

**Narratives of Teacher Stress: The Impact of the Changing
Context of Professional Work**

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Education

By

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Abstract

In our daily lives we all experience forms of stress and as humans, we are equipped with internal mechanisms to react to the phenomenon. We utilize tactics that are recognised as ‘fight or flight’ depending upon how we perceive the threat and we employ them accordingly. However, when we are unable to meet the challenges placed upon us, when they form a barrier to our achievement and progress, we become overwhelmed and are susceptible to the detrimental effects of stress.

The past two decades have witnessed rapid technological advances and we are thus connected to a global set of networks. Education has had to change in order to compete with a global market that requires new skills. Teaching and what teachers do have come under scrutiny in terms of audit to ensure that a ‘World-Class’ education system is being delivered. As a result there has been an increase in teacher workload and the profession has become re-defined in order to meet contemporary needs.

Recent research by government led bodies supports the need to address teacher workload as a major cause of stress. One result has seen the development of the Workload Agreement (2003) aimed at easing the ever-increasing demands placed upon teachers. Whether this measure will be enough to address the difficulties surrounding teaching in a post-modern society remains to be seen.

This inquiry focuses on teachers who have experienced work place stress which is a widely recognised phenomenon and has its own particular features. In revealing key issues surrounding teachers and their workload this study aims to uncover the particular features of teacher stress with

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This inquiry focuses on teachers who have experienced work place stress which is a widely recognised phenomenon and has its own particular features. In revealing key issues surrounding teachers and their workload this study aims to uncover the particular features of teacher stress with

specific emphasis on role, role conflict, change, management issues, age and workload. Furthermore the study hopes to expose how teacher's lives are changed as a result of their encounter with stress. The harrowing nature of the participants' stress narratives compelled me to chronicle the stories and unveil the impact of their experiences upon all aspects of their lives.

Employing methods associated with the case study approach, I conducted unstructured interviews with eight participants. Each person provided me with stories that are narratives of their stress experiences. The nature of this work is grounded in the qualitative paradigm and I have approached this from an interpretative stance. I believe my study confirms issues surrounding teacher workload and teacher stress merits inquiry.

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Finally my thanks to Martin and Sophia who encouraged me to embark on this study and subsequently offered their support at all stages of the project.

Glossary of Abbreviations

CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DfEE	Department for Employment and Education
DFES	Department for Education and Science
HSE	Health and Safety Executive
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
INSET	In-Service Training
LSA	Learning Support Assistant
NASUWT	National Association
NC	National Curriculum
NLS	National Literacy Strategy
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
NUT	National Union of Teachers
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PPA	Planning, Preparation and Assessment
PRP	Performance Related Pay
SA	Support Assistant
SAT's	Standard Assessment Tests
STRB	School Teachers Review Body
TA	Teaching Assistant
TTA	Teacher Training Agency

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Do any of the following statements resonate with you?

- You can't sleep on Sunday nights
- You judge the day by how many cups of coffee have gone cold
- You realize it's lunch time and you haven't had time to visit the toilet since you got up
- Eating was a pleasant experience, now it gets in the way of relaxation
- The 'healthy limit' of alcohol intake does not seem like very much at all
- Everything you see on holiday becomes a lesson plan...that you finish in the middle of the night

(Adapted from www.tes.co.uk/staffroom, 2003)

Then, the chances are, you are a teacher and possibly a VERY stressed teacher. Of course there are many more aspects to consider, however I am interested in teachers and how their jobs affect their lives.

Stress results from inappropriate levels of pressure and it is the subjective feelings associated with stress that determine how we cope with its effects. It was observed in the Health and Safety Executive report (2000) that job

characteristics could increase perceived stress – but they did not inevitably lead to stress. A distinction should be made here. Adams (1999) clarified this when she identified stressors as being those components that are ‘within’ our psychological makeup, which leads us to being, susceptible to stress. Elements that are ‘without’ our control are the external factors, such as the demands placed upon our working practices and they have an impact on our stress levels. The report further examined the interactions between; age, gender, marital status, ethnicity, full-time/part-time workers and socio-economic status. Thereafter it explored the relationship between these variables and the likelihood of encountering workplace stress.

Teaching is widely recognized as a stressful occupation. Research into the causes and effects of workplace stress is plentiful (Kyriacou and Sutcliffe 1977, Health and Safety Executive 1995, Bowers and McIver 2000). More recently a report undertaken for the Health and Safety Executive (2000) sought to discover why some individuals perceive high levels of stress whereas others do not. In the report stress is defined as:

‘the reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed upon them. It arises when they can not cope’ (p1).

In our daily lives we all experience forms of stress and humans are equipped with internal mechanisms to react to these situations. We employ tactics that are readily recognized as ‘fight or flight’ Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1978) depending upon how we perceive the threat to ourselves. However, when we are unable to meet challenges we become overwhelmed and susceptible to the detrimental effects of stress.

Effects such as lethargy, sleeplessness, anxiety, panic attacks and other distressing symptoms, underlie an inability to deal effectively with the

situation in which we find ourselves. When in this tumultuous state we may experience a '*critical incident*' Measor (1984), that becomes a focus for our extreme distress. Such incidents prompt us to react using our personal ways of coping with stress. The impact that these events can have upon our lives is crucial as to whether we can continue in a professional capacity or not. The ramifications of ill health and absence from the workplace have a huge part to play in any institution, and indeed, our personal lives.

My study coincides with a recent shift in thinking about stress in general and how we now recognize that there are multiple causation factors leading to the condition. Previously stress was viewed in a far more 'internalised' manner and Adams (1999) did much to expose both the 'internal' and 'external' features of stress.

The past two decades have witnessed rapid changes and revision in what is expected of teachers in the UK and what they actually do. Coincidentally, societal changes (e.g. the rise in single parent families) have made a vast impact on peoples' lives, prompting us to consider a model, encompassing a more psycho – sociological perspective as a prominent model in explaining the phenomenon.

My inquiry is influenced by personal experience and I acknowledge this in my study. I intend to elicit the experience of other professionals within my field and to explore their perceptions of stress, its causes and impact on their professionalism. I aim to present my sociological interpretation of teacher stress as represented through biographical narratives. Doing so will provide a rich contextual backdrop to the participants' experiences of work place stress.

The Proximate Context of the Inquiry

The research project will be undertaken in the light of my own experiences during 1994 of workplace stress, ill health, early retirement and subsequent recovery. I was passionate about teaching and enjoyed a very successful career until the mid - nineties. A Head Teacher early in my career often remarked upon my enthusiasm. I had high expectations of being in my career for life. I wanted to make a difference in the lives of young people and I sought to encourage them to achieve their full potential.

I had been brought up in similar socio-economic conditions to those of my pupils and I had developed a successful career. One of my aims was to illustrate that it was possible to use a good education as a tool to gain success. I wanted opportunities for all the children in my pastoral care regardless of their background and ability. My post as a Head of Year in a large inner city comprehensive was demanding but I loved it. I coped with my workload, which at times was extremely hefty due to the nature of my position of middle management within the school. I seemed to thrive on pressure and meeting deadlines.

The changes to the curriculum in the form of a National Curriculum in 1998 and 2000 were at first, daunting. As with most periods of great change, adapting to new systems takes some time. Changes were implemented and I became aware of a remarkable increase in workload. I felt, that no sooner had we set the wheels of change into motion, that there was no means of stopping to reflect on what we were doing!

Coinciding with a period of rapid changes and innovations the school I worked in had a rapid turnover of leadership. For one reason or another, Head Teachers did not stay very long. Each new leader was keen to make

their mark, usually involving yet more changes to systems and practice. I found it increasingly difficult to keep pace.

I wondered if (then in my early 40's) that perhaps I was getting too old for the job. However, when I spoke with some of my younger colleagues I realized they too were under pressure to keep up. They spoke of being prepared for the amounts of paper work in the forms of planning and assessment, however they claimed that this seemed far in excess of what was necessary.

There had been several serious incidents concerning pupil behaviour in the school and an OFSTED inspection highlighted discipline as a major concern in their report. Poor discipline was reflected in poor examination results. The school was placed in 'special measures'. All means of managing a 'turnaround' were attempted. The school became an extremely stressful environment and provoked distress in many of its community. I became a casualty of stress.

At first I could not believe this had happened to me. I had a period of time off work but was determined to return. I tried twice to resume my work and failed. I was retired from my profession. For over a year I retreated to 'lick my wounds' but I constantly questioned why this had happened to me. I wondered if other teachers had experienced similar events. I began to read about stress and about teacher stress in particular. I realized that some of the literature resonated with me and when I reflected on my experiences, I could link them to the relevant literature. The most salient issues for me were;

- The rapid and sweeping changes to the curriculum
- Pupil behaviour
- Management issues
- Role
- Workload

Once I realized that teacher stress was a recognized phenomenon, I was able to be more rational about my inability to cope. Following a period of recuperation I decided to give teaching another try. I wanted to know if I was failing or if the areas identified above were the cause of my experience of stress. I was allowed to resume teaching two days per week in a different school. I no longer have the responsibility of my previous post and am working in a completely different environment. My work is entirely changed, being a classroom teacher. The school I teach in is happy and children achieve well. There is a very supportive management and an exemplary leader. Here I feel I make a valuable contribution to the school community. There are still elements of stress and I illustrate some later, however there are attempts made to address this by the management system.

Related personal data will be interwoven throughout the study in order to confirm or question similar experiences of the phenomenon as it occurs with some other professionals in the field of education. In doing so I must reiterate that my own experience will be transparent. This is intentional but is not intended to detract from the reportage of teacher stress by other participants.

Information contained in publications such as 'The Teacher' indicated that many 'middle-aged' teachers, who suffered stress related illness, accepted early retirement as their 'lot'. In agreement with this view, other authorities such as Health and Safety Executive (2000) and Bowers and McIver (2000) found teachers were experiencing increasing difficulty in maintaining the pace of work required. Furthermore in the results of their survey, teachers reported feelings of being de-professionalised, de-skilled and demoralized (Bowers and McIver 2000). They were seemingly caught in a spiral of 'blame'.

This knowledge prompted me to explore the perceived causes of stress from my colleagues. Were these feelings of stress and inability to cope prevalent? Could they be attributed to anything in particular? What was making teachers and teaching so stressful?

An opportunity arose during an informal staff meeting in my institution. I commented on a Times Educational Supplement article by David Newnham (11.1.02) 'Get a Life' that had really struck a chord with me. The school had recently been informed of a forthcoming OFSTED inspection and every moment seemed spent on the preparation for this event. The article discussed teacher stress and workload and referred to Coopers work on stress (1998),

'Since then,' Cooper says, 'things have gotten a lot worse.' *'Part of the reason,' he says, is 'initiative fatigue, human beings can only cope with a certain amount of change.'* (Crystal lecture)

I remarked on this and attached a print of Munch's 'The Scream' to a white board in the staff room. I invited teachers to contribute any thoughts or pertinent comments. Within minutes the board was covered. This confirmed my feelings that teachers were being overwhelmed by 'initiative overload'.

The teachers' comments covered a variety of perceived causes of stress;

If I have to tick just one more box!

We are testing them (children) to the limits!

More targets?

What new planning format? When did it change?

What next?

There was a section of the board devoted to the latest acronyms associated with the profession. There were so many, easily over fifty and prompted one teacher to comment jokingly, that it was, "*a good idea we know the alphabet!*"

Amongst them were;

PRP - Performance Related Pay

NLS - National Literacy Scheme

SATs -Standard Attainment Targets

NQT - Newly Qualified Teacher

NCT - Non Contact Time

TA - Teaching Assistant

SA - Support Assistant

LSA - Learning Support Assistant

The meanings of many were lost to some of us who had experienced several changes and new innovations over the years. Some were entirely new and

not yet familiar to everyone. We laughed at our confusion. However, this portrayed a picture, to me, of several professionals who were perplexed and dismayed at having constant new initiatives and directives thrust upon them. The responses were kept and later produced in a poster format at a Brunel University Conference Day (July 2002). The work was entitled 'Initiative Overload: Teachers' Responses and generated much useful information for me. Those who were in an educational arena had an empathy with the posters message. They confirmed that, indeed, many teachers were currently feeling very, if not extremely, stressed in their working lives.

I contacted a teachers' helpline and various support networks (UNWIND, PAX, SPECTRUM, Teacherline) via the Internet. They confirmed my initial thoughts. This topic generated significant concern not only amongst teachers, but other groups such as, their employers and unions. Thus I began to ask more questions and I began speculations about the impact of stress in teachers' work, on their health and well being. I felt compelled to make further inquiries into teachers and their experiences of workplace stress.

Conclusion

It was revealing to note that early work carried out by Dunham (1975) attributed a high turnover of staff as a clear indication of stressed teachers. There is more recent evidence (Bowers and McIver 2000, Health and Safety Executive 2000, Bowers 2001, General Teaching Council 2002, Galton and MacBeath 2002) which substantiates my belief that teacher stress is prevalent and therefore merits further investigation. Moreover it would be useful to see what the research indicated about the most productive means to retain teachers and support them in their work.

If the government is committed to retaining teachers unless they are deemed permanently, medically unfit to continue, then efforts must be made to support their endeavours. There must be some assurances given that working conditions are congruent with a healthy lifestyle. I have proven that it is possible to return to the classroom. I still strive to make a difference in children's lives. I am able to sustain a position that entails two days working each week but I know that is the limit of my capability now. I have no post of responsibility and could not entertain the stress this would put me under. My return has only been accomplished by sheer hard work and determination. This has not been easy.

Teachers' workload and teacher stress appears to generate considerable interest within the profession. The causes and effects of workplace stress are well documented and will be explored in a subsequent chapter. I consider my research to be a timely inquiry coinciding with the Workload Agreement and the need to implement the first stages of trying to create a better work / life balance for teachers.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

The aim of this chapter is to review literature concerning teacher stress, its possible causes and the impact of its effects.

Introduction to teacher stress

Most literature makes appropriate reference to the causes and nature of stress. Early work was done by Seyle (1975) who is regarded by many as the '*godfather of stress*'. Seyle recognized that stress is present in all our lives and that not all stress is bad for us. Seyle described stress as, '*the spice of life,*' (p74). We sometimes need stressful situations and indeed, some individuals thrive on it. Those with a psychological perspective would assume that we are furnished with the internal mechanisms associated with '*fight*' or '*flight*' suggested Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1978) and these are our triggers in responding to stressful situations. In other words, we may determine our best course of action is to distance ourselves from a perceived threat and '*flight*' becomes our response. Alternatively, we may feel that we possess the means to deal with the situation by confronting it, thus we enter the '*fight*' mode.

Stress can sometimes be a powerful force – a driver that helps us to achieve our potential, conversely too little stress can lead to boredom and underachievement. It is when stress becomes unmanageable, that individuals lose control and begin to suffer adverse effects of stress, such as anxiety and depression asserts Adams (1999).

Early studies by Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1977) established a clear relationship between working conditions and stress. In a subsequent study, (1978) they offered a model of teacher stress which conceptualised the phenomenon in terms of teachers individual responses to their perceptions of the situations they found themselves in. This is a key to our understanding of the stress phenomenon. Interestingly this notion underpins the work of other authors, such as Adams (1999) who acknowledged the influence of the '*within*' and '*without*' stressors. These are determining features relating to how we cope or conversely, do not cope with stress.

'*Within*' stressors are determined by our individual characteristics and our ability to employ strategies to cope with the phenomenon, declared Adams (1999). The '*without*' stressors are those brought on by organisations and institutions within which, we have no means of controlling the demands placed upon us. Fundamentally, how we perceive those factors, is how we determine and develop our responses. When we can discern between those things we are able to control and those we can not, we will usually produce an appropriate response. If we find ourselves unable to respond adequately, we suffer distress manifested as fear and panic. We may subsequently display the more commonly associated physical symptoms of stress as pointed out by Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1978b) such as sweating and dizziness, disorientation and loss of control.

The inquiries of Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1978b) indicated that approximately one quarter of teachers sampled found their occupation, '*very or extremely stressful.*' (p159). This was supported by the results they obtained using a Likert type scale, that elicits the strength of responses to a set of questions. The choice of answers commonly range between strongly agreeing and strongly disagreeing with a given set of statements. However

there are difficulties in employing such methods when conducting research into stress, which is generally not quantifiable. There is no sure way of recording the unique experience individuals have of the stress phenomenon. Each person could report the depth of their feelings in very different ways. We can not be sure if rating scales are responded to honestly, as we all seek to represent ourselves to each other in the best light. According to Cohen et al, (2000) an analysis of responses to individual rating scales can provide a rich source of participants' feelings and provide statistical data on which to base interpretations. However Cohen et al, (2000) remind us that we must do so with caution.

Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1978b) offered further clarification of teacher stress as, '*a response syndrome of negative effect (such as anger or depression) resulting from the teachers job*' (p159). Furthermore, Kyriacou (1981) described the phenomenon as, '*an unpleasant emotional state (such as tension, frustration, anxiety, emotional exhaustion) arising from aspects of one's job*' (p55). Kyriacou and Sutcliffes' work could be considered as constituting an important fore runner of subsequent research into teacher stress. This can be viewed as an important on-going subject of inquiry that has an impact on today's teaching force.

Looker and Gregson (1989) also interpreted the findings of a Likert type scale of responses when investigating stress. They determined that stress was, a '*mismatch between perceived demands and how we think we can cope with those demands*' (p89). Teachers have to endure lengthy periods of stress such as, when writing reports, parent consultations and examination preparation. When demands reach an intolerable level, it can lead to a breakdown of health. The stress responses involve all bodily functions and if we are exposed to frequent prolonged stressors, such as those previously mentioned, it would be reasonable to assume that a period of illness may result, asserted Looker and Gregson (1989).

According to Gray and Freeman (1988) stress is present in all organisations and we should expect some reaction to pressure. However, organisations do not suit all people all of the time. Ironically educational institutions purport to be person centred and should have care-management as a central component of their policy and practice. Instead, for some individuals, the institution and its operationalisation hold the triggers for their stress symptoms.

Esteve (in Cole and Walker 1989: 1) regarded the condition of stress as, '*paramountly disabling.*' He reminds us that although teacher '*burnout*' appears to be a commonly used blanket phrase for teachers' feelings of low morale and anxiety, there are other factors to consider. Esteve draws attention to a backdrop of high public criticism and little acknowledgement of teachers' difficult working conditions and were felt to be contributory to the teacher's experiences of stress. Whether teachers can identify areas for changes to ease their working lives largely depends on how they perceive factors impacting on their work. Primary factors, such as the day to day running of the classroom can be directly under the influence of the teacher. Systems and processes can be adapted in order to meet individual coping needs. Secondary factors belong to the situation teachers find themselves in, the organisation and its indirect effects and demands. Such demands can provide the de-motivators that lead some individuals to experience stress. When these sources of uncertainty or conflict are not resolved, says Esteve, they can have a profound effect, impacting on the well being of individuals within the organisation.

Dunham (1992) described stress as, '*a process of behavioural, emotional, mental and physical reactions caused by prolonged, increased or new pressures, which are significantly greater than coping resources*' (p92). Interestingly, at the time of his work he observed that teachers appeared unwilling to admit to stress. This response may have signalled some

rebellion at the culture of blame, where teachers who are under pressure are viewed as being at fault for becoming ill. Teacher stress may have been interpreted as a sign of weakness or failure. Some teachers face stress and try to cope with increasing demands. Dunham would interpose that the reaction relies heavily on the teacher being able to identify key stressors and to respond appropriately. If this could be achieved the adverse effects of stress would be avoided.

When considering the manifold tasks Capel (in Cole and Walker 1989) suggested teachers could face daily, such as teaching, counselling and producing differentiated learning materials, something has to give. Those teachers who are unable to cope may experience emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and low levels of personal accomplishment.

Teacher stress is similar to other forms of occupational stress in that it is workplace related. The Health and Safety Commission (1990) defined the phenomenon as follows: *'stress is the reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed upon them. It arises when they can't cope.'* Furthermore they reinforced this by adding, *'excessive workplace pressure can cause stress, which may be harmful'* (p32). Differentiation must be made between 'being under pressure,' which is sometimes necessary and can be productive, as opposed to prolonged, chronic stress that can be damaging to health.

At the time of their study, Cole and Walker (1989) suspected the mass media perceived stress as a *'passing fad.'* Indeed it has a continuing, significant impact on the lives of teachers today. The results of recent research (Bowers and McIver 2000; Health and Safety Executive 2000; Bowers 2001; General Teaching Council 2002) serve to confirm the

consistency of research in this area and that indeed, teacher stress has not abated.

Contextualising Teacher Stress

What is it about our Education System that is capable of having such detrimental effects on teachers? The following statement may provide some explanation.

'The spiralling demands of government initiatives, incessant record-keeping, education plans, targeting and inspections, have left teachers reeling. A working week of 50 hours is average. Many are doing 70 hours. This is not only bad for teachers, it's harmful to children. It's time to limit the load.' Times Educational Supplement,(Editorial 13.4.01).

In recent years the Education Service has faced pressure to secure improvements regarding teachers working conditions. In response to a situation of increased illness and absence due to work related stress, the Government was urged to discover why teachers were finding their tasks markedly more difficult. A number of influential reports on Teacher Workload and related issues have resulted such as (Health and Safety Executive 2000; Bowers and McIver 2000; Bowers 2001).

Various concerned bodies such as the General Teaching Council and Teachers' Unions have welcomed the reports. The inquiries indicated teachers' workloads as being excessive and stress provoking. Issues such as change, role ambiguity, conflicting management styles, accountability, transparency, working conditions, salary and career prospects, pupil behaviour and workload were frequently reported as causes of teacher stress.

Studies looking at what teachers actually do, such as those in diary form used in the work of Johnstone (1993) where over a period of time, the participants recorded their tasks, are illuminating. The teachers in her study detailed the work associated with their duties and how long the activities took. Such documents provide clear descriptions and insights into what is involved in the role of the teacher. We all know what teachers do, don't we? Well, they teach! It is however all the associated tasks, such as planning and preparation, marking and assessment, for instance, that teachers find so time consuming, confusing and confounding.

Exploring Multiple Factor Causation of Stress amongst Teachers

The individual perception of where the stress comes from and how it can be addressed concerns us because if teachers are unable to identify the locus of control, they lose their ability to perceive the contingent relationship between their behaviour and events that surround it. Dunham (1976) claimed that the recognition of unclear expectations and targets for teachers appeared to promote mistrust and apprehension leading to stress.

Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1977) focused their studies on the multiple factors that influenced teachers and their work. The responses they gained via interviews and questionnaires from 157 teachers led to their unveiling exacerbating factors leading to teachers experiencing stress. The most common factors were;

- Role Conflict
- Change
- Age
- Gender

- Management Issues
- Workload

Role Conflict

In their study of teachers, Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1978b) found that approximately 20% of the 157 respondents to a questionnaire reported their work as, '*very or extremely stressful.*' In a later revised model of teacher stress, Kyriacou (1987) again highlighted teachers' perceptions of the undue pressures placed upon them. They argued that high levels of pressure placed on individuals could lead to an inability to cope and damaging effects of stress being evident. Other authorities, (Phillips and Lee 1980, Payne and Fletcher 1983 in Kyriacou 1987) concurred that the degree of control the teacher has over stressors was crucial to their stress response.

Similarly, Kyriacou, Freeman, Capel, Cox et al, (in Cole and Walker, 1989) agreed that teachers were disturbed by the lack of control they had in all spheres of their work. Likewise Cole (1989) pointed to the frustration felt by teachers who were unable to retain their many diverse ideologies and therefore were forced to conform to a prescribed curriculum. This was in order to meet the expectations of others such as Department Heads, Head Teachers and Local Authorities and Government bodies. In doing so, teachers could be monitored in terms of measurements such as, examination results and league tables.

The high values placed on the results of examinations for example have further impacted on how teachers view their role. Professional transparency, where teachers feel under pressure at being judged by their results, observation of their practice by peers or OFSTED, suggested Wragg (TES

25.6.04), were also felt to have an impact on increased levels of stress in teachers.

When citing role ambiguity and role conflict as areas of stress for teachers, Dunham (1992) echoed Capel, (in Cole and Walker 1989). However, Capel offered an opinion that, those who understand and accept that their job could be stressful had more success in controlling the scale of stress that might otherwise be suffered. The key to dealing with this issue may lie in teachers being more adequately prepared for the manifold tasks required of them. In order to become more resilient to the effects of stress, greater role preparedness could be explored as a means to better coping behaviours. The Teacher Training Agency worked closely with the Teacher Support Network in seeking ways to improve the preparation of Newly Qualified Teachers and young teachers (in Teacher Support Network Four Years On-2004), as they appeared to have recognized the implications of stress for recruitment and retention. If trainees and Newly Qualified Teachers are given adequate and appropriate learning experiences, they can be better equipped to deal with the reality of teaching.

Considering the multi-dimensional nature of the job, there may be a need to re-define the role of the teacher. Furthermore, Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) suggested that teaching could be re-professionalised in a more contemporary setting to meet the demands of the modern day curriculum. They offered a model for teacher professionalism that attempted to meet the challenges presented by a post-modern age to educational policy and practice. Their revival of teacher professionalism encompassed the development of cultures of collaboration where teachers worked together towards continuous improvement.

Capel and Woods (1998) highlighted the confusion teachers have experienced over their role. It is easy to question how much authority the teacher really has over pupil development, learning and socialization, particularly when teachers are unsure what the latest educational focus should currently be. This can be set against the backdrop of constant changes in policy and practice suggested Troman and Woods (2000).

The Bigger Picture: Stress and anxiety in contemporary late modern societies.

Societal Changes

Our world has changed rapidly over the last few decades in a way that Beck (1999) described succinctly as, '*...a new kind of global order, a new kind of society and a new kind of personal life are coming into being, all of which differ from earlier phases of social development,*' (p2).

We are living in a state of global restructuring and there are changes involved in our social and political lives. At the heart of this dynamic process is Information Technology and its impact at being able to cause shifts of control and power. We can communicate instantly with people all over the world via devices such as web cameras, satellite technology and through digital communication we are thus connected to a host of individuals. Thus, the use of Information Technology has the power to promote rapidity of growth and control over workforces. We can share information, news and ideas with several people at once without ever leaving our homes. We can witness other people's lives and see history as it is made asserted Maguire (2002). Previous generations did not have to consider the results of the changes in society brought about by rapid technological advances. In a sense, time and space have become compacted

and Harvey (1989) referred to this process as *'time – space distantiation,'* (p142) where there is a global village with no discernible boundaries, except for those whose economies prevent them gaining access.

This reflects a world of changing ideas and values and according to Henderson and Castells (1987) and these issues touch all areas of our lives. According to Henderson and Castells (1987) the intensity of change and the domination of exaggerated power are the forces controlling the markets of productivity from the most demanding positions. The countries in control are those who can monopolize the most technologically advanced workforce. This is exemplified in the nature of Capitalism that characterizes the New Times. The power of 'New Capitalism' lies in the ability to exhort workers to achieve more. In doing so, they agitate the workers into a state of unease because the 'economic elite', those 'captains of industry' are able to push and explore new ways of making money. Other countries have to capitulate and follow suit to become part of the network, as the economy of one country can not survive alone. Castells (2000) work on network societies demonstrated that we must be part of the global information society in order to be part of the marketable workforce. This is enhanced by the regulation and audit for the promotion of educating highly technologically skilled workers able to compete globally for jobs. Those who can not compete and have little access to the tools that allow them to take part in such a world occupy other spaces. They are deemed to have less value and command less reward for their work.

Harvey (1989) agrees with Beck's (1999) discussion of risk. Many societies are enduring rapidity of change promoting insecurity in the values we hold. We seem to need a framework in terms of time, space and society. Furthermore, Harvey clarifies my point: *'Symbolic orderings of space and time provide a framework for experience through which we learn what we are in society,'* (p214) and we lose sight of one of our fundamental needs,

when- *'during phases of maximal change, the spatial and temporal bases for reproduction of the social order are subject to the severest disruption,'* (p 239).

Harvey equated this space and time connection with monetary concerns and a state of confusion: *'Time and space both get defined through the organisations of social practices fundamental to commodity production.'* Consequently, *'no one knows what the 'right time and place for everything' might be,'* (p 239).

Beck (1999) alerted us to the anxieties that, transformations in areas such as the organisation of work that can challenge our *'fundamental convictions'* (p91). Societal changes where behaviour and attitudes have been affected cause us to experience a state of uncertainty. We have become part of what Beck terms the *'society of risk'* (p3). He defined the concept thus: *'Risk is the modern approach to foresee and control the future consequences of human action, the various unintended consequences of radicalized modernisation. It is an (institutionalised) attempt, a cognitive map, to colonize the future.'* (p3).

Beck asserted that instruments such as the media have installed this direct politics of *'Global technological citizenship'* (p44), which has led us to be part of global risk communities. This can be seen as part of the complex condition of living in a risk society. In agreement with Maguire (2002), Beck underlined the role of the immediacy of communications in this new risk scenario as; *'The political site of the world risk society is not the street but television'* (p44). Where we see the threat of risk determines our response. This is the *'whip'* (p137) that keeps us in a state of constant agitation and anxiety, stated Beck (1999).

Giddens agreed that: *'modern social life is characterised by profound processes of the re-organisation of time and space. ...they act to transform the content and nature of day-to-day social life'* (p2). However, we are able to play a part in our destiny. Individuals have choices and we can, to some extent control our lifestyles. The 'high risk' lifestyle such as individuals who partake in 'substance misuse' is one of choice. The risk of being involved in a catastrophe however, is not usually within our control. At the core of this is our ability to be reflexive and open to change advised Giddens (1991) *'In the settings of modernity, altered self has to be explored and constructed as part of a reflexive process of connecting personal and social change'* (p33).

Risk affects us all in terms of it being a powerful influence on individuals, collectively, such as gendered or ethnic groups and in institutions such as schools. We are, according to Giddens (1991) *'all connected to a global capitalistic economy'* (p33).

What we need to consider is the way individuals have to make radical adaptations in their personal and professional lives. In the face of rapid and radical changes, life beliefs are challenged and need to be modified to meet new demands in order to compete for space. The construct of identity is a powerful tool in dealing with change. According to Castells (1997) our experiences and the meanings we attribute to them, help us to construct our identity. If we consider that we all hold a plurality of roles at any given time such as wife, mother, sister, we need the ability to assert each role in context. This essentially requires us to adopt a position and recognized identity. This has become difficult in times where we display: *'defensive reactions against the impositions of global disorder and uncontrollable, fast-paced change'* stated Castells (1997:64). We can consider this in light

of the changing values held by public sector professionals including teachers – a cohort whose lives have been subjected to dramatic levels and intensities of change over the last few decades. Alongside this we have as ‘risk’ subjects to appreciate the various ways in which we negotiate and seek to be accepted. Our relationships are meshed in with increasingly complex forms of social difference. These alterations in the stability of social and institutional forms are the context and circumstance of our personal, professional, gendered and familial positions, for instance.

It is interesting to note that Castells believes we can re-assert identity by subscribing to the traditional collective identities of family, nationality and religion. These groups who look for spaces to have their voices heard can be viewed as those who have *‘powerful resistance identities’* (p356). It is difficult to hold on to our resistance and re-assert power if we hold on to ‘old times’ or belonging to stigmatized groups. The identities we assert can prove a great strength and source of value if they are recognized and seen to contribute.

We can however, be undermined by what ‘others’ construct for us, often our physical appearance is crucial in these projective identifications. Most notably, perhaps in the context of gender and ‘race’ for example. The traditional role of ‘housewife’ and ‘little woman’ for instance is at odds with the modern woman’s attempts to transform herself. This occupies a space of great possibility and high anxiety, where women can be seen to challenge the traditional role thrust upon them and adopting new positions. It has become more common to hear of women ‘juggling’ their roles to enable them to be the primary carer of the family and to have a career outside of the home.

In these 'new times' however, traditional modes are themselves subject to constant revision and we are constantly invited to create new identities. At the same time however, that residues of tradition remain alongside new postmodern identities that are signaled. Such multiplicity creates a space of great possibility and high anxiety.

The most prized new identity can be seen as the highly dynamic, go-getting individuals who have broken with the 'old times'. Here the entrepreneurial subject is prominent. This focus on the future brings the danger that where there is so much constant change that there is no space left to reflect (Schon 1983).

Educational Changes

In the light of such societal changes, the government response has provoked educational changes. In 1989 Cole referred to the changes in education as, '*sweeping, radical and comprehensive*' (p164) and they have continued to be so since the time of his writing. Kiman (1998) concurred and attributed periods of rapid change, constant innovations and initiatives, as contributory to teacher stress. These issues were furthermore acknowledged for teachers being vulnerable to professional 'burnout'. Callan and Terry (1994) offered their support by attributing change as contributory to stress in organisations such as schools.

New initiatives are constantly appearing and have brought all manner of challenge to contemporary teaching and learning. Compliance is costly to some teachers and highlighted succinctly by Hey and Bradford (2004:20-28) who cited Dadds' (1999) analogy of '*swarming bees*'. This illustrates the manner in which teachers are subjected to constant change and innovation

and the way they respond by ‘swarming here and then there’ never really knowing where they should be swarming to next! In other words it is not the content of change that is seen as significant as that it is change for its own sake, which seems to indicate dynamism. Educational changes such as the implementation and revisions to, the National Curriculum, Literacy and Numeracy Hours, have required teachers to commit large amounts of time towards planning, preparation, assessment and delivery of dynamic lessons that meet OFSTED standards of approval. For the NUT McAvoy pointed out: *‘Too much unnecessary preparation and planning for the purpose of self protection is a major cause of teachers’ excessive workload,’* (The Guardian 3.5.02).

Teachers must ensure all pupils whatever their ability or aptitude, have access to the curriculum DfEE (1997) and this often provides them with challenges. Teachers try to ensure materials and teaching aids reflect the differing needs of all their pupils and this can be difficult in the light of Social Inclusion DfEE (1997). Social Inclusion has heralded a need for increased levels of classroom support. In recent years the trend has been to include pupils with a variety of Special Needs in mainstream schools. This is referred to in the Green Paper, Excellence for All: Meeting Special Educational Needs (DfEE 1997) and offers teachers guidance on how best to manage the aims of Social inclusion. In order to address the challenge of meeting Special Needs for pupils, extra provision in the form of Learning Support Assistants was suggested as a significant way forward. As a result, their management, role and training have been formalized and this has become an extra role for teachers to undertake.

Government imposed changes have produced a system that can be measured in terms of success. The National Curriculum and a whole battery of tests have been produced in order to ensure schools and teachers are accountable. There is increased pressure on young people to perform well in tests and

public examinations, as they will be entering a global market workforce. Pupil performance is a measurable factor by SAT's, GCSE and A level results and both parents and teachers regard children's attainments as reflecting good teaching suggested Svendsen, (The Guardian 10.6.03). Children's achievements are recorded in league tables that are subsequently placed in the public domain. This has an impact on how teachers deliver the curriculum and there are fears that it can become 'sculpted' towards the tests.

Ball's views are (1999) in agreement with Dillon and Maguire (2000) that the marketized school is audited and judged on success of tests and targets achieved. Teachers have to adapt and change in order to deliver a curriculum that caters for testing and measuring to International standards. Globalisation has a considerable effect on what is happening in our schools and inevitably on what the teachers' role has become.

Teaching is to be reformed to provide a 'World Class Education Service' thus preparations are being made in order for teachers to be, *'enabling the nation to prepare for the emergence of the new economy and its increased demands for skills and human capital'* DfEE (2001).

Reprofessionalising the Teacher

There has been heated academic debate in recent years (Hargreaves and Goodson 1996, Ball 1999, Dillon and Maguire 2000) in relation to whether government attempts at reforming educational professionals have moved in the direction of re or de-professionalisation. The former strategy implies a distinct lack of trust in teacher professionalism. However in order for re-professionalisation to occur Hargreaves (1996) recognizes the need to

reform in the light of new times and requirements for new skills and competencies.

Reform over the last three decades have been attempted according to Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) and these should be contextualised in a time of *'profound social change'* (p9). Teachers are caught up within these reforms and many of them imbued with pre-marketized values; find themselves in a contradictory relationship to attempts at re-professionalisation using audit and accountability. As Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) point out: *'It marks a struggle to redefine the work of teaching by governments, administrators, business and teachers themselves'* (p4).

In order to respond to requirements from a variety of different stakeholders to educate for the global economy teachers are expected to comply with the new conditions however, this can come at a price. A culture of compliance entails Performance Management, Performance Related Pay, Appraisal and Mentoring, warned Maguire (2002). Teacher Training has now changed through such means and has become an agency promoting competencies and skills, thus diminishing creativity and individuality, questioning and reflexivity.

It is no wonder that teachers feel frustration at not being able to retain their individual professional stance. Their work is in a state of perpetual flux. Maguire (2002) echoed Ball's (1999) description of contemporary teachers: *'teachers have become transparent and soulless. All imagination and creativity have been bleached out'* (p26). Whilst this may be an extreme view, it will resonate with many teachers. In order to keep up with the latest educational trends, teachers have to leave behind their unique contribution to the teaching and learning experience. Insecurity, mistrust and anxiety

result from having to be multiply accountable to a variety of interested 'others'.

Under New Labour a variety of Green Papers and other documents exhort teachers to 'Meet the Challenge of Change.' Modernising the profession has been proposed however, it has instead been re-configured. According to Quicke (2000) these 'new times' simply serve to conceal '*a new language of oppression hidden behind old structures of inequality*' (p300). Initially, Quicke offered a devastating critique on de-professionalisation and de-regulation of what teachers do. He then reverted to recommending a model of professionalism through collaborative means!

There is clearly conflict over what aspirations at reform consist of and caution is advised. We could be inviting a 'culture of blame' where teachers and teaching are blamed for pupil failure. Policy makers and management will seek to obviate blame and shift it from their domain. Exertion of power in this form is exemplary of workplace bullying argued Troman and Woods (2000).

Goodson (1992) pointed to several forms of professionalism in his post-modern view of teaching such as classical, practical and extended. Each form has its own virtues and entails different tensions between regulation and independence. He also warned that new initiatives can prove destructive and intensify teachers work: '*professionalisation can empower teachers or exploit them*' (p20). In an alternative view, Helsby and McCulloch (1997) asserted that competencies could be increased, thereby raising teachers' credibility and professionalism.

We are urged to consider the market forces at play in teacher professionalism and how schools are now marketed in competition via results, by Dillon and Maguire (2001:22) '*children and their performances are tracked and exchanged as commodities.*' In agreement Mahoney and Hextall (2000) offered the opinion that: '*In some schools the discourses of financial planning and economic rationalism now operate in an antagonistic relation to the discourse of teaching and learning or pupil welfare*' (p67).

Teaching can now be understood in the light of 'New Managerialist' language. Teachers are exhorted to 'improve practice', be 'efficient time managers', and be 'effective' in their tasks. The 'market' rules have supplanted all that have gone before. Teachers now have to comply with a new set of rules governing how to conduct themselves and this is all related to the notion of control. The Government will seek all means possible of securing Mr. Blair's (2000) aim of '*embracing Globalisation*' and will promote teaching and teachers being more tightly controlled with their work measured and centralised.

The training of teachers has changed to meet the needs of a contemporary society TTA (2005) and has become an agency promoting competencies and skills according to Troman and Woods (2000). However this type of schooling does little to enhance the teaching and learning experience. Instead it serves to diminish creativity, individuality, questioning and reflexivity asserted Ball (1999). The task for the teacher is to keep abreast of the changes. The real challenge is to hold on to their individual philosophies and not to lose identity in a culture that seeks compliance.

We can see then, that the profession has been forced to transform in order to succeed in a competitive market. Educators must feed the global economy with highly skilled workers. The paradox is that some teachers become compromised in their beliefs when they conform to the requirements of a new social order.

Age

Educational reforms which appear to change like high street fashion are difficult to adjust to and perhaps this age group has had more than its fair share, suggested the Health and Safety Executive (2000) in their study on 17,000 randomly selected individuals in Bristol. Participants were grouped into two categories, the first being 18-35 and secondly 35-55 age group.

Interestingly, the Health and Safety Executive study (2000) pointed to a correlation between the stress phenomenon and age and to whether or not teachers could cope with the demands of their profession. According to their report, the peak times of experiencing stress fall between 40 and 60 years of age. This age group has witnessed the most rapid and encompassing changes of all spheres of the profession. Constant curriculum reforms, delivery methods and greater accountability are some of the issues this age group has had to contend with.

The Health and Safety Executive (2000) study further revealed that younger workers were not as worried about their workloads, as their older colleagues. Perhaps this indicates a move towards better training and preparation of teachers. Younger members of the profession may be encouraged to expect and to deal more efficiently, with large amounts of administration tasks. Long working hours may be readily accepted as part of the job. It is worth considering that younger teachers may not be

undertaking additional responsibilities such as a family or mortgage. This would require the diversion of energy and commitment in areas other than their professional lives.

There is however, alternative information Teacherline (2004) that points to a rise of one in four younger teachers' (aged 21-35) seeking early exit from the profession. This presents a very worrying picture for future recruitment and retention of teachers. Some young teachers may become disillusioned by what the reality of their role entails. Their decision to exit the profession has an impact on the retention and stability of staffing in schools. Also highlighted are issues of staff morale and motivation as they are inter-linked and provide management with real challenges in creating a happy, healthy working environment.

This view corroborates intelligence from Teacher News, (9.9.02) where The General Teaching Council reported that up to four out of ten teachers left the profession within five years of qualifying. They cited pupil behaviour as one of the major concerns influencing teachers' decisions to leave. If we regard pupil behaviour to be a source of stress, then the most compelling study produced the Elton Report (1989). What teachers must acknowledge is that behaviours are sometimes out of their control. Pupil behaviour nevertheless, impacts enormously on the teachers' ability to cope well, confirmed Svendsen (19.6.03).

Four years ago a twenty four-hour helpline for teachers (Teacherline) was introduced as a response to teachers seeking confidential help. An analysis of their data indicates that their efforts are helpful to teachers. They offer advice in prompting teachers to develop coping strategies, or to seek referral to other agencies and this has proved an important contribution in

supportive action for teachers under stress. They estimated nearly one in every fifteen teachers has sought their assistance and that the numbers of callers continues to rise.

Teachers nearing retirement are a very interesting group as they have particular issues to consider. They are the teachers, who, at the time of this writing, are nearing retirement and have witnessed vast changes in the profession. It is likely that their dissatisfaction will be the most profound. They are also the individuals who may be more resistant to change and new initiatives. The Health and Safety Executive report (2000) highlights the possibility of suffering from stress when one or more adverse factors, such as resisting innovations are present in our lives. We could consider Hubermans (1993) view of the life cycle of the teacher as offering an alternative picture. Some 'older' teachers (in the age group 45-55 years) reach what he describes as a '*phase of serenity*' (p11) where they adopt a more content and reflective attitude.

It is reasonable to assume that many of the teachers considering retiring on ill health grounds would have already completed considerable years of service and would therefore gain a sustainable pension. Many of the teachers considering this form of exit appear to fall into the age group of 50 plus. According to Boerlijst (1998) and the Health and Safety Executive (2000) these individuals are identified as the '*older workers*', who appear prone to de-motivation and who feel less interest shown in them by managers. Older teachers, with a lengthy service have witnessed a period encompassing manifold changes and new initiatives. The rate of the changes and revisions of teaching styles and materials contribute significantly to their experience of 'burnout'. This has an impact on their decision to pursue early retirement. It could be argued that most workers experience de-motivation at some point in their careers, and this is just part of life.

However there appears a marked sense of loss of agency in older teachers reported the Health and Safety Executive (2000) and Bowers (2001).

According to Slater and McHardy, (2001) one of the government proposals regarding retention, is to entice teachers back from retirement. If retired teachers could be persuaded to resume teaching, strategies to support their return would need to be in place. Reintegration and coping with the demands entailed in this profession would need careful, sensitive monitoring.

Gender

Some interesting observations can be made from the research done by the Health and Safety Executive (2000). Notably females in full-time employment were reportedly more stressed than males. This may well be linked to the fact that, generally, females are the primary carers in most families. This coupled with full-time employment undoubtedly adds to the responsibilities women hold. Hence women may well encounter raised stress levels. It may be conceivable that some men do not recognize the symptoms of stress, or that they simply will not acknowledge they are susceptible to stress. There are difficulties regarding the reporting of stress informed Head et al, (1996). Only the individual can conceptualise their experience of the stress phenomenon and this creates problems into researching stress. No two people will have exactly the same experiences, thus there is no way of making any measurable standards. Any research done in this manner would be questionable and Johnstone (1989) emphasised this: *'The validity and reliability of the data, the representativeness of the sample the distributions of the various scores and the specific statistical techniques used are all points to be queried'* (p8).

Stress tends to be a self-reported illness, according to The Health and Safety Executive (1995) and symptoms are not always manifested physically. There may be interesting discoveries if there are gender differences in perceptions of stress and how it is dealt with.

Management Issues

The impact of the school organisation on stress can not be ignored asserted Capel (1987) and Pines and Aronson (1981) furthermore it can be reflected in the quality of education being delivered. If the organisation is poorly led or unsupportive it can have an effect on teachers, their pupils and the work they do. This factor can detract from the quality of experiences in teaching and learning. Schools must strive to foster support for the community they serve. We should consider the relationship between the organisation and the teacher as important when trying to understand the impact of stress. The aim should be one of mutual support.

In her study Kinman (1998) discovered a range of reported illness such as; high blood pressure, migraine, stomach ulcers, loss of self-esteem and low morale associated with teacher stress. Some educators apparently did not absent themselves from duty and this proved detrimental to their well being. Their associated administration tasks piled up and were still to be tackled after an absence. The resultant situation was an unmanageable workload. Some professionals, who suffer such pressure, may hesitate to report symptoms of stress if they feel their position in an institution could be undermined. Perhaps this is why Kinman argued that teacher stress needs to be '*legitimised*' as there is a culture of denial, particularly in a competitive environment, where one is keen to be seen coping successfully.

Workload

Importantly we should not overlook or underestimate the impact of stress especially at a time when teaching and teachers are high on the political agenda. It will be interesting to consider the impact of the Workload Agreement proposals on workplace stress for teachers (2003) and their planned phases of implementation in 2004 and 2005.

A report commissioned by the joint bodies of government and unions undertaken by Bowers for Price Waterhouse Cooper (2001) reflected the governments concern that teachers working conditions merited investigation. Highlighted, amongst other issues, was the observation that some teachers, were working around 53 hours a week in order to complete tasks associated with their duties. One of their suggestions to ease the workload was to reduce teacher working hours. Just after rejecting teachers' claim for a shorter working week, Estelle Morris, then education secretary, (31.3.02) spoke about this issue at the Easter National Union of Teachers conference, *'We couldn't go to a 35 hour working week. That is potty. They are teachers for God's sake, we can not put limits on the hours that they teach.'* Indeed they do not! Soon after making this statement, Estelle Morris became a casualty of work related stress and resigned from her post.

Some other suggestions highlighted by Bowers (2001) report are equally unrealistic. The blanket proposal that all teachers make more use of ICT in order to aid teaching does not make sense. Not all teachers have been fully trained in the use of Computer Assisted Learning. However the New Opportunities for Schools Fund has gone some way to address this. Though the training, by its very nature, of having to produce a portfolio of evidence of skills and competencies, has been an added burden on some teachers. Using computers was intended as a tool to allow teachers greater periods of preparation time, it is unclear how this would be accomplished. The long

promised '*Laptops for all*, ' Estelle Morris (2002) appears to have been more or less accomplished. Now that most teachers are provided with such a resource, what is to be expected in return? All lessons prepared on computer, production of stimulating visual materials, after school chat rooms to inspire jaded teachers, constant contact via email with colleagues, homework help for pupils via the Internet? This may constitute a worrying picture for some teachers.

In agreement with this view, Hey in a Lecture at Brunel University (2003) refers to work on ICT mediated learning. She forecast an opinion that indicated lecturers being policed through incessant, monitored contact via the Internet. This is reminiscent of the concept of Big Brother!

How Individuals Cope With Stress

Early work done by Lazarus, (1966, 1974 and 1976) suggested that teachers were adept at developing coping strategies in order to address their feelings of distress. One way would be to take a direct action, such as removing the source of a threat, for instance a challenging pupil could be taken from a classroom. Another would be a palliative action where one would develop an emotional detachment from the situation, such as developing an ability to leave school at a set time each day and not to continue work-related tasks at home.

How teachers cope is dependent on where they perceive the locus of control to be and indeed, the degree of that control declared Kyriacou (1987). Several others supported this view, Hargreaves (1978), Woods (1979), Denscombe (1980) by implying that teachers use a range of techniques, largely learnt '*on the job*' Hargreaves (1996) and which appear to be

effective coping mechanisms. Teachers under stress need to develop a wide repertoire of skills such as better time management and looking at improving their lifestyle, for example, in order to cope with their stress symptoms, suggests the Health and Safety Executive (2000).

Gray and Freeman (1988) pointed to self-appraisal as a key factor in how we cope with stress. Personal awareness appears to be the key to managing our stress. We need to recognize the demands and pressures that trigger our stress and subsequent responses. Accordingly stress is a difficult area to research as it is a personal perception and therefore different for us all. Some individuals will find they have experienced the phenomenon before and have developed effective ways of coping.

We must contemplate other factors that come into play when considering how we cope with stress in our lives. Those personal circumstances of health, personality and self-esteem impact on our coping strategies. Secondly, situational factors such as a perceived threat and its frequency will be determining factors in our responses. Lastly external conditions such as job demands and the amount of social support we can obtain have their role in how we cope.

Consideration must be given to the association between such internal characteristics as role preparedness, job satisfaction, life satisfaction, illness symptoms, locus of control and self-esteem. In order to understand the impact stress has on teachers' lives and how they attempt to cope with the phenomenon, we must reflect on the association between multiple factors that impact on our responses. The socio-economic climate we live in, the political backdrop and our personal perceptions have their part to play in how we prioritise the demands placed on our lives.

Support Strategies

Enabling teachers to cope with the demands of their job will lead to a reduction of stress symptoms and the need for absence from duty. Support strategies can offer either individual or collaborative frameworks.

Organisations have an ability to offer social support, which largely depends on the management style of the institution. If stress is perceived as a shared concern and not as part of a culture of blame, it can be sympathetically tackled. Colleagues can seek and obtain advice from each other. Such social support has distinct advantages. Strategies for coping can be shared, as it is likely that others in the organisation have experienced similar problems. Dunham (1992) suggested teachers facing difficulty could become highly adept at developing strategies to cope with demands. We regularly employ the interpersonal relationships we have and they exert a powerful effect on support systems.

Colleagues may be able to help shift the focus of the problem and bring a new perspective by asking if the situation or events could be changed. Sounding out concerns can help alleviate difficulties and at the same time, alert others for the need to offer support. This assumes there is an environment of openness and trust, which recognizes the phenomenon of teacher stress and where sharing experiences and fostering a sense of collegiality is valued.

Cox et al. (1989) offered a problem solving approach grounded in action for change. They suggested that teachers could identify their own stressors and seek out methods of reducing them. The teachers would take part in the

research for action and take action on the findings of the research. This ‘real world’ problem solving, using exploratory workshops for instance, can be a powerful agency for change.

The problems faced by many teachers are of the organisation and management and they can not be easily separated. In agreement, other authors Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1978b), Freeman (1987), Capel (1987), Kinman (1998) pointed out the need to offer assistance in the following forms;

- Clarify the teachers role and expectations
- Allow teachers to have time to prepare their work
- Train teachers to meet the demands of the modern curriculum
- Listen to their concerns.

Furthermore these strategies of support are also advocated in the recommendations of other authors such as; Bowers and McIver (2000), Health and Safety Executive (2000) and the Workforce Reform (2003).

Houston’s (1989) study on women’s responses to stress is interesting. Her work challenged the long held opinion that stress triggers the ‘fight or flight’ response. Instead she offered the opinion that women utilize other options, which men do not appear to access, in order to cope with stress. Among them she alluded to the friendships women have with each other, as being a powerful support mechanism. Houston and other feminist writers Hey (1997), Oakley (1972), Reay (1998) suggest that women have a wide range of coping strategies and generally seek to help each other. There does

not currently appear to be evidence of men seeking similar support from each other.

Chakrvorty (1989) looked at lengthy periods of absence attributed to psychological illness and whether early identification and intervention could prevent them. This would provide a method of avoiding costly replacement and disruption to teaching. Promoting good health by means of help systems would seem an example of good practice. A support network would enable individuals to help themselves to the backup they require. This is a legitimate area for development, echoed by the European Stress Management Program based at Nottingham University.

Kinman's (1998) inquiry via questionnaire on 5,000 randomly selected academic staff in Higher Education Institutes, pointed out that whilst 45% of her sample was aware of stress management strategies, such as counselling, they did not know how to access the services. However, those who did discovered that they had to make their own approaches and pay for the services themselves.

Guidance from the Health and Safety Commission (1990) was aimed specifically at teachers. They offered advice on identifying the nature and causes of workplace stress. Furthermore, they suggested initiatives to deal with stress. Importantly they agreed with Bowers and McIver (2000) when acknowledging the need for teachers to have a reduction in the factors attributing to teacher stress. Action plans to countermand the teachers workload have gained much interest not least from the Learning Support Assistants who will be required to undertake some of the tasks removed from teachers as part of the Workload Agreement (2003).

There is growing concern over teachers' welfare and the impact this has on their decision to continue or exit the profession. Recently a number of web sites on the Internet have been dedicated to listening to teachers' concerns. Several sites have been established as help lines for teachers who find themselves in times of crisis. Teacherline produced a checklist of stress factors and suggestions for coping with the condition (11.1.02). They recommended that teachers try to identify patterns of stress and seek ways to change the situation. Time management and personal time were advocated as being helpful in combating stress.

Agencies such as the Teacher Support Network have an efficient twenty-four hour listening service that is heavily subscribed to. They recorded some 30,000 (one in every fifteen teachers) seeking help via their service last year (June 2004). Clearly this points to the need for some remedial action on behalf of the teaching profession.

When Support Strategies Fail

There is a key feature connecting teacher absence and ill health retirement and that is one of cost. Not all schools are insured against long term absence and mounting costs for supply teachers. To cover such absences contributes to decisions over whether or not there is an expectation that a teacher may recover and return to duty. Conversely the organisation may seek to encourage retirement for the 'older' teacher.

Prior to 1997 many teachers suffering from work related stress were offered early ill health retirement. Teachers who accepted this form of exit were released with an enhanced financial package. In 1997 changes were made and measures were introduced in an effort to reduce the number of teachers retiring in this manner, DfEE (1997). We should understand that the

government has a stake here. There is a cost to funding teachers' pensions. Teachers' pensions are calculated according to the number of years of service they have completed. They also take into account the teachers highest earnings. Payments are now in the Local Education Authority domain and this has an impact on their drive towards the retention of teachers.

Following the changes in 1997 teachers who retired on grounds of ill health were to be considered permanently incapacitated for any further employment within teaching, DfEE (1997). The impact of the regulations would make anyone think very carefully before deciding to curtail their earning potential. This makes it harder for any teacher considering retirement on the grounds of ill health to exit the profession. Indeed the Department of Education publication *Fitness to Teach* (2000) advises invoking ill health retirement and only after all other avenues of help have been explored. They recognize that early retirement can have a far-reaching impact on the teachers' future and the organisations future development.

The number of teachers retiring due to ill health decreased markedly following the 1997 initiative, as discovered by Bowers and McIver (2000). The Department for Education reported between 1997 and 1999 that the figures for ill health retirement were halved. Indeed, Bowers and McIver (2000) observed a notable reduction in teachers seeking ill health retirement between 1995 and 1999.

Teachers seeking early retirement because of work related stress, are not terminally ill, it is possible for some measure of recovery supported by appropriate treatment. Some teachers may recover sufficiently to return to work, albeit in some limited capacity. To state that they should be

represented as permanently incapacitated seems presumptuous and unreasonable. Individuals do recover from the effects of stress. One could argue that the government discovered a powerful instrument to help achieve their proposal to reduce early ill health retirement of teachers and thus save on the cost of early pension payments.

It should be recognized that some retired teachers would not consider returning to the classroom environment. For anyone considering such action, June Izbicki (16.3.01) had words of caution '*...returning is a matter not to be taken lightly.*' Returnees may face a very changed atmosphere in the climate of current educational practice. In support of this view, Jon Slater and Anne McHardy reported for the Times Educational Supplement (9.3.01). They had examined research that queried if retired teachers wanted to return to the classroom. Respondents felt they were '*old enough to know better,*' and would not consider returning. They reiterated the notion that teachers, who were allowed early retirement, must have suffered stress and exhaustion: '*Get retired teachers to come back? No chance! The fact that they were granted early retirement means that there was probably some kind of fatigue or exhaustion*' Slater and McHardy, (9.3.01). Why would they want to return to work in such a stress-provoking environment?

One extremely interesting proposal came from the revisions of 1997 and concerns the notion of '*Stepping Down*' found in a report for the Department for Education (2000). It would be reasonable to expect that an experienced teacher would have additional remuneration for posts of responsibility. Teachers nearing retirement were approached with the initiative of relinquishing part of their post. New and young teachers could be trained in the role by the '*Stepping Down*' teacher, thus ensuring Continuing Professional Development. It is assumed that those teachers being asked to '*Step Down*' would be willing to do so. There is however, little clarity regarding any loss of earnings this could incur, which would be

a compelling reason to hold on to a post when considering how teachers' pensions are calculated. Conversely there is no mention of enhancement for teachers who act in the role of trainer or Mentor.

Management may try all nature of strategies to secure the continued services of teachers. Both teachers and managers must seek mutually acceptable ways forward. There is little point retaining a teacher who feels so ill that they have no wish to continue. If a teacher has reached the limit of their endurance, they should be allowed to leave. A supportive management will ensure that the best options are explored to suit both the teacher and the organisation. Bowers (2001) clarified this point, *'When teachers become too ill to teach, their absence before retirement may affect the organisation of the school, while their premature retirement due to disability can have adverse consequences both for the individual and the education system as a whole'* (p145).

This would imply that there is a direct impact of sick teachers and the effect they have in schools. Long term teacher absence and cover by supply teachers has an unsettling effect on children. Lack of continuity has a cascade reaction and eventually manifests in the quality of education children receive.

One very worrying picture is created by the Governments determination to raise teachers 'school leaving age' from 60 to 65, as reported in the Times Educational Supplement (20.6.03). This notion would serve to make it even more difficult for teachers to seek early retirement. The ability to retire 'legitimately' at 60 was considered a 'perk' of the profession. Doug McAvoy, General Secretary of the National Union of Teachers, deplores the government edict and in a rejoinder (18.7.03) said: *'Teachers by the age of*

60 frequently feel they cannot go on and that is why so few teachers are in the 60 to 65 age group. The Government is forcing people who feel they are burned out and want to retire to stay in the profession. That will not be good for those teachers or their pupils. ' Further more recent inquiries prompted Griva and Joeke (4.6.04) to express an opinion that, *'teachers in England are the most stressed in Europe.'*

Absence

It appears that there are difficulties in recording sickness and absenteeism in the public sector. Bowers and McIver (2000) confirmed in their findings, that statistics were not kept uniformly and distinctions regarding absence and absenteeism were unclear. Local Education Authorities policies differ as to what was recorded as absence. This situation has prompted calls for remedial action. The Department for Education and Employment tried to measure absenteeism in response to the then Secretary of State for Education, David Blunkett, (2000) who requested that teacher absence be reduced by 30% in 2003.

Local Education Authorities were given the task by David Blunkett of governing and managing the phenomenon of teacher absence but how they did so appeared largely up to them. There would seem a number of faults were evident in Blunkett's measures. They were not differentiated by part-time and full-time workers for instance. No uniform policy was provided for the data gathering and this led to further discrepancies in the reliability of the information collected. The statistics proved unreliable and the Cabinet Office (2000) issued a warning about the interpretation of the results with the figures. Since most organisations gather data for their own purposes, one has to consider what bias would be brought to the nature of the evidence they collected in order to obtain some clarity.

Bowers (2001) was able to offer the example of the '*Bradford Factor*' when accounting for teacher absence. This attempted to measure teacher absence and was based upon data collected in a Bradford school. The aim was to provide an overall picture of an individual's absence, in both days and frequency of absence. A case study illustrated how this could be employed to appropriate effect and be considered as an acceptable means of measuring teacher absence. After scrutiny of Bowers' materials it appears that there still however, remains the difficulty of alternative interpretations concerning the nature of absence and absenteeism. The anomalies between how different organisations record teacher absence would point to the need for consultation between the various authorities to provide a more uniform policy on gathering their statistics and this is open to abuse.

Measuring the frequency of teacher absences may be a more reasonable approach and Parker (1995) offered support for this notion. The data collected would serve to highlight individuals' absence profiles rather than measuring time lost overall, in organisations by absence. It could be argued that this may help identify individuals 'at risk' of stress related illness and could be a useful tool to trigger early interventions. Alternatively, some teachers and their unions may consider this approach highly intrusive and cause for alarm. It would depend largely on the nature of the organisation and whether it was viewed as supportive or not.

Imants and Van Zoelens' study (1995) was equally unable to provide a clear definition of the concepts of absence and absenteeism however, some distinction must be made. The key appears to be in determining if the absence is voluntary or involuntary and is related to the notion that stress is usually self-reported. The term absenteeism is commonly used in the USA

and led Jacobson (2001) to declare it a choice by an employee, thereby making a difference between *'involuntary'* and *'unavoidable.'*

Similarly Bowers (2001) experienced difficulty identifying what constituted absence in a number of different institutions. In a survey of over 100 schools, his research could discern little common practice between what was regarded as absence or absenteeism. We could consider Ehrenbergs' (1991) identification of three categories of absence as being enlightening. He defined serious illness as occasions where teachers were unable to work. Minor illnesses caused the teacher to decide whether or not they were able to work. He called the third category, 'paid vacation' where the teacher self reported ill. This would imply teachers have no control over the first two but a choice is exercised in the last. Indeed the Australians are largely credited with coining the phrase, 'taking a sickie' which implies the voluntary absence from duty. One could suggest that this be interpreted as a sign of resistance against managerial attempts to control absence.

Allegro and Veerman (1998) provided an insight into the impact stress made on absence in the Netherlands. They suggested that around 70% of reported sickness absences did not appear on the medical statistics regarding teacher stress related absence. In the Netherlands, the employee, not the doctor, states when they are fit to resume work after illness. This creates difficulties. A great deal depends on the relationship between the patient and doctor. Some doctors may willingly authenticate absence and some may hold an alternative perception of the patients' symptoms and their underlying causes. According to Allegro and Veerman, research in the Netherlands suggested that 'strictly medical grounds' accounted for around 20% of teacher absence. Furthermore, they suggested that 50% of teachers' absence had roots in psychological and workplace conditions.

According to Naylor (2001) the picture is echoed internationally. Canadian teachers expressed their concerns over workload and work related stress in a report for the Federation of Teachers, King and Peart (1992). In Australia Dinham and Scott (2000) confirmed a similar picture of teachers lives being dominated by workload to the extent that it negatively impacted on family life and other significant relationships. Drago (1999) offered further support in his study of American teachers, for 'the overworked society' where workers were encouraged to high levels of involvement. Subsequent high levels of stress were equated with teachers struggling to meet the diverse tasks intense involvement entailed. This is supportive of a global impression of teachers experiencing occupational stress.

There would seem a necessity for clarification as to what constitutes absence and absenteeism. Then it would be possible to provide a more accurate picture of teacher absence attributed to workplace stress. With clear, uniform guidelines in place, management systems will be better equipped to assess the scale of teacher absence and to tackle ways to reduce it.

Managing Absence

How a stressed teacher's absence is construed and managed is a key factor in maintaining a work force and creating an environment of well being. It would be too easy a solution to retire all sick or long term absent teachers. Such actions may suit some management styles to rid themselves of the inconvenience of absent workers. Education ministers have acknowledged the need to review existing policies and identify examples of good practice, say the Health and Safety Executive (2002) and to collaborate with appropriate bodies to make changes. There is a need to produce uniform policies to aid the management of absence amongst teachers.

Three types of policy can be observed in recent research reports such as the Health and Safety Executive (2000), Bowers and McIver (2000), Bowers (2001).

Inhibitory

This type of absence policy is aimed at deterring the teacher from making the choice to be absent. Instead it is encouraged that contact is made with the Head Teacher. When entering into a dialogue, the teacher may be asked to provide cover work for absence periods or be asked to plan work for a cover teacher. Doing such work can only add to the experience of stress for the already stressed teacher! This type of action would serve as a deterrent to absence.

Preventative

This would assume some interventions were in place to recognize workplace stress and to attempt to alleviate the need for absence. Changes to timetables or altered duties could be accomplished. A number of questions arise considering the cost of such action. This would require careful planning and reassignment of other staff or possibly employing more teachers to cover duties. However it could help to minimise the disruption to pupils' education. This type of action would reflect a management system that recognizes the impact of teacher stress and its effect on the teaching and learning process. Such systems also recognize the impact of teacher absence on the whole school community.

Curative

Therapeutic approaches such as counselling could be considered suggests the Health and Safety Executive (2000) and would depend on individuals recognising their own needs and accepting support from a trained therapist.

All Local Education Authorities do not have access to such a service and individuals may have financial constraints preventing them from obtaining this type of support. There would be an expectation that some measure of recovery would ensue from pursuing this approach and a planned return to work could be achieved.

One could postulate that the leadership style should promote a healthy, happy school environment. This would surely encourage good attendance. As Van Der Linde (2000) suggested, '*effective management techniques in the school and classroom are the best way of preventing stress in both pupils and teachers*' (p375).

There is a significant relationship between a highly motivated, positive attitude and the promotion of good attendance. Where a culture of attendance is prized, it would seem to reflect a caring and supportive organisation. Stress reduction relies on institutions accepting a role in managing the phenomenon in an empathetic manner. This can be effective if the climate of the institution is one of social support asserts Kyriacou (1989). On the other hand however, the means of creating a culture of attendance does not always reflect good management practice. Some styles of management create a climate of fear. Such inhibitory models were observed by Bowers (2001) and describe policies and practices whereby absence is strongly discouraged.

The Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) declares that employers have a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all their employees. Furthermore, under the management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1992) employers have a duty to assess the Health and Safety risks to which their employees are exposed at work. Risk assessment should highlight that some work procedures lead to

stress and present as a health hazard. These issues should be treated as potential risk situations for some individuals.

From the guidance contained in the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) it would seem that the emphasis placed upon individuals to develop coping mechanisms, such as outlined by Dunham (1992) has shifted. Newer guidelines provided by The Health and Safety Executive (1995) point out that the whole organisation has a part to play in developing standards of good practice: *'It is important that excessive stress is not seen as a personal problem but an issue which managers, staff and the organisation as a whole are committed to addressing'* (p8).

Organisations must look to what changes can be brought about in order to reduce harmful stressors. Employers are expected to look at risk assessment procedures to identify early signs of stress in employees and this relies upon a holistic approach to stress management. To adopt a more holistic approach, it would be important to involve both the individual and the organisation in the process, according to advice provided by the Health and Safety Executive (2000).

At a Local Authority course on stress management (Autumn 2002) it was mentioned that, in accordance with Health and Safety guidance, managers were recognized as having to do something about the causes of health problems and to try to control the causes of stress. This relies on the assumption that they work for everyone and depends on the construct of stress being displayed. According to the Local Education Authorities policy, the procedure for risk assessment would apply equally to the emotional and mental well being, as well as to the physical safety of its employees. The anticipation was that employees would take the responsibility of self-

reporting stress. The policy is flawed if it is aimed at promoting a positive attitude towards wellbeing. This kind of blanket response makes too many assumptions about the climate of an organisation and the individual's acceptance of admitting to symptoms of stress. Some teachers may not realize or be unwilling to admit that they are not coping, particularly if the organisation is not supportive in recognising work place stress.

Policies to monitor teacher absence should be in place in Local Education Authorities. This would respond to advice issued by David Blunkett (May 2000). Interestingly, when Bowers and McIver requested copies of some Local Education Authority policies, not all complied, leaving one to wonder whether they existed or not. Such policies should be readily accessible to all employees and generally available within the public domain. They should contain clear guidance for those who manage public sector workers. In schools it is essential that they hold guidelines for Head Teachers on how to best manage sickness absence and ill health amongst their teaching staff. School governors should also be aware of policies with regard to teacher absence, according to advice from the Department for Education and Science (2004). It is the '*duty of School Governors and Head Teachers to comply with directions on Health and Safety from the Local Education Authority.*' School Governors clearly have a role in ensuring quality education is delivered. This encompasses continuity and attendance of teaching staff.

Albeit coherent, a policy does not necessarily solve the organisations problems declared Trowler (2003). What is needed is the commitment to implement and drive initiatives through. Any proposals to enforce policies will undoubtedly cause criticism or resistance from some quarters.

Organisations can be encouraged to take ownership of their policies and resolve any difficulties, by negotiation with those who are involved in the operationalisation. Such policies can only be effective in conjunction with

good management. Poor management often weakens the organisation through its insensitivity towards and lack of appreciation of its personnel.

Policies need regular review, communicating changing needs and being revised accordingly. It is an area fraught with difficulties that are pointed out by Trowler (2003), *'The policy-making process is a complex one involving a contest between competing interpretations of 'the problem', negotiations and compromises during the policy-formulation stage'* (p119).

All stakeholders should be involved in the process and it should be viewed as a continuous method of improvement. If it is perceived that the needs of the organisation can not be met from within, there are several agencies that could be considered as helpful. For instance Educational Consultants could lead institutions in the policy making process, oversee implementation and review progress.

The Health and Safety Commission, (1998) recommended organisations produced their own policies however, although they modelled a cycle of problem analysis, part of the process is missing. They omit to mention review as an important part of policy making and implementation. The Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations (1996) furthermore, required employers to consult with their members regarding the formation and implementation of policies. This would seem to address issues of equity amongst all the organisation's employees.

The Health and Safety Executive (2000) advised that we should consider identifying support strategies appropriate to each case and this is sensible. All organisations have their own particular style, culture and management.

Following on from previous research the Health and Safety Executive has embarked on further work to identify good practice within organisations. They hope to suggest models that could be shared by other institutions seeking to improve their policies.

The nature of policy making and their implementation is variable. The Department for Education and Employment review (Nov 2000) offered a wide range of experience from other countries and this could assist policy making bodies in the UK. For instance, there are examples of policies to retain the older worker. This could prove beneficial in a training capacity for Newly Qualified Teachers who could utilize their experience. Further guidance is offered when looking at ways to enable workers to continue past the usual retirement age.

Policies and practices differ from one Local Authority to the next. Anomalies in issues such as what constitutes sickness absence or what is termed 'leave' have come under scrutiny. Indeed the literature points to discrepancies in Local Education Authority records of the number of teacher absences due to ill health, asserted Bowers and McIver (2000). Without a uniform policy adopted by all authorities, it is difficult to predict accurately the scale of teacher absence and how much of that is related to workplace stress.

According to Bowers and McIver (2000) many Local Education Authorities have well- developed policies regarding the management of sickness and absence of teachers. Schools are now required to adopt Local Education Authority policies and they tend to be overseen by initially by the School Governing Body. Ultimately however, the responsibility falls upon the Head Teacher. The response of the Head Teacher depends on their insight into the relationship between workplace stress and ill health. Indeed, such factors as

leadership style, budget constraints and other pressures, will influence how they set about managing a very sensitive issue.

Recruitment and Retention

In April 2001, the National Union of Teachers reported that teacher shortages were recognized to be at crisis levels by both employers and the Government. Reporting for *The Teacher* (April 2001) and Smithers and Robinson (2001), teacher shortage amounts to around 10,000 per year throughout the country. This prompted the government to take measures to both hold onto serving teachers and also to increase the teaching workforce. According to Slater and McHardy, TES (2001) one of their initiatives was to entice teachers back from retirement. In the light of the 1997 clause of permanent incapacity, the invitation to return does not include those teachers who retired early due to ill health. Even so, if retired teachers could be persuaded to resume teaching, strategies to support their return would need to be in place. Reintegration and coping with the demands entailed in this profession would need careful, sensitive monitoring.

In parts of England we have experienced a time of difficulty in recruiting and retaining teachers. The shortage of teachers was also reported as reaching '*crisis*' levels by the president of the National Union of Teachers, Douglas McAvoy (2000). Mike Baker (28.8.01) similarly described the situation thus, '*Teacher Shortages Worst for Decades.*' This headline provoked a response from the Department for Education and Skills when a spokesperson reported, '*There are 12,000 more teachers in our classrooms today than in 1998.*' Recruits had evidently been attracted by incentives such as, 'welcome' bursaries, shortage subject inducement and the opening of new routes into teaching. This situation can not however, be reconciled with the then Education Secretary's, report that by 2006, she estimated the

shortfall of teachers to be around 40,000. The then Shadow Education Secretary, Theresa May had a telling point to make in her response, when she stated that the government must take some action to ease the '*burden of bureaucracy*' on teachers in order to allow them to do what they should do - teach. More recently, The General Teaching Council in a News item (9.9.02) reported, '*Flight of Teachers, Must be Stopped.*' This prompted the government to take measures to both hold onto serving teachers and also to increase the teaching workforce.

There is little evidence at the time of writing, of means of supporting teachers who wish to return to work following a '*critical incident*,' ill health and subsequent recovery. The term '*critical incident*' was used by Measor (1984) to describe an event that can trigger our responses to the stress experience. It would seem a valuable step to consider means to reconstruct the professional lives of teachers in order to enable their return to work.

If the government is committed to retaining teachers unless they are deemed permanently medically unfit to continue, then efforts must be made to support their endeavours. There must be some assurances given that working conditions are congruent with a healthy lifestyle.

The Workforce Agreement

Following the publication of the Price Waterhouse Cooper report by Bowers (2001) it was evident that some action had to be taken in order to address the areas teachers found most stressful about their work. The School Teacher's Review Body continued the task and negotiations took place between teachers unions and government representatives. The result was the signing of the National Agreement, 'Raising Standards and Tackling Workload' (15.1.03). Several bodies such as, employers, government

representatives, and teachers' unions, with the notable exception of the National Union of Teachers signed this agreement. Whilst the NUT agreed that something needs to be done to alleviate teachers' workload, some elements of the agreement concerning the use of Classroom Assistants remain contentious.

Some time ago, (2000) the Prime Minister, Mr. Blair promised the support of a '*mum's army*.' The intention was to provide a sizeable force of some 23,000 Classroom Assistants to help with the administration and preparation of teaching materials and other relevant tasks. However, recognising the need for a more professional body, a study undertaken for the charity MENCAP paved the way for a more professional body of Classroom Assistants, Lacey (1999). This was given greater prominence by the findings of a report for the Department for Education, by Farrell et al, (1999). Jointly they pointed to the need for a recognized, trained body of Support Staff.

Teachers have developed a rapport with support staff in order to enable them to assist some of their administration tasks. Such attempts at uniting professional bodies, requires time, co-operation and commitment from both parties, suggested Rouse (2000) in order to allow teachers to hand over many administration tasks to Support Staff and use Teaching Assistants in the classroom.

There were several issues brought to the fore by the Workforce Proposal (2003). The implications for the role, training and management of Support Staff provide anxieties, as they appear to be within the classroom teacher's responsibility. Support Staff are not teachers and need guidance on what is to be done by them in the classroom. This activity may take the form of informal chats or detailed lesson plans showing exactly what the teacher

expects of the assistant. So, it is possible this in fact may cause yet more work for the teacher, to now take on a mentoring /training role for an Assistant in their classroom.

The continuing issue of contention is that the National Union of Teachers will not condone Classroom Assistants/ Learning Support Assistants in the place of a teacher. Furthermore Classroom Assistants should not be expected to take whole classes, in order to provide teachers, with non-contact time. This issue, amongst others, remains a real 'sticking point' to the full implementation of the Workload Agreement. Support Staff are not teachers and should not be substituted in the teachers' role. The National Union of Teachers and UNISON have a campaign that highlights their unease clearly, *'Who Will Teach Your Child Today?'* Furthermore they demand, *'that every class should have a teacher and every class a teaching assistant'* UNISON (2003). More outspokenly, Wragg writing for the TES (5.12.03) feels the measure is a step backwards, *'This is taking teaching back to the 19th century, to Victorian times when anyone was allowed to teach'*.

Alternatively, the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers, offer their support for the agreement. Their general secretary, Eamonn O'Kane considers the unions were right to sign the deal. He is quick to point out that the agreement makes, *'clear that qualified teachers retain pedagogic responsibility for pupils'* TES (9.1.04).

Presumably he is trying to allay his members' fears that Classroom Assistants will be taking the teachers place – just as the National Union of Teachers has warned. Is this one way the Government seeks to cut spending – by replacing teachers with Classroom Assistants? The only union not to sign the agreement has suggested this could be the case.

There have been several attempts to address some of the above issues. Subsequently, all Teaching Assistants / Learning Support Assistants / Classroom Assistants, are seeking clearer guidance on their role. There is structured training, which must be completed, and career pathways for their Continued Professional Development, are in place. Anomalies however, exist where some Local Authorities have not yet begun to review the Assistants pay structure and conditions, reports William (2004) and this would appear to devalue their contribution to the teaching and learning experience.

Following a Times Educational Supplement poll (January 2004) results of their survey reveal that some teachers are continuing to carry out some of the 24 tasks that were due to be delegated to Support Staff. They also report that most teachers were still very unhappy at the thought of Classroom Assistants being able to deliver lessons, even in a short-term cover capacity.

Another element of the Workload agreement considers providing teachers with guaranteed Planning, Preparation and Assessment time. The aim is to allow teachers 10% of time tabled teaching time to complete tasks associated with Planning, Preparation and Assessment. The time is not to be used for covering absent teachers and is '*...for the teacher to determine how the time is used*' according to the National Remodelling Team (2003).

The National Remodelling Team identified the '*significant pressures that are driving change*' (p4). Their aim is to bring about changes in schools by raising standards (in education) and tackling (teacher) workload. This can be seen in a framework of; Government Initiatives, Pupil Assessment, Social Changes, Budget Constraints, Employment Legislation and Technological advances. In order to raise standards they recommend three main areas for change; responding to curriculum change, catering for different educational

needs and increased use of computer assisted learning. Those elements are no different to the current aims of most schools. The workload issue is the most interesting. Much earlier attempts to reduce teachers working hours was greeted with derision by Morris (31.3.02) who declared it impossible! There is an intention to address the work/life balance but there are no details of how this will be implemented. So far the Remodelling Team have successfully introduced Planning, Preparation and Assessment time for teachers and this is discussed in the last chapter of my thesis.

The next phase is due to be implemented by September 2005. How it will be achieved will be interesting and schools have been provided optional models by the National Remodelling Team (2003). How the individual institutions interpret the suggestions will depend on such constraints as their budgets and the opportunities of their culture.

Summary

Teaching in a post-modern society has influenced the way teachers regard their profession. There have been moves towards reform, such as outlined by the General Teaching Council (2002) and I wonder if they will serve to re-professionalise or de-professionalise teachers. Issues such as the role of the teacher, change and pupil behaviour have an influence on how teachers undertake their duties. Is their role being re-defined in order to suit a more contemporary setting?

According to the Health and Safety Executive (2000) teaching is one of the most stressful occupations. What is it about teaching that provokes some teachers to experience the deleterious effects of stress? A key feature of stress is illness and absence from duty. This can have a detrimental effect on children's education, (Kyriacou 1987).

According to Bowers (2001) and the General Teaching Council (2002) workload is the most common cause of teacher stress. In order to address teacher workload an agreement was proposed between employers, employees and unions, as outlined in the Workload Agreement (2003). There are however, issues concerning the use of Classroom Support Assistants that have not been resolved.

Some stressed teachers become too ill to continue and seek ill health retirement. This is strongly discouraged by government enforcing changes such as, the source of funding, to teachers' pensions in 1997. Most worryingly for teachers is the prospect of having to continue working to the age of 65, as proposed by the Department for Work and Pensions (June 2003). Mike Beard, (20.7.03) Head of pensions at the National Association of Head Teachers had a poignant comment regarding this. He wrote, *'If teachers are forced to work until 65 they will be carried out in coffins.'* Most teaching unions would agree that many of its' members are worn out by 60.

One very distinct feature of this review is in the apparent lack of studies concerning the ethnicity of stressed teachers. There is little mention of any differentiation between any ethnic groups studied, though we live in a multi-cultural society. It would be most interesting to discover if there are any differences in how these individuals cope with stress and whether or not, they have similar strategies for support.

The most compelling issue is now, what will the impact of the Workforce Agreement be? This will not be evident for some time however certain questions do come to mind. The Workforce Reforms become law in 2005.

Educational institutions will have to seek ways and means to implement the changes to teachers' working lives. There may be little evidence for some time concerning how these changes will be achieved and each establishment and management system will interpret them in different ways. Much will be dependent on the management style and multi-variant constraints. The situation will be very interesting to observe over the next few years and various solutions will no doubt transpire.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

This chapter is in two sections.

Section One

Firstly I discuss the methodology of using narratives and explore the following aspects;

- What I want to know
- Epistemology
- Using Narratives
- Telling stories
- Why tell stories?
- Who tells stories?
- The listener
- Confronting Dilemmas
- Informed Consent
- Insider research
- Representation
- Ethics

Introduction

According to Cohen et al, (2000) there are three main ways by which we seek to discover what we need to know and these often overlap. Initially, we look to our experiences, those of others and the authoritative sources of recognized experts within our field. Secondly, we seek analytical thinking. Thirdly by using inductive, deductive, or a combination of both forms of reasoning, within the qualitative paradigm. We also seek to undertake research that is systematic and controlled.

At one end of the continuum of approaches is the positivist methodologist who relies upon scientific research, backed up by quantifiable data as described by Cohen et al, (2000). The logical positivist position supports the theory that the meaning of a statement is given by its verification. However, in terms of empirical evidence, only verifiable statements are valued. Analysis is presented in 'laws' or law-like generalizations. However this methodological position fails to take account of our unique ability to interpret our experiences advises Miles and Huberman (1994). However statistics, tables and figures have their place in research and Robson (1993) and Cohen et al, (2000) offer several examples of such work. Indeed, such empirical computational evidence offers credence to the validity of some qualitative studies.

Research with people in the context of exploring the experience of stress takes on a different nature and provides me with an opportunity to use a more appropriate and generative alternative. Robson (1999) reminds us that working with participants and their information requires the acknowledgement of complexities that can not be quantified. Emotions and feelings are described in varying degrees depending on individuals' responses to situations. Using interpretive methodology associated with a case study approach as advocated by Yin (1994) I aim to explore aspects of

the teachers' lives I have been privileged to obtain. More specifically, I focus on those teachers who have experienced workplace stress.

What I want to know

I have an interest in peoples understanding of stress and its impact on their lives. This guided me into an exploratory approach associated with a qualitative methodology. I describe myself as being a 'casualty' of workplace stress and I want to know what it is about teaching that provokes stress. I aim to consider the effects of suffering stress and how it could have an impact on teachers' professional lives, causing them to feel de-motivated, de-skilled and de-professionalised. I seek to explore the consequences to teachers' personal lives and those other lives we touch.

After my period of illness, I was unsure if a return to teaching would be possible. I began to read about teacher stress in order to understand why it had happened to me. Through my initial reading I determined that there were key factors that could trigger work related stress. I identified with the causes and wanted to discover if those areas provoked similar feelings of de-motivation and de-professionalisation in other teachers.

I intended to focus on teachers' perceptions of the causes of their stress and its impact. I decided the best approach to my research would be qualitative, which, *'generally takes smaller samples, items or groups of people and looks at the qualities in their existence,'* Barnes (1992:108). I also considered the advice of Robson (1993) who when discussing research into aspects of human behaviour suggests; *'when carrying out an enquiry involving humans why not take advantage of the fact that they can tell you things about themselves?'* (p225).

I used the case study approach, as described by Yin (1994), whose advice on exemplary case studies is significant guidance. Case studies provide a useful framework for capturing the human interaction, which those researching aspects of human behaviour seek to explore. Robson (1993) discusses the advantages of the case study, which he advises is: '*A strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence.*' (p52).

The strength of this approach lies in the ability to look closely at issues and to identify the interactive processes that come into play. Case studies are an effective tool when the focus is tightly bound within a conceptual framework. There is a clear advantage of using a case study approach in this study. The method allows for the narratives and the history of the events to be integrated within the whole reporting activity, thus strengthening any claims that are made. Cohen et al, (2000) agree that the case study can allow for an exploration of events and both participants and the researcher can seek to interpret the phenomenon they are studying.

I decided that interviews would be my means of obtaining data. The interviews would not have any formal structure due to a lesson I had learnt in previous research whilst studying for an MA. I sought a very informal type of interview, as I wanted stories and not answers to questions. Silverman (1993) highlights the value of such an approach, as it allows participants to display their individual perceptions. I did not want to direct the encounter with a set of formalised questions, nor did I seek to elicit responses to a '*shopping list*' of topics, as Robson (1993) describes. Instead I hoped for something far richer and informative. I intended quite simply, to ask participants to tell me about their work. Indeed Cohen et al, (2000) highlight the opportunity for uncovering the '*unexpected*' in this type of inquiry.

The notion of just one opening question being sufficient was reinforced by my pilot interview. If participants wanted to tell their stories, I felt I should allow them to do so without interruption or interference from me. This was a crucial decision for my inquiry. Part of the human condition is to be anxious – this precipitates responses. Interviewing can provoke distress when listening to traumatic events. Furthermore, I needed to be sure that I was capable of listening to the nature of stories related to workplace stress, in a manner that was non-threatening to both participants AND myself.

I was therefore prompted in my choice of methodology in order to reflect an overall research strategy. My choice was clearly that, I would obtain my data using life stories that according to Thompson (1978) would allow me to gain knowledge about the *'uniqueness, as well as the representativeness, of every life story'* (p 78). I would gain the stories by asking my participants to tell me about their careers and their experience of workplace stress.

The stories belong to the informants; the interpretation belongs to the researcher, state Goodson and Sikes (2001). I am not the author of the stories, merely the writer of the participants' stories, which advances the interviewee's message and context within which it is told. What evolves, are narratives of other peoples' life experiences in teaching, which have been similar and also have resonance with my own experiences. A critical reading will aid those who wish to know more of the unique nature of teacher workload and stress and how it impacts on teachers' lives.

Essentially, adopting a qualitative nature towards an inquiry demands that I develop a highly reflexive manner whereby according to Miles and Huberman (1994) *'the researcher takes on a questioning stance'* (p10). Reflexivity is a model of research that sees knowledge as produced inter-

subjectively and is an emergent property of human relations. Furthermore they state that: *'Reflexivity recognizes that researchers are inescapably part of the social world that they are researching and, indeed, that this social world is an already interpreted world by the actors, undermining the notion of objective reality'* (p141).

Cohen et al, (2000) reiterate that understanding is socially mediated and our interpretation is always contextual and situational. In taking up this position the researcher must constantly revise their practice and pay particular regard to how they represent their participants. The experience entails questioning but more importantly, listening. Then the researcher is able to interpret and re-construct the data into narratives of understanding.

Giddens (1991) also advocated developing a highly reflexive approach, achieved through examination of practices and refining views and positions where necessary. This approach should be an aid towards reflecting upon and interpreting the narratives in terms of their generating sources. I have also occupied some of these positions and experiences (see Chapter 1 p4-5) and this will be evident in my analysis and interpretation.

Considering Epistemology

The portrayal of the phenomenon of teacher stress in this study fits a clear epistemology that lies within the interpretative stance. In order to present my explorations and interpretations I need to make clear what my stance is, that in turn, clarifies how I arrive at an understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

Schon (1983) advocates that researchers need a high order of reflexivity in order to comprehend issues such as, how did participants come to think this? Is this a construction of their truth or mine? Whose truth is it? How

did the participants arrive at their understanding of the life experience and make meaning of it? How is that related to their perceptions of the past, present and future?

Individuals holding a feminist epistemology, such as Oakley (1981), Hey (1997) and Reay (1998) seek to utilize the findings of such research as a means to seek 'change for the better'. Acker (1989) expresses the view that teaching upholds a powerful system that defines the role of male and female teachers. At the time of her writing she asserted that female teachers were regarded as either spinsters, with a dubious sexual orientation, or '*women with children.*' Men were viewed as '*breadwinners.*' This implies a hierarchy and '*hierarchies mean competition.*' Furthermore Acker points to women being marginalised and excluded from the career pathways traditionally available to men.

Feminist researchers have developed and tended to privilege methodologies associated with oral history and life story approaches as they allow access to the 'silent' people. The 'silent' people are those who appear to have no other forum for telling their stories. In her Doctoral study Middleton (1985) uses the term '*alienation*' to describe women who were marginalised by the patriarchal hierarchy of schools. Robson (1993) acknowledges the way feminist methodology has influenced our thoughts about research: '*Feminists have challenged not only the view of the way in which knowledge is produced but also whose view of the world it represents*' (p65).

The life history approach recognizes the person in their contexts, such as the professions, families, also the economic and political spheres. Our view of the world is largely determined by the beliefs and values we hold as a member of a particular group of reference for example, a profession. However, not all groups hold the same beliefs at any given time and as

situations change we may find our 'world view' changes. Others with similar experiences are invited to take part in constructing similar pictures for themselves in order to provide greater understanding of a particular phenomenon, for instance.

Goodson (1983) refers to life histories strengths, that allow us to portray an interaction of how we and other people live our lives, they: *'have the potential to make a far-reaching contribution to the problem of understanding the links between "personal troubles" and "public issues", a task that lies at the very heart of the social enterprise'* (p34).

The academic interpreter looks at life history or life story to understand how participants negotiate their positions and make sense of the world they live in. Ball and Goodson (1985) argue that the teachers': *'career must be studied in the context of the whole life' (and that life histories can help in exploring this relationship)* (p21).

The interpretation of knowledge and how it is gained helps us form a personal epistemology. This reliance on analysing qualitative experience in the context of life narratives, will allow me both to place my own experience of stress in another comparative context and possibly provide me with more insights into 'others' experiences.

In using life history approaches participants are invited to tell us their experiences and Murray and Chamberlain (1999) agree that this offers the researcher opportunities to gain insights: *'Oral histories utilize unstructured, in-depth interviews in which participants are encouraged to share their life stories and significant milestones'* (p122). Additionally Beynon (1985) provided a succinct justification for obtaining teachers' life

histories: '*...they are influenced by past, as well as contemporary, events and more attention should be paid to how critical incidents in an institution's history affect its teachers*' (p23). Such 'interconnections' can furnish us with a rich context for the narratives and aid the interpretation of our experiences and behaviour.

Using Narratives

Goodson (1995) declares: '*Narratives select the elements of the telling to confer meaning on prior events – events that may not have had such meaning at the time,*' (p89). This would help to locate our stories in time and place. Interestingly, this is a narrative transposition of Kirkgaard's famous statement that we '*live life forwards but understand it backwards,*' (in Josselson 1995). In other words, we may not understand why events occur as they do or the manner of our responses. By developing a reflexive attitude however, we are capable of re-examining prior events in order to make meaning of our current experiences.

Wengraf (1995) points us towards considering that contextualisation increases the likelihood of better interpretation and provides for subjectivity. In order to gain a more insightful portrayal of the phenomenon we are studying, we provide a '*backdrop*' in which to situate the narratives. Thus the reader is furnished with the '*wider picture*' (p 57) of the events such as where and when they happened. Wengraf (1995) offers support for the notion that an expert researcher generates knowledge of the topic studied and they employ the skill of narrative understanding and interpretation. By giving the context of the narratives, researchers are able to integrate knowledge of the historical and situational dimensions of the interaction within an interview: '*...interpretivists point out that knowledge is a social and historical product,*' add Miles and Huberman (1994:10).

The study began with an aspiration to explore whole life histories, such as would be similar to the work of Munro (1988) who, when collecting data, investigated the historical setting of the lives of teachers who were being studied. Instead, what in fact happens according to Munro is that a *'layer'* of life, profoundly influenced by a *'critical incident'* is placed within a social construction. This is heavily influenced by the situational context of each participant.

In the context of this study I focus on the *'layer'* of experience framed by the *'critical incidents'* of stress as defined by Measor (1984). These events are determined: *'key events in the individual's life and around which pivotal decisions revolve'* (p61). Goodson (1992) clarifies the difference between the two types of stories. One *'layer'* of stories requires the researcher to interpret the autobiographical narrative. The stories I obtained contain *'significant periods of distress'* which have consequently shaped and changed the lives of some teachers. This is the layer of stories I expose. Measor (1984) refers to these transient times as *'critical incidents'* which have antecedents. The culmination of events then determines our responses, or *'counter incidents.'* Again this is not fixed and lasts only as long as the incident, however the impact can have far reaching consequences to the individuals' life.

I seek to obtain life histories or biographical narratives, or a layer that exposes *'critical incidents'* and I want to examine how individuals talk about and story their experiences. I look for explanations of how people perceive the social context they inhabit. There are no standards or grades to ascribe to the depth of feeling an individual may talk about. Participants choose to express themselves according to their perceptions of their experiences and how they make sense of them. The participants will be allowed to explore what their anticipated future holds. At the same time I

was also aim to ponder these factors in light of my own story, its history and its future.

Whilst conducting a previous research project (MA Study) it became clear that, for a variety of reasons people want to tell their stories. My earlier study explored the nature of a group of people and their roles within an institution. I developed a set of probing questions in order to collect data. However, the questions were too limiting and leading. I would have found it far more productive to ask only one opening question, such as, “*please tell me about your job.*” The study would have been far richer. Instead, time was wasted and opportunities to explore unexpected avenues of interest were not pursued.

In this inquiry, what I expected to happen happened. My participants wanted to tell their stories without being interrupted by me. Had I done so I would have interfered with the narrative and spoiled the stories by probing with questions. What I obtained was a rich portrayal of teacher’s careers. Contained within the narratives are detailed aspects of what teachers do and how their job can influence other areas of life. Furthermore, as I gleaned information regarding workplace stress I was allowed to know factors that contributed to the participant’s feelings of loss of agency, distress and de-professionalisation. This information allowed me to grasp the context of the story and to locate it within my understanding of the phenomenon of teacher stress. I now realize I would have missed this vital component of the research if I had simply asked questions.

My study focuses on peoples’ lived experiences, their ‘*perceptions, assumptions, pre-judgements and pre-supposition,*’ as outlined by Van Manen (1977:64). The data that has been obtained consists of stories as they

have been told during the interview process. The subsequent analysis and interpretation will portray a reflexive understanding of the narratives.

As the stories unfolded, my personal experience and knowledge of the educational setting helped aid my understanding of what happened to my participants and why they perceived erosion of their professional lives. The narratives were interpreted to produce the representation of my understanding of the participants' experiences.

Goodson and Sikes (2001) are reassuring when they affirm there is no '*proper*' way to '*do*' life history work. They regard each piece of research having its own specific features and this is what makes it unique and compelling reading. I therefore have an honest aspiration to yield an interesting and illustrative text whilst taking into account that my work must be systematic. It should display knowledge of ethical considerations and adherence to the practice of confidentiality as outlined by BERA.

Telling Stories

In telling a story of events in our lives, we are storytellers and we live in a storied world. Our stories permeate our everyday life and as a consequence, we interpret the world and define ourselves through our storied experiences, assert Goodson and Sikes (2001). The telling of our stories implies an unfinished nature. We are still living the experience but we perceive our story as having a place – an emplotment, Polkington (in Wengraf 1995) agrees that, '*narrative knowledge is maintained in emplotted stories*' (p 62). Our stories help us to gain a position in a life that would otherwise seem chaotic. We attempt to bring order to the crisis of events by constructing a story and our stories integrate material from our life experiences. According to Becker (1970) our representation is a dynamic construction rooted in the

social and cultural context of the participant. We can choose to select and develop our stories to elucidate our location in the narrative. We attempt to bring order in the telling of our story. We seek to make sense of our world and our place within it. This is our appreciation of how our lives are organised around time and consequential events. Narrative dialogue is a dynamic, vital, component to our understanding of the social, political and cultural context of our experiences and therefore our lives.

Why Tell Stories?

Stories help us to understand the nature of our experiences. They can provide us with a way of addressing our sense of loss of agency, in times of adversity. In the case of this study, interpretation of participants' experiences of workplace stress and its impact on their lives is important, particularly if we are to acknowledge their expressions of de-professionalisation.

Murray (1999) informs us that narratives are stretches of dialogue between the researcher and the participants and are '*...constructed in an interpersonal context*' (p55). They are a co-construction of events and also a re-construction that occurs during the transcribing and interpretation of a participant's story. The interpretation demonstrates the interaction with the context and culture of the given story. The sequence can help the storyteller define their representation of previous experiences. We seek clarity of what has gone before in order to re-interpret how those events have an impact on us. Whilst our narratives and our lives are distinct, they interpenetrate. Murray (1999) reasserts that: '*Narratives are situated and created within the broader socio-cultural and more immediate interpersonal context,*' furthermore that '*they can not be abstracted from this context*' (p54).

Thus we are given a history and provided with the context and social order of the story. This brings meaning and order to our interpretation of those 'critical incidents' that have shaped our professional and personal lives.

The stories have elements of 'critical incidents', which have interrupted some section of an individual's life and career pathway. They determine the actions we select and according to Goodson and Sikes (2001) depend on the resources we have available to us, which, in turn determines our subsequent direction. These events have coloured all aspects of the teachers' lives and those, whose lives are thereafter touched. It is interesting to discover how individuals represent their condition. Also, what reality they construct as a result of their experience. They are not in a passive state, concerning their observation of the events rather they seek to interpolate their position. They want their identity such as teacher, male, leader or mentor recognized as being important in the micro - politics of their institutions. Their narrative re-constructions summon us to listen to their account. By reading the narratives we are invited to understand the experience they relate to us. The speakers configure and expose themselves in all manners of realms of their existence.

When constructing the stories we integrate our life story as we cement the now and the hoped for future. This is dynamic and has its roots in a social cultural context. The product is our social representation of our identity. Recounting the stories provides a rich description and interpretation of life experiences.

Those who have a story to tell are the people who have an ability to tell and share it with others. American folk - lore suggests, '*stories happen to those who can tell them.*' The telling of a story is not a passive experience.

American anthropologists such as Barret (1906) and Radin (1920) propose we become a part of the telling and this is how the narrator shapes the story that they offer to the listener.

Stories provide an understanding of others and the context in which their story is told. The researchers' task is to KNOW, or to have an empathy with the situation, then to interpret the findings of any inquiry with a respectful and dignified authority. Ricoeur (1974) suggests: *'interpretation has specific subjective implications, such as the involvement of the reader in the process of understanding and the reciprocity between text-interpretation and self-interpretation'* (p303).

Who Tells Stories?

Each participant provides an interpretation of their experiences, depending upon how they construct their social world. Their lives are represented on multi-levels and depend upon how they view their position at any given time. We all travel with rapidity through many roles in the course of any social interaction. These roles can be blurred or ill defined, according to how we seek to represent ourselves within a given situation. Nias (1981a, 1984b) draws our attention to the concept of the reference group. In this, she identifies the action of how we respond by quoting Shibutani's (1955) understanding of a reference group: *'how a person defines the situation, which perspectives he uses in arriving at such a definition, and who constitutes the audience whose responses provide the necessary confirmation and support for his position'* (p171).

This raises questions concerning power within institutions that have an impact on how we are allowed to portray ourselves. We usually try to

conform to the norms of groups we subscribe to and look for opportunities to represent ourselves in a favourable light in order to be accepted.

Goodson and Sykes (2001) question how our participants become the '*chosen*.' I needed informants who, by the fact that they have experienced similar events associated with the stress phenomenon, become individuals with an important story to tell. The participants' stories do not exist in isolation and are not told in a neat, linear or chronological way. They are part of the narrators' lives and so have antecedents and repercussions that are not necessarily represented in this inquiry. Their stories present highly significant representations of the impact of workplace stress on their lives. The phenomenon has had and continues to have an influence on how the individuals view their teaching career and its place in their life.

Inevitably when we are unable to sustain our position, perhaps due to an experience such as workplace stress, our aspirations become clouded and eroded. We become disillusioned with 'our lot' in life. If we are unable to cope, we may experience a 'critical incident' triggering actions leading to our loss of agency within our perceived world. We may choose to adopt a position of rebellion and 'fight' our cause. Alternatively we may decide to absent ourselves from the incident.

I consider these stories significant in questioning how some teachers appear to have identities '*spoiled*' and voices '*lost*' as described by Reay (1998) thus contributing to their sense of becoming de-professionalised. Clarke (1996) asserts the belief that biographical studies should identify a place for those who are not allowed to speak out, though giving them a voice does not necessarily empower them with the authority to effect change. There is however an opportunity to reassure people that they do not need to feel isolated; there is a link to and solidarity with others. It is important that I

value and respect the participants' stories and provide them with a place to be heard.

This exploration of workplace stress acknowledges the participants' life context and any other previous experiences of the phenomenon. The proximate context of the distress also requires explanation and centres around the participants' personal characteristics, family context, socio-economic position and work ethos, for example. The disruption to the participant's biography is the experience of distress, the loss of agency, difficulty in overcoming the phenomenon, the social disconnection and the need to seek support to aid recovery.

The Listener

The listener has a multiple role activity, of listening and interpreting whilst considering a host of other factors that are brought into the process of inquiry. An interpretation of the data provides a constant debate where one needs to go beyond the script of the narrative we have been given suggests Sikes (2001). The orientation of the study is largely dictated by the researcher and is based around experience of the teacher stress phenomenon.

The study celebrates an individualistic quality – the individual, both researcher and participant, can broaden and border the structure of the interview process. I wanted to create opportunities for the participants to tell their stories in whatever way they felt comfortable. I sought not to guide them through a process of questions and answers and this allowed a broader range of views to be narrated. The participants defined their borders in a similar manner; they told me what they chose to tell. I decided my borders and they focused around not being seen as someone who could change or make things better for the participants.

I was prompted to reflect on the relational inequalities of power in the interview. Oakley (1993:222) alerts us to social scientists who adhere to the largely '*masculine model*' of the '*science of the interview.*' Furthermore that in this situation the interviewee is subjugated thus effecting an elimination of equity between the interviewer and the informant. Consider this also, the researcher is usually healthy yet we seek responses from those who are, or have been ill! Perhaps this will prompt the participants to legitimize their position. Murray (1999) elaborates on this and terms the stories as being generated in '*a rhetorical context of justification and criticism*' (p55). The notion highlights how unbalanced an inquiry could be, Murray and Chamberlain (1999). In this inquiry the participants have all experienced some form of work related stress. I also had first hand experience of the phenomenon and this would seem to make the process of interviewing a little more equitable. My participants were all made aware of this factor and of my subsequent recovery at the outset. I hoped this would help eliminate any embellishment or distortion of their stories.

The stories compete for space however I hold them all to be of importance. They have demanding audiences. They are immediately evaluated by 'listeners,' in such forms as gossip, or chat after an event. When informants are a collected group, they may provide a collective reality and stories of the same or similar experiences. We all bring our own representations and interpret stories on multiple layers of experience and understanding. We may then ask ourselves, whose voice becomes dominant in the reporting of the stories. Is the researcher's interpretation or the participant's, the real representation of the narrative? Hey speaking at a Brunel Conference (7.7.03) advocates that we should be '*aspiring to the authentic*' and this should guide our epistemological position regarding the power we have in the research process. Hey was encouraging us to direct our attention towards producing the most accurate and honest interpretation of whatever

information a participant may offer. This involved respecting the sensitive nature of the stories I was given and reporting in an appropriate manner.

Dilemmas

I wondered about what my informants could hope to gain by telling their stories. Furthermore, I pondered over their understanding of the encounter. It is not a counselling experience, though hopefully there will be some positive outcomes from the event. It could be considered as a life enhancing experience or conversely, a real threat to a relationship and I consulted the advice obtained from the British Educational Research Association regarding research with individuals. I feel very obligated to uphold the '*duty of care*' towards the participants, as outlined by Bradford, when speaking at a Brunel Conference (7.7.03).

Usually we adapt easily in everyday social interactions to the situations we find ourselves in. We are able to assess what responses are appropriate and act accordingly. Should this encounter be any different? Stories of a sensitive nature require careful handling. There is always a danger that participants may see the researcher as an agency of change and it was made explicit from the outset, that nothing about the participants' circumstances could be presumed to alter as a result of the interview. I could not be seen as a means of intervention. However it was hoped that some benefit might be accrued by sharing the experience with an empathetic listener.

Having studied person centred therapy I was alert to the possibility that interview situations may show signs of transference, as described by Rogers (1951). If transference occurs, participants can project their anxieties onto interviewers and it can also be a two way process. Ways to prevent it must be sought as it could cause the data to become contaminated. It is important

to be alert to the feelings of participants. Of equal importance is seeking the means to protect oneself when dealing with such sensitive material.

Participants may experience mistrust and feel that I am being judgmental. Rogers offers the advice of Fenichel (1945) that I can simply '*endeavour to understand and accept.*' I was compelled to consider what kind of account I might obtain. I had experienced the stress phenomenon and wondered what influence I could have on the participants. I considered how I could minimise the risk of harming my participants. The notion of the '*defended subject*' according to Bradford at Brunel Conference (7.7.03) requires us to seek means of protecting those who have agreed to participate in our study. All participants remain anonymous and the schools they worked in have not been described in such a way that they could be identified. This complies with Street's (1992) advice:

*'The adage **do no harm** is hardly enough of a safeguard for relationships within a critical project, rather the emphasis must be on how we collaborate, develop collegiality and how we treat each other respectfully as human beings. This kind of rhetoric reads well but is hard to achieve; it requires constant thoughtfulness'* (p150).

I wondered if the story - teller could be showing any evidence of reflexivity and whether it would be an aid or hindrance to my interpretation of the story. What else had been brought to the telling of their life before our encounter? I bore in mind, the danger of not leading the informant into providing what I wanted to hear in order to confirm any hypothesis I had formed. The information may challenge my views and it was important to acknowledge this. Not everything could be considered as confirmatory! This notion really proved challenging to my understanding.

Informed Consent

How I obtained and presented the stories needed careful thought. I sought to represent the information in as clear and precise a way as possible. I wanted to preserve integrity and professionalism throughout the inquiry. Each participant was treated in equitable terms regarding the time we invested and how I interpreted their stories. What was required constant reflexivity and a critical awareness of what I obtained. Clearly there was a call for me to protect the more vulnerable subjects/participants, who may have questioned my trust. Bradford (7.7.03) advised that, by being transparent in our aims we can gain ‘informed consent’ to act in the interests of ‘the other’, that is, the participant.

Part of the human condition is to be anxious – this precipitates responses. I sought to construct the reality of what was presented whilst trying to defend and protect against a state of anxiety being produced. If I failed, traces would be left in the text, thus affecting interpretation.

Hutchley speaking at a Brunel Conference (7.7.03) encouraged developing an awareness of the participants’ key issues when we sought to obtain their informed consent. This also raised issues around data collection methods such as taping and transcribing and using sections of the text to illustrate concepts. Informed consent implies that nothing would be secretive or selective regarding the data. Hutchley referred to the interview situation as the ‘*one way mirror dilemma*,’ whereby a realm of social interaction remains pristine but where the process of the research rendered it less than natural. He referred to the practice of taping interviews and alerted me to consider that taping is not a normal situation and the data may be contaminated, producing abnormal situations. I wondered if this would

render the data invalid. I agree with Hutchley's view that the event is not normal and that the recording has an influence on what participants say. This was evidenced when the tape recorder was turned off and participants continued to talk more animatedly about their experiences. The dilemma remains un-resolved unless one reverts to covert measures of data collection but that threw up a host of ethical issues. Such conduct would be entirely inappropriate for my inquiry.

Interestingly Hammersley (1992) does not view taping the interview as problematic, rather as yet another opportunity of exploration. He would see this in terms of the influence and effect of research on the behaviour of those we are studying. So, why not seize the moment to gain something else agrees Silverman (2000). Participants may chose to 'perform' for us and represent themselves in a manner they feel more favourable. My field notes contained my impression of the participants' conduct during the interview. They were written immediately after each encounter and proved a valuable aid to my interpretation of the interview.

'Insider' Research

It is difficult to reconcile the influence of self and power and these notions require further exploration. When considering 'self' in this study, it was important to acknowledge that each encounter with a participant was unique. Each person interviewed brought their story and interacted with me in completely different ways. The experiences concerned a common phenomenon and several of the responses and reactions observed were similar. I wondered how much of this was due to their perception of my role in the story telling process. I considered the levels of influence or bias that could be brought to the encounter. There would be a need for high level reflexivity and one way to achieve it, would be to put myself in the position of participant, then examine how the process of the interview was

experienced. This was accomplished by telling my own story. I determined to seek responses to “*how was it for you?*” Informally after each interview and was assured that participants left the encounter in a positive frame of mind.

I questioned whether any ulterior motive appeared as emerging from the researched or the researcher and whether it would serve to strengthen my understanding. I concluded that my best course of action would be to accept and avoid judgements. I felt that my insider knowledge might be biased and this alerted me to be consistently reflexive.

Trowler (2003) suggests that we have multiple role exchanges, such as, school/teacher/pupil, school/teacher and that we become what he terms ‘*cultural traffic.*’ During the course of an inquiry we will experience movement between multiple realities. It is expected that the researcher will experience the need to move between roles of participant/interviewer/participant. Therefore it will be appropriate to choose the repertoire that is relevant at the time. A distinction must be discerned between, what the participants’ interpretation is and the researchers interpretation. This is echoed by Miles and Huberman (1994) who feel that we all come laden with what they term ‘*multi-overlaps.*’ In the case of this research I am a participant with a story and I am the researcher listening to other participant’s stories.

The notion of ‘reciprocity’ is heeded and this is not without its problems. In any interaction there will be some level of control and power. Equality can not be guaranteed, but it is critical to show each participant his or her story is valued. How the participants are led to perceive their contribution to the inquiry is equally important. I was encouraged however as Goodson and

Sikes (2001) regard life history work as: '*collaborative with researcher and informant seeking meanings and explanations together*' (p 45). Thus I feel, as long as I refrain from directing the participant in the telling of their story, then it remains an honest representation of their experiences.

Representation

Truth should form the basis of a constant concern throughout the study. It is important to consider how far the methods and their application and implementation address the issue of reliability concerning the narratives. For the purpose of my study, I observed the advice of Hammersley (1992). He refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions. The latter fits the need for checking how reliable the explanations and interpretations of the stories are.

How do we know if our data is authentic? Claims made can be confirmed by each other within a community of people who have similar experience of the phenomenon studied. According to Woods (1996) it is admissible and he advocates, '*insiders confirming the correctness of analysis.*' This could be argued as addressing my concerns of reliability. I have questioned my work throughout the process of inquiry and I am ever mindful of issues such as, what does this mean? Is the interpretation believable? How can we know? For the purposes of this study, I have assumed that the informants were able to recall and represent their experiences with a degree of consistency and accuracy. It is therefore deemed as reliable evidence.

It is equally valuable to realize the researchers' responsibility and ethics in what we present as valid findings. It would be reasonable to consider that if WE put in OUR language, then we may change the emphasis and

interpretation of the data. Is it possible that we are embellishing the story, 'adding some spice' for the reader? Indeed, it should be acknowledged that we sometimes have a '*different view*' Goodson (1995) and this needs to be addressed if it occurs. Sometimes there may be no resolution and it is my duty to identify to readers, areas of concern and conscience.

As I am also a participant with a narrative recount of similar experiences, I regarded it as important to guard against embellishing, changing or adding judgements, albeit without any manipulative intention, thereby corrupting the text. It was my aim to present each participant's contribution honestly. I was apprehensive about the challenge of the researcher ability to write 'the self' into the text and still represent what was going on with the respondents. Fine (1994) warned that the '*self*' and '*others*' could be at odds and great care must be taken with reportage. However, it is common for the researcher to be, or become a part of the work and thus be 'written in' to the data. This was accomplished by adopting the role of participant and I talked into my taping device. I determined to report with honesty and clarity. If I had not done so, I could not be truthful with my participants and their stories could not be seen as being held in the esteem they deserve.

A critical reading demands consistent checking, in order to assess the adequacy of the story. I feel it would it therefore be possible to assume that multiple stories could attribute greater authority to what we hear and attempt to interpret. Alternatively, the stories could compete with each other and serve only to pose more complex questions for the researcher. It seems reasonable to expect some form of negotiation and exchange within the narrative collection. This implies a two way process that will take place in the interview situation, as explained by Murray and Chamberlain (1999): '*The truth of the narrative is situational, the work of truth reciprocal*' (p11). In other words, we negotiate our positions and tell our stories within them. Similarly the teachers reiterate their experiences and tell their stories in the context of their institution and their role within it.

An additional factor to consider is that the nature of my data collection relies heavily upon participants 'self-reporting.' I accepted that some respondents might have told me what they believed I wished to hear. I also wondered if they represented themselves as victims of some injustice. However, I had confidence that the recounts were representative, of value and authentic representations of the phenomenon of teacher stress. Whilst there is an issue regarding memory and how time may distort the telling somewhat, some of the experiences took place in the same institution and they could be validated by comparing and contrasting occurrences with others.

Ethics

The interview can be acknowledged as a co-constructed narrative. This is one way of understanding the life that has been lived. We ascribe our perceptions of the story and devise our interpretation of the data. I questioned if the same story would emerge if it were told to another researcher? What if the story, were told to someone who had no personal experience of the phenomenon? I was convinced the same story could not emerge. I wanted to protect the 'precious text' of our stories and needed to look critically at how we care for and present our findings. This was after all a co-construction of several events.

I considered the effects of my relationship with the informants, in terms of, the likelihood of some change as a result of sharing intimate knowledge. Was I too intrusive in queries of this nature? It was important to consider the ethics of research on human beings as it highlights the researcher's responsibility and duty of care towards all respondents. Furthermore I wondered what could happen as a consequence of the encounter. Considering the influence and impact the telling of a story can have on both informant and interviewer, such

notions as trust and confidentiality appeared high on my agenda. Ways were sought to protect the informant and the self, as implied in Sikes et al, (1995). I gave all participants pseudonyms thus rendering them anonymous. I did not name the Local Authorities and the schools they worked in can not be identified. We are advised to seek opportunities to lessen anxiety and minimise any harm that may arise as a result of the interview experience advises Cohen et al, (2000). Knowing that I sought to protect my participants' identities allowed us to proceed confidently.

At a recent research conference on ethical reflexivity, at Brunel University (7.7.03) Cortazzi reminded researchers that the guiding principles of ethics should encompass several key areas. Issues surrounding the protection of participants are paramount. We must assure informants that we intend to preserve their anonymity. When stories enter the public domain, this may be very difficult as we are not always in a position to discipline how others utilize our work. Divulging information that is of a sensitive nature requires that we store it securely. Informants need some guarantee that the stories they have provided are regarded as 'precious text' and with confidentiality and respect.

Throughout my inquiry, the Ethical Guidelines produced by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) were consulted and adhered to. Brunel University Education Department draft Code of Research Ethics contains standards which should be observed by all staff and students throughout the institution, when conducting research with people. My inquiry was conducted with ethical behaviour as a major issue and guiding principle. The employment of such guidelines allowed for opportunities to be more reflexive about the practice and process of the study. To a large extent it could be argued that it formed the framework of the inquiry.

Methodology

Section Two

This section details the following areas; The Sample, The Interviews, Transcribing the Interviews, Analysing the Data and Coding.

The Sample

My choice of topic, methodology and methods are firmly rooted in the qualitative paradigm. Qualitative work is often associated with case studies of small numbers of participants, advises Yin (1994). Silverman offers the view of Stake (1994:236) that I consider as valuable, he describes the *'intrinsic case study'* where *'this case is of interest...in all its particularity and ordinariness.'* It is even possible to undertake valuable research with the single person case study such as in the case of Barret's (1906) work on Geronimo.

Miles and Huberman (1994) point out that more time can be invested in a small group of people allowing for detailed and in-depth inquiry. Studies involving fewer people can be restrictive and the scope of the inquiry limited. I acknowledge that the findings would be very different if the population was based in a rural setting, was of mixed ages, was of balanced gender and represented by other ethnicities. My sample is of an opportunistic nature which Cohen et al, (2000) declare as, "selecting from whoever happens to be available," (p143).

I looked for the means of showing two key elements of the sample. They were concerned with generalisability and representativeness. This caused me to

question how a small group could achieve such high aims. Robson (1993) is critical of convenience (opportunistic) sampling saying, '*It does not produce representative findings*, (p136). However, in the context of this highly sensitive issue, representativeness was not relevant. I was obliged to work with people who responded to me and that I felt comfortable with. The study renders valuable personal narratives that offer analytical insight into teacher stress. My findings are indicative of the participants' experiences of the workplace stress phenomenon.

Next I considered the issue of findings always being generalisable. Again, Silverman (2000) provided an option, by pointing out that it is not always the task of the qualitative researcher to be concerned with this matter. Indeed it would not be advisable to seek responses that are always confirmatory. There is value in finding negative responses as they can provide us with the means to test our theories. Cohen et al, (2000) agree, that we do not always need to seek generalizability: '*It (sampling) does not seek to generalize about the wider population, for a convenience sample that is an irrelevance,*' (p103).

I considered how I would obtain a selection of people and invite them to take part in my study. I also required ease of access in order to carry out the work. I needed a '*people sample*' Robson (1993:136) who would be willing to talk about very stressful periods of their lives. Miles and Huberman (1994) advise considering what the participants can bring to the study. The context of their experiences may be similar and consideration must be given to what is, '*typical*', '*representative*' and '*negative*' (p34).

I therefore needed a set of guiding principles in order to inform my selection of respondents. Cohen et al, (2000) advise a set of criteria in terms of group size, time frame and context. My choices were also guided by geographical

proximity and ease of access which Cohen et al, declare: *'involves choosing the nearest individuals to serve as respondents,'* (p102).

Initially I thought about eliciting information from ex-colleagues who had suffered workplace stress. After reflecting on the implications of this, such as a change in our relationship, unburdening worries or seeking interventions, I decided not to pursue this avenue as my sole means of obtaining participants. I placed a request for participants in a union publication. I obtained several responses and replied to all of them. Some respondents had clear agendas that did not match mine. For example, some wanted retribution and legal action and I could not enter into their proposals. I had to state that I was not capable or indeed seeking to accomplish this. Some were geographically too far away to be practical.

Eventually I was able to identify a small group of eight participants (including myself) who were willing to tell their stories. The process of identification came about when I considered that I was unable to discern any underlying 'other' motive for them in telling their story. It was important to establish that participants could not have any expectation that I was in a position to resolve any issues they may have regarding their past or present work.

I am one of the participants and there are contentions inherent to the complex nature of 'insider' research. I realized I would have the added dimension of telling my story and interpreting my narrative. Being reflective allowed me to portray my narrative as an honest representation of my stress experiences. Telling the participants that I would be a part of this study created a sense of trust and equity. I felt very privileged to have obtained the narratives of teacher stress from my participants. The nature of this research with other professionals in the field inevitably led me to adhere closely to the ethical considerations involving research with other people.

The participants for my inquiry were chosen from thirty-four responses to a request I made via a teacher's union publication. The following table provides their characteristics. In the analysis they are provided with pseudonyms.

Sample Details

PARTICIPANT NUMBER	AGE	GENDER	RETIRED	PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER	HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER	INNER-CITY SCHOOL	LONDON SUBURBAN SCHOOL
1	50+	Male	Yes		Yes	Yes	
2	40+	Female	Yes		Yes	Yes	
3	40+	Male	Yes		Yes	Yes	
4	40+	Female	Yes		Yes	Yes	
5	50+	Female	No	Yes			Yes
6	40+	Male	Yes	Yes			Yes
7	50+	Female	No	Yes			Yes
8	50+	Female	No	Yes			Yes

Four stories have been told by Primary school teachers' and four by Secondary school teachers'. The schools they taught in represent both inner city environments and suburban London. Generally they share the commonality of similar age and socio-economic position. The participants' who wished to tell their stories were broadly within what is generally termed 'middle age' and had spent considerable years in the profession. It would be reasonable to assume that with a long record of service, those teachers would also have gained posts of responsibility that adds another dimension to their workload. At the very least, they would be at the top end of their salary scale and earning potential. All participants happen to be British and white. This is clearly a result of societal networks. The omission of non-white respondents may suggest a number of things such as, unwillingness to identify themselves as suffering from stress, a feeling that admission of failure to cope would be stigmatising, or mistrusting my intentions.

The Interviews

A deciding factor on choosing participants was proximity and ease of access. The venues varied, being either at the participants' homes or at a local leisure facility. The latter proved the most comfortable. I observed that being in a 'neutral' place allowed both participants and myself easier ways to end the interview.

Each participant was assured that I would adhere to the ethical guidelines provided by the British Educational Research Association. I also followed the guidance of Robson (1993) and informed the participants that they could withdraw at any time. I confirmed that their confidentiality would be respected and anonymity assured. The participants all agreed to my taping the interviews and that edited highlights, could be reproduced as text.

Each interview began with a reiteration of my focus for the study. I then sought to reassure the participants and to make them feel as comfortable in the situation as possible. Due to the sensitive nature of my inquiry I felt it important to spend time reassuring my informants that I was interested in their stories for the purpose of understanding the impact of stress on their careers.

All interviews were taped and I decided not to take notes throughout the telling of the story. I wanted the participants to know that their stories were precious to me. I felt note taking would detract from the importance I sought to place on listening to the stories. I did however make a point of writing a commentary as soon as possible afterwards. Inevitably some small detail will be missing. Perhaps a sigh or a shrug of the shoulders, were not recorded, however the stories were so powerful and their authors so forthright, that I could recall what I felt were most of these instances.

Interestingly, most participants continued telling me their experiences after the tape was turned off. Sometimes they provided far more detailed and often colourful accounts of their experiences. Some of the subsequent material was in the form of gossip about other members of staff and I chose to disregard this. Some extra material contained disclosures of workplace bullying and victimization. I wondered how to deal with this. I found I had to reiterate to myself, that I was not in a position to effect change or remedy any situation.

The participants were informed that I would hold the only copy of their taped story. I would transcribe the tapes and the data would be stored securely. The stories would be transcribed in full and a copy would be kept on my computer with a safe password. At the end of each interview I took time to ensure the participants were confident that I would conduct my inquiry with integrity and pride in my professionalism. I thanked them for their time and contribution to my study. I feel that I inspired trust and confidence that the stories would be interpreted with a duty of care and respect towards my participants.

Transcribing the Interviews

Next I considered how I would produce the text. I obtained the last of my data at a time that coincided with the school summer holiday. I decided to have a holiday alone in Cyprus and in order to occupy my time profitably I set myself the task of transcribing the interviews by hand. I spent four weeks under a tree in beautiful surroundings, uninterrupted on my data. The task took far longer than I had anticipated. I concur with Robson (1993) who warns that interviews amass huge quantities of data and this can be daunting. I also possessed copious notes that I had made after reflecting on the interviews. My quandary was, should I write every single utterance, or just produce a readable text. I had already resolved to transcribe all the interviews. It is admissible to transcribe only some interviews or only parts of some too, as suggested by Silverman

(2000) however I felt that in order to do the study justice I should make a complete transcribed collection of all the data. I therefore also concluded that I would transcribe verbatim in order to obtain a full appreciation of all the stories. It would be true to say, I would have felt uneasy allowing an outsider to transcribe the tapes for me. Transcribing the tapes became an arduous task and took far longer than the four weeks I had allocated.

Cohen et al, (2000) prompted me to question just exactly what I was transcribing. Indeed they suggest the researcher be cautious, *'believing that they tell everything that took place in the interview,'* (p125). Certainly I was alert to the problems that can be associated such as, tone of voice, body language, or the participants' frame of mind for instance. My notes after the interviews were a useful prompt in coping with this.

It became possible after such a close relationship with the text to detect recurrent themes were emerging. I was transcribing what I heard. I reflected that the process of analysis had already begun.

Analysing the Data

Although all respondents had experienced the common phenomenon of workplace stress, each had a unique account, involving individual ways of responding. The stories told in this study do not fall easily into any pre-defined 'position'. They do not all share the same contextual situation but are similar in that they involve educational institutions and educators. The stories have an antecedent particular to each individual. They have similar experiential qualities however they have vastly differentiated consequences.

Before the analysis could be attempted I had to address some concerns that I knew were particular to this research. I acknowledged that telling a story was a construction of reality. We therefore can not assume that the researcher held the only 'reality'. This led me to query how much of the informants' story was also the researchers. This is a special facet of the inquiry, considering my story is embedded within the text. My subjectivity is inevitably in the text as I am the main interpreter and what I have, is the sense I made of what sense the participants made of their experiences. I did not resolve my dilemmas easily. Instead I determined to accept that I was a 'player' and that I would be 'written in' and if I found opportunities to acknowledge my voice, then I would elucidate. Another dilemma for me was deciding what to put in and what is left out, Bruner (1990) refers to '*the teller*' and '*the told*' as a transaction and the data was analysed with this transaction in mind.

I realized that all the informants, who have experienced the phenomenon of teacher stress, could construct their stories within similar or very different frameworks. They could choose to provide me with a medical, emotional or personal narrative and they would all be acceptable vehicles for telling their stories. People who tell stories often do so in literate cultures through familiar forms and it was expected that some familiar genres would appear. Similarly, the same vocabulary and the same sort of sequence influenced by popular culture, by professional folklore and by the way stories of survival and duress have been represented are embedded in the narratives.

Coding

After each interview I made notes and reflected on how the process had gone. I began to amass material that I did not want to lose and sought a means of classifying and storing it in a methodical manner. Thus I began to explore how I could code my data.

In order to accomplish the analysis of my data I required a system whereby I could codify the large volume of material I obtained during the course of the interviews. I realized that I needed to assign categories or labels to the various themes as they emerged and my field notes alerted me to the advantage of doing this early in my inquiry. I knew that I could not rely on my memory to capture everything that occurred during the interviews. Simultaneously I felt the need to be aware of what Miles and Huberman (1994:56) refer to as *'tunnel vision'* where I might miss important points and dismiss them as irrelevant. Furthermore Miles and Huberman suggest caution when dealing with large quantities of data that qualitative methods yield, during the *'selective process'* (p55) nothing should be discarded. One way of maintaining a focus throughout the process would be to consistently re-visit the research questions. Such an activity during the coding process promotes *'ongoing, iterative reflection,'* assert Miles and Huberman (1994).

I transcribed the data myself by playing the taped narratives over and over and then began writing the stories word for word. This activity took a very long time and produced vast amounts of text. I decided to include all *'utterances'* that I could identify as Silverman (2000) advises they can: *'also add value and yield new dimensions'* (p149).

I decided my best approach would be to use coding as a framework for my means of making sense of the data. Cohen, Manion and Morrision (2000) clarify the activity thus: *'Coding is the ascription of a category label either to a piece of data, with the category label either decided in advance or in response to the data that have been collected,'* (p283). I began the process of coding with a thorough re-reading of the data and listening to the tapes. On each transcript I began to create simple codes around blocks of the text. For example, when a participant mentioned conflict I highlighted the text

and coded it C, when they mentioned a problem with management I coded the text MGT. These codes were open and identified the categories, their contents and potential. From this simple coding system I then went on to revise the codes, as they became large clusters of categories. Miles and Huberman (1994) refer to the process of '*clustering*' as a: '*general name given to the process of inductively forming the categories, and the iterative sorting of things – events and actors into these categories,*' (p249).

By following this principle I was then in a position to 'break down' the text again and re-assemble it. The codes enabled me to pull the data together coherently and identify links between categories. Once the codes were revised some were renamed. Some codes became redundant and some were subsumed into others.

The next stage was to develop some type of matrix to view the codes at once, preferably on one page. This was similar to a matrix described by Miles and Huberman (1994) whereby names were listed in rows then attributed to columns so that I could see the whole landscape at once. I produced this as a tabulated format to show each participant's mention of Role Conflict (RC), Management Issues (MGT) and other themes that emerged. This activity helped to clarify the relationship with other codes and I was able to look within each domain to discover if they could be re-assigned or linked to others. I noted the pages that I referred to in the transcripts and highlighted text for use later.

At this point I questioned the efficacy of my approach. I was aware that I might not be flexible enough to deviate from the codes and explore new avenues of opportunity. Indeed, I nearly did overlook one important element of this study (loss and mourning) that was embedded in another code. I was alert to Silverman's (2000) advice to compare sub-samples and to '*generate topics with a scope outside the substantive area of research,*' (p152). Additionally,

Atkinson (1992:459) advises although coding schemes furnish, '*a powerful conceptual grid,*' they can be hard to deviate from and this restricts our exploration. This prompted me to go beyond the scripts and thus retrieve the powerful narrative of loss and mourning that I would otherwise have lost.

I realized that I had amassed an unwieldy quantity of material that Lincoln and Gubba (1985:354) refer to as '*data overload,*' and so I considered the use of computer assisted analysis. A number of programs exist such as CAQDAS, ATLAS and NUDIST and they, '*allow for conclusions to be based on rigorous analysis,*' affirms Silverman (2000:156). Using such methods allows for tabulating categories and counting participant's references to instances, themes and occurrences. This may serve as a guard against losing items embedded in the transcripts of dense texts.

Several more advantages of using computer programs are worth consideration. Data can be stored and retrieved easily on computers using a variety of new technologies such as CD's and Memory Sticks that are capable of storing large amounts of text. Qualitative data analysis programs allow for the labour intensive activities to be quickly and efficiently achieved. Tasks such as; checking and cross-checking, collating, segmenting, labelling, sorting, frequency counts relationships and quotes can be accomplished with relative ease.

There are clearly advantages to employing computer programs designed to analyse qualitative data. After consulting the advice offered by Miles and Huberman (1994) on choosing software, however I decided against it. I am not familiar with any programs designed to manage data and doing so would have meant investing a lot of time. I was thoroughly engaged with my data and did not relish being restricted to whatever codes the program would assign to the

work. I thought the nature of my data would be best represented in the manner I had originally chosen.

The first stage coding identified the descriptive nature of elements of the teachers work. They were initially called Role, Change, Age, Management and Workload. The codes were subsequently revised as a result of looking more closely at the clusters and sub-dividing them into new codes. When I revisited the first stage of coded data I realized that I needed to consider the wider picture of what was happening in society to impact on the teachers experiences and why they identified the areas they did. The issues are discussed further in Chapter Five.

Once I was satisfied with the coding I referred to the literature contained within Chapter 2 of my thesis. From this point I could begin to conceptualise the participants' narratives based around the themes I had identified and the links within other literature such as; Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1977), Ball and Goodson (1985), Bowers and McIver (2000) Health and Safety Executive (2000) Troman and Woods (2000). They indicate different structures of stress and ideological shifts in the nature of work.

In order to move towards theorising, I needed to enrich the interpretation by considering the sociological forces at play. This can be usefully explored by looking at the theme of Role Conflict. Initially I accepted that teachers experienced difficulty with the changing nature of their profession and the way this could increase stress in their working lives. The psychological perspective would allow us to conceptualise stress within the individual but I needed to go beyond this and situate the findings within a sociological frame.

There are however, other factors that require consideration. We are being urged into an era of 'new professionalism' such as described by Quicke (2000) where teachers are monitored and audited. Under the scrutiny of regulations they are forced to continually re-construct the self to perform all the tasks that can be measured by new forms of audit. They are required to produce evidence of their achievements and it is the constant pressure of doing so that produces their performance. New circumstances of teachers' work are produced in new conditions of power where teachers work can be constituted in different ways. If we consider Foucault's (1980) notion that power and knowledge are intimately connected, then it can be powerful for those who elicit from the workers. It can also be powerful for the teachers provided they are seen to be on the side of change. Teachers who do not comply with the 'new ways' are the ones who encounter pressure to conform, are judged and held up to account. Thus the performativity of teachers is something that 'others' demand. That is why they are constantly 'swarming', rushing here and there to supply evidence and hit the targets. Teachers are expected to be competent at their jobs and to demonstrate their competencies evidenced by results and targets they have achieved.

Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) point to the paradox faced when considering the changing nature of teachers' work, they say: *'What passes for professionalism and professionalisation is very different in the experienced lives and work of teachers,'* (p22). This issue was brought into the nature of the narratives I obtained for my study and I realized that the teachers were not just describing their role or their changing role and the conflict they felt about it. They were trying to discern how and why this was happening to them.

The next step for me was to 'listen to the talk' again. I needed to move from the descriptive phase into the interpretative phase. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) the interpretation is: *'reflexive, reactive interaction between the researcher and the de-contextualised data that are*

already interpretations of a social encounter, ' (p282). Furthermore they suggest, what we do is to loose the whole then reassemble the data set. This requires us to; classify, categorise, order units of meaning, reassemble the narrative and interpret the data. I returned to the text to discover if any codes were newly visible or had become redundant and was able to discern that some categories overlapped and merged with others.

The codes were subsequently conceptualised as sociological themes I interpreted from the data. I recognized that role and role conflict encompassed the notion of new modes of professionalism, such as mentioned by Ball and Goodson (1985), Troman and Woods (2000). My participants told me of their dilemmas regarding aspects of their work that had radically changed their duties. Changes inevitably enter this domain and as Maguire (2002) points out, the influence of globalisation and its effect on our education system has had a profound impact on the nature of teachers work. The result can be evidenced in the changing nature of professionalism where teachers work is audited by performance and measured by success, add Hey and Bradford (2004). A direct consequence of this has seen the profession being politicised by 'New Managerialist' terms using the language of market forces. Teachers are exhorted to observe and mentor each other, meet targets and strive for higher examination results. Performance Related Pay is another such 'driver' that forces teachers' into compliancy with government edicts.

There is a 'downside' that has proven damaging to the professional lives of my participants. They displayed an agitated attitude towards the perils of performativity and led them to reveal stories they perceived as revealing management issues and incompetence. I revised these codes and interpreted the data as displaying evidence of workplace bullying. Troman and Woods (2000) assert this is a widespread phenomenon at all levels within the realms of education.

In order for management to realize their targets, deadlines and workloads filter down through the system from the Head Teacher. My participants identified markedly increased workloads and undue pressures were placed upon them. Their success was seen in terms of obtaining good OFSTED reports and being able to deliver measured, quality education. Such transparency and accountability provokes a state of anxiety, as described by Beck (1992) and Giddens (1998).

My participants mentioned age and gender as having influence on how they viewed their positions. Indeed they do have significance when placed in the context of the changing nature of professional work. This can be seen in the competency driven market for the training of new teachers and the demand for technological skills. The value of the older more experienced practitioner, who may not have the value added skills, is thus questioned. Age in particular has an impact on recruitment and retention efforts, as seen in the TTA's (2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005) efforts to encourage young graduates into the profession. The trend is however that they do not remain in teaching reports Teacherline (2004).

When the interpretation was underway I had to be constantly alert to providing a theorised account of the themes. There were difficulties discerning subtle shifts between themes and the data had to be revisited several times to check for consistency. The narratives displayed elements that I recognized from my review of literature in the field of teacher stress. Thus my initial codes changed and developed around a sociological framework that identifies some reasons for the changes in teachers' professional lives. In the presentation of the data analysis I have included the participants' terms and my own interpretation of the sociological concepts they define.

CHAPTER FOUR

Data Analysis

Introduction

After several readings of the transcripts and listening to the tapes and coding the data, I knew I had achieved something important in the ability to tell and interpret the stories. I realized that the stories would be co- or re - constructed in ways that other readers would find interesting. Teachers facing workplace stress de-motivation and feelings of de-professionalisation would be able to engage with the text. I hoped that by telling the stories, others could see it was sometimes possible to recover and return. This could be empowering.

Participant Vignettes

The first participant, Raymond, entered the profession late, having had a successful earlier career in industry. He reported his motivation to teach was in order to “*give something back.*” He viewed teaching as a vocation and described feeling a “*calling*” to contribute towards the community. Financially he was secure and his family life was stable. His children had completed their education and he felt able to “*take on a new challenge.*” In choosing teaching as his second career, he thought he could provide expertise and different skills to benefit young people. He felt a particular empathy with young adults and decided that Key Stage 3 and the transition towards 16+ education was the best use of his previous employment and experience.

He detailed several positive experiences of teaching and highlighted moments of enlightenment, *“I knew they understood, I knew they got it!”* Such occasions provided feelings of real satisfaction, *“it was such a joy when I knew they understood what I was trying to teach.”*

Having held senior management positions in industry, he felt equipped to cope with the demands of the teaching profession. He felt prepared by his training to expect long working hours, associated paperwork and meeting deadlines. He did not expect a lack of appreciation for extra curricular activities that became expected of him. He did not seek thanks but was disillusioned by the lack of recognition from management for his efforts. He felt he made a big investment in his new career but was dismayed by what he perceived as little care from anyone, for all the extra duties he performed. His feelings of dismay and disillusionment deepened when yet more voluntary commitment was asked of him. The workload appeared to increase exponentially, the more he did, the more he was asked to do and he felt *“put upon.”* These feelings were compounded when he was asked to rewrite a planning document for the whole of his large ICT Department. The task coincided with other changes and he was confused by the seemingly constant changes to policies and practices.

When he made his concerns known to the management team he felt they began to put pressure on him to leave. He felt they made him increasingly insecure about his ability to teach and lead a curriculum team. The pressure was unrelenting and he began to need time off work in order to *“catch up on myself and recuperate. I had to get strong for the next battle.”* A ‘critical incident,’ such as described by Measor (1984) involving an altercation with a pupil brought matters to a head. The teacher felt unable to go on and reported to his doctor. He never went back to his post. He was declared unfit on medical grounds and remains permanently retired.

The second participant, Maria, is a single female and in her mid 40's. She hails from a background of high educational achievement. Both of her parents were Head Teachers and she sought to emulate what she considered as their success. From an early stage in her teaching career she reported having a "*game plan*" and set about "*rising through the ranks.*" Her hard work and determination paid off and she obtained a middle management post fairly rapidly, "*I was only 32 and I was there, I mean, I did it!*" Gaining such a post appears to have heralded her pathway to success. Very soon after, she reported being promoted to the Senior Management of the school and she "*loved*" her work. The enjoyment began to wane when several changes took place in the school. In what she felt was a very short period of time, she witnessed changes to the management team, a marked decline in pupil behaviour and a vastly increased workload.

She continued to "*battle on*" until encountering a 'critical incident' that became insurmountable. The incident came in the form of a dispute with the Head Teacher and the event had such an impact on her working life that she felt unable to continue. She described this time in her life as her "*complete breakdown.*" She was retired from teaching under the ill health regulations and has not felt able to take up any other form of employment.

Anthony, the third participant, is a permanently retired teacher. He became retired on the grounds of ill health at the age of 40 and reported feeling, "*very bitter and angry about this situation.*" When he began teaching he felt, "*full of enthusiasm and commitment*" and he, "*wanted to make a difference.*" He felt he had chosen a career for life and was optimistic that he would be successful. Having obtained a management post early he felt proud of his achievements.

Anthony enjoyed teaching pupils who presented with challenging behaviour and felt he gained kudos amongst the staff for his success in dealing with such students. He reported serving several years in the post and that they were very happy times. He felt part of a “*large family*” of caring professionals. All pleasure was dashed when a new Head Teacher appeared in the school. Anthony readily admits that there was a very real and powerful personality clash. Anthony had for some time been an authoritative figure in the school and his position was being challenged. He perceived the threat as being evidenced by increased pressures and demands being placed upon him. He felt the extra burden of an increased workload unreasonable and unmanageable.

Anthony described himself as a victim of workplace bullying, as outlined by Troman and Woods (2000). He reported that the pressure was unrelenting and eventually became intolerable. He reported himself as ill on several occasions but was dismayed that management did not take his assumptions of unreasonable behaviour on the part of the new Head Teacher as serious. On reflection he considered that perhaps they had colluded in order to get rid of him. His periods of ill health increased. He tried several times to return and to, “*go back.*” He was unable to sustain a return and was retired after a lengthy period of illness.

The fourth participant, Ruth, described herself as being, “*meticulous in all areas of life.*” Her job was important to her but family commitments came first. She felt she had, “*old fashioned values*” and that her place was primarily as a carer for her family. In order to sustain a career in teaching she sought clarity in her duties. She wanted clear aims and objectives, time scales and recognition of a job well done. She felt she, “*played it by the rules. Just tell me what to do and I will get it done.*”

Her teaching career was enjoyable and she was happy with her achievements. She had no ambitions to be part of a management team and did not seek promotion or extra responsibility. Thus she experienced unease when her duties appeared ill defined. Partly as a result of an OFSTED inspection, the management of the school had decided to change some job descriptions and to re-structure teachers' roles. Ruth became confused and disoriented. She reported being unable to cope with such uncertainty.

Ruth was required to attend meetings to address improvements to the school Action Plan and this became a major source of her distress. Furthermore, she felt unable to cope with change. At 50+ she felt adapting to change was extremely challenging. She described systems in the school as becoming "*chaotic*" and she felt in a state of flux. She was bewildered by the need for change and her view was, "*everything had been alright as it was, why change it when it works?*" She experienced panic attacks when faced with consistent change and insecurity.

Ruth recalled a 'critical incident' that, "*tipped the balance.*" She was required to take on a role of responsibility in an area of the curriculum where she had no experience. She sought advice and training in order to carry the extra duties but none was provided. She reported feeling, "*overwhelmed and unable to cope*" she "*went to pieces.*" She became permanently retired from the profession.

Sarah, the fifth participant, described herself as being a highly respected and valued teacher. She is married, 50 + and currently teaching part - time in a Primary school situated in a London suburb. Interestingly, she was retired on ill health grounds before the government changed the regulations in

1997. She has returned to teaching on a reduced timetable of two days per week.

Sarah chose to tell her story based around the incidents leading to a period of illness. Also detailed is her recovery and decision to return to the profession. What she provided is a picture that described weak management and what she termed as, "*Workload Overload.*" These are the issues she attributed to her experience of stress and distress.

Her encounter with the stress phenomenon clearly shocked Sarah who had always considered herself as, "*a very strong woman.*" What she found highly disturbing was the profound effect stress could exert. Not only was her health impaired for some time, she also found her family relationships suffered. When she recovered she felt she wanted to return to teaching however, being retired on ill health grounds made this problematic. She told of her anger and frustration at the loss of her career. After much searching she found a school willing to employ her for two days a week but her loss is still palpably felt.

Participant six is Alex, who worked in one inner city high school for nearly twenty years. He described himself as totally dedicated to his profession. He took great pride in his achievements and cited pleasure in knowing that many of his students gained examination success as a result of his input. His commitment entailed several extra curricular areas including residential trips and after school sport and study clubs. He perceived the school as being a happy place, "*like a big family*" and referred to excellent relationships between staff/parents/pupils. This was clearly a very fulfilling time in his career, however it did not last.

Due to a falling roll the school was required to amalgamate with another local high school. From that point on Alex became unhappy and disillusioned. He described problems stemming from the process of amalgamation when teachers had to apply for posts within the newly created school, *“I had to apply for my own job for heavens sake!”* There was competition from the teacher holding a parallel post in the other school and pressure to obtain jobs was intense. Some staff had to be lost in the amalgamation. Some left out of choice, some were re - deployed. He described this time as, *“extremely stressful.”*

Alex tried to remain positive about the experience but felt he had to work twice as hard to maintain his status. He hoped the new school would, *“settle down with the new team.”* This hoped for future did not happen. The school discipline became an issue and blame was apportioned. Some staff insisted it had become problematic because of the mixed intake from the two schools. Whilst alternatively, some staff blamed the new management for not being able to meet the needs of a very different school population.

Alex became ill due to work place stress and took a lengthy period of time off work. He described his amazement that he was left to his own devices in order to recover. He sought help from Teacherline and found counselling empowering. He has returned part-time but no longer feels the same commitment to the profession. After a process of soul searching, he felt undervalued and that he was not being supported in returning. He plans to seek work in property development.

The seventh participant, Mary, had a previous career as a child psychologist. She decided after her children had left home to retrain as a teacher. After qualifying she obtained a post in a primary school near her home and

reported an enjoyment for her new career. This was marred however when she had a negative experience during an OFSTED inspection, such as described by Troman and Woods (2000). Following the inspection, she felt her Head Teacher questioned her ability and she lost all confidence in herself. What also disturbed her, is the fact that she could be easily identified in the report as what she interpreted as, "*a failing teacher.*"

She tried hard to understand why a lesson, that she admitted, was not one of her best, could so affect other people's perceptions of her ability. She felt her teaching up to that point had always been highly effective. What she also narrated was how the experience still had an effect on how she felt about the profession.

In order to address what she perceived as her weakened professionalism, she attempted to compensate by working even harder. She told of working long hours every evening after school in order to, "*come up with really dynamic lessons.*" She could not maintain the pace and suffered ill health as a result. Mary felt pressured into resigning from her post. She has subsequently found another teaching job in a small Special School where she feels her efforts are more appreciated.

The eighth participant, Anna, felt the management of her school was cause for concern. She was a long serving member of the team and felt secure in challenging the Head Teacher over issues that worried her. What she discovered caused her to question her relationships with her colleagues. She felt they "*ganged up on me, they used me to get at others.*" They made her feel, "*in the middle all the time.*"

Anna wanted to leave the profession for some time and only remained in order to secure her pension. She felt, “*jaded and used up.*” There was no trust in staff relations and the unease she felt had affected her teaching. She reported experiencing a feeling of fear, that other staff were just waiting for her to do something wrong. Her expectation when going to work was one of dread. There was no support from the Head Teacher and she knew the management to be equally unhelpful.

Her workload increased even though she had expressed concern over what she could successfully accomplish. Still more appeared to be required. Constant revision of policy and practice left her confused. However seeking clarification would be to, “*play into their hands, they are just waiting for me.*” Her experience of teaching was created in a climate of fear. She reiterated throughout her narrative that she was still amazed at how intimidated she felt, by her experiences. She reported having to take lengthy periods of “*time out*” in order to recuperate and “*get ready for the next battle.*”

A major blow to her plans to retire as soon as possible could come from the government if teachers are required to continue service to 65 years old as described by Svendsen (2003) and Beard (2003). She said she would “*crumble.*” She “*could not survive.*” She experienced a very challenging time of her life when she, “*should be able to relax a bit more.*”

Perceived Causes of Stress

In this section I will present the themes that my participants identified as being the major causes of their experience of stress. I also provide my construct of the sociological interpretation of their stress.

Change: Responses to the Effect of Globalisation on Education

Change and new initiatives can be seen as contributory to teachers experiencing stress. Changes have been necessary in order to respond to the demands of providing education to a world class standard, asserts the DfEE (2001). How change is managed is largely dependent on the vision of management systems. Change can be better accomplished easily when people are consulted and prepared. Alternatively it can be a highly stressful time.

Raymond did not mind adapting to change but felt that the pressure to be constantly changing was unnecessary. This led to his comment that management set:

Raymond: *“unrealistic targets, the policies were incoherent and practices were inconsistent.”*

It seemed that there were relentless pressures to be in a state of change that the management determined as ‘improvement.’ Raymond detailed incidences of changes he made in order to comply with management’s requests. His disillusionment increased after completing changes to his department’s delivery of the National Curriculum, then being told to change the content and delivery system just one year later!

Similarly other participants felt the changes and rate of changes brought about by new initiatives contributed toward their stress. It has to be remembered that the participants in this study are all in the age group who have seen the greatest changes in education over the last two decades. Some found the experience of change more difficult than others. Maria was emphatic that change and new initiatives were contributory causes of her

stress. She felt that the imposition of unrealistic targets for change and the changes to her timetable were detrimental to her role. Additionally she was concerned at the lack of consultation when new policies and practices were introduced. This was felt to impact on her feeling a loss of professionalism and lack of self worth:

Maria: "Numerous changes, including management, policies, working conditions and even changing the schools name were made. They proved not to be positive moves and consequently, caused a great deal of stress to me and my colleagues."

Changes to role, job title, policies and practices were cited throughout each participant's story. Anthony had three lengthy periods of absence and each time he returned systems had been changed. He was confused and demoralized by the changes. His workload was increased and entailed areas he had no experience in.

Anthony: "The new environment felt chaotic. I was getting more and more pressure. I was not functioning at all!"

Similarly Ruth felt such changes brought about low staff morale and contributed to a high turnover of teachers leaving. She described them as:

Ruth: "ill-advised and ill-considered."

They were regarded as increasing pressure and being detrimental to her health and wellbeing. Indeed a 'critical incident' led to her eventual capitulation. She was asked to change her teaching area and subject and this was:

Ruth: "the last straw!"

Sarah told of the constant pressure to change and adopt new initiatives:

Sarah: "Some of the changes that we are facing are happening daily now. It's getting more and more difficult to um, to carry on. It's like I'm being punished for being conscientious, for wanting to do a good job."

Clearly Sarah wanted to keep up with new innovations but was struggling to cope with the rate of change. Another factor for her to contend with was a lack of collegiality. A period of instability in staffing led to her feeling of isolation. Changes to staffing can be very unsettling. Teachers can gain support from each other at times of difficulty:

Sarah: "I'm now the only teacher who has had any lengthy service. There's one – away on long sickness. He won't be back. There's a teacher just gone. She's concerned about her health - she's gone. At the other end of the corridor there's a teacher who is leaving next week. We'll see if someone turns up."

It is not hard to imagine the disillusionment of working in such an environment. Indeed Alex confirmed similar feelings when he cited the changes in leadership, ever changing school policies and job descriptions as:

Alex: "creating insecurity and anxiety." Furthermore that, "Each change brought about an increased and often intolerable workload."

One thing he found astonishing is that no use was made of his proven capabilities. He could not understand why his job was changed, against what he felt were reasonable requests, so that he was placed in areas where he felt inadequate and ill prepared. Yet again we see teachers moved to areas that

are not appropriate to their training. The move caused this teacher to have to implement his own strategies to cope:

Alex: "I had to introduce team building and this took up an inordinate amount of my already over stretched time."

Changes to teachers duties when they are absent from school is to be a consistent feature identified by the participants. These changes are inevitable as other teachers' roles change to cover their responsibilities. Additionally, some participants highlight the confusion faced upon their return. All participants as a major factor in their stress experiences cite the fact that changes are felt to impose extra work. Alex encountered a 'critical incident' regarding changes to his role that caused him great alarm and led to his absence from school:

Alex: "I stated (to the Head Teacher) that I could no longer cope. She told me that I would cope, but offered no strategies in order to help me. Instead she asked me to take on another role. One of her new initiatives was to help motivate disaffected students in a 'study unit' and I was asked to run this project. I asked if this would mean a reduction in my other commitments, as it was such an enormous task. However she said that I was meant to do this along with all my other duties! I informed her that I now felt extremely ill and anxious. I said I felt unable to go on any longer. She said I would cope as I always did! I informed her that I now felt very ill indeed and was completely overwhelmed!"

When new initiatives are introduced they usually require some level of expertise from those who are asked to implement them. Certainly time in order to train for new duties would seem appropriate. However, the stories from participants echo each other in that they were often being asked to implement new strategies, policies and practices that were being 'foisted' upon them. They consistently comment on not being able to take on extra

duties for a variety of reasons such as, time, existing workload, lack of ability, or lack of training in certain areas. Such factors can contribute to the feeling of becoming de-professionalised when we realize that we are unable to perform to the best of our ability:

Alex: "I made every effort to regain control but failed and became completely overwhelmed. I visited my G.P. who deemed me unfit for work!"

Mary felt dismayed by the constant changes:

Mary: "I hadn't realized there would be this constant battle. You constantly have to LEARN how to do it! You learn how to do it (paper work) and then you have to learn it again (changes and new initiatives). Even though you know HOW to do it, you have to PROVE you can do it! It's fairly fruitless and thankless. It's a constant."

She was feeling particularly demoralized at the rate of change:

Mary: "Mondays are always depressing because we get - and we are working flat out - and you are hit with - ANOTHER thing what's more important than the last thing!"

Similar to other participants' experiences, when she complained to management, her concerns were not addressed:

Mary: "We got - agh! Things from the Head, and she was bringing in initiatives and in the end I would say, listen, can you give me one really good valid reason for doing these things? Just tell me what makes it valid and if you don't - I'm not going to do it."

It seems no valid reason was provided, for this participant continues:

Mary: *“She said, oh you have to do it. I said, oh! Do you? It isn't valid, it doesn't work. It is of no use to anyone - I AM NOT DOING IT!”*

This was quite a direct challenge to the management on an important issue. The illustration served to highlight the participants' exasperation at the constant new initiatives being thrust upon teachers.

Anna did not view change as a major source of contention. She did however confront the Head Teacher of her school on some issues. Anna described her experience of change and new initiatives as a time of *“castles in the air”*. Evidently there was a period of difficulty in the school and the staff were unhappy:

Anna: *“They all started leaving. We had a large exodus of people.”*

Anna thought that recent changes and an overload of work had contributed to staff feeling demoralized and under valued. She confronted the Head Teacher with the responsibility for the situation:

Anna: *“I tried to stand up to her quite a few times, in a reasonable way and because I'm reasonable, she found that quite difficult. She, she, she. It came as a surprise to her!”*

Nothing was done to alleviate the sources of contention and not long after the confrontation Anna felt unable to continue her work.

To summarize, teachers have encountered many changes over the last two decades as described by authorities such as; Hargreaves and Goodson (1996), Capel and Woods (1998) and Troman and Woods (2000). These changes can be seen in the light of the need to equip pupils with an education that conforms to international standards. This allows pupils to compete for work in a global market that requires new skills and Dillon and

Maguire (2001) expose these requirements succinctly. The curriculum has changed in order to meet these demands. Changes to their role have meant teachers' workload has increased and Bowers (2001) sheds much light on this issue. New initiatives influencing policies and practice, such as, The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, target setting and Quality, Control and Assessment procedures have left my participants feeling de-valued, undermined, de-skilled, overworked and de-professionalised. Ball (1999) alludes to this model as being 'transparent' in order to be audited.

Role Conflict: New Modes of Professionalism

Part of the human condition is to develop an identity. In doing so we are not merely adopting a role, what we do is more complex. Our behaviour is influenced by what we bring in cultural terms to our role. This becomes embedded in our consciousness when we are emotionally engaged and touches all parts of our lives and experiences. We are placed in new changing conditions and how we occupy our roles can cause conflict and stress. Our responses can go beyond conflict when we are asked to do too much or our values are questioned. The new modes of professionalism suggest we need a new sense of teacher identity. The data signals the changing nature of the role of the teacher and what it means to be in conflict with the role. It heralds more about the impossibilities of a new professionalism with its demands of numerous unworkable requests placed upon a workforce bearing the weight of social economic pressures.

Seven of the teachers reported that they felt their roles, ill defined, changed or changing. They reported experiencing a lack of consultation throughout the process of change. This factor should be eliminated when the full implementation of the Workforce Agreement (2003) is operational.

Raymond referred to having:

Raymond: “...*extra work with no guidance on how to do it!*”

Following an OFSTED inspection, the report specified Raymond’s leadership of a department as exemplary. His teaching skills were observed and reported as “*dynamic*”, however the Head Teacher deemed him as, “*not effective enough.*” Raymond did not consider the situation as conducive to good working practice. Indeed Raymond pointed to a profusion of changes in systems to the school that led to deterioration in the quality of educational provision in the school. The changes brought about an increase in the amount of paperwork that was required:

Raymond: “*energies were being diverted from the real tasks...so wasting precious resources.*”

He attributed a fall in disciplinary standards as being caused by wasting time on paperwork that made no significant change to improve standards in the school. Moreover, changes to titles of Heads and Deputy Heads of departments, served to devalue members of staff. Yet, even though the Head Teacher had been critical of his performance, he found himself with a grand title, extra duties, and an increased workload but without any extra guidance, resources or staff. This situation serves to illustrate how roles can be altered to suit management plans to bring about change. Furthermore Raymond felt that the Head Teacher wanted him to leave:

Raymond: “*He kept putting pressure on me over one thing or another.*” I said, “*do you not appreciate I may be on the verge of a breakdown?*” He said, “*If you are at work, you must do whatever is required of you.*”

Although Raymond insisted he could not keep up with the constant demand for change, he was asked to do even more. In a short time span he was required to put together a new component of work and have it ready to implement in the new term. Raymond struggled to understand why he had to change something that had worked well and been approved by OFSTED. Once completed he presented the work and was told it was no longer necessary:

Raymond: *“shortly after I had completed the work, he (Head Teacher) ordered me to discard the programme I had prepared and moreover to start preparing a completely new one!”*

There seems to be a highly confusing pattern of change and demand in this narrative. It is arbitrary and erratic and can not be seen as model to promote a healthy working practice.

Raymond: *“I said, due to the pressures and stresses, I am now at the end of my tether.”*

Raymond’s protestations were not heeded and he became physically and mentally exhausted. He suffered a ‘nervous breakdown’ and has been unable to resume teaching.

When participants speak of change I found they often used the term ‘confusion.’ Maria highlighted her sense of confusion when her school underwent a series of changes as a response to an adverse OFSTED inspection. The impact of OFSTED inspections is highlighted in the work of Troman and Woods (2000) as being extremely stress provoking. Maria provided her story in a neat chronological order and it is easy to identify her periods of confusion over her role. This may also express her wish to regain control and agency back and to understand how this had happened to her. Maria’s perception of her role was that it was not a ‘stable’ one, citing frequent changes in job description as being very disconcerting. It appeared

that management had the power to switch the teachers around to different year groups and this was done without prior consultation. Such a situation does not reflect an attitude of care towards either the students or the teachers:

Maria: "at the end of term I was informed by management that I would no longer be responsible for my usual pupils."

She recalled other incidents of sudden change that added to her experiencing 'pressure':

Maria: "I was suddenly told that I would be moved to another department for the next term. No preparation was provided in order for me to follow the National Curriculum for this subject."

Maria was highly motivated and proud of her ability to teach well. This incident would have caused her great consternation and a lot of her free time would have been spent in preparation for this new role. She felt that the workload expected of her had become excessive and she was suffering stress symptoms as a result. The imposition of new measures and policies without prior consultation, served to confuse her further. Maria reported feeling very uneasy at what she saw as inconsistency from the management team:

Maria: "My job title changed. This caused a lot of confusion with other staff, students, parents and outside agencies. Nobody knew who I was meant to be anymore. Staff, students and parents were not happy with the changes."

She felt tasks had increased and she was under stress in order to manage completion on time.

Maria: “...on several occasions my mother came into school to help me!”

There followed periods of uncertainty about her future and she expressed concern over her inability to have any measure of control over her environment. The situation became untenable and she became “*depressed and anxious.*” After seeking medical advice she was told her symptoms were those of a highly stressed individual. She retired on ill health grounds.

Radical changes were made to Anthony’s role whilst he was on his third absence from school due to work place stress:

Anthony: “*I went back to see this new Head before the start of the term and during his new stay, he’d obviously changed things around. I was demoted to be a Form Tutor for one of my Tutor Groups, which in some ways, I lost status there. But, again, the Form Tutor roles had changed. The Form Tutor role had more or less the meaning of Head of Year. The Form Tutor had to do everything that some, er, that he didn’t have to do before.*”

Anthony was previously a Head of Year and felt a keen sense of loss at the change in his role. He perceived that others had seen him as failing and were ‘*ousting him out.*’ He did not view this change as supporting his efforts to return to work. He felt demoralized and de-skilled:

Anthony: “...it was going to be pretty tough for me to go back anyway! Obviously pride takes over a little bit and um, professionalism.”

He returned but was unable to sustain his position. He felt under constant pressure and a new Head Teacher was eager for Anthony to take on other responsibilities:

Anthony: "I remember having a meeting with the Head and Deputy Head, in his office. They basically brought me down after about six months and said, 'right now, you've had your time, you're on this particular scale, we want you now to er, take over PE, Head of PE, Careers and also be a full time Form Tutor for this pay scale.' It was basically, if you don't take this, then we are going to cut your wages."

Clearly Anthony had cause for alarm. He recognized that his job was making him ill and could not understand why he was being asked to undertake more responsibilities. As an alternative course of action, he had hoped that the new Head Teacher would have shown some empathy. He pointed out that he had been loyal to the school for twenty- four years and expected some consideration. Three attempts were made to return after periods of ill health and he thought that fact alone would ensure he had some credibility:

Anthony: "I think maybe a little bit of a guarantee somebody saying, 'you've done this for 25 years, um, on this particular scale. You're obviously getting a bit ill. You've pushed, you've put everything into it, and you are a bit low. Um, maybe that. That would have helped me, build up my self esteem again. That was never forthcoming."

Ruth also commented on the role change she experienced. She reported feelings of insecurity and inadequacy. She stated that the measures introduced by a new Head Teacher were *"ill-advised and ill-considered."* The Head Teacher felt her reasons for sweeping changes in the pastoral

team were justified. Ruth failed to accept this decision. On several occasions she challenged the Head Teacher and felt she had the support of other staff and the members of her union to back her up. One of the changes affected her role:

Ruth: “...it directly affected my position and responsibilities to my considerable detriment.”

Furthermore she was:

Ruth: “*compelled to change teaching room and this would be detrimental to my health; the move was the last straw!*”

Such role changes and ‘vagrant’ status of having to move between departments, appear to have the ability to challenge the teachers’ ability to remain ‘in control’ of what they do and how they do it.

Sarah made little mention of role conflict as being attributed to her increased levels of stress. She preferred to concentrate on incidents that were occurring and causing her concern. Her narrative detailed a recent ‘critical incident’ that provoked feelings of panic, fear and hopelessness:

Sarah: “*It’s getting more and more difficult to um, carry on.*” “*I’m frightened.*” “*That’s what I am.*”

Concern was expressed over the fact that she felt isolated after a number of teachers had left the school. She was then faced with the difficulty of trying to establish a collaborative working partnership with a new teacher. She expressed her concerns thus:

Sarah “*Um, it has been a BIG problem being so isolated up there (Top floor of building). I am aware that I’ve been the only teacher up there who’s had any lengthy service. There’s one teacher up there- away on long term sickness- he won’t be back. There’s a teacher just gone. At the other end of the corridor there’s a teacher*

who's leaving next week. We'll see if somebody new turns up. That will be my new 'year partner'-and we have to start again- getting somebody new to work with us- um."

Alex was however succinct in the description of the situation he was in:

Alex: "The system caused massive confusion of roles. There was no adequate consultation."

Like most other participants he was able to identify the lack of consultation of role change as being highly stress provoking. He also showed concern for his fellow teachers who were also feeling the effects of insecurity:

Alex: "All other colleagues who were also enduring undue pressure to meet constantly changing new targets, under most difficult circumstances."

Mary however had some interesting comments that echoed those of other participants:

Mary: "The ever changing policies have seen movable 'goal posts,' creating insecurity and anxiety. There was a marked change in the levels of stress encountered with each new management that was put in place. My job description changed several times throughout the period of unsettled leadership in the school. Each change brought about an increased and often intolerable workload. Vast and sweeping changes were made."

Mary's experiences are of interest because she tried to analyse what happened throughout her career whilst she told her story. What she chronicled was a very sad story of de-motivation from the very start of her

new career. She felt equipped professionally to deal with children who had special needs. She was placed in a class of children in a year group she was ill-prepared for. She was not consulted about this and felt very angry:

Mary: *“I felt like saying, ‘here’s a bit of news!’ you feel like saying, ‘fuck it! You know?’”*

She was indeed angry but countered this by saying:

Mary: *“I am professional and I want to do a professional job”* later adding, *“I’ve got no experience, I’ve got no-one to tell me how to teach year 1.”*

Seemingly teachers encounter the issues of lack of consultation and ill-preparedness repeatedly:

Mary: *“So, I’m expected to be delivering fantastic education on something I know very little about. I’m playing it by ear. I’m alright. I’m working organically you know.”*

This comment serves to summarize her feelings about the negative experience of role changes that she had encountered.

Anna placed her story within a narrative of fear. She had felt herself supportive of other teachers who encountered stressful situations in their work place. In doing so, she had also found herself to be compromised and was unsure how to deal with this situation. When she reflected on her role at this time she reported:

Anna: *“I’m in the middle and I’m a strong character in a quiet way, but not in another – I’m in the middle”*. She became ill and initially blamed this on the fact that she was:

Anna: *“...taking on everybody else’s problems.”*

This function was not her role. She had become someone that other teachers went to with grievances that should have been dealt with by management systems. She realized she would be in a position of contention if she chose to appoint herself as a mediator. She was unsure of where her loyalty lay. Should it be with her colleagues or with a management team that she could have tried to influence? Such quandaries put her professional skills to the test. This participant had the most exciting opportunity to make a challenge to her role and job description. She did not do so!

Anna: "I didn't deal with it as best as I could. She (Head Teacher) she wanted to come between me and my friend, which I didn't like, want, and, um, but I still carried on – but, such, a horrible way!"

Conflict over role and responsibilities is a strong theme to emerge from this study. Teachers face confusion over their multiple roles and imposed changes compound this feeling. Role preparedness can help alleviate the issue, for example, by offering teachers support and training for the extra roles they are required to undertake. Schools should therefore adopt a progressive model that allows teachers to learn and develop new skills. Models such as those advocated by Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) and Quicke (2000) encourage the collaboration of teachers in order to strengthen their professional skills.

The notion of In Service Training has undergone development in recent years. We can now see some attempts being made to address the need for such a system that is included in the aims of the Workforce Agreement (2003). Schools are conscious of the need for Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and it is common to find staff meetings containing some element of training. This is in addition to the compulsory five days per year of In Service Training (INSET) that must be attended. The aim of

professional development is to increase teacher skills and knowledge in order to deliver the curriculum in a more informed way.

Pupil Behaviour

Not all participants felt that pupil behaviour was an issue that impacted on their professionalism. Those who did however were concerned at the effect pupil indiscipline had on the whole school community. Raymond provided a list of student abuses, threats and assaults against staff and other students. He felt that such incidents were not dealt with appropriately in the school and the situation led to teachers leaving. Recruiting new teachers to the school was difficult and Raymond attributed this factor to the challenging nature of some pupils. Indeed this has been commented on frequently by McAvoy for the National Union of Teachers (2002, 2002 and 2003). Interestingly, The General Teaching Council (2002) also discovered via an opinion poll, that pupil indiscipline was one of the major factors for young teachers leaving the profession.

Maria regarded the behaviour policy of her school as inadequate and Trowler (2003) informs us, policies are not remedies and 'stop gap' measures. Usually they are created and implemented to promote positive qualities. Maria witnessed a number of incidents displaying:

Maria: *“student violence to other students and to staff.”*

This was attributed to the school having to take new students who had been excluded from other schools.

Maria: *“The majority of them added to the school's already worrying discipline breakdown. They had already failed and came with a record of poor behaviour.”*

Sarah experienced a time of extreme pressure with a very challenging class. She was concerned that her health had been compromised by having to deal with disaffected pupils on a daily basis:

Sarah: "Um, this week I didn't feel very well at all. That's anxiety, um, all kinds of nonsense going on with the class – feeling very frustrated, very helpless and hopeless, anxious, all the rest of it. Tuesday afternoon built up into a crescendo. I completely broke down in the afternoon - in front of the children, which was pretty grim AND in front of the Head Teacher!"

Sarah viewed this situation as personal failure and had great difficulty in coming to terms with her feelings.

To summarize, views concerning discipline were generally expressed in very emotive terms. They serve to provide a clear representation of how stressful pupil behaviour can be for some teachers and how it can erode their professionalism. This has prompted the General Teaching Council (2002) to undertake further research into the effects of pupil behaviour.

Loss of Professionalism

All participants expressed a profound sense of loss at the feelings they associated with de-professionalisation and re-professionalisation as discussed earlier (p.26-30). They had different perceptions of what they had lost, however they all mourned the erosion of their professionalism, in terms described by Murray and Chamberlain (1999). Those who were forced to accept early (ill health) retirement viewed their loss of earning potential as highly significant in their lives. They also faced lower pension entitlement, as they no longer contributed to the Teachers' Pension Scheme. These participants have lost their careers and indeed are a loss to the teaching profession.

Raymond lost a great deal:

Raymond: *“loss of working life of about 13 years, loss of prospect of promotion and higher pay, loss of prospect of higher pension, all lost!”*

Such a vast scale of loss took its toll on other aspects of his life. He reported feeling *“inadequate”* and *“severely depressed”* by the loss of his career and that all his hopes of a comfortable retirement were *“dashed.”*

Being forced into early retirement due to workplace stress equally devastated Maria. She described how she felt demoralized by the lack of consideration she had received during her illness periods. All confidence in the Head Teacher was lost and she knew that no offer to support her returning to her post would be made. This factor contributed to her feeling *“inadequate and de-professionalised.”* She also described how she felt about a change in her role, *“I was effectively demoted!”* and this contributed to her experiencing, *“greatly increased stress and pressure!”*

Likewise Anthony experienced *“a loss of professionalism”* and ultimately led to his feeling he *“could not go on!”* A loss of status and a tarnished pride in his profession were not enough to enable him to continue. Anthony recognized that he *“wanted to get out!”* The decision to accept early ill health retirement not only left him dismayed at his career loss but also with financial worries. He remains angry at the way his career has been terminated.

Ruth pointed out what the profession lost when she took early ill health retirement. She was also insightful concerning other teachers who remained

in her school. Her view was that, unless “*drastic measures*” were taken to address what she termed as “*incompetent management,*” things would get worse and more teachers would be ill. She detailed several other cases of teachers who were under stress and were considering trying to leave the profession. She expressed a great sadness that many “*talented teachers would be lost!*” Furthermore, “*We need them for God’s sake!*”

The participants who have managed to either return or to ‘hang on’ describe their loss slightly differently. They are deeply concerned with issues of professionalism. This can be seen in the light of the Workforce Proposal (2003). Moves have been made to allow Learning Support Assistants to ‘take’ their classes when they are released for Planning, Preparation and Assessment time detailed in the Workforce Proposal (2005). If classes are to be merely ‘looked after’ the role of teachers is de-valued. Teachers do not view this move as educationally sound. The Learning Support Assistants will be unable to teach and will have a supervisory role. This situation does not encourage others to view the teachers’ role with much professional kudos. The Support Assistants will no doubt be equally dubious about this initiative as it expands their role.

Sarah felt unable to respond to the demands of her job in a positive manner and this was a clear indication of how stressed she was. She described feeling a failure and was helpless to withstand her negative response to work. Anger at having to be part of a “*culture of compliance*” was expressed. This was her description of the way “*backdoor policies were implemented.*” She was referring to the plans to release teachers for PPA. The teachers would go along with the proposals to use Learning Support Assistants but there would be a cost. The price would be the pupil’s education. She also felt teachers would lose public support and that if Support Assistants took classes, the parents would be “*up in arms – and quite rightly too!*” asserts The Teacher publication (2004). She considered

the future was rather bleak for her prospects of staying in the profession but was unsure of what else she could do.

Alex described himself as “*de-skilled, de-professionalised, de-moralised, de-motivated and depressed!*” He also felt inadequate at being unable to sustain his motivation. Although he made a recovery and returned to teaching part-time, he is seeking other avenues of employment. When faced with “*a mountain of tasks, little support and NO thanks,*” he sees scant reason to continue. A lack of collegiality has had a profound effect on Alex. Perhaps if mutual support had been available he would be keen to continue. In the face of “*this thankless task,*” it does not seem likely.

There was an overriding feeling of frustration throughout Mary’s story. She felt she was “*worth so much more!*” She was “*skilled and interested,*” but not valued. Her description of herself was similar to some other participants, she felt “sub – standard.” This whole episode left her wondering about continuing in teaching and she asked:

Mary: “*What’s the point? I am only going to be delivering a curriculum anyway! When the Learning Support people take over that’s what we will become – non-teachers!*”

She expressed a total loss of motivation and dismay.

Anna similarly hoped for some form of recognition for her hard work. She never obtained any thanks for “*Battling on*” during a very difficult time. This participant was constantly “*in the middle*” of conflict and sought peaceful resolutions to the differences voiced by the management team. Occasionally she bore the brunt of their anger and felt “*humiliated*” by their

responses. Her teaching abilities were never questioned however she reported:

Anna: "My confidence, they stripped me of my confidence, they undermined my confidence. I thought I wouldn't survive!"

She continued:

Anna: "I shall never forget it. It made me feel like I was never strong enough, never ever good enough!"

To summarize, it would be reasonable to assume that we all enjoy praise for our efforts. When this is not forthcoming we can feel of little consequence. Management systems may find it easy to 'chip away' our professional status when we are de-moralised and de-motivated.

Age and Gender in a Changing Profession

The teachers who responded to my inquiry belong within the 'middle age' group, or nearing retirement age for those who have been able to continue. It is unreasonable to make the assumption that they are unique in experiencing stress in their occupation; however some generalizations can be made according to the Health and Safety Executive (2000). It is acknowledged that older people may be under different pressures and a number of variables are involved.

The 'older' teachers have faced the challenge of adapting themselves to fit new roles in order to meet the demands of a changing profession asserts Quicke (2000). They have moved from the more traditional perception of the schoolteacher, to one that encompasses a variety of roles within its nature.

Within society we have seen a change in all spheres of our lives suggests Beck (1999). We have evolved into a multi-cultural and diverse community. Schools are very different environments to those experienced at the start of some teachers' careers. Now we encounter initiatives such as; inclusion, parental choice and rights, and regular inspections by OFSTED.

Concerning age, the participants were noticeably somewhat reticent and this may resonate with a personal view, that we do not see ourselves as old or ageing! The factors however, that did have an influence for Raymond were centred on his sadness that he had, "*lost 12 years*" (of service). This had a further impact, in that his retirement benefits would be affected. For an individual to have given up a highly paid previous career, this proved detrimental to his aspirations for a secure retirement.

Maria was convinced that a breakdown in student discipline accounted for some of her 'stressors'. She felt this was hard for her to cope with. Due to a change in her job title that effectively demoted her, she perceived that the pupils held her with little regard. This demeaned her and led to her feelings of anxiety. She reported feeling de-motivated and undervalued and:

Maria: "*far too old to deal with pupil indiscipline.*"

Pupil behaviour and violence were commented upon regularly within the experiences of the High Schoolteachers. The Elton Report (1989) has been the most influential motivator for change, but there is a need for more current work in this area in the form of Behaviour Improvement Plans.

Conversely, Anthony welcomed change in some areas. Those areas were defined according to his age and experience. However, when he was asked

to take on extra responsibilities within the P.E. department, he felt his age precluded him from fulfilling those tasks. Furthermore, when requested to also assist in ICT he pointed out that he had no expertise in the subject. He wanted to do this work but, the training he needed was not provided. He considered that the management team should be willing to fund ICT training for an *“older person.”* He was dismayed that they did not consider this.

Although Ruth reported her stress-related illness to the Head Teacher, nothing was done to alleviate the problems she encountered at work. She perceived this situation as being, *“a callous disregard for Health and Safety.”* She returned after a period of absence but fell ill again. She regarded her compulsory early retirement with anger. Her working life and earning potential was curtailed at a time when funds were necessary to enable her son to go to university. She had relied on being able to work throughout the duration of his course. Faced with this dilemma she sought other work but found her age precluded her from some forms of employment.

Sarah contacted The Teacher Welfare Helpline when she felt unable to continue her work. She spoke at length about how she felt and obtained advice on early retirement. To her dismay she discovered that her length of service was not enough to provide her with a pension she could live on. There was the possibility of a charitable donation but this would have been a ‘one off’ payment. Sarah resigned herself to the fact that she needed to continue working until she reached 60. She doubted if she would be able to do so:

Sarah: *“I haven’t worked today. If I had to work – I could not have done. I phoned the Teacher Helpline. I don’t know what else (job) I can do. This is pretty awful. I can not go on much longer.”*

Early ill health retirement was advised for Sarah however she found herself unable to manage financially and returned to work part-time. Before the changes in Teachers' Pensions Regulations came into force in 1997, teachers who recovered their health were able to return to teaching if they wished, on a limit of two and a half days per week. This did not affect any pension entitlement but teachers doing this are not able to increase their teachers' pension with further contributions.

Alex felt that with hindsight, he should have resisted all attempts to retire. He is furious at what he considers:

Alex: "a loss of nearly twenty year's earnings! Twenty years of my life! At my age, how can I ever earn that again?"

The thoughts of having to continue even part-time are dismal to Alex. He had hoped that he could have coped with the pension but was alarmed at the monetary drop he faced. Having no other source of income he was faced with seeking employment. Initially he sought work with an employment agency. His assumption was that he had various competencies that could be transferable. The positions he was offered were designed to suit younger individuals, first job seekers or of such a nature that he felt demeaning and would undermine his confidence. Being in the middle age group and not ICT trained, he quickly realized that he was lacking in the skills employers were demanding.

Alex obtained work through an agency specializing in supply teachers. A permanent part-time post was subsequently found. When asked how he was coping with being in teaching again he reported:

Alex: "I hate it. I just hate every minute of it! I just have to continue to survive. You know what, I'll end up working till I am 65 then just die!"

Mary chose to remain in the profession. Her family commitments precluded her being able to leave. She explained that she wanted to be in a position to “release” her husband from his job:

Mary: *“He’s (husband) not that happy at work at the moment. I feel – he’s worked all these years – and I have as well – and I’ve been bringing up children and whatever. He has worked really hard and I think there could come a point which he just needs to down grade – he’s at such a high level that we could live – I mean cope – but I know he’s not that happy – and I think, I feel that I want to give him a – you know – a ‘mattress to land on’ if he needs to do that, WOW!”*

Mary recognized that to do so would be at considerable cost to her health and financial position. She was aware that she could not expect the family to exist on her salary. An expensive time was looming with her sons preparing to go to university within a year of each other. There was also the over riding concern that she felt unable to maintain her work schedule for much longer. Mary acknowledged the need to try to continue for a few more years but with great reluctance. She feared that her health would suffer as a consequence of becoming more and more de-motivated and demoralized.

A recent OFSTED inspection had left her feeling *“traumatised by the horror of it all.”* She was very clear that she would like to exit the profession within the next few years and felt if she was unable to do so, she was highly likely to get ill.

Anna resigned from her post. One day she felt she could no longer continue and so *“I handed in my notice!”* At this time her husband was apparently very concerned about her and she was sad that she was unable to talk about

the difficulties she faced. Her husband was also a teacher and equally undergoing a very stressful time. Anna was faced with a time of immense emotional upheaval regarding her professional life:

Anna: "I should be relaxing at my time of life. I should be able to take it a bit easier. I mean – I know my craft, I can do it. Instead there's all this stuff going on!"

Anna did not leave the profession and has taken up a new post. Her experiences have caused her to 'step down' from a management post, incurring some financial loss. The impact of this has been to prevent her from seeking an early retirement. She would have liked to work part-time but felt unable to live as comfortably as she would like, on a lower income.

The participants are all of a similar age and would probably be planning for the end of their careers. This is explored in the notion of the life cycle of teachers contained in the works of Sikes (1985), Boerlijst (1998), and Huberman (1993) and the Health and Safety Executive (2000). For some participants the end arrived earlier than anticipated and their stories detail their losses. Financial commitments play an important part in the participants' futures and this has been a deciding factor for some to continue despite their feelings of stress.

Gender

There were three male participants and five female participants involved in the study. This provided me with an opportunity to explore the differences between the responses of men and women who took part in this study. Notable differences came to light in the way men and women reported their stress experiences and the source of the phenomenon. The men related their stories in terms of 'threat.' They perceived Head Teachers or management making direct threats towards them:

Raymond: *“Management brought about a climate of fear and intimidation: when teachers felt compelled to complain about the pressure and stress they were under, the teachers were made to feel inadequate for their job.”*

This participant further stated that the Head Teacher:

Raymond: *“wanted to surround himself with ‘Yes men’ who would not question him.”*

Their ability and professionalism appeared to be in question and they felt in fear of being seen as a failure. They resisted the threat and appeared to ignore the stress symptoms, feeling the stressors would go when the source of threat ceased. The men did not see that stress was their response to their perceived threat. Instead they were seeking solutions to remove the source of their contention. The men continued to work under very difficult conditions until they became ill and were unable to continue:

Raymond: *“Finally, over the weekend, I was overcome with the pressure and stresses at work. I fell very ill with signs and symptoms of total physical and mental exhaustion. My doctor examined me, diagnosed nervous breakdown and prescribed some medicine. He told me that, in order to recover, I had to take complete rest for some time. Since that day, I was absent from work.”*

Anthony was asked if he had thought of reporting his stress to anyone, his response was an emphatic *“NO!”* He had worked for two male Head Teachers but:

Anthony: *“I couldn’t have gone to the two Heads that were there because I just didn’t have any feelings (of trust) for them at all.”*

He then went on to mention one male teacher, who was helpful; however Anthony was unable to confide fully in this person in order to gain support:

Anthony: *“I mean, I’m a friendly bloke. The guy who was the Senior Teacher, I really respected him. He used to ask me, socially, how I was doing. Obviously, pride takes over and, um.”*

After a period of absence from work Anthony decided to return. When asked if any support was provided to assist the return, he responded:

Anthony: *“No. Just, basically, my own professionalism. Just that I er, I don’t give up things very easily and I wasn’t going to give this up. I had been there a long time.”*

He returned but in under a month was ill again:

Anthony: *“I suddenly realized that this was a bit more serious than I’d thought and that, I was becoming more and more insular. I wasn’t mixing with the staff. I was getting under more pressure, irritable. I wasn’t sleeping; um I wasn’t functioning correctly at all.”*

Alex said he felt *“under attack and threatened.”* He had reported his symptoms of illness to a Senior Teacher after months of trying to *“get a grip.”* This person assured him that he would try to alter Alex’s heavy timetable however:

Alex: *“This did not happen. I discovered that my time table was even worse!”*

He viewed the action as a betrayal. After confiding in someone in a senior position and no action taken to support him, Alex felt he was being undermined and ridiculed. The action also served to make him perceive that he was being *“hounded out.”* Alex responded by seeking union advice that subsequently approached the management on his behalf. The Head Teacher spoke with Alex but this only made him more suspicious of the

management plans to, “*get rid of me.*” He reported that his personality underwent a marked change and:

Alex: “*I felt my colleagues perceived me as failing in my duties.*”

It appears the male teachers’ feared intimidation if they admitted to feelings of stress. Perhaps the fear of failure is very powerful for men, whereas the women appeared far more willing to accede to feelings of stress.

The women told stories that presented a much broader scope of care for each other. They related their narratives to other members of staff and the effect on the whole school community:

Maria: “*Teaching caused a great deal of stress to myself and my colleagues.*”

She continued to show her concern for others:

Maria: “*Several members of staff were absent for long periods of time as a result of stress and work-related illness. A program of stress management could have been arranged for staff.*”

Similarly Ruth described a wider community of stressed teachers and not just herself:

Ruth: “*high staff turnover, low staff morale and poor regard for Health and Safety*”

as being evident in her school. She included the needs of other teachers throughout her narrative.

The sources of stress were varied and felt to be cumulative. Several sources of support were explored and they varied from ‘sisterly’ support, collegiality and friends outside of teaching, family and spouse. Maria sought help from her mother and a friend, who regularly performed some of her administration tasks:

Maria: “On several occasions my mother came into school to help me complete tasks on time!” Also, “I had to ask a friend to type up reports.”

In contrast to the men, women sought out their help at a much earlier stage of their stress. When Maria recognized that she was suffering the effects of stress she sought help:

Maria: “I appealed to both my Line Manager and the Head Master for help, but to no avail!”

Sarah blamed her failure to cope on herself. She sought a meeting with the Head Teacher to explain:

Sarah: “It was a little tearful, but, um, I think I got through, and, the Head Teacher seems to realize now, how serious this problem is.”

She did not seek to apportion blame on any system; instead she took it upon herself that something was wrong with her. After accepting the situation she sought a remedy:

Sarah: “This morning – the pits! Um, I’m going to get an appointment at the doctors because this might just build up to something else and just – IT (she had previously experienced a profound physical reaction to stress and required medical attention) might happen again”

This may also serve to illustrate that women may be because they are more adept at recognising stress symptoms.

Mary pointed to areas of conflict with her Head Teacher. She had hoped to be reassured after a particularly fraught OFSTED experience, however the Head failed to offer her any support and she felt very de-motivated as a result:

Mary: *“I think he (Head Teacher) dealt with the whole thing very badly and he – you know what it is? He undermines my feelings on it! He has no understanding! I got slated! SLAUGHTERED! I feel such a fool!”*

Fortunately Mary was able to enlist the support of a female Deputy Head Teacher who sought various means to address the situation. However, *“The Head remained at a distance.”* He did not seek to represent Mary’s concerns with OFSTED’s impression of her work. She could not condone what she felt was the Head’s callous disregard for her professionalism.

Anna’s story has an interesting dimension in that she sought to protect a male teacher who was in conflict with a female Head Teacher. She constantly referred to herself as being *“in the middle again.”* Anna had witnessed the Head publicly humiliate her colleague:

Anna: *“She just tore a strip off him!”*

There was no justification in Anna’s mind for such a *“nasty remark.”* She viewed her role amongst her colleagues as one of *“supporting others”* and could not condone such *“ghastly unprofessional behaviour.”* It was her perception that she should *“champion the man, as he could not possibly know how to retaliate to that woman!”*

Further gender differences lie in the help teachers sought. The men tried to 'do it alone' whereas the women sought the support of a number of resources, such as the 'sisterly rapport' discovered by Oakley (1981) and they talked about their difficulties quite openly. The men however did not seek such support preferring to talk only with their doctor when they became ill. The difference may be explained by women's ease at talking about problems with one another. Acker (1989:18) also discovered this to be the case when she observed that "*people help each other... They turn their understandings into practical support for other women teachers.*" Houston's (1998) study points to the way she observed that women sought each others support and developed an effective means of helping each other. Perhaps men do not have a similar 'brotherly' support system. They may not relish admitting to anyone that they have a difficulty and to do so could be seen as failure.

Workload: Audit Measured by Performativity

Workload has a profound impact on the lives of teachers asserts the Health and Safety Executive (2000) and Bowers (2001). Moves to decrease teachers' workload are currently under consideration as outlined in the Workforce Proposal (2003, 2004 and 2005), however for some of the participants in this inquiry it is too late.

Raymond, Maria, Anthony and Ruth will not return to teaching as a result of their experiences, illness and early ill health retirement. Participants Sarah, Alex, Mary and Anna continue to teach and should benefit from the proposed changes to their workload. The Workforce Agreement has elements that have already been adopted by most schools. The removal of many administration tasks is one such element. By September 2005 all

teachers should receive 10% of their working time for Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA). This provides some interesting questions about how it will be achieved, and staff development such as, who will be taking the class when the teacher is released.

It is not uncommon for teachers to work over 50 hours each week, as highlighted by Morris (2002). A lot of the work teachers do is done in their free time. Raymond had the task of creating a new a new course for students. He reported long working hours:

Raymond: *"I used to be in school by 6.00am and could not leave for home until 8.00pm!"*

In order to meet the Head Teachers deadline he had to complete most of the work in his own time. This was interpreted as an excessive workload coupled with unrealistic targets and timescale:

Raymond: *"It added so much extra work to my heavy workload."*
He continued, *"I completed all the required work. I held planning meetings with colleagues to discuss and decide the overall plan, got them to assist in preparation of schemes of work, lesson plans and assessment procedures. Finally the entire program was put together!"*

The Head Teacher did not appreciate Raymond's efforts and he was asked to change the whole scheme of work:

Raymond: *"It was an exorbitant quantity of work to be done in a short space of time. On top of my usual duties – it was a lot of extremely hard work!"*

Maria frequently cited her workload as contributory to her feeling *"burnt out."* She had complained to management about her workload but had not

been able to secure any improvements. Enlisting the help of her professional union body did not obtain any remedy to her heavy workload. She became ill due to work place stress. Whilst trying to recover at home she was astonished to find a colleague had been instructed to deliver some outstanding reports to her:

Maria: "I received a telephone call from the Deputy Head Teacher asking if the reports had been completed. I informed him that they were not ready and as I was unwell I was unable to complete them. However, later that day one of the staff, who lived near me, called at my home with the reports for me to complete by the next day! This obviously upset me and added to the stress I was already experiencing!"

It seems incomprehensible that further pressure was placed upon Maria when she was obviously already ill due to her workload!

Anthony's experiences left him very angry. He was effectively told to take on another role without receiving any extra money. This was viewed as a personal affront and interpreted as being part of the Head Teachers 'bully tactics' to get rid of him. Anthony thought the Head Teacher was determined to force him out of the school. He had a period of absence and prior to his return he asked for a reduced timetable. When he returned he was amazed to find changes:

Anthony: "Yeh! They did actually! I went to see this Head before the start of the new term. He changed things alright! I was demoted to a Form Tutor, I had to run the P.E. Department and run the Careers Department. Yeh! Big changes! It was worse!"

The increased workload contributed to his feelings of extreme distress:

Anthony: "I thought, right, I'm not having this! This is not on! I was under a lot of pressure! I went under – BIG TIME!"

Ruth was very clear when describing what she felt were the causes of her workplace stress. She approached the management of the school, her professional union and the Local Authority with her grievances about her “*excessive workload.*” She felt justified to state that all were guilty of violations of Health and Safety laws. During her last period of trying to cope with her workload, she would have pursued the matter further with the Head Teacher. She was unable to do so as the Head Teacher reportedly

Ruth: “*resigned her post due to work related stress!*”

Head Teachers are under constant pressure to ensure their schools perform well. They are able to delegate tasks and set targets for teachers to reach. OFSTED publish the results of their inspections and such transparency allows for criticism if schools are under achieving. Head Teachers may feel powerless in the face of such accountability and they are not immune from the effects of pressure.

The next four participants remain in the profession for the time being. They should see some improvements to their workload in the near future. However they currently face heavy workloads.

Sarah: “*The increase in workload – we are facing it daily now! It’s getting more and more difficult to um, to carry on.*”

She felt extremely distressed by her workload and visited her G.P.

Sarah: “*I’ve just come back from the doctors. He, um, offered me things – um. It’s Friday thank God. Something called Fluoxetine? It’s for the panic. See if this will take the edge off it before Monday. MONDAY – Good God! Ugh! That’s something! Try and face THAT!*”

In this statement she was expressing her horror at having to face her work again after the weekend.

Alex found his workload “*unreasonable and unrealistic.*” He lists numerous duties that could have been completed by clerical staff such as, filing pupil records, interviewing new admissions and making appointments for parents to attend meetings. All the administrative tasks were additional to his heavy timetable and he felt undervalued and pressured and said:

Alex: “*this caused hours of extra work.*”

Similar to another participant he needed a remedy to his stressors and sought a change to his “*overloaded*” timetable. Likewise he was taken aback by the response. Management increased his workload to encompass a support role in six curriculum areas! He complained:

Alex: “*I continually stated the lack of sufficient time required to plan, liaise and differentiate my support activities with all the teachers concerned. I therefore had to hold meetings at inconvenient times, i.e., 7.30 a.m. in order not to interrupt the school day!*”

He decided to obtain an independent risk assessment and the results led him to accuse the management of “*a callous disregard to the risks and to the health and safety of teachers in the school.*” He has continued to teach but plans to leave soon. He remains “*a thorn in their (managements) side*” and challenges the team on behalf of other teachers who feel pressured in their jobs. I suggest this can be a powerful means of regaining all he feels he has lost.

Mary wonders “*what the point of it is?*” She referred to what she viewed as “*meaningless time-consuming tasks.*” Her list included, form filling, ticking boxes, setting targets, adopting new initiatives, and so on. She wants

to “*teach – not deliver!*” The tasks associated with teaching are manifold and take inordinate amounts of time to complete. Mary anticipated hard work but not the volume she had to do:

Mary: “I mean, I understood perfectly, well, that there was this HUGE amount of paperwork and I thought, well, that’s OK. You know, you have to learn don’t you? You have to know the basics of planning. I was happy to work until one o’ clock every night. Which I do! On paperwork! I worked SOLIDLY the whole time! But I don’t expect it to go on and on. This is a CONSTANT battle!”

Many of the tasks were deemed fruitless and a waste of time to her and her pupils and she provided a clear illustration of the strength of her feelings:

Mary: “You know! You put them (children’s names) into these brackets, you write them in, well – who’s ever going to look at them? What value are they? HONESTLY! Should a child go in that box or that box? Well – you end up – you’ve just got to whack them in! How can it be valid? And the tests and the targets! If there’s line to be written on, we just fill them in!”

For some time now teachers have viewed many of their tasks as unnecessary and time wasting. Energy expended on such tasks takes value away from the real job of teaching. This accounts in part for teachers’ feelings of being under valued and de- professionalised.

Mary was aware of proposals to cut some administrative tasks but was very sceptical that any further support to ease her workload would be feasible:

Mary: “Workload Agreement! Hah! Well – who does it? I don’t have any support!”

Anna had a different perspective to all other participants when workload was considered. Although she reported high levels of stress due to her workload she did not attribute this factor as being detrimental to her health. Instead her focus centred on how she could best support other teachers in her school:

Anna: "You can't let people go home snivelling and crying and trembling can you? So, I helped them. I picked up as many people off the floor, I can't believe!"

There was evidently a lot of tension between members of the management team and their anxieties would have cascaded to other staff. Anna saw her role as a mediator and referred to herself as being "*in the middle*" several times. She seemed torn between the desire to retain her professional integrity and being a caring, supportive person. She was aware that she was being critical and perhaps disloyal to the management team she felt it was her duty to support. The school's politics appeared to be governed by guilt and fear and Anna sought to divert many tasks towards herself in order to alleviate pressure from others.

To summarize teachers have heavy workloads associated with their jobs, and several authorities, such as the Heath and Safety Executive (2000), Bowers and McIver (2000) and the General Teaching Council (2003). Usually teachers are happy to perform duties, which they believe have a direct, beneficial impact on their teaching and pupils. When tasks are deemed as unnecessary and time consuming, teachers question the validity of doing them. Extra responsibility thrust upon them is equally annoying particularly if it is without additional remuneration or time allowance. The underlying circumstances driving this increased workload are suggested by

Maguire (2002) to stem from the intensification of work in a competitive global economy. There is intense pressure to deliver high performance pupils and teachers have to ensure excellent service to keep up with such demands. When all efforts are geared towards output and productivity, the cost is to lose time for reflection, advocated by Schon (1983) and described by Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) as: *'a way of describing and developing skilled and thoughtful judgement in professions like teaching'*

Management Issues: Workplace Bullying and Constructs of Power

There are now new forms of control and grids of power that determine what teachers must do in order to be successful. This is linked to the condition of audit where teachers are no longer trusted in terms of their inherent professionalism. They have new tasks thrust upon them and are then checked to discover if the extra demands have been met. Beck (1990) and Giddens (1991) point to the anxiety that is provoked as workers constantly strive to fit in with new system. Furthermore, teachers must work ever harder not to be seen as failing to comply with the 'new order' and thus avoid risk and reprimand.

All participants had major contentions with management. They point to key issues as being detrimental to well being. The most significant most significant are:

- Lack of support offered during the OFSTED experience
- Misuse of power
- Incompetence of leadership

And these can all be conceptualised in terms of power and identity as described by Beck (1999) and Giddens (1991).

The OFSTED inspection of some schools can be an encouraging experience where teachers and pupils are praised for their achievements. However when a school receives a negative report, dealing with the aftermath requires sensitivity as highlighted by Troman and Woods (2002). Then a process of rebuilding and addressing improvements can be implemented. Some schools have supportive Head Teachers and management teams.

Raymond had a very conflicting set of reports concerning his performance. The Head Teacher questioned his competence and he felt quite challenged by the prospect of an OFSTED inspection. Following observations of a number of his lessons and scrutiny of his paperwork, an inspector spoke to Raymond, who said:

Raymond: *“Come on, what are you worried about? You are vastly experienced; you are doing a great job in difficult conditions. Everything is fine and in order. You have nothing to worry about.”*

Nevertheless the Head Teacher harassed and criticised Raymond. The inspectors, whilst generally pleased had offered some areas for improvement. Evidently the Head Teacher dwelt on this factor and increased pressure on Raymond. Likewise Maria reported that her workload and pressures were considerably increased as a response to the *“failure of the school”* by OFSTED. Furthermore, she stated that a number of teachers left the school as a result of the problems surrounding the failed OFSTED inspection and lack of support to recover from the experience.

Anthony expressed feelings of *“turmoil”* following a failed inspection. He described, *“chaos”* and *“pupil ill-discipline”* in the aftermath of an inspection. When the school was subsequently placed in Special Measures, he was amazed that *“no support was given by the Head.”* Confirming other teachers’ observations, he reported that his tasks increased. The Head

Teacher and management team responded to the inspection by rapidly drawing up a School Improvement Plan which is a requirement following OFSTED. Anthony felt it involved him in an impossible situation and that:

Anthony: *“the work had built up – it was down to the hierarchy.”*

According to the view of Ruth, the Local Authority failed to act when her school was reported by OFSTED to be in a *“state of chaos.”* The Head Teacher had been found culpable of incompetent management. She provided a catalogue of failures regarding the policies and practices in the school. Ruth was an active member of a teachers union and enlisted their advice on what she felt were violations of Health and Safety regulations. Additionally she thought that management had:

Ruth: *“a callous disregard for procedures of employment.”*

Furthermore management systems were:

Ruth: *“arbitrary, autocratic, aggressive, oppressive, insensitive, intimidating, inadequate and created a climate of fear.”*

Sarah who did find her Head Teacher supportive offered an alternative perspective. Following her reporting that she was feeling *“overwhelmed”* during a conversation with the Head Teacher she felt:

Sarah: *“quite encouraged by his (Head Teachers’) response in that, um, he realized he had to move quite quickly and take some action. Perhaps if I’d been left until Monday I might never have gone back, that’s certainly how I felt earlier on.”*

She did not detail the actions implemented, however she was satisfied that her concerns were being addressed.

Alex regarded the findings of an OFSTED report as very worrying. There were concerns over several aspects of the day to day running of the school. The response of the management team was similar to others detailed here. An increased workload with impossible targets and time scales was implemented. Under such conditions it is understandable that teachers may become, as Alex pointed out:

Alex: *“overwhelmed, anxious, depressed and despondent.”*

Mary was *“exhausted”* after an OFSTED inspection. She had expected the Head Teacher to be more understanding of teachers’ feelings after such effort had been put in to make it a success. The school did well but she was angry that the Head did not de-brief the staff adequately. She was dismayed that no one had been thanked for all their hard work. On a personal level her performance on the day had let her down. She wanted some reassurance that the Head Teacher recognized she normally did a very good job, but she had handed in her resignation!

Mary: *“There was NO dialogue with the Head after OFSTED and SATS! I felt angry and betrayed. I said, here’s a bit of news for you then - fuck it!”*

Anna was confident and fully prepared for the experience of OFSTED. Her Head Teacher and Deputy Head were not. They were unable to work cohesively to prepare the whole school adequately and Anna felt she was *“in the middle”* of a conflict between management. As Anna had undergone the inspection process previously, both leaders sought her advice on how to approach the forthcoming inspection. Neither could compromise with the other and the school resulted in being ill prepared:

Anna: *“The Head was very worried. I did see her in tears quite frequently, and she said, oh! Everyone is against me! She did have a point!”*

OFSTED is a stressful experience; assert Troman and Woods (2000) however teachers can be supported through the process. Mary pointed out that *“thank you”* would have gone a long way!

Constructs of Power

Power is a feature of all human relationships, such as in how we are addressed, the questions asked of us and in what we are asked to reveal about our competencies. Foucault (1980) examined the exercise of power through discourse and expert knowledge. He determines that power can be viewed as intentional or structural, or both. At the heart of this theory is the manner in which we utilise language to exert influence. Central to new modes of power is the use of language that has its origins in market forces and entrepreneurial activity. This raises issues of value and perspective, if we consider that use of power can be either enabling or repressive.

Central to an understanding of how power can be influenced on teachers are the notions of being held to account, output measured and results audited, they are locked in a ‘grid of audit’. Management teams are also ‘driven’ and can be accused of misusing their power if they employ ‘bully tactics.’ This is a consistent feature throughout the participants’ stories. They frequently refer to issues such as:

Raymond: *“excessive workload, unrealistic goals, lack of consideration and consultation and public harassment. When teachers felt compelled to complain about the pressures and stress they were under, the teachers were made to feel inadequate.”*

Maria: *“unreasonable time schedules, lack of consultation – I was just told that I was paid to do the job!”*

Raymond, Anthony and Alex *reported feeling “threatened.”*

When Anthony was asked to drop a pay scale, he viewed the request as a threat:

Anthony: *“He (Head Teacher) was very, very hostile!”*

Alex described his working conditions as *“oppressive and threatening.”* He felt constantly *“under attack”* by management.

The feeling of being *“inadequate”* was described by Mary:

Mary: *“I feel such a fool! I feel sub-standard!”*

She attributed this to the Head Teacher making no attempt to address her concerns over an OFSTED report. In her view, by not challenging the Inspection team, he had colluded with them and allowed an unfair opinion of her performance to be recorded.

Without the guidance offered by Anna, a poor report may have resulted for her school. She reported a situation causing great turmoil in the school. Due to a series of disagreements between the Head Teacher and the Deputy Head Teacher and the Senior Management Team, staff felt very uneasy. The contentious issues became public and subsequently the parents of children attending the school were questioning teachers. The Head Teacher had forbidden teachers to enter into any dialogue about the conflict however some parents were on the Governing Body of the school and decided to take matters further. They alerted the Local Education Authority to their concerns, which prompted their intervention. Although *“in the middle”* of conflict between members of the Management Team she managed to provide some coherence for the inspection. The aftermath was fraught with accusations of *“taking sides”* and Anna still feels *“fear”* when she recalls the events.

Several participants refer to the Head Teacher or the Management Teams lack of ability to lead appropriately. Raymond described their actions as “*incoherent.*” Maria regarded them as “*lacking.*” Anthony suggested that in his school they were “*in turmoil!*” Ruth felt management was “*getting progressively worse!*” Furthermore she blamed them for:

Ruth: “*incoherent policies and practices, excessive workload, financial mis - management, poor staff/student relations, high staff turnover, low morale, disregard for Health and Safety procedures, and various violations regarding employment laws.*”

Alex found the management team to be “*ineffectual and absurd!*” He offered the opinion that the team showed a distinct lack of leadership ability. They had failed to provide a safe working environment and fostered a threatening atmosphere that teachers found oppressive. Additionally he described the actions of various members of the leadership team as being inconsistent:

Alex: “*some things were chased up - but it appeared to depend on who dealt with the situation in hand.*”

There are difficulties when management fails to provide adequate backup for new initiatives. Both pupils and teachers face confusion and this can result in poor pupil behaviour:

Alex: “*Management failed to provide guidance and support when these ‘drives’ were initiated, causing serious breaches of conduct from some students.*”

Like other participants in this inquiry, Alex sought to inform his Head Teacher of his concerns but was offered little sympathy:

Alex: *“I Informed the Head Teacher several times that I was very stressed by my work. I stated I could no longer cope - she (Head Teacher) told me that I would cope! I was offered no strategies to help. Then I talked to a Deputy Head but he was unable to remedy the situation. In desperation I spoke to my union representative and they took up my concerns with management. No remedies were made.”*

Mary did not perceive the Head Teacher as inadequate however; she did view him as, *“uncaring”* and *“lacking in feeling”* towards his staff.

The view taken up by Anna was one of intervention. She felt compelled to provide cohesion to a very fragmented team. Anna's school was in a state of intense conflict between the Head Teacher, the Deputy Head and the Senior Management Team. Anna sought to try to mediate between all the factions. Knowing that an OFSTED inspection would uncover such differences, she tried to work towards some reconciliation. She was not able to effect this and constantly found herself *‘in the middle’* of disputes between the staff.

Conclusion

When dynamic leadership does not support staff they can become confused. Schools need strong and caring leadership systems in order to support a stable teaching and learning environment. Poor leadership appears to lead to contention and faction between staff. Head Teachers become the *‘filter’* through which all new initiatives pass before they are embedded within the institutions, policies and practices. In her paper on adopting a new initiative Taylor (1985:138) agrees, *“Sometimes the sheer inadequacy of management can appear to be a refusal to put into practice the desire expressed in words to make changes.”* she also points to the frustration this can lead to. Heads

and management should help shape the aims and ethos of the institution they serve.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion and Implications

Narratives of teacher stress: the impact of the changing context of professional work

Recent research into the changing nature of teachers work has revealed certain factors that serve to contribute to the possibility of experiencing the phenomenon of stress suggests the HSE (2000) and Bowers and McIver (2002). Additionally when one or more of the variables are present, the likelihood of suffering from stress symptoms is increased affirms the HSE (2000). The participants' stories provide rich and unique descriptions of their experiences of workplace stress and its impact on their lives. Indeed the narratives obtained for my inquiry serve to reveal the depth of duress some teachers experienced. The participants in this inquiry identified the prevalent factors having most influence on their experience of stress;

- The impact of globalisation on education
- New modes of professionalism
- Loss and Mourning
- Recruitment and Retention
- Age and gender in a changing profession
- Performativity
- Workplace Bullying and constructs of power

The Impact of Globalisation on Education

There have been accelerated social changes in recent years that have shaped new modes of conduct. The notions of political correctness, laws that govern appropriate behaviour towards children and other citizens in every day life, come into play in the school environment. Children know that they have rights detailed in the Children's Act (1989, 2004) and they are quick to point out any perceived injustice. There has been transformation in the structure of the family, working mothers and single parent families are familiar nowadays hence, pastoral care of pupils as well as their academic grounding is now a common additional teacher task. Thus teachers' roles have become blurred and ill defined. This undoubtedly impacts on their ability to cope with the changing demands of their role. Teachers feel there is more to cope with and that demands on them are constantly changing.

Largely due to the advances in technology, we are able to record and in some cases share personal data. This has become common practice where individuals become 'Head Hunted' for jobs where we are now competing in a global market for work. This has implications for education and teaching in a contemporary setting. In order to keep pace, educational provision has changed to produce a system that is recognized in terms of success. The National Curriculum (1988, 2000) ensures that teachers deliver broadly the same educational content to all children in the UK. Children's achievements are measured and recorded in league tables that are subsequently placed in the public domain, thereby making teachers accountable for their work.

As a result, the climate of teaching has been tense in recent years. Nothing could have prepared teachers for the huge array of innovations and the rate of changes, assert Dunham (1992), Troman and Woods (2000), Maguire

(2002) and Quicke (2000). Most initiatives were rapidly imposed and proved stress inducing for many teachers. This type of working practice does nothing to enhance employee well being, instead it is highly demotivating and contributory to teachers feelings of de-professionalisation.

New Modes of Professionalism

Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) outlined the struggle for professional recognition. They interpret professionalism as a paradox where there are confusions and contradictions because professionalism is more about the aspirations than the actual reality of teaching. Teachers need to develop a more collaborative culture that would serve to pool teachers' common knowledge; Quicke (2000) agrees with this but warns that collaborative cultures require agreement, negotiation and consultation. My study highlights these as areas of concern for most the participants.

The model of classical professionalism is not usually applied to teaching and Etzioni (1969) suggests teachers are commonly seen by some as '*semi-professionals*.' What this means is that teachers are not viewed in the same light as medics, for example and this is construed because teaching is not seen as scientific. Teachers can not gain the credibility that medics have with their claim to exclusivity. Teachers' skills and competencies are considered to be inferior to those of other professions. There have been attempts to categorise and code teaching activities in this model to produce some scientific certainty; however Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) declare this to be impossible. As Hargreaves (1984) pointed out that practical experience, not scientific theory was what teachers found most useful in their work.

The concept of the *'reflective practitioner'* was pioneered and fostered by Schon (1983). Adopting this model, assert Connelly and Clandinin (1988) and Quicke (2000) allows teachers to develop their practical professionalism where their experience is seen as central and of value. Quicke determines that teachers can maintain their identity within a collaborative culture when adopting this position: *'...the individual retains a sense of agency in a collaborative context'* (p311) and this would seem a valuable approach. This is pertinent in a climate where teachers are concerned with whether their role is reduced to skills and competencies.

Instead Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) suggest professionalism has become distended. Teachers are pulled in too many different directions by new initiatives and responsibilities. Furthermore, that the very individuals teachers are determined to care for get sidelined by bureaucratisation in such forms as target setting and performance management. They offer a model for teacher professionalism in a complex post-modern age. They describe it thus:

'...it can re-invent teacher professionalism in ways that maximise discretionary judgement, embrace moral and social purposes, forge cultures of collaboration along with self-directed commitments to continuous improvement, and embody heteronomy, complexity and commitment to care' (p21).

Hargreaves (1994) describes the 'new professionalism' as resulting from government initiatives at reform. He feels this fosters the potential for improvement via enhanced co-operation amongst colleagues, professional development and institutional improvements for example. He encourages collaboration and interaction in an effort to create and sustain 'new professionalism.' Sharing knowledge to the advantage of the community is

commended and can promote equity amongst its members and a climate of trust can be created.

Helsby and McCulloch (1996) offer an alternative view. They employed qualitative and quantitative methods to look at the impact of the National Curriculum on teachers' lives. They found initiative overload and the demand for collaboration to develop new strategies, intensified teacher work and left them with less time to prepare for their own teaching activities. This would serve to be erroneous to teachers' professionalism and create further pressures on teachers. They suggest the resulting stress would serve to lower teachers' morale and confidence even further.

Quicke (2000) questions the notion of how power is equated with the constraints of the National Curriculum. Power is distributed throughout institutions at all levels and we all reflect operations of power. Teachers seem to be compliant to stay within the boundaries in order to be measured by results in league tables such as those produced by SAT's. Since the 1980's and 1990's market discipline has been used to make educationalists more accountable. This can be achieved by target setting and budget constraints for example. Quicke's (2000) thoughts remind us that collaboration can reinforce compliance and does not allow power to be distributed evenly.

The results can be seen in the increased workload, low trust ethos that in effect – becomes 'collaboration with constraints,' according to Quicke (2000). He also warns of the opposite view where, there is a new language of oppression that is hidden behind 'old structures of inequality,' and reflexivity is restricted. Alternatively if collaborative cultures allow for equity and encourage reflexive practice then it can be mutually rewarding.

Individuals can be seen to collaborate for change for the better. Quicke (2000) describes the 'New Times' as a development of modernity, not a break from it. Instead he calls it 'reflexive modernity.' Furthermore Quicke (2000) advocates taking account of the changing cultural diversity that has change and growth at its core. Teaching is a dynamic activity and is constantly changing and adapting to meet such needs.

Educational reforms are part of a 'competency driven prescription,' determines Maguire (2002). Attempts to modernise the profession have been seen through the inception of Performance Management. According to the Teacher Training Agency aims (2002, 2004, 2005) the emphasis appears to be placed on how individuals meet the competencies not about gaining competence; what is at stake is that teachers become compliant, de-skilled and controlled. Teachers who teach to 'others' rules in order to deliver a prescribed curriculum in order to comply to dictat, such as proposed by the Green Paper (1998) can be said to have lost professional autonomy. Whilst we can applaud the aims of Social Inclusion, we must provide some 'wiggle space' for differentiated needs and abilities. Other authorities in the field such as, Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) and Quicke (2000) have explored the notion of re-professionalism. Their contributions serve to confirm that teaching is a changing profession.

Loss and Mourning

An additional issue not mentioned in any other research I have encountered in this topic, is that of loss. I have interpreted loss to encompass loss of career and earnings for those who were prematurely retired. For those who remain in post it was felt as anguish at the loss of professionalism. Although the participants did not use the term 'mourning,' I am compelled to argue that their stories portrayed elements of grief and mourning such as described by Silverman (2000) and Murray and Chamberlain (1999). The participants

in this inquiry lamented their losses with alacrity and a strong sense of injustice.

Recruitment

Following reports of teacher shortages reaching '*crisis levels*' and the '*worst for years*,' Tomlinson (2001), the Teacher Training Agency had some success in recruiting new teachers since they launched a campaign in 2001. The TTA revised their campaign to reflect changing needs and reported their largest number of enquiries into teaching followed a series of television advertisements to: '*Work with the most exciting people in the world – children.*' The recruitment drive in two phases was aimed to attract individuals who were able and committed to the profession. In return the TTA stated they were: '*building on the emotional rewards of teaching with a focus on pay and prospects,*' TTA (2004). I question how they will entice their targets of students or 'career changers' with such notions. Pay and prospects for teachers are known to be limited!

In 2001 OFSTED reported that around 40% of teachers leave the profession before completing three years in the classroom, BBC Education News (28.8.01). The main cause for this was reported as finding affordable accommodation, '*their salaries offered them little hope of getting on the property ladder.*' Most students leave university with some measure of debt to repay from their student loans. Coupled with high rents of inner city areas and general cost of living, new teachers are disadvantaged regarding the property market. I can confirm this is the case. Having recently moved into a Key Worker home, I observed that apart from myself, (50+) all of the homes have been bought by teachers in the 30 plus age group. The costs are still too high for new teachers who have not completed enough years of service or who have not obtained posts of additional responsibility with

enhanced pay. In this development, half of the accommodation designated for Key Workers remains empty one year after they were released for sale.

The NUT agreed with the difficulty of housing reported in the BBC Education News (1.11.01) and added further reasons for teachers leaving. They provided a gloomy picture of teachers being, '*overwhelmingly negative*' with 85% referring to '*getting out*' of teaching. The additional causes attributed to this were workload, pupil behaviour and government initiatives.

Retention

A great deal will be dependent upon how accepting any institution is towards the rehabilitation of those who have experience of workplace stress. If the pervading culture is one of blame, then the distressed individual may not be allowed to continue in their professional arena on the same level. This is in effect, de-professionalising the individual. Alternatively, the institution may be supportive and empowering, generating a safe return to work.

Following the HSE report (2000) one government initiative was to seek examples of the best ways to rehabilitate workers and to prevent a relapse into illness caused by workplace stress. This is part of a ten-year plan to tackle work related stress, Securing Health Together (2002 - 2012). It would seem prudent to ascertain any interventions which facilitate reintegration, how they are operationalised and by whom. This knowledge could be used to inform practitioners and their employers. Support must be focused on meeting individual needs. Those who are fully familiar with the educational setting must provide it, as Blunkett pointed out in his letter to all Local Authorities (May 2000).

Age and gender in a changing profession

If morale is low there is little incentive to continue if there is any possibility of an early exit from teaching. This is the case for both young and old teachers. A General Teaching Council article pointed to the ‘flight of young teachers’ (9.9.02). The evidence from their opinion poll led them to state that: *‘up to four out of every ten teachers leave within five years of qualifying.’*

According to the Health and Safety Executive (2000), many of the ‘older’ (50 years plus) teachers are also seeking early retirement. The DfEE (2000) suggests early ill health retirement after all other reasonable avenues are exhausted. This means of exit has been curtailed by the changes in retirement regulations outlined in the paper for the DfEE (1997) and this was implemented in an effort to curb the exodus of older teachers. Teachers’ taking early retirement has an impact on the organisations ability to defer to experienced professionals.

Gender did not have any evident influence on creating stress with the participants in this inquiry. It was however noted that gender influenced the way men and women coped with the phenomenon in different ways. The men were unwilling to admit to their stress symptoms until they became ill, whereas generally, the women sought to have their symptoms of stress recognized and verbalised their concerns earlier by self-reporting their symptoms and concerns. The women tried various support strategies, usually amongst themselves, either in friendship groups, family or professionally in order to address their needs. Perhaps men do not converse readily about their feelings of stress in order to avoid being perceived as not coping. This is an area that interests and confuses me greatly and one I

intend to pursue at a future opportunity. I would like to discover why men encounter difficulty in seeking the support of their colleagues and friends, until the situation becomes so untenable they have to capitulate and leave. It occurs to me that this situation is such an unproductive negative experience and one that could be obviated by seeking support.

Performativity

Following the signing of Raising Standards and Tackling Workload: A National Agreement (15.1.03) a monitoring group made up of unions, employers and Government Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group, (WAMG) was created. It has the task of monitoring the progress of its implementation. The Minister for School Standards David Milliband commented favourably on the efforts schools made since the implementation of the Workload Agreement (11.6.04). He said:

'Workforce reform will enable teachers to have time to focus on providing more personalised learning that will enable all pupils to achieve their potential. As we move through the first year and into the second and third year of this reform, these developments will be further embedded into schools across the country. Workforce reform is the future for teachers, support staff and pupils.'

Bold words indeed! This statement relies heavily on teacher compliance with what is designated as the pattern of reform. We can challenge this position. Illustrations of collective resistance, such as the stance of a campaign in 2002, 'Pay Teachers Properly' and the challenge to create 'damage limitation' on the Literacy Hour, demonstrate how powerful an opposition teachers could be.

Teaching in our contemporary society is challenging and can be rewarding. Not all teachers are stressed, however many do succumb to the pressures surrounding the profession. Some attempts to change the situation are currently being made, such as the Workforce Reform and Remodelling

plans that aim to reduce workload. It is however it is apparent that:

'Currently teachers in the UK are under a constant and unrelenting set of pressures, in part as a consequence of contemporary educational reforms'

Head et al, (1996:5).

Workplace bullying and constructs of power

The 'Band Aid' approach is no good to the stressed teacher whose whole situation needs to be changed. Some individuals will perceive the need to promote social change, that is, to change the nature of the organisation. Participation in the development of policy and practice is to be encouraged. Such a culture of collaboration would allow teachers ownership and create far more openness and trust in the profession. Teachers could be encouraged to plan time frames for the implementation of new strategies. They should also be consulted in evaluating and reviewing the process. Teachers usually know what they need in order to do their job well, surely then, means to allow their own input must be encouraged. Schools should seek to strengthen the organisation and support its members. We should identify sources of potential stress in the workplace and then seek management co-operation to alleviate the stressors.

It would appear that schools where management and staff co-operate well together promote a healthy organisation, advises the National Agreement (12.1.04) and this makes sense. We are urged to create a good work/life balance and decreases stress inducing events. The introduction of Change Management Teams is a step in the right direction. As part of the National Agreement and National Remodelling (2000) initiatives, schools have the opportunity to develop and tailor such teams to suit their needs. Individuals representing all sections of the school community are encouraged to take an active role by participating in the decision making process regarding policy and practice. Such 'ownership' promotes fair representation and goes some

way to addressing ways to develop effective communication within the organisation.

We can view management issues in another light. Workplace bullying is common and I assert, is represented by some of the participants in this inquiry. The Association of Teachers and Lecturers (1996) has shown much concern over the incidents bullying within educational institutions. They say bullying is: *'The persistent (and normally deliberate) misuse of power or position to intimidate, humiliate and undermine'* (p1). Although not all participants identified themselves as being victims of bully tactics, they clearly were! This could be evidenced in ways such as, the amount of work they were expected to do or changes to their timetables and to their roles.

The personal inadequacies of some Head Teachers were highlighted by this inquiry. They abused their power and created a climate of fear and blame. Interestingly they were often at odds with the findings of OFSTED who praised the efforts of some of the participants. Troman and Woods (2000) have pointed out that a climate of mistrust that is created in such circumstances is highly detrimental to the organisation. The impact of a lack of trust upon teachers can serve to erode their self-esteem and professional identity. Anger and resentment become filtered down to the pupils. This is not providing a good role model for the classroom teacher who tries their utmost to eradicate bullying!

'Others' opinions of teachers can be negative. Ball and Goodson (1985) assert this has occurred as a result of profound political and social shifts in the status of teachers. The public perception of the role of the teacher has altered and teachers' standing in the community has been eroded by adverse press and media coverage over the years. This loss of public respect and

esteem resonates with early work done by Goffman (1968) when he described teachers as having 'spoiled careers'. Teachers are anxious about their professional competence says Measor (1984) and this serves to form a negative professional status that attacks identity and self-esteem. Teachers want to embrace the notion of professional status and respect. Some teachers are concerned about their role in the wider community and seek ways to contribute to social change. Teachers are looking for clarity in their role and for a rise in their status that has been eroded in a post-modern society. They look for a new professionalism that values the work teachers actually do in society NOW!

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

Introduction

By focusing on how stress is lived, I have been able to identify the deeply worked processes of regulation as it has impacted on teachers' individual sense of self and self-worth. I have argued that these personal narratives I was privileged to obtain, express aspects of the wider social, cultural, economic transformations affecting contemporary societies, especially those in the West.

The findings of my research have led me to identify several key issues of concern that have a direct impact on the changing context of teachers' professional lives. The nature of the narratives leads me to assert that reform in the teaching profession is long overdue. Action needs to be taken and should be undertaken with a sense of urgency.

As my data chapter indicated, there are areas of contention that my participants enabled me to highlight and I can identify the areas of most pressing concern as;

- The Impact of Globalisation on Education
- Professionalism
- Recruitment, Retention and Age

- Learning Support Assistants
- Workplace Bullying
- Work/life Balance

The Impact of Globalisation on Education

My study highlights the phenomenon of teacher stress as being linked to the wider experiences of the social world and its changing nature. This is in agreement with the work of others such as, Quicke (2000) and Maguire (2002). My findings point to the way teachers have been forced to adapt to the needs of a constantly shifting role in a rapidly changing society. I have identified how teachers must strive to meet the demands of a global network economy, such as described by Giddens (1991) and Castells (1997). I recognise that teachers are required to constantly revise their role. My evidence displays their confusion regarding the expectations of their role and this is supported by the work of Capel and Woods (1998).

We live in an expanding technologically advancing era and economy as outlined by Maguire (2002). My inquiry confirms that in order to be a proactive part of the 'elite' group of teachers who are competent and entrepreneurial, we must avail ourselves of technological advancement. Considering aggressive market demands such as those indicated by the DfEE (2001) alerts us to be aware that professionalism requires specialism to cope with the demands and technological skills are thus needed to compete in the global workforce.

Professionalism

By using the works of such authorities as; Beck (1999), Harvey (1990), Maguire (2002), Hey and Bradford (2004) and others, I have placed the narratives of teacher stress in a wider social context. I discovered valuable information concerning how teachers felt about their increased workload and the impact of this on their lives and careers. The strength of this study lies in the powerful narratives of teacher stress, which contributes to knowledge about teachers and the changing context of their professional work.

My research illustrates that at the heart of teaching is the sense of 'self' and this notion is exemplified by the concept of 'identity' in Harvey (1990). My participants pointed towards feelings of lost identity and individuality. Having to comply with constant new government initiatives contributed to this experience and is described by Ball (2001) in terms of 'bleaching' the souls of teachers. Furthermore, this is compounded by today's climate where teachers must embrace innovations that serve to regulate their work.

The practice of audit with its performance indicators of league tables and examination results, prompt the exertion of power held by particular people who do particular jobs. My work outlines how teachers are under constant pressure to conform in order to meet the requirements of 'others'. In response, teachers have to constantly re-invent themselves with new identities, such as the new entrepreneurial teacher, who 'can do' certain tasks with competency. These shifts towards accountability and transparency have served to erode trust in the professionalism of the teachers in this study. Ball (2001) alerts us to the loss of teachers availability to have time and space to be reflexive about their practice. The debate regarding how teachers can re-assert their claim to trust and respect continues.

Recruitment, Retention and Age

The TTA have developed a new strategy. They now adhere to a 'Corporate Plan' that aims to: *'Raise standards by attracting able and committed people to teaching and by improving the quality of training for teachers and the wider school workforce'* (2005).

In the course of my inquiry I did not discover worthwhile incentives to attract new teachers 'across the board'. There are some schemes that offer higher starting salaries for those who can offer shortage subjects such as Modern Foreign Languages. Some trainees are enticed by having tuition fees paid. Without incentives such as a substantial enhanced welcome bonus or golden handshake, there is little to commend the job to new teachers.

As a professional body teachers are recognized as working excessively long hours for very little monetary reward agree Troman and Woods (2000). A new EU directive states that workers should complete 48 hours per week. According to HSE (2000) most teachers work between 50-70 hours each week! Indeed, the narratives contained in this study serve to confirm this is not at all unusual.

The work of Quicke (2000) on collaborative cultures leads me to consider that we can utilise the experience of others. My findings support this notion as being of value. My participants would have welcomed the opportunity to take part in the training of younger teachers who could then take some of their responsibilities. In order to accomplish this, there should be an exploration of all possible ways to retain older and experienced teachers. such as the notion of 'reasonable adjustments' to their workload. Reduced time tables or extra support in the classroom may also contribute to older

teachers continuing in their profession. Any subsequent revisions and changes should be agreed upon to enhance a healthy working environment.

I discovered that some older teachers experienced anxiety when asked to cope with the demands of technologically advanced teaching aids. They were concerned about learning new skills at an age when they had expected a time of consolidation and reflection.

My research points to periods of motivation and de-motivation and they can be linked to age. Teachers' experience both at certain times of their professional lives asserts Sikes (1985) in her paper on the 'Life Cycle of the Teacher'. It would seem to be a valuable exercise in order to identify those negative periods and target vulnerable teachers for ways to improve or enhance their work. This would serve to provide a balance of work/life issues and to foster higher morale and job satisfaction.

Learning Support Assistants

I have discovered the role, management and training of Learning Support Assistants to be an area of contention. In an earlier research project Rouse (2000) I highlighted concerns about how the Learning Support Assistants could be deployed. The TTA aims to provide appropriate training of all individuals who work with children. The Learning Support Assistants are now under their guidance and receive training and are guided towards clear career pathways. This can only be a positive move towards proper recognition of the invaluable work Learning Support Assistants do. However, Learning Support Assistants are not teachers and should not be used as such.

In absolute agreement with the NUT, I argue it is detrimental to the teaching profession, the children and the Learning Support Assistants to suggest they ‘take charge,’ of classes. They are not allowed to teach the children but can sit with them in a supervisory capacity. Teachers must provide work for the children to do but without any teacher input the work will be severely limited in content, quality and style. This is an untenable situation. The teachers’ professionalism is devalued, the Assistant is reduced to ‘childminder’ status and the children are not being taught. This can not be right. I wonder what the parents will think if schools follow this course of action. Undoubtedly it saves money to use a Support Assistant instead of an extra or ‘floating’ teacher to cover PPA time. When they are covering PPA time they are not fulfilling their main role – that of providing support to children who need it! The Learning Support Assistants I have spoken to do not relish the thoughts of this proposal. I am fearful that they may not wish to continue if they find the task onerous and a wonderful support system would be in jeopardy.

Workplace Bullying

My data reveals that the management teams of schools have inherent power in their roles. Head Teachers can be skilled manipulators capable of capitalising on changing situations in teaching. A shifting government policy or preference for a new initiative can lead to diverting resources elsewhere, thus creating inequity in gendered, racial, economic or age groups, for instance. This creates the situation described by Beck (1999) of agitation and uncertainty. I firmly believe that my study reveals workplace bullying is rife in some institutions and can have devastating effects such as, de-skilling, de-motivating and de-professionalizing those who become victims.

Work/life Balance

Teacher stress is not an individual inadequacy; alternatively I posit that its origins lie in an intensified work demand in the public sector, as discussed by Hey and Bradford (2004). This aggressive intensification of work is evidenced throughout the narratives of stress (see Chapter Four) I obtained for this study.

Workforce Remodelling is a step in the right direction towards easing the pressure teachers' face in their work if it is managed equitably. How Local Education Authorities address these issues will be very interesting! All Authorities have budgetary constraints that affect schools. Naturally they will look for ways to provide cost effective solutions, such as substituting Learning Support Assistants for supply teachers. I fear the real cost will be that children do not receive the standard of education they deserve.

In compliance with the Workforce Agreement, teachers are allowed 10% of their teaching time as Planning, Preparation and Assessment. Schools have been left to decide how they will achieve this and all manners of options could be adopted and the school resources will largely determine these.

Future Research

The findings of my study points out a distinct lack of completed research concerning the ethnicity of stressed teachers. I observed a scarcity of differentiation between any ethnic groups, though we live and work in a multi-cultural society. It is of note that the HSE (2000) report confirms this and emphasises more research needs to take place encompassing a variety of ethnicities. Interestingly only one ethnicity is represented in my study. This occurred even though the invitation to participate was not designed to exclude

any group on the basis of ethnicity, gender or any other section of the community. My inquiry was governed by the nature of the volunteers who decided to participate and was devised to take advantage of any participants who responded to the initial invitation.

Although I discovered policies to manage the absence of teachers, such as devised by Blunkett (1998, 2000) I identified a notable lack of studies on interventions to circumnavigate the adverse effects of stress. Such studies would also benefit from long-term follow up of their effectiveness in combating teacher stress, agreed Matt Jarvis (11.6.04). We need to discover what evidence can be found to substantiate that interventions can have a positive effect on teachers and their work. This could inform the overall direction of future work on this topic.

Personal Future Work – Change Management Team

The outcomes of my research have prompted an interest in the aims of the Well Being Project. This is a scheme created by the Teacher Support Network (1999) and is designed to *'promote the health and well being of all staff in education.'* One direct result of this intervention has been that schools have been advised by their Local Education Authority to develop Change Management Teams in order to achieve changes that may benefit their schools. One of the aims of the programme is to encourage representatives from all sections of the school community to take part in the process of change within the institution. Being elected to represent my colleagues on this team is a considerable responsibility. I was asked to do this on the strength of my professionalism and knowledge about teachers and their work. I feel prepared to do so, having taken part in several training sessions on the Well Being Project.

As I have seen from my research, reform to cope with the changing context of professional work is necessary. I consider my study as being highly relevant to my involvement with the Change Management Team. My research has provided me with valuable and original insight into the areas surrounding experiences that can be changed to enhance the professional lives of teachers. My study has led me to be a committed member of the team that will make changes for the better in my school.

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