

**FEMALE SECONDARY SCHOOL  
EDUCATORS' PERSONALITY  
AWARENESS IN RELATION  
TO WORK RELATED STRESS**

**By**

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**Submitted in part fulfillment of the requirements for**

**the degree of**

**MASTER OF EDUCATION WITH SPECIALISATION  
IN GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING**

**at the**

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**NOVEMBER 2007**

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I declare that **FEMALE SECONDARY SCHOOL EDUCATORS' PERSONALITY AWARENESS IN RELATION TO WORK RELATED STRESS** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

.....

**SIGNATURE**

**(MRS F P WOOD)**

.....

**DATE**

**Dedicated to:**

My husband, Kevin,  
Our children, Michael and Natasha  
For their patience, love and support.

My parents and sister,  
For inspiring me to achieve and never give up.

My friends and colleagues,  
For their emotional support and encouragement.

My Creator,  
For all my prayers being answered.

"Sometimes our light goes out but is blown  
into flame by another human being. Each of us  
owes deepest thanks to those who have  
rekindled this light."

Albert Schweitzer

## **SUMMARY**

Educator stress is a grave problem. The aim of this research is to understand female secondary school educators' personality awareness in relation to work related stress, with particular reference to an independent school in Witbank, Mpumalanga, South Africa. In the literature study I determined the nature of work related stress in educators' lives and investigated personality awareness. My empirical research established the level of work related stress experienced by female educators and how an awareness of different personalities may influence the person's experience of work related stress. The research methods were qualitative in nature and included an interview as well as focus group observations. Findings suggested that all the educators were stressed to a lesser or greater degree, but the critical fact was that what is stressful to one person may not be stressful to another. Based on the findings, recommendations were made for improvements to help alleviate educator stress.

### **Key terms:**

Educator stress; personality awareness; female secondary school educator; work related stress; interview; focus group; post 1994; personality qualities; constructivism; Jung personality theory; social cognitive theory; qualitative research

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the following people and organizations for their contributions to this dissertation.

- My supervisor, Professor Sonnekus, for her sincere and expert guidance throughout this study.
- Professor Kruger, for assisting me with my research topic.
- Sr. Lucia Allenstein, the principal for the use of the school as a research site.
- All the educators who participated in the research study.
- The Library staff, especially Karlien de Beer of the University of South Africa for making literature available to me in response to my request during the course of this study.
- Connie Park for technical editing.
- Professor E M Lemmer for language editing.

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# ACRONYMS

FETC:	Further Education and training certificate
GETC:	General Education and Training Certificate
HOD:	Head of Department at school level
NQF:	National Qualifications framework
OBE:	Outcomes-Based Education

## CHAPTER 1

# ORIENTATION, PROBLEM FORMULATION AND AIMS

*Change isn't what it used to be.*  
(Charles Handy, *The age of unreason*)

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 1 I attempt to orientate the reader regarding the transformation in education in South Africa since 1994 and how it has impacted on educator stress. I also discuss how various personalities experience differing work related stress. As reported in the Pretoria News (2005:1), educator stress is a serious problem and has been widely researched (Bennett, Boshoff & Rigby 1996, Pietersen & Van Zyl 1999). However, as Jarvis (2002:1) states, there is little consensus among different professional groups regarding its etiology and how to tackle it.

My awareness of educator stress relating to post 1994 educational transformation is of a personal nature. While teaching, it came to my attention that educators were becoming increasingly stressed. This was demonstrated daily by negative attitudes to themselves and others. In my view, this was due to transformation demands as well as teaching demands which were not only experienced locally, but seem to be a global phenomenon. Therefore, my aim is to understand female secondary school educators' personality awareness in relation to work related stress.

### 1.2 BACKGROUND

Hayward (in Pietersen & Van Zyl 1999:77) is of the opinion that political change in South Africa, resulting in changes in the structures of teaching, is the single most important contributing factor to high levels of stress among teachers. In addition, according to George and Nykodym (in Pietersen & Van Zyl 1999:77), career women (including educators) experience considerable stress and pressure because they have to fulfil multiple roles.

Transformation is synonymous with change, alteration and reconstruction, which may induce a certain amount of insecurity due to the unknown nature of the final product. Booyse and Swanepoel (in Poppleton & Williamson 2004:21) state that change may involve coming to terms with a multicultural, multilingual education project under the sudden transfer of power to a new government. The South African government's transformation of the education system is such an example. The government which came to power during the democratic elections of 1994 aimed to change the basic philosophy and orientation of the education system from racial segregation to non-discrimination, inclusion and racial integration. These changes have caused work related stress (Hayward in Pietersen & Van Zyl 1999:77).

In South Africa the period since 1994 has been marked by radical educational transformation. This transformation has evolved through a three-phase process. Firstly, Green Papers were published (Department of Education 1997:12), which were broad discussion documents, involving potential role players that investigated particular aspects of education policy. Secondly, White Papers were published (Department of Education 2001:17), involving public debate, which brought about recommendations for the envisaged policy. Finally, legislation was promulgated (Department of Education 2004a:7) and implemented (Poppleton & Williamson 2004:174). All the newly developed education policies and legislation are embedded in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996). The goal is the advancement of human rights as set out in the Bill of Rights (Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, Department of Education 2001:11) as well as social and environmental justice. The reason for this was to remove and redress inequalities that former apartheid policies had put in place. According to Booyse and Swanepoel (in Poppleton & Williamson 2004:174), the new philosophy was primarily concerned with fostering success, not filtering out those who do not succeed, since failure is understood and addressed as a systemic and not an individual problem. Therefore, with the emphasis on Outcomes-based Education, inclusive education and assessment, work related stress for the educator has taken on some new dimensions since 1994.

Some of the first concrete steps towards redesigning the education system are discussed below. I have chosen only to include those that Booyse and Swanepoel's research (in Poppleton & Williamson 2004:175) have stated as having the most impact on a daily basis on educator stress levels since 1994.

### **1.2.1 Outcomes-based education**

According to Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2002:24) Outcomes-based Education (OBE) originated from the competence-based movement in education. Competence-based refers to education in which the emphasis falls on what learners can do and not simply on what they might be able to repeat. This view led to the international trend of OBE being introduced in South Africa. Since 1994 the implementation of OBE has aimed at enabling all learners to reach their maximum learning potential by establishing learning outcomes that should be achieved by the end of the process. Van der Horst and McDonald (1997:6) sum up OBE as a learner-centred, result-oriented approach to learning that, together with a flexible curriculum, is geared to develop a thinking, problem-solving citizen who is equipped to participate in the country's development in an active and productive manner. Consequently, OBE has impacted greatly upon educator stress because educators felt they were inadequately prepared for the implementation of all these outcomes (Poppleton & Williamson 2004:196).

### **1.2.2 Inclusive education**

Since 1994, the demand has been to educate learners with barriers to learning within mainstream classrooms. With this view in mind inclusive education has been implemented and legislated (Eloff, Engelbrecht, Oswald & Swart 2003:295). According to the Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education 2001:17), a wide range of learning needs could emerge as a result of physical, mental, sensory, neurological and developmental impairments, psycho-social disturbances, differences in intellectual ability, specific life experiences or socio-economic deprivation. Therefore, all learners must now be accommodated and educators in the inclusive classroom experience stress because they lack pre-service or in-service training to deal with most of the above-mentioned learning needs.

### **1.2.3 Assessment**

Assessment procedures have undergone a major change since 1994 in the past, test and task based assessment were primarily used, whereas observation based assessment is now included. Assessment types must comprise baseline assessment (the establishment of what learners already know and can do), diagnostic assessment (to identify the cause or causes of a learning barrier), formative assessment (any form of assessment that requires feedback to the learner to monitor and support the learning process) and summative assessment (a judgment

of the competence or performance of the learner is recorded) (Department of Education 2003:28). In the light of the abovementioned, educators are uncertain how to apply these assessment procedures and lack confidence and time in the administration thereof, resulting in increased stress (Pietersen & Van Zyl 1999:77).

These are only three of the changes that have been part of education transformation, but I have chosen to include them because they are fundamental to the new teaching paradigm. Leibowitz (2003:13) states that stress is becoming more prevalent amongst educators, especially in the light of the fundamental changes that have taken place in the education system. Moreover, Burke and McKeen (in Pietersen & Van Zyl 1999:77) are of the opinion that rigid work schedules and few opportunities for innovation lead to a lack of satisfaction and poor productivity among career women. Therefore, the education transformation process involves personal transformation for the female educator, which may induce a certain amount of stress.

### **1.3 ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM**

Research is initiated once there is an awareness of a problem. Firstly, I describe how I became aware of the problem. Furthermore, a preliminary literature study on educator stress as well as other related concepts is included. My problem statement is formulated once the problem is analysed.

#### **1.3.1 Awareness of the problem**

The discussion in Section 1.2 about educational transformation post 1994 highlights a learner centred approach, which however fails to include coping mechanisms for the main stakeholders, namely the educators who have to implement this approach. Ferguson and Ralph (1996:51) are of the opinion that "it seems foolhardy to believe that a single educator could possess all the skills to create rich and effective learning opportunities for all children regardless of their family, socio-economic, cultural, linguistic ability or learning differences". A quotation by Mother Theresa inspired me to use self-awareness as my solution to the problem of educator stress rather than to seek solutions in outside agencies, namely, "*Do not wait for leaders: do it alone, person to person*". I identified with this motto, because I was in a position to make a difference, person to person, and consequently decided to focus on empowering educators to create their own coping mechanisms in order to implement the

changes.

While in the teaching profession, I noticed that since 1994, educator stress in South Africa has drastically increased. This was evident in both my own personal experience as an educator and interaction with colleagues where the initial passion for the profession was replaced with frustration, depression and despondency. This was confirmed by alarming statistics of educator resignations. According to the Pretoria News (2005:1), "the average number of teachers in the system has dropped by almost 20 000 over the past seven years due to low morale and high levels of stress".

I was an intern psychologist in 2006, at the same independent school in Witbank, Mpumalanga where I had previously taught. My role in the school involved learner as well as educator support and confirmed my hunch that educator stress was one of the major problems the school faced. Educators not only asked for assistance in stress management, but also vocational guidance in order to leave the profession they once loved. Learners came to me for assistance because some educators had become a barrier to learning, as these educators displayed out-of-character behaviour due to high stress levels. Dieltiens (2006:1) states that the Wits Education Policy Unit (EPU), the Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD) and the Centre for International Education at Sussex University survey found that the number of independent schools serving poor learners (those charging below R1 000 a year) was negligible (4% of schools). Therefore, it appears that independent schools generally serve an urban middle class. However educators at independent schools may face different pressures because of a higher professional standard set by parents, higher education levels and higher school fees (between R5 999 to more than R200 000 a year). Educators in independent schools may experience undue measures of stress due to these parental expectations. I inquired at selected local public schools about the average amount of sick leave for female secondary school educators. Sick leave amounted to 2.48 days per person. This is much in line with the 2.6 days per person for the independent school in question. I therefore concluded that all female educators, regardless of where they work, experience stress.

My research is based at the aforementioned independent school in Witbank, which historically had been a school for white girls, but had opened its admission to Indian girls in 1977 with much resistance from the conservative local community. Thereafter, learners of other racial groups slowly filtered in with total integration achieved by 1994. Thus it seems as if racial integration was successfully achieved, and can be ruled out as a factor causing stress

in 2007. In 2001 the school had their first Grade 12 class which included boys (albeit five boys). However, no strategies were undertaken to equip the educators (white females who had taught at this single sex school for many years; many of whom only had daughters) to cope with cultural or gender issues. Over the following years, I noticed how educators who had opportunities to leave, did so, and those who had no option but to stay in teaching, were plagued with frustration and despondency that also took its toll on their health and personality. I wondered if teaching boys and girls from all races could cause so much pressure. Although the pressures might come from various origins, Carlyle and Woods (2002:77) state, "Under such pressures, the teachers lost the sense of who they were". It is therefore evident, locally and globally, that educator selves and personal selves are closely intertwined, bound up with vocational commitment and incur large amounts of emotional investment (Carlyle & Woods 2002:77).

### **1.3.2 Investigation of the problem**

I did a preliminary literature study and concluded that educator stress is an international problem of vast dimension. Australian and other overseas research shows that secondary school educators exhibit high levels of stress when compared to other white-collar workers (Dorman 2003:35). In 2003, Teacher Support Scotland investigated the stress suffered by Scottish educators and the core findings of the research showed that 90% of educators interviewed suffered from stress (Educational Institute of Scotland 2005:16). In South Africa, post 1994, different stressors have been added to the original list. The stress that educators undergo results in physiological, psychological and behavioural consequences for educators, which may ultimately lead to a crisis in education with dire consequences for the learners. In most literature, only a broad overview of educator stress is given and it is not specific to post apartheid (1994) timeframe.

## **1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The literature indicates that educator stress is a grave problem. However, all educators do not experience the same level of stress, neither is it the same for all males and females. Pietersen and van Zyl's (1999:77) study confirm that married female educators in particular, experience high levels of stress. Quenk (2000:8) confirms that people of different personality types identify differing sources of both positive energy and stress and these energizers and stressors tend to be consistent with the attributes of their personalities. According to a Jungian

perspective of personality, stress is viewed as a result of a deliberate dynamic in the psyche in order to re-establish balance and/or to stimulate growth (Garden 1991:73). Due to the fact that humans are social beings, the work environment must be included in any study on stress (Munt 2004:586).

Therefore, this study investigates the key research question: "What is the role of personality awareness in relation to female secondary school educators with work related stress?"

Four related research questions are distinguished:

1. What is work related stress?
2. What is the level of stress experienced by female educators?
3. How does awareness of personality occur?
4. How do female educators with different personalities experience work related stress?

In the following section the aims and objectives of this research are given.

## **1.5 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH**

The aim of the research is to understand female secondary school educators' personality awareness in relation to work related stress.

### **1.5.1 General aim**

The main aim of this investigation was to understand the role of personality awareness in relation to the work related stress of female secondary school educators.

### **1.5.2 Objectives**

The subdivision of the general aim determined the following objectives for this research:

Firstly, I determined the nature of work related stress in educators' lives by means of a literature study. My second focus was on literature related to the level of stress experienced specifically by female educators. Thirdly, my further literature study investigated personality, how an awareness of personality occurs, and lastly how people with different personalities experience work related stress.

My empirical research established the level of work related stress experienced by female educators and how an awareness of different personalities may influence the person's experience of work related stress.

In order to realise the above aim and objectives, suitable research methods had to be used. I included an interview as well as focus group observations for the empirical investigation. These research methods are briefly addressed in the next section.

## **1.6 THEORETICAL FOUNDATION**

Henning, van Rensburg and Smit (2004:25) explain that a theoretical framework positions research in the discipline or subject in which you are working, as well as providing an orientation to your study. My study pertains to personality theories as related to female educators' work stress. As Mischel (1993:15) states, personality theories are often applied to help improve the psychological qualities of our lives. Particular reference was made to the psychodynamic approach of Jung's trait theory as well as incorporating the more recent cognitive social theory. Cloninger (1996:86) explains that Jung's description of personality types shows how different personality profiles prevent work related stress. Although personality profiles are not the direct focus in this research, information regarding personality profiles can be fruitfully linked to my research topic. I also chose to incorporate a second theory, namely cognitive social theory, because of the importance of the role of personality awareness in learning, as well as including the concept of self-discrepancies (between actual, ideal and adapted self) and its emotional consequences (namely stress).

The above explanation locates my research in the area of Jung's personality theory as well as the cognitive social perspective of personality.

### **1.6.1 Conceptual framework**

According to Henning, van Rensburg and Smit (2004:26), a conceptual framework is an alignment of the key concepts of the study. In my research I decided to investigate how female secondary school educators' personalities links to their work related stress.

I used a psychoanalytical framework in my initial research. Jung's independent theory of personality emerged from the school of psychoanalysis. The field of literature that is accessed is analytical psychology, with particular reference to Jungian psychology as well as

personality traits. Secondly, I incorporated the social cognitive theory. This theory has its roots in traditional social learning theory. I integrated the two theories by firstly allowing educators to become aware of their personality type according to Jung's typology and secondly, by using this self-report data according to social cognitive theory.

### **1.6.2 Demarcation of the research**

My research was limited to an investigation of the role of personality awareness in relation to female secondary school educators at an independent school in Witbank, Mpumalanga. Therefore, the set of data was too small to make any generalisations. The research included only urban, white, female educators. Nevertheless, the findings and conclusions may provide a framework for bringing about change in the education system that will assist female educators in similar circumstances.

### **1.6.3 Definition and clarification of concepts**

The following concepts are explained to clarify understanding.

#### ***1.6.3.1 Female secondary school educator***

A secondary school includes educators working alone in their select content areas of expertise: lock step, grade-by-grade curriculum: an emphasis on individualistic and competitive learner outputs and grading: classes scheduled in time blocks: learners tracked by academic ability: learning that occurs only within classroom walls for most learners (Bachman, Baldwin & Keating 2006: vii). Pietersen and van Zyl (1999:77) confirm that female secondary school educators' demands exceed their abilities to cope in the work environment, due to the fact that they have to be 'everything to everybody'. Therefore, the stress is threefold: gender, the teaching profession and teaching in a secondary school induce stresses in the work place impacting on the individual's personality.

#### ***1.6.3.2 Stress***

According to Overland (1998:8), while it may be true that educators are under no more or less stress than certain other professionals; they are in a unique position that this stress has a direct influence on learners. Stress, for the purpose of this study, is seen as a psychological concept with negative connotations, which refers to a response to, or results from the inability to cope with physical and/or mental demands, real or perceived, made on educators as a result

of their profession, causing an unpleasant emotional state (Olivier & Venter 2003:187). In this research, stress experienced by female secondary school educators in the work place was linked to their awareness of their own personalities.

### ***1.6.3.3 Personality***

Personality is concerned with human nature, especially how individuals differ. Oliver and Pervin (2001:4) define personality as those characteristics of the person that account for consistent patterns of feeling, thinking and behaving. Consequently, a theory of personality brings together and systemises a wide variety of findings. Quenk (1993:2) explains how psychological type theory is accessible to an everyday understanding of personality consistency because it was formulated to describe and explain normal behavioural variations among 'normal' people. For the purpose of my study, I researched how an awareness of different personality qualities could influence the experience of work related stress in female secondary school educators.

## **1.7 RESEARCH PLAN**

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001:9), research is a systematic process of collecting and logically analysing information for some purpose. The systematic process of collecting and analysing the information for my study was achieved by means of a literature study and an empirical investigation.

### **1.7.1 The literature study**

As previously mentioned in 1.5.2, one of my objectives in my research was doing a literature study on work related stress, secondly on female educator work related stress as well as on the influence different personalities might have on the experience of work related stress. My research began with a review of the existing literature by accessing a variety of information sources.

Books reporting on research projects supplied the main aspects of my theoretical foundation. Journal articles supplied up to date empirical research results focussed on my topic. The information obtained from the Internet reflected recent press releases as well as policy documents.

The detailed literature study on work related stress, as well as the level of stress experienced

by female educators was recorded in Chapter 2 and a literature study on personality awareness and how different personal qualities that are found in personality profiles might influence the experience of work related stress is presented in Chapter 3.

### **1.7.2 Empirical investigation**

An empirical investigation was carried out. I delimited the study to an independent school in Witbank that comprises of a primary and a secondary school. I investigated how work related stress had manifested itself in secondary school female educators. I then addressed the role of personality awareness in order to deal with the work related stress. Finally, I substantiated my evidence with data I gathered from interviews and observations.

#### ***1.7.2.1 Approach***

The types of research questions in this study are exploratory in nature and therefore require a qualitative research methodology. Tesch (in Denscombe 2003:267) notes that qualitative research involves, firstly a concern with meanings and the way people understand things. My research project entailed understanding how female educators understand the influence of their personality on the stress they experience in the work place. Secondly, qualitative research involves a concern with patterns of behaviour. In my research, I dealt with the experience of work related stress which female educators have due to their different personal qualities / personalities.

#### ***1.7.2.2 Research paradigm***

As a researcher, former educator and trained educational psychologist, I believe that knowledge should be actively constructed by people and not simply transferred by someone. I believe that people learn through experience and shape their own development through choice. Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2002:100) emphasise this by stating that constructivism shifts the emphasis to human beings as active agents in their own development. In my research, educators engage in experiences, activities and discussions which challenge them to make meaning of their social and physical environment and by doing this build a more complex understanding of themselves and the world.

#### ***1.7.2.3 Research design***

In order to conduct research, a research design must be chosen. A research design is the plan

and structure of the investigation used to obtain evidence to answer the research question (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:31). Qualitative research methodologies were used for the purpose of this study. The main research design that I chose was action research. According to Berg (2004:197), action research is a research framework that evolved from a number of different intellectual traditions. The approach has been described to be a highly reflective, experiential, and participatory mode of research in which all individuals involved in the study, researcher and participants alike, are deliberate and contributing actors in the research enterprise (Gabel 1995, Wadsworth 1998). According to Henning *et al.* (2004:48), in most dissertation studies, the researcher can only complete one of the many cycles involved in action research. In Chapter 4, I discuss the research design in greater detail.

#### ***1.7.2.4 Ethical issues***

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:420) state that qualitative researchers need to be sensitive to ethical principles because of their resource topic, face-to-face interactive data collection, an emergent design, and reciprocity with participants. As I was doing social research, I regarded informed consent, ensuring privacy, no harm to participants and confidentiality of the utmost importance (Heaton 2004:77). There are also certain ethical issues associated with the aforementioned action research, which are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

#### ***1.7.2.5 Site selection and selection of participants***

Qualitative researchers selectively choose persons, situations and events that are most likely to yield information-rich data about the anticipated problems (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:433). Therefore in my study, 10 female secondary school educators with fifteen years teaching experience (in order to guarantee that they had taught prior to 1994, as well as being part of the education transformation), who were currently teaching in the secondary school, from grades 8 to 12, were identified to participate in the research.

The selection of the person for the in-depth interview begins with a description of the desired attributes or profile of persons who would have knowledge of the topic of educator stress (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:433). The reason that I chose the interviewee was because she had 27 years' teaching experience and had resigned from teaching due to work stress. Her teaching experience therefore made her a suitable research participant.

In terms of the site, I conducted my research in a combined, independent, secondary school in

Witbank, Mpumalanga. I selected this school as per convenience, but also because it consists of a diverse composition of learners.

#### ***1.7.2.6 Data collection methods***

The following data collection methods were used in my research.

##### **Interview**

As Berg (2004:75) states, interviewing may be defined simply as a conversation with the purpose to gather information to help in the understanding how stress has affected educators. I interviewed one person, the interviewee was a female secondary school educator with 27 years teaching experience, who had resigned from teaching due to work stress.

##### **Focus groups**

I chose the focus group approach to be in the format of an interactive group workshop. The focus group consisted of 10 female secondary school educators with at least 15 years teaching experience. McMillan and Schumacher (2001:455) describe focus groups as, a variation of an interview. By creating a social environment in which educators are stimulated by the perceptions and ideas of each other, one can increase the quality and richness of data through a more efficient strategy than one-on-one interviewing. The perceptions and ideas which are shared in the focus group help the participants to develop an awareness of their personality in an interactive way. This awareness of their personality qualities will assist them in the following ways:

- Understanding who they are
- If the qualities that the respondent identified with is their actual self, the ought self or the ideal self (according to Higgins, in Mischel 1993)
- How stress changes their personality qualities and how they are able to understand the dynamics involved
- Being able to understand the personalities of other people, including learners, colleagues, the leadership of the school, the school as an organisation as well as their own families, and in this way alleviating stressful situations

### ***1.7.2.7 Data analysis and interpretation***

As McMillan and Schumacher (2001:461) and Henning *et al.* (2004:127), explain, qualitative data analysis is primarily an ongoing, emerging, non-linear inductive process of organising the data into categories and identifying relationships among the categories. During the group workshop, which involved identifying the work related stress in female educators' lives, as well as personality awareness activities with the focus group, the data were organised into categories that reflected work related stress and the relationship of these data to different personalities. This was done during the exploration phase of the group work activity.

The interpretations of the data were done during the final phase of the group workshop. The participants were guided to an understanding of the data which had been collected and categorised during the group work process. As the facilitator of the group workshop, I used the knowledge which I had gathered during my literature review to help the participants interpret their own data.

### ***1.7.2.8 Issues of trustworthiness and credibility***

Seale (1999:42) explains how different people are bound to have different accounts of the world and therefore the qualitative researcher's role is perhaps no more than to facilitate the expression of these accounts, and consequently the status of these accounts is brought into question, as clearly they are themselves no more than a selection of possible versions. Lincoln and Guba (in Seale 1999:45) explain that the most crucial technique for establishing credibility is through 'member checks', showing materials such as interview scripts or observations to the people on whom the research has been done, so that they can indicate their agreement or disagreement with the way in which the researcher has represented them. This was achieved in my study by giving the educators feedback on the research findings in a workshop. Lincoln and Guba (in Seale 1999:45) replace reliability with dependability or trustworthiness, which can be achieved by a procedure they call 'auditing'. This consists of the researchers' documentation of data, methods and decisions made during a project, as well as its end product. Issues of trustworthiness and credibility were also established because I was able to establish rapport and trust with the research participants because they were my colleagues.

## **1.8 RESEARCH PROGRAMME**

Chapter 1 has introduced the research and given a brief analysis of the problem of female secondary school educators' personality awareness in relation to work related stress. This has been done in the context of educational change, post 1994, with the emphasis on Outcomes-based Education (OBE), inclusive education and assessment. Chapter 2 clarifies what work related stress is by means of a literature study which also looks at the level of stress that female educators experience. Chapter 3 looks at personality awareness and clarifies how females with different personalities experience work related stress. The research design is addressed in detail in Chapter 4. In Chapter 5, the findings and results of the empirical study on personality awareness in relation to female secondary school educators with work related stress was discussed, with emphasis on the qualitative analysis of the gathered data. Finally, in Chapter 6, the findings of the research as well as recommendations and the conclusion are given.

## **1.9 SUMMARY**

I have orientated the reader regarding the transformation in education since 1994 and how it has caused educator stress in general and female educator stress in particular. The educational transformation evolved through a 3 phase process of green and white papers and finally legislation. Some of the most important steps towards redesigning the previous education system involved the change to an OBE system, inclusive education, as well as assessment techniques changing and becoming varied. These changes as well as the other pressures that teaching subjects educators to, involves personal transformation for the female educator which induces a certain amount of stress. All of these changes have induced different degrees of stress in educators.

The awareness of educator stress relating to post 1994 educational transformation was of a personal nature while teaching and working as an intern psychologist at an independent school. My aim was to investigate work related stress, as well as look at the level of stress experienced by female educators. I wanted the educators to become aware of the types of personalities and how this influenced work related stress. Lastly, I explained the core concepts of the research project in order to inform the reader of the key issues.

Chapter 2 contains readings on the phenomena of educator stress in female secondary school educators.

## CHAPTER 2

# WORK RELATED STRESS IN FEMALE SECONDARY SCHOOL EDUCATORS

*My candle burns at both ends;  
It will not last the night.*  
- Edna St. Vincent Millay

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of my study is to explain how female educators experience stress in the work place with particular reference to female educators in South Africa post 1994 and how this relates to their personalities. In addressing this problem comprehensively, it is necessary to explain what is meant by stress and personality and how personality awareness could assist school educators to reduce work related stress. Overland (1998:8) states that the reduction of educators' stress levels is one of the most important challenges facing education. To do this, a school climate should be created where stress is seen as an "interesting, understandable and, up to a point, an inevitable accompaniment to high levels of demand and uncertainty. It needs to be on the agenda, both formal and informal, of most if not all staff rooms" (Claxton 1989:73).

Thus, Chapter 2 begins with an explanation of these key concepts by referring to literature on work related stress, specifically female educator work stress.

The etymological roots of the term educator stress give an in-depth understanding of the concept of work related stress.

### 2.2 ETYMOLOGICAL ROOTS OF THE TERM EDUCATOR STRESS

The etymological roots of a term relates to the origin or source of a word and the development of its meaning. Seyle's classic definition (in Olivier & Venter 2003:186) postulates that stress is the non-specific response of the body to any demands. Therefore, it is an integral part of growth and development that only becomes a predominantly negative factor in a person's life (eroding the abilities to function) when it takes on a destructive meaning. In order to answer the research question dealing with the role of personality

awareness in relation to female secondary school educators with work related stress (see Section 1.5.2), I firstly explore definitions of the term educator stress.

Greenberg (1984:2) summarises stress as the physical, mental or emotional reaction resulting from an individual's response to environmental tensions, conflicts, pressures, and other stimuli. Bennett, Boshoff and Rigby (1996:38) state that occupational stress is especially significant for educators since it may affect not only the educators, but also their learners. Ultimately stress can directly contribute to the destructive lifestyles of educators, which culminate in lower morale and creativity, inability to concentrate including sporadic memory difficulties, lower self-esteem within the school and personal lives and disorganisation in the classroom sometimes to the point of being in an out of control atmosphere and overreacting to mild pressures in the classroom (Bensky, Dixon & Shaw 1981:2).

As mentioned in Section 1.6.4.2, stress, for the purpose of this study, is seen as a psychological concept with negative connotations experienced by female secondary school educators in the workplace. Stress is experienced as a result of gender demands and the demands of the teaching profession in general and teaching in a secondary school in particular. A physical or mental reaction may result from the educators' response to the work stress. Ultimately this will have an impact on the individual's personality.

In the next section an explanation of how work stress affects individuals, particularly female educators in a secondary school, will be presented. Once this is understood one is able to link personality awareness of the secondary school educator to work related stress.

### **2.3 WORK STRESS**

Work stress involves certain phases. According to Carlyle and Woods (2002:55), stress is a process in which the personal identity undergoes assault and battery, total anomy and ultimately transformation. The first phase entails a traumatic separation from the old identity and the structures and cultures that sustained it. Parts of the self are attacked and become separated from the personal identity until the individual becomes completely disorientated. The second phase involves a transition, moving to the depths of despair where rock bottom is reached, but also the beginnings of redemption. This is encouraged by experience of "cocooning": the influence of significant others and the gradual reassertion of the self by the stressed person. Lastly, reincorporation in, or realignment with society, takes place when a sense of personal identity is recovered or reconstructed.

Carlyle and Woods (2002:111) suggest an explanation for reaching rock bottom. They quote Pines *et al.* (1981:3) who state that "while burnout can be an extraordinary painful and distressing experience, as with any difficult event, if handled properly can not only be overcome, it can be the first step towards increased self-awareness, enriched human understanding and a precursor of important life changes, growth and development. Accordingly, people who have experienced burnout and have overcome it almost invariably end up in a better, fuller, more exciting life space". With this in mind, individual educators can do much to deal with the stress within themselves and in their school in a positive manner. As Carlyle and Woods (2002:159) confirm, the educator's first step is to acknowledge that they are emotional beings. Humphrey and Humphrey (1986:83) conclude that a large portion of the responsibility falls to the individual educator to make those kinds of modifications in personal behaviour that will in one way or another add to the quality of living and help in the prevention of undesirable stress. It is therefore imperative that one understands how work stress affects individuals, in order to link personality awareness of the secondary school educator to work related stress.

In the light of the foregoing discussion, Jarvis (2002:1) maintains that teaching has become a stressful occupation. In a survey of head educators by the British National Association of Head Educators it reported in May 2000 that 40% of respondents reported having visited their doctor with a stress related problem in the previous year, 20% considered that they drank too much, 15% believed they were alcoholics and 25% suffered from serious stress related health problems including hypertension, insomnia, depression and gastrointestinal disorders. The Pretoria News (2005:1) published the results of a national survey conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) stating that stress factors were related to the large number of days educators are absent from work. The survey indicated that 10, 6% of educators were hospitalised in the previous year, 7% more than the general population. Munt (2004:587) sums up educator stress as "work situations of low control that are accompanied by high performance demands". Jarvis (2002:2) states: "Of all the educator stressors reported, classroom management anxiety was the only one that did not decline following teaching practice".

In conclusion, Quenk (1993:231) shows that the workplace is an arena where people demonstrate their best and worst selves. Stress that is chronic in most work situations can thwart our best efforts and elicit our own and others' least effective sides. Therefore,

understanding the forms of different inferior functions in different personalities can provide the potential for understanding, predicting, and explaining out of character behaviour at work. Against the background of the above-mentioned information about work stress, it is also important to take cognisance of the causes of stress in the workplace.

## **2.4 CAUSES OF STRESS IN THE WORKPLACE**

Our understanding of stress in the workplace was enhanced by Leibowitz (2003:13) who groups the causes into categories that reflect situations at work.

### **2.4.1 Inadequate working conditions and leadership styles**

Organisations, like schools, will affect educator stress because depending if the environment is efficient or not in its production of a desired effect will influence the educator. According to Goddard (2001:184), collective efficacy refers to the "perceptions of educators in a school that the faculty as a whole can organise and execute the courses of action required to have a positive effect on learners". Therefore, from an organisational perspective, collective efficacy helps to explain the differential effect that school cultures have on educators and learners.

Some schools consequently have a positive influence on educators whereas the impact of other schools is much less productive. The educator who works in a school with low morale and a depressed sense of collective efficacy will experience higher degrees of stress due to low degrees of mutuality, no shared responsibility and a lack of confidence in the co-joint capability of the school. Organisations have affective states that are impacted by collective successes and failures; therefore just as individuals react to stress, so does an organisation. Goddard (2001:192) concludes that one must recognise that educators are aware of and influenced by the social processes and collective beliefs that characterise a school.

Therefore, an individual with modest educator efficacy will likely persist more in the face of personal obstacles and setbacks in a school where educators tend to believe in the group's conjoint ability to educate the learners successfully. Conversely even highly efficacious educators may view personal effort and persistence as inconsequential to learner growth and development, if the school dwells on past group failures. If, added to this, they have little expectation for organisational improvement, they will experience stress and a decline in educator efficacy. According to Salter (1995:28) some psychological types (educators) seem to be more at home in particular environments. This seems to indicate a type-situation match or mismatch with related stress levels.

With regard to attitudes towards leadership, Greenberg's (1984:41) research suggests that those people with the greatest job stress judged that they were simply numbers to management and that concern for the well being of workers was not high on management's list of priorities. The leadership style can dictate what type of educator support is put in place in the school. Huberman (1993:259) researched the positive relationship of educators with the school. He reports that "the presence within school of support helps educators recover from burn-out, which leads them to look more favourably on an institution of which they might have been critical up to then". In some schools, the management have systems in place for educator evaluation; this would have increased educator stress due to evaluation apprehension. Carlyle and Woods (2002:147) sum it up well by saying that educators considered the managerialistic styles of monitoring and appraisal of being too often concerned with surveillance and finding fault, rather than with rewarding success and fostering feelings of self-efficacy. Donald *et al.* (2002:152) therefore maintain that the key challenges to good school leadership include developing personal and interpersonal skills because good 'people management' in the school is not possible without these skills. Therefore, knowledge of how aware teaching staff is of their personality qualities would benefit the school leadership when dealing with work related stress issues.

#### **2.4.2 Little participation in decision-making and distribution of tasks**

Poppleton and Williamson (2004:14) state that it is within the school that the educators are most likely to be cast in the role of implementers of change rather than initiators. This results in the educators being at the end of a long process of implementation from government to local authorities to schools, to heads or principals, to senior staff and finally, to educators. This scenario highlights the fact that educators face the stress involved in implementing change without being part of the decision-making.

A lack of information about changes in the education system often prevail as the study by Booyse and Swanepoel (in Poppleton & Williamson 2004:201) reveals. They found that "in spite of government attempts to consult all potential role players and to engage in extensive public debate by means of Green and White Papers, educators expressed the opinion that they have not really been given the opportunity to get out there and be part of the entire situation. Too often people not involved in the teaching situation are making decisions on our behalf and having the final say". Greenberg (1984:21) states that parents can freely choose their parenting style and independently decide what they will teach their own children but educators do not have the same alternatives. Their freedom of choice is limited by

institutional or organisational factors, because educators are members of a system of policies, procedures, prohibitions and norms that strongly influence how they respond to and teach learners.

Donald *et al.* (2002:26) state that many South Africa educators struggled against incredible odds to maintain a semblance of education during the apartheid years. These odds have been so great that many educators have become demoralised and this results in increased stress levels for the educator. Therefore, to foster a sense of professional responsibility in educators, ownership should be developed, which may be enhanced by an awareness of their personality qualities and will ultimately include active participation in decision making by all educators.

### **2.4.3 High work load and long working hours**

According to the Sunday Times newspaper, Professor Metcalfe (2006) stated that only 5% of the teaching force joined since 1994, therefore most current educators had been trained in separate apartheid systems and received a deeply authoritarian education that was inimical to critical and innovative thinking. Paradoxically, these educators are a generation with high expectations of fundamental educational change, but their experience is of increased bureaucratisation of their work. As many as 75% of educators believe that their workload has increased significantly, with associated increases in stress as a consequence of policy changes in which they are inadequately supported. According to Greenberg (1984:35), the daily tasks of almost every educator include a myriad of duties that go beyond functions associated with the educator/learner relationship.

Inadequate working conditions in the past and at present in some schools in South Africa include class size and inappropriate resources. Greenberg (1984:25) notes that the sense of responsibility can be overwhelming; conflict evolving when administrative and other demands interfere with meeting responsibilities. Once, the educator judges that the system is making it difficult to teach learners effectively, negative stress develops. Not only do the educators have to do the normal teaching, but they are also expected to do the work of clerks, such as collecting money for field trips, filling in forms and fundraising.

The educator's working hours therefore include preparation, marking, teaching, field trips and extra curricular activities. In Booyse and Swanepoel's interviews (in Poppleton & Williamson 2004:197), educators indicated that lesson preparation had become more demanding and time consuming because they needed to be more innovative and demonstrate a much wider cross-section of knowledge. Previously educators had dealt with only homogenous groups. In the

new dispensation, they teach heterogenous groups in which all the learners cannot maintain the same tempo, because the educators need to spend more time on matters that they usually assumed learners to have mastered, an example being terminology. This illustrates the impact of inclusive education discussed in Section 1.2.2. Olivier and Venter (2003:190) explain that long working hours entail that teachers spend long hours at school, help with extramural activities, such as sports coaching or refereeing, or are involved in meetings after hours and do their preparation and marking at home at night. Ironically, the term half-day job takes on a new meaning: working 12 hours out of 24. An educator's typical day may include teaching from 07h30 till 13h30 and attending extra-murals or a meeting till 16h30. In the evening, most female educators take care of the family before doing three hours of marking, preparation, setting tests and exams.

Taking cognisance of the changes in educators' personalities will empower them to deal more effectively with work related stress arising from high work load and long working hours.

#### **2.4.4 Role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload**

Leibowitz (2003:13) explains that within each school are a number of activities that need to be carried out which constitute the roles performed by educators. These roles are listed by Donald *et al.* (2002:184) as mediator of learning, scholar, researcher, lifelong-learner, leader, administrator, manager, supporter, designer and interpreter of learning programmes and materials, assessor of learner and specialist. Role theory researchers have identified three role variables that they consider to have an important effect upon job satisfaction, namely role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload, all of which have been shown to result in decreased job satisfaction.

According to Greenberg (1984:21), the manner in which an educator's role is defined and perceived may be either a cause of stress or a source of stress reduction. If roles are clearly defined, educators will feel comfortable in filling those roles and meeting the demands of the school, because they have an understanding of and control over the tasks to be accomplished. However, if roles are not clearly defined, the educator may feel stressed and insecure. There may be a discrepancy between the educator's perception of the role and others' expectations for it (Bensky *et al.* 1981:7).

Role conflict occurs when the school's expectations contradict the person's expectations. The educator has management, parents and learners affecting him or her (Beard 1990:111). According to Pieterse and van Zyl (1999:74), the role confusion stems from working long

hours versus being a supportive partner. Women especially have to be the homemaker, a supportive wife and mother and, at the same time, a good worker.

Role ambiguity implies that educators are unclear about how to perform and unclear about what is expected of them. Therefore, there is lack of clarity concerning job performance as well as expected consequences (Beard 1990:111).

Role underload/overload is defined as the underutilisation of staff geared up for a specific task or the overburdening of limited personnel resources (Bensky *et al.* 1981:5). According to Greenberg (1984:23), most educators experience role overload. Examples include daily routines in the classroom being broken by a sudden crisis, like attending to an ill student, to disruptions like a fire drill in the middle of an important lesson. In role overload, the educator may feel incompetent in what is expected of her or expected to do more than time permits (Beard 1990:111). According to George and Nykodym (in Pieterse & Van Zyl 1999:77), career women (including educators) experience considerable stress and pressure because they have to be everything to everybody. Another role that all educators assume is that of the polyphasic thinker, because they need to think of two or more things simultaneously, like teaching a lesson and monitoring discipline at the same time. This polyphasic thought is a cause of fatigue (Greenberg 1984:24).

It therefore seems that role confusion has a direct impact on the educators' personalities and therefore an awareness of their personality qualities can assist in dealing with this work stress more effectively.

#### **2.4.5 Constant change and demands of the national curriculum and syllabus changes**

Since 1994, legislation in education in South Africa has undergone many changes, evident in the numerous Green and White Papers (see Section 1.2). Donald *et al.* (2002:25) explain how initially the general concept of OBE tended to become confused with the more specific and technically complex concerns of the original Curriculum 2005. Following the recommendations of the Review Committee on Curriculum 2005, this confusion has given way to a much more basic curriculum framework. Booyse and Swanepoel (in Poppleton & Williamson 2004:200) in their interviews with educators noticed that some educators indicated that their levels of stress had increased dramatically and that consequent to the educational changes, their whole lives started revolving around the school. As a result, educators felt that the demands of teaching were too enormous to handle. According to most of the white respondents in their study, educational change since 1994 has been accompanied

by emotional experiences that can be described as traumatic. These changes have been too numerous in such a short time span and educators complained "in theory it was something that was going to be developed over time, but in practice it was faster than expected or anticipated ... the pace at which changes came, surprised most people" (Booyse & Swanepoel in Poppleton & Williamson 2004:201).

Booyse and Swanepoel (in Poppleton & Williamson 2004:201) also observed that educators who formed part of their research sample felt that the education authorities had deceived them because the latter did not provide them with the necessary assistance to implement the various changes. In order to cope with this transformation, educators introduced a dual system of keeping the "old chalk- and-talk" or "chant-and-drill", according to Freire (in Donald *et al.* 2002:99). This was called the "banking approach", where teaching attempts to deposit knowledge in the learners through direct instruction, which equipped the learner for a matric external exam (as well as being the locus of control for the educator), as well as outcomes based teaching required by the framework of the new curriculum. Moreover, teaching was replaced with the role of facilitator who should guide learners on their journey of acquiring skills. This dual system not only created role ambiguity but was also extremely time consuming. This affected not only the educator who now had double the work load, but unnecessary pressure was put on the learners who were having to cope with stressed educators and heavy workloads. The stressed learners, some of who could not cope with this work load, then ultimately created stressful situations in the classroom, which consequently affected the stress level of the educator even more. This vicious cycle seems to have set the scene for disaster in secondary school education.

As Carlyle and Woods (2002:72) state, educators use commonly ascribed stress management techniques. However, with the continued mismatch between resources and situational demands, personal stress management techniques proved ineffective in the long term for these educators. Carlyle and Woods (2002:2) also found that educators perceived schools as ill equipped to manage change. Educators receive no training in change management. Those responsible for managing change found colleagues highly resistant to further change without rewards.

At the beginning of 2006, educators were expected to implement the new Further Education and Training curriculum for their Grade 10 learners. The Star (January 2006) quotes Lilly Sebepelelela, a deputy principal in Daveyton on the East Rand, who said that most educators were not trained well enough to implement the further education and training curriculum,

which places emphasis on the outcomes-based education (OBE). She said: "The one-week training (in September last year) was not sufficient. It was done when we were busy preparing learners for exams".

According to the report in the Cape Times (21 December 2005) by HSRC research director, Linda Chisholm, there is a serious erosion of instructional time in most schools, with reasons ranging from large classes, increased workload due to a lack of administrative support and increased administrative demands placed on teachers by outcomes-based education assessments (discussed below). Against the background of the discussion of educational transformation, a myriad of problems emerge relating to work stress which impact greatly on the personalities of these educators.

#### **2.4.6 Assessment**

The National Curriculum Statement (2003) states that learners are not only assessed on the basis of pen and paper tests, but also on the basis of progress demonstrated throughout the year. Donald *et al.* (2002:24) explain how OBE originated from the competence-based movement in education. Thus, the emphasis falls on what learners can do, and not simply on what they might be able to repeat. Assessment therefore focuses on what competencies learners have actually achieved. Where a learner needs to move to next in a pre-defined set of learning tasks (criterion-referenced assessment) becomes more important than deciding whether that learner is better or worse than his peers (norm-referenced assessment).

Methods of collecting assessment evidence comprise observation-based assessment, test-based assessment and task-based assessment (Department of Education 2004b:36). Therefore, the core purpose of all assessment within education is to promote effective teaching and learning (Department of Education 2004a:17). However, this creates more stress for the educator who is not properly trained in the different assessment procedures and consequently lack confidence implementing them.

Booyse and Swanepoel (in Poppleton & Williamson 2004:201) state, "It seems as though the new system of assessment that invariably had to be adopted has increased the workload of educators beyond comprehension". Therefore increased administrative demands have been placed on educators by OBE assessments, from formulating rubrics to putting together portfolios for learners. As was stated by the Cape Times (December 2005), the HSRC survey reports that most educators felt that the new curriculum and the continuous assessment requirements had increased their workload by 90%, with about three in four educators saying

their workload had increased "a lot" since 2000. Therefore, the level of work related stress is increasing too. In the light of this, educators need to be aware of the possible changes in their personalities due to this increased stress.

#### **2.4.7 Inclusive education**

Hay, Smit and Paulsen (2001:4) refer to inclusive education and maintain, "It appears that the empowerment of educators is once again neglected in the South African policy documentation on inclusive education". They also mention the large percentage of educators in South Africa who are inadequately trained for inclusive education. According to the South African Schools act (Act 84 of 1996), learners with special educational needs have to be educated at 'ordinary' public schools where this is reasonably practicable. Greenberg (1984:33) maintains that stress is experienced when educators lack the decision-making authority to obtain support for students with special needs in order to provide them with the best education possible. According to a study done by Eloff, Engelbrecht, Oswald and Swart (2003:299) the most stressful issues for educators during inclusion are:

- *Administrative issues:* these include educator's concerns for being held personally accountable for the educational outcomes of learners with intellectual disabilities in their classrooms.
- *Competence issues:* these include educator's concerns for sustaining an active learning environment for the learners with intellectual disabilities.
- *The behaviour of learners with intellectual disabilities:* the short attention span and poor communication are especially stressful for educators.
- *Limited contact with parents* of learners with intellectual disabilities is another main stressor of educators.
- *Support* for the learner with an intellectual disability in the classroom is also a stressor for educators, but only in so far as they experienced stress locating appropriate educational resources for the classroom.

In the light of the above information on inclusive education, inclusion may also refer to schools including previously disadvantaged learners. Boooyse and Swanepoel (in Poppleton & Williamson 2004:201) note that interviewees stated openly, "The integration of black learners into schools has affected my work most". Another interesting aspect of the former study is the finding that most white educators experienced a large degree of frustration as a

consequence of their inability to communicate in an African language. Researchers were told that, since black learners preferred to speak to each other in their own language and the educators did not understand them, it made the educators feel disconcerted. They therefore felt excluded from the conversation on the basis of a language inadequacy, which gave rise to a type of polarisation that could eventually become detrimental to the educator-learner relationship. Moreover, learners "come from different worlds, different cultures and different moral and ethical values" (Booyse & Swanepoel in Poppleton & Williamson 2004:190), each of these differences creating stressful situations in the classroom for the educator, who is often ill equipped to master all of the aforementioned. Arising from the inclusion policies, work stress is evident and thus, it is important to take cognisance of personality traits which might be affected by this stress in order to understand why integration has affected certain educators.

In conclusion, the different levels of work related stress that educators face are the cause of uncertainty, due to doubt, hesitancy, unpredictability and indefiniteness regarding their own competence, role, security and identity. Therefore, it may be of value for the educators to become aware of how different personality qualities influence their experience of work related stress. Female educators are not only faced with all the abovementioned levels of stress, but also have increased stress due to gender and marital demands, which will be discussed below.

## **2.5 THE LEVEL OF STRESS EXPERIENCED BY THE FEMALE EDUCATOR**

Most research on educator stress does not refer exclusively to the levels of stress experienced by the female educator. The research done by Pietersen and van Zyl (1999:76) whereby an investigation into work stress experienced by a group of secondary school educators, confirms that sex and marital status have a significant effect on levels of stress (these factors are significant at the 5% level). The results show that female educators experience significantly higher levels of stress than their male counterparts ( $p < 0.01$ ), and that married educators experience significantly more stress than unmarried educators. Most research (Decker & Borge 1993:15, Furnham & Walsh 1993:28, Long 1990:6, Pretty, McCarthy & Catano 1992:101) indicates that biographical factors, like age, sex, marital status and education, have a direct effect on work stress. Linde and Marx (in Pieterse & van Zyl 1999:77) are of the opinion that the typical career woman lacks social support in the form of

emotional support from family members, nor does she have access to information and advice on problems being experienced.

Eloff *et al.* (2000:1) report that although the correlation between gender and the different stress level factors was not significant, the means for all the factors indicated a higher level of stress for female educators than for male educators. Tuettemann (1991:31) offers some unique statistics in her research: she states that 45% of educators were stressed and that female educators are more likely than males to be stressed by lack of rapport with students and a lack of recognition from both students and superiors. Cooper and Travers (1996:70) report studies by Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1978b) as well as Laughlin (1984) that women educators report greater dissatisfaction than their male colleagues with regard to classroom situations and learner behaviour, whereas male educators tend to report higher dissatisfaction with administration, participation and the need for professional recognition and for their career situation.

Educators do not only perform the role of imparting the knowledge of their subject to the learners, their roles in the school require a lot of multi-tasking, which, once again places educators under a lot of stress due to the demands placed on them. Stress may also increase if the educator's work causes inconvenience to family members. The educator may eventually feel trapped between dedication to the job and dedication to the family. Carlyle and Woods (2002:135) also note that once this takes hold in the workplace, stress can spread like a virus into other inter-connected social areas like families, eating still further into their personal identity. According to George and Nykodym (in Pieterse & Van Zyl 1999:77), female educators fulfil multiple roles. This discussion indicates that female educators are influenced by work related stress, which ultimately affects their personal identities.

There are various ways that work stress manifests itself in the educator. Beard (1990:111) classifies work stress according to mental reaction and physical reaction.

### **2.5.1 Mental reaction**

Educator stress impacts greatly on the individual, in that it dissipates their energy and consequently affects their quality of life (Bennett *et al.* 1996: 38), the eventual result being burnout. Greenberg (1984:43) states that burnout among educators is accompanied by an array of symptoms that include a general malaise: emotional, physical and mental fatigue, feelings of helplessness and hopelessness and a lack of enthusiasm about work and perhaps life in general. One of the primary feelings that educators get when suffering from burnout is

self-doubt (Greenberg 1984:45). Bensky *et al.* (1981:2) explain that job burnout creates a reaction whereby the individual can no longer effectively cope or adapt to the situation or stressors. Examples of this adaptation include absenteeism, poor productivity, high personnel turnover, poor organisational climate, job dissatisfaction, high accident rate and antagonism (Beard 1990:111). Humphrey and Humphrey (1986:27) explain that an individual under stress will function with a behaviour that is different from ordinary behaviour. These kinds of behaviour are arbitrarily sub-classified as:

- Counter behaviour (defensive behaviour), for example an educator might counter a situation by shouting at a learner who has stimulated a stressful situation by committing an act that is not acceptable to the educator.
- Dysfunctional behaviour refers to a reaction that demonstrates impaired or abnormal functioning and that result in a lower level of skill performance that one is ordinarily capable of accomplishing. There might be changes in the normal speech patterns and this could be accompanied by the inability to function well mentally. There could be a temporary impairment of the systems of perception as well as temporary loss of memory.
- Overt behaviour (expressive behaviour) involves such reactions as distorted facial expressions like tics and twitches, and biting the lip.

### **2.5.2 Physical reaction**

"Researchers believe that stress interferes with the activity of lymphocytes, slowing them down and therefore increasing one's susceptibility to viral and bacterial infections" (Comer 2004:188). Therefore, when healthy individuals experience high levels of stress, they remain healthy on the surface. However, their immune system is slowed down making them susceptible to illness. Seyle is an authority on this and his basic ideas are that stress is a non-specific bodily response to environmental stimuli (Seyle in Beard 1990:110). Examples include increased heart rate and blood pressure, increase blood and urine catecholamines and corticosteroids, headaches, ulcers and coronary heart disease. Humphrey and Humphrey (1986:33) separate physical stress into two general types.

- Emergency stress means that hormones are discharged into the blood stream, involving increase in heart rate, rise in blood pressure etc.
- Continuing stress involves the same physiological symptoms as above, but more and

more hormones continue to be produced, the purpose of which is to increase body resistance.

By empowering the educators with knowledge about the personal qualities of their personalities, they are able to strive for psychic balance as well as adapt to inner demands (Garden 1991:87), which will enable them to have better control over their stress levels. The above research indicates that the level of stress experienced by the female secondary school educators is higher than that of their male counterparts in the workplace.

## **2.6 SUMMARY**

After reviewing studies on occupational stress, it was evident that educators are affected significantly. The authors confirmed that stress levels are extremely high and that different levels of stress in the workplace can be identified. My study focused on female secondary school educators, which abovementioned authors confirmed as having higher stress levels than their male counterparts.

However, what one person finds extremely stressful is not necessarily stressful to another and therefore peoples' personalities must be taken into account (Cosgrove 2000:28). Therefore, the last two objectives of my study (see Section 1.5.2) were to undertake a further literature study which investigates personality, how an awareness of personality occurs, and how people with different personalities experience work related stress. This is done in Chapter 3.

## CHAPTER 3

# PERSONALITY AWARENESS AND ITS INFLUENCE ON WORK RELATED STRESS

*The mind is its own place, and in itself  
Can make a heaven of Hell, a hell of Heaven*  
- John Milton

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Having done a comprehensive literature study on stress in Chapter 2, this chapter presents a brief literature review of personality and how people, specifically educators, with different personalities experience work related stress. The National Curriculum Statement (Department of Education 2003) defines educators as mediators of learning, interpreters and designers of learning programmes and materials, leaders, administrators and managers, scholars, researchers and lifelong learners, community members, citizens and pastors, assessors and learning area/phase specialists. These many roles impact on the educators' personality, ultimately resulting in work related stress as explained in Chapter 2.

According to Carlyle and Woods (2002:134), stress is not simply a physical, mental or psychological condition but a process wherein the individual undergoes change. During stress, personal identities come under attack, perhaps through the introduction of newly required social identities. If these are in sharp conflict with the person's self-concept, key elements of the self are stripped away until one is outside the path of society. Losing social referents leads to losing sight of who we are and depersonalisation occurs (Carlyle & Woods 2002:135). Therefore, there is a growing realisation that personality theories attempt to organise observations of people by providing some kind of underlying framework for classifying and describing behaviour (Quenk 1993:2). Quenk (1993:4) states that it is beneficial to include Jung's method when looking at the concept of personality because it not only addresses the consistency and predictability of our personalities but also our inconsistencies. This affirms my research question: What is the role of personality awareness in relation to female secondary school educators with work related stress?

### **3.2 JUNGIAN TYPOLOGY AS A METHOD OF OBSERVING PERSONALITY**

In order to understand the effect that stress has on a person one must first understand why humans behave in different ways. With this in mind, Jung (in Oliver & Pervin 2001:141) states that the integration of the many opposing aspects of our personality into the self is a lifelong struggle: "Personality as a complete realisation of the fullness of our being is an unattainable ideal. But unattainability is no counter argument against an ideal, for ideals are only signposts, never goals."

Spoto (1989:27) refers to Jungian typology as a method of observing human behaviour. In this typology, human behaviour is viewed through patterns determined by the structure of the individual's psyche interacting with itself and the world. Spoto (1989:33) summarises that Jungian typology is a way of putting the individual into conscious and active participation with the broad lines in his or her own personality. Therefore, typological patterns are often characteristic of the ego of the individual, which for Jung is the central complex of consciousness itself. Möller (1995:83) states that Jung's construct of the self is considered to be his most significant contribution to personality psychology and in this he also fills a gap in Freud's theory which preceded Jung's personality theory. In contrast with Freud, for whom personality was formed in the first few years of life, Jung offered a unique analysis of the way in which the self develops throughout life by maturing and growing.

Archer (1991:136) describes Jung's theory: Four main attitudes and functions govern how we interact with the world and with each other, and each of us has a preference for how we operate within each attitude or function. Preference means the preferred way of operating and does not mean that one does not or cannot use abilities and behaviours in the opposite preference. Therefore, by determining your preference within each of the four areas you have one kind of description of your personality. It is also important to note that most people can readily recognise both introverted and extraverted behaviours as part of their personality, but Jungian typology draws on habitual or naturally preferred behaviours. It is therefore evident that people can be seen as actively constructing their world, which is one of the most central concepts of constructivist thinking (Donald *et al.* 2002:102). Constructivism therefore forms the theoretical framework of my research.

### **3.3 CONSTRUCTIVISM AS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

In Chapter 1, I discussed the way in which constructivism is used in my study as the research paradigm as well as the theoretical framework with which to make sense of the data. I will now discuss the main principles of constructivism and how it applies to my research.

#### **3.3.1 Active agency**

Donald *et al.* (2002:100) explain that according to constructivism, human beings are shaped by both nature and nurture, but they are also active in shaping their own development. From this perspective, Quenk (1993:25) states how the dynamic approach of Jung and Myers permits the fullest opportunity for individual development of personality and personal effectiveness and that both genetic endowments (nature) and environmental influences (nurture) affect and are affected by our underlying typological character structure [F.W Brackets]. Jung's theory relates to constructivism as he maintained that the human psyche contained everything necessary to grow, adapt, and heal itself. He believed that people were capable of directing their own personality development and of recognising and benefiting from both positive and negative life experiences. Cognitive psychology is also underpinned by constructivist principles, because Donald *et al.* (2002:103) explain that the central idea in this tradition is that the mind constantly searches for the most effective and economic ways of interpreting and applying the information which comes to it. Thus, people construct strategies - plans of action, or patterned ways of going about things - which have led, or are likely to lead, to what they perceive to be the best results.

#### **3.3.2 Social construction of knowledge**

Donald *et al.* (2002:103) explain that knowledge is not fixed and given, but it is shaped, constructed and reconstructed in different social contexts and at different times. This may refer to the educator whose knowledge on education has been reconstructed, according to the new Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Implicitly it may also include the cognitive restructuring that occurs once the educator is aware of her stressors and how they affect her personality.

#### **3.3.3 Mediation**

Donald *et al.* (2002:104) define mediation as the means through which mentors, educators, parents or peers, help learners gradually to acquire the social constructions of knowledge of which they are part. The mediator provides help and suggestions, but gradually withdraws as

the learner reaches a level of constructing her own internalised understanding. In the light of the aforementioned, this may include the role of the female educator since 1994, who is now seen as facilitator; or it could refer to the educator who has acquired knowledge about herself during a workshop in order to cope eventually with her levels of stress by herself due to her heightened personal awareness.

### **3.3.4 Metacognition and strategies**

Metacognition is an important concept because it refers to a higher level of active engagement that people can develop in relation to their own thinking and understanding (Donald *et al.* 2002:105). Strategies are ways of going about things. In conclusion, the degree to which you are conscious of what you do and why you do it reflects your metacognitive understanding of your strategies. This relates to the female secondary school educator's metacognition and consequent understanding of her personality and how it relates to her work stress.

### **3.3.5 Tools of cognition**

Mischel (1993:447) explains that cognitive appraisal of how stress is viewed by a person may be more important than the amount of stress that actually occurs in the environment. Cognitive tools enable humans to adapt to the world. Constructivism views these tools as a way to shape, transform and reflect on their experiences (Donald *et al.* 2002). These tools may refer to the personality qualities that the educator understands about herself and others in order to avoid and cope with stressful situations in the teaching environment.

In the light of the above, high quality learning environments give learners opportunities to interact and engage with one another and with the educators. In addition, learners should be encouraged to question what they are studying and in so doing become active participants in the learning process. One way of judging the effectiveness of educational programmes is by exploring the extent to which they succeed in this regard. My research therefore includes active learning for the educator, and therefore falls within the constructivism framework. Keeping in mind that knowledge is shaped, constructed and reconstructed in different social contexts and at different times, the cognitive social perspective in personality is discussed in the next section.

### 3.4 THE COGNITIVE SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE IN PERSONALITY

Oliver and Pervin (2001:439) explains that social cognitive theory emphasises the social origins of behaviour and the importance of cognitive thought processes in all aspects of human functioning: motivation, emotion, and action. Cognitive theory is most clearly represented in the works of two psychologists, Albert Bandura and Walter Mischel. The basic tenet, according to Mischel (in Oliver & Pervin 2001:443), is that the person is both responsive to situations and actively constructs and influences situations. Therefore, people select situations and are also shaped by them; they influence the behaviour of others as well as being shaped by the behaviour of others.

Mischel stated that most theories of personality have been built on the assumption of transsituational consistency. Therefore, human behaviour has to be seen as a function of the interaction between the person and the environment (Ekehammar 1974). According to Oliver and Pervin (2001:439), social cognitive theory is critical of the psychoanalytic emphasis of internal instincts and unconscious forces that cannot be studied systematically. Instead, there is an emphasis on the variability of behaviour as the person responds to changes in the environment. Shoda, Mischel and Wright (in Oliver & Pervin 2001:439) explain that behaviour is situation-specific and people have distinctive patterns of behaving in situations. For example, it is more important to know about the kinds of situations in which the person is extraverted and introverted than to know their overall level of extraversion-introversion relative to other individuals.

Mischel (1993:396) explains that the cognitive social approach to personality is directed at the cognitive processes and structures that underlie individual differences in meaningful, personally relevant patterns of thought, judgment, emotion, and social behaviour. According to Bandura (in Mischel 1993:399), the person's awareness of the relevant rules and contingencies greatly facilitates human learning: if you are aware of the contingencies and rules governing the consequences to which your responses will lead, you learn better and faster. Therefore, if educators are aware of their personality qualities, they will have a better understanding of why they are stressed and how to deal with it.

Discrepancies can exist between various mental (cognitive) representations of the self (Mischel 1993:422). For example, your actual self (the representation of yourself as you are) may be discrepant with your ideal self (the representation of who you would like to be). Likewise, the actual self may be discrepant with the ought self (the representation of who you

believe you should be). Higgins (in Mischel 1993:423) proposes that particular discrepancies give rise to specific feelings. The relevance of this analysis for the cognitive social perspective is that it helps to specify in cognitive terms how individuals may encode or represent different facets of themselves and their experience. It makes these cognitive representations basic components in the study of personality as the discrepancies can be a source of stress. This brings us to acknowledging how personality qualities influence work related stress.

### **3.5 PERSONALITY QUALITIES INFLUENCING WORK RELATED STRESS**

Not only do the educators' personality qualities influence their response to work related stress, but their attitude type, which Jung and Garden link to people's response to situations, also influences individual responses to work related stress. In this section, I explore these thoughts.

Garden (1991:84) explains, in Jungian terms, if the psyche is deprived of energy for whatever reason, whether through being run down or fatigued, the conscious functions are more likely to drop into the unconscious. The dropping of a function into the unconscious would not mean that it was not in operation at all but its use would be expected to be more sporadic and less disciplined (not subject to the control of the will). As has been mentioned previously, the educator's influence in education is through relationship and personality rather than through pedagogy (Wickes 1927). Moreover, as Aldridge, Eddowes, Ewing and Kuby (1994:361) state, for this reason, it is necessary for an educator to deal with his/her own personal problems. However, when educators unconsciously impose their own problems or unfulfilled personal goals on children, the consequences are disastrous (Jung 1954, Wickes 1927).

When focusing on the relationship between personality and stress, the following should be remembered. Quenk (2000:8) notes that which is physically or psychologically stressful for one person may be energising and motivating for someone else. Anything that people find stressful forces them to use all their energies to combat whatever is causing the stress because this depletes conscious energy resources. Byrne (in Huberman & Vandenberghe 1999:26) states that there is growing evidence that personality factors may explain why individuals in the same work environment, having the same supervisor and possessing the same educational and experience backgrounds often respond differently to the same stressors. Slegers (in Huberman & Vandenberghe 1999:251) adds that personality factors related to the specific nature of the work that educators do, may be relevant for explaining educator burnout.

According to Spoto (1989:33), the therapeutic point that Jung makes about attitude type best demonstrates the significance of the categories and provides a way to understand which attitude type an individual may in fact be. This can be demonstrated by an extravert who is prevented from extroverting or an introvert who is continually forced to extravert. These individuals run the risk of future neuroses due to a "falsification of type" (disharmony with oneself, lying to oneself or having a "false I"). Therefore, by noticing what attitude tires us out most and the quickest when we are using it provides us with the attitude type that we are not. The important point is, therefore, our need to develop "the attitude consonant with one's nature" (Spoto 1989:34).

According to Garden (1991:85), the inability to rely on the function which one has been accustomed to use for survival, for adaptation to the environment and for self-identification, would in itself be a distressing experience, evoking feelings of helplessness. Garden (1991:83) describes how stress influences the different types, namely, for feeling types the characteristic symptom would be a lessening in concern for others; for thinking types a lessening of ambitiousness; for intuitives a lessening of enthusiasm; and for sensing types a lessening of concern for facts and reality. Fatigue and stress as well as type-specific factors often precede out-of-character experiences. Quenk (2000:10) explains that, where such triggers are habitual characteristics of a work situation, people may find themselves chronically in the grip of their inferior function as explained in the following section.

### **3.6 THE INFERIOR FUNCTION AND TYPE DYNAMICS**

Quenk (2000:2) explains that the inferior function, which is usually a hidden part of our personalities, emerges most dramatically during times of stress, fatigue and illness. Recurring exposure to any source of stress, illness, or fatigue is likely to lead to frequent or even habitual out-of-character reactions. Quenk (2000:6) explains how the inferior function is largely unconscious; we do not direct or control it. Its unconscious energy erupts and takes over our personality when our conscious energy diminishes sufficiently. We often remain unaware of the change in ourselves until the experience is over (out-of-character experience). The inferior takes the attitude opposite the dominant. The direction of flow of psychic energy is the opposite. For example, energy will be introverted if the person's dominant function is extraverted and vice versa. Both the educator and those who work with her may erroneously assume that the person in this state is the "real" person. A recognition of type-relevant

triggers can lead one to suspect that an individual is functioning not in a natural, adaptive way but in an out-of-character, largely ineffectual way.

According to Quenk (2000:11) inferior function experiences are often preceded by a period of exaggerated use of the dominant function without the balancing effects of the auxiliary. This type of exaggeration can go on for quite a long time where stress is persistent. Individuals may be observed to be devoting increasing energy (with decreasing effectiveness) to "being true to themselves" by trying to use their personality strengths. Inevitably, one-sided use of their dominant function makes the situation worse and their efforts unsuccessful. The energy of the inferior function then takes over the personality.

According to Quenk (2000:8), falling into the grip of one's inferior function is most likely to occur when a person's conscious energy is at a low level: the unconscious energy of the inferior function can then emerge. Fatigue and stress can effectively diminish conscious energy, thus allowing unconscious parts of one's personality to become sufficiently energised to take over control. Quenk (1993:57) states that sometimes an intense inferior function experience results in a renewed appreciation of parts of ourselves that we have taken for granted. Familiarity with our strengths may lead us to minimise them, thereby not developing them to their fullest potential. We may then start to overvalue our less preferred characteristics and people in whom those qualities are well developed. Ultimately, becoming aware of an unrecognised or unappreciated aspect of oneself releases energy that is then available for constructive growth.

In conclusion, Quenk (1993:231) informs us that the workplace, in this case the school, is the arena where people demonstrate their best and their worst selves. We show our competence in areas where we are skilled and experienced and where we are appreciated by co-workers and rewarded by employers for competent work performance. But the stress that is chronic, which has been discussed, can thwart our best efforts and elicit our own and others' least effective sides. Therefore, understanding the forms of different inferior functions can provide the potential for understanding, predicting and explaining out-of-character behaviour at work. Quenk (2000:19) concludes that it is also important to take cognisance of psychological types (as discussed in the next section) because in ignoring the dynamic interactions critical to Jung's system, both laypeople and professionals miss out on its greatest contribution to the explanation and prediction of normal personality.

### 3.7 PSYCHOLOGICAL TYPES

According to Spoto (1989:193), psychological type is a specific combination of habitually conscious activity that may be identified according to typological principles and concepts. Each person is analysed according to a typological configuration at the conscious level that in turn is compensated at the unconscious level. Quenk (2000:4) explains how the amount and direction of the flow of psychological energy lie at the heart of the typological understanding of personality. This is divided into the following:

- The dominant function - where one of the four mental functions uses the largest share of a person's psychological energy. According to Garden (1991:77) the typical sequence is for the dominant, and preferably the auxiliary, to be developed in the first half of life. As Garden (1991:77) states, it is assumed that one is born with a preference for, or facility with, one of the perceiving functions (intuition and sensation) and with a preference for, or facility with one of the judging functions (thinking and feeling), therefore being the most conscious function. This is the one we are aware of and can direct and control (Sensing-Intuition, Thinking-Feeling). It is important to note that the attitudes of judging-perceiving and extravert-introvert are both used in identifying a dominant preference.
- The auxiliary function - is not quite as conscious and under our control as the dominant function; however, it complements and balances the dominant function by being the opposite kind of mental process from the dominant. A person therefore has reasonably conscious control of one comfortable way of gathering information and one satisfying way of deciding (e.g., if the dominant is thinking, the auxiliary is sensing or intuition).
- The tertiary function - whichever function is opposite to the auxiliary function. Using this function is often difficult, uncomfortable and unsatisfying. It is relatively unconscious, so we cannot direct and control it. Since it is the opposite of the auxiliary function, it is the same kind of mental process as the auxiliary function.
- The inferior function is where the smallest share of our conscious energy goes to, so it is essentially unconscious. It has a special role in providing balance in an individual's personality. The inferior function becomes more active during times of stress.

Garden (1991:77) explains how as one goes down the hierarchy, each function becomes less reliable and less used. According to Jung, each personality may be divided into one of

various psychotypes in terms of two constructs, namely attitudes and functions. These are explained below.

### **3.7.1 Attitudes**

According to Quenk (2000:5), the above four mental functions account for only two of the four pairs of opposites that make up type. The two remaining pairs are the opposite ways of using energy and the opposite styles of relating to the outside world. They are called attitudes, and the opposites are Extraversion-Introversion, Judging-Perceiving. Each personality can have both introvert and extrovert characteristics; however, in every personality one attitude is dominant and conscious.

- Extraversion, which is the outgoing, candid, accommodating nature, which adapts easily to a given situation and consequently quickly forms attachments.
- Introversion is the hesitant, reflective, retiring nature that keeps to itself and prefers to hide behind mistrustful scrutiny (Möller 1995:69). According to Spoto (1989:32), being extraverted does not prevent an individual from introverted behaviour, nor vice versa. However, one attitude is very often characteristic of a specific personality in the sense that that person seems best able to agree with it, i.e., the person is more comfortable and feels truer to him- or herself (ego-identified) in one attitude rather than another.
- Judging is the approach to the outer world, whereby one comes to conclusions and makes judgments. The focus is on closure, predictability, planning, organisation, and control.
- Perceiving is where the approach to the outer world is to gather information and perceive. Therefore, the focus is on adaptability, flexibility, spontaneity, and openness to new information.

Custer and Peterson (1994:21) explain that perception and judgment compose a large portion of people's total mental activity and govern much of their outer behaviour or function.

### **3.7.2 Functions**

According to Salter (1995:24), in Jungian terms, the interactive function that leads to behaviour involves the exchange of psychic energy (Jung, 1971). The variable nature of the flow of energy between people and environments, assures the diversity of observed behaviours. Therefore, each person has a specific way in which he observes the world and assigns meaning to each experience. Jung distinguished four such functions.

The irrational functions, which involve passively recording but not interpreting experience, are:

- Sensing: this is the initial experience of a phenomenon. According to Myers-Briggs (1980:49), the sensing function refers to the preference to perceive according to what is observed through the senses.
- Intuiting refers to a preference to perceive possibilities, means and relationships by way of insight (Myers-Briggs 1980:50).

The rational functions are:

- Thinking: this is a cognitive process, which entails reasonable and logical interpretation of memory so that it acquires meaning.
- Feeling involves the subjective evaluation of experiences in terms of emotions.

As Möller (1995:70) states, "Jung believed that one function of a pair of bipolar opposites is weaker and subordinate, but any of the four functions can be dominant". Therefore, a self-actualising person will be someone who uses all four functions in structuring his/her experience. Coetzee and Schreuder (2002:54) explain that by combining an individual's dominant attitude and function, the basic personality type may be determined. The personality types are therefore patterns in the way people prefer to perceive and make judgments.

According to Ortenblad (2005:281), there are four types of thinkers. Different personalities focus on different areas of organisation, such as efficiency, flexibility or democracy.

- Sensation thinkers are occupied with authority and well defined rules of behaviour and economic goals.
- Intuitive feelers are concerned with flexibility and decentralization and with making a contribution to humanity.
- Intuitive thinkers emphasise new products, markets and businesses; flexibility and adaptiveness to shifting environments; and new ideas for the creation of new markets.
- Sensation feelers are concerned with the individuals in the organisation and struggle to make the organisation into a family and home for the individuals.

Both the attitudes and the functions include opposites. The principle of antitheses or opposites is discussed in the next section.

### 3.7.3 The principle of opposites

Jung (1971:122) wrote, "I see in all that happens the play of opposites". Without an antithesis, there can be no energy, applying both to physical and psychic energy. Energy is generated by being the result of opposites leading to a process of equalization. Therefore, the greater the conflict, the stronger the energy generated (Möller 1995:74). As Spoto (1986:41) concludes, the movement of energy along the extraversion-introversion pole always implies a movement along the conscious-unconscious pole. Jung stresses that both aspects of the personality should be viewed at once. For example if the outward directed extravert overdoes his/her extraversion, he/she creates in the unconscious, the missing part of the whole picture, namely the highly subjective introvert. Therefore, the extravert's normally public and generous personality may seem to turn egotistical or excessively demanding. Or this person who otherwise may be known for being congenial and considerate of others could become forceful, ruthless, self-absorbed, aggressive or inconsiderate (Spoto 1989:38). Spoto (1989:37) concludes that when the balance between conscious and unconscious life is seriously upset, when the law of compensation is violated, that we can imagine one pole in the psyche behaving as though the other pole did not exist. The opposing sides of the individual's psyche will then often "tense up" and cause actual and distinguishable physical symptoms as the personality undergoes the process toward growth, transformation, or reconciliation with itself. The individual may then comment about being "out of character", "stressed out" or "ready to explode". These are all phrases demonstrating the disjointedness of ego-consciousness out of balance with the unconscious. This is a direct reference to stress reactions. As Garden (1991:81) concludes, the opposite types differed when they were low in energy depletion and were similar when they were high in energy depletion.

### 3.7.4 Type dynamics

The following brief description of the sixteen personality types includes the percentage of educators used in van Rooyen's study (Van Rooyen 2002:157) in South Africa that belong to each type group.

#### Key:

- **E** - Extravert      • **I** - Introvert      • **T** – Thinking      • **F** - Feeling
- **S** - Sensing      • **N** - Intuition      • **J** – Judging      • **P** - Perceiving

<b>ETNJ</b> (8.08%)	<b>ISFP</b> (1.88%)
Intuitive, innovative organiser, analytical,	Observant, loyal Helper, reflective, realistic

systematic, confident: pushes to get action on new ideas and challenges.	empathic, patient with details, gentle and retiring, Shuns disagreements: enjoys the moment.
<b>ESTJ</b> (19.22%)	<b>INFP</b> (2.67%)
Fact-minded, practical <i>Organiser</i> , assertive analytical, systematic, pushes to get things done and working smoothly and efficiently	Imaginative, independent <i>helper</i> , reflective, inquisitive, empathic, loyal to ideals, more interested in possibilities than practicalities
<b>INTP</b> (4.78%)	<b>ESFJ</b> (5.88%)
Inquisitive <i>Analyser</i> , reflective, independent, and curious: more interested in organising ideas than situations or people.	Practical <i>Harmoniser</i> and worker-with-people: sociable, orderly, opinioned: conscientious: realistic and well tuned to the here and now.
<b>ISTP</b> (4.16%)	<b>ENFJ</b> (2.27%)
Practical <i>Analyser</i> , values exactness: more interested in organising data than situations or people: reflective, a cool and curious observer of life.	Imaginative <i>Harmoniser</i> and worker - with people: sociable, expressive, orderly, pinioned, conscientious, and curious about new ideas and possibilities.
<b>ESTP</b> (4.39%)	<b>INFJ</b> (2.90%)
Realistic <i>Adapter</i> in the world of material things: good-natured, tolerant, easy going: oriented to practical, first hand experience: highly observant of details of things.	People-oriented <i>innovator</i> of ideas: serious, quietly forceful and persevering: concerned with the common good, with helping others develop.
<b>ESFP</b> (2.75%)	<b>INTJ</b> (6.04%)
Realistic <i>Adapter</i> in human relationships: friendly and easy with people, highly observant of their feeling and needs: oriented to practical, first hand experience.	Logical, critical, decisive <i>Innovator</i> of serious, intent, highly independent, concerned with organisation: determined and often stubborn.
<b>ISTJ</b> (18.75%)	<b>ENFP</b> (4.63%)
Analytical <i>manager of facts and details</i> , dependable, decisive, painstaking and systematic: concerned with systems and organisation: stable and conservative.	Warmly enthusiastic <i>planner of change</i> : imaginative, individualistic: pursues inspiration with impulsive energy: seeks to understand and inspire others.
<b>ISFJ</b> (6.27%)	<b>ENTP</b> (5.33%)
Sympathetic <i>manager of facts and details</i> , concerned with people's welfare, dependable, painstaking and systematic: stable and conservative	Inventive, analytical <i>planner of change</i> , enthusiastic and independent: pursues inspiration with impulsive energy, seeks to understand and inspire others.

Adapted from: Lawrence (1993) by Coetzee and Schreuder (2002:55)

In order to understand the abovementioned, Quenk (2000:4) states that psychological type is a way of understanding each other and ourselves. Once we are aware that some psychological types are more at home in particular environments, we are also able to understand resulting behavioural reactions. This explanation of psychological types is intended to create awareness in the reader that one can use the typological configuration in the analysis of personalities. However, psychological type casting has not been used as a technique in my research, as it was not within the scope of a dissertation of limited scope. I have merely used personality type awareness as a technique to assist female educators to come to terms with their work related stress.

### **3.8 PERSONALITY TYPE AWARENESS**

Quenk (2000:6) reminds us that in Jung's view of personality, using all of our energy in only one direction makes us one sided, out of balance, and poorly equipped to deal with life. Therefore, he uses the type approach, describing a balance of energy use which impacts on the effect of stress. Energy is consequently pushed in different directions for each of the four mental functions. Tieger (1995:9) explains that Jung, an eclectic psychoanalyst, realised that behaviour that seemed unpredictable, could in fact be anticipated, if one understood the underlying functions and attitudes that people preferred. Having this invaluable information has resulted in our understanding of human behaviour to such a degree that we are now able to accurately identify 16 distinctly different personality types.

According to Jung (1954:55) it is important that the educator should be conscious of the role he/she is playing. He/she must not be satisfied with merely pounding the curriculum into the learner; he/she must also influence him/her through his/her personality. This latter function is at least as important as the actual teaching, if not more so in certain cases. Therefore, the real education a learner receives is based on the personality of the educator. Coetzee and Schreuder (2002:53) explain that Jung's (1990) theory of personality type allows for self-assessment activities to enhance self-insight and informed choice in facilitating career adjustment, or adaptation. Arising from this statement, I decided that my research would assume the point of departure that an awareness of one's personality could impact on educator stress.

### **3.9 THE IMPACT OF AWARENESS OF PERSONALITY AND ENVIRONMENT ON EDUCATOR STRESS**

#### **3.9.1 Awareness of personality**

My research entails helping educators become aware that their personality can impact on the level of stress they experience in the work place. Knowledge of their own personality type could be a coping strategy, Archer (1991:135) states that your experience of stress and your reaction to it are strongly affected by your personality. Following this line of thought, Carlyle and Woods (2002:77) state, "Under such pressures, the educators lost the sense of who they were". Thus, I realised that heightening educators' awareness of their personality might enable them to deal with work related stress in a more effective manner than is presently the case. According to Coetzee and Schreuder (2002:55), knowledge and understanding of personality type theory give individuals a sense of worth and dignity concerning their own qualities. Individuals can be aided in expanding their choices by helping them to realise their strengths and to develop their less preferred functions. This may be a useful way of helping educators alleviate their stress.

As Coetzee and Schreuder (2002:58) emphasise, individuals can be facilitated to become more self-reliant in defining their career opportunities, through the stimulation of self-awareness of personal preferences, motives, values and needs versus what is socially desirable. Custer and Peterson (1994:22) maintain that although no occupation provides a perfect match between personality preferences and work tasks, an understanding of personality traits is important in assisting individuals in making wise career choices. Spoto (1989:33) states that Jung thinks of consciousness as an individual's awareness of his or her own personality. Jungian typology then is a way of heightening the individual's conscious and active participation due to insight into the broad lines of his/ her own personality.

#### **3.9.2 Awareness of environment**

Educators need to be aware that the school environment is defined as a common context for behaviour and that it can impact on their work related stress. According to Salter (1995:25), environments can be identified and categorised by their unique systems of shared pressures that define their particular "personalities" (Holland, 1966, Levy-Leboyer, 1982, Stokols, 1981). These environmental systems are predictable and serve as references for behaviour.

According to Quenk (2000:11), all types benefit from a change of scene and from physical exercise as ways of emerging from the grip of their inferior function. Engaging their auxiliary

function often seems to accompany the diminishing power of the inferior function. Each type may need type-specific helps and hindrances to regaining equilibrium. During the time that stress is ongoing and habitual, as may be true in the school for the educator, there is little opportunity to gain any new perspective about oneself. Growth - encouraging new knowledge - may not come about until a crisis state has been reached or some event or experience forces self-evaluation and re-evaluation of important aspects of one's life situation.

Quenk (1993:231) explains that extreme out of character reactions to the stresses of the workplace can be viewed in the context of the consistency of personality rather than its unpredictability. This can provide the rationality necessary to distinguish between true unreliability, poor performance, and faulty leadership and intermittent episodes of the inferior function. In conclusion, Quenk (1993:231) states, people who are aware of their own and others' inferior behaviour at work, report that they are better able to keep things in perspective for themselves and others. This can have a positive effect on productivity and employee satisfaction, which in turn may reduce some of the stresses of the workplace.

### **3.10 SUMMARY**

This chapter presented an overview of Jungian typology and cognitive social perspectives of observing personality. The discussion on constructivism illustrates how it is the theoretical framework which underpins this research project. The structure of the personality, personality styles and how this relates to stress are addressed by references to the literature on inferior function and type dynamics. This provided the foundation for the research on the link between personality qualities and educator stress.

Chapter 4 focuses on the qualitative research design and the methodology and explains the manner in which the research was planned, and the data was collected and analysed.

## CHAPTER 4

# THE RESEARCH DESIGN

*What you build easily will fall quickly*  
- Slovenian proverb

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

It is evident from the literature study in Chapter 2 that educator stress is a problem of grave concern. In Chapter 3, literature was used to shed some light on the concept of personality and how an awareness of different personality qualities may influence work related stress. The aforementioned theoretical foundation was integrated into my research plan which can be seen as the structure that guided my research process (Mouton 2001:55, McMillan & Schumacher 2001:22).

In this chapter, I provide an in depth account of the research design that was employed in my study. The purpose of the research design was to supply me with a plan and tools that would enable me to answer the research question. My research design was approached from a qualitative research perspective and prescribed the procedures for conducting the study and clarified the data collection methods. The research method, data collection and data analysis are discussed in detail. This section also explores matters such as validity and reliability and ethical considerations.

### 4.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

This research study is an example of what McMillan and Schumacher (2001:19) refer to as applied research, because the aim is to bring a new perspective to the much-researched problem of female secondary school educator stress (Olivier & Venter 2003, Van Wyk 1998, Tang 2001, Pithers 1998, Feldman 1998) and to find an acceptable manner to address the problem. The possibility that educators who become aware of their personality qualities (see Section 3.3), are able to understand the behavioural reactions that are influenced by work related stress (see Section 2.3), encompassed my research. Therefore, my research problem was:

What is the role of personality awareness in relation to female secondary school educators with work related stress?

Secondary questions that were linked to my main research question were:

- What is work related stress?
- What is the level of stress experienced by female educators?
- How does awareness of personality occur?
- How do female educators with different personalities experience work related stress?

In the following section, the specific objectives of the empirical study are highlighted.

### **4.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY**

Empirical studies can make use of "primary data" (obtained by means of surveys, experiments or case studies) or can analyse "existing data" (text or numerical) (Mouton 2001:57, McMillan & Schumacher 2001:23). The core of my research was to ascertain the role of personality awareness in relation to female secondary school educators with work related stress.

The specific objectives of the research were addressed as follows:

I did a literature study (Chapter 2) to determine what work related stress is, with particular reference to stress experienced by female secondary school educators. In Chapter 3, I established how an awareness of personality occurs, and how different personality qualities influence work related stress.

The remaining two sub-questions were investigated by an empirical study. Once this had been done, I was able to report back on the questions regarding the level of stress experienced by female educators and on the manner in which female educators with different personalities experienced work related stress. With these objectives as guidelines, the research design is discussed in the following section.

### **4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Henning *et al.* (2004:141) maintain that the research topic is knowledge both of theory and of the concrete world. As a researcher, my aim was to give credence to theory and reality by merging what is known regarding female educator personalities and their work related stress. This called for a specific research design which could ensure that the evidence obtained in the research enabled me to answer the initial question of the role of personality awareness in relation to female secondary school educators with work related stress, as unambiguously as

possible.

Berg (2004:7) states that the purpose of research is to discover answers to questions through the application of systematic procedures. The systematic procedures which I chose derive from a qualitative research approach because it seeks answers to questions by examining a social setting, namely the school and the individuals, namely the educators who inhabit these settings.

#### **4.4.1 A qualitative approach**

Bogdan and Taylor (in Berg 2004:7) state that research methods on human beings affect how these persons will be viewed. Similarly, McMillan and Schumacher (2001:16) state that there is greater flexibility in both the strategies and the research process of qualitative studies, compared to quantitative methods. Therefore, qualitative procedures provide a means of accessing unquantifiable facts about the actual people whom researchers observe or talk to. In the light of this, my mode of inquiry was qualitative research. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001:15), this type of research is based on constructionism, because multiple realities are socially constructed through individual and collective perceptions or views of the same situation. Therefore, I needed to know whether female secondary school educators were aware of the impact that their personality qualities could have on their work related stress.

I chose a qualitative method in order to describe the female educators' personalities at school and evaluate how they deal with stress that has been evident in the South African school context since 1994 as explained in Chapter 1. The focus was on qualitatively ascertaining their level of awareness rather than on quantifiable data. In future, these data might assist them to deal with work related stress.

The two common elements of qualitative research (Tesch in Denscombe 2003:267) which I applied to my studies were:

- A concern with meanings and the way people understand things, which involved a literature study on educational transformation in South Africa post 1994, and how female secondary school educators assigned meaning to this.
- A concern with female educators' personality qualities, which guided my empirical study on the behavioural reactions to the transformation. In many cases these manifested themselves as stress.

I found in accordance with Naicker (2003:37), many advantages of using qualitative research

methodologies in a school environment. These are as follows:

- The capacity to appreciate educators' behaviour within a school context. This was done by observing the educators in their focus groups as they participated in interactive exercises, as well as in day to day observations in the staff room.
- The opportunity to be close to the participants so that I could capture and present data as distinctly as possible in the school environment. I achieved this by being an active participant in the educator workshop. I was also at an advantage as I had been an educator at this particular school in the past and currently hold the position of intern psychologist at the same school.
- Introspection before, during and after the research in order to find solutions to the problem of educator stress. This involved integrating literature as well as empirical findings in order to understand the problem of educator stress.
- Relevance to policymaking and practice, whereby the qualitative research can improve educational policies and practice (see Section 6.5.5).
- The corrective capacity in qualitative research, which in the case of my research was the ability of the research methodology to inform and shape existing perceptions, about female educator stress and how it affected their personality type.
- As researcher, I was the main data collection instrument.

#### ***4.4.1.1 The researcher as instrument***

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:15) state that qualitative research is more concerned with understanding the social phenomena from the participants' perspectives as well as immersion in the situation (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:16). This was achieved by my participation to some degree in the life of the educators. I did this while I was in my research role as qualitative researcher as I chose a role that was appropriate for my particular type of study. There are three possible roles, all of which I was involved in, namely:

- I observed which implied that I watched as well as observed with my other senses (Henning *et al.* 2004:82).
- I participated in order to develop trust and acceptance of myself as an outsider and to ensure reciprocity (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:436).
- I was an insider observer, which McMillan and Schumacher (2001:435) describe as a

researcher who occupies a formal position in the organisation in which the research is being conducted. This occurred on a daily basis as I had been employed at the site, initially as educator and am currently employed as an intern psychologist.

All the aforementioned roles offered some unique perspectives to empirical research about female educators' personality awareness in relation to work related stress in the school environment. In a qualitative approach of this nature, explorative studies often examine phenomenon that has not been studied previously (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:101).

#### ***4.4.1.2 Explorative***

The role of personality awareness in relation to female secondary school educators with work related stress, relates specifically to the transformations in education post 1994. Due to the fact that this is a relatively new area of inquiry, my research may be considered as exploratory research (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:101).

As a researcher, I used qualitative techniques in order to examine how female secondary school educators learn about and make sense of themselves and others' personal qualities. Therefore, the research was explorative in the sense that I gathered new insights into the phenomenon of personality awareness as well as educator stress.

In order to perform explorative research I needed to pay close attention to the nature of the participants and the instruments, which contribute to descriptive research (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:285).

#### ***4.4.1.3 Descriptive***

My study was descriptive which means that it described in detail the role of personality awareness in relation to female secondary school educators with work related stress. Therefore, by the educators becoming aware of their personality qualities, as well as of their inferior functions (as explained in Sections 3.6 and 3.7) they could gain insight into their work related stress.

This descriptive research was consequently framed within a certain context.

#### ***4.4.1.4 Contextual***

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001:488), the context of a study is the situational description of people and events in which the phenomenon of interest occurs. Qualitative research is based on a constructivist philosophy that assumes its place in contextualised reality as a multilayer, interactive and a shared social experience interpreted by individuals

(McMillan & Schumacher 2001:396). In Chapter 1, I discussed the way in which constructivism was used in my study as the research paradigm, as well as the theoretical framework for the interpretation of the data. I discussed the main principles of constructivism and how they applied to my research in Section 3.3. My understanding of the situational description of people in this particular study is discussed in detail below.

## **4.5 PARTICIPANTS AND SELECTION**

### **4.5.1 Selection of the participants and site**

Participants can be described as a community which Berg (2004:260) defines as some geographically delineated unit within a larger society. The secondary school educator community, from which my participants were drawn, is small enough to permit considerable cultural homogeneity, diffuse interactions and relationships between members, and to produce a social identification by its members.

I purposively chose 10 participants. McMillan and Schumacher (2001:433) describe this procedure as purposeful sampling as it is a strategy to choose small groups or individuals likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomenon of interest, namely female educators' work related stress, post 1994. Therefore, desirable participants were female secondary school educators with at least 15 years of teaching experience. I considered them to be suitable participants because they represented secondary school educators of different grades and learning areas, who had taught prior to the educational transformation. Although I knew the participants, I agreed to provide them with a high degree of confidentiality. The participants' biographical details are given in Chapter 5, Table 5.1.

In terms of the site, I conducted my research in a combined, independent secondary school in Witbank, Mpumalanga. I had been previously employed there for 10 years as a secondary school educator and experienced the stress as well as being witness to educators' comments about their stress levels, which seemed to increase over the years. I am presently employed at the same school as the school intern psychologist. The school has a consistent good academic record, with a 100% pass rate for the matriculants in the past 15 years, which demonstrates a sound culture of teaching and learning. The secondary school has 207 learners (statistics for Term 4, 2006). It ranges from Grade 8 to 12, with the learners ranging from 13 to 18 years of age, which is the middle to top adolescent age range. The educator-learner ratio is 1:25. The educators are all white and the majority of the learners in all classes are black. The educator-learner cultural composition and the fact that the learners fall within a middle to high socio-

economic status could be a limitation of the study (see Section 6.6.2.2). The learners were not involved in the feedback on educator stress, due to the sensitivity of the subject matter.

The educators attended an educator development workshop entitle: "Personality awareness in relation to female secondary school educators with work related stress". I presented this workshop in order to gather data for my research studies. An envisaged secondary benefit was to empower educators at the school to become aware of different personality qualities and how different personalities experienced work related stress. The workshop therefore contributed to the empirical data which I related to my literature findings. Further data were collected during an interview with one female secondary school educator who had resigned at the end of 2005; I chose this educator because her reason for resigning was work related stress.

Once the 10 participants and the site had been defined, I needed to determine suitable qualitative research methods as the ways to collect the relevant data for analysis (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:9).

## **4.6 RESEARCH METHOD**

The research method included a variety of activities. Denscombe (2003:267) implies that what gives qualitative research its distinct identity is the fact that it has its own special approach to the collection and analysis of data. In the next section, the process of data collection is discussed.

### **4.6.1 Data collection**

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001:406), in the data collection phase, the inquirer begins to "hear", "see" and "read" what is going on. It involves the specification of procedures to be used in finding relevant reviews; Henning *et al.* (2004:6) maintain that data collection should involve at least two methods or sources and preferably three which should ensure that the phenomenon has been investigated by means of different sources of information, thus giving the data variety. I used three sources in my research as discussed below.

#### **4.6.1.1 Interview**

Henning *et al.* (2005:53) define the interview as a mechanism, if used methodically according to strict principles of objectivity and neutrality, which will yield information that represents reality more or less 'as it is' through the response (and the filters) of an interviewee. The

interview I conducted was a semi-standardised interview, which Berg (2004:80) describes as the type of interview involving the implementation of a number of predetermined questions and special topics. These questions are typically asked of the interviewee in a systematic and consistent order in order to gather in-depth data about the research problem. Thus, the interviewer is allowed freedom to digress and probe far beyond the answers to the prepared standardised questions. For the purpose of this study, the interviewee was a female secondary school educator with 27 years teaching experience, who had resigned from teaching due to work stress.

According to Berg (2004:85), in order to draw out the most complete story about various subjects or situations under investigation, four types or styles of questions must be included in the survey instrument. Examples of the questions asked in the interview are presented in italics.

- Essential questions exclusively concern the central focus of the study and are geared toward eliciting specific desired information: *How did your work related stress affect you as a female secondary school educator in teaching?*
- Extra questions are those questions roughly equivalent to certain essential ones but worded slightly differently. These are included in order to check on the reliability of responses: *When and how did you realise that the work related stress had affected you?*
- Throwaway questions are general questions used to develop rapport between interviewers and subjects: *How did your university training help with the introduction of OBE?*
- Probing questions provide interviewers with a way to draw out more complete stories from subjects: *What has been the biggest source of work related stress over the past few years?*

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:268) point out that the disadvantage of an interview is that anonymity is not possible. Confidentiality can be stressed, but there is always the potential for faking, or being less than forthright and candid, because the participants may believe that sharing certain information would not be in their best interest. This was occasionally evident in my research because the interviewee always appeared to justify her actions after sharing information about the leadership in the school. This possibly occurred to ensure that she was seen in a positive light regarding her teaching ability and leadership skills.

#### **4.6.1.2 Focus groups**

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:455) describe focus groups as a variation of an interview. It is a group interview, with reliance on interaction within the group, based on topics supplied by the researcher, who typically takes on the role of moderator. McMillan and Schumacher (2001:455) explain that by creating a social environment in which group members are stimulated by the perception and ideas of each other, one can increase the quality and richness of data through a more efficient strategy than one-on-one interviewing.

#### **4.6.1.3 Workshop in group work format**

According to Brown (1992:8), group work provides a context in which individuals help each other. I felt that a workshop conducted in a group, consisting of 10 female secondary school educators each with a minimum of 15 years' experience gave the participants a less intimidating environment as it was done within the safety of the group. It also gave individuals an opportunity to utilise the awareness phase of the group work which was a way of addressing and personalising their work related stress in an environment that was non-threatening. According to Brown (1992:177), group work is also well suited to creating the conditions for people to discover and realise their potential and value, both in the group and in what they take from the group to influence their living environment. This helps them take more control over their own lives. The educators therefore became aware of their personality qualities through exploration in the workshop setting. Ultimately they personalised the information which related to the role that their personality awareness played in relation to their work related stress.

The development dimension of group work has three stages (Unisa 2002:43):

- Awareness – This occurred when I presented the educators with the explanations related to the role of personality awareness in relation to female secondary school educators with work related stress: what work related stress is (based on my research in Chapter 2) and how an awareness of personality occurs according to the theories of Jung as well as the different cognitive representations of the self (based on my research in Chapter 3).
- Exploration – The educators gained knowledge and insight into personality qualities by participating in certain interactive exercises (see Appendix 3) in groups during the workshop. Through these exercises the educators were able to work out their preferred behaviour and consequently their personality qualities.

- Personalisation – By the end of the workshop the educators had worked in four different groups and were able to understand their personality qualities and had developed a better understanding of the role of personality awareness in relation to their work related stress. The educators discussed this in the feedback session of the workshop.

#### **4.6.1.4 Observation and field notes**

Henning *et al.* (2004:82) stress that observation implies seeing as well as observing with the other senses. They also emphasise that the researcher must consequently remain open-minded and aware in order to discover the elements making up the markers and tools that people mobilise in their interactions with others and, more generally, with the world (Henning *et al.* 2004:86). During the interactive workshop with the educators, I made observation notes that provided feedback on educator stress as well as personality awareness. The field notes with annotated notes on my observations were then captured on computer, which provided the data for the analysis and interpretation of the findings and results of the empirical study as presented in Chapter 5.

#### **4.6.1.5 Transcribing qualitative data**

Transcription took place at two stages: after the interview and after the group sessions. As the researcher I recorded the interview, in order to ensure that the whole discussion had been captured. I consequently transcribed the tape to analyse common themes from descriptions of experiences, in order to provide complete data for analysis. Poland (in Henning *et al.* 2004:76) warns that one should not see the transcript itself in isolation as a solitary text, but have in mind the process of the interview as event and also other contextual data. I therefore included the interviewee in the workshop in order to confirm certain information about the personality qualities of the interviewee as well as validating information that the interviewee had given in the interview.

I transcribed the qualitative data from the group work session by using my field notes to categorise common themes that had emerged.

In the next section, descriptions of the steps in the research process are summarised.

#### **4.6.1.6 The steps in the research process**

Berg (2004:197) pointed out the basic action research procedural routine which involves four stages. For the purpose of my research, I applied Berg's steps in the following manner:

- Identifying the research question, namely "What is the role of personality awareness in relation to female secondary school educators with work related stress?" I also identified four sub-questions (see Section 1.4).
- Gathering the information to answer the questions by doing a literature study, and by using an individual interview as well as a focus group in a workshop setting for my empirical research.
- Analysing and interpreting the information, according to the sub-questions of my research. This entailed establishing what work related stress was, what the level of stress was which was experienced by female educators, how their awareness of personality occurred and how female educators with different personalities experienced work related stress.
- Sharing the results with the participants, in the form of the workshop which not only generated data, but also allowed me to share my initial findings with the participants.

Berg (2004:38) states that raw data require some sort of organising and processing before they can actually be analysed. Therefore, once the field notes and transcriptions were compiled fully, I started with the process of analysing the data.

#### **4.6.2 Analysing of data**

According to Denscombe (2003:272), the procedures for analysing qualitative data involve descriptive accounts of the situation. This is what I did in the literature study that looked in detail at the stressors to which educators are subjected and how this could affect their personalities. It also involved a reasonably detailed description of the setting, which I attempted to do by relating the increase in stress to educational transformation post 1994. Then the data were broken down into units for analysis and the units were categorised according to different levels of personality awareness in relation to female secondary school educators with work related stress.

A vital part of my reflections as qualitative researcher, attempted to identify "patterns and processes, commonalities and differences" (Miles & Huberman 1994:9). These patterns, processes, commonalities and differences related to how differing personality qualities relate to stress. As various explanations and themes emerged from the early consideration of the data, I went back to the educators with these explanations and themes to check their validity against 'reality'. This was done in the form of a second interview with the educator who had

resigned due to high stress levels, as well as the personalisation phase of the workshop for the educators.

When data are analysed, researchers make use of coding and transcription in order to reduce, condense and group content (Henning *et al.* 2004:104). The next section explains how I did this in my study.

#### **4.6.2.1 Coding**

Henning *et al.* (2004:104) explain that in open coding, the analyst reads the entire text in order to get a global impression of the content. Once I had done this, I followed Henning *et al.*'s. process: I generated codes as I worked through the data, awarded different units of meaning to the codes and then assimilated the information into classes which correlated with my literature study (see Section 5.4.2.2).

#### **4.6.2.2 Content analysis**

Henning *et al.* (2004:102) refer to content analysis as working with qualitative data that a researcher converts to final patterns of meaning. The content analysis of my research was determined deductively as I used some categorical scheme suggested by a theoretical perspective, and the documents provided a means for assessing the hypothesis (Berg 2004:273). Therefore, the themes that emerged from the literature formed the common classes which overlapped with the empirical evidence (see Section 5.4.2).

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:52) note that a summary of the data collected is finally reported in the results or findings section.

#### **4.6.3 Presenting the results**

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001:52) the results of the empirical research should be presented objectively without interpretation or discussion, summarising what was found. In order to enhance validity in my feedback, I made use of verbatim accounts, in the form of direct quotations. This illustrated the educators' meanings in their own language. McMillan and Schumacher (2001:409) state that verbatim accounts of conversations, transcripts, and direct quotes are highly valued as data. The results are presented to the reader in Chapter 5.

Henning *et al.* (2004:146) emphasise that, in planning and inquiry, a researcher is inevitably asked how trustworthiness, credibility and generalisability were built into the design. These specifications are discussed in the next section.

## 4.7 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:407) emphasise that validity in qualitative research includes both internal (causal inferences) and external (generalisability), and issues of objectivity and reliability.

### 4.7.1 Validity

Validity refers to the degree to which the explanations of the phenomena match the realities of the world (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:407). Mouton states (2001:162) that the strength of qualitative research is the establishment of rapport and trust with research participants (trustworthiness), namely educators who were previously my colleagues, and many who relied on me presently as the intern psychologist at the school, in times of need (see Section 5.3.4). Mouton concludes that there is high construct validity because the collaborative and participatory nature of this design minimises suspicion and distrust of research with a concomitant increase in trust and credibility. Therefore, in the workshop setting, there was a group identity which allowed the educators to speak confidently as one voice.

As McMillan and Schumacher (2001:407) suggest, I used as many strategies as possible to enhance validity of my research, namely:

- Participant observation in the workshop, conducted in natural settings to reflect the reality of the educator work experience more accurately than in a contrived or laboratory setting.
- Multi-method strategies - this permitted triangulation of data across inquiry techniques. Different strategies, namely a literature study, observations, an interview and focus groups, yielded different insights about the topic of female educator stress and thereby increased the credibility of my findings.
- Participant language and verbatim accounts - informant interviews, phrased in the participants' language, were less abstract than many instruments used in other designs.
- Low-inference descriptors, which were concrete, precise descriptions from field notes and interview elaborations, were the hallmarks of my qualitative research and the principle method for identifying patterns in the data. These descriptions were in contrast to the abstract language of non-qualitative researchers.
- Mechanically recorded data - I used a tape recorder to enhance validity as it provided an accurate and relatively complete record.

- Member checking - my research participants functioned as co-researchers as they established a field residence which frequently confirmed my observations. Participants' meanings were checked with individuals through causal conversations in informal situations (especially in the staff room).

#### **4.7.2 Reliability**

According to May (2002:154) one of the most important factors determining the strength of a study is to address generalisability and reliability. This has to do with whether the sample population is an accurate representation of other populations in society. In South Africa we are faced with multicultural, Multilingual population groups, yet my sample only involved female secondary school educators with at least 15 years' teaching experience; therefore the research sample was relevant only to the research in question. The involvement of only white, older English-speaking female educators teaching in a predominantly black learners' private (church) school, during the post 1994 political dispensation in the study means that reliability may have been compromised. Therefore the results of this study cannot be generalised to all educators in South Africa. Further research involving other groups is recommended to obtain a broader picture of stress in the school system in South Africa.

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:420) remind us that qualitative researchers need to be sensitive to ethical principles because of their research topic, face-to-face interactive data collection, an emergent design, and reciprocity with participants. In my research I was constantly trying to ensure that every person was received the right of privacy and dignity of treatment, and therefore the participants in the study were assured of confidentiality. I also ensured that my ability to be transparent, consistent and dependable in all the workshop activities would increase reliability.

### **4.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

According to Heaton (2004:77) certain ethical and legal issues must be taken into account when doing social research. I chose to include the following:

#### **4.8.1 Informed consent**

Berg (2004:64) defines this as the knowing consent of individuals to participate as an exercise of their choice, free of any element of fraud, deceit, duress, or similar unfair inducement or manipulation. Therefore, it required that my research participants were fully informed of the nature of the work and any possible risks to themselves, and that they freely

agreed to take part. I firstly got informed consent from the principal of the school, on the 10 January 2006 (see Appendix 1) to use the school as a research site and approached the secondary school educators concerned at the secondary school phase meeting, on the 11 January 2006 (see Appendix 2), to get their informed consent.

#### **4.8.2 Confidentiality**

Traditionally, the main strategy for preserving confidentiality is through anonymising personal information contained in data sets. Therefore, I ensured that I deleted real names and used pseudonyms. Berg (2004:65) states that in qualitative research, because participants are known to the investigators, anonymity is virtually nonexistent. Thus, it is important to provide subjects with a high degree of confidentiality. I also assured the educators in this study of confidentiality at all stages of the research process for design reliability.

#### **4.8.3 Harm to respondents**

According to Denscombe (2003:137), there is a general expectation that a researcher should operate in an honest and open manner with respect to their investigation. Denscombe (2003:79) explains that the distinct ethical problem for action research is that, although the research centres on the activity of the practitioner, it is almost inevitable that the activity of colleagues will also come under the microscope at some stage or other, as their activity interlinks with that of the practitioner who instigates the research. Due to the fact that the interactive exercises involved group participation, personal humiliation and loss of interpersonal trust were eliminated. I also tried to instil a sense of caring and fairness in the workshop by allowing open discussion while empowering the participants with knowledge on educator stress and personality awareness.

#### **4.8.4 Ensuring privacy**

One must also take into account the following ethics in action research, which have been formulated by Winters (in Denscombe 2003:79):

- The development of the work must remain visible and open to suggestions from others, which is the reason I presented the findings in a workshop format.
- Permission must be obtained before making observations or examining documents produced for other purposes. As mentioned previously this permission was obtained from all the role players.

- Description of others' work and points of view must be negotiated with those concerned before being published.
- The researcher must accept responsibility for maintaining confidentiality. I did this as the nature of a psychologist's work is to ensure confidentiality.

#### **4.9 SUMMARY**

This chapter described the research design of my study. The purpose of the design which I used, as well as the methods implemented, was explained in detail. It was important to point out how the data were collected and which research instruments were used in order to conduct the research. My role as researcher was clearly defined, in order to assist in the interpretation of the results. Finally, matters such as the validity and research ethics were taken into account, in order to make the research credible.

Chapter 5 reflects the data collected and presents a discussion thereof.

## CHAPTER 5

# DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

*"Growth and self-transformation cannot be delegated."*

Lewis Mumford (1895-1990)

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

Pieterse and van Zyl mention (1999:74), that "stress appears to be endemic in the 1990s, especially in this country where the effects of the world recession are compounded by an unstable and rapidly changing social and political climate" (Sullivan, 1995). Although recession has lessened due to political changes, rapid changes in the social and political milieu still impact on the stress levels of the South African population. This nationwide daily stress as well as the occupational stress of the female secondary school educator manifests itself in different reactions. The research design was discussed in the previous chapter. This chapter explains my data analysis, provides a summary of the empirical research and a discussion of the results of my research.

The main aim of this investigation was to understand the role of personality awareness in relation to the work related stress of female secondary school educators. This awareness of personality qualities may assist educators to use it as a therapeutic tool and to deal differently with people or organisational factors that may be potential stressors due to areas of conflict between different personalities.

In my research, I conducted an interview with a female secondary school educator who had resigned from the teaching profession due to work related stress. The interview was transcribed to analyse common themes from descriptions of experiences in order to provide complete data for analysis, which are discussed below. A focus group was also used in my research for data collection. My focus group took place as a staff development workshop. In this workshop, with the aid of a power point presentation as well as interactive tasks, the educators were able to become aware of their personality qualities, especially the inferior function (discussed in Section 3.6). Consequently, the educators explored different

personality qualities in interactive group exercises (see Appendix 3) and finally they were able to personalise this information by doing introspection.

The data collected from the transcription of the interview, as well as the observation and field notes from the workshop were processed with the aim to answer the research question, namely:

What is the role of personality awareness in relation to female secondary school educators with work related stress?

A systematic reflection on the steps in the research process, including the analysis of the data is presented in this chapter. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the processed results.

## **5.2 THE STEPS IN AND DATA FROM THE RESEARCH PROCESS**

In the following section of this chapter, the emphasis is on the selection of participants for the research, the time and duration of the process as well as the role of the researcher as facilitator. The analysis of the collected data, including reducing and organising the data, is discussed. The planned steps in the research process are summarised in Section 4.6.1.5. This section, relates how the planned steps materialised in my empirical research as well as the interpretation of the raw data which was divided into the interview results and the focus group results. I discuss each research method and its results individually.

In order to conduct my research, the sampling procedure which I used in the selection of participants was purposive sampling.

### **5.2.1 Sampling: selection of participants**

Permission was obtained from the headmistress of the independent school in Witbank, Mpumalanga to conduct the survey (see Appendix 1). The educator, with 27 years of teaching experience who had resigned from teaching due to work stress, was approached and agreed to participate in an interview. After an informal explanation of the research aim, all the educators on the staff in the secondary school were invited to partake in the research (see Appendix 2). A total of 10 educators who met the requirements (see Section 4.5.1) agreed to participate in the project. This sample of educators, as well as the interviewee, who was included in this sample participated enthusiastically in the research process. Owing to ethical considerations, participants remained anonymous in the feedback. I included their biographical details in Table 5.1.

**Table 5.1: Biographical detail of participants**

<b>Gender</b>	<b><i>N</i></b>	<b>%</b>
Male	0	0
Female	10	100
Total	10	100
<b>Years of Experience</b>		
1-10	0	0
11-20	5	50
21-30	4	40
31+	1	10
Total	10	100
<b>Age group (years)</b>		
20-30	0	0
31-40	1	10
41-50	4	40
51-60	4	40
61+	1	10
Total	10	100
<b>Grades taught</b>		
8 & 9	4	40
10, 11 & 12	6	60
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	1	10
Divorced/widowed	2	20
Married	7	70
Total	10	100
<b>No of children and gender</b>		
1-2 mixed	0	0
2-4 mixed	3	30
1-2 sons	0	0
2-4 sons	0	0
1-2 daughters	6	60
3-4 daughters	0	0
No children	1	10
Total	10	100

Qualitative interviews may take several forms. McMillan and Schumacher (2001:443) maintain that these forms all vary in their degree of structure and planning and the comparability of responses in data analysis.

### **5.2.2 The qualitative interview: date, time and duration**

The qualitative interview took the form of a semi-standardised interview (see Section 4.6.1.1). The interview was held on 8 November 2006, in an office at the independent secondary school. The interview for the educator was approximately an hour long. The interview was in the morning, when it was convenient for the educator. The office was adequately prepared for the interview by making available furniture and a tape recorder. At the beginning of the interview, I outlined the purpose of the interview and assured the interviewee of the confidentiality of the research. The reason that I chose the interviewee was because she had 27 years teaching experience, and had resigned from teaching due to work stress, therefore encompassing my research topic.

In this manner, I obtained data primarily to become oriented to the field and to gain a sense of the "totality" of the setting for purposeful sampling (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:405).

As explained by McMillan and Schumacher (2001:455), I created a social environment in which group members were stimulated by the perceptions and ideas of each other. I increased the quality and richness of data through a more efficient strategy than one-on-one interviewing, namely a focus group work process.

### **5.2.3 The focus group work process: date, time and duration**

A variation of an interview is the focus group interview, which McMillan and Schumacher (2001:455) describe as a strategy for obtaining a better understanding of a problem or an assessment of a problem or idea by interviewing a purposefully sampled group of people rather than each person individually. This was done in the format of a workshop. The workshop was held on 9 November 2006 in the school staff room with all the secondary school educators, 17 in total. The workshop for the educators was approximately three hours long. The awareness and personalisation phases were approximately 30 minutes in duration. The exploration phase lasted two hours with each activity taking 30 minutes (see Appendix 3). The workshop was in the afternoon, the day before the commencement of the final exams for the secondary school learners. Thus, educators did not have any preparation, marking or extra-murals to attend to. The staffroom was adequately prepared for the workshop by making available furniture, a power-point presentation and writing material for each group.

At the beginning of the workshop I welcomed the participants, outlined the purpose of the workshop and assured the participants of the confidentiality of the research. Although the participants were made to feel comfortable, I could sense that a certain amount of resistance from a few educators; one commented: *"This was just a lot of psycho babble and the only thing that would help my stress levels is retirement or winning the lotto"*. Another stated that *"I hope that this would not take long as I have limited time in my life!"* Others displayed passive resistance by carrying on with work or filing their nails. I allowed them to express their expectations for the workshop. The majority hoped that the workshop would alleviate their work related stress. Statements included, *"At last someone realises that we are stressed"*; *"I sure hope that you will share the results of our stress levels with the education department"* and *"I hope this workshop will give me coping skills, because I am coping less and less as a teacher"*.

Firstly, I attempted to create awareness about work related stress. I did this by showing them a power point presentation (see Appendix 5). This presentation gave them information about types of work related stress and an explanation of Jung's theory of personality and the cognitive social perspective of personality. While discussing the types of work related stress I heard an educator exclaim, *"It is no small wonder I feel so stressed, I can identify with all those points"*. Another educator stated, *"It is so nice to be able to understand why I feel so disillusioned about teaching, I thought it was just old age"*. A few of the educators also said, *"I have forgotten who my true self is"*. The following information was shared regarding the manifestations of stress: *"I live with a permanent headache"*; *"Perhaps my bad health this year is linked to my stress levels"*; *"I often forget learners' names in the classes these days. I thought it was old age. It makes me feel better that it could be stress related"*.

Secondly, through interactive tasks the educators were able to gain knowledge about their preferred behaviour and consequently determine their personality qualities, because this was the group they could best relate to. According to my planning, the educators had to group themselves together according to the different attitudes or functions of a personality trait, for example, all introverts were grouped together (see Appendix 3). The educators became aware of the different personality attitudes and functions by doing interactive tasks, for example distinguishing certain groups: the group who judged (focus on closure, predictability, planning, organisation, and control) and those who were perceivers (focus on adaptability, flexibility, spontaneity, and openness to new information). At a point, the two separate groups were asked to discuss and write down the following points: *Your group has won the*

*lotto and you are going overseas as a group. What are you going to do?* The perceivers made a very haphazard list of the many places they would visit and enjoyed many laughs trying to accommodate people's interests. The judging group had a more serious approach and made a comprehensive itinerary of places, listed modes of travel, how the money would be split and the duration of time to be spent at each place. One of the educators who was in the incorrect group said, *"I feel so uncomfortable in this group. I definitely need more order in my life"*. In another exercise another educator revealed her surprise when she stated, *"I can't see all this way-out stuff, like asteroids and stars. This is plain and simply a box of Smarties. I really thought I was intuitive but I must belong to the sensing group, I guess"*. They all became aware of their personality qualities during the process of relating their personality to their actual self, their ought self and their ideal self (Higgins, in Mischel 1993) as discussed in Section 3.7.

I used the research consulted during the literature study to ascertain how certain personality qualities react to stress. During the workshop I identified out-of-character behaviour from educator feedback, such as *"I was always tough minded, but lately I have become so emotional and take everything to heart"* and *"From being a sympathetic educator, I have become such a hard, cold and aloof educator"*. It appeared that the predominant inferior function in the group was Intuition. According to Jung (in Quenk 1993:238), Intuition plays the role of self-regulation of the psyche during times of stress. This implies that many of these educators "get stuck, lose common sense, are full of doom and gloom, are pessimistic and negative" (Quenk 1993:53). This characteristic had been identified and communicated to me, in my role of school intern psychologist, by several learners during sessions. Comments were made such as *"Mrs XYZ is so unreasonable or negative"* and *"You learners will not get very far in life. You are spoilt and lazy"*.

Two educators in the sample fitted into the Sensing inferior function. Therefore, they were obsessed with unimportant details or overindulgent in sensory pursuits, like drinking, eating, or cleaning. These educators said they became paranoid about the format of the learners' work or noticed if the boys had not shaved. A learner had informed me: *"Ms M even subtracts marks if we do not underline the date and heading"*. Another example was given: *"Mrs B notices if we have gel in our hair but none of the other educators notice it. She must have sharp eyes"*. One educator also admitted that she had become a compulsive eater, *"I even need to keep food in my desk drawers at school, to see me through the day"*; another identified with a compulsive need to clean the house or her classroom, *"I cannot rely on the*

*cleaners anymore. I have now taken to cleaning my own classroom from top to bottom". Only one of educators' inferior function was the thinking function: one stops listening and accommodating others, becoming hypercritical and illogical, taking charge without listening (Van Rooyen: 2006). One educator said, "I function as a bitch in the classroom these days. It is the only way I cope". None of these attitudes are conducive to healthy educator-learner relationships and created a stressful cycle as the learners became rebellious or indifferent to the attitudes of the stressed educators.*

Thirdly, the educators had to personalise the information that they had been given in order to give feedback regarding their own personality qualities. By the end of the workshop the educators had worked in four different groups and were able to understand their personality qualities and had a better understanding of the role of personality awareness in relation to their work related stress. Some of the comments were: *"I now understand why I often get so stressed when the H.O.D demands mark sheets at the spur of the moment because I am a P(Perceiver) and she is expecting me to function like a J(Judging)!"*; *"I thought my out of character behaviour was abnormal. It's nice to know that it is stress induced and I can function normally again"*; *"I am now able to understand the headmistress better. It is her personality under stress that makes her appear as if she does not care, so I must not personalise it anymore."*

#### **5.2.4 Data collected continually**

During the individual interview the interaction was tape recorded and later transcribed. During the workshop I was "hearing, seeing and reading" what was going on in the groups, and tentative data analysis occurred (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:406). This raw data was recorded in field notes and later analysed.

#### **5.2.5 Analysis of data**

My tentative data analysis began as I mentally processed many ideas and facts while collecting data (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:406). This was achieved by using the knowledge from the literature study and identifying patterns emerging from the responses and behaviour that I observed incidentally in the staffroom, in the interview and in the workshop.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001:16), qualitative research seeks to take into account subjectivity in data analysis and interpretation, which I felt, could be achieved through feedback from an interview as well as interaction and observation in a focus group setting. According to Berg (2004:199), data analysis, from the action research perspective,

involves examination of the data in relation to potential resolutions to the questions or problems identified during the first stage of the research process. Henning *et al.* (2004:6) explain that before you begin with an analysis, data are transcribed.

#### **5.2.5.1 Transcription**

I transcribed the field notes that I took during the workshop, as well as observations that I had made. The entire interview was transcribed from the tape, inserting observations that I had made during the interview. I also took into account Poland's comment (in Henning *et al.* 2004:76) that despite the need for an accurate transcription, you should not see the transcript itself in isolation as a solitary text, but have in mind the process of the interview as event and also other contextual data. I therefore attempted to integrate my research findings with the findings of the literature study in Chapters 2 and 3, with the use of coding.

#### **5.2.5.2 Coding**

Once the interview and workshop were completed, the active data collection phase blended into formal data analysis and the construction of meaningful ways to present the data (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:407). According to Henning *et al.* (2004:77), the data undergoes "qualitative coding and categorising" (Merriam 1998, Flick 1998:192-196). I used the various types of stress identified in the literature study and linked them to the responses I had observed from subjects in the interview as well as the focus group. This means that the data are divided into small units of meaning, which are then systematically "named" per unit (coded according to what a unit of meaning signifies for the researcher) and grouped together in categories that contain related codes. Subsequently, I assimilated the information into classes, which correlated with my literature studies (see Section 5.4), as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. Finally, Henning *et al.* (2004:102) maintain that content analysis indicates that in working with qualitative data a researcher has many options on how to convert this "raw" data to final patterns of meaning (analyse the data). In my research study, I linked the literature and empirical findings into three categories: the contribution of educational transformation to secondary school educator stress since 1994; the causes of work related stress among secondary school educators post 1994; and the influence of work related stress on different personality profiles.

#### **5.2.5.3 Content analysis**

My content analysis was a collaborative social research approach. Berg (2004:267) describes the following steps, which I used in my study.

- Data was collected in the interview and focus group and these observations were made into text.
- Codes were analytically developed in the observation data and affixed to information from the literature study.
- Codes relating to personality qualities were transformed into categorical labels affixed to different types of stress.
- Finally female secondary school educators were sorted according to personality qualities and how their qualities respond to stress.
- Sorted materials were examined to isolate meaningful patterns and processes confirming the relationship between stress and personality qualities.
- The results of the empirical research were compared to the theories in the literature study.

The next section entails the discussion of the results which are based on the analysed data.

### **5.3 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

#### **5.3.1 The interview results**

According to Garden (1991:87), when an individual of a particular type is operating in a way which is not consistent with that type, this could lead to high energy depletion. When being consistent with that type, low energy depletion results. The fact that the interviewee had high energy depletion was evident when she stated: *"As an extrovert, I often had to keep my mouth shut as head of department, in order not to upset people, and acting as an introvert stressed me out ..."* According to Quenk (1993:58), when an extravert is forced to introvert while in the inferior, an uncomfortable situation results, regardless of which function is being introverted. The extravert's typical and natural way of dealing with things: talking to people, asking for advice, taking action, and engaging in some energetic activity, become inaccessible because energy has been transferred from the outer world to the inner world. According to the personality qualities of the interviewee, she had identified in the workshop with an extraverted, thinking, sensing, judging type; with her inferior function being feeling.

It was evident from the interview that the interviewee had been highly stressed in her teaching environment because she had functioned predominantly as a feeler (this being her inferior function) in her work situation. An example was embodied in the following: *"You*

*never get to debrief, and everybody thinks you are coping, and you get home and you fall apart and tomorrow morning when you come back to school, nobody knows that and this adds to your stress because your family is suffering and ... the guilt feelings you have!!!!*". Garden (1991:85) explains this by stating that the functions in the unconscious are, by definition, not subject to the will of the ego and act autonomously. One is therefore less comfortable with their use or activity. Since they are less able to be directed, and since the ego may thwart their being used, they are most easily identifiable by their seemingly peculiar, unpredictable character which to an observer may appear somewhat as an "eruption". Thus, one sees sporadic eruptions of sentimentality and hypersensitivity to slights in a thinking type.

Mrs V appreciated the fact that she had become aware of her stress as well as her personality qualities. She responded, *"I also think with the new OBE, we were never given the time to debrief and make time to be aware that we were all not coping and could have made each other feel better, but we never turn to each other, and when Mrs R used to moan about her load and Mrs S, who was part of the leadership in the school said, 'Oh, get on with it'. You may not show a weakness as an educator, and as an educator, depending on your personality, you are on guard all the time. You cannot even go to the Spur and have a glass of wine, while you are preaching to the children about not drinking. And this adds to your stress. I like to live the example for teenagers, so you are 100% of the time on guard"*.

Finally, Mrs V was in agreement that the transformation in education post 1994 had a tremendous impact on all educators and school staff. She concluded, *"Everybody has felt it; educators have felt it as well as the office staff, because more and more appeals have been made to the educator, a much bigger work load. As an H.O.D they all came to speak to me about how it has not been working, how they can try and make it work and you are at the same time trying to make it work, but in my subject you are constantly trying to work out how to make it work and your mind can never rest"*.

### **5.3.2 The focus group work results**

After the workshop, educators strongly agreed that:

- Stress levels were realised by individuals saying, *" I am now aware that I am extremely stressed because I have been functioning more and more in my inferior function, which is feeling. No wonder I feel so weepy all the time!"*

- They were now aware of their personality qualities, which had previously been unclear to them. *"It is amazing to think that I am in my fifties and am now only able to categorise my personality qualities."*
- An awareness of their personality qualities could assist them in managing their stress more effectively, by understanding what stresses their personality. One educator excitedly said: *"I am now able to monitor my mood swings and assess what has stressed me, and am able to realise what changes I need to make in my work situation, in order to return to my true self again."*
- An awareness of personality qualities will enable them to be more tolerant of different personality types in the classroom, thus alleviating a certain amount of frustration leading to stress. One educator verbalised this on behalf of the others: *"I feel guilty that I always judged the learners on my personality qualities and just because I am organised, I need to realise that this does not always come naturally in all learners, and they may need assistance with this".* Another said, *"I believe that an awareness of my personality qualities will make me aware of differences in my family, because I tend to be too much of a perfectionist at times"*

At the end of the workshop I thanked the educators for their contribution, and was surprised to find a positive response. The educator who had initially been so negative apologised, because she said that she had learnt so much about herself and other people. She was saddened by the fact that she had been so harsh with learners who were extraverts, because she had never understood them and had always analysed them through *"the eyes of a strong introvert"*. Most educators also felt empowered, because they were able to understand their "out of character" behaviour. Quenk (1993:4) explains that the theory includes a rationale for our modes of being when we are out of character, not acting normally or otherwise "beside ourselves". As Jung stated, even our inconsistencies are consistent, predictable, logical and valuable.

### **5.3.3 Observation, transcription and field notes**

I made notes throughout the whole process described above, taking note of what I saw, heard and experienced. The different notes are now mentioned:

- Observational notes, in which I observed that many educators identified their inferior function. I saw educators with whom I had previously taught, who had previously had an altruistic attitude towards the learners and who now behaved in a cold, aloof fashion.

This confused me and the learners. The educators seemed relieved that they now understood the changes that had come about in themselves and others. Some were sad when they realised that they had been functioning out of character, and that this had been detrimental to many relationships. If they had been aware of this beforehand, they would have realised the changes they experienced in their personality were due to stress, and this awareness would have brought about an understanding of their personality that could have empowered them.

- Field notes, which were annotated notes on my observations in the focus group, were captured on the word processor in order to categorise the relevant information as discussed in Section 5.4.
- Transcription in conversation analysis, which was done with the interview. Once I had transcribed the interview I inserted a column alongside the transcription, and inserted common classes and themes, in order to categorise the information.

The above-mentioned added value to the research process as it made me identify common themes and classes that one would not have done as successfully with mere observation.

In the next section my role as the researcher is addressed.

### **5.3.4 Role of the researcher**

Henning *et al.* (2004:81) explain how a researcher "becomes" the instrument of observation and "sees for herself" firsthand how people act in a specific setting and what that setting comprises. This was extremely important in my research because I was able to identify not only the different types of work related stress in the educators but was also able to see how people reacted differently to the same situation.

#### ***5.3.4.1 The role of the researcher in the interview***

As the researcher I approached the world from the participant's perspective as a female secondary school educator. I accomplished this by adjusting the level of language through unscheduled probes (like probes about the OBE system) that arose from the interview process itself.

#### ***5.3.4.2 The role of the researcher in the focus group***

Berg (2004:202) points out that the researcher contributes expertise when needed as a participant in the process. I was an active participant in the educator workshop. As a past educator at this particular school, I was able to contribute and understand the educators'

references regarding stressful situations.

## **5.4 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LITERATURE AND EMPIRICAL RESEARCH**

In Chapters 2 and 3 the concepts of work related stress as well as personality awareness were discussed. Some of the identified themes, categories and subcategories can be identified in the following.

### **5.4.1 Literature and empirical findings on how educational transformation has contributed to secondary school educator stress since 1994**

Stress occurs when the environment imposes demands which are perceived as substantially out of balance with the focal person's capabilities (Beard 1990:110). Beard (1990) also notes that, particularly with research on psychological stress symptoms, the interpretation of such results seems problematic given the methodological difficulties inherent in the operationalisation of dependent and independent variables. An example would be job dissatisfaction, which could differ in intensity between individuals, is subjective in nature and could be based on various reasons. This was very evident in the interview, when the interviewee stated emphatically that her teaching had influenced her family to such an extent, that it had become a major reason for leaving the teaching profession: *"You don't do anything with your family on the weekends and you don't go out to people on a Saturday afternoon, because if you don't have an afternoon nap, you will **not** make it the next week and as a family we just decided, the minute we could afford it, is the day I resigned"*. Common subjective reactions would include anxiety, depression and low self-esteem. This was evident in the life of the interviewee, *"I lasted a couple of years till my 6<sup>th</sup> year of teaching in South Africa, then I started taking 'happy hormones' which the Dr says are non-addictive, cheer me uppers, but I reckon that after that almost full time for my teaching career, I would leave the tablets for five or six months because I saw it as a crutch and then I would fall apart again, and this stress has just got worse and worse ..."*. Beard (1990:111) also includes cognitive reactions, such as an inability to concentrate or make decisions, frequent forgetfulness and hypersensitivity to criticism (a clear indicator of a thinking personality becoming a feeler in the inferior function).

It became clear that educational transformation, post 1994, had caused stress among the educators in different ways. This could be seen by looking at their personality qualities and realising that several educators were functioning in their inferior function. As Quenk (1993:239) concludes, those who characteristically emphasise the positive, the recognition of

the negative side of things can be distressing, but it can also stimulate valuable insights into oneself and others. Therefore, those who naturally focus on the negative and the objectionable can find a way to appreciate positive and satisfying counterparts through this perspective that can moderate a limited negative view.

#### **5.4.2 Literature and empirical findings on the causes of work related stress among secondary school educators, post 1994**

According to Berg (2004:277), in a standard content analysis and in order to discuss the findings, common classes must be identified. These common classes are essential in assessing whether certain demographic characteristics are related to patterns that may arise during a given data analysis. According to my observations and field notes in the focus group and interview, the following common classes emerged.

##### ***5.4.2.1 The circumstances that possibly cause stress outside the work situation***

Several educators seemed pleased to gain an understanding of their personality qualities, because this helped them to understand the personalities of their spouses and children. One educator commented that she now understood conflict between herself and her daughter. She was a judging person who is at her best when she plans her work and follows a plan; her daughter was a perceiver who did not want to follow lists or plans. Another educator consulted me after the workshop because she had become aware that she was functioning as her ought self, because of her duties as wife, mother and educator. This had caused stress and she needed to return to her actual self. She now felt better, because she had thought she was "off her rocker" for a long time and it felt good knowing she could do something about her condition and that what she was feeling was "normal".

Booyse and Swanepoel (in Poppleton & Williamson 2004:197) note that the educators' increased workloads have encroached on their personal time after school. They state, "It was their families that had to make sacrifices as far as the use of their personal time after school was concerned". In my research an educator noticed that since her husband (the groundsman), her daughter (relief educator) and her granddaughter (learner at the school) had joined the school, she felt less guilty about time spent with them. She had previously never had enough time outside the school to see them, which had added to her stress.

Quenk (2000:29) identifies the extraverted sensing types to be most stressed if they have to conform to a rigid routine with little free time. This occurred to educators with these personality qualities, especially post 1994, due to the increasing demands in education.

#### **5.4.2.2 *The circumstances that possibly cause stress within the work situation***

I worked through the data of my empirical research, awarded different units of meaning to the codes and assimilated the information into classes which correlated with my literature study. The following classes emerged:

##### **➔ Inadequate working conditions and leadership styles**

As Jacobs and Raath (1993:8) state, the self is the core where the individual's awareness of the different aspects of his or her personality starts. Interestingly, when I did the workshop, the headmistress appeared very agitated in the groups in which she had been placed. After further discussion, she realised that she had put herself into the particular groups in the workshop according to her ought self (the representation of whom you believe you should be), being an extravert, feeling, sensing, judging personality and not her actual self. She had worked out, according to the characteristics of the type, that she had introvert, feeling, intuition, perceiving qualities. This made her realise that she was extremely stressed and it explained why the past year had been taxing on her health as well as her state of mind. She understood why she had needed to participate in retreats at the convent during the holidays to get in touch with her real self again and thereby, the qualities that made her feel least stressed.

Even though educators were reluctant to discuss the leadership in the school, it was noted that educators who did not share the same personality qualities as the headmistress or their head of department, felt they had been unjustly treated or not appreciated. However, after the workshop several educators conveyed the fact that the leaders in the school were acting according to their particular profile or in an inferior function, like the headmistress. The educators said that now they did not take it personally, but understood the leaders for what they were and the conflict areas which were the reasons for their differences.

According to Quenk (1993:231), power relationships in the workplace add a particularly potent, often destructive dimension to expressions of the inferior function. Characterising people and judging them on the basis of their most aberrant behaviour is wasteful and often unwarranted. Knowledge of the inferior function can prove particularly beneficial. Therefore, once the leaders of the school understood personality, it improved their understanding of the educators. Consequent to the workshop, the headmistress told the educators that she realised that they were stressed, and agreed to give them an extra week holiday in January 2007 in order for them to have an adequate rest before starting the new year. She also realised that

several of the feeling types had not used this part of their profile in times of stress. Therefore, she had scheduled a workshop on caring for the following term to assist each other in using this part of their personality again.

The educators who were strong extraverts now understood why they were never given verbal praise. The majority of the leaders were introverts who found it difficult to think of the right thing to say on the spur of the moment. In terms of looking at the school environment on thinking and feeling qualities in personalities, Salter (1995:28) explains that in thinking work settings, feeling individuals regularly complained about their workplaces and used words such as "dysfunctional" to describe the settings. The situation did not bother their thinking peers.

When analysing the inferior function, the headmistress adopted the thinking function, that is, when people stop listening and accommodating others and take charge without listening. According to Naicker (2003:50), principals can directly or indirectly shape the intensity and levels of stress experienced by the educators, and therefore they need to create a supportive environment for them. Naicker (2003:59) concludes that the role of the principal is to provide the necessary social support, which involves frequent interaction with groups who are at risk, providing emotional support and guidance on how to prioritise and to share workload with colleagues. This would not be possible if the headmistress was in her inferior function.

In conclusion, Beard (1990:111) states that the stress that educators, head of departments and principals in schools feel can result from excessive responsibility or accountability, lack of managerial or subordinate support and excessive role expectations from self, heads and colleagues. This was very clearly the problem that Mrs V faced, because she felt a lot of her stress was derived from *"overload of work, people thinking if I give it to her if she wants it or not, she will do it. Now that I have left, my job was split between three people. They (leadership in the school) were all shocked and horrified when I had to make a list of all the things that I had done"*.

### ➔ **Little participation in decision-making and distribution of tasks**

Alienation also occurs because teaching involves isolation because the educator has limited social interaction with adults and is seldom able to participate in decision-making (Beard 1990:111). Due to the lack of information about changes in the education system, it was evident from my research that the perceivers (of which there were only three in the secondary school) were the only ones who were less stressed about the transformation in the education

system post 1994. This was because they were:

- Good at adapting to life and experiences that come along
- Adaptable in how time is used
- Flexible, and did not mind leaving things open for alterations
- Spontaneous.

Whereas the majority of the secondary school educators were judging, meaning that they disliked interrupting a project or changing a plan. I often observed staff members blaming the changes in education for their increased workload and levels of frustration. Moreover, they often mentioned that they were the implementers of the changes, yet they had no say in them. This feeling of helplessness is the biggest inducer of stress in these personality types.

According to Pietersen and Van Zyl (1999:77), an atmosphere of inadequate autonomy, inadequate recognition and limited opportunities prevails in the educators' working environment. This relates to high levels of stress evident in Mrs V's response: *"I kept thinking, it is only me. I must find more hours in the day. This is a do-able thing; lots of people teach so many lessons, but there I was teaching so many lessons and doing H.O.D. and doing two subjects and running a family etc ... These are a lot of things because maybe turning my personality into something else, adding to my stress load, and only when I was out of it could I see that, While in it, you cannot see it at all"*.

Custer and Peterson (1994:25) note that intuitives with thinking qualities were far more likely to leave a job, possibly because they focus attention on possibilities.

### ➔ **High work load and long working hours**

The Human Sciences Research Council survey (Cape Times, December 2005) reported that most educators felt that the new curriculum and the continuous assessment requirements had increased their workload by 90%, with about three in four educators saying their workload had increased "a lot" since 2000.

Booyse and Swanepoel (in Poppleton & Williamson 2004:197) interviewed numerous educators and concluded that educators' duties had increased dramatically, resulting in less time to interact with colleagues, which in the past may have served as a stress relief. In order to be informed of changes required by government and to plan the implementation of these changes on a local level, educators were required to attend an increasing number of meetings.

This was often noticeable in the staffroom during break, when the headmistress wanted to hold meetings, the educators became disgruntled because it made inroads on their personal time to relax. The educators at this school also had to travel to Johannesburg and Pretoria for user groups, which was time consuming and stressful. As stated by the interviewee, *"Therefore being in a small school, and where its location is, I was stranded in my field and I think all my colleagues felt that way. It was stressful to travel to Johannesburg or Pretoria, to our user group meetings"*.

This aspect was related to a specific educator's personality. This educator responded very strongly about her stress in the workshop because she had a strong judging quality in her personality. *"I realise that extra murals are draining on my time as well as the fact that I teach four different subjects and therefore I have a very high work load and extremely long working hours, I also function as a strong "J" (Judging function) which makes me time and deadline orientated, and perhaps I need to do more time management"*. The educator became aware that she was overwhelmed by her tasks and was stressed because she was not adaptable in her use of time (typical characteristic of a perceiving type). It was consequently decided that time management needed to be addressed, so that she could follow a plan and become more time and deadline oriented. This suited the judging component of her personality. Therefore, we compiled a monthly planner which gave her more perspective on her time and was used to indicate to the school leadership the time constraints she was experiencing. Subsequently, she was relieved of extra lessons that she had previously scheduled to do and received extra remuneration for her extra murals.

As Greenberg states (1986:27), the schedule of an effective educator may infringe on time for family and for social and recreational activities at evenings and on weekends. This was supported by Mrs V: *"I know some of my friends, who do not teach, used to say, 'But you have the holidays?' Do they have any idea what I used to do with these holidays? I would spend the first week finishing off school work and admin stuff from the term that just finished, maybe have a week's holiday and then I would start preparing for the next term, because if I did not do that, like setting my exam papers, I did not have time in the term time to do it"*.

### ➔ **Role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload**

According to George and Nykodym (in Pieterse and Van Zyl 1999:77), career women (including educators) experience considerable stress and pressure because they have to be everything to everybody. Feedback given by the educators about their individual roles in the

school showed that this aspect was one of the biggest stressors. I also found that some educators needed assistance with sorting out their personality qualities after the workshop. One educator wrote on her response sheet: *"I feel as confused as to what my true self is and what my adapted self is. Big stress. Please help if you don't mind"*.

Eight members of the focus group were sensing. This made them understand how having too many or ill defined roles stressed them, because they like established routine. The intuitive personalities dislike repeating the same thing and therefore were not as stressed about having many different roles. A grade 8 and 9 educator whose dominant function was intuition taught three learning areas but was less stressed than four educators whose dominant function was sensing and who only taught one learning area.

One source of role conflict is explained by Leibowitz (2003:13) as the situation where educators are expected to provide the best possible education for their learners, but they are often not equipped with the material to do so. Role ambiguity is associated with a lack of information and knowledge and role overload occurs when educators perceive the cumulative demands of their role as beyond their capabilities to perform the task. This points directly to what has already been discussed in terms of post 1994 transformation in education. This was confirmed by Mrs V who said: *"I am just breathing because I live in this continual change. You know your work, you know your subject as an educator, you update all your work by making notes on an ongoing basis as to what worked and what did not work but then you find a new method **but** now the subject matter is changing, the way you teach is changing and it is ongoing and you feel you cannot catch up, because it is prep, marking and the worst thing is there is no one who can give you a solid answer or some advice. Everybody is reinventing the wheel all the time and it is never good enough. It is exhausting"*. When I asked my interviewee to identify her biggest stressor, she replied, *"Yes, role overload and role ambiguity is a very big stressor"*.

### ➔ **Constant change and demands of the national curriculum and syllabus changes**

In the focus group eight female educators felt that stress was caused by unrealistic syllabus demands and changes. According to Quenk (1993:39), dominant judging types, regardless of whether their preference is for thinking or feeling, tend to be more reluctant to change a decision in the face of contradictory evidence than dominant perceiving types. The majority of participants (nine out of ten) are judging. They may doggedly question the new data before

reluctantly altering their behaviour. The educators who constantly complained about the changes in education were judging types; the perceivers tended to take changes in their stride. The judging types even wanted to write to the Department of Education to complain about the grade 9 Continuous Assessment Tasks (CTAs); the perceivers did not see this as a cause of stress. An educator who was a perceiver commented, *"We perceive that the stress we experience must be part of the profession we are in. We live with it and maybe even thrive on it!"*

Donald *et al.* (2002:24) state that the transformation in education has to involve flexibility of process. This has to involve changes in what educators do in their daily process of schooling. It means that the process of teaching cannot follow a single pattern. Variation, according to the needs of different individuals and groups of learners, has to become more possible. This was substantiated by Mrs V. When asked if the transformation in education had affected her, she answered, *"All the time, I hardly ever slept; I think it added to my stress and I did not realise it at the time. There are a lot of things that you do, that you do not realise at the time"*. The extraverted intuitive type needs to be taken seriously and valued for competence and special skills and will be more stressed than other types in this regard (Quenk 2000:41). They may be feeling incompetent because of changes in the education system, for which they were not trained.

### ➔ **Assessment**

According to my field notes of the focus group, seven educators from the sample said that stress was associated with time consuming assessment techniques. Assessment was an area of stress, especially for the educators who were introverted. Unlike the extraverts who enjoy variety and action and like new stimuli, group assessment as well as formative assessment (any form of assessment that requires feedback to the learner to monitor and support the learning process) was a source of stress. Quenk (1993:28) reminds us that people who prefer sensing tend to trust and use information acquired through their five senses, focusing on the individual facts and details in a present situation. People who prefer intuition tend to trust and use information acquired through a 'sixth sense' which focuses on patterns and possibilities that imply a future situation. In the sample tested there was an 80/20 ratio between sensing and intuition; thereby confirming why so many educators felt stressed about assessment techniques. The intuitive educator will have less difficulty with performance-based assessment. Donald *et al.* (2002:120) explain that in order to assess the effectiveness of learning, external actions (what learners can actually show they can do) become the focus of

assessment. From observation of these external actions, deductions can be made about the effectiveness of internal actions that underlie them. This is what is meant by performance-based assessment. This type of assessment is not as comfortable for the sensing educators who still cling to the past normative assessment in education.

Donald *et al.* (2002:24) state that although assessment of performance (whether or not a learner has mastered an outcome) may have to focus on the practical level, the range and depth of foundational and reflexive competencies should still be reflected in the performance. This caused a certain amount of stress for Mrs V, who said, *"I always did different types of assessment. I did not always record them, so I just had to take more time finding ways to record it, so it could be validated. It's very hard to record something that a child has done verbally. I find that very challenging. How do you record your knowledge of that kid, that is terrified to stand up and speak, feeling insecure in the subject? They've gone and done research, they've given it all they've got. How do you justly record that? I have a big problem doing that. It is only a gut feel and now having to validate that, I find it extremely time consuming and I don't know if I mastered it and this was stressful, in the back of my mind. I always thought that the paper does not show how difficult it is for that kid to stand up and talk. For the class clown it is nothing to stand up and talk and you can't show that on paper, because that is subjective. How do you record them as being the class clown, or how do you justify that someone who finds it easy to talk who is already at an advantage? So I felt some of my kids were penalised horribly, whereas my subject I was fortunate with pracs, I had a formal written test as well as the practical skills and the kids who were often not bright were good at doing practicals, so I feel that it catered for both. But as soon as the system made me report back for both, I did not know how to overcome the kids that were penalised and those that were advantaged"*.

According to Quenk (2000:16), introverted feeling types will be most stressed if there is a political climate that demands conformity to unacceptable values and procedures. An example could be the new assessment procedures that the educator needs to conform to. The new assessment techniques involve a lot of paper work and, according to Quenk (1993:195); dealing with bureaucratic red tape can be especially noxious for extraverted intuitives who are likely to dig in their heels and refuse to capitulate to "ridiculous rules".

### → Inclusive education

This aspect was prominent in the literature study but not mentioned by participants in my research. However, whilst doing my internship at the school, I saw that learners with barriers to learning were few in the secondary school. Possibly they had experienced problems of failure in the lower grades and had chosen to leave the school for other options or had not passed the entrance examinations in grade 8.

However, my dealings with the foundation phase indicated that inclusion posed a lot of stress for the educators who were in favour of smaller classes, an educator assistant as well as ongoing guidance from an educational psychologist. One grade 1 educator who would later teach a child with Asperger's syndrome and a learner with an auditory processing disorder said, *"I will teach these children only if I am assisted next year (2007) by an educational psychologist, because I do not have the tools to deal with this"*. Therefore, as Donald *et al.* (2002:298) mention, schools will have to develop and extend effective support services to provide expertise and back-up support to educators, parents and learners. In this regard, the headmistress said, when I applied to do my internship at the school, that she would value my services, because educators needed assistance with inclusive education. I also observed that educators felt more relaxed about having special needs learners in their classes, if they were given a framework to assist these learners. This could be because most educators had the quality of judging in their personality; therefore they desired to be right and to do the right thing in the right way. According to Quenk (2000:37), introverted, sensing types are energised by organising facts and details in order to accomplish a goal. Thus, they would therefore be more stressed than other personalities if they were unable to accomplish a goal, which has implications for educating a learner with barriers to learning.

### → Class problems and adaptation to today's learners

As was indicated by the focus group, six educators felt stressed by learner apathy. Buwalda and Kok (1990:17) states that those involved in the daily round of teaching face numerous pressures as efforts are made to teach learners with different interests, aptitudes and ages. Teaching may therefore demand abilities that the educator does not possess, or it may fail to provide opportunities to utilise abilities (Beard 1990:111). Looking at the biographical details of the sample, this could well be the case.

- The majority of the educators (9/10) were over the age of 40.
- All the educators were females.

- All the educators were white.
- Six educators from the sample had only daughters.
- One female educator had never had children.

According to Quenk (1993:231), stress that is chronic in most work situations can thwart our best efforts and elicit our own and others' least effective sides. Donald *et al's* (2002:25) view is that people in authority, in this case educators, have to care for the needs of those for whom they are responsible before they can earn respect. Respect cannot be demanded: it can only be earned. In the interview with Mrs V, concerning the adaptation to the learners, she said *"I made a personal decision that the day I was not giving my children the very best, I must stop teaching. That was my creed, but I believe educators do not stick to an educators' creed. They could not care and that really ate at me. But why did I even worry about it, because again it affected the kids that came into my classroom, because they all had a special place in my heart, and if anyone was hurting them, I did not like those people, because I don't think anyone knows how much I feel for those kids in front of me and the kids know, by the time they leave they know. So even Mrs E, she kept telling me that kids were scared to come to my class, but that was because of my position. So the conflict came in that my position of HOD, I had to be in control of the disciplining of children, yet in my class I was the caring teacher, so people did not know, who I had to be as HOD and who I am"*.

Bennet *et al.* (1996:38) confirm that stress dissipates an educator's energy and affects his or her quality of life. This has a direct cost, not only on the educator and the school, but ultimately on the educational experience of the learner.

### ➔ Criticism from parents

According to the focus group observation, six educators felt stress resulting from an emphasis on learners' results. Working at an independent school meant the perceived threat of 'payment by results'. This was verbalised clearly by the educator who I interviewed. She stated, *"It's a circumstance of where I am and the private school I was in - and added to that stress was the continual reminder that the children are paying more, so what you are giving should be more. And this really added to the stress, because everybody kept putting it into rand value and whether my child was capable of 30 or my child was capable of 90, I am expecting you to deliver more and if they are capable of 30 and you are getting a 42 out of them which is astronomically fantastic, the parents don't see it as that because I am paying more, you know and that is a huge thing. Just in the classroom. I don't know where it was said Sister (the*

*headmistress) always reminded us how much the parents were paying, and that was always rammed down your throat and parents who would say at parents' meetings, but I am paying for a private school. So I expect blah, blah, blah, blah, blah ... and I am one person in my subject and I can only do so much. But they don't see the bigger picture and they are paying your salary so they feel they have a right to become very vicious. But they never came back to say thank you. They are just so quick to point".*

### ➔ **Professional distress**

The focus group indicated one of the greatest stressors among the majority of educators according to the observations was remuneration, fringe benefits and personnel policy.

Poor status and lack of promotion progress as well as a poor salary contribute greatly to educator stress. The educator most affected by this was the divorced member of staff, who relied on her salary, not just for daily needs, but at the age of 54, also had retirement in mind and this independent school does not have pension or medical aid provision. This educator mentioned repeatedly the stress caused by remuneration, fringe benefits and personnel policy. Two other educators with high stress in this category were married with children; both had two children at university without a bursary and this created great stress. Another educator was 62 years old; therefore with retirement pending, remuneration was a high stressor. Although she has many years of service, she will receive no pension from the school.

#### ***5.4.2.3 Literature and empirical findings on how work related stress influences different personality profiles***

Carlyle and Woods (2002:164) made me realise that, since teaching is widely acknowledged as a stressful occupation, educators need to know about stress, its social aspects, its processual nature and the connections between stress and illness. Therefore, at the workshop the educators were assisted by becoming aware of preventative measures to cope with sources of stress, the symptoms, the range of coping strategies, constructive or counterproductive strategies and knowing how to access help. According to Carlyle and Woods (2002:164), when educators saw stress as an individual phenomenon, they tended to find the recovery process more problematic. Therefore, increased knowledge reduces feelings of self-blame and gives protection from loss of self. By hearing about other educators' stress, the educator felt part of a team and lost her feeling of isolation. I observed this during the group work, where educators shared personal information, which had never happened before.

One educator openly admitted that all the years of stress in teaching had affected her personality. She was a perceiver in a judging environment and this had been difficult; therefore, she had to develop her judging function. After she had spoken, many educators acknowledge the stressors in teaching and their effect on their health (e.g. migraines, neck spasms, ulcers and spastic colons) which they had never admitted before.

In my study knowledge of the inferior function proved particularly beneficial because extreme out-of-character reactions to the stresses of the workplace were viewed in the context of the consistency of personality rather than its unpredictability. Therefore, this provided the rationale to distinguish between unreliability, poor performance, faulty leadership and intermittent episodes of the inferior function.

According to Donald *et al.* (2002:172), the professional role of an educator requires a person to develop a high level of self-understanding and to deal with personal issues constructively. In this regard, Mrs V said, *"Because you talk to someone on the telephone or receptionist etc ... you always deal with one person and one personality at a time but in the classroom, you are dealing with 25 very needy/very sensitive little young developing personalities, all at one time. Just saying one little thing wrong can mess someone up, so I was always aware of the kids, their facial expressions, their eyes sparkling, seeing their shoulders drop. You know, you have done something and that is very stressful, and also cut some children short and say I can't explain it again, that would make the feeler in me feel bad"*.

My observation in the staffroom once prompted me to intervene in a potentially stressful situation and diffuse the stress using personality qualities (see Chapter 3). My notes read: *Mrs B was moaning about Mrs M, because Mrs M had not handed her mark sheets back on time to Mrs B. I explained to Mrs B that she was a strong J (Judging) on the Jung personality scale, which means that she was very systematic and organised in the planning of her work, as opposed to Mrs M who was a strong P (Perceiving), meaning that she sees time as something to be added later and also not following lists or plans. Therefore, being energised by last minute pressures ... Mrs B, then accepted the explanation and laughed about it, rather than making it a source of stress for the rest of the day. She said that she would rearrange her other work and do Mrs M's mark sheet last, so that she would not have last minute stresses with her other work.* I therefore tried to develop higher levels of emotional skills and resilience by using the educators' personality qualities in order to assist in their own stress management.

## 5.5 SUMMARY

The findings of the empirical investigation were discussed in this chapter. I concluded that educators are indeed stressed, and that much stress has been due to the 1994 transformation in education. I assessed the different personality qualities of the educators and they became aware of their stressors and how their personalities react to stress. An educator said to me after the workshop, *"This workshop has changed my life. I feel that I can handle myself and others again, something I had started to doubt, over the years"*. Another educator personalised her profile as she left the workshop saying, *"That was thoroughly enjoyable and well presented, which suites my "J" personality"*.

This chapter identified different themes and categories, from the individual interview as well as the focus group, which was explained by the integration of the literature and empirical investigation. Chapter 6 presents a summary of the research, conclusions, limitations and recommendations.

## CHAPTER 6

# CONCLUSION OF THE RESEARCH

*It is good to have an end to journey towards;  
But it is the journey that matters in the end*  
- Ursula K. LeGuin

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

While teaching at an independent secondary school, personal experience indicated teaching had taken on a new dimension since 1994 because of changes in educational policy and practice. In spite of twenty years of teaching experience, I found that my previous training was inadequate to deal with the transformation in South African education and this induced considerable stress. Locally and internationally literature and the media are paying increasing attention to educator stress in general. As stated in Chapter 1, the study specifically addressed the role of personality awareness in relation to female secondary school educators with work related stress. The study was informed by a literature review in Chapter 2 which dealt with work related stress and the level of stress experienced by female educators. Chapter 3 addressed the different theoretical perspectives with regard to the etiology of personality awareness. The focus of Chapter 4 was the research paradigm, the research design and the research instruments. The data gathering instruments used in this empirical research were a focus group and an individual interview.

Greenberg (1984:6) explains how much of an educator's energy is expended in treating and coping with the mental, physical and emotional ills of others that little is left for personal care and own development beyond the basic necessities. The educator's own well being therefore receives scant attention. With this in mind I conducted a workshop for female educators dealing with personality and stress. Chapter 5 presented and discussed the results of my research.

The findings and recommendations of this chapter are guided by the aims of this study, which were highlighted in Section 1.5 of Chapter 1.

## **6.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

Cosgrove (2000:7) made a valid point that educators need to recognise that it is not their own fault that they are stressed. This was therefore my point of departure. Useful also were factors identified by De Klerk and le Roux (2006:74) which confirmed the importance of self-knowledge. When educators are empowered with self-knowledge on educator stress and knowledge of personality qualities, they are able to address this problem from their own frame of reference. I also realised the significance of the point raised by Carlyle and Woods (2002:86) that it can be difficult for someone at 'rock-bottom' to find help because he or she is so depleted of energy and self-awareness. With the abovementioned in mind, I attempted to assist educators at my school to become aware of their personality qualities. I therefore put into practice the suggestion of Overland (1998:7): we need to create an atmosphere in our schools where stress is no longer presented as a personal failure. "The first step in tackling stress is to acknowledge its existence in teaching, but acceptance is difficult for those who associate stress with personal weakness and professional incompetence" (Dunham 1992:1).

In the following sections, I give a summary of my research, reiterate the findings and draw conclusions emanating from the literature survey and my empirical investigation.

### **6.2.1 Summary, findings and conclusions emanating from the literature survey**

Chapter 2 reviewed the available literature regarding work related stress for the educator as well as the level of stress experienced by female educators. As Pervin (in Oliver & Pervin 2001:445) suggests, research using self-report data clearly supports the view that people see themselves as feeling and acting differently in different situations. For example, a subject will report that she experiences relaxation and behaves in an extraverted fashion in peer-social situations but is tense and introverted at home. Chapter 3 included the theories of Jung's personality types and social cognitive theory. Linking this all to personality, Humphrey and Humphrey (1986:81) note that personality consists of the sum of all the physical, social, emotional and intellectual aspects of any individual, and the importance of this approach is seen when the educator makes an effort in the direction of self-modification of behaviour.

These aforementioned discrepancies in the presentation of the "self" often result in stress, leaving the person with a feeling of "Who am I?" The educators then attempted to find out who they were, and what was stressing them as individuals.

After doing extensive literature research, I realised that the educators that I had observed over the years were stressed. I also perceived many educators were negative towards the learners. These two observations suggested to me that I was judging the introverts on the staff according to my personality trait: I observed the extraverted and the perceivers on the basis of my judging trait. As Spoto (1989:31) notes: "Even the relatively young discipline of psychology often defines the symptomology of maladjustment, narcissistic/borderline and neurotic/psychotic states in terms that assume a kind of collective "extraversion" as the norm or criterion for diagnosis. Secondly, the educators observed may have been displaying "out-of-character" behaviour. Quenk (1993:49) explains this as stress inducing personality changes consistent with that person's particular inferior functions. In conclusion the tired, ill, stressed, or drug-altered person becomes careless and ineffective in using his or her usually reliable functions.

### **6.2.2 Summary, findings and conclusions derived from empirical investigation**

As was mentioned in the above section, stress in the education fraternity was reviewed in the literature pertaining to work related stress in Chapter 2. Personality awareness was addressed in Chapter 3. In the empirical investigation, I attempted to achieve an understanding of the role of personality awareness in relation to the work related stress of female secondary school educators. I achieved this by conducting an interview as well as using a focus group.

The empirical findings of this study suggested that educator stress was caused by many different factors such as inadequate working conditions and leadership styles, little participation in decision-making and distribution of tasks, high work load and long working hours, role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload, constant change and demands of the national curriculum and syllabus changes, assessment, inclusive education, class problems and adaptation to today's learners, criticism from parents and professional distress , which were all discussed in Section 5.4.2.

In conclusion, the empirical investigation recognised that educators were stressed in different ways and in response to different situations in the work environment. Many educators' personality qualities were functioning in the inferior function, which was explained in Section 5.4.2.3.

## **6.3 FINDINGS RELATED TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

### **6.3.1 The main research question**

The main research question was: What is the role of personality awareness in relation to female secondary school educators with work related stress? The research found that when female secondary school educators were aware of their personalities as well as those of others, they were able to use this insight to understand why certain situations induced stress and how this affected personalities.

### **6.3.2 Four related research questions**

The first question (What is work related stress?) was addressed in Chapter 2. It was found to be a grave problem for educators not only in South Africa but also internationally.

Secondly, the question: What is the level of stress experienced by female educators? was investigated and was found to relate largely to transformation in education after 1994.

Thirdly, the question: How does awareness of personality occur? was addressed in Chapter 3. A discussion of personality awareness was given. This was addressed in an interactive workshop relating to Jung's personality theory as well as social cognitive theory.

Lastly, the question: How do female educators with different personalities experience work related stress? was investigated. This question was related to how different personality qualities influence the above mentioned work related stress. Educators consequently became aware of their personality characteristics and how they were affected by stressful situations.

In conclusion, the role of personality awareness in relation to female secondary school educators with work related stress was achieved by a literature study on work related stress and data gathered during the interview. The literature study discussed personality awareness and the workshop raised awareness about personality qualities. Finally, due to personal awareness gained, the educators understood stress levels and how they are experienced by different personalities.

## **6.4 INTERPRETATION**

In order to interpret the information which I gathered during my research, I aimed to give "a coherent convincing argument based on both empirical evidence, and ... [my] ... understanding and logic" (Henning *et al.* 2004: 7).

The role of personality awareness in relation to female secondary school educators with work related stress was interpreted in the following way. Firstly, I noted that all educators who participated in my research were stressed to a lesser or greater degree. Lazarus and Cox (in Garden 1991:75) maintain that most authors, by focusing on the external stressors presumed to cause burnout in a particular setting, define those stressors as universally applicable. However, what is stressful to one person may not be stressful to another. Based on this assumption, I investigated the role of personality awareness in relation to female secondary school educators' work related stress. Knowledge of personality qualities can assist educators to understand how these qualities may influence their work related stress.

Dorman (2003:36) noted that educators operating under high levels of stress for significant periods of time can develop burnout characteristics, including less sympathy towards learners, reduced tolerance of learners, failure to prepare lessons adequately and a lack of commitment to the teaching profession. Therefore, work related stress ultimately impacts on job satisfaction, a problem often neglected by the educators and school management. Educator stress may reduce the educators' effectiveness in the classroom which causes a myriad of problems.

The level of stress experienced by female educators was evident from the empirical evidence. The interviewee indicated that she was well aware of her stress levels, which ultimately led to her resignation from teaching. In the focus group, many educators were functioning in the inferior due to stress.

An awareness of personality was achieved in the literature study. Jung saw the human psyche as containing everything necessary to grow, adapt, and heal itself. He believed that people were capable of directing their own personality development and of recognising and benefiting from both positive and negative life experiences. Cognitive psychology is also underpinned by constructivist principles, because Donald *et al.* (2002:103) explain that the central idea in this tradition is that the mind constantly searches for the most effective and economic ways of interpreting and applying the information which it receives. Thus, people develop strategies, plans of action, or coping patterns that have led, or are likely to lead, to what they perceive to be the best results.

In the interview and focus group, it became evident how female educators with different personalities experience work related stress. Mischel (1993:447) explains that cognitive

appraisal of how stress is viewed by a person, may be more important than the amount of stress that actually occurs in the environment.

In conclusion, "To get to an interpretation of this experience [as reflected in the collected data], you need to be theoretically equipped as a social scientist, that is, able to use your existing knowledge (theory) to explain what you have encountered in the data" (Henning *et al.* 2004: 9). Garden (1991:73) suggested that viewing burnout as a negative experience, which could be alleviated by removing stressors in the environment, is inadequate. An explanation of the findings, using a Jungian perspective, suggests that burnout may be a result of a deliberate dynamic in the psyche to re-establish balance and/or to stimulate growth. Therefore, a better understanding of the psyche would help educators cope with changes that they face in their classrooms, which ultimately manifests itself as stress.

## **6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

In the light of this study the following recommendations are made as follows:

### **6.5.1 Management support**

Leibowitz (2003:13) explains how principal support has four dimensions, which will be easier to instil once the principal has an understanding of personality qualities and how these link to staff's work related stress. These four dimensions are:

- Emotional support, which would include respect and trust for the educator. Bower (2003:25), suggests that the principal be generous with praise and encouragement and be aware of and recognise the unique talents and potential of all staff. This could again relate to personality qualities of individual educators. In terms of the findings of the study, it was evident that the principal's inferior function was thinking, therefore becoming cold and aloof and losing the ability to listen or accommodating others. Consequently, emotional support was compromised.
- Instrumental support, whereby the educator would feel important by helping the principal on work related issues. Make staff meetings a positive experience with input and shared decision making (Bower 2003:25). This would help in reducing stress induced due to little participation in decision-making and distribution of tasks. This was evident in the research which showed that educators felt frustrated with little participation in decision-making and distribution of tasks within the education system and the school system (see Section 5.4.2.1).

- Informational support, whereby the principal supplies information to educators on new policies, teaching methods and other related matters. This could assist the educator with the constant change and demands of the national curriculum and syllabus changes, as well as assessment changes. The interview indicated that this was the problem that Mrs V faced: she experienced severe stress as a result of a lack of informational support from the school leadership, who were often ill informed about the demands placed on the educators due to the changes in education.
- Appraisal support, whereby the principal gives educators personal appraisals. Recognition for good performance could be implemented in the form of a bonus or time off. In the study many educators would have felt more appreciated if they were given personal appraisals from the principal. However, they were only noticed when they were called in by the principal as a result of criticism from a parent. They were appraised only because of the perceived impending threat of 'payment by results' (see Section 5.4.2.1).

Donald *et al.* (2002:28) state that a school-based support team is invaluable. This should consist of the principal, a small group of educators and support service personnel, who should meet on a regular basis to discuss particular needs and problems referred to by educators and should come up with ideas for individual intervention, general development and preventative action. This would also assist with stress induced by class problems and adaptation to learners. In the study, the principal showed her awareness of this need by agreeing to employ me as an intern psychologist at the school and to make the school available as a research sight for educator stress.

## **6.5.2 Educational psychologist support**

This should involve the following:

### **6.5.2.1 *Asset mapping in schools***

Educators can focus on sharing and/or using assets when trying to address the needs of all learners instead of focusing on difficulties or deficits. The assets could be directly related to personality qualities. After presenting the workshop to the educators, educators indicated that they had learnt much about themselves and other people. One educator saw the value of extraverts as well as the value of her own personality quality as a strong introvert (see Section 5.3.1).

### **6.5.2.2 Educator support**

Educator support can be invaluable by means of initiatives such as, educators assisting educators, whereby the educational psychologist sets up weekly meetings to discuss problems which educators have with specific learners and brainstorming is used to solve the problem. Stress induced by inclusive education as well as class problems could be reduced in this way. Stress management literature emphasises the value of team development in confronting the demands of teaching. Some of the benefits include sharing ideas for dealing with stress, using each other's personality strengths to reduce particular tensions, forming supportive relationships that enable team members to improve their self-concept, developing educator centres where materials and ideas can be shared, and establishing some common ground from which pride and integrity can emerge (Swick 1989:25). Cosgrove (2000:149) also suggests annual, or even two-yearly, health checks, with specific reference to mental health. In this study, I observed that several educators were grateful for the workshop, because it gave them a forum to discuss issues. After the focus group discussions several educators came to speak to me about ways of realising their true selves again (see Section 5.2.3).

### **6.5.2.3 Learner support**

The educational psychologist could assist the school with remedial as well as emotional problem solving of needy learners. This could address stress induced by inclusive education. According to my observations, educators need assistance with inclusive education. Educators are more relaxed about having special needs learners in their classes, if they were given a framework to assist these learners (see Section 5.4.2.1).

### **6.5.2.4 Workshops and in-service training programmes**

Olivier and Venter (2003:191) suggest subject advisors could take responsibility for motivating educators in their department, who in turn will motivate learners. Educators should also share ideas on effective classroom management and interesting lessons in order to capture the learner's attention and co-operation. Educators should also be encouraged to further their studies and attend workshops in order to boost their self-esteem and confidence. Myburgh and Niehaus (1997:174) recommend that educator education programmes should be aimed at developing the self-concepts of prospective and practising educators. However, little is mentioned about knowledge of personality qualities. In addition, conflict management and other interpersonal skills should be developed and refined. As Greenberg suggests (1984:7), there is a need for educators to study stress management techniques and to apply them to their

daily routines, because their vulnerability to the negative effects of stress grows with every change in the educational system. Greenberg (1984:42) suggests that one of the first objectives educators should list in their stress management plan is detached concern, a stance in which a caring physician is sufficiently objective or detached from the patient to exercise sound medical judgement yet shows enough concern to provide sensitive understanding and care. It was evident from this study that once educators realised that they were not alone in the work related stress situations and that they could relate their changes in personality to this stress, it became less daunting and more manageable for them (see Section 5.3.1). Olivier and Venter (2003:189) recommend that the goal should always be to build on strengths and improve the mental state of educators. The national Department of Education should design valid and reliable procedures to monitor the stress levels of educators, in collaboration with the National Research Foundation (Van Wyk 1998:187). This will enable them to respond in good time to the needs that develop in this regard. In this research, once the leadership of the school was aware of the educators' personality qualities, they obtained a better understanding of why certain educators reacted in certain ways, and could deal with the crisis more effectively.

Donald *et al.* (2002:26) conclude that in order to achieve professionalism in teaching, empowerment through educator development, involving pre-service education programmes, as well as in-service development programmes, is essential.

I concluded that personality quality awareness empowered the educators as well as the leadership of the school. They not only understood themselves and their colleagues better, but were also able to understand the learners better. Their understanding also creates an awareness of what stresses individual personalities.

### **6.5.3 Educator awareness**

#### **6.5.3.1 Reframing negative stress**

Swick (1989:16) suggests that with the proper orientation and the use of basic planning skills, many educators 'reframe' what might appear to be negative stress into opportunities for personal and professional development. Swick (1989:15) mentions that a particular stressor (such as classroom management problems) may stimulate an educator to take positive action, like enrolling in a professional programme on classroom management. According to these findings, educators seemed relieved to understand the changes in themselves and others. Some were upset when they realised that they had been functioning in their inferior. This had

been detrimental to many of their relationships; if they had been aware of this, they would have realised that their personality changes were due to stress. This awareness could have allowed them to reframe the negative stress and to make changes in their careers or in their outlook on stressors (see Section 5.3.3).

#### ***6.5.3.2 Developing higher levels of emotional skills and resilience***

According to Cosgrove (2000:138), the key to a successful individual coping strategy is to tailor it yourself, do your own stress audit. Educators must work out times, places and activities in which they experience low, or no, negative stress and build from there. If you are well rested, healthy and feel good about yourself and your life, you will achieve far more for your learners than what can be achieved with planning, marking and displays. One educator requested guidance after the workshop, because she had become aware that she was functioning as her ought self. This had caused her stress and she needed to get back to her actual self (see Section 5.4.2.1).

## **6.6 MAIN CONCLUSION OF THE RESEARCH**

In order to give the main conclusions of my research, I refer to Sections 5.4.1 and 5.4.2.

### **6.6.1 Contribution of the study**

The empirical research established the impact of work related stress experienced by female educators (see Section 5.4.2) and how an awareness of different personalities may influence the person's experience of work related stress (see Section 5.4.2.3).

The empirical findings indicated that educators have been affected to a great extent by educational transformation. As part of the research the educators became aware of the role of personality qualities in relation to their work related stress in a workshop setting. Myers and McCaulley (in Coetzee & Schreuder 2002:55) summarise the intentions behind the workshop. They state "knowledge and understanding of personality type theory give individuals a sense of worth and dignity concerning their own qualities. Individuals can be aided in expanding their choices by helping them to realise their strengths and to develop their less preferred functions". Quenk (1993:231) showed that the workplace is an arena where people demonstrate their best and worst selves. Stress that is chronic in most work situations can thwart our best efforts and elicit our own and others' least effective sides. Therefore, an understanding of the forms of different inferior functions (as discussed in Section 3.6) can

provide the potential for understanding, predicting and explaining out of character behaviour at work.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, Quenk (2000:8) reminds us that people of differing personality types identify differing sources of both positive energy and stress, and these energisers and stressors tend to be consistent with the attributes of their personalities. Oliver and Pervin (2001:511) states that, according to the cognitive theory of psychological stress and coping, stress occurs when the person views circumstances as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering well being. Kobasa (in Garden 1991:75) illustrates the potential usefulness of personality in understanding people's differential sensitivity to apparently stressful events. Therefore, according to the research, an awareness of personality qualities is an important tool for the educator as it can be used to understand:

- why female educators react to certain stressors in the school environment and why others seem unaffected.
- analyse female educators' personality qualities to identify the specific stressors in their personality qualities and how personality qualities change under pressure.
- female educators' teaching styles and why they may cause stress in the classroom. Certain learners have personality qualities that conflict with those of the educator.
- the leadership style in the school, and how it can cause stress.
- the school system and how aspects may conflict with female educators' personality qualities.
- why educational transformation has affected some female educator's personalities more than others.

My research therefore includes active learning for the female educator, and therefore falls within the constructivism framework. Qualitative researchers believe that reality is a social construction, that is, individuals or groups derive or ascribe meanings to specific entities, such as events, persons, processes or objects. The educators in this research were part of a focus group in a workshop setting, in which awareness, exploration and personalisation occurred about work related stress as well as personality qualities (see Section 5.2.3). In the personalisation phase the educators formed constructions in order to make sense of these entities and reorganise these constructions as viewpoints, perceptions, and belief system. Therefore, the female educators ascribed certain meanings to their personality qualities which

led to certain responses to transformation in education. These reactions were ultimately experienced as work related stress.

## **6.6.2 Limitations of the study**

This study's limitations need to be taken into consideration. Limitations with regard to the method and the sample, site as well as the researcher, can have an impact on the applicability of the findings. The limitations involve:

### **6.6.2.1 Method**

Morgan (1988:12) states that the hallmark of focus groups is the explicit use of the group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group. This was clear in my research when I observed educators sharing sentiments on the stresses they face (see Section 5.4.2.3). The disadvantage of focus groups is that they are not based in natural settings; therefore there is always some residual uncertainty about the accuracy of what the participants say (Morgan 1988:20). The informal observations of personality congruence/incongruence need a more structured framework in order to do environmetric studies. Therefore, psychometric tests could possibly have been used in order to confirm the results.

### **6.6.2.2 Participants**

As mentioned in Section 4.5.1, the study was performed on a purposeful sample. Only those with 15 years teaching experience and who were currently teaching at the selected site were selected in this study. Only white female educators were used in this research. This could limit the applicability of results as all types of educators were not represented in the study. The set of data was too small to make significant recommendations in support of the research aims. Nevertheless, the findings and conclusions drawn may provide a framework for bringing about change in the thinking of principals and educators regarding the experience of work related stress.

### **6.6.2.3 Site**

With reference to Section 4.5.1, in terms of the site, I conducted my research in a combined, independent secondary school in Witbank, Mpumalanga. The school has a sound culture of teaching and learning. The secondary school ranges from Grade 8 to 12, with the learners ranging from 13 to 18 years of age, which is the middle to top adolescent age range. The abovementioned could prove to be a limitation of the study. The secondary school work

related stresses may not necessarily apply to a primary school, which is therefore also a limitation to the study.

#### **6.6.2.4 Researcher**

According to Seale (1999:3), we live in a post-modern world of multiple selves and endless fragmentation of experience. He quotes Denzin who states that "by making qualitative research "scientifically" respectable, researchers may be imposing schemes of interpretation on the social world. These schemes simply do not fit the world as it was constructed and lived by interacting individuals" (Denzin 1988a:4320). Therefore, I may have viewed stress through my own interpretation of the social world and a personally optimistic approach. Quenk (1993:248) describes these personality qualities (which reflect my own) as: "they like to base their plans and decisions upon known facts and on their personal values". This may have contaminated the findings to a certain extent. Moreover, as stated in Section 5.3.4.2, I was an active participant in the educator workshop. However, as I am employed in this particular school, I could contribute to and understand what the educators referred to regarding stressful situations.

#### **6.6.3 Matters requiring further research**

Based on this research, the following topics were identified for future research.

- Design a test that will enable stakeholders in the school to analyse the school environment and establish a taxonomy of environments.
- Do a comparative study of educator stress between an independent school in an elite suburb and a public school in a township.
- Do a case study on black educator stress teaching in multicultural schools.
- Investigate educator stress and its effects on the learner.
- Link educators' work related stress to emotional intelligence as well as their personality qualities.

### **6.7 FINAL COMMENT**

This chapter started by stating the purpose of the research, which was explained in detail in the summary of the literature and empirical investigation. Consequently, a discussion of the findings as well as an interpretation thereof was provided. Although there were limitations with regard to this study, it yielded useful information that can contribute to a better

understanding of the role of female secondary school educator's personality awareness in relation to work related stress. Matters requiring further research were also listed.

The study was personally significant as I was able to address an issue of ongoing concern in the teaching profession. I hope that this research will contribute to assisting female secondary school educators with work related stress. Once an educator is aware of her personality qualities, she is able to understand the changes she undergoes in times of stress. I hope that every educator will be able to identify her inferior function and return to her true self in order to be energised in the profession once again.

***"Inside every great teacher is an even  
greater one waiting to come out."***

Harry Wong

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**APPENDIX 1**

**A LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION FROM  
THE HEADMISTRESS OF THE INDEPENDENT  
SCHOOL, TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

10 January 2006

The Headmistress  
Saint Thomas Aquinas School  
P.O Box 562  
Witbank 1035

Dear Sister Lucia,

**Request permission to conduct research interviews and observations among female secondary school educators**

It would be greatly appreciated if you could grant me permission to conduct research interviews and observations among the female secondary school educators of your school. I am currently employed as the intern psychologist at your school and am currently studying towards the Master of Education in counseling and guidance. My dissertation topic is: *Female secondary school educators' personality awareness in relation to work related stress.*

The aims of this research project are:

- I determined the nature of work related stress in educators' lives by means of a literature study.
- A literature study related to the level of stress experienced specifically by female educators.
- A literature study investigating how an awareness of personality occurs.
- How people with different personalities experience work related stress.

An interview schedule will be presented to you, aiming at allowing educators to be interviewed as well as participating in a workshop without disrupting the running of the school. The information gathered will be held in confidence and used strictly for research purposes.

Yours faithfully

F.P Wood

**APPENDIX 2**

**A LETTER INVITING FEMALE SECONDARY  
SCHOOL EDUCATORS TO PARTICIPATE IN  
THE STUDY**

University of South Africa  
555-039-4

11 January 2006

Dear Colleagues,

You are invited to take part in a research study that has been approved by the University of South Africa. The requirements needed in order to take part in the research are as follows:

1. Female
2. Secondary school educator
3. At least 15 years teaching experience.

I am currently studying towards the Master of Education (counseling and guidance).

My dissertation topic is: *Female secondary school educators' personality awareness in relation to work related stress.*

The aims of this research project are:

- To determine the nature of work related stress in educators' lives by means of a literature study.
- A literature study related to the level of stress experienced specifically by female educators.
- A literature study investigating how an awareness of personality occurs.
- How people with different personalities experience work related stress.

I hope you will be interested in taking part in this important research study. A copy of the final report of the findings of this study will be available from the Unisa library. Your co-operation is appreciated.

Researcher: F.P. Wood

**APPENDIX 3**

**A DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERACTIVE  
EXERCISES USED DURING THE WORKSHOP**

**ACTIVITY 1** (30 minutes)

Form 2 separate groups: namely extraverts and introverts

(An extravert is driven by the interaction and energy of other people and the introvert driven by the energy of herself)

Once in the two separate groups.

- Extraverts must write down all the positive qualities of an extravert and the negative qualities of an introvert.
- Introverts must write down all the positive qualities of an introvert and all the negative qualities of an extravert.

**ACTIVITY 2** (30 minutes)

Form 2 separate groups: namely judging (whose focus is on closure, predictability, planning, organisation, and control) and Perceivers (whose focus is on adaptability, flexibility, spontaneity, and openness to new information.)

Once in the two separate groups.

Discuss and write down the following points.

Your group has won the lotto and you are going overseas as a group. What are you going to do?

**ACTIVITY 3** (30 minutes)

Form 2 separate groups of sensing people (this refers to the preference to perceive according to what is observed through the senses) and intuiting people (this refers to a preference to perceive possibilities, means and relationships by way of insight)

Give each group a box of smarties and say “What do you see?” ,sensing personalities noticing detail whereas the intuitive personalities being more abstract in their approach.

**ACTIVITY 4** (30 minutes)

Divide the group of educators randomly into two groups.

Tell a story that has many role players and involve a lot of sensitive issues. After telling the story, the groups need to rate the role players from most guilty to most innocent. In the process one will establish which people belong to the thinkers and which ones are feelers.

**APPENDIX 4**

**STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

**TOPIC: Female secondary school educators' personality awareness in relation to work related stress.**

Theme 1: The circumstances that possibly cause stress outside the work situation

Did your stress levels affect your family?

Theme 2: The circumstances that possibly cause stress within the work situation

What appeared to be the biggest sources of work related stress over the past few years?

A) Inadequate working conditions and leadership styles

- Did it ever frustrate you as H.O.D that you would explain things to your colleagues and they could not understand?
- Did you ever think your stress was linked to the school leadership's organizational skills or lack of skills?
- You mention that you had inadequate working conditions, how did the leadership of the school react when you addressed this with them?

B) Little participation in decision-making and distribution of tasks

- How did you feel in terms of your career opportunities in the teaching profession?
- When it came to decision making and distribution of tasks how were you included at the school?

C) High work load and long working hours

- Explain your work load and working hours as a secondary school educator?
- How did you feel about your workload?

D) Role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload

- Did you ever feel that when you were stressed you changed and had out-of – character behavior?
- Explain why you mention the fact that you never had a clearly defined role?
- How do you think that being a thinker made you stressed?
- A lot of the secondary school staff appear to be introverts and you appear to be extroverted by nature, did this influence you at all ?

E) Constant change and demands of the national curriculum and syllabus changes

- Do you think the stress got worse when the transformation in education occurred in 1994?

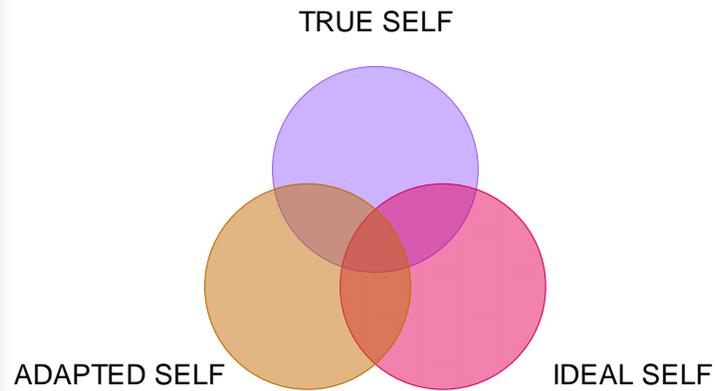
- When and how did you realize that the work related stress had affected you?
  - How have the changes and demands of the national curriculum and syllabus since 1994 affected your working conditions?
  - How did your previous university training help you with the demands of the new OBE?
- F) Assessment
- What impact did the new assessment criteria in teaching have on you?
- G) Class problems and adaptation to today's learners
- As a secondary school educator, explain your relationship with the learners of today.
- H) Criticism from parents
- The type of problems that you had at a private school and a government school, how do they compare?
- I) Professional distress
- How did your work related stress affect you as a female secondary school educator in teaching?
  - And how do you feel making the decision to leave teaching?

**APPENDIX 5**

**POWER POINT PRESENTATION**



## GOAL TO ACHIEVE IN THIS WORKSHOP



## Types of stress

- Inadequate working conditions and leadership styles
- Professional distress
- Classroom discipline and management
- High work load and long working hours
- Little participation in decision making and distribution of tasks
- Family crisis
- Role conflict , role ambiguity and role overload
- Class problems and adaptation to today's students
- Constant change and demands of the national curriculum and syllabus changes
- Interpersonal relationships
- Criticism from parents
- Individual pressure
- Alienation

## Manifestations of educator stress



Behavioural reactions



Cognitive reactions



Physiological reactions



Organisational reactions



## Stress management

- Knowledge and understanding of personality qualities give individuals a sense of worth and dignity concerning their own qualities. Individuals can be aided in expanding their choices by helping them to realise their strengths and to develop their less preferred functions.
- During the time that stress is ongoing and habitual, as may be true in the school for the educator, there is little opportunity to gain any new perspective about oneself.
- Growth – encouraging new knowledge may not come about until a crisis state has been reached or some event or experience forces self-evaluation and re-evaluation of important aspects of one's life situation.

