LEARNING TO MANAGE WORKPLACE STRESS AS PRACTICED BY TEACHERS AT THREE UNDER-RESOURCED WESTERN CAPE HIGH SCHOOLS

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KEYWORDS

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WESTERN CAPE

ABSTRACT

Learning to manage workplace stress as practiced by teachers at three under-resourced Western Cape High Schools.

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The focus of the study is the teacher in the under-resourced schools in the townships of the Western Cape. The purpose is to discover how teachers learn to cope under adverse working conditions.

In a systematic way, we try to uncover what workplace stress is, how it is defined and manifests itself. It also deals with the specific reasons why teachers in South Africa, and especially in poorer schools on the Cape Flats, suffer such heavy stress.

A convenient way to examine issues of stress was to approach it from different angles or levels: the classroom level, the staff/relationship level, the organizational level and the Departmental (Governmental) level. At these levels the causes, manifestations and solutions to workplace stress were researched.

A qualitative study was done to ascertain first hand from the experiences of affected teachers themselves, how they learnt to cope, how this learning came about and what the specific methods or strategies are which they employ to deal effectively with stress.

The study concludes with a general summary of the most salient coping strategies that seem to work for most teachers. Recommendations to address stress at the four levels mentioned are finally made.

NOVEMBER 2008

DECLARATION

I declare that *Learning to manage workplace stress as practiced by teachers at three under-resourced Western Cape High Schools* is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Godfrey Charles Franklin John Ahrendse   November 2008

Signed: _____

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I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the following people:

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I hereby dedicate this effort to the thousands of brave souls in the classrooms of the Cape Flats who try to make a meaningful difference to the young minds and lives in their care.

CONTENTS

Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Rationale of the study

Situated south of the N2 highway along Modderdam Road and the Duinefontein Road, are the townships of Heideveld and Manenberg. It is here that this researcher has taught for almost nineteen years and where he has encountered intolerable levels of workplace stress first-hand. As a dedicated teacher, serious about improving the lives of underprivileged learners, one becomes critically aware of the various factors impacting on the performance of educators. How effective can teachers be in fulfilling their role of developing an educated youth if factors beyond their control make their task so immensely unpleasant? Are teachers still able to make a difference in the lives of those entrusted in their care? These are some of the soul-searching questions that initially gave rise to this study. A particular concern for this researcher is the high levels of stress among teachers in schools in the Western Cape.

Teachers have historically always formed the backbone of society by preparing the youth to assume their rightful place in society. With the new democracy in South Africa it should be no less true- in fact the role of the teacher is vital in the development of the nation.

However, it is common knowledge that many educators have left the teaching profession over the last few years. The main reason for this exodus is often acknowledged by colleagues as the high levels of stress that teachers have to endure,

although this is denied at Departmental level (Cape *Argus*, August 15, 2008). The remaining corpse of educators does not have it any easier: some of them cope admirably, but most educators seem not to be able to cope effectively with stress.

This inability to cope must have serious consequences. Firstly, the teacher's own well-being and health is affected: many suffer migraines, hypertension and a range of other illnesses. Secondly, stress impacts on the teacher's work performance: he/she cannot give his/her best and eventually the learner is adversely affected by obtaining poor academic results. Thirdly it impacts on colleagues who have to supervise the affected teachers' classes when they are absent due to stress-induced illnesses.

The Western Cape Education Department (WCED) vehemently denies that teachers are leaving the profession due to stress or stress-induced illnesses. This denial is however refuted by its own statistics. For example: In the 2005/06 financial year 1172 teachers left the profession. The WCED gave a breakdown of these figures. The reasons stated by employees for leaving were: Personal (204); Private (197); Health (28); Retirement due to ill-health (195) and Early retirements (70) (*WCED Media Release*, 20 June 2006).The percentage who left because of health (195 + 28) is 19%.Yet the Department insists that the annual rate of around 3, 3% for teachers leaving the profession "is comparable with other sectors" and "In general, we can be assured the attrition levels we experience are "normal" (comparatively speaking) and we have sufficient teachers to fill the vacancies that we have; our teacher corps is not too old and with our projected growth levels (learner

numbers, schools, etc) we should be comfortable for the foreseeable future" (Ron Swartz, Head of Education, *Cape Argus*, 15 August 2008).

In the 2006/07 financial year, 933 teachers (3, 3%) and the following year 595(3, 2%) left the profession. If this trend has to continue, schools within the Western Cape Province will not be so comfortable in the near future: with more experienced teachers opting to leave the profession, there is grave concern for the quality and outcomes of education.

1.2 Purpose of this study

This researcher assumes that teachers' stress is negatively impacting on the learning and teaching enterprise. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to explore and analyse the strategies used by teachers to cope or learn to manage stress. In particular, the study identifies the strategies/mechanisms that teachers employ to deal effectively with stress. But more importantly, the study focuses on how teachers learn these coping mechanisms/strategies.

1.3 The study site

This study was done at three under-resourced high schools in the disadvantaged township areas of Heideveld and Manenberg. High levels of unemployment and poverty are the two main social factors typifying Manenberg and Heideveld. According to *Statistics South Africa,* unemployment in Manenberg and Heideveld in 2001 stood at 34.28% and 25.81% respectively (*Statistics South Africa*, July 2003).

58.82% and 39.79% of households in Manenberg and Heideveld respectively, had an income of less than R1600.00 per month.

The level of formal qualifications attainment within these communities is also relatively low. A relatively high percentage of residents have not reached the high school level - 35% in Manenberg and 28% in Heideveld. (*Statistics South Africa*, July 2003)

Ted Leggett (2004) suggests that the lack of resources within poor communities, combined with "a pivotal issue (of) overcrowding", seems to be some of the fundamental causes of the social ills that typify these communities and lead to the high crime levels.
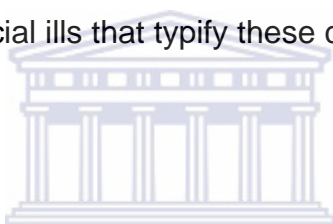
Manenberg is notoriously known as one of the most dangerous and violent communities to live in within the Western Cape. Police statistics confirm this perception: Murder, assault with the intent to inflict grievous bodily harm, common assault, common robbery, robbery with aggravating circumstances, malicious damage to property, burglary at residential premises, illegal possession of firearms and ammunition, theft and drug-related crime have all escalated over the ten year period from1993 to 2003. (Crime Information Analysis Centre, South African Police Services, 2004 Media Release). These are the typical crimes that residents have to endure in their community and which learners and educators are subjected to on a daily basis.

But inevitably the violence has spilled over into the schools as well. Newspaper headlines almost daily remind us of the harsh reality in which schools try to operate effectively: "Gangs groom pre-school kids for life of crime" (*Cape Argus*, January 20, 2008); "Schools are a gangster's paradise" (*Cape Times*, January 24, 2008).

The violence and gangsterism that have entered the school premises affects both the learner and teacher. Learners copy the behaviour of gangsters in their everyday relations with fellow learners and teachers and differences are often settled in a violent manner. Learners' lack of discipline, low self-esteem and a total lack of a learning culture make the job of the teacher even more difficult.

This violent psychosis is evident not only in the township areas, but in the broader society as well. The killing of a schoolboy , Cheslyn Jones, outside his Manenberg High School premises,(*Cape Times*, September 23, 2005), the sword-wielding 'ninja' learner running on a rampage killing at least one other boy, physical attacks on teachers in the classrooms: these stories South Africans have become accustomed to. In the foreword of the report by the South African Human Rights Commission, Jody Collapen states that:

> For a variety of reasons, violence has become normalized in South African society and the tendency to resolve things violently is also accentuated in poorer communities by numerous other causes of friction (SAHRC report: Violent Nature of crime in S.A. , page 12).

Under these conditions teachers experience an escalation in the levels of stress, which prevent teachers from doing their job and impacts negatively on the outcomes and efficiency of education at schools.

The other evils of widespread drug and alcohol abuse add to the despair. A common sight for teachers and learners nowadays, as experienced by the researcher himself, is the total ruins and wreckage left by intruders who burgle classrooms in search of valuable items like copper pipes and wires to sell to maintain their drug addictions.

Schools are not the safe havens it used to be. The Western Cape Education Department (WCED) has implemented the "Safe Schools Project" a few years ago to support affected "high risk schools". This support is in the form of financial assistance to the identified 109 schools as well as trauma counseling for both teachers and learners "to combat the root causes of crime and violence by developing schools into centres of excellence with strong community links in order to promote youth development" (WCED, Media Release, 22 May 2008).

Notwithstanding the support provided by the WCED, school teachers and principals are skeptical about the effectiveness of the interventions. The main concern expressed by many a teacher and principal at affected schools, is that perpetrators who burgle and molest learners at school are often known and pointed out to police. Yet they get away every time to continue with their activities. Principals and teachers feel despondent about this, having to report burglaries and

other crimes almost daily, suffering the loss and expenditure to replace stolen or damaged property.

The unsafe conditions in the area have led to the recent formation of the "Proudly Manenberg Campaign" in 2005. Spurred on by the death of the learner Cheslyn Jones outside the school premises, residents have joined with religious groups, schools and community organisations in the "Proudly Manenberg Campaign" to rid the town of the stigma it has earned as little more than a ghetto. Their focus is to positively re-brand Manenberg and the provincial government is putting money and people into the Campaign to uplift the crime and poverty-ridden neighbourhood through community initiatives. (*Cape Times* , September 23, 2005)

This is the reality these learners and their teachers are battling daily to eradicate. The learners cannot escape the conditions since they live in the area. Fortunately, most teachers, teaching in Manenberg and Heideveld, are able to escape this reality temporarily every afternoon and return to their middle-class homes many kilometers away. However, they have to return to conditions of despair on a daily basis.

But noble intentions and dedication do not keep them from suffering tremendous stress in their workplaces.

1.4 Factors leading to increased levels of teacher stress.

There is a variety of factors in the South African context that lead to increased levels of teacher stress: those that pertain to the education system per se, as well as other societal factors.

Systemic factors include: the Rationalization of teachers; increases in the learner: teacher ratios; the introduction of a new education system; and the overall decline in teacher numbers.

1.4.1 Systemic Factors

1.4.1.1 The Rationalization of teachers.

With the dawn of South African democracy in 1994 have come tremendous changes both in education policy and strategy. These policy changes were prompted primarily by the need to transform the South African society. As expected, these changes also affected teachers and the teaching profession significantly. One of the initial, but major changes that affected teachers was that of teachers' conditions of employment. The most important initiative that affected the teachers' employment was the "Rationalization Programme", whereby the number of teachers at most previously white and coloured schools were to be reduced.

Dr. Zola Skweyiya (1994), then Minister of Public Service and Administration explained the 'New vision and mission'of the public service as follows:

> Given the bloated, fragmented, and inequitable nature of the apartheid public
> service, it is not surprising that a broad consensus emerged in the post-1994

dispensation on the need for a much more efficient, effective and equitable use of resources, tied in particular to improving the quantity and quality of service provision and redressing the imbalances of the past. It was also encouraged by global trends towards rightsizing, privatisation and the achievement of greater competitiveness, quality, efficiency and cost-effectiveness in public service provision.

Consistent with this vision of transforming the schooling sector, the Western Cape Education Department declares that it has "embarked upon a concerted process of restructuring and rationalization of   the education sector with the objective of creating …., a unified and integrated service that is more representative and effective" (WCED, Circular 0051/1996)

With a silence on the ideological underpinnings of 'right sizing' the WCED justifies 'right sizing' as a strategy which first determine:

> … the optimal number of staff needed to render a service, and then, by means of specific programmes, implementing the measures required to bring the number of employees to the desired level in a manner which enhances the principle of equity. It is also seen as making the best use of personnel and material resources. (ibid: 1996).

The intention to create a representative and effective teaching service has to be complimented. However, what becomes problematic is linking this vision with the idea of 'right sizing', especially when 'right sizing' effectively implies reducing the

complement of teachers at schools. In this sense, 'right sizing' has very little to do with the transformation of society but is more consistent with the neo –liberal ideology which subscribes to the philosophy of a minimalist state. This view is shared by Nicholas Hildyard (1998) in his article "The myth of the Minimalist state: *Free market ambiguities".*

Supporters of the "free market" approach to economic and social policy have an ambiguous relationship with the "state". The package of economic reforms promoted in countries around the world, North and South, East and West, over the past two decades -- ranging from privatisation of state or public services and assets to deregulation of labour and environmental laws -- have been intended, in theory, to remove the state from having anything to do with the national economy -- or at least restricting it to a minimal role.

Yash Tandou (2002) in his article "The Keynesian state and its limits" agrees that

 the notion of the "minimalist" state became one of the major tenets of neo-liberalism only after the two major capitalist countries (USA and Great Britain) had already acquired a lead in certain strategic sectors of the economy through state or state-backed monopolies. The state's role was confined to creating the "enabling environment" for the private sector. The latter now became the principal engine of growth

A set of ideas - later to be known as the Washington Consensus - became the lightening rod for World Bank and IMF bureaucrats called upon to devise "structural adjustment programmes" for third world countries which sought their help to get out of structural or temporary balance of payments difficulties. They used the authority of their office and the power of their money to force on these countries a set of policies, summarised as consisting of primarily five indicators - inflation, money supply growth, interest rate, and budget and trade deficits. (2002)

Jamie Peck and Adam Tickell (date unknown) argue that the guiding principles of neo-liberalism , namely minimised state interference and cuts in social spending has taken the aggressive forms of state downsizing, austerity financing, and public-service "reform."

1.4.1.2 Increased learner: teacher ratios

Through a strategy of increasing the teacher-learner ratio and providing voluntary severance packages to educators who were "either fifty years old or had at least ten years of service with the Department" (ibid), the WCED effectively increased the number of learners per class. Increased learner numbers per class impacted the management and discipline in classes, whilst the schools' pool of experienced teachers was instantly diminished.

The result of this "Rationalization Programme" was a massive exodus of highly qualified and experienced teachers from the profession. According to a senior employee in the Personnel Department of the WCED, there are no official statistics on the number of teachers who opted for the Voluntary Severance Package (VSP). However, in the telephonic interview she stated that, unofficially, more than 5 400 teachers - all qualified and by prescription also experienced - in the Western Cape took the VSP offer. This amounted to roughly 11 educators per school who took the VSP.
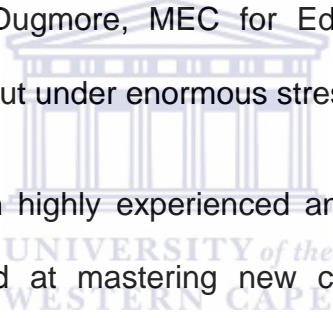
If an average school of 1000 learners had a staff complement of 45 teachers, they now had to contend with 34. Given the reality of the great divide between state schools and the better resourced schools known as 'former model C schools', one can see that, because of economic disparities, the latter schools will remain better equipped to deal with the new staff complement by appointing more teachers from their own coffers. The vast majority of other schools, like the township schools in

Manenberg and Heideveld, simply cannot afford to appoint any teacher using funds generated from within the community.

1.4.1.3 A New education system was introduced

In addition, the new education approach which subscribes to "Outcomes-based Education" (OBE) also resulted in loads of new teaching methodologies, strategies and administrative work which increases the levels of teacher stress (HSRC Media release: 16 November 2005).

In January 2006 Cameron Dugmore, MEC for Education in the Western Cape, recognized that teachers are put under enormous stress:

I freely admit this. Even highly experienced and competent teachers have had to work really hard at mastering new content to meet new policy requirements. The teacher faces questions daily about standards, prioritizing, pacing of teaching and shifting departmental prescripts.

Systems themselves are under stress. Testing and assessment have been problematic and will continue to raise questions until things have settled down. The predictability and stability that we were used to have gone. That's always hard to deal with.

For me the bottom line is that we have a new curriculum. It is currently being phased in to schools. The timelines are set; it is not going to "go away". We're now in the final phase. The curriculum is being bedded down. The NCS is in

Grades 8, 9, 10 and 11 so it's only the last hurdle of Grade 12 in 2008 that lies ahead. (WCED Media Release, 29 January, 2006)

1.4.1.4 Overall decline in teacher numbers

All the above factors: The Rationalization Programme, increased learner-teacher ratios plus the introduction of a new education system (OBE), led to a huge decline in the number of teachers employed at schools.

After the Rationalization programme ended, the workload for teachers increased dramatically. The Education Department was inundated with requests by teachers to be medically or otherwise boarded because of ill-health or stress-related illnesses. This was the perception that many a school principal had when interviewed on the topic.
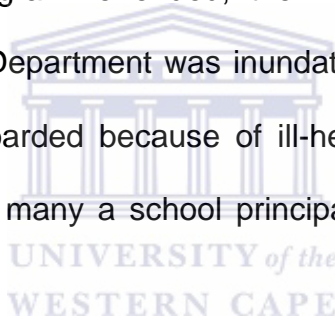
Although no official statistics on the number of educators who left the profession as a result of stress could be ascertained, it is interesting to note that the WCED, as early as 1996, expressed its concern on the matter. In Circular 0094/96: "Stress and Stress management in schools", the WCED states that it is:

aware that stress among teachers is a growing problem in our schools. Stress in the workplace may lead to illness, work-related problems, anxiety and depression. Factors such as rationalization and redeployment may contribute to stress levels.

It is then no surprise that a study commissioned by the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) into *Gross Attrition Rates and Trends in the Public Schools System in South Africa 1997/8 – 2003/4* had, inter alia, found that:

> The average number of educators in the system has declined over the period 1997/8 – 2003/4. This is due to a reduction in the number of temporary educators over time, and extensive rationalization through voluntary severance packages in the provincial education departments with the amalgamation and formulation of new education departments, in the mid- to late- nineties.

The most significant and consistent provincial decline in educator numbers was in the Western Cape where the average number decreased by 13% in this period (compared to a national decline of 4.7%). The proportion of gross attrition due to mortality increased from 7.0% in 1997/8 to 17.7% in 2003/4. Similarly, the proportion of terminations due to medical reasons has grown from 4.6% to 8.7% over the same period while the number of severance packages and transfers declined considerably.

By 2002/3, around 21000 educators were leaving the system annually, although up to a third of these re-entered the system after six months or more. The most frequently reported diagnosis in the last five years before the study was stress-related illnesses such as high blood pressure (15.6%), stomach ulcers (9.1%) and diabetes (4.5%). (Media statement: HSRC, 31 March 2005).

For me the bottom line is that we have a new curriculum. It is currently being phased in to schools. The timelines are set; it is not going to "go away". We're now in the final phase. The curriculum is being bedded down. The NCS is in Grades 8, 9, 10 and 11 so it's only the last hurdle of Grade 12 in 2008 that lies ahead. (WCED Media Release, 29 January, 2006)

These are the broader systemic reasons that led to the higher stress levels at schools generally. What follows is a brief description of the other societal factors on the stress levels of teachers.

1.4.2 Societal factors that increases teacher stress

Township schools are affected by much more than causes that is endemic to the education system. These social factors include: violence, crime, and substance abuse. The problem is often exacerbated by school management teams that are ill- quipped to deal effectively and creatively with their challenges.

The teachers are caught up in the middle of all this: trying to do their job, but constantly having to deal with problems that prevent them from giving their best. There is a mismatch between the teacher's expectation and his reality: this is stress. It is often manifested in the high absentee rate amongst teachers, which is not only a concern for the colleagues, principals and learners, but also the Department. In a recent newspaper article "Stressed teachers fear hostile classrooms" the WCED

reported that for the first two months of the 2007 school year, a total of more than a 1000 teachers had been on sick leave. (*Cape Argus*, March 22, 2007).

Viewed against this background, the purpose of this investigation into the phenomenon of teacher stress seems both logical and necessary. It is to research not only the causes of educator stress, but also the ways in which educators have adapted to changes in their teaching environments. Essentially, thus, this project aims to study the ways in which educators learn how to cope or manage the stress they experience as a result of all the changes that impact on the teaching environment.

1.5 Coping with stress

Coping with stress is thus an important factor in the everyday lives of teachers, especially those teaching at under-resourced schools in poverty-stricken areas where lack of discipline and a culture of learning, gangsterism, drug and alcohol abuse and violence are the order of the day.

Given the reality that teachers face at such affected schools every day, it is easy to see the manifestations of stress: late-coming, low morale, increased conflict situations and burnout. These are clear signs that indicate that some teachers do not cope well with stress. Yet others seem to cope admirably despite the negative surroundings. How teachers cope, and specifically the latter group, under such trying circumstances, is the motivation for and focus of this research project.

In circular 0094/96, the WCED states that teachers "who suspect that they might be suffering from stress" should be referred to school clinics closest to them. "These clinics have at their disposal multi-disciplinary teams of school psychologists, social workers and school doctors". However, it is a commonly held view amongst teachers that the personnel at these 'school clinics', that serve more than 400 schools and thousands of learners, were stretched to the limit already, and were unable to deal with stressed teachers as well. So what other options are available to teachers?

In 2005 the WCED introduced a new Employee Wellness Programme (EWP) to assist teachers with their problems and to provide "its valued employees with the necessary support and guidance in dealing with life's challenges and opportunities" (Minute no: HRD/ 0051/2004). The media release of the EWP dated 12 October 2004 stated:
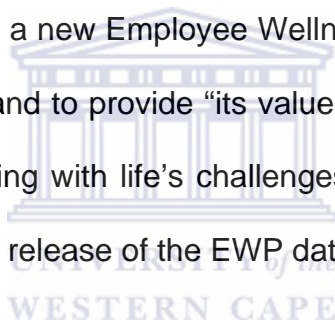
The EWP aims to promote the health and well-being of all WCED employees. This includes their physical and mental health, a healthy lifestyle, wellness and their quality of life.

According to their official website, the EWP is a

Service that provides its employees with support and guidance when they have to deal with life's challenges and opportunities.

The EWP is available to assist you in achieving and maintaining your highest level of job performance and provide you with the opportunity to solve a wide range of personal and job-related problems**.**

This is done through a 24 hours, toll-free telephone line for personal support and information, access to life management through telephone counseling provided by qualified, experienced counselors, psychologists and social workers**.**

But do teachers make use of this facility? Or how effective or successful is this service? These are the questions we hope to find answers to in this study.

This study assumes at this stage of the investigation that teachers are left on their own to devise and learn, either as individuals or as a staff, how to manage workplace stress.

In the absence of any well-known, effective support programme for stressed teachers by the Western Cape Education Department, this research project is significant in that it will hopefully not only highlight the issue of stress management, but also provide a range of stress management options for teachers under the fold of the Area Managers to whom the findings of this study will be disseminated.

1.6 Conclusion

Section one of this study provided the reason or rationale why this study was undertaken. It is a personal issue, for the researcher, which affects not only the individual, but also his colleagues and learners' performance. This section examined the general reasons why stress levels are so dangerously high and discovered systemic factors such as: the Rationalization of teachers, increases in the learner-teacher ratios, the introduction to a new education system and the overall decline of teacher numbers.

General societal factors like poverty and unemployment, as well as specific factors like gangsterism, drug abuse and violence are the other contributing agents for increased teacher stress. Furthermore, the section have defined stress as an unpleasant emotional state and briefly discussed why it is important for teachers to be able to learn coping mechanisms.
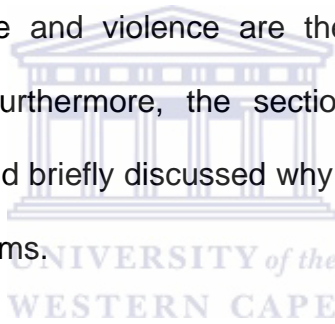
The next section reviews the literature which the researcher found relevant to the study. It starts with an examination and discussion about what exactly workplace learning entails. This is done to understand how and why teachers learn to cope with stress. It then delves into the literature to define workplace stress and the ways in which educators learn to cope with stress.

SECTION 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This section reviews the literature relevant to this study. It starts with the concept workplace learning since the school is viewed as a workplace site of teachers. Accordingly, the review starts with an examination of the concept of workplace learning to locate the problem of teacher stress in its real context. It then investigates the topic of stress in depth: how it is defined, how it manifests itself, its causes and possible solutions or strategies to manage stress.
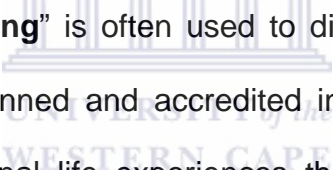
2.2 Workplace Learning

Workplace learning is generally understood to mean "learning-on-the-job*",* or "learning-in-the-job situation*"* or "learning for the workplace*".* For some authors like Rowden and Conine (2005) more learning occurs in the workplace than what happens in formal training sessions or classrooms. Most researchers follow the distinction made by Watkins and Marsick (1992) on the different forms of workplace learning. They identified three forms of workplace learning: formal, informal and incidental learning.

Formal learning or training is discrete planned events (experiences) used to instruct people how to perform specified jobs. Typically it is institutionally sponsored and highly structured. It includes both an expressed organization goal and a defined process, as is evident in places of learning, like colleges, universities, etc.

Informal learning may occur in institutions, but is not typically classroom-based or highly structured, and control of learning is in the hands of the learner, not determined by the organization. Informal learning can occur whether or not there is an expressed goal, and can serve individual as well as corporate objectives.

Incidental learning occurs as an unintended by-product of some other activity, such as trial-and-error experimentation or interpersonal interaction. The intention of the activity is task accomplishment, but unintentionally increases particular knowledge, skills or understanding.

The term "**experiential learning**" is often used to distinguish between orthodox, traditional learning that is planned and accredited in schools and institutions of learning- and informal, personal life experiences that lead the learner towards empowerment and personal emancipation. (Fenwick, 2001:4) But not all experiences are learning experiences. Most writers agree that learning from an experience is:

- an intentional, conscious act;

- a continuous process of actively pursuing new knowledge;

- a process of making meaning;

- to find coherence in the experiences and celebrating their meaning.(ibid, p.4)

In short: to learn through experience is to make sense of a new situation (or experience) and thereby connecting it to the learner's "store room" of sensible knowledge, facts and previous experiences.

Stephen Billet (2001: 62) contests the notions of formal and informal workplace learning. He argues that these terms "suggest a situational determinism that de-emphasises the role of human agency in the constructive processes of thinking-acting-learning". He favours the idea that adult learning as a social practices like schools occurs mainly through participation. The structuring of learning experiences in workplaces is directed towards sustaining practice. Teachers are thus not mere recipients of directed learning, but active participants in the learning process.

The key goal of workplace pedagogy, according to Billett (2001: 63) is to "help develop robust vocational knowledge … that offers the prospect of transfer across situations and circumstances in which the vocation is practiced". Billett maintains that workplace learning occurs through participation in goal directed work tasks and wherein co-workers play a significant part in assisting one another in their learning. In fact he argues that learning occurs through the "indirect guidance provided by the workplace itself and others in the workplace "(ibid: 64). Workplaces provide numerous learning opportunities which Billet calls learning "affordances". However, learners may not use these affordances equally since affordance for learning, according to Billet, is frequently constraint by "inequitable distribution of opportunities to engage in novel work activities";

and by the unwillingness of "experienced workers" to provide guidance and support (ibid).

Hager, based on his research, is assured that learning at work is "sufficiently rich to pass as lifelong learning at work" (2004: 23). Drawing on this insight, the researcher concludes that it is through workplace learning that teachers become efficient in their job and develop the necessary professional skills to effect favourable outcomes in their classrooms.

This study draws on the concepts associated with workplace learning as a lens to make sense of the learning that do take place as teachers try to learn how to cope with stress in their places of work.
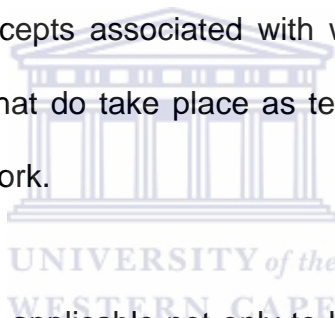
But another theory of learning applicable not only to learners, but teachers alike, also sheds light on the ways in which teachers learn in their workplace.

2.3 **The community of practice**

According to Etienne Wenger (2007) "Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly."

By this definition, teachers clearly constitute a "Community of Practice" (COP): They are active at school in one or more learning area or organizational project, or they

regularly communicate informally in the staffrooms during lunch-breaks. More generally they are part of the larger teacher fraternity where they engage and learn from colleagues from other schools about specific areas of common concern.

Wenger identifies three crucial characteristics of a COP which can easily be applied to teachers' learning practice in their workplace.

First: *The domain.* The COP has an identity defined by a shared domain/ body of interests. Membership of the COP implies a commitment to the domain, and members have a shared competence that distinguishes them from other people.

Second: *The community*. In pursuing their interest in their domain, members engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other, and share information. They build relationships that enable them to learn from each other.

Third: *The practice.* Members of any COP are practitioners: they develop a shared repertoire of resources (experiences, stories, tools, and ways of addressing recurring problems) with sustained interaction over time. (Wenger: circa 2007).

An individual's learning involves *participation* in a community of practice. And that participation 'refers not just to local events of engagement in certain activities with certain people, but to a more encompassing process of being active participants in the *practices* of social communities and constructing *identities* in relation to these communities' (Wenger 1999: 4). We are, therefore, active in more than one community of practice at any stage of our lives. Our learning through these COP's contribute to our thinking about ourselves, that is, our identity.

Initially people have to join communities and learn at the periphery. The things they are involved in are tasks of lesser importance to the other in the community. As they become more competent they become more involved in the main processes of the particular community. They move from **legitimate peripheral participation** to into **'full participation** (Lave and Wenger 1991: 37). Learning is, thus, not seen as the acquisition of knowledge by individuals so much as a process of *social* participation. Eventually learners become, through sustained and more active participation, active as participants in *communities of practitioners.* The mastery of knowledge and skill requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the socio-cultural practices of a community

A COP develops their practice through a variety of activities, such as problem solving, requests for information, re-using assets, discussing developments, documenting projects, mapping knowledge and identifying gaps in their learning processes.

Lesser and Storck (2001) argues that recognition and support of communities of practice can improve organizational performance, and organizational value. This seems to be in contrast with Billet's view that structured adult learning in the workplace is directed only to sustain practice. However it can also be construed that by sustaining good, solid practices, teachers are in fact adding value to the practice and the institution as a whole. This seems to be the case, since a "growing number of people and organizations in various sectors are now focusing on communities of practice as a key to improving their performance" (Wenger: circa 2007).

I will draw on this model of learning- which correlates with the later discussion of *Organizational Learning*- in the analysis and findings of the research.

2.4   The problem of stress: its effects at schools

There is widespread evidence that teacher stress is escalating at an alarming rate, not only in South Africa, but worldwide. Denis Lawrence (1999) in his book *Teaching with confidence* says: "Teachers today are more at risk of developing stress symptoms than at any other time in the history of the profession". Travers and Cooper, agree not only that "the incidence of stress among teachers has received a considerable amount of attention", but that "teaching has recently become characterized as being among the league of traditionally viewed high-stress occupations" (1996: 4).

2.4.1 Definitions of Stress

Stress has taken on many different meanings, which are sometimes contradictory, and confusing (Travers and Cooper, 1996). Gold and Roth agree that stress is not only discussed frequently but also experienced by many people. But the definition of stress has been elusive. They argue that stress means different things to different people, "largely because it is experienced in various ways" by people (Gold and Roth, 1993:14). Hans Selye, defines stress as "the non-specific response of the body to any demand made upon it" (as quoted in Gold and Roth, 1993:17). He coined the two phrases:

Eustress- "which is an event that is experienced as pleasant", and

Distress- "which is an unpleasant experience"

Selye maintains that stress which finds its origins in successful activities bring about a feeling of contentment and youthful vigour. He even called stress "the spice of life". For instance, the teacher should encounter challenges to motivate him, such as putting effort into the preparation of lessons. Success, love and achievement are examples of pleasant (or "good") stress. Limited anxiety is nature's method to prepare a human being for achievement. Too little stress may even lead to underachievement. Therefore stress may lead to unparalleled motivation.

However, stress may also cause unprecedented damage. The latter is caused by distress ("bad" stress). Too much stress is dangerous and debilitating and may impact negatively on one's wellbeing (Van der Linde, 2000: 376-377).

For the purpose of this study, stress would mean Distress, which is an unpleasant experience for the sufferer.
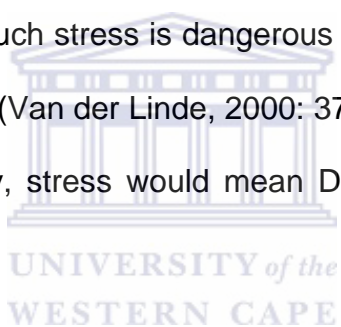
2.4.2 Manifestations of Stress

With these definitions in mind it is easy to see the variety of effects that stress has on teachers. Jack Dunham, in his book *Stress in Teaching*, identified four main types of stress reactions to pressure, i.e. how stressed teachers react to the demands that they face daily:

Behavioural- which includes inappropriate responses to learners, short-temperedness, delayed actions, heavy smoking and drinking;

Emotional reactions- ranging from over-sensitivity to criticism, feelings of insecurity and inadequacy, lack of confidence, frustration, anger, irritability and apathy;

Mental reactions- bad judgments made, poor lesson planning, loss of concentration, forgetfulness, and mental blocks; and

Physical reactions- becoming 'uptight', exhaustion, tiredness, headaches, sleeplessness (Dunham, 1992: 92).

Other indicators of workplace stress are low morale amongst the staff, teacher apathy, regular absenteeism and eventual burnout.

2.4.3 Why is teacher stress a problem?

The major concern with teacher stress in schools is that a prolonged experience of stress can lead to mental and physical ill-health (Kyriacou, 1989: 29). The other concern is that teacher stress has a profound effect on teachers' job performance. This can include teacher absences, a lowered level of job satisfaction and commitment and even an impaired quality of classroom teaching.

In the light of the South African government's policies and strategies to transform society, it seems ironic that its own policies have the effect of defeating their purpose. The very people that should be instrumental in bringing about a new society are being driven to exhaustion/ extinction.

2.4.4 Relationship between pressures, work performance and stress reactions.

One theory which explains the relationship between the demands of teachers' work situation, their stress reactions and work performance is that of Hebb (1972). This theory is commonly referred to and adapted by many researchers.

Dunham explains it as such:

…work with few demands results in poor performance of tasks. Increasing

demands are perceived as stimulating and energizing, but if they are beyond the

person's coping abilities they lead to high levels of anxiety, poor concentration

and reduced effectiveness in one's work. Continued demands, without an

increase in coping resources, may lead to fatigue, exhaustion and burnout.

(1972: 95)

This relationship is expressed in the table below, taken from Dunham (1972: 95).

Illustration 1

Most effective
performance

Early warning signs:
anxiety, over-reacting,
agitation, frustration,
irritability

Pressures
seen as a
challenge

Poor concentration.
Diffculty in making
decisions

Increasing
motivation

Fatigue

Poor
performance

Psychosomatic
symptoms

Exhaustion;
Burnout

DEMANDS

inadequate pressure   increasing pressure   excessive pressure

PRESSURE/DEMANDS

(Reproduced from Dunham, 1972:95)

Thus far we have come to know the general effects that stress has on the teacher. It can only be surmised that, given the harsh realities of under-resourced, violence and crime- ridden schools of townships in the Western Cape, that the effects will be compounded manifold. If schools are to reach their goal in transforming other people's lives, then surely urgent attention should be given to reduce the stress levels at our schools.

The evidence from the literature clearly suggests a correlation between the demands made on teachers and their work performance (HSRC: Educator Workload Report, 2005; Educator school survey, 2005). It is this researcher's serious concern that the academic future of our learners are in jeopardy and headed for the gutters if stress levels of the teachers are allowed to remain at the perceived alarming levels. The school as a learning organization clearly cannot fulfill its duties if it fails to utilize the full potential of both the learners and the teachers who, by the nature of their job, are also learners of their trade or profession.

2.5   What are the causes of teacher stress and burnout?

Researchers differ in the way they classify the causative factors of stress and burnout. José Esteve distinguishes between "primary factors" which have a direct effect on the teacher in the classroom, and "secondary factors" which are environmental and affect the situation in which the teaching takes place (in Cole and Walker, 1987: 7). Gold and Roth (1993) distinguish between "professional stressors", i.e. disruptive students, excessive paperwork, curriculum issues, workload, etc. and "personal stressors" –

referring to issues concerning health, relationships, financial, recreational and living conditions.

In this study the researcher focuses on a simpler, more comprehensive distinction of the underlying causes of teacher stress in schools. These are governmental/departmental policies; the schools organizational structure, and classroom causes.

2.5.1 Governmental/ Departmental policies as cause of stress

To understand the phenomenon of workplace stress one has to locate it in the bigger picture of world affairs in general, and specifically within the current political context in South Africa.
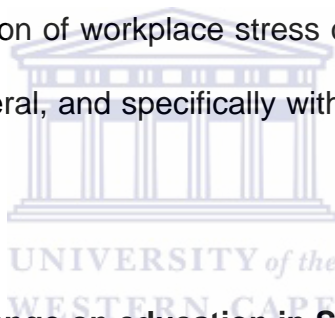
(a). The effects of global change on education in South Africa.

The literature has shown that workplace stress is a global phenomenon and that it has taken on serious proportions affecting teachers' health and well-being, especially over the last two decades. It stands to reason then, that there are common stressors that affect educators globally, and stressors that are specific to the local South African teacher.

The Neo- liberal demands for "structural adjustment programmes' include: the removal of restrictions on foreign investment and trade; the promotion of exports; privatization of public enterprises; reduction in government spending; removal of price controls; the imposition of wage restraints; currency devaluation and adopting democratic reform"

(Youngman, 2000: 9). There exists in today's world still the big divide between poor and rich countries. The poorer nations are all hoping to develop their countries to lessen the burden of unemployment, hunger, disease and illiteracy.

Thus: if the poorer countries of the South wanted some of the financial aid desperately needed to develop their country and eradicate poverty, they had to concede to the imposition of these structural adjustment programmes prescribed by the richer countries of the North.

South Africa was one of the poor countries in line for aid, and with the miracle of democracy being born without full-scale civil war; she became an instant hit with the North. The Neo-liberal organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) came to the rescue for the new South Africa. But the apparently innocent relationship between donor and beneficiary became clear when certain development policies subscribed to earlier by the new regime were changed. Zelda Groener (2001) investigated the relationship between foreign aid and development in countries of the South, including South Africa. Her research shows that, prior to South Africa's engagement with the IMF and World Bank, the government's development policies were geared for real social transformation. This was evident in the Policy on Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) of 1994 and the Green Paper Skills Development Strategy for South Africa of 1997. According to Groener:

Both policies were framed in the context of the government's development policies, the White Paper on Reconstruction and Development, and the macro-economic strategy GEAR (Growth, Employment and Redistribution), published in 1994 and 1996 respectively. …During the period between 1994 and 1997, international organizations were actively engaged in South Africa and there is evidence that the World Bank, for example, had influenced the government's development policies (Groener, 2001: 8).

Her findings

… confirm that the political and economic development agendas…. of international organizations have permeated the political and economic agendas of the South African government's development policies… [thereby]… promoting both social transformation and neo-liberalism" (Groener, 2001: 8).

This intervention into the socio-economic agenda of the South African government had to have an effect on the education policies. According to researchers like Dave Hill (2003) neo-liberalism has a plan and agenda for education. The ethos, language and style of the old Public Services: namely public service and duty, has been replaced by the introduction of a new management style, namely New Public Managerialism.

Within universities and vocational further education the language of education has been very widely replaced by the language of the market, where lecturers 'deliver the product', 'operationalize delivery' and 'facilitate clients' learning'….Where students have become 'customers' selecting 'modules' on a pick 'n mix basis, where 'skill development' at universities has surged in importance to the derogation of the development of critical thought.

The first aim that Business has for schooling is to ensure that schooling and education engage in ideological and economical production. (Hill, 2003).

It seems then that one common cause of workplace stress for teachers is the global impact of the plans and agendas of neo-liberalism policies.
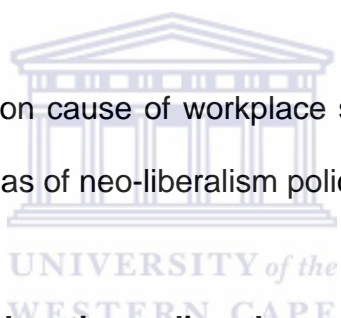
(b) The effects of National Education policy changes in South Africa

After having taken cognizance of the influence and effect of neo-liberalism on a global level, one would expect to find evidence of this effect on the local South African education system. A comprehensive survey conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council on the impact of new policies on educator workload, provided evidence that teacher workload has grown, and that it is due to:

Actual class size; New roles and expectations of teachers; Distribution of subject (learning areas) per teacher; More of the same work; More complex work; Changes in curriculum, marking and assessment; Changes in administrative demands; A more diverse student population inside classrooms.

(Media Release: 16 November 2005)

According to this report by the HSRC, most educators felt that their workload had drastically increased with the new policy of Outcomes Based Education (OBE). A very important finding was that teachers spend more time on planning and preparation (42.5%), assessment and evaluation(36.1%) and much less time on teaching (33.9%) than they previously did (ibid: Table 62).

At a World Aids Day ceremony, Cameron Dugmore, Provincial Minister for Education, admitted in his speech:

> More than ever before our educators are burning out with stress - as an added consequence of increased demands for psycho-social or pastoral support. This, quite apart from any of the other demands of a struggling system. (WCED Media Release, December 1, 2005)

This state of affairs clearly has far-reaching implications for education. Firstly, it causes an increase in teacher stress. Secondly: less time spent teaching raises questions of the quality of the educational outcomes of learners. Thirdly it impacts on the efficiency of teachers and lastly questions the efficacy of new policies.

2.5.2 The school as cause of stress

There are basically two ways in which the school as an institution can be viewed as being a causal factor in teacher stress and burnout: Failing in its role as a learning organization, and the negative physical reality or milieu in which teachers are

supposed to do their job. In this section the school's role as a learning organization is looked into.

The school as a learning organization

In adult learning theories a distinction is often made between "*organizational learning*" which deals with the question of "How does an organization learn?", and the *"learning organization*" which is concerned with the question of "How should an organization learn?"(Petra C. de Weerd-nederhof et al, 2002). For the purpose of this study we will bypass the intricacies of these differing concepts. However, we will combine them to investigate adult learning processes in an organization such as the school.

It is generally understood that the school is a site for adult learning for the teachers. It is there that they really learn their trade/profession. As a "community of practice" the educators at any given school learn how their institution is being run; who yields the power in their department, what to expect from certain teachers, what their expected responsibilities are, what the management style of the principal is, what the policies on discipline, absenteeism etc. is. He/she learns how other teachers cope with stress. The educator learns how to relate to colleagues and also what the limits or boundaries of his/her professional behaviour should be in order to be well adjusted as a teacher. This learning happens daily in every school.

Huber's (1991) model which connects information acquisition and memory is one of the most cited in the literature. His model includes four processes integrally linked to **organizational learning**:
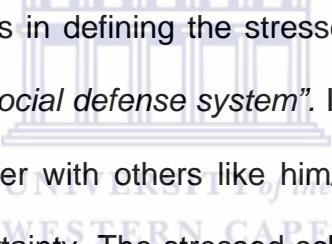
-   Information *acquisition* is the process by which knowledge is obtained;

- Information *distribution* is the process whereby information from different sources is shared and thereby leads to new information or understanding

- Information *interpretation* is the process by which distributed information is given one or more commonly understood meanings; and

- *Organizational memory* is the means by which knowledge is stored for future use. (Petra C. de Weerd- Nederhof et al, 2002: 322).

But this is not what occurs at many a school. If one or more of these processes does not occur as it should, organizational learning- and therefore the individual teacher's learning- is in jeopardy. Many researchers (Gold and Roth, 1993; Claxton, 1989; Dunham, 1992) claim that teachers will often be working for change in an ethos that does not support them in their intention: there is no support from senior teachers, no future vision of where the school is heading and a general sense of apathy prevails. Claxton defines this as the "Stressed Institution":

The **stressed institution** is characterised by a breakdown of *community* and an increase of *disunity.* The staff begins to break up into factions whose identity relies on espousing a simplistic point of view and/or a disparagement of other subgroups. Some of these cliques, or some individuals, begin to adopt a stance of non-participation. From their position of resignation and paranoia it makes sense to opt out of involvement in the formal decision-making processes of the school, and to sit silently in staff-meetings looking ironic or bored……Having opted out, such groups then feel able to *disown decisions* and, in the privacy of their own interactions, to ignore or

subvert them……Like cancer cells in a body, such teachers are 'in' the school but not 'of' it…They become involved in *micropolitics*: Though they may have resigned from direct promotion of their own interest and causes, they may continue their campaigns through the informal media of humour, rumour and gossip. Opposition is no longer confronted at the level of issues, but now becomes a matter of *personalities*…No collective vision exists to inform these discussions, so that the organization of the school develops in a piecemeal fashion, constantly being patched up or modified in a variety of ways which do not cohere, and do not amount to development in a consistent direction.

Claxton follows Isobel Menzies in defining the stressed institution as a characteristic feature of what is called "*the social defense system".* It is an orientation mechanism of the individual to group together with others like him/her to avoid the experience of anxiety, doubt, guilt and uncertainty. The stressed school is thus a manifestation of a *group of stressed individuals* who avoid situations, events, tasks and relationships that cause anxiety or stress (Claxton and Guy, 1989; pp. 132-134).
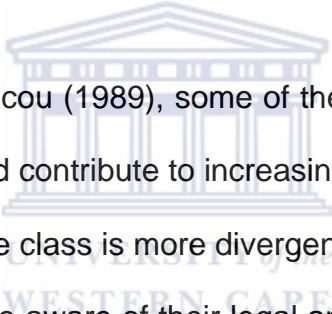
2.5.3 The classroom as a cause of stress

It is clear by comparison that South Africa's changes in education policy and strategy are following the global trend. Implementation problems, with which we are now struggling, have been experienced by other countries of the North, especially the United Kingdom. The problems affecting the teacher in the class are similar .José

Esteve and Chris Kyriacou's (1989) research on the topic is illuminating and very apt and can be applied to the South African context as well.

The evolution of the social framework brought about by globalization has meant a change in the essence of scholastic institutions. Previously we had a basically elite education system based on means and competition. With the dawn of democracy we have mass education-referring to legislation that all children should have a basic education. This has brought about changes in the role of the teacher and the attitude of the learner.

According to Esteve and Kyriacou (1989), some of the problems which teachers have to confront on a daily basis and contribute to increasing stress are the following:

- The composition of the class is more divergent: multicultural and multilingual.

- Learners have become aware of their legal and political rights, but forget their accompanying responsibilities: verbal and mental abuse is common among learners.

- Discipline is deteriorating by the day: Because of the socio-economic realities, there is a breakdown of the family structure. Single-parent families, dysfunctional families and poverty impact on the primary discipline a child has to learn. The teacher now becomes the only disciplinarian in the child's life.

- Excessive paperwork and workload are trademarks of the new assessment criteria.

- Unmotivated, apathetic learners that lack a culture of learning

In the South African context we can add the following stressful causes, as evidenced by the findings of both surveys undertaken by the HSRC in 2005:

- Academically teachers have to contend with "inclusive education" which means that in a single class there is a range of intellectual potential-from the very weak to the very bright learner. Special schools that previously catered for the intellectually impaired child (or special needs child) are all but closed down. The untrained educator now has to "teach" these learners as well. Differentiation to cater for the fast learner becomes extremely difficult.
- The system of OBE underscores the importance of memorization. Learners have no memory of previous work. Which make the idea of 'building blocks' farcical.
- Learners are becoming academically weaker by the day. The poor diagnostic test scores in Mathematics and Literacy for all grades three and six learners are public knowledge. But the government expects excellent pass rates each year. (HSRC: 1997/8)
- Physical working conditions are bad: from broken windows and doors, bad lighting to disruptive learners.
- Resources are poor: from learners without pens and books to no computers, overhead projectors, no labs or technology rooms or musical instruments and no playground facilities or school halls.
- Increase in violence in school is headlined almost daily in newspapers.
- Excessive paperwork and workload are trademarks of the new assessment criteria.

- Overcrowded classrooms: Most schools were built so that each class can accommodate about 30 learners comfortably. At most of the under resourced schools teachers face up to fifty learners in a class, which cause, amongst others, problems of discipline, ventilation and disease.

The above factors clearly are stressful. And if teachers do not have the necessary skills, know-how or coping mechanisms to deal effectively with these problems, increased stress levels and eventual burnout seems inevitable.

2.6   How to deal with workplace stress?

The literature reveals a wide array of strategies on how to deal with occupational or workplace stress. These range from controlling stress, alleviating stress, managing stress and preventing stress. Most researchers agree that the potential stressors should be identified in the workplace. Programmes can be developed and evaluated to address these concerns, both by giving employees broader coping skills but also by attempting to eliminate unnecessary sources of pressure in the workplace. De Frank and Ivancevich (1998) argue that these approaches can be helpful in dealing with existing stress, but that "prevention of work stress is almost always cheaper than its cure".

Nagel and Brown (2003) argue that the first way teachers can manage their stress is to **acknowledge** what exacerbates their stress levels. In their three-step strategy (The ABC of managing stress),

A is for *Acknowledgement;* B is for "*Behaviour modification*" strategies including meditation, adopting time-management strategies, creative problem-solving and cognitive restructuring (replacing your immediate response thoughts with 'good' thoughts); C is for *Communication-* whether verbal or non-verbal, applying the "I" statement and learning to say no to demands made on your already heavy time schedule.(Brown, 2003, p. 259).

Most other researchers prefer a multi-dimensional approach to stress management. Travers and Cooper's preventative intervention strategies include:

a **focus on the individual** (with relaxation techniques, cognitive coping strategies, meditation, exercise, time management, etc.);

a focus **on individual/organizational interface** (including relationships at work, person-environment fit, role issues, participation and autonomy);

and focus **on the organization** (including organizational structure, selection and placement, training, job rotation, etc.) (Travers and Cooper, 1996: 158).

Jack Dunham's approach to teachers' coping resources includes the personal, interpersonal, organizational and community resources (1992: 107-114).

Gold and Roth propagates a holistic approach in what they term the "Professional Health Solution", which has as its purpose:

> to focus on underlying problems and needs, and go beyond stress management. It does deal with immediate stress issues in order to provide some temporary relief, but this is not the main focus. It is comprehensive and

provides skills to survive immediate situations as well as to grow over the long term and develop total professional health. It enables teachers to enjoy teaching again and provides them a means of gaining self-control. It helps them to monitor their lives and provides guidance for healthier personal and professional lives (1993: 51).

The current research has attempted to gain an insight into the strategies that teachers themselves use to learn or adopt in order to cope better or manage their stress.

Following this investigation, the researcher proposes a few stress management strategies that can be implemented at the three levels suggested earlier: the Governmental/ Departmental or Systemic level; the School/Organisation/institutional level and the classroom/personal level.
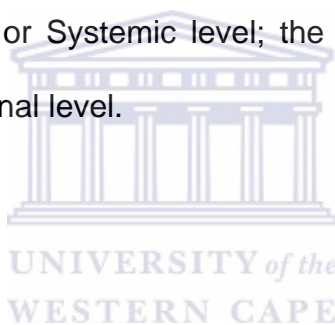
2.7 Conclusion

This section has delved briefly into current literature to uncover what is meant by workplace learning; how stress is defined; what the general and systemic causes of stress are: how it manifests itself in the school environment and how teachers in general should deal with stress.

The next section discusses the methodology, methods and strategies that were followed in the research.

Section 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This section presents the research methodology, research design and discusses the methods used to gather data for this study.

3.2 Methodology

This study draws on both qualitative and quantitative data. However, qualitative data is biased since the study investigates how school teachers learnt about coping with stress at school. Quantitative data is initially drawn on to provide background information about the key informants in the study.

The literature on research methodology is vast. However, the literature seems to agree that particular research frameworks inform research methodology and approaches to educational research. Accordingly it is appropriate to distinguish between **different frameworks of social research**, as each of the different frameworks result in different meaning to research and educational research particularly.

A dominant research paradigm is positivism, which describes, predicts, controls and then explains a phenomenon. **Quantitative research** utilises quantitative research methodology which assumes that meaning is arrived at independent from an individual's subjective interpretations, consciousness and intentions. Such

research draws on neutral, objective or statistical language to draw conclusions (Kelchtermans & Schratz, 1994).

Quantitative research methodology was originally developed in the natural sciences to study natural phenomena (Myers, 1997). It is used in many different fields, such as insurance, medicine, government, psychology and law. This method is about prediction, generalizing a sample to a larger group of subjects, and using numbers to prove or disprove a hypothesis. According to Hunt (2006) this methodology utilizes strict control of variables and the focus is on static reality. Ross (1999) agrees that quantitative research uses data that are structured in the form of numbers or that which can immediately be transported into numbers.

In this study **quantitative research** was used to determine the background information of the respondents, with the emphasis on:

How stress is distributed along male/female lines;

The levels of stress (in self-diagnosed categories);

The years of teaching experience of the respondents; and

The nature of employment of the respondents.

Quantitative research is used when researchers are interested in generating data from a large sample of study objects so that they can generalize the conclusion to a wider spectrum (York, 1998). However a very large sample does not seem to be

required for the purpose of this particular study of the ways in which teachers learn coping skills in their specific work environment.

Further use of the quantitative research method proved insufficient to shed light on the individual respondent's learning experiences. It is extremely difficult to categorise and tally the many different ways in which one particular respondent has come to learn coping skills, let alone that of 28 respondents. Another research method, more appropriate in dealing with intricate social aspects of the data gathered, was needed.

Converse to the quantitative research methodology, **the qualitative research methodology** documents episodes of lived experience representing as closely as possible how people feel, what they know, and what their concerns, beliefs, perceptions and understandings are. The focus of qualitative research is to 'capture' and interpret human practices; practices which cannot be quantified or predicted, and the human being is viewed as a subject capable of rationality, reflection, communication and social interaction (Kelchtermans & Schratz, 1994: 244).

The qualitative research methodology was developed in the social sciences to enable researchers to study social and cultural phenomena (Myers, 1997). It is data that is not usually in the form of numbers. Its goal is to gain a deeper understanding a person's or group's experience. "Qualitative methods are frequently recommended as offering greater sensitivity to meaning than quantitative methods, and they are appealing to people wanting to do small scale studies that have immediate 'human

interest', or provide in-depth analysis of patients' perspectives" (Seale: 2001). Qualitative research methods include instruments such as action research, case studies, grounded theory, historical methods and Ethnography. Some examples of data collection methods include interviews, field observations, diaries and letters.

Issues of reliability and validity, according to York (1998), can be addressed in three ways: prolonged engagement, persistent observation and triangulation.

The object of this study was to determine how teachers learn coping mechanisms, which is a typical social issue. For data on such an activity the researcher has to rely on the spoken word, which is laden with meaning, depending on the interpretation of the subject.

"An **interpretive approach** to research is commonly seen as being qualitative in nature. It involves gathering, examination and interpretation of data for the purpose of discovering meanings and patterns in relationships." (Morgan. et al, 1995: 8).

Following David Lazar in his definition of Interpretivism as a social research approach which emphasizes the meaningfulness of the subject matter of social sciences (Lazar, 1998: 14), this study is not only a collection of mere data on a social phenomenon, but aims to gain an understanding and/or an interpretation of the meanings of such phenomena. In a sense this study also lends itself to the method of 'deconstruction' which post-structuralist methodologists employ to get to the real meaning of the linguistic utterances of research participants.

"Interpretivists tend to favour qualitative rather than quantitative methods … because, on the whole, researchers find that people's words provide greater access to their subjective meaning rather than do statistical trends" (ibid: 7).

Against this background a qualitative analysis seemed the most natural approach for this study. In essence it is a case study focusing on the stressful experiences of teachers and how they learned to manage or cope with stress in their school environments. Following Bent Flyvberg's defense of the case study, this researcher agrees that: "The highest levels in the learning process, which is, virtuosity and true expertise, are reached only via a person's own experiences as practitioners of the relevant skills" (2006: 223).
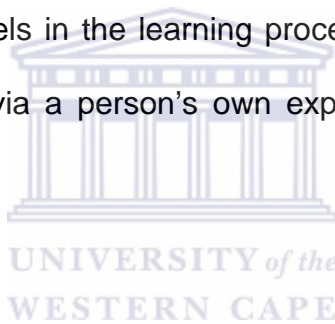
3.3 Research Methods

In this study the following methods were followed: a focus group discussion, an empirical survey and interviews.

3.3.1 An **initial focus group discussion** was held at a secondary school in the Manenberg area with eight teachers. Since the researcher of this study is also a teacher at one of the research sites, (the school), it was easy to get a few volunteers by way of an open invitation in the morning's staff debriefing session.

The group consisted of three males and five female teachers. The aim was two-fold: to

get a working group together for a later follow-up discussion and to get an idea of the type and sequence of questions that could be used in a survey. The questions were all unstructured so as not to hamper the natural flow of discussions. A tape recorder was used and the responses later transcribed.

The advantage of this focus group discussion was that it gave the researcher a better understanding of the particular issues and stressors that teachers experience at the school, as opposed to the more general views that emanated from the literature review. One limitation of this method was the time constraint. Teachers guard their 'free' time preciously. Since this discussion was held after the learners were dismissed, they felt more relaxed. But given the topic of stress to discuss, there's virtually no stopping them- especially with refreshments in hand. The researcher's role as facilitator here was mainly steering the discussions back to the scope of the research topic. The session lasted fifteen minutes longer than the stipulated hour without them realising this.

The transcription of the discussion, together with the researcher's own field notes, provided him with a very good sense of the type of questions to ask in the survey, as well as the order in which the questions should follow.

3.3.2 An **empirical survey** was done to investigate primarily three aspects: the sources of stress specific to the three schools; the different ways in which teachers learn to deal with stress; and the difference in coping strategies between various

sectors of the staff complements. This was done by means of **a questionnaire** containing questions in two areas: Background information and coping strategies. An ethical statement confirming anonymity and confidentiality of the responses was included as a cover page.

A questionnaire is a useful method to gather data form a large sample in a relatively short space of time. However, the limitation of utilising a questionnaire is that the researcher cannot immediately follow-up on answers when the researcher is unclear of what was intended with the answer. In order to compensate for the limitations of the questionnaires, the researcher also employed **the interview method.**
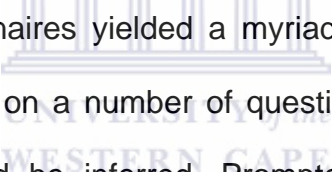
Twenty questionnaires were delivered for distribution amongst teachers at each of the three high schools in the Manenberg area, which were selected to constitute the research population. After a week, one of the high schools still did not have time to hand these out. Being in the midst of the June examinations, they asked for more time. But when the researcher went to collect, the questionnaires were still in the safe. A teacher who felt 'guilty' about the issue offered to ask at least ten teachers to volunteer to complete the questionnaire. Five of those were collected the following day.

In all there were 28 questionnaires completed at the three high schools out of the initial 60 that were distributed. This constituted a 46.6 % response rate and must be viewed in the light of the researcher's close affinity with the staff at two of the schools:

One where he is presently teaching and the other where he had taught for fourteen years.

The focus group discussion of the previous week was also still fresh in the memory of teachers. Of the total of 28 completed questionnaires collected, fourteen (50%) were male and fourteen (50%) were female. This even spread was achieved by pure chance and not by design since the completion of the questionnaire was on a voluntary basis.

3.3.3 The Interviews

The analysis of the questionnaires yielded a myriad of answers as diverse as the group of respondents. Clarity on a number of questions/ answers had to be gained before any conclusions could be inferred. Prompted by the responses from the questionnaires, **interviews** were held with six teachers. The questions were open-ended but semi-structured to gain the necessary clarity on these responses. These interviews shed more light on the personal coping mechanisms that teachers employ in their everyday lives.

The data was assembled, analysed and compared to those emanating from the literature review. A list comprising both the learning strategies/ coping mechanisms was compiled from the data, together with those obtained by other researchers from the literature review.

This was then again presented to a follow-up focus group discussion for ratification and assessment of the most successful strategies and some suggestions for implementing interventions aimed at reducing stress at the various levels of school.

3.4   Analysis of data

In the **focus group discussion** the researcher got a good insight into the specific circumstances that lead to heightened stress levels at the particular school.   Having had previous teaching experience at three other high schools, it was easy for the researcher to see the similarities in the causes for stress. In order for the researcher to dispel these similarities as mere perception, he had to find evidence of such similarities.

To this end, **a questionnaire** was drawn up, using the insights and information gathered in the group discussion as guidelines in formulating the questions. For instance: the categorizing of the different stressors into four distinct levels (classroom; staff; school/ organization and department/ Government) in this thesis was done as a result of the teachers having classified them as such in the group discussion. This categorization was confirmed by the data in the questionnaires as well.

The analysis of the data was no easy task. *Quantitative methods* were used to ascertain numerical truths, such as the number and sex of teachers affected by stress, the nature of employment and the years of teaching experience. For the analysis of the rest of the data, Qualitative methods were used.

Initial analysis yielded a myriad of themes emanating from the responses. Having had the focus group's input at the beginning of the research, proved helpful: the categories of stressors they identified served as guide to finding the underlying themes common to most responses.

Thorough scrutiny of the vast array of responses and possible themes emanating from them, led the researcher back to the Literature Review. This search led to surprising correlations between the themes presented by the writers and those emanating from the data analysed. Most of those themes for which evidence were found in the literature are discussed in the findings, as well as those where none was found in this literature review.

The findings, especially those regarding coping strategies, were then presented to some teachers from the three schools and discussed in personal **interviews.** The interviews were used to ratify or dispel the findings of the research.
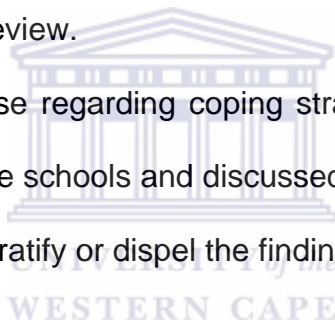
Section 4: Findings and Analysis of Findings

This section analyses the key findings based on the data collected. Firstly we deal with the occurrence of stress: How it affects the respondents; what their main sources of stress are; their underlying strategies or philosophies they have learnt to reduce workplace stress; and specific ways of dealing with stressful situations in the classroom, the staffroom, the organizational (school) level and at Departmental level. This will be followed by a discussion of the suggestions made in trying to manage stress on levels of department, institution and individual.

4.1 Description of sample

The teachers who participated in this study are all teaching in the Manenberg and Heideveld area. The particular area was chosen for two reasons only: Firstly it is the area with which the researcher is familiar with; and secondly because it is in this area where the researcher and his colleagues encountered stress first hand.

4.1.1 The years of teaching experience of the respondents

Table 1

Experience in Years	0-4	4-9	10-14	15-19	20 and more
Males (number) (%)	0	0	4 28,6%	4 28,6%	6 42,8%
Females(number) (%)	2 14,3%	1 7,1%	2 14,3%	4 28,6%	5 35,7%

All 14 of the male respondents (i.e. 100%) had more than ten years of teaching experience. Six had been teaching for more than twenty years. Of the female respondents only three had teaching experience of less than ten years, two of them being fairly new to teaching with less than five year's experience.

On the whole this was a very experienced group of teachers, with only 10, 7% of all the respondents having taught for less than ten years and 19 out of the 28 respondents (67, 9%) having taught for more than 14 years.

This study found that the number of years' experience do not necessarily equip teachers better to deal with stress. Even seasoned teachers struggled with the symptoms of stress.

4.1.2. **The nature of employment of the respondents**

Table 2:

Nature of employment	Males	Females
Contract/ Temporary	5	3
Permanent	9	11

Three of the female teachers and five of the male teachers were appointed on a contract basis. This represents 28, 6 % of all the respondents. Their teaching experience ranges from 14 to 33 years. The rest of the respondents (71, 4 %) were all permanently employed. Although this study did not set out to focus on the relevance of experience or nature of employment on the stress levels experienced by teachers, it

will be interesting at least to note exactly how these factors impacted the lives of our respondents.

4.2 **The Main Results**

4.2.1 **How teaching contributes to stress levels**

This study found that 82% of the teachers were affected by stress-albeit to different degrees. The following broad, self-diagnosed categories of stress affection were identified: Not affected; affected (those who felt that teaching increase their stress levels to a marked degree); seriously affected; and cannot cope. The symptoms were broadly classified according to the actual responses from the data: they are real and not self-diagnosed. The results can be summarized in the following table 3:
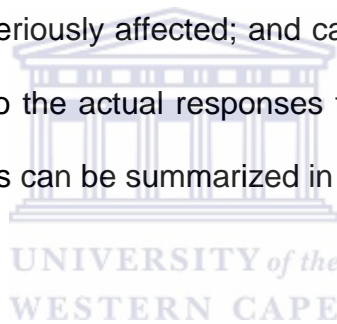
Table 3: *Levels of stress: self – diagnosed categories*.

Stress level	Not affected	Affected	Seriously affected	Cannot cope
Males	3 21, 43%	5 35,72%	5 35,72 %	1 7,13%
Females	2 14,3%	4 28,6%	8 57,1%	0 0%
Symptoms	None	Constantly tired; feel rundown; headaches &migraine; body aches; mentally frustrated; Sleepless nights.	Feeling depressed; Breathing problems (non-smoker); low resistance to infections; Hypertension; Extreme exhaustion; Skin disorders; Nagging personality.	Totally drained and depressed; On the verge of burnout.

The categorization of the symptoms is in no way a fixed one. It corresponds merely to the stated responses given by teachers. Viewed in conjunction with Dunham's illustration on Hebb's theory, one can clearly see that the majority of teachers who completed the questionnaire are on the dangerous side of the stress curve: the work demands are *beyond the person's coping abilities:* they *lead to high levels of anxiety, poor concentration and reduced effectiveness in one's work*.

Of the three male teachers who stated they are not affected by stress, two were contract teachers - one with 18 years and one with 21 years of teaching experience. The other teacher is a senior teacher, permanently employed with 30 years of experience. Of the two females not being affected by stress one is a contract worker with 19 years; the other a permanent teacher with 24 years of teaching experience. The teacher, who stated that he cannot cope any more, is a permanent male teacher with 20 years of experience.

A preliminary conclusion from the above information would be that although experience does help teachers to deal better with stress, it is not a determining factor. Although five teachers (amounting to 17, 9 %) who are reasonably experienced in years stated that they are not affected by stress, an even higher percentage (82, 1%) stated that they indeed are affected by stress. From table 1 it can be seen that 19 teachers had 15 or more years of experience. Five not affected by stress amounts to 26, 3 % of the more experienced ones, whilst the rest (73, 7%) are affected by stress,

some seriously so. If one views this in perspective of the total number of respondents (28) the number of teachers unaffected by stress amounts to only 17, 9 %.

Another important factor is the difference between the males and females who experienced serious levels of stress: 21, 4% more female teachers fall into this category. The reason for this difference has not been explored in this study. It can, however, only be surmised that women teachers are more susceptible to serious levels of workplace stress because of the patriarchal nature of the general society we live in.

4.2.2 **The main sources of workplace stress for teachers**

From the questionnaires it became evident that there are mainly four sources of workplace stress for teachers. These are at organizational level, the staff level, the Departmental level and the classroom level.

At *organizational level* respondents felt that:

1. **Bad management** by the School Management Team (SMT) is the main contributor to increased stress levels. This was articulated in the following manner: "The Principal cannot run the school", said one female teacher (Questionnaire: June 2006) while another stated: "The whole management team lacks vision!" Other comments from the questionnaire in this regard included: "ineffective leadership"; "lack of a broader vision"; "bad working conditions"; "bad organization"; "no clear guidelines". This state of affairs is exactly what Claxton

and Guy had in mind on the topic of *the stressed institution:* " No collective vision exists to inform discussions, so that the organization of the school develops in a piecemeal fashion....and do not amount to development in a consistent direction" (1989:133)

2. **A lack of support from the SMT.**

 Teachers felt that they are not supported in their efforts to give quality education and transforming the school into a proud institution of learning for both learners and teachers alike. The statement "a total lack of support structures" was echoed by many a teacher in the questionnaire.

Lesser and Storck (2001) argues that recognition and support of communities of practice can improve organizational performance, and organizational value. One can thus infer that a lack of support from the SMT may lead to teachers being unhappy, frustrated and in the long run, stressed, if they feel that their efforts are not supported.

3. **Abuse of positional authority** was another factor contributing to teacher stress. Sandra[1], a 46 year old female teacher felt that management was also abusing their positions: "They see to it that they only teach the senior learners [who are usually more disciplined] and teach the smaller classes" [which are better to control] (Focus Group Discussion: 24 May 2006).

4. This study found that **teachers' perception that the SMT cannot solve organizational problems** led to increased stress levels. Nazeem[2], an experienced teacher, said that he has stopped coming to the morning

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[1] Pseudonym used to protect identity of respondents.

debriefing sessions in the staffroom because he thinks it is a total waste of time (Interview, July 19, 2006). "Management never listens to your suggestions to help solve any problem" (July 19, 2006). This seems to be the opinion of most respondents: they believe that the school's SMT are not well-equipped to solve problems that affect the school.

These remarks confirm findings in the literature on different levels. Susan Capel concludes that "the organizational environment may often be the crucial element in determining the level of burnout" (Capel, cited in Cole and Walker, 1990: 38). Guy Claxton, in this regard, feels that principals are also human and subject to the same levels of stress. However, principals do wield a lot of power. Depending on how they use that power could determine the space for individual teachers to be innovative, or not.
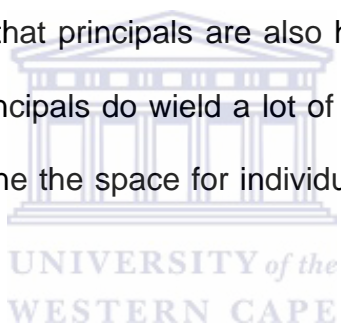
> "If your head teacher is an authoritarian recluse who doesn't remember your name, if you have no idea what the 'philosophy' of the school is, and if staff meetings are a travesty of democracy, it may be that the only thing left for you to change is your job" (Claxton 1989: 147).

Petra de Weerdt was of the opinion that organizational learning cannot occur if any one of the basic steps in the learning process is amiss. In the case study it seems that organisational memory is sorely lacking. Teachers were adamant that "management

does not learn from its mistakes". They continue with outdated practices and rules which create higher levels of anxiety and stress among the workforce.

In the preceding paragraphs we have identified four factors which affect teachers at school: Bad management, abuse of positional authority, a lack of SMT support, and the perception that the SMT cannot solve organizational problems.

Guy Claxton warned that it is at the organizational level where most of the frustration with management lies, and which invariably leads to what he referred to as "the Stressed Institution", where workplace stress and teacher apathy are the order of the day (ibid:136).
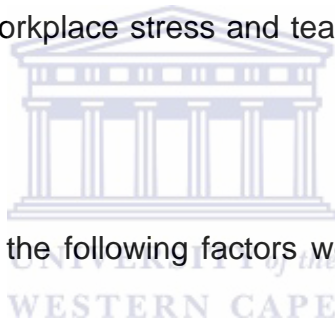
At the *staff/relationship level* the following factors were cited to be main sources of stress:

1. **Teacher negativity; teacher apathy or indifference**. "You can never suggest something new to the staff. They are always negative" ((Interview: 20 July 2006).

2. **Staff conflict.** One teacher summed it up: "There is too much division and friction between staff members. Everyone tries to do his own thing. Everybody is stressed." (Focus group Discussion: May 2006)

3. **Teacher Absenteeism**. A further problem that teachers mentioned in focus group discussions and interviews was the fact that, despite their heavy work-load, teachers still had to invigilate the classes of colleagues who

regularly are absent but definitely not ill. "It is very frustrating having to control other colleagues' unruly learners," were the sentiment of more than one teacher in the focus group discussion (24 May 2006).

Wenger (1998: 5) referred to 'unrecognised relationships' that form a community of practice. The relationship between some teachers is such that they will hide the fact that their colleague may not be sick at home as they have reported. These teachers choose not to reveal their colleague's secret for various reasons. Such relationships, according to Wenger have a purpose (of disseminating information) but are invisible to the organization and sometimes even to the members themselves. They are limited in terms of their social value and possible impact on the organization.
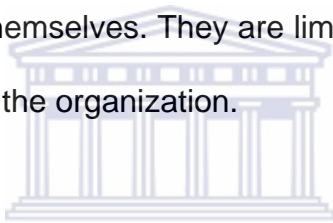
At *Departmental (WCED) level*.

Similar to the HSRC's report findings of 2005, this study found that heavy workload and lack of support from the Education Department are major causes that lead to heightened stress levels of teachers. At all levels of this research (focus group discussion, questionnaire and interviews) teachers complained about the workload and excessive administration imposed on them as a result of the introduction of the new curriculum of Outcomes-based Education (OBE). Freddie[3], a seasoned teacher at one school, expressed this opinion in his interview: "How can it be expected of teachers to give their best when they are overloaded with administrative work? How can they [The WCED] expect improved results without giving the teacher real support?" (19 July, 2006).

At *the classroom level* the following factors were found to be contributing to heightened stress levels:

1. **Undisciplined, rude learners**

A female teacher remarked in the Focus Group discussion: "I've been teaching long enough not to have disciplinary problems in class anymore. But year by year learners are becoming ruder. I'm tired of having to tolerate this!" (24 May, 2006).

2. Vandalism by learners and burglars.

Vandalism by learners occurs mostly when a teacher is not physically in class for whatever reason. If no supervision was arranged for absent teachers, the learners end up alone in class. Vandalism by burglars looking for copper wires and other equipment like brass handles of windows, disrupt the normal class and school procedure too often. "I spend a lot of time having to help clean up my classroom so before I can start teaching," said one female teacher in an interview. (18 July 2006)

3. **Gangsterism in and around school.**

Surprisingly, only a few teachers identified gangsterism as a contributing factor to their stress levels in the questionnaire. But the focus group discussion shed some light on teachers' attitude. One female teacher remarked: "We need a full-time police officer at school to do the policing we have to do." A male teacher had another view: "I think we have become so used to the violence that we are not shocked anymore. I know this is a dangerous state of affairs. We let our guard

down, until something serious happens to a learner- or even one of us." (24 May 2006).

4. Lack of a learning culture

This study found that the lack of a learning culture in our communities to be a serious contributing factor to teachers stress. "I try my best to be innovative and spend a lot of time preparing for lessons and setting question papers for tests. Yet they (the learners) do not even bother to open a book at home. Let alone study!" (Jackie: Focus group discussion, 24 May 2006)

5. Learners' lack of basic knowledge and skill in reading and writing.

Apart from the workload, teachers still have to contend with learners who cannot even write or read. Almost every period is a nightmare for Thelma, the Mathematics teacher: "I find myself having to teach work the learners should have mastered two or three years back before I can start on the topic for the day". (Focus group discussion: 24 May 2006). The English teacher, Fatima, also added her voice to the discussion:" I am not a foundation phase teacher. I do not know how to, and don't have time, to teach these learners how to read." And though it was not meant as an excuse for the learners, teachers felt that the system itself was failing these learners. Learners, who continually fail or do not progress, have very little self-esteem. Coupled to their poor socio-economic circumstances, this could lead to higher levels of frustration which manifests itself as rude behaviour.

4.3 **When do teachers know that they are stressed out?**

The issue of workplace stress is quite familiar to teachers. They see the effects of it around them daily: agitated colleagues, absent colleagues, conflict among staff, unplanned events ruining the normal day, disorganization, disunity, and a general sense of having lost the plot. One teacher described this stressful state: "I feel like a rat running his tread every day. Maybe it's because they (the Management Team) are running this school like a bunch of headless chickens!" (Questionnaire: June 2006).

Teachers know that they are stressed when they become sick or finally realise that they are unhappy in their workplace due to factors outside their control. But this realization or illness does not come about overnight. In the focus group discussion it emerged that it is a long gradual process that starts with almost idiotic naiveté and vigour to make a difference. The realization only comes when teachers feel "insecure and uncertain", as one teacher stated, or when they feel demotivated and despondent. "I just teach because I have to" said one. Another: "I feel unprofessional, as if I'm not worth much as a teacher". It is only when they "don't put in as much as before"and cannot recognize themselves anymore in their daily actions and interactions with learners, colleagues and their families that the awful realization dawns on them. (Focus group discussion: 24 May 2006)

On the other hand sudden bouts of illness or constantly picking up colds, could also spell stress to the teacher.

"I have always been a very sporty person. I've always been involved in sport, especially rugby. I've followed a reasonably healthy diet. But then I realised that the constant colds and flues was due to my body's lowered resistance. I discovered only recently that I have hypertension. I am now on treatment for that and follow an even healthier diet prescribed by doctors."

This is how Nazeem, a 43 year-old teacher described his journey to realising that he was suffering from the effects of stress. (Interview: 20 July, 2006).

Teachers also realize that they are stressed when they feel that they cannot teach to their full potential, or when they see that their teaching methods does not have the same results anymore; or simply that they have lost the pleasure of teaching. One experienced female teacher puts it thus: "I realized that I lost my passion for the job that I love". (Interview: 21 July, 2006).

From the above it is clear that workplace stress impacts very negatively on the health, morale and output of the teachers themselves. Although this study did not set out to investigate the effects of workplace stress on the academic performance of learners, one can only surmise the result or conclude with most findings in the literature that teacher stress is indeed affecting academic standards negatively. (HSRC Report, 2005)

4.4 **Managing workplace stress: How do teachers learn to cope?**

Having discovered what teachers describe as the underlying sources of workplace stress, the logical next step is to determine how teachers cope with these stressors. From the study it emerged that teachers' learning in the workplace about stress is facilitated in many ways which support the literature on the topic: *informal, incidental and experiential.*

1. Learning is informal

In the focus group discussion the question whether teachers had any formal training in ways of how to deal with workplace stress, the answer was an emphatic no! Teachers are thus forced to learn about the stressors informally.
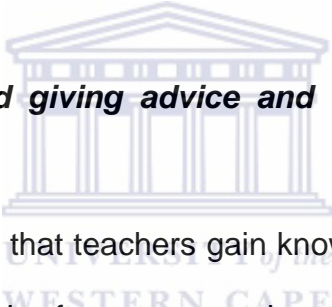
2. *Learning through trial and error (Incidental learning)*

Most teachers felt that the only way to cope with workplace stress, especially the workload, is to constantly try out new ways to alleviate the pressure. The following narrative by one of the respondents is typical of how the wider group learnt to deal with stressors:

> "At first I used lesson time only for teaching and assisting learners with problems. All my marking I did at home. But when I realized that I neglected my family by robbing them of quality time, I knew I had to cut down on the amount of work I bring home. So I started to do most of the assessing/marking after school. At home I only do my lesson planning and setting up tests. I now have more time available to play with my children and help them with their homework, whereas

previously I did not have time for that. It's still difficult sometimes during exam times with the extra load and pressure that time constraints put on you….. But you learn to deal with it as best as you can". (Interview: 17 July 2006)

This incidental method not only works for workload issues, but teachers also learn in this way how to deal with difficult learners, how to change their teaching methodologies in order to reach more children. By trying different ways and eventually choosing those methods that work most effectively, is one way that teachers learn the skill of coping.

3. ***Learning by asking and giving advice and through Communication with colleagues.***

Another finding of this study is that teachers gain knowledge through *discussions* with colleagues and *asking for advice* from more senior teachers. Many teachers felt that the only way for them to learn how things are done at school is through **communication** with colleagues they feel comfortable with. This is how they come to know the workings of the school: How, When and Where to get whatever you need to make your school day a success. To know what is required of them according to the latest policy documents they ask or simply receive advice from friends and fellow colleagues, even those not teaching with them.

A female teacher, Lynne[7], with limited teaching experience, exemplifies this point: "I find it very difficult to teach under the present circumstances because of the lack of

support structures at school. It is … **only in my conversations with teachers in the staff room, that I am learning a lot about the school and its workings. Otherwise I don't how I would have fitted in."**(Interview: 19 July, 2006. Emphasis added.)

These methods of learning how to deal with workplace stress seem to be exactly those that are being described in the literature. It is experiential learning at its best. Elements of informal and incidental learning are clearly evident. It is incidental in the sense that the learning is a by-product of some other activity: mostly unintended discoveries of best practice methods. Discovering how the school is run and what roles each one fulfills, is precisely what the literature refers to as the Community of Practice: the school as a tightly- knit organisational unit where each one has a function. Lynn represents all of us starting out in a new venture. We join the staff and start to participate in its activities: doing almost the minimum, working at the periphery, not disturbing the harmony or balance of power. This is what Lave and Wenger described as "**Legitimate Peripheral Participation**". With time we become more active, participating more in discussions, learn how others with more experience, do their job. We also try their methods and perfect them over time. When finally we have learnt enough through our participation in the community of practice, we become the old hands, experts in our skills. We are then at the core of the practice, having become the practitioners ourselves: ready to teach newcomers to the community our own skills.

It is through the daily interaction and communication with colleagues that teachers realize the scope of their problems and how others have managed to overcome the obstacles.

4.5 General coping strategies learnt by teachers

This study has found the following strategies learnt by teachers to help them cope better with stressors at their workplace.

4.5.1 Thorough planning is vitally important.

One of the best ways to minimize the stress levels is to plan properly and well in advance. This strategy was echoed by most respondents. They have come to learn this through experience, by communicating and participating in the community of practice. One teacher summed it up in the questionnaire:

"Prepare thoroughly for each lesson and each eventuality. Be alert for all

changes- and Always have a plan B". (Questionnaire: June 2006)

Included in this strategy is to **keep marking and assessment up to date (at school, if possible).**To balance work and home priorities, teachers feel that they should try to do the marking of scripts at school, and to try and relax at home. To work continually, systematically and consistently greatly reduces the stress.

4.5.2 Verbalise the causes of stress

Teachers felt the need to verbalise the causes of stress in their staff meetings. It is here that they at least have a chance of being heard. The intention with this strategy, it

seems, is to draw Management's attention to the problems which lead to high stress levels. And even if nothing is done about them, then at least the problem was articulated publicly. Henry, a seasoned Science teacher, remarked in the focus group discussion: "I have learnt to voice my opinion. I know they won't do anything about my concerns, but at least I am not bottling it all up. You get sick of doing that." (Focus group discussion: 24 may 2006).

4.5.3. Refocus on other aspects of your physical and social life.

It became evident in this study that highly stressed teachers are those whose school life takes up a significant part of their lives. Through reflection they have come to realize that they are more than just employers of the school. Responses from the questionnaires echoed this realization frequently. "Only do what has to be done: the minimum is sufficient" seems to be the motto. One respondent's strategy was to only do his job to the best of his abilities. "No one can demand more than that from you". This he learned through his religious background. To do the bare minimum that is required from a teacher seems to be learnt experientially. One teacher stated it thus: "I learned this attitude through being involved in other time-consuming activities that did not work". By just doing their work and concentrating on the learners entrusted to them seems to keep some teachers priorities in check: "You just get frustrated if you worry too much about all the things that are wrong". (Questionnaires: June 2006).

4.5.4. **Recognise when stress might endanger your well-being**

Teachers learn through experience and by participation in their community of practice that the job may become too strenuous to continue .They learn that there are telling signs to look out for when this might happen: too often a colleague has to go on 'stress leave'. The advice given by a few respondents in the questionnaire and the interviews were**:** "Stay at home if you are fatigued or overloaded". This is very worrying advice in the light of the poor academic performance at these schools. Yet at least two teachers admitted to following this advice, which became a strategy. To clarify this strategy, we state the reasoning of one seasoned female teacher with twenty years of experience. She recently resigned from teaching due to stress, but is back at teaching once again. She also cites lack of leadership, overcrowded classes, and the low level of literacy and numeracy skills among learners, staff disunity and lack of learning and technical resources as the main sources of stress. She learnt to cope at school for financial reasons (teaching being her only income for this single parent). Her way of coping is to just go with the flow, to do her work in a non-chalant way, deliberately ignoring the stress-causing factors. As if emancipated by her learning through active participation in her community of practice:" You can only do your best, no more. But to really survive you have to delve into your own resourcefulness and create opportunities to sidestep the triggers". This, she admits, is very difficult: after all, she is human and not a robot. She stays out of school when she is at wits end- just to re-energise herself. She also does physical exercises regularly and takes vitamin tablets to supplement her diet. These coping methods she learnt

after being admitted to hospital a few years ago for treatment for stress induced illness. She underwent psychological therapy at the time. (Interview: 21July, 2006)

4.5.5. Making use of other resources to alleviate stress

Many teachers believed that living a healthy, balanced lifestyle reduces workplace stress. They employ resources like music to calm down and relax. Some do yoga, others get involved in extra-mural activities, like sport. "Learn to juggle your life," was the advice of one experienced respondent. (Questionnaire: June 2006). Other resources proffered by respondents correspond to the advice given in big doses in modern leisure literature. Examples like: Exercise breathing techniques and special relaxing exercises like Reflexology were mentioned.

4.5.6. Be positive and make the best of circumstances.

One of the most admirable strategies which this study found is that teachers always try to be positive. This fosters a better perspective on the harsh reality of everyday school life. A positive attitude goes a long way in facing the challenges of the day Respondents were very outspoken on this strategy:

"Don't listen to negative criticism or discussions. I've learnt that it only leads to more frustration and stress. The principal's attitude led to this view: he is just not interested in solving problems. So either I get sick or adopt other strategies to cope", responded one experienced female teacher.

"Be positive: Enjoy each day what you are doing. Life is too short. I realize that learners will always be naughty," was another's view.

A novice responded: "I am not the only one in this situation. If others can cope, so can I.I have learnt this after becoming very sick."

Another seasoned male teacher: "Try to put everything into perspective. Don't try to change the things you cannot control. Management at school never seems to want change. I can't control this. I adopted this view to keep myself sane." (Questionnaires: June 2006)

4.5.7 Some not-so positive strategies

This study also found some strategies that are not so positive. "Just leave everything as they are. It is no use complaining" and "I eat when I'm upset. I eat my stress away. It helps me relax." These are examples emanating from the questionnaires. Strategies like ignoring the stressors or problems may be interpreted as being negative. It is easy to see that they could contribute to an increase in negative feelings that may impact negatively on staff relationships. This leads to higher stress levels and thus a vicious cycle of stress. But nevertheless it is a strategy that seemingly works for a few.

These were the general strategies that teachers employ to cope with workplace stress. In the next section a compilation is given of the specific coping strategies that teachers employ to deal with stressful situations on four levels: the classroom; Staff relations; the organizational/school level; and at Departmental level.

4.6 **Specific Coping Strategies**

4.6.1**. Learning to cope in the classroom.**

This study found a wide range of strategies, some successful and others not, which teachers employ to cope with very stressful situations. They vary from simple breathing exercises, self-control, ignoring the stressor and trying to find the reason for the behaviour, to completely losing control. Classroom coping strategies include:

(a)*Always try to be in control.*

In this way learners come to realize that they cannot take chances. If the teacher is seen to be in control, the likelihood of learners stepping out of line is diminished. The challenge for teachers is sometimes to pretend that they are in control, especially on those "off-days" when nothing seems to go their way. Even voice control helps in this regard.

But the secret is out on how to maintain control: Most respondents agreed that proper planning is the key to alleviating stress. The following response exemplifies this sentiment:

"Be well-prepared to have sufficient activities to keep the learners occupied." (Questionnaire: June 2006)

(b) Identify the problem, name it, and address it.

This strategy is intended to deal swiftly with any problem that may arise in class. When the stressor is identified it is easier to deal with it. Provided there are some guidelines or rules set for improper behaviour.

After solving or defusing the situation, one teacher usually "makes a life lesson out of it for the whole class" Questionnaire: June 2006). This strategy, however, most of the teachers felt, is time-consuming. "You'll end up just giving life lessons the whole period". (Focus group discussion: July 2006)

(c) Create some breathing space:

This strategy covers a range of alternatives for the teacher. It includes breathing exercise to calm the teacher down when faced with a very stressful situation. Another method is for the teacher to go outside with the rude learner and try to defuse the situation by having a one-on-one conversation with the learner. It is often only then that teachers discover the real reason for the misbehaviour. This is how one respondent perceived it:

> "One often forgets how many problems these kids face everyday. They have hell at home and then we as teachers cannot recognize that there is something wrong. What do expect from such a troubled child? Somewhere the bottle has to burst!" (Interview: 19 July 2006)

Linked to this method is the alternative: that the teacher alone steps outside for a minute. This gives the teacher time to think about the situation and how to defuse it.

(d) In extreme cases, ask for help.

A few teachers recommended that the Head of Department or Grade head be called for assistance with very difficult learners. But even more teachers responded that this method of trying to cope is futile. These teachers advised that you "Solve your own

problems, don't wait for the office: it's useless hoping they will do anything."

(Questionnaire: June 2006)

(e) **If all else fails….**

Many a time the teacher is at wits end and, despite how many years of experience, does not know how to manage a stressful situation. The incidents of conflict in class, teachers feel, are escalating to alarming proportions. It is then when they often resort to other methods. Here are three responses from the questionnaires on this topic:

"I sometimes scream at learners or I raise my voice just to be heard."

Some teachers admitted to swearing in class: "it is the only language that the learners understand".

"After warnings, I sometimes resort to mild corporal punishment. Nothing else works!"

4.6.2 Learning to deal with Staff relations

This study found two basically opposing strategies on how to deal with staff conflict. The first was:"Respect each other's opinion". To resolve the conflict, teachers felt that they had to listen and try to understand the reasons why their colleagues acted in the manner they do: "Go into meaningful discussions and address issues immediately"", was the one type of response. The second strategy was to "avoid or ignore the source of conflict". One teacher put this view: "Don't talk to staff members who increase your stress". (Questionnaires: June 2006)

From these responses, as well as those made in the focus group discussion, it would seem as if most teachers are willing to assist their colleagues with whatever problems

they may have, but that ultimately they do not have the time or expertise to solve all these problems.

4.6.3. Learning to cope at Organisational level

The overwhelming feeling emanating from this case study is that the main source of workplace stress is at organisational level. The absence of a clearly stated vision, the lack of effective leadership, principals who cannot run the schools, the lack of structures to deal effectively with school matters, the lack of a code of conduct for both teachers and learners were all cited as reasons for the "chaotic" (their description) state at the schools concerned.   In the absence of these structures, it becomes increasingly difficult to teach effectively.

These were the actual responses proffered by some respondents in the questionnaires:

(a) *Try to identify problems and seek solutions if possible*. This can be done by raising the issues in staff meetings and to think laterally for ways to improve the situation. Or the issue can first be tackled among colleagues who come up with workable solutions which they then put before a staff meeting. This seems the rational way to go. But many respondents know that nothing comes of even the noblest, working solutions offered, "Simply because they (Management) are too short-sighted to see the benefits of pursuing such ideas, or they are rejecting the ideas because they did not come up with it in the first place!"

(b) *Don't bother*

Some respondents, obviously having come to this conclusion after long battles with management, tend to sever all ties with management. They only communicate with them when absolutely necessary. Clearly not a very helpful suggestion to any newcomer to the profession! These were some comments:

"Don't listen to them (management)."

"I don't take part in the morning briefing sessions any more. You fight a losing battle".

"They (Senior Management Team) are aloof: too busy. They are only some good at crisis management. So don't bother".

"Keep quiet. Maybe the problems will go away."

It is clear from these responses that feelings of despondency and negativity about the way the school is being run, can easily lead to what was earlier described as "the stressed institution". It is at that stage where most teachers become apathetic and they withdraw from all positive discussions and actions in their working environment.

4.6.4 Dealing with stress created at Departmental (WCED) level.

From the interviews and group discussions it became very clear that teachers find it extremely difficult to cope with all the policy and curriculum changes that characterize our education system. The level of frustration and inability to do anything about their situation becomes clear in the negative statements and comments when asked to state how they deal with the stress thus created. Some respondents were of the perspective that it is the responsibility of the WCED to organized intervention sessions

that teaches teachers to cope with stress. One respondent said that "There is a lack of training and support to bring teachers up to date".

But respondents also recognised that in order to cope with their personal stress they should be selective of what they do with whatever comes from the WCED: "Do what you can, not what is expected". Another respondent indicated that since the child is the purpose of her teaching "I only do what will benefit the child's future, otherwise not". (Questionnaires: June 2006)

Not all of these comments were meant as strategies. Rather, they reflect the sentiment of the teachers concerned. But there were also some more favourable comments, like the following in a questionnaire:

> "I know this is just a passing phase in our country's history. Things will   get better. I try to make the most of the situation".

4.7 Conclusion: Findings and analysis

These then were the findings of this research study. Teachers have expressed the causes of their stress at the workplace and how it affects them and their teaching. They have revealed general strategies of dealing with workplace stress as well as their ingenious ways of dealing with specific stress in the classroom, the staffroom, the Management level and at the Departmental levels.

In the next concluding section the key findings are briefly discussed and recommendations to deal with stress at the various levels are made.

Section 5: Conclusion and recommendations

5.1 Original aims and key findings

The purpose of this study was to examine the specific ways in which teachers learn to deal with workplace stress. In the rationale it was argued that workplace stress impacts negatively on the performance and output of teachers. We have seen how the various policy and curriculum changes increase not only the workload, but also the levels of stress experienced by teachers. In defining stress we have seen that the best workable definition is a stimulus- response definition: it is how people experience and interpret a (stressful) situation and their accompanying response to this stimulus, based on their interpretation.
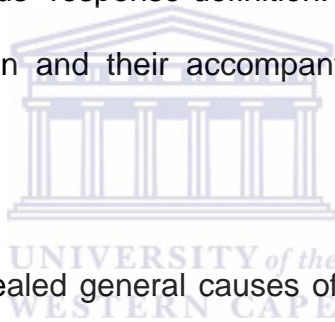
The literature review has revealed general causes of stress in the workplace. Those correspond directly with the specific causes of stress as experienced by the teachers at the three schools surveyed. What became evident through this study are that lack of effective leadership and the absence of sufficient support structures and guidelines serve as the biggest specific causes of stress for teachers. It is in the absence of this leadership and organizational structures that the specific coping strategies of teachers emerged.

The study has revealed how teachers have learnt to deal with very negative working conditions and still do their job as effectively as possible. Being largely unable to effect any meaningful change to their circumstances, they have learnt to rely on their own

personal resources to survive each day. They learn how to juggle their lives so as to accommodate all the demands of their job. In most cases, we have seen in the findings, they fail in this task and sacrifice their health in the process. Some of these coping methods learnt can be labelled as negative and in some cases even illegal, but it is exactly those mechanisms that help them stay afloat and keep their sanity. Teachers have stated that the stressful working conditions stunt their professional growth and kill their creativity. They have lost the grit for teaching because their passion and joy is being eroded.

What, then, are the solutions?

5.2 Recommendations.

It is clear that there is no simple solution to solving the complex issue of workplace stress. It cannot be addressed by mere stress management programmes which deal with stress symptoms only. Nor can it only be addressed by stressor management options which deal with external factors that can lead to stress and burnout. A more holistic approach is needed which tackle the problem on many levels simultaneously. One such approach would be to effect change at the following levels simultaneously.

At Departmental level

What is needed at this level is for government firstly to realize that any policy change or change in the curriculum is traumatic for the teacher. All such changes should be

accompanied by a specific programme to teach educators exactly how to adapt and adopt these changes and how to minimize the stress.

Secondly, government should heed the concerns of the teaching profession on the failure of the new policies, especially OBE (Outcomes based Education).Teachers see the effects of the new system daily in their classrooms. They feel that they are herding a lost generation through a system which is failing them and condemning them to lives of doom. The results of Mathematics and Reading skills are evident of this failure. The HSRC's remark in a media release in 1997 supports this view:"The overall Grade 7 and 8 results of TIMMS paint a bleak picture for science and mathematics education in South Africa". Yet no effective solution has been forthcoming: simply because there is none. OBE should either be adapted so as to emphasize the basics of reading, writing and Arithmetic. Or it should be scrapped in the light of the dismal performance of learners.

Thirdly, more effective programmes should be instituted to deal with workplace stress. The Western Cape Education Department has introduced the Employee Wellness Programme in 2004 to provide "its valued employees with the necessary support and guidance in dealing with life's challenges and opportunities" (Minute no: HRD/ 0051/2004). The media release of the EWP dated 12 October 2004 stated:

The EWP aims to promote the health and well-being of all WCED employees. This includes their physical and mental health, a healthy lifestyle, wellness and their quality of life. The service provides expert counseling and advice on a wide range of issues relating to mental, emotional, physical, financial and legal help. These issues include,

amongst others, depression, relationships, alcoholism, drug abuse, stress, debt, gambling, family problems, bereavement and health problems such as HIV/AIDS.

This programme is by no means known to the teaching fraternity. From the study it was found that only two teachers were aware of its existence, but didn't even know its name. The telephone counseling service is available 24 hours, seven days a week. A telephone call the other night to the service was unanswered. Subsequent phone calls and one to its director in the Department revealed that the EWP is presently busy with a campaign to popularize its services at all major education centres.

The Director admitted that since inception of the EWP they had an utilisation rate of only 3 %. The WCED employs 36000 teachers. The efficiency of the programme could not really be ascertained, since this is a pilot project and cannot be compared to any existing programme. The Director also stated that stress and anxiety accounted for 8. % of the total number of cases attended to for the last quarter which ended March 2006.

Teachers questioned said that they would only make use of such a service if it was localised closer to the area where they taught.

But this programme is evidently not preventative by nature of its stated objectives. Complementary to such a programme must be a project to individually investigate all schools where teachers complain of stress. The causes of stress should be addressed there. A task team consisting of specialist teachers, counselors, psychologists and managers going from school to school where high incidences of stress were reported comes to mind. Such a team would be able to fix the problems before they escalate and cause severe physical and mental damage to teachers.

More teachers and teaching assistants employed at schools would also go a long way in solving the numeracy and literacy problems.

A fourth way in which the Department can prevent such high levels of stress, is to adapt their training courses for teachers to allow for the changes that has taken place over the last few years. Prospective teachers should be trained in crowd control- which is in fact what most teachers have to do most of the time. Another training aspect that needs serious consideration is how to deal effectively with undisciplined learners who seem to have more legal rights than the teachers themselves. The rights and responsibilities of learners should be discussed and debated again at societal level, especially if the government wishes to attract more students in the hope of filling the massive shortage of qualified teachers we are witnessing already.

At the organizational level

Here programmes for effective leadership should be run for the whole management team. To improve staff relationships, courses on Conflict Management and Professional Career advancement would prove attractive and helpful. Regular team/staff- building excursions, however trite it may seem, still provides the opportunity for teachers to meet in a friendlier environment. A change of venue is sometimes all it takes to see things in perspective.

Management should be more than just instruments for downloading departmental rules and regulations. They should be able to assist teachers in all aspects of their daily work. Support programmes for novice teachers should be in place, as well as
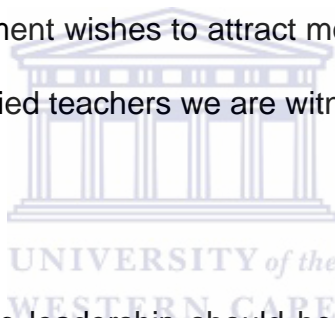
policy guidelines and organizational support at school, for those teachers feeling stressed.

With proper planning and strategizing for each eventuality that may arise throughout the year, it is definitely possible to steer away from the chaos prevalent daily at township schools. Crisis management is a short-term event, not the norm of everyday existence and source of soul scarring frustration that teachers have to endure.

Inventories on the resources of the school and its needs should be undertaken and steps to provide these resources speeded up.

The WCED has recently introduced some measures to address many of the above recommendations, like support programmes for principals and senior management. One such programme is the Human Capital Development Strategy for the province. (Media Release: 4 February 2007)

Unfortunately, these plans are struggling to get off the drawing board.

At the individual level teachers should be encouraged to work on and improve the different levels of their own lives. Not only to build their own professional career, but also to maintain a healthy balance between work and leisure. Their free time should be used to do something they are passionate about. They should make more free time for themselves.

Teachers should be more vigilant for the effects of stress on their own lives: to acknowledge that they sometimes do not cope well with the demands of teaching. They should not feel guilty or ashamed about not coping. Communicating their

concerns to whoever is willing to listen or assist can make a difference. To actively seek help from professionals should be no shame, but second nature.

But above all: this study has reaffirmed for this researcher that one should always strive to balance one's life-that one should be wary not to cross the thin line separating total commitment to one's work on the one hand, and becoming part of the problem that give rise to the stress that is plaguing the profession and threatens its nobility. It would be a sad day to find that the New Beginning of democracy that we all strived for has been paralysed by the fact that the builders and developers of a better tomorrow for our children, were forced to leave the profession for reasons that could have been prevented.
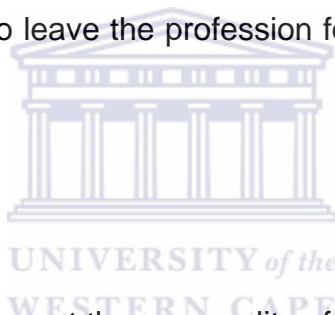
5.3 **Weakness in design**

This study did not take into account the personality of the teacher. Psychologists often classify people as Type A or Type B personalities, depending on a variety of factors. Whether these personality differences do play a role in the way teachers deal with stress, and to what extent, was not the focus of this study. It would have been interesting, at least, to have been aware of this personality classification before the study commenced. The impact of such personality differences on the way teachers themselves cope or learn to cope with stress in their working environment, could have brought a new dimension to the findings of this study.

5.4 Further research possibilities

During the process of writing up the findings of this particular study, it became apparent that the coping strategies or stress management options which are being promoted in the literature were in fact the very same strategies that the teachers in this study have also come to learn in their workplaces. Most teachers were aware of the different coping strategies. This warrants further research into why teachers, being aware of such strategies, still do not follow them. What hinders them from coping with the stress they endure daily when in fact they are intuitively aware of the means to end their stress?

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WCED Media Release: 27 August 2008. School violence reports.

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SURVEY ON STRESS IN TEACHING

INTRODUCTION

Hi, I am Godfrey Ahrendse. I am a teacher and presently registered at UWC for the Intercontinental Masters (ICM) in Adult Education. This research project is required to complete the degree. The focus of the research is how teachers learn strategies to cope with occupational stress.

The following questionnaire has been designed to measure teachers' response to occupational stress; how you deal with it and what strategies, if any, you have to alleviate your personal stress levels. Stress is a topic which has been much researched and for which there are many definitions. Generally speaking, occupational stress or work stress is regarded as a response to situations and circumstances that place special demands on the individual.

The answers to the questionnaire are strictly confidential and will remain anonymous. No names are requested, and there is no way in which any individual can be identified. It has been designed to gather information on groups of individuals.

There are two sections in all which gather information on: *Background* and *How you cope with stress.*

As the questionnaire is being completed in a work context, the results will naturally be used in a work application. The explicit intention of the research project is to indicate the potential sources and effects of stress the teaching profession, as well as the specific methods/ mechanisms/strategies teachers learned to use in order to cope with stress. These coping methods could be used beneficially by other teachers in similar stressed environments.

What we would like you to do

Answer all the questions – remember you are anonymous
Give your first and natural answer
Work quickly and efficiently through the questions
Base your answers on how you felt during the last three months
If you make a mistake, cross it out and provide your new answer
Check each section to make sure you have answered all the items
Place the completed questionnaire in the envelope provided, seal and promptly return to researcher.
Let us know if you would like details of the research results, or have any comments.
You may respond in Afrikaans if you prefer.

Completion of the questionnaire will take 45-60 minutes.

Thank you for your co-operation in this research project and for completing the questionnaire.

Godfrey Ahrendse
Telephone: 9039329/ 0849525864

QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The following questions are concerned with personal and background features about yourself and your job as a teacher.
The answers to these questions are crucial to the study and are for the purpose of statistical analysis only. THEY WILL REMAIN ANONYMOUS AND STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.

Please answer by circling the appropriate items.

Part A: Personal Particulars

1. Sex: Male/ Female

2. Age: ……….. years

Part B: Your Work History

1. How many years have you been teaching altogether?   …………….. years

2. How many years have you been teaching at this school? ……………….. years

3. What is your current job title?
   Principal/ Deputy Principal/ Head of department/ Assistant / Junior

4. What is your teaching status?
   Permanent/ Temporary/ Contract / Ex-permanent (i.e. V.S.P) teacher

5. What is the range of class sizes that you teach? …………………

6. What is the age range in your own class? …………………..

7. How many actual teaching hours do you have with the learners each week?….. hours

8 This translates to …………… periods per cycle , which have …………periods.

14. (a) How many subjects /learning areas do you teach?…………………

    (b) What is your experience at teaching these areas?……………years.

2

Section 2: Stress and how you deal with it

Please answer all the following questions honestly:
Write in N/A (Not Applicable) if you really feel the question isn't applicable to you.

1. How does teaching contribute to your stress levels?

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2. How/to what extent has stress affected your health physically, mentally, spiritually?

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3. What are the main sources of stress in your workplace?

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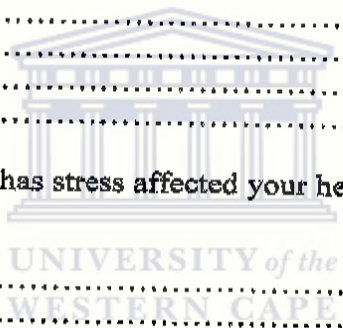
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4. In what ways does stress affect your teaching? In other words, how does it impact on you professionally?

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5. What strategies do you employ to minimize the effects of workload stress?

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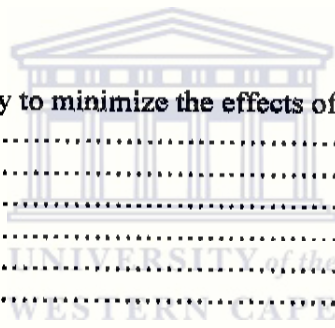
6. Do you seek advice from colleagues regarding the stress you experience? What is the nature of this advice?

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7. Many teachers say they speak to the senior teachers to get guidance on how to cope with their stress. Do you share this view/method? If so, how does this happen and what is the nature of the advice?

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8. (a) Do staff meetings provide opportunities for people to discuss matters relating to stress? Yes/No

   (b) If so, discuss how this can happen.

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9. (a) Are you a member of a staff support group (discussion circle/ clique,etc)? Yes/No
   (b) If Yes,
      how is membership determined by the support group- that is: how is a member inducted into the group? what are the criteria for acceptance?
   (c) How does the group discuss and deal with issues of stress-if at all?

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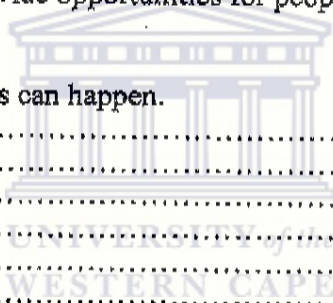
10. (a) Is there a clearly stated vision at your school? Yes/no
    (b) If yes, do you share and actively promote this vision? Yes/No
       Explain:...
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    (c) How does the lack of institutional (school-based) vision increase the levels of
       stress in educators?

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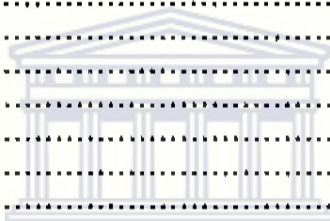
11. How does family and friends play a role in reducing your stress levels?

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12. What role does sport and other extra-mural activities play in reducing your
    stress levels?

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13. (a) What personal philosophy or strategy (-ies) guide you in reducing your stress
     levels, if any.

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(b) How did this come about/ Why or how did you learn to adopt this view?

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14. How do you deal with:
    (a) **a stressful situation in class?**

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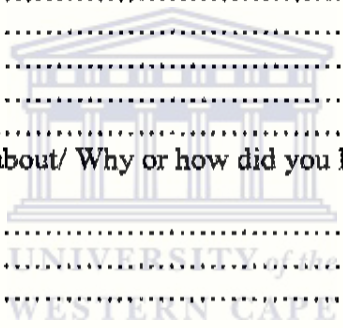
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(b) stress among staff members?

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(c) organizational stress created through (bad) management?

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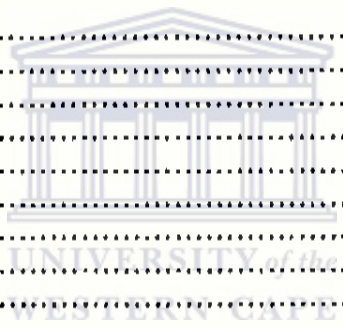
(d) stress created by governmental policies?

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15. Did you ever seek professional help? If so, how did this come about?

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16.   (a) Do you know of any programmes run by the WCED or any NGO to reduce
      teacher stress? (b) If so, how do they operate? (c) Have you approached them yet?
      (d)What services do they offer? (e)How can they be made more efficient?

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**_THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME AND EFFORT IN PARTAKING IN
THIS SURVEY. IT IS GREATLY APPRECIATED._**

UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE