

TEACHER STRESS IN PRIMARY
SCHOOLS AT ENSINGWENI CIRCUIT

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AT ENSINGWENI CIRCUIT

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ABSTRACT

The object of this study was to determine teacher stress in primary schools at Ensingweni Circuit. The first aim was to determine through literature the characteristics of stress, its causes and effects. The second aim was to conduct an empirical investigation into stress among educators at Ensingweni Circuit. The last aim was to present finds, and recommendations, which emanate from the study.

A questionnaire was developed by the investigators, which measured the extent to which educators experienced stress in their working environment. By using the questionnaire the investigator was interested in determining which teaching stressors educators found most stressful. Some 71% females and 29% males educators of primary schools at Ensingweni Circuit filled out questionnaires.

The teaching stressors which this sample of educators found stressful, in order of most to least stressful, were curriculum changes, work load pressures, job insecurity, poor relationship with colleagues, reward and recognition, learners discipline problems, poor rapport with management and role ambiguity.

In terms of factors associated with teacher stress, the results showed that a combination of outside and inside were associated with teacher stress. In terms of inside factors, organisational stressors and classroom stressors were associated with teacher stress. In terms of outside stressors minimal general life stressors were also found to be associated with teacher stress. The problems educators viewed as most stressful are consistent with other studies on teacher stress, namely policy changes,

time-workload pressures and classroom discipline. These studies were conducted by Bernard (1989) Gold & Roth (1993) and Cole & Walker (1989).

The last chapter of this study recommends a variety of strategies that could be employed by educators to alleviate stress in teaching.

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M C Maphalala
ESIKHAWINI
MAY 2002

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my mother Makhosazana (MaNtumba), my father Mvuseni Hezekiel and my grandmother Basakaze Tryphina (MaHlongwane) for their love and wonderful support they have shown to me throughout my education. To my son Andile, and daughter Anathi.

This work is finally and most especially dedicated to my evergreen wife Nqobile kaMgabhi for the love, encouragement and untiring support she gave me during the course of this study.

DECLARATION

I, MNCEDISI CHRISTIAN MAPHALALA hereby declare that this work is my own work both in conception and execution and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signed by Maphalala on the 23rd
day of MAY 2002.

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CHAPTER ONE

1. ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Stress is an organisational problem, which can affect persons in any social environment, be it work place, home or church. Like other people in their organisations, educators are prone to stress because of the nature of their work. The causes of stress can either be internal or external to individual.

These days, circumstances both internal and external to what happens in the classroom make teaching a stressful experience. There are decisions made regarding the process or reorganisation of education and changes in instructional process. Such initiatives may have a negative effect on the educator. Farber (1983:281) states that it is often the case that changes being imposed on the school and the educator are not those which the educator believes are in the interest of learners, his or her effectiveness or job satisfaction. Not only are the decisions and policies often demanding from an educator's point of view, but he or she may have had little input into and influence on the nature of these decisions and changes of an attitudinal and behavioral nature which may place demands on educators.

According to Van der Westhuisen (1991:327), the increasing demands made on the schools and educators have led to an alarming escalation of stress and professional burnout as career risks for those in the teaching profession. A major concern with teacher stress in schools is that prolonged experience of stress can precipitate both mental and physical ill-health (Walker & Cole, 1989:28).

In schools, teacher stress is a problem because of its effect on job performance. This can include educator's leave of absence taken to cope with stress, resultant ill-health, a lowered level of job satisfaction and commitment and impaired quality of classroom teaching. In the latter case the educator's rapport with the learners and colleagues can easily be affected as he or she experiences high levels of stress.

Because stress is an issue, it serves as a subject of research. This chapter looks at the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, definition of terms, method of investigation and delimitation of the study.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Teaching makes immense demands on the mind and feelings of an educator. There is a constant danger of role over-load and the educator must be aware of personal stress (Laar, 1989:42).

Farber (1991:44) states that "It is to the teachers that we entrust our children and thus our

future". Such statements may put pressure on the educators. As educators share the responsibility with a multiplicity of role players, role conflict is a distinct possibility.

Teaching today is harder than it has ever been . The need for change and resultant demands make teaching in this millennium a very stressful occupation. In many schools learner behavior continues to deteriorate. On the other hand educators are blamed for not performing to expectations. They may be getting little support and a great deal of criticism.

At the present time pressures seem to be particularly intense. The rate of change is very fast and confusing. Various initiatives are introduced in our education system regarding transformation. These include outcomes-based education, curriculum restructuring, personnel provisioning norms, change of admission age, rationalisation of staff and transformation of management and governance. Educators feel that their achievements remain largely unacknowledged both financially and symbolically. Under these circumstances teaching is not only a challenging job but also holds the possibility for a considerable work-related stress.

Research has shown that the incidents of stress among educators emanate from break-down of discipline in the school, role ambiguity and conflict, lack of rewards and recognition, poor interpersonal relationships with colleagues, work overload and job insecurity (Walker and Cole:1989:290; Telfer & Swannt: 1986:57; Glaxton 1989:43).

Our education system has placed the educational and emotional welfare of learners first and the true needs and morale of the practioners who deliver this service seem to be negated. With

transformation taking place at a high speed, no measures have been put in place to assist educators to cope with the new challenges that they are facing. This could promote the escalation of stress in the teaching profession.

Stress may affect career motivation and diminish effectiveness and job satisfaction of many loyal and gifted educators. It is for this reason that this phenomenon cannot be ignored hence, the present research project. This study specifically investigates teacher stress in primary schools at Ensingweni Circuit.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are the following:

- i) To determine through literature the characteristics of stress, its causes and effects.
- ii) To conduct an empirical investigation into stress among educators at Ensingweni Circuit.
- iii) To present findings and recommendations which emanate from the study.

1.4 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following terms are defined in the study:

A. STRESS

According to Greenberg (1984:2) stress is the physical, mental or emotional reaction from an individual's response to environmental tensions, conflicts, pressures and the other stimuli. Stress is much more than nervous tension or anxiety. An individual's reaction to stress may be clear to the person experiencing it as well as those who are close to him or her, but it may lie so deep that the person who experiences it only really becomes aware of it when he develops an illness as a result of this condition. It is important to note that stress can either be negative or positive. Positive stress is termed "eustress" and negative stress is termed "distress". This research looks at the negative form of stress.

B. STRESSOR

Berry & Houston (1983:379) define stressor as any demand either physical or psychological encountered in the course of daily life. Lazarus & Cohen (1977: 178) classified stressors according to their severity, to the numbers of people affected by them, to their chronicity, and to the amount of adaptation required. This yielded three classes of stressors:

- 1) Cataclysmic phenomena or sudden, powerful events that affect many people, such as natural disasters.
- 2) Powerful events that affect fewer people, such as family crises.
- 3) Daily hassles or stable, repetitive problems of daily life, such as job dissatisfaction and poor human relations with colleagues.

1.5 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study focuses on post level one (PL1) educators of fifteen primary schools at Ensingweni Circuit in the Mthunzini District. Mthunzini is one of the five districts, which fall under Empangeni region. There are four circuits in the Mthunzini district, namely LINDELIHLE, ONGOYE, ISIKHALA SENKOSI AND ENSINGWENI.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses the descriptive approach into data collection. The descriptive approach is chosen because of its relevance in describing systematically the facts and characteristics of an area of interest, factually and accurately. Of the various types of descriptive approaches, this study used the survey. According to Cohen and Manion (1989:97) surveys gather data at a particular point in time with the intention of (a) describing the nature of existing conditions, or (b) identifying standards against which existing conditions can be compared, or (c) determining the relationships that exist between specific events. Ensingweni Circuit has fifteen primary schools under its jurisdiction, these schools range in size from six to seventeen educators.

The total number of educators in these schools is 279 with 81 (29%) males and 198 (71%) females. From the population of 279 educators, a sample of 168 (60%) of the population was finally chosen. Since female educators constituted 71% of the population and the male educators 29%, a stratified random sampling was used to provide for a more balanced representation of sub-groups in the population.

Two separate lists were compiled, one for female educators and the other for male educators, with the name of the school written next to each educator's name. The lists were drawn alphabetically with the use of educator's surname. The first 120 (71%) female educators and first 48 (29%) male educators were drawn from their respective lists. This added up to a sample of 168 educators.

The stratified random sampling was used to give more representative sample than simple random sampling. In simple random sampling certain strata such as gender in this case may by chance be over- or under- represented in the sample. The major advantage of stratified random sampling is that it guarantees representation of defined groups in the population

This study used questionnaires and formal interviews as data gathering instruments. The questionnaire was designed for educators. It consisted of two sections, namely A & B. Section A of the questionnaire was used for the demographic data which included teaching experience, qualifications, gender and employment status (temporary or permanent). Section B consisted of questions which were mainly concerned with stress in relation to work as well as stress outside the working environment that might put pressure on the educator.

The formal interviews were conducted telephonically with the subjects. The interviews included questions dealing with individual's current perception of their work, and coping strategies that teachers employ when they are faced with stressful situation in their working environment.

1.7 PLAN OF STUDY

CHAPTER ONE

This chapter consists of: introduction, statement of the problem, definition of terms, purpose of the study, delimitation of the study, research methodology and plan of study.

CHAPTER TWO

Chapter two provides a conceptual framework for the study, based on literature.

CHAPTER THREE

Chapter three consists of the description of research instrument and research design.

CHAPTER FOUR

This chapter comprises detailed analysis and interpretation of data.

CHAPTER FIVE

Chapter five gives a synthesis and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Within recent years the teaching profession has been subjected to a great deal of public scrutiny and, in certain quarters, a great deal of unfavourable press coverage. Teachers have been scapegoated as being primarily responsible for the fall in educational standards and the lack of achievement and motivation of students. This 'teacher bashing' resulted in some teachers being unwilling to admit their real profession at social gatherings for fear of having to defend themselves. This poses enormous stress on teachers. The objective of this chapter is to give a brief review of literature.

2.2 BACKGROUND TO RESEARCH IN STRESS

Dr Hans Selye a leading authority on the subject of stress, in the early years since he undertook his initial research, sciences knowledge of the biology of stress has been complemented by an ever broader and deeper understanding of psychological, social and environmental factors that create and perpetuate stress in humans as well as animals. As this knowledge has increased, so too have the factors implicated in the stress production (Gordon 1987:16). Economic pressure, crime, social and psychological alienation and

threats from the environment have all proliferated, pushing the cumulative level of stress ever higher.

According to Gordon (1987:17), in the early years these stressors, as well as pathways through which they act have been identified, classified and quantified in a variety of ways. It is now known that death and divorce, a hateful job or a crowded, crime filled neighbour can act on the brain as powerfully as poison or physical pain, producing the biological changes that Selye and Cannon described.

According to Gordon (1987:17) it has been discovered during the same period of time that these and other stressors play an important role in producing and maintaining the majority of the chronic debilitating conditions from which people in the developed countries are likely to suffer. These illnesses include heart disease, arthritis, diabetes, hypertension, depression, asthma, insomnia, headaches, backaches and cancer.

The studies on the causes of stress and on the kinds of personalities that are likely to develop particular illnesses have helped to point the way to the new methods for alleviating stress. For example, as investigators traced the pathways by which emotional tension could be translated into a biological disturbance, some began to suspect that, conversely feelings of emotional well-being could be instrumental in preventing or revealing a biological disturbance. Indeed, research has provided evidence for this theory (Gordon 1987:17).

Positive emotional experiences, a variety of relaxation therapies including meditation and positive mental imaging, have all proved useful in reducing stress and alleviating stress-related illnesses. Similarly, deliberate attempts to change one's attitude or social support system have been shown to have positive effects upon stress-related conditions. For example, widowers generally experience high levels of social alienation and loneliness. Both of these feelings are now known to increase stress and make widowers more vulnerable to heart attacks than are married men of the same age and general status. Therefore, one health promotion strategy that has been developed for these men entails more frequent contact with health care providers and membership in a mutual support group in which potential cardiac patients are committed to helping one another. It turns out that more contact with other people and a more positive attitude towards life do seem to have some value in lowering the risk of illness and premature death in widowers.

2.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF STRESS IN TODAY'S WORLD

According to Beehr & Bhagat (1985:6) stress at work affects employee behaviour in adverse ways. Some of the effects associated with stress are neurosis, coronary heart disease, alimentary conditions such as dyspepsia and ulcers, cancer, asthma, hypertension, backaches and the use of alcohol and drugs. It is believed that stress can cause these problems or at least make them more severe. The list offered here is quite broad and diverse, and that fits with Selye's (1982) description of stress as having non-specific results on the individual. It is in part this very generality of effects that leads to the conclusion that stress is indeed important in our everyday lives.

In terms of its effect on the economy of the nation, stress at work seems to play a very important role. For example, the results of stress might be seen in over use of medical and mental health facilities due to increased illnesses. In the United States it has been estimated that the economic cost of peptic ulcers and cardio-vascular disease, to name but two potential effects of stress, is around \$45 billion annually Beehr & Bhagat (1985:6). Greenwood (1978) as quoted by Beehr & Bhagat (1985:6) has estimated that the cost of executive stress alone is in the billions of dollars. Most such estimates are based upon the direct costs of illnesses. In addition, it is probable that there is some additional cost due to decreased organisational effectiveness of employees who show up for work but who are operating at reduced levels of effectiveness.

Beehr & Bhagat (1985:6) state that another indication of the importance placed upon stress is that some worker compensation laws now make an employing organisation liable for employees' mental as well as physical illnesses if they are due to or made more severe by any aspect of employment. Thus, the legal machinery may force even those organisations that would rather ignore the problem to see it as important.

2.4 DISTRESS AND EUSTRESS

Musikanth (1996:1) states that, *although the major focus in stress research has been on the experimental production and treatment of stress-related illnesses, Selye and those who followed him have also been interested in creative aspects of stress and in the variable*

responsibilities of different people to the same kinds of stress as a common factor of all life as well as a potential contributor to illnesses.

Stress was an integral part of change and change was of course the essence of life, the force propelling people out of their families and into the world, away from parents, siblings, spouses, friends and children. Growth and development could not exist without stress nor could creativity or innovation in art, science or commerce, nor indeed could life itself.

Selye (1982) distinguished between distress and eustress; both subsets were characterised by the same apparent physiological reaction, but one tended to lead to physical illness, whereas the latter produced a state of well-being and satisfaction. The differences, Selye recognised, were in the match between the stressor and the person the stress affected; and more particularly in the differing attitudes of people subjected to the same stress. An electoral campaign might be an overwhelming burden to a person with an introverted, artistic temperament and a prolonged high to a prospective office holder, rigorous examination could be seen as a welcome experience by one student and as a frightening trauma by another. These differences would be reflected in the individual's reaction to the common stressor.

According to Gordon (1978:19) the early researchers on stress have elaborated and refined concepts of stress and its causation and the biological pathways by which it manifests itself. At the same time, clinicians have used these discoveries to help them

respond to implied challenge that Selye issued some years ago. They are learning to focus more and more on humans' remarkable and newly rediscovered capacity to alter their physiological response and challenge, to transform distress into eustress.

Musikanth (1996:2) state that stress may be viewed as positive or negative. The following table highlights the differences in 'eustress' and 'distress' by comparing the physical and emotional characteristics of each.

Figure 2.1 Differences in eustress and distress by comparing the physical and emotional characteristics of each

COMPARISON OF THE PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF 'EUSTRESS' AND 'DISTRESS'	
<i>Eustress</i>	<i>Distress</i>
Physical fitness	Unfit
Increased energy	Fatigue
Improved concentration	Poor concentration
Efficient memory	Poor memory
Healthy libido	Low libido
Calm and relaxed	Muscular tension
Healthy eating patterns	Overeating/loss of appetite
Good sleeping habits	Insomnia

COMPARISON OF THE EMOTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF 'EUSTRESS' AND 'DISTRESS'	
<i>Eustress</i>	<i>Distress</i>
Being decisive	Being indecisive
Being productive	Being under-productive
Having a sense of humour	Lacking a sense of humour
Being in control	Being out of control
Being clear thinking	Having confused thinking
Being positive	Being negative
Being relaxed	Being anxious/irritable
Not worrying	Worrying
Being active	Being passive
Being motivated	Being unmotivated

Source: Musikanth S (1996:3); Stress matters: Durban: William Waterman Publishers.

2.5 SOURCES OF STRESS

Farber (1983:83) state that stress and stressors can be viewed as developing from three distinctive sources, factors with the individual, socio-cultural environment and organisational factors.

2.5.1 Factors within the individual

One source of potential stressors is within the individual. The subjectivity of burnout is reflective of the frequent observation that some individuals show greater or lesser tolerance for stress.

2.5.2 Socio-cultural environment

Social and cultural change produces stress for individuals and for organisations as they attempt to adapt. Sometimes even positive social change, such as increased educational opportunities for teachers and unionisation can produce stress as individuals and organisations try to adjust to new relationships. All social problems we experience such as marital instability, suicide, alcohol, drug abuse, changes in quality of life and economic uncertainty, affect public service workers not only as individuals but in their professional relationships as well.

2.5.3 The relationship between the individual and the organisation

According to Farber (1983:84), the less frequently cited area of stress is the relationship between the individual and the organisation in which he/she structures work role. Farber further states that recent research on effective organisational response to environmental uncertainty clearly indicates that the organisation's ability to achieve the appropriate

match between structure and environment is a key factor in reducing the stress effect such as uncertainty on employees.

Administrative policies and procedures, centralisation and decentralisation of decision making, task organisation and performance measures and a number of other organisational structure – specific factors have all been shown to produce stressors in the work place that are equally as dysfunctional as the more dramatic and the widely perceived environmental factors.

Thus, while the inherent danger in the job of a policeman adds drama to the stress provoking imagery of his environment, the structural features of police work are directly related to perceived stress as well as job satisfaction. According to Farber (1984:85) . similar analysis have been made to other public service occupations.

In conducting a research study that looked at psychological aspects of stress in person – organisation relationships, Farber (1983:85) found that the burnout syndrome is much more a phenomenon of stress in the person – organisation relationships than it is a result of problems in the professional – client relationship. For example, disruptive students create the stress that leads to teacher burnout only if the ideology or sense of community provided by the organisation is insufficient to withstand the threat, or the reality of insult or injury from the environment.

2.6 THEORIES ON STRESS

According to Berry & Houston (1983:372) the issue of stress has been studied in several fields, including medicine, clinical psychology and education. Stress research and theoretical work has taken a number of different routes and this has resulted in some confusing terminology.

However, a conceptual richness has come from this cross-disciplinary work. In this section the focus is on the discussion of some of the better known theoretical models that address the process of stress in general.

2.6.1 *Selye's general adaptation syndrome*

According to Berry & Houston (1983:372), Hans Selye was an endocrinologist who devoted most of his career to study of the physiological process of stress. His theoretical model has taken a position of major importance in current thinking. In his model, Selye proposed that stress is the body's general defensive reaction to a stressor. The underlying physiological basis of stress is the prolonged activation of certain hormonal and nervous system mechanisms. The effects of stress are proposed to vary according to an individual's constitutional make up. For example, a person who has a stress, vulnerable heart is likely to develop coronary problems, whereas someone with a sensitive stomach will tend to have ulcers (Berry & Houston 1983:372).

The general adaptation syndrome is a concept that Selye used to describe the process of stress. The general adaptation syndrome is proposed to consist of three more or less distinct phases namely, the initial alarm reaction, the resistance phase and the exhaustion phase.

During the alarm stage, the body mobilises for action through various changes in the nervous and hormonal systems. For example, the adrenaline level and heart and respiratory rates increase. At this stage the individual can cope with the stressor by means of a fight-or-flight reaction. The alarm stage is a healthful response to demanding situations. If the stress is relieved, the body returns to its normal state. It is only when stress progresses to the next stages that there are likely to be more serious consequences. During the resistance stage, certain superficial signs suggest that the body has returned to normal. For example, there are signs that the body is still in a state of defense. In particular hormonal levels remain high. Finally, if the stress continues, the person enters the exhaustion stage. The bodily processes begin to break down and illness occurs. If the stress is not disrupted, the person will die.

Selye (1982:11) believes that our stores of adaptation energy are limited and not fully replaced. He uses the analogy of a bank account in which only withdrawals are made. Thus life stress depletes us. "Every biological activity causes wear and tear, it leaves some irreversible chemical scars, which accumulate to constitute the signs of aging". This message is clear: if one wants to stay young looking, one should keep out of fast track.

2.6.2 The stressful life events theory

Holmes and Rabe as quoted by Berry & Houston (1983:375) agree with Selye that life events vary more in terms of the size of the impact than the type of impact.

These researchers set out to identify common life events that might be expected to cause stress reactions. They wanted to develop a method of gauging the size of these reactions.

What emerged from their work was the stressful life events model. Briefly this model suggests that a stress reaction occurs whenever an individual experiences something that requires an adaptive response or coping behaviour. The stress producing event can be positive or negative, it involves any aspect of the individual's life, including family, occupation and economy. Life events are proposed to vary in their ability to cause stress. Some require more coping behaviour than others do. The effects of stressful life events are proposed to be additive and the overall size of the effects determines the amount of work that the person must do to cope. The concept of "social readjustment" is used to refer to coping. This is the extent to which one must make changes in response to the stressful life occurrence.

In conjunction with the model, Holmes and his associates devised the Social readjustment rating scale (see figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2 The Social Readjustment Rating Scale

RANK	LIFE EVENT	MEAN VALUE
	Death of spouse	100
	Divorce	73
	Marital separation	65
	Death of close family member	63
	Marriage	50
	Fired at work	47
	Retirement	45
	Change in health of family member	44
	Pregnancy	40
	Sex difficulties	39
	Change in financial state	38
	Change to different line of work	36
	Change in number of arguments with spouse	35
	Foreclosure of mortgage or loan	30
	Change in responsibilities at work	29
	Outstanding personal achievement	28
	Change in living conditions	25
	Trouble with boss	23
	Change in work hours or conditions	20
	Change in social activities	19
	Mortgage or loan less than \$10 000	17
	Change in sleeping habits	16
	Change in eating habits	15
	Vacation	13
	Christmas	12
	Minor violations of the law	11

Source: The Social Readjustment Rating Scale in Psychomatic Research, Vol 2 by T H Holmes and R H Rabe. Pergamon press, Oxford, England, p. 368

This scale resulted from research in which a life chart was used to gather biographical information about the subject's medical histories. Holmes & Musanda and Holmes & Rabe as quoted by Berry & Houston (1983:375) believed that stressful life events play a role in causing illness, and medical histories should provide evidence of this.

Study of lives of a group of hospitalised patients prior to the onset of their current illnesses showed that the patients had experienced clusters of life events requiring some coping response. These events were social and interpersonal incidents involving different aspects of the individual's life. Some events were found to be strongly associated with the onset of the disease, whereas others seemed to have only a mild impact.

Correlation between these events and illnesses were used to weigh the life events included in the social readjustment rating scale. The individuals who scored high on the scale were those with more and more serious life events; and they were predicted to be more likely to become ill. For example the death of a spouse had a ranking of 100 stress points, whereas minor infractions of the law had a value of 11 points on a social readjustment rating scale. According to social readjustment scale work-related stress such as change in working conditions, trouble with boss and change in responsibilities at work are ranked 20, 23 and 29 respectively. This ranking is not as high as family or other personal problems.

2.6.3 Person-Environment fit Theory

French and his associates (1982) after years of study on how the social world affects an individual's social adjustment, physical as well as mental health, developed the person-environment fit theory during the 1970's.

This theory is oriented specifically towards stress at work. A central thrust of this theory is that the resources and demands of the work environment may or may not fit the needs, goals and abilities of the employee. When work demands do not fit the person's abilities and needs, the individual will show signs of strain which will eventually lead to illness. The primary focus of this model was on identifying the kinds of conditions which are likely to result in strain. (French et. al.1982).

There are four basic concepts in this theory: organisational stress, strain, coping and social support. Organisational stress is defined as the potentially threatening conditions of the job or stressors. Important organisational stress conditions include job complexity, workload, role ambiguity and under use of ability. However, it is not that the person simply responds to the work environment. An interaction is proposed between the person and the environment. The individual's perception of the stress condition and the extent to which he or she feels personally capable of meeting the demand must be taken into account. Strain is an unhealthy response that a person makes to a stressful condition. For example, physiological responses, such as high blood pressure, or behavioural characteristics, such as drug uses are evidence of strain. According to Berry & Houston (1983:376) strain encompasses both long-term results of stress and immediate stress reaction.

Coping is defense against stress. Both physiological and behavioural coping mechanisms are involved. The normal physiological fight or flight response may or may not be an appropriate reaction, depending on the stressor. For example, one cannot always cope by

attacking or running away from a threat. In social situation, this response is often inappropriate and the energy available for it must be inhibited. Thus, inhibition of the fight or flight response may also be an attempt to cope with social stress. Social support, which is the emotional support that comes from interpersonal interaction, is proposed to buffer stress and strain.

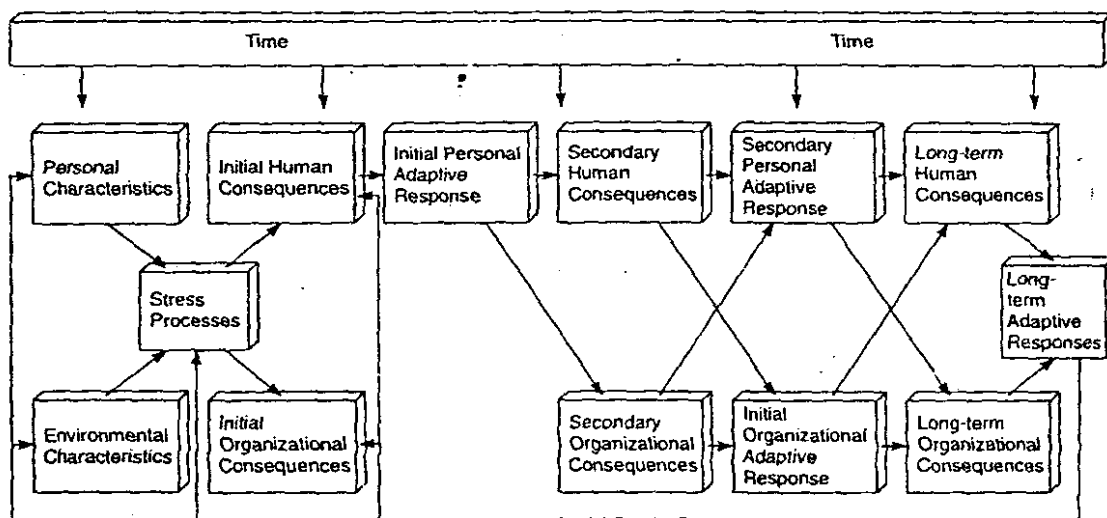
2.6.4 A facet model of the job stress sequence

Beehr and Newman (1978) developed a model to identify and organise all relevant facets or components of job stress. The facet model incorporates more than 150 variables that either have been studied or were suggested by research as being stress-related. These variables are categorised into several different groups or facets, as depicted in Figure 2.3. The personal facet includes any personal characteristics that can have an impact on how a person experiences stress. Psychological conditions, such as personality and physical conditions, such as fitness are examples of personal characteristics are proposed to interact with environmental variables through a process that involves perception and cognitive evaluation of the stressful situations. The environmental facet refers to the work environment and includes job demands, role demands, such as role overload, organisational characteristics, such as the size of an organisation and structure and the external demands such as customer or stakeholders. Both personal and organisational consequences are proposed to result from the person-environment interaction process.

Human consequences include effects on psychological functioning such as anxiety; effects on physical health, such as gastro-intestinal problems, and effects on overt behaviour such as drug use and aggression. Organisational consequences of stress include such behaviours as absenteeism, turn over and productivity losses.

The adaptive responses proposed to follow these consequences represent various attempts to handle the stress. For example, employees can make adaptive responses by seeking social support. Organisations can make adaptive responses by changing work schedules. The third parties can make adaptive responses by offering treatment.

Figure 2.3 *The General Facet Model of Stress showing the sequence of stress over time.*



Berry & Houston (1983:37)

Beehr & Newman (1978) added an element of time to these facets of stress in order to show that stress is a sequential process (See figure 2.3). First, the initial experience of stress is felt and it has immediate human consequences. Following this, the person makes

some initial adaptive responses aimed at alleviating the stress. If over time, these initial responses are not successful, secondary consequences to the person and to the organisation will occur. Next, the person will make secondary adaptive responses. Because the stress problem is now apparent to the organisation, organisational adaptive responses are initiated as well.

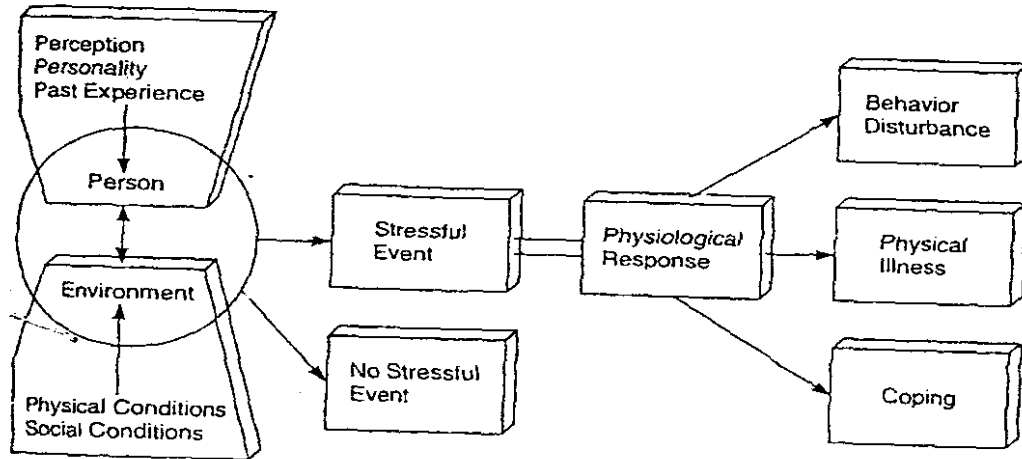
Again, if time does not show these adaptive responses to be successful, then long-term human and organisational consequences will occur. These can affect the health of both the person and the organisation. The consequences are followed by long-term adaptive responses, such as relatively permanent stress management programming. In turn these adaptive responses may have effects on the potential of the person in the future.

2.6.5 *A general perspective on stress*

According to Berry & Houston (1983:378) the theoretical models described thus far are important in current research and they are typical of the current thinking on stress. In several ways, these theories are complementary. First, they all include a person-environment interaction. Life events are considered stressful to the extent that the person experiences them as such.

What determines whether the person will perceive them as stressful depends on his or her past experience, capabilities and characteristic ways of viewing and interacting with the world. Second, the theories recognise stress as a physiological phenomenon.

Figure 2.4 *A general perspective on stress.*



Berry & Houston (1983:376)

The physiological response will depend on:

- (i) the degree on which the person perceives a condition as threatening
- (ii) the manner of coping that is physiologically characteristic of the individual; and
- (iii) the extent to which his or her particular physiological system and organs are vulnerable.

Past learning of coping strategies are likely to affect the physiological response and the particular stress-related illness that may develop.

Berry & Houston (1983:379) discuss stress from the perspective of a facet design. This allows them to organise the research in such a fashion that a number of important

variables can be shown in relation to one another. Using suggestions from Beehr and Newman's theories discussed earlier, Berry & Houston (1983:375) have structured the stress phenomenon as shown in Figure 2.4. First, a person-environment interaction determines whether or not a stressful event will occur. The environment consists of both physical and social conditions. Personal variables include perception and cognition: the learning that occurs through experience and personality. These variables account for some individual differences in how people assess situations as threatening. In Figure 2.4, the physiological response is connected to the stressful event. The physiological response may lead to any of three directions, namely, coping, stress-related illness and behaviour disturbance. With or without coping efforts, illness and behavioural problems are likely to occur.

2.7 STRESSORS

According to Berry and Houston (1983:379) several reviewers have attempted to organise the variables that function as stressors. For example, Lazarus and Cohen (1977) classified stressors according to their severity, to the numbers of people affected by them, to their chronicity and to the amount of adaptation required. This yielded three classes of stressors, namely;

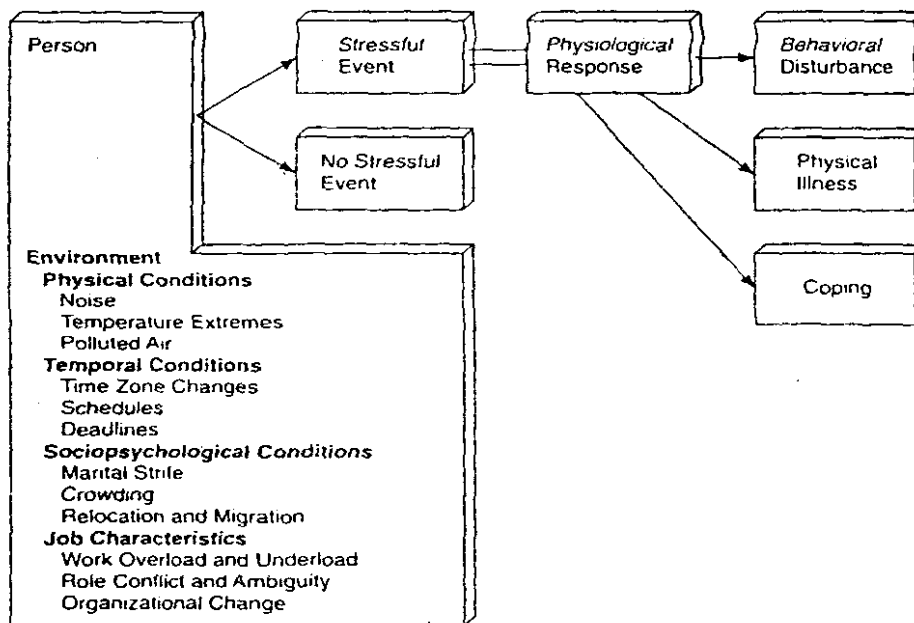
- (i) cataclysmic phenomena or sudden, powerful events that affect many people, such as natural disasters
- (ii) powerful events that affect fewer people, such as family crises; and

- (iii) daily hassles or stable, repetitive problems of daily life, such as job dissatisfaction and commuting.

Another way to categorise stressors is by their own particular nature. Some stressors are physical in nature, such as air pollution. Others are psychological, such as having one's personal space invaded. Some conditions probably are perceived universally as being stressors, such as natural disasters. Others are likely to be defined by a culture. For example, the density required before living space is experienced as crowded is likely to vary amongst cultures (Singer & Baum, 1981).

Stressors at work are as varied as they are in other areas of life (See Figure 2.5). Some stressors are conditions of the physical work environment.

Figure 2.5 *Environmental stressors that affect the worker.*



Other stressors are part of the temporal aspects of work, such as time pressures and schedules. Stressors can also be socio-psychological in nature. Relocation, crowding and marital strife are potential stressors for many people. Some of these conditions are part of the work place and others follow people from home to work. The job itself can contain stressors, such as work overload and lack of autonomy.

2.8 REVIEW OF STUDIES IN TEACHER STRESS

Various studies on teacher stress have been conducted. According to Kyriacou as quoted by Cole and Walker (1989:27) there has been a steady increase in interest in occupational stress among schoolteachers. Such level of discussion and research currently taking place makes teacher stress one of the major areas of attention within education.

While great strides have been made in understanding the nature of stress in teaching and the major sources of stress facing teachers, there is still along way to go in developing strategies and techniques for reducing levels of stress in schools (Cole & Walker, 1989:27).

The study conducted by Kyriacou, 1989, identified sources of teacher stress which appeared to fall in six major categories, namely, *poor motivation in pupils*, *pupil in-discipline*, *poor working conditions*, *time pressures*, *low status* and *conflicts with colleagues*.

The learners' poor attitudes towards school and their lack of motivation have constantly been identified as a major source of stress in certain studies (e.g. Laughlin, 1984; Payne and Furnham, 1987). It is probably the effort involved in teaching such learners on a regular basis that forms the single most important source of stress. While actual in-discipline is also a major area of stress, in-discipline by learners can be dealt with by most teachers most of the time without undue stress. But in some schools and for some teachers this may not be the case. The problem of poorly motivated learners, however, is a more serious and in some ways harder state of affairs to deal with.

Poor working conditions include such problems as inadequate teaching facilities, poor staff room facilities, and the list could be longer. (Dewe 1986; Dunham, 1984; Kyricou & Sutcliffe, 1978). Time pressures refer to the general level of demands on teachers with very short period of time. Indeed, the variety of demands made on a teacher in a typical school day, often with tight deadlines attached to them, make this aspect of teaching a major area of stress (Dewe, 1986; Laughlin, 1984).

Low status has to do with the teachers' perceptions that their profession is held in low esteem by the wider society. This problem is reflected in the level of salaries for teachers and how teaching is discussed by the wider society, particularly through the media. In South Africa there is little doubt that the pay disputes between teacher unions and the government and the criticism leveled on teachers in some newspapers contributes to the lowering of morale within the profession. This is of great concern, since professional self-esteem appears to act as a buffer between stress at work and the likelihood of

precipitating stress-related illness. Some studies have indicated that situation which undermines the teachers' professional self-esteem and identity make teachers much vulnerable to teacher burnout. (Kremer & Hofman, 1985; Dewe 1986).

Conflict with colleagues has also been reported as a major area of stress (Maracco et al, 1982). Such conflicts can range from purely academic disagreements to those arising from exercise of managerial direction. According to (Gold and Roth 1993:6) there are a variety of factors, which contribute to the stress, demoralisation, and dropout of teachers.

These include student discipline and apathy, lack of personal support, insufficient financial support, pressure from the reform movement, lack of community support, poor image of the profession, role ambiguity, and so on.

A study conducted by Otto (1986) using a wide range of schools and teachers has indicated stressors in the area of the work role (e.g. work load, class sizes, administrative demands); role conflict and ambiguity (e.g. conflicting demand by management); school community conflicts, (teachers role as counselor, etc); lack of recognition; poor physical environment and resources (e.g. noise, geographic isolation); lack of control and decision making power (e.g. bureaucratic structure), and poor communication as well as emotional demands of teaching (e.g. its complexity, high quality teaching performance, dealing with students of different backgrounds, culture and gender).

Punch and Tuettemann (1990) found amongst Australia secondary school teachers, job-related factors which conduced to stress. These were perceived lack of efficacy/achievement, inadequate access to facilities, lack of collegial support, excess with societal expectations, lack of influence, student misbehaviour, lack of praise and recognition. The teachers' responses to their working environment were often gender related. Tuettemann and Punch (1992) have reported on evidence which shows that perceived level of influences and autonomy and perceived level of efficacy and achievement (which are associated with control of the work environment) can have an ameliorating effect on the reported level of teachers' psychological distress.

For their study Manthei & Soloman (1988) reported seven stress factors: pupil recalcitrance, poor remuneration, curriculum demand, low professional recognition, poor working conditions, community antagonism and time demands. Borg, et. Al. (1991) on the other hand reported that their sample of primary school teachers rated problems with time and resources, lack of professional recognition, pupil misbehaviour and poor relationships as major occupational stressors.

The picture can become somewhat blurred, however, when it is realised that the teaching context for example teachers' background, sex, experience, teaching load, class composition, school, teaching subjects, workload and lack of satisfaction, have been found to all directly affect a teacher's stress level (Hodge, 1992; Smith & Bourke, 1992). Research shows that the sources of teacher stress vary and that factors such as those

found by Tuetteman & Punch (1992) previously mentioned, namely perceived level of efficacy and achievement, are mitigating factors that may lead to inconsistent findings.

Research, including that of Bernard (1990) shows that the stress that a teacher experiences outside of teaching can contribute to teacher stress. The more stress the teacher brings with to his or her work, the less his/her tolerance will be to cope with organisaitonal and classroom stressors. Bernard (1990:13) further states that common general life stressors include death of a loved one, divorce, serious illness of a member of the family relationship breakdown, financial problems, personal injury or illness, increase in family arguments, pregnancy, birth of a child and change in residence.

Research has shown that there is a strong relationship between he number of these negative events in the teacher's life and stress-related illness.

When changes are imposed on a school from outside, the potential for teacher stress increases. Whether it is the Department of Education or school governing body or some other body which imposes change, the research clearly indicates that when the rate of change imposed on a school is too great, teachers will demonstrate increased job stress and dissatisfaction. In particular, the amount or quantity of change imposed, as well as the degree of uncertainty and ambiguity of the goals of the changes, will aggravate or add to pre-existing levels of job stress.

In an article on burnout (1976:16-22), Maslach allows the spotlight to fall more specifically on the attitude and behavioural changes that take place in its victims, when she states that it basically boils down to a “loss of concern for people with whom one is working and that it is especially a reaction to job related stress”. Her research has indicated that a point is unavoidably reached where reactions and behavioural patterns show a counter-productive tendency, which occurs when the daily demands of a career become unbearably high. One of the most damage-associated implications is the tendency of a practitioner to deal with his “clients” in a distance, cut off and mechanical way. In the teaching profession this kind of attitude has far-reaching and disastrous consequences, because the career choice of the teacher, which was a calling in the beginning, becomes a neutral method of earning a living. Teachers lose career enthusiasm, job satisfaction and excitement in the daily task. This results in a loss of professional commitment.

In his book, on stress in teaching an American author, D’Arenzo(1982:2) draws the conclusion that both the level and the frequency of stress in the teaching profession is increasing drastically. Therefore it is a recognised societal and management dilemma which needs speedy solution and especially thorough, scientifically based strategies for the future. Stress can no longer be written off as the psychosomatic reactions of neurotic individuals. The phenomenon is too widespread and the frequency too high for this kind of approach.

In her research, Duff (1987:4) is instructive when he suggests that stress “is recognised as a real source of physical and mental illness and harmful to the successful functioning of the school”. In this regard it is a problem that needs to be addressed in an open and honest fashion by all the stakeholders.

Miller, (1979:7) remarks that, total elimination of stress in education can never be realised because “A world free of stress would be a world without achievement. Behind every human accomplishment lies worry, frustration and discontent. If one were totally satisfied and free of stress, one would have a little motivation to do anything. The total removal of stress is further unrealistic as stress can also be a powerful generator of productivity, motivation and creativity whereby teachers can deliver their best”.

In the British and American literatures a distinction is drawn between “eustress”, as stress factors which are advantageous for an individual, and “distress” as the result of drawn out, intense stress which eventually leads to psychological, physical and emotional disturbances which may activate professional burnout (Goodall and Brown, 1980:18).

Experts in the field of stress agree that it is the intensity and duration of stress, and not so much the nature of stress, that activates the negative implications thereof. Related to this proposition is the individual’s ability to adapt and his or her mobilisation of defensive and survival mechanism.

2.9 CONCLUSION

The review of literature in this chapter has shown that stress is a part of human condition. This has made it clear that one cannot get rid of it but should learn to manage it within acceptable levels. Studies have shown that unwholesome circumstances, unreasonable working conditions and other environmental factors are all activators of stress in the teaching profession. Teacher esteem has been shown to be a critical factor in determining the possibility of stress in education.

Another dimension, which has been revealed by the studies, is the role of cultural and societal factors in the activation of work stress. There could be unreasonable demands or pressure put by the community and parents on the schools' management and these demands filter down through the hierarchy until everyone has to resort to counter-productive survival strategies, which result in unnecessary stress.

Research has shown stress is likely to be experienced in a school where communication is uni-directional and members of staff do not participate in decision making, where there are poor interpersonal relationships, unreasonable work demand, role ambiguity, job insecurity, inadequate rewards and lack of recognition. There may be sense in the sentiments expressed by Cherniss (1984:188), that for too long there has been exclusive concern with the emotional well being of the learners and that teachers' needs, motivation and morale have been neglected.

It may be argued that our education system has been child-oriented all these years in planning and especially in the demands made on the teacher in this profession, without keeping in mind the psychological reserves, stress-coping abilities and the enduring job satisfaction of teachers of this noble and demanding profession.

CHAPTER THREE

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Literature reviewed in the previous chapter has revealed that job – related stress especially among teachers is a universal concern. The major concern stems from the evidence that prolonged teacher stress can lead to mental and physical ill – health, job dissatisfaction, absenteeism, impaired quality of teaching, and disturbed working relationships. This study looks at stress among teachers at Ensingweni Circuit in Mthunzini district. This includes potential sources of stress related to teaching.

This study therefore approaches stress as an interaction between the person and the environment, taking into consideration individual differences in terms of biographic characteristics and personality, when looking at potential stressors in the work place. Travers and Cooper, (1996:36) observe that, “If we want to alleviate the stress at the teacher level or of the school, we need to understand both the aspects of the individual teacher, that have an effect on the response to stress and the aspects of the school that may exacerbate stress”.

In chapter one it was stated that a descriptive method of research would be used for the purpose of collecting data. According to Charles (1988:81), and Michael (1995:46) descriptive research describe conditions, situations and events of the present. Descriptive approach was suitable for this study because an effort was made to describe, clarify and interpret aspects of teacher stress as they presently exist in schools. Of various types of descriptive research available namely case studies, surveys and developmental studies, this study used the survey approach. A survey was carried out through the use of a questionnaire and an interview schedule.

In this chapter attention is given to empirical research procedures and techniques used in this study. This chapter covers a discussion of data collecting instruments, pilot study, the target population and sampling for questionnaire and interview and administration of data collecting instruments.

3.2 SELECTION AND DESCRIPTION OF DATA COLLECTING INSTRUMENTS

According to Pithers and Forgarty (1995:29), the problem for the researchers is obtaining the accurate measurement of stress and its perceived effects. The studies reported have used a wide range of measuring instruments including teacher daily reports, interviews case studies and self-report questionnaires. The ensuing problem is that many of these scales are not checked for validity and reliability and many have a low-level of reliability

and validity. Scales for which psychometric data are available are often restricted for use by the psychologists and have not been regularly used in occupational stress research among teachers.

Literature review exposed to the investigator a lot of research instruments which have been used previously by other researchers in this field. While instrument uniformity in the teacher stress research community has its desirability investigators should always feel free to modify and improve instruments, and to develop new ones to access conditions and variables more relevant for the teaching profession, especially when the instruments are applied to organisational or cultural context different from ones for which the instruments were originally designed (Chan, 1995:383). This is therefore the approach that has been adopted by the investigator.

In this study the questionnaire and formal interview were used as research instruments because of their convenience to the investigator.

3.2.1 The Questionnaire

According to Best and Kahn (1993:230) a questionnaire is an instrument in which respondents provide responses to questions or mark items that indicate their responses. A questionnaire is used when factual information is desired. When opinions rather than facts are desired an attitude scale is used. Questionnaires may be personally administered

or mailed to the respondents. According to Best and Kahn (1993:231) there are two types of questionnaires namely restricted or close form and unrestricted or open-form. The close-form questionnaire calls for, short responses and a respondent is supposed to mark a yes or no, write a short response or check an item from a list of suggested responses. It may also provide for unanticipated response. The unanticipated response is provided for through the use of an “other” category, which permits respondents to indicate what might be their most important reason, one that the investigator had not anticipated.

The open-form questionnaire calls for a free response in the respondents’ own words. This type of a questionnaire gives no clues to the respondents and provides for greater depth of response. The respondents reveal their frame of reference and possible the reasons for their responses. The questionnaire as a data-collecting instrument has its own advantages and disadvantages.

3.2.1.1 Advantages of the questionnaire

In this study the questionnaire was used as a method of investigation because of the following advantages given by Best and Kahn (1993:231).

- i) It seeks only the information, which cannot be obtained from other sources such as school reports or census data

- ii) The questions are objective, with no leading suggestions to the responses desired
- iii) It is easy to tabulate and interpret
- iv) It can be completed at a convenient time
- v) Travelling and subsistence costs are minimal
- vi) Anonymity of the respondents is guaranteed because their names are not given.

3.2.1.2 Disadvantages of the questionnaire

Tuckman (1994:381) warns that, despite the advantages of the questionnaire, it should be used with caution for the following reasons:

- i) It limits the kind of questions that can be asked and kind of answers that can be obtained.
- ii) Personally sensitive and revealing information is difficult to obtain from the questionnaire.
- iii) It is difficult to get useful answers to indirect and non-specific questions from the questionnaire.
- iv) On questionnaires the researcher must decide all of his or her questions in advance
- v) Printing, travelling and postage becomes very expensive
- vi) Rate of return of the questionnaire is normally very poor

- vii) The questionnaire may not convey the same meaning to all respondents.

3.2.1.3 Construction of the questionnaire

Oppenheim (1992:101) states that the construction of a questionnaire needs thorough planning. Naidoo (196:96) states that the nature, form and the order of questions are very important if meaningful results are to be obtained. He further states that a questionnaire should not be too long because the respondents may get bored with the result that questions appearing at the end of the questionnaire are either left unanswered or are answered without much care and thought.

Khathi (1990:194-195) maintain that the questionnaire may be regarded as a form of an interview paper. Because of this, the procedure for the construction of a questionnaire follows a similar pattern to that of an interview paper. He further states that because the questionnaire is impersonal, care should be taken when it is constructed. This means that the questionnaire should be clear in wording because there is no interviewer to explain what is not clear. In preparing the questionnaire the investigator took into consideration the views by various authors and researchers on how a good questionnaire should be constructed.

The questionnaire consisted of two sections, A and B. Section A of the questionnaire was used in the collection of the demographic data which included teaching experience, qualification, gender and employment status. Research evidence indicates that these

variables directly affect a teacher's stress level (Hoge, 1992:137 and Smith & Bourke, 1992:83). Section B of the questionnaire consisted of questions or items, which were mainly concerned with stress in relation to work as well as stress outside the working environment that might put pressure on the teacher.

Kyriacou & Sutcliffe (1997:284) identified four teachers' work related stress factors. These four factors were labelled pupil misbehaviour, poor working conditions, time pressures and school ethos. The study by Kyriacou, 1989, identified sources of teacher stress which appeared to fall into six major categories namely poor motivation in pupils, pupil indiscipline, poor working conditions, time pressures, low status and conflicts with colleagues. Therefore in formulating the questionnaire the investigator took into consideration the factors mentioned above. Some of the items used in the questionnaire were adopted from the stressor checklist by McLean (1979:131). The stressor checklist listed various kinds of problems that may or may not arise in the respondent's work. The respondent was also required to indicate the extent to which he or she finds each of them to be a problem, concern, or an obstacle in carrying out his or her duties and responsibilities. The checklist did not include possible sources of stress outside the working environment.

As has been previously mentioned, Section A consisted of the demographic information with only four items. Section B consisted of forty-five (45) items or questions, which were categorised into nine (9) variables. Under each variable category, five (5) questions were asked. The nine variables were the following:

- i) Curriculum changes and related issues
- ii) Work overload, usually from insufficient time or lot of work;
- iii) Learner-related sources of stress
- iv) Job insecurity arising from changes, insecurity or uncertainty in the working place
- v) Role ambiguity or job scope arising from lack of clarity about the work objectives, colleagues' expectations of the work role and the scope and responsibilities of the job.
- vi) Rapport between the teacher and management
- vii) System of rewards and recognition or lack of them
- viii) The nature of relationship between the teacher and the colleagues
- ix) Other stressors that might put pressure on a teacher in his or her working environment.

To assess teacher stress a five (5) point scale was used. In the questionnaire teachers were asked to indicate the degree of frequency of stress caused to them by each of the items stated, using the rating scale provided. A five-point scale used: "always", "usually", "sometimes", "seldom" and "never".

3.2.1.4 Pilot study

Oppenheim (1992:47) defines pilot study as a process of designing and trying out the questionnaire. The pilot study is done with fewer subjects of the population to whom the

whole questionnaire will be administered. He further states that pilot study is designed to provide a trial run of the data collection approach. It may be intended to test out data collection method or an instrument to see if it is in need of correction or revision. This means that the pilot study is done to test the research instrument and see whether refinement is needed.

According to Borg and Gall (1981:101) a pilot study has the following advantages:

- i) It represents a thorough check of the planned, statistical and analytical procedures, thus allowing an appraisal of their adequacy in treating the data.
- ii) Provides the researcher with the problems with the research instrument not foreseen prior to the pilot study. These problems are then corrected before the main administration of the questionnaire.

The pilot study for this research was conducted on the group of ten primary school teachers at Lindelihle Circuit in the Mthunzini District. The group of teachers selected for a pilot study had similar characteristics to the one that constituted the population of investigation. After analysing the responses and having some interviews with the respondents, the investigator did necessary corrections such as spelling and misprints indicated by the pilot study and was confident that all the questions in the questionnaire were relevant. At this stage the questionnaire was ready to be administered.

3.2.1.5 The target population and sampling for questionnaire

According to Ary et al (1996:174) the concept of sampling involves taking apportion of a population, making observations on this smaller groups and then generalising findings to the parent population, the larger population from which the sample was done.

According to Tuckman (1994:237) the population is the target group of the study and the first step in sampling is to define the population. The target population of this study was selected from fifteen (15) primary schools at Ensingweni Circuit. The total number of educators in these schools is 279 with 81 (29%) males and 198 (71%) females. Once the population had been identified, the investigator selected a sample or a representative group from this section to serve as respondents.

According to records obtained from Mthunzini District Office, Ensingweni Circuit has only 15 primary schools under its jurisdiction, excluding Junior Primary Schools. From the population of 279 educators, a sample of 168 (60%) of the population was finally chosen. Since female educators constituted 71% of the population and male educators 29% a stratified random sampling was used to provide for a more balanced representation of subgroups in the population.

Two separate lists were compiled, one for the female educators and the other for the male educators, with the name of the school written next to each educator's surname. The first

120 female educators (71%) and the first 48 male educators (29%) were drawn from their respective lists. This added up to a sample of 168 educators.

The stratified random sampling employed in this study ensured that no strata (which is gender in this case) may by chance be over or under represented in the sample. In this study females constituted 71% and the males 29% of the total population and these factors were taken into account when the sample was drawn. According to Ary et al (1996:178) the major advantage of stratified random sampling is that it guarantees representation of defined groups in the population.

3.2.1.6 The administration of the questionnaire

The first step towards administering the questionnaire in this study was to obtain permission to do research from the Mthunzini District Manager and Superintendent of Education Management in charge of Ensingweni Circuit. Letters were sent to all principals of primary schools selected for the study, prior to the study explaining the purpose of research and requesting assistance.

The questionnaire was then distributed to the school principals who passed them to the heads of department for further distribution to the teachers. The instructions were included which stated the purpose of the questionnaire and also guaranteed anonymity of the school and the respondents. After completion, teachers returned the questionnaire

through the principal or any person appointed by the principal and the investigator collected the completed questionnaires from the principals.

3.2.2 Interview

According to Best and Kahn (1993:251) the interview is in a sense an oral questionnaire. Instead of writing the response, the subject or interviewee gives the needed information orally and face to face. The investigator used a structured interview for collecting data. Best and Kahn (1993:105) state that the structured interview is an instrument in which individuals are asked to respond to a series of specific questions. The structured interview technique requires that the interviewers ask the questions exactly as they are worded. They may be allowed some latitude, however in clarifying terms. It is important that the interviewer establishes rapport with each respondent before beginning to ask any question.

The interviews in this study were conducted telephonically with the subjects. An interview schedule was constructed which included questions dealing with individual's current perception of their work, coping strategies that teachers employ when they are faced with stressful situation in their working environment.

From the literature reviewed in Chapter Two it appears that historically teachers have not been vocal about the conditions of their work on the other hand researchers and the media have for the most part failed to investigate work experiences of teachers. The

methodology of the present study aimed at facilitating the subjects' willingness to be self critical as well as critical about the system and the environment with which they work. The investigator hoped to obtain such information through the use of interviews.

3.2.2.1 The advantages of telephone interview

The telephone interview has become popular and recent studies indicate that it compares favourably with the face-to-face interviewing. (Walker & Weaver, 1990:67). The telephone interview has the following advantages:

- i) It involves lower cost and faster completion with relatively high response rate.
- ii) It can be conducted over a relatively short time span with persons scattered over a large geographic area.
- iii) It permits the interviewer to reach people who would not open up on face to face interview, but who might be willing to talk on the telephone
- iv) The respondents have a greater feeling of anonymity and hence there may be less interviewer bias and less social desirability bias than is found with personal interviews (Ary et al, 1996: 436)

3.2.2.2 The disadvantages of telephone interview

The advantages of telephone interview outweigh the disadvantages. The striking disadvantage of telephone interview noted by Ary et al (1996:435) is that people without

telephones are automatically excluded from the study, which may bias results. The other disadvantage is that there is less opportunity for establishing rapport with the respondent than in a face- to- face situation.

3.2.2.3 The target population and sampling for interviews

The interviews were conducted telephonically with fifteen educators from primary schools under Ensingweni Circuit in the Mthunzini District. The aim of the interview was to supplement data collected through the questionnaire and to get information that the investigator had not anticipated when formulating a questionnaire.

The fifteen educators were drawn from a sample of 168 educators who responded to the questionnaire in this study. The names of educators and their telephone numbers were picked from the two lists that were compiled for the questionnaire sampling. The first ten educators from the female list were chosen and the first five educators were chosen from the male list. Only educators who had telephone numbers were targeted for the interview.

3.2.2.4 Conducting the interviews

As has been previously stated, the investigator conducted telephone interviews. The subjects were made aware during the distribution of questionnaires to the schools that they should expect telephone interviews from the investigator.

The investigator asked for telephone or cell numbers from the subjects in order to facilitate the interviews. The interviewer aimed at asking questions in such a way as to obtain valid responses and to record the responses accurately and completely. The initial task of the interviewer was to create an atmosphere that would put the respondent at ease. After introducing himself in a friendly way the interviewer reminded the respondent and stated briefly the purpose of the interview, avoiding giving too much information about the study, which could bias the respondent.

The interview began with fairly simple questions and kept the respondent's attention focused on task at hand. A structured interview schedule containing specific questions was prepared. The interview schedule included the following:

- i) Educators' current perception of his or her work
- ii) Potential sources of stress in their schools
- iii) Coping strategies that an educator employs when faced with stressful situation in their working environment.

3.3 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

After the collection of data through the questionnaire and telephone interviews, due to the lack of personal computer, the data was manually processed. The researcher constructed scoring sheets and frequency tables and carefully went through each and every response

by the respondents for the purpose of recording it. Scoring directions were designed for the questionnaire.

The numbers circled next to each item in the questionnaire, within each of the nine categories were added. Then the nine scores were added together for an overall total score.

Scores on each of the nine categories ranged between five (5) and twenty-five (25). Scores of 15 (60%) or above perhaps suggested that the area might be presenting a problem for a teacher warranting attention. The overall total score ranged between 45 and 225. Scores of 135 (60%) or more suggested a more than desirable amount of overall stress in the teacher's job environment. The processing of the collected data was instrumental in the generalisation of the results.

3.4 CONCLUSION

In the next chapter an in-depth analysis and interpretation of data will be done in such a way that each and every variable do somehow contribute towards a significant conclusion about the study under review.

In this section of the study the investigator has attempted to outline the research methods used in conducting his study. This incorporated the selection and description of instruments, the pilot study, the target population and sampling procedures for

instruments and the administration of instruments. In a nutshell this chapter concerns the methodology that was used by the researcher.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reports on the investigation conducted to determine teacher stress in primary schools at Ensingweni Circuit. Views gathered through collection of data from the respondents were analysed, compared and interpreted. The quantitative and qualitative data collected through the investigation are summarised and discussed in this chapter.

4.2 BIOGRAPHICAL DATA OF THE RESPONDENTS:

Table 4.1 was drawn to illustrate the biographic characteristics of the respondents. Each variable is discussed separately.

Table 4.1**DESCRIPTION OF BIOGRAPHICAL DATA OF EDUCATORS OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

	F	%
1. Age in years		
below 30		
30 - 39	46	27
40 - 49	63	37
50 - 59	38	23
60 & above	21	13
	0	0
2. Gender		
Female		
Male	120	71
	48	29
3. Teaching experience in years		
0 - 5		
6 - 10	37	22
11 & above	60	36
	71	42
4. Qualifications		
Matric		
Diploma	11	7
Degree Courses	58	35
Degree (B.Paed, B.A., B.Sc. etc)	27	16
Honours	68	40
B.Ed.	4	2
M.Ed.	0	0
MA/MSc.	0	0
Doctorate	0	0
Others	0	0
	0	0
5. Employment Status		
Permanent	136	81
Temporary	32	19

4.2.1. *Age of the Respondents:*

The respondents recorded their ages by selecting one of the five age groups supplied. As Table 4.1 illustrates, the significant number of educators, (37 %) ranged between the ages of 30 and 39. A significant number, (27 %) of the respondents were below 30 years of age. This could be ascribed to the fact that senior educators get senior posts; as a result younger educators are employed to fill the vacant posts. The table shows that 23% of the respondents range between 40 and 49. The educators who ranged between 50 and 59 constituted only 13% and no educators were 60 years or above. This may suggest that most people from age 50 and above occupy senior posts while others opt for early retirement or alternative occupation. Stress could be among the driving forces in each case.

4.2.2 *Gender of the educators:*

Table 4.1 shows that 71 % of the respondents were female and 29% were male. The high percentage of females could be attributed to the fact that women dominated the primary school sector and that lower primary schools constitute an exclusive feminine domain.

4.2.3 *Teaching Experience:*

According to Table 4.1 a large number (42%) of respondents had a teaching experience of 11 years and above. The table also shows us that 36% of the respondent had teaching experience of 6 to 10 years. There were 22% of the respondents who had teaching experience between 0 and 5 years. The small fraction of young and relatively inexperienced teachers suggests that the rate of employing new educators has been very low. This has been made possible by the policy of protection of unqualified educators and restrictions involved on filling of vacant posts.

4.2.4 *Qualifications:*

Table 4.1 shows that 7% of the respondents had matric as the highest qualification and 16% had degree courses. Forty percent of the respondents had degrees such as B.Paed, B.A. and B.Sc. and only 2% had honours qualification. No respondents had B.Ed., M.Ed. or Doctorate this could be attributed to the fact that some of the educators who possess these qualifications occupy senior positions as school or office-based educators.

4.2.5 *Employment Status:*

According to Table 4.1 permanent educators constituted 81% of the total of respondents and only 19% of the respondents are temporary educators.

4.3 **RESPONSES ON SOURCES OF STRESS AMONGST EDUCATORS:**

This part was section B of the questionnaire. This section consisted of 45 items that were categorised into 9 variables. Under each variable category, 5 questions were asked (see appendix C)

The analysis and interpretation of data was made possible with the use of Life Stress Scale (Fontana and Abouserie, 1993:267). The total stress scores yielded by the items in the questionnaire was divided into five advisory stress levels namely “no stress” (never), Low stress (seldom), “moderate stress” (sometimes), “high stress” (usually), “very high stress” (always). The responses to the questionnaire were distributed among the five categories.

The tables illustrating the responses are analysed and discussed under specified sub-headings related to the problem under investigation.

4.3.1 Curriculum

TABLE 4.2: Responses of educators on curriculum changes and related issues.

ITEM	RESPONSE CATEGORY					
	NEVER	SELDOM	SOMETIMES	USUALLY	ALWAYS	TOTAL
Lack of personal confidence in implementing the new Curriculum 2005 due to insufficient training	18	19	28	46	57	168
	10.7%	11,3%	16,7%	27,3%	34%	100%
Having to deal with complex policy document and terminology of Curriculum 2005	10	36	30	40	52	168
	5,9%	21,4%	17,9%	23,8%	31%	100%
Lack of guidelines on what needs to be learnt on each grade	33	19	28	50	38	168
	19,6%	11,3%	16,7%	29,8%	22,6%	100%
Lack of ongoing support for the teachers to address problems which might have arose	9	25	44	38	52	168
	5,4%	14,9%	6,2%	22,6%	30,9%	100%
Having to use inadequate and poor learning material.	23	23	26	54	42	168
	13,7%	13,7%	15,5%	32,1%	25%	100%
Overall total score	11.1%	33.1%		55.8%		100%

Table 4.2 consolidates responses to the items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the questionnaire into stress arising from dealing with curriculum changes and related issues. In the study this area of concern was characterised by such items as (lack of confidence in implementing curriculum 2005, having to deal with complex policy document and terminology of curriculum 2005, lack of guidelines on what needs to be learnt on

each grade), the list would be longer (see appendix C). As shown in the table 55,8% of the respondents reported high to very high levels of stress from dealing with curriculum issues and changes. The table also shows that 33.1% of the respondents experienced levels of stress ranging from low to moderate. The other 11,1% of the respondents did not experience any stress from dealing with curriculum changes and related issues.

The other concern which causes a great deal of stress among educators is the fact that curriculum 2005 is being streamlined. This means that they will have to learn new things which will take time to master. There is a feeling among educators that they have not been properly equipped with skills to implement the outcomes based curriculum. They regard the new curriculum as costly because it encourages the use of a variety of resources, which require a lot of money. Therefore the new curriculum is not affordable to the schools especially in the rural areas.

4.3.2 Time pressure and work overload.

TABLE 4.3: Responses of educators on time pressure and work overload.

ITEM	RESPONSE CATEGORY					
	NEVER	SELDOM	SOMETIMES	USUALLY	ALWAYS	TOTAL
Having to deal with classes of large sizes due to poor teacher pupil ratio	31	22	25	42	48	168
	18.5	13	14.9	25	28.6	100
Having too heavy workload, one that you can't possibly finish during school hours	19	34	35	46	34	168
	11.3%	20.2%	20.8%	27.5%	20.2%	100%
Having the requirement of the job, impact your personal life	28	21	41	49	29	168
	16.7%	12.5%	24.4%	29.4%	17.2%	100%
Being exhausted by daily demands at work	16	50	35	39	28	168
	9.5%	29.8%	20.8%	23.2%	16.7%	100%
Being unable to meet deadlines and schedules	21	36	26	53	32	168
	12.5%	21.4%	15.5%	31.5%	19.1%	100%
Overall total score	13.7%	38.7%		47.6%		100%

Table 4.3 presents responses to items 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 of the questionnaire.

According to the table 47,6% of the respondents reported "high to very high" levels of stress from time pressure and work overload. Stress arising from time pressure and work overload is concerned with having too much to do in little time and work intruding on home life.

The table also shows that 38,7% of the respondents reported low to moderate levels of stress while 13,7% reported no stress from this area. In the study this area of stress was typified by such items as (having to deal with large classes, having too heavy work load, which cannot be finished during school hours, being unable to meet deadlines and schedules.

The largest direct effect on teacher stress in this category being planning and assessment workload. Grades 1 to 3 educators had a lesser workload as they assess only three aspects (life skills, numeracy and literacy), whilst grades 5 to 7 educators have more workload of assessing eight learning areas. Gender had a direct effect on stress from time pressure and workload indicating that females feel generally stressed by this factor than their male counterparts.

4.3.3 Learners

Table 4.4: Responses of educators on learner related sources of stress

ITEM	RESPONSE CATEGORY					
	NEVER	SELDOM	SOMETIMES	USUALLY	ALWAYS	TOTAL
Having to deal with indisciplined learners who continually misbehave without support from parents, principals and the Department of education	14	42	31	43	38	168
	8.3%	25%	18.5%	25.6%	22.6%	100%
Inadequate disciplinary policy for learners by both school and Department of Education	30	18	26	42	52	168
	17.9%	10.7%	15.5%	25%	30.9%	100%
Abolition of corporal punishment	24	28	38	40	38	168
	14.3%	16.7%	22.6%	23.8%	22.6%	100%
Learners coming to class without necessary learning material	22	24	26	45	51	168
	13%	14.3%	15.5%	26.8%	30.4%	100%
Having to deal with learners who are hard to motivate	15	28	31	56	38	168
	8.9%	16.7%	18.5%	33.3%	26.6%	100%
Overall total score	12.5%	34.8%		52.7%		100%

Stress arising from learners is concerned with difficulties encountered when dealing or interacting with learners. This area of stress was represented in the questionnaire by items such as (having to deal with indisciplined learners, inadequate disciplinary policy for learners, learners coming to class without necessary learning material, abolition of corporal punishment and having to deal with learners who are hard to motivate). Table 4.6 reveals that the majority of the respondents (52,7%) falls into

the high to very high stress categories as measured by life stress scale. The investigation also revealed that 34,8% of the respondents reported low to moderate levels of stress. Other respondents (15,5%) did not experience any stress from dealing with learners.

According to Smith and Bourke (1992:315) this area of concern is almost universally reported as a major stressor in the teaching profession. The longer serving educators were found to be less prone to learner-related stress than inexperienced educators. This may be attributed to the fact that the established educators may have had ample opportunity to develop relationships with learners and may have developed effective discipline structures. The learner misbehaviour reported by educators includes damaging equipment, distracting others as well as fighting verbally and physically.

4.3.4 *Job insecurity***Table 4.5: Responses of educators on job insecurity**

ITEM	RESPONSE CATEGORY					
	NEVER	SELDOM	SOMETIMES	USUALLY	ALWAYS	TOTAL
Feeling vulnerable to redundancy or involuntary premature retirement	30	22	37	30	49	168
	17.9%	13%	22%	17.9%	29.2%	100%
The constant changes taking place within the teaching profession and lack of consultation on how these changes are to be implemented	19	28	20	41	60	168
	11.3%	16.7%	11.9%	24.4%	35.7%	100%
Fear of being involuntary transferred to another school due to Right Sizing and Rationalisation or (R&R) or Post Provisioning Norm (PPN)	36	27	25	42	38	168
	21.4%	16.1%	14.9%	25%	22.6%	100%
Lack of promotional opportunities and prevalence of unfair promotional procedures	20	18	30	59	41	168
	11.9%	10.7%	17.9%	35.1%	34.4%	100%
Constant threats by the Minister of Education to weed out dead wood in the teaching profession	35	37	32	35	29	168
	20.8%	22%	19.2%	20.8%	17.2%	100%
Overall total score	16. %	32.9%		50.5%		100%

Stress arising from job insecurity is concerned with stress arising from changes, insecurity or uncertainty in the teaching profession. This area of stress was represented in the questionnaire by items such as (feeling vulnerable to redundancy, constant changes taking place in the teaching profession, fear of being involuntary transferred and lack of promotional opportunities and prevalence of unfair promotional procedures.)

Table 4.5 shows that 50.5% of the respondents reported high to very high levels of stress from job insecurity. Other respondents (32,9%) reported low to moderate levels of stress and 16,6% of the respondents reported no stress from this area.

There is a feeling of uncertainty among the educators about their future in the Department of Education because of all the changes that take place without them being involved. These changes include Rationalisation and Redistribution (R&R), Post Provisioning Norm (PPN) and severance packages. The longer serving and permanent educators were found to be less prone to stress related to job insecurity than temporary and inexperienced educators. This may be attributed to the fact that experienced and permanent educators are not always affected by involuntary transfers.

4.3.5 *Role ambiguity*

Table 4.6: Responses of educators on role ambiguity.

ITEM	RESPONSE CATEGORY					
	NEVER	SELDOM	SOMETIMES	USUALLY	ALWAYS	TOTAL
Being unclear on just what the scope and responsibilities of your job are.	33	19	28	50	38	168
	19.6%	11.3%	16.7%	29.8%	22.6%	100%
Feeling that you have too little authority to carry out the responsibilities assigned to you	41	44	30	25	28	168
	24.4%	26.1%	17.9%	14.9%	16.3%	100%
Not being able to get information you need to carry out your duties	17	43	49	23	36	168
	10.1%	25.6%	29.2%	13.7%	21.4%	100%
Having to teach a subject for which you have not been trained	39	27	18	34	50	168
	23.2%	16.1%	10.7%	20.2%	29.8%	100%
Being given extra responsibilities to do	23	30	24	32	59	168
	13.7%	17.9%	14.3%	19%	35.1%	100%
Overall total score	18.2%	37.2%		44.6%		100%

According to Gold and Roth (1993:38) stress arises from role conflict when inappropriate, incompatible and inconsistent demands are placed on teachers. When two or more sets of these inconsistent role behaviours are experienced by an educator, role conflict results. When an educator cannot reconcile inconsistencies between these sets of expected role behaviours, they experience role conflict.

This area of stress was represented in the questionnaire by items 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25 (see appendix C). Table 4.6 shows that 44,6% of the respondents reported high to very high levels of stress from role ambiguity. The table also shows that 37,2% of the respondents fall into the low to moderate stress categories as measured by the life stress scale (LSS). Other respondents (18,2%) did not experience any stress from role ambiguity. The effect on teacher stress in the category being that teachers are expected to provide quality education whilst they are often hindered by unavailability of good learning material. The other reported concern for educators is that they are held responsible for the decline in discipline among learners in their classes whilst the methods of disciplining children are limited. This could be attributed to the abolition of corporal punishment without providing alternative methods of disciplining learners and lack of support from parents.

4.3.6 *Rapport with management*

Table 4.7: Responses of educators on rapport between the educator and management

ITEM	RESPONSE CATEGORY					
	NEVER	SELDOM	SOMETIMES	USUALLY	ALWAYS	TOTAL
Lack of influence over decision making in the school governance	34	19	25	42	48	168
	20.2%	11.3%	14.9%	25%	28.6%	100%
Having ideas considerably different from those of your principal	26	22	35	30	55	168
	15.5%	13.1%	20.8%	17.9%	32.7%	100%
Not knowing what the principal thinks of your performance and how he/she evaluates it	15	17	26	49	61	168
	8.9%	10.1%	15.5%	29.2%	36.3%	100%
Poor interpersonal relationship with the principal and lack of proper channels of communication	35	21	47	28	37	168
	20.8%	12.5%	28%	16.7%	22%	100%
Having to deal with principal who lacks clear and fair standards for work and discipline	28	30	22	47	41	168
	16.7%	17.9%	13%	28%	24.4%	100%
Overall total score	16.4%	34.2%		49.4%		100%

This area is concerned with stress arising from interpersonal relationship between the individual educator and the management. This area of stress was typified by such items as (lack of influence over decision making in the school, having ideas considerably different from those of the principal, poor interpersonal relationship, the list would be longer.) (See appendix C)

Table 4.7 shows that 49,4% of the respondents experienced high to very high levels of stress from poor rapport with management. The table also shows that 34,2% of the respondents reported low to moderate levels of stress while 16,4% reported no stress from this area. These respondents reported lack of influence in the running of their schools as a major cause of stress in this area.

4.3.7 *Interpersonal relationships with colleagues*

Table 4.8: Responses of educator on the nature of relationship between the educator and colleagues.

ITEM	RESPONSE CATEGORY					
	NEVER	SELDOM	SOMETIMES	USUALLY	ALWAYS	TOTAL
Lack of support from the colleagues	23	27	41	31	46	168
	13.7%	16.1%	24.4%	18.5%	27.3%	100%
Poor interpersonal relationship among the staff members	17	39	23	56	33	168
	10.1%	23.2%	14.7%	33.3%	19.7%	100%
Gossiping in the staff room and group pressures	23	18	48	30	49	168
	13.7%	10.7%	28.6%	17.9%	29.1%	100%
Criticism from the colleagues	15	26	34	38	55	168
	8.9%	15.5%	20.2%	22.6%	32.8%	100%
Poor communication and co-operation among the staff	24	18	35	41	50	168
	14.3%	10.7%	20.8%	24.4%	29.8%	100%
Overall total score	12.1%	36.8%		51.1%		100%

Stress arising from relationship with colleagues is concerned with tensions within the staff. This area of stress was typified by such items as (lack of support from colleagues, criticism from colleagues, poor co-operation and communication among the staff,

gossiping in the staff room and group pressure; and poor interpersonal relationships among the staff members.)

Table 4.8 indicates that 51,1% of the respondents reported high to very high levels of stress from tensions within the staff. The table also shows that 36,8% of the respondents reported low to moderate levels of stress. Other respondents (12,1%) did not suffer any stress from relationships with colleagues.

4.3.8 *Lack of rewards and recognition*

Table 4.9: Responses of educators on rewards and recognition

ITEM	RESPONSE CATEGORY					
	NEVER	SELDOM	SOMETIMES	USUALLY	ALWAYS	TOTAL
Lack of satisfactory rewards in terms of both money and status	20	26	37	29	56	168
	12%	15.5%	22%	17.2%	33.3%	100%
Lack of recognition of teachers professionalism within and outside the education system	40	24	34	31	39	168
	23.8%	14.3%	20.2%	18.5%	23.2%	100%
Lack of appreciation, respect and consideration by the Department of Education and the wider society	30	22	38	29	49	168
	18%	13%	22.6%	17.2%	29.2%	100%
Lack of regular feedback about your work	11	43	27	47	40	168
	6.5%	25.5%	16.1%	28%	23.9%	100%
Inadequate salary increase	24	19	40	28	57	168
	14.3%	11.3%	23.8%	16.7%	33.9%	100%
Overall total score	14.9%	36.8%		48.3%		100%

This area of stress is concerned with the system of rewards and recognition or lack of them. This stress arises from the lack of rewards in terms of such considerations as money, status and recognition of personal worth. In this study, this area of stress was represented in the questionnaire by items such as (lack of promotional chances, appreciation, respect and consideration by the Department of Education, lack of regular feedback about educator's work and inadequate salary increase.)

Table 4.9 shows that 48,3% of the respondents reported high to very high levels of stress resulting from lack of rewards and recognition. The table also shows that 36,8% of the respondents experienced low to moderate levels of stress while, 14,9% reported no stress from this area.

4.3.9 Other Stressors

Table 4.10: Responses of educators on other stressors that might put pressure on teacher in his/her working environment.

ITEM	RESPONSE CATEGORY					
	NEVER	SELDOM	SOMETIMES	USUALLY	ALWAYS	TOTAL
Crime in schools, teacher being robbed of their valuables and money	19	20	27	42	60	168
	11.3%	11.9%	16.1%	25%	35.7%	100%
Lack of safety in schools	25	37	21	36	49	168
	14.9%	22%	12.5%	21.4%	29.2%	100%
Poor working conditions and lack of physical resources and funds	30	42	15	37	44	168
	17.9%	25%	8.9%	22%	26.2%	100%
Personal problems outside the working environment	18	24	39	31	56	168
	10.7%	14.3%	23.2%	18.5%	33.3%	100%
Transportation difficulties in getting to school	28	30	29	39	42	168
	16.7%	17.9%	17.2%	23.2%	25%	100%
Overall total score	14.3%	33.8%		51.9%		100%

Other stressors refer to any related stressor that might put pressure on the educator in his or her working environment. In terms of factors associated with teacher stress, the study reveals that a combination of work-related and outside factors was associated with teacher stress. The respondents reported different factors outside their working environment, which had a negative impact on their job. These include financial and family problems.

Table 4.10 reveals that 51,9% of the respondents fall into the high to very high stress categories as measured by Life Stress Scale. The investigation also revealed that 33,8% of the respondents reported low to moderate levels of stress. Other respondents (14,3%) did not experience any stress from this area of stress.

4.4 CONCLUSION:

This chapter has presented a picture of stress as experienced by educators from their work related factors at Ensingweni Circuit. The responses suggest that there is more than desirable amount of stress resulting from work overload, job insecurity and relationship with colleagues. Below average levels of stress were found to be resulting from learners, rewards and recognition, rapport with management, role ambiguity and other stressors.

The next chapter deals with the findings of this study and offers recommendations regarding strategies of coping with stress.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The main aim of the study was to determine stress among teachers in primary schools at Ensingweni Circuit in the Mthunzini District. An effort was made to identify and describe stressors that posed stress on the educators. For the study to achieve its aims, it was necessary for the investigator to review literature on the nature and theories of teacher stress. *Literature review* provided the conceptual framework for investigating teacher stress in the schools in question. A questionnaire and telephone interviews were used to collect empirical data for this study. Data analysis and interpretation provided the basis for the presentation of findings and recommendations. This chapter gives a summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations that were established during the course of investigation.

5.2 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter concludes with the discussion of some theoretical findings and conclusions of the study. *Empirical findings and conclusions* are also covered. An investigation of the two sets of findings throws light on the nature and extent of stress among teachers at Ensingweni Circuit in the Mthunzini District.

5.2.1 Theoretical Findings and Conclusions:

High levels stress in the teaching environment can cause educators to become ineffective in their duties. The literature review in chapter two pointed out that high incidents of stress among educators emanate from break down of discipline in the school, role ambiguity, lack of rewards and recognition, poor interpersonal relationships with colleagues and management, work overload and job insecurity.

In chapter one it was observed that not all stress is bad. We all experience stress that is positive, which causes us to reach beyond our comfort zones. It is important that teachers find out what their optimal stress level is, which allows them to work effectively and creatively. When the teacher gets beyond his or her optimal stress level he or she experiences "negative stress" also known, as distress. This is what we commonly refer to when we speak about stress. Stress is experienced when an educator is unable to cope with the demands that are being placed on him or her. Some of the symptoms of distress are stomach problems, anxiety, depression, frustration, short temper, increased intake of drugs and poor interpersonal relationships. When you are in a stressful situation day in and day out, your body becomes too weak to deal with the continued stress that you experience. This condition is referred to as burnout.

According to Riches and Morgan (1989:65) our understanding of teacher stress and burnout has become much clearer over the past decade. The priority now is to explore how such understanding can be channelled into fostering the reduction of stress levels in schools.

This may enable guidelines to be developed concerning those individual actions and managerial and organisational practices that will promote lower and more acceptable levels of teacher stress. In addition, however it is evident that there are still a number of unresolved questions concerning the nature and causes of teacher stress. Of particular interest is the relationship between the experience of stress and those factors and circumstances that increase or decrease the likelihood of a stress-related illness being precipitated. A number of such questions deserve attention not only in their own right, but also because they will inevitably have implications for the relative effectiveness of coping actions used by teachers and for other strategies employed to reduce levels of teacher stress and burnout.

Kyriacou (1979:289) recommended two types of studies for further research, however these studies have not been conducted yet. The first could usefully focus on the managerial and organisational practices adopted in a particular school in order to highlight how such practices can influence the nature teacher stress experienced. The second could usefully focus on individual teachers' attempts to reduce stress from an unacceptably high level for them. Such studies could make a useful contribution to the consideration of how best to reduce level of teacher stress in schools.

5.2.2 *Empirical Findings And Conclusions:*

The study has established that a substantial number of educators in the study area suffer from stress. There are a variety of factors that contribute to the teacher

stress. These include learner discipline, poor interpersonal relationships with colleagues and management, role ambiguity, curriculum change etc.

In chapter four a detailed presentation of findings on teacher stress in primary schools at Ensingweni Circuit was made. Comments and inferences were made with regard to the responses. The summary of findings and conclusions gives a general overview of stress among teachers in primary schools in question.

5.2.2.1 *Gender*

The study established that in all the primary school, female educators dominated. This could be attributed to the fact that women have dominated in the nurturing of learners in primary schools.

5.2.2.2 *Qualifications*

The study revealed that most of the educators in primary schools at Ensingweni Circuit had degree qualifications and few had matric certificates.

5.2.2.3 *Teaching Experience in Years*

This study revealed that a majority of educators had taught 11 years and above. There was a lesser number of educators with teaching experience of less than five (5) years. This could be attributed to the decrease in the employment of new educators by the Department of Education.

5.2.2.4 *Staffing In Primary Schools*

It was found in the study that some primary schools had less than six educators.

This could be attributed to a number of factors such as the size of enrolment, right sizing, new schools still waiting for staffing and promotion without replacement.

5.2.2.5 *Curriculum*

The highest levels of stress among educators was caused by the introduction of the new curriculum. The amount of effort required to keep abreast of changes in the assessment and curriculum areas is greater than ever before.

5.2.2.6 *Work Overload*

With regard to work overload the study revealed that this area was the second highest stressor recorded by the educators. Stress resulting from work overload could be attributed to the introduction of the new curriculum, understaffing or poor teacher-pupil ratio.

5.2.2.7 *Job Insecurity*

With regard to job insecurity the study established that many educators were stressed due to the following: fear of being voluntarily transferred to another school due to rightsizing and Rationalisation (R&R) or Post Provisioning Norm

(PPN), lack of promotional opportunities and prevalence of unfair promotional procedures, constant changes taking place within the teaching profession and lack of consultation on how these changes are to be implemented.

5.2.2.8 *Interpersonal Relationships with Colleagues*

The study revealed that a substantial number of educators experienced stress due to poor interpersonal relationships with their colleagues. This included lack of support from colleagues, criticism from colleagues, poor communication and co-operation among the staff.

5.2.2.9 *Lack Of Rewards and Recognition*

The investigation revealed that the fifth highest levels of stress among educators were found to be those arising from lack of recognition and rewards. This kind of a stressor results from lack of satisfactory rewards in terms of both money and status, lack of recognition of teacher professionalism within and outside the education system, lack of regular feedback about educator's work and lack of appreciation, respect and consideration by the Department of Education and the wider society.

5.2.2.10 *Breakdown of Discipline*

This study revealed that breakdown of discipline is one of the causes of stress among educators. There appears to be a universal agreement that learners these

days are less self-disciplined, in many cases, less respectful of you simply because you are a teacher. The main concern of the educators is that when corporal punishment was abolished there were no alternative methods of punishment that were put in place.

5.2.2.11 *Rapport with Management*

With regard to rapport with management, the study revealed that educators experienced stress due to the lack of influence over decision-making in the school governance, poor interpersonal relationship with school management team etc. Educators found teaching within this type of environment extremely frustration.

5.2.2.12 *Role Ambiguity*

The investigation established that when inappropriate, incompatible and inconsistent demands are placed on educators, they experienced a considerable amount of stress. Role ambiguity was found to be resulting from the following: being unclear on what the scope and responsibilities of your job are, feeling that you have too little authority to carry out the responsibilities assigned to you and having to teach a subject or learning area for which you have not been trained.

5.2.2.13 *Other Stressors*

The study found that there were a variety of other stressors, which put pressure on an educator in his or her working environment. These include crime in schools,

educators being robbed of their valuables and money, poor working conditions and lack of physical resources, personal problems outside the working environment and transportation difficulties in getting to school.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations are derived from the theoretical and empirical findings of the study and from conclusions on the study.

According to Miller (1979:7) the total elimination of stress in education can never be realized because a world free of stress would be without achievement. Behind every human accomplishment lies worry, frustration and discontent. If one were totally satisfied and free of stress, one would have little motivation to do anything. Stress is therefore a powerful generator of productivity, motivation and creativity whereby educators can give their best performance. However if stress is not kept on a low level it can become counter productive and limit the abilities of educators.

In the light of Miller's (1979:7) observation, it becomes clear that one cannot do away with stress but can only control it into acceptable levels. The following recommendations are therefore suggested to assist educators cope with stress.

The study found that educators tend to use coping strategies, which are not productive such as withdrawal, absenteeism, faking sickness and buying doctor's medical certificates. This does not make the situation any better but further

aggravates it. To reduce sources of work-related stress such as work overload, role ambiguity and conflict, Smith and Bourke (1992:208) suggest the following coping strategies for adoption by both school management and educators for use in an on-going way.

- (a) Rationalise or regulate work demands due to preparation, assessment procedures, resource distribution, clarify instructional goals and share the workload.
- (b) Develop support structures such as time management courses, counseling services. Rodgers (1992:37) sees this as perhaps the most important way in which teacher occupational stress can be reduced.
- (c) Provide greater consideration of all teacher needs, through more flexible management structures able to provide recognition, rewards and collaborative decision making.

The study revealed that role ambiguity is one of the causes of stress among educators, which results from the lack of clarity about work objectives associated with the role, about work colleagues' expectations of the work role and about scope and responsibilities of the job. It is therefore recommended that the school management should let the educators know exactly how they are being evaluated on their work, how to perform adequately and how they can advance in their job.

The study discovered that senior educators were concerned with the lack of promotional prospects in the Department of Education. It is therefore

recommended that alternative ways of recognising the status of senior educators be examined.

According to Cole and Walker (1989:44) individual teachers are responsible for identifying factors which are potential stressors for them, reducing or eliminating the risks, taking steps to avoid stressful situations and reducing stress when it occurs by developing a wide range of stress reducing mechanisms. Educators need training in conflict resolution skills to develop good working relations with colleagues as well as knowledge of many stress-reducing mechanisms they can employ to counteract the stress such as:

- removing themselves temporarily from stressful situation and focusing on another aspect of the job, having a complete change of activity such as taking exercise or reading a book or using relaxation techniques. Then they can determine which are effective for them individually.

The study revealed that too many changes are taking place in our education system in turn generate stress among educators. It is recommended that the Department of Education should develop strategies to prevent stress and burnout through staff development activities, the general organisation and management of the school such as making sure that educators have necessary tools to implement new initiatives such as curriculum 2005, Developmental Appraisal etc. Educators should be consulted on changes taking place and they must see themselves as being part and parcel of change and not view change as being imposed on them.

In time of rapid change in our education system with increasing standard of work performance and expectations requires of all educators devising coping strategies ought to be a high priority within all our schools. Educators need to be assisted in their effort to reduce their relative level of organisational stress and strain. The study revealed that inexperienced educators are more prone to stress as compared to experienced educators. It is recommended that there should be an effective orientation of new members of staff. In their orientation they should be given an open and realistic description of the typical problems and frustrations to be encountered in the teaching profession. This will help them to formulate acceptable and effective solutions in good time.

The initial and important step in dealing with stress is to be more aware about what makes you feel stressed and how you react. Here are some hints that may help educators to cope with everyday tensions and anxieties and reduce stress in their lives.

- i) Be more acknowledgeable about stress.
- ii) Plan ahead and manage time.
- iii) Set clear objectives
- iv) Know your personal limits
- v) Question unreasonable demands
- vi) Have clear values
- vii) Keep fit and take regular exercises
- viii) Eat a balanced diet
- ix) Make leisure time

- x) Network and develop support systems
- xi) Share problems
- xii) Get adequate rest and sleep

Schools should create an organisational climate to encourage rather than discourage communication, openness and trust so that individual educators are able to express their inability to cope, their work related fears and are able to ask for help if needed.

Finally, it is important to note that discussion on coping has tended to focus on what educators can do to mitigate stress as individuals. However, much attention still needs to be given on how schools and the Department of Education can reduce stress for their teachers by the adoption of those management practices, organisation and administrative arrangements, staff relationships, working conditions and curriculum processes that minimise those sources of stress within the school's control.

5.4 CONCLUSION

The investigation has made an effort to indicate findings, conclusions and recommendations regarding teacher stress in primary schools at Ensingweni circuit in the Mthunzini district. Looking at the findings of the study, it seems that stress and dissatisfaction concepts are interrelated, which means that major stressors at work contribute to dissatisfaction, which in turn, lead to high levels of stress. Therefore improving work conditions is essential in order to increase the level of satisfaction of educators with their work and thus lowering the level of stress. In a nutshell, the findings of the study offer evidence that educators work under stress caused by work

related demands such as major restructuring of the teaching profession within a short period of time.

This study therefore suggests that ways must be found to ease the work demand, otherwise there may be serious implication for educator productivity as well as the psychological and physical well being of the individuals.

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APPENDIX A

BOX 23905
KWA-DLANGEZWA
3886

21 September 2001

THE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT
P/BAG X 8512
ESIKHAWINI
3887

**REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH WITH
EDUCATORS AS SUBJECTS**

I hereby request permission to conduct a research with educators in primary schools under your jurisdiction. My investigation is entitled "TEACHER STRESS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS AT ENSINGWENI CIRCUIT"

A copy of a questionnaire is attached. I hope it meets your approval. The names of schools and educators in this study will be treated as confidential, but the findings of the research can be forwarded to your office should you wish me to do so.

Thank you

Yours sincerely

MNCEDISI C. MAPHALALA

APPENDIX B

PROVINCE OF
KWAZULU-NATAL

ISIFUNDAZWE
SAKWAZULU-NATAL

PROVIONSIE
KWAZULU-NATAL

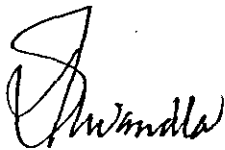
MTHUNZINI DISTRICT OFFICE

Ikheli Locingo :		Isikhwama Seposi : X8512 Esikhawini 3887
Telegraphic Address :		Private Bag :
Telegrafiese Adres :		Privaatsak :
Fax No. :	035-7960134	Imibuzo : District Manager
Ucingo :	035-7964012	Enquiries :
Telephone :	035-7964155	Navrae :
Usuku :		Inkomba : Maphalala M.C.
Date :	06 October 2001	Reference : Research
Datum :		Verwysing :

TO: PRINCIPALS OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS
MTHUNZINI DISTRICT OFFICE

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FOR M.ED PURPOSES

1. Permission is hereby granted to Mr M.C. Maphalala to conduct his research at secondary schools within the district. His research will be centred around *'Teacher Stress in Primary Schools at Ensingweni Circuit.*
2. It is envisaged that no disruption of classes will take place as the research will be by means of a QUESTIONNAIRE.
3. This office will appreciate your co-operation in assisting him.



✓ **DISTRICT MANAGER: MTHUNZINI**

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRE

TO: **TEACHERS**

AIM: To assist the researcher gather information on stress as experienced by teacher from their work related factors. The instructions on how to respond to each item accompany this questionnaire.

Information gathered will be treated as highly confidential as possible. It is for this reason that the respondents need not to supply the researcher with their names and school names on this questionnaire.

SECTION A

TEACHER'S PARTICULARS

Please make a cross (x) in the appropriate space or box provided

1. **GENDER**

1	2
Male	Female

2. **AGE IN YEARS**

Below 30	30 - 39	40 - 49	50 - 59	60 & above

3. **TEACHING EXPERIENCE IN YEARS**

1	2	3
0-4	5-9	10 +

4. **HIGHEST QUALIFICATION**

Matric		B.Ed	
Diploma		M.Ed	
Degree Courses		MA/Msc etc	
Degree eg BA,BSc etc		Doctorate	
Honours			
Other (Specify)			

5. **EMPLOYMENT STATUS**

1	2
Permanent	Temporary

SECTION B

SOURCES OF STRESS AMONG EDUCATORS

Please indicate the frequency of stress caused to you by each of the item statements listed below. Kindly refer to the rating scale provided and circle the most appropriate rating number for each item statement.

Always	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
5	4	3	2	1

CURRICULUM

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| 1. Lack of personal confidence in implementing the new Curriculum 2005 due to insufficient training | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. Having to deal with complex policy document and terminology Of Curriculum 2005 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. Lack of guidelines on what needs to be learnt on each grade | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. Lack of ongoing support for the teachers to address problems which might have arose | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. Having to use inadequate and poor learning material | 1 2 3 4 5 |

JOB PRESSURE/WORK OVERLOAD

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| 6. Having to deal with classes of large sizes due to poor teacher-pupil ratio. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 7. Having too heavy workload, one that you can't possibly finish during school hours. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 8. Having the requirement of the job, impact your personal life. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 9. Being exhausted by daily demands at work. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 10. Being unable to meet deadlines and schedules | 1 2 3 4 5 |

LEARNERS

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 11. Having to deal with indiscipline learners who continually misbehave without support from parents, principals, colleagues and Department of Education | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 12. Inadequate disciplinary policy for learners by both school and Department of Education. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 13. Abolition of corporal punishment | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 14. Learners coming to class without necessary learning material. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 15. Having to deal with learners who are hard to motivate. | 1 2 3 4 5 |

JOB INSECURITY

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| 16. Feeling vulnerable to redundancy or involuntary premature retirement. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 17. The constant changes taking place within the teaching profession and lack of consultation on how these changes are to be implemented. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 18. Fear of being involuntary transferred to another school due to Right Sizing and Rationalisation or (R&R) or Post Provisioning Norm (PPN). | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 19. Lack of promotional opportunities and prevalence of unfair promotional procedures. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 20. Constant threats by the Minister of Education to weed out dead wood in the teaching profession. | 1 2 3 4 5 |

ROLE AMBIGUITY OR JOB SCOPE

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| 21. Being unclear on just what the scope and responsibilities of your area. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 22. Feeling that you have too little authority to carry out the responsibilities assigned to you. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 23. Not being able to get information you need to carry out your duties. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 24. Having to teach a subject for which you have not been trained. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 25. Being given extra responsibilities to do | 1 2 3 4 5 |

RAPPORT WITH MANAGEMENT

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 26. Lack of influence over decision making in the school governance. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 27. Having ideas considerably different from those of your principal. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 28. Not knowing what the principal thinks of your performance and how he/she evaluates it. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 29. Poor interpersonal relationship with the principal and lack of proper channels of communication. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 30. Having to deal with principal who lacks clear and fair standards for work and discipline. | 1 2 3 4 5 |

RELATIONSHIP WITH COLLEAGUES

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 31. Lack of support from the colleagues. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 32. Poor interpersonal relationship amongst the staff members. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 33. Gossiping in the staff room and group pressures. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 34. Criticism from the colleagues. | 1 2 3 4 5 |

35. Poor communication and co-operation amongst the staff. 1 2 3 4 5

REWARDS AND RECOGNITION

36. Lack of satisfactory rewards in terms of both money and status 1 2 3 4 5
37. Lack of recognition for teachers professionalism within and outside the education system. 1 2 3 4 5
38. Lack of appreciation, respect and consideration by the Department of Education and the wider society. 1 2 3 4 5
39. Lack of regular feedback about your work. 1 2 3 4 5
40. Inadequate salary increase 1 2 3 4 5

OTHER STRESSORS

41. Crime in school, teachers being robbed of their valuables and money. 1 2 3 4 5
42. Lack of safety in schools. 1 2 3 4 5
43. Poor working conditions and lack of physical resources and funds. 1 2 3 4 5
44. Personal problems outside the working environment. 1 2 3 4 5
45. Transportation difficulties in getting to school. 1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX D

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION & CULTURE

MTHUNZINI DISTRICT (SKETCH MAP)

KEY

ENSINGWENI

ESIKHALENISENKOSI

GINGINDLOVU

ONGOYE

POST-PRIMARY

PRIMARY

SKILLS

GINGINDLOVU



INDIAN OCEAN

