

University of KwaZulu-Natal

**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE COPING
STRATEGIES USED BY TEACHERS TO DEAL
WITH STRESS**

By

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DECLARATION

I,

John Arokium,

do hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work and the views of authors in my research have all been duly acknowledged and listed in the bibliography.

This research has not been submitted previously for a degree at this or another university.

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Date

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ABSTRACT

In large numbers, teachers are reporting high levels of work-related stress. Surveys from many countries reveal widespread concern about the effects of stress on teachers' well-being and willingness to stay in the profession.

The purpose of this study was to investigate coping strategies that teachers employ when faced with stress in primary schools located in the North Durban Region of Phoenix. Other related aims were to identify the causes of stress and the most significant factors that contribute to teacher stress. Current research reveal that teacher stress has a detrimental effect not only on their physical, mental, social and emotional well being, but also on their efficiency and productivity in the teaching and learning situation.

Statistical analyses revealed that some of the main factors that contributed to teacher stress were large classes, the frequent changes to the curriculum, administrative tasks and the lack of motivation by learners to study. Teachers use a wide range of coping strategies to deal with stress but very few find effective ways to counter the negative effects of stress. Teachers reported that the most effective action that schools or the government could take to reduce teacher stress was to decrease teachers' workload. These findings are in line with those reported in many western countries where the stress caused by a heavy workload and coping with educational reforms have been very much in evidence.

It is anticipated that the present study will be of benefit to teachers, administrators, decision makers and other stakeholders in education.

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CHAPTER ONE

SETTING THE FOCUS

1. Introduction to the study

1.1 Introduction

Between 1994 and 2007, there were rapid changes in South African schools. Some of these changes included Curriculum 2005, the introduction of a new appraisal system for teachers called Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS), inclusive education (which caters for a greater diversity of learners), increased powers of school governing bodies in school decision making processes, rationalisation and redeployment of teachers and the banning of corporal punishment. All of the above changes required teachers to adopt new approaches to teaching lessons in the classroom.

In addition to the above changes, teachers are also faced with challenges such as large numbers of learners in the classroom, unruly learners, school fund raising efforts, assessment of learners with varying ability levels and inadequate resources. These multiple responsibilities and demands increase the teacher's stress levels. The high levels of stress may have a negative effect on their psychological and physical well being. The final toll on teachers is a decrease in job satisfaction and low productivity brought on by stress (Holmes, 2005). There is thus a need for teachers to equip themselves with effective coping strategies to deal with stress (Kyriacou, 2001).

1.2 Statement of the problem

In spite of much international research on stress amongst teachers over the years, little is done to address this issue at school level (Milstein & Farkas, 1993). In the North

Durban region of Phoenix, there are too few programmes to date to equip teachers with strategies to deal with stress. There is thus a need for further research to help clarify the issue of stress amongst teachers. This study exactly clarifies the experience of stress among teachers and the strategies that can be implemented to deal with it.

The approach used in this study is the bio-psycho-social approach (Donald, Lazarus, & Lolwana, 1997). In this approach, the individual is seen as functioning at the biological, psychological and sociological levels. This approach stems from the ecosystemic theory, which examines the interaction of individuals within social contexts. According to Donald, Lazarus, and Lolwana (2000), social contexts are systems where the functioning of the whole is dependent on the interaction between the parts. A school as a system is made up of different parts. These include teachers, learners, parents, School Governing Bodies, school administrators etc. These parts do not function in isolation. To understand the parts we need to first examine the relationship between the various parts since whatever happens in one part will affect all the other parts. In this way, by examining the relationship between the different parts of the system, a better understanding of the whole situation can be attained (Donald, Lazarus, & Lolwana, 2000). In this study the issue of stress is examined holistically and not seen as just existing in the teachers.

This research investigated the sources of stress and the coping strategies teachers use to deal with the stress of classroom situations. Lazarus and Folkman (1986, p.164) have defined coping as “those changing cognitive and behavioural efforts developed for managing the specific external and /or internal demands judged as exceeding or surpassing individual resources.” Coping strategies can be seen as specific methods

used to deal with stress. Practicing deep breathing to reduce a person's stress level is one method (Lazarus & Folkman, 1986). Currently stress experienced by teachers is at a high level. Consequently, the amount of teaching time lost because of work related stress, has increased. It is increasingly becoming the primary reason for teachers taking time off work (Rogers, 1992).

This study attempts to shed light on some of the causes of stress, the effects of stress and the coping strategy teachers' use in dealing with stress.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the sources of stress and the coping strategies that primary school teachers use in dealing with school related stress.

1.4 Critical questions

1.4.1 What are the significant factors that contribute to teacher stress in schools?

1.4.2 What are the coping strategies that teachers use in dealing with stress at school?

1.5 Rationale

I was motivated to embark on this study after discovering that many of my colleagues complained about the high levels of stress that they experienced in school. It seemed that it was not only I that had experienced high levels of stress. This spurred me to ascertain the factors that led to high stress levels among teachers in school and to find out what coping strategies teachers use to deal with such stress. I felt that I was suitable to conduct the research because I teach in a school.

Since the early 1970's, the amount of research on teacher stress has increased steadily and it is now a major topic of research in many countries (Kyriacou, 2001; Troman & Wood, 2001; Vandenberghe & Huberman, 1999). This is because stress is increasingly becoming a recognised occupational hazard of the teaching profession and is thus an inherent feature of teaching (Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1978a; Farmer, 1988). Studies in the United Kingdom (Dunham, 1984; Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1978a; Blasé, 1986) support this view.

Although there has been growing research on the topic of stress amongst teachers internationally, there has not been substantive research on how teachers manage school-related stress in the North Durban region of Phoenix. But, one cannot apply directly the findings made in these studies to the local context. One has to take into account social, cultural, economic and educational differences amongst countries. This implies that one has to be very cautious not to generalise findings from research done in other countries. As such, there is an important need for basic research on teacher stress to be carried out in South Africa where the local factors can be considered in the pursuit of the study.

The widespread concern with the effects of stress upon teachers in schools is shown by the frequency with which the topic is addressed in books, journals, magazines and newspapers. The teachers' daily interaction with learners and colleagues together with the incessant and fragmented demands of teaching often cause pressures and challenges, which may lead to stress. When stressful factors are unrelenting, teachers may experience negative physiological, psychological and sociological consequences (DeRobbio & Iwanicki, 1996, p.1). These negative consequences of stress will be addressed in Chapter Two.

1.6 Significance of the study

The researcher felt it necessary to conduct research of this nature as it would enlighten many teachers about issues relating to the experiences of stress by teachers in schools. This will help teachers to handle stress effectively. It will also highlight the need for counselling centres where teachers can be counselled on stress management.

There are numerous problems that face teachers as a consequence of recent government policies involving rationalisation of teachers, the banning of corporal punishment, voluntary severance packages, early retirement and retrenchment. In addition to this, there have been radical changes in the education system. These are apt to take their toll on the well-being of the teacher corps as changes in social life and school practice brings about serious psychological adjustment problems (Ngidi & Sibaya, 2002). Teachers whom I have spoken to have complained about the lack of discipline in schools, unmotivated learners, large pupil-teacher ratios and the problems associated with implementing the new curriculum. These factors have to a certain extent, contributed to raising the stress levels of teachers (Saptoe, 2000).

By identifying the main sources of stress currently experienced by teachers, it is hoped that decision makers and administrators will be able to design appropriate remedial techniques aimed at improving the quality of teachers working lives so that they can become effective and productive in the teaching-learning situation. It is also hoped that this study will be of benefit and interest to teachers in general by providing them with insight into stress as experienced by them so that they can develop better strategies for coping with the pressures of teaching as well as to provide support to colleagues, administrators, decision-makers as well as other stakeholders. It is

therefore anticipated that the present study will be of benefit to teachers, who have a personal stake in education.

1.7 Outline of the present study

This study will cover the following stress related concepts pertaining to teachers in primary schools: the prevalence of stress, sources of stress, effects of stress, symptoms of stress, coping actions used by teachers and possible measures that can be taken to reduce stress. By examining these concepts, it is hoped that a holistic picture can be attained of how stress affects teachers in the school environment. Particular attention will be paid to international research on stress, the various viewpoints of stress, the causes and effects of stress as well as research relating to the management strategies teachers use in dealing with stress.

This chapter has covered the purpose, critical questions, rationale and significance of the study. Chapter two presents the literature review pertaining to stress as experienced by teachers in school. Particular attention is paid to the various views of stress, the causes of stress, the effects of stress as well as the coping actions used by teachers in dealing with stress. Chapter three focuses on the research methodology employed in the study. Chapter four presents the data analysis and findings of the study. Finally, Chapter five provides recommendations and conclusions.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW: INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will begin with a discussion on the nature of stress as experienced by teachers in primary schools. Thereafter the focus will be on the negative effects of stress on teachers and the strategies that they use to manage stress.

Teachers, together with social workers and servicemen have emerged as the most affected with rising stress (Joseph, 2000). In the past few years, the level of teacher stress had intensified. Teachers had experienced a sharp increase in worries about their workload, deadline pressures, job security and responsibility. The result is that there are an increasing number of teachers experiencing stress-induced problems like high blood pressure, peptic ulcers, sleep disturbances and family crises. Bloch (1978) report that many teachers had to be treated for the same disturbances that soldiers experienced in combat. It is not surprising that some researchers have concluded that schools are among the most stressful ecologies in our society (Donald, Lazarus, & Lolwana, 1997).

Although stress has become a recognised occupational hazard of teaching, there is more popular interest in the topic than there is substantive research about it (Pettegrew & Wolf, 1982). Thus, thorough research is needed to understand how the phenomenon of stress affects teachers in schools.

Given that stressful situations are unavoidable in the school setting and that a high level of stress negatively affects teacher performance, there is a need for teachers to

develop strategies to cope with these stressful situations (Kyriacou, 2000). Some of these strategies will be considered later in the chapter.

On the other hand, low level stress might have positive outcomes for some teachers since it serves as a motivating factor in getting the task done. These teachers feel inspired by low level stress facing them and even enjoy the challenges they are confronted with. They seem to perform better when under such stress. This is evident when, for example, these teachers have to meet administrative deadlines. They are motivated and enthusiastic to complete the given tasks set at given dates. This type of stress is termed eustress or positive stress. Although positive stress still involves demands on the teachers' mind and body, their ability to handle these demands protects them from the ill-effects commonly associated with excessive stress. For these teachers, an ability to meet deadlines such as completing class reports and class schedules on time in school promotes positive stress. Positive stress rekindles their desire to do more tasks (Holmes, 2005).

However, for some teachers these same demands can result in these teachers experiencing high levels of stress. This type of stress is called distress or negative stress (Holmes, 2005). The experience of negative stress has the effect of lowering the energy levels of teachers. Most teachers are unable to cope adequately when faced with challenges in the classroom with such low energy levels. This inability to cope adequately arises when teachers feel overwhelmed by stressful situations and are thus unable to cope with the task at hand (Holmes, 2005).

Since teachers are faced with numerous responsibilities, in addition to the important task of teaching learners, the likelihood of teachers experiencing negative stress is increased. Some of these responsibilities as cited in Gold and Roth (1993) are:

- Pastoral care: Learners are placed under the teachers' custody during school hours and teachers are faced with the enormous responsibility of making sure that learners are safe all the time. For example, teachers need to be vigilant of learners who run wildly and pose a danger to themselves or other learners during playtime. During excursions teachers need to ensure that all learners are accounted for by ensuring that they do not deviate from the designated spots. Some teachers may find these responsibilities stressful. Equally, teachers may find extra-curricular activities too demanding since it may entail taking care of learners outside the school environment. The risk of injury to learners during inter-school matches can prove to be stressful to some teachers (Gold & Roth, 1993).
- Attending to staff meetings: Staff meetings are usually held at the end of the last period of the school day. Many teachers are usually mentally fatigued during this part of the day and consequently they may experience a certain degree of stress.
- Marking of books, tests and assignments: teachers are constantly evaluating learner performance through marking books, tests and assignments. Marking that has not been completed during school hours has to be completed after school hours. In addition to marking of learners' books, teachers also need to spend time preparing for tests and assignments for learners. These are also attended to after school hours. Some teachers may feel that these infringe on other aspects of their lifestyle such as time spent with family, social activities or hobbies. These teachers are bound to experience some stress during these periods.
- Meeting parents: Teachers need to communicate with parents to discuss their children's conduct and progress. This is usually done after school hours. Many

teachers are exhausted during this part of the day and depending on the nature of discussion with parents, it may aggravate teacher stress levels.

- Resources available: Many schools do not have materials such as tools for constructing projects, computers, scientific equipment and materials for science lessons or art material. Teachers may try to improvise their lessons due to the lack of resources. This entails taking the initiative to make alternative arrangements such as borrowing the required items from neighbouring schools or raising funds to buy the resources. This can add to anxiety experienced by teachers.

In addition to the above responsibilities, teachers are also faced with the challenge of large classes, disobedient learners, conflict with staff members, preparing for fund raising efforts, rationalisation and redeployment, meeting deadlines, preparing lessons or tests that cater for all ability levels of learners and writing learner reports.

The resultant stress from the above factors has been linked to physical symptoms such as headaches, negative emotional reactions, poor performance in the classroom and absenteeism. The experience of severe stress may eventually lead to depleted motivation and demoralization. This affects the classroom atmosphere, the school and the educational experience of the learners since teachers are the cog in the educational machinery. Stress amongst teachers must therefore be taken seriously as it can have a negative impact on the individual teacher, the learners, the school, the teaching profession and the whole educational system (Gold & Roth, 1993).

The above has been a discussion on the nature of stress as experienced by teachers in schools. The focus will now shift to the negative effects of stress on teachers and the

strategies that teachers use to manage the stress. These will be covered under the following headings:

- Definition of stress
- International research on stress
- Causes of stress
- Effects of stress
- Coping strategies
- Strategies to manage stress
- The approach of the present study

There does not seem to be a commonly accepted definition of the term stress amongst researchers as there are so many different understandings around this concept (Kagan & Kagan, 1995). Thus, before focusing on studies of stress, it is worth mentioning briefly what different researchers understand by the concept stress.

2.2 Definition of stress

Dunham (1984) discusses stress using three different approaches. The first approach views stress as a load or demand placed upon the person with resultant strain. It suggests that up to a point stress can be managed but when it becomes unmanageable, a person can be affected psychologically, physiologically or both. This approach emphasises causes rather than symptoms. For example, a teacher who has a high workload in class and has to attend to extra- curricular activities may experience high levels of stress. However, there are limitations to equating external pressures with stress. This includes wide-ranging individual differences amongst teachers in their reactions to stressful experiences. For example, one teacher may be feeling stressed in

carrying out extra curricular duties while another teacher may report little or no stress while performing these duties (Dunham, 1984).

The second approach to understanding stress is medically oriented. It is concerned with the teacher's reactions to stressful situations that are either physiological or psychological. These reactions consist of emotional and bodily manifestations such as anxiety, headache, muscular tensions and stomachs ailments. The level of challenge facing the teacher could be both positive and negative. For example, teachers who are preparing for a fund raising event in school can experience a mixture of both positive and negative emotions, at times enjoyable and at other times upsetting. Some researchers would include both the feelings of enjoyment and the feelings of being upset as evidence of stress (Kyriacou, 1991).

However, teachers can have stressful experiences that are not emotional or psychosomatic. An example of such a case is when teachers feel that they are ineffective in the performance of their role in school due to high stress levels. Such an experience of being ineffective is often identified by a major loss of self-confidence.

The third approach looks at pressures caused by stress and reactions to stress together with the coping resources which teachers use as they attempt to cope with difficult situations. Proponents of this approach state that stress occurs when the pressure faced by teachers is significantly greater than the resources or skills that teachers have available to cope with. The experience of stress arises from the dynamic interaction of personal variables (biological and psychological aspects) and environmental variables (classroom, parents, and school community and education department) (Dunham, 1984). The current research will focus mainly on this approach.

2.3 International research on stress

International literature has established that teachers serve in one of the most stressful environments that increase the likelihood of stressful experiences. Some of the factors that contribute to such stressful environments are: large class sizes, teacher evaluation, rowdy learners, parental criticism of teachers, and redeployment of teachers, low remuneration and curriculum changes (Dunham, 1994; Kyriacou, 2001; Travers & Coopers, 1996).

Travers and Coopers (1996) point out that when there was a massive restructuring of the education system in the USA in the 1980's, teacher stress levels increased. Similarly, teacher stress was also evident when Outcomes Based Education (OBE) was introduced to South African schools (Van Zyl & Pietersen, 1999).

It is evident that when teachers are faced with major changes in the education system their stress levels also increases. One of the reasons for this could be reluctance on the part of teachers to change the status quo.

Kendell (1983) investigated stress factors and levels of stress in regular classrooms in Newfoundland and reported that parent-teacher relation and time management were two factors related to stress. Teachers who enjoyed good parent-teacher relationship and had good time management skills experienced less stress than teachers who had an unsatisfactory relationship with parents and who had poor time management skills.

Kyriacou and Sutcliffe's self-report study (1978b) found that twenty percent of the 25 teachers in England described teaching as very stressful. The two most common symptoms of stress reported by these teachers were 'feeling exhausted' and 'feeling frustrated'. These symptoms of stress were in response to four particular stressors:

pupil misbehaviour, poor working conditions, time pressures, and poor school character. Similarly Blasé (1986) argues that work overload (or lack of sufficient time) and student discipline were the most consistently reported stressors (p. 120). A stressor in this context is defined as any event, person or object in the teacher's environment that result in stress (Kyriacou, 1995).

The other significant stressors reported by these teachers were: organisational stressors (e.g. lack of teaching resources, excessive paper work, role overload, insufficient time to complete school related tasks), student related problems (e.g. problem behavior, apathy, absenteeism, poor achievement), administrative problems (e.g. unclear expectations, lack of support, harassment, poor evaluation procedures), and conflict with colleagues (e.g. lack of co-operation, negative attitude, incompetence or irresponsibility (Kyriacou, 1995).

The findings from these international studies show the similarity in the experience of stress by teachers in different countries.

2.4 The causes of stress

According to Borg (1990) the causal factors of stress include those that are intrinsic to teaching (preparation of lessons, maintaining discipline, managing a classroom, extra and co-curricular activities), individual vulnerability (personality differences), and systemic influences (parent, community or education department). By its very nature, teaching is a stressful occupation considering the multiplicity of stressors a teacher is faced with in school. These stressors have the potential to bring about stress in teachers. It is therefore useful to identify these stressors and try to find ways to minimize its negative effects. Of the vast number of studies that have researched stress among teachers, there are ten areas that have been identified as the most common cause of

stress as reported by teachers in England (Borg, 1990; Dunham & Varma, 1984).

These are:

- Teaching learners who lack motivation
- maintaining discipline
- time pressure and workload
- coping with change
- dealing with colleagues
- self esteem and status
- administration and management

Kyriacou (2000) found that the effect of stressors vary for different teachers. This implies that different teachers will experience a stressor differently. For one teacher the main cause of stress may be large class numbers while for another teacher the main cause of stress may be conducting extra-curricular activities. In addition, the effect of a stressor will vary for the same teacher from one day to another. Thus, a teacher may experience a situation as stressful on one day but the same situation on another day may not lead to stress. For example, a teacher may find difficulty in maintaining control of a rowdy class on a particular day resulting in an increase in stress levels but on another day the same teacher is able to maintain control when the same class is rowdy. It appears that teachers have their own unique profile of what typically causes them to feel stressed.

Massey (2000) also cites physical conditions such as school size, noise, overcrowding and school safety that plays a role in causing stress. Poor working conditions, lack of participation in school decision-making processes, the burden of paperwork, and lack of resources, low social status and lack of parental support have

all been identified as factors that can cause stress among school staff (Hammond & Onikama, 1997).

Some of the other factors that can contribute to teachers experiencing stress will now be discussed.

2.4.1 Classroom management

The term management can be viewed as the way individual teachers organise their approach to learning and how they organise their classroom as an aid to learning (Fontana, 1994). Failure to maintain classroom management is one of the most influential factors in creating stress amongst teachers (Levin & Nolan, 2000). One possible reason for this is that teachers in the classroom have to consider a host of factors when managing a classroom.

Some of these factors are: learners coming from different cultural backgrounds, varying ability levels of learners, different socio- economic background of learners, learners with different personality types, learners with physical and/or mental disabilities and unruly learners. The teacher has to take into account all of these factors while performing the important task of teaching. One or more of these factors have the potential to create stressful situations and may increase teacher stress levels during teaching.

As a classroom manager, a teacher has to also make important decisions in the classroom. These decisions could involve deciding whether to retain a learner at a certain grade, setting test dates, finding suitable outings for excursions or deciding on activities for lessons. Hoy and Miscall (2000) state that these decision-making processes themselves are often stressful. This is because teachers are accountable for

the decisions that they make and incorrect decisions can have negative consequences for the teacher and the learner. For example, if a teacher has decided that a particular learner has to be retained for another year at a certain grade due to poor performance, then the teacher concerned has to motivate his/her decision. If there is no concrete evidence (class tests, assignments, homework etc.) to show that the learner has not performed satisfactorily throughout the year then the teacher can be questioned about the decision made. Thus, the teacher has to keep a record of all the learners' assessment. This can add to the teacher's administrative workload.

2.4.2 Maintaining classroom discipline

Maintaining classroom discipline is also a significant source of stress. According to Kyriacou (1991) discipline refers to positive behaviour by learners in the classroom for effective learning. Hamachek (1995), states that the most common type of disciplinary problem that increases teacher stress is learner misbehaviour. He lists the following types of learner misbehaviours most frequently cited by teachers when stressed: excessive talk during lesson time, verbal actions (shouting to another learner), non-verbal actions such as letting a door slam, not paying attention to the teacher, not attending to given tasks during lessons, being out of seat without a valid reason or hindering other learners from doing their tasks during lessons. These types of learner misbehaviour hinder the teacher's task of teaching since valuable lesson time is being used to redirect learners to focus on the given tasks.

Kyriacou (1991) mentions that preventing learner misbehavior is more to do with the skills involved in effective teaching in general than it is to do with how you deal with learner misbehaviour itself. Instilling discipline in learners is therefore not to be viewed as dealing with learner misbehaviour per se but is to be seen as part of the

teacher's general teaching duties. For example, the presentation of lessons that maintains interest and involvement can help to minimize learner misbehaviour.

According to Kyriacou (2000) there are two ways of maintaining classroom discipline that can cause stress. The first way is being alert and vigilant during lessons to prevent negative behavior. This means that while presenting lessons, teachers need to be alert and vigilant of disciplinary problems. The second way of maintaining discipline is to deal with negative behaviors as they occur. These negative behaviours can range from little incidents such as learners not paying attention to the teacher, to learners swearing at teachers or other learners. Some teachers use detention, extra written work or carrying out menial tasks to punish misbehaving learners.

Rutter's classic research (Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore & Ouston, 1979) shows that irrespective of children's home background, schools themselves may sometimes be a key cause of disruptive and un-cooperative learners. This implies that the type of behaviour learners display in schools can be influenced by the nature of school rules, the system of sanctions and punishments, pastoral care network, the leadership styles adopted by management staff, attitude toward children's academic and social problems and the general philosophical ethos of the school. For example, disciplinary problems are most likely in schools that are punitive, poorly managed and do not take into account the socio-economic and cultural background of learners (Fontana, 1994).

On the other hand, schools that show sensitive awareness of the needs of individual learners, and operate in a caring, constructive and positive fashion, are less likely to have problems of anti-social behaviour from children. It can also be said that in any school, the same learners may behave differently with different teachers. This is because teachers have their own peculiar rules and expectations that are required from

learners. These rules and expectations stem from the different management styles that teachers employ in the classroom (Fontana, 1994).

The discipline that prevails in the classroom atmosphere is not only influenced by the teacher's management style. It is also influenced by the expectations learners have of teachers and by the prevailing ethos in the school. For example, some teachers are able to express their enthusiasm in such a way that learners begin to feel enthusiastic about their work. Other teachers may display a demoralized attitude and show little interest in their work. This type of attitude can be adopted by learners who in turn will show less interest in their school work. This implies that the nature, extent and effect of disruptive behaviour are not simply the result of learners acting disruptively. Behaviour is also influenced within the context of teacher-learner interaction in the classroom. Thus, the behaviour of teachers and learners has a reciprocal effect on each other (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 1997).

2.4.3 Evaluation

Evaluation apprehension is an issue of increasing importance, as quality assurance procedures increasingly demand lesson observation. The work of teachers is continually being evaluated informally by learners, colleagues and parents. In addition, teachers continually evaluate the standard of their performance against their colleagues. Teachers may therefore feel under pressure to perform adequately to avoid criticism from school heads, superintendents, colleagues, learners and parents (Fontana, 1994).

Prior to 1994, the evaluation of teachers in the South African education system tended to be bureaucratic and highly subjective. Many teachers found this evaluation process

intimidating. In addition, it did little to enhance their teaching. Thus, there was a need for an improved system of teacher evaluation.

In the post-1994 era, the education department and teacher unions agreed that an appraisal system should form an important part of teacher development even though they differed on the method and content of the appraisal process. Eventually the Education Department and teacher unions negotiated an appraisal system that became known as the Developmental Appraisal System (DAS). This system of appraisal involves the evaluation of a teacher's performance in the classroom. The purpose of DAS is to appraise individual teachers in a transparent manner with a view to determining areas of strength and weaknesses and to draw up programmes for individual development (Department of Education, 1998).

However, from its onset, apprehension was expressed by teachers that the implementation of this appraisal system might be similar to the dreaded system of inspection of the past. This appraisal system was also perceived to be threatening since it made teachers feel inadequate when shortcomings were pointed out to teachers. Teachers also seemed to be more concerned about having to constantly update all their school records as these were subject to evaluation by peers and the HOD. Consequently, teachers experienced this evaluation process as a stressful one.

Although all teacher unions representing teachers were consulted and signed the document concerning the evaluation document, the implementation of the evaluation system appeared to be top-down and non-democratic. Although most teachers are represented by teacher unions, not all teachers agreed to the system of evaluation. Thus, these teachers do not own the process of change but are respondents within it

rather than agents of change. As a result, such teachers are reluctant to accept a system of evaluation in which they are not actively involved when it is formulated.

Even experienced teachers who are confident in their own skills report that being evaluated can be stressful. These teachers have invested much time, thought and energy into developing their own approach to teaching. The consequence of negative critical feedback during the evaluation process can be devastating to the teachers. This is possibly because these teachers may perceive the evaluators as critical and judgmental and this criticism is taken personally. This can increase tension and anxiety in the teachers concerned.

Kyriacou (1991) reported that teachers in England found the whole experience of being appraised very stressful. These teachers also felt that this form of evaluation was judgmental, was an infringement of their autonomy and undermined their sense of professionalism.

This perception also applies to most teachers who have a predisposition to take criticism personally rather than as a criticism of their working practice that can be changed. The possibility of little or negative feedback may be experienced as a major threat to their self-esteem. A study by Jeffrey and Woods (1996) in England investigated the effect of stress on teacher's self-esteem during the evaluation process. He found that these teachers experienced a high degree of trauma during this process. These teachers felt that their self-worth and professional integrity were being undermined by the whole experience of being evaluated. Therefore, teachers who feel uncomfortable having their lessons observed by fellow colleagues may perceive evaluation as a threat. Such teachers may react with marked apprehension when being evaluated as they are uncertain about their ability to meet their own or others

standards. Nevertheless, some teachers may report positive outcomes of helping and mentoring each other and resolving shortcomings in their colleague's lessons (Holmes, 2005).

2.4.4. Time pressure and workload

Everyday, teachers need to be prepared to conduct lessons on different topics that must not only take into account learners with different interests and abilities but also learners with special needs such as learners who are physically and mentally challenged or learners who have hearing and visual impairments. Many teachers are not adequately equipped to deal with such learners and this is likely to increase their stress levels (Carrim, 2003).

In the course of performing their teaching duty teachers face a continuous series of deadlines to meet. This includes writing reports, attending to staff meetings or developmental workshops, marking learners' work and preparing teaching materials. There are bound to be occasions where the combination of a heavy workload and the associated deadlines will accumulate to generate stress in teachers. These teachers may feel compelled that they have to meet these demands as best as they can since they are eventually accountable to various stakeholders such as school heads, superintendents of education and parents. In executing their tasks, it is always possible that some teachers will perform to the required standard while others will perform below the acceptable level. Those who perform far below the required level, face the likelihood that they will suffer from stress-related ailments (Kyriacou, 2000). In addition, colleagues in the work environment can be critical and may complain about required tasks that have not yet met the deadline or the appropriate standards have not been met. In this sense, teachers may get immediate and critical feedback

from other teachers if their performance is judged as inadequate (Troman & Wood, 2001).

Since the teacher's performance is continually exposed to the judgment of other teachers, school heads, learners and parents, the pressure to perform well all the time is high. This may lead to an increase in their anxiety and stress levels.

2.4.5 Rationalisation and redeployment

With the process of rationalisation and redeployment increasing in the latter half of the nineties, job security was no longer guaranteed. Rationalisation was implemented because the department of education reported that its budget could not cater for more teachers. Redeployment was introduced by the government to achieve greater equality in schools across the country (Department of Education, 1998). For the period of the redeployment process, (1998 to 2001), temporary and permanent teachers were declared "in excess" and moved from one school to another where they were perceived to be needed.

The Post Provisioning Norm (PPN) circular is sent to all schools by the Department of Education. It stipulates a formula of how to determine excess teachers. For instance, if there were 12 teachers at a school and the calculated number of teachers according to the PPN is 10, then 2 teachers would have to be declared in 'excess' at this school. These 'excess' teachers would then be redeployed to other schools that experience a shortage of teachers. Such teachers tend to experience an element of loss of control since they are uncertain as to which school they would be redeployed to.

However, some teachers show a reluctance to move to other schools. Some of the reasons for this are: i) traveling costs could increase because the new school may be

located further away from their homes. ii) little or no experience in teaching the different learning areas at the redeployed school iii) inability or difficulty to adjust to a new school environment. This would certainly result in an increase in the stress level amongst teachers who have been declared in “excess” at their schools.

Some teachers may experience the redeployment process as traumatic. The trauma experienced due to leaving a well-loved school can be compared to a form of bereavement. Dunham (1984, p. 23) described a teachers’ experience of leaving a school located in England as follows:

She appears to be suffering from grief for the sights, sounds and even smells of the school and the people from whom she has been separated.

The rationalisation and redeployment process resulted in teachers experiencing low morale in some schools. With fewer teachers, the situation arises such that there is an increase in the number of learners per classroom resulting in overcrowding. This means that these learners may have to share equipment when using computers or laboratory and workshop equipment. Thus, extra pressure is placed on the remaining teachers to accommodate all learners when faced with a shortage of such teaching resources.

While, on the one hand, the media reports that there is a shortage of teachers, on the other hand, there are also media reports stating that teachers are in excess. These reports are conflicting. For example Mbonabi in the Sunday Tribune (4 April, 2004, p. 2) reports that:

A head count[of teachers] at all schools in the province showed many schools had teachers in excess of the post provisioning norm for 2004, and teachers, including those in management positions, would have to be

moved. Temporary teachers (a term that includes substitute unprotected and protected teachers) would have contracts terminated.

On the other hand, Mbanjwa reports in the *The Mercury* (31 May, 2004, p. 4) that:

Despite measures taken by DoE to draw more teachers into the profession, the educational needs of South Africa will not be met without drastic measures. It is estimated that over the next four years 16,000 teachers will be needed for KwaZulu-Natal alone, whereas only 320 teachers from UKZN will graduate at the end of 2004.

The uncertainty and confusion generated by the above conflicting media reports has the potential to increase anxiety among teachers. In addition, the general public can also be confused by such reports.

2.4.6 Change

Change itself can cause stress among teachers. The South African education system is currently undergoing major changes. During South Africa's progress toward a democratic society since 1994, major changes were made in the education system and consequently, the Education Department produced a number of new policy documents. The implementation of these new policies required teachers to make corresponding changes in their teaching to accommodate the requirements of the policies (Department of Education, 1998).

Some of these policy changes include a new curriculum popularly known as Curriculum 2005, the banning of corporal punishment, Whole School Evaluation and Performance Related Pay. These major policy changes introduced by the education department can be stressful to teachers especially if these require teachers to make great adjustments in school. For example, many teachers viewed the implementation

of Curriculum 2005 with much trepidation. The new system required major changes in their teaching approach and many teachers found it difficult to make such major adjustments. In this system of education, emphasis is placed on what learners know and can do in contrast to the previous content-based syllabus. The intended outcomes of learning, rather than the prescription of content are important in Curriculum 2005. It was intended to allow greater creativity, individuality and autonomy for teachers, within the framework of a national curriculum with prescribed outcomes (Tema, 1997).

Many teachers feel that Curriculum 2005 is a hindrance to their autonomy and creativity. Teachers poorly understood this approach and perceived it as a technique to be learned rather than enabling and empowering. There had been much reluctance on the part of many teachers in accepting the new curriculum. curriculum for a variety of reasons. Some of these are the complex language and confusing terminology used in the curriculum documents, the inclusion of eight learning areas in the General Education and Training (GET) band, too much time on managing and assessing learners and little time for classroom work, the inadequacy of Curriculum 2005 workshops for teachers and the unmanageable timeframes to implement the curriculum in all the grades (Potenza, 2003). These changes resulted in much confusion and apprehension amongst teachers and the possibility existed that their performance will be less successful because they were not able to use tried and trusted teaching methods that they were accustomed to. It is for these reasons that many teachers were reluctant to accept the change in curriculum. Nevertheless, teachers were compelled by policy to change their traditional method of teaching to the new approach.

This paradigm shift required major changes in terms of recording and reporting of learners work, lesson preparation, different forms of assessment, and teacher- learner interaction. Thus, the working practice of teachers had to change to take into account the new curriculum. Many teachers had difficulty in implementing this curriculum because of its confusing terminology and the short time period in which it had to be implemented. Many teachers felt that Curriculum 2005 increased their workload and demanded more administration. Because of these changes, many teachers felt highly stressed (Carrim, 2003).

Subsequently the Education Department introduced the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) to schools with the aim of enabling teachers to cope better with the implementation of Curriculum 2005. However, many teachers still have difficulty in the implementation of NCS such as recording, reporting and assessment. The Review Committee that conducted research on Curriculum 2005 implementation found that most teachers were not effectively implementing the new curriculum framework due to a “lack of resources, inadequate training and adhering to a number of policies when attempting to enact educational reforms in schools” (Carrim, 2003, p. 315).

Although the curriculum changes introduced to schools were done in consultation with teacher unions, the information about these changes was not filtered down to all union members. Thus, we find that a large proportion of teachers only become aware of the changes after the actual policy documents about curriculum changes are finalised. Therefore, teachers do not have a sense of ownership of the changes introduced. Travers and Coopers (1996) note that there are problems inherent in any systemic change in which a vision of the organisation may be understood only by a few that hold key positions. This implies that changes in the education system are

best understood by authorities who introduced the changes rather than the majority of teachers who are supposed to implement these changes in the classroom. Constantly changing policies can be confusing and frustrating to teachers. Those who are unwilling to embrace these changes may experience more stress than teachers who accept these changes. Thus, different teachers will respond to these changes differently. This implies that the personality of teachers also play a role in determining stress levels of teachers. This aspect will now be discussed.

2.4.7 Teacher personality and classroom management

The different personality types of teachers influence the way and the rate at which teachers respond to stressors (Holmes, 2005). Research by Dunham and Varma (1984) show that some teachers have personality traits that make them more vulnerable to stress in schools than other personality traits. This implies that there is a relationship between a teacher's personality and the way in which he or she responds to stressful events.

For example, some teachers experience little trouble in maintaining discipline among learners, hence the stress level is low while other teachers struggle to overcome inadequacies in their personalities rather than in the material which they have available or the teaching techniques which they choose to employ. These inadequacies could be physical characteristics such as extreme slowness or hesitancy of speech, annoying habits or mannerisms, anxiety, lack of confidence, shyness or diffidence. These factors affect the teacher's ability to effectively manage the class when disciplinary problems arise (Fontana, 1994). The inevitable result is an increase in the teachers stress level.

Greene, Abidin and Kmetz (1997) offer the viewpoint that the amount of teacher stress generated by a learner's misbehaviour is in part a reflection of learner - teacher compatibility. For example, if a particular learner persistently makes a noise and if a particular teacher feels that persistent noise would cause disruption in teaching, then that learner's behaviour would generate stress whilst with another teacher who is less concerned about such noise as a problem, little stress would arise.

Kyriacou (1991) mentions three personality types and their relationship to stress. These are: Type A and Type B personalities, external/internal locus of control personality and the neurotic personality. These personality types will now be discussed in relation to the teacher's experience of stress.

2.4.7.1 Type A and Type B personality types

Teachers with Type A personality characteristics strive to achieve increasingly more work in less and less time. They are often obsessed with their work, very competitive, always on the move and have a strong sense of urgency. These individuals strive to complete their tasks in spite of obstacles. They often get aggressive, impatient, tense and irritable if people interfere with their tasks. Greenberge (2004) explains that the reason for this is that some of the chemicals released by the brain during these stressful periods may be felt as pleasurable and therefore, these teachers may come to continually seek out situations of intense pressure.

Teachers with Type B personality characteristics on the other hand are just as successful in completing tasks as teachers with Type A personality characteristics but their approach is different. Teachers with type B characteristics are more confident and laid back and approach situations in a relaxed attitude (Greenberge, 2004).

From the viewpoint of the teaching profession, this implies that stress levels will vary from one teacher to another because of varying interpretations and differences in the ability to cope with a problem situation. This is illustrated in the following example: A teacher in the History department may be granted a medical disability early retirement due to AIDS- related ill-health. For cost effective reasons, the vacant post is not filled and the affected classes have to be divided between the remaining two History teachers. Teacher A, who is at present coping well, feels that this increased workload presents an opportunity to build up his/her skills and add to his/her curriculum vitae. Teacher B, however, feels so overloaded at the time that she cannot cope with any more work. In reality, their workload is similar though their personalities and perceptions of extra work differ.

With the rapid changes in the South African education system, there are increasing demands by subject heads, SGB'S, parents and the Education Department for teachers to produce quality education. Considering these changes and demands, teachers who display Type A personality characteristics are more likely to experience difficulty in the management of stress than teachers who display Type B personality characteristics (Deventer & Kruger, 2003).

It must be noted that the characteristics displayed by Type A and Type B personality types are present in everyone but the characteristics from only one of the two types is usually dominant in an individual (Deventer & Kruger, 2003).

2.4.7.2 The internal / external locus of control personality

An internal locus of control refers to the predominant feeling that one can be effective in controlling, changing or shaping ones environment. (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 1997). Teachers who have such feelings tend to have a generalised belief that they

have the ability to influence important events that affect them. For example, if such teachers are faced with high work loads and are under pressure to meet deadlines, they will attempt to handle the situation as calmly as possible rather than panic and feel out of control. They are better able to handle the endless series of interruptions by “message bearers” who move from class to class during lessons (Fontana, 1994).

An external locus of control refers to the feeling that your environment is in control of you. Teachers with an external locus of control personality have a strong expectancy that they have little control over important things that happen to them and therefore feel vulnerable and helpless when exposed to stressful situations in schools. Interruptions from outside the classroom such as message bearers may be experienced as a source of annoyance or irritation. They have a predisposition to see such situations as being beyond their control and are therefore unable to deal with them. Therefore these teachers will perceive stressful situations as threatening and will tend to allow the source of stress to continue rather than try out strategies that will help to reduce their experience of stress (Kyriacou, 2000). While being a teacher in the classroom may seem to give one a feeling of autonomy, teachers may perceive that this control is not complete. This is because of the prescriptive nature of the curricula, deadlines to be met, the process of appraisal of teachers and the lack of resources that many schools experience.

Halpin, Halpin and Harris (1985), showed that locus of control was related to the amount of stress teachers experienced. Teachers who felt that they were in control of their educational environment reported less stress in the classroom than did those who did not.

2.4.7.3 Neurotic personality

Teachers with a neurotic personality have a strong disposition to worry about things and to ruminate for long periods about problems that may face them. A neurotic teacher, for example, may worry excessively about all kinds of possibilities of the forthcoming classroom evaluation. Since their thoughts tend to be negative, it can lead to greater stress in these teachers. Consequently, thinking about stressful situations generates much of their stress. (Kyriacou, 2000). Neurotic personality types are prone to stress because they have a low threshold in stressful situations.

In addition to personality factors, there is a range of factors that influence the degree to which the teacher is able to exercise effective management in the classroom. Some of these factors are physical appearance. There could be something about the teacher's dress or hairstyle that may attract ridicule from learners in a class. A teacher may also have an annoying habit of gesture such as pacing up and down the classroom while talking as if oblivious of the presence of the class or he/she fails to look at children when addressing them. Voice projection of the teacher is also another factor that can influence the teacher's ability to maintain classroom discipline. The teacher who speaks too loudly or too softly most of the time is not practicing good voice projection. Muttering or punctuating the speech with long pauses and a succession of "ers" and "ums" and a monotonous voice indicates indecisiveness on the part of the teacher. Fontana (1994) lists the following aspects of good classroom management to which effective leadership by the teacher is central, namely:

- Management of learners
- Establishment and maintenance of internal and external communication systems
- The fostering of a sense of belonging
- The identification of classroom aims and standards

- The encouragement of collective responsibility
- Support for the learners

No matter how the teacher approaches the various tasks involved in managing a class, there must be no doubt in the minds of anyone that leadership always resides ultimately with him or her. Without such certainty, the chances of maintaining good class control and management are gravely compromised (Fontana, 1994).

2.4.8 Overload

Excessive school workload and the complexity of a teacher's job role can threaten his/her feelings of well being. Hammond and Onikama (1997) found that excessive workload can lead to stress. A factor related to workload is role overload that takes place when teachers are faced with a number of different roles within their job. This may entail constantly switching from one role to another. Pithers and Soden (1998) highlighted role overload as a significant stressor among teachers. Some of these roles include performing the daily duties of teaching, completing administrative work, nursing injured learners or counselling learners with personal problems.

Due to the various roles performed by the teacher, role conflicts may occur. A role conflict exists when there is incompatibility in the requirements or demands of the work role. This is evident when a teacher is torn by conflicting demands. For example, the teacher may be trying to revise a section with learners in preparation for a test but the school administration urgently requires statistical details from teachers concerning learner's biographical information, learner's home background and parent particulars. There is thus a demand at the same point in time for different tasks to be accomplished. These role conflicts can have serious consequences for the teacher's subjective experience of stress. Pines (1982) found that the more the conflicting

demands imposed by a certain work environment, the greater the stress levels. Role conflict has been linked to less job satisfaction, more tension, poor performance and poor relationship among co-workers (Bedouin, Armenakis & Curran, 1981).

2.4.9 The organisational dimension of the work environment

Schools are complex organisations (Handy & Aiken, 1986). The school as an organisation is comprised of groups of people (teachers, learners, SMT's, SGB'S and parents) who work together in different ways to meet shared goals (teaching and learning). Accordingly, schools may be viewed as organisations that are the result of the grouping of work (teaching curricular and extra-curricular activities) and the allocation of duties, responsibilities and authority to teachers in order to achieve specific organisational aims (Gultig, Ndhlovu & Bertram, 1990). An organisation is also made up of elements such as human resources, technical support, management and leadership, school culture, identity, the community and the wider social system. All of these elements have to function effectively in order to achieve its goals. Any element, which is dysfunctional, can have a ripple effect and filter down to the teacher in the classroom resulting in the teacher being unable to cope adequately with the demands of teaching (Gultig, 2002). The teacher is bound to experience stress in such a situation. For example if the principal displays poor leadership and management skills in a school then this school may not function effectively and the teachers stress level is adversely affected.

2.4.9.1 Bureaucratic features

Schools as bureaucratic organisations tend to be more self-serving than public serving and are thus blamed for causing stress among teachers (Pines, 1982). One of the main problems arising due to the bureaucratic nature of the school environment is the

amount of administrative tasks that the teacher has to attend to. This is a key source of stress for teachers. The time spent completing administrative tasks detracts from the quality time that could be spent teaching learners. The limited time teachers have is often felt to be wasted. Stress comes not only from completing the administrative tasks such as completing statistical returns and reading circulars sent by the department, but also in the knowledge that other tasks such as preparing lessons, administering tests and marking still need to be attended to (Joseph, 2000).

The official concern for completing forms and performing other routine administrative work creates problems for the more caring and idealistic teachers. They are faced with an inherent tension between the job of teaching learners and the vast array of peripheral tasks that have to be done. These teachers may even feel that they are becoming clerks instead of professionals. Completing these administrative tasks may take up a significant amount of the teachers teaching time and it can be emotionally draining. Performing these tasks can thus be seen as an obstacle to the actual task of teaching (Holmes, 2005).

In addition to completing these tasks, teachers have to carry out a range of other tasks such as pastoral care, organising school events or fund raising efforts, extra and co-curricular activities or collecting monies from learners. Some teachers complain that such tasks are unwelcome aspects of their work since they consider that their main task is teaching learners in the classroom environment (Holmes, 2005).

However, teachers are compelled to complete these administrative tasks since it forms part of the accountability process. This may contribute to a sense of heavy time pressure and workload, thus generating high levels of stress in teachers.

2.4.9.2 Relationship with colleagues

A typical school staff is comprised of teachers who have different personality types. Teachers are thus more likely to have disagreements with one another when faced with decision-making processes in the school setting. For example there may be disagreements concerning the best format to use in writing school reports for learners or the staff may have different views regarding the type of sporting equipment required for the school. Most of the time teachers resolve these problems and conflicts in a professional and positive manner (Holmes, 2005).

At some point however, disagreements may be so strong that the quality of the working relationship between members of staff becomes affected. If such disagreements persist, then the normal functioning of a school is disturbed thus causing stress to those affected teachers.

2.5 The effects of stress

The effect of stress on teachers is wide and varying. Joseph (2000) identifies four categories of negative stress. This is depicted in Table 2.1. These lists are not exhaustive. Physical symptoms of stress such as rashes, back pains and stomach problems are more easily identified and relieved than symptoms of stress that are of emotional or mental in nature. Physical symptoms usually persist for a few days and are mostly treated by taking medication from a doctor or clinic. On the other hand, symptoms of stress that are emotional or mental in nature such as anxiety, depression and nervousness may persist for longer periods of time. This could be due to the fact that these symptoms may be a characteristic trait of some teachers. These teachers are likely to experience greater levels of stress in schools which can lead them to take leave from school to recover from these symptoms (Joseph, 2000).

Table 2.1 Categories of some effects of negative stress (Joseph, 2000)

Physical	Emotional	Mental	Social
Rashes	Crying	Lack interest	Lack grooming
Headaches	Anxiety	Forgetfulness	Isolation
Teeth grinding	Frustration	Poor concentration	Loneliness
Back or neck pains	Worry	Confusion	Low sex drive
Insomnia	Nervousness	Low productivity	Lashing out
Fatigue	Depression	Negative attitude	Clamming up
Colds	Tension	No new ideas	Nagging
Stomach problems	Mood swings	Lethargy	Fewer contacts
Frequent drug use	Irritability	Easily discouraged	Using people

Some of the most commonly occurring effects of stress on teachers will now be discussed.

2.5.1 Stress-related illnesses

One of the concerns about teacher stress is that the sustained experience of stress may lead to stress-related illnesses, ranging from a reduced resistance to the common cold to physical and mental illnesses such as peptic ulcers and depression respectively (Kyriacou, 2000). Guglielmi and Tatrow (1998) on the other hand state that a high level of stress can lead to a range of unhealthy behaviours such as rushed and irregular meals, smoking, heavy drinking and insufficient sleep. Resorting to these unhealthy behaviours impairs their effective functioning in schools. It is often these unhealthy behaviours that hasten illnesses on the body and mind rather than the direct effect of stress itself. The consequence of this is that it can lead to teacher

absenteeism. Teachers may require a few days to recover from their illness. Learners unfortunately will lose lessons for the period that the teacher is absent (Guglielmi & Tatrow, 1998).

2.5.2 Teacher burnout

The experience of a high level of stress at work over a long period can lead to teacher burnout. Burnout leads to attitudinal exhaustion, physical exhaustion and emotional exhaustion (Kyriacou, 2000). Attitudinal exhaustion occurs when teachers experience a lack of enthusiasm for work and a lowering of a sense of job satisfaction. They may also find themselves increasingly less interested in learner's work. Physical exhaustion occurs when teachers feel physically tired for much of the time at school. Such teachers will typically say that they are completely drained of energy at the end of each school day. Emotional exhaustion occurs when teachers find it very difficult to sustain a positive feeling during the school working day. Their dominant feeling is one of not being able to fulfill the task at hand. The main emotion experienced by teachers here is typically that of depression. It is the boredom of routine teaching over a long period that contributes to burnout. Thus, most teachers who have experienced burnout need to find innovative ways to make their teaching exciting (Massey, 2000).

2.5.3 Low teacher morale

The degeneration of morale in teachers is a reflection of the stressful conditions of work and the disillusionment they experience because of unfulfilled expectations. This low morale mainly accounts for various reports that describe the profession as being in crisis. Some of these reports are: Wendt (1980) 'a sense of crisis', Wangberg (1984) 'Teachers in crisis: The need to improve workplace and teaching as a profession' and Farber (1991) 'Crisis in education'.

Teacher's experience of stress in the classroom is often expressed openly in the staffroom among colleagues. These experiences reflect poor morale amongst teachers. Teachers may feel demoralized and dissatisfied with conditions such as high teacher-learner ratio, IQMS, excessive paper work or learners who lack motivation. Such school-related stressors are major factors in contributing to low morale. Poor morale saps the energy from teachers such that they find it difficult to function effectively throughout the school day. It has also diminished the satisfaction that many teachers derive from accomplishing school-related tasks. The combination of low morale and high stress can lead to teachers being alienated from school.

2.5.4 Attrition

High stress levels can cause teachers to leave the profession. Stress has been identified as one of the factors related to teacher attrition in parts of the Pacific (Hammond & Onikama, 1997). Many of the personal and professional problems that are not being handled adequately by teachers are reflected in their feelings of irritability, fatigue, frustration and anger. When these symptoms are not being dealt with, teachers experience greater stress which often leads to increasing levels of burnout and eventual dropout (Gold & Roth, 1993).

Travers and Coopers (1996) surveyed 800 teachers in England and found that 20% of sick leave was attributed to stress and 55% of teachers reported that they would consider leaving teaching. Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1978b) acknowledge that the intention to leave teaching is associated with teacher stress. This pattern is also evident in the South African education system. Newspaper headings have identified the retention of teachers as a major challenge for the Department of Education. Some of these newspaper reports are:

"Most SA teachers ready to quit" (Kazie, 1999. p. 10).

"Many good teachers have quit in despair because of the OBE system"

(Nondumiso, 2001. p. 3).

"Profoundly sad so many teachers are quitting" (Slindile, 2002. p. 7).

This implies that teachers do not stay in their profession for too long because of high stress levels.

2.5.5 Absenteeism

Stress can lead to illness and consequently absenteeism of teachers. At the school level, the increase in stress is reflected in the growing average annual days of teacher absences and a rise in the number of early retirements. This results in a loss of valuable instructional opportunities to learners (Hammond & Onikama, 1997). Kedjidian (1995) found that the effect of absenteeism due to stress was an increase in medical costs to the teacher and lowered productivity in schools. Scott and Winbush (1991) found that job satisfaction is negatively related to teacher absenteeism. This implies that absenteeism increases when there is less job satisfaction.

Absenteeism of teachers also has a detrimental effect on learner performance in the class. Many parents and students may feel that the poor performance of learners may be due, in part, to frequent teacher absenteeism. Students might also not attend school because a teacher is not present to teach them. Thus, high teacher absenteeism can have a negative effect on student achievement (Pellicer, 1984).

While the exact causes of absenteeism have not been pinpointed, it is known that in most cases there is a significant positive correlation between teacher stress and the total number of days that teachers are away from school (Whalberg, 1974).

2.5.6 Impact on learners

There is some evidence to suggest that teacher stress spill over onto students as well. Blasé (1986) found that workplace stress diminishes teacher enthusiasm and distances them emotionally from their students, thereby lessening teacher-learner interaction. Kyriacou (1991, p. 147) reported that “stress may significantly impair the working relationship a teacher has with students and the quality of commitment and teaching he or she is able to give.” This can negatively influence learner performance.

2.6 Coping strategies

Some stress is beneficial and even necessary in daily life. If a teacher has to complete the end of year examination markings, there will be a degree of stress experienced in terms of trying to complete the work according to a deadline. This type of beneficial stress has been termed eustress (Holmes, 2005). However, constant or sudden extensive stress can be harmful physically and mentally. Thus, the idea of coping with stress emerged. By coping is meant efforts to escape from or reduce anxiety induced by stress. This can be done by changing the event in the environment causing stress or changing our reactions to it (O’ Connor, 1984). Kyriacou (2000) defines coping as a direct action taken by teachers to deal positively with a source of stress. He identifies two forms of coping strategies. The first form is called *direct-action strategies*. These involve identifying the source of stress and then taking action to deal with the source of stress so that it no longer exists. An example is an unruly learner who will be seen as a threat to the teacher’s authority. The teacher exerts authority to deal with the unruly learner to prevent a stressful experience. The second form of coping strategies is called *palliative strategies*. These strategies do not deal with the source of stress directly. Instead, they try to reduce the emotional experience

of stress. Although the source of stress is still there, teachers come to experience less stress in its presence. One example of this strategy is taking medication to deal with stress at the end of the school day (Kyriacou, 2000).

However most teachers use both types of strategies simultaneously. Some of these strategies will now be discussed.

2.6.1 Direct-action strategies

In dealing with stress at school, direct action strategies are preferable since it attempts to deal with the source of stress itself until it is removed. The first step in using direct action is to identify as clearly as possible what is causing stress. Having identified the source of stress, the teacher has to consider what type of action is to be taken so that the source of stress can be removed. For example, if a learner in class is continually misbehaving, the teacher needs to think of what can be done so that the learner behaves well in future.

Some aspects that can be taken into account are : Does the learner have problems with the level of work in class and thus need more academic support? Does the learner need to be isolated in the classroom or moved to the front? Have colleagues been consulted to see if there is a wider problem involved? If one of these actions works, and the learner then starts to behave well, then the source of stress is considered removed. If all strategies have been tried and the problem still persists, an arrangement can be made to transfer the learner to another classroom. That would remove the source of stress for the teacher. Kyriacou (2000) identifies five main categories of direct action. These categories are direct attack, enhancing skill and ability to act, adapting to the situation, removing the source of stress and seeking the help of colleagues.

Direct attack involves taking action in a situation where the teacher already has the skill and ability to deal with the source of stress effectively. Examples of direct attack are actions such as being firmer with a misbehaving learner, allocating more time for marking when experiencing stress due to high marking loads and trying to negotiate with a colleague when a conflict situation arises. In the second category, enhancing skill and ability to act, one takes action to change one's behaviour so that in the future one can deal effectively with the situation that is generating stress. For example, if a teacher is asked to implement a teaching method that he/she is unfamiliar with, or is asked to teach a topic that he/she is inadequate in, then this is likely to cause some stress. However, if the teacher can develop new skills or areas of knowledge, then these sources of stress are removed (Kyriacou, 2000). Curriculum changes in the South African education system mean that teachers need to continually develop their classroom practice to keep pace with new demands.

The third category is called adapting to the situation. This involves taking action that enables teachers to adapt better to the situation that is generating stress. Most of the stress that teachers experience is in part self-imposed by the standards they have set for their own performance. For example, teachers who are particular about all learners completing their homework may experience greater stress because of the constant questioning of learners who rarely do homework that have been set for them. This may make it difficult for the teacher to sustain a positive rapport with the whole class (Kyriacou, 2000). Since these learners may unlikely to ever do homework on a regular basis, the teacher needs to gradually adapt to this situation by lowering his/her demands. The teacher however would continue to express the importance of doing

homework to the learner and then set short tasks and give praise if they are done (Kyriacou, 2000).

The fourth category is called removing the source of stress. There may be situations that are difficult to deal with despite a teacher's best endeavour to do so. If a teacher finds that undertaking important organisational tasks generates stress, then the teacher should avoid volunteering to take on any additional tasks of this sort and see if these tasks can be taken on by somebody else. Similarly, if a teacher finds it upsetting to give a very strong reprimand to a learner, then the teacher can refer such learners to their colleagues to deal with (Kyriacou, 2000).

The fifth category involves seeking the help of colleagues when dealing with the source of stress. A colleague may be able to offer concrete help to teachers experiencing high levels of stress. The colleague could arrange for a heavy marking load, faced by a stressed teacher, to be shared among other staff members. Another way colleagues can help a teacher in a stressful situation is by giving practical advice on how to deal with such a situation. The teacher can then see whether part of the problem stems from having unrealistic expectations or whether there are more effective actions that he/she is unaware of (Kyriacou, 2000).

Research by Russell (1987) has shown that supportive social relationships can help teachers to cope with and reduce stress especially when they feel that others can support them. These include family, friends and colleagues. Research has indicated that social support systems are important determinants of the course and outcome of stress (O'Connor, 1984). Sharing problems with colleagues can therefore offer opportunities for teachers to alleviate their stress levels experienced at school.

2.6.2 Palliative coping strategies

When sources of stress cannot be dealt with through the use of direct action, the best strategy is to reduce the strength of the negative emotion that is generated by such situations. Coping strategies which are aimed at reducing one's subjective feeling of stress whilst the source of stress still remains present are called palliative coping strategies. For example, a teacher may have become upset by learners who are constantly disrespectful. The teacher can discipline himself/ herself not to take such behaviour personally (Kyriacou, 2000). The following evocation makes this distinction between direct action and palliative strategies:

Give me the strength to change that which can be changed.

Give me the patience to cope with that which cannot.

Give me the wisdom to know the difference between the two.

(Kyriacou, 1995)

Kyriacou (2000) distinguishes between two categories of palliative techniques: mental techniques and physical techniques.

2.6.2.1 Mental techniques

Mental techniques are anything one can do to alter how one views a stressful situation. If a teacher can view the situation in a way that is less threatening, then the experience of stress will be mitigated. Kyriacou (2000) identifies four key mental techniques used by teachers. These are:

- Putting things in perspective
- Seeing the humour in the situation
- Thinking of positive things
- Emotional control

In the first technique, the teacher needs to remind himself/herself that an incident can be quite trivial when viewed within the broader perspective of everyday school life. Teachers are often faced with a myriad of duties in school and it is very easy to get things out of perspective and to become upset by an incident that is quite trivial. For example, if a learner draws a diagram in ink instead of pencil despite the teacher's advice to the whole class not to do so, the teacher might become quite upset. (Kyriacou, 2000).

The second technique requires teachers to see the humour in the situation. A learner who refuses to do any work may remind the teacher of himself/herself when in school as a youngster. The teacher may recall a situation when he/she did not like to do their class work. This may help the teacher to view this situation in a light-hearted way instead of being upset. With so many demands on teachers, a sense of humour helps to dissipate some of the stress that has been building up during the day (Kyriacou, 2000).

The third technique involves thinking of positive things. For example, if teachers have interests which are outside school, then the teacher can periodically think about the interests during the school day and sometimes talk about them with colleagues. Thinking about positive things in this way from time to time can help one to feel more positive about events encountered in the school environment (Kyriacou, 2000).

The fourth mental technique entails maintaining some form of emotional control when faced with a stressful situation. This ensures that teachers do not allow their feelings to get out of control. There are two ways of doing this. The first is to tell one self to keep calm when faced with a stressful situation. The second way of

maintaining emotional control is to reduce the amount of time spent ruminating about the problem i.e. not to mentally replay unpleasant events repeatedly (Kyriacou, 2000).

To prevent rumination over unpleasant events, teachers can engage their mind in some other activities such as reading a book or playing sport to direct the mind away from needless rumination. A study by Roger and Hudson (1995) indicates that training to achieve emotional control, by combining these two strategies of staying calm and curtailing rumination, can be effective in reducing stress at work.

2.6.2.1 Physical techniques

Physical techniques are things teachers can do that physically reduce their feelings of tension and frustration that are generated when stress is experienced. Three main physical techniques were identified by the Education Service Advisory Committee (1998) in England. These are:

- relaxation techniques
- exercise
- medication

The first physical technique involves teachers undergoing a relaxation training programme. This can help one become aware of muscle tension and to get used to the feeling of how to relax them. This technique involves tensing different muscles in the body and relaxing it after a while. Another way is to role-play situations that would normally generate stress. An example of such role-play situations is confronting a group of learners who have cheated during an examination. If teachers can learn to stay relaxed in such situations, then they will be able to deal with such difficult situations effectively without experiencing a high level of stress (Education Service Advisory Committee, 1998).

The second technique requires teachers to take part in physical sports such as swimming, playing tennis or soccer and other leisure activities such as singing or gardening can help to keep one's body in shape whilst at the same time dissipating any feelings of muscular or nervous tension that may have been generated by demands at school (Education Service Advisory Committee, 1998). This may have a liberating effect on the physical, mental and emotional state of the teacher (Otto, 1996, p.185). Physical exercise can be in the form of walking, swimming, cycling, jogging and other sports such as golf and tennis. However, physical exercise should not involve unhealthy competition since this may lead to more stress.

The third physical technique involves teachers taking medication to relieve stress. This may be helpful in the short term but more effective coping techniques need to be used so that the use of medication can be terminated at the earliest opportunity. Constant dependence on medication can lead to one becoming immune to the effect of the drug or there could be side effects from the use of the drug. This may result in teachers experiencing greater levels of stress (Holmes, 2005).

Although nothing can be done to eliminate stress altogether the occurrence of stress takes its toll on teachers. Teachers therefore need to know as much about effective management strategies so that stress can be minimized. It is also important for teachers to find a specific strategy that works for them since a strategy that works for one teacher may not be as effective for others.

Knowledge of how teachers cope with stress will inform teacher education programmes of the effective ways of providing support to teachers who are experiencing high levels of stress. Because of the teacher's need for organisational and personal effectiveness in the classroom, it is important that both management and

individual attention be given to stress reduction in schools. Stress management should therefore be a part of a teacher's everyday routine as well as a school's operational planning (Education Service Advisory Committee, 1998).

2.7 The approach of the present study

The framework adopted in this study is an ecosystemic approach. This approach considers the mutual contribution of the person and the situation in addition to their relationship. It is an approach founded on the principles of human ecology and systems theory. Ecology concerns itself with the interrelationships of the person and his/her environment or ecosystems (O'Connor, 1984). Similarly, the teacher is viewed in terms of his/her interrelationship with significant aspects of the environment. This is depicted in Figure 2 1.

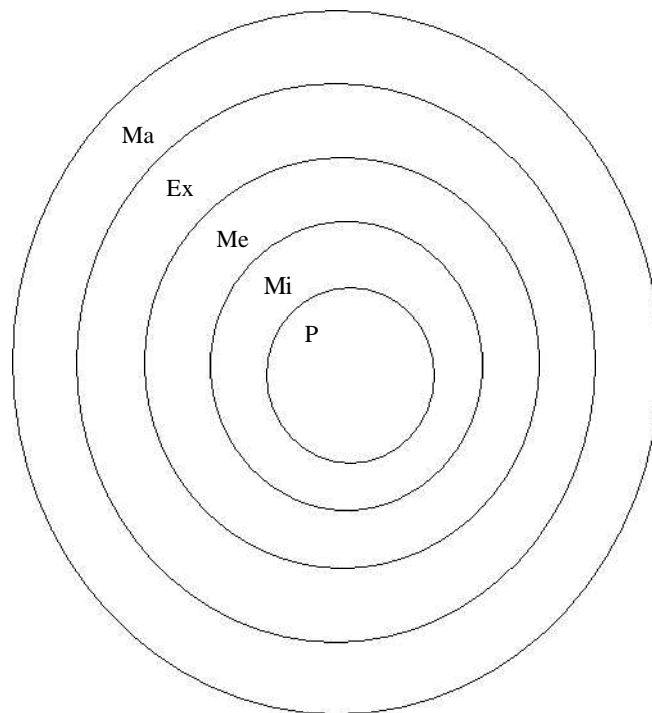


Figure 2.1: The teacher's life space and work environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1990).

P = Person

Mi = microsystem: smallest social unit of organised work such as the classroom or the office

Me = mesosystem: The larger complex of smaller work units that comprise the company or institution such as the school.

Ex = exosystem: Non-work ecosystem that directly affects the worker and his /her company's agency e.g. the surrounding community.

Ma = macrosystems: The district, provincial or national level. This level is beyond the control of the teacher but it exerts a strong influence on the meso- and micro-environment. The state, including the provincial education authorities, plays a crucial role at this level.

The diagram illustrates that the teachers work environment and the larger life space contains the following important components: the person (teacher), the micro system, the mesosystem, the exosystem and the macro system. The macro system represents the larger cultural and worldwide complex. It refers to the district, provincial or national level. This aspect is beyond the control of the teacher but it exerts a strong influence on the meso and micro-environment. This influence is often experienced more indirectly although not necessarily less powerful than the other three components of the life-space. The state, including the provincial education authorities, plays a crucial role at this level (Bronfenbrenner, 1990).

The micro system represents the smallest social unit of organised work within which the teacher performs his work such as the classroom or the office. This is seen when a teacher interacts with learners in the classroom. The ecosystem represents the larger complex of smaller work units that comprise the company or institution such as the

school. It represents the next highest level of organisation of the work environment. It encompasses all of the micro systems that together form a larger whole. This includes all the classrooms and the administration of the school. The exo system represents the non-work ecosystem that directly affects the teacher and his/her school. It encompasses those elements of the larger environment that impinge directly and frequently on the mesosystem. This includes parents and the surrounding community or SGB. Teachers must build bridges between the home and school. Teachers and schools need to extend to parents as many options as possible to allow them to get involved in their child's education. This needs to happen because there are so many hurdles that working parents face, such as inflexible work schedules and limited sick leave; "time off work" may mean ends won't meet. Open communication with the parents as well as the student is imperative for the success of the child. Parents must realise that teachers cannot do all the work themselves and vice versa. Teachers should help children learn to read and parents must help reinforce that learning at home. This can help reduce the stress load of teachers (Bronfenbrenner, 1990).

Figure 1 also illustrates a need for a multi-disciplinary effort to study the phenomenon of stress. The personal element for example calls for input from disciplines such as biology, neurology and psychiatry. The environmental element invites inputs from disciplines such as economics, sociology, organisational development, group dynamics and labor relations. Thus, these elements do not exist in isolation but are in a dynamic and constant interaction with each other. The consequence of these interactions is experienced throughout the entire system and is reciprocal in nature. This means that each element influences and is influenced by the other elements (Bronfenbrenner, 1990).

2.7.1 Personal factors contributing to the experience of stress

Personal factors that contribute to stress include factors such as genetic endowment, physical health status, education and skills training, motivation and interest, interpersonal relationship or mental health status. When addressing the ecological sources of stress, it is important to consider the individuals perception and interpretations of events (Baum, Singer & Baum, 1981). The teacher's previous experience, attitudes and coping strategies will also influence how an individual perceives and responds to any given stressor. Inadequate training in terms of the NCS currently implemented in schools result in teachers experiencing personal and professional failure which eventually leads to stress. As teachers move from one part of the life-space to another e.g. from the mesosystem to exo system, he /she will encounter new norms, power hierarchies and challenges. How well the teacher performs in one area of his/her life space will affect his /her effectiveness in other areas (Bronfenbrenner, 1990).

Therefore, one needs to examine factors that create stressful conditions not only in the work environment (micro system and mesosystem) but also in the exosystem and macro system since we are dealing with an interactive, holistic system. In each environmental component, attention should be directed toward the nature and quality of interpersonal relationship transpiring therein. This is important since interpersonal relationships may be a source of both need gratification and frustration that can significantly influence whether or not one will experience stress, the extent and intensity of the experience and ones recovery from it (Bronfenbrenner, 1990).

According to O'Connor (1984), signs of stress may appear anywhere within the ecological space; including the person and the various parts of the individual's environment namely the micro system, mesosystem, exosystem and macro system. Whenever signs of stress do occur, they indicate an ecological dysfunction. Personal signs of stress should not lead one to conclude that something is wrong only with the person and that fixing whatever is wrong with him/her will be sufficient to correct that person's problem. Therefore, the experience of stress should not be viewed as if there is something wrong with the teacher and that fixing whatever is wrong with him/her will be sufficient to correct the problem. To apply this perspective to the phenomenon of stress means that the teacher, the teacher's ecosystem and the reciprocal impact each has on the other must be considered. In addition, personal variables pertaining to the teacher such as type of personality, gender or age must be taken into account. In human ecology, the person-environment context constitutes the totality of relationship among individuals and their environment. In the school situation, the teacher and his/her interaction with learners in the classroom can form one context where stress manifests itself. There are other contexts in which stress manifests itself such as the interaction between the teacher and parents, teacher and School Management Team (SMT), teacher and colleagues, teacher and School Governing Body (SGB), teacher and community or teacher and education department. If these interactions result in stress then it is viewed as a form of ecological dysfunction. Stress among teachers must be viewed as stemming from the interaction of debilitating individual and environmental factors that together detract from a teacher's ability to do his or her work. This must be seen as operating in a synergistic manner. In a synergistic system, the interaction of the system components taken together has a greater effect than the sum of the individual effects. Thus, reaction to

stress of teachers must be understood within the total context formed by the interrelationship of other elements in the system (O'Connor, 1984).

The unit of analysis is the person-environment context taken as a whole. This context is in turn composed of a series of interlocking system levels where the functioning of the whole is dependent on the interaction among the parts. The school for example is a system with different parts such as staff, students, curriculum, administration or management system. Stress experienced by members in any of these parts will affect all other parts. Thus if one is to understand the whole system in which a teacher is embedded in, one has to examine the relationship between the different parts of the system (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 1999).

It is thus not the students or management system in isolation that result in stress but it is in the dynamic relationship and interaction between them. If solutions have to be found to resolve stress then one has to find out what is causing the “discord” between these levels. Thus improvements in any part of the system can benefit the entire system (Apter, 1982).

2.7.2 Cause and effect

O'Connor (1984) state that stress occurs when group structures lack sufficient resources to meet the needs of all inhabitants. Events occur in a context and are a function of the interaction between persons and larger systems. The fundamental change is from interpreting behaviour in terms of linear cause and effect sequences to conceptualizing behaviour as resulting from a reciprocally causal system of interaction. In a reciprocal causal cycle, each person's behaviour both influences and is influenced by the behaviour of others in the system. Within this cycle, a person's

thoughts, feelings, attitudes and behaviour are reflexive, often without the person's awareness. For example, the stress of discipline experienced by teachers can result in fatigue and irritability. This in turn provokes more negative interaction in an increasing cycle of negative behaviour. Thus, the experience of stress must be understood within the total context formed by the interrelationship of other individuals in the system (O'Connor, 1984).

A fundamental principle of systemic thinking is that cause-effect relationships are not seen as taking place in one direction only but are seen as occurring in cycles. Action in one part is not seen as a cause for action in other parts. This is evident in the way we blame others in relationships. Blaming is one directional thinking since one person is the cause of another person's discomfort. Our own part is not acknowledged. Actions are seen as triggering and affecting one another in a cyclical and repeated pattern. In a classroom a teacher may experience stress and 'take it out' on children. These children then 'take it out' on others and these reactions "cause" the teacher to continue this pattern and a vicious cycle is set in (Donald et al., 2000).

As noted previously stress is defined differently by different researchers. Some have described it in physical terms such as bodily responses to stressful situations while others have looked at psychological factors such as personality or self-concept. The ecosystemic view is that a person can be represented as a coping response system that functions at a biological, psychological and sociological level. This view therefore takes into account the simultaneous interaction of both organismic and situational variables that allow one to understand the variety of forces involved in producing stressful experiences (O'Connor, 1984). At the biological level it is important to look at how the teacher's physical state of health can affect their coping responses in

school. At the psychological level, it is important to look at cognitive mediation. At the social level family, friends, and social welfare networks are important (O'Connor, 1984).

The biological, psychological and sociological aspects of stress will now be discussed.

2.7.3 The biological level

At a biological level, the organism's state of health is very important in overcoming disease and in providing strength to cope with the demands of classroom life. The energy and strength needed to cope with stressors are greatly impaired and limited in the face of physiological problems such as organ impairment. Thus, biological coping is a critical part in dealing with life stressors. Individuals with a greater degree of stress experience higher breathing and heart rates and increased muscle tension. Other symptoms are pains in the chest, stomach-aches or palpitations. Teachers can be seen as a physical integrity whose functioning system depend on the effective operation of pulmonary, circulatory, digestive and other sub-systems (O'Connor, 1984).

Each sub-system must operate within an effective range for the organism as a whole to exist and function effectively. Feedback mechanisms within the body maintain the synergistic function of the sub-systems and attempts to restore the homeostatic balance if the effective range is exceeded. When this balance cannot be restored, the effective functioning of the body is impaired. This impairment in turn affects the person's behaviour and interaction on other system levels (O'Connor, 1984).

2.7.4 The psychological level

While different teachers are exposed to the same situations, some teachers may experience a greater degree of stress than others. Thus, some teachers can withstand quite severe contextual stresses while others cannot. Each one perceives a potentially threatening situation according to one's own needs, expectations and coping resources (Kyriacou, 1995). The concept of resilience is becoming important in explaining individual differences in teachers' response to stress. Resilience is determined mainly by the balance between the stressors teachers are exposed to on the one hand and the protective factors that are operating for them on the other. Protective factors are factors that minimize the negative experience of stress (Rutter, 1985).

Two important protective factors are personal characteristics and social support networks. One example of a personal characteristic is a positive self-concept. Pervin and John (2001) states that the term 'self-concept' refers to a personal judgement of worthiness. It is a general personality characteristic. Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2000) state that the term refers to what people think or believe about themselves in different ways. According to Rogers (1992) people with high self esteem feel better, work better and deal with stress more effectively than those with low self-esteem. Therefore teachers with a high self-esteem will feel good about themselves and thus experience lower levels of stress. These teachers will create a positive atmosphere in the classroom and in turn, learners will feel good about themselves and this can maintain the positive attitude of the teacher. The other personal characteristic is a strong internal locus of control. When teachers feel that they can be effective and have some control over their environment, it becomes possible for them to set personal goals. Without the internal locus of control they would feel powerless and

passively accept whatever happens to them. When this occurs, teachers may require social support. Social support networks include moral support provided by colleagues (Kyriacou, 1995). This aspect will be elaborated further in the next topic.

2.7.5 The sociological level

Any reference to social factors has to take into account the individual in relation to his or her family, peer group, schools, community and social system as a whole. If a teacher experiences an increase in stress levels one cannot explain the reasons for this increase by examining the school, the community or the education department in isolation but it lies in the dynamic relationship and interaction among them. One needs to understand how a disturbance at any one level affects and are affected by disturbances at other levels of the system if any attempt at change is to be effective. A school with too few classrooms, staff shortages and high pupil- teacher ratio, can result in overburdened teachers. The result is poor school achievement which “feeds” into and “hardens” the problems. By improving school resources and by attempting to make schools a more positive experience for all, much can be done to correct the above problem (Rutter, Maughan Mortimore, & Ouston, 1979).

Although teachers work so close to one another (spatially) in schools, it is ironic that a culture of separateness exists. Research by Russell (1987) and Kyriacou (1995) has shown that a supportive social relationship can help teachers to cope with and reduce stress, especially when teachers feel that they can call on others to support them. They also further note that the degree of social support is a crucial factor in mitigating stress. Senior staff can help reduce stress experienced by teachers by endorsing a culture of support (Rogers, 1992). Russell (1987) has noted that researchers have consistently found that individuals who possess high levels of social support tend to

have better physical and mental health than those who do not. In a study by Schwab (1984), teachers who were classified to have burnt out, spent less time with their fellow workers than did other teachers. The welfare and support of staff is essential to the effective running of schools since social support will provide resources to manage it. Some teachers may have a tendency not to talk about their problems since it feels like an admission of incompetence. Rogers (1992) notes that it is this culture of reluctance by teachers not to talk about one's problem and their isolation from colleagues that feeds the stress dynamic.

Thus, social support networks such as support from colleagues can act as a general protective factor for teachers finding difficulty in coping with stress. The more teachers can turn to trusted others, the more they can be helped to cope with stressful situations. In summary, it can be stated that the research on stress reviewed above provides substantial evidence to support the notion that the type interaction between the teacher and his/her work environment can result in either a negative or a positive effect on their physical and psychological health.

Previously research was oriented toward biological, psychological or sociological systems independently to explain stress. Little effort was made to synthesize these approaches. It is this interaction between internal (biological and psychological) and external (sociological) factors that will better explain the phenomenon of stress. In the final analysis it is the interactive ecosystem as a whole where the bio-psycho- social aspects play themselves that need to be taken into account when studying stress in schools.

2.8 Conclusion

From the literature reviewed above, it is evident that teachers experience a high degree of job dissatisfaction together with a high rate of physical, emotional and mental illness. However, the source of stress can be understood and managed. Gaining an awareness of stress management techniques and applying these to the daily activities both in the educational setting and at home will not eliminate all of the causes of stress, but can significantly reduce its negative effects.

This chapter defined important concepts of the present research and has reflected on stress research among teachers. It has also listed and described the various types of stressors and symptoms experienced by teachers in schools and the various coping mechanisms they use to deal with stress.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter presented the literature review where concepts were defined and some relevant aspects were discussed from a theoretical perspective. This chapter begins by discussing the following aspects: purpose of the study, research paradigm, issue of ethics, validity, reliability, pilot testing the questionnaire, the research site, research approach, the research instrument, procedure of collecting data, sampling of schools, the respondents, limitations and conclusion.

The main aim of the study was to examine the coping strategies used by primary school teachers in the North Durban Region of Phoenix when faced with stress.

3.2 The purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to examine the significant factors that increase the stress levels of teachers and the coping strategies that teachers use in dealing with stress at primary schools.

3.3 Research paradigm

A paradigm can be viewed as a set of basic beliefs that represents a worldview. The paradigm underpinning this research methodology is positivism. The positivistic theory proposes that reality and knowledge are quantifiable. It proposes that human behaviour is predictable and that it can be observed and measured (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).

The paradigm therefore influences the way knowledge is studied (Mertens, 2005). This implies that the epistemology or assumptions about knowledge and how it can be obtained influences the way the researcher collects data. In this research study the survey method was used to collect and quantify data. Data was presented in tabular form as percentages. A quantitative method to data collection and analysis was employed. A quantitative empirical investigation was preferred above a qualitative design as the aim was not to describe or emphasise meaning but rather to solve the stated problem by analysing and interpreting data statistically. Also the researcher attempted to establish patterns and regularities in the data. Quantitative approaches are also considered to be more objective, structured and have both high validity and reliability (Babbie, 2007).

3.4 The issue of ethics

Official permission to conduct research was first sought from the Department of Education (refer to Appendix A attached). The reply was in favour of the research and permission was granted (refer to Appendix B attached). Permission was granted under the provision that teaching and learning may not be interrupted at schools during data collection.

I first obtained ethical clearance from the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. On receiving approval from the Department of Education (Kwa-Zulu Natal) and ethical clearance from the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, the researcher proceeded to contact the principals of the sample schools to obtain their permission and support to continue with the study (Appendix C). The researcher met with each principal and discussed the aim of the study. Each principal was also given an official letter requesting

permission to conduct the research at their school (refer to Appendix C attached). Permission was successfully obtained from all principals.

Having obtained permission to conduct the research, other ethical issues such as anonymity and confidentiality were assured to respondents. The researcher assured the respondents of anonymity and confidentiality by not appending their names to the questionnaires and that all information disclosed would be treated in the strictest confidence and would be used solely for the purpose of this study. The names of the schools were also not revealed in the study.

The researcher also informed the teachers that completing the questionnaire was voluntary. A return date was set by mutual agreement where the completed questionnaires were to be collected by the researcher. I conformed to ethical issues by keeping the data in strict confidence and making sure that the identity of the respondents was protected at all times. The respondents were informed that the information which they provided will be treated with total confidentiality and that it would be used for research purposes only.

3.5 Validity

Validity is an important key to effective research. If a piece of research is invalid then it is worthless. Validity is based on the assumption that a particular instrument measures what it purports to measure. It is not possible for research to be 100% valid. Quantitative data possess a measure of standard error that is in-built and has to be acknowledged. Validity should therefore be seen as a matter of degree rather than as an absolute truth (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 1997). Notwithstanding these limitations, validity in this study was increased through careful random sampling and appropriate statistical treatment of data. The pilot testing of questionnaires also

increased the internal validity of the data. It increased the degree of truthfulness of responses and assured the accuracy of data collected.

3.6 Reliability

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (1997), the assumptions underlying reliability are that instrumentation, data and findings should be controllable, predictable, consistent and replicable. It is concerned with precision and accuracy. For research to be reliable it must demonstrate that if it were to be carried out on a similar group of respondents in a similar context then similar results would be found. This presupposes a particular style of research and the positivist paradigm is most suited to this study. In this study reliability was improved by:

maintaining anonymity and confidentiality of respondents (encourages greater honesty in responses).

- Stressing the importance and benefits of the study to the respondents.
- Doing a follow-up to request returns.
- Avoiding a lengthy questionnaire.
- Ease of completion. Most of the questions required respondents to make a tick in the appropriate column.

3.7 Pilot testing the questionnaire

At each stage of the research project, attempts were made to minimize the likelihood of problems and errors in the main study and to maximize the reliability of the findings. Before the actual study was conducted, piloting of the questionnaire was done. The advantages of piloting are that:

- The researcher can adapt or check the feasibility of techniques.

- The researcher can seek clarity on how the respondents would respond in relation to the questions. Would the respondents understand the questions the way it was intended?
- The researcher can evaluate whether the statements and questions were not ambiguous. This procedure helped me to refine the contents, wording and length of the questionnaire.
- The research instrument is sharpened.

The questionnaire was piloted using teachers from schools that were not selected for the research. A total of 9 teachers from the primary school where I teach were chosen to be part of the pilot group. There were 6 females and 3 males in this pilot group. This group provided a valuable critique about the questionnaire format, content, expression and whether questions should be added or deleted before it is administered to a large group of respondents

3.8 The research site

The population from which all the samples was drawn for this study consist of all primary school teachers in the North Durban Region of Phoenix which is located about 15 KM from central Durban. I chose this region as my focus because I have been teaching in this region for 10 years and met many teachers in this region who have complained about high levels of stress in their schools. This piqued my curiosity to do empirical research on stress among teachers.

A total of 10 schools with 90 teachers were involved in this study. These schools admit learners from Grade R to Grade 7. The sampled schools were previously under the control of the Department of ex-House of Delegates, catering for Indian learners only. Since the implementation of the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 and

the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act No.108 of 96), there has been a growing intake of African learners into these schools from neighboring township schools such as Kwa-Mashu and Ntuzuma. The schools involved in this study now admit learners of all races, cultures and languages. These schools currently serve mostly Indian and African learners most of whom reside within walking distance of their school. Learners also travel from surrounding areas such as Kwa-Mashu, Ntuzuma, Avoca and Mount Moriah. The common mode of transport for these learners is bus, taxi or train.

All these schools have a strong competitive ethos with parents putting pressure on learners to do well at school. Parents would be critical of what teachers were doing and were able to give advice where appropriate. Some parents would complain to the school principal if they perceive that teachers are not performing their duties to their satisfaction. Most principals would respond by initially calming these parents and then assuring them that these complaints will be attended to.

The class sizes in the sample schools vary and it is not unusual to find over 40 learners in one class. Classroom teachers usually teach two or more different learning areas and they are responsible for administrative tasks such as collecting and recording monies. These include school fees, monies learners pay for various fund raising events, school photographs etc.

3.9 The research approach

In this research the survey method was applied. Surveys represent one of the most common types of quantitative, social science research. In a survey research, the researcher selects a sample of respondents from a population and administers a

standardized questionnaire to them. The questionnaire or survey, can be a written document that is completed by the person being surveyed, an online questionnaire, a face-to-face interview, or a telephone interview. In this research the survey was conducted by distributing a written document to respondents in the form of a questionnaire. By using surveys, it is possible to collect data from large or small populations (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 1997).

Survey research presents all subjects with a standardized stimulus, and so goes a long way toward eliminating unreliability in the researcher's observations. But surveys can be inflexible in that they require the initial study design (the tool and administration of the tool) to remain unchanged throughout the data collection. Careful wording, format, content, etc. of the questionnaire helped to reduce significantly the subject's own unreliability. Standardized questions ensured that the measurement was more precise by enforcing uniform definitions upon the participants (Neuman, 2000).

I discovered that a wider range of questions could be asked about a given topic by using a questionnaire.

3.10 The research instrument

The main research instrument used was a survey questionnaire constructed by the researcher after a careful study of the literature and discussions with teachers. I chose this method rather than interviews because respondents will be able to complete a wide range of questions in a short period of time. This method also increases the likelihood that a greater number of teachers in the sample will complete the questionnaire.

Another reason for using questionnaires is that it has less bias possibilities than interviews. This is because the researcher is less likely to influence the responses of the respondents unlike in interviews where the interviewer can phrase questions in a way which may lead the respondents towards a particular line of thought. The questionnaire sought to find broad patterns and general trends on teachers experiencing stress rather than teachers unique experience of stress (Neuman, 2000).

The questionnaire consisted of a cover-sheet explaining the purpose of the study, respondent rights and the researcher's contact number for respondents to use in the event that they needed some clarity. The comprehensive questionnaire was sent to 10 primary schools in the North Durban Region of Phoenix. The resultant data were responses to questionnaires from post level one teachers in 10 primary schools in the North Durban Region of Phoenix.

The questions were crafted to find out about teachers experience of stress in school. The questionnaire had 3 sections. These are: Section A, Section B and Section C. Section A was designed to elicit biographical information from the respondents. It comprised 6 questions. This included gender, age, teaching experience, position held at school, number of classrooms in the school and the number of learners in the classroom.

Sections B comprised 3 parts. The first part elicited information with regard to disciplinary measures used by teachers. It consisted of 16 items. The second part dealt with sources of stress. It had 18 items. Finally, the third part dealt with coping strategies used by teachers to alleviate stress. This part comprised 21 items.

A Likert Scale was used to obtain data. This scale provided a range of responses to given statements. These responses were categorised as: strongly disagree, disagree, unsure, agree, and strongly agree. Respondents had to register the extent to which they disagreed or agreed with a particular statement by ticking in the appropriate box. A scale of this nature is based on the assumption that an overall score based on responses to the items reflecting a particular variable under consideration provides a good measure of the variable (Babbie, 2007). Thus it needs to be noted that every item in the scale carried the same weight as the next.

The statements required respondent's to reflect on their experiences of stress rather than merely giving a "correct" response. According to Best and Khan (1986, p.181), "the correctness of the statements is not important as long as they express opinions held by a substantial number of people."

The statements in the questionnaire were balanced with both positive and negative ones. The responses to the questionnaire have elicited data to address the following two critical questions:

Critical question one: What are the significant factors that contribute to teacher stress?

Critical question two: What are the coping strategies that teachers use in dealing with stress in schools?

Section C allowed respondents to give their own responses to open-ended questions. The aim of the open-ended questions was to extend the exploration of coping strategies used by teachers in schools and to allow teachers to express their feelings about their experience of stress in their schools. The open-ended questions sought to elicit details about teacher's experience of stress in schools. It required a broader

spectrum of the views, perceptions and experiences of teachers with regard to their coping strategies during stressful periods in schools. Respondents were able to answer questions in detail and it permitted creativity and self-expression. This allowed unanticipated responses from respondents. The open-ended questions were phrased in a manner that did not presume any viewpoint which could influence the respondent's response.

It was the researcher's intention for these questions to provide "rich information" to enhance the findings of this study. Some of these questions include:

- Is teaching more stressful now than when you first started? Explain.
- Describe how you feel when you are stressed in school?
- Describe what you consider to be the most stressful situation in school.

To enhance the return rate, I delivered questionnaires personally to the sample schools and telephoned the schools to remind respondents of the time and date I wished to collect the questionnaires. Although a time-frame of one week for the completion of all questionnaires was agreed upon between the researcher and respondents, not all questionnaires were returned. In spite of this, the return rate was 93 % making it very successful.

3.11 Procedure of collecting data

Firstly, ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal Ethic's Committee. Secondly, an application to conduct the research was made to the Kwa-Zulu Natal Department of Education by letter (Appendix A) to grant the researcher permission to conduct this study.

When permission was granted by the Education Department to conduct the research, a request to conduct research was made to all principals of participating schools. Accompanying the request was a letter from the Kwa-Zulu Natal Department of Education granting the researcher permission to conduct the study. I thereafter made a visit to the schools to explain to the principals and teachers the purpose of the study. This was followed by the distribution and administration of questionnaires to a total of 84 teachers at the randomly selected primary schools in the North Durban Region of Phoenix. The researcher personally delivered the questionnaires to the respondents, at which instance an agreed upon collection date was determined. In most cases it was a week after the distribution of the questionnaire. A cover letter accompanied each questionnaire. It explained the purpose of the research and assured respondents of anonymity and confidentiality.

3.12 Sampling of schools for the survey

In this section, I will discuss sampling of schools for the survey. I extracted a sample from the target population that consisted of all primary school teachers in the North Durban Region of Phoenix. The list of schools was provided by the Phoenix District Office. Numbers were assigned to each school and by using a table of random numbers, a total of 10 schools were selected from the target population. In random sampling, not only does each element of the sampling frame have a known probability of being selected, but each respondent has the same probability of being selected. This means that every teacher would have had an equal chance of being chosen to participate in the survey. This is called randomization (Babbie, 2007). It also reduces the risk of bias in this study. Furthermore, this method of sampling enabled the researcher to generalise the research findings since it sought to represent

a wider population i.e. it allowed the researcher to draw inferences from the sample to the whole population.

3.13 The respondents

The respondents in this study comprised full-time level one primary school teachers employed by the Kwa-Zulu Natal Department of Education. They were a mixture of individuals who varied in respect of gender, age, marital status, length of teaching experience and rank. The respondents all had a recognised teaching qualification and were registered with the South African Council of Educators (SACE). Most of the respondents live within 20 km of their school. A total of 84 respondents returned their questionnaires.

3.14 Limitations

There were a few limitations and constraints in conducting this research. Some questionnaires were not returned and it required traveling to these schools or making telephonic requests to submit the questionnaires. This necessitated more time and money in traveling. Initially some principals were reluctant to involve the staff in this research since it could have affected teaching and learning in the school. I had to reassure principals that teachers would not be required to complete questionnaires at school since these would be collected at another date.

3.15 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter has highlighted how the various aspects of the research design was planned and executed. The questionnaire was the main tool used to collect data. It has also emphasised how the research design was planned and executed. The next chapter provides an analysis of the data.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

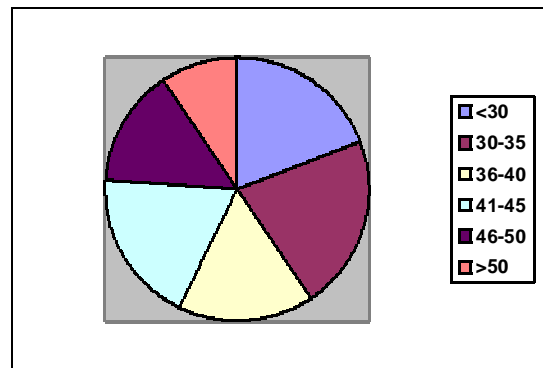
4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the empirical data, found through the use of questionnaires, about the coping strategies used by teachers to deal with stress at school. The researcher used Microsoft Excel package to organise and analyse the data. Specifically, graphical and tabular forms were used to portray the respondent's responses to questions in Sections A and B. These were expressed as percentages. The respondent's responses to open-ended questions in Section C were addressed through frequency counts and content analysis. This was done by organising the data into themes and categories. The research findings are presented and discussed below.

Out of a total of 90 questionnaires sent out, 84 questionnaires were returned by respondents. This represented a 93.33 % return rate and is considered a good return. Tables are used to describe, explain and compare the results. The researcher will now give a presentation and analysis of the data for Sections A, B, and C.

On the question of age, it was found that 19.05 % of respondents were under 30 years, 21.43 % were between 30-35 years old, 16.67 % were between 36-40 years, 19.05 % were between 41 and 45 years, 14.28 % were between 46 and 50 years old and 9.52 % of respondents were over 50 years old. These results are illustrated in figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1 Age-group of respondents



It is evident from the figure above that there is not a vast disparity in the number of teachers in the various age groups. Age does play a role in the teacher's experience of stress. Teachers above 50 years are more likely to experience higher levels of stress considering the dramatic changes in the education system in the last 10 years. Teachers in the lower age groups are more likely to adapt to the changes in the education system especially if they are considering teaching as a long term profession.

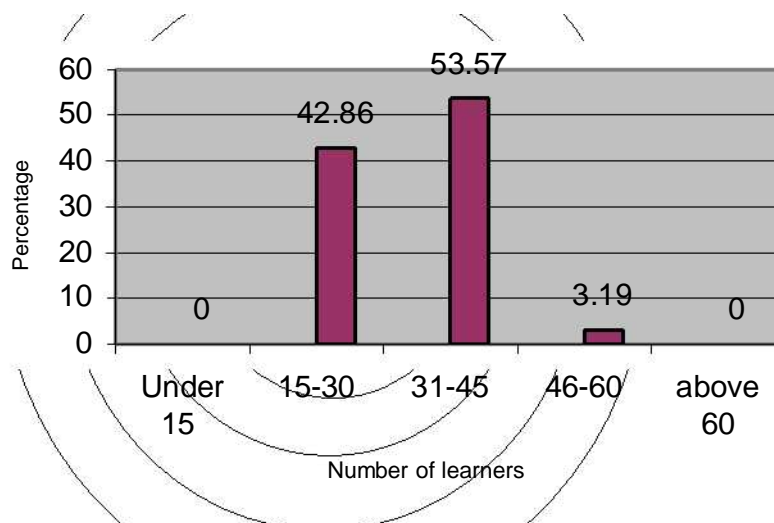
Table 4.1 Respondent teaching experience

Teaching experience	Frequency	Percentage
Under 1 year	3	03.57
1 - 5 years	7	08.33
6 - 10 years	14	16.67
11 - 15 years	26	30.95
16 - 20 years	21	25.00
Over 20 years	13	15.48

On the question of teaching experience, the data revealed that 8.33 % of teachers had between 1-5 years of teaching experience, 16.67 % of teachers had between 6-10 years of teaching experience, 30.95 % of teachers had 11-15 years of experience,

25 % of teachers had 16-20 years of experience while 15.48 % of teachers had above 20 years of teaching experience. It is clear from the above table that the sample comprised a significantly greater number of teachers in the categories 11-15 years and 16-20 years teaching experience. This implies that the sample contained a large number of seasoned teachers. These teachers were more likely to resist any form of changes from the education system since they were accustomed to particular ways of doing things. It was likely that these teachers experienced greater levels of stress when faced with any form of changes that were introduced at the school level. This is evident in table 4.3 where 58.35 % of teachers indicated that they had not agreed with the statement: *I welcome the changes to Curriculum 2005 and NCS*. It is probable that these teachers found it difficult to adapt to the new curriculum because it disrupted their conventional methods of teaching that had been developed over the years.

Figure 4.2 The number of learners in a classroom



The figure above indicates that no teachers reported having fewer than 15 learners in their classroom. 42.86 % of teachers had between 15-30 learners in their classroom,

while 53.57 % of teachers had 31-45 learners in their classroom. Only 3.19 % of teachers had between 46-60 learners in their classroom. No teachers reported having classes with over 60 learners. It is clear from the above table that the majority of teachers had learners of between 31-45 in their classroom. The results showed that most teachers did not have to teach very large classes. Thus these teachers would not have to contend with challenging factors encountered when teaching a large number of learners in a classroom. These factors include: varying ability levels of learners, learners from different socio-economic backgrounds and learners with special educational needs and learners who lack motivation. These factors present a greater challenge for these teachers since these must be taken into consideration when planning and delivering lessons. Since the table showed that 3.19 % of teachers had classes between 46 to 60 learners, it is likely that these teachers will experience high stress levels.

4.2 Disciplinary measures used by teachers in the classroom

Section B of the questionnaire dealt with the disciplinary measures that teachers commonly use in the classroom. Teachers were required to respond to the disciplinary measures they adopted to correct the behaviour of learners. Despite rewards given for good behaviour and some form of punishment meted out for unacceptable behaviour, learner misbehaviour may still persist. The researcher has noted that, during his teaching experience, many learners viewed punishment by teachers as a way of infringing upon their rights. Consequently, if learners have a negative attitude to punishment, it is likely that they would not change their behaviour despite its application. The table below illustrates the various disciplinary measures commonly

used by teachers and the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each one. The analysis of selected statements will now be presented.

Key: SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; U = Unsure; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree F = frequency

Table 4.2 Disciplinary measures used by teachers

	Disciplinary measures used by teachers	Frequency and percentage of respondents									
		SD		D		U		A		SA	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
7.1	I often correct learner's behaviour by applying detention	22	26.19	21	25.00	4	4.76	18	21.43	19	22.60
7.2	I discipline learners by shouting at them	3	3.57	8	9.52	1	1.19	49	58.33	23	27.30
7.3	When learners misbehave, I administer corporal punishment	38	45.24	36	42.86	4	4.76	5	5.95	1	1.19
7.4	I frequently give learner extra homework	21	25.00	25	29.76	2	2.38	12	14.29	24	28.50
7.5	When learners problems are serious, I discuss it with parents	2	2.38	5	5.95	3	3.57	35	41.66	39	46.40
7.6	Teachers in my school make learners squat to discipline them	33	39.29	42	50.00	1	1.19	5	5.95	3	3.57
7.7	I send unruly learners out of the classroom	31	36.90	28	33.33	4	4.76	11	13.10	10	11.90
7.8	I use corporal punishment because parents give me permission	36	42.86	36	42.86	2	2.38	6	7.14	4	4.76
7.9	I use the merit/demerit system to correct learner behaviour	12	14.29	17	20.24	2	2.38	32	38.10	21	25.00
7.10	I use corporal punishment since it is more effective	31	36.90	41	48.81	3	3.57	5	5.95	4	4.76
7.11	I make learners write lines as a disciplinary measure	37	45.20	32	38.10	2	2.38	7	8.33	6	7.14
7.12	I feel that corporal punishment should be re-introduced	13	15.48	18	21.43	8	9.52	27	32.14	18	21.40
7.13	My colleagues emphasise rewards rather than punishment of learners	12	14.29	17	20.24	4	4.76	23	27.38	28	33.33
7.14	I give sweets to learners who behave	25	29.76	32	38.10	0	0.00	14	16.66	13	15.40
7.15	Teachers in my school make learners stand on one leg	31	36.90	28	33.33	3	3.57	12	14.29	10	11.90
7.16	I give learners menial tasks (e.g. pick up litter) for minor misbehaviour	8	9.52	7	8.33	1	1.19	32	38.10	37	44.00

On the issue of disciplining learners, it was found that 26.19 % of teachers strongly disagreed with the *Statement 7.1: I often correct learner's behaviour by applying detention.*

The table revealed that 26.19 % of teachers strongly disagreed with the above statement, 25 % disagreed, 4.76 % were unsure, 21.43 % agreed and 22.6 % strongly agreed. The results revealed that there was not a vast difference between the number of teachers who applied detention and those that did not apply detention to correct learner behaviour. This implies that an almost equal number of teachers applied detention as those that did not apply detention.

The researcher has also observed colleagues detaining learners as part of the school policy. These colleagues experienced a greater degree of stress than those teachers who applied detention voluntarily. Teachers who taught in schools that have a detention policy means that the teacher did not have a choice but must implement detention although they might have preferred other measures of disciplining the learner. The stress experienced by these teachers may be due to the additional time spent with learners during the detention period. The additional time could be during the school breaks or after school hours.

On the other hand, teachers who detained learners voluntarily did have control over their decision to apply detention or any other disciplinary measure. This is less stressful when compared to the stress experienced by teachers applying detention in schools that have a policy on detention. .

The results showed that some teachers found detention to be an effective mechanism to correct learner misbehaviour possibly because it was disliked by learners and thus it may have acted as a deterrent to learners who misbehaved. But it could have been

an inconvenience to these teachers since they were required to remain with these learners during the break or after school. This may have added to the stress levels of these teachers. One possible reason why 44.03 % of teachers chose to detain learners although it could have led to higher stress levels, can be explained by their resilience to stress. The concept of resilience to stress has been discussed in chapter two. This implies that these teachers have overcome the negative effects of stress associated with detaining learners. These teachers are likely to find it less stressful detaining learners during the break or after school hours.

Statement 7.3: When learners misbehave, I administer corporal punishment.

The results in table 4.2 show that 45.24 % of teachers strongly disagreed with the above statement, 42.86 % disagreed, 4.76 % were unsure, 5.95 % agreed and 1.19 % strongly agreed. Thus, 88.1 % of teachers did not administer corporal punishment to discipline learners while only 7.14 % of teachers indicated that they did administer corporal punishment. The results pointed to an overwhelming number of teachers who did not agree to the use of corporal punishment to deal with learners who misbehaved.

A possible reason why some of the teachers still resorted to administering corporal punishment may be due to the following reason: Since most of the teachers (73.81%) in this sample had 10 or more years of teaching experience (Table 4.1), it is likely that these teachers were accustomed to using corporal punishment as a means to maintain discipline. Hence, some of these teachers still regarded corporal punishment as a means to maintaining effective discipline.

The data in the above statement correlated positively with the data in *Statement 7.8 (I use corporal punishment on learners because parents give me permission)* which was

as follows: 42.86 % of teachers strongly disagreed that corporal punishment should be used even if parents give them permission. A further 42.86 % of teachers disagreed with the statement, 2.38 % were unsure, 7.14 % agreed and 4.76 % strongly agreed.

It is evident from the above data that the majority of teachers felt that corporal punishment should not be used even if they were given permission by parents while only 11.9 % of teachers agreed to do so. The results revealed a vast difference between the number of teachers who strongly disagreed with the statement (42.86 %) and the number of teachers who strongly agreed with the statement (4.76 %). This difference was due to the fact that corporal punishment was banned in South African schools and even if parents gave teachers permission to implement this form of punishment, they could be legally held accountable for such actions by the Education Department.

When the use of corporal punishment was banned in South African schools, teachers attempted to resort to alternative forms of disciplining learners. But in-service training conducted by the Education Department on alternative forms of discipline seemed to be inadequate as many colleagues reported that they had not felt confident applying alternative forms of discipline. These teachers therefore felt that they were not well equipped to implement other forms of discipline. These teachers were more likely to find it stressful trying to find and implement other forms of disciplining learners.

It is interesting to contrast the data in *Statement 7.3 (When learners misbehave, I administer corporal punishment)* and *Statement 7.8 (I use corporal punishment because parents give me permission)* above with the data in *Statement 7.12 (I feel that corporal punishment should be re-introduced)*. The data in the latter statement

revealed that 15.48 % of teachers strongly disagreed that corporal punishment should be re-introduced, 21.43 % disagreed, 9.52 % were unsure, 32.14 % agreed and 21.4 % strongly agreed. This implies that 36.91 % of teachers felt that corporal punishment should not be re-introduced while 53.54 % of teachers felt that it should be re-introduced. In contrast to Statement 7.3 where 88.1 % of teachers indicated that they did not physically administer corporal punishment, 53.54 % of teachers indicated that corporal punishment should be re-introduced.

One of the reasons for this discrepancy is that although some teachers may be administering corporal punishment, they have indicated in the questionnaire that they did not administer corporal punishment. In other words, they had given socially acceptable responses because corporal punishment has been banned in schools. The greater number of teachers who felt that corporal punishment should be re-introduced is an indication that current methods of disciplining learners are not working effectively.

Thus, these teachers felt that the banning of corporal punishment had contributed to disciplinary problems in schools and that alternative methods of maintaining discipline seemed to be short-lived or were ineffective. Teachers who agreed that corporal punishment should be re-introduced were probably hoping that this method might be the solution to alleviating disciplinary problems in schools. The Department of Education should offer workshops that addressed the issue of implementing acceptable forms of disciplinary measures to help alleviate stress levels among teachers who encounter disciplinary problems in the classroom.

The administering of corporal punishment not only infringes on fundamental human rights but it also perpetuates a culture of violence in the classroom and frequently does not solve the problem (Rogers, 1992).

When examining *Statement 7.10 (I use corporal punishment since it is more effective than other methods)*, Table 4.2 revealed that 36.9 % of teachers strongly disagreed that corporal punishment was more effective, 48.81 % disagreed, 3.57 % were unsure, 5.95 % agreed and 4.76 % strongly agreed. Thus, 10.71 % of teachers felt that corporal punishment was more effective than other methods while 85.71 % of teachers felt that it was not an effective method. The results indicated that although the majority of teachers disagreed that corporal punishment was as effective as other methods to discipline learners, the data showed that just over half of the teachers in the sample (53.74 %) indicated that corporal punishment should be introduced. Thus, the majority of teachers indicated that they agreed that corporal punishment was not effective but there were still a number of teachers who felt that somehow corporal punishment was effective.

I found that a large number of teachers tended to either disagree or strongly disagree with the following statements: *Statement 7.6 (Teachers in my school make learners' squat to discipline them)* and *Statement 7.7 (I send unruly learners out of the classroom)*. The analyses of the data for these statements follow below.

Statement 7.6: Teachers in my school make learners squat as a way of disciplining them.

Table 4.2 indicated that 39.29 % of teachers strongly disagreed with the statement: '*teachers in my school make learners squat as a way to discipline them*', 50 % disagreed with the statement, 5.95 % agreed with the statement while only 3.57 %

strongly agreed with the statement. The results indicate that a very low percentage of teachers chose to implement this form of disciplinary measure. This could be attributed to the fact that making a learner to squat can possibly be interpreted as a form of corporal punishment. Thus, teachers seemed to avoid implementing this form of disciplinary measure. Also, the consequence of dealing with parental complaints when such disciplinary measures are taken, can be stressful to teachers.

Statement 7.7: I send unruly learners out of the classroom

Table 4.2 revealed that 36.90 % of teachers strongly disagreed with the above statement. A further 33.33 % disagreed, 4 % were unsure, 13.10 % agreed and 11.9 % strongly agreed. It is evident that the majority of teachers (70.23 %) did not send learners out of the classroom for unruly behaviour while only 25 % of teachers used this form of disciplinary measure. It was evident that a lower proportion of teachers used this method to discipline learners. One possible reason for this is because sending learners out of the classroom can be interpreted as a violation of the learners' right to education. It seemed that more teachers preferred not to use this method of disciplining learners possibly because this type of action is frowned upon by parents and principals.

Table 4.2 revealed that a large number of teachers agreed with the following statements: *Statement 7.2 (I discipline learners by shouting at them)* and *Statement 7.5 (When learner's problems are serious, I discuss it with parents)*. The analyses of the data for these two statements follow below.

Table 4.2 revealed that 3.57 % of teachers strongly disagreed with the statement “*I discipline learners by shouting at them.*”, 9.52 % disagreed, 1.19 % were unsure 58.33 % agreed and 27.3% strongly agreed. It is clear from the table above that

the majority of teachers (85.60 %) disciplined learners by shouting at them compared to only 13.09 % of teachers who indicated that shouting was not the preferred means of disciplining learners. The large percentage of teachers who resorted to shouting as a method of disciplining learners may be linked to the abolishment of corporal punishment. It seemed that these teachers used shouting as a quick method to bring attention to the learners. Since shouting does not involve any physical contact with learners, teachers chose this method as the preferred way of correcting learner behaviour.

This pattern of response is similar with regard to *Statement 7.5 (When learners' problems are serious, I discuss it with the parent)*. The table indicated that 2.38 % of teachers strongly disagreed with the above statement, 5.95 % disagreed, 3.57 % were unsure, 41.66 % agreed and 46.4 % strongly agreed. There was a vast difference between the percentage of teachers who strongly disagreed with the statement (2.38 %) and the percentage of teachers who strongly agreed with the statement (46.4 %). The data revealed that a total of only 8.33 % of teachers did not discuss learner's problem with the parent. On the other hand a significantly greater number of teachers (88.09 %) preferred to discuss learners' problems with the parent. It was clear from the data above that teachers were willing to meet and discuss learner's problem with the parent.

It seemed that these teachers preferred to form a rapport with parents so that should problems arise concerning the learner, the cause of the problem could be discussed and resolved in an amicable manner. This strategy is likely to enable the teacher to reduce potentially stressful situations to manageable ones.

The above discussion dealt with the disciplinary measures teachers employ to reduce classroom stress. The responses by teachers indicated that there was no single measure employed by teachers to minimize stress. The following section gives an analysis of the sources of stress as reported by teachers. The results are shown in Table 4.3.

4.3 Sources of stress

Table 4.3 illustrates the various sources of stress that teachers encountered in school. It will be revealed in the analysis of the data that some sources of stress are more stressful than others.

Key: SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; U = Unsure; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree F = frequency

Table 4.3 Sources of stress

	Sources of stress	SD		D		U		A		SA		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	N	%
8.1	I do mind if learners are absent	6	7.14	9	10.72	2	2.38	43	51.19	24	28.57	84	100
8.2	I feel stressed teaching learners with special needs	12	14.29	15	17.86	2	2.38	31	36.90	24	28.57	84	100
8.3	Learners who lack motivation can be stressful to me	10	11.90	23	27.38	1	1.19	34	40.48	16	19.05	84	100
8.4	I do mind if learner talk out of turn in class	10	11.90	15	17.86	5	5.95	36	42.86	18	21.43	84	100
8.5	Learners who back-chat pose a threat to my stress levels	16	19.05	19	22.62	0	0.00	33	39.29	16	19.05	84	100
8.6	Large classes are not a source of stress	24	28.57	41	48.81	3	3.57	10	11.91	6	7.14	84	100
8.7	I consider misbehaviour as part of learner growth	10	11.90	21	25.00	0	0.00	27	32.14	25	29.76	84	100
8.8	I welcome the change to Curriculum 2005 and NCS	26	30.95	23	27.38	3	3.59	15	17.86	17	20.24	84	100
8.9	I find that poor management by principals contributes to stress	9	10.72	17	20.24	3	3.57	29	34.52	26	30.95	84	100
8.10	I find additional administrative work a cause of stress	6	7.14	14	16.67	1	1.19	41	48.81	22	26.19	84	100
8.11	A lack of social support from colleagues has a negative effect	9	10.71	10	11.90	3	3.57	24	28.57	32	38.10	84	100
8.12	I find that a lack of teaching resources is a cause of stress	7	8.33	11	13.10	0	0.00	41	48.81	25	29.76	84	100
8.13	I enjoy extra-curricular activities	19	22.62	24	28.57	0	0.00	23	27.38	18	21.43	84	100
8.14	The SGB and school staff enjoy a good working relationship	18	21.43	26	30.95	4	4.76	24	28.59	12	14.29	84	100
8.15	I feel that policies set by the Department add to stress	10	11.90	14	16.67	1	1.19	38	45.23	21	25.00	84	100
8.16	I feel comfortable when I am being evaluated	8	9.52	16	19.05	2	2.38	35	41.67	23	27.38	84	100
8.17	Parents are co-operative and do not make excessive demands	37	44.05	27	32.14	1	1.19	7	8.33	12	14.29	84	100
8.18	I welcome parental inquiries about learner performance	2	2.38	7	8.33	2	2.38	42	50.00	31	36.90	84	100

The table illustrates that *Statements 8.1, 8.6, 8.9, 8.10, 8.12, 8.15, and 8.18* were rated higher than the other statements as sources of stress by teachers. These statements dealt with learner absenteeism, large classes, poor management by principals, additional administrative work, lack of teaching resources, departmental policies and parental inquiries respectively. More than 70 % of teachers indicated that these factors increased their stress levels. An analysis of selected statements as depicted in table 4.3 follow below.

Statement 8.1: I do mind if learners are absent.

Table 4.3 depicts that 7.14 % of teachers strongly disagreed to the above statement, 10.72 % disagreed, 2.38 % were unsure, 51.19 % agreed and 28.57 % strongly agreed. The data showed that a large number of teachers (79.76 %) did mind if learners were absent in contrast to only 17.86 % of teachers who did not mind if learners were absent. This implied that learner absenteeism can be an important factor in producing stress amongst teachers. This is because teachers are to a large extent accountable for the academic performance of learners in the classroom and learner absenteeism can have a detrimental effect on their scholastic performance.

Statement 8.2. I feel stressed teaching learners with special needs.

Table 4.3 illustrates that 14.29 % of teachers strongly disagreed with the above statement, 17.86 % disagreed, 2.38 % were unsure, 36.90 % agreed and 28.57 % strongly agreed. It is evident that 65.47 % of teachers felt stressed teaching learners with special needs while 32.15% of teachers indicated that they did not feel stressed teaching such learners. There was thus a vast disparity between the number of teachers who felt stressed teaching learners with special needs and those who did not

feel stressed teaching such learners.

The introduction of the White Paper on education by the Department of Education stated that even learners with special needs must be included and catered for in mainstream classes. This meant a movement away from the segregation of learners with disabilities in special classes toward the inclusion of such learners in general education or mainstream classes (Department of Education, 1998).

Prior to this arrangement, learners with special needs were taught in remedial classes or in a school which caters for learners with learning or physical disabilities. In many cases teachers have reacted negatively to these changes. The poor communication between teachers and learners with disabilities appeared to have placed greater stress on teachers.

While table 4.1 showed that more than 70 % of teachers had over 10 years of teaching experience, they were still not well equipped to deal with learners with special needs. It seems that most teachers are comfortable teaching learners in the mainstream classes. Currently, learners with special needs can be included in mainstream classes. It seemed that this presented a new challenge to teachers and it required an adjustment to their routine way of teaching to accommodate such learners.

Because most teachers in the sample lack the essential knowledge, skills and training to deal with learners who have special educational needs and coupled with the inadequate infrastructure in these schools, it is not surprising that these teachers are faced with greater stress teaching learners with special needs in mainstream classes.

Such teachers will therefore experience a greater workload when teaching children with special needs in an inclusive classroom without the proper training and

necessary resources. It seemed that because these teachers felt that they possessed inadequate knowledge and skills to meet the needs of learners with special educational needs, they feared not being able to manage such diversity amongst learners. This had resulted in feelings of hopelessness and an inevitable increase in their stress levels.

Statement 8.5: Learners who back-chat pose a threat to my stress level.

The results in table 4.3 indicate that 19.05 % of teachers strongly disagreed to the statement above, 22.62 % disagreed, 39.29 % agreed and 19.05 % strongly agreed. Thus, a total of 58.34 % of teachers felt that learners who back-chatted did pose a threat to their stress levels while 41.67 % of teachers indicated that such learners did not pose a threat to their stress levels. It is evident that more teachers felt stressed when learners back chatted. Back-chatting by learners is one way that the teacher's authority can be undermined. In such situations, the teacher tries to regain or impose his/her authority which is likely to increase his/her stress levels.

Back-chatting is quite a common occurrence faced by teachers. If back chatting is interpreted as a personal attack by teachers, it may result in anger which will lessen the teacher's ability to deal with this situation in an objective manner. This process invariably generates a degree of stress in teachers.

Statement 8.6: Large classes are not a source of stress since I can handle a large number of learners.

It is clear from the table above that 28.57 % of teachers strongly disagreed with the above statement, 48.81 % disagreed, 3.57 % were unsure, 11.91 % agreed and 7.14 % strongly agreed. It can be seen that 77.38 % of teachers felt that large classes were a

source of stress and they had difficulty handling such classes. Only 19.05 % of teachers felt that large classes were not a source of stress since they could handle a large number of learners.

The majority of teachers who indicated that they felt stressed when handling large classes were more likely to find learners with varying academic abilities and learners from varying socio-economic backgrounds in their classroom. This presented a greater challenge to these teachers since they needed to cater for the educational needs of learners from different backgrounds and varying capabilities. Teachers may have taken longer to identify or assist children with learning difficulties in these classes. Teachers with large classes faced greater marking loads. As a result, the performance of the class as a whole on tests and other assessment tasks might not have been satisfactory. These teachers were likely to experience a higher level of stress.

It is not uncommon to find classes with the number of learners ranging from 40 to 80 in the North Durban Region of Phoenix. This can be demotivating to the teacher. Teachers will find that at the end of the day, teaching such large classes can be mentally draining and stressful.

Teachers who taught large classes were likely to experience aggravated stress if this was coupled with the burden of additional administrative tasks, poor management by principals and a lack of resources. These factors will now be analysed.

When examining Statement 8.10 (*I find additional administrative work a cause of stress*), 7.14 % of teachers indicated that they strongly disagreed with the above statement, 16.67 % disagreed, 48.81 % agreed and 26.19 % strongly agreed. The

results indicated that a small percentage of teachers (23.81%) felt that additional administrative work was not a cause of stress. On the other hand, an overwhelming percentage of teachers (75.00 %) felt that additional administrative work was a cause of stress.

The results indicated that a substantially greater number of respondents felt that additional administrative work contributed to stressful experiences. This was not surprising when one examined the amount of time teachers spent on routine administrative tasks in school. These tasks included completing teachers' record books, marking the register, collecting monies from learners, completing personal particulars of learners, completing learner's reports and attending to committee meetings. This contributed to the teacher experiencing a sense of being so busy that they needed to plan the days activity carefully to minimize the amount of stress being experienced as a result of time and work load pressures.

Table 4.3 illustrates that 10.72 % of teachers strongly disagreed to *Statement 8.9 (Poor management by my principal contribute to stress)*, 20.24 % disagreed, 3.57 % were unsure, 34.52 % agreed and 30.95 % strongly agreed. The data revealed that 65.47 % of teachers felt that the poor management style by their principal contributed to stress while only 30.95 % of respondents felt that poor management by principals did not contribute to stress. This supports the findings of other studies (Kyriacou, 1997; Holmes, 2005) which showed that poor management in schools contributed to an increase in the level of stress as experienced by teachers.

Statement 8.8: I welcome the change to Curriculum 2005 and NCS and these have had little adverse effect on my stress level.

The results to the above statement indicated that 30.95 % of respondents strongly disagreed to the above statement, 27.38 %, disagreed, 3.59 % were unsure 17.86 % agreed and 20.24 % strongly agreed.

It is clear that a small number of respondents (38.10 %) welcomed the change to curriculum 2005 and NCS and these had little adverse effect on their stress levels while the majority of respondents (58.33 %) did not welcome these changes. From the above results it could be seen that most teachers were reluctant to accept changes to the education system.

Those teachers who did welcome the change to Curriculum 2005 might have viewed the change as positive and were therefore less likely to feel stressed. Teachers who did not accept the change to Curriculum 2005 were more likely to experience greater stress levels possibly because they were more comfortable with the old curriculum. But the change to Curriculum 2005 is a policy that emanated from the Department of Education at national level. Thus, all teachers were required to adhere to these changes.

Resistance to any form of change is a common tendency among teachers especially to those who have many years of teaching experience. It seemed that the changes experienced by the teachers appeared to be overwhelming and difficult to adjust to. The research sample also indicated that 71.45 % (Table 4.1) of teachers had over 10 years of teaching experience. It was possible that these teachers had grown accustomed to the conventional curriculum over the years and this had made it more

difficult for them to adjust to the new curriculum especially those who found it hard to embrace curriculum change.

Teachers who previously described themselves as being enthusiastic and committed now seemed to be cynical and burnt out from trying to cope with rapid changes, many of which they had not believed were reasonable. They seemed to be frustrated by their lack of control and felt that their concerns were not being heard. These teachers were thus bound to experience an overwhelming sense of powerlessness and isolation which could have led them to feel stressed.

Statement 8.11: A lack of social support from colleagues has a negative effect on my experience of stress.

The results showed that 10.71 % of teachers strongly disagreed with the above statement 11.90 % disagreed, 3.57 % were unsure, 28.57 % agreed and 38.10 % strongly agreed. From these results it was evident that 66.67 % of respondents felt that a lack of social support from colleagues did have a negative effect on their experience of stress. Only 22, 61% of respondents on the other hand felt that it had little or no effect on their experience of stress. The results indicate that teachers who received social support from colleagues experienced stress less negatively than those teachers who did not receive social support from colleagues.

The above data indicated that teachers who formed a strong circle of friends were less susceptible to experiencing negative stress. It is probable that these teachers were able to obtain moral support from their colleagues when they encountered stressful experiences. Thus social support from colleagues can play a role in alleviating the high stress levels of teachers.

Statement 8.13: I enjoy extra-curricular activities.

The table showed that 22.62 % of respondents strongly disagreed with statement 8.13 (*I enjoy extra-curricular activities*) and 28.57 disagreed with this statement. On the other hand 27.38 % of respondents agreed to the statement and 21.43 % strongly agreed to the statement. Thus a total of 51.19 % of respondents indicated that they did not enjoy extra-curricular activities while 48.81 % of respondents indicated that they did enjoy extra-curricular activities. Respondents who did not enjoy extra-curricular activities may have lacked experience or expertise in that particular extra-curricular activity or they may have felt that completing the syllabus was more important than doing extra-curricular activities. They would therefore have preferred to be in the classroom teaching than being out in the field performing extra-curricular duties. It seemed that these teachers had found it more comfortable performing the task of teaching in the classroom than engaging in extra-curricular tasks outside the classroom because they perceived extra-curricular activities as stress-inducing.

On the other hand, those teachers who reported enjoying extra-curricular activities may probably have felt a sense of relief by performing extra-curricular duties as it detracted from the routine of daily classroom life and they may have therefore experienced less stress.

Statement 8.16: I feel comfortable when I am being evaluated as part of IQMS.

Table 4.3 illustrates that 9.52 % of teachers strongly disagreed with the above statement, 19.05 % disagreed, 2.38 % were unsure, 41.67 % agreed and 27.38 % strongly agreed. While 28.57 % of respondents indicated that they did not feel comfortable being evaluated as part of IQMS, a large percentage of teachers (69.05 %) indicated that they felt comfortable during the evaluation procedure.

The high percentage of teachers who reported being comfortable during the evaluation process contradicted international research which showed that the process of evaluation could be stressful to teachers (Jeffrey and Woods, 1996). This anomaly could possibly be explained by the changes in the way teachers are currently being evaluated. The evaluation process in South African schools is currently called Integrated Quality Management System which plays a supportive and guiding role to the teacher being evaluated. There is mutual trust and respect between the appraiser and appraisee (Department of Education, 1998).

This evaluation system attaches importance on improving the quality of teaching. As a result appraised teachers probably felt that they had some ownership over the evaluation process and would not have feared that their self-worth and professional integrity were being undermined. This possibly decreased the possibility of a stressful encounter between the appraiser and appraisee.

Statement 8.18: I welcome parental inquiries about learner performance.

The results show that 2.38 % of teachers strongly disagreed with the above statement, 8.33 % disagreed 2.38 % were unsure, 50 % agreed and 36.90 % strongly agreed. 86.90 % of respondents indicated that they welcomed parental inquiries about learner performance. While only 10.71 % indicated that they did not welcome such inquiries. Most teachers preferred parental involvement in their child's school work because parents were made aware of problematic issues such as incomplete homework and assignments or unacceptable behaviour by learners.

This process of involving parents in their child's school work possibly helped to alleviate some of the stressful situations that could arise in the classroom since the learner was now aware that both the parent and teacher are monitoring him/her and

that the teacher had gained parental support. It is a win-win situation whereby parents become aware of their child's situation in school.

Teachers cope with the above sources of stress in different ways. The level of stress experienced by teachers will be influenced by the type of coping strategy that they choose. The following section gives an analysis of the various coping strategies that teachers use to deal with stress.

4.4. Coping strategies

This section analyzes the coping strategies that teachers used to deal with stress. The data regarding coping strategies are shown in table 4.4.

Table 4.4 : Coping strategies that teachers use to deal with stress

Key: SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; U = Unsure; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree F = frequency

	Coping strategies used by teachers to deal with stress	SD		D		U		A		SA	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
9.1	I try to see the humorous aspect of a stressful situation	8	9.50	16	19.05	7	8.50	19	22.62	34	40.35
9.2	I learn to control my emotions during a stressful encounter	16	19.05	7	8.33	6	7.14	22	26.19	33	39.29
9.3	I do deep breathing when I find myself in a stressful situation	17	20.24	40	47.62	1	1.19	15	17.86	11	13.10
9.4	I do regular physical exercise	31	36.90	15	17.86	2	2.38	21	25.00	15	17.86
9.5	I practice meditation	3	3.57	55	65.48	4	4.76	18	21.43	4	4.76
9.6	I relax after work so that I can cope with stress	21	25.00	31	36.90	3	3.57	22	26.19	7	8.33
9.7	I avoid confronting colleagues	4	4.76	16	19.05	0	0.00	48	57.14	16	19.05
9.8	I continue to further my education	12	14.29	35	41.67	2	2.38	27	32.14	8	9.52
9.9	I tend not to think about things that happened in school	11	13.10	12	14.28	0	0.00	28	33.33	33	39.29
9.10	I plan ahead and prioritise	3	3.57	17	20.24	6	7.14	26	30.95	32	38.09
9.11	I think about the coming vacation to reduce stress	8	9.52	8	9.52	5	5.95	27	32.14	36	42.86
9.12	I practice religion to help me reduce stress	3	3.57	11	13.10	4	4.76	36	42.86	30	35.71
9.13	I share my failures with a trusted person	5	5.95	10	11.90	1	1.19	11	13.10	57	67.86
9.14	I read about stress to help me cope with stressful situations	32	38.10	29	34.52	3	3.57	8	9	12	14.29
9.15	I communicate with learners parents	6	7.14	5	5.95	6	7.14	33	39.29	34	40.48
9.16	I take leave of absence from school	38	45.24	24	28.57	7	8.33	9	10.71	6	7.14
9.17	I seek counselling to deal with stress	31	36.90	38	45.24	2	2.38	7	8.33	6	7.14
9.18	I take alcohol or prescribed drugs	37	44.05	25	29.76	5	5.95	9	10.71	8	9.52
9.19	I deal with stress by ignoring its existence	41	48.81	20	23.81	4	4.76	11	13.10	8	9.52
9.20	If learners become rowdy, I walk out of the classroom	38	45.24	26	30.95	2	2.38	11	13.10	7	8.33
9.21	In general, I find school life quite stressful	5	5.95	23	27.38	5	5	18	21.43	33	39.29

The above table revealed that the extent of a teacher's agreement or disagreement with the various coping strategies varied. But there were a few coping strategies that more than 60 % of teachers indicated that they preferred to use when dealing with stress. These are evident in: *Statement 9.7 (I avoid confronting colleagues)*, *Statement 9.9 (I do not think about things that happened in school)*, *Statement 9.10 (I plan ahead and prioritise)*, *Statement 9.11 (I think about the coming vacation)*, *Statement 9.13 (I share my failures with a trusted person)* and *Statement 9.15 (I communicate with learner's parents)*. The analyses of the data for these statements follow below.

Statement 9.7: I avoid confronting colleagues to prevent a stressful encounter.

The results revealed that only 4.76 % of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement '*I avoid confronting colleagues to prevent a stressful encounter*' while 19.05 % of respondents disagreed with the statement. However, a large number of teachers (57.14 %) agreed with this statement and 19.05 % strongly agreed with the statement. The statistics above showed that most teachers preferred not to confront their colleagues when a stressful situation arose between them. By adopting this approach it was likely that future stressful encounters amongst these teachers were prevented.

Statement 9.9: I tend not to think about things that happened in school to reduce my stress levels.

The table revealed that 13.10 % of teachers strongly disagreed with the above statement, 14.28 % disagreed, 33.33 % agreed and 39 % strongly agreed. A total of 72.33 % of teachers felt that by not thinking about things that happened in school, it helped to reduce their stress levels. In contrast, only 27.38 % of teachers felt that this

approach did not reduce their stress levels. Thus, it was clear that the majority of teachers did not think about events that happened in school as a method to reduce their stress levels. Most often there was a natural tendency for teachers to reflect on a stressful situation that occurred during the day which affected them in a negative way. This reflection possibly activated the type of feelings that was experienced during the stressful situation.

Since most of the teachers in the sample had 10 or more years of teaching experience (71.45 %) it seemed that they had learnt through their teaching experience, to ignore thinking about daily stressful encounters in school. The school can be viewed as a working environment where teachers constantly interact with many learners every day. It was therefore likely that teachers would have encountered disobedient learners that resulted in teachers experiencing higher stress levels. But it seemed that these teachers have discovered that by ignoring or not thinking about these events, their stress levels could be lowered. It was clear that had come to view such situations as part of their daily duty and had learnt to get accustomed to these situations. This relates to the concept of resilience which has been discussed in Chapter 2.

Statement 9.10: I plan ahead and prioritise so that I may prevent stressful situations.

The result for the statement '*I plan ahead and prioritise so that I may prevent stressful situations*' is as follows: 3.57 % strongly disagreed, 20.24 % disagreed, 7.14 % were unsure, 30.95 % agreed and 38.09 % strongly agreed. The majority of respondents (69.04 %) indicated that they plan ahead and prioritise to prevent stressful situations. The above result is most probably due to the higher number of teachers with many years of teaching service. It is apparent that their teaching

experience has enabled them to see the value of planning ahead and prioritizing to enable them to cope more efficiently with given tasks and therefore minimize stress.

Statement 9.11: I think about the coming vacation to reduce stress.

The table shows that 9.52 % of teachers strongly disagreed with the above statement, 9.52 % of teachers disagreed, 5.95 % were unsure, 32.14 % agreed and 42.86 % strongly agreed. These figures indicate that the majority of teachers tried to reduce their stress levels by thinking about the coming vacation. The resultant reduction in stress levels of these teachers was probably due to the notion that although they were faced with stress at school, the thought of the forthcoming vacation provided a sense of relief. These teachers sought solace in the belief that they would have had time to recover from school-related stress during the vacation.

Statement 9.13: I share my failures with a trusted person to manage my stress at school.

Table 4.4 indicates that 5.95 % of teachers strongly disagreed with the above statement, 11.90 % of teachers disagreed with the statement, 1.19 % were unsure, 13.10 % agreed while a large proportion of teachers (67.86 %) strongly agreed with the above statement. Thus, a total of 80.96 % of teachers indicated that they shared their failures with a trusted person to manage stress at school. On the other hand, only 17.85 % of teachers indicated that they had not shared their failures with a trusted person to manage stress at school.

It is clear from the results above that a significant number of respondents relied on a trusted person to talk about their problems and by so doing they were able to cope with stress at school.

It appeared that the sharing of teachers' failures occurred when there was a trusted person available. If a trusted person was not available, then the difficulties and consequent stress that the teacher experienced in school was hidden from the rest of the staff. This finding correlated with statement 8.12 in table 4.3 where 67.7% of teachers felt that a lack of social support had a negative effect on their stress levels. It was apparent from the data that teachers avoided discussing their difficulties with just anyone. It seemed that teachers needed a trusted colleague who was sympathetic and helpful so that they were able to face and overcome professional worries thus minimizing the experience of stress.

Statement 9.15: I communicate with learners parents which help me to understand the situation thus making it less stressful.

The table indicates that 7.14 % of teachers strongly disagreed with the above statement, 5.95 % disagreed, 7.14 % were unsure, 39.29 % agreed and 40.48 % strongly agreed. These results indicate a marked contrast between teachers who communicated with parents and those teachers who did not communicate with parents. The above results showed that (13.09 %) of teachers did not communicate with learner's parents about the child's performance since it did not help to make the situation less stressful. In contrast, 79.77 % of teachers felt that communicating with learners parents helped them to understand the learner's background thus making it less stressful.

The results clearly indicated that the majority of teachers found it less stressful when they were able to communicate with parents of learners. It would therefore be useful if parents made appointments to meet the teacher to discuss their child's schoolwork. If parents became critical, aggressive or abusive toward teachers, it could indicate a

lack of constructive communication between them. These situations can be highly stressful to teachers

Statement 9.2: I learn to control my emotions during a stressful encounter.

The results revealed that 19.04 % of teachers strongly disagreed with the statement, 8.33 % disagreed, 7.14 % were unsure, 26.19 % agreed and 39.29 % strongly agreed.

The above results showed that 65.48 % of teachers learnt to control their emotions in a stressful situation while only 27.37 % had not resorted to this method of self control. The results indicated that the majority of teachers tried to lower their experience of negative stress by taking control of their emotions when stressors arose. This supports Joseph's (2000) argument that an individual needed to take ownership and control of stressful situations by breaking out of the victim role and developing an owner mentality.

Since teachers see themselves as public figures, they feel the need to conduct themselves in a professional manner. However, the experience of stress in the form of anger, frustration or depression can sometimes result in teachers feeling as if these are the only responses available to them. But this type of response is indicative of a lack of emotional control. Thus controlling their emotions when faced with a stressful situation rather than addressing the source of stress, was seen as the most appropriate response. This is aptly illustrated in the following quote:

*Give me the strength to change that which can be changed,
Give me the patience to cope with that which cannot,
Give me the wisdom to know the difference between the two.*
(Kyriacou, 2000. p. 87).

Statement 9.3: I do deep breathing when I find myself in a stressful situation in school.

With regard to the statement, “*I do deep breathing when I find myself in a stressful situation,*” 20.24 % of respondent indicated that they strongly disagreed with the statement, 47.62 % disagreed, 17.86 % agreed and 13.10 % strongly agreed. This finding indicated that 67.86 % of teachers did not do deep breathing when faced with a stressful situation. The results seems to imply that these teachers were so enmeshed in the stressful situation that they had not considered lowering their stress levels by doing deep breathing .

Statement 9.4: I do regular physical exercise to cope with stress in the classroom.

Table 4.4 indicated that 36.9 % of respondents strongly disagreed with the above statement, 17.86 % disagreed, 4.76 % were unsure, 25 % agreed and 17.86 % strongly agreed.

It is evident that 42.86 % of respondents engaged in regular physical exercise to cope with stress experienced in the classroom while a total of 54.76 % of respondents indicated that they had not resorted to this strategy. The results indicated that more than half of the respondents had not resorted to physical exercise to cope with stress in the classroom. One of the possible explanations for this is that these teachers were not aware of the benefits of performing physical exercise to alleviate their experience of stress.

During a hectic day at school, teachers are often not conscious of how tense their muscles could become. Performing some form of physical exercise helps to relax the muscles of the body and enables the teacher to deal with stress more effectively. According to Holmes (2005), physical exercise can help teachers to reduce the

feelings of tension and frustration that are generated when experiencing stress.

Teachers often complain of being tired at the end of the day. However a distinction needs to be made between being mentally tired and being physically tired. There are periods when teachers have a mentally demanding day such as completing administrative tasks, marking or completing learner's report cards. In such circumstances physical activities such as going for a brisk walk can help the body unwind and to relax, thus alleviating teacher stress levels.

In addition, taking part in physical sports such as swimming, squash or leisure activities such as gardening, dancing or singing can also help them to keep their body in shape thus enabling them to better cope with the daily stress that is encountered at school.

Statement 9.5: I practice meditation so that I can deal with stressful situations.

Table 4.4 indicated that 3.5 % of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement: *"I practice meditation so that I can deal with stressful situations."* The majority of respondents (65.48 %) disagreed, 4.76 % were unsure, 21, 43 % agreed and 4.76 % strongly agreed with this statement. The high percentage of respondents (68, 98 %) who do not practice meditation to deal with stressful situations can be attributed to the fact that these respondents needed to acquire the skills of meditation by a person qualified to teach meditation. Also, there were many teachers who were aware of the benefits of meditation but may not have practiced it sufficiently to acquire its benefits.

The essence of meditation lies in developing the ability of the mind to remain focused in a relaxed way on a particular object, sound or idea. It allows teachers to control their thinking better so that they can avoid the sense of panic that can arise in a

stressful situation. Extensive research has shown that meditation helped to stabilize physiological processes such as high blood pressure, tension and thus lower stress levels. Unfortunately, teachers who experienced high stress and who could have benefited from this form of relaxation often responded that they did not have the time to practice meditation.

Statement 9.6: I relax after work so that I can cope with school stress the following day.

The results in Table 4.4 shows that 25 % of teachers strongly disagreed to the above statement, 36.9 % disagreed, 3.7 % were unsure, 26.19 % agreed and 8.33 % strongly agreed.

Thus a higher percentage of teachers indicated that they did not relax after work. In Figure 4.1, it was revealed that 80.95 % of respondents were over 30 years. This indicated that a high number of these respondents were likely to be married with children. They were therefore more likely to be faced with greater responsibilities at home such as doing household chores, shopping for groceries, paying household accounts, taking children for extra curricular activities or visiting medical personnel such as the dentist, doctor or physiotherapist. These responsibilities resulted in little or no time for relaxation.

It is important for these teachers to find some time during the afternoon or evening to relax. Some of the activities that they can choose to relax at the end of the school day are: having a relaxing bath, listening to relaxing music, immersing oneself in a hobby or meditating. These activities can help the teacher to get the body back to a state of relaxation thus helping the teacher to cope with stress more effectively.

Statement 9.8: I continue to further my education to help me to gain a broader view of the school situation and thus cope better with stress.

Table 4.4 indicates that 14.29 % of teachers strongly disagreed with the above statement, 41.67 % disagreed, 2.38 % were unsure 32.14 % agreed and 9.52 % strongly agreed. Thus, a larger percentage of teachers (55.96 %) did not feel that further education would help them to gain a broader view of the school situation and thus cope better with stress.

This is illustrated by one of the respondents who has recounted that in the Masters programme, there was an emphasis on challenging the education system and one had to be a thinker and a doer if one encountered problems but yet when one gets out there into the education setting, the attitude was that nothing would ever change. This respondent felt a sense of disillusionment. This may explain why there was a feeling among teachers that further education was not a way to cope with stress.

Statement 9.12: I practice religion to help me reduce my stress levels at school.

The results for Table 4.4 showed that 3.57 % strongly disagreed with the statement '*I practice religion to help me reduce my stress levels*' while 13.10 % disagreed with this statement. 4.76 % of respondents indicated that they were unsure. However, 42.86 % of respondents agreed with the statement while 35.71 % strongly agreed with this statement.

Based on the data above, it is evident that the majority of teachers practiced religion to reduce their stress levels at school. Religion is the central core around which most teachers lives revolve. As indicated in the results it was not surprising that most teachers resorted to their religious practice to deal with stress. This practice could be

in the form of a prayer, ritual, traditional dance or song at a place of worship or at home. These activities helped them to attain peace and solace within themselves when it became stressful at school.

Statement 9.14: I read about ways of dealing with stress to help me cope with stressful situations at school.

The data for the above statement is as follows: 38.10 % strongly disagreed, 34.52 % disagreed, and 3.57 % were unsure, 9.52 % agreed and 14.29 % strongly agreed. It is clear that a large proportion of teachers (72.62 %) do not read about stress to help them to cope with stressful situations at school. On the other hand only 23.52 % of teachers indicated that they do read about stress which helps them to deal with stress. Thus, the majority of teachers felt that reading about stress will not help them to cope with stress at school. Also, teachers are faced with personal and other commitments that may leave little or no time to read about stress.

Statement 9.16: I take leave of absence from school to handle school-related stress.

Table 4.4 above indicated the following results for statement 9.16: 45.24 % of teachers strongly disagreed, 28.57 % disagreed, 8.33 % were unsure, 10.71 % agreed and 7.14 % strongly agreed. This implies that 73.81 % of teachers do not take absence from school to handle school related stress while 17.81 % of teachers responded that they did take absence from school to handle stress at school. These results contrasted with research showing that a large proportion of teacher absenteeism could be attributed to stress at school (Kyriacou, 2000; Holmes, 2005). This contradiction was possibly due to the reluctance of teachers to reveal that they did take absence from school due to stress experienced at school. They could have feared being perceived

as someone who was unable to deal with stress at school. It is for this reason that these teachers were unlikely to reveal to colleagues that stress affected them negatively.

Those teachers who did take absence from school might have reported that they were suffering from a physical ailment but in reality their absence could have been due to feeling stressed. Also, there may have been teachers who did not feel well and took absence but did not realise that this feeling was stress-related. Thus teachers may not have recognised the symptoms of stress and even if they did, they were reluctant to admit it.

Only rarely is the issue of stress addressed in a staff meeting at school and when it is mentioned in a staff room, it is in a joking manner or in hushed tones. There is none of the compassion that is afforded to a colleague who is stressed as is evident in a colleague suffering from a physical ailment. Instead, the “stressed out” teacher is seen as a failure. Worse, that is exactly how he or she feels. Perhaps if it were known how many teachers suffer from work-related stress then the stigma might be diminished (Joseph, 2000).

When the absentee rate amongst teachers is high, parents and learners may feel that poor performance by learners is due to frequent teacher absenteeism. This can be demotivating and stressful for teachers.

Statement 9.17: I seek counselling to deal with stress at school.

The table reveals that 36.90 % of teachers strongly disagreed to the above statement, 45.24 % disagreed, and 2.38 % were unsure, 8.33 % agreed and 7.14 % strongly agreed. The data indicates that a substantially large percentage of teachers (82.14 %)

indicated that they did not seek counselling to deal with school-related stress while only 15.47 % of teachers responded that they did seek counselling to deal with school-related stress.

The above results could possibly be biased because many teachers who did seek counselling to deal with stress-related issues may not have indicated so in the questionnaire due to the stigma of being labeled as a stressed teacher who was seeking psychological help. Thus, there could possibly be a greater number of teachers who did seek counselling to deal with stress-related problems than the above table reveals.

It is therefore important to have moral support in school for teachers who experience a great deal of stress so that they can be counselled about their problems. Speaking about problems that are stressful can help teachers to alleviate their experience of stress. It is therefore advantageous to provide staff with the opportunity to talk about their problems with a trained member of the human resource team or an expert. Whatever the form of counselling for the teacher, it should be impartial and confidential. Once management staff is aware that a member of staff is suffering from stress, it is advisable to find out if the stress is personal, work based or both (Joseph, 2000).

Statement 9.18: I take alcohol or prescribed drugs to deal with stress at school.

The table shows that 44.05 % of respondents strongly disagreed with the above statement, 29.76 % disagreed, 5.95 % were unsure, 10.71 % agreed and 9.52 % strongly agreed. Thus a total of 73.81 % of teachers reported that they did not take alcohol or prescribed drugs to cope with stress at school. Only 20.23 % of teachers reported that they resorted to this method to deal with stress at school. Most

respondents might not have reported that they took drugs or consumed alcohol to deal with stress since it might be viewed as being socially unacceptable. Thus, the responses of respondents to this statement might have an element of bias.

Those teachers who did take some form of drugs, especially alcohol, to cope with the stress of school-related activities before or during school hours could have been in a state of mind that was not conducive to teaching learners.

Alcohol in moderation can be a temporary stress buster. It provides an opportunity to unwind and relax. The problem arises when alcohol or drug intake becomes excessive. In this case alcohol or drugs will hide the problem, masking the cause and only alleviating the symptoms (Holmes, 2005).

Statement 9.19: I deal with stress by ignoring its existence.

The table illustrated that 48.81 % strongly disagreed with the above statement, 23.81 % agreed, 4.76 % were unsure, 13.10 % agreed and 9.52 % strongly agreed. Thus 22.62 % of teachers dealt with stress by just ignoring its existence while the majority of teachers (72.62 %) did not ignore the existence of stress. Most of the teachers in the sample were seasoned teachers and they probably realised that by ignoring a problem, it only worsened the stressful situation. They therefore preferred to address the stressful situation than to ignore it.

Statement 9.20: If learners become too rowdy, I walk out of the classroom

The table revealed that 45.24 % of teachers strongly disagreed with the above statement, 30.95 % of teachers disagreed, 2.38 % were unsure, 13.10 % agreed and 8.33 % strongly agreed. This indicated that 21.43 % of teachers walked out of the

classroom when learners became too rowdy while the majority of teachers (76.19 %) did not resort to this method when learners became rowdy. This indicated that most teachers preferred to address the rowdy class than to walk out. These teachers were more likely to experience greater stress levels than those teachers who preferred to walk out of the classroom when it became rowdy.

Statement 9.21: In general I find school life quite stressful.

From the table above the results for the statement '*In general I find school life quite stressful*' were as follows: 5.95 % strongly disagreed 27.38 % disagreed 5.9% unsure, 21.43 % agreed and 39.29 % strongly agreed. It is evident from these results that 60.72 % of teachers did find school life quite stressful while 33.33 % of teachers did not find school life stressful. These results indicated that there were a greater proportion of teachers who found school life stressful. This was consistent with international research which indicated that large numbers of teachers found teaching stressful and had opted to resign (Kyriacou, 2001; Rogers, 1992; Travers and Coopers, 1996).

This chapter has outlined the findings of the empirical investigation concerning coping strategies that teachers used when they experienced stress at schools in the North Durban Region of Phoenix. The next section focuses on the analysis of the respondents responses to open-ended questions.

4.5 Teacher' perception of stress in school

The aim of the open-ended question was to extend the exploration of coping strategies used by teachers to deal with stress. These questions allowed the

respondents to respond more freely rather than give a fixed type of response. The responses by respondents were consistent with the ratings already reported above.

Question 10.1: How does stress affect you?

Most teachers feared acknowledging their experience of stress. Teachers rarely discussed their experience of stress at staff meetings. When it was mentioned in a staff meeting, it was alluded to in a joking manner or in hushed tones. Most teachers were uneducated about the consequences of experiencing stress and they often hesitated to seek medical help because they did not recognise the severity of the symptoms and even if they did, they were reluctant to admit it.

Teachers' responses to the above question can be categorised as follows: Physical symptoms, emotional symptoms or no symptoms. It was found that 54 % of respondents reported experiencing physical symptoms such as body pains, indigestion, stiff neck or having the common cold. On the other hand fewer respondents reported emotional symptoms such as depression, anxiety, tension or feeling frustrated. This constituted 17 % of the respondents. 29 % of respondents reported that stress did not affect them adversely. These responses correlated with research by Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1978b) regarding teachers' experience of physical symptoms. They found that the most common symptoms of stress reported by teachers were body pains or experiencing the common cold.

Question 10.2: Is teaching more stressful now than when you first started?

A total of 94 % of teachers expressed the view that teaching is more stressful now than in the previous years. These teachers were therefore more likely to be affected emotionally or physically by stress. But only 17 % of these respondents indicated that

they were emotionally affected by stress while 14 % indicated that they were not affected by stress. It appears that many teachers were cautious of confiding their experience of stress for fear of being seen as one who was not able to cope under pressure. This was possibly because the “stressed out” teacher was often viewed as a failure by colleagues. Worse, that is exactly how the stressed out teacher feels. Perhaps if it were known how many teachers suffer from work-related stress, then the stigma associated with the experience of teacher stress might be diminished.

These teachers attributed physical problems and general ill health to the experience of stress that they were experiencing at work. They often described themselves as experiencing psychological symptoms such as being anxious, restless, agitated, demotivated and mentally drained or experiencing physical symptoms such as headaches, insomnia, stomach cramps and depression.

One teacher described his feelings of being stressed as follows:

All I can call them is panic attacks or anxiety attacks. Only a week ago when it was 4 o'clock, in the morning, I woke up and I thought, Oh my Jesus, I'm not going to get the work done and there is no way I'm going to accomplish it. I have spent hours each night which takes away from your social life and time with your family. Six years ago I went through a separation and divorce and when I look back at it I actually believe that part of the reason that happened was because of the amount of time I was putting into my teaching job which kept me away from my wife and my daughter. I just don't think I'm healthy as a result of it.

The amount of work teachers had to fit into their school day and the amount they had to take home at night thus intruded into their personal lives. The juggling required to cope with the responsibilities on both fronts was stressful for them. Teachers reported that this stress resulted in feelings of guilt because of reduced time with their families, a strain on their marriage and little time for themselves. This lack of personal time resulted in poor emotional health and guilt because they felt neglectful of their families. They were also resentful that they had to often choose work over their family (Gold & Roth, 1993).

Question 10.3: What is the most stressful factor in school?

The following factors were most frequently cited as being most stressful at school: work overload (34 %), learner discipline (31 %) and curriculum change (27 %). Other factors that were less frequently cited were: overcrowded classrooms, inadequate school security and extra-curricular activities.

Teachers often complained about the excessive administrative tasks which were often performed after school hours. In addition, teachers also needed to do planning and preparing of class lessons at this time. There were also excessive demands on teachers to attend school-related meetings and writing of reports (Gultig, 2002).

The frustration of an unmanageable and unrelenting workload was evident in all the respondents' response to the open-ended questions. The teachers in this study felt that they were unable to cope with the demands of their work which they perceived as being impossible at times. These teachers' experiences regarding work overload supported the earlier research of Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1978a), Hiebert (1985) and Blasé (1986).

The second most stressful situation that respondents recorded was learner discipline. The most common types of disciplinary problems that teachers reported were: behaviour that interfered with teaching and learning eg. learners who continually called out during a lesson; behaviour by learners that was psychologically or physically unsafe eg. teasing and harassing other learners and behaviour that destroyed property (Levin & Nolan, 1991).

The third most stressful factor that teachers reported was the numerous changes to the curriculum. A number of teachers complained that they had to attend numerous workshops to familiarise themselves with the constant changes to the curriculum. This had resulted in a disruption to their normal classroom teaching and had also created instability to their methodology of teaching. It seemed that teachers were content with maintaining the status quo and were not too receptive to major changes in the curriculum (Carrim, 2003).

10.4: How can the stressful situation be alleviated?

Most teachers cited the numerous tasks that needed to be done during a school day other than teaching and learning. Some of these were writing reports, attending to committee meetings, extra-curricular activities, fund raising and meeting parents. These teachers expressed the view that the Education Department could help alleviate their stressful workload by reducing some of these administrative tasks. A total of 87 % of teachers made reference to reducing administrative tasks to alleviate their stress levels. It was noted above that teachers cited work overload as the most stressful factor contributing to high stress levels and administrative tasks constitute a large part of work overload.

Since teachers spend a large amount of time in school on administrative tasks, it detracts from the quality time that could be spent with the main task of teaching and learning (Kyriacou, 2000). Not completing the school syllabus with learners due to other tasks can be stressful to teachers. Respondents have complained that their workload had increased to levels that they find it unacceptable. This heavier workload inevitably generated a high level of stress.

Question 10.5: Has the implementation of OBE and NCS been stressful to you?

Between 1989 and 1994 South Africa embarked on a radical transformation of education and training. One of the most challenging aspects of this transformation has been the adoption of an Outcomes Based Education system. The majority of teachers (77 %) felt that the change to the OBE system and NCS has been stressful. Some have complained about the rapid change to the OBE system and receiving inadequate training in this system. Others have stated that the constant changes to the curriculum have resulted in uncertainty and an expectation that there would be further changes.

Whether it was curriculum change or assessment change, the respondents seemed to express the feeling of being exhausted of yet another round of changes to the teaching and learning situation. This indicated that teachers seemed to be experiencing a sense of reform fatigue.

Although it is too soon in this study to make definite statements, the changes that teachers have experienced appeared to have been overwhelming. Teachers spoke of being left out of decision-making processes and of feeling greater pressure to achieve better results. This supported research on reform and restructuring by Farber who reported that worn out teachers “often feel that no one really understands what they

are enduring” (Farber, 1991, p. 679). These teachers felt depersonalised and undervalued when they were not involved in the decision-making processes and this was echoed in teacher’s responses to the open-ended questions. It seemed that teachers felt stressed because the goals of the school seemed to be incompatible with their own professional goals. Teachers who described themselves as once enthusiastic and committed now seemed cynical and burnt out from trying to cope with rapid changes. They were frustrated by their lack of control and felt that their concerns were not being heard. An overwhelming sense of powerlessness and isolation permeated their responses.

Question 10.6: Has the implementation of Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) had any impact on your stress levels? Explain.

The evaluation process of teachers in South African schools is known as Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS). Most teachers (74 %) expressed the view that the process of IQMS was initially stressful and contributed to a reduction in job satisfaction and low morale. Teachers felt that it undermined any sense of being proactive, autonomous professionals and therefore they did not feel comfortable being evaluated as part of IQMS.

But many teachers (79 %) stated that only when the rationale for IQMS was made clear, did they feel more at ease and experienced less stress during the evaluation process. They later realised that the evaluation process played a supportive and guiding role to the teacher being evaluated. There was mutual trust and respect between the appraiser and appraisee (Department of Education, 1998). Teachers stated that they now had some ownership over the evaluation process.

Because this evaluation system attached importance on improving the quality of

teaching, teachers did not fear that their self-worth and professional integrity were being undermined. This was more likely to decrease the possibility of a stressful experience.

Question 10.7: What are some of the positive aspects that you find as a teacher in your school?

Regardless of the level of stress experienced, every teacher wrote about his/her love of teaching. Teachers expressed that they enjoyed the positive interaction with their learners, helping and encouraging them to learn and the feeling that they had some impact on the lives of these learners.

They found rewards in teaching life skills and witnessing learners develop socially and emotionally as well as intellectually. Over and over they spoke of how rewarding it is to impart their knowledge to a group of enthusiastic students and to see them enjoy the challenges and rewards of studying. One teacher expressed her feelings as follows:

It's important that I've been able to touch someone else's life. Kids can open a book and they read it themselves but it's to bring it to life; I think that's important. I think when you can do that and you see a little light go on in their heads...I think that's very important. That's what I like about teaching.

Another teacher expressed her motivation to teach as follows:

It's a pleasure when you reach the kids sometimes that have nothing going for them and that gives me the greatest joy. I like being able to share the knowledge that I have and encourage children to learn. I like being able to

work with young kids. I really like working with kids and helping them. I like the idea that you are encouraging people to develop their minds.

Clearly, most teachers expressed their dedication and wanted to be good teachers. They took great joy and pride in educating their learners and in influencing their lives. They still professed a love of teaching in spite of the many stressors they faced every day.

This chapter has alluded to teachers responses to stress in the school situation. Although responses varied there seemed to be some commonality on certain issues. Overall the findings appeared to indicate that the following sources of stress were common among teachers: poor discipline among learners, heavy workload, administrative duties and learners with special needs. Their responses to the various coping strategies also varied. Some of the coping strategies that teachers preferred most were: avoid confronting colleagues, practicing religion, communicating with learners' parents and sharing their failures with a trusted person.

CHAPTER FIVE

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This research has identified the following factors which were frequently cited as sources of stress: poor discipline among learners, heavy workload, administrative duties and learners with special needs. These factors are also cited by teachers in international research as shown in Chapter 2. As a result teachers experienced physical, emotional and mental illness. There is thus a need to establish a greater support base for teachers who are stressed and require help. Below are some recommendations that teachers can take into account when dealing with stressful experiences. Thereafter, future directions for research and limitations will be discussed. Finally, a conclusion will be drawn.

5.1 Recommendations for managing stress in schools

The responsibility and ability to reduce the level of stress experienced at school lie as much with individual teachers as with school administrators. Thus, an attempt to alleviate stress levels amongst teachers should include organisational and individual based strategies. Some of these strategies to alleviate the level of teacher stress in schools are discussed below.

5.1.1 Organisational-based strategies

- Schools need to develop support systems in schools. An effective support system includes teachers who approach their colleagues in a benevolent manner and who provide emotional comfort when they are highly distressed. Thus, it is important to have colleagues in school who care about each other.

- Schools also need to encourage all stakeholders such as parents, community members, teachers and learners to develop a sense of engagement in and ownership of what happens in education. When teachers are made to feel that there is a sense of support from other stakeholders, it helps to alleviate some of the stress that they experience in schools (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2000).
- It is essential that professional development activities are organised by school management on a regular basis to help teachers to deal with new developments and changes that they face in school. These include meetings and workshops for the staff as a whole as well as more specialised activities for individual or small groups of staff within the school. Such activities help to develop a sense of collegiality and teamwork amongst teachers (Rogers, 1992).
- In-service training programmes should be organised by Faculties and Colleges of Education or by Management Personnel in the relevant Education Department. Such programmes could provide teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to cope with stress (Sooful, 1992).
- The top-down management style of schools should be reviewed. Teachers should be given opportunities to make inputs relating to school policies and procedures. This can contribute to improved self esteem on the part of teachers (Levin & Nolan, 2000).

- Peripatetic staff should be employed to undertake relief teaching in schools as a way of reducing the workload of teachers within tolerable limits. Teachers must accept their own limitations within the teaching context (Holmes, 2005). They must realise that they cannot succeed with every learner or solve every problem at school or that they are able to help in all situations.
- Teachers must spend time out of their usual role as teachers by pursuing, for example, a hobby or some form of recreational activity (Kyriacou, 2000). This can help teachers to unwind and revitalize themselves for the next day at work.

5.1.2 Individual based strategies

Some strategies that can be utilised by teachers to cope with stress on an individual basis are: stress awareness, physiological training, environment adjustment and mind control.

5.1.2.1 Stress awareness

Teachers need to become aware of stressful experiences to help them determine, identify and understand the origins of stress. Holmes (2005) mentions the following strategies in stress awareness:

- Recognise stress-producing work events and the corresponding thoughts that they provoke (stressors).
- Become aware of the effects of such thoughts on one's physiological and emotional responses.
- Recognise these physiological and emotional responses as manifestations of stress.

- Systematically evaluate the objective consequences of stress-producing events at work.
- Replace self-defeating thoughts that invoke stress (Holmes, 2005).

Once causes of stress have been recognised and identified, preventative measures can be taken. Bunce and West (1996) demonstrated that respondents can become empowered through various stress-management activities. After helping employees identify primary stressors, employers can provide training in counselling skills so that staff members are able to offer support and guidance to colleagues who are facing difficulties at work.

5.1.2.2 Physiological training

Holmes (2005) suggests that teachers need to include physiological coping strategies such as the following: regular physical exercise (walking, jogging, cycling) or relaxation techniques (Transcendental Meditation, yoga or deep breathing) to reduce their mental and emotional fatigue. Some of these strategies, as discussed by Holmes (2005), will be outlined below.

- **Aerobic activity:** This refers to any type of activity that raises the level of one's pulse rate. Suggested exercises include bicycling, swimming, jogging or fast walking. Research by Murphy (1983) suggests that biofeedback and muscle relaxation are effective as part of a work-based stress-management programme.
- **Breathing technique:** This method entails learning how to breathe for relaxation purposes. Simple exercises include closing one's eyes; counting

backwards from ten to one; inhaling while saying to oneself, “I am...,” and exhaling while saying “calm and relaxed.” (Holmes, 2005).

- Biofeedback: This method involves the electronic measurement of mind-body functions such as muscle tension, intestinal activity, blood flow, breathing or heartbeat. These measurements are then used to control these functions (Holmes, 2005).
- Focused meditation: Perhaps, this is the oldest of all mind-body techniques. Of the many meditation techniques, the most current and popular form involves focusing on a “mantra” (single word, number, or phrase) for about 15 to 20 minutes (Holmes, 2005).

Relaxation training and related techniques lack the side effects of using medicines such as drowsiness or addiction but to achieve relaxation requires a period of time to learn and practice.

5.1.2.3 Environmental adjustment

Another major component of successful stress-prevention programmes is the development of situational coping strategies. Respondents are trained in strategies that help them either change their reaction to specific stressful situations or alter their work environment (Kyriacou, 2000).

Respondents can learn:

- Assertiveness techniques
- Tools for enlisting the cooperation of others
- Skills for changing a stressful situation

5.1.2.4 Mind Control

In addition to training respondents in physiological and/or situational coping strategies, the importance of cognitive appraisal and re-appraisal must be considered.

These aspects will be discussed below.

- Use strategies to change how one thinks about stressful or stress-producing situations: Teachers can use cognitive coping strategies that lead to the reduction or prevention of stress. These strategies focus on mental techniques such as replacing self-defeating, self-limiting beliefs with more constructive, realistic, and empowering ones eg. learning how to recognise self-doubt in order to coach oneself into changing these thoughts into positive ones (Kyriacou, 2000).
- Improve time management and goal setting/prioritisation skills: Teachers need to keep track of how they spend time and adjust their behaviour to match identified goals. Activities such as To Do lists, weekly schedules, and six month planning calendars help respondents to focus energy and combat procrastination. This will prevent teachers from taking too many tasks all at once. If time is spent now for necessary planning, time will be saved later on. Teachers get so busy with tasks such as writing reports, committee meetings and extra-curricular activities that they get a sense of being so busy. If they were to stop, step back and re-order things, they might just reduce the amount of stress experienced as a result of time and workload pressures (Kyriacou, 2000).
- Using problem-solving techniques: Teachers need to analyze, understand, and deal with problem situations rather than avoiding them, blaming others, or feel helpless.

- Handling emotions: looking closely at how emotions such as frustration, anxiety, and fear contribute to ineffective coping strategies; and allowing respondents to reassess their feelings and “re-write” effective responses.
- Dealing with life changes: developing counselling skills among respondents in order to help colleagues deal with stressful events. This includes developing communication skills such as listening and empathy; actively listening as well as communicating ones’ thoughts effectively; and clarifying one’s personal feelings (Kyriacou, 2000).

The above strategies can be used to alleviate stressful experiences but stress cannot be eliminated completely from the teacher’s life. Without some stress we cannot function properly as individuals. Stress becomes a problem when teachers are unable to manage it. Thus teachers need to recognise situations in which they experience stress and to take steps to manage it. They need to be able to identify irrational beliefs and they must be able to discriminate between things that can and cannot be changed.

5.2 Limitations

One of the main limitations of the present study was that the sample was confined only to Indian teachers in the North Durban Region of Phoenix. The study was not conducted over a protracted period of time i.e. the survey was administered without considering the time lapse between a stressful event and the survey responses. It presumes that the level of stress experienced by teachers is relatively stable or fixed as opposed to being fluid. This study was conducted over a two week period. This is a relatively short period of time. A study conducted over a long time span would yield information about which period of the year teachers experience greater or less stress.

Teachers may experience high stress levels during a certain part of the year but very low levels of stress in another part of the year. Thus, the type of responses given by respondents to the questionnaire is dependent on the period of the year that respondents answer the questionnaires. The study should thus be conducted over a more protracted time span to yield information about the development and successive phases of the stress process.

Another factor is that the experience of stress differs from one person to the other and as a result one cannot generalise the findings to all teachers in primary schools.

5.3 Future directions for research

The findings of this study have highlighted the fact that teaching is by its nature a stressful occupation. Some of the obvious reasons cited to support this assertion are that teachers have a constant range of demands made upon them by learners, parents, and school administrators many of which are conflicting and almost impossible to meet.

In summary, the findings of this study point to scope of actions for future research on teacher stress. More emphasis should be on the following aspects.

- Similarities and differences between teacher and learner stress.
- Similarities and differences between primary school teachers and high school teachers experience of stress.
- Teacher stress and how it affects their family life.
- Comparison of stress experienced by teachers in township schools, ex Model C schools, private schools, special schools and farm schools.

Research in these aspects may shed more light on how stress affects teachers in the different contexts mentioned above.

5.4 Conclusion

The results from this research have shown that teaching is a demanding job and that teachers are experiencing a high level of stress in schools. The experience of stress amongst teachers not only affects teacher performance and the functioning of the school as an organisation, but also their physical and mental well being. Considering the original problem statement and on the basis of the literature review and empirical data, the following conclusions can be drawn. The effects of stress amongst teachers in primary schools in the North Durban Region of Phoenix are on a par with the effects of stress amongst teachers typically reported for western countries. The dominant sources of stress experienced by teachers in this study appear to be poor discipline among learners, heavy workload, administrative duties and learners with special needs. These sources of stress are also currently experienced by teachers in many western countries and it is interesting to see that these have also emerged here.

It has also become evident from this study that teachers have to perform a myriad number of roles in addition to carrying out their main task of teaching and learning in the classroom. They are expected to act as administrators, counsellors, attend to pastoral care for learners or manage extra-curricular activities. The education department will need to take drastic action to address these issues if teacher stress is to be reduced

The rules and boundaries of teaching are constantly changing. Teachers need to be more open to these changes, exploring them for their implications and creating a supportive climate. This can be illustrated in the following story:

A man had to drive through very dangerous roads made up of blind curves and difficult turns. As he approached a blind turn, another car suddenly came around the curve nearly out of control. The car came roaring toward him but swerved back onto its own side of the road at the last minute. As the two cars passed each other, a woman stuck her head out of the car window and yelled "Pig!" The man was incensed by this name calling since he felt it was her fault. "Sow!" he yelled after her. With that he drove around the bend straight into a pig.

He thought the woman was calling him a pig when in fact she was warning him. The man had paradigm paralysis. He thought that she had called him a pig and so he kept to the 'rules' (Gold & Roth, 1993).

The moral is that teachers may have come from around blind corners. They may shout, argue, instruct and treat colleagues badly. It may be that they have not had the time to stop and explain the situation. The solutions to alleviating stress in the workplace are to work out the best solution with colleagues given the set of rules in which they are currently working with.

Teachers, all with high expectations of achievement, feel dispirited and disillusioned. They are affected physically and emotionally, from a variety of stress-related problems. They appear to be worn down by the cumulative effects of dealing with situations they perceive to be beyond their control. Perhaps initially, the reward of feeling that they are doing something very worthwhile and important sustains a teacher. Ultimately, despite all their work and effort to do an outstanding job, without sufficient positive feedback from administrators, parents and learners, they sometimes feel let down and demoralized.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent

**University of KwaZulu-Natal
Edgewood Campus**

Private Bag X03
Ashwood
3605
27 November 2009

The Head: Department of Education and Culture
For attention: Mr. D.R.B Hlabisa
Private bag X54323
Durban
4000

Sir

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO DO RESEARCH

I wish to request you to grant me permission to conduct a survey amongst teachers in schools in Phoenix.

Currently I am a student at the UKZN in the Faculty of Education specializing in Education Management and Leadership. To fulfill the requirements for the master's degree, I am expected to conduct the research.

In analysing data, confidentiality and anonymity will be strictly observed and at no stage in my report that the names of schools and respondents will be declared.

The research findings will be forwarded to you for your records and comments if required.

I am looking forward to your favourable response.

Yours faithfully

John Arokium (Researcher)

Appendix B



PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL
ISIFUNDAZWE SAKWAZULU-NATALI
PROVINSIE KWAZULU-NATAL

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
UMNYANGO WEFUNDO
DEPARTEMENT VAN ONDERWYS

Tel: 033 341 8610
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Private Bag X9137
Pietermaritzburg
3200

228 Pietermaritz Street
Pietermaritzburg, 3201

INHLOKOHHOVISI

PIETERMARITZBURG

HEAD OFFICE

Enquiries:
Imibuzo: Sibusiso Alwar
Navrae:

Reference:
Inkomba: 0104/06
Verwysing:

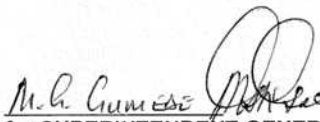
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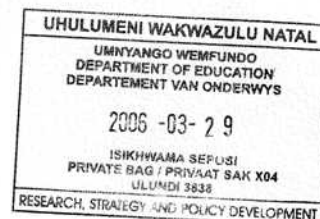
RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to serve as a notice that John Arokium has been granted permission to conduct research with the following terms and conditions:

- That as a researcher, he/she must present a copy of the written permission from the Department to the Head of the Institution concerned before any research may be undertaken at a departmental institution.
- John Arokium has been granted special permission to conduct his/her research during official contact times, as it is believed that their presence would not interrupt education programmes. Should education programmes be interrupted, he/she must, therefore, conduct his/her research during nonofficial contact times.
- No school is expected to participate in the research during the fourth school term, as this is the critical period for schools to focus on their exams.


for SUPERINTENDENT GENERAL
KwaZulu Natal Department of Education



Appendix C

25 Mesham Place
Clare Estate
Durban
4091

Date: 26 May 2006

The principal

Re: Participation in research study: The coping strategies teachers use in dealing with stress.

I am currently researching the above topic through the UKZN: Edgewood. I seek your permission in this regard to conduct research at your school. This entails administering questionnaires to teachers.

The teachers valued participation in this research study is completely voluntary and all information supplied will be treated as strictly confidential.

Thank you

Yours faithfully

John Arokium (Researcher)

University of KwaZulu-Natal-Edgewood Campus

Appendix D

Questionnaire

I am a student at UKZN reading for a master's degree. This questionnaire seeks information on how educators cope with stress in schools. Please note that all information will be confidential and no school or educator will be identified within the study. I appreciate your co-operation. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 084 9510 603 should you have any questions.

Section A: Respondent particulars

Please tick your responses as honestly and spontaneously as possible in the appropriate box.

1. I am a

1.1	Male	
1.2	Female	

2. I am

2.1	Under 30 years old	
2.2	30 – 35 years old	
2.3	36 – 40 years old	
2.4	41 – 45 years old	
2.5	46 – 50 years old	
2.6	Over 50 years old	

3. My teaching experience is

3.1	Under one year	
3.2	1- 5 years	
3.3	6 – 10 years	
3.4	11 – 15 years	
3.5	16 – 20 years	
3.6	over 20 years	

4. I am a/an

4.1	Educator	
4.2	HOD	
4.3	Deputy principal	
4.4	Principal	

5. The school has

5.1	Less than 20 classes	
5.2	21 – 40 classes	
5.3	41 – 60 classes	
5.4	over 60 classes	

6. The number of learners in my class is

6.1	Under 15	
6.2	15 – 30	
6.3	31 – 45	
6.4	46 – 60	
6.5	Above 60	

Section B: School issues

7. Disciplinary measures used by teachers.

For each of the following statements indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement by ticking the relevant block in the scale below.

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree
7.1	I often correct the learner's behaviour by applying detention.					
7.2	I discipline learners by shouting at them					
7.3	When learners misbehave I administer corporal punishment.					
7.4	I frequently give learners extra homework for misdemeanors.					
7.5	When learner's problems are serious I discuss it with the parent, HOD and principal.					
7.6	Educators in my school make learners squat to discipline them.					
7.7	I send unruly learners out of the classroom.					
7.8	I use corporal punishment on learners because parents give me permission.					
7.9	I use the merit/demerit system to correct learner's behaviour.					
7.10	I use corporal punishment since it is more effective than other methods.					
7.11	I make learners write lines as a disciplinary measure.					
7.12	I feel that corporal punishment should be re-introduced.					
7.13	My colleagues emphasise rewards rather than punishment of learners.					
7.14	I give sweets to learners who behave well.					
7.15	Educators in my school make learners stand on one leg if they misbehave.					
7.16	I give learners menial tasks (e.g. pick up litter) for minor misbehaviour.					

8. Sources of stress

For each of the following statements indicate the extent of your agreement or your disagreement by ticking the relevant block in the scale below.

		Strongly disagree	disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree
8.1	I do not mind if learners are absent.					
8.2	I feel stressed teaching learners with special needs(autism, attention deficit disorder) very stressful.					
8.3	Learners who lack motivation can be stressful to me.					
8.4	I do not mind if learners talk out of turn in class.					
8.5	Learners who back-chat pose a threat to my stress level.					
8.6	Large classes are not a source of stress since I can handle a large number of learners.					
8.7	I consider misbehaviour as part of learner growth.					
8.8	I welcome the change to Curriculum 2005 and RNCS and these have had little adverse effect on my stress level.					
8.9	I find that the poor management style by my principal contributes to stress.					
8.10	I find additional administrative work a cause of stress.					
8.11	A lack of social support from colleagues has no effect on my experience of stress.					
8.12	I find that a lack of teaching resources a cause of stress.					
8.13	I enjoy extra-curricular activities.					
8.14	The SGB and school staff enjoy a good working relationship					

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree
8.15	I feel that policies and circulars sent by the Department of Education add to the stress level experienced by educators					
8.16	I feel comfortable when I am being evaluated as part of IQMS					
8.17	Parents are co-operative and do not make excessive demands on educators					
8.18	I welcome parental inquiries about learner performance					

9. Coping strategies

To what extent do you use the following coping strategies? Tick the appropriate column.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree
9.1	I try to see the humorous aspect of a stressful situation in school.					
9.2	I learn to control my emotions in a stressful encounter at school.					
9.3	I do deep breathing when I find myself in a stressful situation in school.					
9.4	I do regular physical exercise to cope with stress in the classroom.					
9.5	I practice meditation so that I can deal with stressful situations.					
9.6	I relax after work so that I can cope with school stress the following day.					
9.7	I avoid confronting colleagues to prevent a stressful encounter.					
9.8	I continue to further my education to help me to gain a broader view of the school situation and thus cope better with stress.					
9.10	I plan ahead and prioritise so that I may prevent stressful situations.					

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree
9.11	I think about the coming vacation to reduce stress					
9.12	I practice religion to help me reduce my stress levels at school					
9.13	I share my failures with a trusted person to manage my stress at school					
9.14	I read about stress to help me cope with stressful situations at school					
9.15	I communicate with learners parents which help me to understand the situation and thus make it less stressful					
9.16	I take absence from school to handle school related stress					
9.17	I seek counselling to deal with stress at school					
9.18	I take alcohol or prescribed drugs to cope with stress at school					
9.19	I deal with stress by ignoring its existence					
9.20	If learners become too rowdy, I walk out of the classroom					
9.21	In general I find school life quite stressful					

Section C

Teachers' perception of stress in school.

10.1 How does stress affect you?

10.2 Is teaching more stressful now than when you first started? Explain.

10.3 Describe what you consider to be the most stressful situation in your school.

10.4 How do you think that this stressful situation could be alleviated or resolved?

10.5 Describe how you feel when you are stressed in school?

10.6 Has the implementation of OBE and the Revised National Curriculum statement been stressful to you? Explain.

10.7 Has the implementation of Integrated Quality Management System had any impact on your stress levels? Explain.

10.8 What are some of the positive aspects that you find as an educator in your school?

10.9 What motivates you to continue teaching?

End of questionnaire

P O Box 31892