in turn would have an impact on the relationships between them.

However, the cases were quick to acknowledge that there will always be an element of professional jealousy within a school. They felt that this was because "it's partly human nature to be jealous". It was also mentioned that professional jealousy could have benefits for job performance – encouraging people to work harder. However, it did need to be controlled. It was felt that management had a role to play in controlling jealousy amongst educators.

But, at School X, the cases felt that management actually helped create professional jealousy and came between co-workers. This was reflected in comments such as, "People get favoured, not for their capabilities or efficiency, but because of how well they get on with management, seemed to confirm this".

5.2.4.5 Possible Power Dynamics

At School X there would seem to be both elements of hierarchical and lateral power dynamics. It is the lateral power that I am primarily interested in, in terms of interpersonal staff relationships. Two of the cases noticed this issue of power amongst colleagues of the

same post level and commented that it impacted negatively on interpersonal relationships. In her interview, the third case commented that she had not noticed issues of lateral power. However, during the group discussion, she commented that hearing the other two talk of power dynamics made her more aware of how present it had been. Again this draws attention to the individual meaning that one makes of experiences – as prior to the group discussion she had not classified certain things as issues of power.

Management were mentioned as integral in creating lateral power dynamics among the educators at School X. It would seem that management gave educators that they favoured responsibilities and tasks which placed them in superior positions. The cases explained that these tasks were not always clearly defined, adding to the confusion and creating more power for those who felt they had the inside track. It would seem that this had a negative impact on interpersonal relationships, pitting educators against each other.

Following from this, it would also seem that gender had a role to play in creating positions of power at School X. It was felt that this was subtle, but tangible. It was reported that most management positions and positions of responsibility were given to male staff members. Both the male and female cases agreed that this was the case. One of the cases referred to this as the "preferred boys club and they do set themselves apart from everyone else". It would seem that this did not have a positive impact on interpersonal staff relationships, leading to a feeling of "us versus them".

It would also seem that race had a role to play in interpersonal power dynamics, although this was only alluded to in the group discussion. This is possibly seen in the following comment, "unfortunately they're white males and I'm not saying this as a black South African, I'm saying this as a non-white male South African. Because, [this group was] against white females, black females. It was against anything other than white male". All three cases confirmed this. Thus it would seem that white male educators were deemed to be in a position of power, hierarchical or otherwise, and this further split the staff. However, it is important to note that the white male group was not represented in this study. Within the research paradigm chosen, the individuals made meaning of their experiences in light of their own personal contexts.

Thus, it would seem that as Blythe Schütte and Mc Lennan (2001) suggest both gender and race are factors that contribute to power dynamics within the workplace. It would also seem

that as they suggest power dynamics do have a role to play in determining whether interpersonal relationships are deemed healthy and supportive.

5.2.5 Management

Although I initially made a decision not to focus on staff-management relationships in this study, it became very apparent during both phases of data production that management made quite an impact on interpersonal relationships at School X.

For this reason it was necessary to explore the role that management plays in influencing interpersonal staff relationships. Previous research by Komote (1987) was done on the role played by relationships between staff and management in organisational development in Black South African schools. Komote (1987:31) suggested that management members had a great role to play in improving interpersonal relationships. This research confirmed what Lindgren (1962:548) suggested, which is that the pattern or tone of relationships, within a school, is often set up by management.

My research would also seem to confirm this. As already mentioned, the cases reported that the staffroom atmosphere was drastically influenced by the presence of management. And, that in their presence the atmosphere was more controlled and formal – stifling the ability for staff to interact comfortably. It was even reported that management disliked staff socialising in the staffroom and actively discouraged this.

The cases also reported that staff meetings, intercom announcements and circulars were all controlled by management and tended to result in one-way, top-down communication only. Thus it was felt that management prevented these formal, interpersonal school practices from being fully utilised to encourage interpersonal staff relationships. This would again be supported by the literature of Komote (1987), and Moonsamy and Hassett (1997:11). They claim that these practices end up eating away at staff relationships rather than supporting them.

Again, with regard to professional jealousy and power dynamics, the cases viewed management as having a role to play in maintaining these factors. They favoured certain staff members, and gave them with responsibilities that were perceived as reward - rather than ability-based. This gave rise to jealousy among colleagues and established lateral power dynamics.

Following from this, the cases also reported that the lack of a formalised team building and staff orientation programme was detrimental to interpersonal relationships. They all felt that these programmes were management's responsibility.

Thus, it would seem that management had a great role to play in setting the tone of interpersonal relationships at School X. This research suggests that they were experienced as having a negative impact on interpersonal staff relationships.

The role staff-management dynamics plays in an educator's commitment to a school seems undeniable. However, due to time constraints and the narrow scope of this study, the role that management played could not be a primary focus. However, the data analysis dictated that some attention be paid to this factor.

5.2.6 Gender Differences

In light of the findings in the first phase of data production, I decided to explore the theme of gender further. In the first phase of data production, the male case's responses with regard to the importance of interpersonal relationships differed from those of the other two female cases. I wanted to explore whether the fact that he was male had any role to play in the way he had constructed his interpersonal experiences in the workplace.

First, I wanted to establish how the cases experienced gender in the field of education. The cases agreed that in their experience there were more females in education than males. The predominance of females in education is a widespread phenomenon. Reviewing the situation in Britain, Bush and Middlewood (1997:124) found that 81% of primary school educators were female and about 50% of secondary school educators were female.

P2 had commented that in South Africa there were also defined gender roles in the field of education. He referred to the women as the "the people who do the work, the foot-soldiers", and he referred to the men as "the decision-makers and the glory-takers". This would support the premise that hierarchical power is experienced as gender-based in education in South Africa. The other two cases agreed with P2, adding that there were exceptions to the rule, but in their experience women made up the bulk of the staff, while management was primarily male. This is not limited to this situation. Bush and Middlewood (1997:124) found in Britain

male educators are more likely to hold positions of responsibility and have higher status and pay.

The theme of gender was thus more apparent in the second phase of data production. One of the female cases pointed out that in the case of women, performance is directly affected by emotional well-being. She felt that "males seem to be able to separate the issues". She went on to claim that she "wouldn't be able to work in a school if [she] wasn't happy". She then confirmed that positive interpersonal relationships provided this happiness for her. P2 responded that men did not necessarily feel differently to women in this regard, but that perhaps they did not react in the same way. Perhaps this would mean that men do not turn to their colleagues for support in the same way that women do, even though they may feel the need.

Later in the group discussion the issue of gender again emerged. One of the female cases challenged P2's comment that being part of a team is more important than friendship. She argued that in her experience this was a difference between men and women. She said, "I want to feel I'm loved and I want to have friends I can speak to". She then generalised her response by saying that "women, generally speaking, ... want to feel connected to the individuals around them". She felt P2 was more task orientated and that was why his emphasis was on 'the team'. She felt that this was primarily a male response.

Both of the other cases agreed that this was probably the case, and P2 admitted that the way he viewed the role of interpersonal staff relationships in the workplace might have had something to do with the fact that he was male. However, he wanted to make it quite clear that being male had nothing to do with how he experienced interpersonal staff relationships at School X. This instead, he attributed to where he sat in the staffroom and to the fact that he never developed a "sense of belonging".

Despite P2's disclaimer, it would seem that men and women may place different emphases on the need for interpersonal staff relationships. However, all three cases felt they were vital in the development of a healthy school.

5.3 THE ROLE OF INTERPERSONAL STAFF RELATIONSHIPS IN EDUCATOR COMMITMENT

First it is important to note how the cases understood the concept "commitment". This is so that the discussion relating to this concept, can be understood within the context of their understanding of it. The following were mentioned as possible aspects of commitment:

1. Giving fully of yourself, your time, effort and knowledge
2. Taking ownership of the tasks – giving of your best
3. Loyalty – you have ownership and you are proud of it

These aspects reflect both attitudinal and behavioural aspects to commitment (see Kamfer *et al.*, 1994:1). Having established this, the next step was to explore the extent to which the cases' understanding reflects elements of Kamfer *et al.*'s (1994:1) four dimensions of organisational commitment.

Kamfer *et al.* (1994:1) describe **affective commitment** as involving both loyalty and effort. Both elements are reflected in the cases' understanding of commitment.

In terms of **continuance commitment**, the cases talk of investing fully in the job, which reflects Kamfer *et al.*'s (1994:2) view that the individual becomes bound to the organisation because of a perceived investment. According to Kamfer *et al.* (1994:2), **moral commitment** is also reflected in the cases' understanding, as this dimension again makes reference to an obligation or loyalty to the organisation. **Alienative commitment** is the only dimension not directly referred to in the cases' description of what commitment within the school context is. Thus I would conclude that their understanding of commitment within the workplace sufficiently reflects the understanding of organisational commitment that I have chosen to use for this study. This then sets the scene for further discussion.

The cases were then asked directly whether they felt that positive interpersonal relationships had any bearing on their commitment to School X. There seemed to be some disagreement initially in the answer. P1 immediately felt that this was "definitely" the case. P3, however, felt that one needed to separate the job from the school. She then mentioned that she felt that commitment to the job was definitely fostered by positive interpersonal relationships.

She went on to explain that one felt a sense of loyalty to the people, particularly within one's department and thus one worked harder so as "not to let anybody in your team down". She confirmed that there is a sense of "commitment to the group". This was further confirmed by one of the cases who commented that commitment within a school is vital as "it puts the enthusiasm in your work".

This would thus support my argument that moral commitment may be born out of loyalty to fellow employees and may actually still benefit the organisation. As Steers (1977:46) suggests, employee commitment is experienced as impacting on performance, which in itself benefits the organisation as it suggests a willingness to exert effort. The cases, who clearly indicate that commitment has a role to play in a healthy, functioning school, further confirm this.

The second case agreed with P3 to some degree. He argued that despite many positive interpersonal relationships at School X, he still felt that commitment to the school was minimal. He explained that educators still did not support the school's objectives. This suggests that an acceptance and belief in the organisation's value system was possibly lacking. Kamfer *et al.* (1994:1) see these characteristics of affective commitment. This lack may suggest that affective commitment was not experienced as being positively affected by positive interpersonal relationships. However, he did go on to state that positive interpersonal relationships throughout the school, including all stakeholders might encourage commitment to the organisation's objectives.

P1 made a very interesting observation in response to this comment. She concluded that without positive interpersonal relationships there definitely would not be commitment to the organisation. She explained that without friends one would not have a sense of belonging, and this she understood to be integral to the commitment process. She also made reference to how friendships provided opportunities for venting one's frustrations and how she experienced this as necessary in fostering commitment.

Therefore these positive interpersonal relationships seem to increase the sense of belonging for an educator and provide a healthy outlet for off-loading. The educator presumably perceives these as positive spin-offs or rewards. This would thus seem to support the premise that continuance commitment is encouraged by positive interpersonal relationships. These

spin-offs would be lost if the educator left and thus might encourage an educator to remain at the school for longer.

Added to this is the fact that according to Abraham (1999:441) one of the benefits from positive interpersonal relationships, which are supportive, is the negation of emotional dissonance, which as discussed in (2.5.5) can be linked to alienative commitment. Therefore, in the presence of supportive relationships, which allow for the venting of internal emotions, the effects of alienative commitment are possibly combated. The cases made no reference to elements of this dimension of commitment. I would argue that, as Kamfer *et al.* (1994:3) suggest, this was possibly due to a lack of knowledge of this construct, which is often overlooked, rather than due to a lack of this commitment dimension.

It is also important to note that as Fisher *et al.* (2003:123) point out there is a positive correlation between psychological well-being and commitment. Accordingly, psychological well-being in essence refers to psychological health. Since it has already been established that supportive interpersonal work relationships have a role to play in promoting healthy educators by combating stress and meeting other needs, it would seem possible to argue, that positive interpersonal staff relationships thus encourage commitment.

In conclusion, it would seem that positive interpersonal educator relationships do relate to commitment. Closer examination revealed specifically continuance, moral and alienative commitment. It is also possible that if these positive relationships were extended to include all role-players within a school, this may influence affective commitment too.

5.4 INTERPERSONAL STAFF RELATIONSHIPS AND STAFF TURNOVER

It is my position that a committed, school staff is less likely to be exposed to high staff turnover thus allowing an opportunity for meaningful, supportive and health-promoting relationships to develop. Commitment to the school may, in turn, encourage interpersonal relationships to develop. I would argue that meaningful interpersonal relationships may also influence an individual's commitment, particularly the element of continuance commitment to their place of work, reducing turnover. This implies again, that interpersonal relationships contribute positively to the promotion of healthy organisations, by encouraging a stable, retainable staff.

Steers (1977:46) and Johnson and Snizek (1991) as cited in Kamfer *et al.* (1994:1) contend there is a decrease in employee turnover as a result of increased employee commitment. I would argue for a direct link with the element of continuance commitment. An educator must weigh up the perceived losses associated with leaving the school.

It is important to note, however, that only two of the cases felt that their interpersonal relationships with colleagues had played a role in their decision to leave. The third felt that he had left as it has always been part of his long-term career plans to leave after a certain period of time. It is also important to note, however, that this is the same case who did not experience a 'sense of belonging' at School X or develop close supportive relationships. Therefore he had no social ties or need fulfilment as a result of these ties.

When questioned about whether he felt these negative experiences might have influenced his views, he agreed that this was probably the case. He commented, "I had nothing to lose at School X". He then explained that if he had been in the same department as the other two cases his experiences would have been different. This again suggests the individually constructed meaning attached to experiences. Specifically he made reference to where he sat in the staffroom, and the lack of a "sense of belonging", as two possible reasons why he felt that it had been easy for him to leave. These reasons both have a direct relationship with interpersonal staff relationships.

Thus, in view of the above, it would seem plausible that interpersonal staff relationships have a role to play in creating continuance commitment and therefore staff retention. Positive relationships seem to encourage an educator to stay at a particular school.

One of the cases also alluded to the fact that a lack of friends within the workplace might lead educators to leave. She felt this might have contributed to the high turnover of staff at School X. She commented that "a deciding factor when I left was that my close co-workers had left as well and then there wasn't really a reason for me to stay". She went on to claim that "human relationships make you feel rooted. If you don't feel rooted it's much easier to turn your back". This would again suggest that positive interpersonal staff relationships are influential in continuance commitment. Without friendships, there is no social cost associated with leaving. Thus it would seem that positive interpersonal staff relationships do possibly reduce staff turnover, while a lack of meaningful relationships makes it easier for an educator to move on.

This was further confirmed when another case added that in her current work environment "I haven't developed close co-worker relationships, so it's easier for me to leave".

The comment was also made that when making the decision to leave, close colleagues acted as a "sounding board" and gave advice. Thus again, in this way, interpersonal staff relationships play a role in an educator's decision to leave a school. However, it would also seem that high staff turnover impacted negatively on interpersonal relationships and the school as a whole.

Another point that arose from the data was that it would seem that close relationships were harder to make in a constantly changing staff body. This again would suggest that there is merit in encouraging a stable staff. It would also seem that issues of power developed. Educators who had been with the school for longer, although not officially promoted, were recognised for their long service and were seen to be favoured over newer staff members. "It's a subtle way to introduce a hierarchy" was the way one of the cases experienced it. This was said to lead to "micro-politics". One of the cases also commented that this made newer staff members feel inadequate, as their lack of experience worked against them. This would impact directly on the overall functioning of the school as an organisation.

5.5 INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS, ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A HEALTHY SCHOOL

In this section, I discuss the role that interpersonal relationships and educator commitment play in the development of a healthy school as experienced by the three cases.

It is important to note that the cases had similar understandings of what constitutes a healthy school. The first case described a healthy school as one with sound principles, transparency and open channels of communication. The second made reference to clearly defined objectives and a concern for educators, while the third felt that open communication and respect for people was vital.

These views together with the definition of health promotion that I adopted from Reddy and Tobias (1994:21) provide the factors that help determine whether the school environment, both physical and mental, is considered healthy.

It is vital to determine which aspects of the school as an organisation are deemed to be important in the cases' understanding of the healthy school. It is, however, important to note that the model that I have used to make sense of a whole school presents all of these factors as inter-related and underpinned by the salient human relationships.

The aspect of sound principles should be reflected in the school's vision and mission and encompass the values and norms of that school. According to Davidoff and Lazarus's (1997:18) model of a whole-school, this reflects the school's culture and identity. Clearly defined objectives would refer to the school's strategy while respect, communication and transparency are encompassed within the structures and procedures of the school. According to Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:25), these reflect how the lines of responsibility relate to each other.

When questioned about whether the cases experienced School X as a healthy school they unanimously agreed that it was not. This was because they felt that it lacked all the vital factors of a healthy school.

However, the focus on the data production was more on the possible role that positive interpersonal relationships play in the development of a healthy school. As already mentioned, I would argue that it is the people who make up the organisation – both management and human resources – who determine all of these factors. So in keeping with the focus of this study, it is the role that human resources and commitment play in the development of a healthy school that is of primary interest.

Related to this, one of the cases mentioned that "a school only develops by having good co-worker relationships". Another pointed out that since communication is a vital element in a healthy school, this means "the relationships are also important". The third case pointed out that "close relationships or happy relationships can assist in the development of the school if it is uniform". He went on to explain that all interpersonal relationships within a school needed to be healthy for this to have a real impact. However, he did recognise the individual impact that positive interpersonal relationships had on the other cases, and added that if all the staff had had these experiences it would have benefited the health of School X greatly. This could perhaps be related to the discussion on gender and the fact that the male case placed more emphasis on the aspect of team than individual gains.

The next step is to have a closer look at the individual health benefits as experienced by the cases. As already mentioned, the cases claimed that positive interpersonal relationships fulfilled many needs for educators. And although only two of the three claimed to experience this personally all three recognised that these relationships provided invaluable support within the workplace – both professionally and personally. The workload was shared, as were ideas, emotional offloading was accepted, a sense of belonging was fostered and opportunities for communication were provided. These are some of the benefits of these relationships mentioned. This is in keeping with the findings of Hartman Ellis and Miller (1994).

It would seem therefore that as Reddy and Tobias (1994:22) claimed, strengthening interpersonal relationships is vital in contributing towards healthy educators. This in turn is imperative in a healthy school. It would seem that these relationships are experienced as providing valuable support, thus contributing to the mental wellness of educators, and as Sarason and Duck (2001:15) suggest, maintenance and promotion of health.

It would seem too that commitment also has a role to play in a healthy organisation. One of the cases commented, and the others agreed, that one needs commitment within an organisation. He felt that this commitment encouraged educators to take the initiative and put more effort into their performance. The comment, "you take the initiative ... you go the extra mile ... you take responsibility", suggests this. As already mentioned, this is in line with the research of Reichers (1985, cited in Billingsley and Cross 1992:454) that commitment influences job performance positively.

This case also pointed out that "you can't replace experience". Here he was making a reference to one of the benefits of staff retention that result from commitment. I would argue that this 'experience' relates to performance, and that the case is implying that job performance is improved as a result of experience. This improved performance, in turn is extremely beneficial to the organisation and its service delivery. Thus according to the cases, commitment has a valuable role to play in the healthy functioning of the school by improving educator performance.

With regard to this, as already mentioned, the cases were quick to point out the negative results of staff turnover. These all impact on the organisation and are thus pertinent with regard to the healthy functioning of the whole school. Micro-politics, lateral power dynamics

and feelings of inadequacy for the new staff members are all mentioned as negative results of high staff turnover. I would argue that these all impact negatively on the health of the whole school by creating difficulties in interpersonal communication. Feelings of inadequacy are counter-productive and, may impact on the educators' psychological well-being. Thus retaining staff, through continuance commitment would combat these negative factors and help promote the health of the whole school.

Another negative result of high staff turnover reported by the cases is administrative in nature. One of the cases claimed that high turnover "makes administration much more difficult". She explained that because the new staff were not familiar with school systems, and possibly were not properly informed, these systems failed to work. This led to constant revision in the systems being employed, which was unsettling for the staff. She also experienced this as weakening relationships between management and staff. She reported that management interpreted this system failure as purposeful wrong-doing on the part of the staff – perhaps confirming the element of mistrust at School X. I would argue that commitment could combat this. Thus, encouraging positive interpersonal relationships, which seem to result in continuance commitment. This is vital for healthy, procedural school functioning.

It would seem that all three cases recognise the benefits of positive interpersonal relationships and organisational commitment for the development of a healthy school. Therefore, it would seem that this area of human resources as an element of a whole school cannot be overlooked or underestimated. This is particularly true if one is trying to develop a healthy, physical and mental school environment.

5.6 POSSIBLE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF HEALTHY SCHOOLS

What follows are recommendations that emerged from the data production with regard to encouraging positive interpersonal relationships so that commitment to the school can be fostered and the development of a healthy school promoted. These recommendations would primarily be for School X. However, it is possible that some of these could apply to other schools too.

5.6.1 Venue for Interactions

It was felt that management were perhaps not fully aware of how the physical lay-out of the staffroom impacted on staff relationships. The physical lay-out, of such a venue, relates to the physical health of the school. Clustering groups around tables may encourage small informal groups to form, but may be detrimental to staff unity by creating cliques, jealousy and lateral power dynamics. Thought needs to be given not only to what is a practical environment, but also to what will best foster healthy, positive interpersonal staff relationships. This venue should also be made available for unrestricted informal interactions, which management should support. According to the cases it is during these interactions that emotional support is given and teaching ideas and practices shared.

5.6.2 Formal School Practices

More consideration possibly needs to be given to how the practices of certain formal school practices can be utilised to encourage healthy relationships. Staff meetings need to be structured in such a way that they allow for educator contribution and for creative problem solving rather than autocratic instruction and scolding. It was felt that this would help foster trust and professional support, thus contributing to educator health. Intercom use and circulars should be restricted to information dissemination only as it would seem that this would limit one-way communication and build staff-management relationships, both vital in the development of a healthy school.

Management are encouraged to value team building and to plan for structured staff team building throughout the year. This will help foster a sense of belonging and build unity contributing to healthy interpersonal relationships amongst the entire staff. A formalised orientation programme for new staff members will also be beneficial as it helps familiarise new educators with the structures and procedures, thereby eliminating many of the administrative problems that may arise. This thus contributes to the healthy development of this aspect of the whole school. It also helps foster a sense of belonging and assimilates new educators into the staff body, again assisting in building positive whole-staff unity.

It was also mentioned that the disciplinary procedures for staff and for managing staff conflict should be standardised and made transparent, so that all would be familiar with and

understand the practice. This would prevent lateral power dynamics developing and prevent resentment and jealousy amongst educators, avoiding the sense that some were favoured by management. This was deemed necessary for the development of a healthy school. It was suggested that some of the private sector practices could be utilised, like having representation in such matters. It was also mentioned that opportunities be created for encouraging chaired discussions and debate – again encouraging the two-way communication and transparency deemed necessary for healthy school development.

5.6.3 Management's Role in Interpersonal Staff Relationships

Throughout both phases of data production the cases made regular reference to the role that management played in either contributing to, or detracting from the development of healthy, positive interpersonal staff relationships.

It was felt that management should recognise the need for a stable, healthy staff and should encourage commitment and discourage high staff turnover. This would possibly mean addressing the factors that lead to staff leaving.

Management need to be aware of the fact that they do set the tone of the working environment and that the school's culture and identity are largely shaped by them. The tone of the school influences the mode of interaction between educators and the ethos of the school environment.

Consistent treatment of educators and promotion procedures are also vital. These eliminate mistrust, professional jealousy and lateral power dynamics all of which are experienced as impacting negatively on interpersonal staff relationships.

The cases also suggested that "the divide between management and staff must be narrowed". They felt that a healthy school was the result of a united staff, all of who recognise the common goal of delivering a quality education to all learners. They felt that management needed to remember that they too were educators, united by this common goal. It was felt that this would lead to the mutual respect required in a healthy school.

5.6.4 Awareness of Different Gender Needs

The cases pointed out that "it is vital that your leadership be diverse". This was explained as needing to reflect the gender break-down of the staff body, so that the different needs of the staff regarding interpersonal staff relationships could be taken into account. It would seem that women might place greater emphasis on the need for positive interpersonal staff relationships, while men might underestimate the need. At present it is felt that the majority of educators are female while management is primarily male, and this might account for why so little emphasis is placed on fostering healthy staff relationships.

5.6.5 Concluding Comments

In conclusion it is important to note that these are just some of the possible recommendations that one could make towards fostering healthy, positive interpersonal staff relationships between educators in schools. These suggestions were based on the experiences of the three individual cases within the context of School X. While this is a contextual study, and the recommendations were never intended for generalisation, it is possible that others could learn from the recommendations made.

5.7 INDIVIDUAL CASE REFLECTIONS

Following the second phase of data production the cases were given a chance to reflect on the process. This allowed me an opportunity to hear how they had individually experienced the process and made meaning of it. It also provided them with an opportunity to express any psychological distress that may have resulted from revisiting what they considered to be painful experiences in an unpleasant school context.

5.7.1 Case One (P1)

P1 felt that talking about what she considered as a "negative work experience" had at first brought back all the negative feelings that she associated with School X. Prior to the group discussion she claimed that she had felt tense and angry – very attached to her emotions about School X. But that now, she felt "more divorced from it". She explained that talking about it again helped "take it away from you".

This would suggest to me that P1 experienced the interview and group discussion as cathartic. She felt she was more objective now and looked back with hindsight and regret that "[she] didn't have the guts sometimes to act differently in some situations". She also felt that she had learned a valuable lesson from the experience, although she did not elaborate as to what this was.

5.7.2 Case Two (P2)

P2 felt that the experience was "extensively great". He explained that it had made him understand that "I actually wasted my time there". He felt that he had much more to offer and that a lot of time had been wasted on insignificant side-issues rather than on the delivery of education. He felt that this was sad, but that he had definitely realised that there were positives. He referred to how he had learned that many good friendships had been formed as a result of working at School X, although he himself had not experienced this.

5.7.3 Case Three (P3)

P3 pointed out that initially she had felt tense at the thought of having to discuss her experiences at School X, as they had not been very pleasant. But that she had found the experience "therapeutic" as it offered opportunity to "vent".

5.8 AN OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

In Chapter One, I placed my study in the context of a transforming South Africa and the need for schools to be healthy sites of learning. Understanding the school as an organisation and examining the many components thereof was imperative to understanding how to develop potent health-promoting learning sites. I then narrowed my focus to one aspect of the school as organisation, that of human resources and specifically interpersonal staff relationships.

My motive for this was that interpersonal staff relationships might influence an educator's commitment to a particular school, therefore impacting on job performance and staff turnover. Job performance and staff turnover are two factors that can impact on the health of a school. Also, as Billingsley and Cross (1992:453) suggest, teacher retention is an area of concern. My objective was therefore to uncover how educators experienced interpersonal staff relationships and how they perceived these to influence their commitment to a particular

school. I chose to focus on interpersonal staff relationships as opposed to management-staff relationships or as I felt this had already been researched vigorously. I also chose to leave staff-learner and staff-parent relationships out of account due to the time and size constraints of the study.

I then explained the Interpretive/Constructivist research paradigm, which informed my research design. This paradigm acknowledges the subjective nature of the study and recognises how meaning is constructed from individual experiences. The subjective relationship between the researcher and the individual cases is also acknowledged.

This was followed by an explanation of the research design. This consisted of three instrumental case studies bounded together by a common context. Using Mouton (1996:133) as a guide, I adopted a *contextual strategy*, as I had no intention of generalising my findings. This also informed my decision to refer to my research participants as the selected cases. These cases were selected for convenience. The research methodology was qualitative and consisted of two phases of data production. The techniques employed were semi-structured interviews and a group discussion. I tape-recorded and transcribed the interviews and then compared the data from the interviews intra-individually and then across cases. This data, along with the literature then informed the group discussion. The group discussion data was then compared to the interview data.

I explained my use of the first person throughout the study (Jones, 1992:18) and reviewed the concepts, which I felt were key to the research. This was followed by an outline of the subsequent chapters.

In Chapter Two I provided an overview of the available literature pertaining to the concepts in this study. I showed diagrammatically how I saw these concepts as linking together. The first of these concepts was health promotion. Health promotion was given formal recognition by the World Health Organisation in the Ottawa Charter on 21 November 1986. This strategy enables individuals to increase control over their environments and health, and recognises the role of schools as health-promoting sites. Following this was a discussion on how interpersonal staff relationships could encourage healthy school development by influencing the mental health of educators. The literature surveyed also suggested a link between health promotion and organisational commitment.

This was followed by an examination of whole-school development as a strategy for promoting school health. I adopted Davidoff and Lazarus' (1997:18) model of a school as organisation and explained how this model provided a context for my specific focus on interpersonal staff relationships.

A closer look at interpersonal relationships and dynamics required an understanding of social interaction in the workplace. Much of the literature referred to interactions within the private sector as not much attention has been paid to adult relationships within schools (Moonsamy & Hassett, 1997:39). This literature revealed that interactions in the workplace are made up of help-orientated and rewarding interactions. Employees deem both supportive. These supportive interactions seem to have positive benefits for employee well-being, reducing stress and preventing burnout. The need for supportive colleague relationships was also explored.

This discussion was followed by an exploration, drawing on the literature of some of the factors that might influence interpersonal staff relationships in a school context. These factors were included venue for interactions, formal school practices, interpersonal conflict, modes of interaction, patterns of group relationships, power dynamics and professional jealousy. This was followed by a closer look at organisational commitment. An overview of the concept was followed by a closer look at the four basic dimensions described by Kamfer *et al.* (1994:1). It was this description of commitment that I adopted for this study. This chapter was concluded with a reflection on the literature and possible links that could be made between the concepts.

In Chapter Three I gave a description of my research design. This began with a closer look at the Interpretive/Constructivist paradigm, focusing on how this informs research and, tracing its roots in constructivism and interpretivism. Using this term by Mertens (1998) required a comparison with her other research paradigms, Positivism/Postpositivism and Emancipatory. This was then followed by a closer look at the research design and methodology. The case study design was discussed in detail and included a rich description of School X the context, which bounded the three case studies. The selection of the case individuals was contextual (Mouton, 1996) and non-probable (Riffe *et al.*, 1998). The methodology was qualitative and consisted of the data production techniques of interviews and a group discussion. The term data production was used as it reflected my research paradigm. The production of data consisted of two phases. The first phase was interviews informed by the literature and my experiences as an educator. I explained why semi-structured interviews appeared to be the

appropriate choice. The second phase followed. One structured group discussion informed by the data from the first phase took place. This validated and confirmed the findings from the first phase by means of triangulation. This validation gave credibility to the research. Further validation was ensured by means of member checks and an audit trial.

The data analysis process was then discussed. This was based on Miles and Huberman's (1994:11) approach and consisted of data reduction, display and verification. These activities occurred concurrently and were displayed in a flow chart showing each step of the process. The data was then displayed in a variety of manners. Ethical consideration was guided by the principles and norms for research as discussed by Mertens (1998:24). This was a fundamental part of my research design and was embedded throughout the research process.

In Chapter Four I presented a detailed description of my research process and included the data analysis. I explained how I had prepared for the study. This included reviewing literature and consulting with experts in educational management and industrial psychology. Once this was completed I invited a number of individuals to participate in the study. Eventually three cases, two female and one male agreed to participate.

The initial phase was then described. This included designing the interview questions and arranging an interview schedule. The biographical data of each of the cases was then presented and followed by a summarised version of each interview transcript. A figure comparing inter-interview differences and similarities revealed that P1 and P2 had similar responses to most questions. P2's answers differed slightly, especially with regard to the role that interpersonal relationships played in commitment and his experiences of these relationships. A causal network then displayed the emerging themes and related them to the concepts of this study.

The second phase was also described. It took place six months after the initial phase and consisted of one group discussion. This was scheduled, and before it occurred the cases were given a chance to check their own interview transcripts and validate the coding system. The group discussion was conducted and lasted 90 minutes. It was then transcribed using the same codes as in the initial phase. The data was firstly displayed as a summary and then as a causal network, giving details of how the themes related to each other. Finally the data from both phases was compared and presented. Themes that emerged from both phases of the data production included:

Figure 5.1: Themes that emerged from both phases of data collection

PHASE ONE	PHASE TWO
Sit in groups Group formation based on: Age Common interests / teaching subjects	Seating plan in staff room leads to: Separation & Isolation Power dynamics Cliques & group formation Security Envy Group formation influenced by subject departments
Relaxed atmosphere– break-times & in absence of management Formal – meetings	Relaxed atmosphere during breaks & in absence of management Meetings influence atmosphere
Meetings often pointless Meetings divided staff from management "us versus them" No two-way communication Lots of circulars	"Us versus them" – created by management Management impacts on commitment & staff turnover Staff turnover leads to admin problems & influences power dynamics Poor communication with management Intercom announcements impact negatively on relationships
Team building not helpful Sense of belonging to group not to whole staff – "us versus them"	Need to unite whole staff – group formation breaks this down
Disagreements & Staff discipline has no real impact on relationships – seen more a formality Professional Jealousy has negative influence on relationships & Causes mistrust	Punitive system – exploited by educators and Inconsistent treatment by management leads to: Professional jealousy Negative impact on Job performance Mistrust Micro-politics
	Gender impacts on how interpersonal relationships are viewed
	Transparency
	Health of educator & Healthy Schools
Friendship groups offer: Comfort Moral support Opportunity to vent Communication opportunities Friends provide: Acceptance Sounding board for sharing Sense of self-worth & value	Friendship groups offer: Unity Opportunity for venting Support Comfort Motivation & inspiration Trust Sense of Belonging which leads to purpose Happiness Communication
	Admin Problems lead to: Resentment Resistance to change Reprimands from Management

In Chapter Five I discussed these themes. This was done within the context of the influential factors in interpersonal staff relationships. This allowed me to see how these factors impacted on interpersonal staff relationships and what the benefits of these relationships were. Specific attention was given to the impact on commitment and staff turnover. These findings were then placed within the context of developing healthy schools.

The findings indicated that many factors were experienced as impacting on interpersonal staff relationships within School X. Positive relationships were experienced as supportive and were possibly valued more by the female case. These supportive relationships were recognised as being influential in both commitment and staff turnover. Thus it was concluded that positive staff relationships do have a role to play in healthy school development by curtailing staff turnover and encouraging continuance and moral commitment and combating the alienative dimension. Recommendations for whole-school development were then made in this vein.

5.9 CONSTRAINTS AND CRITICISMS

One of the possible short-comings in my research design was the **Hawthorne Effect**. As Huysamen (1998:66–67) suggests this is a "reactivity of research" and refers to the impact on case individuals as a result of knowing that they are part of a research undertaking. Two of the cases did mention the emotional effect of being involved in this research. Besides the Hawthorne Effect, this also suggested some psychological discomfort. This may have also influenced the data production somewhat, but all cases reported at the end that they had experienced the process as positive. These effects may have been reduced somewhat by the fact that I was known to all three cases prior to the study. The fact that they were also no longer employed by the Western Cape Education Department and do not work at School X may have also freed them somewhat from these effects, as there was no fear of recrimination.

Another shortcoming of my study was perhaps the fact that it consisted of only three contextual case studies. The fact that there were only three cases, bounded by the same school context, limited the ability to generalise the finding. Although this was part of my research design, in hindsight it would have possibly been useful to be able to generalise the findings across other contexts. However, given time constraints and the size of this study that was perhaps not really feasible. My aim therefore was not generalise the findings so much as it was to highlight the need for further consideration of the importance of interpersonal staff

relationships within the school context. It is also important to note that as Merriam (1998:210, as cited in Engelbrecht *et al.*, 2001:257) suggests when using qualitative methodology it is implied that what we learn in a specific situation can be transferred or generalised to other situations. Thus some degree of generalisation would be appropriate.

Another possible limitation may have been the subjectivity of the researcher. Although this is accounted for within the Interpretive/Constructivist paradigm it is still important to note that it was I who chose the influential factors to be considered regarding interpersonal staff relationships. I also analysed the data for themes and then represented these according to my own understanding. Thus, replicating the experiences of others and their understanding of these experiences in terms of the research focus may have been influenced both by my own experiences and constructed understandings, and my personal interpretation of theirs.

5.10 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Future research in the role that interpersonal relationships play in healthy whole-school development is strongly recommended. As my literature review revealed there is very little research in this area. There is also very little written on educator commitment, either to a school or to the profession. What literature I did find about social interactions in the workplace and commitment referred to the private sector of business and included research from countries other than South Africa. This raises questions about their validity both for local use and within the educational field. And perhaps confirms the need for further research in this area – particularly in view of the importance of human resources in the delivery of education.

This research represents a small-scale study focussing on one particular school context and cannot be generalised to the larger education population. The cases also do not reflect the larger population of educators in this country – particularly with regard to culture, race and religion. What might have been more effective was, either a larger more comprehensive study, or the use of several similar studies done at the same time across a range of school contexts and including a more diverse sample of educators.

Expanding the focus of this study to related areas could also be useful. The role that gender might play in constructing meaning from interpersonal relationship experiences is suggested in this study. Further investigation in this area is warranted. One could argue that it is

important to understand whether gender determines how important interpersonal staff relationships are experienced to be. This could thus inform leadership strategies and procedures within specific school contexts, based on the gender constitution of the staff. The influence of culture, race and religion in interpreting interpersonal staff experiences also deserves future research for the same reason.

5.11 CONCLUSION

My study concludes with an emphasis on the fact that interpersonal staff relationships are only one of the many human resource facets that impact on the health of a school as organisation. My recommendations stem from my belief that human resources underpin all the other elements of the whole – school and are therefore vital in the development of healthy sites for learning.

Whole school development, as a strategy for change, relies on the premise that the school needs to be a learning organisation. Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:35) suggest that this means that the school needs to be relentlessly and thoroughly reflective about its practices, making the required adjustments based on the insights gained through this reflection process.

The school environment needs to be supportive of the process of change. For this to be the case, Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:35) point out that all aspects of the school environment needed to be prepared for change – we cannot develop an organisation without, for example, developing the people who work there. Therefore I hope that whole-school development practitioners and school management teams recognise the benefits of understanding and promoting positive, supportive interpersonal staff relationships within this context.

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APPENDIX A

SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

INTRODUCTION TO THE INTERVIEW

Firstly I would like to thank you once again for agreeing to take part in this study, and for agreeing to share your perceptions and experiences of interpersonal staff relationships at your previous school.

I would to mention again that this information is strictly confidential and neither your name nor the name of the school in question will appear anywhere in this study. I will be recording, and transcribing this interview, with your permission, for the purpose of detailed thematic analysis and interpretation.

QUESTIONS FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Biographical Details

These questions will provide me with your basic background information and will include:

- 1.1 What is your age?
- 1.2 Gender: Male/Female
- 1.3 What are your academic qualifications?
- 1.4 What are your teaching subjects?
- 1.5 How much teaching experience do you have? How many different schools have you taught at?
- 1.6 When did you leave the teaching profession?
- 1.7 Why did you decide to leave teaching? (General reasons)
- 1.8 What are you currently doing?
- 1.9 Would you/Have you considered returning to teaching at some stage?

Information on Specific School (General)

These questions help create the context of the study – one particular school, which we will refer to as High School X, provides the setting for the experiences and perceptions that will be examined. The individual teacher's understanding and perception of that school context is therefore important – a different perception of the context may influence perceived experiences.

- 2.1 Tell me about the last school you were working at:
 - What was the approximate size of school?
 - How many educators were on the staff?

- What type of school is it? (Young/old/ ex-model C etc)
- What type of community does it cater for?
- Do the staff members come from the community?

Venue for interactions

Most schools have a staff-room where educators are to interact in a formal and informal way. The atmosphere, arrangement of furniture and the designated use of this venue all have a bearing on the interactions that occur there (Komote, 1987).

The following questions explore the issues surrounding the place where informal/formal staff interactions occur.

- 3.1 Does the school have a staff-room or a venue where staff members are able to meet?
- 3.2 Is this room used for informal/formal gatherings or both?
- 3.3 How is the furniture arranged?
- 3.4 Do staff members sit in the same place regularly?
- 3.5 Do management sit in the staff-room?

Modes of Interaction

Often certain patterns of interaction become evident within a school staff. Some staff members interact in a formal, stiff manner while perhaps others interact in a bantering or playful way. You may even find a staff room where sexual innuendo or aggression is the normal mode of interaction (Davidoff & Lazarus, 1997).

- 3.6 What is the atmosphere like?
- 3.7 What is the mode of interaction in the staff-room?

Inter-personal Staff Relations

These questions explore the area of inter-personal relations both formal and informal.

Formal interpersonal school practises

This refers to organised opportunities for, or methods of, educator interaction, and includes such things as staff meetings, circulated notices, intercom announcements and organised social or team-building activities (Komote, 1987).

- 4.1 What was the school's practise of staff-meetings?
This will include: regularity, reasons for meeting, ability to contribute, atmosphere, whether they contribute to unity or not etc
- 4.2 Were there team-building activities at all? Were these effective etc
- 4.3 How were disagreements or differing opinions between members of staff formally handled?
- 4.4 What other means, if any, of formal staff interaction were there?

Informal patterns of group relationships and dynamics

Davidoff & Lazarus (1997) explain "informal patterns" as a natural process of forming social group relationships. I understand this to imply that this natural process of relationship formation may occur in a regular way, resulting in the establishment of accepted, group friendships. The term "dynamics" when applied to relationships refers to the motive forces, physical or moral that exist within the relationship (Sykes, 1982).

- 4.5 Would you say that informal patterns of relationships and dynamics were established among the staff? Explain in detail/discuss
- 4.6 What were your experiences of the staff-room dynamics?

Group Relationships

- 4.7 When you arrived, were you welcomed by the entire staff or by a specific group or not at all?
- 4.8 Did you feel that you "belonged" to this staff/group? What does mean to you to "belong"?
- 4.9 On what basis, in your opinion, was this group formed? (Gender, race, subject taught, age etc)
- 4.10 Did this group support you at work? Explain.
- 4.11 Did they influence your ability to work effectively?
- 4.12 Did they anyway influence you r decision to leave/stay on with the school? Profession?

Individual Relationships

- 4.13 How do you define the term "friend"?
- 4.14 Did you have friends on the staff/in this group? (More than just professional colleagues)
- 4.15 How did these relationships/lack thereof contribute to/detract from your professional life? (Explain in detail)
- 4.16 Did you socialise together outside of school hours?
- 4.17 Have you maintained contact with these people?
- 4.18 Did they in anyway influence your decision to leave/stay on with the school? Profession?

Professional Jealousy

Davidoff & Lazarus (1997) state that interpersonal dynamics at a school are often affected by a professional jealousy – innovative educators are resented and undermined as they are thought to show up other staff members.

- 4.19 Were there issues of professional jealousy among the entire staff/your dept?
- 4.20 What influence, if any did this have on you? (Ability to perform, decision to leave etc)

Possible power dynamics within the staff

Often issues such as gender, race and age become issues of power between people (Davidoff & Lazarus, 1997). These dynamics influence interpersonal relationships and, are considered lateral because they do not consider qualifications or positions of authority which tend to give rise to more anticipated power relationships (Davidoff & Lazarus, 1997).

- 4.21 Were there specific, "lateral" power-dynamics among the staff members? This excludes management.
- 4.22 What were your experiences of this?
- 4.23 What is your understanding of the concept "healthy" within the context of a school?
- 4.24 In your opinion, overall were the staff-room dynamics healthy?

Other

- 4.25 Is there anything else pertaining to interpersonal staff relationships that you would like to share?

APPENDIX B

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

INTRODUCTION:

- Explain what the purpose of the group is
 1. A discussion, not a conversation
 2. No right or wrong answers, just ideas and opinions
 3. Feel free to disagree with other people in the group, will be asked if you agree or not
 4. Everyone needs to participate, as all opinions are important.
 - Explain the tape recorder – will be transcribed and analysed later
 - Confidentiality – no names etc will be used.
 - Have participants introduce themselves – first names and the number of the interviewee that they were allocated.
1. Do interpersonal staff relationships have a role to play in the overall development of a healthy school? Explain.
 2. Should relationships with co-workers play a role in the lives of educators? If so, how? Why? Is there a different role to be played in the professional versus personal life?
 3. What do you think may play a role in influencing the way men and women view this? How? Could gender play a role?
 4. In the interviews you were asked whether you felt you "belonged" to the staff and defined what they meant for you. Do you think "having a sense of belonging" influences the way one sees the role of co-workers? Explain.
 5. Is it important to feel that you "belong" to the staff as an educator? Explain.
 6. If so, how could this be encouraged? Would an official orientation programme have a role to play? If so, how?
 7. Is there a dominant gender in the field of education? If so what? Why do you say this?
 8. You all allude to the ergonomics/layout of the staff room and that it was set up in small groupings of chairs around a table. Does this setting arrangement influence interpersonal relationships? If so, How?
 9. You all mention the fact that the staff room atmosphere varied according to the time of day, use of the venue and who was in the room. What was the impact of this? Is there a possibility that the changing staff atmosphere influenced staff relationships? If so, how?
 10. Did formal interpersonal school practises (intercom announcements, circulars etc) influence staff relationships? Explain.
 11. If yes how could formal interpersonal school practises be improved? Could formal meetings be used to encourage staff relationships positively?
 12. If yes, how would staff meetings need to be structured/changed in order to facilitate staff relationships?

13. In the interviews you were asked about the manner in which staff disagreements and discipline were handled in School X. Does the manner in which staff disagreements and staff discipline are handled influence interpersonal relationships? If so, how?
14. 12. You all mentioned that professional jealousy did occur among the staff at School X, although not all of you were directly affected by it. What do you think are the reasons for it?
15. 13. Can Professional jealousy be curbed within schools? How?
16. Does professional jealousy impact negatively on relationships? If so, how?
17. It was alluded to in the interviews that management impacts on co-worker relationships. Some examples given by P2 were, "management {it} didn't encourage lots of interaction amongst all members of staff" "colleagues other than management were given tasks to do and therefore they felt or were made to believe that they were given certain powers, and with that they would, I think, kind of abuse that power to some extent. " There also talk of a "formal atmosphere" when they were in the staff room. How else does management influence the relationships between co-workers?
18. How is mistrust created within a school? Explain. How can it be overcome?
19. P2 alluded to the fact that the high turnover of staff made it difficult to build on-going relationships. Would everyone agree? Did this high turnover have any other impact on staff relationships?
20. You all mention being able to "vent" to fellow staff members with whom you had a close relationship. What are benefits, in your opinion of being able to vent? What was management's role? Could things have been done differently? If so, how?
21. You gave different reasons for what co-worker friendships were based on – "common background, common interest, age, seating in the staffroom, time together, common subject area" Would you say that they were primarily based on shared "school" experiences or shared "outside" experiences?
22. What do you understand by the term "commitment" in the context of the workplace?
23. Do you feel that positive interpersonal staff relationships have any bearing on an educator's commitment to a particular school? Explain.
24. What about the opposite? Do negative interpersonal relationships influence an educator's decision to leave? If so, how? If not, why not?
25. P3 spoke of these close relationships as being a factor in deciding to leave, but not an influence? What do you understand this to mean? Do you all agree?
26. Are there any benefits of a committed school staff? If so, what are they?
27. Is it more beneficial/important to have a united staff or close friends within the staff?
28. P2's responses in the interview differ greatly from the other two, particularly with regard to the importance of close co-worker relationships. P2 speaks of it not "being a priority" and comments that "they were just friends", and goes on to say, "I don't think they any influence really on my professional aspirations or life". Can you think of any possible reasons for this? Could gender be a possible factor worth considering? P2 was also the only one who said he didn't feel that he belonged – could be a possible reason?
29. How do you see the role of relationships in the overall development of the school?
30. In terms of these questions, is there anything that I have missed? Anything you would like to add that think may be important?