

High School Teachers' Perceptions
of
Their Working Environment
in
Newfoundland:

A Grounded Theory Study

by

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ABSTRACT

Teacher stress has been of considerable concern for several decades. Researchers have reported that the primary health problem of teachers is stress and that the causes are multiple and complex. Workplace stress has also been found to diminish teachers' enthusiasm and distance them emotionally from their students, thereby lessening the teacher-student interaction. School reorganization and consolidation in Newfoundland and Labrador has caused the incremental downloading of additional duties for teachers and, in their perception, unreasonable demands. The high stress levels of teachers in this province are worrisome and the causes and results of their stress must be identified and reduced.

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to explore the experiences of high school teachers' work environment, particularly their experiences of stress. Interviews were conducted with 16 high school teachers, from 24 to 55 years of age, in rural and urban Newfoundland in 2002. The constant comparative method of analysis was used to generate three theoretical constructs: the struggle to balance multiple demands (feeling burdened by work pressures and demands, barriers to teacher effectiveness), the importance of supportive work environments (feeling unsupported by administration, value of a collegial community, importance of having adequate resources), and the realities of stress (participants' understanding of stress, self-concept, the taboo of stress, feeling consumed by the job: interference with personal life).

A picture presented of a profession that demanded constant attention often to the detriment of participants' health and well-being. In particular, the emotional repercussions of stress seemed difficult for these participants. Findings suggest

that they were concerned not just for themselves but for their colleagues and their students as well. The stigma associated with stress had prevented these teachers from speaking out until they were interviewed.

This study emphasized the importance of administrative and collegial support, the importance of effective communication, the necessity of adequate resources and professional development, and the need to recognize the excessive workload and the associated stress that teachers are feeling. The results of this study provide new insights into the serious problem of teacher stress in this province and the repercussions on their personal and professional lives. The implications of this study for teachers, the education system, and further research on teachers' stress are discussed.

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For her guidance, focus, attention, and interest in this study I want to sincerely thank Dr. Christine Way. Dr. Way took over supervisory duties part way through my studies. Her willingness to be so involved so late in the process was a blessing for me but created a huge workload for her. Dr. Way's contribution to my understanding of qualitative research has been tremendous, and my appreciation for her expertise continued to grow throughout this process. Her knowledge and insight improved my critical thinking and helped me to see the big picture when at times I could not see beyond the written word. Most appreciated was her patience through some difficult times for me.

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PREFACE

Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causa – Lucky is he who has been able to understand the causes of things.

Virgil

The seed for this research was sown at a Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association (NLTA) general branch meeting in October 1999 in St. John's. Concerns about school restructuring and the resulting changes and about the implementation of Pathways and inclusion of special needs children in mainstream classrooms had prompted the branch to ask representatives from the NLTA office to attend the meeting.

Teacher after teacher related their exhaustion, their distress with the school system, their feelings of hopelessness, and their anger about their changing role. They spoke of their concern for colleagues who felt disillusioned and worried about the expectations placed upon them and whether they could cope. They also voiced concern for their students. Their level of exhaustion was apparent (and this was only October). I left that meeting with a heavy heart but determined that I must do something to help. Indeed, that we must *all* do something to better understand the problems and look for solutions.

My first career was in nursing. For almost twenty years, interrupted by staying at home as a parent for a period, I enjoyed my work as a community health

nurse. Healthy living was something I practised in my own life and encouraged and promoted in the lives of my patients. Changing tracks somewhat, I completed an education degree, taught high school for one year, and then returned to university to pursue graduate studies in counselling. Throughout my years as a teacher and a school counsellor, the health and well-being of my students and teacher colleagues was always central to my thinking. That NLTA meeting highlighted my growing awareness of teachers' distress, and I had grave concerns about the health of our teachers.

Subsequently, I wrote an article for the NLTA Bulletin outlining teachers' concerns about the integration of special needs students into the regular classroom. Although I supported this policy change for the most part, I knew that teachers felt poorly prepared for full integration; many felt they lacked the skills to teach children with learning difficulties and felt even less prepared to deal with other disabilities. Several months later, I conducted a standardized, quantitative pilot study to assess the level of teacher stress in this province. The results of this study, which indicated a high level of teacher stress, were published in the NLTA Bulletin and in Memorial University *Morning Watch* in November 2000. Following the publication of these studies, many teachers contacted me about the problem of teacher stress. They encouraged me to write more and to bring the problem out in the open. By this time I had decided, despite being near the end of my career, that I should pursue doctoral studies and study stress and the working environment of teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL). If we are to facilitate solutions, it is crucial that we explore the phenomena of stress in detail to become more cognizant of, and acknowledge its causes.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
PREFACE	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	xiv
LIST OF FIGURES	xv
LIST OF APPENDICES	xvi
Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background and Rationale	5
1.2 Problem Statement	11
1.3 Research Questions	12
Chapter 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	13
2.1 Understanding stress	13
2.2 Teacher Workload	20
2.2.1 Time Pressures	21
2.2.2 Problems Associated with Class Size	26
2.2.3 Inclusive Classrooms	28
2.2.4 Family Implications	34
2.2.5 Change	36
2.2.6 Summary	40
2.3 Teachers' Work Environment	41
2.3.1 Administrative support	42
2.3.2 Collegial Support	52
2.3.3 Resources	54
2.3.4 Relations with students	56

2.3.5 Summary	60
2.4 Discussion	60
Chapter 3 RESEARCH METHODS	67
3.1 Grounded Theory as a Research Method	67
3.2 Population and Sample	69
3.3 Ethical Considerations	72
3.4 Data Collection Procedure	73
3.4.1 Interviewing Process	74
3.4.2 Interview Schedule	76
3.5 Data Analysis	78
Chapter 4 RESULTS	81
4.1 Constructs	82
4.2 Struggling to Balance Multiple Demands	82
4.2.1 Feeling Burdened by Work Pressures and Demands	83
4.2.1.1 Overwhelmed by responsibilities, accountability and being judged	84
4.2.1.2 Contending with non-teaching duties	89
4.2.2 Barriers to Teacher Effectiveness	94
4.2.2.1 Difficulties posed by inclusion and Pathways	95
4.2.2.2 Struggling to facilitate learning	101
4.2.2.3 Behaviour management and fears for personal safety	104
4.2.3 Summary	111
4.3 The Importance of Supportive Work Environments	112
4.3.1 The Importance of Administrative Support	113
4.3.1.1 Being respectful, treating teachers as professionals	114

4.3.1.2	The importance of effective communication	117
4.3.1.3	Providing guidance and direction to effectively deal with day-to-day issues	120
4.3.2	Value of a Collegial Community	125
4.3.3	Importance of Having Adequate Resources	129
4.3.3.1	Physical resources	129
4.3.3.2	Intellectual and human resources	133
4.3.4	Summary	136
4.4	The Realities of Stress	137
4.4.1	Participants' Understanding of Stress	137
4.4.2	Self-concept	146
4.4.3	The Taboo of Stress	151
4.4.4	Feeling Consumed by the Job: Interference with Personal Life	155
4.4.5	Summary	159
4.5	Interrelationship Between Theoretical Constructs	161
Chapter 5	DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	169
5.1	Struggling to Balance Multiple Demands	169
5.2	The Importance of Supportive Work Environments	179
5.3	The Realities of Stress	184
5.4	Summary of Interrelationships	191
Chapter 6	LIMITATIONS, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS	195
6.1	Limitations of the Study	195
6.2	Implications and Recommendations	196
6.3	Conclusions	203

Chapter 7 REFERENCES	206
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LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Model of Teacher Stress Interaction	162
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LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A Map of School Districts	220
Appendix B Human Investigations Committee (HIC) Consent	222
Appendix C Recruitment Ad.	224
Appendix C Participant Consent Form	226
Appendix D Participant Information	228
Appendix E Questions	230
Appendix F Interview Summary	232
Appendix G Constructs	234

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The 1990s were a “decade of turbulence for working Canadians” (Duxbury & Higgins, 2003, p. vii). Many companies downsized, restructured, and globalized. Technological changes and the need to be competitive added new demands and pressures to both organizations and individuals. This focus on cost efficiency and streamlining, increasing demands and decreasing resources, resulted in increased levels of stress for many employees.

Several studies were conducted in Canada to examine the impact of system changes on employees. In 2000, the Heart and Stroke Foundation (HSF) commissioned a national study on workplace stress. Based on a random household survey of 1,751 households, the HSF reported that nearly half of all adults thirty years and over felt overwhelmed by their jobs, families, or finances. Specifically, about 30% of respondents reported difficulty coping with job demands, and 53% reported not having enough time to spend with families because of work demands.

A fairly extensive research base, spanning several decades, characterizes teaching as a high-stress occupation (Cooper & Travers, 1996; Farber, 2000b; Kyriacou & Sutcliff, 1978a; Milstein & Golaszewski, 1985; Scottish Council for Research in Education, 2003). Numerous books, journal articles and newspaper and magazine reports, employing a variety of theoretical approaches and research methods, have been published on this topic. During the past decade the major causes of teacher stress have been attributed to workload (Geelan, 2002; Naylor, 2001a; Pierce & Molloy, 1990; Taris, Peeters, LeBlanc, Schreurs, & Schaufel, 2001), poor school ethos (Speilberger, Vagg, & Wasala, 2003; Wisniewski &

Gargiulo, 1997), and the inclusion of students with special needs (Abebe & Shaugnessey, 1997; Goddard, 2000; Mamlin, 1999) and behaviour problems (Abebe & Shaugnessey, 1997; Englebrecht, Oswald, Swart & Eloff, 2003; Freidman, 1995) in regular classrooms.

Several Canadian studies have documented a connection between teacher workload and stress (e.g., Geelin, 2002; King & Peart, 1992; Naylor, 2001a; Harvey & Spinney, 2000; Younghusband, 2000). The Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF), formed in 1920, is a voice on educational matters at the provincial, national, and international levels. In 1992, the CTF commissioned a study to examine teacher workload. Based on the results of a stratified random survey of over 17,000 teachers, the authors concluded that teachers were experiencing heavy workloads and high stress levels. The findings also emphasized the importance of supportive work environments in buffering job demands and the resulting stress. Importantly, teacher-administrator relationships was a powerful theme (King & Peart, 1992).

Several researchers have found that stress is a primary health problem among teachers (Bertoch, Neilson, Curley & Borg, 1989; Dworkin, Haney, Dworkin & Telschow, 1990; Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997). A significant percent of the respondents in Younghusband's (2000) study reported that they felt unwell much or most of the time (56%), felt tense much of the time (44%), had difficulty falling asleep (34%), and felt depressed often to most of the time (25%).

Workplace stress not only impacts teachers' health and well-being but also the lives of their families and friends. Geelin (2002) conducted forums with teachers working at 40 different educational sites across Alberta. A total of 1,167 submissions were analyzed. A major theme emerging from the data analysis was

the significant negative impact that increasing job demands were having on personal and family time. Similar findings were reported by teachers in other provinces. In Nova Scotia, teachers reported feeling stressed from excessive expectations placed on them (Harvey & Spinney, 2000). Seventy-five percent reported not spending enough time with family and friends. Many of them felt guilty, resented the pressures and demands of work, and experienced anxiety and fears about not being able to meet others' expectations of them.

There is also some evidence suggesting that stress diminishes teacher effectiveness in the classroom. Blase (1986), Kyriacou (1987), and Slavin (1996) found that workplace stress diminishes teachers' enthusiasm and commitment and distances them emotionally and socially from their students, thereby compromising the teacher-student interaction. In a review of stress literature on teaching published over a ten year period, the Scottish Council for Research in Education (SCRE) (2003) concluded that teachers who are stressed may disengage from the job. The SCRE emphasized the importance of conducting further research to determine the possible impact on students.

The separate and interactive effects of multiple stressors can increase teacher stress levels. If left unchecked without adequate supports, ill health is often the outcome (Daniels, 1996; Pert, 1999; Sweet, Savioe, & Lemyre, 1999). A healthy work environment exists where individuals feel good, can use their talents to achieve high performance, feel valued, and have high levels of well-being. Organizational and individual health are essential to individual and organizational effectiveness (Quick, 1999). At the heart of the matter is the need to understand that a healthy workplace, where teachers can be valued as important resources,

where their expertise, strengths, capabilities, and competence are emphasized, is essential.

The purpose of the current study was to develop an understanding of the separate and interactive effects of the work environment on teachers in NL. A grounded theory approach was used to explore teachers' experiences with stress, key job-related factors that enhanced teacher stress levels, and how stress affected teacher health and overall well-being.

1.1 Background and Rationale

The first major restructuring of the education system in NL came in the 1990s after the Royal Commission on Education (1992) report. The three denominational education councils were dissolved, and the 27 denominational boards were reduced to 10 publicly elected, regional boards (Appendix A). The resulting reductions in school board personnel led to downloading of responsibilities to school administrators and in turn to teachers where the domino effect has perhaps been felt the hardest (Jackson, 2002).

As a result of restructuring, a number of small schools closed, and larger amalgamated schools formed. Many teachers were reassigned to new schools; some had to uproot their families and move to another community. Hillier (1999) cautioned that the threat of such changes, which are still continuing, "may be causing greater stress than the actual change itself" (p. 4).

Aside from restructuring, major curriculum changes resulting from the introduction of Pathways and inclusive classes have increased the demands on teachers. In 1993, the Department of Education implemented Pathways to provide some flexibility for graduation requirements so that high school students with

special needs could experience a more personalized programme while still meeting basic education standards. Teachers are expected to be familiar with the five programming options or “pathways” at the senior high level. Teachers are also expected to be flexible and to vary teaching strategies to meet group and individual needs in class. Extensive documentation, an Individual Support Services Plan (ISSP), and a five-page strategies and accommodations checklist are required for each student. For those readers who are unfamiliar with Pathways, a detailed description is available at www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/dept/sss_ps.htm#Pathways.

At the same time, inclusive classes were introduced that confronted teachers with groups of students with a wide range of learning needs. Inclusion is both a philosophy and a process. The philosophy is that most students with disabilities ought to be educated in the same class as their neighbours and peers. As a process it is a collaborative effort to prepare students with exceptionalities for life and work. Students with disabilities (physical, emotional, behavioural, and/or intellectual) are integrated into general education classes.

Many teachers feared that lack of training and expertise in implementing the best practices for inclusive students would lead to frustration on both sides. They voiced their concerns at NLTA meetings and on Teachers in Cyberspace (TIC). In January 1999, NLTA released a position paper entitled “The Crisis in Student Support” in which it detailed many issues surrounding Pathways and made a number of recommendations. Concerns of teachers regarding workload resulting from the implementation of Pathways and issues around liability were brought to the attention of the Department of Education. Interestingly, even today

there is no requirement to take a special education course to graduate as a teacher from Memorial University of Newfoundland.

On December 1, 1999, the Curriculum Committee of NLTA met with programme specialists from seven of the school districts to discuss the implementation of Pathways and inclusion. Major concerns emanating from a survey completed by 638 teachers included time restraints, trying to meet the diverse needs in the regular classroom, lack of programme and personnel support, legal liability in categorizing students and meeting their needs, and time-consuming documentation (NLTA Executive Notes, January 7-8, 2000).

Teachers' roles have expanded and changed dramatically, and their workload has increased to the point of being unacceptable (Jackson, 2001a, 2001b). Although the number of teachers seeking assistance for stress under the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) of NLTA is now confidential, concerns have been voiced that it is a serious problem, with the numbers seeking help escalating in recent years (Hillier, 1999). In the Royal Commission Report on Education, *Our Children Ourselves*, Burry and Bonnell (1992) noted that 22% to 25% of teachers requesting employee assistance from NLTA cited job and personal stress and burnout as the most frequent reasons. Hillier (1999) reported that between 1989 and 1999 one out of every five teachers in NL sought assistance for stress related problems from EAP. Fred Andrews, former president of the NLTA, divulged in an interview that "many teachers take sick leave due to stress associated with workload" (Jackson, 2001a).

Significantly, little research on teacher stress has been carried out in NL. Earlier studies of a descriptive-correlational nature examined teacher stress levels and contributing factors (Kendell, 1983; Kennedy, 1982; McCarthy-Dwyer, 1993).

Kendell found that parent-teacher relations and time management were two important contributing factors to regular classroom teachers' stress. Kennedy determined that time management, parent/teacher relations, lack of input into decision-making, and the reorganized high school programme were factors contributing to teachers' stress. In addition, she determined that effective school administrators could help reduce teachers' stress levels. McCarthy-Dwyer studied only teachers of challenging needs students. Her conclusions were similar to both previous researchers. In a pilot study of teachers in one large school district in NL, Younghusband (2000) reported that 74% of the participants felt stress most of the time due to role overload, 95% described their job responsibilities as increasing, 74% felt they did not have the necessary resources, 54% wished they had more support to help with the demands of the job, and 29% said they dreaded going to work lately.

While such research provides an understanding, often of a correlational nature, it offers little information on the participants' perspective. In contrast, qualitative research often attempts to explain the meaning of social reality from the perspective of the participants. The researched phenomenon becomes "accessible, tangible and imaginable" (Glesner & Peshkin, 1992, p.8). In order to understand teachers' stress, teachers may be better studied using a methodology which will take their lived experiences into consideration. Huberman (1995) reported that the voices of teachers themselves and their own interpretations of their profession have been largely ignored.

The role of teachers has changed over the years. They are expected to supervise extracurricular activities from drama club to sports, provide lunch hour supervision, supervise playground activities, and monitor bus loading and

unloading. In addition, they find themselves in the role of social worker, secretary, counsellor and advocate, fighting the wars on drugs and writing letters of recommendation for employment and scholarships, etc.

This research is timely, as social changes and economic forces have challenged the teaching profession in NL. In a news release on February 11, 1999, NLTA president Brendon Doyle warned that teachers were severely impacted by the “educational restructuring, downsizing, and the introduction of an overwhelming number of new initiatives” which had “dangerously overloaded” the education system. School reorganization has often created larger class sizes (Jackson, 2001b) and thus heavier work loads and further clerical work. Curriculum changes, as required by Atlantic Provinces Educational Foundations (APEF), for example, should be accompanied by extensive staff development and mentoring.

The effects of these changes on teachers should be documented. Rather than list the ways in which teachers could cope better with stress, as has been the habit of much of the research to date, it would be more helpful to provide a clearer picture of the system in which they work. Illumination of the roots of teacher stress would provide a clearer understanding of this phenomenon and the effect it has on teachers’ health. The direction in which we should move to alleviate this stress will then be more apparent.

1.2 Problem Statement

Teachers bring themselves into their classrooms as helping persons . Corey (1991) theorized that for individuals in helping professions the person he/she is is of utmost importance and that his/her greatest skill is the ability to model aliveness

and realness. He urges those in a helping profession to take care of themselves so that they retain this aliveness. Nathan (1994) cautioned that teachers are exposed to risks that can become chronic problems and he also counselled them to take care of themselves. There is more to teacher stress, however, than trying to take care of one's self. After decades of research there is extensive information but little or no progress toward alleviating the problem. Teachers do not feel that they have an equal partnership in education; they feel overworked and unsupported. They report being excluded from the decision-making process and they want some autonomy.

Teacher stress and resulting burnout is a serious problem that should be researched in a meaningful way if the quality and productivity of education is not to be weakened and if the health and well-being of teachers is to be taken seriously.

There is limited information on high school teachers' experiences of stress in NL, and there are no qualitative studies. In this study, teachers' experiences of stress in the context of work were explored. The objective was to increase our understanding of the environment in which teachers work, the factors contributing to high levels of stress, and the weight and importance teachers place on these factors.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to develop an understanding of the separate and interactive effects of teacher stress in NL. A grounded theory approach was used as the researcher listened to teachers' stories of their experiences of stress and burnout in their workplace and their perception of how it has affected their health and their lives. The researcher attempted to identify the greatest stressors for high school teachers and to determine the supports they felt should be in place. This study of teachers' experiences in their work environment

and the effects on their health and well being will increase our understanding of workplace stress. It is hoped that with increased understanding, the problem can hopefully be alleviated to some degree.

1.3 Research Questions

This study addressed the following research questions:

- (1) What are teachers' experiences of stress in the workplace?
- (2) What are the necessary supports to deal with stress?

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is some degree of strain (the result of stress) in all occupational settings, and the level of stress among teachers is not a new concern. Since 1977, Kyriacou has written 25 articles on teacher stress, and others have written extensively on this topic (Blase, 1986; Bertoch, Neilson, Curley, & Borg, 1989; Borg, Riding, & Falzon, 1991; Englebrecht, Oswald, Swar,t & Eloff, 2003; Kelly & Berthelsen, 1995; Travers & Cooper, 1996). Workload, class size, student behaviour problems, inadequate administrative support, lack of professional training, lack of resources, teaching outside the area of specialization, time pressures, and evaluation apprehension have all been noted as issues of concern for teachers.

This literature review is divided into three major sections. The first section reviews stress in general. The second section explores teacher workload, and the third discusses teachers' work environment.

2.1 Understanding Stress

Despite several decades of research, stress is a relatively misunderstood concept, and, in general, there is still much to be learned. As a result, myths abound. Following a critical review of Canadian studies on teacher stress, Hiebert (1985) found that the terms pressure, demands, stressors, and stress were used interchangeably by many researchers. Hiebert proposed a model that clarified the differences and similarities among these terms. Demands or expectations of others, which do not invoke a stress response, are pressures. However, when demands are perceived to exceed an individual's coping resources, they become

stressors. A stressor may be physical, emotional, intellectual, social, economic, or spiritual. Similar to Cooper and Travers (1996), Hiebert theorized that the level of stress experienced by an individual is directly related to his or her ability to cope with the demands in the environment.

Lazarus' (1966) theory of stress is based on the construct of appraisal. Stress is used to describe the struggle of balancing the pressures and demands of daily living – an individual's struggle to adapt. Lazarus (1999) stated that people try to appraise their situations realistically because they want to remain hopeful. He posited that a person feels threatened when he/she appraises environmental conditions as endangering the chances of attaining his/her goal – an interaction of the person and their environment. Coping with stress involves two processes: acting directly toward the stressor and alleviating it (includes denial). Lazarus (1999) cautioned us not to ignore the emotions involved in stress and adaptation. Where there is stress, there is emotion. Lazarus' theory identifies the interaction between the environment, the nature and intensity of resulting emotional responses to stress, and the personality characteristics of the individual as being important.

Lazarus' interactional theory has been empirically validated by several researchers studying teacher stress (Bertoch et al., 1989; Blase, 1986; Cooper & Cartwright, 1997; Hiebert, 1985; Kagan & Kagan, 1995; Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1978b; Trendall, 1989). The individual in this interactional model is in a less passive role in controlling the stress. The interactional model developed by Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1978a) for explaining teacher stress draws heavily on Lazarus' work. Kyriacou and Sucliffe point out the difference between potential work stressors (e.g., too much work, high noise levels) and actual work stressors. Potential work stressors may result in teacher stress but only if they are perceived

as threats to self-esteem or well-being. The teacher may feel unable to cope with the demands made and therefore fear failure, or these demands may be at variance with his/her higher order needs (needs for self-actualization).

Trendall (1989) expanded upon the interactional theory and proposed a multi-faceted concept of stress involving the individual, the organization, the nature of the workplace, and the nature of general society. He conjectured that stress affects an individual's achievement, effectiveness, and the ability to cope with his or her professional role.

Lazarus (1999) felt that the interactional theory of stress which considers appraisal, emotions, and coping is particularly applicable to the workplace. However, he also recognized that work cannot be isolated from other aspects of a person's life. The interplay of work stress and family stress has been termed "spillover". Research on teacher stress (Dibbon, 2004; Dinham & Scott, 2000; Geelan, 2002; King & Peart, 1992) confirm the negative impact of work stress on family life. Stress experienced in the workplace results in stress in personal/family life and vice versa.

Interactionists theorize that stress arises especially when a person's most important values and needs are threatened. The body does not distinguish between a real threat and a perceived threat. Donnelly, Eburne, and Kittleson (2001) characterize stress caused by perceived threats as lasting longer because of the internal dialogue that takes place in an individual's head (e.g., "What did I do wrong?"; "I don't think I will get this done on time.>"). The authors caution that the threats posed by uncertainty and change are major contributors to stress.

Changes imposed by persons outside the classroom are often "unworkable and unintelligible" (Hargreaves, 1994) and can be "demoralizing and

discouraging” (C. Williams, 2003) to dedicated teachers who question the attributes of some changes and see others as harmful to their students. Structural changes resulting from school reform are usually top-down so the overall vision may be understood by only a few persons in management positions. Fullan (1996) argued that educational reforms often engender overload and stress because they are experienced by teachers as “fragmented and incoherent.”

Still, the question arises, why do only some of the individuals in the same or similar situations experience stress? Stressors appear to have particular meaning and emotional significance to an individual. Their appraisal and perception are what really matters (Cassidy 1999; Lazarus, 1999). It appears that the way in which we respond to demands is in part determined by personality and cognitive styles that influence the way in which we appraise the situation. Limited research in this area has been executed with teachers. Cassidy argues that stress research may well be the most important perspective from which to study health psychology.

Stressors increase the demand on our body for readjustment, forcing it to adapt and to reach a maintenance level again. If stressors are frequent and of prolonged duration, it becomes more likely that coping resources will be exceeded, leaving the person continually struggling to make sense of what has happened and why. This in turn leads to chronic stress (an enduring state) and the resulting health problems that stress inflicts on the body (Glaser, 2005; Griffith, Steptoe, & Cropley, 1999; Rosch, 1997; Spielberger et al., 2003; Steptoe, Cropley, & Joeke, 2000; Sweet et al., 1999).

Hiebert’s (1985) review of the research on Canadian teachers and stress concluded that the individual’s perception of his coping ability gives rise to a

stress response: psychological (e.g., dissatisfaction with the job), physiological (e.g., increased heart rate, insomnia), or behavioural (e.g., conflict with colleagues or students). There is an abundance of medical research linking stress to poor health outcomes. The chronic effects of such stress may include coronary heart disease, lowered immune response contributing to the common cold and perhaps to cancer, and exhaustion, among others as the body struggles to maintain balance (Amelsvoort, Schouten, Maan, Swenne, & Kok, 2000; Cartwright & Cooper, 1997; Cooper & Travers, 1996; Glaser, 2005; Dworkin, Haney & Telschew, 1990; Karlin, Brondolo, & Schwartz, 2003; Rozanski, Blumenthal, & Kaplan, 1999; Sweet et al., 1999).

Across North America, in all types of occupations, people are working longer hours and with less job security. The nature of work is rapidly changing, and now, perhaps more than ever before, job stress poses a threat to the health of workers. Warren (1994) found a strong correlation between workplace stress and the health of the worker. He theorized that increased workplace stress can deny individuals the opportunity to realize optimum health. A national survey of Canadian employees, undertaken by The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety in 1999, found that almost half experienced a “great deal” of stress at work, 25% of them to the point of it making them sick. Research has also documented high stress levels in teachers (Borg et al., 1991; Boyle, Borg, Falzon, & Baglioni, 1995; *Canadian Teachers’ Workplace Survey*, 2001; Chambers & Belcher, 1993; Chan, 1998; Conley & Woosley, 2000; Hall, Hall, & Abaci, 1997; King & Peart, 1992; Naylor, 2001a; O’Connor & Clarke, 1990; Pierce & Molloy, 1990. Winzelberg & Luskin, 1999; Youngusband, 2000).

Usually, a person reacts to and handles a stressful situation, and his or her body returns to normal with few side effects. What often occurs in the workplace, however, is neither a fight or flight. Instead, depending on how the individual perceives the situation and how well he/she copes, the body may stay in a state of elevated arousal, keeping blood pressure high and heart rate elevated. Individuals may be left feeling weak, helpless, demoralized, and in some cases also responsible and culpable (Arthur, 2000; Meichenbaum & Fitzpatrick, 1982).

There is a growing feeling that our mental health is as important as our physical health and that we must make it a workplace priority. Earle (1997) hypothesized that the self-concept of most adults is as deeply rooted in their work roles as in any other roles they play (e.g., friend, parent, spouse, etc.). Further, he contended that satisfaction in an individual's life outside work is strongly influenced by assets developed in his/her life at work. Duxbury and Higgins (2003) also found that work overload was positively associated with physical and mental health problems.

2.2 Teacher Workload

I have never worked in a coal mine, or a uranium mine, or in a herring trawler; but I know from experience that working in a bank from 9:15 to 5:30, and once in four weeks the whole of Saturday, with two weeks holidays a year, was a rest cure compared to teaching in a school.

Eliot (1950)

Much of the research on teacher stress indicates that heavy workloads and increasing time pressures are having a negative impact on teachers and that stress levels are increasing (Black, 2003; Dibbon, 2004; Naylor, 2001a; Pierce &

Molloy, 1990; Taris et al., 2001; van der Klink, Blonk, Schene, & van Dijk, 2001). Several studies have highlighted teacher concerns about the need to extend the work week to meet increasing job demands (*Canadian Teachers Workplace Survey*, 2001; Dibbon, 2004; Drago, Caplan, Constanza, Brubaker, Cloud, Harris et al., 1999; Harvey & Spinney, 2000; Schaefer, 2001).

Repeatedly, the research on teacher stress has identified a number of common stressors regarding workload. This section reviews some of those findings. Time pressures, problems associated with class size, inclusive classrooms, the implications of a heavy workload on family life, and the repercussions of on-going change are discussed, illuminating their effect on stress. Some research has found that teacher stress increases with the age of students taught (Borg et al., 1991; Pierce & Molloy, 1990), and thus high school teachers, facing an ever-changing curriculum and increasing workload, may feel more stress.

2.2.1 *Time Pressures*

In a qualitative study, Blase (1986) examined teachers' perceptions (N=35) of workplace stress. Participants identified three important sources of work stressors, explained why these sources contributed to work stress, identified feelings associated with sources of stress and identified coping strategies and their perceived effectiveness with those feelings. Data were analyzed using the constant-comparative method. Ten major categories of perceived sources of significant stress were identified. The dominant category was organizational stressors (e.g., lack of time, lack of resources, excessive paper work, role overload, etc.), with time appearing as a factor in several of the other stressor categories as

well. Blase emphasized the importance that time plays in all aspects of teacher stress. Study findings also revealed a link between greater work stress and negative feelings in teachers. Blase strongly encouraged that greater attention be given to the organizational orientation of schools, which was discerned as negatively impacting effective teaching and learning.

Montalvo, Bair, and Boor (1995) studied occupational factors that might produce stress by using a questionnaire consisting of 66 stress-related items with 42 teachers. Lack of time was cited as one of the top factors. Younger teachers rated “obligated to take part in too many school activities” as a significant stressor.

Kelly and Berthelsen (1995) invited eight female preschool teachers from 28 to 46 years of age in a metropolitan area of Australia to take part in a qualitative study designed to explore teachers’ perceptions of stress and the perceived role of societal and organizational factors. Each teacher kept a reflective journal for a two week period recording stressful events and their “feelings, reactions, interpretations, and reflections” on those events. Participants were also requested to make diagrams representing their experiences of stress. Themes were developed from the journals and the diagrams. Similar to the findings of Blase (1986), time pressures emerged as the major stressor.

Drago et al. (1999) studied workload issues in a randomly selected sample of 627 teachers in 46 Ontario schools. The return rate was 51%, a high return for this type of research. Teachers were asked to keep a work diary on hours worked per day. The researchers found that although the average teacher was under contract to work 6.5 hours per day (32.5 hour weeks), in actuality most study participants worked 10.28 hours per day (51.40 hour weeks) and were in school 1 3/4 hours longer per day than their contract demanded.

Similar to Drago et al. (1999), Harvey and Spinney (2000) used a 24-hour time-use diary approach to collect data from 45.7% of 1,800 randomly sampled teachers in Nova Scotia. Supplementary questionnaires were also completed by each respondent. The authors reported that teachers recorded an average work week of 52.5 hours. Eighty percent of the participants felt they had too many demands at once. The authors noted that these teachers felt stress from excessive expectations.

The *Canadian Teachers' Workplace Survey* (2001), commissioned by CTF and conducted by Environics Research Group, polled Canadian educators on issues related to their workplace: workload, job stress, school violence, and other related issues. The research group was provided with a random sample of educators in all teachers' organizations across Canada. Telephone interviews were conducted with 1,014 educators in 2001. Sixty-three percent of the participants indicated that their workload had increased compared to two years previously, and 60% reported that they had less time to give to individual students. Fifty-six percent of the teachers indicated that they were spending more time on students' personal non-academic problems than previously.

The British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) surveyed teachers in the province regarding what they considered the most significant aspects of workload and job stress (BCTF Worklife of Teachers Survey Series, 1: Workload and Stress, April 2001). Questionnaires were mailed out to a stratified random sample of 1,500 teachers with a return of 644. Schaefer (2001) reported on the quantitative findings from the BCTF study that pertained to workload and its impact on summer vacation. The author reported that 16.3% of the respondents spent part of their summer in further education and learning new instructional

methods and content to apply during the school year. Eighty percent of full time teachers reported that they spent at least one week of vacation preparing for the coming school year, with new teachers spending three to four weeks doing the same. More than 85% of the respondents reported that their work demands resulted in fatigue. Even those who reported taking full vacation time felt fatigued during the school year (77%).

Jacobsson, Pousette, and Thylefors (2001) studied all 928 teachers in 27 Swedish schools to determine the relationship of 12 factors with stress reactions (e.g., emotional exhaustion and irritation) and feelings of mastery or effectiveness. A basic assumption, from Karasek's model (1979), was that organizational practices in the work setting contributed to teacher stress. A validated questionnaire was used. The authors used regression analysis to determine the best predictors of four dependent variables (emotional exhaustion, irritation, feelings of mastery, and work demands). During regression analysis, pupil misbehaviour surfaced as an important predictor of emotional exhaustion (one of the components of stress), but perceived work demands was the most powerful predictor of stress.

In Newfoundland, Dibbon (2004) studied the impact of workload on teachers and students. To begin, he reviewed recent studies on teacher workload across seven provinces in Canada and concluded that excessive workloads were prevalent. Focus groups were held at four schools representing teachers from kindergarten to grade 12. Dibbon then chose a stratified random sample of 1,000 teachers from which 681 questionnaires were returned. In addition to this quantitative approach, there was an open-ended question at the end of the survey asking teachers to describe the two issues most important to them with respect to

workload. Eight hundred sixteen comments were received, transcribed, coded, and analyzed for common themes. Lack of time was cited by 52% of participants as a problem. As well, respondents reported that an average of 52.32 hours were spent per week on school related activities. Workload concerns were also identified with new programmes and curriculum (30%) and inappropriate assignment (26%). An additional workload pressure that took an inordinate amount of time, about 20% of the year, was supervision. Seventy percent of teachers in the Dibbon study reported more than 60 minutes per week, and 14% had more than two hours per week of supervision duties. The author considered such duties a poor use of professional time.

2.2.2 Problems Associated with Class Size

Class size has been researched and discussed at length (Abebe & Shaughnessey, 1997; Betts & Shkolnik, 1999; Biddle & Berliner, 2002; Gates, 2000; Holloway, 2002; Vander Ark, 2002). The consensus appears to be overwhelmingly in favour of smaller classes, ideally under 20 students, in order to reduce the workload demands on teachers and better meet the needs of students. In a study designed to measure stress, Griffith et al. (1999) found that teachers of larger classes had higher levels of stress than those with smaller class sizes.

In 1992, King and Peart examined how teachers viewed their profession in each Canadian province and territory. Questionnaires were received from a representative sample ($N = 17,000$) and taped interviews were conducted with 223 teachers from this sample. Teachers reported that larger classes meant a heavier workload with more preparation and grading and that less time was available for relating to individual students.

Rice (1999) was interested in the impact of class size on instructional practice. Using a randomized selection of 12,000 eighth grade students and their teachers, data were gathered from 1988 through 1994. Based on teachers' responses, the author found that smaller class size had a positive effect on time spent working in small groups, innovative instructional time, and time spent on whole group discussions. Teachers in larger classes reported doing less of these things. In addition, teachers reported that it was easier to keep order in smaller classes.

Holloway (2002) reviewed the literature on class size and found that teachers in smaller classes spent less time disciplining students and had more instructional time for both group and individual work. Additionally, he concluded that student participation was greater in small classes.

Teachers responding to the *Canadian Teachers' Workplace Survey* (2001) reported that class sizes had increased substantially and the number of integrated, special needs students in their classes also had increased. Dibbon (2004) also found that teachers believed that large classes were a barrier to effective teaching and that resources, already at a premium, were further decreased in large classes. Additionally, study participants reported that they were unable to use innovative teaching methodologies in crowded class rooms and had to resort to a lecture and text approach.

Large classes have also been found to contribute to behaviour problems (Biddle & Berliner, 2002; Dibbon, 2004; Rice, 1999). Both Dibbon (2004) and Naylor (2001b) emphasized that class composition should be taken into consideration when determining class size.

2.2.3 Inclusive Classrooms

The demand to educate students with special needs within mainstream classrooms has increased in the last decade. Students with such diverse needs (intellectual, physical, emotional, and social disabilities) have brought additional demands to teachers' workloads (CTF, 2001). McManus and Kaufman (1991) stated that achieving successful integration of special needs students requires extraordinary effort. Abebe and Shaughnessey (1997) stated that it is difficult to objectively measure teacher and student "success." They noted that discipline and motivational strategies are keenly needed in inclusive classrooms and that much administrative support is needed.

Billingsley (1993) reviewed research findings related to teacher retention and attrition and referred to inclusive classes as being more actively participating than actively educating. Mastropieri and Scruggs (1997) noted that regular education teachers bear a substantial part of the burden in implementing inclusive classes, which adds to the demands they are already facing. These authors observed and evaluated five inclusion projects and found that only one quarter or less of the teachers surveyed felt they had adequate time, training or assistance to be effective in inclusive classes.

In a review of the literature, Wisniewski and Gargiulo (1997) found that teachers who work with students having emotional/behavioural disabilities are at the highest risk of leaving the profession, with attrition rates approximately six times that of other teachers. In a critical review of the literature regarding students with severe disabilities in inclusive classrooms, Sandler (1999) found that there was a "lack of documentation for anything other than social gains with inclusion" (p.148). Similarly, Doorn (2003), a Canadian teacher, also questioned the success

of inclusive classes. In a critical review of the literature he failed to find sufficient evidence to warrant inclusive classes. In fact, the evidence seemed to indicate at least as many problems as benefits using such an approach (e.g., added workload for teachers when they must adapt and modify programmes and meet with parents, special education teachers).

Valeo and Bunch (1998) interviewed six teachers to explore the attitude of regular class teachers to the inclusion of students with special needs within their classes. The authors found that teachers felt the time spent with special needs students was at a cost to regular students. Problems posed by an inclusive policy included lack of time to work individually with students and lack of expertise in special education, particularly in modifying courses for students with special needs. Although this study was limited by its small size, Valeo and Bunch concluded that inadequate teacher pre-service training and inservice preparation for integration contributed to the teachers' lack of understanding of their role in inclusion. Role overload, lack of time, and poor student achievement had previously been linked to teacher stress by Blase (1986).

Concerns of role-conflict among teachers of students with special needs were identified by Billingsley and Cross (1992). These authors also found that professional commitment decreased as role-conflict increased. Additionally, Embich (2001) reported that role conflict and role ambiguity increased feelings of emotional exhaustion for team teachers in inclusive classrooms. Role ambiguity also reduced teachers' sense of personal accomplishment.

A qualitative case study of one school undergoing restructuring to inclusive classes was carried out by Mamlin (1999). The author proposed to determine what inclusion looked like in a school that was just beginning to implement it and what

inclusion meant to the teachers in that school. The data were content analysed according to a pre-determined definition of inclusion. As a participant-observer Mamlin found that teachers' definitions of inclusion evolved over time. The author found that teachers were concerned about the adequacy of preparation time, professional skills, training and resources to implement inclusive practices. In addition, she cited collaborative planning, shared decision-making, on-going technical assistance and extra resources as being instrumental to the success of inclusive classes. Blase (1986) reported that lack of time was one of the most important variables in understanding teacher stress. Farber (2000) cautioned that professional development was critical to teacher well being. These findings concur with those of Freidman (2000), Hargreaves (1994), Jacobsen and Pousette (2001), and Nieto (2003). Inadequate resources have been linked to stress by Geelan (2001), Hargreaves (1994) and Naylor (2001b). Thus, it appears there may be some association between inclusive classes and teacher stress.

Inclusive classes were implemented in South Africa in the 1990s. In a quantitative/qualitative study, Englebrecht et al. (2003) purposely selected 55 teachers to complete a 75-item questionnaire to measure stress and coping in inclusive classes. Eleven items were identified as being the most stressful, with disruptive behaviour considered third most stressful. The authors subsequently purposely selected ten "information-rich" teachers and conducted in-depth interviews with them to develop a better understanding of the issues. Interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed. Englebrecht et al. found that students with behavioural disorders evoked feelings of anxiety; teachers viewed these students with concern. The authors theorized that this might in part be due to inadequate preparation for teachers to teach a learner population with diverse

needs. Disruptive behaviour as well as inappropriate social behaviour were major concerns as were the lack of support services. Teachers found that adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of diverse students and adjusting their work plans to be supportive of these students added to their workload, and many felt untrained for such responsibilities. The findings indicated that most teachers perceived that adequate administrative support and resources were not available.

Other research has linked disruptive behaviour to inclusive classes as well. Wisniewski and Gargiulo (1997) found that teachers of students with emotional and/or behavioural problems reported higher levels of job stress and attrition.

In Nova Scotia, Goddard (2000) held focus group interviews with 16 teachers. These interviews were audiotaped, transcribed, and analysed. A validated questionnaire was also answered by 232 teachers (every third teacher in one large board). Participants described feeling ineffective in performing their job due to the many roles required of them, the extensive preparation needed for inclusive classes, the ensuing paper work, and inadequate resources. Poorly motivated students were also a concern.

Naylor (2001b) reported on the analysis of the qualitative data derived from the BCTF Worklife of Teachers Survey Series, 1: Workload and Stress, April 2001. Naylor found that many of the participants expressed concerns about increasing workloads due to the increasing numbers of students with special needs and the absence of adequate supports and resources to deal with this student population. Participants encountered difficulties meeting the needs of students with a wide range of abilities and increasing behaviour problems in inclusive classrooms. Naylor determined that the heavy workload represented a “severe and unsustainable imbalance” in the lives of many of these teachers. He expressed

concern that the expectations of the education system and society appeared to have no limits and drained the teachers' capacity to work effectively. Curriculum changes required for these students were another area reported to cause workload pressure.

The increasing number of students on Pathways in Newfoundland and the struggle for teachers of trying to balance preparation and assessment was reported to be another workload problem associated with inclusive classes in Dibbon's (2004) study. Teachers reported that the amount of documentation required for assessment was "exorbitant" and the extra stress and demands on out-of-school time, late nights, and weekends added to their workload. Dibbon considered that it was "impossible" for teachers to accomplish all the demands and tasks in the allocated time. Meetings were an additional workload demand, with teachers reporting 2.3 hours per week outside the school day spent in meetings directly related to their job.

2.2.4 Family Implications

The review of the literature revealed few studies on the interaction between teachers' worklife and their family lives. A national study (Duxbury & Higgins, 2003) looked at the major challenges faced by employees to balance their work and family lives. To determine the ramifications of work-life conflicts for employees, families and organizations, Duxbury and Higgins surveyed 31,571 persons in 100 Canadian private, public, and not-for-profit companies with 500 plus employees. The demographic characteristics of the sample corresponded to national data, and the scales used in the questionnaire were psychometrically sound. The authors found that 58% of the respondents reported feeling overloaded

at work, and 28% felt that work demands interfered with family responsibilities. Only 10% of the respondents reported that they allow family responsibilities to interfere with work responsibilities. A greater inability to balance the pressures and demands of work and the demands of family was significantly associated with reduced work performance, increased absenteeism, higher turnover, lower commitment and poorer morale, reduced family and life satisfaction, depression, increased incidence of perceived stress, and stress related illnesses.

Work demands were reported to have a negative impact on families in the study by King and Peart (1992). The authors recommended that teachers set boundaries for work and that they be selective in taking on additional responsibilities. Similarly, Harvey and Spinney (2000) found that 75% of the teachers participating in their study (N = 823) worried about not spending enough time with family and friends. Consequently they felt guilty, resented the pressures and demands of work, and experienced feelings of anxiety, fearing they could not meet the expectations. Dinham and Scott (2000) surveyed a random sample of 2,066 teachers in England, New Zealand, and Australia. Participants in that study reported that heavy workloads detracted from family life.

Younghusband (2000) found that 65.5% of the respondents in her study of Newfoundland teachers desired more time to spend with friends and 40.9% reported that their relationships were not good lately. Dibbon (2004) found parallel concerns about the impact of work demands on teachers' families.

2.2.5 Change

In the past decade schools have undergone a period of constant reform and restructuring. Travers and Cooper (1996) noted that change can be either

problematic or challenging. The authors reported that the top sources of job pressure were all problematic changes. These included: lack of support from central government (e.g., Department of Education), constant changes within the profession (e.g., restructuring and curriculum changes), lack of information as to how changes are to be implemented (e.g., inadequate professional development), and diminishing social respect for teachers. Troman and Woods' (2001) qualitative study of 20 teachers diagnosed with stress found that stress was positively related to restructuring. They reported that the restructuring of schools and education resulted in changed work patterns and relationships in schools. Such changes led to new roles and responsibilities of teachers that went well beyond classroom teaching.

A quantitative-qualitative study of educational reform in secondary schools in Ontario (Ben Jaafar, Freeman, Spencer & Earl, 2005) examined the implementation and impact of restructuring on students, teachers, and administrators. The authors found that teachers were personally and professionally overwhelmed by demands and that their emotional well-being was negatively affected. Those teachers reported that changes occurred too often and too quickly causing them to resist. They distrusted some of the changes and they felt that their professional knowledge was not valued.

Uncertainty and change have been identified as critical issues leading to stress (Donnelly et al, 2001; Hargreaves, 1994; Wilson & Hall, 2002). Similar findings were noted in a review of teacher stress by SCRE (2004). This review demonstrated a relationship between change and workload, long reported to be a stressor. Reference was made to reports that identified change as causing teachers to spend more time on paper work, preparation, and non-teaching duties. The

report noted that uncertainty often causes internal dialogue brought about by that person's appraisal of the demands of the situation and his perception of his own ability to cope (e.g., "Will I be able to do this job?" ; "What if I'm made redundant?").

Change necessitates that teachers have time to reflect and collaborate with colleagues. Teachers in the Dibbon (2004) study indicated that this was not the case for them. Most study participants (76%) did not have adequate time to prepare for and adjust to change. Dibbon outlined innovations necessary for each curriculum change (i.e., new learning outcomes, new delivery modes, new forms of assessment, new methods, new technologies, and new resources). As well, 47% of teachers were teaching a new course, 25% were teaching two new courses, and 10% were teaching three new courses. Additionally, Dibbon noted that almost three quarters of these teachers were not given a choice as to whether or not they would teach these programmes. Twelve percent of the participants were teaching outside their area of expertise, assigned to subject areas where they had little or no experience. The additional workload for these teachers was substantial and both Dibbon and the teachers considered the learning consequences for students quite serious.

J.S.Williams (2003b) explored why teachers choose to stay in the teaching profession. In-depth interviews were conducted with 12 teachers considered to be "outstanding" and who had been in the classroom for at least 15 years. Collectively, the teachers agreed that reform efforts designed without input from teachers can be demoralizing and discouraging. This was particularly so when teachers considered that some of the changes could be detrimental to students. Participants found attempts to standardize instruction were often stifling, yet they

perceived some changes beyond their control and felt they had to learn to live with those changes. Hargreaves (1994) pointed out that dealing with change alone can cause teachers to experience feelings of guilt, frustration, perfectionism, and burnout.

In a similar small study, Nieto (2003) held on-going discussions with seven teachers to explore what keeps them going in spite of everything with which they deal. Most of the participants had been teaching for more than 25 years. Five had been named “Boston Teacher of the Year.” Besides interviews, the author and teachers met together, exchanged e-mails, read books together, and wrote narratives. Nieto was surprised by the level of anger expressed by these good teachers. They resented school policies and changes being made by people far removed from the realities of the classroom, and they perceived themselves as being treated like children at times. The author determined that more must be done to change the conditions under which teachers work, that they need to be supported and celebrated, and that professional development is important in order to deal with change and to encourage intellectual activity. She also theorized that reforms which focus mainly on accountability will drive some effective teachers away.

2.2.6 Summary

The considerable research base highlighting increasing workloads and its detrimental effects (Black, 2003; Dibbon, 2004; Embich, 2001; Naylor, 2001a; Naylor 2001b; Pierce & Molloy, 1990; van der Klink et al., 2001) leaves no doubt that this is a serious problem. Canadian studies by Dibbon (2004), Drago et al. (1999), Harvey and Spinney (2000) and Shaefer (2001) emphasized the long hours teachers spent outside actual class time. This “invisible” work (Dibbon) indicated

that more preparation time was needed by teachers and that added preparation time would increase teachers' job satisfaction. Class size has increased in Canada, and teachers reported that this was a barrier to effective teaching particularly because special needs students have been integrated into the classes. These students require greater attention and demand more of the teacher's time. The success of inclusive classes has been questioned and there appear to be as many problems as benefits associated with this approach (Doorn, 2003; Sandler, 1999).

The impact of teacher workload on family life has not been studied to great extent but it has been reported that teachers' work demands negatively impact family life (Dibbon, 2004; Dinham & Scott, 2000; Harvey & Spinney, 2000; King & Peart, 1992).

Restructuring, curriculum changes, and new policies, without adequate time to prepare and adjust, have been reported as adding to the problems of balancing the workload (Dibbon, 2004; Hargreaves, 1994; Nieto, 2003; Williams, C., 2003a; Wilson & Hall, 2002). In all these studies, teachers felt resentful of the changes imposed upon them from without and wanted more input themselves before new policies were implemented.

The research on teacher workload to date points out that workload involves more than time. While the qualitative research augments the quantitative research on this issue, there are indications that further qualitative studies are needed to understand, in depth, the implications of heavy teachers' workloads on teachers themselves, their families, and their students.

2.3 Teachers' Work Environment

In an article by Jean Graham (2003, p.33), Fred Douglas, NLTA president, was quoted as saying “Teachers work hard. The working condition of the teacher is the learning condition of the child.” Farber (2000a) agreed when he counseled those in charge of schools to create settings where the needs of the teachers would be nurtured as carefully as those of the students. Further, he admonished those in charge of education for ignoring the despair of teachers, a disregard which he posited was to the detriment not just of teachers but also of the students whom they teach.

Some of the key factors linking teachers’ stress to their work environment have been noted as: inadequate administrative support, inadequate collegial support, lack of physical and professional resources, and students with disruptive behaviour (Borg et al., 1991; Englebrecht et al., 2003, Farber, 2000a; King & Peart, 1992; Mimura & Griffiths, 2003). Poor school ethos (environment) may be due, in part, to ineffective communication as well as poor working conditions which, in addition to heavy workload and large classes, may include lack of support and encouragement and lack of educational resources.

2.3.1 Administrative Support

Administrators have a responsibility for organizational and individual health, essentials to high performance and organizational effectiveness (Quick, 1999). Quick theorized that the health of a work environment may be influenced by a number of factors including those intrinsic to the job: workload, pace, control, and physical environment. He agreed with Theorell and Karasek (1996) who contended that employee control, self-determination, and job decision-latitude impact employee strain and health. A healthy environment, according to their

model, is an interaction between the demands of the job, decision latitude, job security and social support (administrative and collegial).

Leithwood (1999) advised school administrators that when teachers are not part of the decision-making process they feel depersonalized, and when they feel unsupported they also feel a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. In addition, he cautioned that exhaustion occurs when teachers perceive the expectations of administrators to be unrealistic. Shain (2001) theorized that school principals hold a major key to teacher well-being, their conduct influences teachers' mental and physical health and their ability to do their jobs. While much has been written on the topic of administrative support (Abebe & Shaugnessy, 1997; Blase, 1986; King & Peart, 1992; Naylor, 2001b; Spielberger et al., 2003; Theorell, 2003), there is little empirical evidence for the role that this factor plays in shaping a conducive work environment for teachers.

Using a random sample of teachers (N = 291) who were members of a union in one large U.S. district, Dworkin et al. (1990) explored the effects of administrator and co-worker support on reducing the job stress-induced illness of teachers. A validated teacher-specific questionnaire with additional questions pertaining to principal and collegial support was used during data collection. The authors' hypothesis that a positive correlation existed between job stress and reported stress-induced illness was confirmed, but the magnitude of the association was quite low. Teachers who had supportive principals were less likely to report stress-induced illness than those with unsupportive principals, but the significance was low. Further, Dworkin et al. determined that when administrators are seen as supportive, colleagues are more likely to be seen in the same light, but again the significance of the relationship was low. The authors

posited that perhaps this is because there is a general atmosphere of support created by administrative style. Teachers in this study indicated that supportive administrators communicated to them that they were doing meaningful work by showing interest in and respecting their efforts (e.g., improving work conditions, setting and enforcing discipline for students, giving feedback, etc.).

McManus and Kaufman (1991) surveyed 701 randomly chosen teachers from a membership data base to examine the working conditions of teachers of students with behavioural disorders. Teachers answering a validated questionnaire reported that administrative support was of paramount importance.

Billingsley and Cross (1992) developed a questionnaire modeled on existing scales to measure job satisfaction, commitment, and intent to stay in teaching. In a quantitative study of 658 randomly chosen general teachers (N=100) and teachers of students with special needs (N=558), the authors found that emotional support from principals was the most valued type of support, particularly regarding discipline concerns. Based on correlational analysis, greater leadership support was positively associated with professional and school commitment, job satisfaction, and intent to stay for both groups. During regression analysis, leadership support emerged as a significant predictor of all outcome variables for special educators, but only for job satisfaction and school commitment for general teachers. Billingsley and Cross stressed the importance of administrative support in building a committed and satisfied staff.

The manifestations of behavioural problems in the classroom are a dilemma for teachers, especially those without much needed administrative support. Cross and Billingsley (1994) used path analysis to examine the effects of work-related factors on job satisfaction and intent to stay in teaching of teachers of special

needs students. The findings confirmed earlier ones (1992) of the importance of administrative support for teachers of students with behavioural concerns.

King and Peart (1992) reported that appreciation of teachers' efforts by principals was highly related to teachers' satisfaction with their work. The majority of teachers were satisfied with their job, but only 16% of high school teachers indicated that they were highly satisfied. Fifty-five percent of participants in the high stress group and 26% in the low stress group said they received "little recognition" for their performance from their administrators. While multiple regression accounted for only 14% of the variance on stress, 44% of the variance in job satisfaction could be explained. In both cases a large part of the variance was attributed to relationships with students and with administrators. Principals' leadership style, communication skills, and concerns for teachers were reported as key factors in creating a positive school environment. Principals who did not offer adequate encouragement and support for discipline matters, feedback, and recognition were more likely to have highly stressed teachers on staff. Only one third of the teachers felt they were able to influence decisions affecting them, yet almost all the principals felt they actively sought staff input into school policies. Although this survey covered every province and had a large number of participants, the data were presented in a descriptive manner leaving the reader with questions about the results. Correlations would have assisted in further understanding the factors involved in better working conditions for teachers, particularly between administrative support and teachers' job satisfaction.

Abebe and Shaughnessy (1997) surveyed 45 K-12 student teachers and 40 K-12 co-operating teachers to identify key factors that most pre-service teachers and classroom teachers find stressful. The findings indicated that teachers wanted

greater administrative support, particularly in the area of discipline. Teachers wanted more control over removing disruptive students from their class and more input into disciplinary matters. However, no data or analysis were included, therefore, it was difficult to ascertain how the authors arrived at their results.

Embich (2001) conducted a study to determine factors that threaten teachers' sense of personal accomplishment and contribute to emotional exhaustion and feelings of depersonalization. The Maslach Burnout Inventory and the Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity Questionnaire were used to survey all 464 learning disabilities teachers in middle and high schools in one large suburban district. Three hundred ten teachers (66.8%) responded. Multiple regression was used to identify the best predictors of stress (i.e., emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and sense of personal accomplishment). Lack of administrative support was found to significantly contribute to elevated levels of emotional exhaustion and a reduced sense of efficacy in all team teachers of special needs students, but not for self-contained teachers. Embich recommended that administrators set clear and reasonable expectations, provide positive feedback on an on-going basis, and engage in collaborative problem solving to ensure a healthy work environment for teachers. The author posited that administrator-teacher collaboration was important to school ethos. Although this study was conducted with learning disability teachers who taught in their own classrooms or as team teachers, it has relevance for general classroom teachers since inclusive classes mean that all teachers now take on the role of learning disability teachers and some teach as a team.

Contrasting findings were reported by Jacobsson et al. (2001) who found that administrative support was not strongly correlated with emotional exhaustion,

irritation, or stress. However, the authors stated that learning orientation, positive feedback, and goal clarity were important to teachers' perceptions of their professional effectiveness and that it was important for administrators to encourage professional development. Considering that the authors found that administrative support did not buffer stress, it is confusing that they encouraged administrators to be supportive. Manager and colleague support were significantly correlated with the dependent variables but not strongly so. Discouraged by work demands and student misbehaviour, such support could not overcome the problem. The authors attempted to explain the differences in their findings from previous research by suggesting that principals are too distant from teachers' daily work and therefore do not have a direct influence on how they cope with their work.

Speilberger et al. (2003) reviewed the occupational stress literature and concluded that lack of support, particularly managerial support, had a very strong influence on an individual's perception of his/her workplace. They concluded that many employees evaluate their work environment in terms of perceived job demands and pressures and the level of support from administrators and co-workers.

In a qualitative study of 48 teachers and 15 administrators from five high schools in Ontario, Leithwood, Steinbach, and Jantzi (2002) examined the responses of teachers and administrators to government accountability initiatives and the effect of leadership practices on teachers' motivation. In general, the teachers surveyed believed that government goals and intentions were political rather than educationally focused. As well, teachers did not feel that accountability policies would improve teaching and learning but instead contributed to lower self-confidence, greater anxiety, lower self-efficacy, and

lower productivity. They felt resentful about the non-consultive approach taken by administrators. Leithwood et al. stressed the importance of using an approximate time frame to implement new policies and curriculum changes. The authors also explained the need for in-service and for extended and continuing administrative support which involves shared decision-making. Similarly, referring to education systems, Levin (1995) expressed concern that the awareness of change is not matched by an understanding of how to manage change. He was particularly concerned about current reform efforts at the high school level and the difficulties faced by teachers in meeting the needs of disinterested, unmotivated students.

In a study of 983 randomly selected middle and high school teachers in Israel, Somech and Bogler (2002) exemplified the importance of a healthy work environment for teachers and their students. A validated questionnaire with Likert-type scales was used to ask participants about their involvement in decision making, their perceptions about school and teaching, and their attitudes to students, their colleagues, and the school organization in general. The findings indicated that greater participation in decision-making was positively associated with teachers' professional and organizational commitment. The authors found that work conditions were significant predictors of commitment, suggesting that teachers need to be involved in issues related to students and curriculum so that they see their role as not only related to their own classes but to the whole organization. Further, the authors noted that being involved in decision-making fosters teachers' willingness to be actively involved in the school other than just the classroom. Pathways analysis confirmed these findings. Such involvement appeared to help create a healthy working environment, beneficial to both teachers

and students. The authors stressed the importance of supportive roles by administrators.

In a quantitative/qualitative national study of high schools over a ten-year period, Ingersol (2003) focused on the organization of schools in America and the character and conditions of the teaching job. Ingersol suggested that teachers who work in systems where they have little decision-making latitude and who are held accountable feel disempowered. This author also argued that such a system fosters student misbehaviour and disruption. He theorized that a stable environment within the classroom and the school in general is a prerequisite for anything else a teacher does. This author found that teachers are vulnerable to student challenges because they can do little about them, but they must put on an appearance of being in control when in fact they have little power. It is precisely for this reason, he stressed, that teachers need administrative support.

Throughout the literature there appears to be agreement that positive interaction between teachers and administrators is crucial to a healthy school environment. Recognition of and feedback on professional performance, clear communication of school policies and goals, accessibility and support in disciplinary matters, and a perception of appreciation are reported to be of uppermost importance to teacher well-being. With workload and student behaviour superceding all other factors as important to determining the quality of the work environment, the need for administrative attention to these factors is clear. Whether administrative support is closely correlated to these factors is still unclear.

2.3.2 Collegial Support

Having colleagues with whom it is possible to share reflections, questions, and plans can make a difference to teacher well-being (Dworkin et al., 1990; Farber, 2000a; Speilberger et al., 2003). Dworkin et al. suggested that a tripartite support system, comprising administrative support, colleague support, and support from family and friends, is ideal.

Schonfeld (1990a) reviewed the literature on social support and found that although studied as a factor in the occupational and general stress literature, support has been given little attention with regards to teachers. Accordingly, using a cross-sectional study, Schonfeld recruited 67 teachers from graduate classes at a college in New York to answer a validated questionnaire consisting of sections on health/morale, stressors, colleague support, and coping strategies. One purpose of the study was to examine the relation of social support from colleagues to psychological symptoms of stress and job-related morale. Schonfeld used regression analysis to analyze the results. Greater colleague support was significantly correlated with lower levels of depression, less psychophysiologic symptoms, and greater job satisfaction. The findings revealed that although colleague support was related to lower levels of stress and higher levels of morale and job satisfaction, it failed to buffer the impact of strain on psychological symptoms of stress and job-related morale.

King and Peart (1992) also found that teachers who indicated good relationships with their colleagues tended to be highly satisfied with teaching. Jacobsson et al. (2001) reported a significant but low correlation between colleague support and emotional exhaustion, irritation, stress, and work demands. Griffith et al. (1999) used the Teaching Stress Inventory, to assess the importance of collegial support among 780 teachers (53.5 % response rate). Analysis was

done with stepwise multiple regression. The greatest predictor of teacher stress was negative affect (i.e., feelings of distress, hostility, and nervousness). Social support was highly correlated with lower stress levels. These results reinforced the beneficial effects of good relationships with colleagues and a harmonious school atmosphere, supporting Sarason's (1993) contentions. Sarason maintained that good collegial conditions contributed to a healthy school environment, where teachers could grow and learn and where they could create and sustain conditions that were necessary for productive learning in their students. However, Dibbon (2004) voiced concern that the collegial model in Newfoundland was weakening, in part because of Pathways. He found that, in some instances, teachers were blaming each other for the high workload associated with this programme.

2.3.3 Resources

Theories differ on the importance of resources for the work environment. On the one hand there is the perception that when adequate resources are available to meet work demands, manageability of the job is increased (Nelson & Simmons, 2003). On the other hand, individuals who feel they have inadequate resources will consider work demands and pressures to be unmanageable (Taris et al., 2001). Hargreaves (1994) discussed the changing world of teaching where increased work demands are enhanced by reduced time, resources, and professional development opportunities. He noted that teachers in Ontario were angry about these reductions. Drago et al. (1999) suggested that the "doing more with less" was a mirroring of societal trends which place higher expectations and higher stress on employees. When circumstances at work prevent the acquisition of needed resources, Shirom (2003) theorized that stress is more likely and that the job demand-resource link is strongly related to emotional exhaustion.

Geelan (2002) echoed the concern about resources. Geelan summarized 1,167 submissions from Alberta teachers and parents in a succession of 40 education hearings across the province in June 2002. The author stated that in the past ten years teachers have become experts at “doing more with less,” all the while presenting an impression of manageability. Additionally, he determined that no matter how many resources were in place, providing services for special needs students decreased the learning environment of other students.

Naylor’s (2001b) analysis of the qualitative data gathered on the work life of 1,500 teachers in British Columbia indicated that even the most basic resources were not adequately supplied. Some teachers spoke of purchasing their own supplies to meet students’ needs. Naylor reported that without needed resources teacher work load is increased, and their struggle to manage becomes more difficult.

Resources are not only physical (e.g., text books, adequate space) but also professional and personal. When professional development and mentoring are reduced, Farber and Ascher (1991) contend that teachers feel their work has increased. In a cross-sectional study of 490 teachers in 33 randomly selected schools in the Netherlands, Evers, Brouwers, and Tomic (2002) explored teachers’ perceptions of new instructional practices. Evers et al. used the Maslach Burnout Inventory and two Likert-style measures designed especially to assess perceived self-efficacy and attitude. Correlational analysis showed that self-efficacy was significantly and positively related to depersonalization and emotional exhaustion, but significantly negatively related to personal accomplishment. Teachers had negative attitudes to change; this was positively related to depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, and low self-efficacy. With restructuring and new

curriculum, the authors found that teachers often lacked the time to learn new skills or to consult with one another and thus began to doubt their ability to function. Those teachers who were able to avail of professional development and who had strong self-efficacy beliefs showed a greater readiness to adopt new instructional practices and were less susceptible to stress than their colleagues with weak self-efficacy beliefs.

2.3.4 Relations with Students

Student behaviour and discipline concerns have been repeatedly linked to negative school environments and teacher stress (Blase, 1986; Borg et al., 1991; Englebrech et al. 2003; Freidman, 1995; Griffith et al., 1999; Ingersol, 2003; Naylor, 2001a; Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997). In their 1992 study of Canadian teachers' work and quality of life, King and Peart reported that although classroom management was not a major problem, it did take considerable time and energy on the part of teachers to control students' behaviour. Teachers in that study indicated that their authority was undermined by the enhanced rights of students. The implementation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Young Offenders' Act resulted in teachers having less authority to discipline students.

Schonfeld's (1990a) study indicated a strong correlation between student violence toward teachers and teacher depression and psychophysiologic symptoms. More than 50% of the participants in the Lyon and Douglas (1998) study indicated that violence resulted in negative affects on career and/or on physical and emotional well-being.

Malcolmson (1994) reported that although violence was not a serious concern in British Columbia, the incidence and visibility of violence was greatest at the high school level. High school teachers in that province ranked student-to-teacher violence as more serious than teachers of younger students. In contrast, Lyon and Douglas (1998) reported increasing teacher concerns about school violence in the province. A stratified random sample of 2,220 members of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation were surveyed with 771 completed surveys returned. Violence was defined as "any threatened, attempted, or actual harm." Four main groups of violence were differentiated: overt violence, covert violence, actual physical violence, and damage to personal property. Overall, 49.5% of the participants had experienced some form of violence in 1997/1998, and 81.3% had experienced violence at some point in their careers. The prevalence of actual physical violence (student against teacher) for the 1997/1998 period was 4.5% and at some point during their careers was 12.4%. Violence most often occurred in the classrooms and during school hours. Half the students who committed the violence had some sort of behavioural problems, and 4.9% of the violent incidents led to physical injuries to the teachers. Over one-third of participants (36.4%) reported that they were afraid or intimidated on occasion at school, indicating a more serious problem than the 1994 study by Malcolmson. A study by Petersen, Pietrzak, and Speaker (1996) supports these findings. Twenty-seven percent of the educators surveyed by Petersen et al. indicated that they were concerned about their safety at school, and 9% reported that they had been physically attacked at school within the past 24 months.

Even greater increases were noted in the CTF study (2001). Seventy-nine percent of the respondents indicated that they had witnessed a violent incident in

2000-2001. Reports of a student physically assaulting another student were made by 76% of the respondents. Two-thirds of the educators reported witnessing verbal abuse directed at a teacher by a student and 29% reported witnessing a student physically assaulting or physically intimidating a teacher. Verbal abuse from parents was also common. Forty-eight percent of the educators witnessed such verbal abuse, which they described as being more than angry.

Violence against teachers was noted as a concern by Bill Bird, administrator for safe schools, Toronto District School Board (personal communication, October 2003). He supplied figures from the Ontario safe schools website which indicated that more than 300,000 teachers in North America were victims of assault, rape and robbery every year.

This concern about violence is highlighted in a recent study commissioned by the Ontario Secondary Schools teachers' Federation (OSSTF), the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) and the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA) in 2005 to establish the incidence of bullying of teachers and support workers in Ontario (www.osstf.on.ca/www/briefs/bullying_summary.pdf). Bullying was defined as "persistent or repeated verbal abuse, threats, insults or humiliation" that had the specific intent of hurting others. Among other questions, teachers were asked how they had been bullied and what the personal consequences of being bullied were (emotional, social, psychological and physical). Included in the total number of participants (1,156) were 411 OSSTF members. A significant percentage of teachers reported that they had been bullied by students (36%). Of those teachers experiencing bullying, 38% had their personal belongings or property vandalized, 20% had been persistently verbally abused, and 27% had been threatened or

physically assaulted on more than one occasion. The researchers determined that the problem of teachers being bullied by students was widespread across Ontario.

2.3.5 Summary

The environment in which teachers work is linked to the stress they feel in their job. Teachers face many demands and the expectation is that they will work at a rapid pace, meeting the needs of a wide range of students, often with limited resources. Unless they are supported and recognized to the same degree that demands are made of them, teachers are susceptible to feeling stress on the job and may be incapable of being effective in the classroom.

2.4 Discussion

For the past three decades teaching has been characterized as a high-stress occupation. The major stressors have remained much the same: heavy workloads, time pressures, inadequate administrative support, students misbehaviour, inadequate resources, restructuring and the reality of constant change, inclusive classes, and a host of other concerns. There are a multitude of international studies which indicate that teacher stress is increasing and that stress is a threat to the quality of personal and family life as well as physical and psychological well-being. Stress may be felt as being under pressure, as tension, anxiety, or strain. Teachers have often been reluctant to admit the extent to which they have experienced stress due to the stigma perceived. However, as more qualitative research is being done, teachers appear to be expressing their concerns more readily and are bringing this issue to the front. Nevertheless, stress is still associated with failure and weakness.

Teachers find themselves faced with circumstances which they believe lessen their effectiveness in the classroom. Class size has been shown to directly affect teaching. However, classes are reported to be increasing in part because of restructuring and the move towards full inclusion. Overcrowded classrooms housing students with a wide range of academic abilities are a source of stress for teachers. In addition to the academic concerns for students, teachers must deal with students who have social, behavioural, and emotional disabilities. Meeting the needs of all students is perceived by teachers to be a difficult task considering the perception of inadequate resources and often inadequate administrative support.

It is difficult to study the phenomenon of teacher stress without considering the school culture as a cause and a way of explaining the phenomenon. Restructuring, in Newfoundland and Labrador has created an environment of constant change. While educational reform has had some positive effects, it has been perceived by many teachers to have had a more negative impact. The paradoxes of change are reductions of time, resources, and professional development support. Instead of making incremental changes that they feel will be beneficial to their students, changes are perceived to be imposed from the outside and are often seen as unworkable and, sometimes, harmful to students. Teachers report feeling left out of the decision-making process and feel greater pressure to achieve better results. Demands for accountability are felt to be excessive, adding to an already stressful job. The uncertainty that has accompanied the many changes experienced, in addition to the restructuring of teaching itself, have been perceived as contributors to teacher stress.

Restructuring and downsizing has created a work environment in which many teachers find it difficult to meet the demands and pressures at the required level for more than a short time. Teachers need to be alert, committed, and dedicated to their profession but also to be supported and recognized for their expertise. Study findings indicate that teachers rarely feel supported and recognized in the same proportion as demands are made of them. Instead, they have reported pressure and stress attributed to poor communication with their administrators, and inadequate support and lack of recognition from their administrators for the contribution they make. Further research findings have indicated that teachers who work in an environment that they perceive to be supportive are less likely to experience high levels of stress.

Administrators need the right mix of challenge and support. They need clear goals, and high standards and must value teachers as individuals and professionals, trusting them to do their job. Study findings have determined significant relationships between teachers' sense of self-efficacy and administrative support. Teachers have been shown to be more professionally committed when school principal leadership/support is strong. Teachers reported resentment when an authoritarian, non-consultive approach was used to implement new policies and curriculum changes. Studies have noted that commitment is enhanced when administrators trust teachers with discretionary decisions. A school principal influences a teacher's work experiences through communication, job design and autonomy, encouraging professional development, providing resources, and giving feedback. Some studies have shown that administrative support also positively influences collegial support.

A harmonious atmosphere at work has been shown to be beneficial to teachers. Collegial support has been found to act as a buffer for emotional exhaustion, an indicator of teacher stress, and to affect teachers' perceptions of stress. Social support from colleagues has been shown to have a beneficial effect on performance and well-being and to buffer the effects of stress on ill health. In the opposite way, poor collegial relationships have been noted by teachers as a major source of stress. It has been shown that teachers benefitted from listening to colleagues describe their experiences of stress because this decreased feelings of being alone and helped to create a better understanding of the phenomenon of stress. Teachers have acknowledged emotional and instructional support from peers as an important factor in their professional development.

Aside from social and administrative supports, adequate physical resources (texts, supplies, safe, clean classrooms, adequate space, etc.) must accompany curriculum changes to ensure that teachers feel they can be effective in the classroom. Studies on teachers' working conditions have shown that when adequate resources are not supplied to meet the demands posed by their work, or when resources are lost or threatened, teachers experience their work as stressful. Inadequate resources render teachers' work that much more difficult. It is important to be well prepared for classes and to have the resources needed to ensure students' success and feelings of being provided for, and to feel effective in the classroom.

How teachers feel about their work is considered to have a direct impact on their effectiveness and continuance in teaching. A positive relationship and a strong bond of trust between teachers and their students is essential to enhance learning. Teachers attempt to recognize the individuality of each student and are

expected to provide a learning environment conducive to all. Large, inclusive classes comprised of students with a wide range of abilities and disabilities have taxed this relationship. A number of key studies have noted the impact of teacher stress on students, citing a positive correlation between teachers' emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and student misbehaviour. As exhaustion is experienced, so too is a lowered level of tolerance, which impacts the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. Students may be susceptible to misbehaviour when they see signs of exhaustion, and the outcome of this process may erode the teacher/student relationship. The hostile behaviour of some students can be a source of stress for the teacher and for the class in general. The incidence of violence has been reported as increasing and is of concern to many teachers. Without administrative support, prolonged, intense interactions in an environment that is emotionally charged may produce stress for both the teacher and the students.

Despite considerable research on stress, and in particular, teacher stress, there is still much to be learned. An important part of the exercise is increasing awareness and knowledge. However, there is more to a stress audit than a questionnaire. Further qualitative studies to obtain a clear understanding of the complex nature of teacher stress and to determine the impact of teacher stress on the schools in which they teach and on education in general is necessary. A focus is needed on "what and how" rather than just "why." We need to further understand the meaning, context, and process of teacher stress and to create theoretical explanations of the reality in the classroom.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH METHODS

Early in the research planning process the researcher questioned the best data collection approach to assess a complex problem and to create a space for teachers to voice their experiences. The researcher believed that a qualitative approach could help frame the issue of teacher stress and assess it in its complicated entirety.

3.1 Grounded Theory as a Research Method

Grounded theory, developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), is a method of data collection and analysis, grounded in reality, well suited to qualitative research. Grounded theory is supported by the theory of symbolic interactionism, which focuses on the subjective understandings and meanings of events and situations for people (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). During application of the method, the researcher uses systematic, inductive guidelines and procedures to collect and analyse data and to discover the theory ingrained in that data. Grounded theory allows the purposeful sampling of subjects to provide data pertinent to particular research populations. This method was chosen to explore high school teachers' experiences of their working environment and to generate a substantive theory reflective of those experiences.

The characteristics of a grounded theorist, as outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1998) are:

- the ability to step back and critically analyze situations;
- the ability to recognize the tendency toward bias;
- the ability to think abstractly;

- the ability to be flexible and open to helpful criticisms;
- sensitivity to the words and actions of respondents;
- a sense of absorption and devotion to the work process (p 7).

The grounded theory researcher follows a specific set of steps, simultaneously collecting data while constantly using comparative analysis. It is an iterative process during which the researcher becomes more and more grounded in the data. Themes and concepts are compared while the researcher looks for instances “when, why, and under what conditions these themes occur in the text” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p 67). Such constant comparison of properties and dimensions enables the researcher to develop richer concepts and models of how the particular phenomenon being studied really works. Equally important is noting differences and variations in the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Ryan & Bernard, 2000).

Theoretical sampling is sampling on the basis of concepts or categories that the researcher has noted as significant either by being constantly repeated or noticeably missing through constant comparison analysis. It is cumulative and somewhat flexible, allowing the theory to be expanded as the researcher notes variations and depth focus while constantly analysing and guiding the data collection (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Kearney et al., 1994). Kirby and McKenna (1989) posit that continuing reflection on process is important to the overall analysis of the data and enables the researcher to become more skillful and intuitive. Inductive guidelines, closely aligned with the canons of good science, allow the researcher to collect and analyse data to build a theoretical framework. It is an integrative approach, helping the researcher understand how people perceive their worlds, how they adapt and how they understand their experiences. Gathering data about the experiences of a population helps the researcher understand

patterns of experiences (Hurtchison, 1998). Sampling is complete when saturation of categories is reached.

3.2 Population and Sample

The target population was high school teachers working in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Approximately twenty-five teachers contacted the researcher for more information on the study in response to a notice about the proposed study in the NLTA Bulletin (December 2001), local newspaper, and other media sources. Every attempt was made to include a purposive sample of teachers from rural and urban schools. Lesser consideration was given to age and years of teaching experience when making the final selection of teachers. Purposive sampling includes sites, events, and participants who are self-identifying and self-selecting but are then chosen by the researcher to be studied, based on the purpose of the research and the phenomenon to be explored (Capuzzi & Gross, 2001).

The final sample of 16 teachers was dictated by a couple of factors. First, three of the teachers agreeing to participate in the study were involved in the pilot phase. Given the fact that initial interviews were practice runs for the researcher and used to develop more relevant questions, the data were questionable and thus excluded from further analysis. Second, category saturation was evident after completion of the first 10 interviews. The decision to include an additional six was for category validation and theory generation purposes.

Study participants ranged in age from 24 to 55 years of age, with an average age of 43 years. The sample was divided equally between female and male teachers. The average number of years worked was 19. Two of the participants had taught less than five years, six between five and fifteen years, and five had taught more than fifteen years.

Two of the teachers had retired one year prior to the interview, and one was newly retired. Seven teachers worked in rural areas of Newfoundland and the remaining nine were employed in urban areas. With regard to education preparation, six participants had a level V teaching certificate, seven had a level VI, and three had a master's degree (a level VII certificate). Four of the teachers were enrolled in a master's programme at Memorial University on a part-time basis. With regard to primary area of responsibility, the sample was quite diverse, covering all subject areas of the curriculum (i.e., science, English, math, special education, technology, physical education, and social studies).

Ten of the sixteen teachers interviewed described themselves as being stressed. The remaining six described their job as stressful but did not consider themselves to be stressed generally. At the time of these interviews two participants were on stress leave. Two participants had previously taken a period of time off work due to stress, and one took medical leave for stress a few months after the interview. Three participants who had previous careers were among those who took leave due to stress. A young teacher with five years experience left the profession at the end of the school year. One teacher emphasized his reason for volunteering to do an interview in this way.

We need to discover the roots of stress, what's causing stress, to eliminate stress ... That's why I called you because I thought I might say something that might have an effect on something, you know. Because it's a very important issue ... It's probably *the* [italics added] most important issue for teachers. It's the *most* [italics added] important issue for teachers.

3.3 Ethical Considerations

This study was given ethics approval by the Human Investigation Committee, Research and Graduate Studies, Faculty of Medicine, Memorial University of Newfoundland in October 2001 (Appendix B). A consent to take part in health research

was required and was approved at the same time (Appendix D). Ethical considerations should go hand in hand with each aspect of qualitative research. All research codes of ethics address the researcher's obligations to participants – their rights to dignity, privacy and confidentiality, and protection from harm (emotional, physical, financial) – that might result from the study.

Without doubt, the researcher has more power within the researcher-participant dyad. Participants have a right to privacy and to expect that their anonymity will be preserved and their confidences protected. The researcher has an obligation to be open and honest about the intended use of the research, to ask permission to record conversations, and to fully inform the participants about the study. An informed consent statement is required across Canada for all participants in a research study. It describes the purpose of the study, states that participation is voluntary, and outlines possible risks or harm and possible benefits to the participants.

During the taping of the interviews, participants were identified by a number. All identifying information concerning study participants, including tapes and transcriptions, were locked in a filing cabinet in the researcher's home. Participants were advised that all identifying information would be immediately removed from the transcripts accompanying the tapes, and all tapes would be erased following publication of the findings.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

Telephone or e-mail contacts were made with those individuals who had contacted the researcher and indicated an interest in the study. This initial contact afforded the researcher an opportunity to establish rapport with potential participants, determine

whether the individual fully understood the nature of the study, and identify a suitable time and site for the interview.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with all study participants over a six month period. Interviews were arranged at the convenience of the participants. Most took place in the researcher's office, but three were conducted in the researcher's home at the request of these participants.

Prior to the interview, the researcher reviewed the consent forms and all other aspects of the study with each participant before obtaining informed, written consent. Information was subsequently gathered on relevant personal characteristics of each participant (e.g., age, years of teaching experience, gender, etc.) (see Appendix E).

Confidentiality was stressed. Participants were asked not to use the name of their school, their home district or their colleagues' names. They were assured that if this did happen the names would be erased from the transcript. It was made clear to the participant again that he or she could stop the interview at any time and could withdraw from the study if he/she wished.

An in-depth interview of approximately 90 minutes was conducted with each participant. The interview was recorded by audio tape. Notes were made following each interview regarding the participant's body language, intensity, and emotional status (e.g., anger, sadness, excitement), and the researcher's feelings of how successfully the interview was accomplished.

3.4.1 *Interviewing Process*

Prior to interviewing, the researcher initiated a pilot project with two teachers to assess the relevancy and clarity of the proposed interview questions. The pilot confirmed

the usefulness of the interview schedule and allowed the interviewer to refine and become more comfortable with the questions.

As preparation for the interview process, a teacher colleague conducted a bracketing interview with the researcher. Bracketing is a process of becoming aware of one's own personal values and preconceptions and then setting them aside in order to see the situation from a new perspective (Hutchinson, 1988). During the bracketing interview, the teacher colleague asked the researcher the same questions intended for study participants. This process enabled the researcher to reflect upon her personal experiences with working in the educational system, and increased her awareness of personal beliefs and biases. Having already completed an earlier quantitative study on teacher stress in the province, the researcher was aware of the potential for high stress levels among high school teachers. Additionally, the researcher had read much in the literature about stressors in the teachers' workplace. Thus the researcher was very cognizant of the need to avoid leading questions regarding specific factors believed to contribute to teacher stress.

The purpose of in-depth interviewing is not to test a hypothesis or gather answers to questions; the purpose is to ask participants to reconstruct their experiences and to investigate them as they are lived and not as we conceptualize them (van Manen, 1998). In-depth interviewing allowed the researcher to grasp an understanding of the lived experiences of individuals' from their perspectives. It was important for the researcher to convey to the participants' that their views were valuable and worthwhile. Participants were able to have exchanges with the interviewer, to talk, to clarify, and to explain their points from their own perspectives. The data collected from teachers in this manner provided insight not otherwise available to the researcher.

Always mindful of the fundamental question motivating this research, the researcher posed open-ended questions as close as possible to the lived experiences of teachers in a way that did not impose expectations of certain responses. In addition, responses were frequently summarized and rephrased back to the participants during the interview in order to clarify or correct the researcher's understanding. Reflective questions provided an opportunity for the participant to make intellectual and emotional connections between his or her work and other aspects of his/her life.

3.4.2 Interview Schedule

The main question to be answered during the interview was: What are the greatest stressors for you as a teacher in your working environment? To begin the interview, open-ended questions about participants' experiences in general were explored, with more personal questions being asked after rapport and trust were established. The interview schedule contained a set of standard questions which served as a guideline for the interview (Appendix F). This semi-structured form allowed the researcher to also ask spontaneous questions that were relevant to that teacher's particular experiences.

During the interview, participants were asked, "Can you tell me as much as possible about your experiences as a teacher – from your first year until the present, reflecting on your experiences of stress and how it has affected you, what it means to you?" Experiences were explored in reference to relationships with colleagues, administrators, students, parents, and the board office. Although interviews can be therapeutic the self-reflection was sometimes also painful for participants and required empathy and concern on the part of the researcher. In fact, several teachers in this study cried as they related their experiences; reliving some of those experiences appeared to cause them great pain. This was difficult for the interviewer as well. On two occasions

she questioned whether the interview should stop but participants wanted to continue, stating that they appreciated the opportunity to discuss this issue.

3.5 Data Analysis

Using the constant comparative method of analysis, the researcher read through each interview to get a sense of the uniqueness of that story. Each transcript was carefully reviewed, sentence by sentence, in order to identify words and phrases that were descriptive and represented a particular concept. Central themes were extracted as the transcript was read and re-read several times. An important part of the ongoing data collection and analysis was the simultaneous comparison of all transcripts for commonalities and differences among emerging themes.

The researcher frequently asked: “What themes dominate?” “What do these statements say about teachers’ experiences?” “How do the various themes relate to each other?” The answers to these questions helped the researcher to impose meaning on the data and develop categories to describe the different dimensions of the data. Theoretical categories were ultimately identified and coded and notes were written (memoing). Memoing is given high priority (Dick, 2001; Kirby & McKenna, 1989; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) because memos gathered over time are a record of theory development.

Connections between themes and emerging categories were identified. Constant comparison of the themes and emerging categories with each new interview allowed category strengthening and exhaustion. Once a final decision was made on the dominant theoretical categories and their properties, all interview transcripts were reviewed again to ensure the categories were present in each of them. Possible connections between categories were considered until a model, grounded in the original data source (the participants’ interviews) began to emerge. Such rigorous coding procedures (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) guided the analysis to develop a theory based on interpretations of the data

which provided an intense understanding of teachers' experiences in the workplace and their experiences of stress.

Participants were subsequently provided with a summary of the taped interview (Appendix G) and were given time to review and reflect upon that material. Space was provided for notes if they wished to elaborate on any statement or to clarify a comment they had made. It was again made clear to the participants that they had the right to withdraw from the study within a month of completion of the interview.

Dick (2001) proposes that this method of analysis assists the participants to better understand their experiences and thus cope more effectively with their situation. His comments reinforced this researcher's goal that study findings be of use to teachers and educators. The interpretive summaries also provided further validation for the researcher's evolving interpretations of the data.

Throughout the data analysis, several of the interviews were read by both a co-supervisor and a committee member, both of whom were experienced in qualitative analysis and grounded theory. Constant checking and re-checking helped verify that the interpretation was actually reflected in the words of the participants. As well, all committee members provided additional commentary on the emerging themes and developing model. This level of involvement of all committee members both challenged and supported the researcher's developing conclusions. Additionally, this on-going consultation provided a validity check with each stage of the analysis.

In summary, Chase (1995) writes that life experiences are of deep and abiding interest to the participant, an opportunity for that person to share his or her world with other people in a way other than a report. Throughout history we have made sense of, and recorded, peoples' experiences, described by Richardson (1990) as "giving voice to those who are silenced" (p.128). Munro (1998) believes that teacher stories can re-shape

our understanding of their experiences of schools and teaching, further supporting the researcher's own belief that the phenomenon of teacher stress would be better understood using this process.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

The objective of grounded theory is to understand how a group of people define their reality and to communicate this in the form of theory. In this study the goal was to create a substantive theory that would capture the reality of teacher stress in the workplace. This chapter describes the experiences of stress in the workplace for sixteen teachers. The findings present the teachers' reflections of life in the classroom and their struggle to cope with a job they love but find overwhelming much of the time. A review of the research related to stress theories indicates that what is most significant is not necessarily the event, but the way the individual perceives the event or stressor (Lazarus, 1999). The similarities and variations that occur in the experiences and perceptions of these teachers are reflected in the interview data.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part describes the dominant theoretical that were generated from the analysis of the transcripts of the participants' interviews and the second section discusses the interrelationship between the constructs.

4.1 Constructs

The interview transcripts provided a rich data base on the participants' experiences of their work environment and the stress that they feel in a workplace that they described as intense and demanding. It was their perception that the effort to remain effective at a high level was taking its toll, not just with themselves but also with many of their colleagues. The absence of desired levels of administrative and collegial and resource support were a major concern for the teachers interviewed. Job pressures have increased and supportive mechanisms have been eroded as a result of restructuring and downsizing

and consequently, teachers felt that their vulnerability to stress in their workplace has increased.

The following sections present a detailed report on the three major constructs (Appendix H) generated from the analysis of the data: the struggle to balance multiple demands, the importance of supportive work environments, and the realities of stress.

4.2 Struggling to Balance Multiple Demands

Teachers spoke about the difficulties of maintaining some semblance of control and some sense of balance in their lives while working in an environment they described as “non-stop.” The teachers’ plight can be seen at subtle levels in day-to-day concerns. One of the greatest sources of frustration and concern for these teachers was the constant struggle to balance the day-to-day demands and pressures of the job. Struggling to find balance was defined in terms of two major properties: the burden of work pressures and demands, and the barriers to teacher effectiveness.

Participants described themselves as “overwhelmed” by the demands placed upon them and the limited time available to meet these demands. They reported increasing responsibilities while at the same time facing work stressors and barriers that were perceived as limiting their work performance effectiveness. Added to these concerns were higher job performance expectations from administration and greater accountability demands. Class size was perceived as exacerbating the day-to-day pressures and this posed barriers to effective teaching.

4.2.1 Feeling Burdened by Work Pressures and Demands

Restructuring, new curricula, and the implementation of Pathways and inclusive classes have created new demands that have left teachers feeling burdened and under

unceasing pressure. The teachers in this study reported feeling bombarded by the demands to do more and more in an ever changing environment. They described their days as being without any personal time, no time to reflect or catch their breath. The combination of demands, often seen as “impossible,” and the pressure to meet those demands interfered with their external and internal productivity. Balancing the number of tasks required of them within a defined time line (i.e., the work day, the work week) caused increasing pressure. The descriptors for this property were: overwhelmed by responsibilities, accountability and being judged, and contending with non-teaching duties.

4.2.1.1 Overwhelmed by responsibilities, accountability and being judged

Teachers reported what they perceived to be a requirement for excessive and constant documentation to support course objectives and student progress. Recording tactics and strategies used to meet course objectives and to provide evidence of meeting obligations to students and parents has increased record keeping substantially. Many teachers found the amount of paper work associated with being accountable particularly burdensome. Feeling overwhelmed by the increasing demands for accountability and feeling threatened by conclusions that might be drawn from test scores, one teacher voiced his fears about being judged by inappropriate criteria.

I've got to record this, O.K.; that's a stress there. Is my ability going to be measured by the paperwork I can produce? You have to make sure [pause] did I cover this, did I tick them off? Because some of them [administrators] may come back later and say, “Well, show me, prove to me as to where you have done this.” And then you've got the board exam at the end of the year which is, I guess, in a way you are going to be judged by the board. [pause] If the kids don't do well is that going to be a reflection on the fact that I haven't done the work?

He went on to express concerns about the time associated with documentation and the feeling that these expectations are unrealistic:

The amount of paper work and everything else that's associated with it ... clerical work maybe. It's those things that occupy so much of the time. It's the new curriculum and I don't know, what they are expecting teachers to do in the way of record keeping ... is just phenomenal.

Many teachers felt similarly burdened. What seemed to be particularly trying was collecting sufficient information to defend one's position. The perception was that their performance was being measured by external indicators which stimulated their drive to do more, increasing the pressure they already felt. The following quotations capture teachers' dissatisfaction and frustration with the volume of paper work as well as the constant pressure to be accountable. The feeling that some of this documentation is clerical work is an added demand now for the teachers. Some scepticism about the reasons behind such documentation is also evident.

You've got to put it on paper and you got to document it and you got to do all this extra work. Like, it's a whole bunch of extra work, whether it's Pathways 1, Pathways 2, Pathways 3 It almost seems like someone just covering up for themselves. The government or someone is just putting this in to cover up down the road.

The paperwork is very stressful. We have to maintain records on students when there is something sent to the office or some discipline problem. Yesterday I had something in my mailbox about collecting student fees. At the end of the day I was to record who paid student fees, how it was paid, send it out to the office.

Am I covered if anyone ever asks questions what I've done either academically with the curriculum or outside dealing with the students personally? You really, really have to make sure you record conversations with parents, make notes on parent/teacher nights; it's a real accountability problem I think. It's a lot of stress on high school teachers.

One teacher summed up the feelings and frustrations of his colleagues thus: “You’re being bogged down by paperwork. Being accountable is fine but I think they’ve gone too far. People are burdened.” Perhaps due to the pressures of accountability, these teachers seemed to view what was expected of them as being unrealistic. Accountability weighed heavily with one teacher who said: “I think some of the stressors all relate to the amount of work, the expectations, and accountability placed on teachers.” In fact, many questioned the logistics of trying to balance so many demands within the confines of the day. Trying to balance the work load, get it all accomplished, often without a break in the day, was clearly difficult for everyone. As one teacher said: “It’s non-stop being out there all day.” Another said: “Always on the run from this to that, from this to that, and feeling on edge and trying to fit everything in, constantly. This is difficult, constantly feeling as though there is something to do and you can’t sit down and rest, not ever.”

Struggling with the day-to-day pressures of a workload that seemed unmanageable appeared to be a constant source of stress for these teachers. “Totally overwhelming” was how a math teacher described it: “... you sit there and you’ve got three or four es of stuff and sometimes [pause] where do I start? And how will I ever get it finished?” There did not seem to be enough hours in the day for this next teacher who did not like the position in which he saw himself placed, that of possible failure.

It doesn’t end at 5 pm ... calling parents, tracking down things, preparing things for the next day ... correcting [tests] There’s the logistics of it, the reality fit when you’re dealing with kids; it never gets done in fifteen minutes, between the questions asked and everything else. It’s a balancing act. [pause] You’re trying to juggle and balance the demands I don’t like being set up as a failure ... I don’t think there’s a physical way of accomplishing it I come home with just as much work, the work I planned to do [in prep period] is now pushed into the night [pause] and that paper work!

Trying to find some sort of reasonable balance and successfully manage everything, without feeling like a failure, were sources of stress for other teachers too. One expressed it this way.

I’m putting it [stress] down to new courses, new curriculum, new demands ... maybe next year I’ll be able to juggle and not get so uptight over it. I think that is part of the problem, looking at all the outcomes I don’t mind being accountable but if I’ve got to sit down now and say did I cover this, that’s just an extra layer of bureaucracy that’s not accounted for in my schedule. So am I supposed to do that now on my prep period. [pause] Now, when I think of it, it just seems to be such an insurmountable task in some ways.

Struggling to gain some insight into the problem, this same teacher wondered if the problem lay with the board office and department of education or himself. “It’s the new course It’s just what their expectations, in reality are ... I don’t know how to reconcile them yet.”

Participants also felt that planning and preparing for each class took an inordinate amount of time. Some teachers reported having five preparation periods in a seven day cycle, while some had less. Even the best laid plans can go awry in the busy atmosphere of a school. Preparation time can quickly disappear, as this teacher attempted to explain.

And then if you've got no preparation period and you got half an hour for dinner, try a day like that It's terrible. It's terrible. You might have plans for the morning to go in and use the photocopier. The thing may not be working so dinner time you have to do that. Now, you got half an hour to lunch so you got to eat your lunch, go do this work, you've got students you've got to deal with; there's always something you know. And when you got supervision it's just a real ... but a day without a prep period is just unbelievable; it's difficult.

One teacher expressed her concern not just for herself but also for her students. Her fatigue and frustration were apparent in her voice, her body language, and her words as she evaluated her work environment. She echoed the feelings of her colleagues regarding the unfeasible expectations of the teaching profession: "Impossible is a good word. Insurmountable I am not superhuman ... I can't do it. I really can not do it."

In summary, the pressures and challenges of increasing accountabilities within the teaching profession seemed to weigh heavily on these teachers. Aside from all the documentation required and the demands placed upon them teachers reported being bombarded by the requests to do more: "And there's always memos in our box, please do this, please do that." A portrait evolved of individuals who felt overwhelmed trying to manage their workload and increasing demands while being accountable for student outcomes and their own performance. Despite working at a tremendous pace and trying to prioritize the many tasks demanded of them, they feared being perceived as a failure.

4.2.1.2 Contending with non-teaching duties.

In addition to the classroom pressures and demands, teachers reported numerous non-teaching duties that exacerbated the burdened feeling they were experiencing. Supervision, parent meetings, committee meetings, staff meetings and extracurricular activities extended the working day both before and after normal school hours. These non-teaching duties were described by one teacher as: “Steady belt, over and over. And even in the summer I’m asked to do things, you know.” He elaborated further on some of the activities he was asked to manage.

Perfect attendance assemblies, IT programmes, Skills Canada training, and a fully running power point presentation that I researched, wrote, produced, with audio track, music, in other words a professional. If I were asked to do it for the public sector, which I have done, I would charge \$6,000.00. It took me more than 60 hours.

When this same teacher asked for a substitute teacher to replace him in class in order to facilitate completion of the power point presentation, he was told it was not possible.

Lunch time for study participants involved trying to see students who needed assistance, organizing supplies for class, getting in line for the photo copier, departmental meetings, extracurricular meetings (e.g., theatre, band, sports, school outings, student council), and supervision duties. One teacher outlined his frustrations with the time spent supervising students.

Dinner time, recess time, we’re on the lot, right? Out of seven dinner times I supervise four and I think, three recess. So every day you’re supervising. It’s terrible, terrible.

The cumulative effect of extracurricular activities can be burdensome for teachers. Some teachers felt that more is expected now than in years past: “On top of all that there is the expectation of extracurricular. In recent years there’s certainly more and more of

this.” Expected to give freely of their time for these activities, some of the more seasoned teachers are pulling back, hoping to lessen overall workload and stress: “Basically I do exactly what I have to do I don’t do extras now.” Young teachers, wanting to make a good impression while seeking tenure, often felt pressured into taking on too much responsibility, as this teacher of five years explained: “The last three years I’ve coached four teams and sometimes five teams. I put in four afternoons a week.” Two teachers described their concerns about the negative impact of extracurricular activities both for themselves and young teachers.

On top of that there is the expectations of extra-curricular ... You’re organizing it and taking responsibility for that I think it puts extra stress on you The younger teachers coming in, they’re new to teaching, they’re new to the school, they’re new to the community in many cases, and you know, trying to get a grip on your first year teaching and all it encompasses and trying to make a name for yourself and trying not to have negative things happen in your classroom and so on, puts tremendous pressures right from the word go. And then they’re sort of hit with extracurriculars and some of them grab two or three and it almost requires as much time as teaching a course does. So, before they know it they’re engulfed in things almost over their heads.

For many teachers, the requests for meetings from parents or administrators, whether programme-related or student-related, were perceived as reaching overload proportions. Besides the meetings, phone calls to parents, often in the evening hours, created further demands. There was little time to reflect, to organize thoughts, to keep track of everyone and everything. The pervasive impact of extra non-teaching demands is captured in this teacher’s commentary.

I think in my case it was getting to the point where other aspects of my life really didn’t seem to exist. It just got to the point where work seemed to be all that you had time to do The big thing is that we’re expected to be more aware of the whole student and be more in touch with the parents and the home. And that’s easy

enough if you have fifty or sixty but when you multiply that by maybe four and you're expected to be in touch if there are any problems and God knows how many you are expected to make phone calls and have conferences.

Almost all the participants addressed their expanding role and talked about how non-teaching duties increased the workload and exacerbated accountability demands. Many spoke of the expectation that they should deal with social and emotional problems and take on the role of a parent and/or counsellor but without the expertise needed. Again, concern about accountability was commented upon: "You're expected to make sure the children are socialized, make sure they don't get harassed, make sure they don't get bullied, make sure they develop to their potential ... and with that of course comes a lot more accountability." One teacher said she is often expected to give advice when she makes a call to parents about their child.

And another situation occurs more than you would think. You call home and quite often the mother, but I've had a couple of fathers as well, [say] "well I'm at my wits end and I don't know what to do.".... Now, how am I supposed to respond to that? Am I a trained social worker? Am I going to call a conference ... which is what, in theory, we should be doing. To practise it becomes almost impossible. I think society is expecting us to be all things to all kids.

Some teachers spoke of trying to function as a guidance counsellor either because the counsellor was too busy to see all students or because students often shared very personal concerns with the teachers. This enhanced accountability, because study participants did not feel prepared for this role.

Our guidance counsellor/ed therapist is *so* [italics added] busy testing that she hardly ever has time to see students on a personal problem ... we become a stand-in there. I don't know how many times at lunch time, after school, you know, students come – "Miss, I might be pregnant"; "Miss, my boyfriend broke up with me"; "Miss, my father's an alcoholic"; ... We're not trained for that. Again, it's an added stress.

Despite wanting to help students, teachers who spent time dealing with social problems found that this increased their workload. An added concern was that dealing with caring issues meant walking a fine line regarding accountability. Some teachers also found it difficult to leave everything behind. One teacher commented thus: “I mean, we don’t leave our job in school. That comes home with me. You know, worried about that child when they go home. So that’s a big stress on you ... and then I think we feel guilty if we say no.” Another teacher explained why students presenting with social problems could not be ignored: “We’re nurturers even though people don’t understand that we are. Sometimes we’re probably the only nurturing people these teens have.” A third teacher expressed similar sentiments: “You’re taking care of them, making sure they’re getting fed, making sure their family life [pause].” Besides working with the students and dealing with the extra stress, many of these cases require referral to the school counsellor. Several teachers spoke about the time required to do this at recess, lunch, or after school.

To summarize, these teachers described themselves as burdened with the pressures of work and the constant demands upon their time and personal resources. The pressures and challenges of increasing accountabilities within the teaching profession seemed to weigh heavily upon them. They felt as though they were being evaluated unfairly, that results were often not a fair reflection of their performance. In some cases, the perception was that evaluation was done to protect the school board’s best interests rather than those of the teacher or students. Study participants seemed to question how they could continue at such a hectic pace. One teacher summed it up best: “It all adds up to over and beyond what you can humanly expect most people to perform.”

4.2.2 Barriers to Teacher Effectiveness

Several barriers to teacher effectiveness were identified by study participants. For the most part they tended to be external forces associated with policy and socio-cultural issues over which teachers felt they had no control. However, negative self-perceptions, an internal barrier to effectiveness, surfaced quite often during the interviews. Singularly and cumulatively these barriers detracted from the ideal teaching environment and impacted on participants' perceived ability to teach effectively. Most of the identified external barriers could be collapsed into one of three descriptors, namely: difficulties posed by inclusion and Pathways; struggling to facilitate learning; and behaviour management and fears for personal safety.

4.2.2.1 Difficulties posed by inclusion and Pathways.

Since the 1990s there has been a continual movement towards an inclusive system of regular and special education, where all teachers will share responsibility for teaching students with special needs in an atmosphere of accepted differences. Since 1998 teachers in Newfoundland have been expected to provide adapted instruction (Pathways) for a wide range of learners in their classroom. A large number of students need individualized programming and thus, teachers are expected to modify classroom environments to correspond to student differences.

Based on the interviews conducted, many teachers in this study felt the policies of inclusion and the Pathways programme were rushed, not well thought out and lacked proper support. Study participants attributed increased workloads to these programmes. Teaching students of varying cognitive levels, with diverse psychological, physical, and social needs, was seen as being extremely difficult. Furthermore, students with behavioural problems within an inclusive classroom were reported to pose additional problems for these teachers.

None of the study participants felt that special needs students were best served in an inclusive classroom under the present circumstances. Participants were puzzled that these problems were not being dealt with in a more constructive manner: “There’s nobody recognized that this is a problem.” Perceptions of impossible workloads and inadequate teacher preparation and administrative planning are reflected in the following comments.

It’s impossible to deliver or expect one person to modify a lesson plan for three different groups of people; it’s not possible; there are not enough hours; we are not trained enough. How is it that you can’t teach phys. Ed. unless you have a phys. ed. degree, yet with a lowly bachelor of arts and bachelor of education you now have a license to teach what is really special education.

Another teacher, feeling overworked and anxious about being accountable, had ethical concerns for students with and without special needs. Constantly challenged to be fair to the whole spectrum of abilities, he wondered how he was supposed to teach everyone at the same time. His experience was that teaching to the middle section often resulted in disappointment and frustration for very intelligent academic students and was unhelpful for those with less ability who required extra assistance. One of the keys to success in this programme, the resources, are not there to help teachers implement the programme.

What appears to be okay in theory is not perceived to be realistic by teachers.

They’ve [special needs students] got more problems than academics. And this is the frustrating part some times There’s some disconnection between the practical aspect of it in the classroom and whoever designed the course to begin with Put thirty kids in a classroom like that [pause] with those emotional problems and then say you should be able to get that done ... and meet those outcomes. And I think that’s where they need a reality check Do I ignore the other students who are working along, who might need help? This is where I find the frustration What does inclusivity mean? I think what they are trying to do is include kids without investing the resources in it. There is just no way Like can I really do that if I’ve got ten kids who have individual learning problems and then

another twenty in class ... in the general stream? What am I supposed to do with that? How responsible am I for, what exactly does it mean for me?

Assuming responsibility for developing individual programmes for students with special needs was discussed from an ethical point of view and from an accountability perspective by several of the teachers. While proponents of inclusion emphasize the rights of special needs students and support the policy of integration, many teachers were concerned about the ethics of being unable to provide a reasonable programme for each child in an inclusive classroom. Concern for the well-being of students was reflected in several of the interviews as teachers struggled with how best to meet the needs of everyone in inclusive classes. One teacher reported that he had refused to develop a programme because he worried about the consequences for the student and himself.

I refused to do one [programme] last year for a particular student My reasoning was, that if I put this down on paper and I can't do it are you going to hold me responsible for it? Why should I do up a plan for a kid when I know he can't do it? And another teacher did the same thing because the consequences down the road for this could be drastic So there's a lot of stress there.

The implications of this dilemma also weighed heavily upon another participant. It is apparent from her comments that she constantly struggled to make things work and to prioritize to get it all done.

And then you have students in your class who are more than capable saying, "Come on Miss, hurry up". So that was another stress right there ... those who need challenge academically ... they should be challenged just as well. [pause] For every choice you make there's a consequence. You just have to pick the consequence with the least amount of repercussions, the ones you can live with, and that takes an awful lot of energy and just thinking.

Another teacher attempted to paint a picture of the increased workload involved and his concern for students with high intellectual ability in an inclusive classroom. His

perception was that he could not meet the needs of all his students and he found the limitations difficult:

We've got one student in our school who scored 99 point something in the Canadian Test of Basic Skills; she's in the top 1%. So you've got her in the class with someone who can't read. It's very difficult to design your work so that you don't bore one by being too easy and have it too difficult for the other one How do I do it in a class of thirty-five where they all have problems? How can I have people who can't read, who can't write, how can I do an individual programme for each one in the number of minutes in the class. You can't.

Classroom size was a major concern for all participants, especially in light of the policy on inclusion within the current education system. The larger the class the more diversity in students' cognitive abilities and emotional needs. One teacher commented thus: "Because class sizes in many cases are getting bigger, problems, demands and expectations are getting greater and you got to deal with them and it's impossible to be successful at it. I think they are trying to put a square peg in a round hole. Impossible!" A second teacher attempted to explain the ramifications of large classes, especially large inclusive classes. He described how one problem compounded another, adding to his workload. It sounded like a vicious circle from which it was difficult to extricate oneself.

It's also stressful having to deal with more students ... who have special needs which have been brought into the regular classroom. Along with having to teach these students you also have extra work because of the ISSP (Individual Student Support Plan) process ... having meetings with the parents of these students, their case managers, social workers and things like that There's more meetings after school along those lines ... [with regard to] the class size itself, you've got a large number of students when it comes to correcting exams and so on. When you get into larger class sizes, you have more of a tendency to get more students in there who could be disruptive. So as more problems come up it's more things to deal with and more paper work in terms of documenting things that happen.

It was not that these teachers were totally against the idea of inclusion or Pathways but rather the manner in which these programs were implemented, the increasing number of students in the classroom, and the increased pressures placed upon them to be accountable for all students and their individualized programmes: “If you want that, if this is what they want, then let’s put the resources to make it work.” Although the general feeling was that inclusion and Pathways were not working well and were increasing teacher workload, some participants discussed the possibility that both programmes could be made successful.

In one school I was in [in another province] we had ... support teachers who came in and taught with the classroom teacher We’d set up policies of how that should be done. But it was very effective when the other teacher was there because there was always someone else or yourself could go and deal with a problem that may become potentially very difficult.

In summary, it appeared that most of these teachers felt that inclusive classrooms did not serve all students well. They voiced concern that students experienced less than an optimal learning environment with these programmes as presently implemented. Furthermore, based on these interviews, teachers indicated that aside from the added workload, from a practical standpoint it is impossible for them to meet the needs of all students. They saw themselves as having neither the training nor support staff to plan the best approach for each needy student while worrying about the overall ethical issues of doing so. Thus they felt their productivity was often operating below optimal level.

4.2.2.2 Struggling to facilitate learning.

A second barrier to teacher effectiveness was low student motivation. Teaching requires a good relationship between the teacher and the student. Much of school learning demands that students are active and involved, interested for a sustained period, and

motivated to succeed. To maintain motivation teachers must make learning enjoyable and encourage students to become interested enough to initiate learning. Motivating students to exert the effort needed to learn can be very difficult especially with special needs students who may have experienced years of failure.

The interviews illustrated the challenge of providing the appropriate amount of support and structure to ensure some level of success in large classes with students of varying cognitive abilities. While discussing this problem, the discouragement felt by this teacher of nine years came through clearly.

Oooh yes [sigh] and I don't know where it comes from. It seems to be getting worse and worse as time goes on. The attitude, the desire to do well, the competitive edge ... intrinsically, you know, the internal desire to do well is just not there anymore. So it's a real problem trying to get them to focus.

Although math has been identified as a problem area for so many students today, one math teacher believed that it was more a question of motivation than ability. His frustration seemed to be more with the students than with himself: "It's not the fact that kids can't do the math it's just that they choose not to. You can only offer the help; you can't force them ... I can't sit down and force the kid to read the text book."

Other teachers felt that today's students want to be entertained. Despite attempts to make classes more interesting and to present material in more entertaining ways, teachers found that they sometimes had to revert to a style that gave them more control of the class. Two participants illustrated this dilemma confronting teachers.

It was a struggle so I had to go back to the more controlled situation of lecture, notes It's hard you know, to present a curriculum that I feel is worthy and noteworthy but it doesn't reach them at the level they would be reached I found that they found every way in the book to write down the answers and cheat and spend their time talking about their social lives.

Students want to be entertained. Everything is boring for students It's very hard to motivate students It has to be a fun place but I think we have to get the idea across that it's fun but you're here to learn and I don't know if that message is getting out to students because they're not motivated to learn; they want everything to be fun. It's very stressful.

Based on these interviews, it appears that the perceived low motivation among students is of considerable concern for teachers.

The struggle to balance such a heavy workload to meet the demands and teach at an effective level impacted teachers, but they felt keenly that it also meant a loss for their students. One teacher talked about the struggle to stay on top of her game and said: "A couple of times I actually thought I was going to quit. I really did. I felt like I had failed my profession ... I was letting myself down and my students." Other teachers talked about the effect on students when they disengaged themselves in order to try and cope with the demands: "It bothers me because I feel that the children at school lost out"; "There is always that nagging feeling that I am shortchanging the kids, that work is not being done."

The interviews illustrated the challenge of providing the appropriate amount of support and structure to ensure some level of success in large classes with students of varying cognitive abilities. These teachers reported that the low motivation often witnessed among students was disheartening and stressful. They often appeared to question their own ability when they felt unable to motivate students. "I feel frustrated not being able to come up with something." Frustration led to self-evaluation which often left study participants with feelings of failure and discouragement. This teacher summed up those feelings: "I'm telling you, when you've got a class at the end of it who is two thirds failing ... it's not the most encouraging feeling, or motivating." Another teacher questioned her ability and her effectiveness and looked to herself for a solution to

the problem: “You can’t get through to them and you wonder why not, what are you doing wrong that you can’t get through to them.”

Their days were marked by the constant effort of trying to create and maintain some semblance of balance in their lives while coping with lingering doubts of their abilities and of whether their situations would ever change for the better. Thus, it became more difficult to maintain a positive attitude and be as productive as they wanted to be. This perspective was expressed by a teacher who struggled on an almost daily basis about his future as a teacher: “I’m almost ready to give up the ghost in many ways I have plenty to offer and a willingness and desire but I can’t do it anymore.”

4.2.2.3 Behaviour management and fears for personal safety.

Disruptive behaviour was reported to be a major challenge by every teacher. There were examples given of being cursed at, of having to give some students almost constant attention for fear of what they might do, of students who blatantly refused to work or complete assignments, and of vandalism, criminal behaviours, and bullying. Based on the interviews it was clear that it took a substantial amount of time and energy to successfully manage disruptive behaviour in order to maintain a classroom environment conducive to learning for all students.

Study participants found themselves struggling to anticipate discipline problems in order to prevent disruption in their classes. Their words portrayed feelings of frustration with having to spend so much time trying to control the behaviour of some students so the rest of the class could learn. One teacher expressed his concerns this way: “You’re working harder at the wrong part of your job.” Similar concerns were voiced by another teacher: “You feel that you’re forever fighting to keep control in the classroom rather than trying to concentrate on what you’re trying to teach. I find that *very* [italics added]

stressful.” Still another teacher called it “draining.” There was one teacher who said that while he managed to keep some control he found the pressure of doing so quite stressful: “I did manage to keep some control, quite a bit of control in the classroom but it took all that I had to do that. And how did I feel? I felt stressed! That was always stressful to go into that classroom.”

Study participants were frustrated with this impediment to teaching. So much time and effort went into behaviour management that not enough time was left for teaching. One teacher took this very personally.

Not being able to teach the way I want to teach. It’s really frustrating and stressful. In some way I figure these students are taking away some of my rights. In that I’m a professional; I’ve got experience and I’m paid to teach.

Another teacher tried to take it less personally: “I try not to lose my cool. It’s the stress of dealing with that [behaviour] [pause]. It’s just the hassle of dealing [pause] I try not to get upset over it.” Other teachers felt thwarted in their attempts to improve the classroom environment: “So it becomes a battle. So there’s that stress, there’s that stress of usually dealing with the same person each day.”

Teachers had previously acknowledged that students bring a wide range of emotional, physical, and social needs to school, but their perception is that these diversities have become more noticeable with the policy to integrate special needs children into the regular classrooms. Regarding students with special needs in inclusive classes this teacher said: “They’ve got more problems than academics. And this is the frustrating part sometimes.” Another described the situation thus: ...“there’s other issues like they’ve got all kinds of baggage on the go; they have minimal skills in a lot of cases and their attendance is not what it should be because they themselves feel alienated.” The problems of misbehaviour and inclusion appeared to compound one another as this

interviewee described his classes: “Now out of the thirty-five [students] twenty can’t read. Now you’ve got discipline problems, you’ve got people who can’t read, you’ve got some weak students who want to do good.” One teacher attempted to illuminate the effect that disruptive behaviour can have on a teacher.

If I knew I had a certain particular class in a day, yeah, I would dread going in, not dread to go to work but dread to go in to certain classes with certain people I tell you, I had one kid in class and my time was spent on him ... he was so arrogant and so rude Now I know he had problems but I mean ... I really didn’t like going It was like walking on egg shells with him.

Participants felt that the cumulative effect of disruptive behaviour on teachers increased their workload and lowered their effectiveness. Teachers struggled to motivate students to learn, to teach the required curriculum, and to meet the needs of all the students while dealing with disruptive students. The following quote captures the concerns expressed in many of the interviews. There was a plea expressed here for a better understanding of the issue from the perspective of those who deal with it on a daily basis.

I believe that the majority should have a far greater impact than the minority who are causing hell for everybody, teachers and students I tell you, I think it *has* [italics added] to be addressed They are wasting a lot of teachers’ time, they’re wasting a lot of valuable educational learning time for students and I think we have to be concerned for those other students in the classroom whether they are weak academic kids or top notch students And we have got to get away from thinking that because a guy don’t come in with a gun or a knife in his pocket that he’s not disruptive you know, because he is.

Aside from the demands presented by students with behavioural problems, some teachers felt a sense of dread and feared the possibility of violence. Feeling underpowered to exert control over disruptive and aggressive students, one teacher

described her experiences thus: “You go in to class daily with knots in your stomach, that maybe I’m going to tread on someone’s toes the wrong way there’s a physical threat there always.” Another teacher emphasized the importance of being acutely aware of one’s actions and potential repercussions at all times. He recalled a recent incident with a student.

He was almost prepared to swing ... that was my perception. I was keeping my distance, keeping my voice calmThe hands, the fists were clenched and everything else I was picking up on this. I better watch this this is going to go where I don’t want it to go.

One teacher of only seven years had experienced property damage and had been threatened with physical assault.

I’ve had students who told me they were going to beat the shit out of me; if they get into trouble at the office they are going to come back and hunt me down. I’ve had students who myself and other teachers have had a peace bond against because they have been expelled or suspended at school and they want to harm me. I have had damage done to my car and to my property. And I have come very close to being physically assaulted in the classroom by a student with a hairline temper who actually did go on to assault another teacher.

Others, too, had been threatened with physical harm. This next teacher, who showed concern for one of her students, was threatened by that student’s boyfriend.

I had a boyfriend and a girl threaten me once, phoned me up at school to threaten me because I’d asked how she was. She’d been on drugs and stuff and he had been in prison He was in a mess with the law kind of thing and he felt threatened that I’d just said “Is everything ok?” I think he thought I was intruding, and he told me, basically, that he was going to smack me if I did it again.

There seemed to be a feeling among teachers who had been in the profession for a number of years that problems with violence were increasing. Focussing on potential threats within the current school system one teacher went on to say that she perceived “A

level of it [disruptive behaviour and violence] has to be tolerated to function.” She felt she had to alter her standards somewhat to tolerate that level and to protect herself.

It’s difficult. A teacher has to decide every time, is this the right time or the wrong time [to discipline]. And it’s not just a case of having high standards or low standards, it’s working out the best way to deal with it without putting yourself in a position of vulnerability. That’s what I found And I don’t really want to put myself on the line for those things any more.

Another teacher, too, found herself tolerating negative behaviour for fear of the consequences if she did not. Her commentary illustrates how her overall effectiveness is diminished when she has to contend with problematic students.

One that sat back in the corner with his head shaved and those long navy trench coats and his eyebrows like the devil ... and didn’t do a tap and just lay his head on the desk. When I asked him why he was in school he said that in order to live at home he had to come to school and that was all he was going to do was come to school. I didn’t like that but I allowed it because I’d heard a couple of things that happened in another school he was in. Like throwing a desk at a teacher I used to watch the clock in that class, and it was a long hour.

Teachers felt that students who exhibit behaviour problems require discipline when they disrupt the classroom and deter other students ability to learn. Such misbehaviour also inhibits the teacher’s ability to facilitate learning. However, when disciplinary approaches are perceived in a negative way by the perpetrator (i.e., loss of face in front of peers) then he/she may become a source of threat to the teacher. Teachers seemed to look for ways to punish aggression that involve as little counteraggression as possible in the hope that violence could be avoided. Several teachers referred to walking the fine line of how to manage the classroom with that threat of possible violence as “walking on egg shells.”

I had a fight break out in my class and that was so stressful. I was going down across the room and thinking ‘What am I going to do when I get there?’ When I got to the office and was telling the principal my voice was shaking and that was stressful.

This teacher saw violence on the increase, and she worried about the future. Her perception was that without the means to adequately control disruptive and possibly volatile students, the situation was going to become even worse for teachers.

What were the biggest stressors would be highly disruptive students [sigh] and then not being able to alleviate that situation So I’m saying this is probably the biggest thing to deal with in years to come, is the increasing violent nature of the classroom. They can be physically, emotionally, mentally, quite a war zone.

In summary, it appeared that while teachers are expected to be in control of the classroom, they perceived themselves as having little control over the possibility of violence. Fears of disruptive and/or violent behaviour left these teachers feeling the need to be “on alert” much of the time. They also indicated that within this often uneasy classroom environment it was more difficult to teach the way they wanted to teach. There were some who said their confidence was “knocked” because of the vulnerable positions they sometimes felt themselves to be in. And again, the cumulative effect of large classes, multiple disabilities, and behaviours that sometimes leaned toward violence, created a sense of uneasiness: “You just don’t know what’s going to happen next.” That perception of the possibility of violence, in turn, created a feeling of anxiety and stress. The interview transcripts were permeated with teachers’ perceptions of working in a demanding environment which often left them feeling afraid for their personal safety as well as overwhelmed and discouraged.

4.2.3 Summary

Overloaded with paper work and facing increasingly larger classes, the problems inherent in inclusive classes, and the multiple role expectation, teachers expressed their concern not just for themselves but also for their students. They felt pressured and burdened by the many demands placed on them and the time lines dictated for accomplishment of these demands. Despite working long hours and attempting to do their best, they faced several external barriers that they felt inhibited their effectiveness as teachers. Together, these barriers, along with the pressures and demands, created a feeling of being non-productive in the midst of a high level of productivity and of being alone in their struggle to manage as teachers. These external impediments in turn generated internal barriers to effective teaching and productivity when participants questioned their ability, and felt they were failing at their job, thus experiencing diminishing self-esteem.

Some of the problems were perceived as fixable but not on their own. The nature of their struggle to balance the multiple demands placed on them was perceived to be enhanced or diminished depending on the supportiveness of their work environment.

4.3 The Importance of Supportive Work Environments

The interview transcripts provided a rich data base on the importance of supportive work environments. Inadequate support was a major stressor felt by study participants. The properties defining this category relate to the teachers' feelings of the importance of administrative support, valuing a collegial community, and the importance of adequate resources.

4.3.1 The importance of administrative support.

Dealing with administrators who do not seem to understand the problems teachers face in the classroom was a source of considerable concern for all participants and elicited extensive discussion. The desire for supportive relationships with administrators was referred to again and again throughout the interviews. Several participants talked about management versus visionary leadership. Principals were viewed as fulfilling more of a management role than a leadership one (i.e., rarely offering encouragement or recognizing achievement, not having specific goals for the school). In some schools teachers perceived an attitude of “good enough is never good enough.”

In this study, a picture unfolded that illuminated a group of teachers who perceived themselves as not being adequately supported or appreciated in keeping with the demands placed upon them. The property – feeling unsupported by administration – emerged from participants’ perceptions of their views on good leaders: being respectful, treating teachers as professionals, being effective communicators, and providing guidance and direction to deal effectively with day- to-day issues.

4.3.1.1 Being respectful, treating teachers as professionals.

The perception that there is a division between administration and staff surfaced in many interviews. Interviewees sensed a hierarchy on which their status was low and resented the lack of respect afforded them as professionals. One teacher commented thus: “I mean there was a real ‘us’ and ‘them’ attitude between the administration and staff.” Another teacher described an instance of inappropriate behaviour which left her feeling disrespected. “I can remember one day he [principal] snapped at a workshop that we were doing, and he just got up and yelled and yelled and yelled at the entire staff. And we were just sitting there you know. We’re paid professionals. You don’t do that.”

The feeling that teachers' visions were not considered worthwhile or respected made some teachers feel disconnected from and ignored by administration. One of the participants voiced his frustration with the lack of respect shown to himself and his peers.

I sometimes get the feeling I'll be totally ignored and a lot of teachers feel that way If you look at a bunch of professionals who do their job well and you ignore them, brush them off ... that's the part I find frustrating With this new board I don't feel that [old] connection. If you put a suggestion on paper they'll ignore it.

Another teacher concurred. When her opinions and experience were not listened to she felt that this lack of respect devalued her profession.

Well, for starters, I think it tells me that I'm not valued as a teacher ... I'm not valued enough to have input into what I teach them [students]. I think that's an oxymoron ... I'm valued to teach it but I'm not valued to develop it [curriculum].

One teacher described where he thought he stood in the scheme of things: "I know where I rank on the opinion, on the food chain, down below, the bottom feeder It's so much for being treated with a certain amount of professionalism." Another teacher viewed the work environment as operating below acceptable standards, and administrators as being indifferent to teachers' value and worth. This type of setting led to low morale.

It's not healthy here [at school] yet I know that will be ignored ... if they treated you with respect, they'd listen to you and take what you have to say with a certain amount of concern I think the fact that they are not fixing things up shows a lack of respect. That makes me a little bit angry. I'm talking about seeing graffiti that's left on the walls – the most vulgar kind. I'm talking about where flooding has shut down an entire stairwell, the fire exit. Yet the school stays open. Just another example of where we rate and where we rank in the scheme of things. It's stressful. It lowers the morale quite significantly. You aren't valued very highly.

The staff room, which serves as a work space, lunch area, and social space for teachers, was mentioned several times in reference to respect. It appeared that the ambience of staff rooms was rather unpleasant and not particularly relaxing, another indication of the level of respect afforded these participants. One teacher made some suggestions for improving a staff room to show respect for the teachers' environment.

Paint goes a long way. Can we have a bathroom that says this is for the boys and this is for girls ... and you know, this is a place of value and not just a place where dust bunnies are collecting and the ceiling cracks. You know, just a beautiful physical environment would be so nice. They'd have the cracks fixed.

Some teachers felt that unfair workloads resulted when administration perceived some subject areas to be more important than others. The following comments capture teachers' thoughts.

When my subject is not something the administration thinks is important so they put forty kids in there because that is not an AP class or that's not math, then that's even more stressful. That combined with my much higher workload makes me damned mad. It's unfair I also think there is this idea that, as one of my colleagues calls it, if you are teaching a "sexy" course, that's great. If you are teaching Advanced Placement or one of the math or science courses, especially really high level ones, then you are very important. But if you are just an English teacher or even perhaps what is worse, a teacher who is not even in the core subjects, then you're less important.

The above comments reflect the importance these teachers placed on being valued as professionals, being respected for their expertise, and being recognized for their ability to contribute to the overall education process. When they perceived themselves to be less important than their administrators, feelings of being disrespected increased, and morale was lowered.

4.3.1.2 The importance of effective communication.

A number of teachers pinpointed communication as an essential component of good leadership. Communication was defined as the administrator's availability and accessibility to discuss problems and possible solutions. These teachers emphasized the importance of feeling a level of comfort when approaching their administrator(s) to discuss concerns. They wanted administrators who listened, who cared, who had insight into their problems, and who could give advice, and be supportive. The ideal administrator would engage in discussion with them and would attempt to work out some of the problems.

These teachers used words like "helpless," "powerless," and "disillusioned" to describe their feelings and their situation: "The things I don't like, [pause] the feeling of being absolutely helpless to change anything." These feelings were attributed to a variety of issues. Most important among them was the perceived general lack of consultation between teachers and administration at all levels and insufficient involvement in decision-making. Participants felt changes occurred, often without their input, yet they felt in a prime position to offer suggestions based on their experience.

When representatives from the Department of Education or board office did consult with them it was often perceived to be faked because of the feeling that decisions had already been made and what they had to say was inconsequential. One teacher provided insight into how he saw the relationship between administrators and teachers: "They make decisions and if you agree with them you get along great. If you disagree with our administration and their vision for the school your life is very difficult." Another teacher articulated her frustration over feeling powerless because she felt she was not being listened to.

This course was brought in and the learning outcomes were given to us and you know, we were told we could talk about it [at a board

office meeting]. But we talked about it, it was never recorded, no one ever heard it [the opinions].

One nine-year veteran, reflecting upon the beginning of her teaching career, described how uncomfortable it was for her to seek guidance from school administrators. Here again the concern regarding accountability was mentioned which was compounded by fears of being seen as less than adequate if she approached the principal for advice.

When I started to teach, the teachers all told me “solve your own problems. Don’t go in, just avoid going to the office and that will be the best way to handle and the least amount of stress on you is just to avoid”.... As a new teacher, when you don’t know how to do some of those things then it is really stressful. I found myself worrying, second guessing myself, what if the administration were to come down, what would they say, how would they be, how would I be perceived?

It appeared from her dialogue that she had been socialized not to seek guidance from administration. The perceived message was “don’t rock the boat.” This same message was conveyed to the youngest teacher interviewed who had worked in contract positions in several schools. Ironically, although he wanted support from administration, he provided a rationale for not going to them to voice his concerns or seek advice.

I find the support from administration ... and from the board level, it isn’t there. Sometimes you lack direction on where you should go with things I tend to stay away from administration because I don’t want to seem incompetent so I go towards the other staff members but yet you don’t want to bother, go bothering them too much either because they have their own work to do. So, it kind of seems like there’s no where, really, to turn. If you’ve got a problem you’re supposed to take care of it; that’s my personal experience.

Even when some of these teachers did approach their administrators they found it difficult to communicate with them. One teacher expressed his frustration with administrators’ communication skills and priority setting: “Individuals who were poor

communicators who were in an administrative position, who were trying to impress the board and put another feather in their cap, adding another programme to the school agenda.” Other teachers voiced similar complaints about administrators. One teacher described her experience interacting with an administrator: “He was an unapproachable sort of man so I couldn’t even go to ask him. I didn’t feel comfortable even asking.” However, this same teacher reported that she was having a more positive experience with the new administrator: “At least I know that I will be heard and it’s not stressful going to him, wondering how he will react. He’s very open door, you know, greets you in the morning with a smile, how are you, how are things going.”

The importance of quality leadership, which involved understanding classroom issues, giving guidance and direction for disciplinary matters, and possessing good communication skills, appeared to be intertwined. Singularly and in combination, as reported by the study participants, these qualities added to, or diminished, the pressures of the job. These teachers wanted administrators who were accessible and approachable, and who expressed interest in teachers’ input into decision-making rather than mandating participation during the latter stages of implementation.

4.3.1.3 Providing guidance and direction to effectively deal with day-to-day issues.

The interviews portrayed the teachers’ frustrations with administrators’ abilities. One rural teacher echoed the thoughts of many study participants when he highlighted inadequate leadership as the greatest stressor for him.

I think the number one cause, in my opinion, of stress in schools, is administrators not being able to do their jobs. Don’t have the ability or don’t want to ruffle feathers at the board level. I think that’s the number one factor.

The model of a good administrator was expressed this way by one individual.

Being there to support them [teachers] and to give leadership knowledge and experience and at the same time to take someone to task for, you were supposed to be on duty, you were supposed to do this. You know, run a good ship.

The perception, in general, was that administrators were not “in touch” with what life in the classroom is like: “Administrators who have been in the job a long time forget the classroom stresses.”; “Sometimes I think they have forgotten what it’s like to be there.” This perceived lack of understanding seemed to exist at all administrative levels. One teacher’s comments portrayed his perception of administrators at the board level who do not understand, who cannot walk in the shoes of a teacher.

As for the board, I don’t think they have an understanding or they’ve forgotten what it’s like to be there and have the problems or whatever else. They are looking at the big picture but what I’m looking at, the nuts and bolts of it, implementing reports, carrying out the curriculum, and I’ve got a student down there telling me to “fuck off”.

Similar comments were made by a second teacher.

And I can think, the last two special programme support specialists [at board office] for special needs that we have had in our school, if they have ever been in a classroom in their life, I mean, the things they suggest and the things they tell us we have to do and that we should do Actually, they amaze me.

The standard of leadership at board office level left many study participants feeling that appropriate guidance was missing. One teacher expressed his frustration at being left on his own to deal with issues.

There's no kind of direction and we can't get direction because the person from the board who's giving us direction is so new at it also that it's helter skelter and we're not getting any guidance and we're not getting a lot of in-service so, we're kind of, like, out there floating.

A newly retired teacher expressed the importance of guidance from administrators: "I think with the present administration, they're not, I guess qualified to be good administrators in my opinion. I think our school doesn't have any direction, doesn't have any goals at the end of the day to reach and I think if you don't have that you don't have much." However, this same person also noted that teachers need to take more responsibility by voicing their concerns more loudly rather than accepting things and feeling like they are unable to manage.

Sometimes it's hard to figure out. I think part of it is lack of support ... I don't think the school wants to hear about that [about Pathways] or the board. I think they want you to tow the line and I think teachers will beat around the subject a bit to cover it up and get it over with. [pause] You get to that point where we don't tell the truth; we don't lie but we don't tell the truth. There's a fine line there I know but that's it; that's how I feel.

Most study participants believed that administrators should have strong leadership qualities, in addition to academic qualifications, in order to provide meaningful direction to and be supportive of staff, especially to teachers new to the system. What was deemed important was an administrator's ability to convey an understanding of the issues confronting teachers in the classroom.

One particular area in which administrative guidance, direction, and support was desired was discipline. The transcripts revealed a common need to feel supported by administrators in carrying out disciplinary measures. Leadership and discipline were visualized as going hand-in-hand: “A principal with no leadership or not being able to control also leaves a lack of discipline in your school. And when you have a lack of discipline you have trouble.”

The general feeling was that the issues arising when dealing with disruptive students are lessened when adequate administrative support is present. Although expressing frustration regarding the lack of understanding for some issues, this teacher was grateful for the support received from his principal when it came to matters of discipline. His principal did respect his judgment and stood behind him in matters of disruptive behaviour.

So, in that way it's been good. The administration has been good in backing me up and that, so in the end, as long as the kids perceive that there is a consequence and that I'm going to follow up that's the ... a lot of the stress is gone with it.

However, other teachers felt that they did not get the support needed. One teacher made this comment: “And you go to the vice-principal (about a student who is a behaviour problem) and he says, ‘Yes, he is a problem but what can we do with him?’ And that was the extent of the help we got from the vice-principal.” Another teacher described himself as “ready to give up the ghost” because he felt unsupported by administration in dealing with disruptive students. From his viewpoint there was little insight into the teachers’ problems and no recommendations about ways to resolve them.

I was so stressed yesterday that I went to the V.P. ... and this was two hours after the incident [a student cursed him repeatedly in front of other students]. I said, "I don't know if I want to stick around today You got me up to my eyeballs ed in grad, perfect attendance assemblies, IT next week, Skills Canada this week and you're asking all of these things from me and yet you can let me be abused by students that aren't even in my class." And I said, "like I'm ready to give up the ghost." I mean, how can you operate like that?

These study participants wanted administrators to have goals, to communicate clear expectations, and to demonstrate leadership skills. They wanted administrators at all levels to understand classroom issues, to recognize the day to day problems faced by teachers, and to provide realistic solutions to those problems. Administrators who stood behind teachers in their decisions regarding student misbehaviour were appreciated, and such support was perceived to lessen the burden of behaviour problems.

4.3.2 Value of a Collegial Community.

The transcripts revealed that working relationships with colleagues can be both a source of support and a source of distress. All the interviewees perceived collegial support as helpful, a buffer for the pressures and demands of the job. Those who experienced good collegial support talked about the importance of being able to discuss work with people who understood, were empathetic, and provided emotional support. One teacher talked about the sense of community derived from being part of a group who understood each other's needs on both a professional and personal level.

We have Friday afternoon, like socials. Just sit around and chat. And that's a big help. At the end of a week, all of a sudden, you know, you got this camaraderie. That I enjoy, the sense of community with teachers, with my colleagues, and not strictly on a professional level but just on a personal level You know they are there for you.

A second teacher described how the support received from one colleague helped him deal with the aftermath of a difficult situation: “Another teacher who happened to be walking by, one that I have a trusted faith in, stood by the classroom and waited for me to finish [ranting]. And when I finished she said, ‘Are you going to be ok?’ ” Such support was described as “comforting.”

While some teachers described receiving support from their colleagues, others reported experiencing inadequate or strained communication and a general reluctance to acknowledge colleagues’ problems. Such avoidance behaviour lead to feelings of resentment.

As well, a lack of understanding even from my colleagues about what I am trying to accomplish. There are six people doing scheduling at my school so they just keep adding students to my class without any regard for the appropriate number of students who should be there.

Teachers who worked hard at helping to manage the general student problems in the school resented teachers who disengaged themselves from the fray and chose not to become involved or be of assistance. One teacher articulated his frustration and even anger, at the seemingly unwillingness of colleagues to support one another. Feeling isolated and alone, he wanted his colleagues to have the courage to speak out on issues rather than deny that problems existed when the opportunity to discuss them surfaced in staff meetings.

And I don’t like the fact that it’s very two-faced I’ve got to say. And I have trouble expressing that to people I want to be co-workers with ... and they will tell you that off the record but you get them into a staff meeting or into a circle where you’re talking about a real issue and all of a sudden it’s denial. “No, I don’t have that problem. Everything is hunky dory in my career. I have good students, I don’t have the same problems as you do.” I just find it SO FALSE! [his voice rising] And that’s so disappointing to me.

As well, some participants felt that teachers who chose to ignore problems resented anyone who tried to alleviate the situation. One teacher felt that resentment keenly and felt she and some of her colleagues did not have the collegial support they needed. As a result she was left feeling alone to deal with the problems.

I think it was a hell of a year for a number of dedicated teachers. I think other teachers just [pause] some of them just didn't care. You know, they didn't care where they were [students] as long as they weren't in their class Students in the corridor when they were supposed to be in class, that really came to a head this year because I personally brought kids back to class four times this year to teachers that were not happy about it ... and I think that was very stressful And so, I think that isolated me a little bit. So, it was a year of isolation pretty much [crying].

When discussing collegial support, participants also tried to understand or rationalize why it was absent at times. Some teachers attributed the problem to teacher workload. There just was not enough time to be supportive: "Teachers were usually too busy to spend too much time supporting each other and we were all feeling in much the same situation."

The staff room, a gathering place for teachers and a place where support might have been expected, was seen as just the opposite by several teachers. It appeared as though communication was often difficult and infrequent: "We would spend less time chatting with each other down in the staffroom. When people arrived they were usually not too cheerful." Several teachers said they avoided the staff room. One said: "I could alleviate that [tight feeling] by spending quiet time. In other words, not going to the staff room at recess." The staffroom was frequently described as a negative and stressful environment that worked against supportive collegial relationships.

What it [stress] caused among teachers was less socializing time and when we did socialize in the staff room I felt there was a fair amount of negativity and cynicism. When we talked about things in the

school it would frequently be in a cynical tone and a derogatory way Sometimes you felt there just wasn't enough positive rapport in the staff room.

One teacher, who had worked in several schools, described staff rooms thus: "There's very little beauty. It's also very noisy or very quiet."

In summary, study participants appeared to value the support of their colleagues, finding some relief from the pressures and demands of work when they were able to experience such support. The feeling of not being alone was a source of support and comfort. However, it was clear that while this support was desired it was not always available. A picture was formed of busy individuals, working and coping alone for the most part, often unable either to find support or be supportive.

4.3.3 Importance of Having Adequate Resources.

There were two main characteristics or descriptors defining this property: physical, and intellectual and human resources. The physical resources such as texts, paper supplies, adequate computers, and enough space in which to teach in an optimum manner were seen by these teachers as a basic requirement. When physical resources were inadequate, intellectual and human resources were felt to be under greater pressure.

4.3.3.1 Physical resources.

Every teacher interviewed saw physical resource inadequacy as a major problem. Examples were given of teaching without a text, not having enough texts for students, using out-dated texts, limited and inadequate physical space, and insufficient equipment and supplies. Participants emphasized the importance of having enough resources to successfully deliver courses in accordance with curriculum objectives.

As several teachers explained, teaching basic programmes can be challenging at the best of times as many of the students taking these courses struggle academically to master the curriculum. They indicated that a great deal of patience is required to provide individual help and attention to each student even when adequate resources are available. The demands on a teacher's time and patience is increased when there are not enough texts. "They have to share books and they [academically weak students] are not the type of students who can do that. They need a lot of structure and alone time."

A science teacher felt that the level of physical resources available to facilitate student learning was problematic: "We're expected to do more and more with fewer and fewer resources I think the dwindling resources we have are creating havoc on all levels and it just filters right down." Several teachers described in detail how inadequate resources interfered with their ability to ensure effective delivery of courses. One spoke of the difficulty this creates for her and for her students, as she described trying to accommodate 38 academically weak students in a lab designed for 20. Another teacher's frustration was palpable as he said:

You're going to find out when you actually get in the system that all the things you want to do will either be shot down because you'll be told that you can't do it or there aren't enough resources to do it Nobody cares if I have enough resources or if my class is too big to handle technology. I've got thirty-five of these people; I've got room for twelve and resources for three!

Still other teachers commented on not having sufficient access to computer technology to teach the required curriculum.

Lack of resources is another thing (sigh). We've got three computer labs. On a good day twelve might work. The other big problem is that there are about twelve different types of computers in there. Trying to maintain a network with that much diversity causes problems We don't have access to computers or the computers we *can* [italics added] access aren't good enough.

You got thirty-five kids in your class and you've got fifteen computers. It's a major problem I like to use the internet but, oh, that's very stressful because it's always down and it's not working.

One young teacher spoke at length about how inadequate physical resources in his school resulted in extra after hours work. He was particularly frustrated by the low level planning that sometimes goes into the preparation of new curriculum and the seemingly inconsiderate approach taken by the Department of Education. His frustration could be felt in his monologue as he described the extra hours of work created by the lack of resources.

Well, first of all, our lab wasn't ready until the twenty-second of September which meant I couldn't do my first unit on line. So I had to go in and photocopy one night, sixteen hundred pages in total to give those thirty-one students the following day. You know, I had to basically, turn it all into paper.

Concern about the lack of relevant texts permeated every subject area and was obviously an area of frustration. For two teachers outdated texts impacted their ability to teach effectively.

I can think of the atlas we have in school. We've got about forty of them but the most recent one is from 1996. You know, when you're doing a course in World History and you're talking about current events, and Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union are still on the map [laugh] it doesn't help.

I'm teaching physical science. I don't know how long ago but physical science was going to be dropped from the curriculum, lets say ten years ago. OK, now no books have been made since ten years. We're still teaching it [without access to texts].

Pathways and inclusive classes brought additional requirements yet they too were seen to be without the necessary resources. This teacher was struggling to deal with the problem but at the same time was not quite sure what resources he should have because there were no clear guidelines.

Then let's put the resources to make it work. This is the stress and I have yet to figure out what to do with the ISSPs. They haven't adequately resourced or actually considered what's involved, what you need in a classroom.

Some teachers resort to buying their own equipment and supplies in order to access up to date materials as needed. "I must say I have a good resource base myself ... I've bought them over the years of teaching. No, they have never been given to me. I have always bought them. I bet I probably have \$2,500 worth of resources that I've bought over my thirteen years."

To summarize, teachers appeared to spend a significant amount of time searching for and collecting resources to meet the curriculum. This added to their workload, made their work more difficult, increased feelings of frustration and lessened their ability to teach effectively.

4.3.3.2 Intellectual and human resources.

Aside from the external, physical resources required, teachers described the need for such internal resources as training for new curriculum and for curriculum changes, professional development to keep current with new instructional ideas, and in-servicing on new technology and audio-visual aids. Feeling comfort with course content when addressing a class is important for reducing the struggle of demands and pressures experienced by teachers. One English teacher commented that she had planned to spend part of her summer holiday preparing for the next school year but could not do this without the resources.

I would like to be more comfortable. I think that's important. I really think that if you are going to bring in new novels and new anthologies and new ways of learning, teachers need time to digest this information. It's not good enough to not have curriculum guides

ready for teachers in the summer. It's not good enough not to have resources ready so that I can look through them.

She needed a greater comfort level with the material in order to feel more confident entering the classroom.

Another English teacher was concerned about his ability to teach the visual arts component because he was not knowledgeable in that area: "My training is not in visual arts. In some ways I feel that I have to be all things to all people." When teachers are not adequately trained to deliver new courses, teaching becomes unnecessarily burdensome. One teacher commented thus: "The last two years I've taught ... new courses that I've never taught before. And this job increases the workload and I've had a lot of stress the last two years."

Many teachers, wanting professional development and training, assume some responsibility by pursuing university studies to improve their knowledge base in a particular subject area or work toward a higher level teaching certificate. A number of teachers use their summer to do this. Again, the point was made that the onus for professional development was on the teacher. While this may be accepted to a degree the scheduling can be problematic. This full time teacher, part-time graduate student and mother of two wanted to improve her skills ,but she wondered where she would find the time if she had to do it on her own time.

I know they have working groups for social studies and language at the School Board. But just getting the time to do it. They have workshops that you can do on your own time and summer institutes but when you're in [grad] school, I think I'm in school for my whole life [laugh], that's what it feels like. You know, you want to do it, you really do, but I just find that there's just no time.

Many of these teachers have had to teach subject areas with which they were unfamiliar and in some cases had no training at all. Lack of personal resources and

expertise compounded their struggle with balancing multiple demands and pressures. In some cases it appeared to be a situation where a body was needed, so a body was found: “It’s not what you’re qualified to teach, it’s what slot you fit in and that’s sad, that’s sad, and that’s what’s happening.” ; “I had to teach biology and I hadn’t done a course in university so that was pretty stressful.”

Assigning teachers to areas outside their expertise was viewed as being especially problematic for young teachers. Teaching courses without an adequate background or university training can cause additional pressure for teachers as well as students, especially when parents become aware of their inadequacies.

Parents at first when I went there were not pleased with the marks I was giving the students because the teachers they had before were not marking appropriately or to grade level. Many of them were not English teachers and didn’t know beyond the basics. Just as if I had been asked to teach math [laugh] I wouldn’t do very good. So, when parents came in to visit me they were very agitated.

One teacher summed up the problems of being inadequately trained for a subject area in which an individual is required to teach. She described the detrimental effects this had on students, the concerns it raised for parents, and her own feelings of inadequacy.

I had never done science labs ever in high school Now I had to teach science. What was all this equipment about? I didn’t know what I was doing. Those kids, I know, really suffered ’cause I was their science teacher. I found it very stressful. It was my first year teaching I also had about a third or half the class were behavioural problems. Really severe. Knowing that some of the kids knew I should be doing more, and knowing some of the parents knew I should be doing more, and I knew I should be doing more but not having the skills or ways or time to find out. It was very stressful.

The problems of being required to teach subjects outside the teacher’s area of expertise were widely discussed. The uncertainty and anxiety created was compounded

by having to teach students at various levels of ability and often with discipline problems. It also created concern among parents who were not pleased with the learning situation for their children.

4.3.4 *Summary*

The interviews highlighted the importance of adequate physical resources and the detrimental effects felt by teachers and students when such resources were not available. Additionally, feeling prepared and confident to teach was perceived as a basic requirement prior to entering the classroom. These descriptors were intertwined as participants spoke of having timely access to adequate physical resources in order to be intellectually prepared. The need to be skillfull in several areas, to have the time and resources to upgrade academic skills and pursue professional development, and to learn new curriculum were seen as having a cumulative effect and were causes of considerable concern for these teachers.

Participants defined good leadership as one of the most important attributes of an administrator. They wanted and expected administrators at all levels to communicate effectively, to demonstrate an understanding of the day-to-day issues facing teachers, and to provide the supports necessary for teachers to effectively execute their responsibilities. They also desired a safe and pleasant environment in which to work and socialize. Collegial support was valued and deemed important to offset the demands and pressures of the job. That this was often not experienced was attributed to busy schedules and a workload that did not allow enough time to either look for support or be supportive.

4.4 The Realities of Stress

The third theme to evolve was the realities of stress. Four properties were identified: participants' understanding of stress, self-concept, the taboo of stress, and feeling so consumed by the job that it interfered with personal life. The text of the interviews illustrates the many ways in which stress was experienced and the wide ranging impact it had on participants' lives. They described physical, psychological, and emotional outcomes of stress and their cumulative effects: their inability to teach in the manner desired, repercussions for family, and the effects they felt personally.

4.4.1 Participants' Understanding of Stress

The word stress was used quite freely by study participants. Therefore, it was necessary to ask what was meant by it in the context of the work environment. The interviews elicited feelings of being under the pressure of time and of running down and wearing out as they talked about low energy and of not being able to keep up the pace they felt was expected of them. Feelings of frustration were enhanced when stress incapacitated them and prevented them from performing at the desired level. One teacher explained stress in the context of time pressures: "Something that makes me uptight, pushed for time. A hurry weight always there." The teachers' definitions of stress highlighted causal factors, the effects that stressors had on them. Physical effects were quite often described, particularly in the form of low energy.

How do I find stress? I find like sometimes I haven't got the energy to do anything, you know. Stress has taken away your zest. It takes away your energy. It causes sickness.

One teacher experienced exhaustion to the point where she felt she "wasn't operating on all cylinders." Her physical and psychological symptoms were intertwined as she faced the prospect of another day at school. Her dialogue captures the progression of her symptoms.

I'd be very fatigued is the best way of putting it. Didn't have a lot of energy. Fatigue was probably the big thing. After a while when it got really serious it would be lack of sleep ... the tightness in the chest developed to perpetual coughing. My husband would always know when I was getting upset because I'd cough in the morning. I'd cough and cough. It was a tightness ... that's from anxiety [about going to work] There were days that I barely knew how I got through because it was related to lack of sleep, not operating on all cylinders, like you say. You know that part of you is not there.

Another teacher found that stress limited her ability to live a healthy life style because she felt depleted of energy. She found it difficult to put her job out of her mind when she was home. Her exhaustion reached a point where it appeared she was becoming dysfunctional.

I'd get to sleep OK but I'd wake up and things would be going around and around in my head and I might not get back to sleep ... Getting home, all that I wanted to do was lie down on the sofa and stay there ... very exhausted. And I think, interfered with sleep, interfered with eating, not having an appetite, not having an interest in preparing healthy foods. Packaged suppers for two weeks in a row which is not your healthiest diet so it reflected on the way I was taking care of myself.

It was often apparent to these teachers that their colleagues had symptoms of stress too: "People just get more edgy, much more preoccupied It's just that you can go in [to the staff room] and look sometimes and say 'OK, I think I'll leave now.'" One teacher described the manner in which she witnessed stress in her colleagues.

You see a lot of teachers in the staff room; they're drained, they're absolutely drained. They have no energy. Some of them get sick and end up being off ... it's just your body is just so worn down that you end up picking up the bugs that are everywhere in a school.

Somatic problems, perceived as a result of stress, were described in the form of headache, fatigue, insomnia, muscular discomfort, high blood pressure, and pain: "I feel a

lot of headaches, stress headaches, whatever you call them.” One participant who had been a physical education teacher for many years said he was very health conscious. However, over the past couple of years, feeling the results of restructuring and a change of schools, he experienced insomnia and chest pain.

I think it's affecting me health wise. This year I've missed a fair amount of time. I ended up with a lot of physical tests ... the more of these things that are eliminated it points towards stress. Very tired, headache. This fall I started to get chest pains There are times I have a problem sleeping.

Another teacher experienced headaches and elevated blood pressure which she could detect herself: “They say you can't feel your blood pressure changing but I certainly could quite often detect that this [situation] is stressful and I was getting really uptight ... more often than not I'd have a headache at the end of the day.” Many of the teachers found they could not unwind after a stressful day, and so insomnia and sleepless nights were a common complaint. There was a combination of physical and psychological signs of stress, and it was difficult for them to ascertain which came first, the insomnia or the anxiety.

Many shades of emotions were experienced and described by the participants. Worrysome thoughts, preoccupations, and fears often interfered with their ability to function, made it difficult to concentrate on the task at hand, and sometimes reached the point that they wanted to avoid going to work: “Certain days it [stress] wants you to stay home, that type of thing. I think that's what stress does to you. Stress takes away your caring too.” The thoughts and worries of one teacher accumulated to the point where she felt consumed and unable to function. No matter how hard she worked she could not meet the expectations.

Well, for me it was an accumulation of things. I would go home on Friday night thinking of everything I had to do on the weekend and

worrying about how I would get it all done. By Sunday night I would be drained. I felt unable to function, totally drained I worked harder and harder until I couldn't handle it any more.

Stress appeared in part, to result from an inability to meet expectations.

Participants related anxiety, tension, fear, frustration, a feeling of inadequacy, and a feeling of helplessness in relation to this problem. There was also a sense of being out of control as they strove to balance the demands and pressures which they continued to describe as “overwhelming.” These teachers attempted to define stress and to describe how it made them feel emotionally.

I guess it's something [stress] that makes you feel anxious, makes you feel down, probably depressed I suppose, on times. You just can't keep up with things that are going on with the time you have to do it.

Stress for me is when there are more expectations of me than you could possibly achieve. It's when you are frustrated because you cannot do everything you need to do or everything that you would like to do.

Stress [sigh] [pause] is just not being able to cope with everything. You know, you've got too much on your plate. You just can't do everything that people want you to do and live up to people's expectations so therefore you get stressed out.

The feelings of anxiety or tension created by a situation ... the feelings of tension that are brought on by situations that either you feel you can't control or situations that are getting out of hand or, you know, beyond the grasp.

Some teachers spoke about dreading going to work. When they felt they could not contend with the pressures and demands any longer they tried to cope by avoiding particular tasks at school or wanted to avoid school altogether.

I think that stress brings on dread. A coping mechanism that avoids things, avoids you doing certain things in school ... you know, I'm

going to avoid this. I'm not going to make a scene because it's going to get me nowhere so pretty well avoid going in that area.

These two teachers described the apprehension they felt just thinking about having to go to work.

I find it difficult walking into the building. I think that [pause] there's always a certain thing when I open the gym door. When I walk into my office in the morning; it's always a nagging feeling about the place.

I've often had a rough day and even the next morning get up and go to work and I don't have an appetite, don't have any breakfast before I go, butterflies in my stomach, sick to my stomach.

Significantly, study participants highlighted the workplace demands which they perceived to be over and above what they could achieve in the time allotted. Throughout these definitions there is the perception that they felt they had little control over their situation. There was the feeling that workplace issues overrode other things, described by one teacher as, "when your job consumes you." Such feelings of stress resulted in anxiety, frustration, helplessness, and ill health. One teacher summed up these definitions quite emphatically when he defined stress, "like running down the road being chased by a Mack truck."

Teachers tended to focus on negative personal outcomes: physical, psychological, and behavioural, rather than any positive effects. Interviews elicited signs and symptoms of all types. Stress often appeared to take a maladaptive form, such as illness, without personal awareness. The problem with signs and symptoms related to stress is that sometimes they are disguised by other symptoms. One teacher did not acknowledge stress until he developed acute back pain, so severe that he was off work for three weeks. He found it difficult to understand that what was happening to him was a physical manifestation of stress until he was diagnosed at the hospital: "I was in school and I just

turned, I didn't do anything ... and I was in bed two weeks on my back, couldn't get out of bed ... I couldn't feed myself, I couldn't do anything." He felt conflicted at that time because his principal who also had a back problem continued to work despite the fact he had difficulty getting out of his chair. The teacher wondered what his principal thought about him being off work: "Does he think that people who are off on stress leave should be in [school] because, ha, that's nothing?"

Several other teachers discussed how difficult it sometimes was to recognize stress. One teacher said: "I'd started getting stressed without realizing it. I had no idea I was feeling stress." Others said: "I'm not sure if I was really fully aware It was almost like I had shut down."; "It's hard to recognize our own and it's hard to recognize it in others unless they are completely agitated or completely worn out." This teacher described how stress crept up on her without her knowledge: "One Sunday I remember I just cried and cried. I had started to get stressed without even knowing it; I had never acknowledged my feelings and the stress just accumulated."

One participant described in detail how he failed to recognize the symptoms of stress. It was not until he felt desperate enough to visit the doctor that the hidden culprit was revealed. The doctor was surprised; he wasn't a very common visitor.

He [doctor] said to me ... "Boy, it's strange to see you over here"... I said, 'I felt like if I didn't come over here I felt like I was going to bust'. The pressure, like I was ready to explode, you know. It seems like you're trapped and you can't get out. So that's how I felt and I went over and talked to him. He could tell right away from looking at me.

Another teacher did not initially recognize stress as her problem and tried to attribute it to other factors: "I tried to sort of suggest that it was, oh, fluctuating hormones." One teacher, off on stress leave at the time of interview, spoke about how she perceived her

health problem and why she needed leave. “I think the life style of a teacher makes, or made me ignore my emotional needs completely. [pause] I never really addressed the emotional needs that I had and I think that’s eventually why I broke down.” And yet another could hardly believe that the problem she had was not a physical illness as such, but was due to stress:

My neck used to all break out ... I used to get headaches with spots across my eyes ... When I went to the doctor about my eyes, I can remember going and they said, you know, you must be under stress. And I said no, nothing really bothers me They said, well, you know, you’re having symptoms of stress.

The transcripts illuminated the problems created when stress was not acknowledged, when the stressors were not dealt with. When participants suppressed their feelings and tried to carry on, despite feeling under pressure, stress was exacerbated and the cycle continued as this teacher, retired for one year, related. The longlasting effects of trying to appear normal and cope with the demands and pressures, of avoiding the problem, are evident here as she still has difficulty discussing that experience. The pain in her voice was almost tangible as she spoke very quietly.

Some teachers have gone in and closed the door and screamed. I’ve gone in and closed the door and cried. And then you have to, twenty minutes later, open the door and appear like everything is normal. So you do a lot of pressing down, pressing down. [She held her hands palms down and demonstrated pushing down.]

Then, waving her hand in a “no more” fashion, and with head down, she said: “I don’t want to talk about that any more.”

4.4.2 Self-concept

Teachers' self-concept is heavily influenced by experiences from interacting with students, administrators, and parents as well as the work environment in general. One teacher said: "I sometimes get the feeling I'll be totally ignored." Another teacher said: "If they treated you with respect, they'd listen to you and take what you have to say with a certain amount of concern." Many of the participants spoke about the effect of feeling that they were low on the totem pole in comparison to administrators at all levels. One teacher said that she did not feel valued, and as a result, "It lowers your morale quite significantly."

Fear of being found wanting in some respects caused several of the participants to question their abilities, especially when schools were compared to each other: "Is this a reflection on us? On me?" Another teacher said, "I was afraid to say I can't handle this. I think it's because we have this expectation that we can be everything to everybody, and we can't, not without help." Several teachers spoke about their self-evaluation, their loss of confidence in their ability to be a good teacher, and their loss of self-esteem: "I started to question whether I could teach, whether I was a good teacher." A relatively new teacher said: "I found myself worrying, second guessing myself ... what would they say, how would I be perceived."

Participants' feelings of powerlessness and despair were expressed or reflected in the interviews. The perception appeared to be that appropriate changes would never be made and feelings of being overworked and fatigued would continue. Against this background of thoughts and feelings these participants believed that work demands and pressures and anxiety often led to poorer work performance and compromised relationships with students. Negative self-perceptions and low feelings of self-worth were an internal barrier that often caused teachers to appraise themselves and their effectiveness in the classroom as less than optimal. This teacher was supposed to be an

expert in motivating students. Instead, she experienced great difficulties, saw herself as a failure, and questioned her ability to continue teaching.

I had done all this beautiful research on my master's about how you can motivate these students but none of it worked. And I kept asking myself 'why?' Why did none of this work? I tried everything ... so, yeah, it was like I was failing.

Changes in behaviour that resulted in a diminished performance were not uncommon as teachers talked about how they coped with stress. For some, disengagement, even for short periods, was a way to survive but it was a no win situation. They felt badly about the repercussions for students and they did not feel good about themselves. One person said he found himself "giving up in many ways." He saw the situation "somewhat cynically," as "Survival of the fittest. Just sort of deal with as little as you can. Get in. Get out." But when asked how it felt to just resign himself to disengaging like that, he said "horrible."

They recognized that their behaviour in the classroom changed as a result of stress, or perhaps as a way to cope with stress: "I was having trouble concentrating ... I just had no ambition to get anything done." Feeling ineffective and non-productive, their self-esteem often faltered and their job satisfaction decreased. In short, study participants believed that their performance as a teacher was probably less than optimum at times.

Mentally, it was mentally draining. I just didn't have the energy and when you yourself are not motivated or energetic it's very difficult to teach a group of thirty-one fifteen or sixteen year olds. How can you get them to a level to teach them if you are not at your own game? You can't.

One of the younger teachers confessed that when he was stressed he felt "snappy."

“I’m a little more jumpy, especially if I’m not sleeping too good. I’m just a little more tired in the morning, takes me a little longer to get going.” When asked if that meant he was less tolerant of his students when he felt stressed he answered “exactly.”

One study participant, who had been off on stress leave, discussed how that affected her self-confidence as she struggled with returning to work: “It has taken me a long time to accept that perhaps I could learn enough mechanisms to go back to work. The first two or three months I was off I was sure I would quit teaching.” Still another teacher struggled with the stress of teaching and being effective.

It goes against your self-esteem because you define yourself by who you are and what you do ... I know I’m a good teacher. And you know, last year I wasn’t a good teacher. And I knew I wasn’t a good teacher so that made it even worse. What was I doing? I wasn’t teaching the way I wanted to teach.

The loss of self-confidence and self-esteem was described somewhat emotionally by other teachers for whom the need to be a “good” teacher was very strong. They spoke about their sense of insecurity, self-doubt, and devaluing of themselves, culminating in a sense of failure.

And nobody wants to admit to failure you know.... You try to cope within until you get somebody that you can confide in. I think that’s an automatic stress maker in itself.

You feel the [pause] the sense that I have failed I can remember driving home from school feeling like I’m not a very good teacher and I don’t do a very good job ... and I would just feel like “aw, I wish I could be more like ___.”

Clearly, this loss of belief in one’s self was difficult to overcome and caused considerable grief, adding to the inability to be effective in the classroom. One teacher expressed it thus: “Teachers, I think we doubt ourselves quite a bit ... There is always that sense of insecurity or self-doubt or self-deprecation.” This was often the case when parent-

teacher interviews took place as well. Fearing aggressive parents or that parents might not see them as a good teacher, some felt insecure and worried: “I’m always anxious about parent-teacher interviews ... maybe it’s me; maybe that’s my shortcoming.”

These teachers reported feelings of powerlessness as they struggled to manage/control a class without adequate back up from administration. Their need to exert some control over their own situation was apparent: “The thing I don’t like [*pause*] the feeling of being absolutely helpless to change anything.” Without the perception of support and control, it seemed that these teachers had lost some interest in continuing the fight: “I was really disillusioned you know, very disillusioned.”

Even while imposing high standards on themselves, lingering feelings of inadequacy and a sense of failure surfaced frequently in the interviews. Stress on the job was at the root of these feelings and in turn, such feelings contributed to their level of stress, a cycle from which these teachers found it difficult to extricate themselves.

4.4.3 *The Taboo of Stress.*

Many of the participants referred to the taboo of stress and an apparent reluctance to recognize it at work. Only one of the teacher participants had taken part in a workshop on stress although several said they had asked for one in their school. When one participant was asked if the topic of stress was ever addressed in his school he replied: “Never ever. Nothing. And yet, everybody’s running around completely stressed.” Participants spoke of the stigma attached to stress, the reluctance to discuss the topic at school and the fear that they would be perceived as weak if it were known that they were stressed. It appeared that although stress was sometimes addressed in the staff room, it was most often in negative terms or as a joke: “People joke about it in the staff room where they say ‘I’m stressed out’ but I think they really mean it.” Some participants

expressed concern that although teachers admit their job is stressful, they do not admit to their own stress or even, perhaps, recognize their own stress or that of their colleagues. One teacher said: “The particular study that you’re doing and the particular area that you’re looking at, I think, is something that right now is not being recognized at all.”

Several teachers stated during the interviews that this was the first time they had discussed stress in relation to themselves. There appeared to be many reasons for this reluctance to talk about stress, particularly at school: “Stress is seen as a weakness;” “Stress is something that people don’t want to let other people know that they are stressed because that might let people know that they are weak ... because of that, people don’t usually tend to speak up.” Others associated the fear of speaking out with possible repercussions professionally.

I know people on our staff right now and they put up with much more than I ever would. They are frightened to death to even let anybody know that they are experiencing trouble so I can’t imagine what kind of stress they are under.

You might tell your close colleagues how you were feeling but you wouldn’t let the administration know or school office personnel.

One teacher, who expressed the opinion that “There’s a lot of teachers in our school who are stressed to the max,” recollected a time when his administrators agreed to discuss stress at a workshop and the fallout that resulted.

About two years ago it was decided by the administration that we would close down the system for the whole day and deal with it. And when it finally came to the crunch we only spent two hours of that day dealing with stress! They broke us into groups with a department head ... it wasn’t a very open reception ... the department heads took notes and then took them to the administration and the administration said “Who said this?” “Who said that?”

There were also fears of what colleagues might think of a person who admitted to feeling stress, concern that he/she might be perceived as not up to the job.

You're terrified to admit it. You would never say "I feel really stressed." You might say "The class is really stressful" but not in the true sense of the word. Some of the very high-powered and effective teachers would scorn on people who were concerned about stress. That impression comes across that if you have stress you are weaker and there's a big taboo about it. I think that's why people don't mention how stressed they are really feeling because it is seen as shameful and that you've not completed your job as you should have done.

Even when it is known that a teacher is off on stress leave, his/her colleagues are often appeared to be unsure of how to respond. One teacher related an incident in her staff room where some of the teachers did not think it necessary to send the traditional fruit basket always delivered to a teacher who was on sick leave. Another teacher offered this opinion on why stress is not recognized. "People don't know how to react." She went on to describe the reaction to her when she went on medical leave for stress: "I didn't get so much as a card. I wouldn't say I was hurt but [pause] surprised. And you think, you know, why not?" She emphasized the importance of being alert to signs of stress in her colleagues and being supportive of one another.

I think people should be aware of any changes in what you're used to, in terms of behaviour and social ... may be distress. Trying to be aware of it in other teachers and trying to be aware of what you can do afterwards. It can be as simple as a phone call.

Most participants felt that there should be something at a school level and at a district level where ideas could be shared with teachers from other schools. One teacher spoke for many when he said: "We need to work at this. We need to do things, we need to discover the roots of stress ... to make teaching easier and less stressful." The support from administrators did not appear to be there and many stories were related of trying to

get stress on the agenda at staff meetings. One teacher gave a passionate review of the problem and his concern for teachers if the issue continues to be avoided.

We can't get it to the front. They [administration] don't see it as being important enough to deal with Nothing ever gets done to avoid stress. We got suggestions to but nobody wants to listen. You put it on the agenda and it keeps getting put off. But stress, I'm telling you right now, stress is not going to go away in the teaching profession. It's going to be more and more stressful all the time unless it's dealt with and it's *not* [italics added] being dealt with.

Perhaps as one person suggested, administration does not have the answers so they ignore the problem: "They may not have any solutions so they kind of feel that if they ignore it, it will just go away."

In summary, there appeared to be a reluctance at all levels to address the issue of stress. Some teachers could hardly admit to themselves that they were feeling stress, others worried that they might be seen as "weak" or incompetent, and still others worried about the professional repercussions if they confided in administration. The general consensus, though, was that this is a major concern for teachers and that it needs to be addressed, that there needs to be a better understanding to reduce the taboo of stress.

4.4.4 Feeling Consumed by the Job: Interference with Personal Life.

Participants frequently talked about being consumed by their job. They spoke about how it was difficult to get away from it, to put it out of mind, and of how the job interfered with all aspects of their lives. One teacher defined stress as feeling consumed to the point where he found it difficult to separate himself from his work.

I would say [stress is] basically when your job consumes you. Regardless of whether you are in school or at home or whatever activity you are doing, the one thing that is on your mind almost all the time is school, students, and work, and courses, dealing with administration, teachers, and everything else. You know, when you reach the point where you can't walk away from it I think that's

when you're stressed. I'd say you just feel overwhelmed. It's just so much or it's so frustrating or you feel so helpless that it just overwhelms you.

This teacher described how being consumed by work evoked fears about not being able to manage, resulting in insomnia and panic attacks. His description demonstrates the increasing impact stress had on him as his sleep problems worsened.

All I can call them is panic attacks, or anxiety attacks It was four o'clock in the morning; I woke up and I thought "Oh my Jesus, I'm not going to get the work done ... there's no way I'm going to accomplish it" I could always get back to sleep but now, sometimes the cold sweats; I can't get back to sleep ... and I said "I hope to God this isn't going to become a problem. I can't handle this."

Another experienced both physical and psychological effects of stress, but it was the psycho-emotional aspect that finally forced him to take stress leave and seek counselling. Feeling overwhelmed by the workload and feeling physically and emotionally unwell, he questioned his ability to teach and whether he could cope with the job. He spoke about how stress had impacted his family when he was unable to separate work from home.

I felt a lot of headaches, stress headaches, whatever you call them, loss of sleep night time, lack of being able to concentrate on work you are trying to do, irritable, irritable with family members when you come home from work for the day and you've probably got three or four hours of work to do before the day is over You end up taking it home with you, irritability and short tempered ... emotionally drained sometimes after a very rough day, that kind of thing. Wondering if the way you approached it or if you did it right, or is this going to happen again tomorrow or is this going to be like this now every day for the rest of the year.

This teacher also had difficulty separating work life and home life. There was a substantial impact on family and little time for fun.

The people in your family are feeling the effects of your stress I had less time to play with my family, you know, my son and husband. We never went on dates, my husband and I, ever, never ever, ever. And my son, the most I would do with him would be his piano I was locked in the study all day Saturday and half Sunday.

Another young mother also worried about the affect her work-related stress was having on her children:

You're very quick tempered, you have little patience You can carry it home with you. You can't help it and you end up not having patience with your kids. Your children come and say "Mommy, can you do this?" [You say] "Leave me alone." You just don't have the energy or desire to do anything.

The loss of personal and family time was felt keenly by most of the interviewees: "Time-wise there is no time for one's self and it's just being pulled apart in all directions ... the lack of personal time is phenomenal."; "I feel that I missed out on an awful lot of things that I would have loved to have done." The non-stop pace caused one teacher to lose even the joy of a weekend because he ended up working or worrying about work to be done, so he lost the opportunity to socialize or spend time with his family.

I don't have time to unwind In some ways I hate Sundays because if I haven't done the work on Saturday I've got to think about preparing or getting [pause] spending an afternoon, even if it's a nice afternoon, catching up on the work, preparation or correction, or whatever else. The weekend is not my own.

One teacher struggled with the loss of personal/social time and felt that neither family nor friends understood why she wasn't able to join them.

Even amongst my own family and friends people will say, "Why don't you come out with us on a Wednesday night or do something." They don't realize that I am up every night past midnight working. I can't get my work done even then.

They could not go back in time to regain time lost, and there was a sense of sadness and guilt as they discussed this. One teacher referred to this as he spoke about what he felt his job had cost both him and his family.

The fact that there have been hours each night outside of the school day which takes away from your social life, time with your family ... I went through a separation and divorce and when I look back at it I actually believe that part of the reasons that happened was because of the amount of time I was putting into my teaching job which kept me away from my wife and my daughter.

Another described how the stress of his job had resulted in a loss to himself and so to his family. There was an expression of regret in what his job had cost him and his family.

I'm not the most talkative at home ... I'm distant in some ways ... sometimes emotionally distant because I don't want to be talking. I don't always want to be around people ... I just want time to myself. I've started to think about that lately, with regards to my children ... I don't know if I spend enough time with them ... I've in some ways, I've cheated my own family of my time.

And it was not just husbands and children who experienced the impact of the teacher's stress. Some participants felt badly about neglecting their parents: "I can recall that there would be two weeks in a stretch when I wouldn't be able to see my parents. There just didn't seem to be a) time or b) energy, you know."

In summary, these teachers appeared to be consumed by their jobs to the point of having difficulty separating work and family. This had repercussions both physically and emotionally and that was said to impact families as well. Participants expressed concern for the manner in which they presented themselves at home: the lack of energy, irritability, and lack of time to interact with family members.

4.4.5 Summary

These teachers' comments illustrated the complexity of stress and the difficulties associated with recognizing the signs and symptoms and of accepting ownership of the diagnosis. Stress was manifested as a fusion of physical, emotional, and psychological effects that appeared to impact these individuals personally and professionally. They were able to articulate these manifestations and to describe the extrinsic effects on their productivity, self-esteem, and on their families.

A picture presented of a profession which demanded constant attention often to the detriment of participants' health and well being. In particular, the emotional repercussions of stress seemed difficult for these teachers. There were frequent references to the difficulty of separating work life from home life and the problems that caused. Feelings of guilt were common when families were neglected because of work responsibilities. This added to often-present feelings of low self-esteem.

The transcripts illustrate how feelings of self-worth and productivity in the classroom are closely linked to the manifestations of stress. When teachers were exhausted physically, and/or emotionally unwell, they experienced difficulty coping in the classroom. As they perceived that their productivity had decreased, they lost confidence and feelings of despair and helplessness were experienced in addition to feelings of inadequacy.

Many of these teachers spoke of the losses they experienced due to their demanding job and the stress that accumulated. They found themselves redefining their professional identity and role as a teacher, in what they perceived as adverse circumstances. The cost of adapting and redefining their role and adjusting their goals was a loss of personal and family time, self-esteem, confidence, and often life-long career dreams. They were concerned not just for themselves but also for their students, whom

they felt experienced a loss as well when teachers felt less effective in the classroom and were physically and emotionally exhausted.

The realities of stress appeared to cause a loss of spirit and meaning in the lives of these participants. Their experiences of lower levels of satisfaction with their work and perceived reduction in their own effectiveness in the classroom were seen as a result of job stress, but these are also contributing factors to their stress. The resulting disillusionment seemed to ensure that the cycle of stress would continue as participants voiced little hope for improvement in their situation.

4.5 Interrelationship Between Theoretical Constructs

The central objective of this study was to determine how a group of high school teachers in Newfoundland experience stress. Three constructs (the struggle to balance multiple demands, the importance of supportive work environments, and the realities of stress) interact and exist around each other. The first two constructs influence and shape the perceived level of stress experienced by each individual. Emerging from the data, a common thread connecting the constructs was determined to be “recognizing the challenges of being a teacher” (Figure 1).

The constructs, struggling to balance multiple demands (e.g. paper work, meetings, curriculum changes) and the importance of having a supportive work environment (e.g. administrative support) directly influence each other. These teachers felt that without the desired support they were less able to meet the demands and pressures. With so many demands, they felt that resources, physical, personal, and professional were essential if they were to be effective in the classroom. The realities of stress, physical, emotional and psychological outcomes, were often perceived to be the direct outcome of the many demands and pressures and the perceived inadequacy of

support. In turn, when feeling stressed, these teachers felt they could not meet all the expectations, could not be supportive to their colleagues, and sometimes disengaged themselves from administrators. The work environment was not perceived as a healthy environment when the demands were heavy and when supports were not felt adequate. It was felt by participants that stress itself added to the unhealthiness of the work place environment because stressed out teachers created negativity, especially in the staff room. They wanted stress to be acknowledged by administrators and colleagues, to have discussions on the topic, to work towards solutions for the problems, and to create a healthier environment in which to work.

Recognizing the challenges of being a teacher is defined as developing a greater understanding of the day-to-day working life of a high school teacher in Newfoundland and what they perceived as being paramount in helping them cope with stress. Such an understanding is perceived by the participants as important for the teachers themselves, for administration at all levels, and for society in general. As the data unfolded it became apparent that the teachers' view of their profession and of themselves as professionals changed as they faced new challenges and developed a greater awareness of their chosen career. These teachers described how, initially, they were enthusiastic and had lofty goals about helping young people, sharing their area of expertise to educate students, and contributing to society. As the interviews evolved, the participants' descriptions of themselves portrayed an on-going redefinition of their professional self in order to meet the expectations of administrators, parents, students, and society in general. Teaching was not entirely what they had envisioned.

New situations and roles for which participants were unprepared gave rise to self-appraisal and reconstructing methods to suit the occasion. As these teachers became more experienced many of them also became disillusioned. Perceiving that adequate

administrative support or collegial support was not available and without the necessary resources they felt were necessary, they often felt left alone to their own resources. In order to cope they reappraised their goals and objectives and accepted that perhaps some of their original goals were too idealistic. They recognized that it was impossible to do all that was expected of them, and they learned to live with that to some extent. Many of them developed a greater understanding of stress and put some controls in place to make stress more manageable. In doing so, a new and evolving picture of what teaching is all about exists for them.

Quite often participants expressed a desire for greater support and for greater recognition of their situation. They expressed concerns that society does not seem to understand their job, that there is an underlying notion that teachers are not really working, that they have a “pretty cushy job.” They saw irony in the way that, on the one hand the public seems to regard teaching as an easy job, but on the other hand but would not want the job. These feelings are supported by the CTF (2000) study which reported that the teaching profession has been socially undervalued for the past decade.

One teacher expressed her feelings this way: “If one values education and children then surely one should value the person who is responsible for educating them.” This perceived lack of respect contributed to an overall feeling of being unsupported and added to the stress already felt. One teacher of several years said: “People have the wrong idea of teachers.”

Feeling burdened by a workload they perceived as unrealistic and impossible, teachers struggled to meet the challenges and balance the demands. Changes brought about by restructuring, the implementation of Pathways and inclusive classes, and new curricula added to the day-to-day stresses of teaching. Stress appeared to challenge each individual’s ability to teach in the manner he or she desired. Teachers felt increasing

pressures to not only learn the ins and outs of new curricula but also to develop individual curricula for students with special needs. In turn, they were accountable for the learning outcomes for all students. The required documentation was burdensome and carried with it concerns for teachers. They felt they might be unfairly judged depending on the success of their students, and this further increased feelings of stress.

In their attempts to meet these challenges they gained a better understanding of what they could and could not manage and what was realistic, although this was often frustrating for them. Many had concerns about being consumed by the heavy workload and the impact of this on their personal and family lives. Recognizing the dangers and valuing their relationships, they appeared to be learning to put controls in place here, too. Perhaps more frustrating were their feelings that administrators did not appear to recognize the barriers teachers faced (Pathways, inclusive classrooms, poorly motivated students, students with behaviour problems, fears for personal safety, and inadequate resources) as they tried to be effective in a classroom that was not always a healthy environment in which to work. There was a desire for greater input into decisions that would affect their classrooms, their teaching responsibilities, and their levels of stress. They wanted their professional expertise to be recognized and valued.

The findings suggest that when administrators recognized the day-to-day challenges and the barriers faced by teachers, then teachers felt supported and understood. In turn, this reduced some of their stress. On the other hand, when administrators were perceived to be out of touch with the realities of the classroom and did not demonstrate leadership qualities, stress increased. The respect and support particularly regarding disciplinary problems of administrators and colleagues increased the likelihood of a healthy environment in which to work. The perception of teachers was that the nature of the classroom is not fully understood, particularly inclusive

classrooms where behaviour problems were reported to be greater and where the fear of possible violence continually kept them apprehensive. When administrators were thought to be out of touch with these realities classroom teachers felt the difficulties of their job was not fully recognized and the unhealthy environment in which they worked was not recognized.

Participants felt that the realities of stress were not fully recognized by administrators. Although many of them attempted to have the issue discussed at school it generally was not. Administrators were seen as avoiding recognition of this problem so closely associated with being a teacher. The taboo of stress was widely discussed in the interviews. The teachers' own attempt to address the issue was to take part in this study, hoping that teacher stress would be acknowledged and better understood. The data reveal deep concerns of these teachers to have the problem addressed, for the profession to be recognized as a high stress occupation, and the need to develop ways of reducing stress in the workplace.

Collegial support was important to these teachers as well. However, they did not always feel supported by their peers, and they acknowledged that it was sometimes difficult to be supportive in such a hectic environment. When such support was felt, it helped relieve the tensions of the day. When it was not perceived, feelings of resentment, frustration, and sadness were expressed.

The physical environment in which they worked was addressed many times in the interviews. When teachers compared their own environment to that of board office and Department of Education employees they felt undervalued, and they resented the perceived "them" and "us" attitude. They wanted administrators to recognize not only the classroom issues leading to stress but also the need for a pleasant area in which to

work during preparation time and in which to socialize with colleagues during lunch breaks and before and after school.

The need to be recognized and valued is an underlying factor in this study. These teachers feel they can overcome some of the barriers to effective teaching and manage others if they are recognized and valued for their hard work. Administrative support and adequate resources are an important element. They want to have the topic of stress brought to the forefront; they want recognition that stress is not a weakness. In their perception, a healthier working environment will create a healthier learning environment for students.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This qualitative study used grounded theory to explore teachers' perceptions of their working environment. The present study expands upon previous research which documented job stress as a major concern for teachers. Little research on teachers' work environment has been conducted in Newfoundland and Labrador in recent years, and previous research has generally been quantitative.

This study focused on teachers in the NL educational system and sheds light on their concerns and their perceptions of teaching in present times. The discussion is presented according to the major theoretical constructs generated from the data analysis.

5.1 Struggling to Balance Multiple Demands

Hunter (1977) recognized the many demands on teachers when she wrote:

Air traffic control, surgery and teaching are probably three of the most potentially stressful occupations in the world ... in them people are responsible for functioning in learned patterns yet must also possess on-their-feet, high speed thinking and decision-making skills to handle the unexpected situations triggered by the variance of humans and the caprice of nature (p.122).

This study provides new insight into the working environment in which teachers are employed, in particular the multiple demands and pressures facing them and the hectic pace at which they work each day. While there is some support for the findings in the literature, much of the research has been quantitative and teachers have not had the opportunity to describe their teaching experiences from their point of view. Central in these findings was a feeling from teachers of being disabled by demands and

responsibilities while at the same time struggling to overcome the barriers that were perceived to inhibit effective teaching.

Teachers in the present study were overwhelmed with the scale and pace of educational change in the province in the past few years. Some of the changes were considered to have a negative effect on students and to increase the already heavy work load of teachers. Farber (2000) and Hillier (1999) concurred when they noted that although educational reform was supposed to lessen teacher stress, in fact it had little impact or even a negative impact. They, along with Dibbon (2004), found that time, or specifically, the lack of time, was a major concern for teachers and that teachers responded to the hurried pace and pressures of organizational change and school reform in various ways: confusion, panic, anger, withdrawal, anxiety, and stress.

Farber (2000) suggested that in their efforts to raise academic standing, schools had become rigid and intrusive with regard to what was being taught. Leithwood (1999) expressed parallel concerns to the teachers in this present study when he discussed the “turbulent,” changing environment in which teachers work. Similarly, Evers et al. (2002) and Dibbon (2004) reported that curriculum changes associated with restructuring often resulted in a lack of time for teachers to be trained in new skills or to consult with one another about new methods. Ben Jaafar et al. (2005) reported that teachers felt overwhelmed by demands when change occurred too quickly and too often and that they resisted when they distrusted some of the changes. Those teachers also felt they were not valued as professionals when their knowledge and expertise were not being valued.

Teachers in this current study reported feeling bombarded by demands and deadlines within the work day with little time to reflect on their work. The incremental and cumulative expectations of others caused them to feel pressured and stressed. Long working hours and lack of preparation time have been regularly cited in the literature as

stressors for teachers (Blase, 1986; CTF, 2001; Dibbon, 2004; Drago, 1999; Harvey & Spinney, 2000; Kelly & Berthelsen, 1995; Naylor, 2001a). Perceived work demands were the most powerful predictor of teacher stress according to Jacobsson et al. (2001).

Participants in the current study described the many hours spent outside actual school time as enhancing the pressure they were feeling and they often felt resentful when work encroached on personal time. These findings reinforce the research by Shaefer (2001) who found that the average teacher took only 58% of their summer holiday time. Shaefer noted that teachers in her study reported doing general related work (cleaning and/or moving classrooms, preparing and presenting workshops, preparing new curricula, and preparing classes) with a high percentage of them reporting that they felt fatigued soon after the school year began.

In the current study teachers expressed concerns that the increasing demands for accountability added more hours to an already long day. These teachers questioned the need for such extensive paper work which they felt was unrelated to improving teaching and learning. Added to the paper work was the escalating number of meetings required to confirm that students' needs were being met, that the curriculum was being followed, and that teachers were being accountable. These teachers voiced feelings of frustration, fatigue, and anxiety as to where the demands for accountability would all end. They feared they would be held accountable for student outcomes in courses for which they felt ill-prepared and in courses (especially inclusive classes) where the documentation was considered excessive. The many reports of feeling unprepared for teaching new curriculum resulted in feelings of insecurity. These findings also concur with Leithwood et al. (2002), Evers et al. (2002), and with Ingersol (2003), who argued that teachers should have more control over areas for which they are held accountable.

Teachers in this study expressed frustration about the rising demands and conflicting expectations not only from the Department of Education and board offices, but also from the public, who seem to expect them to manage all aspects of the students' upbringing. Of primary concern to the teachers in the present study were the profound social and emotional needs many students bring to school. Teachers felt ill-prepared to deal with many of these issues. Classes now tend to include many more students with serious difficulties: health and behaviour problems, young offenders, and multiple social concerns which require additional attention. Concerns were voiced regarding the extent to which teachers are expected to perform multiple roles that are not directly related to teaching and learning. What teachers feared most was how accountable they would be for some of these issues. In conversation with teachers in Ontario, Watson (1994) found similar frustrations. Watson argued that teachers have neither adequate training nor the resources to deal with the increasing social problems they face in the school system.

The changing role of the teacher has been well documented (Conley & Woosley, 2000; Hargreaves, 1994; Watson, 1994). Similar to the current study, Goddard (2000) found a growing shift of responsibility from family to school. Goddard reported that teachers in Nova Scotia felt they had become a "cure all" for many issues and problems for which they had not previously been responsible, and viewed themselves as "social workers" and "jugglers." Supervision was another. Similarly, participants in the CTF (2001) study reported that they were spending an increasing amount of time on students' personal non-academic problems.

demand. In some schools teachers reported this duty to be excessive, adding that it was exhausting to patrol the corridors and supervise school yards and bussing. In the current study teachers often found themselves on both recess and lunch duty with little or no time for other necessities. Naylor (2001a) reported that teachers' lunch periods were

jeopardized by the pressures of other work demands. Dibbon (2004) also concluded that given the high demands on teacher time in the current working environment, teacher supervision is an unwise use of teacher time. There has been little recognition of supervisory duties in the literature, perhaps because it was not referred to in standardized questionnaires.

Extracurricular activities were an additional demand placed on teachers in the current study. Examples of extra activities that fell within the norm included: coaching sports teams, directing drama clubs, assisting with student councils and athletic clubs, supervising yearbook committees and school outings, and other responsibilities. The effect of such responsibilities weighed heavily on many of the teachers who worried not only about the time spent but the accountability should anything happen to students while under their supervision. One young teacher who coached four sports teams was required to be at school for several hours each evening. That same teacher left the profession at the end of the school year. Several participants in the current study expressed concerns about the enhanced vulnerability of young teachers who were reluctant to say no to extra curricular activities. Concerns for young teachers were also reported by Montalvo et al. (1995).

A second important property defining this construct is barriers to effective teaching. Teachers in the current study identified several barriers to effective teaching. The most serious were Pathways and inclusive classrooms, and behaviour management and the struggle to facilitate learning in less than ideal conditions. Pathways, a comprehensive special needs programme, was developed provincially and, to date, it has not been evaluated, thus there is no evidence to indicate whether this programme facilitates learning. Importantly, teachers in this study had concerns about the added documentation required, the lack of training for effective implementation, and increased

demands on their time. The programme then was perceived in a negative light and thus became a barrier to teacher effectiveness in the classroom.

In the current study, Pathways was identified as a major concern by teachers because of the need to modify the curriculum in different ways to accommodate the diverse needs of students. Frustration and accountability fears were high regarding this problem as teachers talked of struggling to meet their students' needs. Feelings of inadequacy and reduced self-confidence were understandable. "Impossible" was a frequently used adjective to describe the delivery of Pathways as the teachers tried to live up to the demands placed upon them in this regard.

The perception of all the participants in the present study was that inclusion was a major barrier to being an effective teacher. They also felt that they bore much of the burden for implementing inclusive classes. If teachers feel unsupported and overwhelmed by these additional demands, the success of this policy remains questionable. Much has been written, both for and against inclusion, but all researchers agree that adequate teacher training, administrative support and encouragement, and resources are necessities if inclusive classes are to be successful (Abebe & Shaughnessy, 1997; Englebrecht et al., 2003; Geelan, 2002; Goddard, 2000; Green et al., 1997; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 1997; Naylor, 2001b). Geelan (2002) stated that teachers in Alberta were concerned about inclusive classes and noted that some policy changes on paper are sometimes difficult to implement in practice.

Teachers in this present study reported that students' disruptive behaviour was becoming more of a problem in recent years and identified such behaviour as a major source of stress. Managing these students took considerable time and detracted from teachers' ability to teach effectively. Further, they voiced concerns that they had little control over discipline matters and often faced the same students over and over, adding to

feelings of frustration and stress. Student misbehaviour has been identified as a serious stressor for teachers in several studies (Abebe & Shaugnessy, 1997; Blase, 1986; Englebrecht et al., 2003; Freidman, 1995; Jacobbson et al., 2001; Naylor, 2001b). Naylor found that students' negative behaviour increased teachers' stress, but also such behaviour disrupted the class and inhibited the teacher's ability to meet the needs of all students.

Motivating students to learn is always a challenge but it is greater when teaching students with special needs. Expressions of feeling disheartened were frequently heard during the interviews in the present study. Naylor (2001b) explored this issue of apathetic students. He noted that schools are under pressure to keep students in school and to maximize their academic achievement, a task he considered "impossible" considering that some students have minimal interest in academics or are unable to reach academic standards. Similarly, Levin (1995) has found that in light of high unemployment rates, some students question the value of education, feeling that a good education no longer guarantees a good job, and they are therefore disinterested in school.

Equally concerning in this present study was the verbal abuse that teachers often experienced from both students and parents. Aside from Naylor (2001b), the literature does not address the issue of parent abuse and even Naylor does so in a limited manner. Verbal abuse directed towards teachers was not noted in any of the literature to date.

The issue of violence surpasses every day behaviour problems and was perceived to be a growing problem by participants in the current study. These teachers spoke about being on constant alert for disruptions in the class room as well as on the school premises and of the "wear and tear" this caused them. They spoke of "knots in your stomach," of dealing with students who are "extremely volatile," of feeling "threatened," "vulnerable," and of the stress they felt resulting from the fear of violence. The difference in this study

compared to others, with respect to violence, is that teachers spoke about the impact that the fear of violence has on them. They were able to speak about the emotional toll this took on them. A number of Canadian studies support concerns of increasing violence in schools (CTF, 2001; Lyon & Douglas, 1998; Malcomson, 1994; Naylor, 2001b).

Malcomson (1994) found that violence was a more serious problem at the high school level. In a national study on school violence in the United States, Petersen, Pietrzak and Speaker (1996) also found that violence was a growing problem in schools and was especially pronounced at the high school level.

5.2 The Importance of Supportive Work Environments

There is a definite link between the pressures and demands of teaching and the work environment in the current study. The pressure to do more with less affected how these teachers felt, thought, and behaved. These findings support the research of Speilberger et al. (2003) who found that teachers evaluated their work environment in terms of perceived job demands and pressures.

Under such time-pressured conditions, study participants emphasized the importance of working cooperatively and collaboratively with administrators and colleagues to provide a supportive working environment for both teachers and students. Equally important for these teachers was the presence of adequate physical and human resources. Besides adequate resources and positive administrative and collegial relations, study participants identified the importance of forging workable and sustainable relations with students.

Administrative support played a key role in the experiences of teachers in the current study as they grappled with heavy workloads and on-going changes. Changes that were imposed from the outside without their input were often regarded as unworkable

and unintelligible. Rather than just implementing policies, study participants expressed a desire to be involved in developing policies and in taking greater ownership for them. Importantly, several teachers emphasized that individual school needs and circumstances need to be taken into account when policies are developed.

It is acknowledged that teachers' experience and views should be taken more seriously when planning policies and curriculum (Abebe & Shaughnessey, 1997; Jacobsson et al., 2003; Shain, 2001; Speilberger et al., 2003; Wilson, 2001). Additionally, Theorell (2003) stressed that being able to exert control over one's own situation is a fundamental need. Duxbury and Higgins (2003) noted the need to identify, develop, and implement supportive work policies and encouraged dialogue between all parties.

The importance of effective communication, particularly between administrators and teachers, was discussed at length throughout the interviews. Pressure and stress from a lack of communication or recognition of their work was reported by many participants. Quite often, when teachers in the current study made their opinions known, they felt as though they were ignored, did not feel engaged, and felt devalued by administrators. This created feelings of resentment, negativity, and isolation. In an analysis of trends in the Canadian workplace, C. Williams (2003) addressed the importance of good interpersonal relations and collaboration between management and employees. As Hargreaves (1994) noted, teachers can feel isolated when they are at odds with their administrators. As well, the author noted that these differences can lead to stigmatization and silencing. Griffith et al. (1999) also reported that teachers may disengage themselves when the pressures of work become too heavy and support is not experienced. Similarly, Conley & Woosley (2000)

hypothesized that teachers who value a level of control with their work may withdraw and may not perform as successfully.

Feelings of isolation were felt most strongly when teachers in the current study felt that they had to deal with behavioural concerns and discipline without the support of administrators. The perceived lack of control over academic and student issues, coupled with the lack of authority to act on their knowledge and experience, was cause for some of the participants to consider changing careers. Kelly and Berthelsen (1995) recommended that school administrators develop practices that would be more supportive of teaching responsibilities. Abebe and Shaughnessy (1997) argued for training programmes to prepare teachers to teach poorly motivated, disruptive, aggressive, at risk students, as well as those who are intelligent, cooperative, and motivated.

Teachers in the current study suggested that supportive administrators can help bond together a school by valuing teachers as individuals and trusting them to do their jobs. The bonds made with other teachers were also considered important. The camaraderie with colleagues and the connection made while they suffered the highs and lows of the job together created lasting friendships and were seen as a plus to the job. Research is somewhat divided on the importance of collegial support, but many agree that it is important to the general ethos in the school as well as to individuals (Freidman, 2000; Wilson, 2001). Greenglass et al. (1997) found that collegial support buffered emotional exhaustion, an indicator of high stress.

There was a feeling of sadness and sometimes anger and frustration when collegial support was not experienced. A picture emerged of teachers who were so overworked that there was little time to confer with colleagues or even to share lunch and some down time. In addition, these teachers often perceived the staff room as a place to avoid rather than being a refuge and a place to enjoy a laugh with friends. Similarly, Dibbon (2004)

found teachers had little time to confer with colleagues. He considered this a serious problem and one of the reasons why so many innovations were poorly implemented. Farber (2000b) shed some light on the negativity found in staff rooms. This author found that worn-out teachers often minimized successes and maximized failures, and sought out colleagues who confirmed their feelings of a stressful profession.

In the current study teachers' receptivity to change appeared to be influenced by their perception about the support given to facilitate these changes. Significantly, these teachers felt that professional development for new courses and policies was not adequate. The support of experts in the field and having the time to plan and discuss ideas with administration and colleagues were viewed as essentials. The importance of professional development, mentoring and peer coaching to offset the difficulties inherent in rapid and multiple changes has been explored by other researchers. Farber (2000a) cautioned that when such support is not available, teachers experience stress from the additional work.

Teachers in the current study voiced concerns about inadequate personal resources such as on-going professional training. When new curriculum is introduced it would seem reasonable to expect that teachers would receive in-servicing yet this was frequently cited by study participants as not their experience. They were often expected to teach new courses without manuals, texts, in-servicing, or an opportunity to confer with colleagues in other schools who were faced with the same dilemma. Many research studies have determined that professional development is critical to teacher well-being (Evers et al., 2002; Farber, 2000a; Freidman, 2000; Valeo & Bunch, 1998).

Without adequate texts, paper supplies, and space in which to teach in an effective manner, study participants felt added pressure and more stress. They spoke of photocopying materials because texts were not available or were out of date. The irony is

that there is a limit placed on the number of photocopies a teacher can make in one year. Resources for new curricula are essential, yet they were often not available to study participants until the school year was well under way, and sometimes not at all. Hargreaves (1994) addressed the changing world of teaching and advised educators about the reductions in resources and the difficulties resulting from such deficiencies. Naylor (2001a) attributed some of the stress teachers felt to the lack of resources. The provision of adequate resources was considered a “huge issue” by the teachers in Dibbon’s (2004) study.

5.3 The Realities of Stress.

Previous research has proposed that the primary health problem of teachers is stress (Bertoch et al., 1989; Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997). The current study’s findings reinforce the need to be concerned for teachers’ health. As reported by study participants, the effect of workplace stress not only impacts teachers’ health and well-being but also the lives of their families and friends. Additionally, concerns were voiced for students who are taught by teachers experiencing stress.

Although the word is used freely, stress can be difficult to define. The teachers in the current study were asked to explain what stress meant to them and to elaborate on how it was experienced. Feelings of pressure and lack of time to fulfill their own expectations and those of others were paramount. As several researchers have pointed out, society’s expectations of teachers appear to be increasing (Conley & Woosley, 2000; Goddard, 2000; Hargreaves, 1994; Naylor, 2001a) and thus the pressures and demands increase.

Teachers in this study also discussed what they perceived as the main causes of stress in the workplace (balancing multiple demands, work overload, lack of time,

inadequate resources, inadequate administrative support, inclusive classes, Pathways, student misbehaviour, on-going changes, inadequate professional development). The literature points to similar concerns in studies of teacher stress in several countries (Blase, 1986; Borg et al., 1991; Cooper, 1995; CTF, 2001; Dibbon, 2004; Farber, 2000b; Hargreaves, 1992; Jacobsson & Pousette, 2001; Wilson & Hall, 2002).

Using a variety of adjectives, study participants described the indicators of stress using the following adjectives: anxious, frustrated, fatigued, uptight, depleted of energy, exhausted, edgy, drained, inadequate, overwhelmed, down, depressed, panicky, tense, helpless. Similar signs and symptoms of stress have been identified in the literature (Conley and Woosley, 2000; Donnelly et al., 2001; Dworkin et al., 1990; Hargreaves, 2001; J.S. Williams, 2003).

Many participants could not leave school problems at work and stress accumulated to the point where some felt somewhat dysfunctional. The hidden dimensions of stress are not discussed in the teacher literature but became important for these teachers because often it was not until they had to seek medical attention that they began to recognize the signs of stress.

Stress was reported by these teachers as having a variety of physical outcomes. They described having headaches, being unable to sleep, feeling chest pain and back ache, and having high blood pressure. From all indications in this study, physical concerns caused emotional concerns, a cycle which increased as stress increased. Several studies have reported that stress can adversely affect health and can also be incapacitating (Griffith et al., 1999; Karlin et al., 2003; Rosch, 1997; Rozanski et al., 1999; Shain, 2001; Steptoe et al., 2000; Sweet et al., 1999; Travers & Cooper, 1996). Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1978a) argued that while stress produces physical problems, such physical problems can become the source of further stress when teachers become concerned about their health or

there are financial implications. Physical and emotional exhaustion is cited by Black (2003) as one of the most serious outcomes of stress for teachers.

Self-confidence and self-concept became important in the whole picture of stress because being effective as a teacher was important to these study participants. These teachers seemed to be losing the dream of being effective, of making a difference, and of feeling capable and able to deal with everything that was expected of them. As they struggled to manage all the demands and pressures, and to be accountable, they often perceived themselves as lacking the ability to cope and to be a “good” teacher. This all had a negative impact on teachers’ self-image, causing several of the participants to question whether they would be able to continue teaching. Freidman (2000) found that when teachers imposed impossibly high standards on themselves they were often unable to live up to their ideals and ended up physically and emotionally exhausted. He referred to their “shattered dreams” as they experienced feelings of failure and inadequacy. Leithwood et al. (2002) cautioned that accountability initiatives often erode teachers’ sense of self-efficacy and confidence in their work. In her review of the literature on teacher stress, Black (2003) found similar psychological effects and feelings of inadequacy. Perceived low self-confidence was identified as a source of stress by Englebrecht et al.(2003).

These negative self-perceptions were an internal barrier causing teachers to re-appraise their abilities. Many of the study participants reported that they felt unable to cope at times and dreaded going to work some days. Many felt ineffective and were unsure whether their inner resources could sustain them. Indeed, several of the participants in this study reported that they had seriously considered leaving the profession because of stress. Concerns about retention are well documented. Dibbon and Sheppard (2001) found that almost 50% of new teachers considered leaving the

profession. The *Canadian Teachers' Workplace Survey* (CTF, 2001) cited general frustration and stress, work demands, and behaviour problems as the main reasons why teachers leave. Griffith et al. (1999) suggested that disengagement may be beneficial in the short term, but Goddard (2000) reported that some teachers disengage to the point of retreating from the profession as a response to the stress they experience.

The taboo of stress was referred to quite often. Participants spoke of their reluctance to confide in anyone about their stress for fear of being seen as not able to manage, or cope. This was considered a major concern for untenured teachers. The perception was that if a teacher is experiencing stress, there is little of the compassion afforded to a person with a physical ailment. Instead, the stressed out teacher is seen as a "failure." Worse, that was how many of these teachers described themselves as feeling at one time or another. They wondered out loud why there is such a reluctance to talk about stress. They questioned why, when it *is* spoken about, it is usually in joking terms. They debated why stress is not recognized as a serious problem for teachers, as important as a broken bone or a medical complaint. Despite the copious number of research articles and books on teacher stress, these questions have not been adequately addressed.

Participants described how effectiveness at work and at home is handicapped by stress. It impacted their professional lives, their personal lives and their families. The lack of personal time resulted in poor emotional health, guilt because they felt neglectful of their families, and resentment because they felt forced to choose work over self and family. There appeared to be a progression from initial anxiety about job performance to a feeling of being overwhelmed. When individuals began to question whether they were fulfilling the requirements of their job they experienced anxiety and distress which in turn, often negatively affected their relationships with colleagues and students. These

concerns have been documented by others (Dibbon, 2004; Dinham & Scott, 2000; Geelan, 2002; King & Peart, 1992).

Anger was frequently expressed as participants shared their experiences and discussed the stress of their job. They spoke of having a hard day at work and then going home feeling tense and angry. Such feelings made them want to withdraw from interactions with their family, and some of the participants blamed these feelings and their irritability for the breakup of relationships. This may shed some light on concerns for students who are being taught by teachers feeling stress. If a teacher's anger due to stress impacts his/her family, it may be reasonable to believe that it will also impact students. Goleman (1995) explained that stress produces adrenocortical arousal which in turn lowers the threshold for what provokes anger. In fact, Farber (2000a), Schonfeld (1990a), and Slavin (1996) have expressed concerns that a teacher's stress may negatively impact students. Similarly, Nieto (2003) expressed surprise at the level of anger expressed by the teachers she interviewed. Nieto found that anger sometimes develops into feelings of desperation and a desire to leave the profession. Such emotional reactions to stress need to be explored in depth.

The interviews in the present study highlighted the realities of stress for these participants. A picture emerged of dedicated professionals who felt that the environment in which they worked seriously impacted their ability to be as effective in the classroom as they had hoped to be. Aside from the increasing demands on their time and personal resources, they perceived themselves as needing more support from administrators at all levels. As they struggled to meet the demands and pressures without the resources and supports, they experienced physical, emotional, and psychological symptoms of stress. Unfortunately, the cumulative effects of stress were often not understood or acknowledged until there was a serious problem. The realities of the stress experienced

seriously impacted their work, their relationships with colleagues, their health, and their personal and family life. Many of them questioned why they should continue in their profession because they felt less effective in the classroom, which, in turn, added to their stress. They saw little hope for positive change, and they were concerned for the long term effects on their health and well-being.

5.4 Summary of Interrelationships

These three constructs, struggling to balance multiple demands, the importance of supportive work environment,s and the realities of stress, overlap and are interactive. A common thread, recognizing the challenges of being a teacher, emerged from the data. The participants' understanding of all that a teacher's work entails broadened as they gained more experience, and they began to question how they could possibly fulfill the various roles expected of them and meet the growing demands. There was also the realization that their perception of teaching was often different from that of society who expected them to fulfill many roles for which they did not consider themselves trained. So, too, there appeared to be expectations from all levels of education which seemed impossible for them to meet, given the time and resources with which they had to work.

Duxbury and Higgins (2003) made several recommendations to employers to help create more reasonable workloads for their employees and thus a better balance between their work lives and family lives. High on the list was the need to recognize that unrealistic work demands are not sustainable over time and are not cost effective. The authors reported that employees who have a greater sense of control can cope with greater demands. Consequently, they recommended increased employee participation in decision-making.

These teachers all referred to the struggle of meeting challenges when they felt they were often left to their own resources. They perceived themselves as being required to do more with less, which increased the daily strains on their time. The administrative support they wanted and felt they needed was often perceived to be inadequate, leaving them feeling resentful and angry and sometimes somewhat stranded. That was not what they had envisioned when they started teaching, and a different perception of teaching evolved as they questioned their effectiveness.

These teachers had a growing concern about the stress involved in teaching and they recognized that coping with stress was in itself a challenge. However, stress appeared to be a taboo subject and was perceived to be a sign of weakness by colleagues. Thus, silence ensued. Individually, these participants tried to cope with growing levels of stress and the accompanying physical, psychological, and emotional outcomes of stress.

One of the biggest challenges facing these teachers was the need for a healthier working environment. Poor physical working conditions were challenging and caused resentment, especially when they saw that board offices and the Department of Education facilities were much superior. As well, these teachers wanted a happier, more relaxed school environment where they would experience both administrative and collegial support, where there would be time to converse with colleagues, and time to have lunch on most days. Instead, they often felt as though they worked in a negative atmosphere where their expertise and experiences did not count. The perceptions were that their opinions were ignored much of the time and that they had little control over their own work place or their profession. This in turn led to further stress and a loss of self-confidence and self-esteem.

The realities of teaching caused these teachers to question whether they wanted to stay in the profession. In many cases that exacerbated the feelings of stress. They wanted to teach, but knowing what was expected of them and feeling that they lacked support and were somewhat ineffective, they began to consider whether they could stay in the profession. The irony of wanting to be a good teacher, to make a difference to students, and feeling as though that was an impossibility was not lost on these participants.

A qualitative study on what entails a healthy workplace for teachers and how that might be instituted would be timely following on this present study.

Chapter 6

LIMITATIONS, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter presents the limitations of the study, implications, recommendations for further research, and conclusions, based on the data.

6.1 Limitations of the Study

This qualitative study represents a purposeful sample of high school teachers in Newfoundland. Every attempt was made to include both male and female teachers in rural and urban schools and to select teachers across the island. Labrador was not included.

The small sample size ($N=16$) might be considered a limitation. Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest that saturation is reached when collecting additional data seems counterproductive. In the present study there did not appear to be any new themes evolving from the data after the first 10 to 12 interviews. Strauss and Corbin emphasize that it is not the number of individuals who exhibit a concept but rather how often the concept emerges and how the properties look in different conditions.

Teachers were asked to relate their experiences of stress in their working environment. As such, only teachers who had experienced stress at work responded to the invitation to participate in the study. There is no way to determine if the teachers interviewed were more or less stressed than those who chose not to respond. Further research, using similar methods, focussing more generally on the work environment is needed.

The data were based exclusively on high school teachers' experiences and do not include teachers from primary/elementary or junior high schools. Private schools, which may have different administrative structures or support systems, are not represented.

6.2 Implications and Recommendations

The literature does not cover this aspect of teacher stress well. This study illuminates just how seriously teachers can be emotionally affected by stress. This demonstrates the importance of further qualitative studies to better understand their feelings and their needs.

It was clear from the interviews that stress for these teachers was a serious issue and that they wished to bring it to the forefront. Their goal in volunteering for this study was to do just that. They saw it as an opportunity to speak out, and they hoped that by doing so something could be done to "make teaching less stressful." When comments such as "There's a lot of teachers in our school who are stressed to the max" were made it was difficult for the interviewer to understand why, seemingly, administration did not notice. Perhaps they did but felt unable to deal with the problem. Or, perhaps they did not recognize stress for what it was. The literature does not discuss this aspect of teacher stress but administrators' understanding of teacher stress is an area of research worth exploring. As well, further qualitative research to explore the taboo of stress would be helpful to better understand why teachers themselves are reluctant to speak out about stress.

The interviews illustrate teachers' perceptions of a systemic failure to recognize the excessive workload and the associated stress that teachers are experiencing. There are so many expectations but it seems that little consideration has been given to the

effects of cumulative expectations and demands on these teachers. How reasonable is it to expect teachers to implement new curriculum and at the same time develop the curriculum, all without adequate training? Considering the barrage of educational policy changes and the increasing demands placed on teachers it is worrying that none of the previous responsibilities, such as supervision or extracurricular duties, have been reduced or eliminated.

The implications of work overload are clear in this study. Personal time is becoming increasingly scarce outside of school for these teachers as they are faced with increasing demands to meet deadlines that cannot be accomplished within the scheduled instructional time. Perhaps supervision duty could be eliminated by establishing paid positions in each school when supervision is required, thereby freeing teachers for more important work or a much needed lunch break. There is a need for more qualitative studies to give teachers at all school levels the opportunity to discuss these issues.

What creates collegial support in a school, and how can it be encouraged and nurtured? What is the role of administrators? What is the role of teachers themselves? And what is the responsibility of school boards to provide a physically pleasant workplace, especially a staff room in which teachers can gather and lend support to each other? Some communication between all parties could be a positive step towards creating a more nurturing atmosphere in which to work.

Perhaps improving communication between all levels of education would be a start to address some of the concerns voiced by these participants. The importance of effective communication, particularly between administrator and teacher, was discussed at length throughout the interviews. Pressure and stress from a lack of communication or recognition of the work they were doing was reported by many participants. The right mix of challenge and support is in itself a challenge. Changing work structures to

enhance access to the sources of job-empowerment (i.e. shared governance) is within the scope of the education system. Administrators should be encouraged to empower teachers and support professional practice. Rather than implementing policies designed by others, teachers ought to be making their own policies, ones that would suit not the just the school board, but the school.

The barriers identified by teachers in this present study need to be recognized. The implications of inadequate resources affect both teachers and students. This issue must be addressed at all levels of education, and teachers' concerns should be taken seriously to ensure that adequate resources are available. It is unfair to expect a teacher to teach technology courses with only half the computers in working condition and little technical assistance to repair broken equipment. It is not acceptable to expect teachers to purchase their own supplies or to expect students or teachers to study in classrooms designed for half the number of students. How inadequate resources can be justified by the Department of Education was difficult for teachers to understand and caused considerable frustration and anger. Failure to recognize the need for resources was perceived as a lack of respect for both teachers and students. So too were the crowded conditions in which several of the participants had to work. The outcome is an education system which is stressful for teachers, leaving them feeling ineffective in the classroom.

One of the barriers that teachers identified was dealing with students who had varying levels of academic abilities in an inclusive classroom. Additionally, many of those students had multiple difficulties and problems not related to academics. How can the social, vocational, and personal needs of these students be met when the greater portion of the school day is spent on academics? The special-needs students are physically present, which satisfies policy but at what cost? The education system has turned a blind eye to the very problems and conditions that have caused those students to

have special needs, and the teachers are caught in the middle. How can this problem be addressed best? Does the onus lie with the university to prepare teachers for these roles? Should school boards provide professional development in this area? On the other hand, should teachers be expected to perform the role of social worker/care giver? Perhaps, in addition to the guidance counsellor, there is a role for a social worker in the schools.

Discipline was a serious issue for each teacher in this study, but they felt it was not adequately addressed by administrators. They also felt that they had little control over disciplinary matters. Of great concern was the threat of violence. Other studies have demonstrated the problems of discipline and violence using statistics, but there is a need for further qualitative research in this area. No teacher should be expected to live with the threat of physical violence or verbal assault to him/her self or to students in the class room. The fear of possible violence and how it might be managed is a concern that should be studied in greater depth. There are safe school programmes to help ensure the safety of students, but some thought should be directed to ensuring the safety of teachers as well.

Based on the results of this study, there appears to be a need to monitor the health of our schools and to be proactive in stress reduction. The questions arise: What can we do to change the conditions faced by teachers? How can we reduce the turbulence within the school system and improve the quality of work life? How can we educate teachers, administrators, and the public about teacher stress? How can we reduce or eliminate the taboo of stress so that it can be discussed freely?

At the heart of the matter is the realization that stress is a serious problem for teachers. Simply ignoring the issue will not make it go away. According to these participants, stress is linked with a heavy work load, increasing expectations, and inadequate supports. Further qualitative research in these areas, giving teachers an

opportunity to discuss their concerns, is indicated for a better understanding and the possibility of answers to the questions posed. Helping to create an environment where stress could be talked about as something other than failure would be a positive step.

Neither the Department of Education nor the school boards have addressed stress in a serious manner in NL. NLTA provides workshops on stress, but they must first be invited to a school, and only one teacher in this study had had that experience. Additionally, such workshops are generic and cannot possibly address each school's individual concerns in a manner that will result in adequate systemic change. If stress management is to be effective it must be individualized to a particular workplace and it must be more than a "one time" endeavour. Instead, at the present time, the onus is placed on the teacher to learn better methods of coping, and no responsibility has been taken by the education system to reduce teacher stress.

Educational reform has ignored the need for structural changes. For the most part, those changes that have been implemented have been add-ons to existing teacher practices without attention to the root causes of concerns in the education system.

There is a need for the education system to acknowledge the problem of teacher stress and to begin to work with teachers and administrators to seek solutions toward stress reduction. The "front end issues" should be addressed in a proactive manner. Less emphasis on EAP programmes as a solution and more emphasis on what the education system can do to eliminate or reduce teacher stress would be a better answer to this problem.

6.3 Conclusions

The objectives of this study were to increase understanding of the environment in which high school teachers work, to learn more about the factors which contribute to high

levels of stress, and to gain a better understanding of the separate and interactive effects of teacher stress. The researcher considers that these objectives were met and that the findings will contribute to further work directed towards solutions.

Overloaded and bombarded with massive changes and unrealistic time demands, these teachers were feeling overwhelmed, helpless and powerless, exhausted and disillusioned. There was never enough time in their work day to accomplish everything that was expected of them. Their personal lives were eroded by the increasing demands of their job, which impacted their well being, forcing many of them to re-consider their desire to continue teaching.

Time to converse with colleagues, to collaborate, to look for support or be supportive, was negligible, and that often created feelings of isolation. The perception of inadequate administrative support and poor communication caused feelings of being undervalued and created an environment of negativity which in turn reduced feelings of responsibility to the school itself and the system in general. Feeling that they had almost no authority outside the classroom and very little inside, these teachers were left feeling at the bottom of the totem pole.

Effective teachers constitute a valuable human resource, one that needs to be supported and treasured. Instead, these teacher participants felt undervalued, and they worried about their effectiveness in the face of all the obstacles they perceived. The needs of students with academic deficits, social and/or behavioural disabilities, often accompanied by previous failures and frustrations, caused great concern for the teachers. Such students, functioning at a slower and lower academic level will forever be behind and outside the group, yet the teacher is expected to teach this class of 25 to 40 students as a group. Such a task is extremely difficult at best but impossible without adequate supports.

The teachers in this study wanted to be well prepared, to work in a supportive environment where stress is understood and acknowledged, and where they would be encouraged to flourish and grow. They wanted their employer to provide a safe working environment to ensure their psychological and physical well-being. Surely, no teacher should leave their workplace in a worse state of health than when they arrived.

Chapter 7

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Appendix A
Map of School Districts

Appendix B
Human Investigation Committee (HIC) Approval

Appendix C
Recruitment Ad

Appendix D
Participant Consent Form

Appendix E
Participant Information

Appendix F
Interview Schedule

Appendix G
Interview Summary Form

Appendix H Constructs