

THE ROLE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT IN ALLEVIATING WORK-RELATED TEACHER STRESS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

by

H W NGOBENI

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SUPERVISOR: DR H M VAN DER MERWE

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Student Number: 647-694-5

I declare that:

The role of the Head of Department in alleviating work-related teacher stress in primary schools is my own work and that all the sources that I used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

.....
Signature
(MR H W NGOBENI)

.....
Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this piece of work to my family. Most of all to my late parents, William and Rosinah, who had very little formal education but taught me the importance of education.

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SUMMARY

Work-related teacher stress is indeed a major problem in schools. The main aim of this study was to investigate the role of the Head of Department in alleviating work-related teacher stress among primary schools in the Temba Circuit. The research problem was investigated by means of a literature study and an empirical investigation. The literature study identified the main causes of teacher related stress. A qualitative inquiry using semi-structured focus group interviews with teachers and semi-structured individual interviews with Heads of Department were conducted in order to find answers to the research questions. It was found that the main sources of teacher stress could be grouped into four main categories, namely, interpersonal, organisational, professional and personal stressors. Guidelines to be considered by Heads of Department to alleviate the stress that teachers under their auspices are encountering were developed on the basis of these four categories of teacher stressors.

KEY TERMS

Head of Department

Primary school teachers

Work-related stress

Stressors

Temba Circuit

Focus groups

Qualitative research

Stress management

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CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Stress is an inevitable part of everyday life. When managed well, it works in a positive way to help a person to perform better. In this regard Cockburn (1996:7) identifies positive stress situations that are good for any person like falling in love, the laughter of a joyous moment or whatever else that thrills or challenges the person in a positive way. Such healthy tension is indeed vital for happiness and improved performance.

Excessive pressure, however, can be distressing, leading to loss of effectiveness and ultimately, to ill-health and a total breakdown. Hargreaves (1998:8) proclaims that badly managed or ignored stress can be a killer. With regard to stress at the workplace, studies have shown that certain occupations such as the work of paramedics, teaching and welfare work are more stressful than others (Hargreaves 1998:32). The complicated character of stress at the workplace is evident in the fact that within each occupation there are indeed certain aspects causing significant amounts of stress that need to be managed satisfactorily (Hargreaves 1998:32).

A number of studies have drawn attention to the prevalence of stress in the teaching profession (Dunham & Varma 1998; Kyriacou 2000; Travers & Cooper 1996). Although there have been many attempts to investigate the real cause of teacher stress, often the findings of such studies have not been consistent. A major problem has been the variety of ways in which people have interpreted the phenomenon of teacher stress. Moreover, teachers are often reluctant to admit the extent to which they experience stress due to the fact that it may be seen as a weakness (Travers & Cooper 1996:3). However, the effect of teacher stress on job performance is evident in the large numbers of teachers' leave of absence taken to cope with stress, resultant ill-health, a lowered level of job satisfaction and commitment and impaired quality of classroom teaching. Because of all these dysfunctional effects of teacher stress, school managers, which include Heads of

Department, have the responsibility to manage their schools in such a way that stress levels are reduced for all staff.

1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH

As Head of Department of the intermediate phase of a primary school in the Temba Circuit, the researcher became aware of the problem of stress among primary school teachers in his formal and informal interaction with them. The researcher observed the behaviour of teachers and received reports related to absenteeism and common illnesses that are directly related to excessive stress badly managed amongst the teachers.

This made him realise that the teachers are in dire need of guidelines for effective stress management. What also became apparent is the crucial role that the Head of Department as a member of the school management team should play to reduce work-related stress in schools.

The researcher realised that an investigation into the role of the Head of Department in alleviating work-related teacher stress can shed new light on this matter. Through this research, the teacher and the school can formulate possible recommendations, which could serve as valuable guidelines for successful management of stress.

1.3 BACKGROUND TO STUDY

1.3.1 Work-related stress

Servicemen, social workers, teachers and linguists emerged as the biggest sufferers of stress in the 1990s (Joseph 2000:15). A study of over a hundred occupations shows that these are among the jobs where workers have experienced the sharpest increase in worries about workloads, deadline pressures, job security and responsibility (Joseph 2000:15). With regard to the teaching profession specifically, many researchers have confirmed teachers' experience of stress (Dunham & Varma 1998; Kyriacou 2000; Travers & Cooper 1996). Questionnaires asking teachers to rate their experience of stress

at work typically indicate that about a quarter of schoolteachers worldwide regard teaching as a “very or extremely stressful” job (Kyriacou 2000:29).

Although Joseph (2000:15) emphasises that there is no single way of predicting what will cause harmful levels of stress, work-related stress usually relates to factors such as a lack of job security, downsizing, longer working hours and heavier workloads. As a consequence of additional hours, for example, people are prone to health problems, whereas the effects of downsizing result in a reduced workforce, which is burdened with the same number of tasks.

Structural factors at work such as role conflict and role ambiguity are also serious causes of stress (Travers & Cooper 1996:46). Specifically with regard to the teaching profession the multitude of relationships that form part of teachers’ work are potentially serious causes of stress. A review of the research literature in this regard reveals that teachers are experiencing stress mainly because of their relationships with colleagues, principals, Heads of Department, parents, education authorities, the community, dysfunctional families and learners (Travers & Cooper 1996:51).

1.3.2 The concept stress

The term stress is derived from the Latin word *stringere*, which means to bind tight or to press together (Trauer 1986:9). As the effect of unrelieved tension, stress is brought about by stressful situations termed stressors. Stressors relate to one’s perception of risk factors in the environment and one’s assessment of whether personal resources will enable one to meet the environmental challenges or whether, on the other hand, one will become overwhelmed by environmental threats (Spangenberg & Orpen-Lyall 2000:6). Stress reaction as the body’s biochemical response to a threatening situation is intended to ensure self-survival. Frequent exposure to stressors, however, can have far-reaching physical, emotional and psychological consequences.

1.3.3 Stress within the school environment

In schools, teacher stress is a problem because of its negative effects on job performance. Because of the need for organisational and personal effectiveness, it is important that both attention of management and individual attention are given to stress reduction in the school. However, it is not possible to avoid stressful conditions completely.

Therefore, there is an essential need to learn to cope with or tolerate stress reaction. Stress management should be part of every teacher's everyday routine as well as every school's operational planning (Van der Merwe 2003:54). The role, which the Head of Department as a middle manager could play in alleviating teacher stress within the school environment, is by absorbing, modifying or suppressing stressors among teachers (Naicker 2003:14).

With regard to the significant prevalence of stress within the school environment, certain school related sources of stress have been reported consistently across a wide range of studies. These sources fall into seven main categories (Dunham & Varma 1996:7):

- Poor learner behaviour;
- Time pressure and overload;
- Poor school ethos, including poor relationships with the principal and with colleagues;
- Poor working conditions, including lack of resources and poor physical features of the building used;
- Poor prospects concerning pay, promotion and career development.

Within this broad spectrum of school-related sources of stress each individual teacher has his/her own unique profile of stressors.

In countries worldwide schools are undergoing periods of rapid change affecting teaching methods, the content of the school curriculum and assessment procedures (Kyriacou 2000). The same applies to South African education, which is also undergoing rapid

changes since the change of government in 1994. Major changes in this regard relate to curriculum changes, redeployment of staff and increased school-based management (Berkhout 1998:197-201). Such changes increase teachers' stress levels significantly.

With regard to local curriculum change, the introduction of Curriculum 2005 (C2005) has caused significant levels of stress to teachers. When C2005 was introduced, teachers were not properly trained to implement it (Potenza 2003:9). Curriculum 2005 had its own problems and was very difficult to implement due to its complex structure. A review committee was formed to evaluate it and to make recommendations. The review committee recommended that it should be strengthened and streamlined by simplifying its language and its design features and be called the Revised National Curriculum Statement (Potenza 2003:10-12). This Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) has been implemented in primary schools in the foundation phase from January 2004. Many teachers complain about increased stress levels caused by continuous curriculum change for the sake of change (Beeld 14 September 2004:9).

The redeployment of teachers holds a serious threat to teachers and results in a loss of trust between teachers and the Department of Education (Dibetle 2003:31). Redeployment, which is a stressful situation in itself, tends to be worsened by the fact that many teachers who have been declared in excess are frustrated by the refusal of School Governing Bodies to recommend their transfer. Other teachers experience a deliberate delay in being released (Dibetle 2003:31). Redeployment is forcing many teachers to quit the field of education because it causes insecurity and frustration. Redeployment is a continuous process based on the teacher-learner ratio, which implies that teachers will continue to be frustrated by redeployment threats in future.

With regard to school-based management and the increased powers allocated to School Governing Bodies, their main functions in terms of section 20(i) of the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) relate to the governance of public schools and provision of resources (SASA 1996(a):12-13). Another function of the School Governing Bodies, which in some cases impacts negatively on teachers, is their power to recommend

candidates for promotion. Due to a lack of proper training by the education authorities, the School Governing Bodies are frequently manipulated by the principals to promote the principal's favourite, thus causing frustration to teachers (Dibetle 2003:31). The inconsistency and unreliability of some School Governing Bodies which are negatively influenced by the principals is a major cause of stress to teachers. The need for proper training of the School Governing Body members for the sake of teacher stress alleviation is self-evident.

The role which the Head of Department as a middle manager can possibly fulfill in alleviating teachers' stress levels is by functioning as a 'stress filter' between the teachers and the perceived 'threat' in the environment (Naicker 2003:14). According to the researcher, a working definition of the 'stress filter' would refer to the Head of Department who absorbs, modifies or even suppresses stressors not conducive to the well-being of the teacher (Naicker 2003:14).

1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Primary school teachers in the Temba Circuit are exposed to a wide variety of multidimensional stressors within the work situation. These stressors have a negative effect on the quality of their teaching and their health. At times these teachers are so overwhelmed by the many and varied demands of the profession that they also tend to experience the work situation as a toxic environment (Beeld 14 September 2004:9).

The Head of Department as a middle manager fulfils a crucial role in stress alleviation at school by being a resourceful person who needs to provide appropriate leadership, be supportive, motivate teachers, reflects on his/her own stress process and on that of the teachers in a positive way. In attempting to elucidate the role which the Head of Department should fulfill in alleviating negative stress encountered by the teachers, it is also necessary to be aware of both the existence and the sources that cause stress to occur at schools (Naicker 2003:14).

This gives rise to the main research question, namely;

What is the role of the Head of Department in alleviating work-related teacher stress in primary schools?

This main problem statement gives rise to the following three sub-questions:

- How does the phenomenon of teacher stress manifest in schools?
- What kind of negative stress is experienced by primary school teachers?
- How can the Head of Department alleviate the negative work-related stress encountered by primary school teachers?

1.5 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of this study is to do an exploratory investigation into the role of the Head of Department in alleviating work-related teacher stress in primary schools in the Temba Circuit. By doing that, new light will be shed on the extent of the problem of stress experienced by teachers in their work environment and the impact thereof on the quality of their teaching. A further aim is to propose appropriate guidelines to Heads of Department to alleviate the negative influence of stress encountered by the teachers under their auspices. In order to accomplish this aim, the following objectives should be realised by this study:

- To investigate the causes of work-related stress among primary school teachers;
- To investigate the role of the Head of Department in alleviating work-related teacher stress in primary schools;
- To propose appropriate guidelines that Heads of Department can consider in their attempts to alleviate the work-related stress of teachers under their auspices in order to cope with the negative influence of stress.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

1.6.1 Literature review

The literature review in a research study accomplishes several purposes such as sharing with the reader the results of other studies that are closely related to the study being reported; it relates a study to the larger, ongoing dialogue in the literature about a topic; it fills in gaps and extends prior studies; it provides a framework for establishing the importance of study and provides a benchmark for comparing the results of a study with other findings (Cresswell 1994:20-21).

In this study, the literature review enabled the researcher to gain further insight into work-related teacher stress as well as the role of the Head of Department in alleviating teacher stress.

A literature study in the form of sources such as newspapers, books, journal articles and dissertations were used with this study to determine what has already been researched on the role of the Head of Department in alleviating work-related teacher stress in schools. The literature study also helped to analyse and explain logically and coherently the factors that lead to the negative work-related stress experienced by primary school teachers (Vithal & Jansen 1997:17).

1.6.2 Qualitative research paradigm

The qualitative approach was used in this investigation. The qualitative research approach is not aimed at generalising the results but ultimately to make statements about the relationships among categories and establishing certain characteristic patterns in data (Vithal & Jansen 1997:35).

Since the aim with this research is to understand rather than to prove, a qualitative approach is the most suitable for this type of study as it affords teachers the opportunity to define their own perceptions and problems experienced as regards stress in the workplace. This allowed the researcher to learn from informant's perspectives and their personal experience (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:372-373).

The qualitative paradigm is termed the constructivist or naturalistic approach, the interpretative approach or the postpositivist or postmodern perspective (Creswell 1994:4). It is a naturalistic inquiry since it uses non-manipulative data collection strategies to discover the natural flow of events and processes and how participants themselves interpret their situation (Henning 2004:31). Qualitative design is naturalistic to the extent that the research takes place in real-world settings such as with this research, primary schools in the Temba Circuit. The researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest. Instead the phenomenon of interest unfolds naturally in that it has no predetermined course established by and for the researcher such as would occur in a laboratory or other controlled setting (Patton 2001:39).

A qualitative study presents its findings largely in language and is about the meaning constructed from language that presents the data. Qualitative studies usually aim for depth rather than quantity of understanding (Henning 2004:31).

1.6.2.1 Participants and sampling

The population subjects of this study comprise of fifty-four primary schools in the Temba Circuit. Based on convenience, participants were selected from three primary schools in the Temba Circuit.

From each one of the selected three schools, five teachers were selected. Those teachers were likely to be knowledgeable due to always being absent from school because of illnesses that are directly related to excessive work-related stress. Three focus group interviews were conducted, one focus group per selected primary schools consisting of

five teachers each (Patton 2001:385). These fifteen teachers were all teaching in the intermediate phase. The intermediate phase refers to Grade four to Grade six.

Three Heads of Department from the intermediate phase were purposefully selected, one from each of the selected primary schools. This selection is broadened to three clusters instead of three schools for the sake of purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling was used to select these Heads of Department since each one of them has valuable experience in dealing with incidences of teacher stress in their managerial roles. The researcher decided to identify only three Heads of Department as participants because purposeful sampling is not designed to achieve population validity (Borg & Gall 1996:217). With purposeful sampling, the aim is to achieve an in-depth understanding of selected individuals. The aim is not to select a sample that will represent accurately a defined population (Borg & Gall 1996:218).

1.6.2.2 Research methods

The qualitative approach requires the use of effective methods of data collection that is valid and reliable such as interviews (Patton 2001:39). This research used semi-structured focus group and individual interviews as methods.

(1) Individual interviews

Interviews consist of oral questions by the interviewer and oral responses by the research participants. Interview participants typically speak in their own words and their responses are recorded by the interviewer, either verbatim on audiotape or videotape, through handwritten or computer-generated notes or in short-term memory for later note taking (Borg & Gall 1996:289).

Semi-structured individual interviews with a schedule were used in this study because qualitative research aims to uncover the unexpected or unanticipated (Creswell 1994:145). This type of interview ensures that the area that is focused on is the area of interest, for example, the role of the Head of Department in alleviating work-related teacher stress in primary schools in the Temba Circuit. In this focused area of interest, the

interviewer follows his/her nose in formulating and ordering questions (Krathwohl 1998:287).

Semi-structured interviews ensure that the rigid sequence of questions is avoided and the interviews are conducted in a form of an informal conversation, which is more flexible and open-ended. Semi-structured interviews with a schedule enable the researcher to reframe questions where the interviewees are not clear as well as obtaining a greater depth of information (Krathwohl 1998:287). Interviews with Heads of Department focused mainly on how to alleviate work-related teacher stress in primary schools in the Temba Circuit.

(2) Focus group interviews

The focus group interview was used in this research because it is a data gathering technique which is cost effective and can quickly gather information about the kind of negative stress experienced by primary school teachers in the Temba Circuit (Krathwohl 1998:295).

A focus group interview refers to an interview with a small group of people on a specific topic. Groups are typically six to ten people with similar backgrounds who participate in the interview for one to two hours (Patton 2001:385). In this study, three focus group interviews were conducted with fifteen purposefully selected intermediate phase teachers. The fifteen teachers were selected on the basis of their frequent absence from school due to illnesses that are directly related to excessive work-related stress.

Focus group interviews have several advantages over individual interviews for collecting data. Firstly, interactions among participants enhance data quality and participants tend to provide checks and balances on each other, which weeds out false or extreme views unlike a series of one-on-one interviews (Patton 2001:386). Secondly, Patton (2001:386) points out that in one hour, you can gather information from eight people instead of only one, significantly increasing sample size. Lastly, the extent to which there is a relatively consistent, shared view or great diversity of views can be quickly assessed unlike in a

series of one-on-one interviews. The researcher used focus group interviews in this study because it's less expensive and can quickly gather information from the purposefully selected fifteen intermediate phase teachers (Krathwohl 1998:295).

1.6.2.3 Data analysis

The data from semi-structured focus group and individual interviews responses were analysed for the purpose of identifying emerging topics and recurring patterns (Krathwohl 1998:361). These emerging topics and recurring patterns were related to the teacher participants' perceptions of their work-related stressors and the input to be provided by the Head of Department as a stress alleviator. Transcripts of recordings of interviews were carefully scrutinised and analysed over a period of time in order to gain familiarity for categorising purposes. Content analysis was used to analyse research data and it entailed identifying, coding and categorising the primary patterns in the recorded data (Henning 2004:104). The coding process of dividing data into parts by means of a classification system revealed that the recurring patterns are the causes of work-related teacher stress. This enabled the researcher to focus his interviews on the specific alleviation of such stressors (Krathwohl 1998:312).

1.7 DEMARCATION OF STUDY

The research was undertaken in the study field of Educational Management. Although the study was conducted in the Temba Circuit in the North West Province, the findings or elements thereof are likely to be applicable to other circuits of education in the province and in the country because it is imperative that stress in all schools be managed in an effective manner so as to pursue excellence in the classroom. However, the findings of qualitative research are aimed at an extension of understanding the phenomenon observed and researched rather than generalising findings (Vithal & Jansen 1997:35). The major limitation of this study is to be found in the fact that it focused on a specific educational phase within a specific geographical area.

1.8 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

The key concepts of the research project are: teacher, primary school, stress, stressors and Temba Circuit.

These concepts can be defined as follows:

1.8.1 Stress

Although a legion of meaning is attached to the concept stress, it basically relates to the individual's negative or positive response to a situation – whether the situation is of the past, the present or anticipated in the future. Response may take various forms viz. distress (i.e. overstress) and hypostress (i.e. understress). It is the individual's unique perception of the situation which determines the degree of experienced negative or positive stress (Joseph 2000:14-15).

It is this negative side of stress i.e. distress, that the study will pay attention to. Although it is called distress, the word stress will be used in this study because of its common use and understanding.

1.8.2 Stressor

Linked to the concept stress, a stressor is an experience or situation within or outside the individual, which elicits a stress response (Dunham & Varma 1996:15). It is the individual's unique perception, which determines whether the stressor is viewed as negative or positive.

1.8.3 Teachers

The concept teacher relates to a learning mediator who encourages and stimulates the construction and production of knowledge. Teacher also relates to a person who

interprets and design learning programmes and materials. A teacher is regarded as a researcher and lifelong learner and as someone who is an assessor and learning area or phase specialist (DoE 2000). From this definition it is clear that the teacher fulfils a multitude of roles so as to ensure that the education of the learner is promoted in a proper manner.

1.8.4 Head of Department

The term Head of Department as used in this dissertation refers to those members of a school staff who hold promotion posts within the Education Department. Their tasks are to engage in class teaching, be responsible for the effective functioning of the department and organise co-curricular and extra-curricular activities so as to ensure that the education of the learner is promoted in a proper manner. What is evident is that a Head of Department is an educational manager responsible for controlling and monitoring both the learners' and teachers' work as well as giving the necessary support to teachers to ensure that effective teaching and learning takes place in the classrooms.

1.8.5 Primary School

According to the present school structure, formal learning institutions are classified as follows (DoE 2000):

- Pre-school : catering for children from 3 years to 5 years.
- Primary schools : catering for learners from Grade R to Grade 7, ages 6 – 13 years.
- Secondary school : catering for learners from Grade 8 to Grade 12, ages 14 – 18 years.

This study focused on teachers working with primary school learners, that is learners in grade R to grade 7. However, within this demarcation a more refined focus was on the intermediate phase, which represents a focus on teachers who teach learners in grade 4 to grade 6 (cf par. 1.6.2).

1.8.6 Temba Circuit

A circuit is a cluster of schools in the same area, which share educational leaders. It can also be defined as the head office for managing the affairs of the schools. The name Temba refers to a semi-urban township, which is situated north of Pretoria near Hammanskraal in the North West Province. Temba Circuit is named after this semi-urban township. Temba Circuit falls under Bojanala East Region.

1.9 PROGRAMME OF STUDY

Chapter 1

Chapter one comprises of a general orientation of the research. This includes an introduction to the research and a reflection on the background to and motivation for the study. The statement of the problem, aims and objectives with the research, the study demarcation and the research design are also addressed in chapter one.

Chapter 2.

In chapter two the relevant literature with regard to teacher stress and alleviation mechanisms are reviewed. This is done to provide a theoretical background and framework to the problem under investigation.

Chapter 3.

This chapter deals with the research design which includes the data collection techniques, the sample of the study and the empirical research procedure that is followed to collect relevant data.

Chapter 4.

Data collected are reported on in Chapter 4. This includes a focus on the research findings by means of a scientific analysis, interpretation and evaluation of the research results.

Chapter 5.

In terms of the research findings, conclusions are drawn, guidelines developed and recommendations made in chapter five.

1.10 CONCLUSION

This research is aimed at investigating the nature of the role of the Head of Department in alleviating work-related teacher stress in Primary Schools. The area of research is geographically demarcated as Temba Circuit, which is in the North West province.

The introduction highlighted that many in the teaching profession are working under considerable stress. Locally this is perceived to be mainly as a result of the pressures caused by the rapid rate of changes with the introduction of Curriculum 2005 and Revised National Curriculum Statements (RNCS), the redeployment threats and the demand for accountability to parents and the broader community. A key element essential to the successful and effective alleviation of work-related teacher stress in primary schools is the role of the Head of Department in managing work-related stress and supporting teachers effectively to cope with stress reaction.

Chapter two will focus on the relevant literature and past findings with regard to work-related stress and management's alleviation thereof. This will be done with a specific focus on the teaching environment.

CHAPTER TWO

A LITERATURE SURVEY ON TEACHER STRESS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Within recent years the teaching profession worldwide has been subjected to a great deal of public scrutiny and in certain quarters, a great deal of unfavourable press coverage (Maphalala 2002:10). Teachers have been scapegoated as being primarily responsible for the fall in educational standards and the lack of achievement and motivation of learners. (Maphalala 2002:10). This ‘teacher bashing’ resulted in some teachers being unwilling to admit their real profession at social gatherings for fear of having to defend themselves. Teaching has indeed become characterized as being among the league of traditionally viewed high-stress occupations.

The South African education system has undergone a process of enormous and rapid change since 1994. These changes entail, amongst others, the introduction of Curriculum 2005 (C2005) in 1998 which has since been replaced by the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) in 2003, the redeployment of teachers and the formation of School Governing Bodies (Berkhout 1998:194-200). These rapid and enormous changes pose enormous stress on teachers.

In this chapter, the focus will be on the magnitude of work-related teacher stress and the role of the Head of Department as middle manager in an alleviation of the situation. Aspects that will be discussed relate to the different kinds of stress, the versatility of stress impact on people, main sources of teacher stress and the managerial role of the Head of Department in such a stress-related work environment. A short summary of the chapter will be given at the end.

2.2 THE CONCEPTS STRESS AND STRESSORS

2.2.1 Stress

The word 'stress' is used loosely, with different people and different groups of people giving it a different emphasis – taking it to mean different things. One suggestion is that it comes from Old French, 'distresse' meaning to be placed under narrowness or oppression (Joseph 2000: 14-15). Over the centuries, this word changed to stress and distress.

The meaning of the word stress depends on what context it is used in. At one end of the scale, stress represents those challenges, which excite and keep people on their toes. At the other end of the scale, stress represents those conditions under which individuals have demands placed upon them that they cannot physically or psychologically meet and which ultimately may lead to a breakdown (Joseph 2000: 14-15); par. 1.8.1). A definition for stress could be that it is an excess of demands made upon the adaptive capacities of the mind and body (Joseph 2000: 14-15).

Stress can also be viewed as the feeling of not being able to cope with problems or potential problems in life. Jude (1998:5) emphasises the fact that stress is not always negative and therefore defines it as "any event that places a demand on your system, that causes mental and/or physical changes." With regard to teacher stress, Kyriacou (1997:156) defines it as "the experience by a teacher of unpleasant emotions such as tension, frustration, anxiety, anger and depression, resulting from aspects of his/her work as a teacher."

2.2.2 Stressor

According to Travers and Cooper (1996:13) a 'stressor' is something in the environment that acts as a stimulus and is physical, psychological or behavioural in nature. Rogers and Graham (1999:10) define stressors as things, which collectively make up stressful situations. In other words, stressors are things which happen to a person, and which reinforce his/her feeling of being unable to cope.

Rogers and Graham (1999:10) maintain that everybody's life is different, and we all face stressors which are unique and personal. There are, however, certain common themes for structures of stress, which emerge from large studies of stressors. These themes are: abrupt change, feeling of being over-committed, feeling under-skilled and joyless striving.

Identifying stressors according to Rogers and Graham (1999:10) means having a close look at one's life to see which factors are contributing to one's stress. Rogers and Graham (1999:10) argue that any kind of change is a potential stress in one's life. The more rapid the change, and the more significant, the greater the resulting stress.

Dunham and Varma (1998:10) interpret the cause of the problem as a 'stressor' and the effect, which the stressor has on the individual as strain. The word 'strain' should then be treated as a general term referring to the entire experience

With regard to the teaching profession, Hayward (1991:16) interpret stressors as work related variables (demands) which tend to interfere with the teacher's work effort, deplete valuable time and energy and cause tension in teachers. Hayward (1991:16) states that stressors are viewed as events in the environment that require greater than usual adaptive responses from the body.

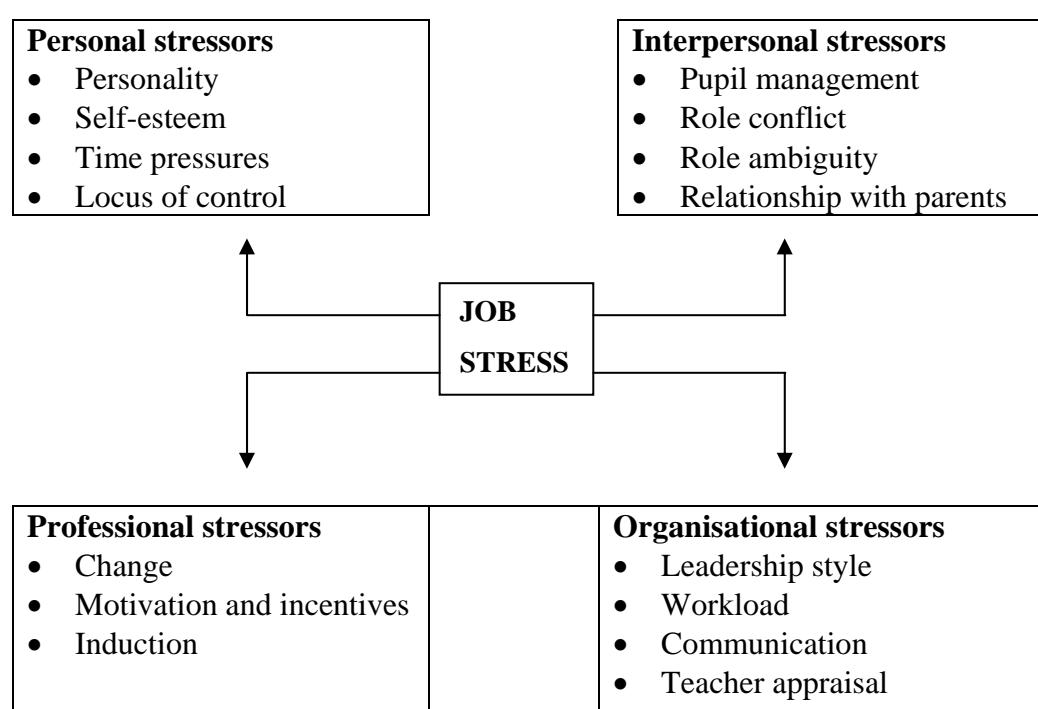
Van der Bank (2001:17) defines teacher stressors as environmental conditions within the teaching profession that have the potential to cause stress. A stressor is then interpreted as an experience or situation outside or within the teacher, which elicits a stress response – either positive or negative (Van der Bank 2001:175). Because stressors are the environmental conditions that have the potential to cause stress, the educational manager such as the Head of Department must be able to recognise the different stressors which induce work-related stress because they influence the work attitudes, behaviour and performance of teachers (Van der Bank 2001:176).

Figure 2.1 depicts four categories of stressors, viz.

- Personal stressors
- Interpersonal stressors
- Professional stressors
- Organisational stressors

What is evident from figure 2.1 is that personal stressors, interpersonal stressors, professional stressors and organisational stressors can be the causes of job stress or can influence it, depending on how the individual teacher or the educational manager such as the Head of Department experience and will react to stress and stressors. However, it is also evident from figure 2.1 that the four categories of stressors are interrelated and they have an impact on each other (Van der Bank 2001:176).

Figure. 2.1 **The four categories of stressors**



Source: Van der Bank (2001:176).

According to Hayward (1991:16-17), stressors are not confined solely to the environment through factors such as inadequate resources and poor working

conditions. Stressors can also emanate from other sources. For example, there are professional stressors such as curriculum change, personal stressors such as time pressures and interpersonal stressors such as role conflict. Secondly, according to Hayward (1991:16-17), not all stressors are negative. An illustration would be the time pressures placed on teachers for a school concert. The rapidly looming opening night deadline could serve as a positive stressor in getting greater commitment from all involved in the theatrical production. Finally, the individual can perceive stressors, like stress, in negative or positive terms. What one teacher views as a negative experience or situation to be endured, a colleague could view as an exciting challenge, depending, amongst others, on personality type (par. 2.4).

To summarise, it is clear that different authors define the term 'stressors' differently. Rogers and Graham (1999:10) define stressors as things, which collectively make up stressful situations. Travers and Cooper (1996:13) define a stressor as something in the environment that acts as a stimulus, and which is physical, psychological or behavioral in nature. Dunham and Varma (1996:15) define stressors as sources of stress. It is clear that the concept stressors, although being treated from different perspectives by different authors, connects the meaning of being sources of stress that affect teachers' work attitudes, behaviour and performance.

It is a given fact that stress is not necessarily always negative and the Head of Department should be aware of this dual character of stress.

2.3 POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE STRESS

According to Vandenberghe and Huberman (1999:59) work-related stress in general and stress in teachers' work in particular, is viewed as one of the most serious causes for bad performance. Although the literature acknowledges the possibility that stress may have positive outcomes, its orientation is primarily towards understanding the negative consequences of stress for workers and the impact thereof on their job performance. Little attention has been paid to the potentially productive consequences of work-related stress because of the overwhelming negative effects

thereof which demand a continuous investigation into a sustained alleviation of stress consequences.

In this regard stress is portrayed as something to be responded to, to be managed, to be coped with, or to be avoided. It is not portrayed as something actively sought or proactively challenged, and certainly not as something created purposefully (Vandenberghe and Huberman 1999:59).

Jude (1998:5-7) and Musikanth (1996:2) identify these two different kinds of stress as distress and eustress. Both subsets are characterised by the same psychological reaction, but distress tends to lead to physical illness, whereas eustress produces a state of well-being and satisfaction. Gmelch and Chan (1994:4) confirm that whether stress is positive or negative, the initial physiological reaction is much the same.

Eustress as a condition of well-being and satisfaction relate to situations and conditions such as promotion, friendship, holidays, projects, marriage, children, challenge, progress, achievement, relationship, sport and hobbies (Jude 1998:7). These events tend to give all people eustress. Some of these situations might be distressful rather than eustressful depending on attitude, self-esteem and specific life experiences, which cause people to view events and situations differently.

In general however most people will feel good and experience positive eustress associated with these events. These feelings of eustress help people to perform better, and at the same time to feel better about themselves (Jude 1998:7). This condition of well-being and satisfaction created by eustress is confirmed by Gmelch and Chan (1994:4) who point to the fact that the word eustress comes from the Greek prefix 'eu' meaning good, as in euphoria.

Distress is caused by conditions of trauma, pressure, illness, fear, hate, temper, anxiety, frustration, worry, pain, tension, road rage, hostility and death of close family and friends (Jude 1998:5-7). Such conditions of distress influence people to feel unpleasant and to suffer from negative effects of stress (Jude 1998:5-7).

In essence, however, stress represents any event that places a demand on the body, mentally or physically, therefore the similarity in all stress, whether positive or negative.

With our tendency to emphasise the negative effects of stress, we have forgotten to look at the duality of stress. The Chinese, for example, use two characters when spelling stress. The first signals danger and the other opportunity (Gmelch & Chan 1994:4). It is evident that, like the Chinese representation, we also have words in our language to express both feelings: distress for bad or unpleasant events, and eustress for good or pleasant.

The following table highlights the differences in eustress and distress by comparing the physical and emotional characteristics of each.

Table 2.1 The physical and emotional characteristics of eustress and distress

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS	
EUSTRESS (Positive stress)	DISTRESS (Negative stress)
Physical fitness Increased energy Improved concentration Efficient memory Healthy eating patterns Good sleeping habits	Unfit Fatigue Poor concentration Poor memory Overeating/Loss of appetite Insomnia

EMOTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS	
EUSTRESS (Positive stress)	DISTRESS (Negative stress)
Being decisive Being productive Having a sense of humour Being in control Being positive Not worrying Being active Being motivated	Being indecisive Being under-productive Lacking a sense of humour Being out of control Being negative Worrying Being passive Being unmotivated

Source: Musikanth S (1996:3)

Table 2.1 indicates that positively experienced physical and emotional conditions commonly experienced by all human-beings can be directly related to eustress. As opposed to this, table 2.1 also shows that commonly experienced negative conditions can be directly related to distress.

Therefore, for the purpose of well-being and productivity, the individual and organisation should aim at reducing physical and emotional conditions of stress and focus on factors and activities resulting in eustress. Such situations, however, tends to be related to specific personality types.

2.4 STRESS AND PERSONALITY TYPE

The same source of stress provokes different reactions in persons. Travers and Cooper (1996:65) state that the type 'A' behavioural style is one of the most widely investigated 'person-based' characteristics that may influence the stress relationship.

The type 'A' behaviour pattern involves perfectionism, hostility, aggressiveness, competitiveness and poses a strong sense of time urgency. The school setting always seems to act as a trigger to bring out type 'A' behaviours (Travers and Cooper 1996:65).

According to Gmelch and Chan (1994:6) type 'B' personalities are exactly the opposite of type 'A' since they are rarely hurried, able to relax without feeling guilty and work without agitation.

Dunham and Varma (1998), Travers and Cooper (1996) and Gmelch and Chan (1994) agree that unlike type 'A' personality types, type 'B' personality types adopt a more realistic view of work and life and are not inclined to take on more than they can cope with. Type 'B' personality types do not always like to work to deadlines and are better at delegating to those who work with them. However, the Head of Department must be aware of these two types of personalities with their behavioural patterns and perspectives since these two types of personalities may be a threat or a challenge to him/her. A Head of Department's own success rate with stress

alleviation depends on his/her ability to combine good qualities of both personality types.

2.5 STRESS AND THE WORKPLACE

2.5.1 The inevitable presence of stress

Today's world fashions a unique set of daily challenges for teachers that requires them to adapt to a broad range of situations (McGrath 1995:vii). Teachers face circumstances in an average work day that would have been unheard of a generation ago. Cultural and economic conditions present teachers with learners who arrive at school with complex problems and needs. Vandenberghe and Huberman (1998:37) emphasize that teachers face new challenges and opportunities from increasingly diverse and needy learner populations. Demands on teachers to develop new knowledge and skills and perform new tasks are increasing rapidly. So too are expectations for school and teacher performance and accountability.

In modern society teachers have a problem with status (Cockburn 1996:49). Due to the fact that everybody has at one time been at school, most people believe that they themselves have some or even most of a teacher's expertise and capability. Teachers lack the mystique that normally enhances professional status and power, and are subject to public attempts to control and constrain them. Main constraints are legislation, public opinion and especially the media (Cockburn 1996:49).

Gmelch and Chan (1994:4) stated that nature through the forces of wind, cold and heat has brought about tension, depression, headaches and the illnesses associated with these conditions. Even more catastrophic than the stresses of nature, however are those created in the work environment. Considering the magnitude of stress caused by the tsunami of 26 December 2004 (Time Magazine 2005:18-23) work-related stress should then indeed be a major factor to take account of.

With regard to the school situation, stresses are found in all aspects of a teacher's work environment. Stressors are found in the physical school environment, the nature

of teachers' work, the learners they work with and the colleagues they liaise with. Locked in as stress prisoners, the only salvation for teachers is to begin to get control over their lives and learn the strategies of coping (Gmelch & Chan 1994:4-6).

2.5.2 Effects of work-related teacher stress

Stress is neither good nor bad, but it depends on the amount of stress and how it is experienced (par. 2.3, par. 2.4). The effects of work-related stress can be manifested physiologically, psychologically and behaviourally. On the physiological level, all types of stress produce a chemical reaction in the body, e.g. changes in metabolism, increased heart rate and increased blood pressure. If stress persists, serious health conditions can result (Van der Bank 2001:186).

The psychological problems resulting from stress relate to anxiety, tension, depression, boredom and mental fatigue, which impair the teacher's ability to concentrate and make decisions (Van der Bank 2001:186). Dunham and Varma (1998:37) point to the fact that frustration results in physiological conditions such as headaches, sleep disturbances, stomach upsets, hypertension and body rashes and, in severe cases, depressive illness. Anxiety is linked to a loss of confidence, feelings of inadequacy, confusion in thinking and sometimes panic (Dunham & Varma 1998:37).

The physiological and psychological effects of stress indicate how teachers feel whereas the behavioural effects indicate what teachers actually do under stress. Any sudden change in behaviour, e.g. increased smoking or use of alcohol, impulsive behaviour, speech difficulties and decreased performance suggest that a teacher is experiencing a high-level of stress (Van der Bank 2001:186).

Considering these negative effects of stress against the background of the fact that one of the major adverse influences of job satisfaction, work performance and productivity, and absenteeism and turnover is the incidence of stress at work (Dunham & Varma 1998:37), it is evident that stress needs to be managed to acceptable levels. It is important that educational managers such as the Heads of

Department operate without dysfunctional effects resulting from excessive stress. Educational managers and specifically Heads of Department need to manage the school as a whole in such a way that stress levels are reduced for all staff.

2.6 SOURCES OF STRESS AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

Dunham and Varma (1998:15) group sources of stress at work into two broad categories: physical and psycho-social. Physical sources include biological, chemical and mechanical features of the workplace whereas psycho-social sources of stress represent 'aspects of job content, work organization and management, and of social and organizational conditions which have the potential for psychological and physical harm'. In general, however, work is experienced as stressful when workers realize that they are having difficulty coping with the demands of work when it is indeed important to them that they should be able to cope. The following are potential sources of stress among primary school teachers:

2.6.1 Role conflict

Role conflict is defined as two or more sets of inconsistent conflicting role expectations experienced simultaneously by an individual and represents an interpersonal stressor (par. 2.2.2). Many female teachers, for example, are simultaneously professional people, mothers to their children and wives to their husbands thus having pressure to comply with different and inconsistent demands. Another example is where teachers are heavily involved in extramural activities and there is a conflict between the roles of learning area or class teacher and soccer coach or art organiser which result in stress for the teacher (Vandenberghe & Huberman 1999:61).

2.6.2 Role ambiguity

Role ambiguity which is also categorised as an interpersonal stressor (par. 2.2.2) involves lack of clear, consistent information regarding rights, duties, tasks and responsibilities. It is generally associated with vague expectation for performance preference. It is also associated with uncertainty concerning what a person must do to

perform his or her role effectively. Role ambiguity may result from a lack of opportunity to experience task completion and closure and from an inability to see immediate or direct effects of one's work. Role ambiguity may also arise when experiences of success are inconsistent and seemingly random (Vandenberghe & Huberman 1999:61).

Often a teacher works in a situation where the job expectations are not clearly delineated to the individual. For example, an experienced teacher might be appointed to be a mentor to a new teacher. If specific guidelines are not given to both the mentor and the new teacher, misunderstandings and hurt can occur when neither side knows their specific roles, which can result in stress for both parties.

2.6.3 Workload

Workload as a source of stress amongst primary school teachers is categorised as an organisational stressor (par. 2.2.2). Generally, workload stress is associated with overload where teachers are being expected to take on more than is possible in terms of their role. For example, the teacher may be assigned a pastoral role in addition to one of Head of Department, meaning that none of the three roles are sufficiently fulfilled.

Too many demands made in too short a time results in a situation in which the teacher cannot cope which in turn lead to considerable stress. The work expectations made on school teachers are further thwarted by interruptions such as intercom announcements, unscheduled short notice staff meetings and unscheduled practices for school activities (Vandenberghe & Huberman 1999:61).

2.6.4 Relationships with colleagues

A fourth source of commonly experienced workplace stress as identified by Vandenberghe & Huberman (1999:64) relates to the interpersonal stressor of relations with colleagues. Fellow colleagues may not only have different roles but also different perceptions of what the job is all about. In addition, teachers are part of a multi-disciplinary teamwork with colleagues outside the school and with parents

who may also have different perceptions of what should be happening within the classroom.

Another problem that may face teachers in primary schools is that they may fear protesting about their problems, when they are overburdened, because they do not want to let fellow colleagues down. For example, although the only way to cope with stress might be absenteeism, teachers fear the resulting overload this may impose on fellow colleagues in the school (Travers & Cooper 1996:51).

2.6.5 Change

Another important source of stress commonly experienced in the workplace is change, which Van der Bank (2001) categorises as a professional stressor (par.2.2.2). Change is an inevitable part of life. As such, we are ourselves in a continuous process of change as our circumstances and the realities of our life constantly change (Van der Merwe 2003:37-38). However, it is important to recognize that within these cycle of change, where broader social issues affect our day-to-day lives, and where our day-to-day lives in turn shape broader social changes, we have a responsibility to engage consciously in changing towards certain chosen directions. This however generates a tremendous amount of stress.

Change causes a lot of stress for teachers that are involved in it. Although a natural phenomenon, change ceases to yield any rewards if it occurs too frequently or seems to be out of control. In the teaching profession there is continual change resulting in continually new demands on teachers. Changed teaching methodology, new learning areas and new learning programmes are demands on teachers, which cause considerable amounts of stress (DoE 2002:56-57). The pace with which change is undertaken also causes a significant degree of stress for teachers (Van der Bank 2001:182).

According to Vandenberghe and Huberman (1997:70-71), change can introduce new roles and performance expectations that conflict with other roles an individual is expected to perform. Change can also introduce new uncertainties and ambiguities

about organisational goals, the roles of individuals in the organisation, and the knowledge and skills that are required to perform new roles (Vandenberghe & Huberman 1997:70-71). Change can create feelings of incompetence. Change can also lead to quantitative and qualitative overload as individuals attempt to keep up with changing technologies and standards for performance. Change can evoke a sense of powerlessness. It can threaten individuals' discretion and ability to influence their work environments. Vandenberghe and Huberman (1999:70-71) emphasise that change may evoke stress by challenging the beliefs, values, attachments and assumptions that create personal order and meaning in an organization. It may disrupt individual goals. Change involves cognitive and emotional challenge, loss and redefinition. It means let go of the old and learning the new.

With regard to the teaching profession, the need to cope with change is a major source of stress. Dunham and Varma (1998:8) confirm that in recent years, frequent changes have occurred in the content and methods of teaching required in many countries. These changes were coupled with the introduction of greater accountability and public assessment of performance. Often these changes have occurred at short notice, and have not been linked with adequate programmes of in-service training. This has meant that teachers have often been expected to acquire new skills and become fully acquainted with new requirements at an unrealistic speed. Moreover, many changes have been introduced in a manner that criticized previous practice and made teachers feel they were under attack (Dunham & Varma 1998:8).

With regard to the South African education situation change was and still is the buzzword. South Africa's democratic government inherited a divided and unequal system of education. Under apartheid, South Africa had nineteen different educational departments separated by race, geography and ideology. This education system prepared children in different ways for the positions they were expected to occupy in social, economic and political life under apartheid. In each department, the curriculum played a powerful role in reinforcing inequality. What, how and whether children were taught differed according to the roles they were expected to play in the wider society (RNCS 2002:4).

Educational change in post-apartheid South Africa started immediately after the election in 1994 when the National Education and Training Forum began a process of syllabus revision and subject rationalisation. The purpose of this process was mainly to lay the foundations for a single national core syllabus to redress the past inequalities (RNCS 2002:4). Added to these curriculum changes were the policies on redeployment of teachers, school-based governance and multi-cultural school environments (par.1.3.3).

2.6.6 New leadership roles

With regard to the teaching profession in South Africa, role conflict occurs when the teacher is in a situation where there are pressures to comply with different and inconsistent demands. As was explained in paragraph 2.6.1, role conflict occurs where teachers are heavily involved in extramural activities, which very often result in a conflict between the roles of learning or class teacher and soccer coach or art club organiser (Vandenberghe & Huberman 1999:61). This results in considerable stress for the teacher.

Vandenberghe and Huberman (1999:74) concur with Van der Bank (2001:182) in identifying role conflict as a significant issue of new leadership roles responsible for causing interpersonal stress for teachers. Role conflict may result from differences between teacher-leaders' expectations for their new roles and the actual leadership activities they perform. In this regard one of the greatest sources of role conflict in teacher leadership concerns tensions teachers feel between their roles as classroom facilitators who are working with learners and their roles as teacher-leaders who are working with other teachers and administrators (Vandenberghe & Huberman 1999:14).

According to Van der Bank (2001:182) role ambiguity refers to the uncertainty an individual teacher experiences about the expectations of others. However, without a clear job description and information about the rights, duties and responsibilities of the teacher, uncertainty and incorrect behaviour might result. To avoid this type of

behaviour, the educational manager such as the Head of Department, should demarcate the specific responsibilities and role expectations of each teacher clearly to lessen undue stress within the teacher as well as conflict among different teachers.

With regard to the different relationships a teacher is involved in, against the background of achieving quality education, the effective school aims at a harmonious relationship with parents. Unfortunately, teachers and parents often disagree and stress can result from contact with parents who are imposing, demanding and inconsiderate. These parents expect the teacher to achieve the impossible as far as the individual child is concerned. To add salt on sore, conscientious teachers are also stressed by parents who do not care or give sufficient support to their children (Van der Bank 2001:182).

2.6.7 New teacher roles

The policy on norms and standards for teachers identify seven roles that teachers are expected to fulfil by virtue of their profession (DoE 2000:56-57). These roles and responsibilities outlined for teachers are in keeping with the changes of the globalised transforming education system. However, these roles may help in creating work related teacher stress in schools. According to the reports on norms and standards for teachers (DoE 2000) the roles and responsibilities that teachers must be prepared to play are as follows:

- ***Learning mediator***

The teacher is expected to mediate learning in a manner which is sensitive to the diverse needs of learners, including those with barriers to learning. Teachers are expected to construct learning environments that are appropriately conceptualised and inspirational. Teachers are expected to communicate effectively showing recognition of and respect for the differences of others. In addition the teacher should demonstrate sound knowledge of subject content and various principles, strategies and resources appropriate to teaching in a South African context (DoE 2002:56).

Considering these multidimensional task related to the learning mediator role of the teacher, against the background of the fact that teachers are not getting enough training and support from the Department of Education (Potenza 2003:9) it is evident that the learning mediator role of the teacher manifests as a significant work-related stressor.

- ***Interpreter and designer of learning programmes and materials***

The teacher should understand and interpret provided learning programmes, design original learning programmes, identify the requirements for a specific context of learning and select and prepare suitable textual and visual resources for learning. The teacher should also select, sequence and pace the learning in a manner sensitive to the differing needs of the subject/learning area and learners (DoE 2002:56-57).

However, these may create a lot of stress for the teacher due to a lack of clarity on how he/she should interpret and design learning programmes in policy documents as well as the complex language and confusing terminology used in Curriculum 2005(C2005) documents (Potenza 2003:7). Added to this multidimensional task, class size and sensitivity to the deferring needs of learners in the same class may also manifest as a significant work-related stressor to the teacher.

- ***Leader, administrator and manager***

The teacher should make appropriate decisions, manage learning in the classroom, carry out classroom administrative duties efficiently and participate in school decision making structures. These competences should be performed in ways which are democratic, which support learners and colleagues, and which demonstrate responsiveness to changing circumstances and needs (DoE 2002:56-57). Related to all these demands on the teacher to be a leader, administrator and manager is the evidence of teacher stress due to overload as well as lack of training and support from the Department of Education to perform all these duties efficiently and properly (Potenza 2003:9).

- *Scholars, researcher and lifelong learner*

The teacher is expected to achieve ongoing personal, academic, occupational and professional growth through pursuing reflective study and research in their learning area, in broader professional and educational matters, and in other related fields (DoE 2002:56-57). However, these may put a lot of pressure on the teacher to master and perform all these expected aspects successfully within limited time constraints thus generating stress for the teacher (Potenza 2003:11).

- *Community, citizenship and pastoral role*

The teacher is expected to practice and promote a critical, committed and ethical attitude towards developing a sense of respect and responsibility towards others. Within the school, the teacher should uphold the constitution and promote democratic values and practices in school and society. The teacher should also demonstrate an ability to develop a supportive and empowering environment for the learner and respond to the educational and other needs of learners (DoE 2002:56-57). However, this role may create a tremendous amount of stress for the teacher due to the lack of adequate in-service training and support with regard to the teacher's community, citizenship and pastoral role from the Department of Education (Potenza 2003:9).

- *Assessor*

The teacher is expected to understand that assessment is an essential feature of the teaching and learning process and he/she is expected to know how to integrate it effectively into the teaching process. The teacher should have an understanding of the purposes, methods and effects of assessment and be able to provide helpful feedback to learners. The teacher should design and manage both formative and summative assessment in ways that are appropriate to the level and purpose of the learning and meet the requirements of accrediting bodies. The teacher should keep detailed and diagnostic records of assessment. The teacher should understand how to interpret and use assessment results to feed into processes for the improvement of

learning programmes (DoE 2002:56-57). However, due to lack of sufficient training on how to assess, what to assess and when to assess, against the background of large class sizes and time constraints the teacher is struggling to carry out this role. In conjunction, the unclarity as to how assessment policy is related to practice creates a further amount of stress for the teacher (Potenza 2003:8).

- ***Learning area/subject/discipline/phase specialist***

The teacher is expected to be well grounded in the knowledge, skills, values, principles, methods, and procedures relevant to the discipline, the subject, the learning area, the phase of study and the professional or occupational practice. The teacher should be well acquainted with different approaches to teaching and learning (and, where appropriate, research and management), and how these may be used in ways which are appropriate to the learners and the context. The teacher should have a well-developed understanding of the knowledge appropriate to the specialism (DoE 2002:56-57). However, due to the short period of teacher training that is allocated for the teaching profession, the novice teacher is not able to master the approaches to teaching and learning effectively. Due to everyday demands and time constraints to master approaches in practice it creates stress for the teacher (Potenza 2003:9).

It is clear that the demands of the seven new teacher roles, which the teacher must fulfil by virtue of his/her profession, may create work-related stressors in schools and a tremendous amount of extra stress for the teacher. This is mainly due to the multiple and sophisticated character of each teacher role and the failure of the Department of Education to provide sufficient in-service training on each of those complex roles (Potenza 2003:9).

Although the leadership style of the Head of Department may be a source of stress, it will be discussed separately due to its magnitude and complexity.

2.7 THE LEADERSHIP STYLE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT AND TEACHER STRESS

The style of the leader refers to the behaviour pattern that characterises a specific leader. There are a number of different types of leadership styles of which the democratic, the autocratic, the free reign and the bureaucratic leadership styles are the most commonly known ones. A reflection on the different leadership styles of the Head of Department is important to be described in this chapter.

- ***The democratic leadership style***

According to Van der Bank (2001), Van der Westhuizen (1996) and Prinsloo (2003) the democratic leadership involves the staff by means of mutual consultation in decision-making. Decisions are made by means of voluntary and spontaneous communication and the leader plays an active role in the process. This type of leadership provides the staff with an opportunity to make a contribution and offers opportunities for original and creative contributions by staff members, and in the process of attaining the goals of the school.

Prinsloo (2003:144-146) highlights the advantages and disadvantages of this leadership style. The advantages of this type of style relate to: Staff, parents and learners who are motivated to realize the school's aims, staff experience job satisfaction, there is a two-way movement of information and ideas, human relations are good and an atmosphere prevails in which staff and learners can develop to their full potential. This results in a low turnover of staff.

The researcher's view regarding this type of leadership style, however, is that it may also cause teachers stress because teachers will be expected to work overtime after a hard days work in order to help the Head of Department in decision-making. This will leave the teachers with limited time for themselves due to overconsultation with all the stakeholders. The other disadvantage associated with an educational leader such as the Head of Department with a democratic leadership style that may also cause teacher stress is when a situation arises in which snap decisions have to be

made. A great deal of time will be lost because too many people have to be consulted. For example, setting dates for meetings on the term programme and year programme resulting in long discussions because there will always be members of staff who do not agree with a particular date (Prinsloo 2003:45). Considering overload where teachers are being expected to take on more in terms of their role (par.2.6.3) the democratic leadership style may increase stress for both the teachers and the Head of Department.

- ***The autocratic leadership style***

Prinsloo (2003) agree with Van der Westhuizen (1996) that an autocratic leader is leader-centred and dictatorial to a variable degree. The Heads of Department with an autocratic leadership style always want their own way in determining policies that are rigidly applied and has a strong disciplinary character. According to Naicker (2003:2), an autocratic Head of Department will make all the decisions and take full responsibility to ensure that set goals are attained. The autocratic Head of Department creates non-existent needs among his/her staff that may find the pursuit of such needs stressful. Despite dissatisfaction among staff members the autocratic Head of Department will persist with his/her plans. This type of a leader is inclined to dominate and has difficulty in working with others (Van der Westhuizen 1996:190).

Autocratic leaders make demands on the grounds of their position as leaders and may use fear, threats and force as a power base. A tense atmosphere with little job satisfaction prevails and staff suffers from stress. There is dissatisfaction with the school management. Human relations in the school are poor. There is little or no staff development and staff turnover is unusually high (Prinsloo 2003:144).

However, the only advantage of an autocratic leadership style is that performance is usually good (Prinsloo 2003:114). This is attributed to the fact that the autocratic leader's attempts at leadership in a school is successful, but he/she is ineffective in motivating the staff and creating harmonious human relations and job satisfaction

among them, thus, despite the fact performance in the school is high, the staff is not happy (Prinsloo 2003:114). The researcher's view is that although this leadership style may be good for performance, it may not be good for the teachers' moral since fear may cause tremendous stress for them.

- **The free reign leadership (Laissez-faire or individual-centred leadership)**

The free reign leadership is a type of leadership that does not make his/her presence felt. The members of staff have the freedom to make individual or group decisions. The leader guides staff members by appealing to personal integrity (Van der Westhuizen 1996:190). A situation is created by this type of leadership in which the individual is totally trusted to make decisions and where the Head of Department is minimally involved in the background (Van der Westhuizen 1996:190).

According to Van der Bank (2001:87-88) a leader using this style almost abdicates his/her leadership role, allowing subordinates more or less to lead themselves. However, this leadership style may create a tremendous amount of stress for both the experienced and inexperienced teachers due to the minimal involvement of the Head of Department in providing and co-ordinating guidance on schemes of work, lesson planning and syllabuses to both of them (Van der Bank 2001:87-88).

- **The bureaucratic leadership style**

According to Van der Westhuizen (1996:190) the Head of Department who is a bureaucratic leader will use policies, laws and rules to manage the affairs of the school. Such a leadership style may be effective in some situations, such as informing teachers of the various education policies. Heads of Department who adhere strictly to the law, rules and regulations as leadership's strategies will cause stress among teachers. A bureaucratic leadership style among Heads of Department is described by Van der Westhuizen (1996:190) as impersonal and a quick route to solving problems. This type of leadership is rigid and the Head of Department's authority is centralised.

The researcher's view is that it is very important for all primary school Heads of Department to understand and apply the leadership style that is appropriate to the specific situation and the specific needs of the teachers. However, the ability of Heads of Department to motivate teachers in primary schools is a challenging task. A successful Head of Department should possess the ability to communicate effectively, to resolve conflicts, to be accountable, to provide appropriate leadership and to manage change effectively. Personality traits of the Head of Department, professional conduct and stress management programmes do not only influence job satisfaction and the well-being of teachers (Naicker 2003:22), but also have a leading influence on productivity and school well-being.

2.8 THE ROLE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT AND STRESS ALLEVIATION

The job description of the Head of Department, relates to tasks such as the engagement in class teaching, to be responsible for the effective functioning of the department and to organise relevant/related extra-curricular activities so as to ensure that the learning areas or phase and the education of the learners is promoted in a proper manner (PAM 1999:66). These duties and responsibilities of the Head of Department are individual and varied, depending on the approaches and needs of the particular school, and include, but are not limited to teaching, extra and co-curricular activities, personnel, general administrative duties and communication (PAM 1999:66).

With regard to teaching, the Head of Department needs to engage in class teaching as per workload of the relevant post level and the needs of the school. The Head of Department needs to be a class teacher if required and he/she needs to assess and to record the attainment of learners taught (PAM 1999:66).

Regarding extra and co-curricular activities, the Head of Department needs to be in charge of a subject, learning area or phase as well as to develop the policy for that department. The Head of Department needs to co-ordinate evaluation/assessment and

homework of all the subjects in that department. He/she needs to provide and co-ordinate guidance on the latest ideas on approaches to the subject, method, techniques and evaluation in his/her field. The Head of Department should also provide and co-ordinate guidance on syllabuses, schemes of work and homework to inexperienced staff members as well as controlling the educators' and learners' work in the department and sharing the responsibilities of organising and conducting the extra and co-curricular activities (PAM 1999:66).

With regard to personnel, the Head of Department needs to advise the principal regarding the division of work among the staff in that department as well as to participate in agreed school/teacher appraisal processes in order to regularly review their professional practice with the aim of improving teaching, learning and management (PAM 1999:66).

Regarding general/administrative duties, the Head of Department needs to assist with the planning and management of administrative tasks such as school stock, textbooks, equipment for the department, the budget for the department and the subject work schemes. The Head of Department should also assist with or even perform one or more non-teaching administrative duties, such as being secretary to general staff meetings, be responsible for the timetabling, oversee the collection of school fees and other monies and act as accountable person when accidents occurs. He/she should act on behalf of the principal during his/her absence from school if the school does not qualify for a Deputy principal (PAM 1999:66).

With regard to communication, the Head of Department needs to co-operate with colleagues in order to maintain a good teaching standard and progress among the learners. The Head of Department should foster administrative efficiency within the department and the school. He/she should collaborate with educators or with other schools in developing the department and conducting extra-curricular activities. He/she should meet with parents and discuss the progress and conduct of their children. He/she should participate in departmental and professional committees, seminars and courses in order to contribute to and/or update one's professional views/standards. He/she should maintain contact with sporting, social, cultural and

community organisations. The Head of Department should also have contacts with the public on behalf of the principal (PAM 1999:67).

The Head of Department as internal change agent is expected to initiate, facilitate and implement change by determining the outcomes of the proposed change and by also determining the procedures and methods for implementing change. It is clear that this should be possible if the Head of Department's direct presence in the teaching and learning situation is considered in order to play a constructive role in alleviating work-related teacher stress in primary schools (Van der Merwe 2003:44).

It is evident that the Head of Department in the execution of all his/her multiple duties could serve as an important catalyst in functioning as a 'stress filter' between the teacher and the perceived 'threat' in the environment. The Head of Department may therefore moderate the levels of stress experienced by teachers (Naicker 2003:14). A working definition for this 'stress filter' task of the Head of Department would refer to the Head of Department as the person who absorbs, modifies or even suppresses stressors not conducive to the well-being of the teacher.

It is clear that the post of Head of Department now has an even more amplified role in which extra duties and responsibilities have to be fitted into a full teaching schedule (Dunham 1992:83). However, the role of being a stress filter for his/her subordinates should at all times have preference in absorbing, modifying or suppressing stressors not conducive to the well-being of the teachers (Naicker 2003:14).

It is important to look at the stress encountered by the Head of Department due to the multidimensional roles he/she plays, some of which could be in conflict with his/her personal beliefs or attitudes. The Head of Department should also be able to manage his/her own stress successfully in order to be able to alleviate the stress experienced by teachers in schools. Added to all of this is the fact that the Head of Department may encounter stress irrespective of his/her position of authority just like any other teacher (Gmelch & Chan 1994:33).

2.9 STRESS ENCOUNTERED BY THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

The literature defines stress in several different but related ways, each grounded in a person-environment-interaction perspective. Stress may result from an environmental situation perceived as presenting a demand that threatens to exceed the person's capabilities and resources for meeting that demand (Vandenberghe & Huberman 1999:60-61). However, as was highlighted in paragraph 1.8.1 and further discussed in paragraph 2.4 virtually any physical or cultural factor in an environment or any event that requires coping or adaptation can act as a stressor.

With regard to the teaching profession and the position of the Head of Department in this profession Gmelch and Chan (1994:33-34) have identified a Head of Department stress cycle in which four categories of sources of Head of Department stress are determined.

- Source 1: Role-Based Stress. The Heads of Department experience stress due to the different roles they play, some in conflict with their personal beliefs or attitudes. Against this background, the Heads of Department are faced with stressors such as thoughts of not being able to satisfy the conflicting demands of those who are in authority and those which need to be managed and of being unclear on just what the scope and responsibilities of their (Heads of Department) job are (Gmelch & Chan 1994:33).
- Source 2: Task-Based Stress. Task based stress arises from the performances of day-to-day administrative activities of the Heads of Department, such as writing reports, attending meetings, answering frequent telephone calls as well as the general feeling of having too heavy a workload that they (Heads of Department) cannot possibly finish during the normal working hours (Gmelch & Chan 1994:33). However, the Heads of Department must also function as stress filters between the teachers and the perceived threat in the environment in order to alleviate work-related teacher stress in schools.

- Source 3: Boundary-Spanning Stress: Boundary Spanning stress of the Heads of Department emanates from external conditions, such as preparing and allocating budget resources as well as negotiations and gaining public support for school funds. These stressors are extrinsic in nature and they come from outside the school borders where the Head of Department does not have total control (Gmelch & Chan 1994:33).
- Source 4: Conflict-Mediating Stress. This type of stress arises from the Heads of Department's handling of conflicts with teachers, parents and learners (Gmelch & Chan 1994:34).

Based on this stress cycle and all the multiple sources responsible for the Head of Department stress, it is clear that the Head of Department as stress filter is also prone to a tremendous amount of stress on account of his/her own stress job description. To be able to alleviate the stress of his/her subordinates successfully, the Head of Department should in the first place be able to manage his/her own stress successfully. In the next paragraphs a possible stress management plan for the school and each individual teacher will be discussed.

2.10 A STRESS MANAGEMENT PLAN

Due to the fact that stress is an inevitable and often a positive phenomenon, it cannot and should not be eliminated from the work environment, but should be managed effectively. This means that steps should be taken to minimise the harmful effects of stress for both Head of Department and the teachers (Van der Bank 2001:185-186).

Gmelch and Chan (1994) agree with Dunham and Varma (1998) that a necessary precursor to managing stress is to recognise the stress that occurs daily to an individual teacher and Head of Department, and also to acknowledge that something must be done to reduce it.

However, the Head of Department as an important catalyst in functioning as a 'stress filter' between the teacher and the perceived 'threat' in the environment (par.2.8)

must be aware that stress-intervention programmes should be tackled from different levels due to the complex nature of teachers and problems (Dunham & Varma 1998:161)

Dunham and Varma (1998:161) categorise these stress-intervention programmes into two types, i.e. primary and secondary intervention approaches. Matters that may need to be addressed at primary level intervention could include job design and management styles. Stress management at the secondary intervention level could include looking at improving responses to the sources of stress and developing personal skills. The programme may include understanding the physical stress reactions, assertiveness training and improving coping skills (Dunham & Varma 1998:161).

Stress management training to be alive at school means facing 'stress' in all the forms in which it occurs at school. Stress is not a medical problem but a managerial one. The effective management of stress is an important part of a school and teacher's well-being (Dunham & Varma 1998:162).

Mills (1994:1) states that stress management is a tool and a life-skill but it must never be seen as an easy answer to all our problems. Stress management can take away some of the problems by curing those that are self-induced but as a life-skill, it requires from the individual to make some pertinent changes in his/her lifestyle and mode of thought. The effects of stress can be eased if the individual is prepared to input some effort and learn some strategies. Stress management can make a demanding job easy, however, it cannot take away all the problems we face as teachers. In this regard Mills (1994:1) emphasise that it can never be perceived as a remedy for stress 'to be taken three times a day with meals.'

Stress management should be part of every teacher's everyday routine as well as every school's operational planning. The Head of Department as middle manager should fulfil a crucial role in such a stress management plan. There should be training to help the group as well as the individual to deal with stress and where possible, obtain beneficial results from its occurrence. A workshop is one form of

group activity by which stress management can be effected. A workshop programme should have clearly defined goals. Such goals should relate to matters of recognition of the stress problem, the generation of alternative solutions to the problem of stress, the implementation of a plan to alleviate stress and the evaluation of the successfulness of implementation. The Head of Department as a stress filter should use such a management plan to alleviate work-related teacher stress in primary schools (Dunham & Varma 1998:163).

Ellison (1990) provides the following stress management plan that can be utilised at either the individual or organisational school level:

2.10.1 Stage A: Recognition and analysis of the problem

At the individual level, it is possible for the individual Head of Department to recognise the signs and causes of stress and then to manage these stressors. However, an individual Head of Department should try to classify what he/she sees as intolerable behaviour on the part of teachers. Sharing this list with a colleague will improve each Head of Department's understanding of the similarities and differences in areas of tolerance. In knowing him/herself, the Head of Department can improve his/her own situation as well as that of the teachers (Ellison 1990:116).

Although there is considerable value in this 'self-help' approach to understanding stress, the role of the Head of Department is to develop a proactive strategy for stress reduction for the whole school. A specially designed questionnaire is probably the most appropriate mechanism to pinpoint stressors. Analysis of the data forthcoming from such questions would identify the core and marginal issues in creating stress, and this would help to give focus to the stress-reduction programme (Van der Merwe 2003:55).

2.10.2 Stage B – planning: generating alternative solutions

The first stage in dealing with common problems would ideally take the form of some sort of open forum/discussion/brainstorming session, preferably led by an

outsider such as a counsellor or educational psychologist (Ellison 1990:117). This has the advantage of using that person's skills, depersonalising some of the more contentious issues, and providing a less preconceived view of things. Alternatively, or as an extension to this, a planning team within the Head of Department's own ranks could generate solutions and propose strategies which could be implemented by individual teachers or the whole school (Van der Merwe 2003:56).

These possible strategies for effectively coping with stress can be divided into four categories.

2.10.2.1 Lessen the demands

According to Van der Merwe (2003:56) this direct approach to handling stress is the most practical and the easiest to understand. The Head of Department should use this approach to remove or reduce the actual cause of work-related teacher stress and the results will be clearly seen by the individual teacher and throughout the school. Basically, the Head of Department should use this strategy to involve the individual teachers by assisting them to plan their work and to prioritise so that most important tasks are not overlooked. However, this strategy also involves a greater readiness to delegate, especially to others with time and expertise, and to say "no" rather than to take on too much work (Van der Merwe 2003:56).

At the whole school level, the Head of Department should establish the realistic aims which will ensure that these are attainable, and the teachers will feel less frustrated than if there is a sense of working hard but never actually reaching the aims. The Head of Department should design the administrative procedures which will suit the particular school and to support the teachers in their work, rather than be based on a provincial or countrywide model (Van der Merwe 2003:56).

However, while lessening the demands of stress is the most obvious and ideal solution to over-stress, it is not always possible to achieve this therefore the need to be able to reduce the reaction to stress.

2.10.2.2 Reduce the reaction to stress

According to Van der Merwe (2003:56-57) there are many ways in which teachers can counteract the effects of stress and achieve a fairly relaxed state of mind and body. Some of these methods involve the use of external agents, such as medicines, drugs and electronic devices, while others employ physical and mental techniques, such as relaxation, training and meditation. All these methods have their advantages and disadvantages. Medicines and drugs are convenient, generally work quickly, and can be quite powerful in their effect. However, they can be expensive, habit-forming, and become weaker in their effects if used for a long time. In addition, they give the user little future protection against stress symptoms (Van der Merwe 2003:56). Relaxation training and related techniques are excellent general purpose ways of combating stress. They lack all of the disadvantages of medicines, but require a certain amount of time to learn and practice (Van der Merwe 2003:56).

2.10.2.3 Improve stress management skills

According to Ellison (1990:119), teachers and Heads of Department can become better able to deal with stress if they enhance their skills in relating to others. Instead of just talking at colleagues, it is important to listen to what they have to say. If the Heads of Department and teachers can relate well to each other, they can function as groups and through effective teamwork and develop mutual support systems. In this regard brainstorming, whereby the 'sufferer' airs a stress related problem by explaining its background, and fellow staff members generate as many potential solutions as possible for the 'sufferer' to consider, is an excellent technique of stress management skills improvement at the school level.

At the individual teacher and Head of Department level, the following stress management skills may be considered (Van der Merwe 2003:57): The teacher and the Head of Department should socialise with colleagues and allow relationships to run smoothly. He/she should get up earlier and allow more time for tasks. He/she should adopt practical coping skills, for example, when tired, arrange to do things later when refreshed. He/she should refuse to compare him/herself to others and to

set own standards for him/herself. He/she should learn to prioritise activities and to focus on tackling only one task at a time. He/she should develop and use family and friends as support networks. He/she should follow the serenity prayer by accepting what he/she cannot change, by changing what he/she can, and by having the wisdom to know the difference (Van der Merwe 2003:57).

2.10.2.4 Change attitudes

Ellison (1990:120) emphasises that a school which takes a collaborative look at stress has already begun to adopt a changed attitude towards it. The Head of Department should give teachers encouragement to express their feelings, with the minimum of embarrassment and without the bitterness or aggression which can accompany frustration. Just talking over a problem can help teachers to cope with stress, particularly when that stress originates outside the school and there is little that can be done to remove the cause. For example, the unavoidable stress related to the furthering of studies, being a single parent, or taking care of a terminally ill relative, needs to be managed correctly (Van der Merwe 2003:57-58).

With regard to these unavoidable stressors, the soothing influence of humour needs to be considered by the Head of Department as the work-related stress alleviator. In supporting teachers, the value of humour must not be underestimated because laughter relieves tension, teachers should be helped to see the funny side of a stressful situation so that they can rationalise the problem (Van der Merwe 2005:58).

Finally, the tendency, especially when under pressure, to worry over trivia (unimportant or useless things) needs to be changed. It is the role of the Head of Department to alleviate work-related teacher stress by helping teachers to accept in a relaxed way that certain things cannot be changed or controlled (Ellison 1990:120).

2.10.3 Stage C: Implementing the plans

There are a wide variety of strategies, which can be adopted by the Heads of Department, teachers and the school as a whole, to reduce or remove the actual cause of work-related stress. The most appropriate strategies and means of operationalising them need to be chosen to suit the specific situation by the Head of Department as an important role player, with the aim of helping teachers to take responsibility for their own lives and to solve their own problems (Ellison 1990:120).

The Head of Department can tackle stress problems at school level by considering the following possibilities: He/she could organise a full-day workshop for the whole staff on coping skills for stress. He/she could approach the educational psychologist for counselling the affected teachers. He/she could organise visits within or between schools to exchange knowledge and skills with regard to stress management. He/she could develop practical management skills among the teachers by encouraging them to enrol for a module in stress management. He/she could ensure that there are changes in organisational structural responsibilities and he/she could organise for follow-up sessions to empower teachers to learn to cope with high levels of stress (Van der Merwe 2003:59).

2.10.4 Stage D: Evaluating the activities

Ellison (1990:121) emphasise that any activity should be evaluated in order to consider effectiveness. While the results of a stress reduction programme should be apparent in increased organisational effectiveness, a more formal evaluation is possible. This will particularly be the case if a questionnaire approach was used at the outset. It can then be repeated at a later stage and used for comparison. However, Ellison (1990:121) points out that a staff's increased awareness of stress as a result of the stress management programme could distort their replies.

The outcome of a successful stress management programme should be that problems are seen in a better perspective. Individual teachers should feel that they have taken control of their lives again, and that they are able to make constructive decisions

about their work. It is crucial that the coping strategies which are employed actually bring about stress reduction, otherwise teachers will feel a sense of failure and be even more aware of their inability to cope with stress (Ellison 1990:121).

2.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter provides a theoretical perspective on the prevalence of work-related teacher stress and the management alleviation thereof. This was done with specific focus on the teaching environment. The interpretation of the concepts stress and stressor, positive and negative stress, stress and personality type, stress and the workplace as well as sources of stress among primary school teachers such as role conflict, role ambiguity, unreasonable workload, relationships with colleagues, change, new leadership roles and new teacher roles were discussed.

The effects of the different leadership styles of the Head of Department on the well-being of teachers, the role of the Head of Department and stress alleviation, stress encountered by the Head of Department as well as a stress management plan provides a theoretical understanding of the main and sub-research questions of this study.

What is also evident from the discussions in this chapter is that stress is a crucial part of human condition and specifically work-related stress. This was made clear in this chapter that one cannot get rid of stress but should learn to manage it within acceptable levels.

Chapter three will focus on the qualitative research design and the methodology. It will also undertake to explain the manner in which the research is planned, data collected and analysed.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the focus is on the research paradigm and methodology used to find answers to the postulated research questions. The discussions represent an extension of the initial explanations on the research design and methodology used as was presented in chapter one. Paragraph 1.6 indicated that the investigation will be conducted from a qualitative research paradigm.

A qualitative study should answer valid and clearly stated research questions (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:397). The following research questions guided this qualitative study:

- What is the role of the Head of Department in alleviating work-related teacher stress in primary schools?
- What kind of negative stress is experienced by primary school teachers?
- How can the Head of Department alleviate the negative work-related stress encountered by primary school teachers?

The usefulness of a qualitative study is enhanced to the degree to which the research design is adequately described so that researchers may use the study to extend the findings to other similar studies (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:369).

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design and methodology have been developed to enable the researcher to obtain the best data from the sample studied. Thus, its purpose is to provide the

most valid answers to the research questions. The design describes the procedures for conducting the study and the methods of data collection. The research design is a very important part of an investigation since certain limitations in interpreting the results are related to a design. The research design also determines how the data should be analysed (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:400). As was explained in paragraph 1.6 and paragraph 3.1, a qualitative research approach is applied to this study.

A qualitative research design is appropriate for this study because a naturalistic method is used to collect the required data on the sources of stressors that teachers encounter in real-world settings such as schools. The anticipated problems related to the experience of negative stress by primary school teachers were reviewed in the literatures (chapter 2) and guided the research questions asked during individual and focus group interviews. These questions were continuously reformulated because qualitative research is open to change throughout the process of data collection (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:396).

The qualitative research design examines one phenomenon of interest in depth at a selected site for the sake of a better understanding of that phenomenon, regardless of the number of participants, social scenes, processes and activities (McMillan & Schumacher 2001: 396). The phenomenon of interest in this research is the stress experienced by primary school teachers in the Temba Circuit.

Another consideration for employing a qualitative approach to this investigation is the fact that data collection strategies with a qualitative approach are multiple, such as verbatim accounts, low-inference descriptors, mechanically recorded data and participants' reviews of their experiences in their own terms (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:405). All of these strategies were employed in this investigation on teacher stress and the Head of Department's alleviating role. Thus, this research, typical of qualitative research, uses different forms of data collection strategies that

yield a richness of data, therefore permitting a fuller understanding of the phenomenon studied (Best & Kahn 1993:184).

Moreover, qualitative research design is appropriate for this study because it provides descriptions of a situation (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:396) such as the prevalence of stress amongst primary school teachers. Qualitative research can either be exploratory or fully interpretive in nature. It offers insight into reasons behind events (Krathwohl 1993:20). The investigation into the main stressors experienced by primary school teachers naturally also shed light on the reasons for these circumstances. This also reflects the core features of qualitative research which examines the phenomenon in context rather than concentrating on a part to the exclusion of aspects that might give a different perspective (Krathwohl 1993:353).

Most qualitative analyses are done with words. Krathwohl (1993:353) emphasises that qualitative interpretations do not occur through statistical data, but through words. These words can be organised to permit the researcher to contrast, compare, analyse and bestow patterns upon them. In this study the researcher captured data concerning the perceptions of Heads of Department and teachers on work-related stress among primary school teachers and the alleviating role of the Head of Department in this regard. The research required an intense and prolonged contact with a 'field' or life situation, which warrants a qualitative approach (Krathwohl 1993:353).

In qualitative research, there is an open agenda (Krathwohl 1993:353) which applied to the main task of this research, namely to explicate the ways in which Heads of Department and teachers in primary schools come to understand, account for, take action, and otherwise manage their day-to-day stress related situations. By means of an open agenda the complexity of the phenomenon could be richly illustrated by appropriately taking into account the influences of personalities, politics and time on the phenomenon. Observations appeared to reflect the way participants understand and view the phenomenon of teacher stress. This is

interpreted and contextualised in an open manner by staying as close as possible to the natural situation (Krathwohl 1993:353).

In this study the researcher is primarily concerned with the process rather than the outcomes. This implies that the main concern relates to how Heads of Department and teachers make sense of their stress related lives and experiences. Data of this process is mediated through a human instrument. In this case the researcher was the main research instrument, which implied that he could adapt to circumstances to obtain rich information about work-related teacher stress and how the Head of Department can alleviate it (Creswell 1994:145). In the process the researcher used a broad range of his own experience, imagination and intellect in various and unpredictable ways.

3.3 RESEARCH METHODS

The qualitative approach often requires the use of interactive methods of data collection such as interviews and observation. In this study interviews were used as a data collection method.

3.3.1 The interview as a qualitative research method

Borg and Gall (1996:289) define the research interview as a face-to-face oral exchange between an interviewer and an individual or a group of individuals. As a data gathering tool the interview is effective, valid and reliable and can provide an in-depth analysis of the situation within a holistic context (Van der Westhuizen 1995:89). Patton (2001:39) stresses that interviewing should be conducted in real-world settings that reflect the participant's reality to a greater extent than contrived settings. Adhering to real-world settings increases validity.

As a data gathering tool, interviewing takes on different forms depending on the specific purpose. Some are spur-of-the-moment interchanges whereas other interviews are carefully planned and sometimes highly structured. In this regard

Krathwohl (1998:285) points to the fact that although interviews may be spontaneous events, particularly during participant observation, once certain needed information is targeted, interviews typically become planned events, sometimes with structured questions to assure obtaining the desired information. The three most commonly used forms of interviewing are the following:

- **The informal unstructured interview**

With this kind of interview, questions emerge from the immediate context and there is no predetermined sequence of questions. Researchers rely on a spontaneous generation of questions in the natural flow of an interaction (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:443; Borg & Gall 1996:309).

- **The semi-structured interview with a schedule**

With this type of interview, a schedule is used as a guideline for the interviewer, which contains a set of questions or themes relevant to the research. The themes in the interview schedule are not addressed in a particular sequence, but all the relevant topics are covered during the interview (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:444; Borg & Gall 1996:309).

- **The structured interview**

With the structured interview, participants are asked the same questions in the same order with essentially the same words, thus reducing interviewer flexibility. This type of interviewing is usually applied to situations in which participants are illiterate. Standardised wording of questions may constrain and limit the naturalness and relevancy of the response (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:444; Borg & Gall 1996:310).

3.3.2 Interviewing applied in this research

In this study, semi-structured individual and focus group interviews were used. The application of both types of interviewing contributed to data triangulation in that the role of the Head of Department in alleviating teacher stress was explored from the perspectives of both the teachers and the school managers (De Vos 1998:359).

- **Semi-structured individual interviews**

Three individual interviews with three Heads of Department were conducted. The value of applying a semi-structured individual interview with a schedule is that the interview is flexible and adaptable allowing the interviewer to make a true assessment of what the participant really believes in. Although flexible, data are obtained relatively systematically which makes it easy to compare and analyse data in order to interpret clearly (De Vos 1998:299). The value of this interview structure is to provide a systematic collection of data. The interview guide ensures that all the relevant and important data are not forgotten. (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:444; Borg & Gall 1996:309).

A disadvantage of semi-structured interviewing, however, relates to the fact that participants may feel uneasy and therefore use avoidance tactics if sensitive questions are asked. Interviews are also subjective because factors such as trust, honesty, social distance and the interviewer's control differ from one interview to another. There is a lack of anonymity because the interviewer can observe the interviewee. One way of counter-acting these hindrances is accomplished by using a highly trained and proficient interviewer (Borg & Gall 1996:290; Krathwohl 1998:289).

- **Focus group interviews**

The focus group interview differs from the individual interview in so far as that with a focus group interview a group of people are interviewed on a specific topic (Patton

2001: 385). Groups are typically six to ten people with similar backgrounds insofar as having authoritative knowledge on the topic. With regard to the purpose of focus group interviewing in research, Patton (2001:385) emphasises that it is first and foremost a session for gathering information. It is not a problem solving or a decision-making session.

Focus group interviewing is therefore not primarily a discussion, though direct interactions among participants occur, but it is an information collecting event. The twist is that, unlike a series of one-on-one interviews, in a focus group interview participants get to hear each other's responses and to make additional comments beyond their own original responses as they hear what other people have to say. However, participants need not agree with each other or reach any kind of consensus. The object is to get high-quality data in a social context where people can consider their own views in the context of the views of others (Patton 2001: 386).

The focus group interview as a specialised form of interviewing is usually used to gather information on how a group of people that is representative of a target population reacts to something presented to them, for example, an idea, a product or a speech. Patton (2001:386) notes that an important advantage of focus group interviewing is that it creates a social environment in which group members are stimulated by each other's perceptions and ideas of each other, thereby enhancing the quality and richness of data beyond what can be achieved with one to one interviewing. A focus group interview can combine exploration and structure, starting broadly and then narrowing. An important advantage of a focus group interview as a data gathering technique is that data collection is cost effective and one can quickly gather information from a sample of people (Krathwohl 1998: 295-296).

The purpose of using focus group interviewing in this research is to obtain information from a small group of primary school teachers about the kind of negative stress they are experiencing at school and how they judge the Heads of

Department's performances in alleviating these negative stressors (Patton 2001: 385). Since all the participants are from one Circuit of Education, focus group interviews are more appropriate than individual interviews because more participants can be interviewed in less time, thereby enhancing the quality of data and saving costs and time.

3.4 PARTICIPANTS AND SAMPLING

A sample is a group of individuals who will participate in the research. A sample is selected from a population, which is a larger group in a particular environment. The purpose of a sample is to get a manageable group for research purposes. Sampling is used in qualitative research in the selection of interviewees (Krathwohl 1998:160).

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:404) suggest that the sample size should be directly related to and determined by factors like the purpose of the study, the research problem, the major data collection technique and the availability of information-rich participants. Thus, in this study purposeful sampling as the process of selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study is used (Patton 1990:169). The power and logic of purposeful sampling relates to the fact that a few cases studied in-depth yield sufficient insights about the topic (McMillan and Schumacher 2001:401).

The researcher selected information-rich participants who are knowledgeable and informative about the phenomenon of work-related stress. The indicators used to select information-rich participants related to participants' detailed experiences of stress identifiable by their continuous absence from school on account of work-related stress. Heads of Department were selected on the basis of their experiences with dealing with stressed teachers under their auspices.

The area of research in this study is the Temba Circuit that is situated in the North West Province. The Temba Circuit consists of fifty-four primary schools. Based on

convenience, three primary schools were selected as sites for an in-depth collection of data.

Three focus group interviews were conducted with fifteen teachers. Each of the three primary schools was represented by a focus group consisting of five teachers from the intermediate phase. Purposeful sampling was used to select these teachers on their account of frequent absence from school due to illnesses that are directly related to excessive stress. The aim with the conducting of these three focus group interviews related to an identification of the kind of negative stress experienced at primary schools in the Temba Circuit (Borg & Gall 1996:217). Secondly, it related to the collecting of information on how school managers such as the Heads of Department can contribute to an alleviation of the stress experienced by teachers.

The three individual interviews were conducted with three Heads of Department from the intermediate phase. Each Head of Department represented a primary school in the sample. The aim with interviewing the three Heads of Department was to collect information on how the managers fulfill their responsibilities of alleviating stress amongst teachers under their auspices. Participants were requested to distinguish between ideal and real responses in order for the researcher to develop viable guidelines for a stress alleviation approach at schools. The three Heads of Department were key informants because they frequently deal with incidences of teacher stress in their managerial roles. The researcher considered the sample to be adequate because the aim was not to select a sample that would represent, for example, a province wide or country wide population (Borg & Gall 1996:218).

3.5 DATA COLLECTING AND DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

The researcher applied a qualitative approach and chose a role that is appropriate for the purpose of this study. There are five possible roles that the qualitative researcher can fulfill: Complete observer, full participant, participant observer, inside observer and interviewer. (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:435). These roles vary in terms of

the way the researcher's presence affects the social system or persons under study. The roles of participant observer and interviewer are the two most typical research roles for most forms of qualitative inquiry (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:435). These are also the two roles fulfilled with this study because the researcher observed and interviewed the participants as is explained in paragraph 4.3.

3.5.1 Data collection

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001:432), choosing a site is a negotiation process to obtain freedom of access to a site that is suitable for the research problems and feasible for the researcher's resources of time, mobility and skills. Identifying and negotiating access to the site and individuals is an important procedure of the qualitative research design (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:432).

Once the site and the participants were identified the researcher negotiated access to conduct the interviews (see annexure A1). Permission was secured from the Department of Education (see annexure A2). The sole purpose of conducting the interviews was to collect data. Permission was secured from the participants to record the interviews. In this regard the researcher wrote a brief proposal that included an honest reflection of the primary research purpose in order to gain access to the schools (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:432-434). Permission was given in writing to the researcher to proceed with the study in the circuit (see annexure A2).

Once approval to proceed with the research had been secured from the authorities, the researcher began with the process of negotiating and maintaining relationships with individuals at the research site. The researcher constantly maintained the trust and confidentiality of the participants throughout the data collection period to preserve their anonymity (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:432).

Findings and recommendations of the study were made available to the participants, on request. The dates of the interviews were negotiated with the participants of the three selected primary schools.

The individual interviews with the three Heads of Department and the focus group interviews with teachers were conducted at their schools, as this is their natural setting and forms part of their daily lives. The interviews were conducted after school hours so as to minimise disruption of teaching and learning in the school. The interviewer made every participant feel comfortable. In order to set the participants at ease, a general topic was discussed before getting to the specifics of the interview.

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:432-433) describe the importance of mapping the field before the basic data collection. The researcher mapped the field by acquiring data of the social, spatial and temporal relationships of the site to gain a sense of the total context. The researcher's role as participant-observer was consolidated by his capacity of having been a teacher and Head of Department for many years. This served as an added advantage to understand the social, spatial and temporal relationships in this study.

3.5.2 Data analysis

The qualitative researcher develops a certain way to organise, code and retrieve data for formal data analysis. In this study, the data derived from the individual and focus group interviews are verbatim accounts of what transpired in the audio-recorded interview sessions. Audio-recording the interview ensures completeness of the verbal interaction and provides material for reliability checks (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:449-450).

The data collection phase should phase out naturally and logically into formal data analysis and the presentation of data (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:405-407). According to Best and Kahn (1993:204), only after the data has been organised and

described should the researcher begin with the most critical phase of the process of analysis and interpretation.

The challenge of data analysis is to make sense of massive amounts of data, reduce the volume of information, identify significant patterns and construct a framework for communicating the essence of what the data revealed (Patton 1990:371-372). Making sense of the data depends largely on the researcher's intellectual rigor and a tolerance for tentativeness of interpretation until the entire analysis is completed (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:462). In this study, analysis of the raw data begun with the identification of key themes and patterns (Gough & Scott 2000:1).

The eight steps proposed by Tesch (in De Vos 1998:343) for data analysis served as guide for the analysis of teachers' stress and the role to be played by Heads of Department in an alleviation effort (see paragraph 4.5.2). The eight steps were applied according to the following process:

1. Reading through all transcripts carefully to get a sense of the whole
2. Selecting one participant's response to find underlying meanings and thinking as expressed during that interview. Thoughts that come up are written in the margin. Continuing with steps 2 for several participants and listing all the topics.
3. Clustering similar topics together.
4. Tracking the list and returning to the data and then finding out emerging categories.
5. Reading categories by grouping related topics that show interrelationships.
6. Each category is coded and arranged accordingly.
7. Assembling data material belonging together into one place and beginning with preliminary analysis.
8. Existing data is recorded if necessary.

Tesch's approach for data analyses (De Vos 1998:348) corroborates the view of McMillan and Schumacher (2001:462) who state that qualitative analysis is a

relatively systematic process of selecting, categorising, comparing, synthesising and interpreting to provide explanations of the single phenomenon of interest in such a way that others reading the results can understand and draw their own interpretations.

3.6 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF RESEARCH

3.6.1 Validity of qualitative design

Validity refers to the degree to which the explanations of the phenomena match the realities of the world (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:407). In qualitative research, claims of validity rest on the data collection and analysis techniques and on the extent to which these techniques are clearly explained. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001:407-408), qualitative researchers commonly use a combination of any of the following ten possible strategies to enhance design validity: Prolonged field work, multi-method strategies, participant verbatim language, low-inference descriptors, multiple researchers, mechanically recorded data, participant researcher, member checking, participant review, and negative cases or discrepant data.

To ensure validity of this study, a combination of two strategies were used, namely participants' verbatim accounts were collected through the individual and focus group interviews and these verbatim accounts were mechanically recorded (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:408).

3.6.2 Reliability of a qualitative design

Reliability of qualitative research design refers to the extent to which other researchers would arrive at similar results if they studied the same case using exactly the same procedures (Borg & Gall 1996:572). According to Krathwohl (1998:435), reliability refers to the consistency of an instrument in measuring whatever it

measures. In a qualitative research paradigm, however, reliability is interpreted as trustworthiness and the degree of transferability of findings (De Vos 1998:348).

To ensure the trustworthiness of this research the model of Guba (De Vos 1998:348) was applied. Audio recordings and original transcripts of the semi-structured individual and focus group interviews were carefully stored. An accurate record of the dates, time and persons involved were recorded. The data was transcribed from the audio-cassettes and coded and categorised into topics and themes. The total interview time was also recorded. The data was corroborated with the participants at all the stages of the research process. Prior to the conducting of the interviews, the researcher engaged in a discussion with a knowledgeable colleague to determine the neutrality and clarity of the interview schedule. This strategy is known as peer briefing (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:428-429; De Vos 1998:350).

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher himself conducted the interviews. The researcher was familiar with the settings, the participants and the topic under investigation. The understanding of the context and role of the researcher enhanced awareness, knowledge and sensitivity to the many challenges, decisions and issues that could be encountered. The researcher established trust by indicating the purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed during the investigation, the planned use of the data and the credibility of the researcher (De Vos 1998:25). The tone of the interview was cordial, supportive and non-threatening (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:401).

Confidentiality of the data, preserving the anonymity of informants and using the research for intended purposes, were pursued (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:421). The tape recorder was used to record verbal communication with the consent of all the participants. They were continuously reminded of their rights in terms of revealing their attitudes and beliefs (De Vos 1998:28). The recording equipment was arranged as unobtrusively as possible. The interviewer was sensitive to the needs and

rights of the participants, and since he was familiar with the issues under investigation, he was able to keep the interviews focussed (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:421).

Although physical harm to the participants seldom occurs in qualitative research, some persons can experience humiliation and loss of interpersonal trust. A sense of caring and fairness has to enter the researcher's thinking and actions (McMillan & Schumacher 201:422). The more sensitive the information, the greater the responsibility of the researcher to treat the information as confidential. The researcher was aware of these circumstances at all times.

3.8 CONCLUSION

Chapter three focused on the research design and methodology employed in the empirical investigation. This pertained to a description of the qualitative research paradigm and a motivation for considering it as the best option to find answers to the postulated research questions. The researcher's role as well as the manner of data collecting and analysis of raw data was discussed. In this regard qualitative research methods employed to collect data, namely semi-structured individual and focus group interviewing were explained and Tesch's model for data analysis was determined as the guide for an analysis of the collected data. Related aspects such as the validity and reliability of a qualitative investigation and ethical matters were also addressed.

Chapter four focuses on an analysis and interpretation of the data collected.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION OF EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The primary aim of the study was to do an exploratory investigation into the role of the Head of Department in alleviating work-related teacher stress in primary schools in the Temba Circuit. This was conducted in order to propose appropriate guidelines for consideration by Heads of Department to alleviate the work-related stress encountered by the members of staff under their auspices (paragraph 2.10).

The data collected for this study addressed the relevant research questions. The main research question is:

What is the role of the Head of Department in alleviating work-related teacher stress in primary schools?

Secondary research questions flowing from this main question are as follows:

- 1 What kind of negative stress do primary school teachers experience?
- 2 How does the phenomenon of teacher stress manifest in schools?
- 3 How can the Head of Department alleviate the negative work-related stress encountered by primary school teachers?

The research sub-question number 2 that focuses on the phenomenon of teacher stress as it generally manifests in schools was to a significant extent addressed by the literature study of chapter two.

4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

As explained in chapter three, a qualitative research approach was used to collect data for the study since the primary aim was to understand the role of the Head of Department in alleviating work-related teacher stress in primary schools in the Temba Circuit (paragraph 3.2). The primary instruments used to collect data were semi-structured individual and focus group interviews. These instruments were selected because the researcher wanted to obtain the participants' perspectives of the work-related stress that they are experiencing through a human instrument rather than through inventories as pointed out in paragraph 3.2.

The intention of the study is not to generalise the findings to all other primary schools but the findings could provide an impetus for further research on the subject. The results of this study are presented in the context of its limitations as pointed out in paragraph 1.7.

4.3 METHODOLOGY IN BRIEF

As was elaborately discussed in chapter three, focus group interviews were conducted at three primary schools with teachers from the intermediate phase who are knowledgeable with regard to work-related teacher stress. The three individual interviews were conducted with Heads of Department who are key informants as far as work-related teacher stress is concerned. Pre formulated questions were asked. However, the participants were allowed to expatiate which determined followed-up questioning adhering to a semi-structured arrangement. All interviews were recorded and transcribed.

4.4 WHAT WAS THE RESEARCHER LOOKING FOR?

The individual interviews with the three Heads of Department were conducted with two aims in mind. The first aim was to investigate what stressors teachers' experience. The second aim was to find out what Heads of Department do to alleviate these stressors. The

second aim had a dual focus. Firstly, the focus was on practice in terms of what Heads of Department really do to alleviate stress. Secondly, the focus was on the ideal situation, namely, what they should do to alleviate work-related stress amongst teachers under their auspices.

The three focus group interviews were conducted with fifteen teachers from three primary schools, five teachers from each selected primary school. The aim with conducting these three focus group interviews related firstly to identifying the kind of negative stress experienced by teachers at primary schools in the Temba Circuit. It secondly related to what Heads of Department actually do to alleviate teacher stress (reality) and how should they contribute to an alleviation of the stress experienced by teachers (ideal situation).

4.5 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

4.5.1 Data collection

According to Terreblanche and Durrheim (2002: 45), data is the basic material on which a researcher's findings are based. Data comes from observation and can take the form of numbers (numeric or quantitative data) or language (qualitative data). As was explained in chapter three, the data of this qualitative study was collected through interviews.

Each of the three focus group interviews lasted between forty-five and fifty minutes and each of the three individual interviews thirty to forty-five minutes. After that time saturation was reached in all cases. All the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

4.5.2 Data analysis

Data analysis implies a making sense of the data that has been collected (De Vos 1998:343).

In this study, the data analysis steps of Tesch (in De Vos 1998:343) as explained in paragraph 3.5.2 were considered. The eight steps as explained in paragraph 3.5.2 were eventually reduced to a focus on the following three final steps:

Step 1: Reading

In this first step all the transcripts were read and re-read to get a sense of the whole. This was followed by selecting participants' responses to find underlying meanings and thoughts of the interview.

Step 2: Listing of topics

After listing all the topics from all the responses, similar topics or responses were clustered together. These similar responses were organised into categories in an attempt to answer the following two remaining research questions:

- 1 What kind of negative stress is experienced by primary school teachers?
- 2 How can the Head of Department alleviate the negative work-related stress encountered by primary school teachers?

Step 3: Development of categories

The development of categories progressed on account of the identification of sub-categories and themes adhering to each category as shown in Table 4.1.

TABLE 4.1 A synopsis of categories, sub-categories and themes that emerged from the raw data

Categories	Sub-categories	Alleviation themes
Interpersonal stressors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role conflict -teacher, parent and spouse -teacher and sports coach	-Awareness of personal and work roles -Empathetic leniency when needed
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role ambiguity -Complexity of fulfilling 7 key roles of a teacher -Confusion on task descriptions	-Awareness of different professional roles -Opportunities for clarity -Opportunities for realisation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher roles -Demands on ownership and responsibility -Vague explanations	-Empowerment for initiative taking -Ownership on interpretation

Categories	Sub-categories	Alleviation themes
Interpersonal stressors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -between teachers -between teachers and learners -between teachers and parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Communication and team spirit -Constructive meetings -Constructive social events -Creation of effective disciplinary committees -Providing guidance and counselling programmes
Organisational stressors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workload <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -key roles -extra-curricular activities -lack of learning area knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Interpreting and realising 7 key roles of a teacher -Fair work allocation responsibilities -Opportunities for capacity building
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership roles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Rights and responsibilities -Democratic approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Interpreting and realising leadership role -Opportunities for democratic leadership style empowerment

Categories	Sub-categories	Alleviation themes
Professional stressors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing environments -Decentralisation demands -Codes of conduct <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education policies -Rationalisation and redeployment -Curriculum -Discipline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Insight on magnitude -Integrity, trust, pride <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Bargaining power -Interpretation and implementation -Adapting to new approaches
Personal stressors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges -Specialist knowledge -Professional status <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remuneration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Continuous opportunities for development -Guidance on interpretation -Put into perspective

4.6 RESEARCH FINDINGS

As is clear from the table, four categories were used to present the research findings. The four categories represent the four main sources of teacher stress. These four main categories of the sources of teacher stress were determined from the literature study in chapter two. From each category, sub-categories were determined that represent the specific stressors that teachers encounter on a daily basis. The magnitude of these stressors and the alleviating thereof by the Head of Department in real terms and

according to what would be the ideal situation, are discussed as themes that emerged from each category. These research findings serve as answer to sub-questions 1 and 3 which relate to the kind of negative stress experienced by primary school teachers in the Temba Circuit and the Heads of Department's alleviation responses to these stressors.

Sub-question 2 on the manifestation of teacher stress at schools in general was answered with the literature study of chapter two. The literature findings on the manifestation of teacher stress at schools revealed that work-related teacher stress is inevitable and manifests physiologically, psychologically and behaviourally with physiological and psychological effects representing how teachers feel and behavioural effects representing what teachers do under stress. It was discussed in chapter two (paragraph 2.2.2) that stressors are found in all aspects of teachers' work environments such as the nature of their work, the learners they work with and the colleagues they liase with. A serious stressor was determined to be the demands on teachers to develop new knowledge and skills and to perform new tasks within an environment of rapid change (paragraph 2.5.1).

Subsequently the research findings are discussed according to the structure captured in Table 4.1.

4.6.1 INTERPERSONAL STRESSORS

4.6.1.1 Role conflict

Participants in general experienced at least two sets of inconsistent conflicting role expectations. The levels of inconsistency in role responsibilities relate mainly to female teachers who experience the demand of being employees, mothers and spouses at the same time. One female teacher responded to this as follows: "I am simultaneously a professional teacher, a mother to my three children and a wife to my husband thus experiencing tremendous pressure to comply with different and inconsistent demands." Participants indicated that pressure to comply with different and inconsistent demands

affect their performance negatively. As one female teacher acclaimed: “I have to cook, wash the dishes, wash and iron the clothes, clean the house and help my children to do their homework which is too much for me.”

This negative performance manifests in a tendency to show less commitment. One teacher explained it as follows: “The attitude of teachers to teaching while performing other roles as added responsibility is a burden resulting in being less committed to teaching.” As one participant stated: “My performance is lukewarm since my husband lost his job and I am being the sole bread- winner in the family.”

With regard to the simultaneous occurrence of two sets of inconsistent expected role responsibilities for an individual teacher, one teacher indicated: “I am a professional teacher and soccer coach, my assigned roles are contradictory and are in conflict with each other. So, even if we have a policy for extramural activities, conflict does still exist.” The extra-mural activities policy allows the activities to take place during school hours. However this implies an interference with teaching and learning. He gave an example of music practices that are extra-curricular related and that take place during school hours. This results in music practices taking priority in primary schools to the expense of curricular matters. When it comes to curricular related results, at the end of the year however, the teacher is held accountable for learning that was not realised sufficiently.

The emerging pattern from the data collected shows that primary school teachers experience stress as a result of role conflict. This became evident from the interviews as one teacher pointed out that: “The pressure to comply with different and inconsistent demands such as being heavily involved in extra-mural activities while simultaneously having to ensure that my learners learn to read and write effectively is frustrating me.”

4.6.1.2 Head of Department as alleviator

It became evident from teachers’ responses that the Heads of Department need to create

effective and consistent work role expectations and related structures at their schools. The Head of Department should arrange constructive workshops to empower teachers with regard to coping with role responsibilities. Individual teachers need to be trained to manage their time and responsibilities in order to reduce levels of stress experienced by the teachers. As one female teacher said: "I suggest that Heads of Department should provide the necessary social and emotional support to empower us female teachers who are at risk of work-related stress by organising regular constructive workshops on being good mothers while doing school work at home such as lesson preparations and marking learners' activities."

The well-being of teachers depends on how they perceive the effectiveness of the role of the Head of Department who should show them empathetic leniency when needed to alleviate the negative work-related stress at school. It is the view of the researcher that Heads of Department need to protect teachers against stressful working conditions caused by the inconsistent conflicting role expectations by making them aware of personal and work roles.

4.6.1.3 Role ambiguity

An analysis of the data on role ambiguity shows that the majority of the participants felt stressed because they perceived role ambiguity at their schools as a result of a lack of clear, consistent information regarding rights, duties, tasks and responsibilities of teachers with regard to the seven key roles that they have to perform. According to one of the participants the attitude of teachers to teaching and performing other roles as added responsibilities "sucks." He said: "Since the dawn of democracy, teachers are no longer committed to teaching and their attitude sucks." It appeared that teachers are expected to teach, evaluate, manage, study, fulfil pastoral duties, master their learning areas and design learning material and these seven roles could seem to contradict each other due to a lack of clear descriptions. As one teacher said: "The new teacher roles are not clearly defined because of the failure of the Department of Education to provide sufficient in-service training of these complex roles."

Participants perceived that the job expectations are not clearly defined to the individual teacher. For example, an experienced Head of Department might be appointed to be a mentor to a new teacher. The interviews show that if specific guidelines on mentoring new teachers are not given to both the mentor who is the experienced Head of Department and the new teacher, misunderstanding and hurt can occur when neither party knows their specific roles, which can result in stress for both. With regard to this confusion on task descriptions, the officials of the Department of Education should arrange constructive workshops to empower both parties about their job expectations. As one teacher said: “I am confused by a lack of clarity about my job description because I may do too much or too little or the wrong tasks since I and my Head of Department do not know what to expect from each other.”

The investigation also established that when inappropriate, incompatible and inconsistent demands are placed on teachers, they experienced a considerable amount of stress. Role ambiguity was found to arise from the following three situations: lack of clarity about the scope and responsibilities of one’s job, feeling that one has too little authority to carry out the responsibilities assigned to one and having to teach a subject or learning area for which one has not being trained to teach. With regard to the scope and responsibilities of a teacher’s job, one participant said: “It affects my performance negatively because of its inconsistent demands.”

Regarding the situation in which teachers feel that they have too little authority to carry out responsibilities assigned to them, one teacher responded as follows: “I am held responsible for the decline in discipline among learners in my class whilst the methods of disciplining learners are limited due to the abolition of corporal punishment without providing alternative methods of disciplining learners and lack of support from parents.” With regard to teachers who have to teach learning areas that they have not being trained to teach, one teacher responded by saying: “It is frustrating to teach a learning area that I am not being trained to teach.”

4.6.1.4 Head of Department as alleviator

It is clear from the interviews that the role of the Heads of Department is to understand why teachers experience role ambiguity at their schools. To modify the situation appropriately, the Head of Department should create an awareness and an understanding of the different professional roles. Clarity can be achieved by drawing up clear job descriptions outlining job responsibilities. Teachers need to be supported and guided by Heads of Department when carrying out the responsibilities assigned to them. Constructive workshops on all learning areas should be conducted on a regular basis by the Head of Department to clarify issues which are not clear. Teachers should draw up work schedules and lesson plans to alleviate work-related teacher stress and frustrations.

4.6.1.5 New teacher roles

An analysis of the data shows that the majority of the participants felt that the roles that teachers are expected to fulfil by virtue of their profession help in creating work-related teacher stress in schools. One teacher said: “I am frustrated by the roles that I am expected to fulfil by virtue of my profession because they are not clearly defined and are putting more pressure on me.”

It was explained in chapter two (paragraph 2.6.7) that the multidimensional task related to the learning mediator role of the teacher such as mediating learning in a manner, which is sensitive to the diverse needs of learners, which include those with barriers to learning, is causing severe stress to teachers. It was also explained in paragraph 2.6.7 that teachers are not getting enough training and support from the Department of Education. The participants reiterated all these reasons. One participant said: “The Department of Education failed to provide sufficient in-service training of these complex roles to us.” It is evident that the learning mediator role of the teacher also manifests as a significant work-related stressor at the Temba Circuit.

Participants indicated that the new teacher roles are not clearly defined and thus cause

uncertainty. One teacher echoed: “The new teacher roles are putting more pressure and frustration on me due to its complexity.” Another teacher remarked: “The new teacher roles are not clearly defined because of the failure of the Department of Education to provide constructive in-service training to us.”

As was explained in chapter two, the lack of clarity in policy documents on how to interpret and design learning programmes as well as complex language and confusing terminology used in Curriculum 2005 documents create considerable stress for the teacher. This also became evident from the interviews as one teacher pointed out: “The contents of the policy documents was not well introduced to us by the Department of Education.”

As was discussed in chapter two to be a leader, administrator and manager is the cause of teacher stress. Overload and lack of training and support from the Department of Education to perform all these duties efficiently cause stress as pointed out by Potenza (2003:9). The teacher is also expected to achieve ongoing personal, academic, occupational and professional growth and these demands place pressure on the teacher to master and perform all these expected aspects successfully within limited time constraints. In this regard one of the teachers said: “This new roles that I am expected to fulfil within the school according to the policy on norms and standards are putting more pressure on me due to its multidimensional nature.”

As was also explained in chapter two, the demands of the new teacher roles by virtue of his/her profession create work-related stressors in schools and a tremendous amount of extra stress for the teacher. This also became evident from the interviews and one of the teachers indicated that: “The failure of the Department of Education to provide sufficient and constructive in-service training on the nature and approach with each of these complex teacher roles is frustrating me.”

4.6.1.6 Head of Department as alleviator

It became evident from the participants' responses that the Head of Department should take initiative in empowering teachers under his/her auspices by arranging the development programmes such as constructive workshops and in-service training where new teacher roles are discussed since the Department of Education has failed to empower and support teachers in this regard. With regard to interpretation of the new teacher roles, the Head of Department needs to clearly define these roles and encourage teachers to take responsibility for them.

4.6.1.7 Poor relationships between teachers, learners and parents

-Poor relationships between teachers

Teachers in the focus group interviews identified working relationships with colleagues as a source of stress. Participants reported that they experienced work-related stress due to poor interpersonal relationships with their colleagues. As one teacher said: "My relationship with my colleagues is bad because we are criticising and backbiting each other." This was corroborated by other participants. One teacher said: "I and my colleagues are not supporting each other and I feel stressed by the situation at my school."

Participants are of the view that poor communication and the lack of co-operation among the staff members is the major source of work-related teacher stress. As one teacher said: "I am like an island at my school since I work alone and the communication between me and my colleagues is poor due to gossiping which resulted to a lack of trust and co-operation among the staff."

-Poor relationships between teachers and learners

Teachers in the Temba Circuit experience severe stress with regard to learners' discipline in the classroom. Ineffective and inconsistent measures to discipline learners is a source of stress and relates to the fact that the use of corporal punishment has been abolished. Schools have failed to develop and implement workable alternative measures of discipline.

Female teachers experienced more stress than male teachers stemming from an inability to discipline learners effectively. As one female teacher responded: "Learners in my class don't want to listen because I speak softly. I feel very stressed when they listen to my male colleague who also speaks softly and respond positively to his instructions." Clearly female teachers experience more discomfort than males with learner discipline because of stereotyped attitudes adopted by learners towards female teachers. Learners are often in conflict with the role of female teachers as an enforcer of discipline.

Lack of discipline among learners is a major cause of poor relationships between teachers and learners. Teachers perceive that learners have more rights than them. As one teacher said: "Learners at our school are disrespectful and they backchat because they have more rights than teachers."

-Poor relationships between teachers and parents

Teachers in the Temba Circuit experience a lack of parent involvement particular with regard to disciplining learners. As one teacher said: "There is a lack of parent support. Parents need to teach their children respect for their teachers." Most teachers feel stressed when learners do not take their class activities and homework seriously and when parents display a negative attitude to teachers when they call the children to order. One teacher said: "I am not getting full involvement from parents when I give their children homework because some will come to school the following day without having done it and that stresses me a lot."

This indifferent attitude of many parents to their responsibility of ensuring that their children are disciplined learners is indeed a major stressor for teachers. Moreover, parents expect wonders from teachers. Parents who do not care or give sufficient support to their children place pressure on the teachers. In this regard one participant said: “I felt frustrated and stressed due to the demands placed on me by the parents to achieve the impossible as far as the disciplining of the individual child is concerned and that has created poor relationship between me and the parents.”

4.6.1.8 Head of Department as alleviator

It became clear from participants’ responses that the Head of Department needs to improve the social support provided to teachers by organising regular constructive meetings and social events to build team spirit and to learn from each other. It must be noted that good working relationship may only flourish if the Head of Department encourages team spirit among all the stakeholders.

The Head of Department should design the organisational structure in such a way that it creates sound and open communication between teachers, learners and parents which will facilitate good working relationships between individuals. As one participant said: “The communication system within my school is not open. I feel that I am not important and that in itself affects my moral negatively.”

With regard to alleviation of poor relationships between teachers and learners caused by lack of learner discipline, the Head of Department needs to create effective disciplinary structures such as a disciplinary committee with a sound and clear policy for proper management of learner discipline since consistency in the application of disciplinary measures is important. One teacher echoed: “I feel frustrated when parents are not supporting my efforts of disciplining their children. I demand that the parents should teach their children to respect teachers.”

The Head of Department should create the perception among teachers that learners' discipline is a priority, and that learners do not have more rights than they do. The Head of Department should create a supportive environment such as providing guidance and counselling programmes to teachers, especially the female teachers since they experience greater difficulty in disciplining learners. One teacher said: "I wish that guidance and counselling programmes should be introduced in schools to help teachers cope with discomfort in the teaching environment."

4.6.2 ORGANISATIONAL STRESSORS

4.6.2.1 Workload

From the focus group interviews it became clear that the majority of the participants work for fifty hours a week, which includes lesson preparation, classroom instructions, marking, curricular and extra-curricular activities. One teacher said: "I face an almost equal workload at home of lesson preparation and marking after such a hectic day at school." This means that most participants are at risk of chronic stress and ill-health as a result of extensive overtime work. Most participants described their workload as very heavy due to having large numbers in the classes, having to keep pace with the marking of class activities and homework. As one participant stated "I work for fifty hours per week and I feel stressed by my workload."

The investigation also established that generally, workload stress is associated with overload where teachers are expected to assume extensive responsibilities in terms of their role. For example, the teacher may be assigned a pastoral role in addition to that of Head of Department, thus neither of the two roles is performed adequately. One participant explained that: "I am teaching my learning area, fulfil the role of pastoral guiding for a specific class and act as Head of Department. He said: "I feel exhausted at the end of the school day because of this high volume of workload and diversified task demands."

As indicated in paragraph 2.6.3, too many demands made in too short a time result in feelings of anguish and despair which in turn lead to considerable stress. One participant pointed out: “My workload is excessive and I cannot cope with it.” The work expectations made on school teachers at the Temba Circuit are also complicated by interruptions such as intercom announcements, unscheduled short notice staff meetings and other school activities as was pointed out by Vandenberghe and Huberman (1996:61) as a common generator of teacher stress. In this regard a participant said: “I am sick and tired of these continuous interruptions of my planned school day...Ever so often my lesson is interrupted and I sit with the stress of not covering the complete syllabus.”

The interviews show that the Head of Department should provide the necessary organisational support for the groups identified as at risk. This organisational support involves frequent interaction with groups who are at risk and guidance on how to prioritise and share the workload with colleagues. A teacher explained: “I as a teacher need support of my seniors in order to be able to manage my work-related stress positively.”

Further analysis of the interviews’ data showed that specific groups such as female teachers experience excessive stress because of their school workload in conjunction with the responsibilities of various other roles faced simultaneously on a daily basis. Many female teachers, for example, are simultaneously professional people, mothers to their children, and wives to their husbands. Thus, they must comply with different and conflicting demands. Other female teachers are single mothers who must fulfil the role of professional teacher and the role of mother and father to their children. One such a teacher who is a single mother emphasised, “I cannot even start to explain exactly how much stress I cope with each day, but what can one do...the show must go on!”

Moreover, beginner teachers are highly stressed due to an inability to cope with the demands made by the workload. A participant who has been teaching for only one year pointed out, “I want to quit teaching because as a teacher I am expected to play many

roles in a short time.” It seems that beginner teachers experience many problems as a result of excessive workloads and some feel that the experienced teachers dump difficult classes on them. In this regard one beginner teacher was concerned that “all the thorny tasks are dumped on me.”

What is very clear is that increased workload is a cause of serious stress among primary school teachers. Most participants reiterated the following opinion of one participant: “I feel dissatisfied and overburdened ...I feel exhausted at the end of the school day due to my workload which is excessive and stressful.”

Heads of Department also encounter excessive workloads and feel that their tasks should be reduced. Like one participant said: “I feel exhausted at the end of school day due to high volumes of workload.” Increasing extra-curricular demands and increased responsibilities with regard to the general administration of the school exacerbates the excessive workload of Heads of Department. They feel that the time allocated for administration within the context of an increased demand for ownership and the fulfilment of the seven key teacher roles is too little. One Head of Department pointed out: “For me extended responsibilities are a burden because I no longer feel in control...I am no longer committed to teaching since the dawn of democracy.”

This rigorous daily routine of teachers is frequently complicated by other demands, such as by involvement in extra-mural activities on top of the curricular programme they have to fulfil as class teachers. Some participants pointed out that they are also expected to teach learning areas for which they have not been trained and that the discomfort of teaching a subject that one is not prepared for causes tremendous stress. In this regard they blame the Department of Education for failure to conduct constructive workshops to train teachers to offer all the learning areas effectively. With regard to teaching a learning area for which one has not been trained to teach, one participant said: “I have no choice since it is the only job I have, but at this stage it is not a happy job...I am not a specialist on the topics.”

4.6.2.2 Head of Department as alleviator

From the interviews it is clear that it is the role of the Head of Department to provide the necessary organisational support for the groups identified as at risk. This organisational support involves frequent interaction with groups who are at risk and guidance on how to prioritise and share workload fairly with colleagues. Like one teacher has explained: “I, as a teacher, need support of my seniors in order to be able to manage my work-related stress positively.”

The interviews conducted showed that it is the role of the Heads of Department to assist teachers to cope with their work by organising constructive workshops for capacity building.

4.6.2.3 New leadership roles

It was already reported on in paragraph 4.6.1 that role conflict is explained as a significant source of teacher stress at the Temba Circuit. From the interviews it is clear that role conflict results from differences between teacher-leaders’ expectations for their new roles and the actual leadership activities they perform. One participant pointed out: “I am a class teacher and I am also playing a leadership role as a soccer coach coordinator at my school and that is causing tremendous stress to me.” In this regard, one of the greatest sources of role conflict in teacher leadership concerns tensions teachers feel between their roles as classroom facilitators who are working with learners and their roles as teacher-leaders who are working with other teachers and administrators. One participant proclaimed: “ I have to work under pressure at all times due to the conflicting roles I am expected to play as a teacher teaching my classes while simultaneously also have to act as senior teacher coordinating the teaching of the learning areas as an added responsibility delegated to me by the principal.”

The literature study on new leadership roles as pointed out in paragraph 2.6.6 shows that there is a lack of clear job description and information about the rights, duties and

responsibilities of the teacher-leaders, which resulted in uncertainty and inappropriate behaviour. The study of Naicker (2003:73) shows that undue teaching stress occurs when the leadership style of the Heads of Department is inappropriate to the new democratic principles espoused since 1994. Therefore, South African teachers of the post-apartheid era will be unlikely to tolerate a management style that is rigid, authoritarian and does not permit the free flow of ideas. Participants of the study confirmed this opinion. One of the teachers explained that: “I demand a democratic leadership style of my Head of Department because it allow the free flow of ideas as opposed to authoritarian leadership style and I hate feeling excluded from general decision-making.”

4.6.2.4 Head of Department as alleviator

The participants’ responses clearly showed that the Head of Department should demarcate, preferably in writing, the specific responsibilities and role expectations of each teacher clearly to lessen undue stress within the teacher as well as conflict among different teachers. As one participant said: “I am confused and frustrated by the conflicting leadership roles that I am expected to perform as senior teacher due to a lack of clarity about the scope and responsibilities of my job.”

With regard to opportunities for leadership style empowerment, the Head of Department should be effective and lead by example. The Head of Department should aim to reduce the teachers’ stress by providing appropriate leadership and motivating teachers as well as involving them in the general decision-making process. As one participant proclaimed: “I hate feeling excluded from general decision-making because I want to be empowered by being part of the decisions which affect me.”

4.6.3 PROFESSIONAL STRESSORS

4.6.3.1 Changing environments

With regard to the teaching profession, the need to cope with change is a major source of stress as pointed out by Travers and Cooper (1996: 8). The interviews conducted showed that teachers of the Temba Circuit are also experiencing stress related to environmental changes. A main stressor relates to the implementation of a changed curriculum. In this regard one participant teacher pointed to the responsibility of the Head of Department to manage change in a systematic and supportive way so that teachers know the new requirements and demands and have time to internalise them. One teacher said: “I dream of a Head of Department that can assist me with interpreting and implementing what is required.”

The interviews’ data also revealed that the Head of Department should aim to keep the organisation flexible during the implementation of a new curriculum. Once the programme of change such as curriculum is under way, it must be evaluated. Clear criteria need to be identified to measure the success of the curriculum change. One of the participants suggested: “Change in educational policies such as the curriculum should be introduced logically and systematically to avoid confusion.” Being called upon to implement mandated changes, for example, the Revised National Curriculum Statement indeed increases teacher stress as pointed out by Wilson and Hall (2002: 75-87).

4.5.3.2 The implementation of new education policies

An emerging pattern from the data collected shows that the teachers experience stress as a result of the implementation of new education policies. Participants in general are dissatisfied with the implementation of the Revised National Curriculum Statement because of inadequate training. In this regard one teacher pointed out: “My only experience of all the Revised National Curriculum Statement workshops is one of frustration... I was taught too many and confusing things in a very short period and all it

did was to increase my already high stress levels.” Another teacher mouthed her concern as follows: “My concern is having to deal with the complex policy document and terminology of the Revised National Curriculum Statement while lacking guidelines on what needs to be learnt on each grade... the lack of ongoing support from the Department of Education officials and the inability to approach them for assistance on addressing problems which might arise during implementation is killing me.”

From the interviews it seems that unreasonable expectations related to the implementation process of rationalisation and redeployment has caused some participants unforeseen and unexpected distress. The one participant described his experience as follows: “I was redeployed because the principal hated me... and for that reason, the policy was unfairly used to get rid of me from school.” Another participant added: “I feel traumatised and threatened especially when the process is unfairly implemented.”

What was interesting, however, was that some participants described the redeployment and rationalisation policy and the implementation thereof as beneficial to school improvement. In this regard one teacher pointed out: “I don’t have a problem with the implementation process of the policy because it is good for equal distribution of human resources to schools.”

4.6.3.3 Head of Department as alleviator

It became clear from participants’ responses that the Head of Department should introduce and manage change systematically in such a way that it helps teachers in adapting to new approaches to alleviating work-related teacher stress. From the interviews conducted it was also revealed that it is the role of Heads of Department to see to it that when change is introduced its insight and magnitude should be evaluated and monitored to avoid confusion. A participant pointed out that: “One of the most difficult activities of the Heads of Department is introducing and carrying out changes in the school.”

The Head of Department as alleviator needs to empower teachers to implement the Revised National Curriculum Statement. In this regard one participant pointed out: “I have a problem in implementing and interpreting the complex policy document and terminology of the Revised National Curriculum Statement and the lack of guidelines on what needs to be learnt on each grade frustrates me a lot.”

With regard to the implementation of the policy of rationalisation and redeployment, the Head of Department should ensure that the process is transparent and is carried out with pride, trust and integrity according to the set criteria. It is the role of the Head of Department to ensure that all the stakeholders such as the teacher unions and the officials of the Department of Education are present when additional posts are identified for redeployment purposes. In this regard one participant described his feelings as follows: “I am dissatisfied with the implementation of this policy because the process was unfairly implemented when my post was identified as additional to the establishment without following proper procedures as outlined in the procedure manual.”

4.6.4 PERSONAL STRESSORS

4.6.4.1 Challenges

Teachers who join the teaching profession will undoubtedly encounter stressful situations if they lack specialist knowledge to fulfil their roles. Participants in general indicated that they enjoy teaching and are not considering the possibility of changing their careers. The one teacher passionately announced:” I enjoy teaching and I am not even considering changing my career.”

From the collected data it is clear that some of the participants have stated that teaching is too demanding because of the multidimensional roles teachers have to fulfil and is challenging because of the complexity of the education policies teachers have to interpret and implement. As one teacher confirmed: “I do enjoy teaching even though it has too much work and is stressful.”

One Head of Department remarked: “I really enjoy my management job and cannot resign, the biggest challenge to me is the workload and the lack of support with specialist knowledge and guidance from the Education Department officials.”

4.6.4.2 Remuneration

Most teachers are leaving the teaching profession to work in the private sector because of poor salaries and unreasonable workloads. Some of the teachers are even afraid to talk about their profession let alone identify themselves as teachers at social gatherings fearing to be ridiculed by their counterparts who earn better salaries in the private sector.

It is clear from the interviews that financial remuneration is a matter of concern to most of the participants. As one teacher said: “I don’t enjoy teaching because of the unreasonable workload and the salary I receive which is too little to meet my financial needs since I have three children who are still at school and an unemployed husband to support.”

4.6.4.3 Head of Department as alleviator

It became evident from participants’ responses that teachers experienced frustration as a result of poor salaries when their workload is considered. It also became clear that teachers need support to judge matters within context. As one teacher pointed out: “I don’t enjoy teaching because the amount of work is not equal to the salary I receive and I wish someone could convince me of the contrary.” The dissatisfaction caused by low salaries among the participants was highlighted by the responses of the participants who wanted to resign and seek employment in other sectors.

The data collected from the interviews showed that the Head of Department should motivate teachers to persevere and continue in their careers in spite of work overload or lack of sufficient financial remuneration. Ultimately, teaching is a calling to serve society

and educate the nation's youth, rather than a profit oriented profession. The Head of Department has a major role to fulfil in convincing teachers of this ideal of life.

4.7 CONCLUSION

Chapter four focused on the findings of the empirical investigation of teacher stress encountered in the Temba Circuit and the role to be played by the Head of Department to alleviate the encountered stress. It was found that the main factors causing stress among primary school teachers at the Temba Circuit which Heads of Department are required to alleviate relate to role conflict, role ambiguity, new teacher roles, poor relationships between teachers and parents, workload, changing environments and new leadership roles.

The collected data indicates that Heads of Department can indeed fulfil significant alleviating roles in lessening the stress experienced by teachers under their auspices. It became apparent that Heads of Department could support their staff with regard to interpersonal, personal, professional and organisational stressors in many ways.

The conclusions and recommendations of the study will be discussed in chapter five.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Stress is indeed an inevitable part of everyday life. In this chapter a brief summary of the important literature and empirical findings are followed by recommendations in the form of guidelines to Heads of Department to assist them in their efforts to alleviate work-related stress encountered by teachers under their auspices. These findings and recommendations are guided by the aims of the study which are as follows:

- To investigate the causes of work-related stress among primary school teachers;
- To investigate the role of the Head of Department in alleviating work-related teacher stress in primary schools;
- To propose appropriate guidelines that Heads of Department can consider in their attempts to alleviate the work-related stress of teachers under their auspices in order to cope with the negative influence of stress.

5.2 SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT FINDINGS

The literature and empirical findings of this study address the research problem and aims that related to the nature and extent of work-related teacher stress experienced by primary school teachers and the role to be played by the Head of Department as alleviator of teacher stress.

5.2.1 Literature and empirical findings on the causes of work-related stress among primary school teachers

The first aim of the study was to investigate the causes of work-related stress encountered by primary school teachers in the Temba Circuit. It was necessary to firstly review the literature on school stress in order to determine what is already

known about the causes of work-related teacher stress which impacts negatively on work performance.

The theoretical background on the prevalence of work-related teacher stress and management's alleviation thereof was presented in chapter two. The focus was specifically on the teaching environment. The concepts stress, stressors, positive and negative stress, stress and personality type and stress in the workplace were discussed followed by a discussion of the sources of stress most frequently experienced by teachers.

With regard to stress it was revealed that work-related stress is a crucial part of the human condition and that one cannot avoid stress but should learn to manage it within acceptable levels (paragraph 2.2.1). It was found that teacher stress relates to the experience of unpleasant emotions such as tension, frustration and anxiety that result from stressful situations known as stressors. Positive and negative stressors were found to be characterised by the same psychological reaction, but distress or negative stress results in physical illness; eustress or positive stress impacts positively on increased achievement to the extent of encouraging exceptional performance (paragraph 2.3). Stress reaction was found to relate closely to personality type in that personality types 'A' create unnecessary stress for themselves because of their sense of urgency about time and personality types 'B' are more patient and relaxed, displaying a more laid back lifestyle (paragraph 2.4). It is important that the Head of Department should be aware of the reaction to stress of the teachers under his/her auspices representing the two opposing personality types to be able to respond appropriately.

With regard to stress in the school situation, stressors were found to be part and parcel of a teacher's work environment and the remedy lies in employing coping strategies (paragraph 2.5.1) The main sources of primary school teachers' stress were found to relate to role conflict, role ambiguity, heavy workload, relationships with colleagues, change, new leadership roles and new teacher roles (paragraph 2.6). Role conflict related mostly to the simultaneous occurrence of two or more sets of inconsistent role behaviours expected from the teacher, such as, being an imparter of knowledge while simultaneously having to coach and referee the soccer team. Role

ambiguity was found to relate to a lack of clarity about the roles and responsibilities embedded in teachers' job descriptions. Heavy workloads in particular were experienced by female teachers who have to meet the conflicting demands of both home and school by performing professional work during the school day and after hours while simultaneously fulfilling many other domestic tasks. Relationships between teachers, learners and parents were reported to be poor on account of negative criticism, a lack of support amongst teachers and a lack of parent involvement in the education of their children which includes neglect of discipline of their children. It was found that difficulties in interpersonal relationships are inevitable since within any organisation like a school, moments of tension will occur amongst parents, learners and teachers on account of human nature that should be managed to acceptable levels. Education policy changes related to the curriculum and matters concerning rationalisation and the redeployment of teachers. New teacher and leadership roles were found to impact negatively on teachers' stress because of a lack of a clear definition of the roles of teacher-leaders. The new curriculum was found to be frustrating to the teachers because of its complex jargon. The policy on rationalisation and redeployment processes traumatised teachers because of a lack of transparency and unfair implementation. These causes of teacher stress were grouped into four interrelated categories of stressors, viz. personal stressors, interpersonal stressors, professional stressors and organisational stressors (paragraphs 2.2 and 4.6).

The empirical investigation revealed that many teachers encounter role conflict due to inconsistent and conflicting role expectations. Teachers in focus group interviews admitted that they encountered role ambiguity as a result of a lack of clear, consistent information with regard to the seven key roles they have to perform. Teacher stress was also caused by the new leadership and teacher roles which are not clearly defined and thus cause uncertainty. Participants concurred that poor relationships between teachers, learners and parents, unreasonable workload, changing environments, the implementation of new education policies, teaching challenges and poor remuneration cause severe stress (paragraph 4.6).

5.2.2 Literature and empirical findings on the role of the Head of Department in alleviating work-related teacher stress in primary schools

The second aim of the study was to investigate what the role of the Head of Department is or should be, in alleviating work-related teacher stress. The Head of Department is an important person who can act as a stress filter between the teacher and the perceived threat in the school environment such as role conflict. This requires the Head of Department to be resourceful and provide appropriate leadership at all times (Naicker 2003:74).

Secondly, it implies that the Head of Department should support teachers under his/her auspices emotionally, organisationally and socially. The Head of Department should, for example, motivate and assist teachers by reflecting on their way of coping with their own stress processes and by being supportive of their initiatives and decisions taken to alleviate the negative work-related stress that they encounter (Naicker 2003:74).

The empirical investigation showed that some participants perceived the Head of Department as not supportive due to poor communication and poor co-operation with the staff. It became clear that the Heads of Department should give more professional support with the implementation of the Revised National Curriculum Statement and in the application of the policy on rationalisation and redeployment.

Interviews with Heads of Department revealed that they are aware that they should support the teachers under their auspices on an interpersonal, personal, professional and organisational level (paragraph 4.6). With regard to role ambiguity as an interpersonal stressor, for example, Heads of Department should seek to understand the causes of teachers' experience of role ambiguity at their schools to be able to attend to the problem appropriately.

5.2.3 Literature findings on a stress management approach

The third aim of the study was to develop guidelines for Heads of Department to consider in their attempts to alleviate the negative stress encountered by teachers under their auspices. Considering that stress is an inevitable, but often also a positive phenomenon of daily life, it should not be eliminated from the work environment, but should be managed effectively. For that reason concerted efforts should be taken by the Head of Department to minimise the harmful effects of negative stress experienced by teachers.

Minimum plans for stress management as orchestrated by school managers relate to the recognition and analysis of the stress problem and the generating of possible solutions in order to determine the most appropriate solution (Ellison 1990). Specific steps in such a stress management endeavour relate to the reduction of the demands made on teachers, reduction of the causes of work-related teacher stress, the introduction of relaxation training and the improvement of stress management skills by enhancing skills to cope with stress. The Head of Department should indeed manage stress by encouraging teachers to express their feelings freely, but without bitterness or aggression (Ellison 1990: 120).

5.3 GUIDELINES TO BE CONSIDERED BY HEADS OF DEPARTMENT

In an attempt to assist Heads of Department with their stress alleviating task, guidelines are presented that are arranged in terms of reactions to major teacher stressors. These stressors are grouped and discussed according to the four categories of teacher stressors, namely interpersonal, organisational, professional and personal stressors.

5.3.1 Interpersonal stressors

5.3.1.1 Role conflict

With regard to role conflict, the empirical findings of the study revealed that participants in general experience inconsistent and conflicting role expectations. The levels of inconsistency relate to multiple roles experienced by female teachers who are employees, mothers and spouses at the same time (paragraphs 2.6.1 & 4.6.1).

In order to alleviate the stress resulting from role conflict, the Head of Department should create effective and consistent work role expectation structures. This should be done by providing constructive workshops to empower teachers with regard to an understanding of their role responsibilities (paragraph 4.6.1). The Head of Department should protect teachers against stressful working conditions caused by inconsistent and conflicting role expectations such as being a professional teacher and a soccer coach by making them aware of and providing clarity on time management with regard to personal and work roles.

5.3.1.2 Role ambiguity

The findings of the study revealed that participants experience job expectations as vaguely defined. Role ambiguity results from confusion about the scope and responsibilities of the job, feelings of having little authority to carry out responsibilities assigned to the teacher and having to teach a learning area for which one has not been trained to teach (paragraphs 2.6.2 & 4.6.1).

In order to alleviate stress related to role ambiguity, the Head of Department should arrange to inform teachers about the different professional roles that include curricular and extra-curricular responsibilities. The Head of Department should provide clarity on the teacher's curricular and extra-curricular roles by drawing up clear and comprehensive policies of what the scope and responsibilities of each of these tasks are. Constructive workshops should be conducted on these aspects on a regular basis to clarify matters that are not clear, such as, the confusion related to the compilation

of work schedules, lesson plans and extra-curricular responsibilities such as conducting the school choir. This will alleviate teacher stress by reducing frustration caused by a lack of clear, consistent information regarding duties, tasks and responsibilities of teachers with regard to the seven teacher roles. (paragraph 4.6.1).

5.3.1.3 New teacher roles

Role ambiguity is caused by poorly defined teacher roles and this lack of clarity results in frustration among teachers. To alleviate the stress resulting from this and on account of the neglect of the Education Department to train and support teachers in their new roles, the Head of Department should arrange for constructive workshops and day long in-service training opportunities for teachers focussing on clarifying their new roles (paragraph 4.6.1).

5.3.1.4 Poor relationships between teachers, learners and parents.

Teachers have experienced tremendous stress with regard to maintaining discipline in the classroom since the use of corporal punishment was abolished. In this regard, female teachers experience more stress than their male colleagues because of stereotyped attitudes adopted by learners towards them. These stereotyped attitudes relate to perceiving female teachers as incapable of exercising discipline on account of their feminine atone and approaches. Lack of parent involvement in disciplining children is a major source of stress for teachers (paragraph 4.6.1).

Participants reported poor working relationships with colleagues as a source of stress. In order to improve relationships and provide social support to teachers, the Head of Department should organise regular constructive meetings, team building and social events to build team spirit and to provide the opportunity for staff to learn from each other. The Head of Department should design the organisational structure in such a way that there is sound and open communication between teachers, learners and parents essential for good working relationships (paragraph 4.6.1).

With regard to a lack of learner discipline, the Head of Department should constitute an effective disciplinary committee which should develop a sound and clear policy for

proper management of learner discipline. It is important that the disciplinary committee is consistent in the application of the disciplinary measures. This will help the Head of Department to alleviate poor relationships amongst teachers, parents and learners caused by poor learner discipline, the lack of explicit rules and poor communication of these rules (paragraph 4.6.1).

The Head of Department as authoritative person should address parents regularly on parent involvement and parent responsibilities with regard to ensuring that their children are well mannered and co-operative towards teachers. Parents should be encouraged by the Head of Department to actively support all reasonable requests from the teachers with regard to homework and punctuality. The Head of Department can also act as a filter with regard to the number of demands and expectations made by parents on teachers.

The Head of Department can improve collegiality by encouraging teachers to form support groups. The Head of Department should also play a leading role in encouraging teachers to focus on teaching the learners since teaching is their primary function. Involvement by the teacher in extra-mural and extra-curricular activities are commendable but it should not be so time consuming or demand such a level of commitment that the teacher cannot give sufficient attention to formal teaching (paragraph 4.6.1). It is the task of the Head of Department to ensure that teaching is treated as the most important aspect of school functioning and that teachers devote sufficient attention to teaching. In this regard the Head of Department should address teachers regularly on appropriate conduct and work ethics.

Since teachers become frustrated when they are precluded from the decision-making process on matters that affect them directly, the Heads of Department should, in pursuit of democracy, motivate teachers by letting them realise that their inputs are valued and needed for the development of the school as a sound, effective educational institution (paragraphs 2.7 & 4.6.2). This will not only increase work satisfaction, but also alleviate stress resulting from the exclusion from decision-making.

5.3.2 Organisational stressors

5.3.2.1 Workload

The findings of the study revealed that many participants on average work for fifty hours a week. This includes lesson preparation, classroom instruction, marking, other curricular activities and extra-curricular activities (paragraph 4.6.2). It was also evident that beginner teachers and female teachers with small children are highly stressed on account of excessive workloads.

In order to alleviate the stress caused by excessive workloads, the Head of Department should arrange for the development of a support programme for beginner teachers and female teachers to assist them to cope with their responsibilities. Heads of Department should contribute to the success of such support programmes by their support on an organisational, social and emotional level.

On an organisational level the support of the Heads of Department with regard to teachers' work overload relates to guidance to teachers on how to set priorities and share the workload with colleagues. The Head of Department should arrange for fair work allocation (paragraph 4.6.2).

Related to this is the input needed from the Head of Department to ensure an equitable distribution of workload between the various post levels, in order to alleviate stress resulting from possible overburdening on some levels. For example, if post level two teachers teach fewer than the scheduled teaching hours, the post level one teacher will receive an unfair workload.

5.3.2.2 New leadership roles

It is clear from literature and empirical findings that a lack of clear job description and information about the rights, duties and responsibilities of the teacher-leaders result in high levels of stress on account of uncertainty and incorrect behaviour (paragraph 2.7). In order to alleviate stress resulting from the confusion due to indistinctness, the

Head of Department should pursue a democratic leadership style of permitting the free flow of ideas to unpack matters pertaining to teacher-leader rights and duties and to iron out confusion contributing to misunderstandings (paragraph 2.7). This should be achieved by means of regular and constructive meetings on the matter.

5.3.3 Professional stressors

5.3.3.1 Changing environments

Numerous changes are taking place in the South African education system generating stress among teachers (paragraph 2.6.5). These changes essentially relate to the curriculum, the policies on redeployment of teachers, school-based governance and multi-cultural school environments.

To alleviate stress arising from these continuous changes, the Head of Department should aim to keep the school as flexible as possible to accommodate these changes. One way of ensuring flexibility is to react proactively. For example, once the programme of change such as curriculum reform is underway, the Head of Department must study these changes himself/herself, and then arrange for information meetings in which teachers are collectively informed and trained to implement these changes. Clear criteria should also be identified by the Head of Department to measure the success of change (paragraph 4.6.3).

On account of his/her authoritative position, the Head of Department should also contact the Department of Education to request them to implement staff development to prevent stress and burnout. Teachers should be consulted about changes to inspire a sense of ownership. In this regard the Head of Department should serve as a dynamic spokesperson lobbying for government to consult with teachers prior to policy development. After all, the teachers are the implementers of the government's education policy.

5.3.3.2 The implementation of new education policies

From the interviews it was clear that participants in general were dissatisfied with the implementation of the Revised National Curricular Statement. This dissatisfaction relates to inadequate training and the lack of ongoing support from the Department of Education officials to address problems, which arose during the implementation period. The policy on rationalisation and redeployment and the implementation thereof has caused teachers much distress (paragraph 4.6.3).

One way in which the Head of Department can contribute to the alleviation of teacher stress on account of policy implementation is to endeavour for transparency at all times. The Head of Department should also treat it as his/her responsibility to ensure that the organisers of workshops on Revised National Curriculum Statement matters be held accountable for the improvement of the quality and the frequency of the in-service training.

The Head of Department should ensure that teachers receive adequate training and enough support with the implementation of the new curriculum. With regard to the continuous process of implementing the rationalisation and redeployment policy, the Head of Department should ensure that policy implementation is transparent and is carried out fairly according to the set criteria.

5.3.4 Personal stressors

5.3.4.1 Remuneration

The interviews revealed that the financial remuneration of teachers is a cause of stress for many participants (paragraph 4.6.4). In this regard some participants are even considering career change because of excessive workload and poor pay.

In this regard the Head of Department should offer emotional support. The Head of Department should motivate teachers constantly by placing financial matters into perspective. In this regard the Head of Department can point out to teachers the many

opportunities available to them to experience work satisfaction which can add value to their teaching career.

5.3.4.2 Household problems

Although participants chose not to talk about their personal problems during the interviews, it could be deduced that some teachers are experiencing personal problems such as ill-health, divorce, loss of loved ones and insecurity on account of high crime rates.

According to Naicker (2003:88), teachers should talk about their personal problems with confidantes to relieve themselves of stress. Having supportive relationships to rely on can help people to deal with stressful situations. Those who lack such relationships are vulnerable to the effects of stress. In this regard the Head of Department should reassure teachers of their worth and their co-workers' support. The Head of Department should actively oversee the development and maintenance of constructive informal support structures for colleagues to counteract high levels of stress caused by personal stressors. In this regard the Heads of Department should continuously sensitise staff to the problems experienced by colleagues and encourage staff to be constantly alert to supporting colleagues whenever needed.

5.3.5 Retrospection

When reflecting on teacher stress and the role to be played by Heads of Department to alleviate negative stress, the Heads of Department should aim to reduce the levels of stress encountered by teachers by filtering unwanted stress. They should also encourage greater participation of teachers in all matters pertaining to a reducing of unacceptable high levels of stress as experienced by themselves or by their colleagues.

To be able to do this, the Head of Department should be a resourceful person. Firstly, the Head of Department should provide appropriate leadership at all times. Secondly, he/she should be responsive and supportive to teachers under his/her auspices. Thirdly, the Head of Department should motivate and encourage teachers by

reflecting on his/her own stress process and that of teachers and to find ways to keep stress within acceptable levels which can then be utilised as positive stress.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

To date, there has been relatively little research done on the stress encountered in South African primary schools. In this study, the researcher investigated teacher stress as encountered in primary schools in the Temba Circuit and the role of the Head of Department in stress alleviating efforts. The following recommendations for further study are based on the findings of this study.

The factors that contribute to teacher stress are many and varied. The role to be played by the Department of Education, parents and other important role players like School Governing Bodies in alleviating teacher stress was not part of the empirical investigation of this study and thus require additional research.

The focus of this research was on the role of the Head of Department to alleviate negative stress as encountered by teachers in the Temba Circuit. This is an exclusively rural environment. It is recommended that similar investigations be undertaken amongst urban primary schools to determine whether there are distinct differences between the kinds and levels of stress encountered by primary school teachers in rural and urban areas.

5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The researcher firstly acknowledges that this was a qualitative inquiry involving a small sample of teachers and Heads of Department in the Temba Circuit. The study does not seek to generalise findings.

The scope of the study was limited by the fact that only selected primary school teachers of three primary schools in the Temba Circuit were included in the

investigation. A third limitation related to the fact that the study was conducted in a rural orientated environment only.

5.6 CONCLUSION

The study was motivated by the research problem that related to the role of the Head of Department in alleviating work-related teacher stress in primary schools. To address the research problem, three primary schools were selected for focus group and individual interviews. The research results showed that primary school teachers indeed experience stress in the workplace. The main causes of stress in the workplace were found to be related to role conflict, role ambiguity, increased workload, policy changes, poor interpersonal relationships with colleagues, new leadership roles and new teacher roles.

The research results determined that Heads of Department have an important role to fulfil with regard to alleviating the stress as experienced by teachers under their auspices. The Head of Department should fulfil a constructive leading and supporting role on account of his/her authority and accountability related to his/her managerial position. The Head of Department is responsible for the development and maintaining of various structures of constructive support to the teachers under his/her auspices in terms of academic, social and emotional assistance to enable them to cope with unavoidable levels of stress.

It is hoped that this study will contribute meaningfully towards constructive organisational strategies to improve the working conditions and overall well-being of primary school teachers, on account of the active role to be fulfilled by the Head of Department as alleviator of work-related teacher stress.

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Annexure A

Leboneng Primary School
P.O. Box 114
Temba
0407
17 August 2005

The APO Manager/ ISC
The Temba APO
Private Bag X495
Hammanskraal
0400

Dear Sir

Request permission to conduct research interviews among primary school teachers and Heads of Department.

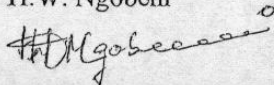
It would be greatly appreciated if the Department of Education in the North West Province, Bojanala East Region grants me permission to conduct research interviews among primary school teachers and Heads of Department. I am currently studying towards the Master of Education (Educational Management). My dissertation topic is: *The role of the Head of Department in alleviating work-related teacher stress in primary schools.*

The aims of this research project are:

- To investigate the role of the Head of Department in alleviating work-related teacher stress in primary schools;
- To identify the kind of negative stress experienced by primary school teachers;
- To analyse how teacher stress is manifesting in schools;
- To develop guidelines and recommendations that will enable Heads of Department to alleviate the negative work-related teacher stress.

An interview schedule will be presented to the principals aimed at allowing teachers and Heads of Department interviewed without disrupting the running of the school. The information gathered will be held in confidence and used strictly for research purposes. Your prompt response in this regard will be highly appreciated. Thanks in anticipation.

Yours faithfully
H.W. Ngobeni



Annexure B



Lefapha La Thuto
Department Of Education
Departement van Onderwys

PRIVATE BAG X495
HAMMANSKRAAL
0400
TEL: (012) 717-5562/3/4
717-3522
FAX: (012) 717-3316

BOJANALA EAST REGION TEMBA AREA PROJECT OFFICE

ematsei@nwpg.org.za

29 August 2005

Ref. No.: 7/4/1

To: Primary School Principals
From: APO Manager
Subject: Permission to conduct research interviews: H.W. Ngobeni

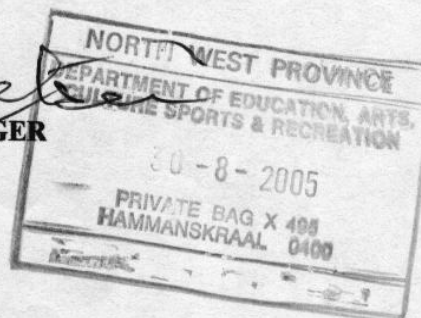
We hereby grant one of our colleagues, H.W. Ngobeni, headmaster of Leboneng Primary, permission to conduct interviews with colleagues in the primary schools.

Please allow him the opportunity but avoid interfering with the teaching/learning sessions.

Thanks


APO MANAGER

cc. ISCs



Annexure C

University of South Africa
Reg. No. 647-694-5
17 August 2005

Dear Colleague

You are invited to take part in a research study that has been approved by the University of South Africa. I am currently studying towards the Master of Education (Educational Management). My dissertation topic is:

The role of the Head of Department in alleviating work-related teacher stress in primary schools.

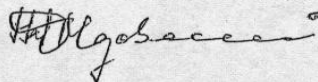
To be able to complete this study, I need to conduct interviews with teachers and Heads of Department who teach in primary schools.

The aims of this research project are:

- To investigate the role of the Head of Department in alleviating work-related teacher stress;
- To identify the kind of negative stress experienced by primary school teachers;
- To analyse how teacher stress is manifesting in schools;
- To develop guidelines and recommendations that will enable Heads of Department to alleviate the negative 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 by approximately March 2006. Your co-operation is appreciated.

Researcher: H.W. (Chris) Ngobeni



CELL: 0822234334.

Annexure D 1

SEMI-STRUCTURED FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES ONLY.

Category A: Role conflict

How does pressure to comply with different and inconsistent demands such as being heavily involved in extramural activities and the role you play as a class teacher affect your performance? Do you sometimes want to perform the job differently to that on the job description and if so what happens? If you take work home, does it interfere with family life? Does the Head of Department help you to alleviate the negative work-related stress that you are encountering? If "yes" how?

Category B: Role ambiguity

Do you have other responsibilities except the number of periods you are teaching? With all the added responsibilities and periods, are you able to carry out your duties well? Are all these added responsibilities clearly delineated (sharply described) to you? Do you have to teach learning area for which you have not been trained for? Does the Head of Department give you professional support to carry out your responsibilities?

Category C: Workload

How do you feel about your workload? Can you describe your curricular, co-curricular, extra-curricular and administrative tasks at this school? How often did you have to work on weekends and after school hours?

Category D: Relationships with colleagues

How is the interpersonal relationship among staff members? Do you support each other as colleagues at school? If you are not supporting each other may you give me the reason why not? Does the communication system work with reasonable efficiency among the staff?

Category E: Change

Which school policy has caused you much dissatisfaction: Outcomes Based Education, Rationalisation and Redeployment, Intergraded Quality Management System or Revised National Curriculum Statement? Why is this so and what would you recommend? Is change adequately implemented in your school? Is change effectively managed at your schools by the Heads of Department? If "yes" then how?

Category F: New leadership roles

How would you describe the decision making process at your school? Are members of staff adequately consulted on important decision? What type of support have you received from the Head of Department of the school? Would you consider this support to be adequate? What other support would you have appreciated from the Head of Department?

Category G: New teacher roles

What are the roles that teachers are expected to fulfil by virtue of their profession according to the policy on norms and standards? What other roles and responsibilities are teachers expected to play except teaching? Are the roles that you are expected to fulfil clearly defined in the policy? Are you coping with the pressure of fulfilling these roles as expected by the policy? If not, what should be done to help you to overcome this?

Category H: Personal and other factors

Do you enjoy teaching or are you considering the possibility of changing your career? What are your reasons? Do you suffer from any physical symptoms recently such as headaches and medical conditions such as high blood pressure that are stress related? How do you cope with these problems? Is there anything else that you would like me to know that may have caused personal discomfort and unpleasant emotions, even at home?

Thank you very much for participating in this interview.

Annexure D 2

SEMI-STRUCTURED INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES ONLY.

Q1. Do you have staff development programmes where you discuss good teaching, new leadership roles, new teacher roles, and workloads...? How often do you conduct such programmes?

Q2. What is the attitude of teachers to teaching and performing other roles as added responsibilities? How do you support them to perform better?

Q3. How is the teachers absenteeism which is related to stress according to the reports you receive on daily basis? How do you address (control) the problem of teacher absenteeism at your school?

Q4. Do teachers go to class in time or do they delay? How do you motivate them to respond promptly to the bell? How punctual are teachers in the morning? If not punctual then what is their common reason for their late coming?

Q5. Do you have policy for extramural activities? Is it effective or does it cause conflict by its nature of demands which sometimes interfere with teaching and learning? How can you alleviate this problem of conflicting policies at your school?

Q6. According to your observation, how does the phenomenon of teacher stress manifest in schools and what is your recommendation to alleviate this negative work-related stress in schools? Could you tell us what kind of negative stress is experienced by teachers at your school?

Q7. Which school policy do you think has caused much dissatisfaction among teachers at your school and how do you support them to overcome the dissatisfaction? Do you effectively manage change at your school and how do you manage it?

Q8. Do you have conflict management system in place at your school? Could you tell us how it operates to alleviate work-related stress?

Q9. Do you give teachers professional support? How do you give them such support and why? How do you assist teachers to build a sound relationship with other colleagues?

Q10. Do you enjoy playing managerial role as the Head of Department or you are considering the possibility of resigning? Could you briefly tell us more about the challenges you are facing as the Head of Department at your school that may have caused you unpleasant emotions?

Thank you very much for participating in this interview.