Role conflict and ambiguity in mid-level management in primary schools

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work in this dissertation 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

23 November 2020

Date

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SUMMARY

The aim of this study was to investigate the challenges faced by and expectations placed upon HODs, as mid-level managers in primary schools, to determine the extent of role conflict and role ambiguity they experience in the execution of their daily tasks. Being in the middle, between top management and the teachers in their department, HODs face numerous challenges related to conflicting positions within their role and they experience a variety of expectations placed on them by several stakeholders. HODs also seem unsure about the extent of all the tasks that need to be executed and what they are responsible for. In this research, the Job Demands Resources (JD-R) theory formed part of the theoretical framework that was used in explaining the phenomenon of challenges, in the form of role conflict and role ambiguity, which HODs as mid-level managers face, as well as the resources available to HODs that can counteract the demands of the job.

A qualitative research design with a constructivist-interpretivist paradigm underpinning the study was used to explore the nature of role conflict and role ambiguity experienced by mid-level managers in primary schools. A purposive sampling process was used to narrow down the participants. Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted to gain deeper insight into the challenges and expectations that HODs in primary schools face. Verbatim transcriptions of these interviews were used to conduct the data analysis in the form of a content analysis.

The main findings of the research include:

- *Findings with regards to the nature of role conflict and role ambiguity mid-level managers in primary schools experience*

A lot of role conflict and role ambiguity experienced by HODs is embedded in the core duties stipulated within the PAM document, which, in certain instances, overlap with core duties of deputy principals and principals alike. Furthermore, the PAM document stipulates that the core duties are to be determined by schools according to their needs. HODs also end up taking responsibility for the core duties assigned to master- or senior teachers as they don't feature in schools.

- *Findings with regards to the challenges mid-level managers in primary schools face in their attempts to manage their departments*

HODs face several challenges in the execution of their daily tasks. They struggle with work overload and time constraints. HODs also find it challenging to manage their department in the sense of creating unity, utilising staff correctly and delegating effectively. In addition to this, it is

a challenge for HODs to have knowledge of all the subjects taught across all the grades within their department. Duties outside of their department that HODs must fulfil also pose a challenge, as do tasks of mentorship and leadership due to a lack of time. Another challenge faced by HODs is their middle position and the sense of not knowing where they belong. They form part of management, but not top management, yet they are in an authoritative position, while still forming part of the complement of staff. Working with different stakeholders is also cumbersome to HODs. Lastly, in 2020, Covid-19 brought about specific challenges for HODs.

- *Findings with regards to the expectations placed upon HODs from both senior school management and educators in the HOD's team*

It was found that HODs experience that their principals have high expectations of them in general, but specifically in helping to maintain high standards and working towards creating a school of excellence. It was also found that teachers expect a lot of HODs in the sense of having extensive knowledge and having answers readily available for everything. More specifically, HODs experience wide-ranging expectations placed on them in the execution of academic and administrative functions, as well as keeping relations with and working with different stakeholders. Despite being a core duty assigned to master or senior teachers, HODs experience certain expectations placed on them with regards to fulfilling a mentorship role. It is expected of HODs to be innovative in their approach and not to stagnate. In being part of the SMT, they must participate in strategic planning processes and oversee numerous other functions outside of their own departments. In addition to this, it is also expected of HODs to be effective communicators and to assist in extra-mural activities.

- *Findings with regards to the formulation of guidelines for principals and HODs in primary schools to reduce role conflict and role ambiguity in mid-level management*

Guidelines were formulated for principals to reduce role conflict and role ambiguity experienced by their HODs. Guidelines were also formulated for HODs themselves to make their own lives easier and to guide them towards being more successful in their positions.

Finally, recommendations were made to the Department of Basic Education, district officials, principals and HODs to reduce role conflict and ambiguity experienced by HODs in primary schools.

Key terms: Mid-level managers, HODs, primary schools, challenges, expectations, role conflict, role ambiguity

OPSOMMING

Die rasionaal vir hierdie studie is geskoei op die uitdagings wat departmentshoofde in die gesig staar, asook verwagtinge wat op departmentshoofde as middelvlakbestuur in laerskole geplaas word in ‘n poging om die omvang van die teenstrydighede wat hul in hul rol ervaar, asook die onsekerhede ten opsigte van hul rol in die uitvoering van hul daaglikse pligte te bepaal. Om in die middel, tussen topbestuur en die onderwysers in hul departement te staan, bring teweeg dat departementshoofde talle uitdagings in ooreenstemming met die teenstrydighede van hul rol in die gesig staar. Hul ervaar ook dat ‘n verskeidenheid verwagtinge op hulle deur onderskeie belanghebbendes geplaas word. Departementshoofde kom onseker voor oor die omvang van al die take wat deur hul verrig moet word en waarvoor hulle verantwoordelik is. In hierdie navorsing, het die ‘Job Demands Resources (JD-R)’ teorie gedien as teoretiese raamwerk wat gebruik is ter verduideliking van die uitdagings in die vorm van teenstrydighede in ‘n rol, asook die onsekerhede rakende hul rol wat departementshoofde as middelvlakbestuurslede ervaar. Die hulpbronne wat departementshoofde se taak vergemaklik en as teenvoeter teenoor die werksvereistes staan, is ook nagevors.

‘n Kwalitatiewe navorsingsontwerp met konstruktivistiese-interprevistiese paradigma wat die studie onderlê is gebruik om die aard van teenstrydighede en onsekerhede wat middelvlakbestuurslede in laerskole in hul rol ervaar te ondersoek. Doelgerigte steekproefneming is gebruik om die deelnemende departementshoofde te identifiseer. Semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude is uitgevoer om ‘n dieper insig te verkry in die uitdagings wat departementshoofde van laerskole ervaar, sowel as die verwagtinge wat op hulle geplaas word. Die onderhoude is verbatim getranskribeer waarna data-analise in die vorm van inhoudsanalise gedoen is.

Die belangrikste bevindinge van die navorsing sluit in:

- *Bevindinge rakende die aard van teenstrydighede en onsekerhede wat middelvlakbestuur in laerskole in hul rol ervaar*

Talle teenstrydighede en onsekerhede wat deur departementshoofde ervaar word is ingebed in die primêre pligte soos omskryf deur die PAM dokument en ook waar hierdie primêre pligte met dié van onderhoofde en skoolhoofde ooreenstem. Verder stipuleer die PAM dokument ook dat die departementshoofde se primêre pligte deur skole volgens hulle behoeftes neergelê kan word. Departementshoofde neem verder ook die verantwoordelikheid op om die pligte wat aan meester- of senior onderwysers toegeken is uit te voer, aangesien hierdie onderwysers nie sterk in skole figureer nie.

- *Bevindinge rakende die uitdagings wat middelvlakbestuur in laerskole in die gesig staar in hul pogings om hul departemente te bestuur*

Verskeie uitdagings staar departementshoofde met die uitvoering van hul daaglikse pligte in die gesig. Hulle sukkel met werksoorlading, en in ooreenstemming hiermee, ook ‘n gebrek aan tyd. Departemenshoofde vind die bestuur van hul departement uitdagend in die lig gesien dat hul ‘n eenheid moet skep, hul personeel korrek moet aanwend, asook om effektief te delegeer. Tesame hiermee, vind departementshoofde dit uitdagend om kennis van alle vakke in alle grade soos in hul departement aangebied te hê. Pligte wat hul buite die raamwerk van hul departement moet uitvoer, asook die take van mentorskap en leierskap stel ‘n uitdaging aan departementshoofde, grotendeels as gevolg van ‘n gebrek aan tyd. Hul posisie in die middel word ook as uitdagend ervaar in die opsig dat hul onseker voel oor waar hulle inpas. Departementshoofde vorm deel van bestuur, dog is hul nie deel van topbestuur nie. Hulle is steeds deel van die personeelkorps, dog is hul in ‘n gesagsposisie. Om met verskillende belanghebbendes te werk stel ook ‘n uitdaging aan departementshoofde. Laastens, het Covid-19 ook sekere uitdagings in 2020 teweeggebring.

- *Bevindinge rakende die verwagtinge wat op departementshoofde deur beide die senior bestuur van die skool en onderwysers in die departementshoof se span geplaas word*

Departementshoofde ervaar dat hul skoolhoofde hoë verwagtinge van hulle in die algemeen het en ook meer spesifiek in die strewe daarna om hoë standaarde te handhaaf en ‘n uitstekende skool te skep. Daar is verder gevind dat onderwysers baie van departementshoofde verwag in die opsig dat hul uitgebreide kennis, asook antwoorde vir alles geredelik beskikbaar moet hê. Om meer spesifiek te wees, ervaar departementshoofde dat hoë verwagtinge aan hul gestel word in die uitvoering van akademiese en administratiewe pligte, asook in die handhawing van goeie verhoudings en in samewerking met die onderskeie belanghebbendes. Ten spyte daarvan dat dit eintlik as primêre plig aan meester- en senioronderwysers toegeken is, word daar verwag van departementshoofde om ‘n mentorskap rol te vertolk. Dit word verder van hul verwag om innoverend in hul aanslag te wees en om nie te stagneer nie. As deel van die skoolbestuurspan moet hulle deel uitmaak van strategiese beplanningsprosesse en ook talle ander funksies buite hul departemente vervul. Tesame hiermee, word daar ook van departementshoofde verwag om effektief te kommunikeer, asook om op buitekurrikulêre veld te help.

- *Bevindinge rakende die formulering van riglyne vir skoolhoofde en departementshoofde in laerskole om teenstrydighede en onsekerhede ten opsigte van departementshoofde se rol as middelvlakbestuur te verminder*

Riglyne is vir skoolhoofde geformuleer om teenstrydighede en onsekerhede wat hul departementshoofde ervaar te verminder. Riglyne is ook vir departementshoofde hulself geformuleer om hul eie lewens te vergemaklik en om hulle te lei om suksesvolle departementshoofde te kan wees.

Laastens, is aanbevelings aan die Departement van Basiese Onderwys, distriksbeamptes, skoolhoofde en departementshoofde gemaak om teenstrydighede en onsekerhede wat departementshoofde in laerskole ervaar, te verminder.

Sleutelwoorde: Middelvlakbestuur, departementshoofde, laerskole, uitdagings, verwagtinge, teenstrydighede, onsekerhede

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT ..... **II**

SUMMARY ..... **IV**

OPSOMMING ..... **VI**

ABBREVIATIONS LIST ..... **XVII**

CHAPTER 1 ORIENTATION **1**

1.1 Introduction **1**

1.2 Problem statement and rationale **1**

1.3 Research problem and research questions **4**

1.4 Research aim and objectives **5**

1.5 Clarification of key concepts **5**

1.5.1 Role conflict 5

1.5.2 Role ambiguity 6

1.5.3 Mid-level management 6

1.5.4 Challenges 7

1.5.5 Expectations 7

1.6 Theoretical framework **7**

1.7 Research design and methodology **8**

1.7.1 Research paradigm 8

1.7.2 Research design 9

1.7.3 Population and sampling 10

1.7.4 Data collection 11

1.7.5 Data analysis 11

1.7.6 Trustworthiness 12

1.7.7 Ethical considerations 13

1.8 Contribution of the study 13

1.9 Summary 14

CHAPTER 2 THE NATURE OF ROLE CONFLICT AND ROLE AMBIGUITY IN MID-LEVEL MANAGEMENT IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS 15

2.1 Introduction 15

2.2 Mid-level management 15

2.2.1 Concept clarification 15

2.2.2 Mid-level management in organisations 16

2.2.3 Mid-level management in schools 18

2.2.4 Roles and responsibilities of HODs 19

2.2.4.1 Responsibilities of HODs 19

2.2.4.2 Roles of HODs 20

2.2.5 Synthesis 25

2.3 Theoretical framework 26

2.3.1 Job Demands Resources (JD-R) theory 26

2.3.1.1 Job demands 27

2.3.1.2 Job resources 28

2.3.1.3 JD-R theory in practice 29

2.3.2 Relevance of JD-R theory to the focus of the study 30

2.3.2.1 Job demands and HODs 30

2.3.2.2 Job resources and HODs 31

2.3.2.3 How job demands and job resources interact and influence the HOD 32
2.3.3 Synthesis 33
2.4 Role conflict 33
2.4.1 Concept clarification 33
2.4.2 Role conflict experienced by mid-level managers in organisations 34
2.4.2.1 Expectations of mid-level managers in organisations 36
2.4.2.2 Challenges experienced by mid-level managers in organisations 37
2.4.3 Role conflict experienced by HODs within the school as organisation 38
2.4.3.1 Expectations of HODs 40
2.4.3.1.1 Administrative expectations 41
2.4.3.1.2 Interpersonal expectations 42
2.4.3.1.3 Leadership expectations 42
2.4.3.1.4 Extra-mural expectations 42
2.4.3.1.5 Expectations in IQMS evaluations 43
2.4.3.1.6 Teaching expectations 43
2.4.3.1.7 Coaching- and mentoring expectations 44
2.4.3.1.8 Entrepreneurial expectations 44
2.4.3.1.9 Policy-making expectations 45
2.4.3.2 Challenges experienced by HODs 45
2.4.4 Synthesis 46
2.5 Role ambiguity 47
2.5.1 Concept clarification 47
2.5.2 Role ambiguity experienced by mid-level managers 47

2.5.3 Role ambiguity experienced by HODs 48

2.5.4 Synthesis 51

2.6 Summary 51

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY 53

3.1 Introduction 53

3.2 Research paradigm 53

3.3 Research design 55

3.4 Population and sampling 56

3.5 Data collection 57

3.5.1 Individual interviews 57

3.5.2 Semi-structured interviews 58

3.5.3 Interview process 59

3.6 Data analysis 60

3.7 Trustworthiness 62

3.8 Ethical considerations 63

3.9 Summary 65

CHAPTER 4 DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS 66

4.1 Introduction 66

4.2 Process of data analysis 66

4.3 Discussion of identified themes 69

4.3.1 Challenges mid-level managers in primary schools face in their attempts to manage their departments 69

4.3.2 Expectations placed upon HODs by both top management and teachers 80

4.3.3 The nature of role conflict experienced by mid-level management in primary schools 94

4.3.4 The nature of role ambiguity experienced by mid-level management in primary schools 100

4.4 Aspects to include in formal training and/or professional development of HODs 105

4.5 Guidelines for the Department of Basic Education and/or other management bodies of schools to reduce role conflict and role ambiguity within HODs in primary schools 110

4.6 Guidelines for principals to reduce role conflict and role ambiguity of their HODs 112

4.7 Guidelines for HODs themselves to make their own lives easier 116

4.8 Summary 120

CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 121

5.1 Introduction 121

5.2 Summary of the research 121

5.3 Findings of the research 123

5.3.1 Research Question 1 123

5.3.1.1 Mid-level management in primary schools 123

5.3.1.2 Roles and responsibilities of HODs in primary schools 123

5.3.1.3 Role conflict 124

5.3.1.4 Role ambiguity 125

5.3.2 Research Question 2 125

5.3.2.1 Work overload 126

5.3.2.2 Management of department 126

5.3.2.3 Delegating and utilising staff 126
5.3.2.4 Academic challenges 126
5.3.2.5 Own teaching 126
5.3.2.6 Duties outside of HOD position 127
5.3.2.7 Mentorship and leadership 127
5.3.2.8 Position in the middle 127
5.3.2.9 Working with different stakeholders 128
5.3.2.10 Covid-19 128
5.3.3 Research Question 3 128
5.3.3.1 General 129
5.3.3.2 Academics 129
5.3.3.3 Administration 129
5.3.3.4 Leadership 129
5.3.3.5 Mentorship 129
5.3.3.6 Managing department with its different stakeholders 130
5.3.3.7 Appointment of new staff 130
5.3.3.8 Staff-related matters 130
5.3.3.9 Innovation 130
5.3.3.10 Extra-mural activities 131
5.3.3.11 Communication 131
5.3.3.12 SMT expectations 131
5.3.4 Research Question 4 131

5.3.4.1 Guidelines for principals to reduce role conflict and role ambiguity in their HODs 131

5.3.4.2 Guidelines for HODs themselves to reduce their role conflict and role ambiguity 133

5.4 Recommendations 134

5.4.1 Recommendations to the Department of Basic Education 134

5.4.2 Recommendations to the DBE, as well as other bodies governing independent schools 134

5.4.3 Recommendations to school principals 135

5.4.4 Recommendations to HODs as mid-level managers 137

5.4.5 Recommendations for future research 138

5.5 Limitations of the study 138

5.6 Conclusion 139

REFERENCE LIST 141

ADDENDUM A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE 160

ADDENDUM B: EXTRACT OF TRANSCRIPTION AND DATA ANALYSIS AS EXAMPLE 162

ADDENDUM C: EXTRACT OF DATA ANALYSIS SUMMARY AS EXAMPLE 167

ADDENDUM D: ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER 173

ADDENDUM E: GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER 176

ADDENDUM F: PERMISSION LETTER – PRINCIPAL 178

ADDENDUM G: GOODWILL LETTER – CHAIRPERSON OF SGB/PAC 181

ADDENDUM H: INFORMED CONSENT – PARTICIPANT 184

ADDENDUM I: EXTRACT OF TRANSCRIPTION AND DATA ANALYSIS WITH AMENDMENTS BY PARTICIPANT AS EXAMPLE 187

ADDENDUM J: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE AS TRANSLATED INTO AFRIKAANS 193

ADDENDUM K: EXTRACT OF TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW CONDUCTED IN AFRIKAANS WITH TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH AND DATA ANALYSIS AS EXAMPLE 195

ADDENDUM L: DETAILED RECORD OF CHALLENGES FACED WITH ONLINE INTERVIEWS 200

ADDENDUM L: LETTER FROM LANGUAGE EDITOR 202

ABBREVIATIONS LIST

HOD: Head of Department

DBE: Department of Basic Education

PAM: Personnel Administrative Measures

IQMS: Integrated Quality Management System

JD-R theory: Job Demands Resources theory

SMT: School Management Team

SIP: School Improvement Plan

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4-1: Summary of participants..... 67

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2-1: Brokerage roles played by a mid-level manager. 18

Figure 2-2: The Job Demands-Resources model. 27

Figure 2-3: Position of the mid-level manager. 35

Figure 2-4: Position of the HOD within the school system. 39

Figure 4-1: Components related to role conflict and role ambiguity in mid-level management in primary schools 69

CHAPTER 1 ORIENTATION

1.1 Introduction

Mid-level management is an integral part of any organisation and has its own valuable place in the successful functioning of an organisation. Managing in the middle, however, has its own set of challenges and unique stressors adding to the frustrations that many mid-level managers experience. Departmental heads or Head of Departments (HODs) are the mid-level managers in schools. This study investigates the role conflict and role ambiguity HODs experience in their position and explores the challenges they face, as well as the expectations placed upon them. The aim and goal of the study was to provide guidelines for both top-level and mid-level managers to facilitate mid-level managers to flourish in their position.

1.2 Problem statement and rationale

Tinline and Cooper (2016:1) describe the mid-level manager's position as being in a work pressure sandwich with frequent demands from both above and below. Mid-level managers are at the receiving end of a continuous stream of feedback through comments, criticisms, instructions, complaints, requests, disruptions and problems from top-level management, their direct subordinates, as well as customers (Johnston, 2014:10). Some of this feedback might make a mid-level manager doubt him-/herself and could cause them to question their decisions and actions (Johnston, 2014:10). Mid-level managers struggle to place and use their position of power. In interacting with superiors, mid-level managers naturally adopt a low-power behavioural style and play the role of a subordinate, but when interacting with subordinates, they adopt a more assertive, high-power behavioural style (Anicich & Hirsh, 2017b:3). The behavioural patterns associated with being a manager (such as assertiveness), are incompatible with the behavioural patterns associated with being a subordinate (such as deference) and filling these conflicting roles lead to increased feelings of stress and anxiety, reflecting the tension between incompatible social expectations (Anicich & Hirsh, 2017b:3). Mid-level managers often find themselves stuck in the middle of different stakeholder groups, which adds to endless conflicting demands (Anicich & Hirsh, 2017b:3).

A lack of knowledge of what is expected in a certain role and being unsure of the tasks and responsibilities of that role combined with vague job descriptions are all factors contributing to role ambiguity (Sinha & Subramanian, 2012:75). In their comparative study between low-level, mid-level and high-level managers Sinha and Subramanian (2012:75) found that mid-level managers are the employees who experience role ambiguity the most. Role conflict also appears

to be highest for mid-level managers with the most significant factors contributing to this conflict, the feeling of having to do things against one's better judgement, and of wanting to handle things differently, but not having the freedom to do so (Sinha & Subramanian, 2012:75). Mid-level managers must cope with situations, problems and challenges as they arise and handle these situations to the best of their ability, often without clear guidelines, which means that they work in the face of often-continuous ambiguity (Cook, 2017:17). As Anicich and Hirsch (2017a:660) argue "[I]ndividuals who frequently alternate between interacting with higher- and lower-power others have unique psychological experiences that cannot be understood within existing conceptualizations of power and these individuals who repeatedly move between upward and downward social interactions (or vertical code-switching) are likely to experience role conflict". Anicich and Hirsch (2017a:660) further propose that managers in these middle-power states have been overlooked in past theorizing and empirical investigations into the psychology of power.

The question is also asked if the relationship between vertical code-switching and role conflict will be weaker among employees who adopt a role integration strategy and stronger among employees who adopt a role segmentation strategy (Anicich & Hirsch, 2017a:667). Anicich and Hirsch (2017a:667) explain that a role integration strategy implies that individuals approach and view their role and role-based identities as both superiors and subordinates as being compatible with each other. The role segmentation strategy, however, means that individuals approach and view their position as both subordinates and superiors, as highly incompatible (Anicich & Hirsch, 2017a:667). An individual following the role segmentation strategy finds vertical code-switching to be difficult and tiring; hence experiences high role conflict.

Above-mentioned proposition begs the question to what extent the role conflict experience is in the hands of the mid-level managers themselves to manage and control. Organisations increasingly expect employees to take personal initiative in the workplace, yet this expectation can pose the risk of proactive employees taking inappropriate actions that could do more harm than good (Glaser *et al.*, 2016:1357). Glaser *et al*. (2016:1358) add that more research is needed to further investigate ways in which organisations can manage the risks of personal initiative while also appreciating and utilising its benefits. The possibility of mid-level managers using personal initiative will add a whole new dimension to the research proposed, where the role conflict and role ambiguity experienced by mid-level managers could lead to them drawing on their own resources. Mid-level managers will then use initiative to perform their role and to answer to the challenges they face and the expectations placed upon them. Mid-level managers' ability to use personal initiative could add to the guidelines created for middle- and top-level managers with regards to the position of the mid-level manager. Trust comes into play at this point, which also

forms an integral part of the relationship between top management and mid-level managers in an organisation and is also worth researching (Raes *et al*., 2011:121).

More specifically, in the educational context the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) document (Department of Basic Education, 2016:92) stipulates that educators fill a post level 1 position, heads of department a post level 2 position, deputy principals a post level 3 position and principals a post level 4 position. In other words, principals and deputy principals are the heads of department's senior management and the educators are part of the HOD's team. HODs are thus in the middle and would be the mid-level managers in a school. Apart from interaction with senior management and post level 1 educators, HODs also interact with the customers in the educational field. In their research study, Tohidi and Jabbari (2011:433-434) argue that education can be regarded as service provision and that there are indeed customers in the educational context. They distinguish between primary customers who receive the services directly (the learners), secondary customers who directly influence the education of specific individuals (such as families), and tertiary customers, which include society at large. With HODs identified as the mid-level management in schools, the question arises if they indeed face similar challenges, and experience role conflict and ambiguity, similar to mid-level managers in the corporate world.

The Policy Handbook for Educators as commissioned by the Education Labour Relations Council (2003:C-66) and the PAM document (2016:Annexure A.5) give some guidelines towards the job description of an HOD with regards to teaching, extra-curricular activities, personnel management, general or administrative tasks, and communicative duties. It does, however, also state that the responsibilities of the job are individual and varied, depending on the approaches and needs of a particular school. This already suggests that HODs will experience role ambiguity by not knowing exactly what is expected of them.

Very little research has been done in the field of mid-level management in schools and most of the literature that deals with the problems that mid-level managers face, relates to businesses and the corporate world. Johnston (2014:3) has made valuable contributions to the field with regards to the position mid-level managers find themselves in and their conflicting experiences, but he clearly states that he has drawn on his own experience in business and business development. Tinline and Cooper (2016:1) also shed light on the challenges a mid-level manager faces and the feeling of being stuck in the middle, but continuously refer to the organisation the mid-level manager works for, which does not necessarily fit the unique set-up of a school. Miller (2012:ch. 1) also has some strong viewpoints on the position mid-level managers find themselves in, but also draws his conclusions from his own experience in his work in major corporations.

There seems to be a gap in research on the challenges a mid-level manager in an educational context (i.e. a head of department) face. A number of journal articles deal with aspects related to head of departments in secondary schools (high schools), but this has very little relevance to primary school level. Most of these articles were also quite old and outdated. Wise and Bush (1999:190-193) conducted a study on the role of the academic mid-level manager in secondary schools. In the study mid-level managers and their superiors were asked which tasks and responsibilities they regarded as being the mid-level managers'. A variety of tasks were listed, and they were grouped into four categories: academic tasks, administrative tasks, managerial tasks and educational tasks. From the study's results it became obvious that there is a big discrepancy between what mid-level managers believe their tasks and responsibilities are versus what their superiors believe. This study was, however, done in secondary schools and similar research could not be found for primary schools.

Meanwhile, Collier *et al*. (2002:24) conducted a study exploring the role of HODs in secondary schools. They found that more external demands and pressures were considered the worst aspects of the role. Amongst these pressures were the problems arising from being between the needs of the senior executive and the department, which indicates role conflict experienced by HODs in secondary schools. Once again, the question remains if this would also be the case in primary schools.

Due to this lack of research in the primary school setting, this study explores the challenges faced by and expectations placed upon HODs in primary schools to determine the extent of role conflict and role ambiguity that they experience. The ways in which HODs take initiative and are proactive in finding ways to manage their own challenges are also explored with the objective to see if these actions can be incorporated in guidelines to assist top-level management and mid-level managers. A proactive approach can either benefit or harm an organisation. Proactive behaviour and the way it influences job demands and resources is researched in correlation with the JD-R theory, which underpins this study.

1.3 Research problem and research questions

From the argument stated above, the following main research problem is identified:

Which challenges and expectations contribute to role conflict and role ambiguity in mid-level management in primary schools?

The main research problem can be broken down into the following research questions:

i. What is the nature of role conflict and role ambiguity in mid-level management in primary schools?
ii. What challenges do mid-level managers in primary schools face in their attempts to manage their departments?
iii. What are the expectations placed upon HODs by senior management as well as educators in their department?
iv. Which guidelines can be formulated for principals and HODs of primary schools to reduce role conflict and role ambiguity in mid-level management?

1.4 Research aim and objectives

The aim of this study is to determine the challenges faced by and the expectations placed upon mid-level management in primary schools and explore the factors contributing to mid-level management experiencing role conflict and role ambiguity. The objectives of this study are:

i. to explore the nature of role conflict and role ambiguity mid-level managers in primary schools experience;
ii. to identify the challenges mid-level managers in primary schools face in their attempts to manage their departments;
iii. to explore the expectations placed upon the HODs from both the senior management of the school and educators in the HOD's team; and
iv. to formulate guidelines for principals and HODs in primary schools to reduce role conflict and role ambiguity in mid-level management.

1.5 Clarification of key concepts

1.5.1 Role conflict

In the field of sociology, the term 'role' is used to describe a set of expected behaviours and obligations placed upon individuals based on their position in life and relative to others (Crossman, 2017). Crossman (2017) further explains that role conflict happens when there are contradictions between the different roles that a person takes on or plays in their everyday life. In some cases, the conflict is a result of opposing obligations that results in a conflict of interest; taking on roles with different statuses; or disagreeing about the responsibilities of a particular role (Crossman, 2017). Role conflict can ensue when people disagree about what the expectations are for a particular role or when someone has trouble fulfilling the expectations of a role because their duties are difficult, unclear or unpleasant (Crossman, 2017). According to Anicich and Hirsh (2017b:3) role conflict also happens when a person must play very different roles. In the case of

a mid-level manager, this happens because they find themselves simultaneously in the position of a leader and a subordinate (Anicich & Hirsh, 2017b:3). Role conflict is a feeling of being pulled in multiple directions, and unable to satisfy every role partner (Onyemah, 2008:300).

Role conflict occurs when a person experiences conflict in having to fulfil multiple roles at the same time, which in the educational field and in the case of the HOD, could be the role of both superior and subordinate.

1.5.2 Role ambiguity

Role ambiguity occur when employees are unclear about the level of authority in decision making, what they are expected to accomplish and how they will be judged. Role ambiguity is comprised of uncertainty about what actions to take to fulfil the expectations of the role (Örtqvist & Wincent, 2006:399). Onyemah (2008:300) explains role ambiguity as the perception that one lacks information necessary to perform a job or task leading to a feeling of helplessness.

Role ambiguity is the perception that employees don't know what is expected of them in a specific role, when managers are unsure of the decisions they may make and what they have the authority to decide.

1.5.3 Mid-level management

Mid-level managers sit somewhere in the middle of their organisation's hierarchy. They have progressed beyond first and perhaps second line management, and while they are not at executive level, they may well report to someone who is (Tinline & Cooper, 2016:1). Miller (2012:ch. 1, par. 7) explains that companies consist of three organisational levels: senior leadership, mid-level management, and the workforce. Mid-level managers mostly operate "in the moment", with responsibilities that have immediate and often conflicting deliverables, and they oversee execution in most organisations (Cook, 2017:17). Johnston (2014:9) elaborates by explaining that the mid-level manager is in the middle of a triangle, which includes the business (represented by the chief executive officer, managing director or business owner), the customer and the employees (the people who make up your organisation). The PAM document (2016:92) stipulates that educators fill a post level 1 position, head of departments a post level 2 position, deputy principals a post level 3 position and principals a post level 4 position. This places HODs in the middle and implies that they would be the mid-level managers in a school.

Mid-level managers are those functioning between the executives at top-level management and the workforce of the company, which in the school environment will be the HODs, as they report

to the principal and deputy principal, but manage the educators of different phases in the primary school.

1.5.4 Challenges

The Little Oxford English Dictionary (2006:104) defines a challenge as an interesting but difficult task or situation. Noda (2013:121) explains that challenges are rarely minor and elaborates that if they are manageable one would likely approach it as a routine task. Instead, he says, that a task becomes a challenge only when it is large enough to overwhelm the person. Noda (2013:123) further explains that the meaning of a certain challenge may change, depending on the changes in one's context and one's horizons of interpretation.

Challenges are interesting and difficult tasks that seems to be overwhelming.

1.5.5 Expectations

The Oxford English Dictionary (2015) defines expectation as a preconceived idea or opinion based on what a person has hoped for or imagined regarding a future event, situation or encounter. In an attempt to clarify the concept of expectations placed upon someone and more specifically, the mid-level manager, different people surrounding the mid-level manager will each have their own preconceived ideas or opinions of what they imagine the role of the mid-level manager is. This is further explained in that business leaders want performance and results, customers want great products, service and value, and employees want their needs to be met at work (Johnston, 2014:9).

When expectations are placed upon a mid-level manager by a superior or a subordinate, the superior or subordinate will have their own preconceived ideas or opinions of what they imagine the mid-level manager should do.

1.6 Theoretical framework

The job-demands resources (JD-R) theory focus on the well-being of employees within an organisation to ultimately improve the functioning of organisations. Mid-level managers are very much part of the successes and/or failures of organisations. It is therefore important that their well-being must be promoted; hence the use of this theory as part of the theoretical framework of this study. The job-demands resources (JD-R) model was introduced in 2001 and has since developed into the JD-R theory. The originators of the theory have expressed their wish that the theory will continue to inspire researchers who want to promote employee well-being and effective

organisational functioning (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017:273). Referring to the first study that utilised the JD-R model, Bakker and Demerouti (2017:274) explain that all job characteristics can be classified in two broad categories of working conditions, namely job demands and job resources. Demerouti *et al*. (cited by Bakker & Demerouti, 2017:274) defines job demands as those physical, psychological, social or organisational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or psychological effort, while Bakker and Demerouti (2017:274) name high work pressure and emotional demanding interactions with clients or customers as examples. Job resources refer to those physical, psychological, social, or organisational aspects of the job that assist in achieving work goals, reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs, or stimulate personal growth, learning and development (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007:312), with autonomy, skill variety, performance feedback, and opportunities for growth posited as examples (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017:274).

The theory has developed and evolved as numerous researchers added to the factors contributing to job demands and job resources. Bakker and Demerouti (2017:277) recognise that JD-R research and reviews have resulted in some unsettled issues that may be worthy of further investigation, and for the purpose of this study a closer look is taken at the job demands and resources applicable to HODs in primary schools. One can further distinguish between hindrance and challenge job demands (Lepine *et al*., 2005:764). Hindrance job demands are job demands or work circumstances that involve excessive or undesirable constraints that interfere with or inhibit an individual's ability to achieve valued goals (Cavanaugh *et al*., 2000:67). Role conflict, role overload and role ambiguity are all examples of hindrance job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017:277). Challenge job demands are demands that cost effort, but that potentially promote the personal growth and achievement of the employee (Podsakoff *et al*., as cited by Bakker & Demerouti, 2017:277). The challenges faced by departmental heads was viewed through the lens of this theory and classified as hindrance job demands, challenge job demands, or both. The theoretical framework is unpacked in more detail in Chapter Two.

1.7 Research design and methodology

1.7.1 Research paradigm

The philosophic worldview leading up to this research approach was the constructivist worldview. Creswell and Creswell (2018:4) see worldviews as a general philosophical orientation about the world and the nature of research that a researcher brings to a study. Creswell and Creswell (2018:7) further explain that social constructivists believe that individuals seek understanding of

the world in which they live and work. This rings especially true to this research, in which an understanding of the world of the mid-level manager in education is sought. Constructivist researchers see knowledge and truth as created by the mind instead of something that was discovered. They focus on the process by which meanings are created and seek to understand the world of lived experience from the perspective of those who live it (Walker, 2015:37). As a constructivist researcher in this study, the focus falls on determining the lived experiences of HODs in primary schools and constructing their realities based on their feedback. Management, and in the case of this study, mid-level management exist in a social world. In the social world people make sense of situations based on their individual experience in their particular context (Goduka, 2012:127). Goduka (2012:127) further states that meaning is constructed and continuously re-constructed through experience over time, which results in a variety of interpretations. This incorporates the interpretivist paradigm, together with the constructivist paradigm, on which this study is based. It was important, here, to determine the contextual factors that influence, determine and affect the interpretations reached by different individuals (Goduka, 2012:127).

This study attempts to identify role conflict and the ambiguity experienced by HODs in primary schools, which is largely identified by the way in which they interpret their work circumstances and the roles that they play in their surroundings, as well as the researcher's interpretation of their recollections; hence, the inclusion of the interpretivist paradigm. Interpretivists aim to work alongside others as they make sense of, draw meaning from and create their realities in order to understand other points of view and to interpret these experiences in the context of the researcher's academic experience (Goduka, 2012:127). One of the objectives of this study is to use the information as presented by the participants and to formulate guidelines for principals and HODs to reduce role conflict and role ambiguity in mid-level management according to the findings and realities constructed by the research.

1.7.2 Research design

Creswell and Creswell (2018:4) describe qualitative research as an approach for investigating and creating a deeper understanding of the meaning individuals or groups derive from a social or human problem. The process of qualitative research involves emerging questions and procedures, data collection in the participant's environment, data analysis inductively building from particular to general themes, and the interpretation of the meaning of the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:4). Klenke (2016:20) explains qualitative research as "a process of naturalistic inquiry that seeks in-depth understanding of social phenomena within their natural setting".

Qualitative research reports are descriptive and incorporates expressive language reflecting the voices of the participants and their lived experiences (Klenke, 2016:23). Seen in the light of these explanations, a qualitative research approach was used for the purpose of this study. The views of HODs on the role that they fill in their particular position in schools are explored and the nature of possible role conflict and role ambiguity is identified according to accounts given by participants in the research. Ontologically, this research seeks to find the truth or reality in the experiences of an HOD in his/her role. Rutberg and Bouikidis (2018:211) believe that the qualitative research methodology is often used when the issue-at-hand is not well-understood and there is a desire to explore the issue thoroughly. Such a desire was present in this research as the role conflict and ambiguity experienced by HODs in primary schools were not fully understood yet and the issue needed in-depth exploring.

Interpretivism is strongly influenced by phenomenology, an approach that underpins the importance of considering the interpretations of human beings and their perceptions of their situation as our starting point in grasping social phenomena (Nieuwenhuis, 2016a:60). In this study the interpretations of HODs of their role as mid-level managers in schools are explored. Phenomenology looks at an event through a lens of how that event is viewed by a person, not how the event takes place. The person's perception and interpretation of the event is given priority in understanding how the event unfolded (Ungvarsky, 2017). Since this study explores the HODs' perceptions and interpretations of their roles and deciphers these explanations, it is clear that the research at hand is phenomenological in nature. A phenomenological study tries to grasp people's perceptions and perspectives in relation to a situation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015:273), which in this case are the perceptions and perspectives of HODs in their role as mid-level managers in the school environment. Phenomenologists aim to describe what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:77).

1.7.3 Population and sampling

A phenomenological study describes the meaning of not just one, but several individuals of their lived experiences of a phenomenon (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:77) and therefore, several participants must be selected. The population for this study consists of HODs in primary schools in the Pretoria area. The researcher uses purposive sampling where participants are purposefully selected to ensure that trustworthy results will be obtained. Making use of purposive sampling researchers seek to include "information-rich" participants that will contribute the most towards answering the research question (Devers & Frankel, 2000:264). For this study, the research problem seeks to understand the challenges faced by mid-level managers or HODs in primary

schools, hence the inclusion of HODs as the sample. Primary schools consist of independent- and public schools, so as part of the sampling process, HODs from both independent- and public schools are included in order to compare if the HODs in both types of schools experience the same challenges to determine the universal nature of the problem. In primary schools, one also finds Foundation phase HODs (Grades R, 1, 2 and 3 and possibly Grade RR too), Intermediate phase HODs (Grades 4, 5 and 6), as well as Intersen phase HODs (Grades 4, 5, 6 and 7). HODs from all three phases are also included in the sample. This ensures that samples of all HODs in all different types of primary schools are included in the study.

1.7.4 Data collection

Leedy and Ormrod (2015:273) suggest that phenomenological research relies almost exclusively on in-depth interviews with a selected sample of participants where the researcher listens attentively to the interviewees describing their everyday experiences related to the phenomenon. In this study, the data collection procedure takes the form of semi-structured interviews where open-ended questions are asked (as explained by Klenke, 2016:130). This form of interview allows the researcher to ask specific questions to get specific answers that can be compared with each other, but also allows the researcher the freedom to explore more and gain a deeper understanding of the feelings and experiences of the HODs and the specific challenges they face (see Addendum A). In qualitative interviews, the researcher may conduct direct, face-to-face interviews with participants, telephonic interviews, or engage in focus group interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:186). Patton (2015:ch. 1, par. 2) also explains that qualitative findings are based on three kinds of data: in-depth open-ended interviews, direct observations, and written communications. For the purpose of this study the researcher conducted online, digital interviews. Interviews allow the researcher access to direct quotations from participants about their experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge (Patton 2015: ch. 1,par.2); exactly what is needed for this study where the experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge of HODs are explored in order to answer the research problem.

1.7.5 Data analysis

During the interview process, the researcher recorded the various sessions, and took field notes, which awarded the researcher the opportunity to reflect upon the body language or any non-verbal cues displayed by the participants. The recorded verbal data was transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Klenke (2016:140) warns that recorded interviews and their transcripts make for a large volume of material, which must be condensed, categorised, interpreted and made meaningful in correlation with the research question. Data collected in the interview process was

hand-coded and meaning was created through grouping data together in codes. The analysis of data included the identification of similarities and differences in the answers provided by the various participants. It is not possible to pre-determine the outcomes of interviews, nor have pre-determined codes or themes; thus, this was an open-coded process, constructed as the interview process unfolded and as the content was analysed.

As explained by Klenke (2016:140) the researcher looked for words, phrases and/or markers that tied in with the research question and assigned appropriate labels to these items and grouped similar markers together within these labels. Creswell and Creswell (2018:192) also explain content analysis as a process that requires sequential steps similar to what has been explained, but then adds another step to the coding process, which includes deducing the way in which the description and themes will be represented in the qualitative narrative to record the findings. The sequential steps as explained by Creswell and Creswell (2018:192) ensured that the researcher produced credible results.

1.7.6 Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, trustworthiness is paramount (Nieuwenhuis, 2016c:123). Guba and Lincoln (as cited by Guba, 1981:79) identifies the following four criteria that should be addressed to verify the trustworthiness of a study: truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality. In this study, as a qualitative or naturalistic study, and in conjunction with suggestions by Guba and Lincoln (as cited by Guba, 1981:84) the researcher addressed the issue of truth value by focusing on the credibility of the study. The researcher frequently sent through data analysis documents to her study leader to verify that the interpretation and analysis of data was done honestly and with care. The researcher furthermore addressed the issue of applicability with seeking descriptive statements obtained by a sample selected purposefully to gain the interpretations of the lived experiences of HODs in primary schools. These descriptive statements provided rich data for comparison and indicate transferability amongst the different statements (as cited by Guba, 1981:86). Guba and Lincoln (as cited by Guba, 1981:86) continues to explain that consistency in qualitative research is reached and shown by means of dependability, as well as neutrality via confirmability. The researcher has organised and stored all documentation meticulously. The documentation includes the original audio recordings of the interviews, the transcriptions and data analysis documents, also indicating the coding, as well as documentation pointing out the similarities, as well as differences found between the different interviews (see Addendum C). All these documents are kept as an audit trail by the researcher and will be made available to external auditors if necessary.

1.7.7 Ethical considerations

The necessary ethical approval for this research was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of the North-West University (see Addendum D) before any data were collected, as suggested by Leedy and Ormrod (2015:124). The Consolidated Department of Basic Education Research Protocols (2017:2;3) provided guidelines as to the process to be followed when research involving Department of Education officials is to be conducted. Heads of Departments in government schools are employed by the Department of Education and the necessary documentation, as explained in the above-mentioned document, was completed and the necessary permission obtained from the Gauteng Department of Education who stipulated that research may be conducted in schools in the Tshwane North and Tshwane West regions (see Addendum E). Written permission was also obtained from principals (see Addendum F), as well as the chairpersons of the School Governing Bodies (SGB) and/or Parent Advisory Committees (PAC) (see Addendum G) of schools where the HODs were interviewed.

The participants were provided with the necessary consent forms (see Addendum H) and reminded that they will remain anonymous and that their privacy will be respected. Participants were also reminded that participation is voluntary and that they should not feel pressurised in any way to take part in the interview process (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015:121). Furthermore, as suggested by Leedy and Ormrod (2015:123), the research findings were reported in a complete and honest way, without intentionally misleading others about the findings, or fabricating facts. The necessary credit and acknowledgement were granted when using words or ideas from other authors, as failure to do so would be deemed plagiarism which is, as explained by Leedy and Ormrod (2015:87), unethical.

1.8 Contribution of the study

This study aims to create greater understanding of the challenges HODs as mid-level managers face in the execution of their daily tasks, as well as explore the expectations placed upon them in their efforts to manage their departments. The role conflict and role ambiguity HODs experience in their position as mid-level managers are investigated, as well as the effects thereof on the school climate and the positive functioning of the school, in correlation with the JD-R theory. This should then serve as the starting point to further research in this field, while the findings are utilised in the compilation of a guide for both HODs and principals to ensure the optimum functioning and utilisation of HODs in schools.

1.9 Summary

The aim of this chapter was to indicate and motivate the necessity of the research and to orientate the reader regarding the methodology used in conducting the research. To start with, the study was introduced, with the problem statement and rationale following. Indicating the direction of the study, the research questions, research aim and objectives followed. Key concepts were clarified, followed by a description of the Job Demands Resources (JD-R) theory as the theoretical framework for the study. Next, the research paradigm and research design for the study was outlined. The researcher adopted a constructivist worldview and engaged an interpretivist perspective. Qualitative research was conducted and a phenomenological design was used. Convenience sampling was used to identify schools and purposive sampling to identify participants. The methods of data collection and data analysis were explained and issues related to trustworthiness and ethical considerations were highlighted. To conclude this chapter, a description of the contribution of the study was given. Within Chapter Two to follow the relevant literature study related to role conflict and role ambiguity mid-level managers in general and more specifically within primary schools experience are discussed. Chapter Three provides a more extensive description of the research design and methodology applied in this study, as well as the methods of data collection and analysis used. Chapter Four provides the results of the data analysis and the research results are presented. In Chapter Five, the research problem is addressed and the research questions answered. Similarities are highlighted between existing knowledge found in literature and the results of the study and recommendations made in correlation with the findings.

CHAPTER 2 THE NATURE OF ROLE CONFLICT AND ROLE AMBIGUITY IN MID-LEVEL MANAGEMENT IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

2.1 Introduction

In Chapter One an overview was given of what this study encapsulates. The ideas that gave rise to this research were explained and the first steps in structuring the process were explored. In Chapter Two, the findings of in-depth literature study are reflected. The literature study focuses on exploring existing findings regarding the roles of mid-level managers in general, as well as in the field of education; the possible role conflict and role ambiguity they may experience; and other challenges they may face. This chapter also explains how the role of the mid-level manager fits into the theoretical framework of the Job Demands Resources Model (JD-R model) with the focus on the demands placed on them, as well as the resources that have a positive impact on them and their position.

2.2 Mid-level management

Mid-level management and the functioning of a mid-level manager in an organisation forms a big part of the success story of any company or organisation as these employees impact on the commitment of the workers (Lleo *et al.,* 2017:974). Mid-level managers also tie the work that the workforce does on ground-level to the expectations of top management and ensure that all are working towards the same common goal in ensuring the success of the organisation (Johnston, 2014:9). Furthermore, mid-level managers play a key role in building relationships in organisations, which also enhances the well-being of employees within the organisation (Lleo *et al.*, 2017:983).

2.2.1 Concept clarification

Mid-level managers find themselves somewhere in the middle of their organisation's management hierarchy. They have moved past the first levels of management, but still report to higher management (Tinline & Cooper, 2016:ch. 1, par.1). Companies generally consist of three levels; senior management, mid-level management and the workforce (Miller, 2012:ch. 1, par.7). The position of the mid-level manager is seen as the position between those above and those below (Gabel, 2002:361). As these managers are positioned between two extreme poles of employees, people management skills in this position are of utmost importance (Lawson, 2015:ch. 4, par.1). Kras *et al*. (2017:216), however, view mid-level managers as being near the bottom of the organisation's hierarchy, but with ties to and authorisation associated with top management in a

company. Mid-level managers are also in the privileged position to get information from all stakeholders, including customers, employees and top management due to their close contact and communication with all parties (Ashford & Detert, 2015:73). These managers' interaction within their organisations involves upward, downward and lateral relations, thus influencing upwards and downwards, and playing the important role of bringing the suggestions and ideas of the workforce to the attention of the top managers (Hazucha & Hill, 2014:38; Lampaki & Papadakis, 2018:627). Ou *et al.* (2017:1915) indicate that mid-level managers are important linking pins in the implementation of organisational strategies. Mid-level managers fill the central space in the hierarchy of organisations and their duties include ensuring the implementation of top management's plans by ensuring employees are fulfilling their roles (Harding *et al.*, 2014:1213). Although mid-level managers are controlled by top management, they must also exercise control over employees and are thus also controllers (Harding *et al.*, 2014:1232). At the same time, acting as resisters who resist the control of top management, mid-level managers are also resisted by employees, placing the mid-level manager in a unique position (Harding *et al.*, 2014:1232). With the former in mind, mid-level managers can also be defined as the group of managers who give, as well as receive direction (Stoker, 2006:32).

From the above argument it can be concluded that the mid-level manager is the one functioning in the middle of the managerial structure of an organisation between the executives at top-level management and the workforce of the company. They have employees reporting to them, but they also report to senior managers.

2.2.2 Mid-level management in organisations

In the corporate world mid-level managers are those in the middle of a triangle, which includes the business (represented by the chief executive officer, managing director or business owner), the customer and the employees or workforce (Johnston, 2014:9). With specialised, professional knowledge they are managing a certain discipline or sub-discipline within their organisation (Department of Labour, 2014:2). Mid-level managers are then also in charge of the integration of different divisions in an organisation (Teerikangas & Birollo, 2018:66). They provide input in the drawing up of business plans for organisations (Department of Labour, 2014:2), and oversee execution of policies in line with business plans in most organisations (Cook, 2017:17). It is expected of the mid-level manager to pursue an organisation's strategic objectives and to also be sensitive towards and look out for the well-being of the staff (Hiekkataipale & Lämsä, 2017:147), hence them operating much of the time "in the moment" (Cook, 2017:17). It is widely accepted that mid-level managers in organisations are just expected to convert the ideas of senior

management into practice and to motivate and encourage their employees to find new ways to make money (Burgess, 2013:199). Miller (2012:ch. 1, par. 6) explains the position of the mid-level manager in an organisation as whatever is best for the organisation at the given time. Ouakouak *et al.* (2014:314), however, highlight that mid-level managers have a positive effect on an organisation's performance and should be given more autonomy and responsibility to contribute even more towards an organisations well-being. Mid-level managers are considered to be thoughtful and strategically-minded individuals who are committed to their jobs and the well-being of the company they work for (Lawson, 2015:ch. 4, par. 1). In implementing improved quality management practices and bringing about change in public organisations, the lack of mid-level management commitment and responsibility directly influence employee commitment, hence the importance of training mid-level managers in accepting and embracing change in organisations (Alhaqbani *et al.*, 2016:935). Teerikangas and Birollo (2018:65) appreciate the role of mid-level managers being at both ends of receiving the change, as well as driving it, and fulfilling a strategic role in this sense.

Mid-level managers play a brokerage role within their organisations, which means that they function in the middle, providing the link between different positions within an organisation (Shi *et al.*, 2009:1455). This brokerage role, however, also encompasses a variety of other roles linking different stakeholders with one another, which could add to the conflict experienced by mid-level managers and the uncertainty of where they fit into an organisation. The different brokerage roles possibly played by mid-level managers are named and explained as follows (Shi *et al.*, 2009:1461):

i. The Cosmopolitan I: Linking two lower-level managers.
ii. The Gatekeeper I: Linking lower-level manager to peer middle-manager.
iii. The Representative: Linking a peer mid-level manager to top management.
iv. The Liaison I: Relaying information from lower-level managers to top management.
v. The Cosmopolitan II: Connecting two top-level managers.
vi. The Gatekeeper II: Relaying information from top management to peer middle-managers.
vii. The Liaison II: Relaying information from top management to lower-level managers.
viii. The Coordinator: Facilitate information amongst peer group.

The following representation (Figure 2-1) shows the eight different brokerage roles played by a mid-level manager:

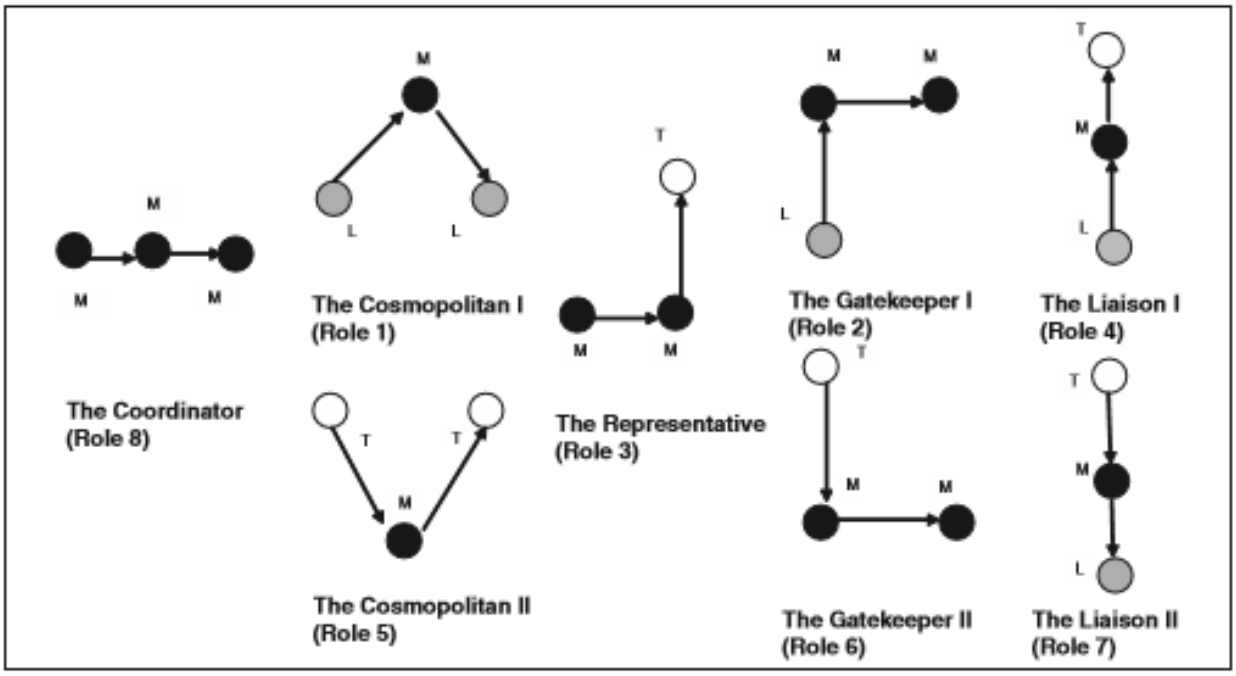


Figure 2-1: Brokerage roles played by a mid-level manager (Shi *et al*., 2009:1461)

In Figure 2-1, the three different colours represent the different levels of management. The dark circles represent the mid-level managers (M), the grey circles represent the lower-level managers (L) and the white circles represent the top-level managers (T). The figure provides a clear picture of how mid-level managers play a linking role between different stakeholders and how they inevitably lie in the middle of all these linkages adding to the complexity of the role of mid-level managers.

This section has explored the roles of mid-level managers in organisations. This study, however, focuses on mid-level management in schools, which will be focused on in the following section.

2.2.3 Mid-level management in schools

Mid-level management in schools is defined as teachers who are responsible for maintaining, developing or improving certain aspects of the school environment, which includes student welfare, curriculum, policy, teacher development and various other aspects (De Nobile, 2018:398). In South African public and private schools, Heads of Departments (HODs) are the mid-level managers who are former educators promoted to the role of supervising other educators (Mampane, 2017:143). In the past HODs were mainly tasked with administrative duties and

management of academic matters of their departments, whilst principals as senior managers were involved in personnel matters. The situation has however changed as HODs are now also found to be more involved in personnel matters within their departments (Richardson, 2008:ch. 1, par.6).

Seobi and Wood (2016:12) recognise the HOD's influence on teachers and teaching assistants within schools in encouraging them to take responsibility for their own learning and development and to help them feel valued, which will contribute to them feeling motivated. In line with this, if HODs are given more of an active role in creating and implementing goals, they can take ownership of the process and bring about significant change (Paranosic & Riveros, 2017:447). Some post level 1 educators have been dubbed as Grade head or Subject head according to their field of specialisation and/or number of years' experience, and are called senior teachers, but this position is still classified as a classroom teacher, whereas HODs are classified as managers (Department of Basic Education, 2016:50). With clarity about who mid-level managers are and where they fit into the schooling system, their roles and responsibilities will now be explored.

2.2.4 Roles and responsibilities of HODs

2.2.4.1 Responsibilities of HODs

According to the Department of Basic Education (2016:36-38), the core duties and responsibilities of the HOD lie in the hands of each school and are based on the school's specific needs. It is, however, stipulated that HODs are to engage in class teaching, ensure the successful functioning of their departments, oversee successful implementation of various extra-curricular activities and ensure that the educational well-being of the learners is being taken care of. HODs should provide guidance to inexperienced staff members and guide all staff in their departments to implement the curriculum or any curriculum changes successfully. Controlling the work of learners and educators and providing feedback, as well as compiling reports for the principal, are some additional responsibilities allocated to HODs. It is also expected of them to fill the role of the deputy principal or principal in their absence.

General administrative tasks also form part of the duties of an HOD and these could include the drawing up of timetables, taking stock registers, collecting money, conducting fire drills and implementing emergency plans, budgeting, and many more. Furthermore, the HOD should stay in communication with all stakeholders, including parents of the school. Along with the rest of management in a school, HODs are expected to be actively involved in the management of classroom practice by staff that will enhance the learning experience of learners, and to not be

confined to their offices as management (Bush *et al.*, 2010:167). Management on all levels, including HODs should also model good teaching practice with exceptional planning and teaching strategies, and they should monitor the staff in their departments, evaluate them and give constructive feedback (Bush *et al.*, 2010:167). HODs are expected to be specialists in the academic field of the departments they manage, and it has also become increasingly important for them to be actively involved in the continuous evaluation and development of the staff members that form part of their departments (Du Plessis & Eberlein, 2018:27). HODs should also identify the professional and training needs of personnel in their departments (Mampane, 2018:193). Above and beyond the responsibilities that befall HODs in their positions, they also have certain roles to fulfil.

2.2.4.2 Roles of HODs

Mentoring

Due to their humane approach and their encouraging nature, HODs are key role players in the development of staff in their departments' leadership development within schools (Dinham, 2007:77). Even though HODs have their own personalities and personal traits, their approach in general have been found to be professional, yet humane (Dinham, 2007:77). Seen in this light, they play the role of mentor to their personnel, which is also confirmed by Laff (2009:17), even though the Department of Basic Education assigns the task of mentorship to a master teacher (Department of Basic Education, 2016:35). Worth noting, however, is that master teachers don't really feature in schools and therefore the role of mentorship befalls the HODs.

Leadership

HODs are recognised as leaders in schools and the importance of leadership training for HODs has been identified as a necessity in support of good teacher development (Mampane, 2017:149) The Department of Education assigns this leadership role to master and senior teachers (Department of Basic Education, 2016:30), but in the absence of these teachers, HODs are then expected to fill these roles. However, in yet another contradiction, only deputy principals and principals are appraised according to their leadership qualities and not HODs or master or senior teachers (Education Labour Relations Council, 2003:48).

Manager

An appointed HOD of a school is recognised as a manager (Department of Basic Education, 2016:54), but in using Mintzberg's model explaining the roles of managers, certain managerial

roles befall HODs and others not. After researching the managerial role Mintzberg categorises the different managerial roles as interpersonal roles, informational roles and decisional roles (Stoner & Freeman, 1989:17), which are elaborated upon below.

i. Interpersonal roles

Interpersonal roles include figurehead roles such as fulfilling obligatory functions, which include attending social functions of employees and being involved in their personal well-being, leadership roles such as training, motivating and encouraging staff, hiring of staff, and also fulfilling a liaison role in communicating with a variety of different stakeholders (Stoner & Freeman, 1989:16-17). Mid-level managers or, in this case HODs, have been identified as key role players in improving the well-being of subordinates, or in this case teachers, and involving themselves with a wellness-programme and motivating an organisation's employees in taking part (Putnam, 2018:25). This suggests that the role of a mid-level manager in the managerial task of figurehead as an interpersonal role is recognised. HODs do seem to be recognised in this position, as seeing to the well-being of the educators in their department is stipulated as one of their main responsibilities (Mampane, 2017:146). The PAM document (Department of Basic Education, 2016:35) assigns the task of supporting teachers and assisting with their personal growth to master teachers, but once again, it is worth noting that master teachers don't feature in schools and this role seems to then be filled by HODs.

HODs fulfil various instructional leadership roles, including classroom monitoring and giving instructions to teachers, improving learners' results, as well as monitoring the attendance and punctuality of educators and learners. However, professional development leadership roles were not found to be part of the HODs' role (Solangi, 2016:224). HODs acknowledge that through their instructional leadership, they have the power to influence teachers and teaching assistants in a positive way to improve their own learning and development as educators by guiding them in working together as a team and engaging in dialogues and discussions (Seobi & Wood, 2016:12). Mampane (2017:146) also recognises the value in HODs fulfilling both the role of manager and leader as HODs are considered to have the necessary objective perspective as a manager and the commitment and vision of a wise leader.

Within universities, HODs as mid-level managers have been found to be involved in roles such as motivation, creating a positive work environment, sharing advice, and mediation, which fall under the managerial interpersonal role of leadership (Martinez-García *et al.*, 2019:475). In secondary schools it is shown that teachers who perceive their HODs as successful leaders, feed upon that, and even invest back into their HODs' leadership, making them even more successful

(Au *et al.*, 2003:493). It does, however, seem that the leadership role befalling HODs is limited. McGurk (2009:474) identifies an absence of the need to train mid-level managers as leaders in public service organisations (which would include schools) and that leadership development amongst mid-level managers is lacking, which confirms that the top-down approach of senior managers is exercised without utilising the approach of involving HODs in leadership. Gleeson and Knights (2008:59) identify HODs in the field of Further Education as future leaders in identifying the need to equip them with necessary skills, which implies that currently, major leadership roles only befall management in senior positions. Even in identifying the need for mid-level managers, or HODs in this instance, to be trained as leaders and putting the training in place in companies, Chaimongkonrojna and Steane (2015:1177) suggest that these mid-level managers invest time in determining what behavioural development their senior managers expect of them. This questions the autonomy of the developed HOD as a leader, as it is implied that HODs should first determine what behavioural development their principals expect of them. HODs are considered leaders only in relation to the principal, who is deemed as the 'real' leader (Lillejord & Borte, 2020:88).

Ashford and Detert (2015:73) explain that mid-level managers, or in this case HODs, have the necessary contact with clients, suppliers and so forth, but not necessarily in a liaison position. In their interaction, they gather certain information and gain insight into certain information that might necessitate change within the organisation, but they do not have the power to do anything with the information. The PAM document (Department of Basic Education, 2016:38) stipulates that HODs' duties are similar to mid-level managers in other fields and include meeting with parents as clients of the school to discuss their children's performance and conduct. However, the task of meeting with School Governing Bodies and formulating policies befall the principal (Department of Basic Education, 2016:42-44).

Ashford and Detert (2015:73) also find that, too often, senior managers shoot down the ideas of mid-level managers, removing them from the equation of entrepreneurship in bettering an organisation, even though the mid-level managers are client facing and in touch with client needs. Whether this is the case for HODs in schools is unclear at this stage, but it would be beneficial if HODs fulfil the role of assisting principals in the policy-drafting procedure, as they are more in touch with the parents in their specific department. However, this does not seem to be the case as HODs' roles are explained to entail only enforcing policies and not necessarily creating them (Mampane, 2017:146). This is in line with what is found in general, with mid-level managers reporting a feeling of disempowerment and worthlessness in policy making as a result of organisational hierarchy structures (Kras *et al.*, 2017:231). Furthermore, while mid-level

managers are found to be more people-oriented, this orientation is not in the direction of relationship building or dealing and liaising with clients, implying that these roles are still seen as the tasks of top management (Stoker, 2006:39).

ii. Informational roles

Stoner and Freeman (1989:16-17) explain the informational roles of a manager, as identified by Mintzberg, as including the roles of being a monitor, a disseminator and a spokesperson. A monitor continuously gathers information from a variety of parties involved in the organisation and stays well-informed. As a disseminator, the manager continuously keeps subordinates informed and shares information with them, and as a spokesperson, the manager communicates certain information such as plans, policies, actions and results to external parties. It seems that the informational role of disseminator is allocated to HODs, as mid-level managers are expected to convey information and top-management decisions to company employees and to put it in a language understandable to all (Groskovs & Ulhoi, 2019:8). Lampaki and Papadakis (2018:634) imply the same when identifying the mid-level manager, or in this case the HOD, as the one to ensure that the strategy proposed by top management is communicated and implemented within the organisation. Even though this is indicative of the management role of disseminator being assigned to a mid-level manager, it also indicates that the management role of entrepreneur wouldn't befall the HOD. This is indeed evident in schools, according to Busher and Harris (1999:307), who emphasise the importance of the HOD as a mid-level manager to communicate the perspectives of top management and share their vision amongst staff members by merely sharing the policies as dictated by top management.

HODs are involved in activating necessary teacher development programmes for the educators in their departments and are should therefore remain informed of the needs of their teachers (Mampane, 2018:193). Bubnys and Kauneckiené (2017:82) point out that the identification, development and promotion of teacher strengths is seen as a key role of HODs. HODs themselves play a leading role in identifying leadership potential in their staff members, utilising it and working towards distributed leadership in their department (Dinham, 2007:77). This role of monitor is thus recognised, but it also seems that mid-level managers in general find themselves by-passed, as employees often realise that these mid-level managers don't really have any power, opting to discuss their issues and concerns with top management in person (Kras *et al.*, 2017:227). This trend is echoed by Laff (2009:17), who points out that senior managers nowadays more readily involve themselves with the workforce working at ground level and having open-door policies.

iii. Decisional roles

Decisional roles befalling managers, according to Mintzberg, include entrepreneurship, being disturbance handlers, resource allocators and negotiators (Stoner & Freeman, 1989:16-17). As an entrepreneur, a manager brings about change through his own free will with his own ideas for the good of the company. Burgess (2013:199) states that centralised systems in the hotel industry prevent mid-level managers from adopting corporate entrepreneurship and that, even though senior managers claim to encourage communication, this is oftentimes just a one-way, top-down communication. This is also reported to be the case amongst HODs as academic mid-level managers at universities and colleges, where they lack decision-making skills as they are not awarded the entrepreneurial opportunities (Reyes, 2019:5). Mid-level managers' decisional role as entrepreneurs is, therefore, questioned. Martinez-García *et al*. (2019:475) further emphasise this by pointing out the poor visibility of HODs acting as managers in universities, despite their managerial positions, as they lack power in decision-making. Paranosic and Riveros (2017:447) suggest that mid-level managers should be empowered more, and that top management should utilise mid-level managers more in decision-making and taking ownership these decisions. This implies that this has not been the case and that mid-level managers are not executing the managerial role of entrepreneurship.

Strategic planning within schools should fall under the jurisdiction of the whole School Management Team and everybody should have a role therein. Yet, it has been shown to not to necessarily be the case with HODs who have been left out of some vital steps, such as vision crafting, in the strategic planning process (Myende & Bhengu, 2015:643). Myende and Bhengu (2015:643) further mention that HODs involved in the totality of the strategic planning process understand their roles better and execute their duties more effectively. Du Plessis and Eberlein (2018:11) find subject distribution within departments to be done by the principal as opposed to the HOD, which in effect means that the HOD hasn't been able to exercise his role as resource allocator and also implies that principals take certain duties and roles assigned to HODs, out of their hands.

Top managers themselves have been found to hinder those in lower management ranks, such as HODs, from involving themselves in the managerial decisional role of disturbance handler by not involving them in the understanding of organisational problems and the solving thereof (Caughron & Mumford, 2012:352). To ensure company success, Groskovs and Ulhoi (2019:9) highlight the importance of the senior manager, and not the mid-level manager, in responding appropriately to threats. This further implies that HODs are not seen as being part of the disturbance handling

process and yet, it is also a managerial role that HODs should be involved in particularly when disturbances affecting their departments directly are to be handled.

Role of standing as the Head of Department

The role of HODs is explained as contradictory in the sense that it has a positive influence within schools and yet, HODs report a lack of support and numerous other challenges, including being burdened with responsibilities while lacking authority, being unsure as to their priorities and an inability to manage the employees in their departments (Bessant & Mavin, 2016:928). In the quest to improve or uphold a good academic standard in schools, the positive influence of HODs come to the fore when they are actively tasked to hold teachers in their departments accountable for what they are meant to do, and when they, as HODs, are also in turn held accountable by their principals for what they are meant to do (Steyn, 2018:10791). Yet, with holding the teachers in their departments accountable, it is also noted that HODs are prone to take on the role of protector of the teachers, filling the role of a quasi-parent — offering advice, care and protection, sometimes even from top management (Gjerde & Alvesson, 2020:144). The core duties and responsibilities outlined for HODs, however, merely involve physical teaching in the class, playing an active role on the extra-mural field, administrative duties, being involved with appraising staff, and communicating information between the different stakeholders (Department of Basic Education, 2016:37-38).

2.2.5 Synthesis

Management in any organisation consists of different levels, including entry-level managers, mid-level managers and top management positions. Mid-level managers report to top management, but also oversee the work of entry-level managers and the normal workforce, ensure that policies are implemented, and that everybody is working towards the same goals. In the school environment, Heads of Departments (or HODs) are mid-level managers. They report to the principal and deputy principal of a school, but they also oversee the work of Grade heads and Subject heads, as well as other post level 1 educators. HODs are assigned a number of tasks, including, amongst others, general day-to-day running of the relevant phase in the school, implementation of curriculum and policies and ensuring that learners receive quality education, as well as guidance and monitoring of educators in their phase. The preceding paragraphs indicated what mid-level management and the role of HODs as mid-level managers in schools entail. This phenomenon will be approached in this study using a specific theoretical framework.

2.3 Theoretical framework

A theory is explained as an organised body of concepts and principles aimed at explaining a particular phenomenon (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015:39). Creswell and Creswell (2018:61) explain that theories are used to broadly explain attitudes and behaviour. Leedy and Ormrod (2015:39) clarify that after a theory has been developed to explain a phenomenon, the theory lends itself to further research. In this research, the Job Demands Resources (JD-R) theory forms part of the theoretical framework that is used in explaining the phenomenon of challenges in the form of role conflict and role ambiguity, which HODs as mid-level managers are facing.

2.3.1 Job Demands Resources (JD-R) theory

The job demands resources (JD-R) theory is focused on the well-being of employees within an organisation and to ultimately improve the functioning of organisations. The job-demands resources (JD-R) model was introduced in 2001 and has since developed into the JD-R theory. The originators of the theory, Bakker and Demerouti (2017:273), have expressed their wish that the theory will continue to inspire researchers who want to promote employee well-being and effective organisational functioning. In referring back to the first study utilising the JD-R model, Bakker and Demerouti (2017:274) explain that all job characteristics can be classified in two broad categories of working conditions, namely job demands and job resources. The theory tries to tie together the stress and the motivation research traditions, which are two fairly independent research traditions (Bakker & Demerouti, 2011:1). Figure 2-2 shows the interaction between job demands and job resources and its effect on job performance.

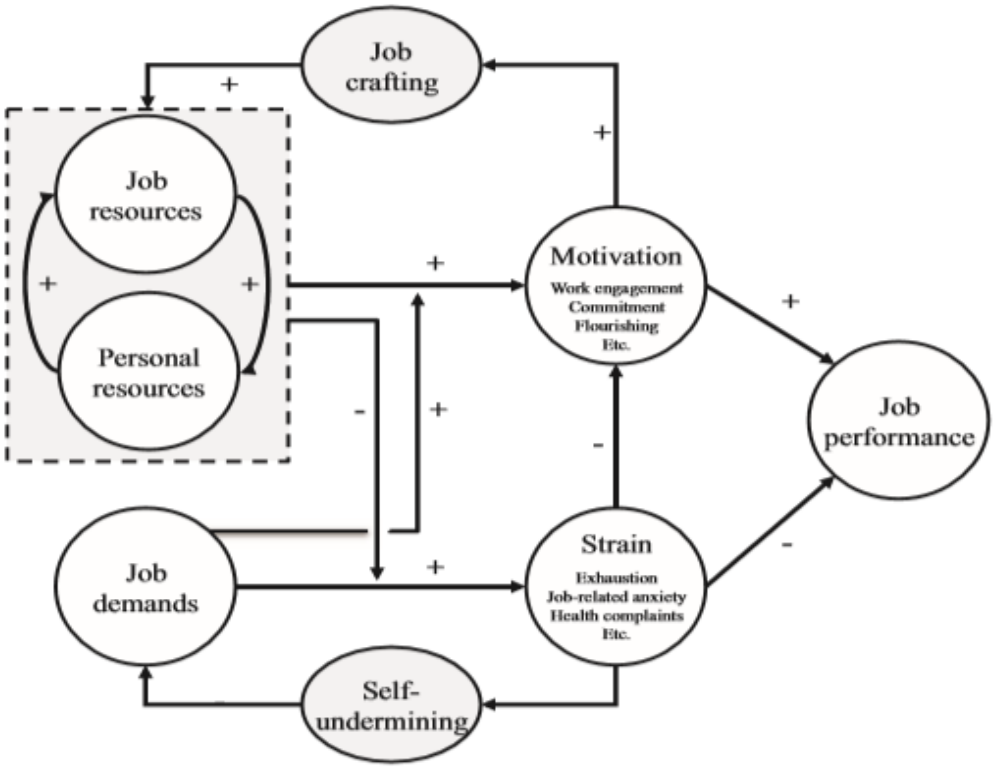


Figure 2-2: The Job Demands-Resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017)

2.3.1.1 Job demands

Demerouti *et al.* (cited by Bakker & Demerouti, 2017:274) define job demands as those physical, psychological, social or organisational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or psychological effort and Bakker and Demerouti (2017:274) name high work pressure and emotional demanding interactions with clients or customers as examples that adds to strain, such as exhaustion and job-related anxiety, amongst others, experienced by employees, which have a negative impact on job performance (as seen in Figure 2-2 above).

It seems that job demands come in a variety of forms and are often job specific. Work overload, interpersonal conflict and surface acting were found to be job demands contributing to work-family conflict amongst pre-school teachers in China (Gu *et al.*, 2019:8). Work overload was identified as a job demand amongst managers (Joubert & Rothmann, 2007:58) and in this case was found to lead to exhaustion. According to Jackson (2018:743) job overload, which includes mental and emotional overload, as well as job insecurity, rated high as job demands in national government departments negatively affecting employee attitudes. Santa Maria *et al.* (2018:114) identify role

conflict as a job demand amongst police officers with them having to be approachable, yet uncompromising. Police officers have also been found to experience work-family role conflict as a job demand with it leading to emotional exhaustion and eventually burnout (Lambert *et al.*, 2019:49). Uzoigwe *et al.* (2016:636) also report work-family conflict as being an ever-present job demand amongst female professionals within the field of science and technology. In the retail sector unsatisfied customers and threats to employees' safety, as well as irregular working hours, have been identified as job demands (Tuckey *et al.*, 2017:377). Lecturer-researcher role conflict has been researched as a job demand amongst lecturers in further education and training, who are also researchers, and it has been found to lead to emotional exhaustion and negatively affecting personal relationships with colleagues, as well as family members (Xu, 2019:914). In taking all of this into account, it is clear that conflicting standards, role ambiguity and role conflict have been noted as job demands influencing employee engagement in general in the workplace regardless of the type of work (Breevaart & Bakker, 2018:339).

It is worth noting that greater job demands relate to greater job stress (Affrunti *et al.*, 2018:373) and lead to demotivation and energy depletion, which, in turn, have also been linked to a deterioration in health (Breevaart & Bakker, 2018:339). This phenomenon is also captured in Figure 2-2 as an example of the strain on employees experiencing job demands. Evidence also suggests that staff absenteeism in organisations are linked to the same staff members experiencing a number of job demands simultaneously (Van Woerkom *et al.*, 2015:146), hence the importance of research on the topic of job demands.

2.3.1.2 Job resources

Job resources refer to those physical, psychological, social, or organisational aspects of the job that assist in achieving work goals, reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs, or stimulate personal growth, learning and development (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007:312), and autonomy, skill variety, performance feedback, as well as opportunities for growth are named as examples (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017:274). In looking at Figure 2-2, the presence of job resources also leads to motivation, which encourages work engagement and commitment and leads to a flourishing employee, which in turn also has a desirable and positive effect on job performance.

Certain job resources are job-specific whereas others span employment in general. Supervisor work-family support and the feeling of having meaning in one's work acted as job resources that reduced work-family conflict experienced by pre-school teachers in China (Gu *et al.*, 2019:9),

whereas police officers in Germany experienced cohesion and shared values by colleagues, as well as an uplifting leadership climate as job resources (Santa Maria *et al.*, 2018:115). Growth opportunities and opportunities to advance, as well as organisational support (Jackson, 2018:743) in general had a positive effect on employee attitudes within a variety of national government departments in South Africa.

Tuckey *et al.* (2017:374) show that job resources also stand in direct correlation to job demands where a demand can be experienced in absence of a specific resource. An example of this is role ambiguity experienced as a demand due to the absence of role clarity as a resource.

2.3.1.3 JD-R theory in practice

The theory has developed and evolved as numerous researchers added factors contributing to job demands and job resources. Diebig *et al.* (2017:234) used the JD-R theory in identifying transformational leadership as a job resource to combat job demands brought on by daily stress. The negative effects of organisational politics as a job demand and the necessary resources needed to combat this were explored by Lampaki and Papadakis (2018:627). Van Wingerden *et al.* (2017:164) used the JD-R theory in the educational sector to explain job crafting as a job resource to combat job demands. According to the JD-R theory each occupation has its own negative and/or positive job-specific factors related to occupational well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007:312).

McIntyre *et al.* (2017:238) mention that three assumptions are at the core of the JD-R theory. Firstly, high levels of job resources will lead to workers being motivated and ultimately to good performance. Secondly, high levels of job demand create strain and possibly poor health. Thirdly, it is presumed that job resources and job demands will interact leading to high levels of resources being able to lessen the effect of high levels of demand. In looking at job demands one can further distinguish between hindrance and challenge job demands (LePine *et al.*, 2005:764). Hindrance job demands are job demands or work circumstances that involve excessive or undesirable constraints that interfere with or inhibit an individual's ability to achieve valued goals (Cavanaugh *et al.*, 2000:67). Corso-de-Zúñiga *et al.* (2017:12) explain that employees finding themselves unable to cope with demanding situations at work, experience inner resignation and a feeling that work has lost its meaning. The aim and ultimate goal of this theory is to engage committed and satisfied employees in organisations (Anthun & Innstrand, 2016:63), hence the importance of exploring both job demands and job resources simultaneously.

2.3.2 Relevance of JD-R theory to the focus of the study

Bakker and Demerouti (2017:277) recognise that JD-R research and reviews have resulted in some unsettled issues that may be worthy of further investigation and for the purpose of this study a closer look is taken at the job demands and resources applicable to HODs in primary schools.

2.3.2.1 Job demands and HODs

Role conflict, role overload and role ambiguity are all examples of hindrance job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017:277). Challenge job demands are demands that cost effort, but that potentially promote personal growth and achievement of the employee (Podsakoff *et al.,* as cited by Bakker & Demerouti, 2017:277). The challenges faced by HODs are viewed through the lens of this theory and classified as hindrance job demands, challenge job demands, or both. Juggling the task of being a faculty advocate for their department and, in such, meeting their employees' needs, as well as implementing the visions and plans of top management, regardless how it affects the staff, is a job demand that HODs oftentimes struggle with (Hinson-Hasty, 2019:131). This kind of role conflict as job demand increases the anxiety and stress HODs experience in the workplace (Han *et al.*, 2014:483). Heavy workloads, together with stress lead to emotional exhaustion, especially in the field of education and amongst mid-level managers (Valadez-Torres *et al.*, 2017:562). Pepper and Giles (2015:46) furthermore emphasise the fact that HODs in higher education feel overwhelmed in their jobs with a major sense of responsibility and yet, minor power, as they deem their position merely as one to implement decisions made by top management and not to bring in changes they feel are necessary within their departments.

The more uncertainty there is about the tasks, roles and levels of performance, the less satisfied and more stressed workers are (Urien *et al.*, 2017:142). Nagar (2012:56) also acknowledges that stress is related to role ambiguity and that role ambiguity exists when employees are uncertain of what is expected of them. Role ambiguity as job demand leads to exhaustion and cynicism towards the fulfilment of the role, which in turn can negatively influence psychological wellbeing (Jackson & Rothmann, 2005:119). The whole team climate is negatively affected by job demands, and more specifically by burnout experienced by employees in mid-career stages, which would also imply mid-level managers and in this case, HODs (Salmela-Aro & Upadyaya, 2018:198). Bakker and Demerouti (2011:4) themselves identify role conflict and role ambiguity as job stressors that are a hindrance to job demand. Role ambiguity is stated as a job stressor for HODs in universities in that they often find themselves in the position of not knowing what is expected of them and that expectations also differ between campuses (Chilvers *et al.*, 2018:437). Role conflict links with physical ill-health symptoms such as backaches, dizziness, eye strain,

gastrointestinal problems and sleep disturbances (Nixon *et al.*, 2011:13) and is, in this light seen as a job demand (Diebig *et al.*, 2017:237). The presence of job demands is clear in the role of HODs. The presence of job resources is explored next.

2.3.2.2 Job resources and HODs

Factors that are possible job resources for HODs are also explored along with how the demands and resources interact with one another. Trust in top management is a job resource for mid-level managers in order to ensure implementation of changes (Lampaki & Papadakis, 2018:634). Role clarity is a job resource motivating a person to fulfil their tasks successfully (Van Wingerden *et al.*, 2017:165). A mid-level manager's own approach towards the task could be a resource in the sense that a transformational leadership style counters negativity and turns staff positive (Nielsen & Cleal, 2011:351). Diebig *et al.* (2017:237) highlight clear communication with regards to job expectations and support shown towards HODs from top management, as job resources for the HOD. Furthermore, being an HOD of a successful department yielding good results has been proven to increase the likelihood of such an HOD to successfully face and work through their challenges (Dinham, 2007:77). This notion is echoed by Kerry (2005:72) who also links HODs' feelings of success to the successful delivery of a good curriculum and a positive education experience for the learners in their department. Razzak (2015:12) identifies a deep desire within HODs to sustain good learner achievement levels, not just in their departments, but also in the school as a whole. Tying in with this, it is worth noting that inclusion in the strategic planning process of the whole school, and not just their department, has had positive impacts on HODs as it assisted in them seeing and understanding the bigger picture better and, in turn, executing their duties more effectively (Myende & Bhengu, 2015:643).

In-service training, covering the various administrative tasks expected of HODs, and opportunities awarded to HODs for professional skills development to cope with other tasks, such as conflict management or leading a department, are stated as job resources that will alleviate the pressures found to be experienced by them (Chilvers *et al.*, 2018:438). In line with this, Tam (2010:382) explains the positive impact that training, the attendance of courses and being mentored has on HODs. In striving towards a well-functioning department and having a good relationship with the teachers in their department, HODs regard good teamwork as a resource in making their tasks easier (Kerry, 2005:72). HODs also have a desire to see more collaborative relationships between teachers in their departments (Razzak, 2015:12). Razzak (2015:12) furthermore identifies the innate desire within HODs to grow within themselves and move up the career ladder to satisfy their personal ambitions. HODs also feel a deep sense of satisfaction when they are invited to

be an active participant in the process of defining their roles, which in turn then leads to them being more engaged and committed to their roles (Kelley & Salisbury, 2013:310). Together with this, it is worth noting that the feeling of contentment of HODs is embedded in the trust top management has in them, as well as top management's understanding of the relational nature of their position of authority as HODs functioning within and as part of their departments (Branson *et al.*, 2016:143). On the other hand, HODs who feel valued by the teachers in their departments will fare better in their roles managing those teachers, without being met with suspicion and disloyalty (Gjerde & Alvesson, 2020:147).

2.3.2.3 How job demands and job resources interact and influence the HOD

Job demands and job resources should be viewed in conjunction with one another as job resources can counter the effects of job demands. Van Wingerden *et al.* (2017:165) note that role clarity, as a job resource, stands in opposition to role ambiguity, which is a job demand, and can combat the negative effect thereof. A proactive personality can be a personal resource to combat the demand of role conflict (Han *et al.*, 2014:482). Walsh (2014:1148) also constitutes that job satisfaction can be increased with reduced role ambiguity, which is a job demand, and this can be achieved by clarifying job requirements and providing service scripts that will serve the role of job resources. With job resources such as supportive behaviour and clear communication from top management, as suggested by Diebig *et al.* (2017:237), the effect of role conflict as a job demand and the previously-mentioned physical ill-health symptoms linked to this (Nixon *et al.*, 2011:13) can be combatted.

It is important to note here the unique position of HODs, who experience both the negative effect of job demands and the positive effect of job resources. Simultaneously, HODs have the power associated with being leaders (which they are recognised as), to bring about positive work experiences amongst their employees (job resources) that can combat the effect of job demands placed on educators in the schooling system (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017:280). In line with this unique position, it is worth mentioning that younger employees need guidance and support from their older colleagues, and more specifically managers, who, in turn, need more autonomy to fulfil the role of mentor to their younger colleagues (Anthun & Innstrand, 2016:63). Respect, trust and the belief that HODs are looking out for their teachers and have their best interests at heart, create a responsiveness from the teachers in the department which ultimately makes the HODs' tasks easier and is thus seen as job resources (Gjerde & Alvesson, 2020:147).

Messmann *et al.* (2017:1959) point out that psychological empowerment in a role serves as a job resource and leads to the successful managing of demanding situations. Stress arising from role

ambiguity can be reduced with clear job descriptions (Nagar, 2012:56). Employees, and in this case HODs' positive attitude towards their job leads to greater commitment towards their organisation. and, educational institutions require committed employees who will contribute wholeheartedly to the success of the institution in the interest of all stakeholders (Nagar, 2012:56). HODs therefore need to be wholeheartedly engaged in their jobs and the roles they play. Job demands, such as role conflict and role ambiguity, have a negative effect on work engagement, whereas positive events in education turn into job resources, helping employees, and in this case HODs to remain engaged (Kraimer *et al.*, 2019:149). Kwon and Kim (2020:13) support the notion that engaged employees act more innovatively and cope better in facing challenges (which are job demands), hence engagement being identified as a job resource. With most HODs lacking a clear job description and with principals delegating tasks ad hoc, role ambiguity, as a job demand, could, however, lead to poor engagement on the side of the HOD, while job clarity, as a resource, could go a long way in enhancing other job resources (Lillejord & Borte, 2020:84).

2.3.3 Synthesis

HODs are educators who have put in effort and worked hard in the field. They have moved past post level 1 and are clearly dedicated to the field of education. In their position as mid-level manager they can make a difference in the school environment and it is therefore important to explore the challenges as well as the positive aspects of their work environment. The JD-R theory is an ideal framework to use and provides an outline for this by distinguishing between demands and resources and the interaction amongst them. In their unique position, HODs will experience certain job demands, that could, amongst others, include role conflict and role ambiguity. On the other hand, HODs might also have job resources at their disposal that need to be utilised in the quest to combat the demands placed on them.

2.4 Role conflict

Role conflict is deemed a general job demand in the work place (Breevaart & Bakker, 2018:339). It is thus necessary for the purpose of this study to explore the role conflict HODs in primary schools experience and how it could influence their job performance.

2.4.1 Concept clarification

In the field of sociology, the term 'role' is used to describe a set of expected behaviours and obligations based on an individual's position in life and relative to others (Crossman, 2017). Crossman (2017) explains that role conflict occurs when there are contradictions between different roles that individuals take on or play in their everyday life. In some instances, the conflict

is a result of opposing obligations that results in a conflict of interest, taking on roles with different statuses, or a disagreement over the responsibilities of a particular role (Crossman, 2017). Role conflict can ensue when people disagree about what the expectations are for a role or when someone has trouble fulfilling the expectations of a role because their duties are difficult, unclear or unpleasant (Crossman, 2017). According to Anicich and Hirsh (2017b:3), role conflict also happens when one person must play very different roles. In the case of a mid-level manager, this happens because they find themselves simultaneously in the position of both a leader and a subordinate (Anicich & Hirsh, 2017b:3). Role conflict is a feeling of being pulled in multiple directions — unable to find a way to satisfy every role partner (Onyemah, 2008:300). Role conflict also occurs when different stakeholders of an organisation give inconsistent or conflicting information to an employee/s regarding their job demands (Nixon *et al.*, 2011:8). An organisation can be defined as a system of differing roles, and role conflict also occurs when conflicting expectations of a certain role are experienced (Sinha & Subramanian, 2012:71). Role conflict is further experienced when one wants to deal with a situation arising in a certain way, but not having the freedom to do so (Sinha & Subramanian, 2012:75). Han *et al.* (2014:473) find that role conflict is typically experienced in boundary-spanning roles within organisations and mid-level management fits this profile.

Role conflict occurs when a person experiences conflict in having to fulfil multiple roles at the same time, which in the educational field could be the role of superior and of subordinate that the HOD fulfils.

2.4.2 Role conflict experienced by mid-level managers in organisations

Typically, in a day's work, mid-level managers will find themselves in a position where top management expects several projects to be completed, while employees want to bargain for promotions and raises, and customers demand better service (Coughlin, 2016:8). In this, mid-level managers feel pressurised from all ends, being controlled by both employees and top management (Kras *et al.*, 2017:224). Bossmann *et al.* (2016:2) also describe mid-level managers as individuals experiencing contradictory requests placed upon them; they have to meet ambitious productivity targets put in place by top management and at the same time stay sensitive to the needs of their employees. Trying to meet the needs at both ends, mid-level managers are also expected to assume very different roles when alternating between fairly high and fairly low power interaction styles and having conflicting demands placed on them to top it all (Anicich & Hirsch, 2017b:3). Moreover, the norms and expectations that come with leadership are incompatible with the norms and expectations associated with subordinates (Anicich & Hirsh,

2017b:3) and yet it is expected of mid-level managers to fulfil both roles. Apart from having to deal with the pressure of being stuck in the middle, as explained above, Gabel (2002:361) points out that successful mid-level managers don't just understand the views of the employees, but also those of their superiors.

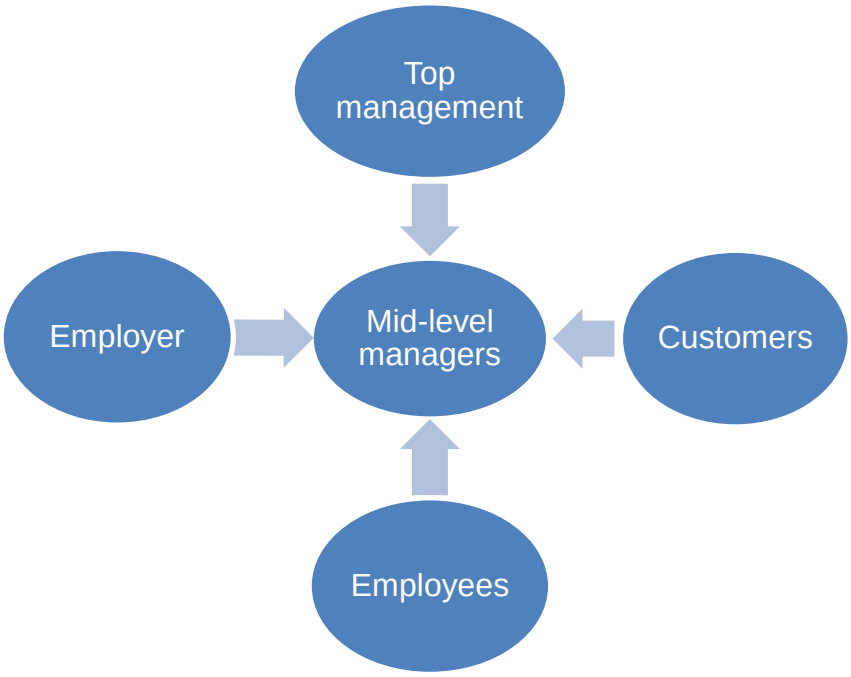


Figure 2-3: Position of the mid-level manager

As seen in Figure 2-3, mid-level managers find themselves surrounded by stakeholders who are all placing demands on them. Looking up at them as superiors, employees view mid-level managers as empowered policy makers, but many mid-level managers regard themselves as disempowered go-betweens (Kras *et al.*, 2017:221). It is also worth noting that employees at different positions in the hierarchy of an organisation, perceive barriers to the continuous improvement of the organisation differently. Top management identifies these barriers mostly as shortcomings of information systems and methods implemented to improve the organisation, whereas the workforce identifies limited support and commitment from management as the main barrier. Mid-level managers acknowledge both groups of barriers, but tend to agree more with the workers (Lodgaard *et al.*, 2016:1123).

Being in touch with what is happening at ground level, mid-level managers are best equipped to know what the needs of the employees and the customers are, but they are struggling to sell this to top managers and to form a part of important decision-making processes which will ultimately

affect the organisation (Ashford & Detert, 2015:75). Echoing this, Weinstein (2018:29) emphasises that mid-level managers in organisations often carry the heaviest burden in having to manage entry-level employees, while also providing the necessary support to top management. Subsequently, mid-level managers are often frustrated by trying to meet the needs of both their superiors and subordinates, while feeling that their own needs are never met, and their efforts are underappreciated (Tyler, 2016:49). In line with this, mid-level managers' success in a company greatly relies on the power and authority they are given to make decisions, and the lack thereof can result in frustration and ineffectiveness (Ouakouak, 2014:313).

Amongst several job stressors researched amongst different management levels, role conflict ranks high as a job stressor experienced by mid-level managers (Sinha & Subramanian, 2012:75). Role conflict has even been identified as one of the leading causes of job dissatisfaction among managerial staff (Singh & Ashish, 2011:47). In trying to cope with role conflict, mid-level managers tap into resources, such as time, effort and favours, which in turn leads to the depletion of these resources (Han *et al.*, 2014:476). Attempts amongst mid-level managers to cope with the demands of role conflict leads to higher instances of work-related anxiety (Han *et al.*, 2014:473).

2.4.2.1 Expectations of mid-level managers in organisations

A multitude of expectations are placed on mid-level managers in organisations. It is expected of mid-level managers to successfully influence both upwards and downwards, and take their departments' input to top management (Hazucha & Hill, 2014:38). At the same time, to be effective in their roles, mid-level managers have to be willing to face situations that could make them unpopular, whether it is to communicate policies to employees or to convey employee feedback upwards to top management (Hazucha & Hill, 2014:40). Oftentimes mid-level managers are also expected to implement changes at a fast pace and under pressure of top management, while also still trying to make sense of the changes on ground level themselves (Teerikangas & Birollo, 2018:76).

It is expected of mid-level managers to realise the ideas and vision as set in place by senior management, but at the same time they are also encouraged to be innovative and willing to take risks (Burgess, 2013:200). Mid-level managers are expected to not just act in a supervisory position, but also complete task-oriented work as workforce employees, which add to the conflict experienced in their roles (Laff, 2009:17). It is expected of mid-level managers to be key drivers of organisational improvement and development as they represent both the workforce and tie in with management (Li, 2018:128), and yet, this is also where their role conflict is rooted. These

heightened expectations in the overlapping roles that mid-level managers must play increasingly frustrates mid-level managers (Laff, 2009:17).

In organisations it is generally the accepted practice that top managers are coached or mentored by external parties, while it is expected of mid-level managers to coach or mentor the employees in their department (Spaten & Flensborg, 2013:20). This in itself is an expectation that could create a challenge as the mid-level manager might find it difficult to manage the mentee while building a personal relationship. Finding the time necessary to act as a mentor or coach to all their employees could also frustrate mid-level managers (Spaten & Flensborg, 2013:35). However, it has been found that despite the challenges in such an exercise, mentoring has also proved valuable for mid-level managers who reported growth in themselves after conducting mentoring sessions (Spaten & Flensborg, 2013:29).

2.4.2.2 Challenges experienced by mid-level managers in organisations

Mid-level managers have more responsibility and authority than in the positions they held before, but they still have less power and control than those in more senior positions. This means that, even though they have some control over their immediate departments, they are still expected answer to someone else who controls their work and ultimately makes the decisions (Parris *et al.*, 2008:108). As previously mentioned, mid-level managers are expected to be more innovative and yet, top managers often dismiss ideas put forward by mid-level managers (Ashford & Detert, 2015:73). Furthermore, mid-level managers' innovative attempts are often derailed by top managers micromanaging (Hazucha & Hill, 2014:40). In line with this, Alhaqbani *et al.*, (2016:935) state that it is expected of mid-level managers to be more involved in the overall improvement plans of an organisation and there is a need to train mid-level managers to accept and cope with this change in their traditional roles. The potential of mid-level managers to be successful change agents in their organisations lies in their ability to successfully combine being both the driver and the experiencer of change (Teerikangas & Birollo, 2018:87).

Where mid-level managers used to act as a bridge between the workforce and top management, top management now gets more involved and communicates more with the workforce employees. Subsequently, mid-level managers don't always know where they fit in or what is expected of them (Laff, 2009:17). Amongst the different levels of management, the challenge is to distinguish between the different roles played by the different members of management and the management tasks assigned to each (Sinha & Subramanian, 2012:71). Sometimes top managers in companies unknowingly add to a mid-level manager's feeling of incompetence (Weinstein, 2018:30). Weinstein (2018:30), however, explains that, apart from top managers being responsible for mid-

level managers' feelings of incompetence, it can also be contributed to the organisation, the industry or the mid-level manager's role itself.

Furthermore, mid-level managers fulfil the role of coaches or mentors, which is a complicated role as it is challenging to manage subordinates, while simultaneously building an open and trusting relationship in order to mentor the subordinates (Misiukonis, 2011:64). Misiukonis (2011:65) also emphasises the importance of senior management support and the necessity of having organisational measures in place where mid-level managers are expected to take up coaching and mentoring roles. A mentee needs to feel safe enough in the mentor-mentee relationship that he or she will be willing to share sensitive topics and feelings without the fear of being judged (Hersman, 2018:145) and one cannot help but wonder how a mentee would feel divulging such information towards his direct manager.

2.4.3 Role conflict experienced by HODs within the school as organisation

In correlation with the role conflict experienced by mid-level managers in corporate organisations, Fitzgerald (2009:63) also highlights the role conflict HODs as mid-level managers experience in facing dual accountability, Mid-level managers are accountable to the principal for how they manage their department, but are also accountable to their department in how they advocate for their needs. Adding to this, more recent school improvement plans have indicated that leadership has become increasingly important, with HODs having to fulfil the role of leader as well as manager (Bush, 2012). Coughlin (2016:8) suggests that in order to manage their departments better, HODs should lead; and that this leadership will ultimately influence how their employees think. De Nobile (2018:395) agrees with this notion and acknowledges a recent shift in the terminology used — from mid-level management to middle leadership — indicating how the role has evolved. Mampane (2018:193) also acknowledges the necessity of affirming the leadership role of HODs and undergoing the necessary training. But, adding to the conflict experienced by mid-level managers, and ultimately HODs, Coughlin (2016:9) explains that, even though a mid-level manager should stay in line with top management's bigger vision, leadership does not necessarily mean to do what top management expects, but to oftentimes take a stand and pursue matters according to own beliefs.

Over the last few years mid-level managers' and, by implication HODs' tasks seem to have shifted to become more people-oriented and have taken on a form of coaching employees in their departments. HODs are, however, not necessarily trained for this, nor have they necessarily kept up to date with these latest expectations (Stoker, 2006:39). Despite movement towards leadership being part of the HODs role, this role as leader and mentor is not recognised in the

PAM document as part of the HOD's job description. According to the Department of Basic Education (2016:21;24), leadership is the role of a senior teacher or a master teacher. In the educational field, role conflict stemming from different relationships a person holds with different stakeholders, such as often experienced by HODs, has a negative impact on job performance, and the focus should fall on striving towards harmony for the good of the educational institution (Ahmed *et al.*, 2014:109).

HODs are found to be in a conflicting position in terms of the expectations placed upon them by senior managers and by their team members. It is clear that there is a definite need for senior managers to be more specific in their expectations and to also make this known to the HOD's team members (Wise, 1999:372). In reflecting on his time as HOD in a secondary school, Jackson (2019:1) explains it as a daily balancing act between meeting organisational demands and priorities and meeting the needs of the department. The HOD's role is so complex that De Nobile (2018:410) recognises the need for further research into the way they operate, which factors support or hinder them, and the influences they have on school effectiveness.

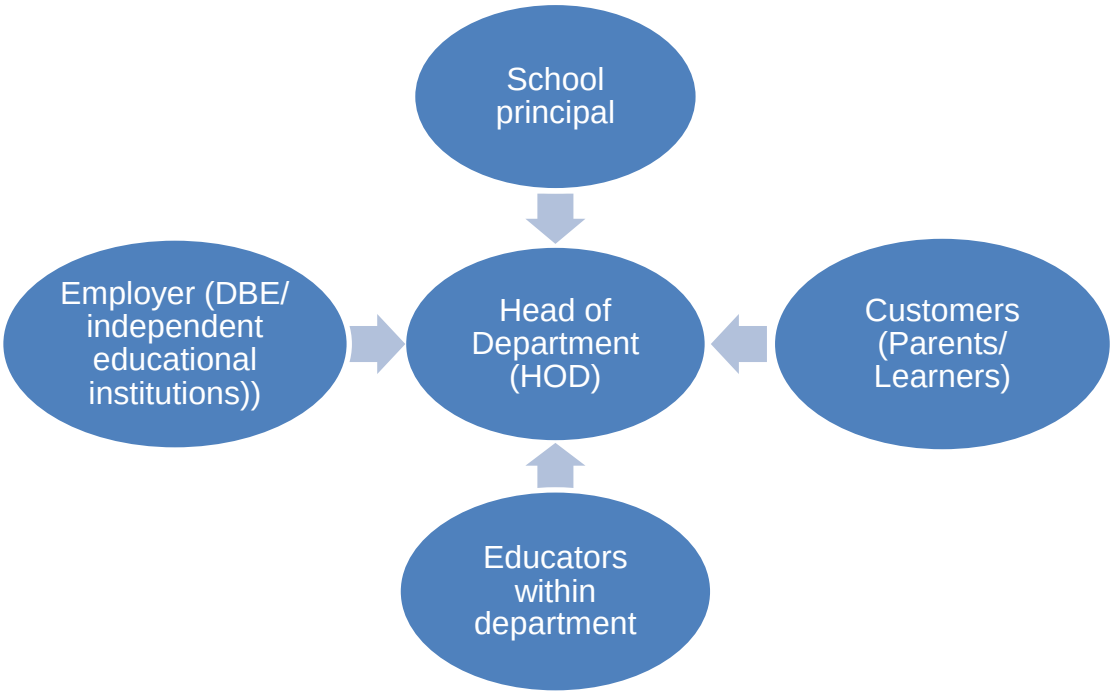


Figure 2-4: Position of the HOD within the school system

Figure 2-4 shows the position of the HOD in the school system, with the principal as top management placing demands upon the HOD, educators within the department having certain

expectations of the HOD and then also the HOD's employer and the customers on the sides with their own demands.

2.4.3.1 Expectations of HODs

In the past, the role of the HOD mostly entailed administrative tasks, but as previously mentioned, there has been a movement towards more of a leadership and active management role, sometimes even in school development at large, and not just that of the department managed by the HOD (Bush, 2012). Furthermore, it is expected of mid-level managers in the educational sector to also fulfil the role of industry entrepreneurs — recruiting and retaining the best employees, and being competitive in the educational market (Corbett, 2017:214).

All these demands are increasingly placed on HODs even though, strictly speaking, in the hierarchy of a school, the HOD is traditionally the mid-level manager, which is not part of the top management team. Top management is usually in control of the overall strategic development of the school, with mid-level managers overseeing the operational day-to-day work of the educators in their departments (Busher & Harris, 1999:306). There is also clear evidence that HODs are increasingly accepting responsibility for tasks previously discarded or not acknowledged by them as part of their job descriptions, and that their responsibilities have become more diverse (Wise & Bush, 1999:193-194). Basson and Mestry (2019:9) have outlined the need for HODs to be more involved with and collaborate more with the members of school governing bodies in order to manage the finances of the school effectively. At the same time, being the managers with the closest interaction with the educators in their departments, HODs are also expected to make significant contributions to their own staff's professional development (Du Plessis & Eberlein, 2018:3). It seems that educators in different departments expect their HODs to fulfil the role of organiser, referee and administrator (Giannelli, 85:53).

Furthermore, HODs are expected to manage their departments and lead their subordinates, while many have not had in-service training and are therefore not qualified in terms of management or leadership; hence, they lack the expertise to fulfil their management role effectively (Bipath & Nkabinde, 2018:5). It is expected of HODs to get their staff to perform certain tasks and buy into certain ideas without an authoritative approach in order for the whole team to be involved in a positive manner (Tyrell, 2014:25). The Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) has been used in South African public schools since 2003 to assess and appraise educators, HODs, deputy principals and principals. This appraisal system assesses certain behaviours and daily tasks expected of HODs. It seems that some expectations don't correlate with the core duties and responsibilities assigned to HODs in the PAM document. For example, according to the IQMS

document (Education Labour Relations Council, 2003:36), HODs are expected to foster appropriate relations with different stakeholders including staff, learners and parents, and to work towards development of the school. However, interaction with different stakeholders is listed as a core duty and responsibility of master teachers and not HODs in the PAM document (Department of Basic Education, 2016:25).

According to Mintzberg, being a resource allocator is a decisional managerial role (Stoner & Freeman, 1989:16-17) and HODs are also appraised accordingly since it is stipulated that it is expected of them to manage resources (including human, infrastructure and teaching aids) in an efficient and effective manner (Education Labour Relations Council, 2003:40-41). People management is listed as a necessary skill expected of HODs in the PAM document, but the management of other resources is a core duty of the principal (Department of Basic Education, 2016:41). It is furthermore expected of HODs to successfully mentor and guide staff and they are appraised on this (Education Labour Relations Council, 2003:44). Guidance of staff is, however, listed as the responsibility of a master teacher and not of HODs (Department of Basic Education, 2016:54). Apart from the PAM document stating that the duties expected of an HOD are to be determined and stipulated by each school, certain suggestions are made by the Department of Basic Education of what could be expected of HODs. In a bid to try and explain these varied expectations placed upon HODs in primary schools, they could be classified as follows:

2.4.3.1.1 Administrative expectations

The PAM document stipulates that good administrative skills are a necessity for HODs (Department of Basic Education, 2016:54). The PAM document does not, however, specify the administrative fields in which HODs should excel, which could lead to role conflict on the part of HODs as they could be unsure as to what is expected of them versus what their superiors are supposed to do. Seen in the light of poor learner performance, Bush *et al.* (2010:167) finds that HODs should stop spending so much time on routine administrative duties and rather invest their time into involving themselves in the teaching part of the day-to-day running of a school. However, the administrative function of HODs within their departments is an integral part of their expected duties (Fitzgerald, 2009:56). HODs do, however, feel that a lot of the administrative work expected of them is unnecessary and that the importance of these expectations must be revised (Collier *et al.*, 2002:24). HODs are known to take on administrative tasks which teachers are overburdened with to relieve the burden on teachers to allow them to rather spend that time on teaching (Dinham, 2007:76).

2.4.3.1.2 Interpersonal expectations

According to the IQMS instrument (Education Labour Relations Council, 2003:45-46), HODs are assessed on their decision making and accountability skills and how they liaise with different stakeholders to successfully draw everybody's opinion into final decision-making processes, are seen as an outstanding outcome in this regard. This correlates with Mintzberg's interpretation of HODs fulfilling an interpersonal managerial role, which expects a manager to be a liaison (Stoner & Freeman, 1989:16-17). This, however, is not recognised as a skill expected of HODs according to the PAM document. Interacting with stakeholders and playing the liaison role is listed as a necessary skill for master teachers (Department of Basic Education, 2016:35).

It is also expected of HODs to have good communication skills, as well as good people management skills (Department of Basic Education, 2016:54). Once again, it is not specified in which context they should have good communication skills and with whom they should interact and communicate effectively. Busher and Harris (1999:313) highlight that HODs know how to interact with and get the most out of their employees in their department, and thus the importance of communication skills in this regard cannot be underestimated.

2.4.3.1.3 Leadership expectations

According to the PAM document, leadership skills and the responsibility of leading others befall master teachers and senior teachers, whereas HODs are mainly tasked with administrative duties. However, Mintzberg lists leadership as a managerial role in his management role model (Stoner & Freeman, 1989:16-17) and HODs do fulfil a management position. Mampane (2017:121) even states that HODs' professional training is meant to equip them with the necessary knowledge and abilities as teacher leaders. HODs are also found to have better and more rewarding workdays if they have the necessary expertise in leadership (Mampane, 2017:131). Mampane (2018:193) stresses that the leadership role of HODs needs to be affirmed to enable the acquiring of necessary skills and knowledge for them to successfully manage their departments. More successful education systems are also evident in schools with more distributed leadership, which includes HODs leading their departments (Du Plessis & Eberlein, 2018:11). The role of leadership has most likely befallen HODs since master and senior teachers are no longer appointed in schools.

2.4.3.1.4 Extra-mural expectations

HODs are also expected to participate in co- and extra-curricular activities in working towards the holistic improvement of learners. To achieve an outstanding appraisal, HODs have to be actively

involved in these activities and not just to take the lead or organise (Education Labour Relations Council, 2003:38-39). This is echoed in the PAM document where active involvement in extra- and co-curricular activities is also listed as a core duty of HODs (Department of Basic Education, 2016:36-37). The PAM document, however, lists tasks such as drawing up tests, exams and memoranda, overseeing a phase and developing policies thereof, as the necessary core duties under the heading co- and extra-curricular activities. HODs report that they feel over-burdened by having to carry the additional load involvement in extra-curricular activities, which includes sport- and cultural activities at school and not necessarily departmental extra- and co-curricular activities (Collier *et al.*, 2002:24; Du Plessis & Eberlein, 2018:13). Apart from merely participating in extra-curricular activities, HODs are expected to be competent in co- and extra-curricular activities (Department of Basic Education, 2016:54). It, therefore, seems that HODs are involved in actual coaching and not just in the management thereof (Collier *et al.*, 2002:24), and the involvement of HODs in rigorous extra-mural programmes is also echoed by Du Plessis and Eberlein (2018:13).

2.4.3.1.5 Expectations in IQMS evaluations

Apart from being appraised themselves, HODs are also part of the School Management Team (SMT) and it is stipulated in the IQMS document that it is expected of the SMT of a school to be involved in the planning and implementation process of the appraisal system in the school (Education Labour Relations Council, 2003:3). The SMT should inform the educators of in-service training and encourage them to attend (Education Labour Relations Council, 2003:3). It is furthermore stated that the SMT must also assist with the implementation of the appraisal system and ensure that school self-evaluation is done in correlation with the whole school evaluation policy (Education Labour Relations Council, 2003:3).

2.4.3.1.6 Teaching expectations

HODs should be competent teachers and assessors (Department of Basic Education, 2016:54). This is to be expected as HODs are regarded as managers in the field of education, which will require expertise in teaching and assessing learners. One challenge experienced in this regard is the continuously evolving field of teaching and learning; while the younger generation of qualified teachers is assumed to be more up to date with the latest trends, HODs who are expected to coach, mentor and lead them, could be out of touch with the newest and latest trends (Mampane, 2017:130). Furthermore, this management position in the educational field, often still entails the HOD being a teacher in the classroom and staying abreast of the latest teaching- and assessment strategies to ensure learner success, and also in motivating learners (Bipath &

Nkabinde, 2018:7). Apart from the students in HODs' own classrooms, the successful academic outcomes of all the students in an HOD's department also fall under the responsibilities of the HOD (Corbett, 2017:216). HODs also recognise the importance of the personal and social development of learners as the foundation for academic success, which adds another dimension of teaching and assessment skills necessary for HODs (Dinham, 2007:76).

2.4.3.1.7 Coaching- and mentoring expectations

A core duty listed under master teachers, but not HODs is the ability to give guidance, which can also be understood as coaching or mentoring others. Mampane (2017:129) states that HODs who coach and mentor their staff appropriately and successfully, create long-term strategies to improve education. HODs enjoy the role of mentoring and coaching their subordinates and they can see the benefits thereof, but have found a lack of time negatively impacting this role (Collier *et al.*, 2002:24).

2.4.3.1.8 Entrepreneurial expectations

Nowhere in the PAM document under the expectations of HODs are the roles of entrepreneur, disturbance handler or resource allocator stipulated and yet, these are managerial roles identified by Mintzberg (Stoner & Freeman, 1989:16-17). Mampane (2017:132) describes empowered HODs as independent thinkers, which is an important characteristic for successful entrepreneurship. However, HODs are not principals or deputy principals, and they are challenged by their limited authority and the tasks they are allowed to do or the decisions they are allowed to make (De Nobile,2018:396). The question remains where these limits lie with regards to their authority in performing allowed tasks and taking decisions. Strategic planning seems to be the role of principals and deputy principals, and yet, HODs in schools in the Pinetown district were found to be involved in the strategic planning process (Myende & Bhengu, 2015:638). The level of their involvement was, however, difficult to determine. It also seems that the mindset of the principal of a school determines the involvement of HODs in the strategic planning process and overall management of a school (Myende & Bhengu, 2015:642). Principals should be invitational leaders, inviting HODs to be part of the process, thereby promoting collaborative management of their school.

This begs the question of the role principals and their management style play in the expectations placed upon HODs. Certain top managers dismiss good ideas put forward by mid-level managers (Ashford & Detert, 2015:73) and micromanaging top managers dismiss innovative ideas coming from mid-level managers (Hazucha & Hill, 2014:40) and yet, it is recognised that mid-level

managers need to be both the driver and the experiencer of change (Teerikangas & Birollo, 2018:87).

2.4.3.1.9 Policy-making expectations

It is only expected of principals and deputy principals to have good knowledge of applicable educator legislation, regulation and policies (Department of Basic Education, 2016:55) and yet, it has been stated that in effective management practices, staff at all levels should be involved in important decision-making and formation of policies (Busher & Harris, 1999:314). The level of this kind of involvement from staff members, and more specifically HODs, however, lies in the hands of each school and their top management (Busher & Harris, 1999:314).

Apart from, and probably due to the mentioned expectations, HODs also experience some challenges, which is elaborated on in the next paragraph.

2.4.3.2 Challenges experienced by HODs

HODs are often in the uncomfortable position of being sandwiched between the conflicting requirements of the senior management team and their own departmental colleagues and often serve as a 'buffer' (Bush, 2012).

Adding to this challenge, employees view the powers of mid-level managers differently to mid-level managers' own perceptions of their role and capabilities. Employees place mid-level managers alongside top management as policy makers, whereas mid-level managers themselves view their position as powerless in-betweens (Kras *et al.*, 2017:215). Paranosic and Riveros (2017:442) also state that even though HODs are the accepted go-to person for employees in a department, HODs often feel disempowered to take control of a situation, due to a perceived lack of authority and power, even though they are part of the management team. Martínez-García *et al.* (2018:475) confirm this, stating that HODs are invisible in their role as manager due to their lack of power and the fact that they are not really allowed to make any decisions. Tay *et al.* (2019:59) point out that HODs are neither managers with ultimate decision-making power, nor educators with actual control over what happens at ground level.

Since teachers view HODs as part of the top management team, they often experience the guidance provided by HODs as criticism and of a prescriptive nature, instead of seeing it as a learning process and using it to grow and learn (Du Plessis, 2015:106). Participatory leadership, where HODs include teachers in the decision-making processes is identified as an important tool for a department, and ultimately a school, to function successfully and to move forward towards

achieving a common goal (Terblanche, 2012:96). However, with teachers being afraid of criticism or experiencing their HODs as prescriptive, they may be hesitant to take up an active, participatory role in the running of the school.

It is also important to note that mid-level managers, or in this case HODs, may experience role conflict stemming from a constant uncertainty about what their principals will think of certain decisions they make when working with teachers in their departments and whether top management will be in agreement (Anicich & Hirsh, 2017a:665). HODs also feel that even though they put forward good ideas, these are seldom recognised nor bear fruit and they are caught up in the day-to-day running of their departments (Feeney, 2009:215).

In addition to this, HODs often lack the time to manage their departments and lead their subordinates, due to the time spent teaching in the classroom themselves (Bipath & Nkabinde, 2018:7). This is echoed by Du Plessis and Eberlein, (2018:13) in their finding that HODs' extensive workload with regards to teaching and extra-mural activities, leaves very little to no time for professional development in their management role. The guidance role HODs as managers play in their respective departments and the importance thereof is also recognised, but, once again, lack of time to exercise this role is a challenge (Du Plessis, 2015:107).

Challenges experienced by newly appointed HODs may differ completely from those experienced by more senior HODs, as their managerial roles evolve (Tyrell, 2014:24). Tyrell (2014:29 & 30) explains that HODs develop and take on different organisational identities as their roles evolve. These identities could vary from being a lone wolf, a team-player, an alliance-keeper, a collaborator, to a protector and many more (Tyrell, 2014:29).

Another challenge worth noticing is what a change in principals might entail. As mentioned earlier, a lot of the responsibilities and expectations placed upon HODs lie in the hands of individual schools and their top management. In a study conducted about the HODs' role played in the assessment structure in a school, a HOD said that she was serving the fourth principal in her time as HOD and she states that each principal comes with their own set of ideas, vision and expectations (Tay *et al.*, 2019:54).

2.4.4 Synthesis

Role conflict is a real challenge for mid-level managers in general, but also for HODs as mid-level managers in the educational sector. HODs face many similar challenges and have many similar expectations placed upon them as other mid-level managers, but also face unique challenges

and expectations based on their specific roles in the educational space, and the way this is experienced by HODs in primary schools is worth exploring in more detail.

2.5 Role ambiguity

Role ambiguity experienced by an employee is a job demand (Breevaart & Bakker, 2018:339). For this study, role ambiguity and uncertainty about roles will be explored amongst HODs in primary schools and how it possibly affects the execution of their tasks.

2.5.1 Concept clarification

Role ambiguity occurs when information regarding an employee's position is not made clear, which results in the employee being unsure of his or her duties and requirements (Nixon *et al.*, 2011:8). It can also be explained as the feeling of being unsure of what is needed to fulfil the requirements of one's role within the workplace (Sinha & Subramanian, 2012:71). Sinha and Subramanian (2012:75) further explain that vague descriptions of tasks and responsibilities in a specific role and its priorities, and a basic lack of a proper job description all contribute to role ambiguity.

Role ambiguity thus refers to the uncertainty employees may feel in their position and the execution of their duties.

2.5.2 Role ambiguity experienced by mid-level managers

Mid-level managers are often left out of an organisation's transformation models and plans. While top management are enthusiastically driving the change, and workers are applying the new tools and methods, mid-level managers are left in the dark and not being kept up to date or consulted about these changes (Holmemo & Ingvaldsen, 2016:1342). Corbett (2017:215) bluntly states that mid-level managers have no guidance on how to conduct themselves or indications of what is expected of them in their role other than translating the bigger vision into an operational reality. According to Sy and D'Annanzio (2005:43) ambiguity in clear job descriptions and a lack of guidelines with regards to roles and responsibilities are particularly vexing to mid-level managers. Mid-level managers are found to be unsure of what is important in their jobs, how to understand their roles, and subsequently what to prioritise at any given time (Bossmann *et al.*, 2016:5).

To add to their woes, mid-level managers are typically customer-facing, which puts them in the unenviable position of having to deal with customers when promises made by the company were not delivered and the mid-level managers not knowing what is expected of them in such situations

(Jumabhoy, 2016:7). Mid-level managers often report a lack of communication from top management on company goals or what they want the outward appearance of the company to be, resulting in mid-level managers guessing and making up their own minds about what it is that is important to the company's image and functioning (Dean *et al.*, 2010:64). This was confirmed in case studies conducted by White (2011:82) where it was often found that the question asked by newly appointed mid-level managers included how they should approach their new role and what resources will be available to them to assist them in that role. Amongst several job stressors researched amongst different management levels, role ambiguity ranks high as a job stressor experienced by mid-level managers (Sinha & Subramanian, 2012:75).

2.5.3 Role ambiguity experienced by HODs

Ambiguity and job uncertainty, more than anything else, cause HODs' discomfort and is the biggest contributor towards their unease (Block, 2014:333). De Nobile (2018:410) explains that it might be impossible to pin a 'one size fits all' model on HODs and the role they play in schools, and that context plays a big role here. Even the Department of Basic Education (Department of Basic Education, 2016:27) states that the HOD's job description is individual and school-specific according to the needs of each different school. In a study exploring the roles played by HODs, Woollven (2014:60 & 61) reports, in line with the PAM document, that the roles HODs play differ from school to school and that each school is unique in their expectations of their HODs. Paranosic and Riveros (2017:447) agree that the role of the HOD is complex and not clearly defined or understood. Maboe (2013:25 & 26) recognises the mentorship role played by HODs in schools in empowering younger and less experienced teachers in their departments and yet mentoring is not a job description listed under HODs' responsibilities in the PAM document. It is also generally expected of HODs to involve parents in the process of motivating learners to perform at their best, and yet, this role and the importance thereof is not recognised by most HODs (Bipath & Nkabinde, 2018:7). This highlights the nature of the role ambiguity experienced in the field of mid-level managers or HODs in the educational field.

It is also widely accepted that HODs should manage their departments and yet HODs are unsure of what the term management really means and what the job of managing a department entails (Nkabinde, 2013:104). HODs do not receive the necessary training to enhance professional development and to fill their roles successfully, and they mostly rely on what was modelled to them by the HODs under whom they had worked previously. Furthermore, there have been calls for training of HODs in order to better understand their roles in a drive to empower them more (Du Plessis & Eberlein, 2018:11;14). The need for training is, however, emphasised as the roles

and responsibilities traditionally associated with HODs have evolved and grown so that, in fulfilling their roles in the 21st century managerial positions, it includes a variety of managerial and leadership competencies, which include strategic management, performance management, change management, financial management, relationship management, project management, customer management, risk management, diversity management, administration and time management, as well as skills related to leadership, communication, industrial relations, training and development, recruitment and selection, problem solving and decision making (Potgieter *et al.*, 2011:95 - 98).

In the higher educational field, the nature of the position of mid-level manager, or HOD, is such that it includes tasks such as keeping to deadlines, attention to detail, being effective, developing programmes, complying with assessment policies, dealing appropriately with conflict, managing departmental budgets and developing business plans (Hinson-Hasty, 2019:132). For the purpose of this study, the question is if the same range of competencies is expected of HODs in primary schools and to what level they are expected to fulfil these roles. HODs in higher education explain their jobs as mediators of change, in other words, finding ways to lessen the impact of change on people in their departments to successfully continue with their daily tasks (Qualter & Willis, 2012:137).

HODs in higher education at universities, also view their job as those of communicators or more specifically translators in conveying messages or giving feedback from the level of top management to their employees (Qualter & Willis, 2012:137). Apart from their traditional administrative and academic roles, HODs in higher education institutions are now filling management and leadership roles — some even strategic in nature (Potgieter *et al.*, 2011:98), with the leadership role explained as one of motivation, leading staff towards reaching a common goal.

The need for training and coaching in the variety of tasks they need to fulfil is a need expressed amongst HODs. In recognising their role ambiguity, Potgieter *et al.* (2011:97) appreciate the need for training of HODs and development programmes aimed at preparing them for their managerial role, which will decrease their uncertainties and assist in them being more confident in their roles. Wilmot (2017:24) also recognises this change of role for HODs in Jamaican schools, moving from a merely managerial position to a position where leadership is expected of them, and that training is necessary for HODs to effectively perform these roles.

It seems that role ambiguity is an age-old phenomenon when it comes to the role an HOD must perform. As far back as 1998, HODs were already performing the expected roles of managing

their departments, while still teaching classes and coaching employees. However, it was also evident that they performed the roles of moral agents, organisational and social architects and even maintenance roles — focusing on whatever was needed in the department at a specific time (Brown & Rutherford, 1998:87). Referring to his experience as HOD for Mathematics, Modau (2004:7) explains how he himself managed the role of being the HOD while still being an active teacher and leading those in his department; confirming the role of HODs as leaders who take ownership of their own departments, without necessarily having the guidance to do so.

The role of leadership being performed by a departmental head is confirmed in Vanblaere and Devos' (2018:105) study in secondary schools where two types of leadership roles assumed by HOD's — group-oriented and development-oriented — are identified and investigated. In studying how different leadership styles in HODs influence their departments in a secondary school, the leadership role of HODs is also recognised and both group-oriented and development-oriented leadership traits are found despite being two vastly different leadership styles (Parascandalo, 2014:86). HODs facilitate student learning and work towards developing students, and they also encourage in-service training for staff. They are good communicators who link their staff members with top management; and they also desire good relations and sharing of ideas amongst their staff members (Parascandalo, 2014:86).

To add to the ambiguity faced by HODs, master teachers, and not HODs are explained as those who provide guidance to post level 1 teachers (Department of Basic Education, 2016:54) and yet it is common practice for mid-level managers to be utilised as mentors (Misiukonis, 2011:54; Spaten & Flensborg, 2013:18). Master teachers, however, do not feature in schools nowadays and that could possibly be the reason for HODs taking on roles assigned to master teachers.

Different HODs explain their roles in different ways based on their perceptions in the context of their schools. Mediator, communicator, advocate, departmental representative, fixer, supplier, enforcer, manager and liaison are all descriptors given by HODs to the roles they perform (Feeney, 2009:215). HODs also fulfil the role of ensuring curriculum development in their departments in a bid to ensure academic excellence, leading their staff to reach certain goals collectively, hiring and socialising employees, all while not having received training in any of these myriad tasks (Schuh & Kuh, 2005:1).

Focusing on major organisational consequences in scenarios and explaining these to HODs, is a major tool for principals in creating confident HODs, and supporting them in making sense of a scenario and managing it in a confident way (Caughron & Mumford, 2012:351). A coercive leader on the other hand, focusing on personal consequences, leads to the HOD losing confidence and

acting in an insecure way, which then adds to ambiguity in the situation (Caughron & Mumford, 2012:351). Involving HODs in strategic planning and making them part of the decision-making process, on the other hand, creates a uniformity in the school management team and fosters a common vision with all employees striving towards the same goal (Myende & Bhengu, 2015:641). Incomplete yearly planning by senior management and a lack of meetings focused on planning the way forward, complicates the role of the HOD in that the aims and goals are not clearly defined and that there is vagueness in the direction in which to steer the department. This also results in the inability of involving employees in the management process and creates an environment of participatory leadership (Terblanche, 2012:101).

2.5.4 Synthesis

It is very frustrating for any person appointed in any role to not know exactly what is expected of them and this seems to be a general problem amongst mid-level managers. Having only a few guidelines penned down by the Department of Basic Education dealing with the job description for HODs and leaving the rest up to each school and their individual needs, creates the grounds for role ambiguity amongst HODs. Literature shows that there is a great deal of confusion surrounding the tasks of HODs in general. This study aims to explore the role ambiguity experienced by HODs in primary schools more specifically.

2.6 Summary

In this chapter, mid-level management in general was explained, as well as mid-level management in the educational field, namely HODs. Thereafter, the roles and responsibilities of HODs were highlighted. Furthermore, in looking through the lens of the Job Demands Resources Model, the job demands and resources specific to HODs were explored. True to the title of this study, role ambiguity and role conflict experienced by mid-level managers and HODs were then focused on and attention was paid specifically to the challenges they are facing and the expectations placed upon them. Seen in the light of research already done in the field and explained in this chapter, mid-level managers in general face challenges in the sense of experiencing role conflict and role ambiguity and they are not always sure of what is expected of them. This was also found amongst HODs, but it seems as if most research in this field was conducted in secondary schools or high schools and in further education or universities. There is also limited current resources on the subject matter and it seems that it is not a recently researched topic. The topic of mid-level managers', and more specifically HODs in primary schools' role conflict and role ambiguity lends itself to and calls for further investigation and

research. In the next chapter, the design and methodology used in the empirical part of the research will be unpacked.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In Chapter Two literature findings were presented with regards to challenges mid-level managers in general, and HODs as mid-level managers in schools, face. This study aims to explore the challenges of role conflict and role ambiguity that HODs in primary schools are confronted with. In order to find answers to the research questions posed and to reach the goals and objectives set out for this study, the necessary strategies are identified and explained in this chapter. Firstly, the research paradigm and design underpinning this study are presented, followed by an explanation of the population and sampling technique. This is followed by a description of the data collection and analysis methods and the chapter concludes with a presentation of ethical considerations surrounding the study.

3.2 Research paradigm

The philosophical worldview underpinning the research approach is the constructivist worldview. Creswell and Creswell (2018:5) see worldviews as general philosophical orientations about the world and the nature of research that a researcher brings to a study. Social constructivists believe that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:7). The social constructivist as researcher works with research participants to construct knowledge and a new reality, and in this, the values of the researcher and the value systems of the respective participants are revealed (Lincoln & Guba, 2013:41). This benefits not only the participants, but also any possible stakeholders. This rang especially true in the context of this research, which aimed at understanding the world of the HOD, as a mid-level manager in education, with the findings potentially benefitting not only HODs themselves, but also principals in managing their school management team.

Constructivist researchers see knowledge and truth as created by the mind instead of something that is discovered. They focus on the process by which meanings are created and seek to understand the world of lived experience from the perspective of those who live it (Walker, 2015:37). Gupta and Awasthy (2015:27) explain constructivism as a qualitative research position that employs art-like portrayal to uncover the challenges existing in various contexts. They further state that constructivists view language as being an intricate part of human beings and that they focus on how individuals give meaning to his world (Gupta & Awasthy 2015:27). The constructivist researcher researches a world already interpreted and the researcher's job is to uncover this according to the meanings created by humans, instead of discovering universal laws (Walliman,

2011:22). This implies that here can be more than one interpretation of a phenomenon. Gupta and Aswathy (2015:27) confirm that these multiple views of reality realise the complexity of any situation and do not just award a simplistic narrow view of the reality. In order to reach full understanding of the participants' worlds and gain insight into it, the researcher as individual is an important tool in the process and needs to take a subjective stance (Gupta & Awasthy, 2015:32).

As a constructivist researcher in this study, the focus was on determining the lived experiences of HOD's in primary schools and constructing their realities based on their feedback. Management, and in the case of this study, mid-level management exists in a social world. In the social world people make sense of situations based on their individual experience in their specific context (Goduka, 2012:127). Lincoln and Guba (2013:49) add to the notion of a social milieu outlining constructivist research and also highlighting the ever-changing nature of meaning construction, explaining that with the addition of every new individual, new meaning is also added and thus, continuous reconstruction takes place These constructions and reconstructions eventually lead to an end product made up of individual efforts at sense-making; hence, constructivism is also seen as being subjective in nature (Lincoln & Guba, 2013:47). Goduka (2012:127) states that meaning is constructed and continuously re-constructed through experience over time, which results in a variety of interpretations. This alludes to the interpretivist paradigm, which, together with the constructivist paradigm, form the basis for this study. It is seen as important, here, to determine the contextual factors that influence, determine and affect the interpretations reached by different individuals (Goduka, 2012:127). This study attempted to identify role conflict and role ambiguity experienced by HOD's in primary schools and this was largely identified by the way in which they interpreted their work circumstances, the roles they play in their surroundings, as well as the researcher's interpretation of their recollections; hence, the inclusion of the interpretivist paradigm. Interpretivists aim to work alongside others as they make sense of, draw meaning from, and create their realities in order to understand other points of view and to interpret these experiences in the context of the researcher's academic experience (Goduka, 2012:127). With the aim of interpretive studies being understanding (Munkvold & Bygstad, 2016:178), the researcher in this study aimed to gain insight in and understanding of HODs' experiences and their interpretations thereof (Munkvold & Bygstad, 2016:178). Social reality was moulded by these constructed narrations as suggested by Irshaidat, (2018:16).

One of the objectives of this study is to use the information as presented by the participants, or HODs, and to formulate guidelines for principals and HODs to reduce role conflict and role ambiguity in mid-level management according to the findings and realities constructed by the

research. In practice, the construction of this experienced reality, and analysis thereof, will contribute towards offering insight into employees' experiences and assist with shaping and guiding management to bring about change (Greeff, 2015:507). Such large-scale change happens whenever there is adequate agreement within a team of constructors on some new construction to warrant action and the constructors are sufficiently motivated to undertake it together with the researcher as the primary change agent (Lincoln & Guba, 2013:74). In engaging the interpretivist perspective, an understanding of HODs' circumstances in their own school contexts guided the researcher's endeavours in grasping and embracing this diversity by focusing on the ways in which HODs, as the constructors, interpret and experience their schools' context (Greeff, 2015:497).

3.3 Research design

Creswell and Creswell (2018:3) describe qualitative research as an approach for investigating and creating a deeper understanding of the meaning individuals or groups put to a social or human problem. The authors further explain that the process of qualitative research involves developing questions and procedures, data collection in the participant's environment, data analysis inductively building from particular to general themes, and the researcher interpreting the meaning of the data. Gupta and Awasthy (2015:31-35) classify qualitative research as a form of social science with the focus on interpreting people's experiences and making sense of their worlds. They also confirm the existence of multiple constructed realities and deem the strength of qualitative research to be in its ability to get a feel of the insider's view and to give detailed theoretical descriptions of how these insiders experience a given research context.

In this study, the aim was to gain understanding of how HODs experience their roles as mid-level managers in the educational field, as well as the possible role conflict, role ambiguity and other challenges they face. The research also aimed at gaining insight into what can be done to utilise HODs optimally in primary schools. The qualitative approach was selected to conduct this research, as quality information will be obtained from the participants whom the study is about — the HODs themselves. They were awarded the opportunity to give accounts of their experiences and their perceptions of their worlds as HODs in primary schools, which is indicative of the descriptive and expressive language reflecting the voices of the participants and their lived experiences, characteristic in qualitative research (Klenke,2016:23).

This study is grounded within phenomenology. In phenomenology the researcher develops a deeper understanding of participants' reality and how they perceive and construct it (Gupta & Awasthy, 2015:40; Leedy & Ormrod, 2015:273; Ungvarsky, 2017), and how a certain

phenomenon presents itself. Phenomenologists aim to describe what all participants — in this instance HODs in primary schools — have in common as they experience a phenomenon, which for the purpose of this study is role conflict and role ambiguity (Nieuwenhuis, 2016a:60). In order to gain insight into the lived experiences of the individuals being researched, the researcher aimed to construct and re-construct the world of multiple realities as experienced by the different participants (Lincoln & Guba, 2013:88).

Within the different accounts of the variety of social actors, the same reality will have different readings (Irshaidat, 2018:17), and within this study, the various HODs interviewed each gave their own account of how they experience their reality, each in their own unique way. The reliability in interpretative research, then, lies in the constant comparisons in findings, which is what the researcher did in this instance in order to explore the possibility of certain phenomena appearing. Through interpreting the lived experiences of the different HODs as recounted by them, focusing on details such as what is said and how it is said, as well as comparing the different accounts, meaning was given and conclusions were drawn, which are subjective in nature. It was expected that each HOD taking part as a participant in this study will produce their own account of their situation and their surroundings, as well as of their position at their school. A wide range of individuals filling the position of HOD at various schools took part in this study and multiple realities were indeed found, which emphasises the fact that “employees of organisations are not objects to be utilised, but diverse human beings” (Greeff, 2015:497). This is necessary in order to understand and eventually construct the world from the perspective of the participants in the study (Bonache & Festing, 2020:104).

3.4 Population and sampling

This study is focused on primary schools, including independent and public schools. Therefore, as part of the sampling process, HODs from both independent and public schools were included in order to gain insight into the lived experiences of HODs in both types of schools, explore the challenges they face, as well as the expectations placed upon them, to determine the universal nature of the problem. Convenient sampling was used to identify the primary schools and the researcher identified schools that fell within the greater Tshwane area whose HODs also had the means to engage in online interviews. Five independent schools were conveniently identified in Tshwane — four located in an urban area and one in a township. Three public schools, part of the Gauteng Department of Education, were identified and fell within two Tshwane districts, Tshwane North and Tshwane West.

A phenomenological study describes the meaning of lived experiences of not just one, but several individuals, as a phenomenon (Nieuwenhuis, 2016:77), and therefore, several participants must be selected. Participants were purposefully selected to ensure that trustworthy results were obtained. Purposive sampling seeks to identify and carefully choose participants who will be a rich source of information with regards to the phenomenon of interest (Bonache & Festing, 2020:108). Making use of purposive sampling researchers seek to include these "information-rich" participants that will contribute the most towards answering the research questions (Devers & Frankel, 2000:264; Gupta & Awasthy, 2015:38). Purposive sampling was indeed used to identify the participants for this study and HODs in primary schools in the Pretoria area were selected. The research problem sought to understand the challenges faced by mid-level managers or HODs in primary schools; hence, the inclusion of HODs as the sample. In primary schools, there are Foundation phase HODs, Intermediate phase HODs, as well as Intersen phase HODs all of which were represented in this study. The sample selected also included HODs with a vastly different number of years of experience in the particular position. This was done to determine if there was any difference in the experience of any identified role conflict and/or role ambiguity when years of service was compared.

Using above-mentioned criteria, the researcher narrowed the sample down to fifteen participants representing Foundation phase, Intermediate phase and Intersen phase HODs from a variety of primary schools.

The HODs were represented in the following way:

i. Seven Foundation phase HODs (Grades RR – 3) of which five were from independent schools and two from government schools
ii. Four Intermediate phase HODs (Grades 4 – 6) of which two were from independent schools and two from government schools
iii. Four Intersen phase HODs (Grades 4 – 7) of which three were from independent schools and one from a government school

3.5 Data collection

3.5.1 Individual interviews

Leedy and Ormrod (2015:273) suggest that phenomenological researchers rely almost exclusively on in-depth interviews with a selected sample of participants where the researcher will listen attentively to the interviewees describing their everyday experiences related to the phenomenon. The stated research questions are used as the starting point to determine the use

of interviews as the chosen way to collect data and if the said questions beg an understanding of what certain behaviours or phenomena 'mean' to individuals, then in-depth interviews make the most sense (Forsey, 2017:365). In qualitative interviews, the researcher may conduct direct, face-to-face interviews with participants, telephonic interviews, or engage in focus group interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:186).

Interviews are conducted to find out what we do not know and are unable to know otherwise and notes should be kept of what is heard, in order to analyse the data and eventually gain better understanding of the information shared in the interview process (Forsey, 2017:364). Walliman (2011:99) agrees that interviews are suitable for research questions requiring probing to obtain adequate, valuable and rich information. The interviewer, as qualitative researcher, is also in a good position during an interview to take note of the quality of the responses, to notice if a question was not understood properly, and to encourage the interviewee to be elaborate on answers provided (Walliman, 2011:100). For the purpose of this study the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews via online, digital platforms (due to the Covid-19 pandemic). Interviews allow the researcher to get direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge (Patton 2015:ch. 1, par.2), which is exactly what was needed for this study where the experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge of HODs were explored and used to answer the research questions.

3.5.2 Semi-structured interviews

The data collection procedure in this research took the form of semi-structured interviews where open-ended questions (as explained by Klenke, 2016:130) were asked. This form of interview allowed the researcher to ask specific questions to get specific answers, which could be compared with each other. It also allowed the researcher the freedom to explore more and gain a deeper understanding into the feelings and experiences of the HODs and the specific challenges they face (see Addendum A for Interview schedule). This correlates with suggestions made by Forsey (2017:372), who explains that the schedule in a semi-structured interview should guide, rather than determine the flow of the interview, as semi-structured interviews consists of structured and unstructured sections with standardised and open type questions (Walliman, 2011:99), which allows discussions to take different directions during the course of the interview process.

3.5.3 Interview process

During the interview process, handwritten field notes were taken, while the interviews were also recorded to retain optimum data from the interview. In line with the phenomenological approach in this study, the interview process assisted with getting factual and true insight into the feelings that HODs, as mid-level managers, experience on a daily basis, as well as the challenges they face. The interview process requires a collection of academic, organisational and social skills (Forsey, 2017:364), which the researcher applied to gain the necessary information. Listening is a necessary skill (Forsey, 2017:372-374) and the researcher ensured that she listened attentively to what the participants were saying. At the same time the writing and compiling of the research report is just as important (Forsey, 2017:372-374) and the researcher took care to record the findings accurately and analyse it as best as possible. In line with what Gupta and Awasthy (2015:38) suggest, the researcher didn't just listen during the interview process, but also put in a conscious effort to hear, take in and understand what was heard, using this information to probe further. The researcher also approached the interviews logically, with the focus on thinking and processing quickly and judging what needed to be pursued further, and generating the necessary questions, in line with the process stipulated by Gupta and Awasthy (2015:38).

Curiosity and an enquiring mind with a determination to want to know more are all attributes of a qualitative researcher (Gupta & Awasthy, 2015:38). The researcher in this study approached the interviews with the necessary curiosity in order to answer the research questions. In accordance with the description of the interview process as outlined by Creswell and Creswell (2018:192), the researcher took great care when conducting the interviews. The researcher started the interview process with introducing basic information about the research and the reason it is being conducted. In a calm and relaxed atmosphere, the researcher introduced herself and briefly explained what was expected of the participant. This was followed by the content questions, which consisted of structured questions (see Addendum A), as well as unstructured, probing questions that arose as the interview proceeded.

In line with Forsey's (2017:373) suggestions, the researcher concluded each interview by explaining that the recording will be transcribed in a professional manner and that the participant will remain anonymous in the written product. The researcher thanked the participant and reminded each one that they are welcome to contact the researcher with any further questions. The interviewer was mindful not to put words in people's mouths, to keep reactions to herself and to award the participants the opportunity to express their own meaning in their own way as prescribed by Leedy and Ormrod (2015:274).

Face-to-face interviews can be conducted in a variety of settings: at home, at work, outdoors or anywhere suitable to both the interviewer and interviewee, and the interviewer can utilise visual cues such as a smile and nods of agreement to work towards obtaining good results (Walliman, 2011:100). With the challenges brought about by the Covid-19 outbreak and the lockdown period, as well as visitation to schools in a private capacity limited, face-to-face interviews were conducted via online, digital platforms. The researcher set up online meetings using Skype, Microsoft Teams, Zoom or other digital platforms preferred by the participants. The researcher was also mindful of setting up these meetings at times most suitable to both herself and the participant. This allowed the researcher to still have a live meeting with the participants where the structured interview questions were asked, as well as probing questions where needed. The researcher could also utilise visual cues including smiles and signs of uncertainty, and could also correct any incorrect interpretation of questions without delay. The contact sessions were recorded, and the participants were made aware of these recordings.

Walliman (2011:134) advises an interim summary during the data collection stage. The researcher used this advice and created an interim summary a third of the way into the interview schedule. Stock was taken of the quality of material gathered up to that point and the data that still needed to be collected was compared to the time left. A short provisional report containing summaries of data collected, as well as a first cross-case analysis was compiled and discussed with the study leader.

3.6 Data analysis

Words cannot be manipulated mathematically and require unique analytical strategies (Walliman, 2011:71). The careful interpretation of the meaning of words, the building of concepts and variables, and the intricate procedure of putting this together to construct something new are what matters in qualitative research (Walliman, 2011:73). Interview data produces material that is not very structured, and it takes a lot of effort to sift through the data to create something sensible (Basu, 2015:81). In line with Walliman's suggestions (2011:100), and to ensure that a full, uninterpreted record of what was said is retained, the online interviews were recorded. This allowed for recording and saving of answers given during the interview process. The researcher watched and listened to the recordings afterwards and field notes were made reflecting upon the body language, facial expressions and any other emotional cues on the part of the participant. The verbal data was transcribed verbatim by the researcher in order to analyse it and to have the raw data available for further analysis by others, another important point raised by Walliman (2011:100).

Recorded interviews and their transcripts make for a large volume of material that must be condensed, categorised, interpreted and made meaningful in correlation with the research question (Klenke, 2016:140). The inclusion of original reports is too cumbersome to put forward, analyse and explain the outcomes of a qualitative research project (Walliman, 2011:135). It is thus necessary to analyse, condense and find a graphical way to present the raw material. As Basu (2015:83) emphasises the analysis of qualitative data remains a big responsibility, and this was kept in mind by the researcher, who attempted to remain true to the participants' renditions of their experiences, whilst analysing and condensing the material.

The process of data analysis in the form of content analysis, where the content of the spoken word was analysed, was then started by the researcher to create order in the bulk of the data collected to ensure successful cross-case analysis and possible prediction of phenomena (Walliman, 2011:135). Data collected in the interview process was hand-coded and meaning was created through grouping data together in codes and by analysing data to identify similarities and differences in the different participants' interviews. The researcher followed an open-coded process with no pre-determined codes, but rather constructed codes as the interview process unfolded and as the content was analysed. The researcher hand-coded the data (see Addenda B and C).

The researcher followed the sequential steps for data analysis as explained by Creswell and Creswell (2018:192).

i. Step 1: This step entails the organising and preparation of the data for analysis. In this case, the researcher transcribed and typed-up all the interview material.
ii. Step 2: This step involves reading or looking at all the data to gain a general sense of the information. Here, the researcher viewed the recordings of the interviews and read through the transcriptions to thoroughly familiarising herself with the content. During step 2, the researcher also took note of participants' emotions, body language, facial expressions, and so forth, and started making notes thereof.
iii. Step 3: This step entails the coding of data, which is the process of organising the data and allocating certain key words to certain parts of the data. This was represented in diagram format. Representing the data in a diagram with codes written in the margins is the first step in drawing necessary comparisons, as suggested by Walliman (2011:132), and to create the platform for notes about human emotions and feelings as this is also very much part of qualitative data. Walliman (2011:132) further mentions the importance of organising information whilst the details are still fresh in the mind as information will be

lost if this task is left for too long. Hence, the researcher completed steps 1 - 3 as soon as possible after an interview took place.

iv. Step 4: In this the step the codes are used to create themes. As Walliman (2011:134) explains, the codes are pulled together into meaningful groupings to create smaller analytical units, or common themes.

v. Step 5: In this step the findings of the analysis were conveyed in a narrative way where a detailed description of the different themes and an explanation of the multiple perspectives drawn from the different individuals, were presented.

Once all these steps were followed, the data analysis could be concluded and the rigour with which qualitative research must be conducted in order to produce thorough findings, as explained earlier, was evident (Bridges, 2017:29-30).

3.7 Trustworthiness

For this study to be accepted as trustworthy, the researcher addressed the issues of truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality as proposed by Guba and Lincoln (as cited by Guba, 1981:84). Being a qualitative study, and in line with suggestions made by Guba and Lincoln (as cited by Guba, 1981:84-87), the researcher addressed these aspects in the following manner:

Truth value via credibility: Throughout the data analysis procedure, the researcher frequently shared the data analysis documents indicating the coding process with her study leader for cross-checking and to ensure that coding and analysis were done truthfully, thus ensuring a credible product. The researcher recorded all the interviews and created verbatim transcriptions. These transcriptions were used to extract themes and categories, which were used for analysis purposes.

Applicability via transferability: Purposive sampling was implemented for this study with the researcher selecting HODs of primary schools. Participants from the different phases in primary schools (Foundation phase, Intermediate, and Intersen phase) were sourced and both government and independent schools were represented. The researcher attempted to draw descriptive statements from the HODs during interviews in order to obtain rich data, which could be compared to identify similarities and differences, thus testing the transferability of information. The findings were also compared to what was found in the literature study.

Consistency via dependability: The researcher worked at leaving an audit trail for the study to be viewed as dependable in its findings. All documentation, including the original recordings of the interviews, the transcription and data analysis documents, as well as a document indicating the

comparisons drawn were kept and safely stored to be readily available should it be necessary to retrieve for further auditing purposes.

Neutrality via confirmability: The researcher sought to give honest feedback of her findings at all times in both the literature study, as well as information obtained from participants. This can be verified by all the necessary documentation stored for audit purposes. Taking into account that the interviews took place during the Covid-19 pandemic and couldn't be conducted in person, all factors that influenced the digital online interviews, such as load shedding that cut sessions short or dropped signals, were also noted. Sensible coding of the transcribed data was verified by sharing the data transcripts with respondents for validation of it being a true reflection of what they shared and meant in the interviews. One participant chose to amend the initial transcription (see Addendum I). It is also worth noting that some participants were Afrikaans-speaking and preferred to be interviewed in Afrikaans. The interview schedule was translated in Afrikaans beforehand (see Addendum J), to facilitate conducting the interviews in Afrikaans. The transcripts of those interviews were translated to English for analysis purposes (see Addendum K).

3.8 Ethical considerations

The necessary ethical approval for this research was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education, North-West University (see Addendum D) before any data was collected, as suggested by Leedy and Ormrod (2015:124). The aims of this research have been identified as being in accordance with the ethical standards prescribed by the North-West University (Walliman, 2011:46). Working within organisations requires additional consent (Walliman, 2011:467). Heads of departments in government schools are employed by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the necessary written permission to conduct research in government schools and to interview HODs in government schools was obtained from the DBE (see Addendum E). Written permission was also obtained from principals (see Addendum F), as well as the chairpersons of the School Governing Bodies (SGB) and/or Parent Advisory Committees (PAC) (see Addendum G) of schools, which had HODs participating in this study.

It is worth noting that all human institutions and all human actions are profoundly ethical in nature and that constructivist enquiries lend themselves to ethical problems (Lincoln & Guba, 2013:74). This implies that the constructivist researcher may face unique ethical challenges, with face-to-face interviews putting in question privacy and anonymity, hence the inclusion of a fully informed consent form (see Addendum H) and the assurance that the participants may withdraw at any time (Lincoln & Guba, 2013:75-76). Seen in the light of this challenge, the participants in this study were given the necessary consent forms and reminded that they will remain anonymous and that

their privacy will be respected. In accordance with Walliman's (2011:47) suggestions, these consent forms explained clearly what the research as about to enable the participants to make an informed decision whether they wanted to take part or not. They were also reminded that they may withdraw from the study at any time without any repercussions, in line with suggestions made by Walliman (2011:48), as well as Leedy and Ormrod (2015:121).

To ensure the participants that they will be protected from harm, the informed consent form also stipulated the fact that they will remain anonymous and that their identity will not be disclosed. As collected data may well contain confidential information about people or organisations, it is vitally important to create a storage system that is safe and accessible only to the researcher (Walliman, 2011:49). The researcher kept the information gathered from the interviews in a password-protected folder on a flash drive. Handwritten notes were kept in the researcher's possession during the analysis process. Thereafter, it was kept in a locked cupboard in the supervisor's office. During the interview process, the participants were asked whether they consent to the researcher recording the online interviews and they were assured that these recordings would be destroyed after it was saved to the password-protected folder on the researcher's flash drive. All drafts of the research report were shared with the supervisors for their comments and inputs, but it was with the clear understanding that the content is confidential and not ready for dissemination (Walliman, 2011:50). All data, both electronic and handwritten, that was gathered, will be destroyed five years after the completion of the research.

The researchers explained to the participants that even though they will not directly benefit from the research, they will be working towards a better understanding of the position of HODs in schools, which could lead to improving their circumstances, ultimately benefitting all HODs in primary schools who work towards improving the function of schools. Furthermore, as suggested by Leedy and Ormrod (2015:123), the research findings were reported in a complete and honest way, without intentionally misleading others about the findings or fabricating facts. The necessary credit and acknowledgement were granted when using words or ideas from other authors, as failure to do so would be deemed plagiarism, which is, as explained by Leedy and Ormrod (2015:87), unethical. Given the ethical considerations and the fact that constructions are influenced by the voices of the constructors, constructivist researchers do have a special obligation to arrange the hermeneutic or interpretivist process so that all the voices involved can be heard and honoured (Lincoln & Guba, 2013:78). Lincoln and Guba (2013:78) further state that constructivists should not just be open to new information challenging the current construction, but should actively seek them out.

As a researcher, one must keep your biases in check (Basu, 2015:83), however hard it may be in phenomenology. Walliman (2011:45) echoes this sentiment, explaining that should the researcher see any reason for the possibility of bias in any aspect of the research, it should be acknowledged and explained. Even though the researcher works in the field of education and fills an HOD position, the researcher approached the study and conducted the interviews in a neutral, unbiased fashion and focused on merely working with the information gained in the interviews. As suggested by Walliman (2011:46) the researcher furthermore aimed to be as neutral as possible in the use of terminology involving participants, as well as the people they refer to in the interviews, and guarded against being patronising, making every effort to avoid prejudice and discrimination. The researcher was also weary of the way in which she presented herself in the role of researcher and guarded against influencing the attitude or responses of the participants (Walliman, 2011:46). It was also explained to the participants that the researcher is a student-researcher and that the research is part of an academic exercise with immediate action not evident (Walliman, 2011:46).

Literature assists with informing the researcher about the nature of research already done in the field (Basu,2015:77) and it is expected of the researcher to go into the field "without any preconceived notions on the topic" (Basu, 2015:77). The necessary literature study for this research was completed and concisely noted in Chapter Two.

3.9 Summary

This chapter outlined the research paradigm and research design for this study. The researcher adopted a constructivist worldview and engaged an interpretivist perspective. Qualitative research was conducted and a phenomenological design was used. Convenience sampling was utilised to identify schools and purposive sampling to identify participants. Interviews were conducted to collect data and due to the Covid-19 pandemic, digital interviews were set up with participants. The transcribed interviews were analysed using content analysis. To conclude this chapter, the ethical considerations were explained. In Chapter Four, the researcher will present the data, the data analysis and the results of the analysis.

CHAPTER 4 DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter Three the research design and methodology for this study were explained. These strategies were unpacked in presenting the research paradigm and design underpinning this study, explaining the population and sampling techniques used, as well as describing the data collection and analysis methods used. Steps to address the trustworthiness and ethical considerations of the study were also explained. The research questions of this study revolve around possible role conflict and role ambiguity that HODs in primary schools might experience in their position. Within this chapter the researcher presents the analysis and findings of the data and presents the identified themes to answer the research questions.

4.2 Process of data analysis

The aim and overall objective of this study is to gain insight in the lived experiences of HODs in primary schools and to explore the possible role conflict and role ambiguity they might experience in the fulfilment of their daily tasks. Research questions were developed to find answers to the possible role conflict and ambiguity experienced by primary school HODs. With this in mind, data was collected by interviewing HODs, to gain understanding of their perceptions of their positions and the roles they play in their schools. These interviews were recorded in order to retain the data for transcription and analysis purposes.

The recordings of the interviews were transcribed verbatim. Some of the interviews were conducted in Afrikaans, as certain participants felt more comfortable sharing their experiences in Afrikaans. These interviews were also transcribed verbatim and then translated to English for data analysis purposes. Upon completion of the transcriptions, the researcher read through the transcription again to familiarise herself with the content. Thereafter, she started analysing the data by breaking it up into smaller chunks and assigning codes, categories and themes to it by making use of hand-coding. The codes, categories and themes were then presented in a table format in order to draw comparisons and quickly see the similarities and differences found between the recollections of the various participants (see Addendum H for an excerpt of this table where comparisons were drawn).

The researcher is an HOD in a primary school herself and, even though this did come up in a few of the interviews, the researcher did not allow this to influence either her judgement or the results

of the interview. She took care not to ask any leading questions or lead the participants to any specific answers.

The participants are distinguished in the following manner (Table 4-1) for the duration of Chapter Four:

Table 4-1: Summary of participants

FP-I1	Foundation phase HOD - Female Ten years of experience (eight at a previous school and two at her current school)	Small Independent school – fairly wealthy area
FP-I2	Foundation phase HOD - Female One year of experience	Small Independent school subsidised by the Department of Education – middle-class area
FP-I3	Foundation phase HOD - Female Five years of experience (eight months at her current school)	Rapidly-growing Independent school – fairly low-income area
FP-I4	Foundation phase HOD - Female Thirteen years of experience (spent at two schools)	Average-sized Independent school – middle-class rural area
FP-I5	Foundation phase HOD - Female One-and-a-half years of experience	Small Independent school subsidised by the Department of Education – middle-class area
FP-G1	Foundation phase HOD - Female Fifteen years of experience (spent at two schools)	Relatively large Government school – middle-class area

FP-G2	Foundation phase HOD - Female Thirteen years of experience	Small to average sized Government school – middle-class area
IP-I1	Intermediate phase HOD - Male Seven years of experience	Relatively large and rapidly-growing Independent school – rural, low-income area
IP-I2	Intermediate phase HOD - Female Three years of experience	Rapidly-growing Independent school – fairly low-income area
IP-G1	Intermediate phase HOD - Female Eleven years of experience	Relatively large Government school – low-income area
IP-G2	Intermediate phase HOD - Male Five-and-a-half years of experience	Relatively large Government school – middle-class area
ISP-I1	Intersen phase HOD - Female Four years of experience	Small Independent school subsidised by the Department of Education – middle-class area
ISP-I2	Intersen phase HOD - Female Two years of experience	Small Independent school – fairly wealthy area
ISP-I3	Intersen phase HOD - Female Two years of experience	Average-sized Independent school – middle-class rural area
ISP-G1	Intersen phase HOD - Female One-year-and-seven-months of experience	Relatively large Government school – middle-class area

The results of the analysis will be explained next with reference to how it relates to the research questions.

4.3 Discussion of identified themes

The diagram below (Figure 4-1) shows the components making up the role conflict and role ambiguity in mid-level management in primary schools.

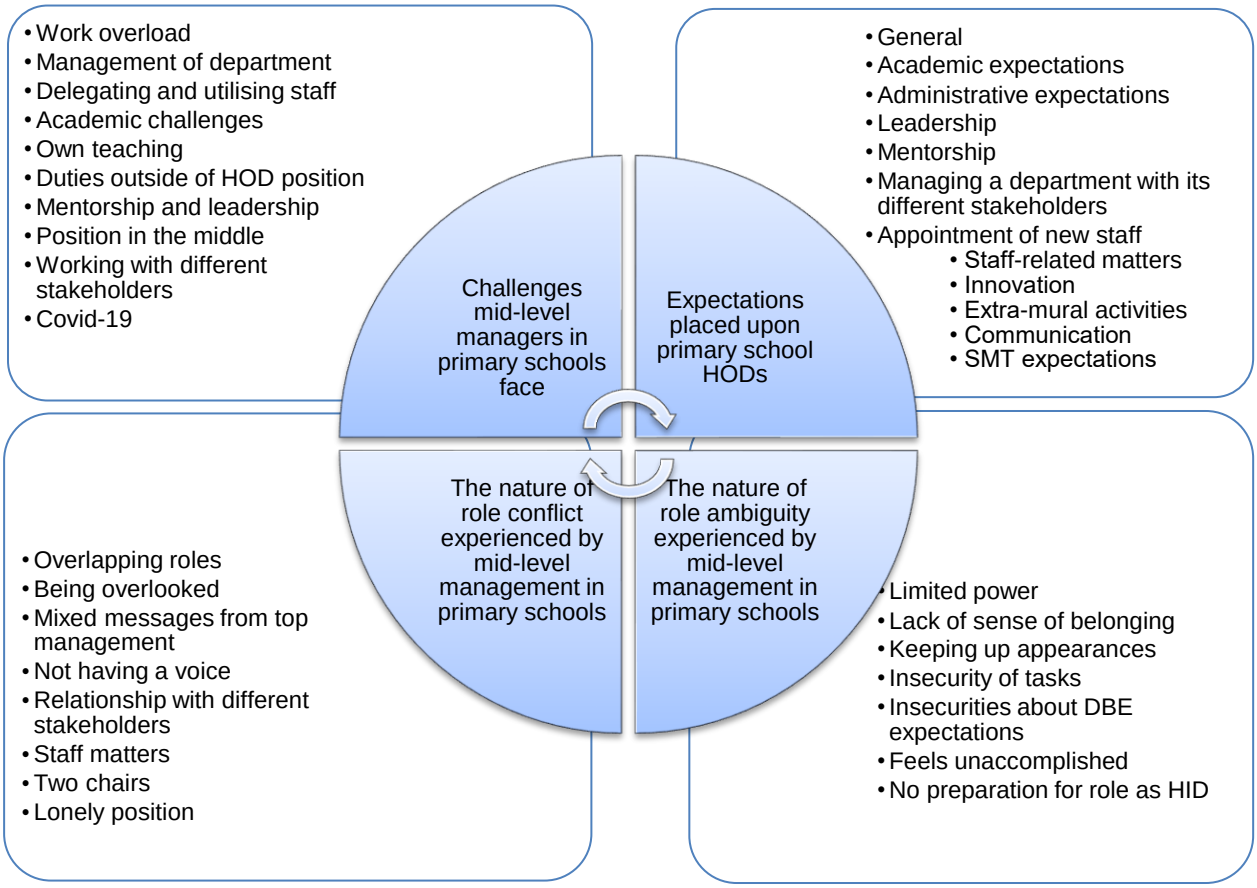


Figure 4-1: Components related to role conflict and role ambiguity in mid-level management in primary schools

4.3.1 Challenges mid-level managers in primary schools face in their attempts to manage their departments

Certain themes became evident regarding the challenges mid-level managers in primary schools face in their attempts to manage their departments. These themes are presented here to explain these challenges.

- **Work overload**

It is evident by the responses of several HODs interviewed that work overload in a variety of forms is experienced. They feel overwhelmed with the number of tasks they must perform, find it hard to cope, and worry about forgetting some of the magnitude of tasks they are expected to perform. Due to a lack of time, they also worry about neglecting certain important tasks. Based on the following response, it further became clear that the HODs were not prepared for the mammoth task of what acting as an HOD, entailed:

ISP-I3: When I applied for the position, I didn't know there were some hidden tasks as well that I didn't know of.

Together with work overload and the huge number of tasks that befall HODs, time limitations were explained as challenging, with HODs reporting that with only a finite number of hours in a day, they simply don't have enough time for everything. They feel as if they don't have enough hands to do everything and it is a challenge to keep all the balls in the air. In this struggle to get to everything, they start experiencing feelings of guilt for neglecting some of their tasks somewhere along the line, as is evident in the following response:

FP-I2: I never have time for anything, least of all the very important task of mentorship. I am always on a guilt trip for not doing enough, due to not having enough time.

The above-mentioned work overload and time constraints have quite a significant impact on HODs' personal lives, as they start using personal time at home to catch up on work not completed during work hours. This also results in work infringing on family time, with the families of HODs' having to adjust their needs and schedules around this. As can be expected, this causes friction within families and this infringement on home life can be summed up in the following response:

ISP-I3: I sometimes feel like I'm married to my job, my husband also thinks so sometimes, my job is my other half.

An overview of literature also shows work overload and time constraints as challenges that HODs often experience. Bipath and Nkabinde (2018:7) state that HODs' lack the time to manage their departments and lead their subordinates, while Du Plessis and Eberlein (2018:13) found that the extensive work load carried by HODs leaves very little to no time for professional development in their management role.

Viewed in line with the Job Demands Resources (or JD-R) theory (§2.3.1.1) it seems that there are a wide variety job demands that are often job-specific. Work overload, as mentioned by HODs, was found to be a job demand amongst managers (Joubert & Rothmann, 2007:58) leading to exhaustion, with Valadez-Torrez *et al.* (2017:562) indicating that heavy workload, together with stress lead to emotional exhaustion, especially in the field of education and amongst mid-level managers. Bakker and Demerouti, who are the originators of the JD-R theory themselves, state role overload as an example of a hindrance job demand (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017:277), with Cavanaugh *et al.* (2000:67) explaining hindrance job demands as job demands or work circumstances that involve excessive or undesirable constraints that interfere with or inhibit an individual's ability to achieve valued goals.

Despite the heavy workload, time limitations and burden on one's personal life, ISP-I3 managed to see the silver lining:

ISP-I3: The moment you want to fall into pieces, there's so many people around me…..that's why I love teaching, that's why I love being here in this position as well, because , even though you can sometimes feel very separated, the moment you actually open up and you say….I can't….stop stop stop, I'm struggling, then they are really supportive and help.

This comment points to the possibility that support from colleagues can act as a job resource, an idea echoed by Jackson (2018:743) who reports that organisational support in general had a positive effect on employee attitudes within a variety of national government departments in South Africa.

- **Management of department**

Several HODs mentioned challenges related to the general management of their departments in its totality and inclusive of many different aspects, but with managing people playing an important role here. Indicative of this is responses such as these in answer to the question of what participants find challenging in their position:

IP-I2: Tough to manage so many people with so many subjects with so many grades.

FP-I2: ……to get everybody on the same page about how we are going to approach the curriculum…….and to almost let them think like one.

Conflict management amongst staff or even between the HOD and staff members within a department also seem to pose a challenge. HODs reported disliking role conflict and diffusing

sensitive situations. They also dislike telling someone to change their way of doing things or reprimanding or punishing a staff member. The following response encapsulates the significant challenge that conflict management poses to HODs:

IP-G2: Working with different people….that is a challenge……it is more a challenge for me in the sense of……the handling of conflict…it is a challenge for me.

This idea is confirmed in literature with Razzak (2015:12) finding that HODs have a desire to see successful and collaborative relationships between teachers in their departments, while Kerry (2005:72) recognises that HODs strive towards a well-functioning department and having a good relationship with the teachers in their department. Kerry also stipulates that HODs regard good teamwork as a resource in making their task easier, confirming the proposition made in the JD-R theory that job resources can combat the negative effects of job demands.

In looking at the following response, it seems that the inclusion of younger individuals in a departmental staff complement, also creates some challenges for the HOD:

FP-G2: My biggest challenge with staff is the young ones, not necessarily the older ones that have been there a while…..when I have problems, it is with the young staff thinking they know everything and who want to design the wheel from the start….and leave their mark.

What is interesting here is that the assertion made by FP-G2 does not correlate with the findings of Anthun & Innstrand (2016:63), who note that younger employees have the need for guidance and support from their older colleagues and more specifically managers, whereas in the case of the interviewee, the HOD seemingly finds this guidance role exhausting and challenging due to the younger staff claiming to know everything.

One participant said it is challenging that teachers and learners in her department are often fearful to approach her because they find the label of HOD intimidating, expressing her experience as follows:

ISP-I1: Teachers, children, everybody…..the biggest challenge is, they are often scared of me and then end up stepping back.

This rings true when viewed in relation to Misiukonis' findings (2011:64) that it is challenging to not only manage subordinates, but to also build a trust relationship and have an openness in the relationship in order to mentor the subordinates. HODs also find that staff competence or lack thereof creates challenges in their management of departments as one participant explained:

ISP-G1: So I find it difficult to constantly remediate teachers …..your test is again not correct, your memorandum is again not written in full, that to me is a challenge….

In line with ISP-G1's comment, IP-G2 also finds it cumbersome to continuously remind teachers to perform certain tasks in a certain manner:

IP-G2: it is a challenge for me to ask a staff member the same thing five times, as I start feeling bad……..teachers who don't plan properly…..

Consistent with these observations, HODs also find it cumbersome to check up on teachers all the time to see if they are fulfilling their duties correctly:

IP-I2: So, I won't say I have a problem managing it, but you do have those problem areas that you have to work on and focus on, so what I usually do is, let's say it's an overall thing….a teacher always late with her things….that teacher obviously has some kind of scheduling problem …or I won't say problem….that's not their strong point.

Mampane (2018:193) recognises the role of HODs in the professional development of teachers in their departments, more specifically in terms of in-service training to equip these teachers with the required knowledge and skills. However, she also suggests that the Department of Basic Education and principals should support their HODs in this supervisory role and equip *them* with the necessary skills to recognise gaps in their teachers' competencies and recommend relevant training.

- **Delegating and utilising staff**

HODs seem to find it hard to delegate and include their staff members in certain tasks and decisions. They are hesitant to hand over certain responsibilities to teachers and to have their staff members involved in certain aspects of the job. They tend to want to micromanage, and struggle to utilise their staff correctly. This has the unfortunate result of teachers becoming insecure and asking HODs assistance with the smallest of problems, adding to the workload of HODs, which, as previously mentioned is quite extensive. The following responses prove the challenges HODs face with utilising their staff effectively, as well as involving them in certain tasks:

FP-I4: I wish I had more experience in psychology, something like that….you have to read the people….. that you….if you understand what I mean by 'read'……so that you know the people

that you work with, and you must know which people to choose, to be your grade leaders….grade heads.

Linked to this observation, ISP-G1 expressed a desire to capitalise on teachers' strong points and voiced it as follows:

ISP-G1: ….to involve them, because the easy task out is to just do it yourself, but I try and involve all of them and find weak points and strong points and use that when I can, because it also boosts the teachers if they see they can help you with your leadership.

While the HODs interviewed find it hard to delegate and hand over certain tasks to their teachers, Dinham (2007:77) recognise the leading role HODs take in identifying leadership potential in their staff members, utilising it and working towards distributed leadership in their department.

- **Academic challenges**

HODs' responses varied widely in what they found challenging in the context of their academic duties. Challenges ranged from assisting teachers to select suitable study material to intervening in the tuition of weaker learners to assist them in passing and progressing to the next grade. However, the overarching challenge was needing the knowledge of all the subjects offered in all the different grades within their department, as one participant explained:

IP-I2: Tough to manage so many people with so many subjects with so many grades.

Although it is not a frequent occurrence, the implementation of a new curriculum poses a challenge to HODs. At the same time, the challenge of implementing a new curriculum was also explained as being fulfilling and rewarding, especially when the implementation is met with positive:

FP-I4: It's a challenge to work out a new curriculum, I can tell you that….and everything from scratch…..but it's very….I don't know what the word is…fulfilment….rewarding, yeah….especially if you get your feedback from persons like (name of district official at the Department of Basic Education) and they appreciate what you're doing….

This particular recollection of both the challenge and reward that the implementation of a new curriculum can offer, is interesting and can be viewed against the JD-R theory. According to the JD-R theory each occupation has its own negative and/or positive job-specific factors related to occupational well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007:312). Curriculum-implementation and bringing a new curriculum to fruition in schools are part of an HOD's core duties and

responsibilities, but can be a challenge, which means it is a job demand that cost effort. At the same time the task potentially promotes personal growth and achievement, which is referred to as a challenge job demand (Podsakoff *et al.* as cited by Bakker & Demerouti, 2017:277). However, as in the case of the HOD who expressed fulfilment when she received positive feedback, this positive feedback, which served as encouragement, serves the purpose of a job resource.

- **Own teaching**

Each HOD interviewed acts as a teacher as well, and balancing teaching responsibilities with the various roles of a departmental head is also seen as challenging. Apart from the extra workload and the inevitable time spent after hours to complete all the administrative and academic duties of both HOD and teacher, HODs also struggle to find time during school hours to fulfil tasks such as conducting class visits, mentoring teachers, addressing behaviour problems of learners, and so forth, particularly when they have to be in their own classrooms themselves. This challenge is evident in the following explanation:

FP-I3: I just think….uhm…as a head you are expected to do your head's job and oversee and mentor and look after people, but then you also have your class, because I'm teaching Grade R…..35 Grade Rs that you're trying to look after, with their parents….so it's just, it's time….when do you teach….when do you HOD…..when do you lead your team at the same time? .

ISP-I2 also elaborates on the challenge of fulfilling both the roles of an HOD and a teacher:

ISP-I2: …..you have the role of teacher that you have to fulfil daily, you know, you stand in the classroom and then, as HOD, you have to exercise control over everything and take the lead and so…..planning and everything…so I think…….the big expectation placed on us to be a class teacher……it allows very little time to do what I would actually like to do better….because sometimes I feel that a person should, on both levels, you know….you take away from the classroom, your teaching professionalism….and then…exactly the same from your control on the other side…..

In line with these answers, Bipath and Nkabinde (2018:7) found that HODs lack the time to manage their departments and lead their subordinates, due to the time spent teaching in the classroom themselves. The same was reported by Du Plessis and Eberlein (2018:13) in their findings that the extensive workload of teaching in the classroom, leaves very little to no time for HODs to develop professionally in their management role. Similarly, Corbett (2017:216) recognises that, apart from the students in HODs' own classrooms, the successful academic

outcomes of all the students in an HOD's department also fall under the responsibilities of the HOD.

- **Duties outside of HOD position**

It seems that schools are utilising their HODs for more than just management or teaching roles, and this adds to the challenges experienced by HODs. Additional duties range from overseeing whole-school discipline, to overseeing marketing in an attempt to keep the school filled to capacity, and even filling the role of principal in his/her absence. The following was relayed during the interviews:

IP-I1: …..we don't have a head of primary school, so at this stage, I need to fill a lot of those tasks as well and cover those gaps as well……so yeah, that has put a lot of extra stress on me as a phase head.

FP-G2 also experienced the challenge of acting as principal during her early years of being HOD and remembers it as follows:

FP-G2: …..we didn't have a deputy principal, so there was one HOD and that HOD was Intersen phase and the principal…and then…when the other HOD and the principal went on a rugby tour, then I had to stand in as principal….that was terrible…young teacher…34….35….and now, all of a sudden…you have that responsibility…that was really terrible.

Even though the task of standing in for the principal is in line with what is stipulated in the PAM document (Department of Basic Education, 2016:37), which states that HODs should act on behalf of the principal in his/her absence, this posed a challenge for FP-G2 when she was a younger HOD with very little experience. In looking at the response of IP-I1, the length of such a substitution becomes problematic, as taking on extra responsibilities over and above the responsibilities of being an HOD, causes prolonged and continuous stress.

It also seems that there is a trend in schools to increasingly involve HODs in the running of the bigger school environment, which correlates with Alhaqbani *et al.*, (2016:935) who state that it is expected of mid-level managers to be more involved in the overall improvement plans of an organisation and that a need exists to train mid-level managers to accept and cope with this change in their traditional roles. Based on the answers provided in the interviews, HODs clearly still find this increase in involvement challenging, bringing into question whether the necessary training is indeed taking place. Teerinkangas and Birollo (2018:87) also recognise the potential

of mid-level managers to be successful change agents in their organisations and states that this lies in their ability to successfully combine being both the driver and the experiencer of change.

- **Mentorship and leadership**

According to the PAM document the role of mentorship befalls senior and master teachers and not HODs. Almost all HODs interviewed, however, fulfil the role of being a mentor on some level. This could be due to the absence of senior and master teachers within schools, as the researcher did not come across one mention of either. One or two HODs mentioned having and using their subject heads as mentors but found them not very reliable or successful in this role and personally taking up the mentorship role in any case. Several challenges accompany this mentorship role. To start with, the time it takes to do in-depth mentorship is seen as a challenge, especially in conjunction with the remuneration received as HOD. HODs also find it challenging to mentor different staff with their different personalities in different ways and this is explained as follows:

IP-G1: I think….for me the different personalities….to understand each person is quite difficult for me……because I think the main thing is just to understand each person as an individual and not sort of think you are all a group and you are all the same.

Collier *et al.* (2002:24) found that HODs enjoy the role of mentoring and coaching their subordinates and that HODs can see the benefits thereof, but also found that a lack of time negatively impacts this role.

HODs also fill a leadership role, which adds another layer in the challenges they face, as certain staff members are not accepting of the authority of the HOD as a leader. Such staff members challenge HODs in questioning their decisions or their instructions. This challenge is elucidated on as follows:

FP-I4: …..you know, you have teachers in your phase that has very, very strong personalities and they want to be in your position, but they're not allowed to be there and they don't always listen to you…

HODs experience the non-acceptance of their authority negatively, and links to literature that posits that HODs who feel valued by the teachers in their departments will fare better in their roles managing those teachers without being met with suspicion and disloyalty (Gjerde & Alvesson, 2020:147).

- **Position in the middle**

HODs' position in the middle between top management and general staff, creates a lack of a sense of belonging. HODs are also placed in an uncomfortable position when they know that a decision made by top management can affect staff negatively. The challenge of not knowing where you belong as an HOD, with the added challenge of assuming the role of protector, are explained in the following ways:

ISP-I3: ……it's a very lonely position to have ….you don't really feel that much part of management , but you are in a very influential position and…..it's a little bit of management and also a little bit of still being a staff member….

FP-I2: ……it is sometimes difficult if you feel the principal made a decision that might put the teachers at a disadvantage, but our relationship is very open, so I think it is necessary to sort out anything coming up straight away and talk it out….

In line with what FP-I2 relayed, Gjerde and Alvesson (2020:144) found that despite holding the teachers in their departments accountable, HODs are prone to take on the role of protector and almost fill the role of a parent to them, offering advice, care and protection, sometimes even from top management. Similarly, Hinson-Hasty (2019:131) reports that juggling the task of being faculty advocate for their department and being there to meet their employees' needs, as well as implementing the visions and plans of top management regardless of how it affects the working-class employee, is a job demand that HODs oftentimes struggle with. It is also important noting here that an open-door policy from the principal's side to address issues, makes HODs feel more at ease with having to implement certain things expected by said principal. This is in line with the finding that with supportive behaviour and clear communication from top management (Diebig *et al., 2017:237)* as resources this job demand of implementing ideas from top management can be combatted (Nixon *et al.*, 2011:13).

- **Working with different stakeholders**

In their position, HODs work with a variety of stakeholders, varying from top management, to parents, to staff members, to learners, to the Department of Basic Education. Managing all of these relationships was explained as being challenging. Managing so-called helicopter parents, who want to be too involved in the educational side of things, proved to be particularly challenging. The generation gap that exists between some HODs and young parents also came up as a challenge. Another challenge experienced when dealing with parents is the parents' denial if their

child is experiencing certain academic problems. This results in the parents blaming the teachers and the school, and this conflict has to be managed.

Moving to the relationship with the Department of Basic Education as stakeholder, HODs feel that the department sometimes have unreasonable expectations in the deadlines that they set. This leads to HODs performing certain tasks themselves, instead of having their teachers do them, as they feel guilty expecting something in too short a time from their staff. Another challenge is that HODs find it hard at times to balance the expectations from the Department of Basic Education with what is expected from the school itself, and what they, themselves, know work well in practice, as is explained in the following statement:

FP-I2: ….between the department and the school and to maintain that fine balance between the two……the department says one thing, your conscience says something else and then there is also how something will work in practice and to manage that stress that is quite a challenge

A similar finding was made by Jackson (2019:1) explaining that in his time spent as HOD in a secondary school, meeting organisational demands and the priorities of top management and meeting the needs of the Department of Basic Education, was a daily balancing act.

- **Covid-19**

A factor that brought about additional challenges in 2020, is the Covid-19 pandemic. When asked about the challenges they face as HODs, a lot of participants mentioned factors specifically related to Covid-19, which ranged from teachers being nervous to return to school, to dealing with different levels of academic competence after lockdown (during which certain learners worked hard while others did not work at all), as well as the possibility of not being able to keep learners back if they do not meet the requirements for passing a grade. Other challenges brought about by Covid-19 was mobilising staff to put in extra hours needed for remedial work, changes in the curriculum, a lack of adequate and timeous communication from the DBE, the significant red tape that accompanies teaching, as well as finding creative ways to bring the curriculum content across to the learners. This can be summarised in a feeling of uncertainty experienced by HODs, who at the same time are expected to take the lead. This is explained as follows:

FP-G1: I think they want you to be leader in the, mainly the manner of ..to be …always aware of what is going on, especially now during this Covid time where we …where our planning changed three times from the department…..

In line with FP-G1's comment that she finds it challenging to be a leader during these uncertain times, IP-G1 states:

IP-G1: …….and I think everybody is stressed out at this stage…..you don't know what to do and what to expect and you must now be the leader.

With the pandemic being a new and unknown crisis impacting schools and the role of HODs, no literature was found to compare these findings to, but this could be an interesting new topic of research.

4.3.2 Expectations placed upon HODs by both top management and teachers

HODs seem to carry a significant load of expectations placed on them by both their top management and employees within their departments.

- **General**

HODs experience that their principals expect a lot of them, particularly in terms of their work ethic and as partners in the collective effort to improve their schools. Principals rely heavily on HODs in fulfilling their roles to ensure the smooth-running of the school and creating the best possible experiences and opportunities for learners. As proof of this the following responses were noted:

IP-G1: I think his expectations are quite high……..he wants everything to be perfect….he wants us to be the best that we probably can…….try to give our learners the best opportunity.

Simultaneously, teachers in a department have high expectations of their HODs. They expect their HODs to have answers and solutions to all their questions and problems, and expect their undivided attention. These expectations are clear in the following response:

FP-I2: Everything…..(laughs)….they rely a lot on a person, yes, so I think they expect of you to always have an answer and they expect that one will calmly talk them through any difficult situation and I think they expect of me to really know what we have to do and that I will give that through properly and I will also say that they expect that your knowledge is good enough.

The following response to the question of what their teachers expect of them, is one of several that indicated that HODs are not always sure of what these expectations are:

IP-G1: I must say I wish I knew……..I think sometimes I want to do too much for them……so I don't know really….do they appreciate that I do too much, or do I ….or does it bother them…..

At the same time, HODs are not sure whether they do too much for their staff, whether their assistance is appreciated, or whether it adds to the frustrations of the teachers. HODs also believe that their staff has a warped perception of what an HOD does, possibly feeling that HODs are merely creating tasks for teachers. Furthermore, HODs are frustrated that teachers expect immediate action when they demand something

The more specific aspects that were elucidated on during the discussion about the expectations placed upon HODs, are discussed below.

- **Academic expectations**

HODs recount that it is their responsibility to see that the academics of the school is run according to the expectations of the Department of Basic Education, but that additional work is also expected from them. Simultaneously, HODs experience that their principals expect them to play an active role in working towards the provision of good quality education and a high academic standard. Proof of this is found in the following statement:

IP-I1: She (principal) really expects a good quality education…..she (principal) wants her school to be a school of excellence.

This strive towards being the best in an academic field is in line with what was reported by Corbett (2017:214), who found that it is expected of mid-level managers in the educational sectors to also fulfil the role of industry entrepreneurs and being competitive in the educational market.

HODs are expected to take complete control of the academics within their departments in ensuring curriculum coverage and ensuring thorough planning. This is an expectation placed on them mostly by their principals, but both principals and teachers expect their HODs to have extensive knowledge of the curriculum across the entirety of the department. This is evident in the following responses:

ISP-I2: …..you have to have the knowledge of each subject and each…. academically, it is all the languages, all the subjects etc and innovation that we have from time to time, you know you must give all the academic leadership and ensure that everything gets implemented according to the rules and regulation….

IP-I2: I must be on par with the curriculum, so I need to know what's going on in my phase in every subject in every grade……

This is in line with what is written in the PAM document stating that HODs should guide staff in their departments to implement the curriculum or any curriculum changes successfully (Department of Basic Education, 2016:36-38). Bipath and Nkabinde (2018:7) also reported that this forms part of the involvement and role of the HOD and highlighted the importance of HODs staying abreast of the latest teaching and assessment strategies in ensuring learner success. Corbett (2017:216) also stated that, apart from the students in an HODs' own classrooms, the successful academic outcomes of all the students in an HOD's department also fall under the purview of the HOD.

The sharing of curriculum content with learners during the unexpected Covid-19 pandemic became a major issue with certain additional demands and expectations placed on HODs in relation to curriculum management and presentation. The following comment is proof of this:

IP-I1: …..staff training on a regular basis regarding new, especially with the Covid times that we live in, new ways of teaching, online teaching, so yeah, I'm involved in a lot of those aspects.

This unexpected pandemic brought about additional expectations placed on HODs, but, then again, the PAM documents states that HODs are to ensure that the educational well-being of learners are being taken care of (Department of Basic Education, 2016:36-38) and the educational well-being of learners remains important, even during a pandemic.

- **Administrative expectations**

In looking at the responses during the interviews with HODs, the administrative tasks expected of HODs seem to be quite comprehensive and is also experienced as overwhelming with one respondent (IP-I2) mentioning that HODs have a lot of administration and commenting with: *"Where do I start?".* Some administrative tasks seem consistent amongst the different schools with several HODs and these include pre- and post-moderations, monitoring of work, class visits, drawing up of rosters, attending and managing meetings, control and pre-planning of activities. Some administrative tasks were only mentioned by a few HODs — these include the signing of report cards, budgeting, keeping track of staff leave, control of absenteeism, preparing the school for visits by Umalusi (the board in charge of accreditation of independent schools), and so forth. This magnitude of administrative tasks and what is expected of HODs was explained in the following way:

FP-I3: Yes, definitely, a lot of administrative. Mmmm, you know (principal name)….her planning, her filing, is so up to date….I actually feel….administrative tasks like parent communication, we

have a whole file we have to constantly update, and then also, class visits, file control, you have to have it all on record, filed all the time, any duties, incident reports as well, it is a lot of admin.

The PAM document does stipulate that HODs should assist with the planning and management of general administrative duties in schools and names drawing up of time-tables, taking stock registers, budgeting for the department, collection of money, and conducting fire and emergency drills as examples (Department of Basic Education, 2016:37). Coordination of assessments and assignments between different subjects in a department and work control of staff in a variety of forms are stated as extra- or co-curricular tasks related to HODs (Department of Basic Education, 2016:36-37), which could also relate to administrative tasks. Certain tasks seem to be general within all schools represented, but there were a number of tasks that were school-specific, which ties with the prescriptions of the PAM document that core duties of HODs actually lie in the hands of each school and are based on their needs (Department of Basic Education, 2016:36-38).

- **Leadership**

Leadership seems to be one of the grey areas, where at times it is recognised as an important HOD duty (Mampane, 2017:149), yet it is not stipulated as such in the PAM document, nor are HODs appraised for it as part of the IQMS instrument.

A couple of HODs mentioned that leadership is expected of them and that they realise the importance of fulfilling the leadership role. The following comment serves as proof hereof:

ISP-I1: …what is our vision and our mission in our department…. because you pull your whole phase with you…..you are there as a leader and if you don't have a good goal to work towards, then each one does….that was our biggest problem…each one just went on…….that's my personal opinion….the phase will be as good as the phase head….I also need to set the example and set the benchmark for good quality education.

In light of the Covid-19 pandemic, it seems that the leadership role of HODs have been revived and that, in the midst of this crisis, it is expected of HODs to handle problems or challenges quickly and effectively and to set the pace to get through difficult circumstances. These expectations are clear in the following statement:

FP-G2: I saw with Covid now…they look up to you…they are…some people are…excuse me for putting it this way, it is maybe the wrong word….but some people are completely helpless and they function very poorly under stress and when there is so many new things and changes, some people just can't handle that and they work poorly and seek definite leadership.

Despite all these expectations placed on HODs by their teachers, the responsibility of leading others, technically befall master teachers and senior teachers, and not HODs, according to the PAM document. However, in contrast to what is stated in the PAM document, and more in line with Mintzberg's management role model that lists leadership as a managerial role (Stoner & Freeman, 1989:16-17), HODs confirmed during the interview process that their teachers expect them to lead them. The researcher found that HODs view their leadership role as very important and they seemed proud in having to lead their department, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. This rings true when compared with Du Plessis and Eberlein's (2018:11) findings that more successful education systems are evident in schools with more distributed leadership, which includes HODs leading their departments. Bush (2012) has also found that recent school improvement plans have indicated that leadership has become increasingly important with HODs having to fulfil the role of leading as well as managing.

- **Mentorship**

There is no indication that Grade heads and Subject heads are identified as master teachers, but, in line with the duties and/or roles assigned to master teachers discussed in the PAM document (Department of Basic Education 2016:35), two respondents mentioned that they assigned the task of mentorship to the Grade heads and Subject heads in their phase and merely oversaw the process, with one of these respondents also mentioning that, apart from not having the time for in-depth training and mentorship, she experiences it as a conflict of interest when she fulfils the role of mentor as she is also expected to evaluate and assess the educator after the mentorship process.

In contrast with the PAM document, more than half of the HODs interviewed did, however, mention that the task of mentorship befalls them. This includes a myriad of mentorship roles, ranging from mentoring new staff, younger staff, student teachers, and even current and older staff. The following quote serves as example:

IP-G2: I think they (teachers) definitely also expect mentorship…uhm…..in the sense of…they would like for us to explain things in more detail to them when we explain something or they need to feel that they can come to us and ask…..I definitely think management expects of me to mentor the people under me….to help them…

Whether the mentoring role is performed in the absence of master teachers or merely because they are just performed by the HOD is unclear. Some of these mentoring roles seem fitting for HODs to perform, however, since conducting class visits and guiding staff with curriculum

implementation are core duties of HODs according to the PAM document (§4.3.1.1. & §4.3.1.2). In looking at some responses as mentioned earlier, it was found that certain HODs delegate the role of mentorship to Grade heads, but still seem to be in control of the process.

The importance of HODs being involved in the mentoring process was found by Mampane (2017:129), who reported that HODs who coach and mentor their staff appropriately, successfully create long-term strategies to improve education. At least one respondent echoed this sentiment:

IP-I2: I think I like that …that's the teacher in me…..

Collier *et al.* (2002:24) also found that HODs enjoy the role of mentoring and coaching their subordinates and that they can see the benefits thereof, with the only drawback being their lack of time.

- **Managing a department with its different stakeholders**

As is to be expected, certain expectations are placed on HODs with regards to managing their own departments and certain tasks just come with the position. The smooth running of a department is in the hands of its HOD as is the execution of certain department-specific functions, and events such as parent evenings. It is also expected of HODs to manage the different stakeholders within their departments, which include learners and their issues such as discipline or academic problems, parents and their expectations, as well as teachers with their specific needs. HODs are also expected to take responsibility for anything that goes awry. The following quotes serve as proof of these expectations placed on HODs:

ISP-I1: ……to handle the daily tasks of my department…anything related to my department …from difficult parents to discipline problems…a child struggling with anything.

In addition to the different tasks of managing a department as mentioned by ISP-I1, FP-I2 adds that the ultimate responsibility for the department also lies with the HOD:

FP-I2: …someone has to take responsibility of a phase, so any problems or anything gets channelled to you….

The responsibilities that form part of managing their departments, entail interaction with different stakeholders including teachers, learners and parents. This is in line with the appraisal requirements stipulated in the IQMS document, which states that HODs are expected to foster appropriate relations with different stakeholders (Education Labour Relations Council, 2003:36).

However, interaction with different stakeholders is listed as a core duty and responsibility of master teachers and not HODs in the PAM document (Department of Basic Education,2016:25).

- **Appointment of new staff**

Involvement in the process of appointing new staff, particularly for staff members in their own departments, is yet another expectation placed on certain HODs. This process includes sifting through applications as well as being present during interviews. HODs appreciate this involvement in having a say in who is appointed as they will ultimately be working closely together with these new educators. The involvement in this process is explained as follows:

IP-I1: I'm part of that, so luckily I also do have an input in who we appoint, especially in my phase, so yeah, I also really appreciate that, also from our Executive Head (principal), that she is not only doing the appointments herself, but she also makes use of the phase heads in that phase to deal with the interviews, yes.

It is not abundantly clear in the PAM document who is to be involved in the process of the recruitment and appointment of new staff members and involvement herein was only mentioned by a few participants. However, Corbett (2017:214) has emphasised the importance of mid-level managers' involvement in recruiting the best possible candidates to appoint as teachers in schools in order to remain competitive. The management of resources, which could, apart from teaching aids, also include human resources, is however only explained as a core duty of the principal (Department of Basic Education, 2016:41). Yet, HODs are appraised on whether they manage resources (including human, infrastructure and teaching aids) in an efficient and effective manner (Education Labour Relations Council, 2003:40-41).

- **Staff-related matters**

HODs reported playing a significant role in various staff-related matters and they have vast expectations placed on them in this regard.

Staff development:

Some HODs reported taking on an active role in the development of their staff, be it professional or character development. HODs also recognise and appreciate the need for educators to be empowered in this way as they also have their own goals and this is best explained in the following manner:

IP-I2: I believe in, what do you call it, you know, empowering the educators….you know, they also want to be, maybe a HOD one day or a subject head or something, so that is very important to me

This is in line with Du Plessis and Eberlein (2018:3) who report that HODs are expected to make significant contributions to their own staff's professional development, as they are the managers with the closest interaction with the educators in their department.

Staff training:

HODs are also tasked with the training of young staff and new staff, as well as updating current staff on the latest academic trends. This entails in-service training, which includes general training, as well as training with an eye on new developments or new curriculum implementation. This is experienced as a significant expectation in looking at the following response:

FP-G2: I do a lot of in-service training for my staff.

Staff training as such is not listed as a core duty of HODs according to the PAM document, but it is stated that principals are to take control of developing staff training programmes, which could include in-service training and could then be provided by HODs (Department of Basic Education, 2016:42).

Control:

Control of the staff and managing what they are doing are also regarded as tasks befalling HODs, which was acknowledged during the interviews. These tasks include knowing what the staff is doing and how they are doing it, to see to it that all the teachers are doing their work and to exercise control in general, as explained by ISP-I3:

ISP-I3: …..because you don't just give them the guidelines, but you also have to check and make sure they are following, they are listening…..which they are sometimes not doing….to make sure that they do it the way you want them to do it…..

This control function is also reflected in literature with Tyrell (2014:25) reporting that it is expected of HODs to get staff in their departments to perform certain tasks.

Staff interrelationships:

One participant mentioned that it is her task to sort out disputes arising between staff members in her phase and she explained it like this:

FP-I3: ….if people don't get along, I have to sit and chat with them and you have to climb in there and make sure that everything is ok……

Evaluating and utilising staff:

The evaluation and utilisation and mobilisation of staff within a department to perform certain duties are also considered as tasks that HODs perform and are explained as follows:

FP-G2: ……with class visits for control, so it is the formal, how can I say it….evaluation of the teachers that I do….twice a year it is book control and twice per year class visits…one as phase head and then for IQMS control….

The PAM document (Department of Basic Education, 2016:19) also stipulates that management in education must be able to identify, work with and utilise the professional competencies of their teachers and create a sense of unity of purpose.

Emotional support:

During the interviews it came across that the emotional support of staff is a heavy burden carried by HODs with almost all reporting that this support is expected from them. Emotional support entails being available to their teachers to provide an ear to listen to problems, to show appreciation and gratitude for what the teachers are doing, as well as to affirm that they are performing their duties adequately, while also guiding them through certain situations calmly. This is what was said:

IP-G2: I think then the pastoral role if one can put it that way…motivation….finding out if everybody is doing ok, so actually on a personal level….

This confirms the interpersonal role (Stoner & Freeman, 1989:16-17) played by HODs and also explains how mid-level managers are considered key role players in the training, motivating and encouragement of staff, and improving the well-being of subordinates (Putnam, 2018:25; Mampane, 2017:146).

- **Innovation**

Apart from managing the day-to-day running of their departments, it seems that HODs are also expected to be innovators who introduce new ideas for their departments and schools at large, and who mobilise staff in implementing these new innovations. The following quote proves this:

ISP-I2: ….and innovation that we have from time to time, you know you must give all the academic leadership…..

In line with the abovementioned comment, IP-I2 also mentioned the importance of showing growth:

IP-I2: ….to make sure that we don't stagnate….you know what I mean….we grow…….

In this instance, the researcher questions the role principals and their management style play in the expectations placed upon HODs. Certain top managers dismiss good ideas put forward by mid-level managers (Ashford & Detert, 2015:73) and micromanaging top managers are known to dismiss innovative ideas coming from mid-level managers (Hazucha & Hill, 2014:40). Yet, it is recognised that mid-level managers need to be both the driver and the experiencer of change (Teerikangas & Birollo, 2018:87). It is worth noting the following response here:

FP-I3: ……in the previous school I had a lot of freedom……I could literally pretty much do what I wanted with my phase….if I wanted to plan a function, the function was planned ….if you want to do anything. At this point, I think because there is so much red tape in this independent school, you don't really have that much freedom ….I'd rather go to my principal first to find out if…yes, no, maybe….before we do anything.

ISP-I3 also experienced first-hand that an HOD's role and the freedom they have differ from school to school and explains it as follows:

ISP-I3: ….and I also think it differs from one management team to another….where….I was part of a management team at my previous school as well….definitely played a different role as here at our school …..you have a voice here, I did not have a voice there, but you had to implement certain things as well…..

Despite certain participants mentioning that they are expected to bring new, innovative ideas to the table, it does not seem to be the case everywhere. This expectation seems to be aligned with the management style of the principal and/or the unique situation within each school, as well as the number of years an HOD has spent at a school.

- **Extra-mural activities**

Even though literature indicates (§2.1.3.1.4) that extra-mural activities heavily burden HODs, it seems that the role of coach on the sporting field and in cultural activities does not befall HODs or, at least, that schools are actively trying to lighten this load on the HODs. HODs tend to fulfil a supporting role in this regard. This is evident in the following responses:

IP-I2: I assisted with the netball as well and assisting meaning…I used to coach myself, and now I'm only assisting where needed, because of, you know, the workload and the administration and so on.

ISP-G1: I do coach softball and I am involved with what we call the English evening where I have to arrange it, but other than that, we try to keep the departmental heads out of too many extra-mural activities, but often it happens, like now that there's just not an extra person that can coach the softball….so they need someone until there's a replacement or someone who can replace.

Three respondents mentioned that their extra-mural activities entailed activities of a more academic nature and that it is specific to their phase or department, for example coaching learners in preparation for spelling competitions, Eisteddfods and being involved in the school newspaper. This is exactly in line with stipulations in the PAM document explaining that extra-mural activities of HODs are more academic of nature (Department of Basic Education, 2016:36). The following respondents explained what their academic extra-mural responsibilities entail:

IP-G2: I know HODs' extra-murals can actually be divided into two in the sense of….if we now think of academical extra-curricular things….astro-quiz, spelathon, spelling bee….those things….those things all fall under us as HODs….

IP-G1: Extra-murals….I won't say sport, my extra-murals I would say is like ….I started the spelling competitions, Afrikaans and English…..

The fact that principals are trying to lessen the load of extra-mural activities on HODs could cause problems, as HODs are appraised according to their involvement in extra-mural activities; hence, in order to achieve an outstanding outcome during their appraisal, HODs have to be involved actively in these activities and not just to take the lead or organise (Education Labour Relations Council, 2003:38-39). It could be beneficial for principals to explain that these extra-mural activities can be more academic in nature.

Lastly, it is also worth mentioning that three respondents indicated that they are actively involved in the organising as well as the coaching of various sport and cultural extra-curricular activities, but that it is not expected of them and that they do it by choice, as ISP-I3 explained:

ISP-I3: I'm also involved in extra-murals ….I coach netball and I'm also part of the athletics coaches…middle distance….running and uhm…also part of the cross country…that's also something that I am passionate about…..but…..if I did not have that……I think you must have balance and that's why I like to do that as well….and you also get to know the kids on a very different level….. I don't think it is expected of me…but I do like it……

The observations made in relation to expectations of involvement in extra-mural activities during the interviews, seems to contradict the literature surveyd. Collier *et al.* (2002:24), as well as Du Plessis and Eberlein (2018:13) found that HODs report feeling over-burdened by also still carrying the load of being involved in extra-curricular activities and that HODs are still involved in rigorous extra-mural programmes.

- **Communication**

During the interviews it became clear that HODs experience that communication is a significant expectation both from their teachers and their principals. It seems that teachers expect their HODs to communicate all relevant important information to them as the following responses show:

FP-I2: I think they (teachers) expect of me to really know what we have to do and that I will give that through properly….

IP-G2: ….first of all they expect clarity, transparency to put it that way…so if I hear things at the dept of ed, they expect me to tell them. they definitely expect of us to be transparent with them and tell them exactly what is going on.

Principals' expectations placed on HODs that relate to communication range from communicating guidelines and other information timeously with staff in their departments, as well as good communication with parents:

IP-G2: …he (principal) expects first of all that we must have good communication within the phase and that we communicate the correct things at the correct time with our staff…..

FP-I3 elaborates on what IP-G2 mentions, stating the expectation of communication with parents:

FP-I3: ……parent communication……have the parents been notified….how many parents meetings have you had……where are those minutes?

This all seem to be in line with the PAM document, which stipulates that it is expected of HODs to have good communication skills (Department of Basic Education, 2016:54). It is, however, not specified in which context they should have good communication skills and with whom they should interact and communicate. Nevertheless, Busher and Harris (1999:313) explain that HODs should know how to interact with and get the most out of their employees in their department.

- **SMT expectations**

Being the mid-level managers in primary schools, HODs also form part of the School Management Team (SMT) and identify certain expectations placed on them being part of the SMT. Many of these expectations relate to tasks that fall outside their own departments. Overseeing school health and safety, administering school progress reports, administering school time tables, overseeing IQMS, as well as developing School Improvement Plans were all named as examples. Apart from these specific tasks, HODs, as members of the SMT, are also expected to play a role in strategic thought-processes that will benefit the school. This was explained as follows:

ISP-I2: As member of the school management team we have to think very strategically and give strategic leadership in terms of the school.

This involvement in the strategic planning process of the school does not correlate with the traditional belief that top management is usually in control of the overall strategic development of the school, while mid-level managers are only in charge of the operational day-to-day work of the educators in their departments (Busher &Harris, 1999:306). There seems to be a drive towards including the whole SMT, including HODs, in school development at large. In line with this Myende and Bhengu (2015:642) found that HODs in certain schools are part of the strategic planning process, but this inclusion does seem to depend on the principal of a school and his leadership style (Ashford & Detert, 2015:73; Hazucha & Hill, 2014:40). It is also worth mentioning once again, that mid-level managers in the educational sector are increasingly expected to fulfil the role of industry entrepreneurs and to be competitive in the educational market (Corbett, 2017:214). This is in line with at least two respondents who stated that they play active roles in the marketing of their schools.

Forming part of SMTs, HODs are not only expected to manage their departments independently, but also with the support of the other members of the SMT. They are expected to represent their

departments at SMT level in numerous ways, and provide feedback on what is happening in their departments. This is clarified in the following comments:

IP-I1: ….as part of the School Management Team where I represent my phase, give feedback to my Executive Head (principal) regarding what is going on in my phase……

FP-I3: …..to lead your phase, to run your phase to the best of your ability….to make sure that the phase complies with all school policies and to make sure that they're doing their jobs and that I'm doing my job.

Apart from specific task-related expectations, HODs are also expected to be involved in cohesive and collective decision-making that will contribute to moving the school in a certain direction. However, certain challenges were noted in this regard:

ISP-G1: ….we are there to support each other and then from there hold each other strong, remind each other with all the functions that must take place and if you see someone is overworked, you know, just assisting, offering your help….

FP-G2: …..and then we, as management team…decides on the best for the school… brainstorm all those activities…that we do….

This collective effort, and valuing the voices of the HODs, are noted by Burgess (2013:200) who explains that, even though it is expected of mid-level managers to realise the ideas and vision as set in place by senior management, they are also encouraged to be innovative and willing to take risks. Furthermore, being involved in whole school development is noted by Bush (2012) when he found HODs to be utilised more as managers within the whole school environment.

Certain HODs were however baffled by their inclusion in SMTs, stating they are unsure of what is expected of them in this position and that this sometimes puts them in uncomfortable positions. This was voiced in the following ways:

IP-G1: I thought that we would all work together and we would listen to one another's ideas and we would learn from one another …I also….I'd like to think that the SMT should stand together, because if you can't stand together and if your staff can't see that , then the rest of the school is going to see it. I would, for instance, I would see something, then I would want to warn my principal, if you know what I mean …you know, I would hear something and I would say….Ýou know what….I heard that, but I don't want to say where I heard it ….I don't want to say in what context…I want to say it so that we can make a better team…..

ISP-I3: I don't always think I have anything to say and then when I do ask something because I feel pressurised to table some kind of agenda point, I feel that I shouldn't have…

IP-G1's dilemma is reminiscent of Bush's findings that HODs are often in the uncomfortable position of being sandwiched between the conflicting requirements of the senior management team and their own departmental colleagues (§2.4.3.2). The insecurities ISP-I3 voiced could relate to Feeney's (2009:215) findings that some HODs feel that their ideas are seldom recognised.

Despite the sheer number of often very high expectations placed on their HODs, it is also clear (in looking at the following responses) that principals have their HODs' general well-being at heart:

IP-G2: ….he (principal) always says….his motto is 'Stop going to work, start going to life'…

FP-G1 adds to this in saying:

FP-G1: ….you can rely on him whenever you need assistance… my principal expects me to know that I can rely on his support, all the time…..I definitely make use of his experience…I will definitely come and ask…

Seen in the light of the JD-R theory, HODs might experience all the expectations placed on them as part of the SMT and any subsequent conflict, as overwhelming job demands. As the literature points out, support by their principals might then act as a job resource in combatting the effects of the job demands placed on them (§2.3.2.3). With job resources such as supportive behaviour and clear communication from top management as suggested by Diebig *et al.* (2017:237), the effect of role conflict as a job demand and the physical ill-health symptoms linked to this as mentioned before (Nixon *et al.*, 2011:13) can be combatted.

4.3.3 The nature of role conflict experienced by mid-level management in primary schools

- **Overlapping roles**

HODs feel frustrated with the overlapping of roles and tasks as stipulated in the PAM document. In some cases similar academic, administrative, staff-related and communication tasks are prescribed to HODs, deputy principals and principals, and this leaves HODs uncertain as to what exactly is expected of them in their role. However, HODs do acknowledge feeling empowered in the instances where they must perform duties actually meant for deputy principals and principals,

viewing this as a positive learning experience. Yet, a clear understanding of what is expected of them, remains a major concern and voiced this in the following way:

IP-G1: ….the PAM document ….if you look at that….yeah, then it says things under the principal, but it also says it under the deputy and it also says it under the HOD, so what part of that must I do…what part does the deputy do and what part does the principal do?

This overlapping of roles is apparent in the explanation of the core duties and responsibilities contained in the PAM document (Department of Basic Education, 2016:36-44), with a number of overlapping administrative, personnel-related, academic and communication tasks. Job demands, such as this confusion in knowing exactly what is expected of them, have a negative effect on work engagement, whereas positive events in education, such as a clear explanation of expectations turn job demands into job resources, helping employees, and in this case HODs to remain engaged (Kraimer *et al.*, 2019:149). Clear communication from top management has also been found to be a job resource (Diebig *et al.*, 2017:237) and thus clear communication from principals with regards to what is expected of their HODs, especially in roles overlapping with their superiors will go a long way.

- ***Being overlooked***

It became clear in the interviews with Foundation phase HODs that they feel their principals don't necessarily understand their phase and that they lack support in that sense. It was explained that principals don't understand how Foundation phase learners progress from one grade to the next and that they don't understand the necessity of learning support material and teaching aids in this phase; hence, not approving the necessary expenses in this regard. A feeling of being overlooked is also experienced by Foundation phase HODs as they feel they have reached a ceiling in their growth, but are uncertain of promotion since Foundation phase HODs seldom get appointed as deputy principals or principals. This causes a role conflict and frustration, with Foundation phase HODs working as hard as their fellow Intermediate and Intersen phase colleagues, yet possibly not getting the same opportunities to develop. This feeling was vocalised by one of the HODs:

FP-G2: …..a Foundation phase teacher…even though you are exactly the same post level as the seniors….does not necessarily get accepted as being that high … and you are actually just as much of a HOD and just as much manager….and with as many teachers as a Gr7 teacher…I oftentimes find that Foundation phase staff does not get deemed as high as a big-child educator…It sometimes seems as if you are being looked down upon. I have been for a couple

of interviews….*for deputy principal positions and they will always appoint a senior person…I don't know if they think….the deputy principal can't be a Foundation phase teacher….*

Even though the researcher failed to find much literature to substantiate this statement, it has been noted that the minimum requirements posted in advertisements for the position of primary school principals specifically state that only candidates qualified in the Intermediate and Senior phase field should apply. There is thus reason to believe that this feeling of being overlooked is justified and this phenomenon could be worth researching in the future. Razzak (2015:12) identified the innate desire within HODs to grow within themselves and move up the career ladder in an attempt to satisfy their personal ambitions, and if this opportunity is not present, it could cause conflicted feelings.

- **Mixed messages from top management**

In the event where more than one top manager is present in a school, for instance a deputy principal and a principal or a principal and an owner of an independent school, this creates conflict for HODs, especially when they receive mixed messages or conflicting answers from the different members of top management. HODs also become conflicted if they have a better relationship with one of the top managers or if they feel one trusts them more while the other still feels the need to micromanage them. Another issue is when an HOD who has to go through several different channels to get to an answer, simply goes straight to the top, ending up stepping on certain members of top management's toes. This feeling is voiced by IP-G1:

IP-G1: Am I allowed to go to my principal or not…can I skip my deputy or not…..I don't want to report to two or three persons……I want to report to one person……it just sometimes feel like people are on my shoulder the whole time…..it sometimes feels like ….you get the responsibility, but I don't know ….everybody doesn't always trust 100%.....

This ties in with the belief that while it is expected of mid-level managers to be more innovative, top managers often dismiss their good ideas (Ashford & Detert, 2015:73), or micromanaging top managers derail their innovative attempts (Hazucha & Hill, 2014:40). This correlates with the finding made by Tay *et al.* (2019:54) that each principal comes with their own ideas, vision and expectations. It is also in line with findings by Caughron and Mumford (2012:351) who report that a coercive leader leads to the HOD losing confidence and acting in an insecure way, whereas a principal who involves HODs in strategic planning and decision-making processes, creates a common vision as explained by Myende and Bhengu (2015:641). Role conflict also occurs when different stakeholders of an organisation give a certain employee inconsistent or conflicting

information regarding their job demands (Nixon *et al.*, 2011:8) and role conflict also occurs when conflicting expectations of a certain role are experienced (Sinha & Subramanian, 2012:71).

- **Not having a voice**

Some HODs reported frustration in feeling that they do not have a voice or that their opinions do not count. They feel that they are overstepping boundaries in voicing their opinions and yet, feel that they should have a voice as HOD. While not all top management level employees are reported as making HODs feel this way, there certainly are some top managers who cause this kind of role conflict. The following was noted:

IP-G2: I know that I am a creative thinker….you want to put your opinion on the table, but you don't want to be aggressive, but you want people to know you have an opinion, because why am I a HOD if I keep quiet…..I'm there to represent my phase….I thought that we would all work together and we would listen to one another's ideas and we would learn from one another …I also….I'd like to think that the SMT should stand together….

This relates to Mampane (2017:132) explaining that empowered HODs are independent thinkers, which is an important quality of entrepreneurship, but as De Nobile (2018:396) explains, HODs are not principals or deputy principals and they are challenged by their limited authority and uncertainty over the tasks they are allowed to do or the decisions they are allowed to take. It rings true then that the mindset of the principal of a school determines the involvement of HODs in the strategic planning process and overall management of a school (Myende & Bhengu, 2015:642) in the sense that they must be invitational leaders inviting HODs to be part of the process and must promote collaborative management of their school. However, certain top managers dismiss good ideas put forward by mid-level managers (Ashford & Detert, 2015:73) and micromanaging top managers dismiss innovative ideas coming from mid-level managers (Hazucha & Hill, 2014:40). Seen in conjunction with the JD-R theory, Kwon and Kim (2020:13) found that engaged employees act more innovatively and cope better in facing challenges (which are job demands), hence engagement being identified as a job resource and it is thus worth engaging HODs and giving them a voice within the management structure of a school.

- **Relationship with different stakeholders**

HODs also relayed feeling conflicted in their role with different stakeholders placing different expectations on them. They experience that parents place certain demands on them related to educational expectations without seeing the bigger picture. The Department of Basic Education places certain demands on HODs that are not always practically possible. HODs feel that they

sometimes do so much for their staff but that this is not always appreciated, with teachers merely placing more demands on them. HODs also report feeling pressurised by principals to perform certain tasks which are not always in line with what they know works best within their departments. An example of how this is perceived by a relatively new HOD is clear in the following quote:

ISP-I3: I must say…when you are not part of the management and you are only a teacher, you can put the management sometimes under a lot of pressure, because they're not doing what you think they should….but then, when you are part of management , you understand that, it's not always just clear-cut, it's not always just black and white….there's also grey areas…

These feelings are in line with the statement that mid-level managers feel pressurised from all ends, being controlled by both employees and top management (Kras *et al.*, 2017:224) and that mid-level managers as individuals experience contradictory requests placed upon them in having to meet ambitious productivity targets put in place by top management and yet having to stay sensitive to the needs of their employees (Bossmann *et al.,* 2016:2).

- **Staff matters**

HODs relayed feeling conflicted with regards to certain matters related to staff. One respondent explained that HODs know the staff in their departments best and expressed a conflict in that she sometimes wished she herself, rather than top management, could address her staff. Top management often think it is merely a matter of giving an instruction, whereas an HOD will explain the reasons for the instruction and offer their assistance. Contrary to this, one HOD mentioned feeling bypassed as some of her staff members discuss certain matters directly with the principal. One HOD also felt that her authority was undermined by a staff member who in her personal capacity was friends with the principal and felt that this staff member always had more information than her. She felt that this was unprofessional conduct on the part of the principal. It also became clear that HODs always walk the extra mile for the teachers, but one participant added that she does not even think her staff members fully appreciate everything she does. She voiced this as follows:

IP-G1: …..if I can show you over the years what I've done for my staff for my phase and then sometimes I just think a third of them appreciate it and that is the bad part of the job…..

This correlates with Tyler (2016:49) who reports that HODs often feel that their efforts are underappreciated. It is worth mentioning here too that younger employees have the need for guidance and support from their older colleagues and more specifically HODs in this instance,

who in turn need for more autonomy to fulfil the role of guiding and supporting their younger colleagues (Anthun & Innstrand, 2016:63).

- **Two chairs**

A number of HODs mentioned a conflict in performing the roles of both teacher with normal teaching responsibilities, and HOD who must act in a controlling role. Several HODs said they were unsure of how to manage this as they did not receive any guidance. This is explained well by FP-G1:

FP-G1: …..the only conflict that I do have within myself…the two chairs that I'm sitting on…because I'm a teacher for my Gr3 class and then I were appointed as HOD….

Within literature, Modau (2004:7) relays how he himself managed the roles of being the HOD and an active teacher and that, despite the fact that he still taught actively, he had to exercise a leadership role and take ownership of his department, all without the necessary guidance to do so.

- **Lonely position**

HODs mentioned their position as mid-level manager as being a lonely one as they do not form part of management nor of the normal staff complement. They further mentioned not being able to discuss anything with staff that happened at management level and vice versa. HOD's find it conflicting to be the boss or the authority figure, while also a friend and close colleague. Furthermore, HODs feel conflicted in being a 'normal' teacher, but at the same time having to make important decisions. HODs are therefore clearly unsure of where they fit in as the following comment explains:

ISP-I3: it's a very lonely position to have…..it's a little bit of management and also a little bit of still being a staff member…..standing on that line being manager and then also still being a teacher…..

Above-mentioned response serves to prove the role conflict HODs experience in having to play the roles of both a leader and a subordinate at the same time, as mentioned by (Anicich and Hirsh, 2017b:3).

4.3.4 The nature of role ambiguity experienced by mid-level management in primary schools

- **Limited power**

It is worth noting that it seems that HODs are bound to certain restrictions that relate to their freedom to make decisions. Some HODs mentioned that there are certain structures in place and protocols to follow in decision-making and that they do not have the power to make decisions outside of these policies. HODs also mentioned that they are obliged to stay within the framework of the school's motto, as well as take into account the expectations of the Department of Basic Education and the expectations that parents have of the school, when they make a decision. Even though some HODs declared themselves free to make smaller decisions within their phase, a number of them also mentioned that decisions that are to be made, need to either first be discussed at SMT level or be approved by someone from top management. This can be frustrating and cause role conflict, since HODs would like to know that they are indeed in charge of their phase and allowed to do certain things. This is clear in the following responses:

ISP-I3: There's always a point of discussion somewhere…..I don't feel free to just make decisions at this point.

IP-G1 concurred in saying:

IP-G1: You're in charge of your phase and then….I'm not supposed to be in charge

In looking at the feedback from the HODs, it is worth noting that despite certain HODs having some freedom in decision-making, the issue of keeping within guidelines and protocols kept being repeated. According to the PAM document (Department of Basic Education, 2016:55) only principals/deputy principals are expected to be knowledgeable of applicable educator legislation, regulation and policies, which begs the question how much knowledge HODs will have to ensure that they remain within these boundaries. Ashford and Detert (2015:75) found that mid-level managers often feel that they are not involved in decision-making processes, and in line with this, Ouakouak (2014:313) reports that mid-level managers' successes in a company greatly rely on the power and authority they are given to make decisions (and that a lack thereof can result in frustration and ineffectiveness). In referring back to Chapter Two where the presence of job demands and the role of HODs were explored, it was found that HODs feel overwhelmed as they experience a sense of major responsibility but hold little power. This leads to a feeling of helplessness in bringing about necessary changes and can therefore be identified as a debilitating job demand.

- **Buffer position**

HODs act as a buffer between their teachers and top management at times. They value having the opportunity to first address their teachers when realising something is amiss, instead of badmouthing them at top management. Yet, they feel a responsibility to be loyal towards top management and their principals, who expect them to inform them of any problems. This causes uncertainty of where their responsibilities lie. The following account of this conflicting position was given:

FP-I4: …..you have to be the…..buffer…between the head and your teachers…..and you must always….I mean, you are the head, so you must cover for your teachers……

This conflict of interest is further explained as follows:

IP-G1: I think being an HOD is the most difficult part, because you are in the middle…..

This conflict of interest is echoed by Bush (2012) who identifies HODs as often finding themselves in uncomfortable position of being sandwiched between the conflicting requirements of the senior management team and their own departmental.

- **Keeping up appearances**

In their positions, HODs experience many insecurities and while they are often unsure of how to manage their departments, they feel it is necessary to keep up appearances for the sake of their staff. Even when they need assistance in managing their departments, they fear seeming weak or insecure in the eyes of their principals and/or their staff. It has been reported that HODs would rather contact colleagues at neighbouring schools for help, or try to cram as much knowledge as possible when they are initially employed, to avoid coming across as unqualified for their position, or to keep their staff calm. This situation of keeping up appearances was explained in the following way:

FP-G2: ….the stress was so bad…..the poker face that you keep….everything seems calm, but in the meantime…you know that cartoon picture of the duck on the pond…all calm…but underneath their feet are kicking like mad….that was it….no in-service training…nothing…and I got no help from my principal….

This mirrors the findings of Nkabinde (2013:104) who stated that while it is widely accepted that HODs should manage their departments they are often unsure of what the term management truly means and what the job of managing a department actually entails. Within the framework of the JD-R theory, this kind of role ambiguity is considered a job stressor, which is a hindrance job demand (Bakker & Demerouti, 2011:4). Jackson and Rothman (2005:119) state that role

ambiguity as a job demand leads to exhaustion and cynicism, which in turn can influence psychological well-being, which links to the stress HODs experience due to uncertainty of what their roles entail and the concurrent pressure of keeping up appearances. Considering the last part of FP-G2's response, it is evident that she did not receive support from her principal since he did not explain exactly what was expected of her. As literature has proven, clear communication related to job expectations, and support shown towards HODs from top management would go a long way as a job resource for the HOD (Diebig *et al., 2017:237)*.

- **Insecurity of tasks**

At least one participant mentioned she does not know what her principal thinks of her job performance — whether she is overstepping her boundaries, or whether she is not doing enough. This feeling is to be expected as the roles HODs fulfil are so varied between the different schools. It also correlates with the earlier finding that several duties that HODs, deputy principals and principals are expected to fulfil, overlap. This feeling of insecurity was voiced in the following way by the participant:

FP-I2: …..sometimes you don't know how your principal will see something….does he think you are taking over or does he think you are maybe doing too little…..

It seems as if more than one HOD experience the feeling of not being sure what their duties entail in correlation to other staff- or management members' duties with IP-G1 mentioning the following:

IP-G1: I don't know where my duties start and where it ends…….that is something I would like to know……

Block (2014:333) names ambiguity and job uncertainty as major factors causing HODs' discomfort. Once again, it is worth noting that role clarity is a job resource motivating a person in fulfilling their tasks successfully (van Wingerden *et al.*, 2017:165) and that clear guidelines from principals with regards to what is expected of their HODs will go a long way in combatting the job demand of role ambiguity.

- **Insecurities about DBE expectations**

It was noted that HODs feel very uncertain of what the Department of Basic Education expects of them and their staff. It seems as if communication from the side of the DBE is lacking and that, even when schools do receive information, it is either late or lacks clarity. HODs often find certain expectations from the DBE to be unnecessary, causing needless stress amongst the teachers. An impression was created that while certain schools, specifically those in the city, are deemed as being on the right track and therefore not receiving visits from DBE officials, these schools

would still benefit from visits and feedback on what can, in fact, be improved. HODs at independent school mentioned that their schools are expected to remain within the guidelines of the DBE, but that they do not receive any communication from the department. This results in the HODs having to research the necessary material to ensure they have the latest information or communication, as it is part of their tasks to ensure that their department stays within the necessary boundaries. These uncertainties related to DBE expectations come to the fore in the following statement:

ISP-I1: ….the department of education things….I don't have an idea what is going on there….

Being a representative for the school in interactions with the DBE is one of the recognised roles of HODs (Feeney, 2009:215). It has, however, been found that if top management (or in this case the DBE) does not clearly define the aims and goals, or if there is little clarity in which direction to lead a department, this complicates the HODs' role in knowing how to involve their employees (Terblanche, 2012:101). This ties in with HODs reporting that they have to manage their teachers' stress that results from poor communication of expectations or unnecessary tasks sent through by the DBE.

- **Feels unaccomplished**

HODs reported that with the magnitude of tasks befalling them and with these tasks multiplying every year, they start to feel unaccomplished. They struggle to focus on completing duties or tasks thoroughly and in conjunction with their uncertainty about what exactly their role and duties entail, they end up doing a little bit of everything. This feeling is proven with ISP-I1 explaining her perception of her professional capacity as HOD:

ISP-I1: …..Jack of all trades, master of none…..

Valadez-Torres *et al.* (2017:562) found that heavy workloads (as experienced by the HODs interviewed), together with stress, lead to emotional exhaustion especially in the field of education and amongst mid-level managers. The burden of a heavy workload leads to difficulty prioritising, as also reported by HODs. This can be explained as role ambiguity as a job demand, which can lead to exhaustion and cynicism and in turn can negatively affect psychological well-being (Jackson & Rothmann, 2005:119).

- **No preparation for role as HOD**

None of the HODs interviewed recalled that they had any extensive training before taking up the role of HOD or even thereafter. Most of the participants did not know as newly appointed HODs what the job entailed and what was expected of them. No instructions were given to them and

they did not have in-service training either. A handful of the older HODs employed by the DBE relayed that they had attended a basic training session offered by DBE officials, but that this was very basic and not very helpful in covering everything they needed to know, or preparing them for their role. It does not seem that similar training has been offered since. During the interviews it also became clear that some HODs were hesitant to ask for assistance from HODs at neighbouring schools, especially amongst Afrikaans schools, that are considered to be very competitive. This adds to the HODs' stress since they feel unable to turn anywhere for help. One HOD mentioned learning from the HOD at her previous school. Only four HODs interviewed were in the position of being appointed and knowing they will start their employment whilst their predecessors were still there to share knowledge and experience. A few HODs also mentioned learning from their fellow SMT members, but the general assessment was that HODs developed professionally as they went along. They had to learn things by themselves and they had to learn it quickly, with FP-G2 explaining it as being a *'crash course'* and FP-I2 also explaining it as *'you just oftentimes trial and error'*. The following extracts serve as proof that no significant training was provided and that HODs were very much left to their own devices to learn what to do:

In reply to the question whether she had received any training for her position, ISP-I3 started with a tongue-in-the-cheek reply in saying…..

How was I prepared, like you mean, did I get a document in my first drawer when I opened it…..I think someone stole it

and then continued with:

I was not aware of all the tasks that was involved and it was not explained to me when I got the position as a phase head……

with IP-G1 adding:

What I did, I did by myself……

and IP-I1 elaborating even more in saying:

….never ever in my life did anyone show me or tell me or give me instructions….listen this is wat a phase head needs to do. I got hold of a document once where there's a bit of guidance of guidelines of what is expected of you as a phase head and I was using that as a guideline, but soon realised that there is actually much much more than what is on that list…..

This lack of training and preparation for the role of HOD is also recognised in literature. Du Plessis and Eberlein (2018:11 & 14) state that HODs do not receive the necessary training to enhance professional development and to fill their roles successfully, and that there have been calls for

training to assist HODs to better understand their roles and in a drive to empower them. Role ambiguity has been classified as a hindrance job demand (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017:277) hindering an employee from fulfilling their jobs to the best of their ability. This ambiguity is linked to emotional discomfort in that workers are less satisfied and more stressed with the presence of uncertainty about tasks and roles (Nagar, 2012:56; Urien *et al.*, 2017:142). Block (2014:33) also finds that ambiguity and job uncertainty, more than anything else, cause HODs' discomfort and is the biggest contributor towards their unease. True to the nature of the JD-R theory, where job resources and job demands should be seen in correlation to one another, it is worth noting that role clarity, as a job resource, stands in opposition to role ambiguity, as a job demand, and that it has the ability to combat the negative effect thereof (Van Wingerden *et al.*, 2017:165).

True to the nature of the JD-R theory, which is the theoretical framework used in explaining the phenomenon of challenges in the form of role conflict and role ambiguity HODs as mid-level managers are facing, certain resources will be presented next in order to combat the demands explained in this section. The need for training in the form of courses or formal development platforms has been identified in the previous paragraph and certain suggestions were made by HODs of what to include in such training, which will be explained. HODs made certain suggestions to the DBE and/or their management bodies (if part of independent schools) of what they could do to alleviate the stress that HODs experience and this will also be presented. Finally, HODs also provided certain guidelines to principals of what they could do to reduce role conflict and role ambiguity experienced by their HODs and even provided guidelines to other HODs to make their own lives easier. All these suggestions and guidelines are presented next.

4.4 Aspects to include in formal training and/or professional development of HODs

As indicated in the previous paragraph, HODs confirmed the fact that they did not receive enough training to prepare them for their roles as mid-level managers in the education system. In looking at the following comments it is also confirmed that while training is necessary for newly appointed HODs, on-going training is another pressing need:

FP-G1: I think it would be great if there is an HOD course…you know……I think it would be super if you can have a course where the newly-appointed HOD can go and see….what's awaiting me

In addition to training courses for newly appointed HODs as mentioned by FP-G1, IP-G1 also mentioned the necessity of different types of courses for longer-serving HODs:

IP-G1: …..so I think they could have like ten different courses and you can pick one every month…..

The starting point for these training courses or professional development opportunities could be a general explanation of what the tasks and duties of HODs entail and what they can expect on a daily basis, as ISP-I3 suggests:

ISP-I3: ….just by starting off, give me the frame, because I am a tickbox person, I am a list person, I would like to know what my duties are…what's expected from me…and from there on, we can add…..

After the initial explanation of tasks, duties and expectations, a number of different aspects have been identified by HODs, which can be included in training and these are now explained in more detail.

- **People skills**

More than half of the participants expressed the need for training to have the necessary people skills to work with and handle the different people in their departments, how to address them, how to remain professional, how to handle difficult situations arising between different teachers, and how to nurture human relations in general. HODs also called for courses to be presented that will assist with personality analyses of teachers in their department and the necessary training in how to deal with the different personalities, equipping HODs with the skills to deal with different personalities and having a better understanding of your own personality in order to deal with your staff more successfully. This need was expressed in the following ways by HODs:

ISP-G1: I think definitely….something like understanding human relations, or how to use different personality styles, to hand out tasks according to your personality, to find strengths and weaknesses…..how to use it…..

FP-I1 agrees with ISP-G1's statement and says:

FP-I1: …..but the most important thing for me will be how to work with people…….because, if you can win people's hearts, then they will walk a long road with you…

The necessity for having good skills in working with different people cannot be over-emphasised, seen in the context of the role that a mid-level manager is expected to fulfil. This is reminiscent of the brokerage role as explained in Chapter Two (§2.2.2) played by mid-level managers where they act as a link between different people in different positions within an organisation. Furthermore, mid-level managers also fulfil numerous interpersonal roles ranging from figurehead roles, to leadership roles to liaison roles all of which require good personal skills.

- **Administrative skills**

The HODs interviewed also identified certain administrative tasks they would like or would have liked to receive training in. These include, amongst others, budgeting, work and book control, class visits, putting systems in place, organising and chairing meetings, and even monitoring and moderations. As IP-G1 mentioned: *"When I started, I didn't even know the difference between moderation and monitoring".* The following quote also encapsulates the need for training in the multitude of administrative tasks that need to be performed by HODs:

IP-I1: ……my take on that is, especially the admin……just the admin of a phase head, to do all your book controls, to write your reports for the class visits, the filing systems, all those kinds of things……nobody ever showed me ok this is how you do it, you just go with your gut feeling and hope everything is going to be fine……

This need stands in correlation with the PAM document stipulating that good administrative skills are a necessity for HODs (Department of Basic Education, 2016:54) and HODs' are appraised based on their administrative skills (where they are asked if the quality of their administration adds to the building of an effective institution) (Education Labour Relations Council,2003:40).

- **Academic skills**

Training in all academic aspects was another need identified by HODs, with short, mid and long term planning, the calculation and weighting of marks, the drawing up and presenting of academic schedules, analysing curricula and different assessment methods, were all named as examples. Furthermore, HODs also expressed a need for training to assist them in placing the best possible academic content on the table and to ensure the best possible teaching is taking place to safeguard an excellent academic standard. For all of this to happen, HODs need not only academic knowledge, but also skills to effectively mobilise their teachers to ensure good academic practice in the school and more specifically their department. The following statement emphasises the importance of this:

FP-I4: ….and what I think is….how to guide your teachers to be good teachers, to use their skills, within your….what they can do….within….your prescriptions….they must still be able to be creative, but within the curriculum….not out of the curriculum……

Successful academic results in an HOD's department has been identified as a job resource based on the JD-R theory, which is focused on what creates job dissatisfaction or job satisfaction and how resources or positive factors can counteract the effect of job demands. Being HOD of a

successful department yielding good results has been proven to increase the likelihood of such HODs to successfully work through their challenges as job demands (Dinham, 2007:77). Kerry (2005:72) also draws a link between HODs' feelings of success with the delivery of a successful curriculum to the learners and a positive school experience for the learners in their department. Seen in conjunction with this, Razzak (2015:12) identifies a deep desire within HODs to sustain learner achievement levels in not just their departments, but in their schools as a whole.

- **Time management**

Several HODs also identified the need for training in effective time management and skills to prioritise. This links to challenges regarding work overload and time constraints as explained by HODs earlier, as is shown in this comment:

IP-I2: ….there's so many things, but I would definitely say managing of time, managing your time, especially the fact of, if we're talking about HODs now, or head of departments in schools specifically now, your teaching and being an HOD….how to manage your time properly, between your schooling, your administration tasks and your teachers…..and if you do have extra-murals, yeah, that as well…so I think yeah, definitely time management…..

Even though time management and skills in learning how to prioritise tasks were identified as training needs, one wonders if the workload of HODs should not rather be addressed. In their findings on the perceptions and reality of the work of HODs in secondary schools, Collier *et al.* (2002:24-25) propose that the teaching load, as well as the administrative tasks of HODs should be lessened to allow more time for the other necessary higher-level roles they have to play and duties they have to fulfil.

- **Mentorship**

Ten of the fifteen HODs interviewed would like to see an intensive training programme in mentorship and how to successfully fulfil a guidance role. Mentorship in general should be addressed, as well as more specifically the mentoring of new teachers, the mentoring of older teachers in acquiring new skills or adapting to new ways of teaching, how to guide sensitively and sensibly and how to correct someone without them taking offense. This is all encapsulated in the following observation:

FP-I3: I think there should be something about mentoring ….especially the newer ladies that are coming in…..not very sure…..I watched some class lessons….I was quite shocked with what they're teaching and how they're teaching …..so surely how to mentor teachers….and how to

guide without being condescending ….I don't know if that's possible….without hurting feelings, how would you go about doing this……..

As explained in Chapter Two, it is important to note the unique position of HODs in this regard. They experience the negative effect of job demands and the positive effect of job resources themselves and yet also have the power in their hands as managers to bring about positive work experiences (job resources) to combat the effect of job demands placed on educators in the schooling system (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017:280). Younger employees have the need for guidance and support from their older colleagues and more specifically their managers, who in turn have the need for more autonomy to fulfil the role to guide and support their younger colleagues (Anthun & Innstrand, 2016:63). Another challenge in this regard is that teachers normally view HODs as part of the top management team, which then results in them experiencing the guidance HODs give them as being prescriptive and as criticism, instead of seeing it as a learning process (Du Plessis, 2015:106). Therefore, mentorship training and how to approach a guidance role cannot be overemphasised.

- **Management skills**

Finally, in recognising their position as a manager, albeit a mid-level manager, HODs recognise that there should be some training in general management skills and other management-related issues, for instance how to manage your department and your staff effectively. IP-G2 made the following recommendation in this regard:

IP-G2: ….. especially because in most schools' HODs serve on the management of the school, so I think definitely something like the 'principles of management' will be a good thing….one can almost say like a short course in management…..

Fitzgerald (2009:63) also found that HODs are accountable to their principals for how they manage their department and the successful execution of this role is paramount. Bipath and Nkabinde (2018:5) have, however, also found that several HODs have not had any in-service training and are not qualified either in terms of management or leadership and lack the necessary expertise to fulfil this role.

4.5 Guidelines for the Department of Basic Education and/or other management bodies of schools to reduce role conflict and role ambiguity within HODs in primary schools

The HODs interviewed were asked to provide certain guidelines to the DBE, as well as other management bodies that might govern independent schools in an attempt to reduce role conflict and role ambiguity that HODs experience in their positions. HODs contributed to this in the following way:

- **Clear communication and guidelines**

Clear and timeous communication by the DBE came across as an area that leaves room for improvement HODs reported that it will relieve their stress if the DBE finds ways to communicate more effectively. It was reported that the quality of the content of material shared by the DBE is satisfactory, but it often does not reach HODs timeously. It was also suggested that the different sub-departments within the DBE communicate with one another or have a single database in order to prevent HODs from re-sending the same information repeatedly. The benefits of good quality material and the disadvantages of poor communication is summarised in the following extract:

ISP-I2: You know what….as of late, I am quite impressed with what the department of education is doing…I really am impressed with their weekly planning and I am impressed with their planning per school term, but communication, I think communication….the big thing at our school, is really the communication guidelines….the channels are not always in place….so we struggle…I told you….I have to go and look on the internet …..so maybe…if all schools can just have a network where things can be posted for HODs on a weekly basis…then…you know, even if it is just a little newsletter….indicating what we should look out for….

HODs also expressed the need that the DBE provide clear and comprehensive guidelines as to what is expected of them and what exactly their tasks entail. The guidelines HODs desire include information on curriculum implementation, administrative tasks, and detailed explanations of how the tasks of HODs, deputy principals and principals can be distinguished. Examples of what is expected can be drafted and shared with HODs. The need for guidelines and clarity regarding the roles and expectations come across in the following quote:

ISP-I3: I think for me it's give them that ….the guidelines….a little more reference to what's your responsibilities……and then also, I think also not just to make it the HOD's responsibility to handle

the academics, the emotional and the discipline of the phase…..but to have the other members clearly marked as the discipline person, the curriculum person…..

In alleviating the stress and job demand of ambiguity and uncertainty regarding responsibilities, effective and timeous communication as well as clear guidelines will go a long way as a job resource as is evident in the findings of Bakker and Demerouti (2011:4) who developed the JD-R theory and identified role ambiguity as job stressors being a hindrance job demand. Diebig *et al.* (2017:237), on the other hand, highlight clear communication with regards to job expectations towards HODs from top management as job resources for the HOD.

- **Continuity**

HODs also expressed a need for continuity and less unnecessary changes. Consistency within the DBE, in other words having the Department's different sections working in the same way, would also assist with relieving the stress of HODs. This need for continuity is expressed as follows:

FP-G2: So ….for HODs…..to make it easier for them…it feels sometimes if they change things just for the sake of changing it…and there isn't method in the madness…so find a structure that works and say….this is my 5 year plan…and in the following 5 years I want you to work through it in this way….

When continuity is present, HODs will also know what to expect from one year to the next, which will depreciate role ambiguity further. It is worth mentioning once again, that ambiguity and job uncertainty, more than anything else, cause HODs' discomfort and is the biggest contributor towards their unease (Block, 2014:333).

- **Alleviate workload**

HODs feel that the DBE can play a significant role in alleviating their workload. To start with the DBE can lessen the administrative load and do away with the extensive paper trail that they expect. They can also start putting plans in place and ideas forward to free up the HODs' hands by appointing more staff to alleviate HODs' teaching load. In the case of Foundation phase HODs whose teaching role cannot be taken away completely, the school governing bodies could invest in full-time assistants for these HODs.

FP-G2: ….also hours….definitely less contact time that you can have a free period or two to get to everything…then I would focus on HODs maybe…I almost want to say…less school responsibilities, more management.

It is indeed necessary to address work overload as a job demand when taking into account the findings of literature. Work overload was identified as a job demand amongst managers (Joubert & Rothmann, 2007:58) and was found to lead to exhaustion. Affrunti *et al.* (2018:373) point out that greater job demands relate to greater job stress, which in turn leads to demotivation and energy depletion, which, in turn, has also been linked to deterioration of health (Breevaart & Bakker, 2018:339).

4.6 Guidelines for principals to reduce role conflict and role ambiguity of their HODs

HODs recognised the important role top management plays in their well-being at work and presented guidelines for principals to reduce role conflict and role ambiguity experienced by their HODs. Certain HODs presented these according to what they felt lacking in their positions, whereas others emphasised the fact that they can make the suggestions based on the benefits of experiencing the inputs of their principals first hand.

- **Be involved**

HODs expressed a desire for their principals to have an open-door policy and being available to their HODs when needed. The importance of principals checking in on HODs and creating the necessary platforms for this was emphasised and the suggestion made that principals could even put aside specific times in a week to have meetings with their HODs to touch base with each of them. The following comments serve as proof of the suggestion that principals should involve themselves actively with their HODs:

IP-G2: ….a principal shouldn't just be in his office….he has to get to the HODs and I think it will be good if he can do class visits by the HODs to give tips and info so we can know for sure that our phase is on the right path…

FP-I3: ….be very open, have an open-door policy, especially with your HODs, cause they're going to rely on you a lot….answer the stupid questions, because there will be a lot of those ….and guide…..and listen….

Job resources refer to those physical, psychological, social, or organisational aspects of the job that contribute to the achievement of goals, reduce job demands and associated physiological and psychological costs, or stimulate personal growth, learning and development (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007:312). Autonomy, skill variety, performance feedback and opportunities for growth are named as examples of job resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017:274).

- **Guidance**

HODs themselves also need mentoring, with the principal the ideal candidate for that. HODs will appreciate guidance from their principal who are generally experienced in and knowledgeable of HODs' struggles and their need for professional development. This need for in-service training from their principals is evident in the following statement:

IP-I1: …..and then mentorship……because even a principal was once at a time, started as a phase head and I think there's lots of information and lots of experience that a principal can share with his staff, especially new appointed phase heads and help them and give them direction…..not to say that everything that the principal say is 100% correct, but the experience is so valuable and to share that with your phase heads……

Chilvers *et al.* (2018:438) report that in-service training and opportunities awarded to HODs for professional skills development to cope with their myriad responsibilities are stated as job resources that will alleviate the pressures placed on them. In line with this, Tam (2010:382) reports that training, which can take on the form of attending courses and being mentored, has a positive impact on HODs.

- **Be specific about tasks and expectations**

HODs wish to have more direction when it comes to their specific tasks and what exactly is expected of them in their position at school. This correlates with the PAM document that stipulates that HODs' tasks are school-specific, but also the fact that certain tasks that are explicitly stated in the PAM document overlap between HODs, deputy principals and principals. Therefore, the need for clear guidelines and specific instructions related to their responsibilities at school were mentioned by HODs and can be summed up as follows:

IP-G1: ……..something that I really struggle with, is to know……where does the deputy's …….from where to where is her phase and from where to where is his phase and where do I fit in….so I would maybe like a principal to be more accurate with that…..I don't know where I fit in… because I want to do my own work…and I want to do it correct, so I want you to communicate with me and tell me everything I need to do……

Ambiguity, due to unclear job descriptions, and lack of guidelines related to roles and responsibilities are found to be particularly vexing to mid-level managers (Sy and D'Annanzio, 2005:43). Mid-level managers are unsure of what is important in their jobs, and how to understand their roles, and in such struggle to prioritise duties at certain given times (Bossmann

et al., 2016:5). This job demand is also evident amongst mid-level managers in education with most HODs lacking a clear job description and with principals delegating tasks ad hoc (§2.3.2.3). Role ambiguity, as a job demand, could lead to poor engagement on the side of the HOD, but job clarity, as a resource, could go a long way in enhancing other job resources (Lillejord & Borte, 2020:84).

- **Alleviate workload**

HODs believe that their principals have a lot of power to alleviate at least some of their heavy workload. To start with, they should be more involved, which could lead to them becoming more aware of the HODs' workload. From there they could delegate tasks and appoint teachers to take over certain tasks that should not necessarily be done by HODs. Principals should also free up their HODs from actual teaching in order to allow more time for HOD duties. In the event where the teaching load cannot be relieved, for instance with Foundation phase HODs, principals should work toward appointing full-time assistants for them. Just the feeling that principals are looking out for them and are sensitive to their needs with regards to work overload goes a long way as is evident in the following comment:

ISP-G1: He's (principal) constantly walking around, talking to us, asking …are you still ok…..are you coping, your tasks…should we take away some of your tasks….he's constantly asking….can we train other people to take over some of your tasks….because he believes in empowering the staff and he feels there's often work that our HODs are doing that general teaching staff can do as well…..

With work overload named as one of the biggest challenges experienced by HODs in the interviews conducted during this research, and as confirmed in literature, with Collier *et al.* (2002:24-25) explaining that time HODs do not have sufficient time to deal with all their responsibilities, it is worth noting that principals should do everything possible in their power to try and alleviate work overload. This could avoid a scenario described by Corso-de-Zúñiga *et al.* (2017:12), who explain that employees finding themselves unable to cope with demanding situations at work, experience inner resignation and a feeling that work has lost its meaning. An effort towards positive work engagement should be focused on, with Kwon and Kim (2020:13) reporting that engaged employees act more innovatively and cope better in facing challenges.

- **Foundation phase-specific guidelines**

Foundation phase HODs have additional guidelines to propose to principals, seen in the light that most principals are seemingly trained in Intermediate and/or Senior phases. Foundation phase HODs often feel that they and their departments are misunderstood and that their viewpoints are not appreciated due to this lack of understanding of how they function. Subsequently, they would like to suggest that their principals take the time to listen and learn, which could be done by visiting the Foundation phase classes to experience its reality. They suggest that principals open themselves up to be taught and to take guidance from their Foundation phase HODs. Employed as a Foundation phase HOD herself, FP-G1 explains this need in the following way:

FP-G1: ….to be a Foundation phase teacher, so I have to guide my principal to learn how, before we have a meeting with a parent…because he doesn't always have that practical background that I have….so I have to guide him with that….and I think principals need some more time in class visiting in Foundation phase, to actually really understand what it is …what it's taking from a teacher….to be a Foundation phase teacher…..I think principals need some more guidance in being a principal for the Foundation phase….educators as well, but I think that's where my role comes in, you know, to be in the middle of that and to guide him to be able to give the professional advice, because I do have the experience in that field that he doesn't necessarily have…..

Little research has been done on the fact that Foundation phase HODs are rarely appointed as primary school principals, and this topic needs to be investigated. Moosa and Bhana (2017:382-383) have, however, found that men are traditionally placed as managers within the educational profession, but that men are unlikely to be found as being Foundation phase teachers.

- **Trust**

HODs would also like to see that their principals trust them and believe in them. They want to be given responsibilities and then know they are trusted. In listening to them and supporting them, principals will also prove that they trust their HODs. HODs also stated that they know the teachers in their departments better than principals, and therefore would prefer to have the opportunity to address issues with teachers in their department first, or to at least be involved when such circumstances occur. HODs often have the knowledge of why a certain staff member reacted in a certain way. This desire for being trusted by their principals, is explicit in the following quote:

IP-G2: I think one suggestions for the principal would be…..trust your HODs 100%.....choose their side first before you choose anybody else's side….

The desire for trust, and to be an active participant, even in defining their roles, are reiterated in the literature. Kelley and Salisbury (2013:310) found that HODs feel a deep sense of satisfaction when they are invited to be an active participant in the process of defining their roles, which leads to them being more engaged and committed to their roles. The feeling of contentment of HODs as a job resource is embedded in the trust top management has in them, as well as top management's understanding of the relational nature of their position of authority as HODs functioning within and as part of their departments (Branson *et al.*, 2016:143).

4.7 Guidelines for HODs themselves to make their own lives easier

It seems that HODs have an innate arsenal of certain personality or character traits that stand them in good stead to face daily challenges or insecurities. One wonders whether these traits develop over time or if HODs are selected and appointed based on these traits and their outlook on working life. It came across during interviews that HODs are go-getters who get the job done. They are energetic, solve problems easily and show strong leadership qualities, despite all the challenges they face. This becomes clear in the following renditions of how HODs explain their perceptions of their roles:

IP-I1: …..and also I'm a very pro-active type of guy, so if I see there's something that needs to be addressed and nobody's doing that, even if it's not my duty, I'll take the course and I will start with the process of getting the things that needs to be done….let them be done.

This pro-active personality also comes to the fore in the following statement by IP-I2:

IP-I2: ….I won't say I question whether it is my task, but I do take on more than I have to … …I will take on more…even if it is not my job.…I know it's not my job….but you know what….I am here to build a school…. I think that's the leader in you, you know….you just do it, you're not a follower, you're a doer…and I think that's why most of the HODs are in the positions they are in …it just tells you one thing , we are all appointed there for a reason, and I think…not everyone…like I said, I do believe in staff development, but not everyone can be it…

This notion of HODs taking control of their own situations in a positive way is also demonstrated in literature. Nielsen and Cleal (2011:351) found that mid-level managers' own approach towards tasks could be a job resource in the sense that a transformational leadership style counters negativity, while Han *et al.* (2014:482) argue that a pro-active personality can be a personal resource to combat the demand of role conflict.

In being more specific about assistance HODs themselves can give to others, or newly appointed HODs, the following guidelines are laid down:

- **Good planning and effective time management**

The need for proper planning cannot be overemphasised. HODs claim planning to be the starting point of success in their daily working lives. They suggest that HODs create structure in their lives, by planning ahead and setting a routine. The need for checklists was also added as part of this planning process. HODs added that if you planned your day, it makes whatever comes up during the day easier to manage, even if unplanned events occur. This is explained as follows:

FP-G2: ….so I would also add this for my HODs…that you must create structure and planning in your day….that is very important…you must be a planner….

Even when something does not go according to plan, FP-G1 still points to the importance of planning:

FP-G1: …..you are so overwhelmed when you look at all the marking you've got to do with your own class, the preparation, the assessment, you know, the meetings that you have to attend…at first I have to say that you have to be a very meticulous planner…you have to plan very well…..plan your day and you will discover that all your planning sometimes you walk away and your day didn't go…not even the first part of the day went as you wanted, it was turned upside down by something that happened that you couldn't plan, but plan for you day…..

HODs also want to emphasise the importance of good time management. They suggest that HODs decide ahead of the time what time to spend on own class work and on management or HOD work, and to stick to this schedule. It is also suggested that HODs use what they already have and to add or build on this, rather than redo all the work every year. FP-I4 describes this as to: *'work smarter, not harder'*. HODs should teach themselves to prioritise and must accept that they cannot get to everything. This suggestion of time management is best explained in the following manner:

FP-I5: And time management…that is a big thing…..I know because I struggle with it…if you have a routine….once you have a routine….make one…..and create certain times…such as….for this length of time I am going to work on my own class work…and for this length of time on my HOD work…and keep to that…keep a routine….

In addition to the importance of time management as mentioned by FP-I5, ISP-I1 mentions the importance of learning to prioritise:

ISP-I1: …..I think one has to….your time management is very important and to prioritise. You are not going to get to everything, so you must just realise it and decide what is most important…where is your biggest problem at that exact time, prioritise, make lists and then just do it…..

Research has shown that being efficient is a personal resource affecting one's working life and that efficient employees were more engaged at work and subsequently more efficient with job crafting, which acts as a job resource (Rošková & Faragová, 2020:158). Both good planning and effective time management on the side of an HOD can be seen as efficient actions in overcoming certain challenges and job demands, and ensures that the HOD becomes more efficient.

- **Create a team**

The HODs interviewed also felt the need to remind other HODs that they are not an island. They should use their teachers to create a cohesive team who collectively work towards the goals of the department. This should start with being good to your staff and leading by example, but at the same time recognising that you cannot do everything by yourself and getting *'people in place that can make your load lighter'* (ISP-I3). HODs should know their staff, their strengths and weaknesses and appoint certain teachers to be main teachers in certain subjects. These teachers can take control of the planning, assessments, and so forth. HODs should also remember that they should trust their staff, show appreciation towards them, and give them affirmation when tasks were well-executed. An innate respect for one another must be created within the team and teachers should trust that their HOD will listen to them, but will also ultimately take the best decisions that will benefit the whole team. The suggestion to work towards creating a team spirit within one's department is best described by FP-I2:

FP-I2: I think that one must have an open relationship with your staff….I think one mustn't try and be the boss….they must understand that you are a team and that one just has to take the responsibility for the team…..I think if an HOD tries to be bossy then it will be the fastest that no one wants to work together any longer and that things go awry, so I think everybody must get to the point realising we are a team and everybody pushes one another, with no one needing to pull. It must be a team sport……

This stands in correlation to Gjerde and Alvesson's argument (2020:147) that respect, trust and belief in their HODs create a responsiveness from the teachers in the department, which ultimately makes the HODs' tasks easier, therefore being seen as a job resource.

- **Look after yourself**

Finally, the interviewees highlighted the importance of HODs looking after themselves or in the words of FP-G1: *'Be good to yourself in the first place'.* HODs are encouraged to keep a balance, taking time for themselves and their families and reminding themselves that God called them to fulfil more than one role. They should know where to draw the line and not always take on more work. They are also reminded not to be so hard on themselves. Looking after yourself first in order to fulfil your professional role as HOD better, is something that comes to the fore in the following extracts:

ISP-I2: I would say, in terms of your personal life…and that fuel that we need in our own personal tanks….get a balance somewhere…where you can do the work that you have to do, but at the same time pay attention to yourself as person and your own development…..

Elaborating about this fuel needed by HODs in their own personal tanks, FP-G1 states:

FP-G1: …..but be good to yourself….and sometimes when I feel so overwhelmed, that I think I'm not in the right job….just lock your door, just take your handbag and nothing else and just, you go and you treat yourself with something you like…you read a book, you sit in a park, you watch a movie, you go to bed early, you treat yourself with a milkshake or a cappuccino….or you do…just be good to yourself…because if you don't do that….you have an empty cup and you can't pour from your own empty cup to fill your educators' or your parents' or your learners'……

The importance of self-care within stressful work environments is also recognised by Butler *et al.* (2019:119), who highlight the importance of developing a self-care plan according to personal needs and to take the mindful, deliberate step to set this plan into motion. Butler *et al.* (2019:119) further explains how a self-care programme will have a positive impact on all domains of an individual's life, including their professional life; hence, the importance of taking this necessary step. Self-care should be an ongoing process and not just a once-off occurrence. One should continue investing in oneself and evaluate what works and what does not in promoting your own happiness and well-being.

4.8 Summary

In this chapter, the researcher presented the data, the data analysis as well as the results of the analysis. The focus fell on making sense of the data in order to answer the research questions as stated in Chapter One. These research questions were related to the challenges HODs face in fulfilling their daily tasks, the expectations placed on them by different stakeholders, as well as the nature of role conflict and role ambiguity as it relates to mid-level management in primary schools. Throughout the chapter comparisons were drawn with the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. Furthermore, a relation was drawn between the JD-R theory with role conflict and role ambiguity that HODs experience, indicating challenges and expectations that act as job demands, but also highlighting job resources that have the potential to combat those job demands. To end off the chapter, guidelines were formulated for school governing bodies, principals and HODs themselves based on what HODs relayed during the interview process, as well as and what was found in literature.

Chapter Five summarises the most important aspects of this study and presents the findings in relation to the research aims. To conclude the chapter, the limitations to the study will be discussed, as well as recommendations brought forth by the outcome of the study.

CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter Four, the content analysis and identified themes were discussed. In this chapter the research is summarised and the findings are presented in line with the aims of the research and the research questions. Recommendations for the different stakeholders are made according to the empirical findings, as well as in the literature reviewed. Limitations to the study is mentioned and the chapter concludes with the implications of the findings of the study.

5.2 Summary of the research

The purpose of this section is to provide a summary of the most important aspects of the different chapters in the research. In Chapter One the research was introduced by providing the problem statement and rationale for the study, which entails the challenges faced by and expectations placed upon HODs, as mid-level managers in primary schools, to determine the extent of role conflict and role ambiguity they experience (§1.2). From this problem statement and rationale, the research questions were formulated (§1.3) and the research aims and objectives identified (§1.4). Key concepts including role conflict (§1.5.1), role ambiguity (§1.5.2), mid-level management (§1.5.3), challenges (§1.5.4) and expectations (§1.5.5), were clarified. The theoretical framework that underpins the study, namely the JD-R theory and its relevance to the study was briefly explained (§1.6) followed by a short description of the research design and methodology (§1.7). The population and sampling strategy used in the study was explained (§1.7.3), followed by an explanation of the data collection method that was utilised (§1.7.4), as well as the data analysis procedure followed (§1.7.5). The issue of trustworthiness was also addressed (§1.7.6), followed by an explanation of the ethical considerations considered (§1.7.7). Chapter One concluded with a brief explanation of the contribution of the study (§1.8).

Chapter Two presented the conceptual and theoretical framework of the study, starting with an introduction to mid-level management (§2.1). The concept was clarified (§2.2.1), followed by a description of how mid-level managers fit into organisations (§2.2.2) and, more specifically, how mid-level managers fit into the school system (§2.2.3). Thereafter the roles and responsibilities of HODs, as mid-level managers in schools were explored (§2.2.4). The theoretical framework used for this study was introduced (§2.3) with specific focus on the JD-R theory (§2.3.1); first explaining job demands (§2.3.1.1), then job resources (§2.3.1.2), and a discussion of the JD-R theory in practice (§2.3.1.3). Following on from this, the JD-R theory was explored more specifically, with an emphasis of the field related to this study, namely mid-level management in

education (§2.3.2). Job demands (§2.3.2.1), job resources (§2.3.2.2) and how both influence HODs (§2.3.2.3) were focused on next. After presenting literature findings related to the theoretical framework, the chapter explored the concept of role conflict (§2.4) starting with a clarification of the concept (§2.4.1), and an explanation of role conflict experienced by mid-level managers in organisations (§2.4.2). Expectations of mid-level managers in organisations (§2.4.2.1) and challenges experienced by mid-level managers in organisations (§2.4.2.2) were subsequently investigated. In correlation with the focus of this study, literature that relate to role conflict experienced by HODs within the school as an organisation (§2.4.3) was discussed with expectations placed on HODs (§2.4.3.1) and challenges experienced by HODs (§2.4.3.2) highlighted. The chapter then honed in on role ambiguity (§2.5), focusing on studies conducted on role ambiguity experienced by mid-level managers (§2.5.2) and HODs (§2.5.3).

Chapter Three addressed the research design and methodology used in this study. A comprehensive explanation of the research paradigm (§3.2) as well as the research design (§3.3) was given with constructivist-interpretivism underpinning the study, and a qualitative approach used to explore the nature of role conflict and role ambiguity experienced by mid-level managers in primary schools. The population and sampling techniques used were specified and the purposive sampling process was explained. The data collection procedure, with specific focus on individual semi-structured interviews, was discussed. The interview process was explained in more detail (§3.5.3) followed by a description of how the data analysis procedure took place (§3.6). Hereafter, the issue of trustworthiness was addressed (§3.7) in more detail and the chapter concluded with an in-detail explanation of the ethical considerations (§3.8) that was considered.

Chapter Four presented the empirical data by way of an analysis and discussion of data collected during interviews. Firstly, the process of data analysis was explained and the participants introduced (§4.2), followed by a discussion of the identified themes (§4.3). The discussion of the identified themes took place under the following headings:

i. Challenges faced by mid-level managers in primary schools in managing their departments (§4.3.1);
ii. Expectations placed upon HODs by both top management and teachers (§4.3.2);
iii. The nature of role conflict experienced by mid-level managers in primary schools (§4.3.3); and
iv. The nature of role ambiguity experienced by mid-level managers in primary schools (§4.3.4).

The chapter also identified aspects to include in formal training and/or professional development of HODs (§4.4). Furthermore, guidelines were provided for the DBE and/or other management bodies of schools to reduce role conflict and role ambiguity experienced by HODs in primary schools (§4.5), guidelines for principals to reduce role conflict and role ambiguity experienced by their HODs were presented (§4.6), and finally, guidelines were presented by HODs themselves to make their own lives easier (§4.7).

Chapter Five offers a summary of the integrated interpretation of the research. It presents and correlates, where possible, the findings of the literature study, and the data analysis. Recommendations are made for the different stakeholders based on the findings of the study and the chapter concludes with an explanation of the limitations of the study.

5.3 Findings of the research

The findings as presented here have been drawn from the literature review as well as the data analysis. To answer the main research problem the findings are being discussed in relation to the individual research questions as presented in Chapter One.

5.3.1 Research Question 1

The first research question was aimed at exploring the nature of role conflict and role ambiguity that mid-level managers in primary schools experience. These are the main findings:

5.3.1.1 Mid-level management in primary schools

The Department of Basic Education (2016:92) stipulates in its Personnel Administrative Measure (PAM) document that educators fill a post level 1 position, HODs a post level 2 position, deputy principals a post level 3 position and principals a post level 4 position. This places HODs in the middle and implies that they would be the mid-level managers in a school (§2.2.3).

5.3.1.2 Roles and responsibilities of HODs in primary schools

Despite certain specific roles and responsibilities assigned to HODs, the PAM document specifies that the core duties and responsibilities of the HOD lie in the hands of each school and depends on their specific needs, which leads to a wide variety of roles and responsibilities that could be and are indeed assigned to HODs (§2.2.4.1). It has also been deduced from literature that HODs end up fulfilling several tasks assigned to master or senior teachers, who are not present in primary schools.

Appointed HODs are also recognised as managers according to the PAM document, and yet, literature has proven that certain managerial roles do not befall HODs, including the role of leadership, entrepreneurial roles, decision-making roles and roles related to strategic planning. Furthermore, the roles of HODs are explained as contradictory in the sense that it has a positive influence within schools, and yet, HODs report a lack of support and numerous other challenges, including being burdened with responsibilities while lacking the necessary authority, being unsure of their priorities, and an inability to manage the employees in their departments (§2.2.4.2).

5.3.1.3 Role conflict

It was found that HODs in primary schools experience role conflict with regards to accountability. They are supposed to account to their principals in the management of their departments, but are also accountable to the teachers in their department to advocate for their needs (§2.4.3). HODs are constantly trying to balance meeting organisational demands and priorities and meeting the needs of the department. Within the literature review it also came to the fore that HODs' roles are veering more towards leadership, in the sense that they are expected to lead their departments towards a certain goal, which is ultimately top management's bigger vision, while leadership also entails taking a stance and pursuing matters according to their own beliefs (§2.4.3). HODs' duties also seem to encompass a mentorship role; however, neither leadership nor mentorship are identified as core duties of HODs in the PAM document, resulting in role conflict (§2.4.3). To add to this contradiction, during the IQMS process, HODs are appraised on their leadership and mentorship skills, even though these skills do not form part of their core duties.

The administrative burden placed on HODs also cause role conflict, as HODs know that administrative tasks are part of their duties, but the sheer amount of it takes away from their other responsibilities, leading to uncertainty as to what to prioritise (§2.4.3.1.1). Even though the PAM document specifies HODs' extra-mural activities to be more academic of nature, HODs are actively involved in numerous other extra-mural activities and are appraised accordingly, adding to this conflict of not knowing which tasks to focus on (§2.4.3.1.4). Role conflict experienced amongst HODs also entail that certain principals expect HODs to be creative and innovative, and take part in the strategic planning processes of the school, whereas others HODs report experiencing their principals to micromanage them — not allowing them to think for themselves. Furthermore, the leadership style of certain principals seems to dictate the roles HODs will fill (§2.4.3.1.8). Another conflict experienced within their role as mid-level managers is an apparent misconception that exists among their employees of what the position and powers of their HODs

entail. Employees often view mid-level managers as part of top management and policy makers, whereas mid-level managers themselves view their position as powerless in-betweens, often unable to provide the necessary answers or give the needed permissions to their teachers (§2.4.3.2). HODs also find it conflictual to be considered as managers, but then also expected to act as mentors to their staff (§2.4.3.2). Lack of time and work overload are contributing factors to the role conflict HODs experience as they have managerial roles to fulfil, but also need to continue with teaching duties (§2.4.3.2).

These conflicting interactions and experiences which HODs have with top management and the teachers within their department, form part of the social and organisational aspects of a job that require sustained psychological effort, which are classified as job demands that add to strains such as exhaustion and job-related anxiety (§2.3.1.1).

5.3.1.4 Role ambiguity

Ambiguity and job uncertainty, more than anything else, cause HODs' discomfort. This is not surprising, considering that context seems to dictate the role played by HODs in each school. Even the PAM document states that the HOD's job description is individual and school-specific according to the needs of each different school. In correlation with this it was found that each school is unique in their expectations of their HOD. HODs often do not receive training in their roles, and with the ever-changing nature of their position, they are left feeling insecure and uncertain. Once again, it seems that the leadership style of a principal in a school determines the confidence with which their HODs perform their roles. Coercive leaders create insecure HODs who experience role ambiguity in their roles. Furthermore, it was reported that incomplete pre-planning on the part of senior management results in HODs not knowing what to do in leading their department and what direction they must follow in fulfilling their leadership role. This uncertainty leads to a lack of engagement on the side of the HOD, which acts as a job demand (§2.3.1.1).

5.3.2 Research Question 2

The second research question aimed at identifying the challenges mid-level managers in primary schools face in their attempts to manage their departments (§1.4). The following main findings from the analysis of data were made:

5.3.2.1 Work overload

The sheer number of tasks that befall HODs and in related to that, time constraints, are extremely challenging. They are overburdened and struggle to prioritise and identify the most important aspects of their daily tasks. Heavy workload, as a job demand, has also been found to lead to emotional exhaustion especially in the field of education and amongst mid-level managers (§2.3.2.1).

5.3.2.2 Management of department

HODs reported that it is challenging to manage their department in its totality, specifically referring to the fact that they must have knowledge of all the subjects taught across all the grades within their department (§4.3.1). An additional challenge related to this is to encourage all the educators within their grade to work together towards a common goal. The inclusion of younger and inexperienced staff within a department is challenging, as are the perceptions of staff and learners of HODs' positions as management. Staff member and learners view HODs as authority figures and are fearful to approach them. HODs also find it cumbersome to continuously check up on their staff and to remind them to perform certain duties.

5.3.2.3 Delegating and utilising staff

HODs find contradictions inherent in delegating to and utilising their staff (§4.3.1). They find it hard to identify their staff members' strong and weak suits in order to utilise their teachers more effectively, and end up performing tasks themselves or micromanaging situations; in other words not delegating. This results in their staff turning to them at every challenge, and being unable to solve even the smallest of problems — with HODs often not having the time to deal with all these minor problems.

5.3.2.4 Academic challenges

HODs see it as a challenge to have knowledge of all the subjects within all the grades taught in their department (§4.3.1) and to assist teachers in selecting suitable learning material for their specific subjects. Curriculum implementation and especially the introduction of a new curriculum and the management thereof presents a huge challenge to HODs.

5.3.2.5 Own teaching

HODs also find it very challenging to continue acting as teachers and balancing the tasks and responsibilities that come with in-classroom teaching, with the role of HOD and the responsibilities

associated to the position (§4.3.1). Both these roles entail a magnitude of tasks to be performed (many after hours). However, apart from that, HODs find it hard to support their staff and manage their departments at school within school hours when they also have to teach themselves. Once again, this is linked to the job demand of work overload experienced by HODs.

5.3.2.6 Duties outside of HOD position

Notwithstanding some HODs indicating that they enjoy some additional challenges and learning from it, HODs recounted that it is challenging to be increasingly utilised in functions outside of their position (§4.3.1). This involves HODs overseeing certain areas that span across the whole school and not just their departments. The challenge experienced in this regard is related to HODs not having the necessary skills and experience to deal with matters outside of their department. Added to this, HODs feel frustrated with the overlapping of roles and tasks as stipulated in the PAM document with some of the same academic, administrative, staff-related and communication tasks expected of HODs, deputy principals and principals – leading to uncertainty among HODs of what exactly is expected from them (§4.3.3). The literature review confirmed that the more uncertainty there is about the tasks, roles and levels of performance, the less satisfied and more stressed workers are. Stress is related to role ambiguity and role ambiguity exists when employees are uncertain of what is expected of them (§2.3.2.1). Role ambiguity as a job demand leads to exhaustion and cynicism, which in turn can negatively influence psychological well-being.

5.3.2.7 Mentorship and leadership

Mentoring and leadership, which are not tasks assigned directly to HODs, but rather to master and senior teachers, also present a challenge (§4.3.1). Mentoring younger, inexperienced teachers, or older staff who need guidance in adapting to new ways of teaching, take up a lot of time. As explained earlier, HODs already struggle with work overload and lack of time, and insufficient remuneration for all these tasks were added as a challenge with regards to the time it takes to mentor. HODs also find the task of mentorship challenging as they have to mentor several different teachers with many different personalities. With regards to leadership, it has been found that the biggest challenge lies in staff with strong personalities who are unable to accept authority and who are continuously challenging the authority of the HOD.

5.3.2.8 Position in the middle

Being positioned in the middle, as mid-level manager, HODs struggle with a sense of belonging (§4.3.1), feeling a kinship with both top management and the teachers. In some instances, they

have the authority in which they manage their staff and yet, feel a need to protect their teachers from top management. Added to this is the frustration certain HODs feel when they have several managers above them who send mixed messages or provide conflicting answers (§4.3.3). As a result of this sense of a lack of belonging, HODs mentioned their position as being a lonely one; not being able to discuss what happens at management level with their staff, and vice versa (§4.3.3). According to the literature reviewed, HODs often struggle with juggling the task of being a faculty advocate for their department and implementing the visions and plans of top management, regardless how it affects the teachers (§2.3.2.1).

5.3.2.9 Working with different stakeholders

Being the mid-level manager in the school places HODs in a position where they have to interact and work with various different stakeholders related to the school, including parents, learners and the DBE. Having to manage all these relationships places a significant strain on HODs. Seeing to the needs of parents and keeping them satisfied as the clients are challenging. Furthermore, HODs find the expectations of the DBE and the time frames they prescribe to be challenging. They also find it hard at times to marry the expectations of the DBE with the needs of the parents, the expectations of top management, and with what they know is practicable. HODs feel frustrated when their teachers place more demands on them as HODs being part of SMT without seeing the bigger picture. Simultaneously HODs also report feeling pressurised by principals to perform certain tasks that are not always in line with what they know works within their departments (§4.3.3).

5.3.2.10 Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic brought along new challenges for HODs in 2020 (§4.3.1). HODs found it increasingly difficult to manage their departments academically particularly related to the day-to-day running of the new rules and regulations. These are uncertain times for HODs as well, who do not have all the answers, while it is expected from them to make decisions and take the lead within their departments.

5.3.3 Research Question 3

The third research question was aimed at exploring the expectations placed upon HODs from both senior management and educators in the HOD's team (§1.4). The following main findings were made:

5.3.3.1 General

It was found that HODs experience that their principals have high expectations of them in general (§4.3.2), especially in contributing to the maintenance of high standards and working towards creating schools of excellence. It was also found that teachers expect a lot of HODs in the sense of having extensive knowledge and having answers on any possible problem, readily available (§4.3.2).

5.3.3.2 Academics

In terms of academic expectations, HODs need to ensure compliance with the prescriptions of the DBE related to curriculum implementation, while they are also expected to go the extra mile and work towards setting their school apart from other schools (§4.3.2). In order to manage curriculum implementation within their department, HODs should know the curriculum across all the grades and all the subjects within their department (§4.3.2). It is also expected of HODs to ensure curriculum implementation despite several challenges and whether it fits their department. This was evident during the Covid-19 pandemic, where HODs experienced the continuous presentation of the curriculum as an added expectation (§4.3.2).

5.3.3.3 Administration

HODs carry a heavy load with regards to administrative tasks that they are expected to fulfil (§4.3.2). Certain tasks are standard across different schools, whereas others are school-specific, but overall it seems as if the role of HOD comes with a significant administrative burden.

5.3.3.4 Leadership

Even though not stipulated as a core duty of HODs in the PAM document, it is expected of HODs to act as leaders in their departments (§4.3.2). HODs also feel the need themselves to lead their department towards certain goals. HODs' leadership role also became more pronounced during the Covid-19 pandemic, as they were expected to lead their departments and set the pace.

5.3.3.5 Mentorship

Younger, new and inexperienced teachers are expected to be mentored, while older staff also need mentoring in adapting new ways from time to time. Despite not being a core duty of HODs according to the PAM document, it is often expected that HODs should fulfil this role (§4.3.2.). This is either in absence of master or senior teachers, as a result of these teachers not fulfilling the duty, or because it is an expectation of the HODs within a specific school. Several HODs

mentioned that they do not have time for taking on a mentorship role, especially when taking into account how long it takes so properly mentor an employee, combined with HODs' extensive workload.

5.3.3.6 Managing department with its different stakeholders

HODs are expected to ensure the smooth-running of their departments (§4.3.2). They are also expected to oversee the execution of certain department-specific functions such as parent evenings. Furthermore, they are supposed to manage and take control of the involvement of different stakeholders within the functioning of their departments, for instance parents, learners, the DBE, teachers and top management. HODs are very uncertain of the Department of Basic Education's expectations of them and their staff. It seems that there is a lack of communication from the DBE, and, even when schools do receive communication, the information is either late or lacking in clarity. HODs find certain expectations from the DBE to be unnecessary, causing teachers to needlessly stress (§4.3.4).

5.3.3.7 Appointment of new staff

Certain HODs are expected to be involved in the process of appointing new staff, both within and outside of their departments (§4.3.2). This includes taking part in the initial process of sifting candidates, being a member of the interview team, and ultimately deciding upon the successful candidate.

5.3.3.8 Staff-related matters

HODs are expected to play a role in a variety of staff-related matters including staff development, staff training, control, staff interrelationships, evaluation and utilisation of staff and innovation (§4.3.2).

5.3.3.9 Innovation

Contemporary schools are expected to stand apart in order to become a school of choice; hence the recent expectations placed on HODs to be innovative in their approach and come up with new ideas (§4.3.2). HODs are also expected to mobilise their staff to bring new innovations to fruition. While this kind of innovative thinking is expected of HODs, they are simultaneously expected to remain within certain boundaries and stay within a certain framework (§4.3.4). This expectation adds to the job demands experienced by HODs. The contradictory experience of having major responsibilities, yet minor power, and being expected to implement decisions made by top

management while not empowered to implement changes they themselves deem necessary (§2.3.2.1), is yet another challenge faced by HODs.

5.3.3.10 Extra-mural activities

Schools are apparently trying to lessen HODs' involvement in extra-mural duties on the sports field. It is, however, still expected of HODs to play a leading role in extra-mural of an academic nature (§4.3.2). These are often department-specific activities and include spelling competitions, parents' evenings and merit functions.

5.3.3.11 Communication

HODs are constantly expected to communicate with both top management, and their teachers (§4.3.2). Teachers expect HODs to keep them informed of important matters and communicating their duties to them. Principals expect HODs to communicate important information to the staff in their departments, and parents, in a timeous manner, while also keeping open channels of communication with all other stakeholders.

5.3.3.12 SMT expectations

In being part of the SMT, more expectations are placed on HODs, especially in the sense of the broader school environment and not just related to their department (§4.3.2). This includes overseeing certain functions such as whole school discipline maintenance, IQMS management, SIP development, and so forth. It is also expected of HODs as part of the SMT, to involve themselves in strategic thought and planning processes. HODs involvement in the SMT also entails them being part of a group with the focus on collective decision-making. It is also expected of HODs, as part of the SMT, to give feedback regarding their department and to keep the rest of the SMT up to date with regards to their department.

5.3.4 Research Question 4

The fourth research question wanted to ascertain which guidelines can be formulated for principals and HODs of primary schools to reduce role conflict and role ambiguity in mid-level management (§1.5). The following main findings from the analysis of data were made:

5.3.4.1 Guidelines for principals to reduce role conflict and role ambiguity in their HODs

Be involved

Principals should have an open-door policy and make themselves available to their HODs when needed. Principals should also schedule specific times and create the necessary platforms for their HODs to regularly meet with them (§4.6). During these meetings the HODs will be awarded a platform to discuss their roles and possibly actively participate in defining their role, which will then act as a job resource in leading to them being more engaged and committed to their role (§2.3.2.2).

Guidance

Born from the assumption that principals were once also HODs as part of the progression of their career, principals should provide the necessary guidance to their HODs and mentor them (§4.6). HODs believe their principals have the necessary experience and knowledge to provide this kind of in-service training and would appreciate this assistance.

Be specific about tasks and expectations

With the PAM document stating that HODs' tasks can be varied and school-specific, based on the needs of the school, HODs have expressed the need for their principals to be more specific in assigning their tasks and explaining what is expected of them (§4.6). Principals should explicitly state where the HODs responsibilities stop and where theirs (as principals) start, especially in conjunction with the tasks of top management. This role clarity will act as a job resource and combat the negative effect of role ambiguity which is a job demand (§2.3.2.3).

Alleviate workload

In becoming more involved, principals will become aware of the heavy workload of their HODs and this should act as a catalyst for alleviating this burden. Where possible, principals can lessen some of the HOD's teaching load and free up some periods for them to fulfil their HOD duties. This can be done by either appointing more staff to help with teaching or, in cases where it is not feasible to free up an HOD from teaching, appointing a full-time assistant for the HOD (§4.6).

Foundation phase-specific guidelines

It seems that a majority of principals are Intermediate and Senior phase qualified and have experience in those specific departments, therefore do not necessarily have the knowledge (or understanding) of the functioning of the Foundation phase. Foundation phase HODs would like their principals to listen and learn from them, and, if feasible attend their classes and visit their

phase more regularly in order to create the necessary understanding. Principals should be willing to be guided by their Foundation phase HODs (§4.6).

Trust

HODs wish to be trusted by their principals, with this trust bestowed on them by top management creating a feeling of contentment. Trust acts as a job resource for HODs. Principals should have the necessary belief in their HODs, give them certain responsibilities and then, to show their trust, leave them to the task. They should also support their HODs. Lastly, HODs would like their principals to involve them in staff matters, especially when a staff member is in the wrong. HODs would like to have the opportunity to first address their teachers before members of top management does (§4.6). Even in allowing this, HODs will experience their principal's trust in them.

5.3.4.2 Guidelines for HODs themselves to reduce their role conflict and role ambiguity

General

HODs seem to have pro-active personalities, are adept at problem solving, and generally do not wait for someone to act. Tapping into these characteristics could lead to a more positive work experience (§4.7) and could contribute to mobilising their staff in a more positive manner. As the literature under review suggested, mid-level managers' own approach towards their task could be a resource as a transformational leadership style counters negativity (§2.3.2.2).

Good time management and effective planning

HODs explained that they are more productive and adept at solving problems on days where they have plotted out their schedules; hence, the suggestion HODs should concentrate on managing their time more efficiently by properly planning in advance. Some HODs added that creating checklists is a handy tool to ensure that days are properly structured (§4.7).

Create a team

Good teamwork and good relationships with teachers in the department act as job resources for HODs by making their tasks easier and creating a well-functioning department (§2.3.2.2). HODs should therefore remember that they have a whole team of (mostly) eager and dedicated educators to help them. HODs should capitalise on this and build a cohesive team spirit amongst their teachers, who are willing to help and make a difference. This starts with HODs knowing their staff, therefore HODs should make a concerted effort to get to know their staff, which will

subsequently assist them in utilising them to the benefit of the department and based on their strengths and weaknesses. An innate respect for one another must be created within the team and staff should trust that their HOD will not only listen to their concerns, but that the HOD will also ultimately make the best decisions that would benefit the whole team (§4.7).

Self-care

First and foremost, HODs should look after themselves and ensure that they take enough time for themselves. HODs are reminded to take care of their own needs and to do things that they enjoy doing. They should know where to draw the line and they should not always be willing to take on additional work. They are also reminded to not always be so hard on themselves (§4.7).

5.4 Recommendations

Recommendations are made to different stakeholders to address and reduce role conflict and role ambiguity in HODs in primary schools. This in turn will lead to better functioning HODs and create more effective management structures within primary schools.

5.4.1 Recommendations to the Department of Basic Education

Recommendation 1

Based upon the fact that several core duties assigned to HODs, deputy principals and principals overlap within the PAM document, the DBE should consider reviewing the PAM document with an eye on creating more specific job descriptions for HODs, deputy principals and principals.

Motivation

By effecting this change, both role conflict and role ambiguity amongst HODs can be reduced, as they will not feel as conflicted in their position, fearing overstepping their boundaries. HODs will know exactly where their duties start and where they stop, which will in turn reduce the job demand of role conflict and role ambiguity. Clear explanations will act as job resources to keep HODs engaged (§2.3.2.3).

5.4.2 Recommendations to the DBE, as well as other bodies governing independent schools

Recommendation 2

With HODs relaying that they did not receive the necessary development opportunities to fulfil their tasks and duties as mid-level managers effectively (§4.3.4), while also not receiving continuous professional development opportunities to ensure that they stay on par with regulations and expectations, it is recommended that the DBE and/or other bodies governing independent schools invest in relevant training.

Motivation

With role ambiguity leading to emotional discomfort, and in this instance HODs being more stressed due to not knowing what is expected of them, role clarity will go a long way as a job resource to combat this demand (§4.3.4). This role clarity can be brought about in providing thorough preparation for the role of HOD as well as continuous development opportunities within the role.

Recommendation 3

It is recommended that the DBE and/or the body governing an independent school is clear in what they expect of HODs in the line of what needs to be submitted to them or what needs to be implemented by them within the school. This kind of communication should also reach the HODs in a timeous manner, with effective communication tools being put in place for this to happen. Simultaneously, regular visits to all schools by DBE district officials are recommended based on findings that HODs of schools who are not classified as underperforming schools expressed the need to receive these kinds of visits to ensure that they are on the right track (§4.3.4).

Motivation

This recommendation is based on HODs relaying that they are not always sure what is expected from them and also not receiving timeous communication of these expectations, which in turn complicates the HODs' task in that they have to manage their teachers' stress resulting from this poor communication of expectations (§4.3.4). HODs also need to know if they are on the right track in leading their departments within their schools and to be corrected if they are wrong. Even if on the right track, positive feedback serves as a job resource in providing much-needed encouragement (§4.3.1).

5.4.3 Recommendations to school principals

Recommendation 5

It is recommended that principals should not just have an open-door policy, but also create specific platforms to meet with their HODs. This can be in the form of weekly meetings with each HOD individually and not just as part of the SMT.

Motivation

This recommendation is made based on HODs expressing the need for their principals to be more involved, to know what is happening within the school and to provide the necessary guidance to them as HODs, and to also act as mentors (§4.6).

Recommendation 6

The researcher would also like to recommend to principals to be clear in their expectations of their HODs and give the necessary guidelines with regards to what their tasks are. It is important that these tasks and expectations are clearly communicated to HODs in the format of a task agreement and duty distribution document drafted by the principal, wherein the tasks of the HOD are defined. These tasks should also be defined in correlation to the duties of the other SMT members. With work overload being a major challenge experienced by HODs (§4.3.1), it is recommended that principals attempt to alleviate this. A pre-planned duty distribution document agreed upon by all parties will already go a long way to reduce work overload. Principals should work towards structuring their staff distribution in such a way that they can free up their HODs from teaching. In the event that this is not possible, for instance with Foundation phase HODs who are prime class teachers, principals should look at structuring their budget in such a way that they can employ a full-time assistant for these HODs or negotiate with the DBE to provide assistants or extra educators. Furthermore, it is recommended that principals work towards releasing their HODs as far as possible with regards to extra-mural responsibilities in order to allow them more time to spend on their HOD-related duties. An induction programme should also be developed for newly appointed HODs at schools. SMT members, such as fellow HODs or the deputy principal should be tasked with taking the lead in these induction programmes, which will serve the purpose of easing the newly appointed HOD into his/her new position.

Motivation

Core duties for HODs are very vague and overlap with the core duties of other stakeholders, as contained in the current PAM document. The document also stipulates that core duties are school-specific; hence the importance of clarity in this regard cannot be over-emphasised in order to reduce role conflict and role ambiguity for HODs. Role ambiguity as a job demand leads to stress, whereas clear job descriptions as a job resource alleviates this stress (§2.3.2.3). HODs

are increasingly struggling to find enough time to perform their HOD-related duties as they have to spend a lot of time teaching during school hours and taking care of administrative tasks related to that teaching after school. HODs also need to develop their managerial skills and focus on professional development in this regard. They want to make a difference within the school environment as a manager and not necessarily be bound to the classroom in the same capacity as a post level 1 teacher but just with the added title of HOD.

5.4.4 Recommendations to HODs as mid-level managers

Recommendation 8

Upon completion of this study, the researcher would also like to recommend that HODs work towards creating good relations with all the different stakeholders with whom they work on a daily basis. These would include learners, teachers, parents, top management, as well as DBE officials. As an initiative of the HOD, meetings should be set up with teachers within the department, as well as with parents to create a platform for discussions. HODs should engage with top management and DBE officials, and they should conduct regular informal class visits for the learners to get to know them and in such create good relationships.

Motivation

In creating good relations with different stakeholders, HODs will create a platform and an opportunity to openly discuss various issues and address matters arising. Teamwork and collaborative relationships between HODs and their teachers will act as a job resource to make their tasks, as HODs, easier. In having an open relationship with principals and DBE officials, HODs will also have the means to make their own needs known to these stakeholders. Creating relationships with parents, learners and even young teachers, will enable these stakeholders to get to know the HOD, to trust them and not view them as merely another unapproachable individual in an authoritative position. This correlates with the finding that a mid-level manager's own approach towards the tasks could be a resource as a transformational leadership style counters negativity (§2.3.2.2).

Recommendation 9

Lastly and most importantly, as evident in responses by HODs (§4.7), it is recommended that HODs make time to fulfil their own needs in a personal capacity. HODs should not always avail themselves for additional work that need to be done at school and they should allow themselves to say 'no'.

Motivation

This recommendation is also made in conjunction with what was found and reflected on earlier in the study that a self-care programme has a positive impact on all domains of an individual's life, including the professional domain. HODs should continue investing in themselves and work towards promoting their own happiness and well-being, in an attempt to stay healthy and professionally perform to the best of their abilities.

5.4.5 Recommendations for future research

Recommendation 10

The recognition of Foundation phase HODs as equals within management structures in primary schools is recommended as a topic for future research. Foundation phase HODs seem to have reached the ceiling of their career as mid-level managers and are not necessarily given the same opportunities as Intermediate- or Intersen HODs to further their careers and be awarded promotional opportunities. Whether this is indeed the case can be investigated, and if so, the reasons behind it. In addition to this, it is worth exploring what Foundation phase HODs can do to make themselves more marketable to be considered for top management positions.

Motivation

It seems that Foundation phase HODs are overlooked in the appointment of top management positions in primary schools even though they hold the same post level position as an Intermediate or Intersen phase HOD. With Foundation phase HODs also fulfilling a management position, one is left to wonder if this is truly the pinnacle of their career, and whether it is in fact the case that they are not readily recognised and taken into account for top management positions, especially in comparison to Intermediate and Intersen phase HODs.

5.5 Limitations of the study

The aim of the study was to determine the challenges faced by and the expectations placed upon mid-level management in primary schools and to explore the factors contributing to mid-level management experiencing role conflict and role ambiguity. A total of fifteen HODs were interviewed in the study from a variety of schools in the greater Pretoria area, including independent and government schools within wealthier, middle-class, as well as poorer communities. The findings cannot be generalised and made applicable to all primary schools and

all HODs within the South African context. The findings could, however, spur on further research within the field of mid-level management in primary schools.

The researcher also faced certain challenges in the eye of the Covid-19 pandemic with regards to data collection and more specifically the qualitative nature thereof. With government schools being closed for a greater part of the 2020 school year, the researcher struggled to get hold of principals and HODs in order to involve them as participants. Even in instances where the researcher was successful in making contact with principals and HODs, either the principals were hesitant to let their HODs take part or the HODs themselves were hesitant to take part due to the challenges they were experiencing in trying to manage their responsibilities within the pandemic. Once the researcher managed to get willing participants, a further challenge presented itself in that schools were not allowed third party visitors onto their properties and this resulted in the researcher conducting online interviews via platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams and even in some instances WhatsApp calls instead of in-person interviews with the added frustrations of poor internet connectivity and load shedding (see Addendum L for a more detailed record of these challenges faced).

Adding to the challenges the researcher faced, several HODs interviewed were also Afrikaans-speaking and felt more comfortable being interviewed in Afrikaans. The researcher is fully bilingual and felt comfortable interviewing the participants in Afrikaans but had to translate the interview schedule to Afrikaans, upon which these interviews could then be conducted in Afrikaans and the verbatim transcriptions made in Afrikaans. Only after these transcriptions were translated to English, could data analysis take place.

5.6 Conclusion

This research investigated the challenges faced by and the expectations placed upon HODs as mid-level management in primary schools and to explore the factors contributing to these HODs experiencing role conflict and role ambiguity. It has been found that HODs in primary schools face numerous challenges in the execution of their daily tasks. They also have many expectations placed on them from a variety of sources. These challenges and expectations, together with many other factors contribute to HODs experiencing role conflict, as well as role ambiguity, which in turn makes it hard for them to function and fulfil their role to the best of their abilities. It seems that HODs in primary schools have more to offer in terms of management, but that they are curbed by several obstacles. They are under-utilised as managers while they have the potential, with their experience and expertise, to play a bigger role in this regard. These obstacles in the form of challenges and expectations, as well as role conflict and ambiguity, are all job demands that

have a negative impact on the functioning of the HODs. The research has, however, also highlighted aspects to counteract the job demands and delved into certain actions of different stakeholders that could serve as job resources for HODs to be fully functional and to be utilised successfully. It is worth the undertaking to explore job resources that will have a positive impact on HODs in order to eliminate or reduce the effect of their job demands and to have HODs emerge as fully functional managers within the primary school system.

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ADDENDUM A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Title of study: Role conflict and ambiguity in mid-level management in primary schools

Purpose and instruction:

The independent person recruiting you and requesting this interview, indicated to you that I am busy with a research project and my MEd dissertation on the role conflict and role ambiguity HODs in primary schools experience. You have consented to this interview. I would like to reiterate that the reason for this interview is to obtain your opinions regarding your work as an HOD and the role conflict and role ambiguity you might experience as well as the challenges you face in your daily tasks. The information obtained will be used only for research purposes and no names of participants, schools or any identifying data regarding the school will be made known in the report. Do you have any questions before we start the interview?

May I record this online session which will include audio and visual and may I also make a voice recording of the interview using my cellular phone to use as a back-up? This would help me to listen to it again later and so make a transcript of the interview for data-analysis purposes.

First question is just to put your position in context:

Are you a Foundation phase- or Intersen phase HOD and how many years' experience do you have as HOD?

1. Can you explain your tasks as HOD?

2. What does your principal expect of you?

3. What do the teachers in your department expect of you?

4. What is expected of you as part of the school management team (SMT)?

5. Explain the extent to which you have freedom to make decisions for your department and in the broader school community?

6. Which aspects of your position as HOD do you find rather challenging?

7. In what way or ways do you feel conflicted in your position as HOD?

8. What aspects of your daily duties are you unsure of or leaves you feeling unsure if it even is your duty?

9. How were you prepared for your role as HOD?

10. Which aspects should be addressed in the training and/or professional development of HODs?

11. If you could suggest ways of making life for HODs easier, what would it be?

ADDENDUM B: EXTRACT OF TRANSCRIPTION AND DATA ANALYSIS AS EXAMPLE

	Code	category	theme
Interviewer: Can you explain your tasks as HOD?			Tasks
HOD: Yes, I can. I think, mainly for me, what is the main purpose of a HOD or a phase head in our terms regarding (our group of private) schools is that, I think I am responsible for the academic side of my phase. So my academic results in my phase and all my responsibilities regarding the academics is, I think my main purpose as a HOD looking over all the academic parts of that, the curriculum, making sure the curriculum is properly addressed during lessons in school hours and also to utilise the best possible time allocated for those subjects.	results curriculum presentation class visits new ways of teaching	Academics	
Interviewer: So very much academic of nature. Administrative tasks maybe?			
HOD: Yeah, so I'm going to only focus on what I think is important as a HOD, but in my personal capacity, yes, of course there are a lot more than just that that I just mentioned, moderations of assessments, monitoring teaching, academic results, analysing academic results, class visits, interviews with my staff, staff training on a regular basis regarding new, especially with the Covid times that we live in, new ways of teaching, online teaching, so yeah, I'm involved in a lot of those aspects as well, but also, again, more than that in my capacity as a HOD at my school.	moderations monitoring analysing academic results class visits interviews staff training new ways of teaching	Administrative	
Interviewer: I think you mentioned something now in that regard, maybe in the line of mentorship as well. Would you also regard mentorship as being part of your tasks?			
HOD: Yes, absolutely. Also for our student teachers. We have two student teachers at the moment and that takes quite a lot of effort from me as a HOD at this stage, because, on a daily basis, I interview them, I make sure that I also distribute them to different teachers, giving them the exposure that they need. The specific one that I'm busy with now is a first year student, so she's basically just doing observation. She is just observing, but also, we also expose them to the normal	student teachers class visits training of new staff training of new ways of teaching	Mentorship	

teaching practice on a daily basis and yeah, so that is part of what I am doing on a daily basis. **Interviewer: Ok, that is with regards to student teachers. Do you also regard your position as a mentor, and in what way, for the actual staff?** HOD: Definitely, definitely. In my case, I have a phase meeting once a week and giving updates to my staff but also in that meeting there's always a part that I allocate to teacher training. We also send our teachers out for in-house training at other schools sometimes, but in that, let me just start back with the meetings so especially on all the new developments regarding technology, so technology for us at this stage is quite a huge challenge and that's why I allocate, and it sounds like simple things, but I really think teachers just don't know how to do it, especially things like capturing marks on Synergy (computer programme used by school), using Synergy, utilising Synergy as a platform that can really assist you in many different ways, but still, they don't know it if somebody don't show them that. I know on remote learning, there's a remote learning team that always, once a week, has a training session, but some of my teachers, just because of tight schedules, don't attend those meetings, so what I do, I just again, refresh on that training and just make sure that all of my staff is on the same page with regarding technology and all those requirements. **Interviewer: So that's more of a personal touch then at the end to make sure then that they are following you and what you expect of them. Would you also regard leadership as part of your tasks as an HOD and in what way?** HOD: Yeah, leadership….there's quite a few places where I'm involved, also in the SMT, as part of the School Management Team where I represent my phase, give feedback to my Executive head (principal) regarding what is going on in my phase, our term programme, see that we are on track with our planning for the term, planning for the year, yeah, I'm also part of the SMT of the school.	actual staff – giving updates, training, new developments Part of SMT – represent my phase term programme Staff training – new staff and new ways Class visits	Leadership Teaching and learning	

Interviewer: Ok, well, while we're on that….what is expected of you as part of the School Management Team? HOD: Yeah, there is quite a few things. Just for an example, I am also part of the health and safety, I am actually in charge of health and safety at my school, so that is also an extra thing which takes a lot of my time, making sure that all the health and safety requirements are adhered to. There's health and safety inspections that needs to take place each week. Each month I need to have a safety meeting with my safety team, yeah, and all safety issues regarding from gate access throughout to learners that's injured, forms that needs to be submitted, injury forms submitted to head office that they can also have track on what is going on regarding our injuries at our school. Yeah, and then, from head office, they can also on a regular basis come and inspect a school and make sure everything is safe. Then, over and above that, I'm a teacher as well. I'm teaching at the moment Grade 4, 5, 6 and 7 natural sciences which is a heavy burden on a person like me with all the other responsibilities. Just by being a normal teacher you need to also do your planning. We are busy with online planning at the moment. Each lesson needs to be recorded, then your capturing of your marks, your daily day to day presentation of your lessons in class, all those kinds of things. I'm also the school Synergy school administrator at the school, so that means I'm responsible for every single report card that is issued at the school. I need to make sure and control and make sure that all the reports is going out to the parents without any mistakes, you know that little story and then I'm also the time-table administrator, so yes, I am also responsible for all the time-tables at our school regarding every class, every teacher, teacher allocation, me an my Executive Head (principal), is normally by round about September/October we start allocating teachers to their subjects for the next year and then I start with the time-tabling and then a lot of operational duties at the primary school because in our school we still don't have an Operational Head, which means we don't have a head of primary school, so I capture a lot of that responsibilities as well. **Interviewer: Ok, so you then report, in the absence of a primary school principal, you report to the Executive Head which is in charge of the High School, Primary School and the whole campus?** HOD: That's correct yes.	health and safety in school (not just phase) (extra) teacher (burden) Synergy school (not just phase) administrator – issuing of report cards time-table administrator no primary school head – extra responsibilities	Part of SMT	

I**nterviewer: So, while we are on that topic…..what does your principal, or in this case, your Executive head, expect of you?** HOD: Basically all the things that I just mentioned. She (principal) really expects a good quality education. She expects that her school runs smoothly. She expects that any teacher problems, any problems that occur in my phase I need to report. We have disciplinary hearings that I need to attend with, especially with the learners. Oh yes, by the way, I'm also the head of discipline in my school, so that is also quite a challenging task, because it is not just discipline, you also need to attend disciplinary hearings, sending out letters to the parents, get the parents involved if there is a disciplinary hearing, let them attend, the learner needs to attend, it's a whole process that needs to take place. Yeah, so that is also taking a lot of my time. Yeah, she expects……she (principal) wants her school to be a school of excellence, let me put it that way. **Interviewer: Of course, yeah, of course. Does your principal expect anything of you, and also if you could elaborate if your answer is yes, on the extra-mural field?** HOD: Yes, of course. I was, for a long time, also involved in the extra-mural organisation part of that. Luckily, at this stage, we could appoint a very vibrant young teacher who's really into sport and she took over that task of organisation part, but I'm still responsible for transport, organising transport to the venues. I'm also part of planning. Planning sessions regarding our sport,assisting the teacher also mentoring the teacher regarding athletics, all those kind of things. So I'm really busy at school at the moment regarding that, but luckily at this stage, the Covid has just brought things a bit down, so we can just have a breather on that one. **Interviewer: That's true. Now, going back on what you said, that you are also in charge of health and safety, discipline, and so forth, is that also just for your phase or for the whole primary school?** HOD: Whole primary school. So I'm involved in all that in the primary school and some of these tasks also for the high school, although the high school do have a phase head on the FET as well as the Senior phase, but yeah, some of those tasks I also carry out.	Good quality education Smooth-running of school Reporting of teacher problems Disciplinary hearings School of excellence Head of discipline in school (not just phase) (extra) Extra-mural – organisational matters assisting teachers mentoring teachers	Of principal	Expectations

Interviewer: So then you are veering away from your actual head of department position, but to fill other gaps and needs in the school HOD: Yeah, because of the fact that we are a new school growing our numbers and in the (our private school group) set-up the budget doesn't allow people at this stage to appoint for that gap so all of us are pulling together and just make sure that we try and cover all the gaps.	Budget restraints – lack of human resources		

ADDENDUM C: EXTRACT OF DATA ANALYSIS SUMMARY AS EXAMPLE

Theme	Category	Code	Quotes	Which participant
Tasks	General		'When I applied for the position, I didn't know there were some hidden tasks as well that I didn't know of'	ISP-I3
			'It is a mammoth task'	FP-G1
		It is a lot		FP-G2
		Was grade head too until last year		FP-G2
	Academics	Results		IP-I1
		Curriculum presentation and standard		IP-I1, FP-I2, IP-I2
		Supervise curriculum coverage		ISP-G1
		Curriculum implementation		ISP-I2, FP-I4, FP-G1

		Implementing curriculum changes or new curriculums		ISP-I2, FP-I4
		Class visits (Moved to Admin)		IP-I1
		New ways of teaching		IP-I1
		To see that teachers do their work (Moved to staff management)		FP-I1, FP-I3
		Planning		FP-I1, FP-I4
		Execution of planning		FP-I1
		Ensuring phase stays in line within guidelines and policies, rules and regulations of dept of ed (Moved to management of department)		ISP-I2
		Ensuring phase stays in line within guidelines and policies, rules and		ISP-I2

		regulations of Umalusi (private school accreditation board) (Moved to management of department)		
		Preparation for Umalusi (private school accreditation board) (Moved to whole school management)		FP-I1
		Standard of work		FP-I2
		Supervise assessments		ISP-G1, FP-I5
		Work through progress reports and sign (Moved to administrative)		FP-I5
		Own teaching (Moved to Within own grade)		FP-I3, FP-I5, IP-G1, FP-G1
		Ensuring staff communicates academic performance of learners		FP-I3

		with parents (Moved to staff management)		
		Guiding staff to select suitable academic learning material to be used in classes		ISP-I2
		Read up online to stay on top of things		ISP-I2
		Started cloud school with Covid		FP-G2
		In charge of certain subject areas (x2 HODs in phase)		IP-G2
	Administrative	Moderations – pre and post (files, tasks, assessments)		IP-I1, FP-I2, ISP-I1, IP-G1, IP-G2, IP-I2, ISP-I3, FP-G2
		Monitoring (files, tasks, assessments, lessons, planning)		IP-I1, ISP-I2, IP-G1, IP-I2, ISP-I2

		Work through progress reports and sign		FP-I5
		Quality control		FP-G2
		Proof reading		FP-G2
		Management-specific		ISP-I2
		Manage attendance		IP-I2
		Related to discipline issues (e.g. meetings with parents)		IP-I2
		Analysing academics		IP-I1
		Class visits -Combine with quality control in books and observation of difficult learners in class to assist with parent meetings (14)		IP-I1, FP-I3, FP-G1, FP-G2
		Interviews		IP-I1, IP-G1

		Staff training (Moved to staff development)		IP-I1
		Rosters		FP-I1, FP-I2, ISP-I1, FP-G2
		Time-tables		IP-I2
		Draft tables and checklists		ISP-I3
		Phase running smoothly (Moved to management of department)		FP-I1
		Ordering of books		FP-I1

ADDENDUM D: ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER



Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Fax: 018 299-4910
Web: http://www.nwu.ac.za

Senate Committee for Research Ethics
Tel: 018 299-4849
Email: nkosinathi.machine@nwu.ac.za

ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

5 Based on approval by the **Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee (EduREC)** on 19/07/2020, this committee hereby **approves** your study as indicated below. This implies that the North-West University Senate Committee for Research Ethics (NWU-SCRE) grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Study title: Role conflict and ambiguity in mid-level management in primary schools

Study Leader/Supervisor (Principal Investigator)/Researcher: Dr CP van der Vyver Student / Team: S Myburgh (MEd student – 30442230); Dr L van Jaarsveld

Ethics number:

N	W	U	-	0	1	6	4	8	-	1	9	-	A	2

Institution Study Number Year Status

Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation

Low

Application Type: Project

Commencement date: **30/04/2020** **Risk:**

Special in process conditions of the research for approval (if applicable):

General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, the following general terms and conditions will apply:

- The study leader/supervisor/principal investigator/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the EduREC:
  - annually (or as otherwise requested) on the monitoring of the study, whereby a letter of continuation will be provided, and upon completion of the study; and
  - without any delay in case of any adverse event or incident (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the study.
- The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Should any amendments to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the study leader/researcher must apply for approval of these amendments at the EduREC, prior to implementation. Should there be any deviations from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such amendments, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- Annually a number of studies may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the study may be started.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility, the NWU-SCRC and EduREC reserves the right to:

- withdraw or postpone approval if:
  - any unethical principles or practices of the study are revealed or suspected;
  - it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the EduREC or that information has been false or misrepresented;
  - submission of the annual (or otherwise stipulated) monitoring report, the required amendments, or reporting of adverse events or incidents was not done in a timely manner and accurately; and / or
  - new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary

6 The EduREC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your study. Please do not hesitate to contact the EduREC or the NWU-SCRE for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely

Prof JAK Olivier
Chairperson NWU Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee

Original details: (22351930) C:\Users\22351930\Desktop\ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY.docm 8 November 2018

Current details: (22351930) M:\DSS1\8533\Monitoring and Reporting Cluster\Ethics\Certificates\Templates\Research Ethics Approval Letters\9.1.5.4.1 ES-REC Ethical Approval Letter.docm
5 December 2018

File reference: 9.1.5.4.2

ADDENDUM E: GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

GAUTENG PROVINCE
Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

8/4/4/1/2

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	25 June 2020
Validity of Research Approval:	04 February 2020 – 30 September 2020 2019/504
Name of Researcher:	Myburgh S
Address of Researcher:	Plot 310 Pofadderstreet
	Kameelfontein Estate
	Kameeldrift ,Pretoria
Telephone Number:	0834197520
Email address:	myburgas@gmail.com
Research Topic:	Role conflict and ambiguity in mid-level management in Primary School
Type of qualification	Master's in Education
Number and type of schools:	10 Primary School
District/s/HO	Tshwane North ,Tshwane West

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

25/06/2020

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

1. *Letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study*

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management
7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001
Tel: (011) 355 0488
Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

2. *The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.*
3. ***Because of COVID 19 pandemic researchers can ONLY collect data online, telephonically or may make arrangements for Zoom with the school Principal. Requests for such arrangements should be submitted to the GDE Education Research and Knowledge Management directorate. The approval letter will then indicate the type of arrangements that have been made with the school.***
4. ***The Researchers are advised to make arrangements with the schools via Fax, email or telephonically with the Principal.***
5. *A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*
6. *A letter / document that outline the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.*
7. *The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.*
8. *Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.*
9. *Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.*
10. *Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.*
11. *It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.*
12. *The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.*
13. *The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.*
14. *On completion of the study the researcher/s must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.*
15. *The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.*
16. *Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.*

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards

.....

Mr Ishmani Mukatuni
Acting CES: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: 25/06/2020

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management
7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001
Tel: (011) 355 0488
Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

ADDENDUM F: PERMISSION LETTER – PRINCIPAL

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Web: http://www.nwu.ac.za

Faculty of Education

EDULEAD

Principal
Name of school
Street name
Suburb
Pretoria

Tel: 0182994587
Email: cp.vandervyver@nwu.ac.za

17 August 2020

PERMISSION LETTER: SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

I hereby request your permission for educators in your school to participate in this research, which involves HODs in primary schools. Prior to granting permission, please acquaint yourself with the information below.

The details of the research are as follows:

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

Role conflict and ambiguity in mid-level management in primary schools

ETHICS APPLICATION NUMBER

NWU-01648-19-S2

PROJECT SUPERVISOR: Dr CP van der Vyver
CO-SUPERVISOR: Dr Leentjie van Jaarsveld
ADDRESS: Building B11, G61 North-West university Potchefstroom Campus 2530
CONTACT NUMBER: 018 299 4587

MEMBER OF PROJECT TEAM MEd-Student: Mrs Sanet Myburgh
ADDRESS: PO Box 31522 Wonderboompoort 0033
CONTACT NUMBER: 0834197520

FACULTY OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
Contact person: Ms Erna Greyling, E-mail: Erna.Greyling@nwu.ac.za, Tel. (018) 299 4656

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education of the North-West University and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines of this committee. Permission was also obtained from the provincial Department of Basic Education/other relevant body.

What is this research about?

The aims of this research are:

- To explore the nature of role conflict and role ambiguity mid-level managers in primary schools experience
- To identify the challenges mid-level managers in primary schools face in their attempts to manage their departments
- To explore the expectations placed upon the HODs from both the senior management of the school and educators in the HOD's department
- To formulate guidelines for principals and HODs in primary schools to reduce role conflict and role ambiguity in mid-level management

Participants

- HODs in primary schools

What is expected of participants?

To answer interview questions individually about their role as a HOD in a primary school as honestly as possible

Benefits to participants

There are no direct benefits for participants. Indirectly, they do, however, contribute towards further understanding of the position of HODs as mid-level managers in schools and the efforts in reducing role conflict and role ambiguity amongst HODs

Risks involved for participants

There are no foreseen risks for participants except for time limitations for the interview process and that participants may get tired during interviews. Participants are free to withdraw at any time and will not suffer any negative consequences as a result hereof.

Confidentiality and protection of identity

The researcher undertakes to treat the shared information during the interview process as confidential and not to disclose the identity of any participants or schools participating in the research. All reports and use of collected data will be dealt with in such a way that participants will remain anonymous.

Dissemination of findings

Findings will be recorded in MEd dissertation of researcher. Findings will be also disseminated to principals of participating schools and participants in the form of a short summary of findings.

If you have any further questions or enquiries regarding your participation in this research, please contact the researchers for more information.

Yours sincerely
Sanet Myburgh
(Researcher)

DECLARATION BY PRINCIPAL:

By signing below, I ……..……. agree to give permission for the research to take place with the identified participants in the study entitled:

Role conflict and ambiguity in mid-level management in primary schools

I declare that:

- I have read this information and consent form and understand what is expected of the participants in the research.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to the researcher and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and participants will not be pressurised to take part.
- Participants may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- Participants may be asked to leave the research process before it is completed, if the researcher feels it is in their best interests, or if they do not follow the research procedures, as agreed to.

Signed at (place)_____on (date) _____/_____/20____

_____

Signature of School Principal/Relevant person

ADDENDUM G: GOODWILL LETTER – CHAIRPERSON OF SGB/PAC

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Web: http://www.nwu.ac.za

Faculty of Education

EDULEAD

Tel: 0182994587
Email: cp.vandervyver@nwu.ac.za

SGB Chariperson
Name of school
Street name
Suburb
Pretoria

17 August 2020

GOODWILL PERMISSION: SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY/OTHER RELEVANT BODY

I hereby request your permission for educators in your school to participate in this research, which involves HODs of primary schools. Prior to granting permission, please acquaint yourself with the information below.

The details of the research are as follows:

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

Role conflict and ambiguity in mid-level management in primary schools

ETHICS APPLICATION NUMBER

NWU-01648-19-S2

PROJECT SUPERVISOR: Dr CP van der Vyver
CO-SUPERVISOR: Dr Leentjie van Jaarsveld
ADDRESS: Building B11, G61 North-West university Potchefstroom Campus 2530
CONTACT NUMBER: 018 299 4587

MEMBER OF PROJECT TEAM MEd-Student: Mrs Sanet Myburgh
ADDRESS: PO Box 31522 Wonderboompoort 0033
CONTACT NUMBER: 0834197520

FACULTY OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
Contact person: Ms Erna Greyling, E-mail: Erna.Greyling@nwu.ac.za, Tel. (018) 299 4656

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education of the North-West University and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines of this committee. Permission was also obtained from the provincial Department of Basic Education.

What is this research about?

The aims of this research are:

- To explore the nature of role conflict and role ambiguity mid-level managers in primary schools experience
- To identify the challenges mid-level managers in primary schools face in their attempts to manage their departments
- To explore the expectations placed upon the HODs from both the senior management of the school and educators in the HOD's department
- To formulate guidelines for principals and HODs in primary schools to reduce role conflict and role ambiguity in mid-level management

Participants

- HODs in primary schools

What is expected of participants?

To answer interview questions individually about their role as a HOD in a primary school as honestly as possible

Benefits to participants

There are no direct benefits for participants. Indirectly, they do, however, contribute towards further understanding of the position of HODs as mid-level managers in schools and the efforts in reducing role conflict and role ambiguity amongst HODs

Risks involved for participants

There are no foreseen risks for participants except for time limitations for the interview process and that participants may get tired during interviews. Participants are free to withdraw at any time and will not suffer any negative consequences as a result hereof.

Confidentiality and protection of identity

The researcher undertakes to treat the shared information during the interview process as confidential and not to disclose the identity of any participants or schools participating in the research. All reports and use of collected data will be dealt with in such a way that participants will remain anonymous.

Dissemination of findings

Findings will be recorded in MEd dissertation of researcher. Findings will also be disseminated to principals of participating schools and participants in the form of a short summary of findings.

If you have any further questions or enquiries regarding your participation in this research, please contact the researchers for more information.

Yours sincerely
Sanet Myburgh
(Researcher)

DECLARATION BY SGB CHAIRPERSON/RELEVANT RESPONSIBLE PERSON:

By signing below, I …….……. agree to give permission for the research to take place with the identified participants in the study entitled:

Role conflict and ambiguity in mid-level management in primary schools

I declare that:

- I have read this information and consent form and understand what is expected of the participants in the research.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to the researcher and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and participants will not be pressurised to take part.
- Participants may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- Participants may be asked to leave the research process before it is completed, if the researcher feels it is in their best interests, or if they do not follow the research procedures, as agreed to.

Signed at (place)_____on (date) _____/_____/20____

_____

Signature of SGB Chairperson/Relevant responsible person

ADDENDUM H: INFORMED CONSENT – PARTICIPANT

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Web: http://www.nwu.ac.za

Faculty of Education

EDULEAD

Head of Department
Name of School
Street name
Suburb
Pretoria

Tel: 0182994587
Email: cp.vandervyver@nwu.ac.za

9 July 2020

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

I hereby request your consent to participate in this research, which involves HODs in primary schools. Before you give consent, please acquaint yourself with the information below.

The details of the research are as follows:

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

Role conflict and ambiguity in mid-level management in primary schools

ETHICS APPLICATION NUMBER

NWU-01648-19-S2

PROJECT SUPERVISOR: Dr CP van der Vyver
CO-SUPERVISOR: Dr Leentjie van Jaarsveld
ADDRESS: Building B11, G61 North-West university Potchefstroom Campus 2530
CONTACT NUMBER: 018 299 4587

MEMBER OF PROJECT TEAM MEd-Student: Mrs Sanet Myburgh
ADDRESS: PO Box 31522 Wonderboompoort 0033
CONTACT NUMBER: 0834197520

FACULTY OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
Contact person: Ms Erna Greyling, E-mail: Erna.Greyling@nwu.ac.za, Tel. (018) 299 4656

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education of the North-West University and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines of this

committee. Permission was also asked from the provincial Department of Basic Education, as well as the school principal and chairperson of the School Governing Body.

What is this research about?
The aims of this research are:

- To explore the nature of role conflict and role ambiguity mid-level managers in primary schools experience
- To identify the challenges mid-level managers in primary schools face in their attempts to manage their departments
- To explore the expectations placed upon the HODs from both the senior management of the school and educators in the HOD's department
- To formulate guidelines for principals and HODs in primary schools to reduce role conflict and role ambiguity in mid-level management

Participants
- HODs in primary schools

What is expected of you as participant?
To answer semi-structured interview questions about your role as HOD in a primary school as honestly as possible. This will entail pre-determined questions, as well as other questions arising from your answers.

Benefits to you as participant
Your contribution towards further understanding of the position of HODs as mid-level managers in schools and the efforts in reducing role conflict and role ambiguity amongst HODs

Risks involved for participants
Time limitations for interview process. Fears of information not being treated as confidential and not remaining anonymous. Participants are also under no obligation to participate and may withdraw at any time without suffering any negative consequences. No remuneration is offered for participation in this study.

Confidentiality and protection of identity
The researcher undertakes to treat the shared information during the interview process as confidential and not to disclose the identity of any participants.

Dissemination of findings
Findings will be recorded in MEd dissertation of researcher. A short summary of the findings will also be provided to you as participant as well as your school principal.

If you have any further questions or enquiries regarding your participation in this research, please contact the researchers for more information.

Yours sincerely
Sanet Myburgh
(Researcher)

DECLARATION BY PARTICIPANT:

By signing below, I ……..……. agree to take part in a research study entitled:

Role conflict and ambiguity in mid-level management in primary schools

I declare that:

- I have read this information and consent form and understand what is expected of me in the research.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to the researcher and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- I may be asked to leave the research process before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in my best interests, or if I do not follow the research procedures, as agreed to.

Signed at (place)_____on (date) _____/_____/20____

_____ _____

Signature of participant **Researcher**

ADDENDUM I: EXTRACT OF TRANSCRIPTION AND DATA ANALYSIS WITH AMENDMENTS BY PARTICIPANT AS EXAMPLE

Amendments indicated in blue print in transcription text:

Transcription	Code	category	theme
Interviewer: Can you explain your tasks as HOD? When you were now the head of your department, what were your tasks?			Tasks
HOD: Ok, well, mainly you have to…when I started in 2003, I had to implement the new curriculum….remember, they started with the revised curriculum then , so I had to implement that, I had to do all the paperwork concerning assessment, plannings, working out the curriculum for the grades, see that everything takes place, doing the book controls	2003 when started as HOD – new revised curriculum implemented – had to implement	Academic	
Interviewer: Ok, so that was academic and administrative….anything in the line of mentorship?	Working out curriculum for grades		
HOD: Yes, I had to take the lead….right in the beginning in 2003, when I took over as head of department, there was nothing at that school. It was a new school , so I had to, the first thing I did , was that I went to one of the phase head meetings and there I met (name of department official)….I don't know what you call her….. Her name was (name of department official).	Planning New school – had nothing in place	Starting new	Challenge
As phase head I had to take mentorship to give guidance to the teachers in connection with the curriculum (all aspects) and its implementation.			
Interviewer: I know her	Paperwork re assessments	Admin/ Academic	Tasks
HOD: So I went to her and I asked her….please help me, there's nothing, nothing at all…..so I had to…..she gave me a lot of advice….how to implement the curriculum and how to go on with planning and give information to the teachers, having meetings to teach them how to use the curriculum at that stage, because remember,	Book control	Admin	

we were all used to the previous curriculum and we had to change to the new one, the revised one, so I had to choose my grade heads and we went to many, many of phase head meetings, the government's phase head meetings, you know and, unfortunately I didn't have any experience, other than my HOD (qualification – Hoër Onderwys Diploma) , my THOD, (qualification – Transvaal Hoër Onderwys Diploma) at that stage we had a THOD (qualification – Transvaal Hoër Onderwys Diploma). I wish I had more experience in psychology, something like that….you have to read the people that you….if you understand what I mean by 'read'……so that you know the people that you work with, and you must know which people to choose , to be your grade leaders….grade heads…. **Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, so that's obviously then part of managing your phase, that was part of your tasks as managing your phase, to choose the correct grade heads..and** HOD: Yes, you must take care that you choose the correct people for the correct grade, cause you can make a mistake, once I did, and I'll tell you this story later **Interviewer: Ok…laughing….any tasks with regards, as a HOD as being part of an HOD , any tasks also in extra-murals?** HOD: Uhm…not really…..well, actually you sat in the management meetings and they had to organise all the stuff and we just make decisions according to that, but I didn't really take part in the sports activities as such	Take the lead Choosing grade heads Choosing grade heads, but wish had more psychology experience, to read people and choose the correct grade heads Attend HOD meetings at dept of ed Attend management meetings Did not do any sport	Leadership Managing phase Managing phase Managing phase Extra-murals	 Challenge Tasks
Interviewer: Ok, when you were an HOD, what do you think your principal expected of you as HOD? HOD: Everything…..I'm not talking about (the second private school I was HOD at), I'm talking about (the first private school I was HOD at). …actually he didn't know….my experience, not with (2nd principal at 2nd school), but with….can I name the person…..	'Everything' Principals had no knowledge of FP,	Of principal	Expectations Challenge

Interviewer: Yes, well I am going to cut it out of the final report HOD: The previous principal from (the first private school I was HOD at) and not (2nd principal at 1st school that became 1st primary school principal of 2nd school – she was a different story) and (1st overall principal of 2nd school), so it was (name of 1st principal at 1st school and 1st overall principal of 2nd school) ….they didn't have any, any knowledge about the Foundation phase, they didn't know what's going on, what must be taught in which grades, how the grades go from one grade to another grade, so we had to do everything…there was no help from them…the only help that I got, right in the beginning, was from (department official named earlier), and I also invited her to come and visit me at the school, so she came for a while and she gave me a very good report **Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, I think that's generally the case in primary schools, you don't really have top management that knows anything of the Foundation Phase** HOD: They don't know ….some of our principals…laughing….so they expect you to do things that's not applicable to the little ones at all **Interviewer: Yeah, yeah…I understand. Would you say that, in the line of academics or in a different way, that expectations that's not applicable?** HOD: academics, yes **Interviewer: Ok, in what way do you think?** HOD: Academics….like, they don't understand what you're doing …what is the word now…….**Interviewer: you can say in Afrikaans…..**HOD: hulpmiddels….if you have to buy that….**Interviewer: teaching aids….**HOD: teaching….if you have to buy teaching aids…you are also bound to a budget and they don't understand that….that cost a lot of money, but the teachers do need the teaching aids and also, you know, the (brand name) readers….we didn't have any readers, so we had to buy	didn't know what was going on, what must be taught, how learners progress - So I had to do everything with no help from them - They expect you to do things not applicable to little ones - They don't understand when you need something e.g. teaching aids or readers Management Taking responsibility for your phase, also when things go wrong Admin		Expectations

the readers, we had to look into which group was the best, so there was no advice from them **Interviewer: Clearly because they don't know. What do you think the principal expected of you with regards to leadership?** HOD: Sigh….everything….he wanted….I had to organise the grade…the meetings….minutes….everything….I had to draw up the planning sheets, the assessment sheets….I can't think so quickly now…..I just did everything….if I think of something else I'll type it out for you and send it **Interviewer: laughing….sure….that will be fine**	-Meetings (minutes etc) -Drawing up planning sheets -Drawing up assessment sheets Academics - To maintain a good standard in the school, especially in private school with parents being the clients Innovation – come up with new ideas to promote private school		
I**nterviewer: We've spoken about what your principal expected of you…..What do you think your staff in your department expected of you as their phase head?** HOD: You know how difficult it is to be a phase head, so if there are any problems, that came up, they didn't want to sort out the problems by themselves, so you had to go to the principal and you had to take all the punishment …or what do you call it….yeah….you know how it works….you have to be like, the …I don't know how to say it in English….the buffer between them messing up and the principal, because he wants to know why is things going…why is things wrong, what happened here and you must explain to him and it's your responsibility to see that there's a good	To be the buffer between them and principal To sort out problems To be there for them when they are overwhelmed	Of educators	Expectations

standard …in the school. And also that everything runs smoothly in your department. **Interviewer: So that, I think, is also part of what your principal expects of you if you're going back to that question….to maintain a good standard in the school?** HOD: Yes, definitely…and the standard….especially if it is a private school…you know, you must concentrate on….what can I do…that was always the question…what can we, as management, or the teachers do to make the school a better place, better than the government schools, because you know, at a private school, the parents are the clients and you have to keep the parents happy and you have to do extra work, and implement ideas that they don't get in a government school….you know, like the extra classes we give, the smaller classes, so that was what we had to…we always had to come up with a new idea, what to do to be in advance **Interviewer: Do you think the teachers in your department expected anything of you in the line of …how can I put it…their personal matters?** HOD: Uhm……I had experiences like that, yes…..there was once, but that was at (my 2nd school I was HOD at) ….when they stress, you know, sometimes they come to you and they ask you …so one day one of the teachers just came to me and she sat in my storeroom and she cried the whole day….and afterwards she said….thank you very much, I feel better now **Interviewer: Laughing…she just needed you and your place** HOD: Yeah, but that doesn't….that's just one or two times that that happened…. **Interviewer: So it's not too often….** HOD: No, not too often….	Understanding when they go through a rough patch Mentorship academically – how to do things		

Interviewer: Do you think the teachers in the department expected anything of you in the line of support? HOD: Definitely, if they need support, say for instance they go through a rough patch, they won't come and tell you, but they will come and ask you to have, say for instance they need some leave or stuff like that, yes, definitely **Interviewer: And mentorship? Do they expect you to mentor them?** HOD: Yes, definitely…and show them how to do their stuff…in all the academic ways, yes, definitely….if there's one thing I can add, is that ….if you are a leader….if you are like a phase head, you must never, ever have social meetings in the way that you…drink and you know, you mustn't socialise …if you socialise in a way that it's school related…you know, you mustn't socialise too much and you mustn't …jy moenie huisvriende word nie…because that's very wrong, because once you're socialising and you're drinking a glass of wine…and two glasses of wine…then you talk too much and then you say stuff that's ….you know…I don't know what the word is…., but then you talk and that's not good …you must keep it….you must always remember….you are the head, they are the teachers….not that you think you are better than them…. **Interviewer: No, but I think to remain professional in that wat** HOD: That's right, yeah…. **Interviewer: Because like you say….otherwise you stand the chance of disclosing information which you're not supposed to** HOD: Not at all, yes. Because you don't discuss stuff….stuff from management meetings , that is so confidential and then…what happens if it slips out…and they provoke you to talk about stuff …so it's better not to socialise too much ….if you go out….like we go to (restaurant close to school), have a nice glass of wine….or like that, that's another story, but to be like close to someone …no….	Don't socialise and become friends so that you drink together with your staff and say things that you shouldn't (confidential things) – remain professional	To HODs self	Suggestions

ADDENDUM J: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE AS TRANSLATED INTO AFRIKAANS

Titel van studie: Rolkonflik en -dubbelsinnigheid in middelvlakbestuur in laerskole

Doel en instruksie:

Die onafhanklike persoon wat u gewerf het en die onderhoud versoek het, het aangedui dat ek besig is met ‘n navorsingsprojek en my meestersgraadverhandeling oor die rolkonflik en -dubbelsinnigheid wat departementshoofde ervaar. U het ingestem tot hierdie onderhoud. Ek wil graag weer daarop klemlê dat die rede vir die onderhoud is om u opinie rakende u werk as departementshoof, die rolkonflik en -dubbelsinnigheid wat u ervaar, sowel as die uitdagings wat u met u daaglikse take ervaar, te verkry. Die inligting ontvang sal slegs vir navorsingsdoeleindes gebruik word en name van deelnemers, skole en enige ander identifiseerbare data van die skool sal geensins in die verslag vervat word nie. Het u enige vrae voor ons die onderhoud begin?

Mag ek maar ‘n direkte opname van hierdie aanlyn-sessie maak wat oudio sowel as visuele teks opneem en mag ek ook ‘n stemopname van die onderhoud maak met my selfoon ter ondersteuning. Dit sal my in staat stel om weer later daarna te luister en die onderhoud te transkribeer vir data-analise doeleindes.

Die eerste vraag is slegs om u pos in konteks te plaas:

Is u die departementshoof vir die Grondslagfase of die Intersenfase by u skool en hoeveel jaar het u ervaring in u posisie?

1. Kan u u take as departementshoof beskryf?

2. Wat verwag u hoof van u as departementshoof?

3. Wat verwag die onderwysers in u departement van u?

4. Wat word verwag van u as lid van die skoolbestuurspan?

5. Verduidelik die mate waartoe u vryheid het om besluite in u department en in die groter skoolgemeenskap te neem.

6. Watter aspekte van u posisie as departementshoof ervaar u nogal as uitdagend?

7. Watter teenstrydighede ervaar u in u posisie as departementshoof?

8. Oor watter aspekte van u daaglikse pligte voel u onseker of laat u selfs met die vraag of dit u plig is?

9. Hoe is u vir u rol as departementshoof voorberei?

10. Watter aspekte moet in die opleiding en/of professionele ontwikkeling van departementshoofde aandag geniet?

11. Kan u enige voorstelle maak om die lewe van departementshoofde te vergemaklik?

ADDENDUM K: EXTRACT OF TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW CONDUCTED IN AFRIKAANS WITH TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH AND DATA ANALYSIS AS EXAMPLE

Transkripsie	Kode	Kategorie	Tema
Onderhoudvoerder: Kan jy jou take as departementshoof beskryf? Jy kan met enigiets begin….whatever comes to mind….jou take as departementshoof HOD: Ek dink….heel eerste…akademies-gewys is daar sekere….wel, jy het nou met Erika klaar gepraat….ons is altwee saam by die senior fase, so daar is sekere akademiese ….sal ons maar sê vakareas wat onder my val en sekere vakareas wat onder (mede-departementshoof) val. Die vakareas wat onder my val is WIskunde, Wetenskap, Tegnologie, EBW. Onder Erika is dit dan die tale en BSW ensovoorts, so wat my take in daai opsig aanbetref is eerstens om te kontroleer dat ons darem die regte modererings, werkkontrole en dan ook bietjie opleiding vir die personeel gee. ONs het vakhoofde ook in elke area, so ek is byvoorbeeld nou aan hoof van WIskunde, maar ons het 'n vakhoof wat mense onder sê maar Gr4, 5 en 6 kontroleer en dan kontroleer ek nou weer die vakhoof en dan kyk ek ook nou maar net na die goeters wat die vakhoof gekontroleer het….is dit darem op standaard ensovoorts….so akademies is di teen van die groot goeters. Dan is dit ook maar …..ietsie wat so tussen alles deur is is maar innovation…innovasie, so as ons sien ietsie werk goed dan probeer ons dit….dis eintlik maar leiding vir die onderwysers….uhm….dan ook wat die hulpverlening-gedeelte aanbetref, dis nou vir ons kindertjies wat druipelinge is….sulke goeters….daai ekstra statistieke….die analises van wie is ons moontlike grensgevalle…al daai goedjies, dit hanteer ek ook….en dan onder dit is daar nou weer die SBST wat sorg dat die kinders aangemeld word en al daai tipe dinge, so dit is ook 'n groot deel van die werk. Dan 'n ander redelike groot gedeelte…eintlik ook maar kontrolering, maar dit is vooruitbeplanning vir datums, assesseringsprogramme opstel, daai tipe goeters, dat ons kan kyk dat ons alles darem mooi in die kwartaal afhandel, so dis nogals 'n groot ding en dan….laat ek so vinnig dink….ek dink dan, die 'pastoral role' as 'n mens dit so kan sê….motivering….bietjie hoor is almal oraait ….hoekom was jy siek gewees , is alles fine by die huis, moet jy 'n boodskappie stuur, so eintlik daai op persoonlike vlak …uhm…en dan….wat die 'management team'			

aanbetref is dit eintlik maar om die hoof se hande sterk te maak…te sorg dat die goeters wat van die departement af kom ….dat dit deur ons geimplementeer word ….kommunikasie met die departement…vakadviseurs ensovoorts, so dit is eintlik maar dit as ek dit so vinnig kan opsom. **Onderhoudvoerder: Enigiets in die lyn van mentorskap misken…..deel van jou take….sou jy reken?** HOD: Yes, definitief….uhm….mentorskap …uhm….(mede-departementshoof) is wel verantwoordelik vir die IQMS as 'n geheel, maar….uhm….ek is baie oor die onderwysers….so die klasbesoeke ….al daai tipe goeters, so soos jy nou sê mentorskap….nuwe personeel wat inkom….sorg dat die vakhoof en hulle oor die weg kom, dat hulle weet alles wat verwag word van hulle….nee definitief mentor is ook 'n groot ding **Onderhoudvoerder: Sou jy as een van jou take ook buitemuurs ingooi?** HOD: O ja nee….definitief….ek weet departementshoofde se buitemuurs kan eintlik as twee opgedeel word in die sin van ….as ons nou dink aan ons akademiese ekstra buite-kurrikulêre goeters….astro-quiz, spelathon, spelling bee…daai goeters….dit is alles, daai goed val alles onder ons as departementshoofde, maar ja, omdat ek 'n man is ….in my geval, is die sport maar nog steeds. Ons probeer hard as ons die werksverdeling doen, om my by die sport los te maak, want dis vergaderings en moderering en al daai goeters, maar op hierdie stadium is ek maar nog steeds betrokke van kwartaal 1 af…atletiek, rugby, krieket en dan doen ek die skool se klank ook, so enige funksie waar daar moet iets opgestel word ….projektors uhm klank….al daai goeters val ook onder my ….so ja, die buitemuurs is definitief 'n iets **Onderhoudvoerder: Ja, ongelukkig het mens net nie gewoonlik genoeg hande in 'n skool nie. Ek weet ek myself maar, moet ook maar inspring en uithelp by swem en so aan, maar ja, ek moet sê….(mede-departementshoof) het nogal gesimpatiseer met jou as 'n man…..want julle mans is maar gewoonlik ….daar is maar net nie genoeg van julle gewoonlik om al sportbedrywighede te beman nie**			

HOD: Ek moet sê…wat die rugby byvoorbeeld aanbetref, het ons nou by die skool so bietjie 'n plan gemaak ook….ons het my by die eerste span spesifiek gesit, maar dan het ons twee ekstra buite-afrigters gekry. So hulle doen fisies die 'skills' en die 'coaching' en al daai dinge en dan doen ek, van die skool se kant af die admin…sorg dat hulle hul briefies het…..ongelukkig moet ek nog steeds by die oefeninge wees, maar dit maak 'n mens se tyd darem so bietjie oop….as daar 'n oueraand is, dan kan ek vroeg weggaan by die rugby , want daar is darem professionele ouens wat dit doen **Onderhoudvoerder: Daar is darem iemand…..ja dit help.**			

Translation	Code	category	theme
Interviewer: Can you describe your tasks as HOD? You can start with anything….whatever comes to mind….your tasks as HOD HOD: I think…..first of all….academically there are certain….well, you already spoke to (fellow HOD's name)…..we are both at the senior phase, so there are certain academic….shall we call it subject areas that fall under me and certain subject areas that fall under (fellow HOD's name). The subject areas that fall under me are Mathematics, Science, Technology, EMS. Under (fellow HOD) we have the languages etc. So with regarding my tasks in that regard it would first of all be to control that we do the correct moderations, book controls, and then also to give some training to the staff. We also have subject heads in each area, so I am at the head of Mathematics now, but we also have a subject head that control say Gr4, 5 & 6 and then I control the subject head and oversee the controlling that he has done……if it was on standard etc….so academically that is one of the big things. Then it is also….something in-between everything is innovation….innovation…so if we realise something works really well, then we try it ….it is actually also leading the	In charge of certain subject areas – shared with another HOD Moderations Book control Staff training	Academic Admin Admin Staff management	Tasks

staff…uhm….and then also regarding assistance for our learners, those struggling academically…..such things…the extra statistics…the analysis of who our borderline failures are…all those things I also handle….and then with that there is also the SBST ensuring that these learners' names get mentioned at the department and all those things….so that is also a big part of the work. Then….another rather big part….also basically controlling…..but it is pre-preparation for dates, drawing up assessment programmes, all those type things, to ensure that we cover everything in the term, so it is quite big and then….let me quickly think….I think then the pastoral role if one can put it that way…motivation….finding out if everybody is doing ok, why were you ill….is everything fine at home, do you have to send a message, so actually on a personal level….uhm….and then, regarding the management team it is actually to strengthen the principal's hands, to ensure that the things coming from the department of education is implemented at our school…..communication with the department of education….subject advisers, etc, so it is actually that to give a summary **Interviewer: Anything in the line of mentorship maybe….as part of your tasks….would you reckon?** HOD: Yes, definitely…uhm…mentorship….uhm…(fellow-HOD name) is responsible for IQMS as a whole, but….uhm…I do work over the staff….so the class visits…all those type things, like you said….mentorship…new staff coming in….ensure that the subject head and they get along and that they know what is expected of them….no, definitely mentorship is a big thing. **Interviewer: Would you also add in extra-mural activities as one of your tasks?** HOD: O yes, definitely….I know HODs' extra-murals can actually be divided into two in the sense of….if we now think of academical extra-curricular things….astro-quiz, spelathon, spelling bee….those things….those things all fall under us as HODs, but yes, because I am a male…in my case, I do sport too. We try hard when we do the task-divisions to not add me at the sport as much, because it is meetings and moderations and all that, but at this stage I am still involved from Term	Controlling subject heads Innovation – trying new things that seem to work Leading the staff Assistance for learners Statistics and analysis of failing learners SBST – reporting learners to dept Pre-preparation (dates/assessment plans, etc) 'pastoral role' and also making sure all staff is ok Motivation Strengthening the principal's hands	Management of phase Managing phase Leadership Managing phase Managing phase Admin Staff management Whole school	

1….athletics, rugby, cricket and then I also do the school's sound…so any function where things have to be set up….projectors, sound, etc, those things also fall under me…so yes, extra-murals is also a thing. **Interviewer: Yes, unfortunately there is never enough hands in a school environment. I know myself too, I also have to jump in and help out at swimming etc, but yes, I must say (fellow HOD name) sympathised with you as a male….because you as male staff….there is never enough of you to help will all the sporting codes** HOD: I must say…..regarding rugby….we tried to make a bit of a plan at school now…..we decided to have me work with the first team, but then we also got two external coaches. So they focus on the skills and the coaching and all those things and I do the administration from the school side, ensure the learners have their letters, etc…so unfortunately I still have to be at training sessions, but it does free up my time a bit, so if there is a parents evening, then I can leave early at rugby practice, as there are professional coaches helping. **Interviewer: Then there is someone….yes, that helps**	Ensuring dept expectations are adhered to and done Communication with dept of ed Mentorship – class visits, new staff Extra-murals – especially academic of nature AS male, also sport Also in charge of sound and projectors etc at functions	Mentorship Extra-murals Whole school	

ADDENDUM L: DETAILED RECORD OF CHALLENGES FACED WITH ONLINE INTERVIEWS

The platforms used for the different interviews, as well as the challenges experienced, are explained in following table:

Participant	Platform	Challenges
FP-I1	WhatsApp call	Interview meant to be conducted via Microsoft Teams, but couldn't connect. Made use of a WhatsApp call instead and just used Teams for recording purposes.
FP-I2	Zoom meeting with cell phone and Teams used for recording.	-
FP-I3	Microsoft Teams meeting – cell phone used for recording.	-
FP-I4	Microsoft Teams meeting – cell phone used for recording.	-
FP-I5	Zoom meeting with cell phone used for recording	-
FP-G1	Zoom subsequent call via landline	Started with Zoom meeting and recording on cellphone. Signal failed, lost complete connectivity. Reconnected, but lost audio. Continued and finished meeting on a landline on speaker phone and recorded call on Microsoft Teams (hence two parts in recording) Poor audio throughout the meeting (even first part)
FP-G2	Zoom meeting with cell phone used for recording	-
IP-I1	Microsoft Teams – live recording on Teams –	-

	removed visual and kept audio	
IP-I2	Microsoft Teams meeting – cell phone used for recording.	-
IP-G1	Zoom meeting – cell phone used for recording	-
IP-G2	Zoom meeting – cell phone used for recording	-
ISP-I1	Zoom meeting with cell phone used for recording – switched to landline call	Started with Zoom meeting – loadshedding halfway through interview resulted in lost signal – changed to landline call using a cell phone for recording.
ISP-I2	Microsoft Teams meeting with cell phone used for recording	-
ISP-I3	Microsoft Teams meeting with cell phone used for recording	-
ISP-G1	Zoom meeting with cell phone used for recording	-

ADDENDUM L: LETTER FROM LANGUAGE EDITOR

MWE LANGUAGE SERVICES

To whom it may concern,

This letter serves to confirm that the MEd thesis by Ms S Myburgh (student number: 30442230), entitled, "Role conflict and ambiguity in mid-level management in primary schools", has been professionally edited by myself, Martine van der Walt Ehlers.

I have been editing academic material both for students in South Africa and internationally, for several years, and completed the Certificate in Editing Principles and Practices (with distinction) through CE@UP (University of Pretoria).

Sincerely,

Martine van der Walt Ehlers
Language Editor, MWE Language Services

mwelanguageservices@gmail.com