

**A Study of Teacher Stress: Exploring Practitioner  
Research and Teacher Collaboration as A Way Forward**

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## **Abstract**

There is widespread concern over the high levels of reported work-related stress, job dissatisfaction and psychological distress associated with teaching and the effects of stress on teacher's sense of well-being and their willingness to stay in the profession (Borg, 1990; MSLAT, 1996; Troman, 1998; Schonfeld, 1990; Wilson, 2002). Much of the traditional research on teacher stress has been carried out by external 'experts' using quantitative survey type approaches to analyze occupational stress levels resulting in restrictive data analysis unrepresentative of the true picture of stress in the teaching profession. Researchers have advocated a more holistic approach incorporating mixed methods combining both qualitative and quantitative methods in order to gain subjective teacher reports of stress and coping mechanisms resulting in a fuller picture on teacher stress with future recommendations grounded in research. Recently, the reflective practice movement in healthcare (eg:-Boswell, 2007) has suggested using a more integrative approach to advance practitioner knowledge and empower them to improve practice through reflection to create an understanding of the issues within a local context.

My research was particularly interested in the issues relating to teacher stress including the way teacher stress was being measured and the effectiveness of qualitative over quantitative methods, the inclusion and exclusion practices of disruptive students and the use of practitioner research to encourage teacher collaboration as a way of dealing with teacher stress. Practitioner-Research methodology has been successfully adopted in Nursing and Health-Care and has recently been used in Education with mixed findings some successfully advocating p-r while other research was hampered by bureaucracy and top-down managerial agendas. In relation to this a single UK Secondary school was researched as a case study by the investigator who taught Sixth formers A'level Psychology at the school. The research was conducted in phases using a qualitative multi-method approach incorporating triangulation to include staff, students and researcher reflections about practice in order to encourage staff collaboration, empowerment and meta-cognition. A reflexive stance was thus adopted to underpin the research methodology. Semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted on 20 teachers (varying levels, ages and mixed gender) to assess the proposed research objectives. Classroom observations and student interviews were carried out for a year 10 class to complete the data collection. The findings revealed how students felt caught up in a self-fulfilling prophecy with teachers seeing them negatively, leading to a spiral of failure and

lack of motivation and the teacher interviews with both newly qualified and experienced teachers, uncovered how different coping strategies were used to deal with disruption, classroom and task management in general. The most important findings came from middle managers who claimed there was poor communication between senior tiers and lower teaching tiers with a strong sense of bureaucracy ruling their decisions. In order to bridge this gap, the practice development phase of the research tried to establish collaborative meetings in order to encourage teachers from all levels to self-reflect, deal with problematic issues and action research solutions of teaching practices. The Senior Management Team (SMT, including the Head) did not encourage staff or the researcher to proceed further with the final phase and the research was abruptly halted. *Despite this, I believe that practitioner-research is a viable methodology in education research as it gives 'ownership of knowledge' to the practitioner using a self-reflexive stance to increasing their evidence-based practice resulting in a growth in meta-cognition to make improvements in practice. I feel, we need to increase insider research and use Action Research spirals and collegial collaboration as a way forward.*

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## Prologue

*'Nothing we ever imagined is beyond our powers, only beyond our present self-knowledge'*

**Theodore Roszak**

As a precursor to my thesis I feel it necessary to explain my position as a researcher to the reader and describe how I have produced the chapters in this thesis. I feel this will help guide the reader by placing the research in context and prepare the reader to share in my journey. In relation to this, I have been inspired by Phillips and Jorgensen (2007) who state that the *'preface navigates the text between the individual and the collective suggesting to the reader how the text has been produced and how it is to be consumed'* (p7).

The research is underpinned with reflexivity on theory and self-reflections as a narrative to inform the reader of my personal thoughts and intentions and both are intentionally weaved into the chapters to provide a sense of progression and continuity. This I feel is an important process as Steier (1991) defines *'reflexivity as turning back on one's own experiences to produce spiralling from its own self-pointing'* (p171). In this way narratives can be interwoven into research to produce *'a story in progress'* (Finlay and Gough, 2003) which can inform the reader of the researcher's reflections at different points in time. Furthermore, these reflections can be used to inform narrative and can be effectively incorporated into qualitative research using alternative forms such as poetry, a play, drawings, metaphors, music, photographs or novels (Richardson, 1990, 2000b; Norris, 1997). More importantly, researchers like Sandelowski and Barroso (2002) argue that research reports are perceived as dynamic vehicles between the researcher/writer and the reviewer/reader rather than factual accounts following a set structured write-up. Now it is commonplace in qualitative research that *'one narrative size does not fit all'* (Tierney, 1995 p389) and researchers are experimenting with different forms of communicating findings of qualitative research including different forms of narrative style which are *'artistically pleasing and creative'* (Thody, 2006 p132) including reflections (Smaling, 2002). Tierney (1999 p683) states that researchers are *'struggling on how to get out of the representational straightjacket that social scientists have been in for most of this century'* and require *'greater narrative flexibility in time, space and voice'*. One must not forget the poly-vocality involved in qualitative research with voice having multiple dimensions

from the researcher and the research respondents (Hertz, 1997) and the writing of all these texts becomes '*a process of discovery of the subject and of the self*' (Richardson, 1994 p184). Writing, after all is a '*dynamic, creative process*' (Richardson, 1994 p924) and static writing models undermine qualitative researchers confidence as their research experiences are incongruent with the writing models stipulated by academic boards leaving a '*flotilla of qualitative writing that is simply not interesting to read as writers have their voices silenced, shutting down creativity*' (Richardson, 1994 p925).

Hence being inspired by such research, I have adopted a distinctive rather idiosyncratic way of being reflexive throughout the thesis by using blue italics to '*denote a jump*' (Tracy, 2004 p511) between theoretical thoughts, reflections and poetry and the text written in a traditional academic style. The use of colour within qualitative research is related to the post-modernist mixed genres use of Creative Analytic Practices (CAP) and relates to the process of '*crystallization, where texts have moved from plane geometry to using light theory and prisms refracting colour*' (Richardson, 1994 p934) so that colour in texts can be used for differentiation purposes, between research and reflexivity and crystallization allows the researcher to incorporate other disciplines from the Arts to Sociology and History. Furthermore, there is much support for the use of verbatim quotes in text which not only include author's quotes but the use of quotes to inform and guide the reader as to the topic under discussion and add interest in reports (Corden and Sainsbury, 2006). Hence, I have purposefully set the quotes which inform the reader about the chapters apart from the research as '*stand alone*' quotes to emphasise and extend the readers inquisitiveness.

Eisner (1991/1998) argues that '*Educational inquiry will be more complete and informative, as humans increase the range of ways in which they describe, interpret and evaluate the educational world*' (p685). Therefore, I hope this preface guides the reader into a broader understanding of the teacher as researcher methodology with the added reflexivity and colloquialisms incorporated into the text.

*To begin with then, as a Sixth form and Adult teacher and tutor, I was already aware of the incumbent stress teachers face with administration, poor staff-pupil relations, innovative school policies and changing Government reforms but was intrigued at the attrition of thirteen teachers (some whom were long servicing teachers) at the school in June 2004. This left me quite curious as it seemed very sudden and the replacements*

*seemed very young as they were mostly newly qualified teachers (NQTs). Also, the school was opening a Learning Support Centre (known as A3) for 'disaffected' school children....basically to include school 'phobics' (those apprehensive of the classroom environment and interaction), students on long term exclusions, students' with emotional and behavioural disorders, those with disabilities and others with related problems. On the whole, the news was it would be a positive step forward for the school placing it firmly on the local area map as an evolving 'inclusive school' ready for learners of all types and abilities. It sounded wonderful....staff were enthused, the builders were in ....yet it made me feel anxious. I wondered what happens to teacher stress when disruptive students are to remain at schools and now the school leaving age is to rise to 18 years to encourage students to remain in full-time education as long as possible.*

*My growing concern as a (then) newly appointed experienced Psychology teacher at the school was 'What stress management programmes are in place for teachers? Where can they go if the stress becomes too much? Does the school have an effective support network?'. With regards to such burning questions my reflexivity grew. However, the problems I faced were baffling 'How does the worker question the management?'. As I read further, I soon realised that teaching like most professions is based on positivist, traditional hierarchical assumptions grounded in bureaucratic principles supporting governance, audit trails and accountability (Musselwhite and Vincent, 2005). I felt that I would be trying to create a change in a system that relied on top-down positivist controls and that teachers may perceive my research as interference to an order that was safe and comfortable, or they would appreciate the change and encourage collaboration among staff. Either way I felt trapped between wanting to support fellow colleagues in their 'stress' by giving them the chance to air their opinions of the changes at the school and complying to my position within the hierarchy. However, as a doctoral student we were encouraged to change something in practice and 'find the gap'. Thus for me 'the gap' that I came across was whether teachers had any type of power or control over their own decisions (bottom up) or were they always being dictated to by management, such that they simply had to abide by rulings and handle situations.*

Based on this, my original approach to the research was simply to investigate the newly created learning support unit for the disaffected students to ascertain its effectiveness in terms of implementations and outcomes both for students and staff involved with it. *I began interviewing the staff there and was quite convinced that this would be the way*

*forward. However, as time passed by, I soon began to realise that to truly answer my original aims involved a long term investigation, more than the allocated doctoral years.*

My thoughts veered towards my initial curiosity of teacher attrition and teacher stress, yet in the beginning the apprehension of starting teacher research as a research practitioner began to haunt me. Would teachers accept a colleague questioning them? Would they not question my authority?. *Thus methodologically, I decided that the best way to assess teacher stress was to interview teachers working at different levels, with different experiences ranging from long term service teachers, Newly Qualified Teachers (NQT) to management tiers and ask them questions about their perceptions of their job role, teacher stress and behaviour management. Based on this and with the assumption that the research was mostly qualitative in design I divided the research into phases, starting with designing and implementing the interviews and then based on the emergent nature of the design finish with a phase concerning teacher improvement and development. I remember that at the time my literature reviewing led me to discover the merits of meta-cognition and unravel the mysteries of Baird and colleagues (Baird, 1999) in their PEEL (Project for Enhancing Effective Learning) approach. I was convinced that I would try to encourage interviewees to form a collaborative focus group as my fifth phase (after interview transcription and theme dissemination) to incorporate the PEEL philosophy. I feel that you (the reader) will appreciate that many paths were trodden and investigated but only few were taken seriously.*

Having e-mailed all staff at the school to gain informed consent and decided upon the demographics of the sample (to exclude sixth form teachers who did not teach lower years) the first phase was carried out using a Semi structured interview schedule. *This led to a spreading recognition that teachers were stressed as many approached me happy to be involved in the research claiming to be stressed yet was I really after everyone or particular participants?. The reader may be wondering what the logic was in using teachers with experience of teaching lower years. Well, in truth, my own personal biases led me to hold the obvious opinion that more disruption occurred for lower years teachers than those teaching sixth form only. In turn, my readings led me to discover that teachers that taught Emotional and Behaviourally Disruptive (EBD) students suffered higher attrition (Seery, 1990) and were more emotionally and physically exhausted suffering from more burnout than non-EBD teachers (Center and Callaway, 1999). This heavily influenced the structure of the interview schedule and put my research aims into*

*perspective.* As the research unfolded and more and more teachers were enthused to ‘talk’ believing it was their time to ‘spill the beans’ about the goings on at the school and its impact on teachers, many teachers held the view that I was some sort of saviour or ‘Messiah’ (or so it felt at the time). *They really believed I could help them for the better. Teachers would come up to me or see me in passing and ask what changes I would implement or would I be able to advise their departmental Newly Qualified Teachers (NQT). Well as you can probably imagine, as a teacher-researcher things were going well.....teachers felt they could confide in me since I was ‘one of them’, many teachers approached me volunteering as participants and others were simply intrigued by the notion of research by a teacher. For a short period of time I basked in the ‘delusional power’ that feeling like a Messiah had given me. I remember believing that I, a naïve teacher-researcher, could make changes to teaching practice and that the Headmaster would appreciate my research.*

As the interviewing progressed, I was approached by the Head of Art and Design and asked whether I could help a newly qualified teacher (NQT) of Art and observe her troublesome year 10 class in order to offer her advice. Somehow, the teachers at the school were assuming that I had all the ‘answers’ and could use a ‘quick fix-it’ approach to deal with their problems. Feeling slightly pressurised by the Head of Art, I agreed to observing, and possibly interviewing the year 10 Art class. My research had now turned from single design to a multi method design and *I remember feeling that the research was emerging into something that was not originally envisaged.....to some extent I felt slightly out of control as the pace of the interviewing picked up, more and more staff were asking for advice and opening up new paths to research. The emergent design was taking over and I found it very difficult at times separating myself from the dual-roles of teacher researcher that I had created for myself. On many occasions I felt fragmented as though all the roles.....teacher-researcher, tutor, advisor/mentor, student, mother, wife... that I was fulfilling were becoming blurred even on some occasions collapsing around me.* The juggling act became more and more difficult as the teaching commitments increased, my literature reviewing expanded and examination marking commitments were made. Additionally, time for family roles conflicted with time for research. Perhaps being a woman has made it harder. *I’ve often wondered how professional women cope with life and now realise that life is much, much harder the higher up the career and educational ladder you climb. Thus, I really appreciate and am truly inspired by women with family*

*commitments who have achieved the heights of their professions especially those with doctorates.*

*Unfortunately, you (the reader) will discover the hurdles I experienced in this research particularly in the final phase, as many teachers (particularly Senior Management including the Head) did not see the true potential in my research arguing that I had already biased the research with my perceptions of stress, that I had not understood the level of teacher attrition each year and had tried to encourage teacher collaboration without a managerial agenda. My reflections on this portray a rather disheartened state as I believed that the Senior Management team (SMT) at the school were fearful of bottom-up research and did not appreciate the benefits other schools had gained from allowing this perspective.*

*Yet at this point, I do not want to direct the reader in anyway but would rather they read the chapters from an outsider's viewpoint trying to understand the predicaments and decisions that I as researcher made throughout the journey. My reflections throughout cast serious doubt on many things that we take for granted such as our position in the hierarchies, our perceived importance and worth. I find it difficult being or presenting an unbiased representation of the events that unfolded and would like the reader to understand my position in relation to the research outcome. After all, not all researchers are influential at making changes in practice and we must not forget that the journeys themselves have changed people.*

Perhaps in hindsight, if I had understood the importance of teacher empowerment for my research I might have approached the Head from the beginning about my intention to create change using bottom-up research, and had involved Senior Management more, then perhaps the research outcome would have been very different. The reader should appreciate that none of the aims and objectives were set in stone and the beauty of qualitative research is to uncover 'gaps', highlight discrepancies and allow oneself the freedom to evolve and become something other than was previously intended. *I started the DProf write up with a clear picture of how it would be presented ie: introduction, literature review, methodology and separate narrative tying the sections together in a traditional academic style. As my research phases were emergent, I decided to write in an emergent way allowing reflections, poetry, phrases and creativity to be incorporated in the write-up while still maintaining some form of academic rigidity. I do appreciate that*

*the reader will analyse, deconstruct and reconstruct the text to make sense of it for themselves as each individual constructs their own reality. Yet I invite the reader to accept this idiosyncratic, post modern approach to text and engage with my journey, challenging, questioning and confronting the findings. Does the research reflect inherent problems in our educational and political system? Are we simply cogs being wound up in a bigger wheel? Will we as individuals in our own right ever have control over our own practices? What is to become of the future of practitioner research if others face the same barriers I did...how is change likely to occur?* With questions like these I now invite you to make what you will of the text and question my approach as insider researcher to wishing to inspire a change in an old fashioned, technocratic system and encourage creativity and a growth in meta-cognition. As was once written “...*top-down hierarchical organisations may be inevitable but they needn't be toxic*” (Leavitt, 2005 p176).

## Chapter 1

### My Doctoral Journey

#### *How it all began*

*'It had long since come to my attention that people of accomplishment rarely sat back and let things happen to them. They went out and made things happen.'*

*Elinor Smith*

## Chapter 1- My Doctoral Journey

*‘A teacher is a compass that activates the magnets of curiosity, knowledge and wisdom in pupils’*

*Ever Garrison*

### 1.1 My Doctoral Journey: *How it all started*

The purpose of this chapter is to build up from the prologue and explain how the research all started including how the literature review evolved. The first section concentrates on how the research questions were framed over time and leads onto the literature reviewing and the difficulty faced in trying to narrow down the researching to relevant key words. This then leads onto the literature review chapters (chapters 2, 3 and 4). *The doctoral journey and my reflections on it continue throughout the chapters as I believe that the iterative and emergent nature of the research should have reflections as the research unfolds and in this way, you, the reader can appreciate my thoughts and feelings as the journey continued.*

*I begin by describing my job role and my perceptions of being a teacher at a Secondary school which sets the context of my research and how my journey unfolded.* A reflexive style was adopted to describe the journey and my involvement in the ‘emplotment’ is the impact the teacher and student participants had on me and the impact of the final phase of the research. My desire to place the practitioner and their experience as central to the study has led me to include my own perceptions and experiences as a teacher practitioner. Payne (2000) states that *‘reflexivity helps us identify the socially and rhetorically constructed boundaries that delimit our view of the social field, to transgress those limits and provide a basis for creative, ethical alternatives’*(p10). In this way, researchers are able to use their reflexivity as a way to achieve extensions to their understanding of work practices and a commitment to reflexivity suggests we continue to assess the impact of our research and understand our experiences of research transformation (Brydon-Miller, 1997). Much support for the teacher as practitioner is supported in the literature (Vance and McKinnon, 2002; Ronnerman, 2003; Ulanoff, 2003; Veugeler, 2004) and the reader is asked to appreciate the apprehensions faced in undertaking this design as the journey evolved from chaos and confusion to a clearer understanding.

*I am currently Head of Psychology at a Secondary school in the U.K. I have been teaching for around thirteen years. I have gained experience from different settings- colleges, university and am now in my fourth year in my current position. I enjoy teaching. I find it rewarding imparting knowledge and information to students and encouraging them to confidently sit exams. However, I guess I am one of the lucky ones- I only teach post 16 and adults and therefore have never really come across the practice of teaching younger/lower years. When I first began teaching at the school I used to dread doing the Tuesday morning duty at break time. On passing the lower years in the corridors at the school I would hear their brash, loud, boisterous voices as they conversed with each other (if that's what you call it). Every other word sounded rude, their appearance seemed unkempt and they all seemed to have a sluggish-ness about them, which would irritate me. Nevertheless, as teachers I feel we have a duty to remain positive and encouraging...always trying to see the good in people.*

This reflection has been reiterated well, in a lovely poem by Dorothy Law Holte called 'A Life in Your Hand'. The poem uses adjectives describing the ways children learn and how if taught appropriately they learn to be better citizens eventually finding happiness, goodness and ultimately love in the world.

### **A Life in Your Hand**

If children live with **criticism**, they learn to **condemn**  
 If children live with **hostility**, they learn to **fight**  
 If children live with **ridicule**, they learn to be **shy**  
 If children live with **shame**, they learn to **feel guilty**  
 If children live with **tolerance**, they learn to be **patient**  
 If children live with **encouragement**, they learn to be **confident**  
 If children live with **praise**, they learn to **appreciate**  
 If children live with **fairness**, they learn **justice**  
 If children live with **approval**, they learn to **like themselves**  
 If children live with **acceptance and friendship**  
 They learn to **find love in the world!**

**by Dorothy Law Holte**

*In this way, I believe that teaching is one of the most difficult professions as whatever the student's capabilities, attitudes and behaviour we (teachers) must remain calm, professional and positive. Personally, I find sixth formers frustrating enough with their lackadaisical attitude to learning a subject they actually chose. My mind boggles then, as*

*to how lower school teachers cope with the day to day stressors they face and some student's (not all) behavioural problems. Additionally, all teachers have to cope with duties, absence cover, staff meetings, administration, detentions, marking and Ofsted. This research really began when I was in the second year of my current position. By that time, I had settled at the school, was comfortable with the teaching processes, the timetable, administration and the sixth formers. I, however, felt that coming from a further education background (F.E colleges) had taken me longer to cope with the Secondary school system and there were still questions that were unanswered in my mind.*

## **1.2 How Did The Research Questions Evolve?**

*My interest for this research on stress in teaching, started in January 2004 when I heard that thirteen staff members would be leaving school in July 2004. In discussions with them, many of them had simply had enough of poor administration, messed up timetables, misbehaved students and piles of administrative paperwork. They all said they were moving on to better situations- some had been promoted in other schools, some retired and others just tired of teaching.* Despite their decision to leave, the school is a good (13-19 years) Secondary school to work for, with an intake of approximately 1300 pupils, situated rurally with supportive staff and a pleasant atmosphere, but like any school has its inherent pressures and its misbehaved students. The school itself has been accredited to a Science College status and is the main Secondary school for the area covering a wide geographical intake. Also the school has a small percentage of Special Educational Needs (SEN) pupils (approximately 24% compared to other Secondary schools with approximately 40% SEN intake) which includes students with BESD (Behavioural, Emotional and Social disorder) and from September 2004 developed a special Learning Support Centre for the exclusion of misbehaved, SEN pupils or for pupils with both mental and physical disability (known as A3).

*Thus, from this what seemed like quite sudden attrition of qualified (long term) staff members and the introduction of thirteen new staff to cover their positions or fill other vacancies in the school (many of whom were newly qualified-NQTs) the itch to find out why and how began. I decided to concentrate on the school as a case study being a sixth form teacher and tutor myself, and was also originally motivated to evaluate the newly opened Learning Support Centre. The Senior Management Team (SMT) encouraged me for the research on A3 since other local schools had successful units open for some years. The main concern would be the benefit for the student with the aim towards successful*

follow through into jobs or college courses. *The key issue that I was interested in was whether such disruptive pupils (not necessarily EBD or SEN) were included back into mainstream teaching on a more permanent basis to complete qualifications. My understanding being that the majority of such students tend to leave school with the very minimum of qualifications (less than five GCSEs). Therefore, the school is motivated to increase the number of minimum passes at GCSE, encourage pupils to enter Sixth form or to enter the A3 unit and progress from there.*

On the whole like most schools, the Government is encouraging LEAs to increase subject diversity and student enrolment on non-accredited as well as accredited courses. In spring 2003 the Working Group on 14-19 Reform was established. Chaired by Mike Tomlinson, its task being to, consider the long-term picture of education in Britain and to remedy the historical weaknesses in the structure of 14-19 years learning with the view to make reforms to the Government. In October 2004, the Tomlinson report was published which concentrated on 14-19 Curriculum and Qualifications reform. The Government built on and responded to the challenges set out in the Tomlinson report and the DfES (February, 2005) published The White Paper report charting the next 10 years reform programme designed to educate and equip young people for the demands of life in the twenty-first century. Their aim being to offer:

*'... high quality vocational routes of learning, ensure every young person is to be secure in the basics that they need for life and work, every child will be given the opportunity to develop to their full potential and be rewarded for their success'*(DfES, White Paper, 2005).

Also, they aimed to:

*'Tackle disengagement, truancy and poor behaviour in schools'* (DfES, White Paper, 2005).

In order to deliver the reforms for 14-19 education a significant programme of change will occur and whilst some changes can be introduced quickly, others will take much longer. Alongside these predicted reforms students will have more support in learning programme choice at the age of 14 which will engage them in learning until the age of 18/19. The prime Government target is to have the vast majority of students electing to remain in full-time education to Key Stage 5 (KS5). The aim being to, encourage students to achieve their longer-term learning and career aspirations and overcome the current

barriers to learning, participation and achievement that arise in the 14-19 sector. This will be backed by a National Framework of Careers Education including Connexions Service and the Progress File (an interactive set of materials designed to help young people develop into independent learners, capable of making decisions about their future). *These policies sound excellent and in most cases have already started being implemented.*

In addition, with the worrying trend of disruptive pupils being excluded from mainstream classes and the impact this has upon them, the Government is keen to prevent permanent exclusions and has started an initiative drive towards social inclusion and the development of specialist units to make this possible with individualised education programs being developed for educating children with diverse abilities (OECD, 1994a; Deppeler, 1998; Loreman and Deppeler, 2001). Thus the drive for inclusion has forced teachers whether they agree with Government policies, to teach individualised programs for students of all abilities (and disabilities) and hence this principle of accepting individual differences within the classroom or school setting has added to teachers' workload and stress (Center and Callaway, 1999; Foreman, 2001). Loreman and Deppeler (2001) state that teachers with diverse ability students in regular classrooms need to be *'highly skilled and motivated in order to be successful, and improving learning through the development of outstanding educational practice should be the primary aim of every teacher and school'* (p3). Despite this, teachers are faced with students' challenging behaviours and disruption which occur for numerous personal and social reasons (Educational Response Centre, 1992) and the typical response is to blame or label the student as a 'trouble-maker' or 'problem-student'. Teachers are expected to minimise these 'disruptions' by negotiating individual approaches and using school behaviour policies to promote positive behaviour and successfully cope with challenging behaviour, perhaps on a daily basis (Loreman et al, 2005). Not all teachers can cope or want to have to cope with continuous disruption and challenging behaviours and eventually the cumulative effect of such daily hassles mounts to stress-related disorders and even teacher attrition (Seery, 1990; Mellow, 1999).

*In January 2004 I began researching into teaching and stress and was overwhelmed with the vast amount of information into teacher attrition and job burnout.* Much research concentrated on stress variables in teaching (Dunham, 1984) but little or not much research was found on inclusion and exclusion of difficult students in schools and the impact they have on teacher stress. *Then just by chance I happened to Google search on local postgraduate research faculties and found to my surprise that Bournemouth*

*University not only offered such postgraduate research but a course was available which encouraged the improvement of the student's current practice. This sounded very promising since it meant that I could study and work simultaneously as well as base my research on teaching.* Wilson (2002) stipulates that teacher ill-health including stress is worrying and in need of further investigation. *I decided that it would be a good idea to concentrate my research on the school (as a case study) and to find out what if any stress management programs were in place at the school.* On addressing this issue to the headmaster, it seemed that no such policy for stress reduction was in place apart from Focus groups, Curriculum Area meetings, the School Development group, Subject Tutors and Mentors and the usual general staff meetings. *Thus, thoughts of developing a stress management programme for the school began to concern me, and the possible research questions that I could investigate. At the time there was no coherence to my research question just a strong desire to help colleagues.*

*I set about completing the first research assessment objective (RAOI) proposal and included research on stress and job burnout in teachers, gaining information from Teacherline UK, The Transatlantic Education Mega-Site and the Western Regional Resource Centre into stress and education. Such websites and information led me to the Emotional and Behavioural Disorder Teacher Stressors Questionnaire (the EBD-TSQ), which is an instrument designed to assess occupational stressors in teachers, particularly those teaching emotionally and behaviourally disruptive pupils. Pleased with my rather quick and highly motivated attempt to combine different research together, the initial research proposal (RAOI) was born and was sent off to the university (IHCS) for appraisal.* The course commenced with a well needed introduction to library services, the joys and woes of literature searching and the Harvard system. Supervisors began to impress upon us the need to reduce and focus our research objectives. *Aware that my research aim was too broad, and with no clear cut objectives, I set about the task of narrowing down my research. However, with regard to my research interest I was soon to find out that this would be a mammoth task since stress and teaching drew up 31,000 hits from the 'Psychlit' database search. The task of trawling through them to find the latest research was headache invoking and so I turned my interest to books on stress and teaching. This led me to concentrate on research carried out by Dunham (1980a, 1980b) which concentrated on factors/variables that caused the stress to teachers. Certain key variables were found (which are highlighted in the main body of my research, chapter 3).*

*I enjoyed reading around the area of stress in teaching and stumbled across thought provoking literature with titles like- **How Children Fail** by John Holt (1984) and **Curriculum Evaluation** by D. Hamilton (1976). Both books looked at how the current curriculum plays down the importance of dissemination and how teachers apparently value most in children what they least value in themselves. In other words, Holt argued that teachers and schools encourage docile, suggestible children and don't value courage in students but fear it as a form of hyperactivity and disruptiveness. However, I found this quite a sarcastic and negative view of schooling. I agree that in a lesson it is difficult to maintain the students attention and periods of lull take place, but to state that schools encourage docility is wrong and offensive, and Ofsted would have the school on the failure list as quick as possible!!. Additionally, does Holt restrict his argument to Secondary school children...what about older students? Do they stop being 'docile' and suddenly gain enthusiasm?. What about doctoral students?.*

As time continued, the importance of the research question became apparent as the next postgraduate research objective (known as RAO6) loomed ahead. This would be sent to the Research Committee at Bournemouth University and would need to be a more structured proposal including aims, research objectives, background research, methodology and ethics. The work for this started in November 2004 and was finally completed in January 2005. Many revisions to the original RA01 were made and resulted in a much clearer set of objectives which allowed a fair amount of diversity in the literature reviewing. All aspects were considered covering: What stress is and how it affects teaching, research on stress variables, classroom interaction, disruptive pupils, EBD, teacher characteristics and demographic variables. This included some interesting findings by Chen (2002) who found gender differences in coping styles. *I knew that the issue of teacher stress would base my research and would probably involve interviewing teachers and that the issue of inclusion and exclusion of disruptive students could be used to assess the degree of stress teachers felt either on a daily or longer term basis. Thus in this slow methodical way, the mists and cobwebs in my mind cleared away to leave fairly concise research aims and objectives. The aim of my main research was to investigate teacher stress in relation to the inclusion/exclusion policy. Would teachers feel less stress when disruptive students were excluded? And how would or does the re-inclusion of excluded students impact teacher stress?. I felt these were important questions and my research focused on the factors that affected teacher stress, the attrition rate of teachers leaving due to stress related factors and coping mechanisms.*

This became the main emphasis of my systematic review which incorporated the pressure teachers feel when having to follow actions, demands or guidelines set from higher management or external agencies (top-down) contrary to their personal judgments (bottom-up). Thus the conflict of interests between top-down and bottom-up control was assessed throughout the write-up. *Other interesting thoughts based on this conflict of interest were, whether I as a teacher-practitioner could create more insider collaboration between staff at different levels. In particular I wondered ....how practices especially that of teaching could be made more personal, reflective and beneficial to both teacher and student in order to avoid teacher burnout and decrease teacher attrition.*

*The questions for my research seemed to be very current and needed an innovative form of research to answer them. Thus, as a teacher researcher both a qualitative and quantitative research epistemology was used with multi-methods including interview, observation and self-reflection.* Cassell and Symon (1999) argue that despite research into work development there has been little change in the underlying epistemological assumptions that influence how the research is interpreted, along with a lack of reflection and creativity which unfortunately stifles the discipline. Gephart (1999) states that much qualitative work is set within the positivist, normative or functionalist paradigm but should in fact be considered with other epistemological positions as well as the traditional ones. This causes labelling difficulties, since anything which is not traditionally qualitative is considered to be an alternative method as an addition to quantitative research, instead of being a separate perspective based on different underlying epistemological assumptions with different research goals. This then does not contribute to innovative and vibrant research and can only be true with qualitative approaches adopting alternative epistemological perspectives. *In this way, new insights for research can grow by adopting a critical stance on accepted practices.* Cassell and Symon (2004) further state that other important strategies such as exploring judgements of good research practice, research reflexivity and training must also be considered.

### **1.3 Systematic Review of Literature: How it evolved**

The Dprof was set up in April 2004 as a new doctoral programme underpinned by peer supervision and divided into four components including a research thesis, methodology, practice development section and a narrative tying all the sections together. This programme was purposefully designed to offer a non-traditional doctorate on a part-time basis for students to work and research consecutively. The main emphasis was to

encourage students to find gaps either in their professional practice or in the literature that needed further investigation and analysis. The result of this was that in the first cohort, six students from varying Health and Education (Nursing, Physiotherapy, Hypnotherapy, Higher Education and Secondary Education teaching) backgrounds were accepted to research on their practices. *In my case, being a teacher I decided to investigate teacher stress in relation to the ever changing government policies, currently 'inclusion'.* This was becoming an area of concern as many students with behavioural problems were attending regular classes but really would have benefited from specialised education away from mainstream teaching. A lot of changes had occurred at the school in including staff attrition (13 out of 85 teachers left in one go which was odd since only about 2 or 3 teachers leave every other year) and the development of a specialised area for disaffected students. *In relation to these changes my interest for research began and in particular I liked the idea of being able to continue working and researching my practice.* The part-time doctorate spread over four years, suited my requirements and was also running locally at Bournemouth University.

As time continued and the Dprof was coming towards the end of its second year, the Dprof cohort were warned of the upcoming viva transfer (known as RAO7) which was a formal written document entailing abstract, systematic review, methodology, discussion and narrative. *I began to write up the RAO7 and decided to divide the systematic review into chapters.*

*Initially I thought that it would be sensible to set the scene about the history of education and the process of inclusion/exclusion from a global perspective. However for the purposes of the RAO7 it was decided to eliminate these well researched sections, which, I must add was a little annoying. Suddenly I felt the pressure around me mounting up. Not only was I caught up in the hassles of what to include in the write-up but I had just taken the role of external examiner for the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) marking Psychology AS paper 2. Ofsted were also looming around the school and I soon learnt that I was also going to be assessed. Again the pressures of fragmentation grew stronger, I felt torn between my everyday work life and my desire to pass the viva. The viva deadline loomed closer and closer. I decided not to meet the deadline and extend my write-up period. Luckily the Easter holidays gave me some respite. Once the exam marking period was over, I again became enthused to continue the write-up. With a more rational mind I accepted the suggestions made by my supervisor and quickly began*

*reducing and refining the chapters. Eventually the write-up included an abstract, a narrative (on who I was and why I was researching my topic), the three literature review chapters, a methodology section (which covered the weaknesses found (so far) on teacher research), the findings of both the year 10 observation and staff interviews. The 'pièce de resistance' was my excel spreadsheet illustrating my progress timeline (page 164). It included colour blocks of progress illustrating when the research started, the literature reviewing, the different assessments that had occurred and finished with a colour block for final write-up and course completion. Finally the references were added along with a fairly detailed appendix section including the informed consent sheet, the interview schedule, the year 10 observation questions and their findings.*

### **1.3.1 The Systematic Review of Stress and Teaching**

Altogether the systematic review takes the reader on an extensive exploration of factors and issues into the analysis of stress in teaching and uncovers some of the limitations of the teacher-researcher approach. Most of the research into teaching and stress concentrated on Secondary teachers and a wide perspective was adopted to analyse stress in teaching. Initially, the literature reviewing was very wide considering stress in occupations and then narrowed down to factors affecting stress in teaching. The search began with general electronic database searching on the A-Z database library and mostly concentrating on the 'PsychInfo' and 'PsychLit' databases where approximately 31,000 hits were found related to stress. After trawling through these 'hits' and disregarding irrelevant articles (those which included Primary, Middle or Higher Education and those that dealt with other occupations) the mass reading of the literature began.

Certain articles were considered irrelevant such as those that did cross-cultural comparisons and those that concentrated on stress coping strategies within countries like China (Chen, 2002; Chan, 2003). Articles were analysed for relevant content related to stress and Secondary teachers, the methodology adopted and the method of analysis. A search strategy was drawn up including all the relevant and related studies to help guide the systematic review and help structure the write-up of the chapters. Apart from 'PsychLit', other databases were explored including ERIC, The Journal of Educational Change, the Journal of Education, the Forum of Qualitative Social Science (FQS), Systematic reviews such as Segerstrom and Miller (2004) meta-analysis of 30 years of inquiry into Psychological stress and the human immune system, the SCRE Research

Report number 109 (Wilson, 2002), the EPPI reports (2004), Slaybaugh et al (1995/1996) on research related to attitudes towards the teaching profession, the DES Elton report and the DfES reports uncovering different Secondary education reports and National Strategies including the White Paper (DfES,2002a;2002b,2005), articles related to Action Research and Reflexive methodology (Schon,1983;1987; Schiratz,1993; Critical Awareness of Research for Practice - CARP). As the literature review grew, many books were added to the search particularly Dunham (1984) Stress in Teaching and those books related to methodology (Carr and Kemmis, 1985; Boyatzis, 1998; Cassell and Symon, 2004; Rolfe, 2001). Finally, as the phases of the research unfolded, the literature searching veered towards practitioner-research and top down, bottom-up research (Shor, 1992; Stoll and Fink, 1996; Sykes, 1996; Zeichner and Noffke, 2001; Vance and McKinnon, 2002; Ulanoff et al, 2003; Veugeler, 2004).

Nursing research was considered due to the successful implementation of practitioner-research as a methodology to nursing (Allen, 2004; Boswell, 2007) and was considered as a comparison to teaching and practitioner research. This was used to accentuate the fact that practitioner research as a methodology has been successful and is free to be used for any occupation. *However, my reading search found that educational practitioner research was not a common methodological approach and research carried out by practitioner teachers was often looked at suspiciously by the school management and other teachers.*

Altogether the literature review encompasses three chapters focusing on the issue of stress and how it impacts on professionals both mentally and physically and is structured using reflexivity and poetry to illustrate key points. The purpose of the literature review is to enlighten the reader on the issue of workplace stress particularly in teaching, by funnelling the chapters to start with a broad overview of stress in the workplace, stress in teaching and finally analysing the methodologies used in assessing the prevalence of teacher stress incorporating newer approaches such as practitioner-research. *I purposely made the decision to inform the reader of the use of practitioner-research as a methodology in the final chapter of the literature review and not the first chapter as I wanted the literature review to logically inform the reader of the problem of teacher stress and how it has been researched. Thus in order to build up to the final chapter of the literature review I began setting the scene on stress in the workplace.*

The first chapter in the literature review was written with the aim of introducing the reader to the concept of stress and how stress affects us both physiologically and psychologically including individual and gender differences. The first chapter sets the scene by assessing stress in the workplace including meta-analytic research assessing factors affecting job stress (like job satisfaction and control). Special focus is then given to teachers in chapter 3, in relation to stress factors that impact on daily teaching and how personality and teaching characteristics can exacerbate stress which leads on to the final chapter in the literature review assessing the issue of stress management especially with regards to teachers personal coping strategies and the methodology used to investigate teacher stress. The issue of quality in teaching and teaching improvement is considered which sheds light on action research and new approaches to analysing teacher stress including practitioner-research. The reader is referred to examples of such research which led to improvement in teaching practices like the PEEL research (Project for Enhancing Effective learning) originating in Australia and the Nottinghamshire Staff Development project (known as TRIST-TVEI). The problems of such external research, has been documented along with the use of bottom-up insider-research in Secondary schools. Chapter 4 addresses some of the research methods adopted to investigate teacher stress concentrating on the use of practitioner-research as a means of insider investigation to help teacher practitioners. The pros and cons of practitioner-research are considered which is used as the basis for reflections of this methodology in later chapters. The final chapter of the literature review is then used as grounding for the methodology behind the research and is analysed in terms of its success in further chapters.

## **The Literature Review**

*'Its not just about looking and copying, it's about feeling too'*

*Paul Cezanne*

### **Chapter 2- Stress in the Workplace**

### **Chapter 3- Stress in Teaching**

### **Chapter 4- The Use of Practitioner-Research in Education**

## **Chapter 2- Stress in the Workplace**

*'The important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle'*

***Pierre De Coubertin***

Stress pervades our lives in all forms and affects our behaviour, performance and attitudes. This chapter sets the scene for the literature review by analysing what stress is and how it affects us including an examination of gender differences in the stress response. This then leads onto the prevalence of stress in the workplace, occupational stress and gender comparisons, the changing work climate and perceptions of organisations, workload and job satisfaction.

### **2.1 What is Stress**

Stress has been defined as an *'unpleasant emotional state fraught with tension, frustration, anxiety and emotional exhaustion'* (Kyriacou, 2001 p27). The Health and Safety Executive (2004) define stress in terms of *excessive pressure or demands* but also recognise the idea of *eustress* in which a certain amount of stress is beneficial and necessary. They regard stress as the *'intervening variable occurring as a reaction to an accumulation of stressors which incorporates emotional, behavioural and physiological components'* (Bell et al, 2000 p131). Stressors include all aversive circumstances that threaten the well being of a person but are prone to individual differences in appraisal (Evans and Cohen, 1987).

According to Selye (1975) when our balance or equilibrium is disturbed by excessive pressure from imposed change or other environmental stressors our body uses up considerable amounts of adaptation energy trying to restore the balance. In this respect, humans have evolved with the capability to appraise the stressor in the short term and control the acute stress response. The difficulty lies when the individual can no longer manage the pressure or the stress appraisal has been ineffective. According to Hans Selye (1975) when a stressor is chronic or long lasting it results in reduced natural killer cell cytotoxicity, suppressed lymphocyte proliferative responses and dulled humoral responses to immunisation (Cohen et al, 2001; Dhabhar and McEwan, 1997, 2001; Kiecolt-Glaser et al, 1996). Meta-analyses of stress have found immunosuppressive effects of stress especially with longer term stressors (Herbert and Cohen, 1993; Zorilla et al, 2001).

However, Segerstrom and Miller's (2004) meta-analysis of stress research of more than 300 studies over the past 30 years, found that psychological challenges are capable of modifying various features of the immune system and that behaviour was a potentially important pathway linking stress with the immune system. In fact Jones and Bright (2001) argue that stress should be seen as an umbrella term including a range of environmental stimuli and personality factors. Stress was thus seen simply as a stimulus that could produce changes in our behaviour, cognition, emotion and physiology. Lazarus (1999) proposed a more transactional approach to stress incorporating an interactive relationship between the person and the environment. He believed that stress occurred when the person appraised the situation as exceeding their adaptive responses. In this respect, Lazarus claimed that stress could not be objectively defined but was more subjective and hence the transactional model, unlike other more biological models, allowed for individual differences in how people responded to the same event. Higher correlations were found for psychological appraisal and the impact on the immune system (Bosch et al, 2001; Segerstrom, 2001; Stowell et al, 2001) in contrast to low correlations ( $r=-0.10$ ) found between immune responses and subjective experiences (eg: for the relationship between intrusive thoughts and NK cell cytotoxicity).

## **2.2 Individual and Gender differences in the Stress Response**

Meta-Analytic research carried out by Segerstrom and Miller (2004) on individual differences and stress appraisal, found differences in cardiovascular and neuroendocrine responses in the appraisal of situations and the presence of negative thought patterns (Frankenhauser, 1975; Tomaka et al 1997). Furthermore, research on physiological reactivity under stress, found that type A males exhibited greater increases of systolic blood pressure than type B's in response to a difficult cognitive tasks, but not women. Males were found to be more biologically and psychosocially vulnerable to stressors than women (Scanlan et al, 1998; Maes, 1999). Additionally, when different populations were studied using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), emotional exhaustion was found to be higher for women than men, those with poor promotion prospects and little social support (Gaines and Jermier, 1983). Social explanations have argued that males have less social support, more unhealthy habits and more stressful occupations and generally tend to be more prone to cardiovascular disorders than women. Research found that females engaged in fewer unhealthy behaviours like smoking and drinking which was used as an explanation as to why males tended to have the highest rates of CHD (coronary heart

disease) but also found an increase in women's CHD rates and a narrowing of the gender gap in CHD mortality rates, as more women were smoking, drinking and working in male related occupations (Frankenhauser, 1983).

Gender differences were also found to exist in the cognitive appraisal of stress, with females suppressing their anger and showing lower reactivity in stressful situations than men because of their thought processes (Vogele et al, 1997). Researchers supported this explanation with reference to gender and socialisation differences. According to Socio-biologists, gender differences are seen as sexual adaptations which improve the survival capacities of the human race (Wilson, 1976). Males are dominant and selfish to promote their genetic line and women are caring and faithful to their offspring and families for their survival. In this respect, Socio-biologists like Wilson (1976) argued that, females had learned the lowered stress reactivity due to their more docile upbringing compared to males with their hardened or tough emphasis on life, and stated that this learned environmental response had impacted upon and evolved the stress response (Goldberg, 1979). Gender difference research has adopted more of a social constructionist stance, accepting biological predispositions and determinism but including socio-cultural patterns to determine gender behaviour. Research arguing that males showed greater cardiovascular reactivity to stressors than females found the opposite as on 5 out of 6 measures of stress including heart rate and blood pressure, the females showed higher reactivity to the 2 stressors being tested (Stone et al, 1990).

### **2.3 Stress and the Workplace**

The Trades Union Congress (TUC, 2000) has urged the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to recognise that stress is a major workplace hazard. The TUC have requested the HSE to develop standards for tackling excessive workloads, low staffing levels and long hours which they believe accumulate leading to employee stress. The workforce of Britain, suffer with this growing trend in terms of absenteeism, depression, heart and respiratory problems and numerous other ailments and complaints. According to the HSE (published 5/5/04), the number of days off work with stress and anxiety more than doubled between 1996 and 2002, rising from just over 6 million to 13.4 million. Workplace stress is estimated to cost the economy £3.7 billion a year with one in ten people falling victim to overstress, which costs society at least 60 billion dollars, as a result of the constant pace of technological and environmental change.

Stress management is now without a doubt a priority area and the HSE are encouraging employers to act since stress has now overtaken musculo-skeletal disorders as the main cause of days lost at work. According to the Work Stress Management Ltd (London) last year 6,248 UK companies paid out an average of £51,000 in damages for workplace stress and the trends show a rise in work-related lawsuits. Overstress costs the workplace in terms of lost productivity, medical care for the complications of overstress, job accidents and traffic fatalities (half as a result of driving using pick-me-ups).

For many professional workers, stress is inherent in the job from the inescapable pressures and competing demands (Fontana, 1989). According to Beehr and Newman (1978) stress, and in particular job stress occurs when there is a poor person-environment fit, such that job related factors interact with the worker to change their psychological or physiological condition so that they deviate from normal functioning. General causes of stress range from organisational problems such as long hours, poor status and pay to job uncertainty and job insecurity. Specific causes of stress at work range from unclear role specifications, high self-expectation and the inability to influence decision making, to clashes with superiors, isolation, poor communication and role conflict. The majority of workers constantly complain of the sheer volume of work-related responsibilities which results in feeling undervalued, feeling unable to say 'no' to any demand but yet not working productively or efficiently. These people become irritable, miserable, lack energy and commitment and may even result in personality changes, lower self-esteem and poor internal locus of control. Such Professionals may find it hard to concentrate on anyone task, and cannot be relied upon to do their share.

## **2.4 The Changing Work Climate**

Additionally, employee stress is exacerbated by the changing job climate. According to Bridges (1995) there are no longer jobs for life and the security to match. Companies are being down sized with new technology and specialized jobs resulting in enormous demands upon the individuals adaptation energy and excessive stress related problems. Stress, is becoming an industrial injury, replacing many other reasons for absenteeism, like backache or more traditional causes of sickness absenteeism. According to Small Firms Association (10/11/05) absenteeism costs small businesses 550 Euros (on average) and the national average for absenteeism in 2004 was 3.4% or just under 8 working days, rising to 4.6% for bigger firms (over 50 workers). Overall, there is a growing body of

evidence that current trends in employment conditions may be eroding levels of job satisfaction and directly damaging the physical and mental health of employees. Unfortunately employees today are having, to work past their contracted hours struggling to meet tight deadlines and targets. Research carried found that *'work practices were becoming more automated and inflexible leaving employees with less and less control over their workload'* (Faragher et al, 2003 p105). The capability of employers to out-source people on short-term contracts has increased feelings of job insecurity. Throughout the UK and Europe there is a workaholic culture which is negatively impacting on employees. Furthermore, comparisons of the number of hours worked and stress were made by the TUC (2000) survey which highlighted a 'long work hours culture' but with UK employees working an average of 43.6 hours compared with European countries with an average of 40.4 hours.

## **2.5 Perceptions of Organisations, Workload and Job Satisfaction**

According to Weber's (1947) ideas on bureaucracy, organisations are viewed as highly rational, impersonal and mechanistic systems operating according to clearly defined and relatively inflexible rules and regulations. As a result the worker tends to unconsciously treat the organisation as a larger power run according to unchangeable laws governed by a higher source. Weber believes that workers tend to passively accept their roles, emerging as anonymous, depersonalised individuals who are powerless in the notion of change and blindly accept and expect outsiders to 'fix problems' within the workplace. This results in a pacifist, non-committal approach to work resulting in behavioural disorders and dissatisfaction. *So why have organisations and their hierarchies become such a dirty word? Why is the worker so reliant on hierarchies when they undermine and control our autonomy yet expect devotion and unquestioning commitment from us?* The answer, according to Leavitt (2005) is because organisational hierarchies define who we are, they provide us with structure in our lives, protect and reward us and allow us to achieve, yet we continuously battle against them trying our best to humanise their top-down bureaucracy and control. In relation to this, humanisers are concerned with team building, human relations programs and organisational development with the view to enhance personal growth, improve morale, encourage creativity and increase collaboration. Whereas systemisers rely on effectiveness, discipline, improved measurements and clear lines of authority and responsibility. Leavitt's (2005) description of the polarisation effect with hierarchies parallels Ulanoff's (2004) top-down and bottom-up dichotomy faced by

organisations. As a result of the ongoing conflict between the humanising bottom-up, versus the systemising top-down, organisational management structures have or are evolving into flattened, networked and teamed structures incorporating softer approaches to management issues. However, despite the fog of modernism, organisational hierarchies will always exist and have simply replaced traditional policies with new methods of organisational discipline and order reflecting and reinforcing top-down hierarchical structures. Leavitt (2005) argues that hierarchies by their very nature are top-down and enforce employees to conform despite democratising in line with societies standards. He argues that top-down hierarchies will never diminish, are inevitable but needn't be toxic leaving the worker in a state of limbo (desiring to leave but forced to work for financial reasons). Additionally, Weber argues that the worker needs to perceive their undermined position and needs to collaborate with other workers to enforce a change in their work climate and reduce stress. *I agree with Weber's arguments and also accept Ulanoff's dichotomy, yet despite the fact that stress has become synonymous with the workplace, there seem to be some workers who can stay in control of their workload and handle job frustrations without the overstress symptoms. Somehow such people are able to strike a balance between using humour, renewing their energy and resources and finding pleasure and reward from their working life within the organisational structures, whether they are hierarchical or networked, teamed structures.*

Fontana and Abouserie (1993) states that it is the way in which workplace stress is perceived and handled which allows the stimulation to actually be enjoyed. A systematic review and meta-analysis of over 400 studies was conducted by Faragher et al (2003). A strong link was found between self-report measures of job satisfaction and physical and mental well being. The researchers suggested that job satisfaction level was an important factor influencing the health of workers and thus stated that organisations needed to develop stress management policies to identify work practices that caused the most job dissatisfaction with the view to improve employee health. Furthermore, Faragher et al (2003) endorsed the view that employees suffering work related psychological problems needed to critically evaluate their work and explore ways of gaining greater job satisfaction.

*Thus, stress can both be good and bad depending upon our reactions to it and our capacity to deal with it.* Both the Yerkes-Dodson inverted U curve and the human function curve (Nixon, 1987), state that the degree of arousal or pressure we feel is related

to the optimum or increased performance of the job. If the task at hand is manageable then the arousal or stress is healthy.

## **2.6 Occupational Stress Comparisons**

Professor Cary Cooper of the Manchester School of Management believes that there is a high correlation between stress, mental ill-health and absenteeism from work (Clarke and Cooper, 2003; Cooper, 1995; Cooper et al, 1994). He further states that this is related to the amount of control people have over their work and career development. Research carried out by Cooper and colleagues at the University of Manchester (Institute of Science and Technology) found that the most stressful jobs in Britain at the time were the prison service, uniformed services- police, fire and ambulance, social workers, doctors, dentists, nurses and teachers. The next group to suffer the most stress in Britain included miners, armed forces, construction, management, acting, journalism, film production, catering and hotel work, professional sport and public transport. The stress researchers independently evaluated each of these jobs on a 10 point scale (1=most stressful to 10=least stressful). All of the jobs previously mentioned scored higher than 6.5 and even went up to 7.7 (very stressful). Research was updated and results found that after a decade the jobs had become more stressful because of technological advances, global changes, changes in customer expectations, changing market trends and the political changes affecting the workforce. Recent studies have also found a consistent association between employment in human service occupations and the risk of affective and stress related disorders with education and social services displaying the highest risks and males being more vulnerable than women in the same professions (Wieclaw et al, 2006). From Occupational Stress Inventories carried out with different professions (Johnstone, 1993b), the only profession that were found to have scores related to the teachers were general practitioners (with a mean of 32.48 compared to the teachers mean on factors intrinsic to the job of 33.25).

Teachers were less satisfied with factors intrinsic to the job, the organisational climate and home/work interface than managers (Wilson, 2002). However, the teachers were more satisfied with their career and achievements, more likely to use social support than the general population or managers, more likely to register lower mental and physical health than managers or the general population but were more prone to Type A behaviours. Finally, further comparative evidence was provided by the TUC (2000) in a survey of safety representatives across most occupational sectors. Both stress and workload came to be represented as the main factors by 82% of educational representatives, 74% from the

health sector but the financial and insurance sector had the highest percentage (86%). Nevertheless, such comparisons of human service professions to all employed in other occupations and the degree of psychiatrically diagnosed affective and stress related disorders, tends to be biased to the populations being used and does not consider whether the employment in human service occupations are related to specific psychosocial factors not found in other jobs.

Despite such convincing research one needs to consider the selection mechanisms, specific work hazards and the personality characteristics of the employees to understand the causal web between employment in human service professions and mental health.

## **2.7 Gender differences in Occupations**

Research into demographic variables and teaching by Chen (2002) on stress and life events of middle school teachers from China, found that there was a gender difference on the Stressful Life Events Scale (SLERS). Male teachers had higher negative life events scores than the female teachers but one could argue that such findings are not ecologically valid and are only specific to the population being tested and the culture.

Also, sex differences to burnout on the job and depression, were reported by Medindia.com (10/11/05). They found genders differ with regards to their inflammatory reactions to work-related burnout. Women who have experienced job burnout and men who experience depression were reported to have increased levels of two inflammation biomarkers (fibrinogen and C-reactive protein-CRP) which were related to prospective cardiovascular disease and stroke. The report also found that women who had scored higher on burnout had a '1.6 fold risk' of increased CRP levels and fibrinogen in comparison to non-burnout women. The male score was much higher. Males who had suffered depression had a '3.15 fold risk' of increased CRP and fibrinogen when compared to non-depressed males. The report stated that both groups (burn-out women and depressed men) were at a much higher risk of inflammation related disease. Thus males on the whole seem to be more reactive to stress in the immune response than women and such research supports the transactional model of stress and the relationship between the stressor, stress appraisal and the stress response. *I believe that women are more reactive and responsive to stressors than in the past but as women are now achieving better education and careers, the stressors have also evolved. We are living and*

*working in a highly competitive, technological environment that has impacted negatively on the workforce forcing the worker to show commitment and unquestioning devotion to work leaving little time for family and children, thus exacerbating the stress even further. There has been a narrowing of the gender gap both in terms of physiological reactivity and psychological appraisal to stressors and research needs to focus on more generic responses to stressors and effective coping mechanisms.* Individual differences were found to be important in coping styles since people differed along their ability to personally prioritize demands or rely on social support (Cohen and Willis, 1985). Research on social support found that the higher the levels of support the higher the occurrence of positive health behaviors and lower levels of support led to increases in negative emotions which in turn effected the levels of hormones and the immune system (Kiecolt-Glaser et al, 1984; Kessler and McLeod, 1985). Both structural social support (a person's network of social relationships) and functional social support (the quality of relationships) were found to correlate with disease onset and mortality particularly in the elderly populations and men who had suffered myocardial infarction (Ruberman et al, 1984; Schoenbach et al, 1986). Females were found to make the best use of support networks which in turn increased their personal control to deal with stressful situations (Porter et al, 2000).

Research investigating male and female police officers and their experiences of occupational stress found that the stressors women experienced were qualitatively different to the males, as they reported more sexual discrimination and prejudice than the male officers (Brown and Fielding, 1993). *Thus, research may have found that the gender gap is closing but I feel that the job anxieties experienced by the police women officers in the Brown and Fielding study may be normative for women in many male-type professions. Sociological research has already found pay differences for the genders in the same job and gender workplace inequalities have been well documented, thus when discussing gender differences in work-related stress one must consider each profession independently and not generalise as much of the research appears to have done. After all it would be preposterous to compare different professions for stress experiences as each case is unique and many situational and dispositional variables interact and effect how employees cope with stress.*

## **2.8 The Development of Stress Coping Mechanisms**

Employers and the Government admit to a huge increase in stress related absenteeism yet only a handful of companies (as few as only 13% in 1995) had policies or programs to deal with stress-related illness problems among employees (Woodham, 1995). Research funded by the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) on adults suffering from chronic tense headaches found stress management alone was able to reduce this in 35% of the participants (Journal of the American Association, May 2nd 2001). Numerous methods exist for coping with burnout such as withdrawal, spending more time away from people causing stress and gaining more social support, reducing contact hours, absenteeism or simply not thinking about the job (Argyle, 1989).

Research carried out on the development of stress coping mechanisms concerned itself with the idea of control. Rotter (1966) stipulated that the stronger our internal locus of control the better our self-esteem, sense of self worth and less negativity was shown towards problems. Rotter also found that individuals with an internal locus of control showed less physiological arousal. In contrast individuals with an external locus of control were found to blame others, find stressors difficult to cope with and tended to have a damaged sense of internal control. Kamen and Seligman (1989) found that such individuals suffered more stress-related illness and were less active in coping.

When stressors were evaluated as challenges, the individual could overcome the stress and opportunities for personal growth occurred (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). Thus the stronger ones cognitive appraisal of stressors, the more personal control we can have (Lazarus and Launier, 1978). The perceived control then reduces the threat appraisal made when the stressor is experienced. The person knows how to deal with future stressors and becomes characterized by cognitive flexibility and tolerance of ambiguity (Moss, 1973). Kobasa (1982) related such characteristics to the concept of hardiness. She stipulated 3 aspects inherent in the individuals' personality (commitment, control and challenge) to become an interlocking part of their style of stress resistance. Such that hardy people see themselves in control of their lives, attributing control to themselves not externally, are involved with the world around them and see life as a series of challenges not threats, thus enjoying change as an opportunity for development. In relation to this, different dimensions of coping styles exist ranging from repression-sensitization to denial or as Lazarus and

Folkman (1984) identified, as problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. The former coping strategy relies on the person taking direct action or seeking information relevant to the solution and the latter coping strategy includes efforts to reduce the negative emotional reactions to stress. The researchers recognize the fact that the use of effective coping strategies vary with the situation and with this they state that individuals are capable of both types of strategy dependent on situational factors. Taylor et al (2007) also recognize that action-oriented or abstract coping mechanisms along with intra-psychic efforts to manage the demands created by the stressful events are being recognized for their significant impact on stress related mental and physical health outcomes and for its intervention potential. A newspaper article from the September 20<sup>th</sup> 2005 issue of Times Online reporting on good and bad stress cited comments made by Dr Frank Bond (Senior Lecturer in Psychology at Goldsmiths College) claimed that people who could manage stress had high levels of psychological flexibility and put themselves in fearful situations to pursue their goals.

Finally, research on the development of coping found that coping strategies are learned from our role models such as parents and siblings, such that higher order coping families allowed the identification of corresponding lower order ways of coping. Thus the researchers argue that there is a developmental gradation of coping strategies which relates to how children, adolescents and adults cope with the identification of and dealing with stressors (Skinner et al, 2007).

## **2.9 Summary of Chapter**

This chapter began by focusing on how views of stress have evolved from the purely biological to a combination including psychological appraisal and the role of control. Meta-analyses of stress have found immunosuppressive effects of stress especially with longer term stressors (Herbert and Cohen, 1993; Zorilla et al, 2001). The prevalence of work stress was considered in terms of gender and individual differences. Interesting research by Stone and colleagues (1990) related to gender differences in stress responses, argued against the neat gendered division of the physiological explanation and found that women had higher reactivity to 2 stressors when 6 measures of stress were taken. They concluded that there was a narrowing of the gender gap in terms of the physiological reactivity and appraisal of stressors and males and females were almost equally responsive to stressors. So researchers found, that gender roles and psychological factors

were more important than biological factors for the sex differences in stress responses (Lundberg, 2005). *I felt it important to build up the literature review in this way in order to appreciate how stress affects individuals from both the physiological and psychological perspectives and then appreciate the impact of stress on different occupations.*

Occupational stress comparison research found that teachers had high levels of stress along with GPs but such research tends to be biased to the populations being used and does not consider whether the employment in human service occupations are related to specific psychosocial factors not found in other jobs. *The main reasoning behind including the occupational stress comparisons made by Cooper and colleagues was to understand the variety of stress for different professions and understand the individual differences as well.* Furthermore research by Brown and Fielding focusing on police officers (male and female) and their experiences of occupational stress, found qualitative differences in exposure to organisational stressors, such as female officers experiencing sexual discrimination and prejudice compared to the male police officers. Such findings bring up the issue of subjectivity and the role of control as another factor in the stress response.

The development of stress coping mechanisms was also considered and the more perceived control individuals felt they had over the stressor, the more social support and time away from the stressor the more chance of coping with stressful events. Additionally, research by Skinner argued for a developmental gradation of learned coping styles from childhood to adulthood which involved learned repertoire of coping strategies which were important in determining whether individuals could cope with stressful events.

Overall, this introductory chapter has informed the reader of how employees view their organisations, are affected by the changing work climate and how this affects levels of stress and job satisfaction. The next chapter draws on the research on occupational stress and concentrates on stress in teachers and the factors that exacerbate stress including teacher characteristics and the problems with student disengagement and class disruption in Secondary schools.

## Chapter 3- Stress in Teaching

*'The Teacher who is indeed wise does not bid you to enter  
the house of his wisdom but rather leads you to the  
threshold of your mind'*

***Kahlil Gibran***

## **Chapter 3: Stress in Teaching**

*'To me the sole hope of human salvation lies in teaching'*

***George Bernard Shaw***

This chapter concentrates on stress in teaching including an analysis of the factors causing stress for teachers and the effect stress has on teachers including teacher attrition. This is an important chapter as it critically considers the evidence of 'teacher stress' as a phenomenon apart from other occupations and leads on to an analysis of teacher characteristics in dealing with stressful situations as a precursor to the final chapter in the literature review on the methodology used to investigate teacher stress.

### **3.1 Stress And Teachers**

*'If a doctor, lawyer or dentist had 40 people in his office at any one time, all of whom had different needs and some of whom didn't want to be there and were causing trouble, and the doctor, lawyer or dentist, without assistance, had to treat them all with professional excellence for nine months, then he might have some conception of the classroom teacher's job.'*

**Donald D. Quinn**

Wilson (2002) stipulates that teacher ill-health, including stress is worrying and in need of further investigation. In relation to this, a report by Teacherline UK (2004) stated that teaching is one of the most stressful professions. From Teacherline statistics, 200,000 teachers in England and Wales have stress related problems associated with their work. Compared to the general population teachers and teaching as an occupation is related to higher levels of job dissatisfaction and higher levels of psychological distress. On the whole, incidences of teacher stress, is on the increase and seriously impacting on the quality of the educational system (Schonfeld, 1990). According to the National Union of Teachers (1999) stress in teaching is rooted in organisational causes related to the way teachers are expected to work. From this Teaching Unions and educationalists regarded teacher stress in schools in the UK as a political problem in relation to Government intervention since the mid-80s and compulsory school inspections such as Ofsted.

Also there has been a growing body of evidence of teacher stress from legal cases and claims made against employers who failed to address their obligations to make the work environment safe (Daniels,1996). Thus the research of teacher stress has concentrated on

the personal based characteristics among teachers which is further supported by managers who explain-away stress by relocating the causes back within the individual (as a lack of stress-fitness) or offer an alternative positive definition of stress. Research has found that deeply discontented teacher professionals have felt trapped and have wished to escape with a high percentage wishing to leave in the first five years of teaching (Troman, 1998) and four out of five head teachers reporting burnout in their forties. Research trends on teaching and stress have indicated dissatisfaction with the profession, stating that teachers have been leaving the profession choosing alternative careers, according to the Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher (MLSAT, 1996). Borg (1990) stated that up to one third of teachers perceive their occupation to be highly stressful and according to the Department of Education's Staffing and Schooling Survey (cited in a report on teacher stress by Ruth Reese, Arizona State University West) 39% of teachers in the United States leave the profession in the first five years. Dunham (1984b) explains how teachers are prone to reach the limits of their capacity as work demands are placed upon them and further changes in teaching occur. This results in an array of stress symptoms and the teacher is portrayed (Dunham, 1984b) as '*...a subject to whom pressure is applied with resultant stress*' (p5). Dunham states that teaching as a profession exerts pressure on teachers and the individual teachers react in different ways using a variety of adaptive resources to cope with the pressure. Dunham (1984b) stipulates how employers have a statutory duty to make sure that working environments in schools do not adversely affect employee's health. According to the Guardian (2002a) and recent appeals to reduce awards for stress at work, employees feeling under pressure have a responsibility to inform their employees.

Despite the wealth of evidence explaining the dissatisfaction of teachers with their profession, teacher opinion surveys from 1984 and 1995 were compared and found that most teachers expressed personal satisfaction and were more likely to stay in the profession longer than in the past (Metropolitan Life, 1996). Research by Slaybaugh et al (2004) found that newly qualified teachers were happier and remained committed to the profession in the second year of teaching, despite complaining about discipline and classroom management problems as well as an increasing lack of parental involvement in their children's education. Thus, Slaybaugh et al (2004) argue for a shift in teacher attitudes and their willingness to stay in teaching. *Despite such findings one cannot assume that stressors felt by teachers are the same for all teachers. What about teachers at different levels of teaching (teaching tiers)? Surely the higher up the managerial scale*

*a teacher is the more varied the stressors. I decided to investigate this point further by analyzing how Head teachers stressors differs from other teachers particularly as not all Heads advocate new methodologies and approaches to investigating teacher and student satisfaction levels. The research below explains some interesting factors that affect whether Heads appreciate bottom-up research carried out by employed teaching staff and highlights some of the additional stressors that impact heavily on their decision making.*

Research on the stressors that Head teachers faced found three main factors that differed from other teachers' 1. Work overload 2. Relationships with staff and 3. Training and provision for heads being thinly spread (Cooper and Kelly 1993). Unfortunately there is limited literature on the stressors of head teachers' particularly between newly appointed heads and those who were more experienced, but research found that the stressors and difficulties facing heads changed overtime with experience and the socio-political nature of their jobs (Day and Bakioglu, 1996). Furthermore, externally imposed changes created innovation overload that heads could deal with depending upon which stage in their headship they were at. Research found that heads in the middle phase of their job role (development: consolidation and extension) managed to stay committed to their job role compared to Heads in the Autonomy phase (later on in their career) as they were affected by lack of enthusiasm to externally imposed initiatives preferring to stick to old traditions. Day and Bakioglu (1996) found that such heads were '*unwilling to apply a constructive management style, finding it difficult to change and channeling energy into the stability of the school environment rather than its development*' (p218). Research on age and conservative attitudes in Head teachers, also found that the older they were (aged over 50 years) the more important personal life concerns became and less consideration was given to school improvement (Huberman, 1989; Prick, 1986). Such research led Cooper and Kelly (1993) to become concerned about the stressors that Heads faced and the decline in Heads motivation to change and update school culture and teaching practice after 4 years of an 8 year headship. This in turn caused concern over the stagnation of teaching practice in schools that triggered teacher attrition for those lower down the management scale. *Hence, such research findings can provide insight into some of the pressures felt by Head teachers and their willingness to allow change and innovation from a bottom up level rather than that which has been externally imposed.*

The next section considers the factors affecting teachers stress including classroom disruption, ineffective communication between staff, teacher and pupil, teacher and parent

and most importantly between parent and pupil. *I feel it is important to analyse these factors in order to balance out the stress factors mentioned previously for Head teachers with teachers from different tiers and so that we can consider whether there is a trend of certain factors affecting mainstream level teachers who do not hold managerial positions and face the daily grind of teaching students who are not always willing to learn.*

### **3.2 Factors That Affect Stress In Teaching**

Many factors and variables affecting teacher stress were researched and reported to be problems with discipline, classroom management and the lack of parental involvement with their children's education (Slaybaugh et al, 1995/6; Wolfe and Smith, 1996). Also factors like the lack of administrative support and in particular the isolation of beginning teachers came out to be the most frequent complaints (MLSAT, 1992). Studies of occupational stress indicated that workload and communication were significant causes of teacher stress with anticipation, worry and helplessness emerging as psychological factors influencing stress (Wilson, 2002) both in the UK and globally.

A synthesis of research on the causes, effects and reduction strategies of teacher stress (Wiley, 2000) found the general environmental characteristics of teacher stress included stressors like role conflict and ambiguity, time demands, large class enrolment, troublesome or disruptive students (Dunham, 1977; Borg,1990), poor human relations among staff, inadequate school buildings and equipment or educational resources (Schonfeld,2001).

Research by Slaybaugh et al (2004) concentrated on evaluating the attitudes of (American) second-year teachers towards their profession and to determine whether they were still committed. Using a survey design 74 second-year teachers were assessed and the results found an overall improvement in teacher perceptions of their profession in the second year despite continuing problems of classroom management and discipline. The researchers concluded that effective induction programs were necessary for newly qualified teachers especially with regards to a staff buddy system in schools. The recognition of increases in classroom discipline problems was referred to on a national scale especially with the research from the Metropolitan Life Survey of American teachers (1996) that picked up how American urban school teachers felt that parental support had worsened over the past decade.

Johnstone (1993b) found, in relation to pupil behaviour in a survey of Scottish schools, that it was the repetition of the behaviour that caused the most distress supporting earlier research by Lazarus (1981) that found that continuous irritants can be stressful. Linked to this, Smethers (1984) carried out research on stress and anxiety among comprehensive school teachers. A personality test (the 16PF) was administered (which measures personality traits such as anxiety related traits) in order to determine the anxiety and resilience levels of teachers. The results found that the most frequently reported sources of stress were pupils' poor attitudes and pupil misbehaviour. High levels of anxiety were also found for self reported stress. Also, teachers doing the majority of classroom teaching reported the most stress and the amount of professional experience or the teachers' age did not result in lower levels of job stress. In fact stress research by Dunham (1984) found that the more experienced the teacher in relation to the length of service and age, the more their responsibilities and the higher up the career ladder they climbed. Such teachers with middle management roles experienced stress at different levels to newly qualified teachers who were also younger and more naive with regards to teaching and discipline protocol. Other research found that changes at work, either from within the profession or external governmental demands and changes to the National Curriculum exacerbated stress for teachers (Travers and Cooper, 1989). Additional aspects of change associated with stress come from the push to improve school standards. Research found that post Ofsted blues occurred for teachers resulting in exhaustion, depression and a lack of motivation (Ferguson et al, 1999). However, teachers do cope with additional work demands largely by working long hours but this like any stress factor is associated with teacher burnout and low job satisfaction (Timperley and Robinson, 2000). *Similar problems are found today. Many colleagues have often complained about the factors identified above and explain how tiring the constant battle of classroom control before syllabus delivery is. Unfortunately, instead of the classroom being an amicable environment with effective student-teacher interaction, the classroom dynamics are preceding teaching. In relation to this I believe that the normal perception of the teacher addressing the class, requesting silence and respect and expecting students to be on task is fading away as more and more low-level disruption occurs in schools.*

### **3.3 Disruptive Pupils, Misbehaviour and Teacher Stress**

*'There are no difficult students, just students who don't want to do it your way'*

*Jane Revell & Susan Norman*

The issue of teacher-child relations is an important aspect of how stress occurs in teaching. Unfortunately, not all students present at school feel they are there to learn. There seem to be students whose main purpose is the disruption of classes to the annoyance of other students and teachers. According to the national website of Wales, icWales [Accessed 24 /11/ 05] '*teachers highlight poor pupil behaviour as having a damaging effect and increasing teachers' workload and stress*'. Reported in the article were the results of a survey conducted by the NASUWT found that more than 6 out of 10 teachers have experienced verbal abuse from a pupil in the last year, 1 in 10 have been physically assaulted by a pupil in the last year and 1 in 4 teachers had experienced harassment by a parent during the last 12 months. *Despite these worrying figures, one needs to consider the biases of such reports...which schools were examined? How large were the samples?. It is very easy to look at such reports and gain a sense of scare-mongering but unfortunately, the reality is that there are more and more reports of such disruptive behaviour. Was there no student disruption in the past?... Why are such reports coming to the media's attention now?. Perhaps there is a correlation between the levels of discipline adopted in schools and pupil behaviour. When I was at Secondary school in the eighties, there were the odd troublesome characters but no-one would swear openly to teachers or their peers. There was a sense of horror towards being on detention or being excluded from school but now as a teacher at a Secondary school, I believe times have changed. The students swear using the words as part of their everyday vocabulary. They do not seem to understand why they are reprimanded for use of bad language and see their behaviour as quite normal.*

Overall, violent and disruptive pupil behaviour impacts negatively on teachers at all levels damaging their self confidence both personally and professionally and seems to be a growing stressor for teachers, in some cases on a daily basis. *I think it's important to realise the discrepancy teacher's face between their teacher training and the realities of the 'job'. Many newly qualified teachers learn the basics behind learning theory, motivation and positive reinforcement but then discover to their horror that 'real teaching' is estranged from the book theory learned at colleges. The practices of teaching children not willing or motivated to learn throw theory out of the window and bring forth a teacher relying on their interpersonal skills, commonsense and a lot of cunning. Thus, it is very true to agree that teaching is/can be a very stressful profession and to be a 'good' teacher is now not a matter of the production of knowledge but how you deliver knowledge and inspire the learners.*

According to Schon (1983) it is often difficult to describe what we know (our tacit knowledge) and our actions and use of research-based theories and techniques are often dependent on tacit recognitions. Such knowledge is in professional action and needs to be developed and understood by reflection-in-action. Schon believes that reflection-in-action helps practitioners deal with situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness and value conflict and avoids patterns of behavioural or judgemental error. *In this way, teachers need to reflect on their practices and uncover the reasons behind their judgements and behavioural reactions, particularly with student disruption. When the teacher loses their temper after many classroom strategies have been attempted, it is then that he or she needs to reflect on their personal tacitly held beliefs and think about the best course of action. After all the goal of teaching is the positive welfare of the students, hopefully with as little mental exhaustion and exasperation for the teacher.*

Schon (1983) further advocates, that reflecting on troublesome divergent situations of practice helps the practitioner construct new descriptions of the problems and test the new description through on-the-spot experimentation. In this respect, the practitioner becomes a researcher in the practice context and does not separate thinking from doing but incorporates action-research inquiry into everyday problems and dilemmas. *Gervase Phinn a poet, has described teachers very well and I use the poem to illustrate the grim reality that teachers aren't like me and you....but enter college, cram their minds with knowledge but then emerge completely changed as they have to shriek and scream and bawl and pace the classroom like a lion.*

### **Teachers**

Teachers (it is sad but true),  
Like telling children what to do.  
At college they are taught to shout,  
And learn to order kids about,  
To freeze them with an icy stare,  
And throw their hands up in the air,  
And shake their heads in deep despair.  
With nerves of steel and fists of iron  
They pace the classroom like a lion.

Teachers (it is fair to say)  
 Like giving orders every day.  
 They can't speak quietly at all,  
 They have to shriek and scream and bawl,  
 Bellow, bark and screech and huff,  
 Holler, wail and pant and puff,  
 Lament, complain, sigh and drone,  
 Yell and yelp and roar and moan.  
 Grimace, grunt and growl and groan.

Teachers (I think you'll agree),  
 Don't use words like you and me.  
 In training for their tough profession  
 They learn each teacher-like expression:  
 'Stop fiddling Tim and pay attention  
 Or you will join me in detention!'
   
 'I really don't know why I bother,  
 In one ear and out the other'.  
 'I'm waiting Jane', 'My, my you're slow',  
 'I'm not here for my health you know!'  
 'Now settle down and look this way',  
 And 'Michael put that thing away',  
 'Take out your books', 'What did I just say?'  
 As soon as teachers enter college  
 They cram their minds with all this knowledge.  
 Then they emerge completely changed  
 It's very odd, it's very strange.  
 And that is why (it's sad but true),  
 That teachers aren't like me and you.

by Gervase Phinn

Some authors point out that, despite this continual challenging from students of the authority position of the teacher, provided there is the routine reassertion of the boundaries and expected levels of behaviour, the students accept the concept of a rule-based society within school and most engage in meaningful and rewarding learning. McCoombs (1993) argues that learners of all ages are naturally good at being self-motivated and managing their own learning and hence the stress being caused is a product of how the teacher handles the situation. In relation to this, Ayers and Gray (1998) state that teachers are recommended to be knowledgeable about their curriculum area, have prepared lessons, display effective teaching qualities, engage the learners, use discovery methods, encourage pupils to be motivated. Other recommendations include being aware of pupil differences within the classroom and allow for different learning styles. They state that to avoid pupil misbehaviour these recommendations should be adhered to. *Being a teacher myself, I am aware that many teachers that I know do have the qualities and recommendations that Ayers and Gray stipulate but how do managers and bureaucrats expect teachers to be positive and enthused continuously throughout the working day when teachers not only have disruptive pupils they also have an overload of marking and administrative work in addition to any conflicts between other staff/managers?.*

Ayers and Gray (1998) argue that when a combination of the long list of teacher considerations previously mentioned is missing, the classroom can become a war-zone and this is when teacher stress arises. *What evidence do Ayers and Gray base these assumptions on? They carried out surveys and teacher observations but to make sweeping generalisations is an error. As a teacher their statement is hard to accept as my colleagues would agree that despite the lesson planning, the diversity of teaching methods and the patience shown to students, disruption still arises. Many avenues of constraint exist within the schooling policy to reduce such situations resulting in the ultimate threat of exclusion and even permanent exclusion. In many cases situations are curbed but for some intent on causing trouble other routes are made available. My concern is ... Why is the blame automatically placed or assumed to be on the teacher?.*

A conference held in London (22<sup>nd</sup> November 2005) by the Government's Leadership Group on Behaviour and Discipline highlighted the truancy figures for 2003-4 at 1,264,103 pupils despite the £885 million invested for tackling truancy and reducing exclusions (reported by Neil Stewart Associates Current Conferences). The Government has introduced the use of Learning Support Centres within schools as a halfway house for

such pupils. Many schools nationwide have such centres and their main purpose is the education of disruptive or mentally and physically challenged students. This is achieved through one on one teaching, dual-registration with colleges and employers and schemes like the Princes Trust Award (which encourages students to work towards other qualifications such as the ASDAN accreditation). An alternative curriculum is offered to all excluded students including trips out and work related tasks. For mainstream students, the idea of centres appear to be like holiday centres because of the divergent curriculum offered and indeed to some this perception may well be justified. Nevertheless, this new initiative was set up with the view of both exclusion from class and inclusion within education to achieve the minimum qualification of GCSEs.

Sometimes the disruption occurs because the child suffers from some form of (EBD - Emotional and Behavioural Disorder). EBD students tend to have on-going communication or interaction difficulties that impede the development of social relationships and cause substantial barriers to learning, hence exacerbating the stress for teachers. Such students require specialist care and attention ranging from flexible teaching arrangements, help adjusting to school life (expectations and routines), help in the development of social competence, emotional maturity and positive interaction skills with peers and adults (SEN Codes of Practice, 2001). This is achieved by re-channelling or re-focusing repetitive and self-injurious behaviour, by providing class and school systems which control or censor negative or difficult behaviours to encourage positive behaviour within the provision of safe, supportive environments.

Despite the new initiatives to reduce disruption in mainstream classes and encourage inclusion, there has been a mass of literature highlighting the stress teachers feel with emotionally and behaviourally disordered (EBD) students. The main findings showed that EBD teachers had the largest number of stressors (Center and Callaway, 1999), showed a greater willingness to leave their jobs (Seery, 1990 found a 13% attrition rate for EBD teachers) and suffered more stress and role problems than other teachers (Billingsley and Cross, 1992). Research by Center and Callaway also found significant correlations between reported stressors, the willingness to leave an EBD teaching position and three personality traits (extroversion, psychoticism and neuroticism) from the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire-Revised (EPQ-R). The results found significant correlations for the EBD-TSQ (Teaching Survey Questionnaire) and the EPQ-R with the correlation for Extroversion (E-scale  $r=0.177$ ,  $p<0.03$ ), for Neuroticism (N scale  $r=0.352$ ,  $p<0.0001$ ) and

for Psychotism (P scale  $r=0.202$ ,  $p<0.013$ ). Also, other key factors for EBD teacher attrition included negative student attitudes, discipline problems, poor working conditions and stress (Marlow and Hierlmeir, 1987). However, Merrow (1999) found that teacher shortage problems in general were not of recruitment but of retention. It was reported by researchers, Borg and Riding (1991), that one of the main reasons why teachers left the profession early on in their career was the high stress levels. *Thus the question to be asked is "Is the teacher wholly responsible for classroom disruption or do pupils have their own reasons"?*

### **3.4 The Problem Of Student Disengagement**

*'It's not just about looking and copying, it's about feeling too'*  
**Paul Cezanne**

"... Why should a boy or girl who under some circumstances is witty, observant, analytical, imaginative, in a word 'intelligent', come into the classroom, and as if by magic, turn into a complete idiot?" (Holt,1984 p16). He states, that our schools are filled with children who are defiant, destructive and violent but not brave. They are under peer pressure to look good and need to be steered towards more constructive paths. He believes that children fail to develop more than a tiny part of their tremendous capacity for learning, understanding and creativity. He argues that children are *afraid, bored and confused* (p16). Holt further states that children remain afraid of failing, disappointing or displeasing the many anxious adults around them. They remain bored because they find school a dull trivial place with a narrowed curriculum limiting their intelligence, capabilities and talents.

Holt (1984) argues that schools need to recognize 'value' and foster courage in children not only to better their learning but to tackle discipline problems. In other words, Holt states that the Secondary education system itself is at fault for creating disruption and failures in schools. He argues that the teachers themselves are to blame. They perceive children who are 'brave' as hard to handle, rebellious and defiant. Teachers and bureaucrats (according to Holt, 1984) seem to value docility and suggestibility. Holt further argues that education focuses on tests and assessments with content-biased conceptions of curriculum playing down the importance of disseminating the material. Bureaucracy overshadows education and in some cases inadequate curriculum material can be bureaucratically imposed by exam boards for what seems pointless to most. Is it

any wonder that we suffer from student disengagement?. *However, my reflections on the Holt conceptions of why children fail are rather mixed. In one vain I agree with Holt as he sees children learning a fraction of their true potential capacity. As a teacher I can see this occurring on a practical level as the curriculum restricts the teacher from delving into topics more than is necessary for the exam boards. Students unfortunately are not permitted to take onus of their learning by exploring different avenues of learning. Instead most teachers simply teach them to pass exams and very few students gain in-depth insights into subjects taught at school. This further disconnects them from the learning process and now we are left with a de-motivated student body dominated by bureaucratically determined curricula. On the other hand, this is not the case for every student, teacher or school and generalisations like this should not be stated out of context. Furthermore, how far are teachers or students to blame for the Secondary school system failure, as Holt states?. I feel Holt needed to explicate further on this...how can he suggest that teachers are to blame?.*

As teachers and educators, Holt argues that we should encourage students to think for themselves, be more reflective and relate their experiences to what is being taught. He highlights the problem of student disengagement and low motivation arguing that children's intelligence becomes disconnected from their schooling. This relates to research conducted by the EPPI Centre (2004). In a systematic review of secondary school pupils aged 11-16 and their motivations to learn, they found evidence of a mass disengagement from the education process (DfES 2002a, 2002b). Even in American research, a mass disengagement between students and the education process was found. Most students felt high school was irrelevant, classes were boring and they were at school (in terms of physical presence) to pass the time until something important came along (American Youth Policy Forum workshop - AYPF,2000). Scales (1996) found this to be the case in 40% of high school and 50% of middle school pupils. *I find the AYPF (2000) findings 'too cool' as though the students had all thought this is our time to rebel against the system and I want to seem cool to my friends by stating that learning is boring, when in fact I might enjoy it.* The reader will soon find out that in my research the year 10 class that I interviewed accepted the fact that they were disruptive and that some teachers were fun and interesting and made school enjoyable. *On the whole the reader will find (Chapter 6) that the students interviewed did find school boring but there were individual differences in their commentary and that is why I question the findings of the AYPF (2000) research.*

Furthermore, research by the EPPI (2004) stated that the disengaged pupil is one who has lost connection with the learning process but that even the motivated or engaged learners are putting in minimum effort and motivation in order to achieve minimum hassle. From the Elton Report (DES, 1989) it was suggested that to engage pupils in the learning process, a mixture of curative reprimand and external reward should be used. This eventuates into a behavioural approach to learning with predictable outcomes. However, in reality a more agentic learning takes place as control over the curriculum is placed externally resulting in passivity and a loss of interest in the curriculum. This then curtails opportunities for creativity in the learning process. There is immense pressure on teachers now especially as the government in the UK are set on standards of high performance and high equity in education and require teaching to involve an active process resulting in independent and skilled learners (DfES, 2003).

Hence, there is more of an onus on teachers to educate and motivate students and the in-built assumption, that to motivate students a system of rewards and sanctions should be in place in every school. The Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED, 2001) challenge this view stating that the physical presence of pupils in the classroom does not mean they will learn, or have greater motivation to work with such reward sanctions in place. Interesting research by Deci (1982) found that when teachers were oriented to being more controlling in the classroom rather than supporting autonomy in their students, the students displayed lowered intrinsic motivation and self-esteem. Such teachers were found to be more critical of the students, gave more commands and allowed less choice and autonomy. *The problem arises, in my understanding, when the teacher-child relations in the classroom become polarised. The students begin to lose their motivation to learn and the teacher responds to the student in a negative fashion. A self-fulfilling prophecy occurs.* The students react negatively towards the teacher, refusing to co-operate in class, become closed minded and fail to respond to positivity and success (Choh Sse Yee et al, 2001).

Dweck (1995) explicates how there are differences in learner motivations with one relating to fixed levels of intelligence in which failure is seen as intrinsic to themselves as a lack of ability rather than a lack of effort. In contrast, incremental theorists believe learning is where intelligence is something to be cultivated through effort and set backs motivate them to work harder in order to gain mastery over the task (Choh Sse Yee and Ling, 2001). Such learners rationalise failure and respond in different ways depending on

the theory of intellect they hold (Dweck, 1995). However (unlike Dweck), McLean (2003) maintains that such learning and motivation beliefs are created and not innate and it is the teacher's responsibility to influence positively these beliefs in order to encourage intrinsic motivation. *Another tall order for teachers!! At the end of the day, what can teachers do?. Ofsted require teachers to create individual learner action plans for each student in order to encourage them to learn. Thus from my perception, there seems to be a form of disconnection between learning and teaching especially in light of inclusion procedures and equal opportunities. We seem to be pandering to a set of newly created needs created for the teacher by bureaucrats. It is less a matter of content delivery but one of methods to suit individual needs. Teaching has become increasingly fragmented not only in the classroom but also in terms of demands placed upon the teacher. At the end of the day, students should be treated like mini-adults, not allowed to excuse themselves from learning and on the whole teachers (in my mind) should not be blamed for student/pupil inadequacy. Nevertheless, it is also important to understand the effect of stress on teachers and the coping strategies they adopt to handle both daily and long term stressors.*

### **3.5 Effects Of Stress On Teachers**

From analysing the prevalence of stress we need to consider the impact of stress on teachers' lives, on the schools in which they work and on the pupils they teach. As well as these considerations, the *'economic impact on the education system in terms of lost teaching time and the additional cost of replacing teachers needs to be addressed'* (Wilson, 2002 p11). Such costs can be difficult to quantify as those teachers not reporting stress symptoms are not necessarily stress free. Kyriacou (1980d; 2001) state that teacher stress comes from the demands placed on individual teachers. This results in anger, anxiety, depression and potentially pathogenic physiological changes. They argue that the effects of stress in general result in three ways: 1. Physical 2. Psychological and 3. Behavioural. In relation to this Wiley (2000) has carried out a synthesis of teacher stress research and constructed a table of stress categories that affect teachers, the stress effects and their reduction strategies. Thus, teacher stress problems like extra-organisational issues resulted in anger and increased heart rate and could be resolved through effective administrative support. Likewise, class size caused tension and should be managed with pay incentives; inadequate facilities resulted in feelings of health damage and stomach upsets and job redesign was suggested. *While I agree with Wilson (2000) on increased pay for teachers...how does a pay increase stop stress or justify large classroom sizes?.*

Problems like disruptive students, role conflict and poor staff relations can result in feelings of panic and insomnia and according to Wiley (2000) are dealt with through QWL (Quality of Work life) and Wellness Programs. Overall, Wiley documented numerous strategies to deal with teacher stress. Despite the many options to relieve stress such as stress management courses and counselling services, many teachers complain that the curriculum restrictions, organizational politics, difficult students and personal career aspirations all conflict, overburdening teachers at all levels. Hendrickson (1979) states, that stress and burnout are an '*occupational hazard*' for professionals including teachers. He states that there are teachers who leave the profession because they cannot successfully deal with the stress and those who stay in the profession and learn to cope by facing the stressors using appropriate intervention mechanisms like time management, use of social support network both inside and outside of work and appropriate relaxation and me-time.

Dunham (1980a) investigated the effects of stress on teachers, using action research on two English and Two German comprehensive schools. Staff, were interviewed and given a checklist of stress reactions in the workplace (reactions ranged from irritability, increased aggressiveness, to depression, inability to eat, skin rashes, back pain, migraine and apathy). The results indicated that staff frustration was shown by irritability, increased anger but was also associated with depression, anxiety and apathy. Secondly, major emotional responses included the inability to concentrate and high levels of un-productivity along with psychosomatic reactions like stomach upset, pain and skin disorders. Follow up studies were carried out on three English comprehensive schools and again checklists were used to identify stress reactions in the present school year (1982/83) and assess the frequency with which they occurred. From the percentage of teachers that identified each reaction as often or very often, the results showed that they showed high feelings of exhaustion, frustration because there was little sense of achievement and a marked reduction of contacts with people outside school. These stress reactions were closely followed by wanting to leave the school, apathy and displaced aggression on children or colleagues. Anxiety was also identified which was related to loss of sleep, overeating and poor concentration. Stress reactions were also identified for senior and middle management with the use of open-ended interviewing and questionnaires. Similar frustrations were reported but differenced in severity. Dunham's research of senior management found severe emotional, behavioural, mental and psychosomatic symptoms.

Research on teacher stress by Guglielmi and Tatrow (1998) found teachers suffering with stress were more likely to suffer problems such as alienation, apathy and absenteeism which affected student's achievement. Furthermore, West and West (1989) stated that school systems can be negatively affected by poor teacher performance, absenteeism and turnover rates, such that stress amongst school teachers was positively associated with teacher absenteeism. Also on a personal level, research by Larchick and Chance (2002) found a big impact on teachers' health, well-being and performance from their related job stress.

Some researchers argue against the stress/illness connection stating that certain people remain quite healthy under high stress levels (Holahan and Moos, 1985) probably because of a buffering effect such as support networks and personality factors like hardiness. Also, no hard evidence has been found illustrating that stressed teachers are any less effective than non-stressed counterparts as the majority of research has concentrated on teachers' feelings as opposed to the impact on pupils (Firth-Cozens, 1992). The research described on the stress-illness connection and the need for social support networks, relates to current problems in teaching. At the school a staff buddy system was introduced in 2005 and was open to all staff not just NQT's (newly qualified teachers). The idea behind it was to encourage positive feedback from staff observing each others lessons so that good points of that persons' teaching is highlighted. *In this way it brings different members of staff together to appraise each other and encourage positivity which will always be beneficial in relation to the amount of stress teacher's face. Yet being a teacher, I cannot claim that teaching alone is the only stressful occupation and the differentiation between the stress teachers face and the stress involved in teaching has not been clearly demarcated.*

Teaching is stressful and the job role is very demanding as with other professions like doctors, lawyers, police officers. There seems to be a wealth of research documenting teacher stress in comparison to other occupations (Johnstone, 1993b) but *could it be that stress has become an embodiment of teaching as opposed to other professions?*

From such research it is possible to appreciate the wide range of occupational pressure that teachers have but also to accept that some teachers can handle the heavy demands in school without experiencing any of these stress reactions. *Could it be personal characteristics such as hardiness that separates those teachers who cope with stress from the ones having burnout?*

### **3.6 Teacher Characteristics and Stress**

*'A Teacher should have maximal authority and minimal power'*

**Thomas Szaz**

Society's fast pace and change disturbed our comfort zone (our feelings of security and continuity) and challenged our coping mechanisms. Dunham (1984) states that the teacher's personal characteristics and coping actions make all the difference in coping with stress situations. Frustration was found to be a key stress reaction in Dunham's research and causes a wide range of feelings from irritation to angry aggression. The individual teacher's characteristics will determine how these feelings are displayed. Ryans (1960) constructed the Teachers Characteristics Rating Scale, and found that a 'good' teacher (the one that both staff and students are pleased with) tends to be warm, understanding, friendly, responsible, systematic, imaginative and enthusiastic. It was also found that these characteristics and their importance decreased with the age of the children being taught. In other words, Secondary school children were more accommodating (more accepting of the fact that the teacher has to get through specified curricula) to teachers low in these characteristics, rather than Primary school children. *I find this hard to believe, since my student interviews did not tally with this, in fact the students who thought they were disruptive in classes, wanted teachers to be warm, fun and understanding.* Ryans (1960) research did not produce high correlations between these qualities and teacher success (examination results and pupil on teacher assessment). In fact, even Primary school teachers low in these qualities could still produce satisfactory results. Another important characteristic of a successful teacher was emotional maturity. This means a combination of warmth and liking for pupils with a professional detachment and sense of responsibility. *One could argue though, that Ryans (1960) research was era-dependent and that education today has changed dramatically from the 1960s, almost 180 degrees with Secondary teachers encouraged to create active learning environments which are friendly, relaxed and purposeful.*

Longitudinal research by Cortis (1985) on teachers in their first two decades of their profession, found that successful teachers could put the school before thinking of themselves (by ignoring or dismissing minor differences between teacher and pupil or between teacher and teacher) and take a mature, positive attitude to their job in favour of facilitating children to feel secure and confident. In contrast, they found that unsuccessful teachers were more self-oriented, dominant, suspicious and aggressive and could not

compromise for the interests of the majority. Related to this, research on perfectionism and stress in teachers found a positive correlation between socially prescribed perfectionism and various indices of teacher stress (Flett et al, 1995). They concluded that one must not investigate teacher stress and characteristics without considering the social expectations of perfectionism. This relates to research on perfectionism and personality, with strive for perfectionism being correlated with high levels of teacher stress. This has also been highlighted in old research by Oliver and Butcher (1968) on teacher attitude. They devised a teacher attitude scale which scored teachers on three dimensions-naturalism, radicalism and tender-mindedness. They found that for teachers in the first year of their training all three dimensions were involved, scored highly and related to perfectionism. However, when the teachers took up their first post the levels on these dimensions dropped. This research (despite being old and may be out of date) illustrates the point about the realities of teaching as teachers become less child-centred more conservative and more tough-minded as the years roll on in teaching. Reasons for this ranged from poor working conditions, role conflict, syllabus constraints, time pressure, to difficult children or children requiring specialist help.

Other research on both primary and secondary teachers found a strong correlation between neuroticism and high stress levels and introversion and stress (especially in male teachers) (Fontana and Abouserie, 1993). However original personality research by Friedman and Rosenman (1959) identified three personality types and their relationship to stress. Type A individuals were identified to be competitive, ambitious, impatient, restless, time pressured with perfectionist tendencies. In contrast, Type B individuals were found to lack these characteristics and were more relaxed than Type A. Type C individuals repressed their emotions and reacted to stress with a sense of helplessness. Friedman and Rosenman found from their research that the Type A patterned individuals were more stressed than Type B individuals and were more prone to cardiovascular disease. Research on Type C individuals found that because they repressed their emotions they had a higher chance of being prone to cancer (Morris et al, 1981). However, on re-analysis of the Friedman and Rosenman research, Matthews et al (1977) found that the most important component for Type A individuals to develop CHD was hostility. Research carried out on hostility found that type A who possess high potentials for hostility appear to experience cardiovascular hyper-reactivity even when challenge was minimal (Dembroski et al, 1979). In relation to this, Barefoot et al (1989) found that the frustrations and conflicts present in teaching situations are likely to exacerbate this

personality trait in susceptible people. In fact studies found, that for Type A individuals to repress their anger frequently in teaching situations, causes more harm than its expression (Wright, 1988). Additionally, older research by Buss (1961) found a relationship between suppressed anger and high blood pressure and found that such people could not cope with rage, failed to express aggression, stayed tense and uncomfortable and their blood pressure rose staying higher for longer periods, leading to a permanent condition. Thus there seems to be a strong link from a mass of empirical research on stress, personality and teaching.

Constant conflicts between staff and pupils can result in a sharp loss of confidence in the teacher's perception of the ability to cope. Kobasa (1979) stated that people differ considerably in their ability to cope with stressors. Some individuals are more resilient or *hardy* than others and such people have three characteristics. These are commitment (involvement in their work), challenge (not seeing stress as a threat) and control (they have a stronger internal control). Research on hardiness found that when male executives in stressful jobs were interviewed and followed up a year later, three factors (hardiness, exercise and social support) were found to be important but hardiness played the biggest role (Kobasa et al, 1985). Hardiness, teacher stress and burnout were assessed in a sample of 83 Chinese prospective teachers in Hong Kong (Chan, 2003). It was found that two types of hardiness existed- positive (which correlated with personal accomplishment) and negative hardiness (which mediated the effects of stress on emotional exhaustion and depersonalization). No evidence was found by Chan's research to show that either positive or negative hardiness had stress-buffering effects for teacher burnout. Hughes et al (1987) found that teachers with more extroverted personalities were less susceptible to stress and those found to have a strong emotional component in their personalities were more susceptible to stress. Maslach and Jackson (1982) found that emotional exhaustion and depersonalization were experienced more by nurses and suicide rates were higher for those in the medical profession in comparison to clergy, teachers and social workers. Reasons for this finding related to the degree of sociability within the profession and links with clients, as well as personality and the ability to cope with excessively long hours and work load. From the analysis of teacher characteristics and stress research has suggested that, where the expectations of the teachers' role, becomes incongruent to that of the school and work environment, stress vulnerability occurs. *This provides an important point with regards to the freedom each teacher feels they have within their perceived role and the ability to achieve it in the classroom environment, their relevant professional*

*community and their employing organization.* Bartlett (2002) states, that when the lack of fit between the conceptions of the teachers' role and the conditions of teacher commitment occur, the schools that she studied suffered *high teacher attrition. Considering thirteen teachers left the school in one go, it may be that Bartlett's views hold some truth but without probing those teachers that left can one ever really find out the truth?. However, I cannot state the school I researched is any different to other similar Secondary schools.* Teacher attrition is on the rise in general (Borg, 1990; MLSAT, 1996; Troman, 1998) and it would be foolish to assume one school is better or worse than another. *The question then is....how do teachers cope with these stressors?.*

### **3.7 Teacher Stress and Coping Mechanisms**

Cedoline (1982) argues that there is no single prescription for coping with the stress of teaching, and coping begins with *the awareness of symptoms and causes and the commitment to change.* Therefore, each teacher will need to assess their own unique combination of coping strategies in order to avoid burnout. Related to this is the acceptance of the fact that in mainstream education there are mixed calibre students. As more students with emotional and behavioural disorders (EBD) are placed within classrooms, teachers are expected to cope. Fink and Janssen (1993) proposed that trainee teachers should be taught coping strategies and skills for managing stress and burnout, especially those teaching EBD students. Rockwell (1993) states that burnout can be avoided through personal styles and relationships. She contends that there is more to behaviour management and teaching since effective teaching comes from a creative blend of learned techniques and individual personality.

Much research has been carried out analysing the ways in which teachers cope with stress from the past 50 years (Wilson, 2002). The findings showed that teachers reported different coping mechanisms depending upon the methodological stance of the researcher (whether a quantitative stance was adopted measuring physiological responses to stress or more qualitative stances measuring the individual's perception of stress in relation to situational issues). Dunham (1984b) found that the stance adopted by researchers held different implications for teachers and educational managers. Earlier research dating from the 1960s to 1990s found the top coping mechanisms were breaking work stress into manageable chunks, time management and taking time out to re-evaluate stressors and most importantly talking to colleagues (Kyriacou, 1980; Dunham, 1984b; Griffith et al,

1999). The main problem is identifying a '*standardised approach to measuring stress as most teacher stress reports have either been entirely subjective with little medical or observational evidence, or conducted on volunteers in laboratories which lacks ecological validity and excludes the complexities of real life*' (Fisher, 1984 p6). More recent methods of measuring teacher stress have included the use of diaries, work logs and observations but little physiological evidence of stress has been used outside laboratories (Malcolm and Wilson, 2000; Hall et al, 2001).

Not only is the individual teacher responsible for coping strategies, schools are required to adopt organisational strategies to reduce stress. *After all, we are not told the extent to which disruptive pupils are removed from particular classes or how sets of pupils are allocated to teachers according to their ability to cope. These problems are managed at departmental or managerial level.* Despite these concerns, the majority of teachers develop their own strategies such as keeping things in perspective, avoiding confrontations and relaxing at work (Johnstone, 1989; 1993b). *However, such strategies tend to be too generalised, can almost apply to any work environment and are not grounded in the context of particular incidences in schools or classes which may give rise to teacher stress. Also one cannot be sure that what is reported is what is actually done to confront potential stressors.* Unfortunately, many problems exist with verifying stress reduction strategies since many tend to be palliative only being used to relieve or remove the problem and not cure the problem. *The question is.....'Are there cures to deal with certain situations?'. Commonsense states no, as each situation is different. However, there are certain measures that both the teacher and the school organisation can take to minimise stress.*

### **3.8 Summary of Chapter**

This chapter uncovered the evidence of stress in teaching concentrating on factors that caused stress for teachers including the problems of classroom disruption, de-motivated and disengaged students (EPPI, 2004) and EBD student behaviour and their impact on teachers. Holt's views on education were examined as he blamed the bureaucracy of the education system in favouring docility and suggestibility in students instead of encouraging braveness and independence. Research by Center and Callaway (1999) found that teachers who taught EBD students were unhappier with their jobs and were more likely to leave teaching than their non-EBD counterparts. A contrast was then made between the stressors effecting teachers and Head teachers. Research by Day and

Bakioglu found the Head teachers had more specified stressors such as problems in training and provision for Head teachers, communication with staff and the LEA, handling work overload and external initiative pressures and being accountable for handling poor performance to parents, governors and external agencies like Ofsted. Depending upon the number of years, experience and age of the Head teachers, levels of school improvement and degree of conservatism shown were found to correlate. The older Heads were found to be less concerned with applying a constructive management style and more concerned with the stability of the school environment. Additionally, Heads in the first 4 years of their careers were far more open to change initiatives and school effectiveness. Day and Bakioglu found that problems existed for Heads in the last 4 years of an 8 year Headship cycle. They found a decline in motivation to change and update school culture and teaching practices and urged for a process of mid-career development for Head teachers to allow them to re-focus their levels of job commitment and satisfaction.

After this, teacher characteristics were assessed and research found that teachers having a combination of extroversion, hardiness and social support were less susceptible to stress. The effects of stress on teachers was analysed and found to lead to alienation, apathy, absenteeism and poor teacher performance. All of these effects were then related to the type of coping strategies adopted by employees to handle stress. Effective coping strategies were found to be breaking work stress into manageable chunks, time management and taking time out to re-evaluate stressors and most importantly talking to colleagues. The issues of social support and time management were found to be the most influential methods in controlling the effects of stress yet stress coping strategies were found to be palliative, only being used to relieve or remove the problem and not cure the problem.

The next chapter assesses the dichotomy between bottom-up initiatives from teachers and top-down control from management and introduces new approaches to educational research. The chapter concentrates on newer approaches such as practitioner-research, assessing its benefits, successful applications and the criticisms behind the methodology.

## Chapter 4

### The Use of Practitioner–Research in Education

*'Our capacity to function intellectually is highly dependent on our emotional state. When we are preoccupied our minds are literally occupied with something and we have no space to pay attention, to take in and listen to anything else. When we are frightened we are more likely to make mistakes. When we feel inadequate we tend to give up rather than struggle to carry on with the task.'*

*Teacher in ARTE project (2001 p73)*

## Chapter 4- The Use of Practitioner-Research in Education

*'The art of teaching is the art of assisting discovery'*

**Mark Van Doren**

This chapter reviews the methodology used by researchers to analyse stress in teaching and includes a comparison of traditional methods against newer approaches including action research and practitioner-research as a way of improving teaching practices. Improvement in practice is quite possible as is evidenced in the literature. The main concern lies in the fact that teachers want to exert control, flair and independence in their teaching but in many cases are prevented from doing so due to managerial agendas and top-down restrictions. *This chapter begins by shedding light on the dichotomy between teachers wanting to be in control over their teaching practices and the pressure they feel from management which prevents them from showing flair and makes (us) teachers 'toe the bureaucratic line'.*

### 4.1 The Yin-Yang Effect of Teaching: Pedagogical versus New Age Reflective!

*'Spoon-feeding in the long run teaches us nothing but the shape of the spoon'*

**E.M.Forster**

Teaching as a profession is still thought of as one where the teacher imparts knowledge which incorporates a degree of freedom and creativity, to a body of students who are motivated and willing to learn. With numerous Government education reforms and the push for less student passivity and teacher-led delivery (DfES,2003), schooling today has unfortunately become prone to the dichotomies noted by Ulanoff (2004), such that '*top-down*' systemic change leaves teachers out of the reform planning process (Lieberman, 1995 cited in Novick,1996 p1) and have little control over their professional development and the opportunities to implement them (Sykes, 1995 cited in Novick, 1996 p2). The continuity of new reforms overriding old reforms has led to disappointing results (Clark & Astuto, 1994; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995) with teachers suffering the '*Alice in Wonderland problem where teachers nod blithely at the inevitability of incompatible events*' (Darling-Hammond, 1990 pg344). Thus, with such restricted input into the reform process researchers like Novick (1996 p2) state that teachers '*just close the classroom door waiting for it to all go away*' as was quoted from her paper published on the

Education Policy Analysis Archives. Researchers like (Darling-Hammond, 1990 p341) began to appreciate that top-down policies ‘*constrained practice instead of constructing it*’. *This has meant that the push for student independence and autonomy and regular updates in top-down policies, has left the teacher bemused and in a puppet-like state simply following orders. Thus, if teachers are subject to top-down control and yet are supposed to motivate students, how do teachers allow students to ‘have a voice’ when they themselves do not?*

The education system has been claimed to be based on positivist assumptions of objectivity, rationality and efficiency and more importantly holds the assumption of hierarchical intelligence (Darling-Hammond, 1994). Such that the higher tiers do the critical intellectual work and the bottom is left with doing the daily 'nuts and bolts'. Teachers are often viewed as technicians, *purveyors of a "canned curriculum" provided by a very powerful knowledge industry*, Goodman (1994 cited in Novick, 1996 p2). *In my experience of teaching there seems to be a paradox between traditional methods of teaching including teacher-led discussions, dictation, assessments and the more modern methods of student based independent learning with open forums, discussions and multi method approaches to classroom delivery. Most teachers find themselves continuously updating lesson plans and schemes of work to fit in line with the latest Ofsted requirements.*

The problem could lie in the fact that school managers while stimulating professional initiatives among teachers, expect teachers to conform closely with school policies in order to enhance the school’s organisational coherence (Veugeler, 2004). Schools have become dominated by bureaucratic rationality which stands in stark contrast to democratic schooling (Rizvi, 1989). In other words we are in pursuit of democratic schooling within a managerial view of teaching (Inglis, 1985). We need to allow teacher research to be extended beyond the classroom and school to investigate the contexts of power and control within which educational and social values are now being generated.

*Therefore, we (teachers) face the dilemma between wanting to exert individual control and idiosyncrasy over our teaching practices yet are constrained by managerial attempts to enforce top-down policies, hence my argument for the yin-yang effect of teaching. Should we now be thinking of teaching in terms of both and accept our fate as pawns or puppets in a wider system?. The notion of teachers conforming to expectations of school*

*managers and Ofsted inspectors has been beautifully captured in the poem 'Truth Will Tell' by Gervase Phinn. This is one of my favourite poems illustrating the ridiculous charade we (teachers) play when the inspector visits even at the primary school level. The interesting point is..... 'Who inspects the inspectors?'*

### **Truth Will Tell**

A small child  
was splashing poster paint  
on a great grey piece of paper.  
'Do you paint a picture every week?'  
asked the school inspector.  
The small child shook his little head.  
"Hardly ever as a rule,  
But Miss said we've got to paint today-  
There's an important visitor in school!"

By Gervase Phinn

## **4.2 Limitations of Teacher Stress Research**

A lot of the research on teacher stress tended to be limited methodologically. They used survey design or self-report measures which were not adequate for an analysis of stress. Firstly, these studies assumed that stress was relatively fixed or stable state instead of being a fluid process which caused much controversy amongst researchers who saw stress as multi-factorial and wished to place the individual suffering from stress at the heart of the research. Secondly, much of the research did not consider the time lapse between the stressful event and the presentation of the survey *and suffered from retrospection (which is not valid and subject to a lack of reliability as well as problems of demand characteristics)*. *For example the teacher could exaggerate or undermine the stressful event depending upon the purpose of the research.* Thirdly, according to researchers like Jarvis (2002) and Tennen et al (2000) using the questionnaire approach suffers from the issue of only gathering isolated facts about stress without theoretical guidance. *As a result of such research the participants provided arbitrary lists of stressors and coping strategies but with no coherent conceptualisations and this in my mind is pointless as the reality of living the stressful situation is not portrayed to the researcher and the research remains 'soul-less'.* Thus, critics condemned much educational research as not being good

value for money and being divorced from educational practice with a picture emerging of researchers carrying out their research in a vacuum, unnoticed and unheeded by anyone (Hargreaves, 1996; Tooley and Darby, 1998). On the whole researchers interested in school effectiveness were regarded with disdain (Reynolds, 1988). *I believe that more needs to be done to increase the relevance of pedagogic research in order to impinge upon policies and teaching practice even if it is done in an ad hoc individual way. The more teacher-research there will be the more evidence for the need for teacher-led policies as opposed to top-down policies.*

Concerns about teacher research grew particularly with methodology and the relevance and accessibility of the research (Kennedy, 1997; Hillage et al, 1998). Arguments were made towards making educational research more relevant to everyday practices and its stakeholders with a general agreement on the involvement of teachers in the research process (Hillage et al, 1998; Hargreaves, 1996). Prior to this, school and college improvement was concerned with meeting external targets, completing inspections and publications about performance (Gray,1998) with the view to sustain change in learning conditions in order to accomplish educational goals more effectively (Miles and Ekholm,1985). School effectiveness research was more concerned with academic success and the linking factors that make schools effective; while school improvement research was mainly concerned with processes rather than outcomes. These processes involved promoting change in schools either short-term through staff development or long term through student performance and thus the research related to both forms of improvement came from very different places intellectually, methodologically and theoretically (Reynolds et al,1996).

Blase (1986) complained about the number of teacher stress studies carried out quantitatively, stating that very few studies were qualitative or were concerned with the teachers' conceptualisations of stress. Thus as an improvement to such restrictive approaches, Lazarus (1999) proposed more naturalistic, process-oriented methods which include multi-method data collection with strong emphasis on narratives as an essential method for studying stress. Lazarus (1999) further advocates a more psychotherapeutic method involving clinical interviews which capture the person's experience as closely as possible to the time of the occurrence. Also he states the best form of research would be a combination of clinical interviews with physiological and behavioural measures to complete the methodology and narrative approaches (daily diaries, ecological, momentary

assessments, electronic interviews and emotional narratives) (Lazarus, 1999; Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000; Snyder et al, 2000; Tennen et al, 2000). *One might wonder though, whether the number of studies investigating teacher stress, actually made teachers feel stressed.* Qualitative research on teacher stress was carried out by Vallance (2000) on 20 Secondary school teachers from 4 different Catholic schools. The teachers were interviewed in the school in an unused classroom during non-teaching periods (Woods, 1996) to create as natural a setting as possible (Kvale, 1996). A semi-structured interview schedule was used (Berg, 2001) and the transcripts were not participant checked or validated. Each interview schedule contained questions relating to the teachers career paths and professional development. *This research was very similar to mine as I too used a semi-structured interview with 20 school teachers to assess their stress and views on disruptive behaviour.* Vallance (2000) research found that very few teachers claimed not to suffer from stress and most of them tried ways to combat stress. There seemed to be four approaches that teachers used to perceive stress (1. stress as a construct of multi-dimensional experiences, 2. perceived stress into stress potency and effects, 3. personal approaches to stress including coping strategies and 4. generalised stressors that most teachers experience). Vallance (2000) argued that researchers should not analyse stress as a uni-dimensional construct but see it as modelled in a factorial fashion. *Hence, teacher research gained validity with qualitative methodologies and allowed wider scope of analysis. Some researchers adopted both qualitative and quantitative approaches within the same research to identify stress factors and assess their impact. In this way, I too used a multi-method approach involving both open and closed questions in the interview schedule followed by probe questions to ascertain rich data and had questions relating to teacher's perceptions of stress as I also accept that stress is multi-dimensional.*

For successful improvement to occur, the research can't run counter to the culture of the institution and can only take place in a context where strategies are in place (Hopkins, 1994). On the whole, much educational research has been externally enforced (school effectiveness studies) and closely related to top-down managerial issues and carried out by professional researchers. The recognition of the need for teacher-as-researcher and bottom-up research has raised two contradictory views:...One questioned '*the teacher's expertise and general value of their outputs*', while the other view stressed '*the importance of research activity as a way of accentuating teacher learning and reflective practice*' (Hillage et al, 1998 p24). Despite the growth in teacher-as-practitioner research, critics questioned the efficacy of teacher-researchers to solve problems (Tooley and

Darby, 1998) and much teacher-research was regarded as low-status knowledge based and bounded by everyday local practices hence running the risk of triviality (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1998; Hiebert, 2002). *My feeling is that teacher-research is a must if educational or teacher practices are to improve. Unfortunately, teachers and their practices can get caught up and become shadows of the system. Organisations such as schools can become depersonalising leaving the teacher submerged, invisible and powerless as a result of defined and relatively inflexible rules and regulations. Experiences with school reform tend to leave teachers 'cold and impassive' as we believe that school rules and regulations are set by some larger power and are left to run without reflection on their own immutable laws. To put it simply we are not in the habit of questioning practices or these Weberian ideas of bureaucratic organisations.* As the French put it.... 'The more things change, the more they stay the same' (Weber, 1947 cited in Leavitt, 2005 p3). The next section considers the new approaches in researching teacher stress including the successful PEEL research originating from Australia and the use of the Action research methodology as a way of improving the teacher's deal.

### **4.3 New approaches to Teacher Stress**

*'Teaching is not a lost art, but the regard for it is a lost tradition'*

*Jacques Barzun*

Many stress measurement tools were devised to measure occupational stress and burnout (Cooper et al, 1988; Maslach and Jackson, 1981). *'Most attempts to measure teacher stress levels were either purely physiological ignoring the cognitive appraisal or were self-report inventories unsupported by medical tests or observational evidence'* (Wilson, 2002 p6). Research changed from quantitative approaches such as stress tick-lists and surveys to more qualitative systematic approaches to coping with stress, to include both the teacher's narrative descriptions of stress to encourage teacher reflexivity and give a more rounded repertoire of stress research over time (Kristeva, 1984; Tyler, 1986). Research on teacher stress adopting multi-method approaches tended to be conducted on volunteers, laboratory based and low in ecological validity (Fisher, 1984). From this Johnstone (1993b) carried out a study on teachers' workload and the associated stress using workload diaries. Teachers were asked to keep stress diaries and schools were involved at the institutional level to audit stress, carry out teacher job satisfaction appraisals and create social support networks for teachers to discuss job stress related issues (Woodhouse et al, 1985; Jacobsen, 1989; Borg and Riding, 1991; Dewe, 1991;

Kelchtermans, 1994; Kyriacou, 2001; Schonfeld, 2001). This allowed teachers to log events that caused them stress and relate why they perceived the stress to be negative. Such diary and work-log methods were then adopted as the new way forward to assess teacher stress (Malcolm and Wilson, 2000; Hall et al, 2000). Much of this intervention was allowed by school managers for teachers within the top-down control as the majority of the research was still externally driven by outside agencies and university researchers. *My research found that management do not look kindly on teachers discussing school related issues collaboratively with other teachers and staff, without management awareness or agendas.* Wideen et al (1998) state that research should have more of a self-critical stance with a more ecological approach to learning to teach. They carried out a meta-analysis of 93 empirical studies on learning to teach in order to find out how people learn to teach. They highlighted the fact that many traditional programs of teacher education have little impact upon the firmly held beliefs of beginning teachers. Again they advocate for long-term collaborative support allowing for teacher-reflexivity. In relation to this, researchers found how social support systems moderated the impact of stress and affected teacher's perceptions of stress. Thus, such research explains how teachers in the same working environment may feel differential levels of stress due to the amount and timings of psycho-social support (Griffith et al, 1999) and one coping strategy may be effective in one situation but wholly inappropriate in another (Cooper, 1995).

Also, despite the research that positive feelings help avoid stress, and hardiness is the key factor by helping the individual keep their stress levels within manageable limits (Pierce and Molloy, 1990; Barkdoll, 1991) personality types have continued to influence our ability to cope, as it enables the teacher to deal with situations in a sensible fashion not to exert extraordinary pressure on themselves (Pearlin and Schooler, 1978). Research carried out on people with higher stress perceptions found that they tended to have immature defensive coping mechanisms like avoiding situations, withdrawal, and even daydreaming (McCormick, 1997). *Could it be that the high levels of stress in teaching cause such people (high stress perceivers) to lose their better coping mechanisms? After all I believe we all know our personal stress limits and have our own mechanisms to deal with stress ranging from laughter, time management to simply taking time out and when stress becomes or is perceived as being high our coping mechanisms may falter and commonsense goes out of the window.*

Likewise, teachers using more palliative measures like drinking, smoking and medication were also highly likely to report greater stress from workload, disruption or staff relations (Cooper and Kelly, 1993; Johnstone, 1989). Finally, research by The Scottish Council for Research in Education (SCRE) evaluated the effectiveness of Teacher Support Networks and programs. *'Four offered relaxation and desensitisation techniques but the results found that two of these had no effect, one had a good effect and one only affected six teachers'* (Wilson, 2002 p25). *Unfortunately, such programs are too intensive and cannot be widely available to the teaching profession in general. Since such research on coping strategies, school improvement programs have been advocated to encourage more openness, reflection and collaboration. The understanding being, to help teachers, develop more positive coping strategies to avoid the effects of burnout. The next section attempts to look at such programs helping teachers deal with stress and explains the use of practitioner-research as a methodology.*

#### **4.4 Improving the Teacher's Deal- Methods of Gaining Professional Knowledge and Ownership**

From the wealth of previous research investigating how and why teachers become stressed, academics began to assess the idea of improvement through action research projects (Baird, 1999, NSDP, 1985). The reasoning behind this is the fact that educators are so caught up with the dailiness of teaching (the mundane filling in of lesson plans, adhering to schemes of work (as far as possible) the constant marking and administration procedures as well as classroom discipline), that they lose the sight and reflection of their teaching practices (Griffin, 1987). The issue of reflection in practice and on practice became popular (Schon, 1987). Practitioner involvement in research and audit (involving evaluation, research and development) was embraced across a wide range of professions as an essential ingredient of good practice. The idea being that any research carried out by practitioners would encourage evaluation of practice potentially leading to some form of advancement (McIvor, 1995; McLeod, 1999). Thus, practitioner research has been defined as *'research carried out by practitioners for the purpose of advancing their own practice'* (McLeod, 1999 p8) and is now *'endorsed by a wide range of professions including teaching, nursing, primary health care, medical professions, the penal services and social services'* (Shaw, 2005 p1232).

Practitioner-research has been regarded as the quiet revolution that has occurred over the past 30 years (Ruddock, 2001) but the origins of p-r stem from the work of Schwab (1962) who regarded the science curricula in the 1960s as passive and irrelevant to students learning and personal development, leaving teachers struggling to identify new approaches to engage students. It wasn't until curriculum reforms occurred in British schools that led theorists to question practice effectiveness and challenge the then dominant view that good practice was based on replicating theory rather than building on the practical experiences of teachers themselves (Elliott, 1991 pg6-7). This was further supported by Stenhouse (1976) who firmly believed that schools curricula could not be developed without the teachers' perspective and the ownership of the teacher whose job it was to teach it. Stenhouse (1976) also believed that '*teachers had the capacity for autonomous self development through systematic self study, the study of the work of other teachers and through testing the ideas of classroom procedures*' (p144). Hence, as curriculum reforms grew it wasn't until the 1980s where researchers such as Skilbeck (1986) highlighted the contribution of teacher research in supporting curriculum development. By the late 1990s research by Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) acknowledged the importance of broadening the teacher's knowledge base via research on practice increasing practitioner-researchers authenticity and the professional's sense of ownership.

Perceptions of p-r have been different, some seeing it as '*A way to explore personal understandings and develop strategies supporting their responses to the constantly changing context in which practitioners operate*' (Schon, 1983 p481) or as a means for professionals to '*Increase their professional self direction, increasing work variety and enhancing job-based learning*' (Kincheloe, 2003 p25). Practitioner research has gained popularity particularly with educational theorists who regard p-r as part of good practice encouraging systematic and structured self reflection along with the creative development of knowledge (Murray and Lawrence, 2000; McGinnis, 2003). Practitioner research is now viewed as a state of mind as well as a set of activities that are opportunistic and work creatively around traditional boundaries and obstacles to challenge and present arguments on achieving real collaboration (Hamilton, 2006). *Practitioner research has evolved into a fashionable methodology in my point of view, as it is now more acceptable and plausible to carry out such research within organisations and has been or is now being documented as the best way forward for most professionals to improve their practice and successfully marry professional and experiential knowledge within professional contexts.* Practitioner

research has thus become both a '*Triumphant yet tedious theme in educational scholarship and is regarded as a fresh, unadulterated space for engagement with educational activity free from the pretentious purity of positivist inquiries*' (McWilliam, 2004 p113).

Similarly to p-r, evidence based practice (ebp) can be seen as a way of gaining professional knowledge. Both p-r research and ebp are key underpinnings in achieving best outcome, refining and developing clinical practices within Healthcare provisions (Rowe, 2008). Like practitioner research, evidence based practice is important for most professions ranging from clinical to academic backgrounds but has been implemented and well documented in the nursing and healthcare professions (Fulbrook, 2003; Rowe, 2007; Rowe, 2008) even though ebp does not always necessarily use bottom-up insider inquiry.

In Health research, evidence-based practice has become an industry standard for the provision of quality patient care. Boswell (2007) identifies 3 facets- leadership, collaboration and research that appears to have made this conversion possible. In this way, supportive leadership becomes the impetus for successful implementation of evidence-based practice. In nursing there is a growing outflow of collaborative projects with nurses being involved at different levels of the research resulting in positive and exciting advancements for nurses aiding professional practice development. Hence, practitioner-research and evidence based practice serve to empower and equip staff from any profession and from all levels (Rowe, 2008). When the practitioner is '*part of the organisation the research is authentic taken from an emic perspective*' (Allen, 2004 cited in Speziale and Carpenter, 2007 p202) and '*causes the researcher-practitioner to acknowledge their own taken for granted assumptions*' (Pellat, 2003 cited in Allen, 2004 p15) yet the inside-researcher suffers from the problem of dual-role conflict (Fitzgerald, 1997; Gerrish, 1995; Johnson, 1992; Rudge, 1995). Hence, the practitioner research methodology has pros and cons to it and the research planning to adopt its methodology needs to consider the ethical implications behind researching their own organisation.

#### **4.4.1 Are There Any Advantages To Practitioner-Research?**

Supporters of practitioner research (Dadds, 1998; McWilliam, 2004; Hamilton, 2006; Coleman, 2007) all state that it is worth doing p-r. The main quality of p-r is the drive to move away from positivist approaches based on reductionist views of human nature, towards empowerment and liberation (Coleman, 2007). Therefore, practitioner research

has been seen to have a political agenda in terms of its resistance to social and institutional oppression (McAllistair and Stockhausen, 2001; Noffke, 2001) and teachers are now redeeming themselves from the view of them as part of the oppressive ideological state apparatus (Althusser, 1971; Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Willis, 1977; Smyth, 2001) to one of teachers taking control. By combining p-r and teacher professional development, teachers are not seen as leftist radicals but smart leaders and managers (McConnell, 2002; Potter, 2001).

Practitioner research provides the practitioner with personal benefits like increased self confidence, greater willingness to exercise professional judgement and the improved use of research (Cordingly and Bell, 2002). Additionally, the use of Action research has helped practitioners embed and assess the strengths of potential changes (Murray and Lawrence, 2000) and is more grounded in the specific issue under review, uses more relevant and applicable theory and involves an internal bottom up research perspective allowing researchers to get to the truth which allowed practitioners to change and improve their situations (NTRP, 2005; Coleman, 2007)) and increase the validity of their prior experiences (Zuber-Skerritt, 1996).

Many professionals use p-r to research specific issues and divert attention away from the mundane routines. Hence *'p-r works for all professionals, from teachers in the classroom to school leaders interested in re-engaging with an area of personal interest connected to their teaching expertise'* (Coleman, 2007 p487). When the p-r focus is broader involving other schools or agencies improved collaboration and networking occurs. Also, when the p-r is not locally based it is more successful than single school p-r enquiry (Kelly, 1985). However, Winter (1996) explains that *'doing local research in one's own school or organisation offers greater understanding of the institutions culture and situation despite the danger of relying on taken for granted assumptions and lacking objectivity'* (p18).

Additionally, *'p-r within schools has resulted in two main areas of change (1) systemic changes in schools- referring to changes in processes and ways of teacher practice, and (2) cultural changes in schools since p-r is adopted by teachers at all levels'* (Coleman, 2007 p489). However, effective cultural changes occurred when the Head teachers were involved in the research as it brought more openness for teachers to use and undertake research. Practitioner research is now being supported by external agencies such as the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), DfES, Scottish Council for Research in

Education (SCRE), the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) as well as international projects like PEEL (Baird, 1999) and the PAVOT (Loughran, 2002).

However, the best advantage of p-r is a growth in professional maturity and a commitment to improving practice (Graham et al, 1998) and evidence based practice can be used to contribute to improved service delivery (Rowe, 2007). *The references I studied found new trends in p-r with the view to democratise the process* (Mullen, 2004; Usher, 2004 p1233), *recognise the particularity of individual clients in relation to the local context* (Proctor and Rosen, 2004), *to accept the significance of practice wisdom* (MacDonald, 2000) and *explore the tension between routinisation of practice and the role of practice judgement* (Howard et al, 2003). Much of the literature on practitioner research shares the underlying belief that *'barriers to practice-centred knowledge creation and development could be overcome by enhancing the knowledge creation capacities of individuals and professional communities'* (Eraut, 1985 p131).

*Overall there are many advantages of practitioner research. Structured reflection can be helpful to most professionals to help them improve their practices and is a useful way of bringing theory and practice together to encourage self-questioning and to challenge accepted beliefs. However, it would be foolish not to admit that the history behind p-r has not been devoid of scepticism and even today p-r is regarded as transgressing from traditional, bureaucratic top-down policies as by investigating one's own practice and understanding of professional knowledge, it is easy to uncover untruths which do not sit neatly with managerial ideologies.*

#### **4.4.2 Scepticism for Practitioner-Research and Evidence Based Practice**

Despite the documented advantages to practitioner research, it has been difficult overcoming professional suspicion of research (Carr and Kemmis, 1986). Research was viewed by many including teachers, as threatening and lacking relevance as theoretical ideals failed to describe and match the individuals reality (Elliott, 1991; McWilliam, 2004). It is this suspicion that *'has stopped teachers and school leaders from engaging in p-r preferring to keep their teaching and school practices private'* (Kelly, 1985 p139) and based on this there is a lot of concern about how little research has been undertaken to support school improvement (Carter and Halsall, 1998). Interestingly, in a review of 41 published articles, concerns over educational research and their relevance to practice was noted, with *'problems of methodological weaknesses, problems of the effectiveness of the*

*dissemination of findings and a partisanship of research*' (Tooley, 2000 p 483). Dissemination of findings could be inhibited by *'time constraints or by the political nature of owning up to the findings, causing cognitive dissonance between the findings and the taken for granted assumptions and knowledge held by staff'* (Barker, 2005; Leat, 2005 p493). *I found disseminating my research findings a huge challenge and was extremely anxious as to the possible outcome of opening up and admitting what staff had said albeit anonymity.* Problems against p-r arose in terms of a general lack of connectedness in research work resulting in duplications and gaps in the knowledge base (Hillage et al, 1998).

Furthermore, critics of p-r regarded it as *'a blot on the landscape of academic research, a bastardisation of science and lacking in scientific pedigree'* (McWilliam, 2004 p113) as well a *'travesty of science where the unqualified engage in confirming their own commonsense'* (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995 p114) yet many professionals do not have the time or often the support to transfer reflective and critical thinking skills to everyday practice (Brown et al, 2005). Many critics also question *'the number of small-scale 'me-focused' studies of educational practice stating that they lack scientific validity* (McTaggart, 1991 cited in McWilliam, 2004 p114) *and were only specific to the time the data was collected'* causing problems with generalisability (Winter, 1996 p17). *The reader will soon discover that when I presented the research findings (June 2007), the senior management team refused to accept them as they regarded them to be biased to when the data (interviews) were carried out. They felt strongly about the improvements the school had made since the collection of the results (May 2006) and therefore refused to allow me to continue with the research.*

Additionally, the existence and implementation of practitioner-research and ebp has often been perceived as a turn-off since many professionals doubt its practical implementation when applying its methodologies and results in the workplace (Rowe, 2007). Reasons for such scepticism probably stem from the traditional training and background of most professionals (health and social care workers to educationalists) whose knowledge base has been carved from positivist assumptions. Traditionally, ebp research was used in gaining knowledge about practice but with little room for reflection. Examples of traditional positivist ebp have come from medical research with their randomised control trials where baseline measurements were used as yardsticks for comparisons between experimental groups. Therefore, the implementation of ebp in terms of qualitative

research has not been a smooth transition from the positivist research and even then most ebp endorsed top-down managerial agendas.

Furthermore, the types of knowledge that nurses use most in their practice is regarded as 'soft' as their professional socialisation supports hierarchical agendas and externally promoted ebp (Leamon, 2004). *'Different valuations seem to be placed on different types of knowledge creation in a way that minimises interpenetration, with the particularistic knowledge gained by practicing professionals being limited by its specificity and implicitness'* (Eraut, 1985 p117). Thus, when the nurse practitioner or teacher follows externally endorsed policies, personal knowledge creation is regarded as less important and hence most professionals learn not to question their practices (Darling-Hammond, 1990; Veugeler, 2004) and a catch-22 situation occurs when ebp for nurses is considered to be weak and therefore not a priority (Fulbrook, 2003).

Interestingly with healthcare it is the daily user's voices and stories that should be used to inform practice but researchers argue that only some voices are heard while others seem to be unintentionally silenced and considered not to be relevant for practice development (Leamon, 2004). Even Management research has been accused of a lack of relevance to the managerial practice with too narrow a discipline base and the need to increase the stake-holding of users in various aspects of research, knowledge creation and dissemination (Clark and Astuto, 1994). The problem with ebp and practitioner research is the lack of collaboration with service users resulting in practitioner-research becoming individualistic which construes itself with negativity. Recruiting participants could *'cause a conflict of interest between the practitioner's natural inquisitiveness as a researcher and their responsibilities of confidentiality as a guardian of the school or institution'* (Connexions, 2001 p11). As a consequence, there is a chronic risk that *'practitioner research suffers from institutional capture, as the research is only ever as good as the people involved in it and when the educational establishment regard p-r with suspicion then the outcomes are likely to be hampered'* (Shaw, 2002 p12). Also there seems to be an overly optimistic faith in the ability of research to influence policy and practice.

Nevertheless, *'the drive for educational scholars researching their own practices has been going on for the past seventy years'*, which Filmer (1997 p115) claims is only *'a short time in Academia and University based disciplines'*. However, McWilliams (2004) argues that *'disciplinary 'interestedness' is legitimated within university academic traditions whereas practitioner research has yet to be legitimised'* (p116). Furthermore,

the conflict between the emancipatory goals of p-r and discussions of the classroom as a political struggle are hard to bridge and not always accepted. Due to the *'blurring between 'emancipation' and 'political action', p-r has been confused with divergent outcomes'* (Elliott, 1988 p118). Also, academics state that only they complete practitioner research as they have the appropriate training and expertise but practitioners-as-researchers are novices in the research world (Shaw, 2005) *'who lack methodological sophistication and are guilty of a lack of scholarship'* (Atkinson and Delamont, 1993 p213).

The question many critics ask is *'How do teachers know what is good research, as practitioner research cannot be the sole vehicle of educational research?'* (McNamara, 2001 p23). *I do agree with the critics on these points as many practitioners-as-researchers do not have special training on what to look for and note down as an issue in their everyday work practices, yet this does not mean that practitioner research should not be carried out by the professionals facing these issues and dilemmas on a daily basis.* Additionally one must not forget the dual role pressures practitioner-researchers face as they themselves are immersed in the institution due to employment and therefore feel obligated to fulfil their job role and researcher role without blurring the two roles as often becomes the case, and juggling competitive demands' (Winter, 1996). *This point is very true as with all stages of the research I found participating in both roles quite daunting and by the time I was preparing to disseminate my findings, I felt extremely anxious about my position as Head of Department in the school.*

Despite the critique of practitioner-research there seems to be a misunderstanding of the aims of education (Peters, 1965 p6). This relates to arguments about the quality in education. Unfortunately, the governments' White Paper (DfES, 2005) on teaching quality has not precisely stated what they mean by 'quality'. *Surely, quality is a subjective term and is prone to individual interpretations.* The White paper outlines teaching as an unreflective technical process and quality is synonymous with meeting pre-specified standards via supervision, inspection and control. Carr (1989) states that *'teaching quality uses the rhetoric of professionalism, but simply gives teachers a limited technical discretion within a restrictive framework of bureaucratic rules and managerial controls'*(p2). *In my view as a teacher, teaching becomes part of the person like an extension to their personality and the process of teaching is bound by personal judgements on dissemination and methods of delivery. The external value comes from understanding syllabus or curricula demands but your interpretation of it is intrinsic and*

*therefore the two qualities are interrelated.* After all teaching is a practical art in which exploration and interpretation leads to revision and adjustment of ideas and of practice (Stenhouse, 1975). It is this understanding that teachers need to firstly, recognise and appreciate and secondly, cultivate. *We need to encourage practical discourse in our teaching to realise ethical values and goals. Each teacher needs to make judgements about how to best transfer their general educational values (such as the development of understanding or the self-realisation of the pupils' potential) to classroom practice.*

On the whole teachers display this knowledge of how to *'act or problem-solve in certain situations but can't always explicate how and why they know this knowledge let alone sharing it as good practice'* (Schwab, 1969 pg4). Teachers must learn how to share good practice as part of their everyday teaching practice. Stenhouse (1975) strongly advocates that teachers research their own practice in the hope of creating enlightened curriculum development and a more defensible notion of teacher professionalism. *After all how can one be, called a professional if that person is out of touch with elements relating to the profession.* It's a matter of ownership and control of professional knowledge and the skilful application of theoretical knowledge to instrumental problems in practice (Schon, 1987). He further explains that 'reflection-in-action' questions the teacher's assumptions of theoretical knowledge and requires us to reflect on the situation that posed a problem.

Unfortunately, most approaches for bringing research to teachers *'Still assume that researcher's knowledge is the best foundation upon which to build a professional knowledge base because of its generalisable and trustworthy or scientific nature'* (Hiebert et al, 2002 p3). *Hence the problem arises when trying to bridge the gap between traditional research knowledge and teacher's practice and most researchers blithely accept the inherent difficulties in translating traditional research knowledge into forms teachers can use to inform practice.* The problem seems to be the lack of shared knowledge between teachers, as they do not routinely locate and translate research-based knowledge to inform their efforts (Richardson and Placier, 2001). Furthermore, Hammersley (1993) suggested that teacher problems could not be routinely solved by research. He argued that *'teacher circumstances are diverse and unlikely to be amenable to action in any routine and that 'sound practice is not about straightforward application of theoretical knowledge, but is an activity that necessarily involves judgement and draws on experience as much as on scientific knowledge'* (p430). Therefore, Hammersley (1993) questions the use of practitioner-research in schools as he claims that teachers lack the

ability to understand what they are reflecting upon and what to do with the information. Although special programs designed to support teachers in using specific research information to inform their practices exist, there is the persistent concern that educational research has too little influence on improving classroom practices (National Educational Research Policies and Priorities Board, 1999). *Surely this is due to a weak methodology and not the fact that the teachers are useless or cannot improve on classroom practices.*

Educational researchers all share the same rhetoric, namely that '*Positive educational change is accomplished locally*' and '*we need p-r in terms of both the knowledge of practitioners and research specialists to work together in new ways*' (Erickson and Gutierrez, 2002 p21). *In my opinion very few would have the time or courage for such commitment. We would have to break pre-existing assumptions and allow criticism in order to develop. Unfortunately this appears to be the only way forward. Only critical self-reflection allows the possibility of challenge to the taken for granted shared understandings.* It is never a solitary process and is carried out in critical communities and involves hegemonic power relations to examine the meaning systems that have become ingrained and woven into the fabric of our consciousness. From this hegemonic interaction a process of enlightenment can occur resulting in '*an intellectual elite with congruent interests*' (Gramsci, 1971 p93).

Leitch and Day (2000) argue that more attention needs to be given to the role of emotion in understanding and developing the capacities for reflection not only resulting in personal and professional growth but a systems change as well. In this way, the stakeholder in the company, school or organisation needs to be allowed to reflect using their emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995) and increase the use of affective dimensions in the generation of knowledge. Additionally, educational researchers (Hargreaves, 1994; Nias, 1996; Noddings, 1996; Damasio, 2000) have agreed that '*teachers feelings are a matter of collective concern...so have the potential to be changed and cognitions and feelings cannot be separated from the cultural and social forces around them*' (p68). Practitioner-research allows teachers amongst other professionals to '*Re-engage with their profession, finding meaning and purpose behind daily activities and refreshing their sense of professional identity and motivation*' (Warren-Little, 1996 p69). Thus, bridging the theory-research relevance gap not only requires a change in academic mind set but for managers and firms to rethink their own involvement in the research process (Starkey and Medan, 2001).

*It seems that the theory-practice gap exists in most professions and the use of and need for practitioner research and evidence based practice combining action research and reflection, is vital for all the stakeholders involved with organisations (from the patient to the doctor and from the secretary to the CEO).*

#### **4.5 Action Research as a Way Forward?**

*'Getting things done is not always what is most important. There is value in allowing others to learn, even if the task is not accomplished as quickly, efficiently or effectively'*

**R.D.Clyde**

Adelman (1987) advocates action research not just as a methodology but as a means of providing information essential to practical reasoning. In this way the use of collaboration is beneficial as the use of self-appraisal becomes an empirical study of one's working practices and not mere introspection (Carr, 1989). The result is a more practical solution to work based problem allowing for the fact that human situations are not static but a process of constant change and revision of the taken for granted. This fits in neatly with the hermeneutic cycle of critical interpretation which maintains that teacher appraisal and improvement is not a single process but a series of steps to encourage professional reflection. *In this way, the hope and belief was that collaboration amongst teachers at the school could be a possibility. I began to review articles that had used this methodology, with the view to look for evidence of its use, existence and success.*

##### **4.5.1 The PEEL Method As a Possible Solution**

*As a result of my literature searching, I stumbled across research done in Australia with teachers and students in order to encourage their thinking. The correct term used was 'meta-cognition'. Excited by this, I read further only to find that I needed numerous inter-library loans. The majority of the research was by Baird (1999) and the research was known as PEEL- Project for Enhanced Educational Learning. It sounded brilliant and argued that teachers get caught up in the 'dailiness' of teaching with no or little chance for reflection. Baird and Mitchell (1986) devised PEEL groups to allow for phenomenological reflection offering teachers the chance to meet and discuss problems on a regular basis. Many teachers want to teach effectively but Baird believed they 'don't know what to do or how to start' (Baird, 1998 p153). Researchers then attempted to*

develop collaborative action research groups which enabled teachers to air their views and thoughts about their practice without fear of reprisal. Such PEEL groups were '*teacher-led and school-based*' (Baird, 1999 p92) allowing teachers the chance to self-reflect on their teaching practices and to develop their meta-cognition enabling them to have '*knowledge about, awareness and control over their personal teaching or learning practices*' (Baird, 1999 p92). The emphasis of PEEL was to almost hand over the rein of learning to the student and to stop traditional, pedagogical teaching in which students sat there glassy eyed staring out of classroom windows and not really understanding what had been covered in each class and the teacher battling to produce effective lessons.

Baird (1998) believed that there was a mismatch between what the school *wants* for students and what the school *does for* students, simply because everyday classroom practices don't outwardly promote students' meta-cognition but deliver poor learning habits. In the PEEL research students were asked to keep daily logs of what they had learned in their lessons and a comparison was drawn between passive and active lessons, with more student interest found in the active lessons. Poor learning habits could then be replaced by '*purposeful inquiry based on active reflection*' (Baird, 1998 p154) and turned into good learning behaviours (GLBs). Schools and teachers reported success from the use of the PEEL groups in terms of their teaching practices and classroom environment. Teachers were found to report higher levels of student engagement as well as teaching that was more informed, purposeful, intellectually active and independent (Baird, 1998). Therefore other researchers then emphasised that appropriate school development should provide opportunities for teachers to join collaborative groups in order to encourage teacher reflections and development in order to reconstruct the power of the practitioner to control their profession (Arendt, 1958; Fullan and Hargreaves, 1991). *After all, organisations that allow and encourage critical self-reflection can go beyond professionalism and gain a better understanding of problems with their shared views on their resolution. Also action that follows from this will be more informed and more likely to serve the interests of those it's directed to instead of dominant interests in society.*

Despite the insistence of the importance of PEEL groups for teachers and the international approach to encourage teachers to self-reflect on practices, known as PAVOT (Perspective and Voice of the Teacher), the realities of its availability and workability are questionable. PAVOT was developed to '*assist teachers to research aspects of their practice*' and was regarded as '*a natural extension of PEEL*' (Loughran et al, 2002 p8).

Such active groups are growing worldwide (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Sweden and Denmark) but most teachers simply do not have the time for such extra-curricular commitments. Baird (1998; 1999) advocates that teachers, themselves should encourage and promote these reflective philosophies. *In doing so, teachers will be better able to evaluate their practices and the impact the PEEL group has on their stress. However, in practice, many professionals do not engage in practical reasoning with regard to changing the context of their work.* They ‘*simply take their training and claims of efficiency for granted*’ (Adelman, 1987 p173). Also most teachers already have their ‘*own personal theories about practice and are often reluctant to share them or change them*’ (Elliott and Adelman, 1976 p178), and ‘*problems occur in the degree to which teachers are able to identify problems, concerns or troubles and how to reflect on their experiences*’ (Wright-Mills, 1959 p180). Other problems exist with action research on teacher appraisal. *How can knowledge of human beings be objective and be of practical benefit?. As mentioned before everyone holds theories relevant to their practice but the phenomenon of teacher effectiveness has numerous variables that impact upon it that cannot be generalised to other situations. This then suggests a significant deterioration in validity when applied to similar situations which means that any knowledge/experience gained in one circumstance is conjectural and not fixed.* We must not forget that that the result of collaboration is not certainty but a critique of practice. This is the nature of action research- the practitioner reflects on their practice in order to generate insights which will open up new practical developments leading to further practical innovation. This is part of the action research spiral.

*In light of such difficulties and the question of whether ‘to peel or not to peel’, I decided that replicating the PEEL procedure would be too complicated and time consuming within the limitations of the DProf course. It was then agreed by my supervisors and I, that the PEEL procedure could be the basis for the introduction of a collaborative reflection staff group at the school. This would make my research a lot simpler and would simply involve asking the interviewed staff (not only the highly stressed staff members) to join a group to discuss what was good or bad in their teaching and encourage them to keep a monthly e-journal. The aim being to encourage self-reflection of teaching practices and to help other group members deal with ‘problems’. Thus the final stage of the research would involve group interviewing on a half term (6 weeks) basis, the objective being to encourage meta-cognition and improve teaching, reduce stress and teacher*

*attrition at the school. Thus the idea of my practice development slowly evolved (refer to chapter 6).*

#### **4.6 Is There A Way Forward For Practitioners?**

*Despite the continual debate amongst the advocates of scientific legitimacy and those professionals who simply want to research their own practices in a novel, bottom-up fashion, I believe that practitioner research and gaining evidence based practice are useful and legitimate methodologies for all professions to endorse. 'No researchers, academic or non-academic have a monopoly on knowledge production or what is valid inquiry into practice' (McWilliam, 2004 p120). The best way forward would be to consider how p-r 'is being taught as a legitimate research method in education while considering the research practitioner's interestedness as a 'double-move' scenario' (Lather, 1991 p121). In other words, there is a need to provide practitioners 'the chance of discovering their profession while valuing their tacit knowledge produced from their embeddedness in practice' (McWilliams, 2004 p121).*

Furthermore, p-r has been perceived to be at the 'flabby end' of the qualitative-quantitative continuum '*as p-r is mis-used by overly keen graduate returnees to the university, often misunderstood, sometimes misrepresented and still to achieve broad acceptance*' (Meadmore, Hatcher and McWilliam, 2000). This perception '*can be put to rest as much more needs to be done to understand the 'disinterested-interested' mode of inquiry seeing p-r as a weak method interested in a political battle or trying to endorse social change*' (McWilliams, 2004 p123). Researchers endorsing p-r are adopting an eclectic methodology rather than relying on one particular method (Cheetham and Chivers, 1998) and also that, teachers as researchers have the '*adequate skills to research their own practice better than external experts*' (McIvor, 1995 p1232). *I agree with this point as I believe that the teacher, the nurse or any professional who is immersed in their daily roles is aware of the problems that exist at a ground level and can offer a more substantial account of these events compared to an external expert.*

Practitioner research has been more widely accepted over the past two decades (Coleman, 2007) with the understanding that educational research needs to be made more relevant to the daily needs of practitioners with effective dissemination of findings (Murray and Lawrence, 2000). By using external agencies such as the National Teacher Research Panel (NTRP, 2005) more collaborative approaches to research between practitioners and

academics, has occurred. P-r is now seen as a *'politicised form of research involving change rather than simply studying an issue and is in line with many critical theories'* (Cohen et al, 2000 p28). However, Cohen et al (2000) while accepting the view that p-r has helped change the broader powers and interest, they state that *'it is still a moot point'* (p36) since *'research has become more egalitarian, disciplinary boundaries have become more permeable and scientific enquiry has become less paradigm fixed and more multi-faceted'* (Murray and Lawrence, 2000 p9). Despite these improvements, critics still regard p-r as a *'market version of mainstream research instead of a distinct genre of research'* (Shaw, 2005 p1231). Additionally, ethnographic critics view case study research in education as *'an anthropology with fetishistic significance'* (Atkinson and Delamont, 1993 p207).

Practitioner knowledge in all its tacit-ness needs to become *'public, shared knowledge as it is rich, linked with everyday practices, detailed, concrete and specific and integrated'* (Hiebert et al, 2002 p6). With the use of collaboration, a process considered central to successful professional development, *teachers can support, discuss, verify, refute or modify shared professional knowledge* (Hiebert et al, 2002 p7). The success of the development of an effective teacher knowledge base is in storing the knowledge for others to access, like doctors can in medicine or lawyers can in case law. *The problem is it is difficult representing local knowledge as professional knowledge, unless a shared curriculum is used or created from practitioners shared discussions. Unfortunately, most educational curricula are externally endorsed in schools and teachers were not encouraged to collaborate on such local knowledge.*

Hiebert and colleagues (2002) offer some way forward based on the use of action research cycles, in which teachers employ replication and observation over numerous trials to produce rigorous tests to increase the validity of p-r. Thus, overtime by hypothesis testing, sharing and documenting each teacher's p-r journey, eventually a useful model of effective professional development and teacher knowledge might evolve. Hiebert and colleagues (2002) state that for this approach to work, teachers would have to *stop viewing teaching as personal and private and adopt the view that teaching is a professional activity that can be continuously improved if it is made public and examined openly* (p13). *There has been a marked change in the culture of schools with more emphasis on continuous professional development yet I feel that Hiebert's recommendation for a new system of creating a shared professional knowledge is a long*

*way off. In my research, I did not find all teachers were willing to open up and share their assumptions with others particularly with line managers or staff higher up the management scale. Hierarchical agendas and top-down perceptions, apart from other issues, will always be a barrier in many teachers' minds, despite wanting change to occur. I found that many of the interviewees were pleased that I was doing bottom up research but were aware of the political battle I faced.* Hiebert et al (2002) admit there is a problem of conservatism in schools and universities that hampers change. They conclude by questioning whether our society would be happy with small improvements and changes in practice, instead of following the American ideology of 'quick fixes'.

#### **4.7 Successful Practitioner-Research**

*I believe that not all practitioner-research falls on 'soggy soil, revealing the fetid swamp and its decomposition' as was quoted by Vance and McKinnon (ASET Conference, 2002).* Certain schools and educational institutions have been turned around after Action Research (Posch, 2003; Ronnerman, 2003; Zeichner, 2001). Success and innovation is possible within the positivist, traditional hierarchy. *Schools need to recognise the importance of the reflective movement and allow teachers to participate in building a vision for their schools by articulating its aims, selecting its goals and choosing the means to attain it.* This would and has resulted in effective teaching and learning in a supportive environment from research-based development and collaboration (Breathnach, 2000). *The most important outcome of many successful p-r projects is that they have been acted upon and the knowledge created and disseminated has been used positively.*

Reflective practice creates the opportunity for individuals to consider and evaluate their practice, use counterfactual thought to analyse what might happen if aspects of practice changed, and understand the emotional response to practice, all of which will ultimately lead to more confident, empowered individuals who use considered skills within a practice environment. The benefit being that through collaboration and group work, individuals can understand each other and ultimately work more cohesively creating a healthy environment for teachers, *'who do not just do practice, but who consider, reflect and therefore learn, build, act and change their practice based on that reflection'* (Musselwhite and Vincent, 2005 p91).

Furthermore, the support for practice improvement has been well documented in healthcare (Boswell, 2007; Clark and Copeland, 2003; DoH, 2000; Garner and Portwood,

2002; Musselwhite and Vincent, 2005) using reflective practice auditing, providing support and advice for practitioners in the development of research-based practice and developing communication network systems to disseminate evidence based practice. Also, Educational Action Research has helped teachers cope with the challenges of change and carry through innovation in a reflective and collaborative manner (Altrichter et al, 1993) with the aim being the pursuit of professional knowledge grounded in practice. Many examples of action research practitioner-based inquiry in schools and higher education colleges exist and have mostly been successfully implemented (Gravett, 2004; Light and Cox, 2001; Ulanoff, 2003; Vance and McKinnon, 2002) with the teachers engaging in reciprocal inquiry and exploration in order to change their teaching perspectives to a learning-centred dialogic approach.

Not all educational establishments and teachers have found such research feasible in the climate of bureaucracy and top-down control, even the teachers willing to collaborate admitted they felt safer and more in charge with their previous teaching approach and had a fear of losing control and feeling insecure. Shor (1992) explained how this was possible when moving towards an approach in which the teacher relinquishes unilateral authority and power and the fear this instils highlights how deeply internalised, the role of the teacher as authoritarian knowledge dispenser has become. Gravett (2004) found that even when teachers participated in critical reflection and inquiry, they did not have the epistemological knowledge to construct their own personal teaching methodology. Based on her research, she argues that teachers, much like health-practitioners, need models of teaching to use as a springboard for future reflections and which would help provide the confidence and security teachers need to experiment with new ways of teaching. In this way, the *‘teachers could choose to initially emulate the model in situ, experiment with the model and then use it as a base for gradually constructing a personalised and contextualised teaching methodology’* (Gravett, 2004 p269). *Such research points to the fact that in order to successfully implement a change in teaching practices additional sustained input support by management and colleagues is required. It is not just educational establishments that have had mixed responses to Practitioner-Research many Healthcare Trusts have suffered similar reticence.*

As in Education, the Healthcare Trusts can be viewed as being are based on technocratic positivist policies, where work is driven largely by bureaucratic needs, such as objective, measurable targets (Neumann, 1997). *‘Despite the progress of some NHS Academic*

*Centres in Practice, the current policy and structure of the NHS despite modernisations is still hampered by governance, audit and accountability, such that the work of Academic Centres of Practice (ACP's) has not been fully appreciated by hospital Middle Managers'* (Musselwhite and Vincent, 2005 p99). In contrast, modern '*post-positivist approaches are more transcendent and people focused, addressing problems from a grass-root level, illuminating the quality of the experiences had by those who become collaborators in the discovery of knowledge'* (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994 cited in Musselwhite and Vincent, 2005 p100).

The importance behind such research is the closure of the gap between theory and practice, firstly for each researcher claiming their own perspectives are correct and being blind to the real issues of improvement to practices (Porter, 1993; Rolfe, 1996a;1996b), and secondly, closing the feedback loop of technical rationality by allowing the research practice to influence theory. The reflective practitioner modifies practice and influences theory by hypothesis testing within the Action Research cycle. *In this way practitioners can make informed decisions about their choice of method within practice and do so in the light of evidence-based practice. Despite the differences between the positivist and post-positivist paradigms and the conflict in purposes between top-down control and bottom-up reflections on and in practice, there is an increasing need, in my view as teacher-researcher for practitioner research in Education. As we have seen, successful p-r is possible but only when school managers are involved in the process themselves and encourage their staff to collaborate. The next section describes some successful educational research projects like the Ford Teaching Project, the TRIST TVEI and international projects using p-r successfully.*

#### **4.8 Effective Improvements in Teaching Practices Using Action Research Spirals and Reflection**

*'The best teacher is the one who suggests rather than dogmatizes, and inspires his listener with the wish to teach himself'*

**William Arthur Ward**

Many efforts to broaden the impact of research for teachers have taken place (Berliner and Casanova, 1993; Joyce et al, 1993) despite the recognition that translating research into forms teachers can use is a stubborn problem (Kennedy, 1999; Raths and McAninch,

1999). Evidence of teacher research and improvement in practice came from the Ford Teaching Project (1974). It showed that teachers could successfully research their practice as a means to understand and enhance their own educational values. The project tested the claim, that teachers could conduct research about their own teaching, devise interventions in their teaching, and monitor the consequences as part of an action research cycle. Elliott and Adelman (1976) researched the teacher's problems by conducting reflective enquiry which led to the teachers devising teacher-speak categories upon which they based their practice. They found that by collaborating with colleagues about 'practice', improvements were made, documented and shared.

From the 1980s an era of school reforms occurred with the Government supporting evidence based practice in schools (DfEE, 2000; 2001) and projects such as the Nottinghamshire Staff Development project NSDP (1985-87) and the TRIST- TVEI (Technical and Vocational Educational Initiative) and '*the GRIDS (Guideline for the Review of Internal Developments in school) giving added impetus to the principle of school based enquiry*' (MacBeath, 2005 p481). These were educational case studies done with the purpose of improving education and helping teachers improve their professional work through ownership of their own development. The main aim of TRIST was to enhance the quality of learning in its schools and colleges. The project enabled the local education authority to complete a strategy to meet the proposed aims. A story telling case study was used involving a multi-method approach of data collection. Professional development was looked at in terms of striving to improve classroom performance by giving the control to the teacher and allowing them freedom of the ownership of data. This was met with enthusiasm by other staff and the ideology allowed teachers to identify problems and view them as part of professional growth. It allowed problems to be surfaced and discussed either with an instigator-to-initiate or initiate with fellow initiate. This allowed teachers to drop out of the study making the TRIST ideology a legitimate educational process. It allowed teachers to accept the TRIST values through rational persuasion, not emotional appeal. The results found some deep and colourful accounts of teacher experiences which were put together to create reflective reports about what had happened and could be done within an ethical framework.

Despite its success it was criticised by a teacher for not regarding teachers as professionals to start with and just being another form of managerial control and that teachers were in fragile positions anyway when they are in the classroom. He argued that

the TRIST ideology further alienated teachers from their sense of self-worth. *Well, in my mind he had not fully understood the purpose of the research and had not allowed the TRIST ideology to open his mind. I probably would have been a participant if it meant self improvement in practice.* The conclusions spoke for themselves. Hundreds of teachers walked away with a renewed belief in their own professional ability and the NSDP claimed success for professional control being in the hands of the appraiser and not bureaucratic bodies. *No further evidence was provided on the impact of the TRIST on teaching practices, student success or reduced turnover of teachers. One can only assume that such programs are beneficial to teachers who take part and would inevitable show a resultant impact on teaching practices.*

Furthermore, *'International School improvement projects like the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Developments) promoted p-r principles'* (Reynolds et al, 2003 p3). Currently, we have Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education) *'which believes in the value of self-evaluation by schools'* (Ofsted, 2004 p4-6). *However, I find this quite bizarre as not all schools are open to p-r and their versions of self-evaluation do not always encourage collaboration. Additionally, teachers' autonomy is not as forthcoming as has been documented or explained above with the p-r revolution.* Teaching is *'still under high levels of government control and intervention in classroom practice which has hampered teacher autonomy and intervention'* (Campbell, 2002 p4) and despite these recent Government initiatives, education still suffers from the lack of an established body of knowledge to help teachers 'diagnose' problems in schools, as each classroom or school building is inherently unique (McNamara, 2001). Unfortunately, there still seems to be a *'bedrock belief in the power of science to provide guidelines for how teachers should conduct themselves in schools and classrooms'* (Kliebard, 1993 p295) and despite recent initiatives the relative absence of research informed culture in schools is marked with a gap between teachers using research and teachers doing research (McNamara, 2001).

Overall the push for practitioner research has tried to reclaim teacher autonomy by helping them to investigate pedagogical problems in relation to the failures and successes of the school (Carter and Halsall, 1998; Kincheloe, 2003). Hence, p-r today is regarded to be more authentic because of its proximity to daily work (Bruck et al, 2001), more ethical as it invites non-academics (teachers) to take part in social inquiry and gives voice to the voiceless, amplifying rather than submerging marginal populations and projects

(McWilliam, 2004). Involving teachers in the research process is becoming a growing theme in educational research, to stimulate ebp with teachers to help them to review and refine the outcomes of their research to help their teaching (Hillage, 1998). The line of demarcation between research and practice has become blurred by the recent trend towards p-r initiated research and the stronger collaboration between researcher and practitioner (Davis, 2002). Hence, practitioner research is now more widely accepted and Government bodies like Ofsted, the TTA and DfES all support teacher led research initiatives dealing with student learning, use of ICT in the curriculum, teacher confidence building and many more projects in support of continuous professional development. For successful improvement to occur, the research can't run counter to the culture of the institution and can only take place in a context where strategies are in place (Hopkins, 1994).

On the whole, much educational research has been externally enforced (school effectiveness studies) and closely related to top-down managerial issues and carried out by professional researchers. The recognition of the need for teacher-as-researcher and bottom-up research has raised two contradictory views:...One questioned '*the teacher's expertise and general value of their outputs*', while the other view stressed '*the importance of research activity as a way of accentuating teacher learning and reflective practice*' (Hillage et al, 1998 p24). Despite the growth in teacher-as-practitioner research, critics questioned the efficacy of teacher-researchers to solve problems (Tooley and Darby, 1998) and much teacher-research was regarded as low-status knowledge based and bounded by everyday local practices hence running the risk of triviality (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1998; Hiebert, 2002). *My feeling is that teacher-research is a must if educational or teacher practices are to improve. Unfortunately, teachers and their practices can get caught up and become shadows of the system. Organisations such as schools can become depersonalising leaving the teacher submerged, invisible and powerless as a result of defined and relatively inflexible rules and regulations. Experiences with school reform tend to leave teachers 'cold and impassive' as we believe that school rules and regulations are set by some larger power and are left to run without reflection on their own immutable laws. To put it simply we are not in the habit of questioning practices or these Weberian ideas of bureaucratic organisations.* As the French put it.... '*The more things change, the more they stay the same*' (Weber, 1947 cited in Leavitt, 2005 p3). The next section addresses some further barriers to effective professional development advocating that despite the need for change within institutions,

organisations will always be hampered by bureaucratic control dampening the whole change ethos.

#### **4.9 Barriers to Effective Professional Development**

Teacher professional development is hampered by the lack of reflection-in and on practice which prevents creating schools for inquiry (Schon, 1984; Goodlad, 1994). *In truth many barriers prevent teachers from effective professional development.* Despite the growth of the practitioner-researcher movement, it is difficult for individual teachers to make significant improvements in their practice without the support of colleagues and management (Rolfe, 2001). Unfortunately many teachers value and define their role based on privacy, territoriality and hierarchy producing a problem of teachers not wishing to be accountable in the research (Elliott, 1995). Resistance for collaboration can come from all levels particularly management. Without the supportive or collaborative culture in organisations or schools, researchers cannot improve practice.

Elliott (1995) states, that unless the teachers have been involved in action research from the start, trying to create a reflective practice is fraught with barriers. Secondly, Elliott claims it '*a temptation to be resisted*' (p136) for a single researcher to do insider reflective research since they will face isolation from colleagues and may well be ostracised. He argues that group research has more impact, protection and empowerment particularly if the research is being funded by a recognised body. Thirdly, the use of reflection itself can be problematic (Porter, 1993) since reflection is a subjective process and the researcher can become entrapped in their own verification of practices assuming objective knowledge. In order to avoid this, the researcher-practitioner should verify themes with the participants involved in the organisation in order to confirm findings and uncover biases. *I felt that member checking was a very important process after the interviewing phase and had to ascertain interviewee's consensus on the transcribed commentary before I could continue with the next phase of research. I wanted to avoid researcher bias as far as I could and in some cases during the member checking participant's clarified and updated their commentary.*

Novick (1996) has recognised that many researchers have found '*the process of changing one's practice is difficult and slow, even when there is adequate time for ongoing peer coaching, self-reflection, and collegial inquiry*' (Novick, 1996 p10). Further problems and

barriers to effective professional development are the *lack of time teachers have to spend reflecting* on their daily practices or to share experiences in a secure environment without reprisals in order to help peers grow professionally; then knowing *how to be reflective* (Baird, 1999; Heaney, 1999) and the problem teachers' face of professional isolation (Darling-Hammond, 1994). According to researchers, Clark & Astuto (1994 cited in Novick, 1996 p11) '*sharing problems and their solutions, collegiality, and collaborative inquiry are incongruent with bureaucratic principles of efficiency, authority, and procedural specificity, which still exert a strong influence on schools*'. *I feel that 'the time to do research and collaborate' issue, raises an interesting point about teacher's work lives as they are already full and adding research may only serve to deepen their perceptions that their job can never be done to a satisfactory level, leading to more stress and negativity.*

Furthermore, teachers face the dilemma of professional and personal identity in conflict with professional disciplinary attachment (Biggs, 1997; Pirrie, 1999; Wilmott, 1995) such that they fear 'being open or opened' in favour of tunnel vision and hierarchical agendas. *My belief supported by researchers like Darling Hammond (1990) and Novick (1996) is that in order to overcome the barriers to professional development, schools would have to endorse a democratic governing body, a supportive administration, open door policies, team teaching, and opportunities for both small and large group collaboration with colleagues inside and outside the school.* According to Espinosa (1992 cited in Novick, 1996 p10) '*when school staff (including principals, certified staff, counsellors, and family advocates), parents, and children build on their own experiences and knowledge in an atmosphere that is psychologically safe everyone's learning is enhanced*'. Unfortunately, such democracy has not been widely accepted and schools face the problem of remaining close-knit, hierarchical, bureaucratic institutions dubious of change from the inside-out unless stipulated by external agencies. Relevant to this is the fact that most organisational development tends to be 'deficit based' concentrating on the fixes to problems instead of looking at the positives (Whitney, 1998 p314).

*How realistic is it to find these positives, if staff collaboration and open-ness are not endorsed or when freedom of speech or thinking are thwarted by managerial agendas?.*

## **4.10 Summary Of Chapter**

This chapter has addressed many issues around the use of practitioner-research and evidence based practice (ebp) in education to further teaching practices and has evaluated the strengths and weaknesses behind their implementation. Research suggests that many barriers exist when trying to endorse a change in practice particularly when the organisation or establishment is bureaucratic and traditional in nature, as are educational institutions. Such establishments traditionally endorse top-down policies and frown up internally based endeavours to change practice advocating and relying on external agents to produce change. This was reflected in the first section of the chapter describing the yin-yang dichotomy between teachers wishing to be independent and the control by managers to maintain the status quo. Additionally, problems arise when the teacher-practitioner tries to reflect on their practices yet have the dual role pressures of being researcher and working in the organisation and then finds their research suffers from institutional capture. Research concentrating on insider research within organisations was examined considering the barriers faced by teacher-researchers in the attempt to change practice and encourage collaboration. Unfortunately, not all teacher research has been successful and certain schools refused to incorporate self-reflections, collegiality and collaboration without top-down hierarchical control. In contrast, I then discussed how action research has been successful in schools and introduced the PEEL method as a way forward for both staff and students to increase their meta-cognition. The TRIST-TVEI was also considered along with other successful school based projects using p-r and ebp to improve teaching practices.

The next chapter addresses the choice of, and justifications for the research approach, and explains the methodological choices that were made in relation to assessing teacher stress.

## **Methodology**

*'A good teacher is a master of simplification and an enemy of simplism'*  
***Louis. A. Berman***

**Chapter 5 - Justifications for the research framework**

**Chapter 6- Design and Methodology of the research**

## Chapter 5 Justifications For The Research Framework

*'One must have strategies to execute dreams'*

*Azim Premji, CEO Wipro Ind*

This chapter assesses the research methodology in terms of the choice of approach and its justifications as well and is the precursor to the follow on chapter explaining the design of both, the research study, the practice development and the ethical code of practice for the whole project.

### 5.1 How My Research Fits In

As with many of the limitations of teacher stress research discussed previously, most studies had incorporated using physiological and behavioural measures such as blood pressure, heart beat and Galvanic Skin Response during stressful teaching situations, resulting in quantitative positivist data that could be used to ascertain statistics on stressed out teacher populations. *My research did not involve these quantitative measures, as the aims of the research were to assess stress levels in a social context with teachers, in relation to their workload, behaviour management and the perception of the link between stress and job demands. Literature reviewing allowed my research to follow suggestions from both Lazarus (1999) and Vallance (2000) about methodology within the restrictive framework of the case study.*

A qualitative methodology using multi-method design of triangulation incorporating interview, observation and self-reflection was used as my research. A practitioner-researcher stance was adopted within the case study approach involving a bottom-up approach to staff improvement and school development. *I believe that organisational change is possible and it is the individual who has the power to create it. Thus in order to bring about changes in the school an Action Research methodology was adopted to encourage change using interviews to begin the spiral and encourage co-operative inquiry.* Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) believe that barriers to such organisational change exist such as the overlooked, traditionally accepted behaviour patterns that aggregate to constitute the organisational status quo, as well as schools relying on the external 'fix-it' model. As a result we rely on outside experts to deliver the answers for implementation.

Educational reforms have led to more accountability mechanisms for school and have simply ‘tarted up old reforms’ (Clark & Astuto, 1994; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Sykes, 1995; Novick, 1996). *In other words, school reform through external methods has not been efficient, teachers have not participated in finding solutions resulting in them shrugging their shoulders and accepting the impersonal organisational mechanisms. We tend to resist change, even though organisations like schools are aware of the benefits of collaborative decision making. Despite the recognition for the change in old-fashioned behavioural patterns and traditional schema we suffer from not knowing how to change.* Researchers question the ‘*we believe it but can’t seem to do it phenomenon*’ and argue for teachers to ‘*rethink their professional development instead of maintaining hierarchical relationships and unilateral behaviour while advocating collaboration*’ (Osterman and Kottkamp, 1993 p6). They state that researchers should narrow their conceptual framework for understanding individual and organisational stability and change by focusing on reflective practice as a means of professional development.

### **5.1.1 Gaining Ethical Approval: A Brief Summary**

The research was conducted by gaining ethical approval from the Head to study the teachers and students at his school weeks before the study commenced. As an employee and an insider researcher it was felt that there was no need to gain external ethical approval (eg: from the LEA) as the board of governors agreed that the research was viable before the study commenced. The Head was the main point of contact and as he had agreed to accept the conduct of the research at the school, the governors also agreed. They were informed that the study was about stress in teachers in relation to the inclusion of disruptive pupils into main stream classes. Hence at that time it felt right to simply gain the Heads approval to pursue research into stress in teaching. *I had not envisaged the possibility that the research was emergent in nature and the phases of research could change in light of the interview findings. At the time I was completely unaware that the research methodology was practitioner research based and oblivious to some of the possible barriers that could (and did) affect the research. In hindsight, I should have thoroughly researched all the possible research methodologies before attempting to start the first phase including understanding educational research carried out by insider research practitioners and whether they had been successful or not. My literature reviewing within the first 18 months of the research was focused on educational case studies using Action research, the use of reflection in and on practice and teacher stress.*

*The real nature behind practitioner research was unravelled after the transcription of the interviews and the consideration of phases 4 and 5 of the research. Therefore, despite the ethical approval gained from the Head of the school, I myself as a researcher was unaware of how the research and the literature reviewing would unfold as the nature of qualitative research is very different from quantitative research where the methodology adopted is fixed and unchanging and the ethical approval is more rigorous. Unfortunately, neither the Head nor the rest of the SMT seemed to be aware of this point and had simply assumed that the research would show them 'how many teachers were stressed' or 'how many teachers thought a stress management policy would be beneficial. As a naive researcher the planning and implementation of the research phases was not methodical in nature and even the method of transcribing the interviews was unknown till after the first phase. This meant that despite the Heads approval for me to carry out the research at the school, the exact dynamics were unknown. Despite this I kept the Head abreast of all the research and the plans but the SMT had not really understood that when semi-structured interviews occur, lots of rich data is ascertained particularly when the interviewer is known to the interviewee. This caused problems in the fourth phase when the themes were presented to the staff, as SMT claimed the themes had been exaggerated to make the school seem worse. Additionally all the transcriptions were anonymised and there was no identification of staff from comments and themes that were drawn up.*

*Furthermore, the SMT had not realised how the interviews would be transcribed and when the research findings were being presented they had naively not considered that negative comments made by interviewees could become dominant themes that would be aired to the rest of the staff. Overall, the nature of the ethical approval seems to be a 'murky area' as at the fourth phase of the research the Head stopped me from continuing with the research and everything came to an abrupt and (perhaps foolishly) unexpected halt.*

The next section considers the methodological stance that was initially adopted before realising the true nature behind practitioner-research and covers an overview of educational case study research using action research spirals, co-operative inquiry and reflexivity as a way of moving forward. Each section considers the most appropriate and relevant methods for this research and is justified with narrative description in blue italics.

## **5.2 A Brief Methodological Stance**

A case study approach was adopted at a UK Secondary school, in order for practitioner-research to be established. Practitioner-Research is based on the growing assumption that insider inquiry and bottom-up research in organisations can encourage change and professional development through staff voice, collaboration and empowerment. Stenhouse (1975 p5) states that *'teachers and researchers need to research their own practice in order to enlighten curriculum development, improve professional development and become more reflective in their teaching'*. *I decided to explore my research aims at the school where I worked and hence was happy to adopt a case study approach using the school establishment as the case and not a particular individual.* The case study approach has been open to criticism on the lack of generalisability and validity to other establishments (Simons, 1980; Stenhouse, 1985). As every case study is unique, researchers claim that generalisability is not an option and each case is to be taken on their own merits, as the circumstances are only pertinent to the stakeholders involved. The use of the case study method in education has often been met with scepticism and even hostility (Simons, 1980). Despite this, *'case studies within organisations allow the researcher to recognise the complexities within organisations and understand the embeddedness of social truths'* (Adelman et al, 1980 cited in Bassey, 1999 p23).

A critical theory paradigm was adopted since it is *'emancipatory, critiques ideology and implies the taking of action to change situations'* (Habermas, 1972 cited in Middlewood et al, 1999 p12). This was used as the main framework to base the research design on and Action research was used to elicit change and transformational learning in teachers (Cranton, 1996). Research found that by creating opportunities for teachers to reflect on their teaching practices not only were there changes in meta-cognition, transformational learning occurred as the individual critiques their underlying assumptions and premises and unravels personal internalised cognitions (Mezirow, 1997; Merriam and Caffarella, 1999) using a form of cyclic inductive experimentation like Action Research (Carr and Kemmis, 1985; Kuhne and Quigley, 1997). Action Research spiralling allows for self-reflective inquiry to improve the rationality and justice of practice. The key being to explore the teacher's assumptions in order to integrate newly appropriated meanings into an informed theory of practice (Jarvis, 1999).

The research was divided into phases and the interviewing phase elicited some evocative themes (that did not sit well with the Senior Management team). Through the use of interviewing participants, an action research spiral was initiated in the hope of creating collaborative forums with the teachers to encourage changes in action and evaluation to complete the cycle.

The teachers would become practitioner-researchers recognising problems in their daily practices, sharing their stories and collaborating to reach an effective outcome.

### **5.3 My Research Methodology Framework**

*To understand the qualitative methods I used, it is best to briefly highlight the differences between positivist and interpretive approaches to research and justify their use. Following on I assess the use of educational case studies using action research and argue for the need of practitioner-based enquiry to improve evidence based practice.*

#### **5.3.1 Positivist versus Interpretive Paradigms**

According to the positivist research paradigm reality is out there to be discovered irrespective of who observes (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000). Discoveries about the reality of human actions can be expressed as factual statements about people, events and relationships between them. To the researcher the point of research is to advance knowledge by understanding and describing the phenomena of the world and sharing the findings with others. Such understandings may provide predictions about future events. In this way positivist research has followed the scientific method with its quest for true objective knowledge. Data collection creates an objective reality leading to empirically grounded conclusions, generalisations and theory building (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000).

In contrast, the interpretive research paradigm accepts the idea of there being a reality out there, existing irrespective of people because reality is seen as a construct of the human mind but argues that people perceive the world but not necessarily in the same way. Hence each person holds different understandings of what is real. The interpretive researcher knows that the reality between two people may not be the same and allows people to share accounts of what has been observed. They reject the positivist views about the social world being understood in terms of general statements and see descriptions of

human actions as based on social meanings which can change through social intercourse. Researchers know that by asking questions they may change the situation they are studying. They see themselves as potential variables in the enquiry. Data collection is usually verbal (field notes, diaries and transcripts). But the data can be analysed numerically but not with the quantitative statistical analysis used by positivists. Usually it uses richer language and is basically qualitative analysis.

Therefore a dichotomy can exist between being empirical or interpretive researchers. Positivists adopt a robust, objective and ontological approach whereas interpretivists follow consciousness, experience and an interpretive view of ontology and epistemology (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). These latter researchers claim that culture, language, selective perception, subjective forms of cognition, social conventions, politics, ideology, power and narration are the better way to assess and understand human behaviour. Positivists adopting the scientific method (Auguste Comte, in Martineau, 1853; Popper, 1959) have traditionally criticised qualitative methods as being the 'alternative' method which lacks validity and reliability. Interpretivist researchers (Searle, 1999) argue in favour of personal accounts of reality and argue that social accounts of reality occur through negotiation of meanings of actions and situations.

*'Positivist researchers become educational voyeurs, peering at schools through binoculars, never experiencing the situation themselves, never knowing what it really feels like' (Kincheloe, 2002 p87). This is particularly profound as much educational research has ignored personal accounts of social reality in favour of externally endorsed mandates.*

Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000) state that they are not convinced that empirical reality can be ignored altogether. They believe that the study of confusing and contradictory but often surprising or inspiring empirical material has much to offer. They advocate a combination of approaches to research. They argue that one cannot ignore the existence of reality beyond the researchers' egocentricity and the ethnocentricity of the research paradigms. Unfortunately they recognise that in the quest to be classified as between qualitative and pure quantitative the boundaries between both become slightly blurred. Also they state that the polarisation between the two extremes is dying out or wearing thin in terms of research and is not as popular as it used to be. The choice between quantitative or qualitative approaches lies with the research problem or question. Sometimes purely one approach over the other is better and at other times a combination of the two since the researcher can also add quantitative methods to mainly qualitative research because it may

add a certain value as background material (Gheradi and Turner, 1987; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). *There is the need to avoid the trap of regarding quantitative data as robust and qualitative as weak, unambiguous reflections of reality.*

Miles and Huberman (1994) state that researchers tend to stand somewhere between the two schools of thought, neither being entirely objective (as it's impossible) and value-free or purely interpretivist lacking empirical rigour. It is sensible for researchers to adopt a flexible approach to gathering data, incorporating some elements from both of the two paradigms. *Following Miles and Huberman (1994), my research was emergent in nature and allowed for flexibility in the use of the multi-methods. I found this was much easier to ascertain teacher's views on job related stress and student's perceptions of the school and allow the research phases to culminate from each other, such that the student observations and interviews arose from the teacher interviewing phase and provided a thick description used to substantiate some teacher commentary about the school.*

#### **5.4 The Case Study Approach**

The case study approach has been widely used in organizational research to understand organizational innovation and change as shaped by both internal forces and the external environment (Hartley, 1994). Case studies allow the researcher *'to probe deeply and analyze the phenomena that constitute the life cycle of the establishment with the view to establishing generalizations about the wider population to which that unit belongs'* (Cohen and Manion, 1989 p124-5). Yin (1981) states that the case study approach provides rich data within an organizational setting and is not a method but a research strategy, involving a combination of methods, both quantitative and qualitative often involving triangulation to improve the validity of the research. In relation to this, Yin (1993 p29) states that within an exploratory case study, *'cause and effect relationships are analyzed in order to explain which causes, produced which effect'*. This occurred during the interviewing phase of the research where respondents were asked about their stress reactions and coping mechanisms.

Hartley (1994 p210) further states that *'the case study methods are better able to adapt to and probe areas of original but also emergent theory'*. Overall, the case study is a generic term for the investigation of an individual, group or phenomenon (Sturman, 1994). The distinguishing features of a case study, is the belief that human systems develop a whole-

ness and not a separate loose collection of traits. Therefore researchers believe that they must carry out in-depth investigations of the research to find out what patterns emerge.

Stenhouse (1985 p27) identified 4 broad styles of case study:-

**1.Ethnographic-** looks at the understandings of the actors in the case and offers from the outsiders viewpoint explanations emphasising causal or structural patterns of which participants in the case are unaware.

**2.Evaluative-** a single case or a collection of cases is studied in depth with the purpose of providing educational actors/decision makers (administrators, teachers, parents, pupils) with information that helps them to judge the merit and worth of policies, programs or institutions.

**3.Educational-** here the researchers are not concerned with social theory nor with evaluative judgement but rather with the understanding of educational action. They are concerned with enriching the thinking and discourse of educators either through the systematic and reflective documentation of evidence.

**4.Action research-** this is concerned with contributing to the development of the case/cases under study by feedback of information which can guide revision and refinement of action.

*With regards to my research, I was investigating an educational institution in order to facilitate a change in practice and therefore used both the educational case study with action research.* Much support has come for more of a need for naturalistic inquiry into the teacher retention problem (Adams, 2003) and hence formed the motivation for this methodology. According to Simons (1980) the use of the case study approach in education has often been met with suspicion and even hostility but is very much needed. Simons (1985) further states that there is still a need to clarify the epistemological and theoretical assumptions underlying case study in educational research and evaluation. Methods are not defining in case studies. Case studies allow the researcher to recognize the complexities within organizations and the '*embeddedness of social truths*' (Adelman

et al, 1980 cited in Bassey, 1999 p22). Case studies can also then be used as a ‘*step to action*’ in order to promote effective educational practices, (Bassey, 1999 p23).

Kemmis (1980 cited in Bassey, 1999 p29) states that ‘*the imagination of the case and the invention of the study are cognitive and cultural processes and the case study worker’s actions and descriptions must be justified both in terms of the truth status of the findings and in terms of social accountability*’. Thus good case studies utilise multiple data sources and triangulate methods to interpret converging evidence. *In the same way, my research incorporated using multiple data sources as teachers from all levels (apart from those that taught sixth form only) were invited to participate in the interviews. Furthermore, multi-methods were used in the research as observations of students and teachers were carried out in addition to the interviews to give more profound picture of the stress teachers felt with disruptive students. The justification of the truth status of the themes was left until the final phase (the staff address, reporting the interview themes and allowing teachers to respond).*

The problem with the case study approach (much like ethnography) is justifying to others why the researcher can be a knowledgeable observer-participant who tells us what he/she sees. According to Stenhouse (1985, cited in Bassey, 1999 p23) generalisation and application are matters of judgement rather than calculation and the task of the case study is to produce ordered reports of experience which invite judgement and offer evidence to which judgement can appeal. Furthermore, Stenhouse (1978) stated that when he looked at teacher’s classroom judgements, he found that ‘*predictive generalisations superseded the need for individual judgement*’ (p28) and thus Stenhouse argued that ‘*retrospective generalisations are beneficial and seek to strengthen individual judgement where it can’t be superseded*’ (p28). *Hence, internal validity of case studies exists because they incorporate a chain of evidence which the reader can follow.* According to Tripp (1985) ‘*the teacher within the case study needs to be careful when comparing similar teachers (cases) problems, as each classroom case study is unique to the age, ability and socio-economic status of the pupils but generalisations between similar cases can occur if the features in other accounts are relevant to yours*’(p33). *The problem is, knowing which particular cases to archive for your particular research before the teacher in question can reflect upon their own vicarious experience in their classrooms. Unfortunately, the question of external validity is not easily addressed- it is difficult to generalise on the basis of one case but can be overcome with relevant literature searching about the issue*

*and how the phenomenon has been dealt with in other similar cases.* Confirming this, is the literature on educational case studies such as the Ford Teaching project (1974) which uncovered the need for action research and showed that teachers could successfully research their practice as a means to enhance their own educational value. Additionally, the TRIST-TVEI Nottinghamshire Development project (1985-87 cited in Bassey, 1999 p87) allowed teachers to identify problems and view them as part of their professional growth giving them ownership of their experiences and encouraging collaboration. *Based on research like this, I became convinced that using the case study approach with teacher-researcher methodology was a viable way of gaining improvements in practice and naively believed that when gaps in practice were realised, teachers would happily collaborate to change them. It never dawned on me the extent to which such research was deemed unacceptable by educators and leadership members.*

Overall, the extent to which generalisability is possible will relate to whether the case is typical (similar to previous research done using case study approach ie: looking at the use of a particular teaching strategy in different schools) or the type of phenomena being looked at (eg: assessment of disruptive behaviour at a school). *However, I still believe that generalisability is not possible with the case study approach as each case is not typical but unique and the situations being researched are pertinent to an individual, time and place. Even if the particular phenomenon being researched has been looked at using other schools, it would be wrong for the researcher to generalise within (generalising participants responses) and between the cases (generalising findings between cases).* The researcher must be mindful of the interpretation of the data within the case, especially if they work in the same environment or organisation. In relation to this, a problem lies with interpreting data as the subjectivity of the researcher impinges on the findings and unless verification for these assumptions from the participant is sought, biases occur within the case study approach. *It is very easy for mis-interpretation to occur, just as it is for generalisability of findings between participants. Therefore use of the case study is fraught with its own problems despite the ease of accessibility to participants especially when the researcher works in the establishment.*

Critics of the educational case study approach (Parlett and Hamilton, 1972; Walker, 1983; Atkinson and Delamont, 1985) argue that:

- It is difficult to find ‘*definitive accounts of case study approaches to educational evaluation*’ (p29)
- They reject the argument of ‘*generalisation of case studies and see them as isolated one-off affairs with no sense of cumulative knowledge or developing theoretical insight*’ (p39).
- ‘*Case studies take too long are hard to do*’ (Yin, 1994 p27). *Therefore the research loses its sense of ‘immediacy in time’ and can become retrospective in nature.*

*In response to these arguments against the use of case study in research, I believe that the researchers who adopt interpretive research paradigms involving the use of case study are fully aware that their involvement in the case study (in terms of asking questions) may change the situation they are studying but they learn to accept this and see themselves as potential variables in the enquiry. This results in data collection which is rich in situational accounts, that can be analysed thematically without quantitative numerics and accepts the fact that reality is seen as a construct of the human mind and not in terms of factual statements, hypothesis testing and objectivity. Therefore, from my literature reviewing I agree with Simons who states*

*‘... We need to embrace these paradoxes and study and explore rather than trying to resolve tensions embedded in them and in this way by challenging certainty, to live with ambiguity and to creatively encounter is to arrive eventually at seeing anew’ (Simons, 1996, cited in Bassey, 1999 p36).*

### **5.4.1 Educational Research: Using Case Study**

*When research is scientific and deterministic, educational research becomes the systematic process of discovering how and why people in educational settings behave the way they do. Teaching is assessed using measurable outcomes to assess the quality of teaching and student performance (eg: Ofsted inspections and school league tables). Old assumptions of teaching were always along the lines that a teacher must control the learning and feed the information to the students.* Educational research has recognised the crisis with teachers and their narrowed practicality. Golby (1985) states that education has become ‘*the delivery of pre-specified and un-contestable goods*’(p163). He argues that teachers are simply delivery agents of curriculum that has been conceived and approved elsewhere. Stenhouse (1975) states that educational research should ‘*not be confined to classrooms but extend beyond to investigate the contexts of power and control within which educational and social values are now being generated*’ (p5). ‘*Teachers and*

*researchers need to research their own practice in order to enlighten, curriculum development, improve professional development and become more reflective in their teaching*' (Stenhouse, 1975 p5). Schon (1987) states that we need to learn to break away from *'technical rationality to seeing teaching as professional artistry'* (p8). Professional competence can be achieved by adopting a reflective enquiry on action and on tacit knowledge to inform practice.

Schon (1987, p12) argues that *'education is being distorted and needs to be re-moralised'*. Hence the need for, educational case studies like the Nottinghamshire Staff Development Project 1985-1987 (known as the TRIST-TVEI) and the Ford Teaching Project (1974). Both of these projects involved the use of action research cycles with teachers reflecting on their practices and sharing reflective reports and found positive results with the teachers feeling renewed in their own professional abilities. *From such case studies, I became convinced that the use of educational case studies involving teachers in action research spirals would benefit the teachers at my school.*

Bassey (1999, p44) sees the educational case study as best *'following reality paradigms'* (as concepts of reality vary from person to person and reality is seen as a construct of the human mind therefore people perceive the world but not necessarily in the same way). The public world is positivist and the private world is interpretive. He further states that the exploration of a particular case is essentially interpretive in trying to analyse and interpret the data collected and try to make a coherent report which is long enough to be meaningful and short enough to be readable. In relation to this, Hargreaves (1996, cited in Bassey, 1999 p19) states that *'evidence-based research demonstrates conclusively that if teachers change their practice from x to y there will be a significant and enduring improvement in teaching and learning'*. Bassey (1999) disagrees with this because he says that teaching situations are varied and you can't say with certainty *'do x instead of y and your students will learn more'* (p19). *Teaching is such a complex activity that such simple statements don't exist.* Hargreaves model of the relationship between educational research and the practice of teaching states the main component of the knowledge base of teachers is the subject matter that they teach. This is *'mediated through craft knowledge into the practice of teaching'* (Hargreaves, 1996 cited in Bassey, 1999 p11).

Craft knowledge is acquired through many processes, personal experiences and trial and error learning. Educational research impacts the craft knowledge of teachers but has been

regarded as a weak influence to their teaching practices and has often been ignored or overlooked. Craft knowledge has been defined by Brown and McIntyre (1993 cited in Bassey, 1999 p49) as *'part of teachers' professional knowledge which they acquire from practical experience in the classroom rather than their formal training'*. It guides their day to day actions in classrooms and does not get articulated. The craft knowledge becomes spontaneous, routine and sometimes unconscious. *Teachers and researchers need to always recognise and strengthen craft knowledge in order to improve the knowledge base of teachers and hence improve practice.* The best way is to say to teachers *'do y instead of x and your pupils may learn more'*- this invites them into discourse and asks them to test their own classroom practices and report the outcomes. Bassey (1999 p53) calls this *'fuzzy generalisations'*, because they are general statements about everyday teaching practices with in-built uncertainty. Fuzzy generalisations from research on their own may be memorable but have little credence unless they are read in conjunction with the research report and may encourage others to act on it in their own school and circumstances. *Hence, in my understanding the benefits of educational case study research are (1) they are carried out within a localised boundary of space and time and can be related to a particular set of events, a classroom, a department or a whole institution; (2) they can investigate interesting aspects of an educational activity, program or system and (3) they are used to inform the judgements and decisions of practitioners or policy makers.* Bassey (1999) states that *'educational case studies provide an audit trail by which other researchers may validate or challenge the findings or construct alternative arguments'* (p53) and they allow teachers to take ownership of their teaching and assert their professionalism within their school. *I believe that such case studies are beneficial as they can use action research and reflexivity to help teachers become practitioners and encourage a change in practice from critical enquiry.*

Despite these benefits one major problem could be the fact that educational case study research has the tendency to *'embalm practices which are actually always changing'* (Walker, 1983 p35). *However, I still feel that case study research in schools is viable and can produce changes in practice to benefit teachers and enlighten curriculum development. No matter that top-down controllers such as school managers and policy makers see educational practices moving forward without practitioner-research intervention, I feel that teachers have been limited in their discourses with each other and their professional development has been stifled by bureaucratic, technical rationality restricting the chances of professional artistry. Nevertheless, having read the literature I*

*am aware one can't separate professional knowledge from the practical situation and the problems that teachers face in practice are messy, indeterminate and may be of conflicting values. I agree with Schon (1987) who states that 'teacher's models of professional competence should incorporate a non-technical process in which practitioners can clarify their understandings of these problems using a reflective enquiry framework' (p8). Thus, I am pleased that I could carry out a single educational case study and research the 'gaps' in my school as teacher-researcher adopting a bottom-up approach. How is it possible for researchers to fulfil the dual-purpose role of practitioner-researcher when immersed within a hierarchical, bureaucratic organisation such as schools? What are the barriers researchers face?.*

### **5.5 Teacher-Researcher Inquiry**

*The teacher-as-researcher form of educational inquiry has been found to be an invaluable source of separating the practitioner's conceptions of 'reality in practice' from other teachers or from externally implemented policies.* Lines of inquiry in educational research began to veer towards teacher-researcher and reflexivity in practice. Schon (1987) argues that *'we need to search for an epistemology of teaching practice implicit in the artistic, intuitive processes that can be used in situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness and value conflict'*(p1). Schon advocates the use of both 'knowing-in-action' and 'reflection-in-action' arguing that teachers need to reflect on their practices. In this way they automatically become a researcher in the practice context which results in the construction of a new theory to apply to practice. Teacher-researchers develop professionally by reflecting on their own tacit knowledge rather than referring to theoretical knowledge produced by academic experts. Stenhouse (1975) states in relation to this that *'the way forward for the teacher-researcher is to gain insights into contradictions in the job role like management, supervision, job definition, intra-staff relations along with the silences and feelings of difficulty that such research might uncover'* (p151). The future of teacher-research will be professional and collective, oppositional and emancipatory, be reflexive and be classroom and be both school and nationally focused. In fact, Sir Ronald Gould (1963 p160) stated that *'if teacher's voices were not heard and teaching became marginalised and authoritarian, then teachers would have to develop their own alternative base'*. *That is why the teacher-researcher movement began and in my view is vitally important as it stops teaching becoming a mechanistic, deterministic profession based on achieving targets, accountability and*

*standards. Unfortunately, teachers are constantly harassed with such rhetoric and learn that quality in teaching is based on meeting pre-specified standards via supervision, inspection and control.* Carr (1989) states that *'teachers are given a limited technical discretion within a restrictive, bureaucratic framework based on managerial rules'*(p2).

*Thus, in my view teaching should be regarded as an extension to teacher's personalities, should allow teachers to use their judgement on dissemination and methods of delivery and not just rely on externally based pre-specified curricula that stifle teachers and learners alike. Where has the freedom of discovery gone? Both teachers and students need curricula choice in order to work collaboratively together.* In support of my views, Stenhouse (1975) also sees *'teaching as a practical art in which exploration and interpretation lead to revision and adjustment of ideas and of practice'* (p5). Such researchers claim that teaching is not routine with terminal endpoints but about certain values which must be realised through teaching. Nevertheless, critics argue that seeing teaching as a practical art poses serious challenges to received views of how teaching is to be improved in relation to conformist agendas following bureaucratic procedures (Peters, 1965; Schwab, 1969). Furthermore, teaching has been regarded as a technical activity conducted for utilitarian purposes and not as an ethical activity directed towards morals and social ends. Carr (1989) states that *'our conceptions of the role of the teacher needs to change to accept the fact that professional development stems on the teachers' educational values and make up the very fabric of teaching'* (p12). One cannot separate the teacher from their values and depersonalise the educational process as both are based on the traditional which is deeply embedded in institutional settings. Therefore, improvements in practice can only occur *'when the teacher is critical about these traditions of thought shaping their own practical experiences'* (Langford, 1978 cited in Carr, 1989 p12). Hence, *'teaching as a profession is only genuine when teachers are allowed to make the educational quality of their teaching their central concern'* (Carr, 1989 p18).

Cassell and Symon (1999) argue that despite research into work development there has been little change in the underlying epistemological assumptions that influence how the research is interpreted, along with a lack of reflection and creativity which unfortunately stifles the discipline. Additionally, despite the drive and recognition of the need for democratic schooling (Rizvi, 1989 p13) *'to make education less authoritarian and more centred on the interests of the child, liberal notions of democracy have not been successful*

*and the practice in reality remains elusive*' (Sharp and Green, 1975; Wood, 1984; Watkins, 1989). The temptation to view educational work through the application of criteria related to economic production is strong, and bureaucracies like school managers and government officials rely on quantifiable results of the teaching process and the high quality products of the schooling system (Grundy, 1984 p79). True educational democracy would involve *'distributing equitable power relations to teachers, pupils and parents but research on this found that the parents became frustrated and cynical towards educational democracy'* (Sharp and Green, 1975 p55). *So why is educational reform so difficult?* According to Rizvi (1989) democratic rationality is hampered by the constraints of the dominant rationality which informs the theory and practice of educational administration. When researchers try to enforce or encourage research based on democratic rationality they are being anti-establishmentarian and need to find other ideologies to solve educational problems.

*I believe that it is important to work towards minimising the impact of bureaucracy on the way schools are being administered despite the historical, political and social perspectives behind the dominant ideologies. If teachers are to regard themselves as true professionals, they need to recognise the unequal power-relations within the hierarchy of school institutions and learn to question their practices, not necessarily in a radical manner but enough to gain control or ownership of their teaching practices. Teachers must recognise the need for collaboration, reflection and meta-cognitive growth or they will remain stifled by bureaucratic controls and the passivity of their positions.* Thus, as a reaction against the pressure towards technological educational work, professional educators have become interested in regaining control of practice and reflective deliberation has been identified as being crucial to that process. With this trend towards teacher emancipation, *'teachers took control of their professional judgements and adopted a new language to liberate themselves from a system of education that denies them individual dignity'* (Hopkins, 1985 p149). Through hegemonic interactions and reflections, *'the teacher becomes empowered to control knowledge and practice resulting in intellectual elite with congruent interests'* (Gramsci, 1971 p93). A community of practitioners evolves to *'challenge current practice and go beyond professionalism to gain a better understanding of problems with shared views on their resolution'* (McCarthy, 1973, p95).

## **5.6 Reflexivity in Research**

As the teacher-researcher movement grew out of a period of professional autonomy in response to narrowed practicalities and bureaucratic control, *'teachers became social, political and cultural actors working in a system of production'* (Carr, 1989 p152). Since then, there has been *'the increasing realisation for more reflexive study in social science research particularly with regards to how to carry out reflexive research and our methods of inquiry'* (Cunliffe, 2004 p983). Much of the debate about reflexivity has concentrated on the questions of paradigm choice, the assumptions about reality we ascertain from theories and the nature of reality and knowledge. Also of concern is our ability as researchers to capture the complex, interactional and emergent nature of our social experience. *Therefore the problem is 'can reflexivity offer anything to the organisational researcher or will it simply paralyse them?'*. According to Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000) *'one of the main tasks of reflexive social science is to, appreciate the interplay between philosophical positions and research practice'* (p983). This is then achieved according to Cunliffe (2003) *'by adopting a radically reflexive research approach incorporating both reflexive researching and theorising'* (p983). Built up from ethnography and phenomenology, *'radical reflexivity assumes that we as researchers need to take responsibility for our own theorizing whether it be positivist or anti-positivist, as well as whatever it is we theorize about'* (Hardy and Clegg, 1997 p985). *The main point being that we must recognise our philosophical commitments, and work though the internal logic yet be free to critically question its applicability to practice.* Cunliffe (2003) states that *'the biggest problem of reflexive work is that it's always open to criticism but by criticising ones reflexive practice you expose your biases which in turn privileges you in the fact that you learn to recognise the situated-ness of your position and this can be difficult to do'* (p984).

*'Radical-reflexivity helps reveal these inconceivable issues and highlights the tentativeness of our theories and explanations, thus opening up our fallibility as researchers, exposing hidden alternatives, laying bare epistemological limits and empowering voices that have been overshadowed or subjugated by objective discourse'* (Lynch, 2000 p985). *In other words it gives the practitioner the power to cope with the 'swampy lowlands', referred to as the practitioner's personal thoughts and feelings which are often swamped with technocratic/bureaucratic issues.* Many reflexive researchers like Schon (1987) advocate for the deconstruction of the taken for granted philosophy within

education, namely that teachers are not the best judge of their own subject area and the teaching and assessment of the syllabus content should be governed externally. *Wider issues tend to be raised if results are poor or parents complain or if the school compares worse off than competing schools. Thus in order to do this, the next step in radical reflexive research is the process of 'becoming', in which we deconstruct our own constructions of realities, identities and knowledge and highlight the inter-subjective nature of meaning. 'We analyse our own taken-for-granted suppositions of our work resulting in our own reflexive accomplishment from the perspective of becoming-realism'* (Cunliffe, 2003 p989). This is related to Dewey (1933, p72) who argues that *'reflexivity is linked to uncovering tensions felt as part of a persons 'felt meaning'. He states that in order to overcome problems, the person has to think or reflect on it, mull over and explicate the aspects of the problem and try and understand how to symbolise a possible solution'* (p72). *In other words reflexivity involves the analysis of felt meaning which forms part of the process of cognition. Therefore, as radical reflexive researchers we are working in different linguistic communities such as academic and business and need to unsettle our forms of reasoning and any claims of objectivity or truth. Thus, you risk exposing yourself along with the practitioners in the organisation.* Radical reflexivity has *'a narrative circularity'* (Cunliffe, 2003 p989) tracing the situated and un-situated nature of our accounts so that the individual can reflect both 'in and on' practices resulting in possible improvements. *Eventually, the researcher-practitioner can empower others to deconstruct and then re-construct their conceptions of their work life experiences. This can then lead to shared understandings of teaching practices and further reflexivity and reflection in and on practice.*

Critics of reflexivity (Latour, 1988; Richardson and Fowler, 1998; Gabriel, 2002) state that it has little to offer because it leads to intellectual chaos with questioning what is real, what is knowledge and who we are. According to critics it leads to *'self-indulgent naval gazing with aporia' (unfathomable paradoxes- which are circular in themselves)* (Latour, 1988 p990). All of this undermines serious research making it impossible to say anything meaningful about theory or practice. *In other words 'when does one stop deconstructing or constructing? How does the researcher ever reach an objective, generalisable and fallable point to the research?'* By engaging in narrative circularity the researcher can undermine the aims of the research and its usefulness. Unfortunately *'the issue of self-referentiality in reflexive research can never really be avoided but it does cover the internal consistency of the researchers own assumptions'* (Lynch, 2002 p992).

Researchers become meta-theorists while still adopting the reflexive frame. *Based on this, I decided to adopt a meta-theorist mentality still using a reflexive framework as this would enable my research to remain reflexive without adding to or effecting the interpretation of the participant's findings.*

The problem with this is the chance of 'coming away from reflexivity while assuming it' (Pels, 2000 p993). *In other words the individual does not truly reflect on practices and only think they are being reflexive.* Pels (2000) refers to this as 'flat naturalism' (p993) in which an account is taken as representative or believable and without question. *This was not the case with my research, I needed to understand what made the teacher stressed or feel they could not cope and what they did or were doing about it. I required the teacher to be retrospective and prospective at the same time since I was enquiring about how they coped with negative situations and avoided it occurring again in their practice. In other words because I used an emergent questioning (allowing me to probe certain points of interest), and tried to avoid becoming un-reflexive by asking reflexive probe questions to participants I avoided such problems.*

Cunliffe (2003) refers to this back and forth process as 'ontological oscillation' (p993) which becomes a necessary part of the research process especially when trying to make sense of multiple realities. Cunliffe suggests that researchers engage in at least one self-referent loop by acknowledging and interpreting the impact of their own ontological and epistemological assumptions on their research strategy. This will help their research achieve internal logic and emphasise its situated nature.

*In relation to this my research had internal logic because I was looking at the problems at the school from both a personal and organisational perspective. By considering the wider context (assessing the managerial systems and their impact on staff, the curriculum development, examination systems and syllabi as well as classroom management) I hoped to gain an understanding of the culture of education at the school. Thus, I used both a deconstructionist approach to teacher stress by revealing definitions and conceptions of stress, disruption and behaviour management at the interview phase; and a constructionist approach to reflexivity by offering staff a collaborative action research group to discuss their opinions, values and teaching methods to empower each other and enhance meta-cognition.*

Kristeva (1984, cited in Cunliffe, 2003 p993) agrees with the use of both constructionist and deconstructionist metaphors, because she states *'meaning, experience and identities are not fixed but in process and the radically reflexive researcher, explores the fragments of ideologies and how they come together at particular points in time and subjective space to shape meaning'*.

*It therefore becomes important for the reflexive researcher to reflexively interrogate how s/he constructs representations to work with others towards more linguistically expressive accounts. The researcher may focus on self-reflexivity, the subject's reflexivity or inter-subjective radical reflexivity. I found myself agreeing with Kristeva's understanding of the radically reflexive researcher, as I tried to explore participants' reflexivity during the interviewing and my own reflections on the themes that arose from the interviews. Hence, ontological oscillation was used as a comparative method to analyse the interviews and also to encourage staff feedback during the theme presentation at the staff address made in July 2006. The reader can find out more of this process in chapters 6 and 7 and will realise the difficulty and braveness involved in offering staff the chance to vocalise their thoughts of resultant themes.*

Furthermore, reflexivity in practice is difficult to achieve particularly in light of new technologies, administrative structures, lines of accountability all being prone to rapid change. *'Some professionals do not reflect or claim not to have the time to reflect about the consequences of their actions or the changing contexts in which they occur and do not make informed judgements about changes in their practice'* (Adelman, 1987 p173). Whether professionals are aware of reflection or not, it occurs at every stage of planning from deciding how to talk to pupils, what access they have to knowledge to make progress through a series of tasks and what criteria will be adopted to evaluate pupil's performance- reflection is used and involves both ethical as well as technical decisions (Smith and Geoffrey, 1968; Schwab, 1969). Thus, such decision making and reflection becomes each teacher's practical reasoning which can be used to consider the best approaches to teaching through theorising and testing alternatives in order to improve practice (Hustler et al, 1986; McNiff, 1988). *'Quality action research can be used as a philosophy for the practical ethic which can be made more convincing when practitioners collaborate over issues in practice and extend the validity of the research'* (Carr and Kemmis, 1986 p178).

## **5.7 Action Research**

*In summary, I believe that workers were originally seen as an expendable spare part of companies who followed autocratic styles of management. Problems were either ignored or dealt with from the top-down. Individual workers were not expected to critique their organisations and practices. However this form of organisational practice was stifling and led to increases in absenteeism and stress related disorders.* Ways for improving organisational practices were made through the creation of social change agendas.

*‘Social change agendas are created by the stakeholders critiquing their organisations by gathering knowledge with other stakeholders about the problem to be resolved; and the agendas themselves have changed with the evolution of socio-technical systems and thinking’* (Trist, 1981 cited in Carr, 1989 p29).

Thus, as social changes have occurred a new paradigm has evolved in socio-technical design involving collaboration, collegiality, commitment and innovation. This involves a process of empowerment and self belief which is then tested through action and further discussion through participation and stakeholder collaboration.

Action research sits neatly with the drive for empowerment and emancipation. Action research is not a discipline but has become an intervention science for the cooperative research of academic researchers and practitioners in order to produce emancipatory knowledge and a social change in practice (Greenwood and Levin, 1998). This is achieved through reflective rationality to generate context-specific local knowledge in order to further develop the quality of services (Stenhouse, 1985) and increase the ability of the involved community or organisation members to control their own destinies more effectively and to keep improving their capacity to do so. Action research thus incorporates a cyclical process of questioning and reviewing and self-reflection resulting in the creation of a new or updated body of knowledge to be shared with others. It has been seen as a highly compelling way to bridge the gap between theory and research and practice and has appealed to educationalists and practitioners (Owen, 1993). Therefore, educational action research is seen by many teachers as *‘ongoing professional commitment’* (Bassey, 1990 p39) and recognises the importance of criticism as a means of testing whether findings are valid.

There are two aspects of action research which both involve bringing about change either in a direct way by finding a solution and implementing it but this is normally implemented

with the guidance of external experts or through promoting reflection among practitioners to instigate collaboration and improve practices (Middlewood et al, 1999). The concept of the 'reflective practitioner' or of 'reflection in action' is related to the work of Schon (1984) who sees reflection as '*reflection, in a context of action, on phenomena perceived to be incongruent with intuitive understandings*' (p42).

Schon (1984) analysed case studies about professional work from different professions and argued for a more realistic epistemology of practice. He argued that to act constructively in typical professional practice, practitioners must be able to develop local knowledge and reflect in action becoming researchers in the practice context. *However, this can be a tall order as it is difficult for one to understand and explicate what they already know, where the knowledge has come from and how it has changed or evolved overtime. Thus tacit knowledge changes and can become habituary causing the individual to deal with a situation in a set frame. Until, the practitioner begins to understand the problem by defining it in terms of their own implicit and explicit knowledge, the situation will always be a problem.* In this way the practitioner or researcher then analyses aspects of the situation, allowing the situation to talk back, as Schon (1984) puts it. This will then lead towards an enhancement of understanding the problem by expressing the reflective features of the situation.

The two aspects of action research: the promotion of change and the concept of reflection in action can be interrelated so that action research involves researching one's own organisation from an insider perspective to incite and encourage change to occur from a bottom-up perspective. *Eventually, the practitioner attempts to interlink reflection with further action to resolve the problem and encourage meta-cognition. In other words, action research leads to a form of self-reflective transformation of an individuals' thinking; and problem solving strategies are compared and scrutinised for common elements.* Thus the action research is seen as a spiral process, developed from the work of post-war change theorist Kurt Lewin in the USA, viewing action following evaluation or reflection as one cycle to be followed by others (Bassegy, 1998). Furthermore, action research methods provide the practitioner with a systematic way to formulate research questions identified as important and devise procedures to address the most pressing needs they face in practice (Goswami and Stillman, 1989; Caro-Bruce, 1995). The result of such action research cycles is '*the competency to impart with the knowledge gained*

*from inferences and analogies to the subsequent correction and extension of the generated hypotheses'* (Dorner, 1982 cited in Schiratz, 1993 p44).

*'Much action research has made social situations reactive, stimulating the individuals concerned to actively do things in particular in collaboration with other professionals in the same research situation'* (Schiratz, 1993 p44). This relates to the analysis of *'two behavioural worlds'* as stated by Argyris and Schons (1974 cited in Schiratz, 1993 p45). The first is where professionals hold an *'attitude of mystery and mastery and remain in control of the situation by withholding information from their colleagues'* and the second behavioural attitude is one of *'action and problem solving'* (p45). *This is then seen as a shared task for everyone concerned with the research and can only occur when all the participants can actively develop the situation and have access to all the relevant information. In this way action research practitioners can be democratic reformers rather than revolutionaries, as they aim for greater liberation and self-realisation.*

There are many different forms of action research depending upon the topics they deal with, such as *'community development, changes in educational systems, economic development and even political and changes in organisations'* (Greenwood and Levin, 1998 p28). All these forms of action research *'deviate from a positivist approach based on objectivity which has been criticised by researchers using empirical methods'* (Johnson, 1994 cited in Middlewood et al, 1999 p12). They argue that the intention to improve or change a situation is *'antipathetic to positivist approaches'* (p12). Miles and Huberman (1994 cited in Boyatzis, 1998 p5) comment on the difficulties researchers face working in fixed spectrums, they argue that *'researchers are now adopting a flexible approach to data gathering standing between the positivist and interpretivist schools of thought'*. After all there is the increasing recognition that *'no piece of research is entirely objective and no researcher value-free'*, and, *'neither paradigm inspires research that brings about freedom, justice and democracy'* (Habermas, 1972 cited in Middlewood et al, 1999 p12). *As stated before, action research lies in the middle of both paradigms related to critical theory with its commitments to change, but more importantly 'the researcher not only questions whether practice can be improved but whether the practice is worth improving'* (Dadds, 1995 cited in Middlewood et al, 1999 p17). Unfortunately, action research findings are not directly transferable to all other areas of practice and can only be used to stimulate reflection and thinking about other areas of practice (Stenhouse, 1985). *I feel that this argument can also be made about the case study approach, as findings are*

*situated within the context and immediacy of time they were researched in and cannot be generalised to other situations.*

### **5.7.1 Co-operative Inquiry and Action Research**

*Unfortunately, teachers experience boundaries in their work which tend to be difficult to overcome or resolve. For example particular acts or behaviours the teacher adopts can hinder the development of pupil's learning processes and 'differences in meanings lead to false suppositions or behaviours (both pupil and staff) that may be misinterpreted and lead to failing interactions' (Prokopp, 2000 p1). It is often these discrepancies that cause teacher stress with little understanding of why the problems occurred in the first place. This hones in on the importance of collaboration and co-operative inquiry.* Thus Collaborative research is an *'emergent and systematic inquiry process within the Action research cycles, and is embedded in a true partnership between the researchers for the purpose of generating actionable scientific knowledge'* (Shani et al, 2004 p1).

Some researchers have questioned *'the practitioner's abilities to integrate reflexive strategies into their work life and be able to clarify how this process is accomplished'* (Ahern, 1999 cited in Russell and Kelly, 2002 p3). Wiesenfeld (2000 cited in Russell and Kelly, 2002 p3) has stated that *'researchers have not determined how to operationalise the subjective nature of reflexivity into an expanded understanding'*. Additionally, qualitative research carried out in a district general hospital (East and Robinson, 1994 p57) found that *'the application of the action-research cycle was not straightforward as difficulties arose in simply defining what the problems were'*. East and Robinson (1994) found differences in the views of the hospital managers and senior ward nurses as to the sources of challenge and problems within the hospital organisation resulting in different agendas for change with some common ground. They stated *'that in order to bring about changes in processes, action research should be used to allow a sense of ownership for these changes, to encourage reflections in and on practice and collaborations'* (p57).

Reflexivity helps the researcher-practitioner identify socially constructed boundaries that delimit our view of the social world and provide a basis for creative, ethical alternatives (Payne, 2000). Thus using the collaborative research inquiry as part of Action Research incorporates a team-based approach to research, inviting participants to join discussion forums and pursue a more imaginative and holistic approach to human inquiry (Bray et al,

2000). This allows for richness of contributions to knowledge and expansion of practice (Gergen and Gergen, 1991; Bartunek and Louis, 1996). The individual reflections and personal self-examination expands further into multiple reflections when cooperative enquiry is endorsed, capturing the interpersonal nature of the event (Barry et al, 1999). Levine (2002) states that the participants' involvement in the research, changes them through a dialogic process, which changes the quality of knowing which, in turn changes the knower. *'Cooperative enquiry is where participants are facilitated to develop an informed critical analysis of their organisation by exploring how they are personally connected and then share these accounts with co-researchers to encourage repeated cycles of action and reflection'* (Tee et al, 2007 p135). The reflexivity enhances our ability to stay engaged with our own reactions and those of others while inviting us to confront feelings and conflicts that we might otherwise avoid. *In this way from an emerging mixture of both individual and group subjectivities, scaffolding occurs, allowing researchers to make transitions about the various relationships defining wider processes.* This leads to a synergy of multiple voices expanding their understandings, analysis and interpretations of shared practices (Russell, 2000). *Both co-operative inquiry and collaborative inquiry are beneficial as they give insight into participant's perspectives and enhance practitioner's confidence in decision making.* In this way they become *'a valuable vehicle for developing professional practice'* (Tee et al, 2007 p135).

There are many benefits to this approach including the added social and emotional support, expanded personal insight, a greater sense of achievement (Erickson and Stull, 1998). After all good practice cannot be cloned and duplication of professional practice is not possible unless an instructional approach is adopted by an individual teacher using systematic reflection on action and sharing the experiences with others involved in the research (Posch, 2003). *Researchers are trying to establish quality cultures at school level but are hampered by the fragmented structure of schools, with its strict divisions of work, responsibility and influence. Also each individual teacher works according to the 'autonomy-parity pattern'. This is where each teacher prefers not to be interfered with preferring their own autonomy. However, both these features make it difficult for schools to develop an effective internal management structure providing stability to quality developments. Unfortunately, a conservative, reductionist philosophy is adopted where teachers show loyalty for their profession but not their organisation. Hence, the stress complaints are not recognised as a personal characteristic but an organisational one inherent in the job. As a result, reflections on actions are not encouraged or regarded as*

*a natural course of action. I feel that all teachers need coaching on how to be reflexive and meta-cognitive.*

Johnston (1994) claims that *'action research is not a natural process for teachers as it requires them to be systematic, collaborative and critical and these are characteristics which are not part of teacher's natural reflection on practice'* (p39). Action Research, Collaborative Inquiry and Reflexivity needs to be considered from a political perspective. Neutral, value-free research approaches that were used in the past, denied researchers the possibilities of being reflexive (Brydon-Miller and Tolman, 1997). Working within a post modern perspective we must remember the difficulties in allowing or creating truly reflexive experiences for action. Thus, even as researchers working within a collaborative framework, *'we must not forget the inherent political pressures in organisations (usually educational) and allow for reflexivity on a more sensitive scale'* (Cushman, 1995 cited in Russell and Kelly, 2002 p18). By constantly asking *'Who benefits from the research?'* we close the gap *'between the personal and the political, between the knower and the known and between the researcher and the members of the inquiry'* (Bohan and Russell, 1999 cited in Russell and Kelly, 2002 p18).

### **5.7.2 Educational Action Research**

One way to attain professionalism among teachers is through action research (Ronnerman, 2003). It has been used successfully for school improvement in many countries resulting in changes in teaching practices (Reason, 2001; Zeichner, 2001). In this way, the teacher's *'professional knowledge grows as well as their ability to generate context-specific local knowledge to further develop the quality of services'* (Posch, 2003 p236). Hence action research and practitioner-based inquiry are used as research vehicles for radical critique questioning the arrangements of schooling that perpetuate systematic inequities (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1998). The emphasis of this approach being to look beyond the bureaucratic present to more democratic forms of schooling and management that can ease problems and enhance the internal search for solutions and coping mechanisms in order to improve school effectiveness and decrease ineffectiveness (Harber and Davies, 1998). Despite the fact that much educational research is divided into that based on school effectiveness (focusing on school organisations with a data-driven emphasis on outcomes and based on research knowledge) and school improvement (focusing on individual teachers or groups of teachers with a qualitative orientation and concerned with change in

schools and practitioner knowledge); every outcome from research has implications on teaching and teachers (Reynolds et al, 1993; Middlewood et al,1999) and school improvement is 'crowded out' by the imperative of school effectiveness.

The education system is mostly based on *'positivist assumptions of objectivity, rationality and efficiency and more importantly holds the assumption of hierarchical intelligence'* (Darling-Hammond, 1994 p369).

*'The higher tiers do the critical intellectual work and the bottom is left with doing the daily 'nuts and bolts'. Teachers, are often viewed as technicians, purveyors of a "canned curriculum" provided by a very powerful knowledge industry'* (Goodman, 1994 p39).

*I don't accept this statement where the management or higher level teachers do more critical intellectual work leaving the lower levels 'dishing out' the canned curriculum. Surely teachers at all levels are busy planning and implementing lesson plans in line with schemes of work and therefore are acting and thinking with critical intelligence. Personally, since teacher research carried out in the 90s, teaching and teachers have evolved to being more critical and self-reflexive of their classroom practices.* Researchers claimed that old models of staff development were being relied on while everything else had changed (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Miller, 1995) and educational institutions were not places where dialogue, reflection, and inquiry were valued and practiced since the policy makers treated the modification of behaviour as a question of compliance or enforcement (Darling-Hammond and Wise, 1981). In addition, school managers while stimulating professional initiatives among teachers, expect teachers to conform closely with school policies in order to enhance the school's organisational coherence (Veugeler, 2004). *'The organisational cultures, and norms of schools are deep-set, with taken-for-granted assumptions that are not always expressed, and are often known, without being understood'* (Torrington and Weightman, 1993 cited in Middlewood et al, 1999 p161).

Despite the rich literature on the teachers need for a wide array of opportunities to construct their own understandings and theories in a collaborative setting, top down mandates (from Government bureaucrats, School Heads and Leadership teams) have frequently left teachers out of the reform process and *'conflicting waves of reform have produced disappointing results'* (Clark & Astuto, 1994 cited in Novick, 1996 p1). The continuity of new reforms overriding old reforms has led teachers suffering the *'Alice in Wonderland problem where teachers nod blithely at the inevitability of incompatible events'* (Darling-Hammond, 1990 p344). Thus, with such restricted input into the reform

process, many teachers just close the classroom door waiting for it to all go away (Hargreaves, 1994) as top-down policies constrain practice instead of constructing it (Elmore, 1983).

*Many reforms and policies failed to have any significant impact, not necessarily because of their quality but because of their cumulative effect and the lack of recognition of teacher's prior learning, beliefs and attitudes.* The teacher was seen as a 'conduit for instructional policy but not as an actor' (Darling-Hammond and Berry, 1988 p341). Policy makers were simply concerned with top-down control systems for teaching and not the teachers' knowledge (Darling-Hammond, 1990).

Recently, however, '*educational reforms have recognised the importance of the teacher's knowledge gained from everyday practices with children in the classroom and are now advocating this as the centre of reform and professional development activities*' (Lieberman, 1995 p3). Governments and policy makers are being forced to find new ways of dealing with traditional structures and organisations like schools due to the trends of individualisation and the '*second modernity*' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002 p3) stressing autonomy of individuals and organisations.

*Can traditional structures like schools really change? How much autonomy would there really be for teachers? Surely this would mean more of a bottom-up approach empowering students, teachers and schools room to develop their own education?.* Despite such trends and aspirations, the policy makers still advocate top-down approaches to control and regulate the autonomy, hence the conflict between the two approaches arises (Darling-Hammond, 1992). Reform in schools, however, concentrates on the interplay between control and autonomy, with both bottom-up and top-down approaches in parallel and often interacting (Hargreaves, 1994; Datnow and Castellano, 2000; Veugeler 2004). According to Stoll and Fink (1996) accountability and empowerment are compatible but only with a collaborative approach to the evaluation process incorporating all the stakeholders (teachers, students and parents). *Unfortunately, despite the push for cpd (continual professional development) in schools, true collaboration is still not occurring. Teachers teach in subject departments, don't tend to reflect on their practices (perhaps due to time constraints, think reflection is not worth it or perhaps already reflect without realising) and collaborate and have little contact with other departments. They feel*

*isolated, quietened, they are led to believe their voices are worthless or insignificant and hence the status quo is maintained.*

Hargreaves (1994, p3) argues education suffers from a '*balkanised teaching culture*' seriously affected by continuous reforms, new curricula and assessments restricting opportunities for bottom-up processes and teacher's professional growth to occur. Modern professional development activities should be based on reflection, dialogue with colleagues and more importantly have support for these practices by management tiers, councils and Government agencies. The teacher should be given the freedom to invent local solutions rather than passively accepting practices thought to be universally effective (Little, 1993) and have ample opportunities to construct their own understandings and theories (Clark and Astuto, 1994). *The question is ...why can't teachers change or instigate change? There is a need for teachers as major stakeholders in the education process, to speak out against their practices, work together to encourage change to occur.* Veugeler (2004) clearly points out the conflict in purposes between the ideology of autonomy and self-regulation both for students and teachers and the everyday realities of practice. He argues that schooling is still controlled, traditional and hierarchical and that teachers face a daily battle that exacerbates their stresses, causes high attrition of teachers from schools on a regular basis and makes the work environment of schools isolating and mundane. *Thus, surely the obvious way forward would be to allow teacher-practitioner research in order to stimulate change from within institutions? Why do schools have to be so top-down and teachers so controlled?.*

## **5.8 The Practitioner-Research Trend**

The reflective practice movement developed primarily in healthcare and has led to a growing outflow of collaborative projects with nurses in particular, being involved at different levels. This has resulted in successful, positive and exciting advancements in nursing practices. In this way, evidence based practice has become an industry standard for the provision of quality patient care which has been made possible through supportive leadership, collaboration and research (Boswell, 2007). Nurses have accepted practitioner-research as part of their development and empowerment. According to research the nursing profession is keen to include reflection on daily practices as part of the job, illuminating issues within a practice context (Johns, 1995; Musselwhite et al., 2005). *So*

*what about teachers? How involved are they in the processes of educational research or policy development?*

### **5.8.1 Practitioner Research in Schools**

Researchers have analysed education policy and have found the increasing recognition that *'school reform and staff development are integrally related'* (Novick, 1996 p1). Due to the growth in critics illuminating the rising tide of mediocrity in the educational system new educational reforms were implemented which helped schools and teachers provide students with a better appreciation of their world and thus make society a safer, better informed place. The ideology of such reforms were based on commonsense, schools needed better trained, excellent teachers yet often *'teachers as the subjects for scrutiny were left out of the process, both of planning reforms and the professional development opportunities necessary to implement them'* (Sykes, 1995 p465).

Much educational research has focused on the teacher-as-researcher methodology as grounding for practice development and teacher empowerment in order to move away from technocratic education and technical rationality (Schon, 1984; Stenhouse, 1985). Research on teacher stress was carried out using an outside expert who expected teachers to embrace their findings and change classroom practices (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1993) but since then insider inquiry has grown offering a unique perspective on teaching and learning (Patterson and Shannon, 1993). Action Research and practitioner-based inquiry became the new epistemology for researchers (Elliott and Erbutt, 1985; Carr and Kemmis, 1986) such that reflection in and on action became the novel way to research an organisation. The practitioner can use reflection to recognise, understand and articulate the processes underpinning their expertise and intuitive grasp (tacit knowledge) in relation to their situation (experiential knowledge) and bring the reality of practice to the foreground (Wheeler and Chin, 1984).

With the use of Action Research, the practitioner can explore and improve practices and generate knowledge which can be both emancipatory and empowering. Much practice development research endorses a bottom-up, insider approach, where the practitioner reflects on their own practice challenging the hierarchy of knowledge (Usher and Bryant, 1989). Notions of the reflective practitioner and Action researcher have become

synonymous with critical reflection being part of the process which is more rigorous than the intuitive reflective teachers engage in on a daily basis (Halton, 2004).

Educational Action Research has helped teachers cope with the challenges of change and carry through innovation in a reflective and collaborative manner (Altrichter et al, 1993) with the aim being the pursuit of professional knowledge grounded in practice. With this approach to professional development teachers are viewed, not as technicians, but as intellectuals (Giroux, 1988) with the ability to reflect in and on practice for self improvement and meta-cognitive growth (Baird, 1999). The importance behind such research is the closure of the gap between theory and practice, firstly for each researcher claiming their own perspectives are correct and being blind to the real issues of improvement to practices (Porter,1993;Rolfe 1996a;1996b), and secondly, closing the feedback loop of technical rationality by allowing the research practice to influence theory. *In this way, the reflective practitioner modifies practice and influences theory by hypothesis testing within the Action Research cycle (Figure 1 p128). This figure illustrates how the individual deals with a problem firstly on a reflective level in order to understand the discrepancy between implicit assumptions, explicit expectations and reality leading to an action strategies spiral resulting in the individual experimenting different strategies and using reflexivity to analyse the impact. Eventually an effective action research cycle can be maintained promoting active professional development.*

## **5.9 Summary Of Chapter**

In this chapter an extensive coverage of the different approaches used as part of this educational research has been outlined. Starting with the differentiation between positivist and interpretivist frameworks, the chapter evolved into the justification behind qualitative educational research using the case study approach. *Many types of case study were discussed and the choices that I made for my research were proposed and justified.* Educational case study research was combined with action research considering the need to involve practitioners to take ownership of their situations and make problems explicit so that discrimination with alternative accounts could take place. *Learning new practices often involves changing old habits that have made teaching comfortable and predictable. I believe the best approach is through Collaborative support networks and Action Research spirals involving Co-operative Inquiry. This would enable teachers to both reflect in and on practice as Schon (1983) suggests it is important to share good practice through*

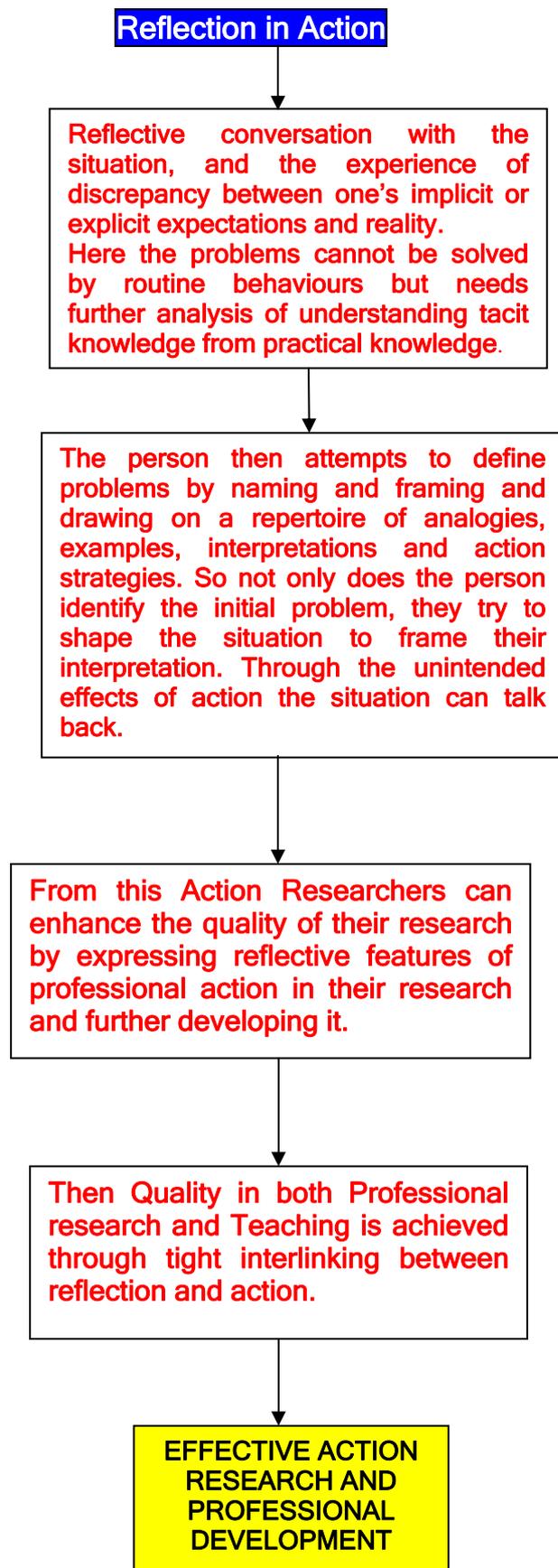
*departmental and whole school support networks thus allowing staff to be reflexive in their teaching practice through action research spirals.*

Action research was discussed in relation to the use of staff collaboration to engage in the effectiveness of the action research spirals in order to improve professional development from an emic or insider perspective. No matter which teacher-researcher methodology we elect to use, in the end the account becomes a ‘laying out’ of personal understanding in line with the political realities which constrain us. The reader was then informed of the need for practitioner research in light of the lack of democratic schooling. Research on democratic schooling was found to be unsuccessful (Rizvi, 1989) as many teachers did not know how to reflect on their practices and did not wish to share their situations with others. Problems facing researchers involved in bottom-up practitioner-research were discussed. Finally, the reader was encouraged to believe in the need for bravery with such methods as teacher-research was still in its infancy and needed to be accepted by top-down bureaucrats before true democracy could be embraced.

*In relation to this and as stated previously, my research involved an educational case study adopting an interpretivist, anti-positivist epistemology. I also attempted to use a radical reflective approach to emancipate teachers to deconstruct their understanding of stress they encounter in their teaching, their perceptions of disruption and the inclusion process and to construct or re-construct their stress coping mechanisms through the use of collaborative action research staff groups.*

In summary, this chapter situates the methods adopted for the research and neatly leads the reader onto the design decisions that emerged throughout the research described in the following chapter.

The next chapter describes the research design journey beginning with an analysis of the initial aims and objectives to the current research goals and leads the reader on to a description of the formulation of the research phases linking into the findings chapter.

**Figure 1. Reflection in Action (Schon,1983)**

## Chapter 6

### Design and Methodology

*'The job of an educator is to teach students to see the vitality in themselves'*

*Joseph Campbell*

## Chapter 6- DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

*'People's behaviour makes sense if you think about it in terms of their goals, needs and motives'*

**Thomas Mann**

*In this chapter I have explicated the research design journey from the initial stages to completion and how the research was carried out in terms of sampling and design decisions, the procedures involved in the phases of the research and my reflections on each phase in blue italics. Also in order to highlight the planning journey to phase 5, I have included a brief narrative explaining the practice development (pd) journey. This highlights the choices and decisions that were made in deciding upon the final pd and ends referring the reader to Figure 3.*

### **Aims and Objectives**

#### **6.1 The Initial Aims- *Redefined***

The initial aims were as follows:

- 1. To identify the key stressors and stress reactions felt by a sample of Secondary School teachers in order to determine what (if any) individual teacher and/or school stress intervention strategies are potentially being used or considered.*
- 2. To further analyse gender and teaching experience in relation to individual stress coping mechanisms.*
- 3. To assess the effectiveness of offering staff a collaborative forum (similar to PEEL) to discuss and enhance their meta-cognition of teaching practices. The aim of the PEEL group will be to reduce/alleviate the stress felt by teachers, help them to share their experiences and look forward to a positive future of teaching.*

*The aims and objectives of the main research were updated many times as I considered the practicalities of carrying out the initial aims. As the research evolved and became less naïve the aims were simplified considering the time restrictions (amongst other factors) to carry out the research within the four year doctoral period. Hence the updated aims were:*

- 1. To assess the relationship between teacher's workload and their health effects in relation to job burnout,*
- 2. To assess teacher stress in relation to the inclusion and exclusion of disruptive students in class.*

3. *To offer teachers the chance of collaboration to increase their meta-cognition and promote self-reflections on daily practices which can be shared.*

In the same way, the initial research objectives were quite different and complicated to the actual research outcomes that evolved. *Initially, I had decided:*

1. *To determine different stress levels (high, medium and low) in a sample of teachers at a secondary school in order to compare each groups key stressors and stress reactions (in relation to demographic variables like gender, age and teaching experience)*
2. *To analyse the types of stress reduction techniques used by teachers in the different groups. The idea being to encourage the high stress teachers from both groups to form a phenomenological collaborative action research group such as that based on the Baird (1986) PEEL project- to improve the quality of teaching and learning and in turn to see its bearing on stress.*

The evolved objectives reduced the number of objectives with the view:

1. *To assess the relationship between workload, stress symptoms and the health effects of teachers at the School;*
2. *To determine stress coping strategies/methods used by teachers and consider their implications on practice (especially with disruptive students)*
3. *To offer staff the chance to form a collaborative action research group to reflect on their teaching and share good practice.*

*Slowly the mists began to fade away, the objectives became clearer. I interviewed the staff about the recently opened learning support unit for disaffected students (known as A3) at the school. I was fascinated as to why the school had set the centre up, who it was for and whether it was working. Initially I believed my practice development would be the evaluation and longitudinal follow through of the A3 centre. In fact my interview schedule was designed with A3 and its usage in mind. My main aim was to find out how teachers felt (in terms of their stress reactions/perceptions) when a student was excluded from their class(es) either as a temporary measure or on a longer term basis and how they felt about the inclusion of disaffected students in their classes. By disaffected students, I mean those that have some form of learning difficulty, emotional and behavioural problems or those that have some disability either temporary (like a broken leg) or more permanent. Basically any student that causes disruption to mainstream teaching and the impact they*

*have on teaching staff was my main interest. 'How do staff cope with disruption in class?', 'Do they have personal methods of coping?' 'Do the teachers use the behaviour policy set at the school?', 'How effective do they think the behavioural strategy already in place at the school is?'. These sorts of questions were then included in the interview schedule which was then further subdivided into demographics (general information about the teacher), work stress reactions and behaviour management.*

*In relation to the analysis of the aims and objectives, I feel it is important to explain how the study was conducted, with whom and the ethical considerations made before the research.*

## **6.2 Setting**

For the purposes of the research a UK Secondary school was analysed as a case study. The school is a Secondary Comprehensive currently holding approximately 1200 students and 120 staff including 30 teaching assistants. Geographically the school enlists pupils from a broad area beginning at year 9 (age 11) to year13 (age 17). The school has both a lower year section (years 9-11; age 11-16) and a sixth form (years 12 and 13; aged 16 plus). In relation to this the teaching staff can be classified into 3 groups:

- Those that teach sixth form only (5 teachers)
- Those that teach all years (approximately 56 teachers taught both lower and upper school)
- Those that just teach the lower school (17 teachers taught lower school only (years 9-11) and tended to have a higher number of disruptive pupils to contend with including those that who display emotional and behavioural disorders (EBD).

*These figures are due for review on a yearly basis since the school currently boasts a high number of teaching assistants and an increase in the number of newly qualified staff.*

## **6.3 Sampling: Inclusive Population**

The research participants included teaching staff (both experienced and NQT) and pupils aged 14-15 from year 10 (recognised by most staff to be the most disruptive year despite their being behavioural issues with all the lower years 9 -11 aged 11-16). Recruitment of teaching staff for the first phase of the research occurred via opportunity sampling in a formal staff address asking for their informed consent to e-mailed standardised instructions that had been sent to all staff explaining who the researcher was, the purpose

of the study, the methodology of the first phase (semi-structured interviews) and how the proposed analysis of the results would occur. *I decided at the very beginning to exclude teachers that only taught sixth form from the sampling, as it was assumed that little disruption would occur in sixth form classes and hence these teachers would not face behaviour management issues and the related stress.*

Approximately 20 interviews were carried out with a mixture of staff in terms of age, gender and experience. The year 10 pupils were recruited with the permission of both the head teacher, senior management and the class teacher. Parental permission was not needed in this case as the Head teacher agreed to be proxy on the parents' behalf. Student consent was then gained verbally with a verbal address from both the class teacher and the researcher and the option to withdraw from the study at any time was also given (although no students dropped out from the interview or objected to the observations).

### **6.3.1 Sampling: Exclusive Population**

The study did not include the following populations as the research would have become too complicated to complete (in the given time of 4 years) and the criteria specified by the aims and objectives would not have been met.

- Lower school pupils (aged 11-16) from the school apart from one year 10 group with the discretion and acceptance of the class teachers;
- Pupils age 16 plus from the school;
- Staff at the school that taught sixth form only;
- Administrative staff and teaching assistants from the school;
- Any other local area schools or UK Schools including primary education (ages 5-11), junior school (7-11), middle schools (8-12), sixth form schools or colleges or further education establishments.

*The consideration of who not to include in the sampling made the research clearer and I could then concentrate on devising the phases of the research and the interview schedule. However, despite convincing myself that case study research as an inside researcher would be more beneficial to changing practice than comparing schools, worries of time constraints and little researching suffocated me. Our supervisors had often explained to us the idea of existential guilt and the anxiety of 'path choosing' and had questioned our*

*emotional dimensions. This was effectively achieved during group supervision with the help of both the doctoral programme leaders who asked us to air our anxieties aloud and then break them down into plausible sections. This allowed us to self-reflect on our understandings and the practicalities of doing the research. They both homed in on the 'so-what' question which made us concentrate on knowledge needed relevant for practice.*

*For me personally, the issues of direct concern that arose were about the quality control of teaching, ethical struggling and the fear of exposing practice. At that time I was anxious about starting my research with staff at the school having only been there 2-3 years. I was apprehensive about possible comments that staff might make with regards to my role as teacher-researcher, especially from long servicing staff, and exactly how I would attain their informed consent. During one of our monthly group supervisions, the doctoral cohort discussed the dilemmas of making space for the research and the need and pressure to clarify our methods. We referred to our research journeys as being a dark creative process. I personally found this so, true as it felt as though lots of thoughts were festering in the back of my mind but few were culminating into any action. I let these thoughts settle while I remained busy with A'level coursework marking at the school. The build up to the Summer term was hectic with exams looming overhead, coursework pressure and other issues being of higher importance than the research. Researchers like Gadamer (1986/1994) and Heidegger (1959) refer to this break in research as 'letting-be-ness', 'lying fallow' or simply having time for 'blue skies thinking'. In other words their argument is that allowing oneself to nurture the space for research does not mean that nothing is happening but that the on-going learning and opportunities of our professional and personal lives 'settle'. According to these researchers one must learn to appreciate the settling period and allow the time for felt-sense in order to be energised and awakened. *In my view that is 'easier said than done' especially when the researcher is a novice to the research journey and faces both time and financial commitments.**

## **6.4 Ethical Considerations**

The concern for the protection of human participants in research can be traced back to the Nuremberg trials and the development of the Nuremberg Code (1947), where the atrocities of World War two were recognised with an intention of preventing them from reoccurring. *Ethics are standards that help researchers distinguish between good and bad practice and make decisions with regard to the design, the sampling and the*

*dissemination of the findings*. Individual countries have developed their own ethics and codes of conduct for medical research and individual universities engaged in research, consultancy and related activities with human and animal subjects have also drawn up their own ethical guidelines and regulations. Ethical committees such as the British Psychological Society (BPS, 1992) and the American Psychological Association (APA, 1992) set the ethical guidelines for researchers to adhere to as closely as possible.

The Bournemouth University codes of ethical practice, stipulates that research must be carried out as ethically and professionally as possible. The University Ethical Advisory group is guided by commonly agreed standards laid down in the Declaration of Helsinki (2000) and by the belief that all educational research should be carried out within an ethic of respect for persons and living beings in general, knowledge, justice and quality. Furthermore, research committees require researchers to gain informed consent, minimise harm to participants and deception and offer participants the right to withdraw before and during the research and treat all participants with dignity and respect (Couchman and Dawson, 1990). Confidentiality and Anonymity are also important ethical guidelines that must be adhered to as far as possible in line with the Data Protection Act (1998). Some ethical guidelines are highly general and can apply to all situations (eg: being honest or helping others), while other standards apply within professional contexts and are concerned with medical or academic ethics. The principles of beneficence (benefiting patients) and non-maleficence (not purposefully harming patients), already set forth in the Hippocratic Oath, have been '*the foundation of medical ethics for the last twenty-five centuries*' (Rancich et al, 1999 p345). Likewise, psychological researchers need to understand the foundational ethical principles on which their profession stands, namely the principles of beneficence and non-maleficence and how to apply them in concrete situations (Strohm Kitchener, 1999). The three principles of '*beneficence and non-maleficence and autonomy are at the heart of many ethical decisions as well as many ethical disputes, as there is the tension between the principles of beneficence and non-maleficence on one side and autonomy on the other*' (Engelhardt 1986 p27). Hence, '*the good derived from the research must be weighed against the potential harm and the benefits must outweigh the risks for the individual and the wider society*' (Holloway and Wheeler, 1995 p224).

When ethical guidelines are not adhered to, ethical dilemmas ensue and become difficult to resolve. However, '*new ethical questions arise more quickly than ethical codes or texts*

*can track them and closer scrutiny reveals inherent contradictions and gaps in the codes of ethics that give the professional minimal guidance when faced with a decision of ethical consequence'* (Strohm Kitchener, 1999 p4). All researchers are using a new decision making model of ethical codes (APA, 1992) and legal concerns with the foundational principles of autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, fidelity and justice (Beauchamp and Childress, 1994). In this way, psychologists who are faced with difficult ethical choices can make ethically defensible decisions.

Furthermore, *'carrying out research, in the place that you work holds additional special considerations'* (Butler, 2003 p21). Qualitative research gathers more opinion based or sensitive personal information and thus carries with a heavier weighting on data protection than quantitative research. This can create problems of *'compromise of using the same participants in future research and hence most qualitative researchers are asked to consider extra ethical issues such as recruitment of participants, issues of data validity, issues of role conflict and confusion'* (Butler, 2003 p21). It is vital that clear lines of demarcation are made apparent to the participants before and during the research, such that the participants are not coerced into participation, they are aware of the research aims, objectives and procedures, as far as possible and that any data that is revealed from the research is validated by the individuals concerned to increase the internal validity of the research. Again, this point is important when research involves using work colleagues as participants, as future relationships or practitioner-researcher roles can become blurred and affected and the work colleagues are vulnerable to data leakage and compromise at work. Caution must be used when transcribing or qualitatively analysing results, not to misinterpret findings, over-generalise findings or declare findings that have not been verified by the participant. Confidentiality and anonymity are necessary to prevent identification or *'naming and shaming'* to occur. *'All researchers, particularly research-practitioners must be aware that whatever is learnt in the research process cannot be unlearned or be regarded as 'unknown' particularly when open ended questioning allows participants the chance to air opinions on work related issues'* (Butler, 2003 p22).

The next dilemma for the researcher is the dissemination of the findings and the manner and timings in which it is carried out. Should the findings be publicised to all work colleagues or only the participants involved in the research?. *The answer, I feel depends upon the research question and hence the reporting of data should be incorporated into the planning phase of the research to avoid role conflict and researcher, participant or*

*organisational embarrassment. However, as I explained in section 5.1 (Gaining Ethical Approval) approval to conduct the research was ascertained from the Head alone who then approached the board of governors for final approval. At the time the research was mainly about 'teacher stress in relation to the inclusion and exclusion of disruptive pupils' and despite the Heads approval based on this research title, my research changed dramatically over the course of time. By the time the teacher interviews had been conducted the emphasis of the research changed as the majority of themes that emerged described the school in a negative light. I felt that as interviewed teachers had been the ones to open up and describe their true feelings in relation to the semi-structured interview questions, that they needed time to collaborate and discuss how these themes could be dealt with. Thus, the last phase of the research emerged as focus groups of teachers involved in collaborative inquiry and action research spirals discussing their reflections of their teaching practice but in many cases without the presence of the SMT or the Head. Obviously then, once the fourth phase (dissemination of the research findings) had been carried out, the Head stopped all research from proceeding. Hence, I regard the issue of ethical conduct as a 'murky area' as to begin with I as a researcher was naively unaware that my research would change and believed the research would not cause problems for any of the staff including the SMT and the Head.*

*Finally, the principles of non-maleficence and beneficence were adhered to as far as possible (by gaining teacher's informed consent and re-assuring them of anonymity throughout) along with respecting participants' autonomy throughout the research. Thus, in order to avoid breaching the ethical guidelines for this research, the following procedures were adopted:*

#### **6.4.1 Gaining Informed Consent**

Informed consent is part of the principle of respect for autonomy. Informed consent is when human participants should be allowed to agree or refuse to participate in the light of comprehensive information concerning the nature and purpose of the research (Homan, 1991). Based on this, the more potentially serious the risks, the more participants need to know. *The problem with informed consent is that it does not really guarantee that the participants understand what they will be doing and without this knowledge, how can researchers truly gain informed consent?* Yates (2004) states that not only do researchers conducting qualitative research have to question access to participants including

gatekeepers (those who control power) but they must also consider how much does one have to tell the participant about the research project. How important are the aims and intended outcomes of the research to participants when qualitative research tends to be emergent in design and one phase of interviewing leads to another unexpected phase?. *I personally found this to be true in my research as I was not sure how the research would evolve past the interviewing phase.* According to Sieber (1992), *'the researcher, involved with qualitative research, is unable to give the participants the exact path of the research, and informed consent is an on-going process throughout the research'* (p224). Furthermore, informed consent can only be gained stage by stage with qualitative research and the researcher must not assume that consent gained in one stage automatically leads on to the next stage (Robinson and Thorne, 1988). *All teachers at the School were notified of the purpose of the research, why and with whom it was being done and the expectations of possible outcomes. Initially, an e-mail was circulated to all staff asking them to agree to take part and sign the agreement (Appendix 1). Informed consent and awareness of the research was raised through a formal address session during a staff meeting to allow staff the chance to participate.* Banister et al (1994) state that informed consent is only ascertained when certain questions regarding the research have been disclosed. Also, Butler (2003) states that *'with qualitative research, recruitment problems can be overcome if a third party approach is used, to recruit participants'* (p21). *This was possible through the use of e-mail instead of face to face contact of staff (even though that was attempted in the full staff meeting). Other recruitment issues were simplified by assuring participants that their involvement in the research would benefit teachers at the school in the long run but their participation was not obligatory and participants had the right to withdraw at any time. This point was reinforced during the verbal delivery of the standardized instructions at the interviewing phase.*

#### **6.4.2 Right to Withdraw**

*Offering participants the right to withdraw during research is important as they feel assured that if they no longer wish to take part they can leave and withhold their data.* In much Social Psychological research the right to withdraw was not truly an option but this could be due to situational and dispositional factors. Sim (1991) states that with qualitative research a dilemma occurs for the researcher with their desire to advance the research and the recognition of the rights of the human being leading to an ethical decision being made about whether to keep data once the participant has left. However,

*'difficulties arise as the status of the research-practitioner could prevent colleagues from giving honest, open and nonbiased answers'* (Sim, 1991 p225). *In my research, the participants were offered the right to withdraw from the research at any stage of the research process until it was written-up and were continuously reassured that the research was for educational purposes only, with the view to help stressed teachers at the school. No undue influence was inflicted on staff especially in relation to colleague/researcher positioning. All participants were treated equally no matter which teaching position they held at the school. Also I made sure that my position (as Head of Psychology) did not influence participants in any way.* However, influence in research means a process of changing something while studying it and for qualitative researchers it is imperative that they uncover the thought processes that lead to further stages (Robinson and Thorne, 1988). *All participants were told that the interviews would be transcribed and copies would be available so that they could verify their answers, before the findings were publicised.* Qualitative research requires researchers to become *'immersed in their data and this causes problems of subjectivity during data analysis and dissemination, as the researcher generates familiarity with the setting, process and world of the participant'* (Robinson and Thorne, 1988 p226). Thus balancing strategies are created for both the subjective and objective elements involved with immersion.

### **6.4.3 Deception, Standardised Instructions and Debrief**

Deception is an important ethic to be avoided as far as possible. According to Baumrind (1985, p190) *'deception is morally wrong and breaks three accepted ethical rules: the right of informed consent, the obligation of researchers to protect the welfare of the participant and the responsibility of the researchers to be trustworthy'*. *Unfortunately, in most psychological research, deception is accepted so long as the research procedures do not unnecessarily harm participants and full debrief is offered at the end of the research.* Christiansen (1988) reviewed studies using deception and reported that participants do not seem to object to deception so long as it is not extreme. *With my research no deception was involved at any of the phases as standardised instructions were handed out to each participant explaining the purpose (aims/objectives) of the research, what was involved at each stage and what was to happen to material collected. After the completion of each stage, all participants were debriefed individually and if needed given extra support for stress related issues such as pamphlets on stress reduction. When the interviews were transcribed, all the participants were invited to review their transcript in order to update*

*or change commentary or to withdraw their data from the research. Luckily no participants withheld their data and all twenty interviewees agreed with their interview transcripts.*

#### **6.4.4 Anonymity and Confidentiality**

Confidentiality, together with the ethical principles of beneficence and non-maleficence, is the most important rule in Medical Oaths at the present time (Gelphi et al, 2000). Confidentiality or anonymity is a legal right under the Data Protection Act and involves keeping participant details anonymous during and after the research. In relation to this, *'the researcher must then decide what information can be made public and when in doubt the decision lies with the participants'* (Holloway, 1992 p227). Confidentiality also applies to where the research is being carried out in terms of particular institutions, geographical location and the identity of the population being researched. According to Butler (2003) by researching ones own work environment, the data collected could be biased by personally knowing participants. *With my research, this was resolved by the semi-structured interview format, gaining participants permission for recording the interview and allowing them access to transcribed material. Also, I gave all the participants the reassurance that the data collected would be anonymous and confidential. Permission was gained from all participants to use the transcribed data to create themes using Comparative Thematic Analysis and all the procedures involved with data analysis were described to the participants beforehand.* However, qualitative research usually means working with small samples and collecting 'thick description' data which in turn can mean that anonymity may not always be possible (Ford and Reutter, 1990).

#### **6.4.5 Privacy Of Information**

Both confidentiality and anonymity are related to the ethic of the right to privacy, such that research observations can be conducted in public places where the behaviour would normally be expected. However, research that breaches individual's right to privacy is unacceptable and with sensitive data all participants have the right to withhold or destroy the information collected. Any information divulged by participants during interviewing remained private and participant's permission was gained before adding the data for analysis. All interviews were arranged in such a manner that students would not overhear or disturb the interviews, interview rooms were locked from the inside and if any interruptions occurred, the interview was terminated and resumed later at another

convenient time. All participants were reassured that any leakages of participant information from the interviews would be minimised as far as possible and all data would be kept confidential and anonymous throughout. The transcribing of the interviews was carried out at home and not on the school premises for added confidentiality. Feedback from the research was provided towards the end of the project (phase 4) in the form of a power point disseminating the main findings and no identification of participants was made or suggested during the presentation. The building and maintenance of a face or 'face-work' (Goffman, 1959; Yates, 2004 p161) are the hardest part of qualitative research and the outcomes of the research are dependent upon the successful implementation of the ethics we have discussed previously.

#### **6.4.6 Avoiding Harm To Participants**

Throughout the study, the participants were reassured of all the ethical points above so that there would be no form of come back on staff or any derogatory comments made about the school and its staff. *All the way through, I promised staff confidentiality and anonymity throughout in order to avoid any harm to participants. Hence, I reassure the reader that this research was carried out as ethically and professionally as possible considering the dual role of researcher-practitioner that I played.* In relation to the dual role, Holloway (1995 p227) states that 'researchers must be clear about their identity as a researcher and firstly as a practitioner, understand the power relationship between the researcher and the participants involved in the research, particularly if the participants are a higher level than the researcher'. Furthermore, researchers must maintain empathy and objectivity; avoid making value judgements yet have empathy for the participants. Fortunately, a 'quid pro quo situation arises in qualitative interviewing with participants pleased for the listening ear and researchers pleased to gain knowledge from participants' (Lofland and Lofland, 1984 p229).

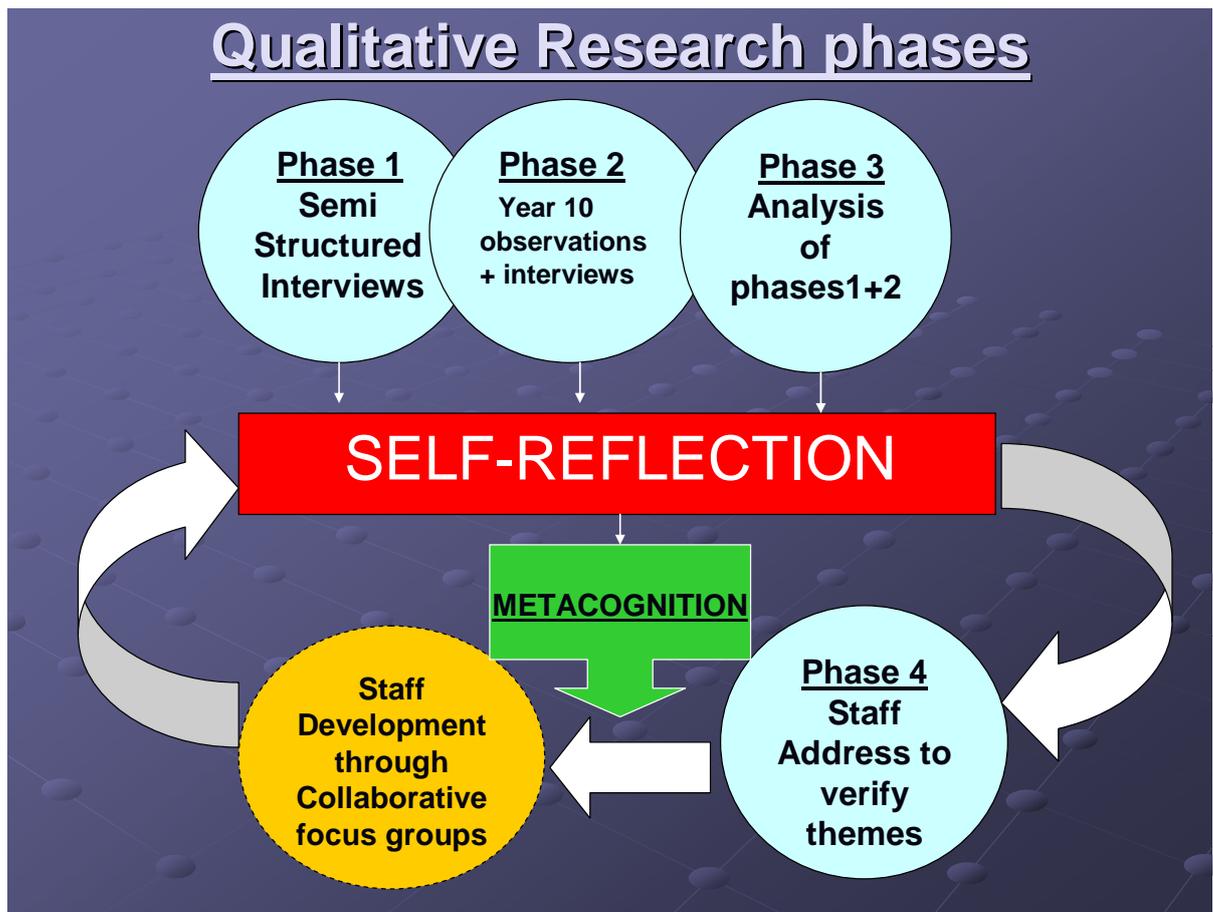
#### **6.5 Design Of The Research**

*Once concerns over ethical considerations and sampling were resolved, I attempted to structure the design of the research based on phases which were emergent in nature, such that the outcome of each stage led to the development of the next. In relation to this, the research was relatively systematic and I happily allowed aspects of the design to change (eg: use of multi-methods) as the research progressed.* The phases are illustrated below (Figure 2) with the use of overlapping circles to highlight how the research was emergent

in design and how each phase incorporated self-reflexivity which increased my own meta-cognitive growth during the research. The final phase is illustrated as a yellow circle encompassed by a dotted line to show the intention for the practice development. Each phase is documented in the following sections beginning with the pre-research aspects such as recruitment of participants and the use of interviewing as a method.

### **6.5.1 The Initial Phase Of The Research - *Recruitment Of Participants***

Standardised instructions about the research aim, purpose, methodology and possible analysis were prepared and e-mailed to all staff at the school (refer to appendix 1). *Staff, were asked to provide their informed consent by either returning the consent forms in my staff pigeon hole or by replying to the e-mail.* Soon after this had been done, a formal address was given to staff in a full staff meeting, verbally re-explaining the purpose of the research and encouraging staff to agree to be interviewed. Confidentiality and Anonymity were promised at all stages of the research as well as the right to withdraw. *Before I conducted my research I was very concerned about using the school as a case study fearing that no staff would co-operate and be interested in participating. Thus in order to gain teacher perceptions I asked a few close colleagues what they felt about the school and how stressed they felt in their jobs. I asked them what coping strategies they used to reduce their stress and if the school had a stress reduction policy/procedure in place. The responses were interesting and apparently there was no stress reduction system in place for staff and my colleagues felt that there was a serious need to break existing barriers between staff in different departments in order for staff to open up and discuss problems that they probably all felt but rarely expressed to each other. Thus from this the basis for my research began especially in the light of the recent attrition of staff at the school. Having understood some of the concerns as expressed by my colleagues, I wondered how they would respond to me doing the research. I had only been at the school for a short while, teaching only sixth form and was concerned that more experienced longer serving teachers would almost ridicule my attempts at trying to understand their stressors in the hope of offering a possible solution. Especially in the light of my research examining, the issue of inclusion and exclusion. I feared staff would ask about my own position and understanding about these problems with regards to difficult students and teaching the lower years.*

*Figure 2- The Phases of the Doctoral Research*

*After all if a researcher approached me I would be intrigued to know how their background influenced their thinking about the research. I was concerned about my objectives. Since at the time they were not clear and I feared stating them to staff without being 90-100% certain that was what I intended to research. One can never be sure how possible participants will react to proposals made to them especially in the light of how hectic teaching and administration already is. Would anyone spare the time to be interviewed?. This apprehension sealed the next problem. I'm sure by now I'm sounding like some mad frenzied worrier but believe you me these concerns floated around my head for some months before I even attempted considering my objectives, designing the interview schedule and lastly asking for teacher consent. The main concern and question not only from me but by the staff themselves was 'What benefit will the research be for the teachers at the school?'. I felt as though there was pressure to change something that either already existed or that was to be created in practice at the school. Also in relation to this, while gaining momentum on my literature reviewing, I found plenty of books on classroom methods and good practice. Authors had already written the .... 'How to teach*

*for dummies books' and thus there was no need for me to write yet another guidebook or handbook. I even found books helping newly qualified teachers with ways to control disruptive pupils and stay in control. Thus it came to mind that with all the wealth of written help available, 'Who was actually reading it'? 'Was it helping them'? and 'Were they sharing their good practice'?*

*Quite a few teachers responded having signed the form and before I knew it even the teaching assistants were keen to become involved. With the advice from my second supervisor I accepted the interests of the teaching assistants and thus formulated questions to ask them about their role in the classroom, how they coped, whether they found their job stressful and their perception of their benefit to both students and teachers. This then allowed responses from them which added to the background knowledge of how different staff, interact in the school. All of a sudden there seemed to be a mass of interest towards my research and my creative thoughts veered towards the creation of the interview transcript.*

*This then led to a massive literature trawl on stress questionnaires and interview styles and drew me towards Dunham (1984) stress reactions checklists and questions from the NATFHE Questionnaire that I could incorporate in my interview transcript. I also considered using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) with its three subscales covering emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and personal accomplishment as a stress tool to find out the actual degree of stress at the school and use this as the basis for interviewing. As a stress inventory, I was aware of its use in research in different professions. Maslach and Jackson (1982) had found that emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation were experienced more by nurses, and suicide rates were higher for those in the medical profession in comparison to clergy, teachers and social workers. Reasons for such findings related to the degree of sociability within the profession, links with clients, personality and the ability to cope with excessively long hours and work load. *I was aware that the MBI as a research tool had high reliability and validity.* Along with the MBI other scales to measure teacher stress were considered such as the Emotional Behavioural Disorder Teacher Stressor Questionnaire (EBD-TSQ) (Centre and Callaway, 1996). Research around this found that annual teacher attrition rate for EBD teachers was around 13% and added to the growing concern of the shortage of EBD teachers (Seery,1990). Also, research by Billingsley and Cross (1987) found that EBD teachers suffered more stress and role problems than other special education teachers. *In relation**

*to my literature reviewing on this and the fact that I was considering teachers who had such students in their classes, the EBD-TSQ was seriously considered for sometime. This initial exploratory phase allowed me to home in on key themes which seem to be of importance for ascertaining data about stress in professions. As a result of this thorough initial analysis and the many ways in which stress can be assessed (mostly quantitatively) I only used Dunham's stress reactions checklist as a model to base the questions in the interview transcript as I realised that my research was widening in all directions and avenues. My supervisors reminded me that it was simpler to keep the research qualitative and avoid quantitative approaches to stress levels as such methods suffered from labelling problems and even the self fulfilling prophecy... 'the results found I am stressed so I must be'.*

### **6.5.1.1 The Use of Interviews**

The Interview as a data gathering method involves the interaction between the researcher and participant but can vary in its style from closed questioning with little rich subjective data to open-ended, discursive and highly interactional. Such that the interview data that emerges is retrospective, prospective and collaborative and is the product of the local interaction of the speakers (Rapley, 2001). Researchers like Seale (1998) argue that interview analysis suffers from the divide of either being seen as a resource, reflecting the interviewees reality from the outside or as a topic, reflecting reality based on joint construction of the data. *However a problem occurs when researchers try to objectify the process of interviewing and remain neutral when infact the interview process is a subjective process on both the interviewer and interviewee's parts. The interviewee is encouraged to be open and honest and provide the richness of data interviewers require while the interviewer records the commentary and probes further based on their personal understanding of the comments being made. The aim being to, engage the interviewee in a rich dialogue.* This results in a 'hierarchical, asymmetrical relationship between the interviewer/interviewee and does not encourage or promote a co-operative engaged relationship revolving around deep disclosure' (Fontana and Frey, 1994 cited in Seale et al, 2004 p19). After all by taking a facilitative yet neutral stance the interview process becomes misleading. Hence by taking Gubrium and Holstein's (2002 cited in Seale et al, 2004 p25) perspective that '*the interview content arises from interactional co-construction, the polarity between being facilitative/neutral and facilitative/self-disclosing disappears*'. Therefore, '*modern interviewing now involves both, facilitating without overtly directing the interviewees talk*' (Berg,1998 cited in Seale et al, 2004 p20) and

*'remaining neutral both verbally and non-verbally in terms of facial expressions (Minichiello et al,1995 cited in Seale et al, 2004 p20) yet showing interest'. The interviewer should be engaged in 'neutralistic conduct without being neutral in the conventional sense' (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991 cited in Seale et al, 2004 p19).*

The notion of interviewer collaboration and self-disclosure has two strands. One where, *'the self-disclosure of the interviewer is useful for comparing and confirming shared experiences and realities'* (Collins, 1998 cited in Seale et al, 2004 p22). The other view of self-disclosure is to advocate co-operative work explicating what each person in the interview understood. However, despite such variations in the purpose of the interviewing, we must remember that the conversations and interactions elicited within the interview are never devoid of historical and socio-cultural influences. We cannot ignore the broader institutional and organisational contexts which surround us. *Thus in relation to this, I used the interview technique to gather as much qualitative thick description about teachers experiences, perceptions and understanding about stress in relation to their jobs and their perceptions of the school, the management and the students. As the interviewer I tried to be as collaborative as possible offering self-disclosure when necessary, in particular informing interviewees about matching content with other interviews.*

### **6.5.2 Phase 1 - The Focused Interviews**

The interview schedule was focused and divided into sections (Appendix 2). The schedule began with a brief section of demographic questions to gather information about gender, age, teacher position and length of service. *I felt that this it was important to consider these variables and find out whether and in what way the age, gender or number of years teaching was affected by school stressors and the coping mechanisms employed to deal with them.* The questions then moved on to a set of closed questions on stress reactions and workload involving Likert Style answers (often, sometimes, never) which would give the researcher some indication of which stress reactions occurred perhaps as a result of job-related stress. Finally the interview schedule moved on to a mixture of closed and open questions on Behaviour Management. *This section had the most questions because I believed this to be the most important aspect of the research as it concentrated on disruptive students and behaviour management as one of the key factors affecting teacher stress levels.* The interview questions were designed to be open-ended allowing

participants the chance to discuss their answers and allow for probe questioning to encourage fluidity in topics. This would enable the researcher to understand the interviewee's conceptions and definitions of stress, disruption and work overload leading to a more discursive approach (Potter and Mulkay, 1985; Potter and Wetherall, 1995). A semi-structured approach was incorporated into the interview designing, such that probe questions were only asked if clarification on a particular answer was needed. An emergent design was used for the interviews allowing the respondent the freedom to add other points relevant to the questions posed. This enables richer data and follows a semi narrative approach. Each respondent was asked consent for recording the interviews. Altogether 20 teachers from a total of 86 came forward and agreed to be interviewed and signed the consent form (Appendix 1). As all the teachers had been sent an e-mail asking for their informed consent, only the teachers that e-mailed back their interest to participate or who handed in the signed consent form took part in the interviewing phase. Most did not have a problem with this but with some participants, the answers were hand written, e-mailed back or written by the researcher during the interview. Finally, participants were debriefed explaining the ethical issues of anonymity, confidentiality, right to withdraw and rights to the data. After each interview, the tapes and scripts were transcribed and read back to participants for answer clarification.

### **6.5.2.1 The Reasoning Behind The Teacher Interview Questions**

As mentioned previously the interview schedule was divided into sections: the first pertained to simple demographic descriptions of how long the teacher had been teaching at the school, what their subject area was and if they had any other responsibilities and which years they taught. *This question was particularly relevant since I had decided that I would not be interviewing staff that taught only sixth form since they would not have experienced the behaviour of the lower years. The understanding being, that there tends to be a higher proportion of disruptive pupils in the lower years, which poses much more stress to teachers than those teaching sixth form only.* Research around this hypothesis has concentrated on looking at the pressures teachers' face when teaching students with Emotional and Behavioural disorders (Center and Callaway,1999) as well as general stress reaction research (Dunham,1984).

The next section was about stress symptoms and the inspiration for this came from Dunham's (1980) stress symptoms checklists, which basically asked respondents to

answer never, sometimes or often to common stress symptoms. However, in order to avoid the problem of ethics in asking personal questions, the question was posed as:-

**Q6. Some authors have identified certain stress symptoms. Would you be prepared to comment on these?**

*During the interviewing I felt that most staff were more than happy to speak about their experiences with the knowledge of no come back on themselves but a few of the respondents were slightly nervous about divulging personal information and kept asking me the purpose of the research and how I would use the information. I replied by reiterating my role and objectives and assured them that the Headmaster and Senior Management team had given me permission to ask the questions for my research.*

The next question addressed how stress symptoms affected their work and whether they had taken leave because of them over the past 12 months. *These questions were asked because most stress questionnaires that I had studied asked professional respondents to try to relate their stress symptoms to absenteeism.* Stress research has found links between stress related problems associated with work, absenteeism and job attrition rates (Wilson, 2002).

The questions (13-15) then related to workload and asked questions which asked respondents to judge how their workload had increased/changed over the last 5 and 2 years. This made respondents reflect about their job role changes if any and how they were achieved (ie: through personal choice or managerial pressure). Many respondents answered how they had increased their workload and explained why they felt more stressed because of it. Question 16 was different from the previous questions as it asked participants:

**Q16. How would you define or describe stress in regards to teaching? How strong a link do you think there is between stress and teaching?.**

This encouraged descriptions and perceptions of each respondent's view on stress and how it relates to teaching. Some interesting descriptions were ascertained and the most interesting point is that no two respondents had the same definitions of stress in teaching and in many of the interviews led on to further probe questioning (an example of an interview can be found in appendix 3). This shows how unique every teacher is and how engrossed each person is in their own emotions and perceptions and links in with the

ethnographic philosophy of culture investigations, by probing for personal descriptions the researcher achieves an Emic perspective allowing insider views and the exploration of the respondents' world (LeCompte et al, 1997). This is separate from the Etic perspective which is the researcher's point of view. Dangers occur when researchers regard the culture they are studying as a homogenous group since critical ethnography claims power within culture and asks' how individuals fit in with the culture and perceive it. *In my research it would be foolish to assume an ethnocentric view of teachers and their experiences and would not result in useful data.* Effective research should entice thick descriptions in order to understand the characteristics of a particular social setting with all its cultural diversity and multiplicity of voices (Holloway and Todres, 2003). Thus in order to achieve this, the interview style was semi-structured following an emergent design to encourage progressive focusing. *Also I found that this was effective in ascertaining respondents' tacit experiential knowledge. I found the interviewing very interesting and rewarding as it led to new avenues to explore for my research.*

The final section of the interview schedule was concerned with the behaviour management problem and the issue of inclusion and exclusion. The questions were devised to gain respondents opinions and views on classroom disruption and behaviour management:-

**Q19. What in your view is disruptive behaviour?**

*Such questioning allowed me to intervene with probe questions (that came to mind as participant's responded to the interview schedule) to clarify interviewees' answers as the answers varied according to each teacher's experiences of disruption.* One respondent stated that he thought the term disruptive behaviour had been over-hyped and misused and that the 'culture of the classroom lends itself automatically to the creation of disruption' (interview 12).

Following the completion of the interview schedule design the apprehension to recruit participants began. *I decided to e-mail standardised instructions to staff* (refer to Appendix 1). *Then on the 11<sup>th</sup> July 2005 I gave a public address to the teachers at the school in the main staff meeting in which I thanked participants who had already been interviewed and encouraged other teachers to participate in the study.* Altogether 20 teachers were interviewed from different subject backgrounds and experiences including NQTs, Heads of Department and Heads of Faculty (2 from Art, 2 from Design and

Technology, 2 from Food Technology, 1 from P.E, 1 from ICT, 2 from Languages, 3 from Geography including the HOD, 1 Head of Sixth Form, 1 from Maths, 1 teacher in charge of A3, 3 from Science, 1 Head of Year 9). No members of the Senior Management Team (SMT) agreed to be interviewed and the Headmaster never came forward either. *Perhaps the SMT including the Head presumed the research was only relevant for lower teaching tiers and not for themselves. Despite this I did ask one Deputy Head to consider being interviewed but she refused on the grounds of being unsure what she would say.*

Overall, the interviewing process went smoothly. The majority of respondents were open about their experiences and were quite happy to air their views about Senior Management and the organisation of the school (see example of interview Appendix 3). *People smiled at me and wondered how I was going to help them. One member of staff smirking at me stated that I could not change the status of things at school but at the same time refused to be interviewed. Was he worried what I would uncover?. As the interviewing progressed, more and more staff became aware of my research and would stop me in corridors or when I was on duty to ask how the research was going and what my findings were to date. In an attempt to refrain from divulging confidential and anonymous information, I found myself in a sticky position as teacher-researcher. It seemed difficult merging the two roles together but believe it or not I ended up becoming so opportunist in my thinking that almost every other minute was research speak. I was no longer Humaira ‘the Psychology teacher’ but some walking research zombie looking for participants. I felt possessed and totally not myself. I was constantly e-mailing, had no time for colleagues in the office and simply no time to breath between lessons, duty, evening lecturing and children. I was fragmented. Or was it perhaps a consequence of postgraduate study? At that stage I began to relate to the explanations of felt-sense. How true that all was. We do need time out to reflect and understand our inner being.*

### **6.5.3 Phase 2- Year 10 Class Observations**

As the interviews were underway, one Head of Faculty who was interviewed opened up about her concerns for a NQT (newly qualified teacher) in her department who was having problems with a disruptive year 10 Art class. *As relayed above in the blue narrative, I felt fragmented as staff approached me with additional requests. To illustrate this point further the third phase of the research emerged because the interviewing led to*

*further interest. The Head of Art suggested that I interviewed the Art NQT and then observed the disruptive class to see whether I could offer any advice.*

Apparently, this new teacher had been suffering a disruptive year 10 Art class with behavioural problems from the beginning of the year. *I was asked to consider observing her trouble class and give some pointers from an insider-teacher perspective.* In an address to all staff the headmaster stated how the levels of disruption had changed over the past 16 years. He stated there were increases in use of bad language as becoming normative amongst students, an increase in fighting more so between females than the stereotypical male perception and increases in the number of fixed term exclusions from school. In order to reduce this, the school has introduced CCTV in key areas in the school and has better provision for dealing with disruptive behaviours such as the A3 unit and access to external bodies like behavioural referral units and Educational Psychologists to help needy students. The SMT were concerned that a problem of labelling existed between teachers and students which they stated must be avoided at all costs. The Deputy Head argued it was 'easy to give a dog a bad name' but then added that this negative evaluation is then picked up by the student and just encourages further disruption. *In fact I found this out first hand from the students themselves.*

*At the time of the request, I was apprehensive about accepting the task since supervisors had explained that my research was already too large and needed to be more focused. Initially, I had not considered a multi-method approach but soon decided that triangulation may be the best way forward. By observing the year 10 class and interviewing the teacher, perhaps I could validate findings. From reading literature on the use of multi-methods, and how researchers can use other methods to support the research or highlight discrepancies, I accepted the possibilities of carrying out non-participant observations with the understanding that this would lead to richer descriptions and evaluations of behaviour and teacher perceptions.* Three periods of observations were undertaken, two with the troubled teacher and another of the same class with a more experienced Art teacher. *The observations were carried out in a non-participative fashion so much so that I asked the teacher to keep my introduction in the class low-key and not to attract attention to my presence. I sat inconspicuously (so as not to draw attention to myself) and made notes of what was observed which were then shared with the teachers after the lesson. Thus, I observed the year 10 class, taking note*

*of the students seating positions and making rough notes on conversations and incidences between the students and the teacher-student relations.*

The first observation was as the teacher had reported. The Students were loud, brash, out of their seats and on many occasions off task. The teacher had to restart the lessons. Afterwards, the teacher was shown the observation notes to validate what had been seen and to gain her perspective of the situation. Obviously, the teacher was unhappy stating that the disruption had started in September and third term in, the year 10 class had still not settled, despite settling for other Art teachers. It was decided that 2 further observations would take place, in which the teacher assured me of an improvement in attitude between the teacher and the students.

*Little did I know that this particular class had been observed numerous times by different observers. In fact the young Art teacher was explaining how one of the observations in the class had been from the NQT trainer and he was observing the teacher more than the students. However, the students were not made aware of this and had pelted him with wet clay when she was not looking. I felt relief that nothing had happened to me and found that class relatively 'normal'. It was very interesting doing the observation as I was told the teachers version of what had happened in the past with that group and was warned about certain characters. Having carried out the observation I decided to observe the same year 10 Art class with another more experienced Art teacher just to compare students' reactions to a different teacher and find out the more experienced teacher's teaching style. Two weeks had passed since the first observation and again I played down my presence as I tried to sit somewhere fairly inconspicuously but with a good sight of the students.*

At the end of my observations, it became apparent that these students needed to be questioned somehow about their behaviour and their reactions to teachers. That was another task that had been added to my list of things to develop.... by this stage the research began to grow rapidly as the research took emergent forms. *I felt another period of settlement and blue sky thinking occurring as I concentrated on the interviewing and left the thought of devising the students' questions till much later.* I then subsequently interviewed the Art teachers and set upon myself the importance of interviewing as many NQT teachers as possible to ascertain their experiences of starting their teaching

profession at the school. Neither staff nor students seemed happy with behaviour management policy at the school.

### **6.5.3.1 Student Group Interview**

*After carrying out the majority of the teacher interviews, I then embarked on creating the questions to ask the year 10 students. I felt that to complete the triangle of research, students would also need to be interviewed in order to ascertain their views on teachers and behaviour management.* The questions were formulated using Baird (1986) PEEL philosophy and questions that he asked year 10 students in his study of an Australian school. The structure of the student interview questions were divided into sections. Firstly, Baird et al asked students general attitudes towards school, perceptions of learning and attitudes regarding teachers. *I further added in questions on disruptive behaviour (Appendix 5).*

All the students agreed to take part in the research probably as they thought it was a chance to “bitch about staff”. The student’s comments were recorded (with their consent) and then transcribed and circulated to the teacher concerned, the Head of Faculty and the Headmaster. The SMT response was favourable and the Headmaster commented positively towards the idea of student interviews and their perceptions. *At this point, I reminded him that further observations of students at the school would not be viable for this doctorate. It seemed to me as teacher-researcher that I was in demand and being pushed from pillar to post with others teachers suggestions. Perhaps that is what the midway viva examiners commented on with regards to the width of the methodology.*

As a result of the triangulation of methods a lot more research findings unfolded allowing me to appreciate day to day activities at the school. *Overall, the interview and student observations were completed and successfully transcribed but the NQT teacher was never really provided a solution. A couple of months later she approached me wondering how the research was commencing and whether I could help her further. Unfortunately, I could not wave a magic wand and dissipate her problems but just explained a few commonsense ideas on teaching, like setting ground rules and boundaries from day 1. After that conversation, I began to question myself “was I going to provide any help for teachers at the school”? Wouldn’t the advice (if any) be commonsense or already available? Worries and fears began to grow yet again. I felt a long way away from*

*reporting back to staff, as I had so boldly stated in the staff address I had given to them when recruiting. At times I felt like a fraud. Who was I to advice them? What difference would my suggestions make?.*

#### **6.5.4 Phase 3 - Interview Analysis**

After all 20 interviews had been completed (recorded on dictaphone tapes) they were ready to be transcribed. *The transcription took a long time, the dicta-phone recordings were quite poor and one member of staff had to be re-interviewed as I cleverly managed to tape over her interview.* The transcriptions were originally handwritten and then given back to the participant for member checking in order to confirm commentary. *I thought this was quite an important phase as in one circumstance an interviewee requested that they be re-interviewed as they perceived the initial comments made as denigrating another member of staff, whom they believed could be identifiable from the comments. The member checking process took longer than I imagined but was well worth doing as the next step of data analysis was then made simpler, as I knew participants were happy with what they had stated and had given their informed consent to continue with the data analysis.* As interviewers we need to be clear whether we are interested in the participants' responses at an individual level or as part of the broader story of the research. Most research follows the latter perspective. On many occasions, individual accounts are written up as a broader collection of voices or the interviewer is asked to speak as a representative or the interviewer interacts in the interview process. Yet some researchers, despite recognising the duality of the interviewer commentary insist in taking each interview as separate cases (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002). *Overall transcribing the Dictaphone recorded interviews was tiresome and tricky on occasions as the sound quality was not brilliant. Nevertheless as the data was collected relevant themes were extracted from each interview with the appropriate comments noted. As this progressed I began to notice similar commentary between the interview transcripts and slowly began to collapse the categories into singular/common units while noting which participants had agreed on those points.* The next step of interview analysis was to computerise and code the transcriptions into related themes with actual commentary and my reflections (Table 1, Appendix 5). This was done by sorting the transcribed interviews into codes and creating Microsoft Excel tables to sort and match the codes (Appendix 5 tables 1 and 2).

### **6.5.4.1 The Use of Thematic Analysis**

*'Qualitative interviewing is experimental as the interviewer begins the process not knowing where it will lead'* (Turkel, 1995 cited in Seale et al, date p30). According to researchers (Glaser and Strauss, 1968; Miles and Huberman, 1994) there are numerous methods of interview analysis. The most basic and well used method is to read and re-read the transcripts, note down interesting themes, start applying codes and then compare each interview with other interviews using the Constant Comparative Method of analysis. This leads to code refinement in the hope that the researcher finds few deviant or negative codes, leaving the researcher ready to write up the results. Thematic analysis involves coding which is a way of relating the data to ideas we have about the raw information leading to an interpretation of the data depending upon which method is employed to organise and present it (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Miles and Huberman, 1984). Many researchers from numerous fields use thematic analysis by using existent explicit codes such as those used in prior-research or theory-driven approaches based on other researchers coding strategies like axial coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) *'or template analytic coding where the codes are derived from someone else's code or framework to process or analyse the information'* (Miller and Crabtree, 1992 cited in Boyatzis, 1998 p33). The other thematic analysis approach is more inductive data driven and is not reliant on previous theory or code development. Instead criterion referencing is used with sub-samples of the raw data specifying the dependent variables being investigated resulting in code development. Once the criterion referencing is sorted, a compare and contrast approach is maintained to extract observable differences between or among the samples. The researcher follows a basic process of immersion and crystallisation involving note-taking while analysing the raw data (Miller and Crabtree, 1992). All three approaches use similar stages and steps in code, category and theme development. On the whole thematic analysis is based on grounded theory where concepts are discovered in the data and verified by the collection of further data to confirm its existence.

Coding in qualitative research is less about allocating numerical keys to pre-set categories and more to do with exploration, conceptualisation and transformation of data (CARP, 2007). The researcher searches for concept indicators linked together by other data until saturated analytic categories are created (Yates, 2004). To begin with researchers decide on sampling and design issues but in addition, the data-driven inductive researcher selects the sub-samples before reducing the raw information and identifying themes which are

then compared across the sub-samples resulting in code development. The researcher then senses the themes and recognises code able moments and remains consistent and reliable while encoding. The codes are then developed leading to the interpretation of these codes into themes in relation to the context of a theory or a conceptual framework. The first two stages allow for the openness to the information for code development but in the third stage the codes are refined by repeatedly going back to the raw data and re-analysing it. However with data-driven approaches the basics to reducing the raw information vary. The researcher can either read each entire protocol creating an outline of each or read them and mark the source of information by underlining, highlighting and then outlining. However, this in itself is prone to biases and most researchers opt for '*computer programs for thoughtful documentation and analysis of qualitative information*' (Weitzman and Miles, 1995 cited in Boyatzis, 1998 p6). Next the data-driven approach researcher identifies the themes within samples looking for similarities or patterns to compare across the sub-samples. The aim being to, reduce the raw information into smaller packets of information. While doing this the researcher is actively blocking the interpretation process or making sense of the themes until later. Unfortunately at this stage the researcher can be vulnerable to inner voices of doubt as to whether they have reached the point of saturation with the raw data. Finally the code development occurs after revisiting and rewriting the theme by giving it a label, a description and an indicator.

This back and forth oscillation is very important for effective code and theme development and ties in with reliability methods that researchers use. The most common is inter-rater reliability, ascertained among the researcher and other observers. They independently apply the codes or themes to the same material and compute the inter-rater reliability. This can be done both quantitatively with calculations of percentages, correlations or statistical analysis or qualitatively through visual comparison and matching of the raw information with the code. The strength and power of the data driven approach is the way in which the themes appear in the raw information as the starting point for code development and the validation with the entire sample is the cross-check that is made with sub-samples. The quality of the coding scheme influences the eventual quality of data analysis as the researcher becomes committed to particular ways of categorising the world based on the initial raw information (Seale, 2001). This learning of the stages of thematic analysis is similar to Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory involving a cycle of composing and constructing language or interpretations of events and observations with a thematic code. Thematic Analysis has numerous overlapping purposes and can be used as

a way of seeing, making sense of data or analyzing qualitative information and is a way of systematically observing a person, group or situation (Boyatzis, 1998).

#### **6.5.4.2 The Limitations Of Thematic Analysis**

There are limitations behind using Thematic Analysis as a method of qualitative data analysis. The theory-driven and prior-research approaches are reliant on the theoretical sensitivity of the researcher and their ability to recognise patterns in the data. The researcher needs the tacit knowledge to recognise key phrases, commentary or situations from the data in order to perceive the themes and then to organise them into a cluster of themes moving up to higher levels of abstraction (Miles and Huberman, 1984). Despite such difficulties, one of the main challenges is the recognition of latent versus manifest content of the raw data. The manifest content is the obvious, something which is apparent or visible such as detection of the number of times a certain word or phrase was used. The problem arises when trying to interpret the context of the word as every context will be different. Thus the researcher becomes engrossed with battling for the latent content which involves analysis of the underlying phenomena under observation. *I overcame this problem by using probe questioning along with the interview questions as the participant's answered the questions. Each probe question was unplanned and allowed to occur freely in response to participant's commentary. In this way both the manifest and latent content of the commentary could be understood as far as the participant's would consent to.*

Thematic analysis allows for both content and latent to be used at the same time. One way could be to get each participant to verify the interpretation made by the researcher but this is a long process and is not always viable. Most thematic analysis involves theory-driven code development since the researcher uses some others framework for coding such as 'template analytic technique'. In many ways it is sensible to adopt this approach in the light of professional standards and practices of various disciplines. Also, the anticipated meanings derived from the data, determines the composition of the code. Then the emerging themes are created from the construction of the meanings given to the codes and hence are embedded in the researchers theoretical sensitivity.

Projection can be a drawback since the researcher can attribute personal characteristics, attitudes, values or emotions to the other person jeopardising effective and insightful

thematic analysis. Unfortunately, with ambiguous qualitative information there are lots of projection opportunities and theory-driven approaches involve more projection, suffer from lower validity and are prone to cultural bias. *This was avoided when I interviewed participant's, as I member checked both during the interview and after transcription to confirm participant's commentary and to avoid ambiguity or misinterpretation.*

The theory-driven approach to coding stays out of context from the original data as the specifics of previous codes may be inappropriate to the raw data (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Prevention of projection is possible through a) developing an explicit code b) establishing consistency of judgement c) using several people to encode the data or by having the participants examine the raw data and d) sticking closely to the raw info when developing themes and codes. However, the best approach is practice, the more that is obtained the more precise the coding and categorising. *When I carried out the Thematic Code Analysis, the axial codes were kept as close to the original data as possible and interviewer bias was avoided by employing a computer sort of all the codes to find similar commentary or similar codes (Table 1, Appendix 4). From this, new category codes were assigned to the sorted data (Table 2, Appendix 4) until the final table was created incorporating the new code names, actual commentary and my reflections on the comments (Table 3a, Appendix 4) and then further reduced to present to staff during the findings dissemination (Table 3b, Appendix 4). In this way, I avoided coding that stays out of context and having to employ objective statistical techniques such as NVivo and CAQDAS.*

Sampling can also be a problem as the term 'garbage in, garbage out' refers to the translation of contaminated raw data which affects the quality of the thematic translation. Mood and cognitive style affect the openness and flexibility of the researcher. Even with appropriate design and sampling and the identification of a framework for theme development, stress, fatigue, distraction affect the accuracy of thematic analysis. Thus the researcher should be well rested, have a clear framework/method for code collection, establish consistency of judgement with multiple perceivers and stop when preoccupied.

Unfortunately researchers from differing epistemological backgrounds argue about the interpretation of the data such that computer methods have been created to objectively code the data. Examples of such coding programs are CAQDAS (computer assisted data analysis) and NVivo. *'These programs code sections and group and organise large*

*amounts of data efficiently which cannot be done manually*' (Conrad and Reinartz, 1984 cited in Seale et al, date p473). Coffey et al (1996) state that such software is resulting in a new orthodoxy based on grounded theory but is inconsistent with other representations of qualitative research. The danger being, the alienation of the researcher from the data with analysis strategies that, go against the methodological and theoretical orientations of qualitative researching (Seidel, 1991; Lonkila, 1995). However, thematic analysis is flexible enough to bridge the gap between epistemological arguments, allowing the researcher to successfully communicate their observations, findings and interpretations of meanings to other researchers using different methods.

Certain circumstances arise when it's not possible to criterion split using the data driven approach. Either because a single person or organisation has been used, or because multiple variables were involved in the research as units of analysis, resulting in no definite criterion variables. In either case a hybrid form of all 3 approaches is used where all the stages and steps are maintained but, the stage 2 and step 3 of comparing and contrasting between sub-samples, is not needed. Thus the researcher uses their own theory or prior research as a guide for articulation of meaningful themes.

Miles and Huberman (1984) suggest a number of other techniques for analysing qualitative data such as 'thinking metaphorically', 'clustering and factoring'. However these methods verge on the quantitative methods like counting instances or events that occur in the data. With Qualitative research, data is collected and analysed very differently to quantitative methods as the research process is not always as linear as quantitative approaches. Therefore analysing the data can begin from the moment data is being collected or can be a cyclical process where analysis of the first data results in ideas emerging that influences the collection of further data. Thus, most qualitative data analysis is based on grounded theory methods until the categories are saturated (Strauss, 1987). Other methods take the comparative responsibility away from the researcher as computer programs analyse the transcripts, resulting in objective code development. *'Both analytical options have their pros and cons but the way one analyses interviews is dependent upon the researcher's specific interests, the questions asked and the level of data analysis required'* (Rapley, 2001 cited in Seale et al, date p15). If the researcher has developed situated moments during the interview process, objectively analysing would not be the best approach. Nevertheless, Miles and Huberman (1984) argue that whatever

method of analysis is adopted by the researcher, a logical chain of evidence should be built up to support their claims and demonstrate the stages of analysis.

#### **6.5.4.3 My Approach to Thematic Analysis**

*For my thematic research analysis, a hybrid form of the inductive approach was used as all 20 interviews were used and not a sub-sample of the data. I made the individuals from my research study (namely the 20 teachers) the unit of coding as each teacher's transcript was visually assessed for important points of emphasis or codes arising from the raw data until a list was drawn up and transferred to an excel table.* The table was manually created in order to display each individuals codes, given category name, the individuals original commentary, my reflections for each code and subcategories that arose from the codes (Table 1, Appendix 4). In order to attain reliability, double coding was used on the raw data. Both myself and my supervisor separately analysed the same interview transcripts and devised codes. These were then compared for consistency until agreement on the code was verbally achieved.

Miles and Huberman (1984) state that double coding can be carried out with more observers but then observers may be different in terms of their gender, expertise or personality. Thus it is best to use observers with similar expertise and practices and with some experience of coding and reducing data. However, the more observers there are, the more the need for measures of inter-rater and rater-expert reliability. This then leads to percentage of agreement calculations with the use of quantitative statistics to analyse the consistency between the raters. *In my analysis of the interview transcripts both myself and my supervisor share the same Psychology background and understand how to draw codes from raw data. Therefore I felt there was no need to calculate such measures of reliability or ascertain percentage agreement as the level of analysis was purely nominal as opposed to interval data concentrating on the intensity or the frequency of the codes. 'Perhaps if there had been more interviews then applying statistical analysis to determine the validity of the themes or code would have been necessary, as quantitative methods can be used with a qualitative method'* (Wolcott, 1994 cited in Boyatzis, 1998 p160). In this way thematic analysis is flexible and allows the researcher to extend, expand and disseminate the findings to different audiences.

Constant Comparative Thematic Analysis was employed in the next stage of data analysis (Boyatzis, 1998), where units of meaning were detected manually (by reading through

each transcript and highlighting key comments or repeated commentary) and then coded. Thus Microsoft Excel was used to sort the results by category. In this way, the Excel programme compared all the data for similar coding and analysis. The codes and categories (140) were reduced into major themes with recurring and related codes, actual commentary and my new reflections with the aid of a computer sort to complete tables of shared themes (Table 2, Appendix 4). Statistical interviewing techniques (NVivo) were not applied as they ‘*objectify the data taking the researcher away from the analysis and not encouraging researcher reflections*’ (Weitzman and Miles, 1995 cited in Boyatzis, 1998 p5). *I thought it would be better with my personal reflections added at each stage of data analysis. After all, in the multi-method design, my reflections as research-practitioner were also important and such technical techniques as NVivo or CAQDAS (computer assisted qualitative data analysis) would not incorporate them.* In this way, sixteen themes (Table 3a and 3b, Appendix 4) were identified through axial coding and through an Action Research cycle were prepared as the basis for a presentation to staff for verification as further justification for ‘subject-checking’.

#### **6.5.5 Phase 4- Dissemination of the Findings**

*In the Summer term 2007, I decided to present the findings of the research to all staff after having deliberated the ethical issues raised from not contacting the Head. It was jointly agreed between the supervisors and my self, not to go behind the Headmaster and create the middle management meetings.*

The main reasons were:

- **Deception** - by not gaining permission for the meetings and gaining informed consent from the staff without the Head’s acknowledgement would cause serious problems for myself and the focus group, as well as a possible negative evaluation of the school if members of the public were informed of the meetings.
- **Harm to Participants**- if the Head was not informed or involved in the development and assessment of the meetings, then the staff involved would be directly affected by the repercussions when and if the meetings became common knowledge.

- **Confidentiality-** obviously this would have been difficult to assure participants since information could leak out if other staff found out the agenda.
- **Anonymity-** In relation to confidentiality, the identity of the group members would have been difficult to keep confidential as the Head would need to be aware of issues relating to the group. Perhaps even other staff would leak information.

A brief power-point presentation was prepared briefly explaining:-

- **Aims and Objectives of the research**
- **The research phases**
- **The sixteen themes**
- **Thematic commentary**
- **Questions for staff to verify the themes**

The presentation included the aims and objectives of the research explaining the research phases and the sixteen transcribed themes that resulted from the teacher interviews (Table 3b, Appendix 4). Finally, a slide asking for audience reflections was included to allow staff to respond to the presentation and air their opinions on the research. *I thought it best to tie in all my research findings and invite staff to join an action research group in order to discuss stress related issues. The plan was to address the staff with my findings and allow them to elaborate or consider them and how this impacted upon their own feelings about their teaching at the school.* During the fourth phase, staff, were encouraged to respond to the themes in the hope that reflections-on practice would begin.

#### **6.5.5.1 The Practice Development Beast (Narrative)**

Many ideas arose from the research for the application to the practice development. *Initially, I believed I would evaluate the Learning Support Centre (commonly known as A3) in the attempt to follow the progress of both staff and students involved in the centre in order to feedback its progress to the rest of the school.* However, noble and opportune this sounded (since A3 had only recently been initiated and its use and success at the time was debatable by many staff), the proposal was disbanded as being too complicated and deep. *In fact, it could have been another doctorate in itself.* As the research commenced and interviewees were recruited, the second practice development idea came to fruition. *As NQT staff, were involved in the interview process, I believed that a standardised*

*handbook of coping strategies for classroom management and handling disruptive students would be beneficial. Unfortunately, literature reviewing and analysis led me to the conclusion that there was no actual need for the book as there was already a wealth of literature on how teachers could improve themselves and manage students. Then I decided to let the research run its course in order to let the fallow lie.* In summary the third practice development arose from the interview transcriptions, as many middle management (including Heads of Year and Heads of Faculty) complained about the lack of communication they had with each other. Many of them claimed that issues were always discussed with Senior Management, and it often felt as though they were being railroaded into autocratic decisions that supported SMT and not them. Interviewees stated that the problems of communication between the SMT and Middle Managers had been occurring for sometime as the previous Head had disbanded a 'secret' Middle Managers meeting that was arranged privately out of school hours. Once that the Head became aware of this and the fact that the minutes of the meeting were not being relayed to SMT, future meeting were banned. *Thus, I tried to try to create informal collaborative focus groups for middle managers either without SMT intervention (which would allow more open ended and honest discussion) or arrange these forums with the Head present as non-participant observer or chair.* Problems with the Head being involved in the meetings would revolve around teacher's feeling reticent in speaking or apprehension about owning up to problems in their daily practices. The understanding behind the formation of these groups was that a form of action research cycle would result from co-operative discussion between them enabling them to jointly plan, initiate and execute actions to better their situation. Whether, the meetings would result in fruition was dependent on its members. The main strategy being, for me to allow a change in practice to occur, offering staff the freedom to control the *beast* in their own way. This included, whether the members continued to use me as a facilitator in the meetings or abandon my help after the first few sessions. *At this stage (pre-initial meeting) I was not sure on the outcome of the first meeting but was planning to e-mail the respective middle managers and invite them to a lunch buffet in order to disseminate the aims and objectives of the meetings and to invite their commentary on it. I envisaged that the initial meeting would encourage the members to take charge of their own agenda, leaving them to debate whether Senior Management should be involved or not.* This then would take that concern away from me (the teacher-researcher) as I saw my role as facilitator in these meetings. *Only time would tell. I had felt reservations about contacting the Headmaster, as many themes were negative towards SMT and school policy, and I was unsure of the Headmaster's reactions. Would the*

*Headmaster be as open minded about the findings, as I had originally perceived him to be? Would the findings remain confidential once he had been privy to them? or Would other members of the SMT be involved, or the board of governors? Could I possibly loose my job after disseminating such findings? What would happen if the research was taken seriously or the press was alerted? Would my research damage the schools reputation?. Many worries loomed..... I became obsessed that my job would suffer. SMT could demonise me and find it difficult to separate me as the teacher from me as the researcher. Months went by as I wallowed in a form of self pity. I discussed these concerns with the other DProf students, other members of staff and supervisors. At one point, I decided not to tell the Headmaster and to e-mail the Middle Managers directly. This would help me avoid explaining why so many of the interviewees had complained about senior management, school organisation and policy and communication problems (to name a few). Both my supervisors advised me with regards to research ethics. They stated that I could fail the doctorate if the Headmaster was not informed of the meetings. Thus, I did eventually contact him and informally told him about the success of the research, passing the viva and the fact that I was in my last phase of the research. I explained that I would be re-contacting interviewees to validate research findings and would invite them to meetings to discuss them. Finally, I informed him that if he needed further explication I would oblige, and that was that. Months of worry and discussion were over in minutes. As far as I was aware, I had informed the Head of the meetings and was happy to progress with the next phase of the research. I was aware that at some stage if the meetings progressed and other members of staff were involved, then senior management would be told of the true purpose either from myself as the facilitator or the group members themselves. One possible solution to this, could be to carry out a separate focus group for Senior Management to validate the research findings too. It would be beneficial for them to realise how staff perceive them and could lead (hopefully) to better communications between staff. I was happy with the final practice development proposal and believed this would create some form of change in practice that could be adopted for future practice post this doctoral research.*

Figure 3: The PD progression pathway illustrates the practice development progression in a flow chart (page 168) and is a pictorial representation of the practice development. The figure illustrates the pd progression with each proposed pd in orange, the decisions to continue (yes) in pink, the decision not to continue in blue and the decision to disband the pd is coloured green. In this way, the reader can visually see the route that was taken before the final pd was planned.

Additionally, a timeline diagram (page 169) illustrating when the practice development was planned in relation to the other phases of the research has been included. The timeline has been divided into colour blocks illustrating the stages of the research development carried out chronologically from the beginning of the doctorate (April 2004) to the proposed last phase of the research until doctoral write-up and completion. The colour blocks illustrate the:

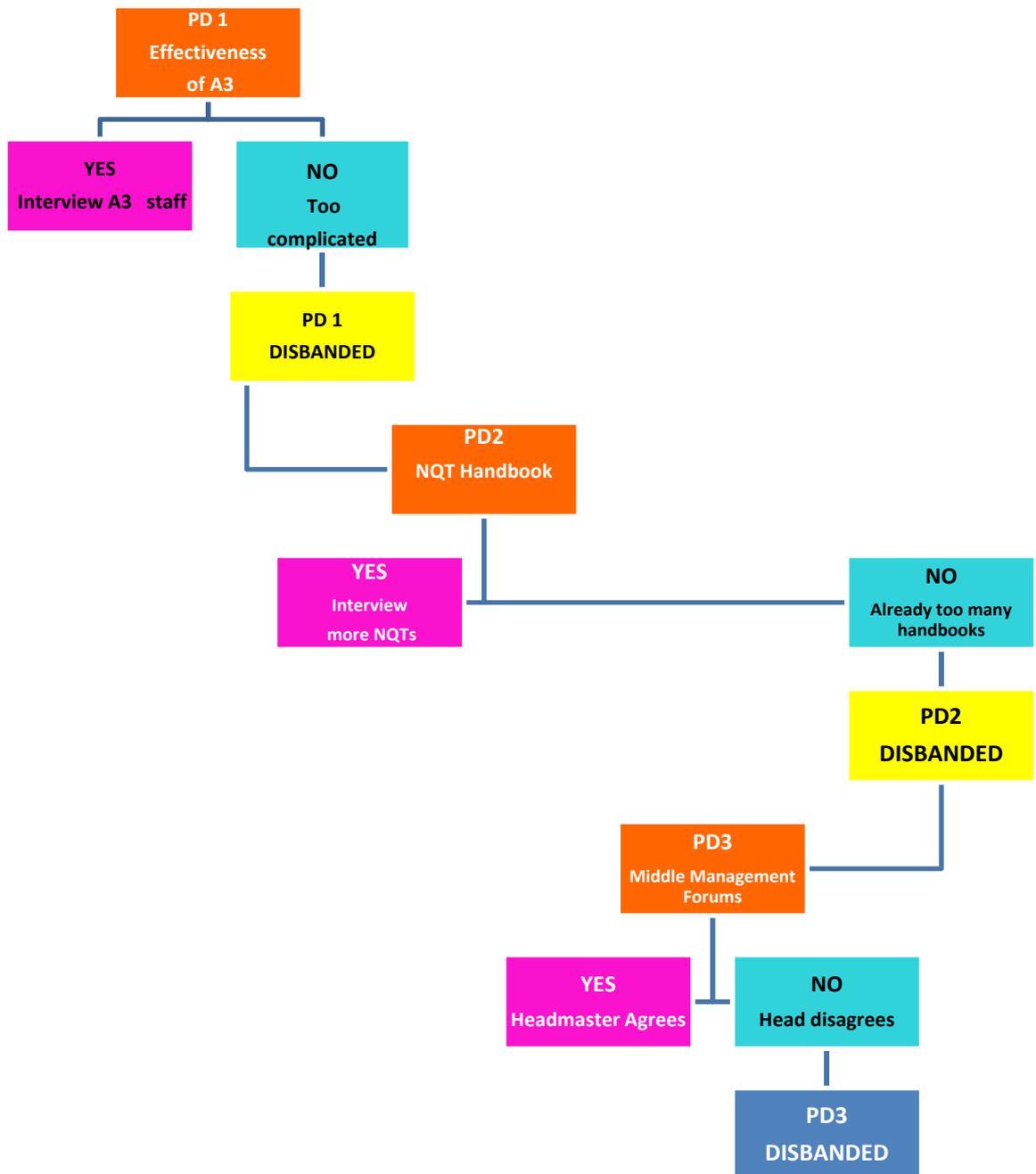
- ❖ **Literature reviewing** (chapters 2 + 3 – shown in red) 
- **Methodology literature reviewing** (shown in pink) 
- **Data collection** (including phases of the research – shown in yellow) 
- **Narrative** (shown in purple running throughout from the start of the course) 
- **Viva Transfer** (shown in orange) 
- **Phase 4 of research** (shown in green) 
- **Practice Development Progression** (shown in blue) 
- **Write up of the research** (shown in turquoise) 
- **Re-Writes and completion** (shown in aqua) 

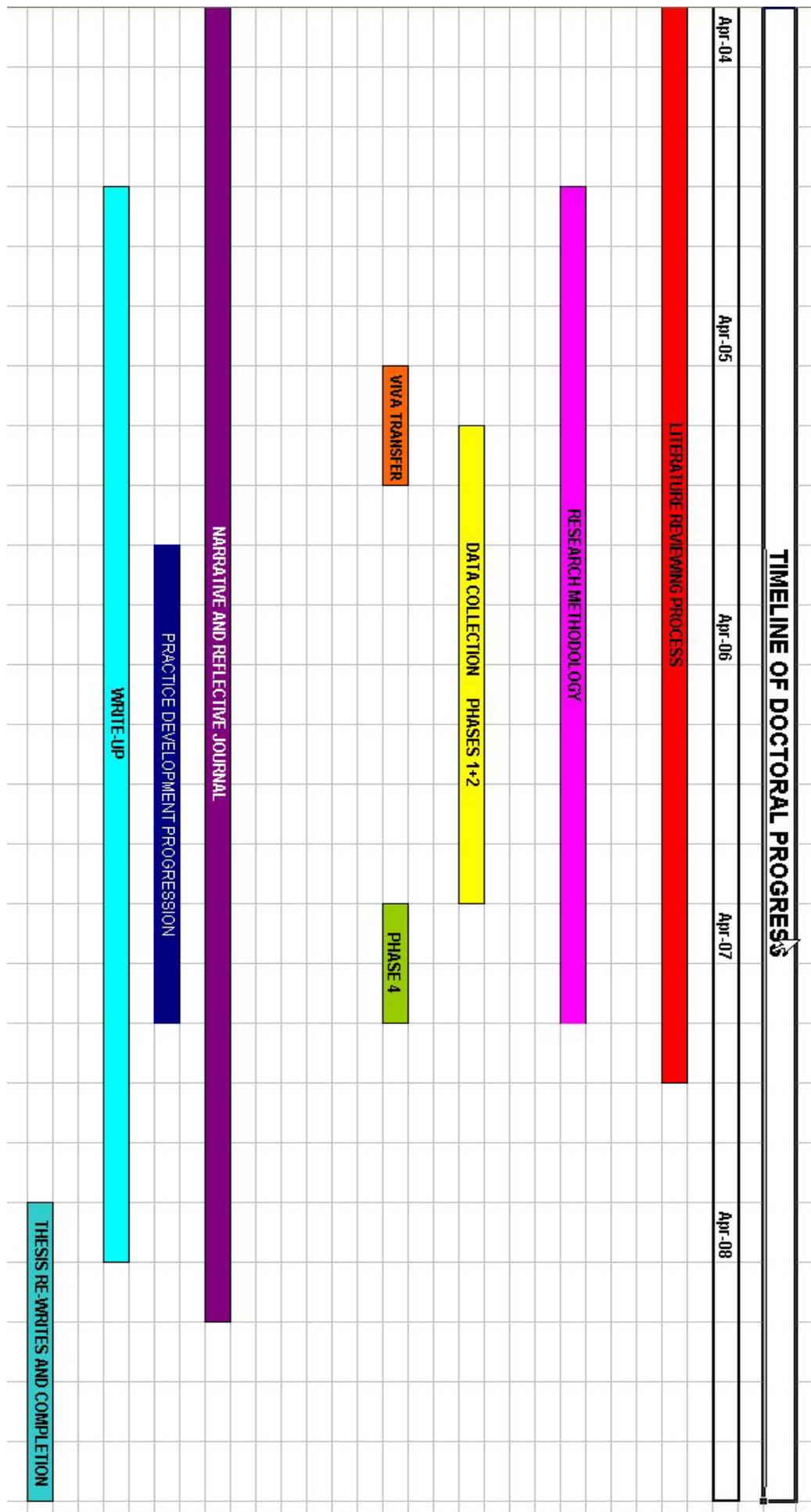
*I feel it is important to include both diagrams as it is easier to understand the decisions taken during the pd progression and the timeline contextualises the research illustrating it in clear colour blocks.*

### Figure 3: Practice Development Progression Pathway

#### Key to Figure 3

PD1, 2 and 3 - Light Orange  YES decision - Pink  NO decision - Aqua   
 PD disbanded- Yellow





### **6.5.6 Phase 5- *The Intended Fifth Phase of the Research***

*The intention of the final phase of the research (illustrated as the yellow circle in Figure 2) was that if enough interest and consent was given from teachers who had attended the staff address (phase 4) and ultimately from the Headmaster for the fifth phase to proceed, then I would encourage teachers to meet on a regular basis (either as departments or subject areas) to reflect on their teaching practices and collaborate any improvements on practice to each other in order to implement them in daily practice. Furthermore, I had planned to encourage staff to keep reflective diaries of daily or weekly occurrences that they could share with each other but not formally record or collate any data from the meetings.*

Initially, the idea behind the collaborative staff forums were that these meetings would be occurring within departments without a Senior Member of Staff being present to encourage open-ness and to avoid any fears of reprisal. *In this way, I envisaged that a form of Action Research spiralling would begin similar to Schon (1983, illustrated in the flow diagram Figure 1 p128) that would begin with teachers opening up and discussing issues pertinent to their teaching practices that would include responses from other teachers based on advice that could be turned into action.* The action could then be, experimented with by each teacher resulting in a spiral of activity and reflection in and on practice and reflexivity about the whole process. *From my literature reviewing on Action Research (AR), I had read about schools and agencies that had implemented such AR spiralling and been successful at improving and changing practice for the better (Ford Teaching Project, 1974; TRIST-TVEI Nottinghamshire Staff Development project 1985-87) as well as nurse-practitioner research (Boswell, 2007; Rowe, 2007;2008).* This had encouraged me to offer staff at the school the same chance to get together on an informal basis to discuss problems and successes with each other to encourage an ethos of open-ness, collaboration of positive practice and experimentation of teaching methods, classroom control and behaviour management. Currently, such positive practice meetings are already in place in line with the post-16 improvement strategy and are encouraging teachers to collaborate good ideas to improve practice. *My staff forums would be very similar to these but would also include staff keeping diaries of the outcomes from their individual AR spiralling which could then be shared and improved on. The main issue of concern to me was whether to include the Head and SMT in the departmental meetings or give them a copy of any minutes recorded from the meetings. Initially, I had not planned*

*that SMT would be involved as I wanted teachers at the school to feel relaxed when being open and honest about their problems about teaching, without knowing that their commentary could be held in contempt at any stage. On further discussions with my DProf cohort and my supervisors as to whether to include or exclude the Headmaster and the SMT from these staff forums, it was decided that ethically within any organisation, permission and informed consent were vital and a required element of all research involving organisations educational or not. Some DProf colleagues could not understand my anxiety about this matter as they were self-employed professionals and were not immersed within traditional, bureaucratic organisations (my apprehensions about the final phase of the research are discussed further in Chapter 6). Hence, after the fourth phase of the research, the Head and the members of the SMT were e-mailed, to ask for their reflections on the research findings and their perceptions of the collaborative meetings. I felt this was very important, as during the research findings presentation no-one outwardly questioned the themes. Could this have been because all of the SMT and the Head were present? Why didn't teachers who had participated in the research speak out?.*

Thus in the hope of the fifth research phase being allowed, the intention was to allow collaborative teacher forums in order to achieve positive changes in the school. *If the Head and SMT members we're opposed to such staff meetings then I would simply document their comments and relate this to an attempt at changing practice. I really believed that teachers would sit in their departments collaborating on teaching issues and that communication levels would improve within and between all teaching levels.*

## **6.6 Summary Of Chapter**

This chapter outlines how concise the aims and objectives have become since the beginning of the doctorate, the demographics of the sample, the exclusive population, and how the research was carried out. The ethical considerations were documented to highlight the importance of each ethic, elaborating on research by Butler (2003) who considered ethics in the place where you work. The main phases of the research were described including reflective narrative and the whole research process was illustrated in Figure 2 (p145) including the intended fifth phase. Such that altogether, semi-structured emergent interviews were carried out on twenty teachers of varying ages, experiences and teaching tiers (Phase 1). Each respondent was interviewed on questions relating to work demographics, work load and health effects and behaviour management. Interviews lasted

around 1 hour at a mutually agreed time and place. Interviews were faithfully transcribed and analysed using Constant Comparative Thematic Analysis (Boyatzis, 1998) where units of meaning were detected manually and then coded. Further analysis of recurring themes was conducted with the aid of a computer sort to complete tables of shared themes (Phase 3). Statistical interviewing techniques (NVivo) were not applied as they objectify the data taking the researcher away from the analysis and not encouraging researcher reflections (Weitzman and Miles, 1995). In this way, sixteen themes were identified through axial coding and through an Action Research cycle were presented to staff for verification (phase 4). Staff, were encouraged to respond to the themes in the hope that reflections-on practice would begin (phase 5). This would then lead to further discussion, which could be collaborative leading to new strategies being adopted to deal with the problems identified. Middle Managers in particular had asked for collaborative meetings in order to freely discuss issues pertinent to themselves without the Leadership teams presence. In addition, observations of a year 10 class were carried out on the request of the Head of Art and Design to aid a newly qualified teacher who had been having difficulty with them (phase 2). Thus, three observations were carried out and then the students were interviewed.

By the end of the Methodology section (chapters 5 and 6) it is hoped that a better comprehension of how and why the research unfolded has been achieved. In the next chapter the research findings from the research phases are outlined.

## Chapter 7

### Research Findings

*Research is what I'm doing when I don't know what I'm doing.*

***Wernher von Braun***

## **Chapter 7: Research Findings**

*'Research is creating new knowledge'.*

*Neil Armstrong*

This chapter highlights the outcomes of the research starting with the student observations and interviews and then addressing the teacher interviews. All the findings are supported again by reflective analysis written in blue italics throughout.

### **7.1 Findings From The Year 10 Observations**

The first observation started off with the Art teacher trying to gain control of her class even before the lesson began. She instructed them to line up outside the classroom (for the second time) and come back in an orderly fashion. Even by this simple command the students were confused and frustrated. Thus the beginning of the lesson was disruptive and rowdy. *My feelings on this were that the teacher was trying to gain control of a class that she had 'lost' a long time ago and that these harsh, demeaning, almost childish requests were not winning her any favours.* The students were answering her back, chatting amongst themselves or completely ignoring her. *Despite this, I am not saying that she should not have kept trying but I suggested to her on the observational debriefing that she needed different tactics.* During the observation, the Art teacher instructed the students to continue with their ceramic Art pieces but at the same time while praising some students she explained to the other less on-task students that *'..they should be privileged to be doing ceramics'.* *In my mind she was creating a barrier between herself (as the teacher authority figure) and the students, instead of inspiring them. This fascinated me, since I have always thought Art was such a creative subject (unlike theoretical subjects like Psychology) that should be fun to teach and learn. Unfortunately from the observations of this teacher's lessons, this perception began to fade.*

Secondly, since the class continued to be disruptive, the teacher stopped them half way through the lesson (before they had finished the original task set) to write down rules of behaviour that she had written on the board. These rules explained the teacher's role and expectations of the class. Then by the end of the lesson the teacher had gained some control over the class but in mind was playing a losing game if she thought she was going to teach them anything. *However, I did not find the group too bad at that time and found that the teacher was tense and stressed herself. I found her style of classroom management awkward with the students not understanding the reasons behind her*

*requests*. The student's behaviour was relatively rowdy but no out of the ordinary behaviour was displayed. The students' were being themselves- talking amongst themselves, they were not listening, they were being challenging to requests especially when the teacher surprised them with an unexpected seating plan. This did not fare well with the students and they outwardly opposed the teacher's decisions to the extent of purposefully annoying the teacher. One of the students was constantly listening to her MP3 player and refused to stop, this resulted in her being temporarily excluded from the class which meant the teacher was absent for a short while leaving the class.

*I did feel for the NQT Art teacher who had obviously been through the mill with that group and oh, how so aware were they of their behaviour. It was almost as though they were destined to wind her up and thought nothing of the consequences or the stress to the teacher. After the observation she explained how terrible they had been since day 1 and really wished that she had set some of her own ground rules other than the school rules which they had rammed down their throats at every assembly.* At the end of the observation some students approached me and said that they did not like the Art teacher and hardly ever played up for the second Art teacher (who was older, more experienced and more relaxed). In light of this comment, I decided to observe the same students with the other Art teacher and did find a difference in the students' attitude and behaviour. On the whole, the students (who had acted like little demons before) were all on task and nice and quiet. In fact the only reprimand the teacher had was with regard to the girls applying make-up in class. Even then the teacher was polite and did not mind repeating herself numerous times until they listened. Thus the stark difference in the class management related directly to the teachers own attitude.

The second teacher was calmer, did not get flustered by small behavioural issues, smiled more in class and was generally more positive than the NQT Art teacher. *But why?* According to this Art teacher (who had been at the school close to 20 years) her philosophy of teaching (as she explained) was quite different. She told me that she tried to adopt a youth club atmosphere in class, allowing certain infringements to take place which were stipulated as school rules ie: students are not normally allowed to wear coats indoors or turn up late to lessons. The teacher allowed these discrepancies and explained how she felt this had the made the difference. She felt the students respected her and had a mutual understanding with her. *To which I responded that this perhaps would work for Art but not for Science or Maths. Was it then a subject specific issue for behaviour*

*management? Do we need to bother with generic behaviour management policies when we should perhaps be concentrating on departmental or individual strategies for disruption, class etiquette and discipline?. My feelings are the answer is all of the above. Yes, we do need to have ground rules which are standardised, but within that be aware of and confident of our own boundaries and classroom management styles. I guess it's a lot like parenting- there is no manual- you just get on with it as best you can trying your best to curb frustrations and anger as not to upset the child!* The second (older and more experienced) Art teacher admitted that most of the time, even when students were being difficult, she had gained a mutual understanding with the class so that there was slightly more freedom in her classes so long as the work set was completed, but had started this from the beginning. Her advice to her colleague was to try and remain as calm as possible under the circumstances and to retrospect on how bad the students had been originally. Finally, she stated that every newly qualified teacher takes time to find a teaching style to suit that becomes generic to all years and that her colleague must not lose faith in her own ability as a highly qualified professional.

The third and final observation was done some weeks later with the original Art teacher. Overall, it was a much better lesson with less shouting, more discipline and more students on task. The teacher perceived this to be because it was only a couple of weeks before the end of the summer term and the students had calmed down quite a bit. She could easily identify the changes that had occurred with that class over the year and felt that she was finally getting through to them. Her final comments related to disciplining and rule setting with students from the beginning of the year and remaining consistent throughout. *I was pleased that I had the opportunity to carry out the three observations with the same Art class and was privy to the change that occurred in the NQT Art class with the disruptive students. The final observation of the class with the original Art teacher, led me to believe that this type of action research cycle using observation to evidence practice and interviewing and discussion to interpret events could result in positive outcomes and was a possible method to offer the teachers involved in the final phase of the research.*

It was suggested to both the Art teachers that perhaps interviewing the year 10 students about classroom disruption and their views on it would be a good step forward as it may help the Art teachers discover what the students really thought. The next step was devising the student interview schedule (Appendix 5, carrying out the interviews as objectively and ethically as possible and transcribing their comments.

## **7.2. The Interview Findings**

### **7.2.1 Year 10 Interviews**

Eight questions were constructed (Appendix 5) asking students their opinions on what they thought of school, what it meant to be a good learner and whether they thought they were good learners, what made a good teacher and how teachers should handle disruptive behaviour. Also, much like the teacher interviews in phase 1 of the research, the questions were open asking students their opinions about school and based upon their responses, probe questions were asked to gain added insight into their views. Unlike the individual face to face interviews with the teachers, the year 10 Art group were all interviewed as a group during a double Art class with the permission of their Art teacher (who remained present in the classroom during the interviewing).

*I believe that the answers to the interview questions were fairly typical of a group of 14 year olds. Most comments were negative towards school and the teachers.* Question 1: *Do you like school...* required students to give a closed yes/no response and then expand on the reasons why. Most of the students interviewed said 'no' arguing that school was boring, a waste of time and there were too many rules to follow. They were then asked them *"how many of you think that coming to school is a good way to further your future?"* A few of the students said 'yes' they realised that it was important because they said they need to do well to get good money for their future but stated that they would prefer a more freer and relaxed way of learning with more attention and reward/reinforcement from teachers. Most students wanted less theory, writing/copying down and more games/fun. They were then asked *"how many of you want to get to Sixth form/college?"* A few of them said they would but stated that the rules are much the same and life at college would be more adult like. In fact their perception of college life perhaps from friends was falsified by the idea of being able to attend lessons whenever they wanted and go for a fag. *I then explained to them that most academic subjects at college still required a pass and that entry into sixth form was 5 A\*- C passes.* To which they all replied.... *"we'll never get to sixth form there is no way I can get C's at GCSE"*. Other students said similar things. *I then explained to one student who said she wanted to get to sixth form but it was achieving grade F in her subjects that if she worked hard next year for her GCSE year that she might get the C grade and with a positive recommendation from the teacher could enter sixth form.*

Research carried out on student motivations by the EPPI (2004) confirmed these students' comments. According to their systematic review of pupils aged 11-16 and their motivations to learning in the classroom (EPPI, 2004) American students said '*high-school is irrelevant, boring and they are just passing time until something better come along*' (AYPF, 2000 p4). *This commentary is very similar to the year 10 class comments they too seemed to be disaffected and disengaged from their schooling.* According to the EPPI (2004)

*'A disaffected pupil is one who no longer sees any purpose in school or learning....they play out time until they are able to leave school'* (p4). Additionally the:

*'A disengaged pupil is one who has lost connection with the learning process'...they may well see the point to learning, value their education and be motivated to learn but have an emotional problem that is acting as a barrier to learning'* (p4)

The argument the EPPI (2004) state is that '*the problem is not one of motivation*' (p4) '*learners of all ages are naturally adept at being self-motivated and at directing and managing their own learning*' (McCoombs, 1993 cited in EPPI, 2004 p1). The issue, according to Dweck (1995) is the type of motivation the learner has, namely internal or external and their implicit beliefs of the type of learner they are (entity or incremental). In summary, '*a learner with an entity belief, sees failure in terms of lack of ability rather than lack of effort*' (Dweck, 1995 cited in EPPI, 2004 p2). *Therefore, they regard themselves as failures and show more negative feelings. The student's comments were mostly negative, against teachers and the school with the exception of a few students who claimed that 'some teachers were O.K'.*

When asked.... "*How many of you would work harder next year and forget messing about with your friends and really buckle down for your future?*".... many of them answered '*What's the point if you can't even get into sixth form, it's better to get a job and find something you are really good at later*'. *My overall impression from that was that we were not doing enough to encourage lower year students into sixth form. We needed to sell the Sixth form just as the college do!*

The Second Question: *What in your understanding is a good learner/student?* required students to give their perceptions about being a 'good' student and doing well at school. A lot of the students did not understand the question to begin with and I had to rephrase it. However, the majority of the ones answering said a good student was a quiet nerdy/geek

who listened to the teacher and did not play up in class. They were then asked “*Why do students play-up in class/disrupt and how does this affect you?*”. The responses ranged from the students are bored in class, do not know how to do the work/answer question and tend to disrupt the class to impress their friends. One student said they disrupt but don’t mean to cause trouble either for themselves, the students or the teacher. The student explained that .... ‘*It could just be them, they don’t know that they are being naughty... it’s just normal*’. The students then explained that the teachers all treat the students differently, some are nice, polite, have or find things in common with students but the majority shout, are rude, tell you off before you’ve done anything wrong, expect us to do what they say but don’t listen to us and don’t let us explain things.

The students were then asked... “*Do you not think that with 30 odd students in each class, it is impossible for teachers to give you that much individual attention?*”. The answer they gave was that “*Teachers should not always respond to the naughty ones and disrupt lessons by putting all of the class on report/detention*”. One student stated that she would prefer more one to one with interesting teachers who she could relate to. Most students said that teachers waste a lot of time trying to sort out the class and get everyone to listen and be quiet and “*that gets really boring and is an opportunity for the naughty ones*”.

The questioning then moved on to look at student motivations. Questions 3: *Do you want to do well at school? “If no then...why not?”*?. This question required students to think individually about what they wished to achieve from school and in the future. Most students answered “*yes but felt they couldn’t achieve the grades because they perceived themselves to be thick/not as bright or they thought the teachers didn’t think they were clever enough to do well*”. One student said that at the beginning of the year a teacher that she had never ever met before said that “*she knew she was a troublemaker and that they’d heard of her*”, to which she replied “*but we’ve never met*”. The student made out that it was wrong for the teacher to be so negative and nasty and stated that she never got on with them and did not bother in class. The questioning moved on to consider what the student’s perceptions were about a good class, a good lesson and good teacher.

Question 4: *What makes a good lesson?* had responses like “*the teacher remains friendly, calm and fun, does not get stressy and shout*”, “*teachers that listen to what we want, try and find things in common with us and engage us in the lesson*”, “*not copying down all the time, not having too much pressure*”. *The funny comment was that they’d prefer more*

*homework and that none of them did any background reading or work at home.* According to those students “*teachers do not help them in terms of motivating them to do well*”. They would “*like to have a better system other than the sticker system that they thought worked for year 9 but not for year 10*”. A lot of them said they would prefer to feel more grown up and responsible. When asked the fifth question: *What in your view is a good teacher? Give some examples*, the responses were fairly similar to the comments made for question 4, since both questions were related. Students stated that it depended on the teachers personality- “*good teachers remain consistent and don’t change they way they approach you. When they are nice we then think of them and try harder. Horrible teachers treat us badly they assume we are all the same when we are not. Sometimes we work well but don’t get rewarded for it*”. Along those lines a quieter student said that she had worked just as hard as a friend but was awarded a lower grade and was not told why. Many of the students felt that teachers took a domineering, ‘I know everything’ rather than an equal base status. They wanted/preferred teachers who showed more equality in their teaching and did not look down on students and expect them to do badly. *So whether we like it or not the age old issue of teacher-student labelling is still occurring and students are fully aware or think they are aware of teacher’s expectations and then act in exactly that fashion. Thus a self-fulfilling prophecy is arising in the minds of many of these lower ability students....they think the teachers doesn’t like or respect them, students then behave badly and the teachers then denigrate them. Personally, I feel that this is not the case and many teachers that take lower school try many methods to engage the weaker students and avoid labelling completely.*

After those responses the next question was particularly appropriate. Question 6: *Do you respect your teachers? If yes why? If no why?*. This question caused the loudest and most emotional response where in many cases the students stating teachers names to make their point. *I warned them that anonymity was an important part of the research and that the interview would be terminated if teacher’s names were included.* Many of the students said “*some of them deserve respect, the good ones who respect us and are friendly*”. *To which I asked “What makes you disrespect teachers?”*. The students answers varied from “*because they deserve it, they don’t let us do what we want, they tell us off all of the time even when we haven’t done anything*” and one boy said “*because it’s fun to mess the teachers about and watch their reactions*”. One student stated that he felt “*....teachers deserve the disruption in classes because they expect us to play up*”. When I questioned him on this he stated he thought that the class were known as the “*thick group who were*

*rowdy and loud*". They almost expected to be on detention and did not see detention as a form of deterrent. Again these answers seemed to naturally lead on to the next question. *Hence question 7: How do you think teachers should handle disruptive behaviour? was a red herring question, as it asked students to think from the teachers perspective and invited students to put themselves in the teachers shoes. Unfortunately, very few students had the capability or the insight to answer the question effectively and many grumbled "it serves 'em right that students play up" and one girl stepped up to the mark and boisterously said "they shouldn't be teaching if they can't handle us". One quieter girl attempted to answer this question but was railroaded by the noisier ones. Her comment was that "teachers at this school need to be a lot firmer with students" since she transferred recently here from another school and felt that discipline was more of a problem here at this school. Others stated that "teachers should not always nit-pick every little thing that naughty ones did and ignore them until the problem got really bad". Most of the lower school teachers have received training on behaviour issues and the current school policy is to ignore and distract to avoid escalation.*

Another student referred to a Science teacher who in her understanding could not control the class and called SOS (the staff support system where an SMT would help with the emergency by removing or excluding the disruptive students and easing the class teacher's burden). The student went on to explain how it took around 25 minutes before the "help" arrived and then nothing was really done about that naughty student. They further stated that *"every teacher uses different methods and because of that students seem to know how far they can push each teacher"*. *Unfortunately, the lack of standardisation of policy usage between teachers and departments was one of the sixteen themes identified in phase 3 of the research. Due to the fact that different perceptions were taken by teachers using the same behavioural policy, then the comment that student made, held true.* Another student said that *"teachers should all be young and with-it not old and stiff then maybe they'd be better able to handle students and understand their mentality"*. I then referred to two students who at the beginning of the lesson had been applying their make-up and asked them why they acted like that and did not see that as disruptive behaviour. They both replied that the Art teacher (present in the class at the time of the interview) was lovely and she never minded them applying make-up, despite the fact that the teacher had reprimanded them three times in the beginning of the lesson. *I personally think that 'the students cannot see past the end of their noses' and literally have to be*

*spoon fed discipline but without them realising and this is a very difficult task to do for any teacher at any level.*

The final question asked students to *give their opinions about the use of discipline in the school* as a whole. Many of the students said “*levels of discipline in the school were low and that students seem to do what they want*”. I then asked “*would it be better to ban the use of mp3 players and mobile phones at school?*”. There was a mixed response to this question- some students said a resounding ‘no’ with no further explanation and others (even the more dominant ones) said “*yes it was a good idea but should be relevant for the whole school not just year 10s and that they should be allowed to use them at break/lunch*”. The responses from question 8 tended to be around the lack of standardisation of discipline between teachers, with some eager to enforce the school rules, while others were more relaxed and situation specific. Hence, many of the students claimed “*sometimes it’s difficult to know what to do for the best or how to act and that, results in students ignoring teachers and watching them get worked up*”.

The year 10 Art group were debriefed (Appendix 6) about the purpose of the study and use of the data and then assured them of confidentiality and anonymity, to which many seemed disappointed as they wanted the Head to know who had made the comments. *I felt that the student interviewing was successful and had resulted in some very interesting commentary that was transcribed word for word and then sent to the Headmaster.* On the whole, the students had a fairly negative self esteem but their comments were quite self-centred. Only a few of the students could understand discipline problems from the teacher’s perspective. They did not like the fact that staff talked about them and had knowledge of their actions and behaviour which they felt only prejudiced teachers against them. *I personally think that students on the whole do not see past the end of their noses and unfortunately the lower years (whether they like it or not) have to be spoon fed discipline but in such a manner that they do not realise they are being controlled. However, this is not an easy task and requires some careful tactics from the teacher. Additionally, much of the student responses tallied with the research I found on student motivations (EPPI, 2004), student and teacher polarisations (Choh Sse Yee, 2001) and Dunham (1984b) with his views on schools creating the disinterested, unmotivated and unchallenged student. Hence, it seems that teachers need to be more creative keeping disaffected students on track so that they don’t become disengaged. Once the pupil is*

*disengaged, teaching becomes a battle which in some cases is destined to be lost (by the teacher).*

### **7.2.2 The Initial Ten Teacher Interview Findings**

Each tier of teaching staff had different commentary and thus Middle Managers who were interviewed shared the recurrent theme that “*they did not have their own voice to discuss issues collaboratively*” “*felt any suggestions that they put forward to SMT were ignored or dismissed*” and this happened on a regular basis, particularly for one respondent (interview 8, Male). Furthermore, a couple of Middle Managers elaborated on the friction between SMT expectations of the job role that Middle Managers should be doing and the reality and perceptions of the teachers involved. They stated that this mis-understanding between the higher and middle teaching tier was in fact a historic (long standing) problem that had occurred overtime and become sustained. The former headmaster had refused middle management contact without a member of the SMT present. The middle management went behind the headmasters back and had the meeting anyway. This caused upset to the senior management team and nothing has been done since. *Many middle managers suggested that I try my luck with the current headmaster to encourage termly meetings (not necessarily at school but on neutral ground) for Heads of Department and Heads of Year to discuss departmental developments. In fact the Head of Sixth form surprisingly said to me “if you manage to pull this off and arrange our meetings, I’ll buy you the biggest bouquet of flowers”. Then further added, (rather disappointedly) that she thought “it would definitely not be possible and would remain a sore point for years to come”.*

*It became apparent from interviewing Heads of Department that the rift between Senior and Middle management was political and all of a sudden I became a member of the battle field. Yes to a stronger intent what had been stated was true but not according to the Senior Management. One respondent stated that the ... “senior managers attempt to fob the middle managers off with the choice and freedom to vote for policies but then deny them the last say as the policy is passed. It’s like a political ploy....lure them with bait and then catch them out when they are least aware” (interview 8, Male). I thought this statement was a bit too strong and also felt that the Senior Management did try their best to address most issues and keep staff happy. However, the teachers still felt the communication levels were very poor and unless something was done to improve this, the*

*attrition rate would get worse or the negativity amongst staff would become worse.* This then caused annoyance, irritation and polarisation between the higher and middle tiers instead of showing a united front between the tiers. The Middle managers stated that the perception that many SMT gave to the rest of the staff, the governors and the public was of the school showing a united front with a supportive Senior Management. *However, the stories that they relayed in the interviews were very different to SMT perceptions.* A lot of interviewees (not just Middle managers) described their annoyance at the perceived lack of support they received from SMT (both verbal and physical help) especially when teachers called SOS (the emergency distress call to SMT when a behavioural problem arises in a classroom with students). Some interviewees stated that when they made the SOS call, “it took the member of SMT on call to deal with the emergency call-out 25 minutes to respond by which time the teacher had handled the situation”. Unfortunately, when the SOS arrived, the emergency situation had dissipated and the teacher was blamed for wasting Senior Management time. Incidences like this were being relayed to me and hence as a result of such commentary one of the comparative themes was the *Effectiveness of SOS and the support of Senior Managers.*

The Newly Qualified Teachers (NQT) shared commentary on “needing more time to discuss problems with other NQTs” “needing more off site visits to other schools to observe good practice” “not being helped appropriately on classroom management and behavioural policy issues”. Additionally, many of the NQTs stated that their physiological reactions in relation to question 6 on the interview schedule (stress reactions checklist) were based on nervousness and performance apprehension. Many teachers complained about tension and stress headaches, a few complained about skin rashes and indigestion and nearly all the NQTs complained about exhaustion, job related irritability and frustration. However, on the whole most of the NQTs interviewed said they were happy to be working at the school, they felt supported and felt that they would stay at the school until they had learned enough about teaching in practice.

Additionally, as the initial ten interviews were compared there was commentary that was shared by all the respondents that led to theme development. These tended to be along the lines of *timetabling confusions* (as in one year there was a lot of timetabling and class overlap which caused double room booking and the added frustration and annoyance); *lack of consistency from SMT when dealing with staff* (teachers complained about the way in which SMT communicated with lower levels, stating that in many cases they were

condescending and arrogant instead of being open minded and positive); *no policy for dealing with staff stress or no one to turn to* (in response to question 18: Do you or have you ever considered a stress management program? Has the school got a stress management program? Would you like there to be one?); lack of standardisation of new policies (at the time of the interviewing a new behaviour policy had been implanted at the school but the interviewees argued that there were departmental differences in its usage and some departments did not bother with it all. Hence, the lack of standardisation caused many teachers annoyance and frustration as many matters were taken into the teachers own hands and discretion. Other shared commentary related to question 16: *How would you define or describe stress in regards to teaching? How strong a link do you think there is between stress and teaching?*. The responses claimed the link between stress and teaching was very high and the definitions of stress tended to be “*perceived pressure related to your job*” (interviews 1, 2, 7, 9, 13, 15, 19, 20). Additionally, all teachers recognised the difficulties in controlling class disruption but the more experienced teachers stated they could handle disruption by using numerous strategies such as individual learning plans, seating arrangements and worksheet activities. Most teachers thought disruptive students tended to be in “*the middle sets where the students were of mixed ability and lower ability students are sat with higher ability students to improve their work*”. Many teachers explained that this was much harder to manage, since one has to have “*...eyes in the back of your head, the minute you turn around someone is off task causing trouble and disrupting students*”. One teacher stated that her method for dealing with disruption was “*...to ignore irrelevancies and only get cross and serious with stronger incidences, try to keep calm and make sure students never see you crack*”. *No wonder staff end up exhausted by lesson 5 because of the continuity of ‘keeping calm and not falling under pressure’. Many staff do not have breaks since many of them are on duty or covering faculty detentions. There seems to be a ‘no time out situation’ occurring for staff which is simply exacerbating their burnout, leading to lack of communication between departments and frustration for many teachers.* However, many of the middle managers interviewed stated that “*the perception of job stress in relation to class disruption was hyped up*” and “*could be reduced with the appropriate training and use of the SOS system*”.

Staff, were also asked about their views of the exclusion process, the A3 support unit (a time-out facility for excluded students, school phobics and disabled students with one to one teacher-student facilitation), re-inclusion of disruptive students and whether stress

would decrease as a result of the exclusion process. Answers were fairly similar. The fact that teachers *“have to leave the classroom for exclusion problems”* was a concern of many of the interview respondents. Many teachers stated that *“they don’t have phones in classrooms to call for help via SOS for disruptive behaviour”*. This they said was *“disturbing the other students who were prepared to work and encouraging a break of routine in classroom delivery”*. Most staff agreed that *“exclusion was a need for schools and that staff could not cope without it”*. They stated that *“teaching was unlike marriage vows and teachers could and should be separated from disruptive students”*. Only a few staff stated they thought the re-inclusion of disruptive pupils had gone smoothly. Many teachers claimed that the excluded student would *“...simply turn-up one day in class without any prior notice, not apologise or behave much differently to before they were excluded and generally cause trouble”*. However, this view was expressed by staff that had little contact with the A3 unit and the unit itself had only recently been set up (September 2004), therefore teething problems would occur. Since then the head of the unit has been informed of these comments and was pleased to acknowledge any difficulties that staff, were facing.

All the staff interviewed were pleased and relieved with the introduction of the A3 unit in school, stating *“...we should have had it set up earlier”*. Funding problems had occurred before then. Also, all the staff agreed that *“...stress levels would and do drop once the disruptive student has been removed but in some cases those students are rehabilitated back into class”*. One respondent stated that they did not think the exclusion process decreased stress for teachers but *“...only masked the stress”*. *I found this comment quite sarcastic and argued that we should be pleased for small mercies*. Currently, the A3 facility has gone from strength to strength and has expanded to include SEN students from other schools in the area. Furthermore, the one to one facilitation between the A3 students and teachers has caused an increase in the number of A3 students successfully passing GCSE subjects or Vocational subjects or doing well at college day release courses.

Finally then, the teacher commentary on the last question (Q32: *Have you ever been tempted to leave teaching? If yes what would be the main reason?*) was very interesting. Most teachers had said *“yes that at certain points in their career they had wanted to leave and the main reason would be lack of communication between departments, job overload and little recognition (either monetary or verbally) and just having had too much of everything”*. The interesting point was that none of them said they would leave teaching

because of the students. One respondent stated that “...*you cannot come into teaching youngsters with views like that, they’re not all that bad and there is good in every one of us you just need to find it!*”. *How true she was. After all teaching is about communication and finding the best in students, hence the Government’s initiatives for individual learning plans and target setting. By leaving the profession, one does not become stress free since stress is more a psychological component than physiological, and is found in every profession. One must learn not to think of better scenarios elsewhere but focus on and improve their current situation.*

When all the interviews were completed, transcribed and thematically analysed using Constant Comparative Thematic Analysis sixteen themes were produced (Appendix 5). Each theme and their related commentary are described separately below.

### **7.2.3 Theme 1: Whole School Attitude**

The interview commentary relayed how both, staff were inconsistent about applying the school rules, and students held blasé attitudes towards them. One interviewee in particular claimed that the “*school rules were not being used in a standardised way by teachers and this was exacerbating behavioural problems*” (interview 1, Female).

### **7.2.4 Theme 2 and 3: Effectiveness of SOS and Support of Senior Management.**

Theme 2 and 3 were combined together as the commentary was related. Nearly every interviewee complained about the problems of the SOS support system in helping teachers who needed immediate relief from classroom disruption. Normally in such circumstances of classroom behavioural problems, the teacher calls the SOS and the member of SMT on call deals with the matter as quickly as possible. However, many interviewees described horror stories of SMT not turning up or taking too long to deal with the issue in some cases “*25 minutes late*” (interview 8). The worst story was relayed by a senior member of staff who explained that:

*“When I was quite a young inexperienced teacher I had called SOS to my English class as a fight had broken out. The SMT removed the 2 boys involved in the fight but not before shouting at me and demeaning me in front of my class. I remember, I felt like crying and so I stormed out of the class and left to cool down”* (interview 11).

*Such commentary resulted in this theme, yet when this theme was disseminated during phase 4 of the research the Senior Management responded by dismissing these comments as being retrospective and unimportant. They stated that “the research was carried out a year go and was thus irrelevant to the current situation”.*

### **7.2.5 Theme 4: A3 Effectiveness**

This theme had a mixed response some participants pleased to have an exclusion area while other teacher participants were more dubious of the benefits of the A3 unit. Only a few teachers felt they really understood and supported the purpose behind the unit. Initially, the unit was set up to look after children with disabilities, SEN problems, school phobics (with the view to encourage them to get used to school in a relaxed, homely atmosphere) and students who were excluded from mainstream classes. *The unit itself was designed to provide students a ‘home from home’ atmosphere with a kitchen, a dining area, a garden and patio and ICT suite.....in other words the A3 unit was designed to be and feel different from the rest of the school. This in itself was causing students in mainstream school ‘jealousy and annoyance’ and the perception that “kids were going to A3 for a doss” (comment from Year10 Art group).* The teacher’s commentary about A3 was about the annoyance when *“excluded students were re-included in mainstream classes without the class teacher being aware of when and with little work planned for that student”.* One interviewee claimed *“students have been re-included without my agreement resulting in no work being set for them and the student re-disrupting the class”* (Interview 13, Female). *In my mind this was an important theme as it showed the lack of effective communication between A3 and the relevant class teacher.*

### **7.2.6 Theme 5: Administration Problems**

The Fifth theme was like an outlier theme, as it was related to question 14: *Workload and Job Stress* and contributory factors on the interview schedule. Nearly all the interviewees complained about the increase in administration within teaching, from report writing to use of computers to dealing with new policies introduced on a regular basis for teachers to use. Other administration concerns that were shared between respondents were *“timetabling”, “bureaucracy”, “added administration as the job role increased”* and *“continuous computer system upgrades”.* Furthermore, these comments were also related to theme 9: *School Facilities* and theme 11: *School Policies*. Many teachers shared concerns over *“inadequate class sizes”, “lack of phones in classrooms to call SOS”, “lack*

of computer rooms available for students”, “internet problems” and other general ergonomic problems about the school buildings ‘wear and tear’. Additionally, many teachers complained about “the lack of standardisation of the use of new policies for staff and the lack of follow-up training” (interviews 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 16, 19).

### **7.2.7 Themes 6 and 7: Teacher Coping Strategies and Teacher Perceptions.**

Theme 6 and 7 were related as the commentary for both was inter-related as teacher’s discussed both their coping strategies and their perceptions of them. Each teacher had different ways of handling disruption or job-related stress but most of the interviewees shared the perception about “the balance between work, poor student behaviour and stress” and tied in to this was the concern for “low self-esteem and self-doubt about teaching”. Many teachers relayed how a bad class, a bad day or a negative comment or conflict between staff members left many teachers feeling low and unappreciated. Furthermore, this theme related to theme 8: *Student Perceptions*. Teachers felt “that students were intuitive of tensions between staff” and teachers thought that “mainstream students who aren’t excluded, see A3 as an escape from lessons and a place of freedom” (interview 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 15, 18, 19, 20).

### **7.2.8 Theme 10: Stress Programme**

Most of the teachers interviewed recognised the failure of the SMT to have a stress councillor for teachers to discuss their stress or health related problems with “we don’t have anywhere to turn when seriously stressed or angered” (interview 4, Female, Head of Year), “I would like to have a point of contact within the school other than my colleagues or line manager, who can assure confidentiality and anonymity and allow me to unburden my woes” (interview 15, Male).

### **7.2.9 Theme 12: Sharing Good Practice**

Many teachers shared commentary on how they “wanted more opportunities for self-development and more communication between departments and teaching levels” “I would love to sometimes discuss issues that relate to teaching without Senior Management” (interview 1, 2, 5, 7, 9, 12, 13, 15). *From commentary like this phase 5 emerged as I decided it would be beneficial to offer teachers the chance to collaborate in forums either with or without SMT presence.*

### **7.2.10 Theme 13 and 14: *Re-Inclusion Practices and Exclusion Procedures***

The next two themes were related to the use of A3 and again linked in with theme 4: *A3 Effectiveness* and Theme 16: *Communication Problems*. Interviewees complained about the “*lack of communication between A3 staff and teachers*” but there was mixed commentary

“*Excluding disruptive students from class is really beneficial...teachers can’t live without A3 now*” (interview 6, Female).

“*The A3 unit is only masking the problem that has always existed but was dealt with differently in the past...teachers were allowed to use appropriate discipline and students listened*” (interview 9, Male).

*As the sixteen themes unfolded I realised that much of the commentary between them overlapped and many themes were inter-related. I thought this would increase the need for the last phase of the research.*

### **7.2.11 Theme 15 and 16: *Historical Problems and Communication Problems***

The final 2 themes were inter-related with the other themes. Teachers explained how:

“*Issues such as behavioural problems, classroom disruption, teacher-student polarisation were historical problems that have existed ever since Secondary Education began*” (interview 9, Male).

Yet one interviewee in particular claimed that:

“*The education system was better before the Government reforms and Ofsted*” (interview 7, Female).

#### **7.2.11.1 Theme 16: *Communication Problems***

The last theme was the most important theme that was uncovered from the transcriptions. All of the participants complained about “*communication problems between departments and teaching tiers and the need for teacher collaboration and chances to reflect on daily practices*” (interview 1-20). *This theme led me to seriously consider my practice development (phase 5) but when the themes were compiled the next stage which caused me concern was the dissemination of the research (phase 4). What was the best way to present the findings to staff when the themes had negative undertones and raised issues*

*contrary to the Leadership team?. Determined to change practice, I focused on the middle management forums for my practice development in the vain attempt to encourage teachers to collaborate, share problems and create solutions that could be practically evaluated using an Action Research spiral. In this way, I hoped that if one group of teachers could improve practice through co-operative inquiry and joint collaboration, then other teachers, departments and eventually the whole school would follow.*

The main objective being to make the Leadership team understand and appreciate comments made by teaching staff at the school in an attempt to enhance professional development, communication between higher and lower tiers and increase meta-cognition. *I remember feeling astounded by the shared outrage of the middle managers and the lack of voice and democracy at the school. Could I, a young female teacher-researcher implement a change in practices? Initiate a democratic reform in favour of teachers? Shift the emphasis of control and change the ownership of the knowledge?. These were huge questions that hung over me darkening my days, inflaming my anxieties, yet something inside me yearned me to find out. Months of turmoil and anxiety led me to consult my doctoral peers who suggested I continue developing the middle management meetings discretely without the Leadership teams, and more importantly, the Heads approval. They claimed that as a University researcher I could carry out research in this way but was being prevented due to the indoctrination into the educational system. Luckily, my supervisors advised against such action claiming that it was not ethically sound and could not only cost me the job but I could fail the doctorate. Eventually, wisdom presided and I felt another mass staff address would resolve the issue.*

*Thus far, I have described the observation findings of year 10, the student interviews and the outcome of the teacher interviews. However, at this point I feel it necessary to describe the viva transfer process that I went through and my reflections of it. I feel that by explaining the doctoral journey without elaborating on the viva process will leave the reader in the dark as to how the research became more focused on creating a change in practice (phase 5). At the time I remember being very confused about the intended outcome of the research and to tell you the truth, I needed the viva to kick start me into clearing my mind as to the possibilities for the practice development phase of the research. Hence, in the next section I have documented the viva process including narrative. I feel it necessary to place the viva journey at this point as opposed to the method chapter as in my mind the viva process occurred during the thematic analysis of*

*the interviews and the examiner's commentary helped my focus on the research dissemination and narrow down my practice development.*

*Overall the interview findings also showed a direct relationship between teacher stress and health related problems, particularly migraines, headaches, aches and pains and minor illnesses such as sore throats (found from questions 6 and 7 in the interview schedule). Furthermore, there was also a relationship found between teacher stress levels and the inclusion of disruptive pupils in class and between teacher stress and the exclusion procedures at the school.*

### **7.3 Viva day cometh!**

During any Doctoral research, whether full or part-time, all students go through their first big hurdle passing them from Masters level to Doctoral level. This is a very important step as it decides the fate of the research and whether it is to be completed at doctoral level. *I feel that is important to document the context in which the viva occurred, the cognitive shift that I experienced towards my research and the practice development as a result of the examiners commentary.*

The viva occurred during the interview transcription and thematic analysis (phase 3). *On May 10<sup>th</sup> 2006 I met my panel of examiners to decide the fate of the research (Doctorate or Masters). Not only was I busy transcribing and analysing codes of my interviews, the anxieties about findings dissemination culminated in additional concerns about preparing for the viva. My previous supervision session had set me thinking about possible viva questions. I thus set about the task of pre-empting the examiners questions. We were all informed of who our externals would be. There would be one external examiner, one of whom had an interest in the overall course set up here in Bournemouth and the other an expert of sorts in our fields of enquiry. From this I believed the questions would be quite general and read through my write-up and method section trying to rehearse sections just in case I was asked about them. Not really knowing what would be asked, viva day arrived. As a group the viva was arranged over 2 days (3 of us on the first day and the other 3 on the final day). My session was 3pm on Wednesday the 10<sup>th</sup> May 2006. Thus being later on in the day, I went to work in the hope to feel less nervous by occupying my day. All my colleagues wished me luck and as I drove down to Bournemouth I tried to remain as calm and hopeful as possible, really believing that if they did not agree with my write-up I would strongly argue my case until they had no choice but to pass me.*

*So here I was, now being called in. Suited up with viva notes in hand I entered the Sanctuary room to my destiny. Having been, formally introduced by the Chair person, the viva battering commenced. Both examiners had questions ready and as sure as I felt I answered one, another question was thrown at me. In truth the questions were not too bad. I felt that I was answering them honestly and knowledgably and as far as I could tell the examiners seemed happy enough. However, there were a couple of rather difficult and quite specific questions to do with my methodology. By this time I felt more relaxed at answering the questions and answered these questions using research related terms and with professional zest. I even used the term 'ontological oscillation' which raised a few eyebrows!!!. Then before I knew it my time was up, the chair person drew the session to a close instructing my supervisor and I to leave the room while they deliberated the outcome. I thanked them all and left excitedly reflecting on my performance. My supervisor was supportive as ever and claimed that I had answered confidently and should pass. Glad that the viva was over, I silently prayed for a positive outcome. As God and her mighty entourage of angels blessed me (or so it felt) I was informed of a clear and successful viva pass with no immediate changes to be made and only a few recommendations to help my research. Both externals were impressed with the effort that I had clearly made and the recognised depth of research but I was warned that the methodology section was too wide and needed narrowing in order to complete on time. Apparently, this was quite normal with research especially with multi-method research. The researcher becomes too immersed in the research design possibilities and can get carried away by participants' suggestions or demands for further investigation. I was instructed to stop interviewing and just to reflect on what had been achieved to date. Happy with this advice, I left Bournemouth beaming with pride and rang home to share my good news. Having such a wonderful family has made me realise how important my desire to become doctor is to me. In truth I'm not sure where or what I'll do career wise with the doctorate but started the DProf simply because I missed researching. The DProf journey so far has been positive despite minor niggles. I now officially feel like a researcher and feel more confident in eventually trying to apply for university based jobs.*

### **7.3.1 Viva Aftermath**

*As time passed I realised it was best to readdress issues that arose from the viva. Even though I was still sitting in the glow of passing, I knew that it would be unwise not to heed the recommendations that were made by the externals. I was congratulated and told to relax from writing up until the research had reached the next phase (Results section). I*

*was then strongly urged to anonymise the research to keep the school's name out of the research and keep in line with ethical considerations of confidentiality. In other words I had to refrain from identifying staff by name or in anyway that could incriminate them. I thought this suggestion was sensible but found it difficult to do, obviously because I am immersed into school life. Then I was advised to restrict the methodology of the research and define the bounds of what I was doing with what could be done.*

*When I reflect back over the research process, I found this difficult to do successfully, since the multi-method design to include the observation and interview of a year 10 Art class, had come from the Art Faculty Head. Many staff began to see me as a saviour to help them stop or somehow decrease disruption in classes, and they did not see me as teacher-researcher. I found the role conflict hard. On the one hand I was another member of staff but on the other hand I was inviting staff to interview on stress, their work life, classroom strategies and views on disruption. Not all staff were willing to open up but I personally felt that since I knew many of them, certain initial research boundaries had been crossed. Many respondents knew that I would keep the results confidential and imparted with a lot of personal information related to the questions.*

The examiners also questioned the expanding research design. They seemed concerned with the multi-method design, the fact that I had now involved year 10 students in the research and seemed confused as to why or how this had been relevant to my initial research aims and objectives. *I tried my best to reassure them that the research was not expanding further but thought it was wise to see the students' perspective, especially from a difficult class.* The examiners were also concerned about the use of a qualitative design but with quantitative questions in the interview schedule. *In support of my emerging research design I can argue that there is literature that allows research to be combined and mixed methods.* Researchers have carried out research including both qualitative and quantitative methods, the latter being only to enhance the results from the qualitative research. *On reflection, I knew the quantitative questions may cause confusion as the rest of the research was qualitative but explained how the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> questions on the interview schedule (Appendix 2) asked interviewees to state how often they had experienced stress symptoms in their job, just as Dunham had done in his research of Secondary school teachers in both English and German schools (1980a).* The understanding being to analyse pictorially the number of staff (if any) suffering from ill

health due to their teaching. If the results had come out low or insignificant, then the idea of stress affecting their health would be ruled out as an explanation of stress in their jobs.

Researchers have found strong empirical evidence stating a link between ill-health and work-related stress (Cooper et al, 1988; 1994; Cooper, 1995). The one negative that could be stated against this, was the fact that the sample size was small (20 interviewees) in relation to the number of staff at the school (86 teachers). *I also knew that the stress results from the interview were not quantifiable. I was not interested in particular, in the number of staff that were stressed or the number of coping strategies they used. The results/transcriptions of the interview schedule were wholly qualitative. Therefore, I was able to explain away the examiners concerns about analysing quantitative data.*

Also, in the examiner's report, questions emerged in regards to the coping mechanisms question (q17) from the interview schedule. The examiner was confused on my focus on coping with stress. Was I asking respondents about general coping mechanisms or coping mechanisms to poor classroom behaviour?. *Well, the answer is actually both!. I was interested in the coping strategies that teachers employed in their general teaching to keep students in line and if they employed strategies separately when disruption occurred. The importance of this question came from the observation and interview with the year10 class. However, the observations, per se, was not part of the original aims and thus it was decided that no more observations would be undertaken (despite the Headmaster suggesting so).* The examiners commented on the fact that the observation/interviews with students could have been inflammatory. *In hindsight, I realise this but can justify the ethics behind it, since I had gained presumptive consent initially from the students before interviewing them, I also gained permission from the Headmaster (who was happy for me to continue without parental agreement, stating he would act as proxy) and lastly from the Head of Faculty and class teachers. However, I agree that the student-teacher relationship could have been made worse after the interview but the students were pleased that research on disruption and teachers' coping strategies was being carried out.* They believed the interview was their chance to air their views. They all behaved well and answered the questions as best they could without referring to too many teacher examples. *Also, I had asked the class teacher to remain with the class during the interview and believe that in this way prevented unnecessary inflammation occurring.*

The students claimed that teachers were overly sensitive and saw literally every noise or comment as disruption, not being able to effectively judge, what was actual disruption, to what was just noise. The students claimed that they saw themselves as disruptive because they could not understand work and teachers did not or were not willing to help on numerous occasions. *Due to such commentary, I was intrigued to see if teachers managed classes appropriately. The results found that the more experienced teachers did understand the difference and could employ numerous strategies to cope with generalised noise and actual disruption.* The inexperienced teachers or newly qualified teachers found it slightly more challenging, perceiving students (like the year 10 class) to be a continual problem. Also, at the time organisational school strategies were in place or had been introduced. The questions from the interview on disruptive behaviour were related to the effectiveness of such school strategies eg: SOS or Staff Work Room (SWR) isolation.

Finally, the examiners were concerned whether I was looking at teacher coping mechanisms with disruptive behaviour or teacher stress separately to the inclusion/exclusion issue. *To tell the truth, the answer again is both. I was concerned with the Government's inclusion policy and highly aware of the growing number of exclusions (permanent and temporary) in schools. Therefore, my initial aims were to look at this in relation to the impact it has on the teacher in terms of their coping with work and their stress levels.* The understanding being that having the inclusion process, encouraged mixed ability classes and aided equal opportunities but also having an exclusion process could decrease immediate stress effects for teachers. *Therefore, I felt justified in reminding the external examiner that the interview questions were relevant and neatly addressed the aims of the research.*

Overall, the interview phase of the research allowed me to use the interview questions in a semi-structured fashion, allowing the use of the questions with smaller prompt questions. These questions were not structured and differed according to each respondent's answers. This allowed for deeper, richer data and encouraged respondents to tell stories about their work life to illustrate the answer they were giving (Appendix 3). *Hence, I can further justify the limited sample size of the interviewees, as larger numbers were not needed, supporting the qualitative methodology.*

Further commentary from the examiner was targeted on the practice development. They recognised that the practice development had been deliberated but was very much still in

gestation. Their concerns were about how I would create the staff groups, whether it would be for all staff or a select group of staff and how I would cope if the groups were not allowed to form. They stated that without the Headmaster's approval the change in practice could not officially occur. *I was able to explain to them that the Headmaster would be informed and I was planning on a way to disseminate the findings from the interviews in order for him to understand the importance and relevance of such meetings.* The next section explains how the findings were disseminated and my reflections on the process.

#### **7.4 Reflections On My Research Dissemination**

*The final phase of the research caused the greatest concern. Two initial proposals for the practice development had been set but were quickly disbanded (refer to Figure 3 PD progression pathway). Finally, in light of the outcome of the interviews, the third practice development was considered. Middle managers had complained about poor communications amongst themselves, and between Senior Management and had been refused such collaboration meetings in the past at the school with the previous Head. Thus, as I saw this to be the biggest need in the school, I attempted to create the collaborative focus groups for middle managers as the change in practice. The understanding being that I would simply facilitate the groups and would begin by stating the aims, objectives and possible outcomes of the meetings. Hopefully, then after the initial meeting, the teachers would then be able to steer themselves, advocate their own agenda to action and increase their meta-cognition. Many fears remained with me about the repercussions of such meetings and possible adversities that could result from it. My intention was to use a narrative methodology in which I would encourage staff to keep daily, weekly or monthly diaries of their teaching experiences. They could then share positive and negative experiences together and learn how to open up and be emancipated. The idea being, for teachers at the school, to incorporate these group meetings into the scheduled timetabled and for the collaboration to grow in order to encourage new staff to join. My feelings are that as teachers (and like other professionals) we become indoctrinated into this bureaucratic domineering system of hierarchical management, and hardly seem to question the purposes behind our actions. Most people just accept their roles and accept the ever increasing work burden that impinges upon them. Many people then begin to lose sight of why they entered the profession. The enthusiasm fades quickly and the tensions and stresses mount.*

As outlined in the literature review there is much evidence illustrating the loss of control at work and the impending stress that affects employees causing job burnout. *If only people could face up to their 'fears', challenge 'structures and hierarchies' without fear of reprisal or loss of position or income, the world of work may be less stressful. However, I feel that this Marxist revolutionary approach is easier said than done. Historically, the richer or more successful have dominated over those below them. There has always been and will always be tensions in the practice world between employer and employee. One could say it is the 'struggle of our times' - to remain stress-free or stress-less while meeting job demands that fluctuate with every government reform. How are teachers supposed to cope with such regular upheaval?. We face the constant pressure/threat of audit and it is this that keeps us where we are. The pressure reduces teachers to tears. It does not emancipate them or encourage students to think for themselves. We don't know how to do this.* Baird (1999) refers to this process as 'meta-cognition' or the growth in personal understanding. Meta-cognition has been researched in relation to teachers gaining control over their personal teaching practices, their knowledge and awareness of their classroom delivery and student evaluations of their teaching practices. In this way a self-reflective process is encouraged allowing for both personal and organisational growth. *You might argue that empowering teachers is hardly Marxist and you might state that power differentials in schools between groups of staff are difficult to change. I, however, would reply that by encouraging teachers to describe what they see as stress in their jobs, what disruptive behaviour is and the coping strategies they may employ to handle disruption, empowers them to change practice for themselves.*

The practice development caused much anxiety and deliberation and took a long time to carry out. Hence it was not seen as a quick fix scenario (as described above) and was eventually viewed as a political battle between senior and lower teaching tiers. As mentioned previously, many versions of the practice development (pd) were drawn up over time with aims and objectives (see Figure 3 p168) yet as was described the first 2 attempts at possibilities of pd were disbanded in favour of waiting for the interview findings (refer to DProf Timeline p169). Thus, with much deliberation and patience, the practice development (known as pd3) emerged from the third phase of the research (interview and observation analysis).

The interview findings had mostly come out negative and revolved around problems with communication between senior and lower tiers, pupil disruption, ergonomic problems such as small classroom sizes and problems with the teacher support system known as SOS. Overall, the practice development phase of the research was the hardest part to complete as it developed from the main research findings. Hence, the dissemination of these findings was carried out using a power point slide show approximately one year after the interviews, as the Thematic Comparative Analysis took time resulting in over 140 axial codes reduced to 16 themes. *As most of the themes were negative and based on problems teachers had faced or were facing in their job at the school, my concerns grew as to how the presentation would be received by staff. I often questioned how staff would receive the themes and the comments they would make. How many of the interviewees would remember what they had said or be confident enough to speak out about the themes? How would the different teaching tiers react to the themes? Would the newly qualified or lower level teachers agree or personalise the themes? Would Senior Managers empathise with these themes or would they vilify them?.* Hence, many fears of reprisal grew in regards to the dissemination of the findings and the acceptance of the fourth phase of the research. *All these fears had been dampening my progress on the pd and I had been feeling reticent about starting this phase of my research. Thus I began to discuss these fears with my Doctorate peers who argued that I need not contact the Head, after all as a researcher I do not need his permission as he would not be involved in the research. My fellow peers questioned my insistence on gaining permission from the Head, stating that this perception was arising as a result of my indoctrination into the profession and the perception of the hierarchy. Surely, though, their commentary could have stemmed from the fact that they were unaware of the bureaucratic nature of education and the real necessity nay a duty to inform the Head of the school before disseminating findings to other teachers. Hence, I don't agree with them, I feel whether one is a research-practitioner or not, the employee does not have the right to take an arrogant stance. I feel that my doctoral peers did not understand the pressure I felt in the conflict of my dual role as practitioner-researcher.*

*Eventually I decided to continue with the presentation. As the power point explained the background of the research, the analysed themes and the proposed fifth phase, I asked staff to consider whether they would be interested in forming collaborative groups to discuss the issues raised from the research and other problems or issues that they found of interest. I suggested that this could be carried out within or between departments*

*involving teachers meeting on a regular basis to share their concerns without (if necessary) the involvement of the Senior Management. I had assured staff of the anonymity of the participants and explained the retrospective nature of the research (May 05-June 06) as well as clearly stating the fact that the school had moved forward in communication and policies and that the school was a more positive establishment since the research was conducted. The aim of the presentation was for the staff to verify these themes.*

Furthermore, in relation to my presentation, Vance and McKinnon (ASET conference, 2002) describe traditional teacher professional development as that involving ‘*short bursts of face to face delivery, based on transmissive methods and recognise the need for collaborative teacher development*’. They recognised the growing trend into collaborative professional development but suggest that the only way forward is ‘*with structured long-term follow-ups*’ (Sparks, 1994; Loucks-Horsley, 1995) with ‘*action research pedagogy for teachers to reflect on practice*’ (Abdal-Haqq, 1996; Dawson, 2002; Solomon Joan and Tresman, 1999). The process of discovery is based on the metaphor of a swamp (either as fertile ground or fetid swamp). The analogy given by Vance and McKinnon (2002) is that teaching is much like ‘*a fetid swamp with mangrove branches hindering progress that when identified lead to more problems as the tree leads to a mass of entangled roots which then become difficult to free one-self from*’. *In this way, I had to determine the position of the themes. Would the staff be happy to uncover the roots of the problems by collaborating or by personal discovery or would the stench of decomposition prevent them from theme verification? If so, where would the supposed stench of decomposition come from? My hunch is the leadership team and each teacher’s fear of reprisal.* Each theme was discussed using examples to illustrate them in the hope to inspire the audience to ask questions or shout out in disagreement. *Many of the themes overlapped and in some cases it was difficult to make a clear segregation, uncovering the entangled roots that caused the commentary. The staff did not respond as I had envisaged and remained silent only commenting when the presentation was over.*

## **7.5 Final Qualitative Findings (Phase 4)**

*Phase 4 of the research was when I disseminated the findings from the teacher interviews to staff in a staff meeting (June 2007).* The Head had allocated a very short time slot at the end of the staff meeting for my presentation when teachers were exhausted after a very

long day. *This meant that staff, were not in the best frame of mind for joint collaboration or possible political ownership of the knowledge.* The staff's body language said it all....some nodded in agreement or disapproval of the themes, others seemed to be apathetic and two teachers walked out claiming irrelevance or busyness. As each theme was being addressed, anonymous commentary examples were included to illustrate them. Many themes claimed that teachers were unhappy by communication between the tiers, the lack of consistency and standardisation of policies and more importantly pointed to the Leadership team's arrogances and inadequacies. Then there was silence....they all sat there shocked perhaps by my audacity of stating my findings. *Perhaps I needed to fudge the data. Would that have pleased them?. I bravely continued aware of the shock and embarrassment showing on the faces of the Senior Managers. Quickly changing tactics, I turned to my rather demotivated and fairly uninterested audience with arms gesticulating the message that '...as excellent teachers we need more collaboration and open-ness we need to admit to problems and come up with joint solutions'. I had envisaged that the presentation would lead to discussions and murmurings amongst the teachers present leading to them being intrigued by the themes and concerned about the identified problems. Unfortunately, as I bravely presented the power-point, the audience remained quiet, uninterested and unmoved. I had failed to gain their interest, motivate them and rally them into collaborative groups. Had I failed in the purpose of the presentation?. I couldn't help feeling disheartened as the presentation came to an end and none of the teachers had asked questions, wondered how they could help or what would happen now.* Staff quickly filed out of the room, glancing at me and then towards the Headmaster as if to say "...you must be joking". *As I walked back to my office for solace, I was surprised to hear my office colleagues congratulating me on the presentation "...well, done that was brilliant" "wow, did you see their faces, Senior Management did not look too happy" "God, you are so brave...I heard the Head of year 9 sniggering at the themes...she whispered 'whose going to own up to it now?'".*

Interestingly enough, despite the staff silence during the presentation, tongues were 'wagging' and the presentation had made an impact. *Was it for my benefit or to my detriment?.* Many teachers laughed at my naivety of not knowing what would or could happen after the presentation and hardly anyone admitted to being involved or claimed they had forgotten what they had said. There seemed to be a real sense of passing the 'buck' and slowly I began to feel guilty about the presentation.

*The following day, I e-mailed the Leadership team offering them the chance to respond to the themes. The responses were fairly emotional, it seemed that the Senior Managers had not taken kindly to the presentation and were being defensive. They were obviously suffering from side effects and apparently one of the Deputy Heads (who was also my line manager) claimed that other staff had aired their disappointment and disapproval of the presentation. Why had they not come to me? Why did staff feel it necessary to go to SMT? Was this truly a nanny-state? Could staff not air their opinions? I was angered by their silence. Had the research been for nothing? Was I not a teacher, a Head of Department, a colleague, an ally.....like the rest of them?*

Days went on and not one member of staff verified the themes. *What were they scared of and more importantly where was their fear of reprisal coming from? Perhaps they felt the same anxiety as I had done before the practice development. It dawned upon me the problem arising was one of dual role-conflict. I was being ostracised (or so it felt) for my role as teacher-researcher. Did they not understand the research objectives? The idea behind teacher emancipation and control through collaboration?. Did they not understand joint co-operation and unity and the benefits gained?. After all, I was trying to help them develop into better teachers, to unlock their meta-cognition and ultimately help their professional development. Did they not appreciate the difficulty I faced playing the dual role and the difficulty of ownership of others knowledge?. I was hugely disappointed by the teacher's lack of responsiveness and felt they were very wrong not to have responded to the themes as they were presented on the power-point. I felt slightly embarrassed that I had disseminated the findings which were fairly negative only concentrating on the problems that had been uncovered during the interviewing. In fact very few of the themes were positive and I had not polished the findings in any way.*

Senior Managers claimed that my interview questions had been biased, that I had influenced the participant's responses or misinterpreted their commentaries. This angered me even more....*Did the Leadership team not understand the concept of interview design and ethics? The rigour behind the DProf and the fact that I would not have passed the various progression stages had my interview questions and techniques not been valid and reliable?* After all the participants were free to answer questions how they wanted but the themes showed shared commentary illustrating the internal validity and mundane realism of the research.

### **7.5.1 The Headmaster has the Final Word**

*Another unexpected outcome I faced was an e-mail from the Head asking me “.....to stop all research, do not proceed further until you have seen me”. This was it.....the final showdown. I would now find out what the Head thought about the research, if he wanted me to continue, whether he had understood the objectives and was happy to implement changes at the school based on the findings and ultimately whether I still had a job. Once again, anxieties peaked. However, the meeting though fairly gruelling was less stressful than I had imagined. He talked openly and frankly about his feelings. Firstly, he stated he would have liked to have seen the findings before the presentation. Why? Would he have changed the findings? If so how? Would he have preferred a more balanced picture holding the Leadership team in a more positive light?.*

The Head then questioned my understanding of ‘stress’ claiming that I had based my research framework on a one-sided personal perception of stress and had tried to validate it with the teachers. He wondered whether I had made the distinction between self-defined stress and clinical stress. *I then explained that stress was multi-factorial and that it was not my definition which was investigated but the perceptions of stress in teaching (in relation to inclusion and exclusion) from the participants that was important. I further explicated that I remained objective and neutral throughout the research, which had been difficult to do being a teacher at the school. However, despite my teaching role I managed to complete the interviews ethically.*

Next, the Head accused me of basing my ideas of high staff turnover at the school on false premises. He argued that I had been naïve, since research on teacher attrition at schools was around 8% meaning our school was not extraordinary. Thus based on this, the Head was trying to *normalise* the turnover and dismiss my research aims and objectives. He further explicated that he felt that I had mishandled the themes and their context....after all twenty teachers out of a staff of hundred and twenty, was only a very small proportion and... *“If stress was a problem for them why had they not informed their line managers? Or why had the Head not been informed? Had I considered teachers who were clinically stressed from those who were self-defined”?* The underlying point was the reputation of the Leadership team and ultimately the school. *“Who would have access to these results?” “Surely, the fact that the research was conducted a year ago (May 2005-June 2006) to when the findings had been presented (June 2007) meant that the research was*

*retrospective*". The Head questioned the validity of the findings and their generalisability ".....if the same research was carried out today the staffs responses would be different now....the school has made huge improvements...communication between higher and lower tiers is much better...we are more organised with a tighter professional development agenda".

The Head stated that his major concern was that the themes and the context had been 'mishandled'. According to him if staff had been so stressed why had they not reported it to their line managers and ultimately to him. He argued that there was a reliability and representation issue at stake. He stated the presentation may be misperceived and that the Senior Management perceived negatively by staff and the public. This in turn could affect the reputation of the school and effect recruitment and retention figures. The Head also believed that the retrospective nature of the research would not have been understood by the staff at the presentation. He believed that the same issues researched would have metamorphosed and new more relevant findings would have been uncovered. *What would happen if the staff made similar comments about the leadership team second time around? How would Senior Management have dealt with this? Would the response and reaction of staff been different to now? Would the Senior Management have been open enough to enlighten staff to any negative commentary?.*

Despite this rather interrogatory start and my defensive response to my research, the meeting progressed well. The Head understood how the purpose of the staff address was verification of the themes with the intention of continual professional development (cpd). The cpd issue is very important and in relation to this the Head stated that the criticisms regarding the re-inclusion procedures for A3 students needed tightening but that there was much better communication levels at the school particularly since the introduction of staff laptops and effective accessible databases. The Head claimed that the research had been useful and if he had been privy to the themes before hand, they could have been dealt with in terms of future progress or practice development. He continued that due to the small sample size in relation to the 120 staff (hence the idea of misrepresentation) that he would hold back final judgement on what had been learned until he had read the final version of the write-up. *Thus, by reserving his judgement and claiming not to be offended by the research, I felt it necessary to ask whether the middle management meetings would have been allowed.*

*I had explained that many schools had carried out collaborative research with staff and had explained that the results were always much more positive if Senior managers had involved themselves as participants in the research.* After fair deliberation, the Head stated he would not have allowed the meetings since meetings without SMT or purposeful objectives were useless. No one would ever gain from such meetings and the Head would be accountable for any issues raised. He argued that meetings without management in any organisation would not be acceptable today, particularly in education. This was then tied in with different types of schooling. The Head claimed that such research being revolutionary and 'new-age' would not have been acceptable in a grammar school or a private institution. The explication being that within the hierarchical education system based on salary structures, set Governmental criteria prevented the proletarianisation of the white collar workers and stated this was his justification for not allowing the final phase of the research (phase 5) to take place. *I then thanked the Head for his consent for the research at the school and explained how case study analysis and teacher-researcher inquiry was a growing recent trend for education research.*

## **7.6 Summary Of Chapter**

*In this chapter I have discussed in detail the findings from all the phases of the research, starting with the observational findings from the year 10 Art group and the student interviews.* The chapter then progressed to describe the initial ten findings from the teacher interviews to include commentary made by Middle Managers, NQTs and commentary that was common to all ten interviewees. The sixteen themes were then described separately incorporating real commentary from interviewees. Additionally, my MPhil to Doctorate transfer viva (including my reflections) was added to give insight into the questions that were asked by both examiners which caused me to narrow the research and concentrate on the practice development. *At the time of the viva transfer, I was busy transcribing interviews and considering avenues to research how to implement a change in practice at the school.* The viva transfer re-focused my attention and led me to develop a power-point to disseminate the research findings. Included in this were the aims and objectives of the research, Figure 2 (p145) and the sixteen themes with anonymous commentary. Unfortunately, no staff responded perhaps due to fear of reprisal and the SMT and Head were outraged with the research outcome stating that they should have previewed it before the staff meeting. The last section of the chapter discussed the

Headmasters reasons for not allowing the final phase of the research and was enhanced by my narrative reflections on the Headmaster's commentary.

Altogether the Methodology section (Chapters 5 and 6) details a journey of discovery, highlighting the difficulties and anxieties that were faced when considering the phases of the research, the use of the emergent design including the practice development and the dissemination of the findings. *A year later as I write up the practice development, I am still employed by the school but saddened in the knowledge that no real changes were introduced to the school as a result of my research intervention. I feel that the school has moved forward since my initial interview findings and presentation, and continues to do so. Yet there is still the underlying assumption that collaborative commentary amongst staff should not challenge the status quo of the school and by doing so questioning the school's reputation with children, parents, governors and the wider community.*

## Chapter 8

### My Critical Reflections Upon My Work As A Researcher– Practitioner and the Dissertation Project

*'In Western thought affect and emotion have been distrusted, denigrated or at least set aside in favour of reason. The tendency to distrust – even deplore- emotion has been aggravated by the rise of professions with their insistence on detachment, distance, cool appraisal and systematic procedures'.*

*Noddings (1996 p435)*

## **Chapter 8: Critical Reflections On My Research**

This chapter considers my reflections on the practice development and addresses the courage involved in trying to address the theory-practice gap in most professional and academic occupations. *In this chapter I will critically reflect upon my research journey and consider the barriers to effective professional development. Furthermore, I consider the implications for further research advocating for the wider use of p-r in education to prevent individual research vilification and isolation. I also consider the advice that I could give as a novice research practitioner to other researchers and how the research could have been conducted to result in a more positive outcome incorporating the process and findings of the intended fifth phase of the research design.*

### **8.1 The Completed Journey**

Altogether, this research has led me on a very important journey of self discovery. *I now realise the naivety from which I started pondering doing doctoral research at the school. The inquisitiveness that had encroached upon my thoughts led to the beginnings of the research process and ultimately ended in a political struggle between myself as research-practitioner and the quest to create teacher collaborative groups amongst staff to help them in their professional and personal development. The resultant barriers experienced whilst carrying out practitioner-research opened my eyes to the ongoing battle between positivist, traditional hierarchies and the individual worker/researcher trying to make sense of the daily grind.*

*Furthermore, the vilification against the research findings surprised me as I did not expect to be blamed or ostracised for commentary made by interviewees and I never perceived the horrible feelings I would have, of possible redundancy for carrying out the research. I feel that my research demonstrated the fact that teachers explicated more 'problems' in their daily teaching than positives and even though not all the findings were negative, very few positives were found. This does not mean that the research was invalid (as the Senior Team stated) or that the school or its leadership are bad. What it proved to me as an insider teacher-practitioner was that there was a discrepancy between the participant teachers' open-ness and the Senior Teams closed-ness, and until some compromise was considered improvement at the school would not take place. In hindsight, I believe I was extremely naive and trusting of the 'system', the school managers and the Headmaster. By now, the reader has probably understood the barrage*

*of questioning I faced from the Headmaster once the findings had been disseminated.* In summary, the Head tried his best to fault the research, claiming that my definition and understanding of teacher stress was initially biased and this had skewed my outlook on the collection of results and the analysis and dissemination of the findings. He argued that the research had not been unbiased, starting from gaining participant consent. *He seemed to forget the numerous e-mails and staff addresses that I prepared to explain the purposes of the research (Appendix 1) and the fact that staff permission had been ascertained before the interviewing.* The Head also questioned the structure of the interview schedule, claiming that the question design was negative resulting in interviewees responding in a negative way, derogatory to what was actually occurring at the school. In other words, the Headmaster saw my whole research process as some form of political teacher liberation which allowed them to speak out against the school, when in fact the school management was very well run with higher proportions of pupils gaining excellent GCSE grades. Additionally, the Head did not understand the emergent nature of the whole research process and expected clearly defined stages of research. *I explained that the interviewing phase was based on open-ended opinion based questioning in relation to the teachers' job role and duties and the questionnaire schedule was semi-structured allowing for probe questioning.* Based on this each interview was unique and the researcher remained impartial (as far as possible in consideration to their insider role). *I explained to the Headmaster that themes that were extracted from the data were based on a computer sort of similarly coded categories and commentary and reduced substantially from 140 axial codes to 16 themes.* Thus, the compilation of the research findings were objectively ascertained and were not influenced by the researcher, as some of the Senior Managers claimed.

Furthermore, it is important to appreciate that it was actually from the interviewing phase that the second stage of student observations and interviews occurred. The Head of Art had requested that I observe her newly qualified Art teacher who had been having difficulties with her year 10 class. Thus, two observations of the year 10 class were carried out and the findings disseminated to the teacher and the Headmaster. From this, the year 10 students were interviewed on their perceptions of classroom disruption, behaviour problems and views on teacher discipline and some very interesting findings resulted (Chapter 7).

All of the phases of the research were time consuming and prone to difficulties. The whole research process took approximately 3 years in total from initially gaining informed consent to the dissemination of the findings. The final year was used to write-up the research and (as has previously been explained in the prologue) incorporated poetry, quotations and personal reflective narrative in blue italics alongside the structured systematic literature review, methodology, findings and practice development sections. The systematic review was divided into chapters starting with stress definitions and resulting in individual and gender differences and an analysis and comparison of occupational stress. This then led into a chapter on stress in teaching and involved a mass review of research on the factors involved in stress creation to the problems with disruptive students and how to address such problems. Wider projects such as the Ford Teaching project, the Nottinghamshire TRIST-TVEI and the Australian based PEEL project to encourage teacher collaboration and meta-cognition were discussed in the fourth chapter in order to understand how educational research has evolved from the very beginnings of the practitioner research movement and how the teacher is now being accepted as the main vehicle involved in education policy analysis. This then led onto a discussion on the conflict between top-down and bottom-up research and the difficulties of endorsing and verifying the emic-insider perspective.

By the fifth chapter on methods, action research, co-operative inquiry and collaboration were discussed in some detail resulting in the analysis of the practitioner-researcher methodology in contrast to positivist explanations and stances on educational research. The sixth chapter invited the reader to understand the aims and objectives of the research and the procedures involved in carrying out each stage of the research. More importantly, the ethical considerations of the research were described in some detail, as all research must be ethically endorsed to maintain outcome validity and maintain a degree of ethical professionalism. This in turn can result in *'the conceptualisation of an activist teaching profession with the aim to improve all aspects of education enterprise not only at the macro level but the micro level of student learning outcomes and teacher's status in the eyes of the community'* (Sachs, 2000 p77). Hence, *'the notion of the ethical professional, incorporated in the use of practitioner-research, has great implications for research leading to social action'* and *'the possibility of an activist teaching profession'* (Lewin, 1946 p203). Once the ethical considerations have been met, the practitioner researcher questions the quality of evidence based practice, the quality of purpose and eventually the quality of the outcome from practitioner-research. Groundwater-Smith (2005) stipulates

that the purpose of the p-r within schools will vary based on the quality of the questions being asked and result in different levels of analysis and outcomes. She states quite clearly that practitioner research fails when it is implemented in a top-down way which denies teacher emancipation in favour of the system hierarchy.

Despite the shared themes and the affirmative commentary based on the desire towards a middle management collaboration group, the last phase of the research was not permitted by the Head. Thus even with positive intentions for staff development it is impossible for the researcher-practitioner to imply that a transformation in teaching practice will ensue. This can only occur in a supportive, non-threatening environment. *I had to respect the Head's decision not to allow the meetings as my role as (insider) researcher-practitioner was not to coerce or impose but to create opportunities for teachers to grow.* The Head claimed that such research being revolutionary and 'new-age' would not have been acceptable in a grammar school or a private institution. His reactions along with other members of SMT were defensive.

## **8.2 My Critical Reflections: *Could the research have been carried out differently?***

*To begin my reflections on the research process and the outcomes of the practice development, I am reminded of a quote by Marston Bates who states that 'Research is the process of going up alleys to see if they are blind'. I thought that this statement was apt to what I was feeling at the time of disseminating the findings as I was feeling very uneasy informing staff that the themes were mostly negative and had felt extremely anxious about the last phase as the Head had not been told the findings prior to the staff meeting. At the time, the decisions I made not to contact the Head to discuss the findings was purely to avoid SMT intervention in the research process. I believed that if I had informed the Head he may have purposely changed or in some way doctored the findings to present the school in a more positive light than was being highlighted by the themes. I truly believed that by plodding along in my research role I would avoid SMT conflict but I was very aware that they would not appreciate the findings. Even after the first ten interviews I soon began to realise that participants were seeing the interviews as an opportunity to discuss school issues without 'fear of reprisal' as many of them said how good it felt discussing their job role, how they saw student discipline and the stress they felt with a colleague who would hopefully put all the data to good use for the benefit of teachers. The*

*reflections from each interview were ascertained and when the data was transcribed, the reflections were put into table form (see Appendix 3) along with the code, theme, actual commentary and my reflections. These reflections were then used both to address issues at the time which could be used to inform the questioning in the next interview and to determine the practice development phase of the research and both the staff and student interviews were used to build up a bank of evidence for the need for the fifth phase of the research*

*On a critical reflection, the anxiety that built up over the 18 months from collecting the interview data to presenting the findings could have been avoided by keeping the Head abreast of the research at every stage. After all despite the Heads informed consent to carry out the research (which he may not have understood in the first place as later on he questioned my definition of 'stress' assuming that the research involved only using stressed teachers) he was not informed about the themes that emerged and the development of the power point on the themes. Therefore, this brings into question at what point the SMT realised what the research was about and when they realised matters were becoming threatening to them or the running of the school. Surely, to be completely ethical in my research role I should have approached the Head explaining the practice development when pd3 had been confirmed. In that way, the Head would be aware of the ideology behind practitioner-research and the purpose of the last phase of the research.*

*Furthermore, I think it is important to explicate how despite reviewing research by Cooper and Kelly (1993) on head teacher stressors and how it affects the decisions they make about their schools in the Manchester study I did not include these stressors in my research as I wanted to sample teachers from all levels and not base the interview around the management strata. This, I feel is a particularly important consideration that was consciously made but in hindsight I think it was probably best to have given Cooper's research a little more credence in the light of the outcomes of my own research. Perhaps had I understood the pressures that head teachers face, I would have changed the research method and carried out more grounded research involving critical analysis of how practitioner researcher could be carried out by teacher-practitioners whilst considering the barriers that affect the use of p-r in schools.*

*During the early phases of the research before the interviewing, I should have insisted that all SMT become participants in the research take part in the interviews and provide*

*their perspective on teacher stress, classroom disruption and coping strategies. In that way, the SMT would have been aware that teachers being interviewed were opening up to me as their fellow colleague and 'spilling the beans' about the realities of the SOS system for dealing with classroom disruption. Senior managers could have then described how they viewed communication systems between themselves and teachers and how they saw disruption at the school.* According to Bell (1987) 'to convince people of the researchers integrity all members of the institution should be involved with the research from the start, as consolidation rather than conflict helps managers on side' (p25). Related to this, Gravett (2004) demonstrated the importance of management support and co-operation in sustaining change within an organisation. Her research tried to implement transformative learning in higher education teachers, changing from a teacher-centred approach to a learning centred dialogic approach using Action research. From the three institutions that she studied, one completely refused to permit the change. She found the issue of control and the deep internalisation of the socialised views of the teacher's role prevented some teachers to make transformational changes (Brockbank and McGill, 1998; Shor, 1992). Mezirow (2000) sums such despondency as occurring at the very beginning of the transformational process. Teachers feel transformational learning poses a threat to the long established sense of order especially within schools, which then hinders self-reflective inquiry and the cyclic nature of action research (Carr and Kemmis, 1985; Kuhne and Quigley, 1997). *Thus could it be that the sense of bureaucracy is hard-set at the school and teachers are afraid of collaboration, self-reflection and empowerment within a tightly controlled regime?.Despite this I am still struggling with my conscience about whether I should have requested follow-on discussions with staff. Would that have made my existence as an insider more difficult?.*

Action Research (AR) and Transformative learning using collaboration and co-operative inquiry is possible, has been effectively carried out by other researchers and can lead to improvements in practice. The biggest factor to successful AR is a supportive management. If they find the process of collaboration, self-reflection and empowerment dubious or threatening, then the research is dead in its tracks. Fecho (2003, cited in Ulanoff, 2003 p432) claimed 'teacher-researchers suffered from 'a double jeopardy problem' where both their practices and their research are critically examined by those who they are accountable to, leading to adverse consequences'. *Unfortunately I found this out while presenting the findings to staff and the Senior management team and believe*

*that I am still suffering from the affects now. Also, I believe that my research proved the difficulties of insider research.*

As explained previously in chapter 4, when the practitioner is ‘*part of the organisation the research is authentic taken from an emic perspective*’ (Allen, 2004 cited in Speziale and Carpenter, 2007 p202) and ‘*causes the researcher-practitioner to acknowledge their own taken for granted assumptions*’ (Pellat, 2003 cited in Allen, 2004 p15) yet the inside-researcher suffers from the problem of dual-role conflict (Fitzgerald, 1997; Gerrish, 1995; Johnson, 1992; Rudge, 1995). The researcher continuously questions the ethics (Gerrish, 2003) and practicality of the research and the institution assesses the researcher based primarily on work performance and attitude. Such that if a negative perception is held about the worker, then their role as researcher may be hindered by the lack of separation of the dual roles. Despite the fact that being an insider gives the ‘*researcher privileges of familiarity in the setting, it can also result in certain routine behaviours being overlooked and the tension between insider-outsider research remains fragile*’ (Bonner and Tolhurst, 2002 cited in Allen, 2004 p16). Many teacher-researchers, unfortunately, find themselves in ‘*a culture that does not kindly advocate questioning and often the ‘victims’ are silenced*’ (Collaborative Action Researchers for Democratic Communities, 1997 cited in Ulanoff, 2003 p432). *Therefore, despite the fact that SMT should have been involved with research from the very beginning I still feel they would have questioned the validity behind practitioner-research and would have prevented me from continuing with the research earlier on, perhaps even before transcribing the data. As has been stipulated above, any threat to the school order would have provided a reason to prevent me from continuing with the doctorate. I feel the SMT at the school would not have appreciated my supervisors from intervening in school business and would have argued that there was no need to research stress at the school as no reports from teachers had been made.*

Furthermore, Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1991) state that managers are in a state of conflict themselves as they suffer from the dilemma of wanting to endorse change and be perceived as effective leaders but are torn between exerting top-down control associated with strong leadership and being seen as permissive leaders. *I appreciate that this dilemma forces many managers of organisations to side with bureaucracy as their job role stipulates but in my mind by ignoring practitioner-research they stifle their staff, encourage despondency and lack of motivation and are themselves the main cause of teacher attrition rates.*

*In hindsight when questioning how I should have done things differently, the answer seems to be all too, unrealistic. I think it depends upon individual schools and their management styles. My school refused to allow p-r in its full capacity, perhaps fearing reprisal from students, parents, governors and ultimately the press. My post-doctoral reflection of this is that neither, the Head or the SMT were actually aware of the advantages in endorsing p-r. Perhaps had I introduced the practitioner-research methodology much earlier in the phases of research at the beginning, then there would have been less alarm at the research findings and less embarrassed and harassed Senior Managers.*

*I remember one member of the SMT panicking once she saw the power point as she argued that this research could damage the school's reputation and intake of new students could drop if parents found out the findings. All the SMT justified their vilification of the research and felt relieved once the Head had finally stopped me from continuing. Little did they know that despite their abhorrence of the findings, the research process and my reflections would still have to be documented in order for me to complete and pass the doctorate.*

*Therefore, I feel justified in the way I conducted my research phases as appropriate informed consent was ascertained and all ethical approvals were made both from the school and from my supervisors guiding me on the research process. The school was anonymised as was the identity of all participants throughout the research by excluding names mentioned in the interview transcripts. However, on reflection of gaining the Head's informed consent to carry out the research at the school, I should have been clearer in explaining the emergence of the research design as was predicated by the nature of qualitative inquiry. This would have allowed for me to continue with the research phases in an inquisitive investigatory stance, perhaps allowing the research to evolve in different ways without the research being abruptly halted by SMT.*

*Additionally, despite the negative outcomes of the research as my role of insider research practitioner, I feel that had the research been conducted by myself as a teacher with a different Secondary school the findings would have been different as being an outsider researcher I would have gained more credence as a researcher associated with Bournemouth University than I did being an inside researcher at my school. Perhaps then practitioner-research is only possible when the researcher is not affiliated with the*

*organisation as ethical dilemmas of dual role conflict are avoided and the researcher themselves avoids the stress of accountability. I must admit that I did not think about this possibility and ironically suffered a great deal of stress and anxiety conducting my research when the research was about stress in teachers. Research needs to be conducted further on the best way to conduct practitioner research and researchers themselves need to be interviewed on the beliefs on the research outcomes and the related stress involved with it. Perhaps insider research is possible when strategies are employed preventing researchers from becoming flustered and stressed out from the research.*

*Personally, I don't feel that the research outcomes would have been that different had I taken the role of outside researcher. Firstly, being employed as Head of Psychology would have prevented me from being accepted as an 'outsider' as I was too immersed in the school and even if I had assumed an outsider position then I could not have conducted the interviews as the Head probably would have expected a researcher from the University to conduct the phases of the research. This would have then put my role as research-practitioner in question. How would I have possibly been able to reflect on the research if I myself was not immersed in it?. Hence, I feel outsider research would not have been viable at the school with me as the researcher.*

*Furthermore, after researching the stressors that affect Head teachers as was mentioned in chapter 3 (Cooper and Kelly, 1993; Day and Bakioglu, 1996) I think that it is important for all researchers to consider the pressures that Head teachers are under in maintaining the status quo of schools. Many factors were found to affect the decisions made on school improvements such as pressure from parents, governors, Ofsted and positioning of schools in league tables. Based on such research I now appreciate some of the problems that the Head at the school could have suffered from when I presented my findings. At the time, the school had been inspected by Ofsted and was graded 'satisfactory' for its teaching and management styles. The Head was probably unwilling to initiate any changes at the school until proper strategies had been put in place with improving teaching, management styles, student discipline and the like. Unfortunately, the criticisms that Ofsted inspectors had picked up on about the school had also been reflected in my research findings. The Head, in my mind, could have used the findings to encourage phase 5 of the research and allow staff the chance to collaborate to improve their teaching styles and discipline procedures.*

*I advise all future insider researchers to pre-plan their research considering all eventualities (as far as is possible) in the research phases and for the researchers to include as many members of the institution as possible to avoid biased sampling, possible demand characteristics and to avoid ostracising managers from the research process. I would advise future practitioner-researchers to be careful when considering research in schools and carry out a lot more grounded research on practitioner-research so that they are aware how to inform their research phases, whom to include and how to avoid socio-political barriers such as top-down bureaucracy covering issues relating to school management, democracy and professional development. I would also advise researchers to avoid (as far as possible) the methodological and ethical binds that are associated with dual role research and if unavoidable (as was my case) to proceed with caution informing the Head of the organisation of any decisions that may have been made that change the course of the research.*

*All in all, despite the difficulties and anxieties I faced during the research and the unexpected premature closure of the research by the Head, I have enjoyed immersing in my dual-role as teacher researcher but now I can sit back and reflect on the research and appreciate how the stressors that affected me during the research were all due to my 'novice ability as a doctoral researcher'. I now feel enlightened to the true nature of practitioner research and feel the necessity for researchers to continue gaining evidence based practice to build up a body of knowledge which can be shared amongst colleagues. Based on this, I do envisage carrying out similar research post-doctorally as I still believe practitioner-research is possible in education even at the Secondary level and I now feel more learned in the use of p-r and the advice I would give fellow researchers in how to carry out research on stress in teachers without becoming stressed, themselves.*

### **8.3 So Where Now? Possible Future Research**

*So what is the outcome of my research study? What are the final conclusions that can be drawn? What are the implications from the research?. These are very important questions.*

It is important to understand that the introduction of newer methodologies such as p-r in schools has not always been understood and appreciated. *Hence, I would like to propose*

*some further suggestions for possible practitioner-research projects which I regard to be important as an outcome of my research. They are listed below:*

**1. Comparative Analysis of practitioner-research within private and public schools and between rural and urban schools or between geographic regions.** *This is very important since we need to find out whether such research would be allowed (considered acceptable/ethical) in these different schools. The Headmaster in my research believed that p-r would not be allowed in private or grammar schools. Could it be because of their traditional bureaucratic structure? Surely such schools have moved with the times and allow more flexible syllabus delivery based on the latest school reform programmes. Also, why has p-r been allowed or been successful in certain schools? Why is it that in some schools the Managers were enthusiastic to engage with p-r and in others not? Perhaps there has been a lack of effective documentation of the benefits to schools of staff carrying out bottom-up research.*

The first suggestion was made in an attempt to verify the Headmaster's commentary about which schools would or would not endorse p-r. *Also, from this I questioned whether certain geographical areas made a difference to the type of school and the type of research endorsed. My assumption being that traditional schools and universities such as private or red-brick would not appreciate bottom up practitioner research and more rurally based schools (such as my school) would allow p-r as the ethos is more open, friendly and relaxed. Unfortunately, my assumptions have completely been shattered as the school at which I work turned out to be very top-down, bureaucratic and highly sceptical of practitioner research and its benefits for teachers.*

**2. More group based practitioner research within schools to prevent individual research vilification and isolation.** *It is far too easy for managers to scapegoat the lone researcher (as I believe happened to me as a single female teacher-researcher) and thus I believe that when groups of teachers are involved the research holds more validity and can easily be enmeshed into teachers' daily practices. The voices of a group of researchers can not be easily silenced as mine was and Senior Managers may feel pressurised to take heed of research outcomes.*

**3. Investigative research into grant allocation and university funding: the case for money versus new knowledge and change.** *This is another interesting point as the battle*

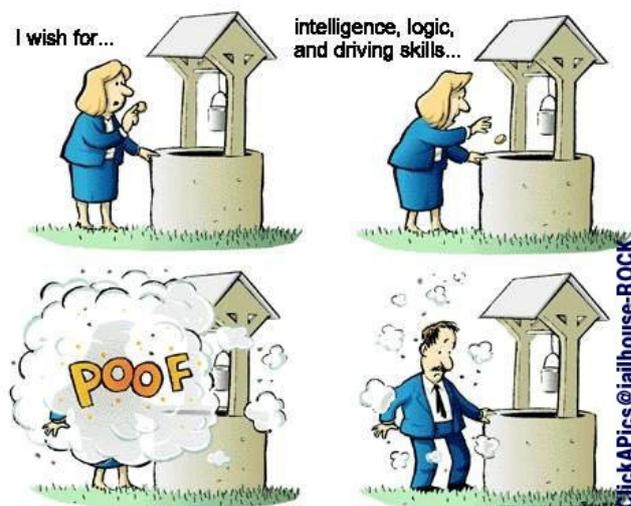
*for knowledge generation and ownership has caused much controversy amongst researchers and academics. Issues of funding and grant allocation, particularly in Higher Education dampen the process of p-r. Likewise, p-r is only seen to be beneficial to schools if monetary gains can be made in terms of additional pupil enrolment, additional cpd funding or extra money from Government agencies for collaborative projects. This suggestion relates to the idea of creating a useful knowledge base amongst practitioners which can be shared. In my readings on p-r I found that practitioners adopt a self centred approach to knowledge generation preferring to keep it to themselves and not collaborate with others. Also, I was astonished to discover the lack of acceptance of p-r findings unless beneficial to the institution. I realise that monetary funding is important for all establishments but I must argue that funding should be made available for all practitioner research projects as the outcomes of the research are not determined and need to be more measured.*

#### **8.4 Implications for Further Research**

*So what is the future of educational research? After the research outcomes what recommendations of future practitioner-research work can I possibly recommend?. Despite the frustrating outcomes of the practice development and the feelings of disappointment for not making a change in practice directly from my research, I still believe in the use of p-r and ebp as methods of educational research. As Metz and Page (2002) state that ‘developing diverse genres of educational inquiry, including practitioner inquiry, may be critically useful in a time when the complexity of schools is not well understood by outside decision makers who are increasingly making the decisions’ (p27). Hence, I feel that there is a need for:*

- ❖ **A wider methodological stance in research incorporating grounded theory and practitioner-research involving action research cycles and multiple methods to allow more flexibility.**
- ❖ **More educational research with teachers to implement changes in practice (eg: better communication, more collaboration and standardisation of protocol). This I feel is very important as research practitioners must try to encourage teacher collaboration and create awareness for the need for p-r at all levels of teaching including Senior Management.**

❖ **Wider use of practitioner-researcher methodology which is *ethical, transparent, collaborative and transformative* (GroundWater-Smith, 2005 p7) to prevent possible organisational prejudice against such research or the researcher.** *My understanding of practice development has grown since my naïve days before immersing into the research. I now realise the importance of this trend and the barriers the researcher faces at each stage apart from possible gender bias between a female researcher and male organisational Heads. To further illustrate my feelings on this gender bias I have included a picture below illustrating the pressure that females face when working for male dominated organisations or trying to learn male-related skills such as driving.*



*I believe that a wider stance is needed for the use of practitioner research and the processes should be ethical (as with other social research), transparent and available to the stakeholder community and be transformative in its intent and action to practice and to society. In this way, questions of doubt or prejudice against such research would minimise and the dual role pressures felt by the research-practitioner would lessen.*

*However, convincing people, teachers, managers, hierarchies, structures to change or implement change is incredibly difficult. So how does progress occur? We as researchers, departments, universities, authorities need to work together to intensify the recognition for the need for change. The problem is that, if this is the case...then why is academia so selfish, independent, cut-throat? Why do academic researchers only think of their own dream, their personal ownership of the knowledge? Why are universities allowing such selfishness and why is it that monetary grants are awarded to departments that can*

*provide the most change in practice or who will provide the most benefit to government agencies?.*

- ❖ **Collaboration of p-r projects between schools and internationally.....***this would encourage other teachers to join such projects and encourage school leaders that the outcome benefits all the stakeholders and benefits the school in both the short and long term. Furthermore, the validity and reliability of such p-r would increase and be taken seriously by academics or critics arguing against p-r's 'bastardisation of science' and as a 'soft' option for professionals.*

### **8.5 End Note**

Finally then the research practitioner must be prepared for...*disputation and vigorous debate, take the time to take risks and be bold, seek for action which transforms rather than that which reproduces and accept the fact that there may be more power in critique than in celebration* (Groundwater-Smith, 2005 p12).*Unfortunately, I feel that teacher-stress will never diminish especially if education continues to support top-down technocratic policies that do not consider the teacher as an intellectual and an essential cog in the wheel of successful schooling.* Despite progress being made towards individualisation, student autonomy and teacher professional development, teachers are often purveyors of the 'canned curriculum' with little say in its planning and implementation. Furthermore, there is still a dominance of treating educational problems as technical and resolutions based on objectivity and positivism.

This research has highlighted some of the key problems the teacher faces (both on a short-term and longer term basis) in relation to the inclusion policy stipulated by the Government. Additionally, the feelings of isolation, lack of department communication and collaboration and fear of reprisal tied in with perceptions of teacher stress, were made apparent during interviewing teachers at the school. *Ultimately, the biggest discovery of all for me as a teacher-researcher was the difficulty I faced in my dual role while carrying out the research and the political nature of bottom-up research within a traditional bureaucratic hierarchical institution. Apart from that I feel that I have accomplished the aims and objectives of the research as had been intended.*

*As an end note, I believe all teacher-researchers carrying out case study analysis should persevere with the barriers posed during the research and convince staff that self-*

*reflection can not only aid personal growth but inadvertently effects students.* The advancement of meta-cognition, the realisation of and reflection on daily practices is vital and is the key to collaboration. Since by questioning ones tacit knowledge, improvements in practical ‘doing’ knowledge will occur. This can then lead to shared practices and effective professional development.

The ownership of the knowledge lies in every teacher’s hand as only they know what they experience on a daily basis and can reflect upon their tacit knowledge. When teachers gain the confidence to fight for the ownership of their knowledge, stand-up for what they believe in effective changes in practice are possible and their voices are heard. Democratisation of educational establishments can be achieved through a bottom-up approach. *Therefore, future researchers must not be apprehensive to adopt the practitioner-researcher framework as I believe the future of educational research is dependent on its success and the teacher wishing to engage in Action Research is not a special kind of teacher but someone wishing to increase their professional expertise (Nixon, 1981; Ulanoff, 2003). Is there any harm in that?.*

*The next chapter (the Epilogue) draws the write up to an end and offers a brief reflective analysis of my views on practitioner research and evidence based practice.*

## Chapter 9

### Epilogue

*'When I look back on the whole experience it has revitalised my  
Love of my subject and my commitment to it....I have been teaching 11  
Years and it has given me a little injection of energy. I am more focused in  
my practice'*

*Cambridge Action Research in Teacher Education Project*

*(McLaughlin, 2001)*

## Chapter 9- Epilogue

*'Learning about practice through research is a powerful hammer, we must take care not to use it to only crack the small nuts'*

*Susan Groundwater-Smith (2005 p11)*

*As I write my final chapter, I feel quite sad to reflect upon the unexpected outcome of my research despite it being carried out ethically and professionally to encourage collaboration. To begin with the research process was relatively straightforward and enjoyable. Teachers volunteered to be participants after the mass e-mail of the aims and objectives of the research (Appendix 1) and were happy to be interviewed, opening up and divulging personal reflections about their teaching and the related stress. The commentary was honest and in many cases participants revealed their exact feelings and perceptions of their job role, their Line Manager and the Senior Management Team. At that point in the research, there was plenty to transcribe with over 140 axial codes that were eventually stream lined via computer sort on matching code and category names, resulting in the sixteen themes. However, as the themes emerged, I realised the negativity behind them as most of them complained about communication levels, available facilities, administration glitches and misperceptions between teaching levels with the majority of SMT taking a dominant seniority stance over middle and lower level teaching tiers. The realisation of the negativity impacted upon my anxieties of research dissemination resulting in a period of research stagnation as I avoided reporting back to staff what I had promised to do within one year of the start of the interviewing.*

When the time came to disseminate the findings, the themes were not taken lightly and members of staff including SMT complained that the research was not relevant as it had become retrospective. *In hindsight, I can understand that argument but to deny its relevance to current teaching practices is burying ones head in the sand. Surely, a more sensible outlook for SMT and the Head would have been to concur with the themes while they were being disseminated and explain to the 'dumbfounded audience of teachers' that a year later from the research, the school had made improvements in the areas covered by the themes in favour of a stronger relationship between different teaching levels. I guess, one could then argue that this outcome would only have been possible had I not allowed the research to stagnate once the thematic analysis was complete. Had I been brave enough, perhaps I should have approached the Head earlier, and showed him the findings, before the mass staff address. That did not occur as I really believed that the*

*Head would try to change the findings in favour of a more balanced outlook. I perceived the possible 'tempering with findings' would not justify the interviewees commentary and that some how I would be deceiving them. Well, the rest is now history. The Head and SMT ostracised me the day after the mass staff address and research dissemination. I began to feel extremely nervous about my job role as teacher-researcher, as somehow it had become merged and I felt as though my job was on the line as a result of the research. The reality of it was that the SMT and the Head were extremely disappointed in the outcome of the research and the Head felt annoyance at agreeing to part-fund the doctorate believing that he would simply find out who was 'stressed out' at the school and perhaps I would create a stress management policy at the school.*

*My perception of the Head's vilification of the findings is that he never really understood what practitioner-research meant. In my estimation, he had not envisaged the emergent nature of qualitative research and the nature of taking on a dual role as teacher, colleague, ally and researcher....one who uncovers truths and investigates participant's felt meanings. Why didn't any members of the SMT agree to be interviewed? My literature reviewing has revealed that schools where the Senior Managers were involved and endorsing the research were the quickest to collaborate and implement changes.*

*I am afraid to admit that the Head's ignorance of qualitative research and the bureaucratic system of the school won and the top-down control prevented the desired research outcomes (to offer staff the chance to increase their meta-cognition through collaborative forums and AR spirals, to discuss problems and successes faced on a daily basis and have the chance to self-reflect in order to improve practices). I look back with a degree of sadness and hopelessness for the use of p-r in schools. Even though research (as previously mentioned) has documented successful p-r outcomes, I can't help feeling let down by the Headmaster and the Leadership team.*

*Nevertheless, the quote written by Susan Groundwater-Smith (2005) makes me realise the importance for the continued use of p-r, particularly in educational research. She believes the quality of p-r outcomes depend upon many factors starting with the practitioner accepting responsibility for the stakeholders of the research including the participants, co-operating in good faith, confronting problems respectfully and sharing ethically. I think the most important factor is trying to aim for consensus decision making in a climate that does not always favour practitioner research and within that to act*

*without prejudice when the outcomes are revealed.* Unfortunately, as Groundwater-Smith discusses in her paper to the Australian Association for research in Education (2005), practitioner research in education can only have successful outcomes when schools and the education system as a whole are *willing to step into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and re-think schooling anew* (p11). *I also agree with her understanding of how teachers have become de-professionalised as they adopt the KISS principle- (Keep it Simple, Stupid) and are not encouraged to reflect and perhaps over complicate issues occurring in daily practice.* Many teacher meetings do not allow time for in-depth collaborative reflections and tend to follow agendas which must be reported back to managers. In this way, true collaboration and reflection is not being endorsed. Even to the extent that the dissemination of my findings was only allowed ten minutes at the end of a staff meeting after school. *I ask you then, how is this fair? Where is the democracy and the freedom of speech? How do practitioner researchers cope with schools that refuse to endorse bottom-up change, only viewing it as political emancipation? Do we start from the standpoint of being upfront with our intentions, processes and possible outcomes from the outset? If this is what schools and educators want, then they do not understand the fluidity involved in carrying out qualitative research.*

According to Cooperrider et al (1987) the use of action research in organisations ‘*has largely failed as an instrument for advancing social knowledge and has not achieved its potential for human development and social organisational transformation*’ (p129). They advocate the use of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) to complement conventional forms of action research, which looks at the positives within the organisation and through using reflexivity, can help us make sense of and give meaning to experiences. Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) argue for the use of AI as ‘*through our assumptions we create the world we later discover*’ (p129). *I agree with their argument that a more positive approach can encourage participants to view their organisation in a better light. As I now sit back and reflect upon my research outcomes, I feel the dissemination of the findings could have been more positively presented concentrating more on optimistic findings and reiterating the improvements that the school has made since the research was conducted. However, in truth I still feel that the outcome would have been the same.*

The saddest reflection of all is the fact that apart from the Headmaster and Senior tiers vilification of the research, the teachers themselves were too embarrassed to admit to the commentary they had made when interviewed. *Hence, when the time came for them to*

*stand up for the shared commentary and the reported themes, their fear of reprisal from top-down control was greater than their admitted desire for collaboration.* Groundwater-Smith (2005) claims that practitioner research is only successful when *'the teachers involved in the research are themselves willing and interested in practitioner research and prepared to share their learning's and new discoveries with their colleagues, build trust and add new opportunities for engagement along the way'* (p10).

*I believe it is a rare researcher that finishes a study without feeling that they could have done things better if they had known at the start what became apparent by the end. In hindsight had I been more aware of the practitioner-researcher movement and the possible barriers that I would face while working as a teacher in the school I was to research, perhaps the outcome would have been less negative. If I had been more open with the dissemination of findings to the Head perhaps I would also have documented staff collaboration and the outcomes of action research spiralling. However, I still believe that even in my novice researcher state, education and the schooling system does not endorse bottom-up research that sides against senior managers or questions the status quo.* Very few schools are happy to accept p-r in its true democratic form as externally endorsed policies are the 'norm' and thus as was previously quoted by Darling-Hammond (1990) the continuity of new reforms overriding old reforms has led teachers suffering the *'Alice in Wonderland problem where teachers nod blithely at the inevitability of incompatible events'*. Thus, *'with such restricted input into the reform process, many teachers just close the classroom door waiting for it to all go away'* (Hargreaves, 1994; cited in Novick, 1996 p2) as researchers found that top-down policies constrain practice instead of constructing it' (Elmore,1983, Sarason, 1982; Fullan, 1982). *Based on such views, why am I questioning the outcome of my research? What made me think that this school would be any different to others?.*

*I end this thesis on a sad reflection of education and the lack of 'brave-ness' that teachers have become indoctrinated with.* As a result, we (teachers) are going to continue telling our 'office' stories of annoyance with the pupils and with members of staff' but will not admit to problems in front of Senior Managers or Ofsted officials. We (teachers) will remain happy to 'be controlled', 'happy with our lack of reflection and reflexivity', 'happy with our stagnation in meta-cognitive growth'. *Despite my grievances and the hampered outcome, I truly believe the teachers at the school were affected by the research leaving many staff aware of the political battle that I faced and in some cases*

*only reinforcing their doubts about the leadership of the school.)* According to Lytle (2008) *'teacher research is alive and well even in the current politically charged atmosphere of scripted instruction and curriculum-driving mandated testing'* (p373) and thus the educational p-r struggle, continues. *I do not want the reader to assume the research was unsuccessful or that the school or the management are 'bad' in anyway.* Despite this the school has improved since the research was conducted and communication levels are slowly improving throughout the school. *My only hope is, that the school learns to 'listen' to teachers voices and accepts 'reflection and reflexivity' as a part of daily practice incorporating both negative and positive events and that teachers can find collaborative solutions however this is possible.*

*I hope you have enjoyed my research journey and feel encouraged to carry out teacher-research despite the documented difficulties. I also hope that you feel enthused to help answer some of the questions posed throughout my research and are encouraged to carry out further research based on my suggestions. Vive praticien de la recherch !*

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## **APPENDIX 1 – STANDARDISED INSTRUCTIONS FOR STAFF AT THE SCHOOL**

**Background to the project:-** This investigation aims to concentrate on stress in teachers at the school in relation to inclusion and exclusion of disruptive students in classes.

### **Purpose of research:-**

**To assess stress levels in the staff at school**

**To find out how staff cope with their stress**

**To find out staffs views on the introduction of the Learning Support Centre (A3)**

**To find out teachers' views on the re-inclusion of disruptive/EBD students to their classes and whether any improvement occurs in the students work standards and behaviour after exclusion?**

### **Researcher position and involvement:-**

The researcher is conducting the research while studying for the Doctor of Professional Practice (DProf) at Bournemouth University. Her Background is in Psychology and her interest is in Psychology and Education. The researcher is also the Psychology/Sociology teacher at the school.

### **What is involved, how the research is conducted and the time research is likely to take:-**

The research will involve a combination of methods from interviews, classroom observations (at the teachers discretion), stress measurement form (MBI) and collaborative staff discussion groups to increase metacognition in teaching practices.

\*Interviews will last 40-60 minutes. I will ask you a series of questions relating to your experiences as a teacher at school and your opinions on the Learning Support Centre and the processes of inclusion, exclusion and re-inclusion of disruptive students.

\*With most questions, there are no right or wrong answers and if you have any problems you are free to stop and ask questions. The interview should be informal and friendly.

\*Please be assured that all the answers you give will be kept confidential and will remain your property.

\*With your permission, themes from the interviews will be included in my final report but the results will be kept anonymous. You can, at any time not answer a question or pause the interview.

\*You can also withdraw at any time from the study and this includes after the interview has taken place.

\*To record the interview, I will use a Dictaphone and may make a few notes.

\*The results will be analysed and presented within the year.

### **State what happens to material collected:-**

It is hoped the results will help evaluate stress levels at school, help teachers cope with stress in their teaching through facilitative group discussions with other faculty teachers and increase metacognition for all staff. The information provided from yourselves to me will be reported in an executive summary which will form part of my write-up for my research. No names or references to participants will be included. If you have any problems or concerns with the interviews or any other parts of the research please feel free to contact me. You can find me in the A1 office just outside the 6<sup>th</sup> form area below the stairs or on extension 246.

**COULD YOU PLEASE SIGN OR TYPE YOUR NAME AFTER READING THE STATEMENT BELOW, THANKYOU.**

*I agree to take part in this research and allow the researcher/interviewer to ask me questions relating to my experiences as a teacher. I also understand that the information will be kept anonymous and will be confidential. Further I understand that I do have the right to withdraw from the research and am not obliged to divulge personal information unless I do of my own free will.*

**Staff Signature:-**

## **Appendix 2 –INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR TEACHERS AT SCHOOL**

### **STANDARDISED INSTRUCTION**

*Thank you for agreeing to this interview. This research is part of my DProf course with Bournemouth University and the aims of the research are as follows:*

- *To assess stress levels in the staff at school*
- *To find out how staff cope with their stress*
- *To find out staffs views on the introduction of the learning support centre (A3)*
- *To find out, staffs views on the processes of exclusion and inclusion of disruptive students.*

*This interview will last 40-60 minutes in which I will ask you a series of both closed and open ended questions. Please feel free to answer as you wish and if there are any questions that you do not wish to answer don't worry. The interview will be informal and friendly. Please be assured the answers you give will be kept confidential and will remain your property. To record the interview I will use a Dictaphone and may make a few notes. The results will be analysed and presented within the year. Do you have any questions?*

### **DEMOGRAPHICS**

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. What is your subject area?
3. Do you have any other responsibilities besides teaching?
4. What year do you teach?

### **STRESS SYMPTOMS**

5. How would you describe your general health 3 years ago and now ie:-good reasonable, poor.
6. Are you experiencing or have you ever experienced any of the following symptoms + if so how often:- (never, sometimes, often)

Headache/migraine

Aches and pains

High blood pressure

Poor sleep patterns

Skin rashes

Indigestion

Stomach ulcers

**Asthma**

**Anxiety**

**Depression**

**Heart disease**

**Changes in appetite**

**Exhaustion**

**Increased consumption of tobacco**

**Increased consumption of alcohol**

**Inability to concentrate**

**Erratic moods**

**Low self esteem/confidence**

**7. While working do you ever feel (never, sometimes, often)**

**Irritated**

**Angry**

**Frustrated**

**Helpless**

**Anxious**

**Depressed**

**Unable to concentrate**

**Over tired**

**8. Have you taken leave in the past 12 months due to work related stress?**

**9. If Yes for how long? A few days, one week, 2 weeks, longer**

**10. Have stress related symptoms returned on your return to work?**

**11. Has your GP suggested that your condition was due to work?**

**12. Are you receiving treatment from your GP for stress related symptoms?**

**WORKLOAD**

**13. Has your workload increased over the last 5 years, and 2 years?**

**14. If yes, then in what way has your workload increased and what do you think has been the main factor contributing to your increase?eg:**

**Changes in condition of service**

**Teaching new courses**

**Admin**

**Increased student numbers**

**Inspection/auditing**

**Meeting targets/deadlines**

**15. How has this affected your (a)health (b)your teaching**

**16. How would you define/describe stress in regards to teaching? How strong a link do you think there is between stress and teaching?**

**17. How do you cope with stress in your teaching? Do you use any particular methods such as relaxation, socialising, drinking or smoking, time management and organisation, deep breathing and calming exercises or other?**

**18. Do you or have you ever considered a stress management program? Has the school got a stress management program? Would you like there to be/do staff need one?**

### **BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT**

**19. What in your view is disruptive behaviour?**

**20. Do you have disruptive students in your class(es)?**

**21. If yes, how do they affect the classes you teach in terms of both other students + your teaching time?**

**22. Have you ever been injured/attacked or assaulted by a student within the past 12 months?**

**23. How do you deal with such disruptive students ie:do you use any other methods before or instead of the SOS or BMFG method?**

**24. How often do you use the SOS system?**

**25. Do you have a detention system already in place in your department? Does it work in terms of reducing disruptive behaviour?**

**26. How often do students that you teach end up in SWR?**

**27. What are your views on exclusion of disruptive pupils from classes in general or from your classes?**

**28. What if there was no exclusion process available for disruptive pupils, how would you cope? How do you think it would affect the school in general?**

**29. Do you think the introduction of the Learning Support unit (A3) has been beneficial and why?**

**30. How do you view the re-inclusion of disruptive students to your classes- either those in A3 or those that simply play up in class?**

**31. Do you think the exclusion of disruptive students will decrease stress for teachers? Why or why not?**

**32. Have you ever been tempted to leave teaching? If, yes what would be the main reason?**

### **DEBRIEF**

*Thank you very much for agreeing to be interviewed. This information will remain confidential and anonymous. The interview will be transcribed and available for your access within the next fortnight. If you have any questions about my research please do not hesitate to contact me and you can peruse the results in an executive summary that will be published at the end of the research. Thankyou.*

**Appendix 3- Interview transcription****(Participant 20)****NB: Researchers commentary in red, participant's commentary in green italics.****STANDARDISED INSTRUCTION**

Thank you for agreeing to this interview. This research is part of my DProf course with Bournemouth University and the aims of the research are as follows:

- *To assess stress levels in the staff at the school*
- *To find out how staff cope with their stress*
- *To find out staffs views on the introduction of the learning support centre (A3)*
- *To find out staffs views on the processes of exclusion and inclusion of disruptive students.*

This interview will last 40-60 minutes in which I will ask you a series of both closed and open ended questions. Please feel free to answer as you wish and if there are any questions that you do not wish to answer don't worry. The interview will be informal and friendly. Please be assured the answers you give will be kept confidential and will remain your property. To record the interview I will use a dicta-phone and may make a few notes. The results will be analysed and presented within the year. Do you have any questions?

**DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS (1-4)**

1. How long have you been teaching? *Since I was 22... that's 34 years and 6 years out to have children.*
2. What is your subject area? *Specialist PE teacher but now I am in Vocational Education.*
3. Do you have any other responsibilities besides teaching? *Head of Year 10*
4. What year do you teach? *10-13*

**OK....Thank you...Now I'm going to ask you some stress symptoms questions.**

**STRESS SYMPTOMS QUESTIONS (5-12)**

5. How would you describe your general health 3 years ago and now ie:-good reasonable, poor.

*Um...in comparison to 3 years ago my health has not been as good...I've been diagnosed with diabetes and my health has got worse.*

**So how did you cope with the diabetes at school?** *Well.....I just took everything in my stride and luckily to begin with I was on tablets and didn't have to inject three times a day. But (long pause).....I did get stressed out a lot more and that affected my blood pressure.*

**Alright...next I will ask you to state whether you've suffered health problems and you need to answer how often they occurred. Is that ok?. Yes, no problem.. I'm glad I can tell someone about what happened to me and how I cope. I think what you are researching is very relevant to teachers and we do need some one to discuss things with... (laughing and gesticulating) you could be the school counsellor . Well...I'd have to really think about that one...I've got enough hats to wear already.**

6.Are you experiencing or have you ever experienced any of the following symptoms + if so how often:- (never, sometimes, often)

Headache/migraine- *often/never*

Aches and pains- *often*

High blood pressure – *haven't had a problem with this apart from in the very beginning of the diagnosis of diabetes.*

Poor sleep patterns- *often*

Skin rashes - *never*

Indigestion- *never*

Stomach ulcers- *never*

Asthma- *never*

Anxiety- *sometimes*

Depression- *never*

Heart disease - *? don't know*

Changes in appetite- *occasionally*

Exhaustion-*sometimes*

Increased consumption of tobacco- *never*

Increased consumption of alcohol- *never*

Inability to concentrate- *sometimes*

Erratic moods- *sometimes*

Low self esteem/confidence- *not often*

**Right....ok then....the next question is the same format but asks you about symptoms while at work. Do you understand? Yes**

7.While working do you ever feel(never,sometimes,often)

Irritated- *often...oh God yes I think every teacher feels incredibly irritated and not only with students...half the time you're irritated about timetabling and staff bothering you about endless tasks.*

Angry- *sometimes*

Frustrated- *often*

Helpless- *never*

Anxious- *often*

Depressed- *never*

Unable to concentrate-*often*

Over tired-*often*

8.Have you taken leave in the past 12 months due to work related stress? *No*

9. If yes for how long? a few days, one week, 2 weeks, longer

10. Have stress related symptoms returned on your return to work?

11. Has your GP suggested that your condition was due to work?

12. Are you receiving treatment from your GP for stress related symptoms? *Yes I'm on tablets to control the diabetes but my belief is that my diabetes started through the job.*

### WORKLOAD

13. Has your workload increased over the last 5 years, and 2 years? *Certainly over the past 5 years and the same but different over the past 2 years. What do you mean by that? Well as my job role has become more involved...(shrugs shoulders) I guess that I've got better at it and can handle the stress now but there is always something new to throw you on.....sometimes on a daily basis and this causes me a lot of stress.*

14. If yes, then in what way has your workload increased and what do you think has been the main factor contributing to your increase?eg: *I have less non-contacts which have now been brought up rather than down. So what is non-contact?... Free lessons. I have found student behaviour hasn't changed but definitely increased poor behaviour. There is more naughtiness now and as a result I am having difficulties...along with all other staff. OK then, can you state whether your workload and stress levels have increased due to any of the following factors?*

**changes in condition of service-** *not in last 2 years*

**teaching new courses-** *yes, new courses from September, new SOW and is and has been cause for anxiety and stress*

**admin-** *yes, problem with changes of deputy heads of year. Why changes? Job changes –transfer of jobs. Have these vacancies been filled? ...(laughing)Not yet and the unknown what type of personality and how much contact time they can give me. Also their leadership qualities and various characters affects the way in which I deliver what I've needed to do rather than other way around. Also admin roles- some are prepared to do small jobs and have had help from TA, which has been invaluable...but paper work is increasing. However, I do feel the new staff-student support will help but I'm dubious about teacher laptops because they keep crashing. Has that increased your stress levels?...(nodding and smurking)... yes, quite a lot because I can't gain quick access to the SIMS info on students. I mean for God sake – I'm used to no computers but feel pressure.....stress but realise I could learn it perhaps on a needs driven basis. My age*

*feels like a barrier but I realised that I could learn it as we all have to make changes to progress. Yes, I agree but what about?*

**increased student numbers?** (shaking head) *...no that hasn't caused any particular stress for me. Our numbers have remained stable.*

**inspection/auditing?...** (gesticulating hands) *... the pressure I have is self-imposed in terms of expectations of high standards from students, especially year 12. I mean I don't know if you do this...(coughing)...I guess every teacher does but you question yourself if they (students) do badly...in fact the older I am becoming the more conscientious I am becoming. So you review, look at how you are teaching and how well students are working and if they're achieving... and you work harder in order to improve. Basically you're conscious gets worse as you get older.*

**meeting targets/deadlines?...** *no, never had problems meeting deadlines...I'm quite conscientious and when push comes to shove I make sure the work is completed. I'm quite proud of myself for that...(smiling).*

**Ok, then but:**

15. How has this affected your (a)health (b)your teaching- *I try to make light of things/having a joke whenever I can. Not being married to a teacher helps... go home have cup of tea... dissipate stress doing other things don't let it bottle up. Stress is not always through teaching, it can sometimes be relaxation. Anything other than reading books and marking. I work until 6pm every evening and want to go home and forget all about work. So you're good at time management? YES.*

16. How would you define/describe stress in regards to teaching? How strong a link do you think there is between stress + teaching? *Yes there is a definite link between stress and teaching. Stress is when external pressures impinge upon the persons' sense of control and self preservation...I mean when you just can't cope with behavioural issues and everyday demands. OK...so then..*

17. How do you cope with stress in your teaching? Do you use any particular methods such as relaxation, socialising, drinking or smoking, time management + organisation, deep breathing + calming exercises or other? *Oh yes I do relax... I must come home and sit down and just stare at the television and watch silly programs, anything other than reading books/marking. Sometimes I work till 6.30pm to avoid taking the work home. Sounds as though you are good at organisation and prioritisation? Yes, I have to be*

*there are stresses and strains but if you are methodical and logical you can control the stress. I cope with it.*

18. Do you or have you ever considered a stress management program? Has the school got a stress management program? Would you like there to be/do staff need one? *No. Staff need one...I haven't even thought about it...if there's an immediate answer then yes staff would go on such programs but a lot of stress is self-inflicted or badly self perceived.....and that is why so many staff are stressed.*

**Right then....the next area is on behaviour management. Are you happy to continue? YES.**

### **BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT**

19. What in your view is disruptive behaviour? *Constant negative behaviour, ranging from small issues like forgetting planners, not having pens/pencils/paper to physically moving around.... (nodding head)*

20. Do you have disruptive students in your class(es)? *yes*

21. If yes, how do they affect the classes you teach in terms of both other students and your teaching time? *Well....its my work related learning groups which are a constant aggravation..they are not learning. The students are coaxed into doing course and then its negotiation with them.*

22. Have you ever been injured/attacked or assaulted by a student within the past 12 months? *no*

23. How do you deal with such disruptive students ie:do you use any other methods before or instead of the SOS or BMFG method? *I occasionally use SOS but it depends how extreme the behaviour. I think the system is very good but use it only when really needed.*

**OK..then...**

24. How often do you use the SOS system? *Once a term...um I don't use it much.*

25. Do you have a detention system already in place in your department? Does it work in terms of reducing disruptive behaviour? *No... my department being Health and Social care and work related learning...no...I prefer to manage things then and there and then the matter is closed. Sometimes you think each teacher should try and do this or just give faculty detention..I think taking away rewards rather than detention. Do something hardcore...detention is not a good system. Sanctions? Yes...(nods head) for example taking away breaks or not allowing them to play football or sit with their friends during lessons.*

26. How often do students that you teach end up in SWR? *Umm....once a term.*

27. What are your views on exclusion of disruptive pupils from classes in general or from your classes? *Yes it's a good idea. Can you explain SOS to me? Yes... a teacher tries to get child to behave in class. The only way to stop disruptions in class is get help... that teacher then phones the main office and they instruct the on-duty manager. They come to the class and review the situation and normally remove the child. Oh right....I see*

28. What if there was no exclusion process available for disruptive pupils, how would you cope? + how do you think it would affect the school in general? *Exclusion permanently or from one lesson to the other? (looks puzzled).. Either?. Um.....its important....exclusion is a threat to students who play-up. We do try to include these students as far as we (teachers) can. If there was no exclusion...I would probably use the table and chair outside the classroom...umm... The school in general would not cope well....teachers would be up in arms. Staff would feel they weren't being heard and this would increase stress levels at the school.*

29. Do you think the introduction of the Learning Support unit (A3) has been beneficial and why? *Yes...because it actually enables staff to use the last stepping stone after trying everything...you try something so much...the difficulty is getting students in there and it does seem to be rather appealing. It becomes a home from home but I don't know much about how they behave down there but I believe it is a good process.*

**OK...so then...**

30. How do you view the re-inclusion of disruptive students to your classes- either those in A3 or those that simply play up in class? *Immediately it helps with stress but problems*

*arise when they come back to class. It causes a lot of extra work for the teacher to reintegrate them back into the classroom environment which has moved so since the child had been excluded.*

31. Do you think the exclusion of disruptive students will decrease stress for teachers? Why or why not? *Umm... I think it does work...it allows other students to concentrate...sometimes it works but some of the silly behaviour is realised and ignored. The class change once the child is excluded...unless you have a lot of disruptive characters in at the same time...I don't know whether they mature but a noticeable change is made. So yes exclusion from class is good for teachers.*

32. Have you ever been tempted to leave teaching? If yes, what would be the main reason?

*(sighing)....Well I did leave for a while but then went back. As a younger teacher I probably would go now but I have really never thought about it. I would not have a job if I got upset by negative behaviour. You're overpowered by pressures...phone calls, notes on my desk plus the normal teaching and then by lunchtime .... I'm too busy to eat. I do feel my role is cross-curricular in many ways. I think one always thinks about positives that can come out of negative situations. I could really do with a TA and that would help me with this job. It has been very stressful...the job gets harder if staff don't pull together and co-operate. You come in when you're feeling down... sore throat just to help everybody out.*

**Would you give up your head of year role?** *Well (shaking head)...I would miss the respect from this position.*

**How many people in your department?** *I'm in different departments...Art, Food technology, Health and Social plus work related learning.....so I guess there's a lot of people 'under me' who I need to direct.*

**Ok...thanks \*\*\*\*\* for agreeing to do this interview. That was good of you and I hope you found it useful/interesting?** *Yes...it sounds really good...what will you do with all the information?* **Well..the next stage is to transcribe everything and then pull all the comments together. Before you leave...I'll just read out the debrief to you...if that's ok. Yes carry on.**

**DEBRIEF**

Thank you very much for agreeing to be interviewed. This information will remain confidential and anonymous. The interview will be transcribed and available for your access whenever you like. If you have any questions about my research please do not hesitate to contact me and you can peruse the results in an executive summary that will be published at the end of the research. Thank You.

**Appendix 4 – Table 3b of the Sixteen themes (Phase 4)**

<b>INTERVIEW THEMES</b>	<b>BROADER COMMENTARY</b>
<b>Theme 1 – Whole School Attitude</b>	General commentary was shared by teachers on the blasé attitude of both staff and students to school policies and behaviour
<b>Theme 2 + 3- Effectiveness of SOS and support of Senior Management Team</b>	Teachers shared commentary on the help given, attitude towards staff and efficiency of the Senior Management Team.
<b>Theme 4 – A3 Effectiveness</b>	Teachers shared concerns about the purpose and usage of the A3 Learning Support Centre for disruptive students, EBD and disabilities.
<b>Theme 5- Administration Problems</b>	Teachers shared concerns over timetabling, bureaucracy, computer use and continuous computer upgrades.
<b>Theme 6- Teacher Coping Strategies</b>	Teachers had differences in their understanding of coping with classroom disruption, the use of SOS support system and the new behaviour policy. Commentaries were mixed some teachers felt in control and others not due to conflicting advice within and between departments.
<b>Theme 7- Teacher Perceptions</b>	Teachers were concerned about the balance between work pressure, stress, poor student behaviour, losing control and suffering from self-doubt.
<b>Theme 8- Student Perceptions</b>	Teachers were concerned about how students did not respect staff and perceived them in a negative light. Teachers felt that students were intuitive of tensions between staff. Also, teachers perceived students thought A3 was a place of freedom away from mainstream lessons.
<b>Theme 9 – School Facilities</b>	Teachers complained about the lack of facilities at the school like classroom sizes and allocation, phones in classrooms, lack of computers and constant teacher laptop upgrades and internet problems.
<b>Theme 10- Stress Programme</b>	Teachers felt that a stress programme was necessary for teachers at the school. They felt they needed a point of contact in times of personal stress and difficulty other than Line management.

<b>Theme 11- School Policies</b>	Many teachers interviewed were distressed by the lack of standardisation of new policies for staff and the lack of follow-up training. Interviewees requested closer monitoring of the policies by the SMT.
<b>Theme 12 – Sharing Good Practice</b>	Interviewees wanted more opportunities for self-development and more communication between departments and teaching levels. They wanted more collaboration and in some cases without Senior Managers.
<b>Theme 13 – Re-inclusion Practices</b>	Some of the interviewees were concerned about the re-inclusion procedure of excluded students back to mainstream classes. Teachers were very concerned about the lack of communication between A3 and the class teacher involved with the difficult student. There was a genuine desire for better communication systems and policies at the school.
<b>Theme 14 – Exclusion Procedures</b>	Teachers had mixed commentary regarding the exclusion procedure. Some thought excluding disruptive students either temporarily or permanently was beneficial for teachers as they had less stress in class. Others argued that the exclusion was just an excuse, masking a problem that has always existed but was dealt with differently in the past. Some teachers claimed exclusion was only needed due to society's desire for political correctness. They claimed by endorsing the policy the school was admitting failure.
<b>Theme 15 – Historical Problems</b>	Teachers explained how the school suffered from long term problems like the lack of parental concern for disruptive students and how parents blamed teachers for their child's inadequacy at school. Teachers thought the education system was better prior to Government reforms and Ofsted.
<b>Theme 16 – Communication Problems</b>	This was the most important theme. All the participants complained about the lack of communication and wanted more Teacher collaboration and chances for reflection.

## APPENDIX 5 - INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO THE YEAR 10 ART CLASS

1. Do you like school?

If yes- what do you like most about school?

If no- why not/what aspects put you off school?

2. What in your understanding is a good learner/student?

3. Do you want to do well at school? If no why?

4. What makes a good lesson?

5. What in your view is a good teacher? Give some examples.

6. Do you respect your teachers? If yes why? If no why?

7. How do you think teachers should handle disruptive behaviour?

8. What do you think about levels of discipline in the school?

