
CHAPTER 2:

THE DYNAMICS OF STRESS AND THE PROCESS OF EXPERIENCING AND COPING WITH STRESS AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE WELLNESS OF TEACHERS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Stress means different things to different persons. If a specific teacher were to be asked what stress means in his/her life, the question could be answered as follows:

- too much work and too little time to do it;
- a feeling of anxiety;
- being unable to cope;
- too much work pressure;
- feeling tired and irritable;
- uncontrollable classes
- financial worries;
- et cetera.

Another person will in all probability give a totally different response, which illustrates the individuality of the experience of stress. What emerges from the answers above, is that stress is more often than not seen as negative only, which is of course not the case (as pointed out in Chapter 1), and also that there are two different types of answers. Firstly, those related to the causes of stress/sources of stress and secondly, those related to the effects of stress. In reality, however, as in the life of a specific teacher as a person, the sources and effects of stress are tied together very closely, probably more than a person often realises. It can be said, therefore, that the sources of stressors and the effects of

stress are theoretically distinguishable, but in practise are often indistinguishable due to the dynamic and constant interaction between cause and effect by the motion of feedforward and feedback loops between them, in the experience of stress. The relationship between sources and effects of stress are therefore much more circular than linear. To elaborate further on this point, one needs to take cognisance of the ways in which stress traditionally has been conceptualised in theory and research, potential sources of stressors, potential effects of stress, and the dynamics of stress and the process of experiencing and coping with stress and how it relates to the wellness of teachers.

2.2 WAYS OF CONCEPTUALISING STRESS

In studying stress, researchers have mostly focussed on one of three approaches, namely the stimulus approach, the response approach and the interactive approach (Meichenbaum, 1985:3-4; Cranwell-Ward, 1990:7-10; Sutherland & Cooper, 1990:10-24; Brown & Campbell, 1994:14-15; Strydom, 1995:30-33; Travers & Cooper, 1996:14-18).

2.2.1 The stimulus approach

According to this approach, stress is something that is imposed on a person from the outside. It is an external factor which brings about some degree of physical or psychological discomfort. Stress is, in other words, caused by extremes of stimulation - either too much or too little. This is probably the oldest approach used in conceptualising the stress phenomenon. In the fifth century BC, Hippocrates believed that the external environment conditioned characteristics of health and disease, but more directly and recently the stress concept was derived from models based on the physical sciences, in particular engineering. In the context of engineering, the concept of stress refers to the calculation of the amount of stresses a building, bridge or other structure can withstand, or cope, with a load or demand placed upon it. The response to stress is strain. If the construction in question is subjected to excessive stress, permanent damage will result. Graphically the stimulus approach can be depicted as follows:

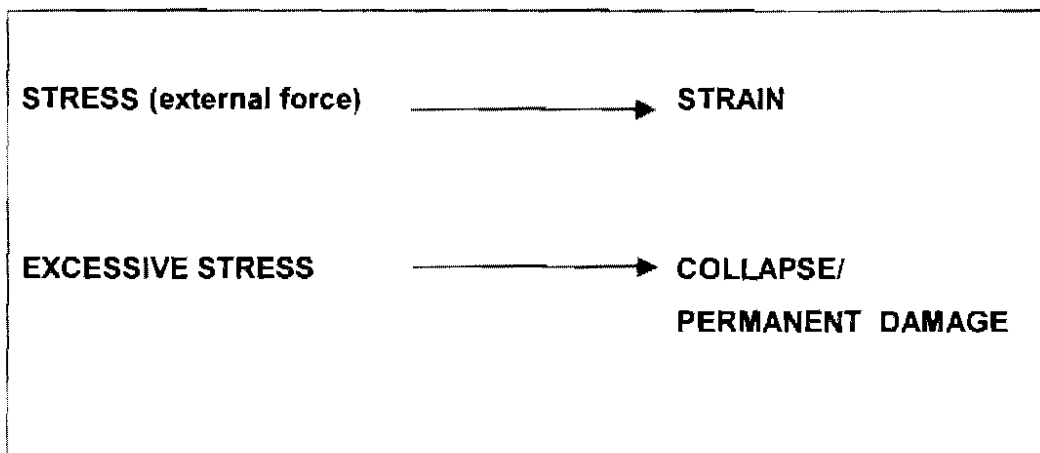


Figure 2.1: The stimulus approach (Cranwell-Ward, 1990:7)

The stimulus approach's view is that various disturbing features in the environment impinge on the individual in a disruptive way, and this brings about changes in a person. The observable strain level and type will depend upon the person, the duration and the severity of the pressure of the pressure exerted.

Methodology employed by this approach usually attempts to focus on the identification of potentially stressful stimuli, which can include stressors such as: environmental stressors (noise, temperature, etc.), social stressors (racism, affirmative action, etc.), psychological stressors (depression, anxiety, etc.), physical stressors (disability, illness, condition etc.), economic stressors (poverty, low salary, etc.) and natural disasters (floods, etc.). Stressors, it seems, can originate from all the contexts of human existence as described in Chapter 1- biological, intra-psychic, ecological and metaphysical. The point is, however, that in the stimulus approach, attempts are made to measure the toxicity of the stimulus, because stress is assumed to be a condition of the environment.

The stimulus approach has received a tremendous amount of attention in research of occupational stress, wherein studies have attempted to isolate features in the work environment that are detrimental to the individual's psychological and physiological well-being. This is often reflected in research, for example in educational management done in South Africa on stress and burnout (see Van der Linde; 1998; Van Heerden, 1988; Buwalda & Kok, 1990; Ferreira, 1991; Mentz *et al.*, 1995). A possible explanation for the popularity for the stimulus approach is the 'scientific approach' that it employs, because it allows researchers to measure stress in a more mechanistic way. That is in much the

same way as we might observe stress imposed on a bridge and its effects. Central to this stress approach is the fact that any person has a tolerance level that may be exceeded, and this 'over-stepping' might result in temporary or permanent damage. This approach also implies that a person is exposed to a multitude of stressors all of the time with which the particular person may cope quite effectively, until such a time that one more event - one too many – 'tips the balance' between coping behaviour and potential total breakdown.

The stimulus approach can conceptually be summarised as follows: Stress is the independent variable, the stimulus, which means that researchers have concentrated on stress as the phenomenon which is extraneous to the individual, with no account taken of individual perceptions, experiences, et cetera. Stress is a disruptive environmental agent where the environment can also be seen as a person's physical (biological) and psychological environment, and not just the world-out-there, as has been indicated with most of the examples given above. This means that stressors (stimuli) can come from any of the contexts of human existence.

2.2.2 The response approach

In a response approach the focus is on the response or reactions made by the person to environmental demands. Stress is thought to be the result of irreversible physical changes associated with an unsatisfied, continuous 'fight or flight' response which eventually leads to illness and death when the body is no longer able to adapt. Adjectives commonly used to refer to this focus on stress is words like 'tension', 'strain' and 'pressure' or 'under pressure'. It can therefore be said that the most interest in this approach to stress is the manifestation of stress, which may occur in three types of response, namely, psychological, physical and behavioural. These three types of response are not discrete elements, they are in fact complexly interrelated.

The response approach can conceptually be summarised as follows: Stress is the dependent variable, the response, which means that researchers have concentrated on stress as a response to stimuli that may be a disturbing situation or environment, for example a noisy classroom, low salary, successive quick changes in educational policy or any of the other examples (and more) cited in the discussion of the stimulus approach. It means a stressor from any context of human existence, can lead to a person's experience of stress – and the resulting psychological, physiological or behavioural

responses. Because of these responses, it is understandable that the larger environment can also be influenced secondarily.

Graphically the response approach can be depicted as follows:

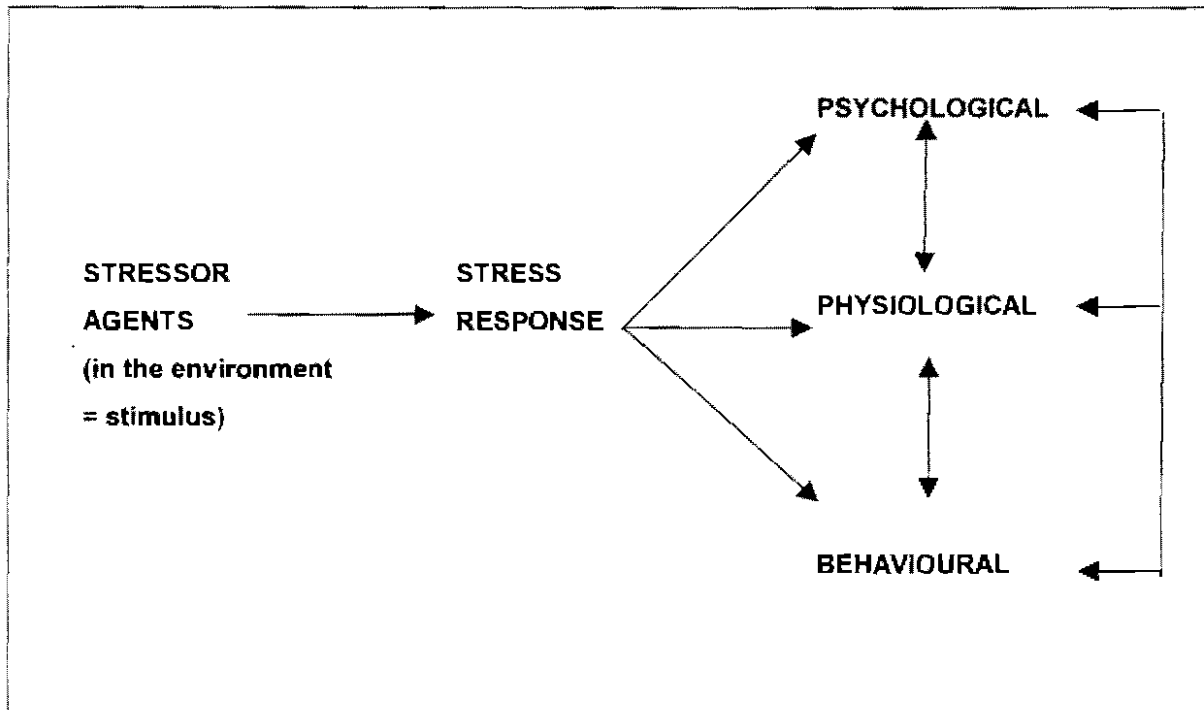


Figure 2.2: The response approach

(Synthesis of Sutherland & Cooper, 1990:11; and Cranwell-Ward, 1990:8)

One of the best known and original proponents of the response approach to stress is Hans Selye (*in* Brown & Campbell, 1994:15; Venter, 1996:17) who developed the idea of the General Adaptation Syndrome, which explains stress as a response process consisting of:

- *The initial alarm reaction.* The 'fight or flight' response, which occurs when the person is exposed to frightening or threatening stimuli. The initial response includes physiological changes which prepares the body for 'fight or flight'.
- *The stage of resistance.* The period during which the person adapts to external stressors, and symptoms of stress improve or disappear.

- *The stage of exhaustion.* This follows if the stressor is sufficiently severe or prolonged. The person can no longer adapt, symptoms reappear and the end result is death.

2.2.3 The interactive approach

In the stimulus and response approaches in stress research respectively, attention was mainly focused on either the environment causing stress or the person experiencing stress. It can be argued that these two approaches are examples of linear ways of explaining the stress phenomenon: enough of these (specified) stressors/demands will cause stress; or stressors will cause these (specified) effects/responses. In the interactive approach it is thought that there is a constant interaction (bidirectional) between person and environment, because people both influence and respond to their environments. This process was labelled 'reciprocal determinism' by Bandura (*in* Carver, Scheier & Pozo, 1992:168) due to the ongoing transaction between person and environment. It is a multiple cause-multiple effect relation, both feeding back to the other. This notion, however, was given rather little attention in the previous two approaches. Stress is a complex process, which not only includes both stimulus and response approaches, but can be conceptualised as a never ending interaction or transaction between person and environment.

Stress is essentially the degree of fit between the person and the environment. This means that it is not the environment *per se* that is stressful, but it is the relationship between the person and the environment which may result in the experience of stress. Stressful transactions are therefore seen as a product of the two interacting systems. Stress is experienced at the point at which the magnitude of the stress stimuli exceeds the person's capacity to resist. To deal with this experience of stress, a person may attempt either to alter his/her environment or to learn ways of trying to change how he/she reacts to a particular stressor. This is the process of coping as has been referred to in Chapter 1. Coping as such is therefore the attempt to try and reach a state of fit between the person and the environment. This will be explained further towards the end of Chapter 2. Levi (*in* Sutherland & Cooper, 1990:23-24) however, gives a more precise descriptive definition of stress as poor-fit, that is consistent with a contemporary interactive approach to the study of stress: "...the interaction between, or misfit of, environmental opportunities and demands, and individual needs and abilities, and expectations elicit reactions. When the fit is bad, when needs are not being met, or

when abilities are over or undertaxed, the organism [person] reacts with various pathogenic mechanisms. These are cognitive, emotional, behavioural and/or physiological and under some conditions of intensity, frequency or duration, and in the presence or absence of certain interacting variables, they may lead to precursors of disease”.

The interactional models developed in the interactive approach have resulted in the increasing recognition of the importance of mental activity as a crucial factor in determining stress. In order for a potential stressor to be seen or experienced as stressful, it must first be phenomenologically interpreted by a person - in other words a personal meaning assigned to the stressor as being stressful. This operation is also referred to as primary appraisal. The operation of a person appraising his/her coping resources and options to deal with the impinging stressor is referred to as secondary appraisal. From this perspective stress can be seen as a cognitively mediated relational concept. The assumption is made that mental states or structures determine the presence or absence of stress. One could therefore say that it is the individual's perception of the stress stimulus, rather than the objective existence of the stimulus, which is important. Two teachers might find themselves in the same situation in the working environment, having the same professional qualification, obtained at the same tertiary institution, teaching at the same school, teaching the same subject for the same grade, but might find the same situations/persons/objects differentially stressful. To illustrate it even more simply, two teachers watching a thriller film (stimulus) will in all probability not experience the film equally stressful due to differential cognitive appraisal and coping responses which lie at the heart of the interactive approach which will result in a different effect of stress (response) in teachers as individuals. This approach views a person as an active agent in his/her environment - someone who actively appraises the importance of what is occurring to his/her well-being. Sapolsky (*in* Hafen, Karren, Frandsen & Smith, 1996:62) also reflects the view that it is not the stressor that is important, but the perception of it: *“The exact same external event can happen to two different people, and, depending on the psychological baggage of the individual experiencing it, the outcome will be different, the disease will be different.”*

To conclude, it can be said that stress is not an environmental stimulus or a response to such a stimulus, but a dynamic relational concept. There is constant interplay between the person and environment, which is mediated by a complex set of ongoing cognitive

processes. In the study of stress there are five major aspects of the interactive approach originating from the concept of the person-environment fit that needs to be considered:

- *Cognitive appraisal* - the subjective perception of the stressor leading to the experience.
- *Experience* - the perception of the stressor will depend on the individual's experience, previous exposure, learning or training and past success or failure.
- *Demand* - this comprises actual demand and perceived demand in addition to actual ability and perceived ability. The perception of demand is further influenced by the individual's needs, desires and immediate arousal level.
- *Interpersonal influence* - the way a potential source of stress is perceived will largely depend upon the presence or absence of other persons which will influence the subjective experience of stress, response and coping behaviours and can be detrimental or beneficial.
- *A state of imbalance* - when a state of imbalance occurs between perceived demand and perceived ability to meet that demand, coping strategies are derived, with feedback of the consequences of these actions: positive consequences restore balance, negative consequences further exacerbate the situation.

Graphically the interactive approach can be depicted as follows:

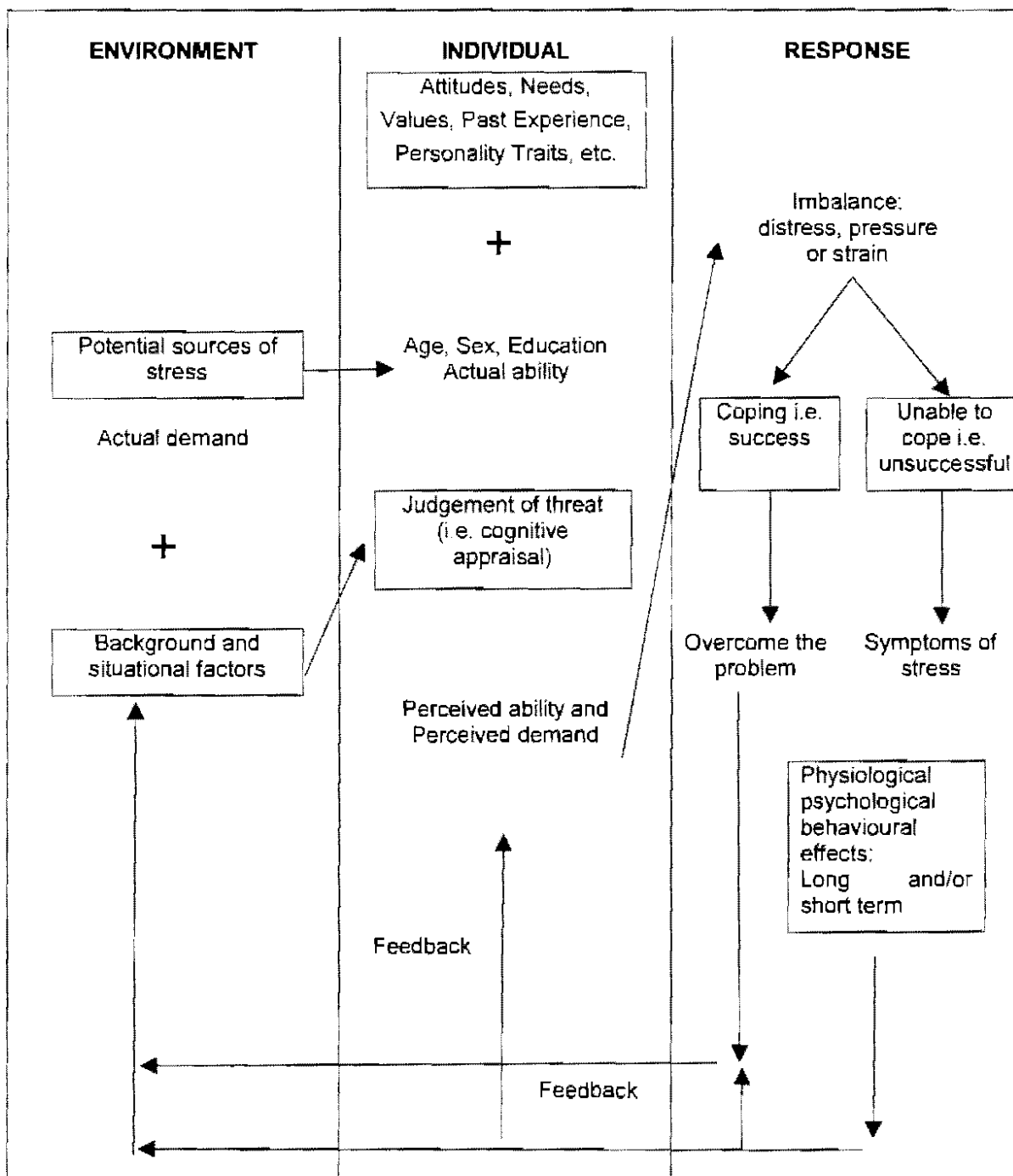


Figure 2.3 : An interactive model of stress

(Sutherland and Cooper, 1990:18)

The interactive approach can conceptually be summarised as follows: Stress is the intervening variable. This approach emphasises the importance of the way individuals perceive and react to stressors which they are exposed to - it reflects a 'lack of fit' between the individual and the environment, its antecedents and effects - a stimulus-response approach.

From the discussion and the graphical representation of the interactive approach, it is clear that the person and the environment are considered more in a holistic sense - the individual person's particular disposition as well as the physiological, psychological and behavioural responses to environmental demands. The environment, on the other hand, and the reference thereof, is also not specified to only indicate a school, or family, or economic, or political, or whatever environment or context, but both the background and situational factors as well as the demands generated from it.

As has been pointed out in Chapter 1, stress tends to have a 'spillover effect' from one context or sub-context to another. It would therefore constitute a nominalisation if teachers are only viewed as beings functioning in a sub-context like the educational context, because teachers as persons are not only teachers, but holistic functioning beings - in, and in interaction with, all contexts of human existence - biological, intrapsychic, ecological and metaphysical. According to Swick and Hanley (1985:6), teachers must contend not only with the school system, but they must also contend with changes that occur in their personal lives and society in general that can be sources of stressors. Fimian (*in Swick and Hanley, 1985:6*) states that "*stress exists not only in the work environment itself, but in the messages that individuals send themselves about the environmental events that occur around them*". These outside of work stressors may also interact with, and consequently influence the levels of stress experienced at work (Eskridge & Coker, 1985:389; Klarreich, 1990:5; Prinsloo, 1990:39; Gmelch & Chan, 1994:13-14; Travers & Cooper, 1996:22). Hayward points out that "*...it should be borne in mind that no single stressor is necessarily the sole source of a particular teacher's stress. Stressors are interwoven and interrelated*". If an individual teacher fails to deal with one source of stress adequately, this may have a 'knock-on' effect and can result in other stressors being created (Travers & Cooper, 1996:22). Because of this view, teachers and their stress need to be studied in a holistic manner by employing a meta-approach as a framework to indicate potential stressors experienced by teachers in all their contexts of human existence and to indicate potential effects of stress in all

teachers' contexts of human existence. Taking this vantage point will mean that the contexts of human existence can both be sources (stimulus) out of which stressors are generated for teachers, as well as showing the effects of (response to) these stressors. These effects together with the coping strategies employed, will on their part feed back and influence the stressors, due to the interactive effect. This process will continue until such time as the stressor has been coped with successfully by the person, or the person has succumbed to the stressor (experiencing burnout, or other physical, psychological, behavioural, social consequences, et cetera - even death), due to the person's impaired functioning. This reflects the dynamic interactive nature of person and environment which will be used as a backdrop in studying stress in teachers and the resultant effect on the wellness of teachers.

2.3 THE META-APPROACH AS A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR A HOLISTIC VIEW OF THE STRESS PHENOMENON

A general description of the meta-approach has been given in Chapter 1. The contexts and sub-contexts of human existence need to be described in greater detail in this section because of its use as a conceptual framework. This is essentially a synthesis of the views of Jordaan and Jordaan (1990:40-46); Jordaan and Jordaan (1998:38-41); and Kirsten (1994:3-5; 11; 18-116) applied to the stress phenomenon. As has already been pointed out, the meta-approach consists of four contexts of human existence, namely the biological, intra-psychic, ecological and metaphysical contexts. Engel (*in* Boddy, 1991:199) propagated a holistic biopsychosocial model concerning society's approach to healthcare and health promotion. Vollhart (1991:35-36) describes this movement as follows: "*What is emerging is a more holistic and complex model that, for the first time in history, is exploring the interactions among social, psychological, and biological factors...*". Gordon (1990:358), however, in the context of holistic medicine goes further by saying that:

This equation of 'biopsychosocial' with 'holistic' is common. It is, however, only partially true. Holistic medicine is biopsychosocial, but it is more. It includes an altered view of the meaning of each person's illness, a change in the structure of the physician-patient relationship, a wider conception of what might potentially be therapeutic, and a fourth dimension, the spiritual, which enlarges and

encompasses the domain of the biopsychosocial and redefines the nature and purpose of treatment.

Gordon (1990:358), in his perspective, also points out that there are several commonalities between holistic medicine and the mental health disciplines and that the holistic perspective might shape the future of mental health practise. Thinking along these lines makes the meta-approach as a vehicle or tool for the study of the stress phenomenon quite useful, because it not only includes the biopsychosocial environment, but also the larger living, non-living and physical environment, as well as the symbolic or metaphysical environment that contains amongst others, the spiritual realm. With this focus another important point is made, which is that the biopsychosocial model is also too narrow an approach because aspects of the state of the natural living and natural and human made non-living environment is negated, or at least not emphasized enough by only focussing on the 'social' part of the environment. With a holistic approach matters such as the existence of malaria, cholera, the state of school buildings, houses and such should also be taken into consideration in the understanding of the dynamics of stress.

Papp's (*in Plas, 1986:47*) holistic view of the systems theory is equally applicable to the understanding of the meta-approach (where "parts" referred to, can be seen as synonymous to contexts):

The central ideas of this theory are that the whole is considered to be greater than the sum of its parts, each can only be understood in the context of the whole, a change in any part will effect every other part: and the whole regulates itself through a series of feedback loops... Information loops travel back and forth within these feedback loops in order to provide stability or homeostasis for the system. The parts are constantly changing in order to keep the system balanced (as a tightrope walker constantly shifts his/her weight to preserve equilibrium).

This means that a stressor out of any context (or sub-context) will affect every other context (or sub-context).

The first two contexts, the biological and intra-psychic-, and more specifically the processes involved, constitute a living person, in other words the 'ingredients' so to speak, of the person as a psychobiological entity. This implies that the biological and intra-psychic contexts are interdependent as has been personally observed and eloquently described by Frankl (1988:75) after his experiences as a Jew in Nazi

concentration camps during the Second World War: "Those who know how close the connection is between the state of mind of man - his courage and hope, or lack of them - and the state of immunity of his body will understand that the sudden loss of hope and courage can have a deadly effect." Cohen and Edwards (1989:237) states that at a general level, it is assumed that stress leads to negative psychological states such as anxiety or depression. In turn, these psychological states may ultimately influence physical health either through a direct effect on biological processes that influence susceptibility to disease, or through behavioural patterns that increase risk for disease and mortality.

Bootzin and Acocella's (1984:186) description of the body-mind relationship is probably one of the most clearly and understandable descriptions. They are of the opinion that body and mind are logically one and the same thing or at most two aspects of the same thing. 'Mind' is an abstract term that refers to the working of the brain. The brain on its part is not only part of the body, but is connected by nerves with all other body parts. Therefore, it can be said that whatever happens psychologically in a person happens also physically, and visa versa. Most of the time a person is unaware of the activities in his/her brain. All that the person is really aware of is the effects of this activity - effects thought of as 'psychological' and not as physical. This is one reason why persons often erroneously regard the mind as something different from the body.

This means that if a person as a psychobiological being has a psychological experience like an emotion, it will also be a physical experience. Conversely, a physical experience can also be a psychological experience. In considering these dynamics, the essence is not so much about the one experience leading to the other as it is about the unity of soma and psyche. It can be concluded that 'physical' and 'psychological' do not refer to different phenomena, but refer to different ways of viewing the same phenomenon (Bootzin & Acocella, 1984:187). Churchland (*in* Green & Shellenberger, 1991:49) refers to this view as an identity model. The identity model suggests that mind and body exist and are manifestations of a common substance, just as ice and water vapour are manifestations of one substance, but are distinctly different. Stress will therefore affect the teacher, as a person who is a psychobiological being, in both the biological and intra-psychic contexts of human existence. These contexts, however, can themselves also serve as sources of stress.

Using the meta-approach as a conceptual framework for a holistic view of the stress phenomenon does not only include the biological and intra-psychic contexts, constituting the person as a psychobiological entity, but also includes the larger environment. Persons do not live their psychobiological lives in a vacuum. They are in fact in constant dialogue with their environmental contexts. These environmental contexts or existential contexts can be divided into an ecological context and a metaphysical context. These contexts represent the broad existential (living, non-living, physical and symbolic) contexts in which the experience and behaviour of human beings (as psychobiological entities) are evoked, maintained and modified. These are the contexts that teachers function within that will often be the sources of their stressors. Due to feedback the effects of the stress a person is experiencing can also be reflected in the environment.

The four contexts of human existence are in theory separable, but in practice inseparable. It would be impossible for a person to live without being a psychobiological entity, because separating it will mean death; it will also be impossible to take a person out of an environment without putting that same person into another environment. It is important to note, as has been said earlier, that these contexts can serve both as potential sources of stressors as well as a reflection of the potential effects of the stress experienced. This means that a stressor can originate in the person (biological and/ or intra-psychic contexts) for example due to a physical condition, or psychological condition that can be experienced as a source of stress. Alternatively, a stressor can also originate in the environment (ecological and metaphysical contexts) for example work demands or interpersonal conflict, or imposed ideology can be experienced as sources of stress. The same can be said for the effects of stress. In this sense, Eskridge and Coker (1985:387-388), Beard (1990:111), Van Eysen (1991:85) and Van der Linde (*in* McDonald & Van der Linde, 1993:137) and others, have tabulated illustrative examples of "*sources and reaction to stress*". In reality however, identifying a definitive and clear-cut starting point (or resultant end effect) of a stressor is not always easy, because the dynamics are much more subtle and intricate. More often, the sources and the effects of stress are a function of dynamic interaction between person and environment. The meta-approach, however, can be used to identify and use the two broad 'components' of stress dynamics, namely the person and the environment - both as source and effect. The meaning of four contexts of human existence in the meta-approach and used as a conceptual framework for a holistic view of the stress phenomenon can be explained in

more detail as follows (Jordaan & Jordaan, 1990:40-46; Jordaan & Jordaan, 1998:38-41; Kirsten, 1994:3-5; 11; 18-116):

2.3.1 Biological context

The importance of the biological context spans across a person's whole life, from conception to death. The development of the body consisting of physiological development (which means changes in the internal structure and functioning of the organs) and physical outward development and general functioning of the body is at the centre of the biological context. Damage and dysfunction caused by illness, trauma or want can be a potential stressor as well as be affected by stress itself. It is therefore important to keep in mind those sub-contexts which constitute the development, functioning and maintenance of the biological context. The sub-contexts of the biological context are mainly represented by:

- Genetic sub-context
- Constitutional sub-context
 - * Skeleton, muscles and general appearance
 - * Nervous system
 - Central nervous system
 - Peripheral nervous system
 - * Endocrine gland system
 - * Respiratory system
 - * Gastrointestinal system
 - * Metabolic system
 - * Excretory system
 - * Reproductive system
 - * Immune system
 - * Et cetera.

2.3.2 Intra-psychic context

The maturation of a person's biological sub-contexts before and after birth permits the differentiation of the person's conscious and experiential processes - to perceive, to think, learn and remember, to experience emotions, to act in a motivated manner and to form a self-image. The identifiable components of the intra-psychic context are a number of interdependent processes which have an important bearing on stress, because problematic functioning of these processes can serve as a source of stressors and can also be effected by stress itself. The intra-psychic processes referred to, also play a pivotal role in the mediation of the stimulus or stressor-experiences. The sub-contexts of the intra-psychic context are represented by:

- Perceptual processes
- Cognitive processes
- Emotive processes
- Dispositional processes
- Self-processes

2.3.3 Ecological context

The ecological context as part of the environment constitute the physical environment, living and non-living, as well natural and man-made with which the person is in interaction. The sub-contexts of the ecological context are represented by:

- Interpersonal sub-context
- Group-dynamic sub-context
- Work sub-context
- Societal sub-context
- Natural and Cultural Physical sub-context

2.3.4 Metaphysical context

The metaphysical context as part of the environment constitutes the symbolic environment. It has to do with things that are beyond our sensory perception, and which existence or non-existence we cannot prove. These include spiritual and religious, and

philosophical and ideological schemas of how persons interpret their ultimate reality - questions concerning what lies beyond all of existence; what its origins, nature and purpose are; what the meaning of life is. The sub-contexts of the metaphysical context are represented by:

- Spiritual and Religious sub-context
- Philosophical and Ideological sub-context

2.4 POTENTIAL SOURCES OF STRESSORS AND POTENTIAL EFFECTS OF STRESS

Because stress and the experience of stress are such a personalised or individual phenomenon, it will be impossible to provide a 'standard inventory' of things that can be regarded as sources of stressors for teachers. The same can also be said for the effects of stress. People are all dynamic and unique entities. This means that stressor X, mediated by individual differences such as perception, appraisal, coping styles and methods, nature and intensity of reactions to stressors, resources, et cetera, will not necessarily lead to effect Y in different persons (Travers & Cooper, 1996:22) (or even the same person at a different time). The experience of stress is unique in that it affects people in a personal manner (Eskridge & Coker, 1985:387). In fact, Kyriacou (1989:32) warns that three caveats need to be borne in mind before identifying sources of stress. Firstly, each teacher has a unique stress profile - what is stressful to one may not be stressful to the other. Secondly, many changes are taking place in education and, what might be a stressor now, might be of no consequence in five years' time. This is especially true for education in a post-apartheid society. Thirdly, particular groups of teachers will be subject to different stressors, types of stressors between a first-year teacher and one with experience will be different, also between staffs of schools in different communities. Some of these sentiments are also reflected by Bloom (*in* Ketterer, Bader & Levy, 1980:264): *"It is a paradigm that does not begin with the assumption that every specific disorder has a single or even multiple necessary precondition. Rather, this paradigm assumes that we are all variously vulnerable to stressful life events"*.

Cassel (*in* Ketterer *et al.* 1980:264) formulates this idea in another way by saying that:

"...any given psychosocial process or stressor will be etiologically specific for any disease".

Karasek and Theorell (1990:86-87) state that a common characteristic of stress theories is that the nature of the causal link between environment and effect on the individual is less easily determined than is usually true for the physical sciences or for conventional medical science. Instead of a single unambiguous cause-and-effect linkage, as in the hard sciences, in stress models many causes (stressors) may accumulate to produce a single effect, but on the other hand, a single cause (stressor) may manifest itself in many quite different effects. Karasek and Theorell (1990:87) furthermore are of the opinion that there is usually a significant time delay between cause and effect. This means that stress effects may often appear to be unintended results where lack of professional observation of the phenomena makes it still harder to isolate the true causes. It must also be noted that when deterministic physical models are applied to human illness or even to very complex physical systems, prediction is also very far from complete. The ambiguity of stress theory needs not be mistaken for non-science or sloppy science. It is merely another form of cause-effect rationality. This form of rationality is probably very well suited to complex systems of all sorts that involve multiple, interacting subsystems, or the term 'sub-contexts' as used in this study. In this sense Cohen and Edwards (1989:237), for example, remark that the specific mechanisms through which psychosocial stress is linked to mental health and physical illness, however, remains to be clarified.

Taking the above opinion of Karasek and Theorell, and Cohen and Edwards into account, as well as that of Carrol (1992:10), who points out that behaviours such as cigarette smoking and excessive alcohol consumption have complex social and psychological determinants, of which stress is merely one component, leads one to the following conclusion: that one should preferably refer to 'potential sources of stressors' and 'potential effects of stress' instead of a deterministic 'source of stressor and 'effect of stress'. What is important, is that one needs to be aware of some of the general potential sources of stressors out of all the contexts of human existence of teachers as well as the potential effects of these stressors reflected in all the contexts of human existence of teachers. This will transpire into the possibility of drawing up a different and personal stress profile of each individual teacher, concerning the potential sources of stressors and potential effects reflected in the individual person (Weiner, 1992:40). It is therefore important that "*the totality of experience should be described, not only one of its properties or aspects*" (Weiner, 1992:30), if the stress phenomenon is to be studied. This is the guiding principle of the following part on potential sources of stressors and

potential effects of stress on teachers. The aim is not, however, to supply an exhaustive list of all potential sources of stressors and all potential effects of stress in all the contexts of human existence, but rather to give exemplary illustrations of some potential sources of stressors out of, and some of the potential effects of stress, in all the contexts of human existence, to illuminate the complexity of the stress phenomenon and its impact on the wellness of teachers. The potential sources of stressors and the potential effects of stress will be discussed context-by-context (inclusive of the different sub-contexts). This means that it has to be kept in mind that a potential source of stressors in a specific sub-context can lead to potential effects of stress in other, as well as the same sub-context due to feedforward to, and feedback in, and from, other sub-contexts. For example, if a person has survived a myocardial infarction (potential source of stressors out of particular sub-contexts), the person might appraise the situation and its consequences as very threatening, and therefore experience actual stress and anxiety (potential effects of stress in other sub-contexts), and as a consequence, also raised blood pressure, heart frequency, et cetera (potential effects of stress in the same original sub-contexts). To stress the complexity of the stress phenomenon even further, it should be kept in mind that the myocardial infarction in itself could have been part of the potential effects of stress related to other or distant potential sources of stress, for example, work and domestic stressors (potential sources of stressors out of other sub-contexts).

Due to the fact that this study is concerned with the experience of stress or distress and a specific intervention to promote wellness, little attention will be given to those other factors in the contexts of human existence that make teachers resilient and which contribute to well-being and the experience of less distress (also potential effects of stress). Although those factors are of extreme importance and cannot be ignored, such a focus can form the explicit focus of another study. As a rule of thumb however, one can say that the more contexts (and sub-contexts) of human existence are integrated and functioning well, the greater the chances will be for the experience of less distress and greater wellness due to the interaction and transactions between healthy functioning systems and sub-systems. This view is essentially also reflected by Myers, Sweeney and Witmer (2000:252). Healthy functioning can also be seen as a resource for coping with stress. What has been said so far can be graphically conceptualised and proposed as a model for the study of stress dynamics for this study:

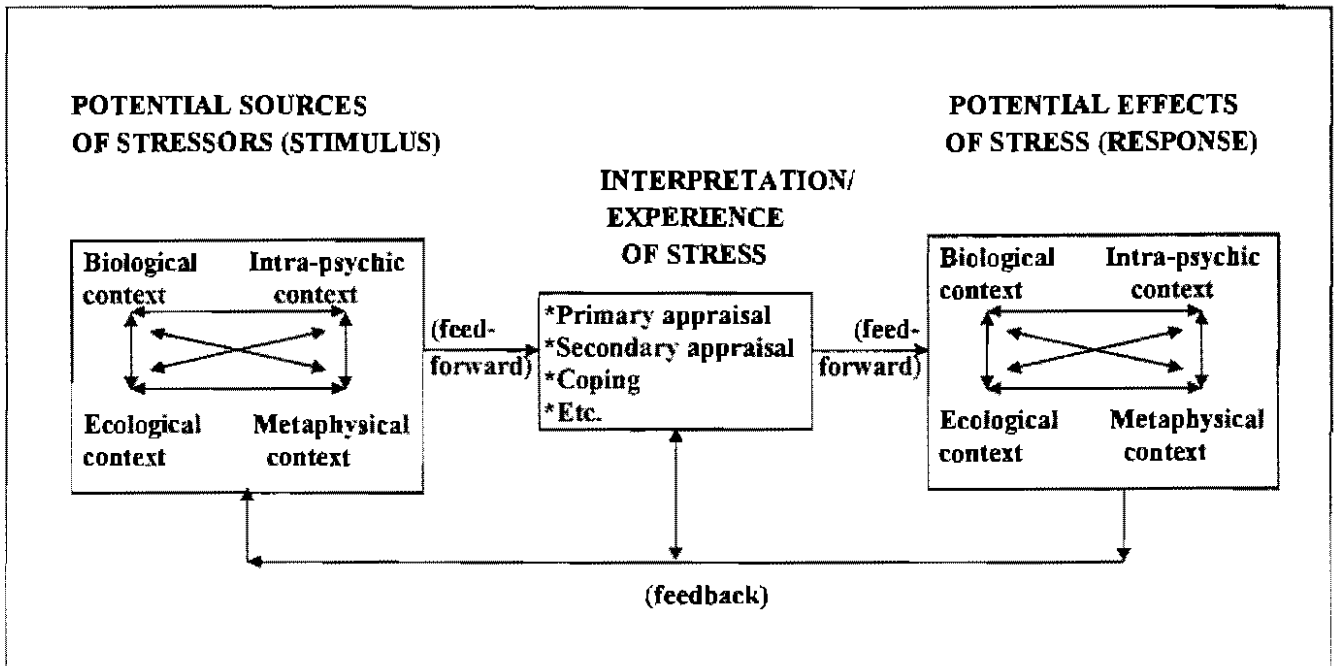


Figure 2.4: A conceptual model of stress dynamics

The dynamics of the interpretation/experience of stress will be discussed after the potential sources of stressors and the potential effects of stress have been discussed.

2.5 POTENTIAL SOURCES OF STRESSORS AND POTENTIAL EFFECTS OF STRESS EXPERIENCED BY TEACHERS IN ALL THEIR CONTEXTS OF HUMAN EXISTENCE

2.5.1 Biological context

Bodily functioning, consisting of physiological development (changes in the internal structure and functioning of organs and systems), physiological functioning (of organs and systems), and outwardly physical development and functioning, stand at the centre of the Biological Context (Kirsten, 1994:19) and physical well-being. Actual damage, disease or dysfunction during any stage in life to the structural or physical integrity of the biological system can, as a consequence, be a source of stressors to the teacher as a

person due to the impact it can have on the other contexts of existence. Conversely, the Biological Context can also be affected, directly or indirectly (via other contexts of existence), by the experience of stress itself - extensively elaborated upon by the proponents of the response approach referred to earlier.

2.5.1.1 Genetic sub-context

Chromosomes and genes play an important role in determining psychological and physical characteristics. A person's given genetic inheritance in interaction with environmental factors determine how the genetic potentialities are realised in terms of the psychological and physical realms. Louw (*in* Theron, 1985:7) remarks in similar vein that a person may be predisposed to a *particular* psychopathological condition on the grounds of his/her genetic composition. To illustrate this point, Hollandsworth (1990:5) refers to research that indicates that some individuals might have an inherent vulnerability to mood disorders and are therefore more susceptible to the effects of environmental stress or the lack of social support, especially such as in the case of endogenic depression. The same can also be said for alcoholism (Hollandsworth, 1990:59) as well as for panic disorder and obsessive disorder (Hollandsworth, 1990:156). A particular teacher as a person might suffer from a designated specific genetic inherited condition like porfina, diabetes mellitus or have a more subtle genetic predisposition for a specific problem, which can develop in interaction with a stressful environment. This will reflect the effects of stress experienced. Whatever the case, the condition in itself can also become a source of stressors due to the impaired functioning in or interaction with the environment. Maian (1991:12) is of the opinion that some people have a genetic predisposition for the development of stress related illnesses.

2.5.1.2 Constitutional sub-context

The constitution is defined as the totality of internal physiological and anatomic as well as external observable characteristics of a human being at any time of his/her life (Louw, Gerdes & Meyer, 1984:52). The constitution on its part is determined further by genetic factors, environmental factors and constitutional factors in itself, illustrating the interaction between different contexts, even an exponential effect. In other words, the characteristics of a person will in itself influence the further development of the person. For example, a teacher suffering from some form of a specific disability, might not develop his/her social skills fully and as a consequence interact less with learners and

colleagues which can result even more in the inhibition of social skills. This means that a disability as a potential source of stressors might lead to more and more stress as the person's social needs also become frustrated, resulting in further physiological, psychological and behavioural effects, and so on. Although the Constitutional Sub-Context can serve as a potential source of stressors, it can also reflect the potential effects of stress as will be indicated.

- **Skeleton, muscles and general appearance**

Actual damage to the skeleton and/or muscles because of trauma, disease, genetic or any other influence resulting in physical disability can have serious consequences for individuals and their families due to the impact on their material and psychological wellness (Wilkinson *in* Broome, 1989:234). Wilkinson (*in* Broome, 1989:236) has in fact pointed out that the initial actual experience of a disability can be compared to a post-traumatic stress disorder. Wilson and Ramphela (1989:182) remark that: *"disabled people are often condemned to lead impoverished lives because the structures both physical and social, of the society are usually designed in such a way as to exclude those who are not 100 per cent mentally or physically fit."*

Because of these inhibiting physical and social structures, it can be argued that teachers with disabilities might be regarded as less employable and less eligible for promotion than peers without disabilities. An unaccommodating physical and social environment can intensify the demands of the profession much more. This situation can be a severe source of stressors as well as be affected by stress itself in terms of the exacerbation of the disability. Although a small percentage of teachers probably have serious disabilities, all experience the effect of tense muscles at least as a potential affect of stress, which on its own contributes significantly to stress and tension. According to Girdano, Everly and Dusek (1997:37), chronically tense muscles complete a feedback loop and further stimulate the mind, resulting in greater stress states, and chronically tense muscles result in numerous psychosomatic disorders including headache, backache, spasms of the esophagus and colon (the latter resulting in either diarrhoea or constipation), posture problems, asthma, tightness in the throat and chest cavity, certain eye problems, lockjaw, muscle tears and pulls and perhaps rheumatoid arthritis.

Teachers living in a society which suffer a great deal from the Ponce de Leon Syndrome (from a diagnostic category borrowed from Medical Hypnoanalysis, after Juan Ponce de Leon who, having an obsession to stay young and not age, searched the fabled Fountain

of Youth (SASCH, undated:32)), might experience dissatisfaction with their general appearance which might be regarded as a stressor in social relations. Chronic stress can lead to the skeleton and muscles being compromised/strained and as a consequence reflect the effects for example in the general posture and physical appearance. Another example concerning the joints of the limbs is that of rheumatoid arthritis. Genest (1989:343-361) refers to the fact that 0.5-1% of the population between the ages of 20 and 80 years, suffer from rheumatoid arthritis. Rheumatoid arthritis has been indicated to be a severe potential source of stressors because of the impact of pain, and on sexual function, mobility, economic and occupational disability and social stresses associated. The potential effects of stress has also long been assumed to play a crucial role in rheumatoid arthritis.

- **Nervous system**

A person's body functions are regulated by two main control systems, namely the central nervous system and the endocrine glands. The central nervous system functions by swiftly conducting electrical impulses from the brain to specific organs or body parts and back. The endocrine glands as second control system, on the other hand, is markedly slower, but the duration of the effect is much longer; it can be up to seventy two hours after a traumatic event (Hafen *et al.*, 1996:61). The nervous system can be graphically divided into the following different divisions as described by Auerbach and Grambling (1998:74):

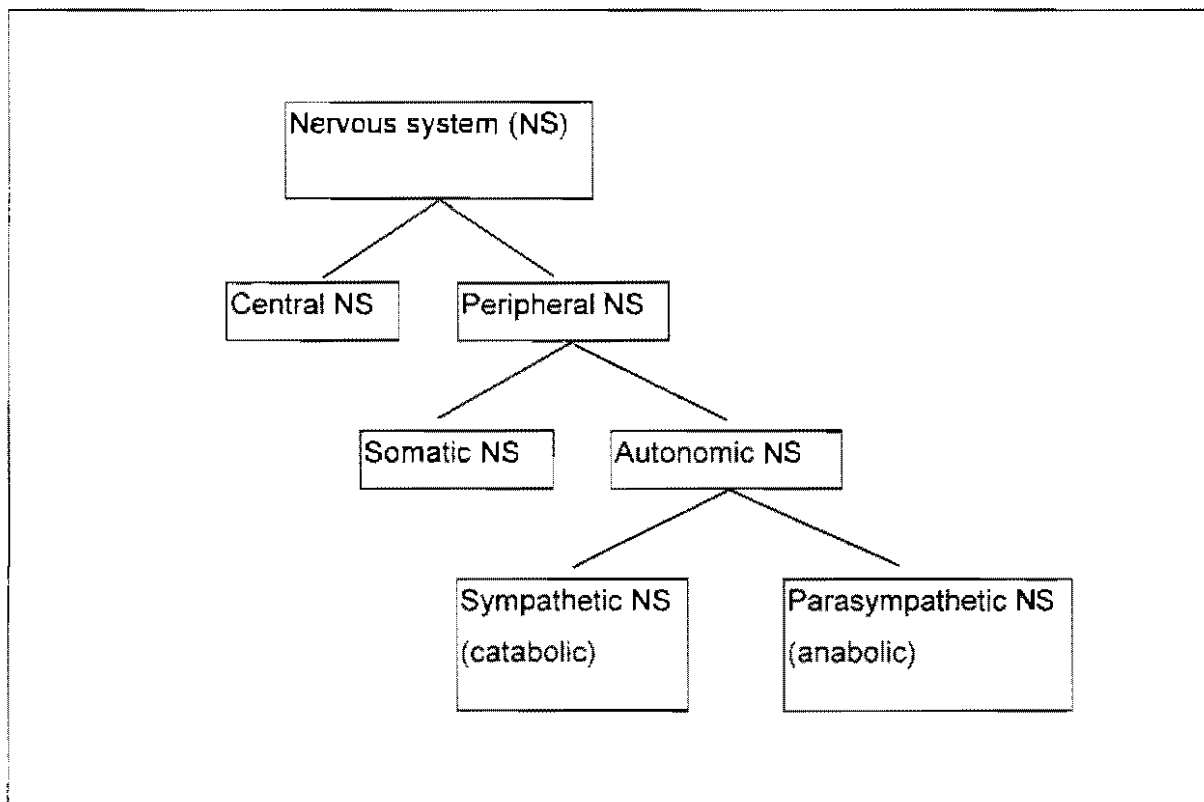


Figure 2.5: Different divisions of the nervous system

The nervous system plays an important role in virtually all behaviour. All psychological processes, as has been said earlier, also 'happens' in the nervous system. The nervous system is first divided into two primary divisions, the central nervous system and peripheral nervous system. The central nervous system comprises the brain and the spinal cord. All other aspects of the nervous system are subsumed under the peripheral nervous system. The peripheral nervous system is divided into the somatic nervous system and the autonomic nervous system. The somatic nervous system is closely involved in the regulation of voluntary motor movements, for example walking. The autonomic nervous system, on the other hand, regulates body functions over which we have little voluntary control, for example, respiration, contraction of the smooth muscles (for example muscles that form the lining of blood vessels). The autonomic nervous system is once again divided into the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. Generally these two divisions of the autonomic nervous system work together in a reciprocal fashion. The sympathetic nervous system is activated in the face of stress by the hypothalamus and is responsible for preparing the body for the 'fight or flight' response. In terms of being a potential source of stressors and presenting the potential effects of stress, the following can be noted in the nervous system (Louw, 1990:49-58):

- *The central nervous system* plays a pivotal role in all higher mental processes. For example, thought, perception, memory decision making and emotional experience are the result of the control, integration and co-ordination of responses upon stimuli from the environment or from the person him-/herself. Damage to the central nervous system due to trauma, disease (or whatever other reason) like a cerebrovascular accident (stroke), can result in very serious potential effects which can have a very serious bearing on the creation of lifelong potential source of stressors due to some form of impairment. These effects can range from disturbance in balance, apathetic behaviour, concentration problems, emotional lability, language problems and a whole range of other potential problems. There are two specific systems, however, as part of the central nervous system which can contribute to being potential sources of stressors, namely the limbic system and the reticular activating system. Dysfunction of the limbic system is associated with emotional disorders (depression, emotional instability, aggression, et cetera), vegetative disorders (eating disorders) and memory problems (especially short-term). The reticular activating system regulates the processes of consciousness, such as sleep, wakefulness, memory and the selective focus of attention. Dysfunction of the reticular activating system can therefore constitute a serious potential source of stressors.

As far as the potential effect of stress on the central nervous system is concerned, research indicates that elevated levels of stress hormones kill off significant numbers of vitally important brain cells (Hafen *et al.*, 1996:61).

- *The peripheral nervous system*, as has been pointed out above, can be divided into the somatic and autonomic nervous systems. It is the autonomic nervous system, consisting of the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems, which has special relevance for stress. The working of these two nervous systems can be regarded as polar extremes. Homeostasis between them are maintained in a reflexive manner, but it can happen that one of them can sometimes tip the balance. If parasympathetic domination occurs, a person will be very calm. Physical condition will be excellent and sleep and concentration problems virtually non-existent. When this happens a person might not be very motivated to function optimally, which might result in parasympathetic dominance becoming a source of stress, because the person can fall behind in certain tasks, work or responsibilities that have to be done.

As has been pointed out in Chapter 1, all stress is not bad, eustress is needed for optimum performance.

When sympathetic dominance takes place, it is characterised by tension, restlessness and anxiety. Physical symptoms can also be noted, namely sweaty palms, paleness, tremors, dilated pupils et cetera. Less overt symptoms are a want of appetite, palpitations of the heart, shallow breathing, weak concentration, difficulty to fall asleep and restless sleep patterns. Sympathetic dominance can clearly be a potential source of stressors, but is also a very well-known effect of stress.

- **Endocrine glands system**

The functioning of the endocrine glands is closely integrated with the nervous system. The endocrine glands secrete hormones directly into the bloodstream and thereby influence certain organs which result in changing physical and psychic functioning. The endocrine glands can be regarded as potent potential sources of stressors whenever dysfunction occurs due to impaired general functioning. It can on the other hand often also present the potential effects of stress. To this effect for instance, Michal (1991:77) mentions that *"stress, and in particular acute stress, can exacerbate an already existing diabetic condition"*. The following can be deduced from the description of the endocrine glands by Louw (1990:58-62) in terms of its relevance and application to stress:

- *The pituitary gland* is controlled by the hypothalamus (part of the central nervous system) (Sapolsky, 1994:31). It secretes hormones which set a biophysiological cascade in motion to act upon demands made on a person. Pituitary gland dysfunction can cause mild emotional symptoms, depression and psychotic states.
- *The thyroid gland's* secretion of thyroxin plays a very important role in the process of metabolism and has a huge effect on behaviour. Under secretion of thyroxin can lead to a whole range of psychopathological symptoms such as depression, memory problems, slow thought processes, disorientation, agitation with concurrent paranoid thoughts, delusions and hallucinations. Over secretion of thyroxin can lead to symptoms of psychopathology like restlessness, anxiety, irritability, sleeplessness and heightened motor activity. Physiological symptoms like bulging eyes, weight loss, increased heart rate and trembling can also occur.

- *The parathyroid gland* secretes the parathyroid hormone which regulates the levels of calcium and phosphate. Under secretion of parathyroid hormone leads to physiological symptoms like muscle spasms and symptoms of psychopathology such as intellectual deterioration and symptoms similar to organic brain disorders and psychosis. Over secretion of parathyroid hormone can cause the decalcification of the skeleton and symptoms of psychopathology such as irritability, lack of energy, tiredness, depression, memory problems, disorientation, anxiety, delirium and paranoid thoughts and hallucinations.
- *The pancreas* secretes insulin and glucagon which function in an antagonistic way to control the level of blood sugar. Under secretion of insulin leads to a heightened level of blood sugar - hyperglycaemia. This condition - diabetes mellitus - presents physiological symptoms like general physical weakness, excessive passing of urine, thirst and hunger. Psychological symptoms like psychological dullness and depression can also occur. The long-term effect of chronic hyperglycaemia and disturbed metabolism (brought about by the hyperglycaemia) is permanent, and irreversible changes in various tissues, particularly the vascular system, lead to the development of diabetic complications that particularly effect the eye, kidney and the nervous system (Deary & Frier, 1995:35). Over secretion of insulin causes hypoglycaemia which is characterised by tiredness, irritability, trembling, head ache, disorientation and delusion. Hypoglycaemia is very common in diabetic patients treated with insulin (Deary & Frier, 1995:36). In serious cases it can lead to convulsions, coma or even death. Recurring long episodes of serious hypoglycaemia can lead to brain damage.
- *The adrenal gland* can be divided into an adrenal cortex and an adrenal medulla. Hyper-functioning of the adrenal cortex can lead to two syndromes: the Cushing and adrenogenital syndromes. Cushing syndrome presents physiological symptoms such as an increase in appetite, obesity, and general tiredness. About 40 to 50 percent of people suffering from Cushing syndrome also present psychopathological symptoms of which the most common are depression (concomitant with a high suicide risk), an euphoric state (very similar to the manic phase of a bipolar disorder), irritability, anxiety, sleeplessness, concentration problems and agitatedness. A psychotic state can develop in exceptional cases with accompanying paranoid thoughts and hallucinations which can be mistaken for

schizophrenia. Adrenogenital syndrome develops when an over secretion of the sex hormone androgen (male) or oestrogen (female) takes place. An over secretion of androgen leads to men and women presenting more masculine characteristics. The reverse happens with an over secretion of oestrogen. Hypo-functioning of the adrenal cortex can lead to a condition known as Addison disease. Well-known physiological symptoms include low blood pressure, weight loss, digestive problems and darkening of the skin. Psychological symptoms include tiredness, apathy, negativism and often depression and irritability. Delusions, disorientation, and even hallucinations can be found in serious cases. The adrenal medulla excretes adrenaline as well as noradrenaline which are both closely involved in the functioning of the sympathetic nervous system referred to earlier.

- *The gonads/genital glands* undergo certain changes during the menopause in women usually between 45 and 50 years of age, due to the decline in activity of the ovaries. This produces various other effects which are further described by MacQueen (1992:242): The menopause is marked by the cessation of women's menstrual cycles and the atrophy of their sexual organs. In addition, other changes may also occur due to changes in the endocrine glands. Symptoms such as increased deposit of fat, atrophy of the skin, growth of facial hair and so called 'hot flushes' with an excessive tendency to perspire due to changes in the cardiovascular system, occur often. Headaches, irritability and depression may also be present. The physical and psychological symptoms experienced by persons, (especially those who have not yet had children and/or those for whom getting old is a personal crisis), may experience this life stage as a source of stressors. The experience of menopause might possibly also be effected by stress. Men also undergo changes in this life stage, but not as dramatically as women. The testicles comprise the genital glands in men. Men experience a slower more gradual process which consists of the waning of fertility, sexual activity and general vitality, sometimes accompanied by irritability, depression and reduced mental concentration. The status of the genital functioning, as is the case with all other glands, can both serve as a potential source of stressors, and can reflect the potential effects of stress.

- **Circulatory system**

Problems with blood circulation can have a serious effect on a person's quality of life, because of the limitations placed on his/her physical activities as well as causing death at a relatively young age. The seriousness of this situation stems from the fact that statistics show that circulatory problems are the most common cause of death in the Western World (Evans in Pitts & Phillips, 1991:187). Circulatory problems do not only include the heart and the functioning of the heart and vascular system, it can include other organs like the lungs or the brain where for example a thrombus (blood clot) can form which can cause serious circulation problems. As a consequence, a small portion of tissue may die (infarkt) because of not receiving oxygen and thus the patient suffer dire consequences. If such an event occurs in the brain (cerebrovascular incident), due to cerebral haemorrhage, cerebral thrombosis, cerebral embolism or pressure on the blood vessel by a tumour (MacQueen, 1992:363), it can cause permanent damage, even death. Symptoms range from presenting initial haziness and confusion, with no later symptoms, to paralysis in a body part, speech impairment, et cetera, depending on the localisation of the infarkt. Additionally, since a stroke often occurs during or just after violent exertion or strong emotion, persons with high blood pressure should seek to avoid these factors (MacQueen, 1992:364). Circulatory problems and potential contributing factors can clearly be a potential source of stressors, but can also reflect the effects of stress. Having high blood cholesterol and blood pressure levels can be a significant potential source of stressors if the person knows about them and is familiar with the possible dangers associated with the conditions in terms of related circulatory problems. If the person has to change his/her lifestyle in order to prevent the dangers associated with these conditions, it may also become a potential source of stressors.. If not, and the person experiences for example a myocardial infarkt and survive it, it may mean that the person will suffer from the consequences of a the condition throughout his/her life. Coronary heart disease can also be an effect of stress due to the fact that stress might increase heart rate, increase plasma cholesterol (Lindsay & Gaw, 1997:23), and increase blood pressure (Saab & Schneiderman, 1993:50), et cetera, and thereby gradually contribute to the development of a heart condition.

- **Respiratory system**

Respiratory problems such as diseases of the lungs and respiratory tract are very common, ranging in severity from the relative triviality of the common cold to conditions of the utmost gravity. In a survey in Britain, National Health Insurance statistics show

that respiratory problems are responsible for more than one-quarter of the total days of absence from work. The main causes are infection, allergy, and damage by dust (MacQueen, 1992:321). The resultant experience of impaired functioning may be a source of stressors, but respiratory problems can also be an effect of stress, as indicated in the discussion of the dynamics in the immune system. Respiratory system functioning as a source of stressors or an effect of stress can also be effected by smoking which is a behaviour often related to stress.

- **Gastrointestinal system**

According to Bennett (*in* Broome, 1989:271), about 70% of referrals to gastroenterological clinics are candidates for psychotherapy. Research results also point out that in at least two out of three of the most common gastrointestinal problems, namely irritable bowel syndrome and peptic ulcer disease "...the importance of psychological factors in the onset or exacerbation of each disorder" (Bennett *in* Broome, 1989:271) is important. A range of eating disorders such as obesity, bulimia and anorexia nervosa, can be very taxing for the body of the person suffering from it, due to the fact that they might get either too much or not enough nutrition. These forms of behaviour have certain definitive psychological correlates (Louw, 1989:33; 168; 471-482; Smith, 1990:163-164). The same can be said for the use of appetite suppressants by persons who are overweight. These appetite suppressants are aimed to change the hypothalamus's control of appetite, which often results in dependency or hypertension (Salus, October/November, 1989:16). The problematic functioning of the gastrointestinal system and the associated behaviours can therefore be seen as acting either as sources of stressors or reflecting the effect of stress.

- **Metabolic system**

The metabolic process takes place after the absorption of nutrients in the blood stream, when complex elements are broken down in simple elements (catabolism) and simple elements are build into complex elements (anabolism). Metabolic diseases may result from the disturbance of the acid-base balance which normally keeps the blood and tissues slightly alkaline; endocrine disorders and effects in metabolising specific dietary constituents; and excess or deprivation of essential food elements (MacQueen, 1992:247). Problems occur when metabolic diseases cause dysfunction in metabolism which can result in the changing of normal biochemical processes in the body. This can

result in different degrees of consequence for the body. A case in point can be diabetes mellitus, a metabolic disorder due to the malfunctioning of the pancreas (part of the endocrine system), as has been shown earlier in the reference to the endocrine glands system:

The disease can effect almost all areas of personal functioning, from cognitive development to mood and interpersonal relationships in adults. Another is that the management regimen is intrusive, pervasive and requires life-long self-regulation of behaviour. The degree of control a patient achieves over the disease is affected by stress, attitudes, social support, the manner in which health care is delivered, and the expertise and beliefs of care professionals. Some patients will develop serious degenerative complications and will require rehabilitation and counselling (Sillitoe & Miles in Broome, 1989:208).

This condition can therefore serve as a potential source of stressors as well as reflect the potential effects of stress itself.

- **Excretory system**

This system has to do with the body's response to get rid of waste products. The kidneys play an important role in this process to filter out end products of the metabolic process from the blood. If this does not happen, it will hinder further metabolic reactions. The kidneys also fulfil a regulating function concerning the electrolyte levels and concentrations of minerals in the blood. If for some reason the kidneys are dysfunctional, it can result in the accumulation of waste products which can lead to death due to uraemia. If the kidneys cannot fulfil this function, then the person has to spend some time on a regular basis coupled to a kidney machine where waste products have to be removed by dialysis or receive a kidney transplant. This can be a serious potential source of stressors notably in the case of dialysis due to (Binik, Devins & Orme, 1989:306-309; Long in Broome, 1989:446) the following:

- Consciousness of the life threatening condition of kidney dysfunction;
- Mortality and physical complications are high;
- Seeing other sufferers die;
- Compromised physical functioning: lack of energy, tiredness, nausea, insomnia, *et cetera*;

- Secondary consequences of kidney dysfunction: loss of work, limited move ability, financial problems, compromised social and family life, et cetera;
- Requirements of rules for living with dialysis: salt-free diet, limitations on fluids, time consuming treatment, taking of medication;
- Dialysis treatment: the person often believes he/she has lost control over life;
- Psychological correlate of dialysis is phobic and anxiety responses, depression, suicide reactions, passive unwillingness to keep to medical demands, anorexia, sleep disorders, sexual dysfunction and psychosocial dysfunction.

Problems in the excretory system like kidney dysfunction can be a source of stressors and can be effected (Carrol, 1992:31; also see Emotive Processes) by stress itself.

- **Reproductive system**

Sexual dysfunctions like erectile dysfunction or some of the other sexual dysfunctions can be a potential source of stressors and can also reflect the potential effects of stress itself. Stress is, according to Malan (1991:32), one of the main causes of infertility in men and women, thereby reflecting a potential effect of stress. It can also be argued that infertility can be a major source of stressors in itself. Sherr (*in Broome, 1989:377*) describes infertility as a stressful situation which can affect a person's social life, work and self perception. In similar vein Sherr (*in Broome, 1989:377*) is of the opinion that a miscarriage "...has enormous emotional impact both at the time of the miscarriage and as a factor on subsequent pregnancies". A miscarriage can therefore serve as a potential source of stressors, but can possibly also be an effect of severe stress itself.

- **Immune system**

The immune system is a very complicated system. The hallmarks of the immune system's ability to distinguish self from nonself are its diversity, specificity and memory. The diversity is exemplified by the vast array of foreign substances such as bacteria, viruses and mutant cells to which the immune system responds. The response to subsequent encounters with the same foreign substance (antigen) becomes more rapid and potent than the first which demonstrates the specificity and memory of the immune system. The immune system is finely calibrated to protect the body on a continuous basis from foreign substances that invade the body from outside (exogenous antigens) and also substances produced by the body itself (endogenous antigens) (Auerbach and

Grambling, 1998:83). There are basically three ways in which the immune system can become dysfunctional that can lead to stress related-illness (Girdano, Everly & Dusek, 1997:47): Firstly by underactivity, secondly by hyperactivity and thirdly by misguided activity. Underactivity of the immune system can leave the body vulnerable to exogenous antigens such as bacteria, viruses and endogenous antigens such as mutant cells, and cancer. Hyperactivity of the immune system can result in allergic responses such as asthma, in fact, as far as the lungs are concerned, hyperimmune-response can cause symptoms ranging from mild discomfort to respiratory failure. Misguided activity of the immune system can result in auto-immune diseases, which means that the immune system attacks its own tissues as well as those invading antigens. In AIDS, for example, certain cells of the immune system itself are mistakenly targeted for destruction, thereby weakening the immune system in general and making the person more susceptible to secondary diseases. In a relatively whole new field called psychoneuro-immunology the complexity of the immune system is demonstrated with the remark by Sapolsky (1994:132), that "...*what goes on in your head can effect how well your immune system functions*". Vollhardt (1991:37) says that evidence is increasing that behavioural factors, such as stress and the individual's ability to cope with it, play an important role in immunosuppression. Experimental data and epidemiologic data have demonstrated that adverse life events, psychologic distress, and depressive symptoms are associated with the development and course of many human diseases (Weiner *in* Irwin, 1993:203). These opinions reflect the interaction of the biological and intra-psychic contexts. The dysfunctional immune system can therefore be potentially effected by stress and can also be a potential source of stressors itself due to the related health problems of a dysfunctioning immune system.

It can be concluded that potential sources of stress can either be directly linked to potential effects of stress such as subsequent physical disorders (for example increased heart rate and blood pressure), or indirectly linked to physical disorders brought about via changes and behaviour or lifestyle (Brown & Campbell, 1994:63-64). These authors also note that it should not be overlooked that physical ill-health can itself be an important potential source of stressors. It can therefore be concluded that the biological context can have a potentially tremendous impact on the wellness of teachers.

2.5.2 Intra-psychic context

As is the case with the biological context, all the processes in the sub-contexts of the intra-psychic context are inextricably related. Although the processes are referred to separately, they are in essence inseparable and in continuous interaction, not only within the intra-psychic context, but also with all other contexts. However, if one wants to communicate one's experiences intelligibly, one has to observe the conventions of language and use the categories of experiential processes that are familiar (Jordaan & Jordaan, 1998:279), as is currently the case in the discussion of the potential sources of stressors and potential effects of stress. The intra-psychic context stands in the centre of the experience of stress due to the appraisal of, and acting upon potential sources of stress by the intra-psychic processes of perception, cognition, affect, disposition and self. These same manifesting or manifested processes of the intra-psychic context can act as potential sources of stressors, and can, on the other hand, also reflect the potential effects of stress and the potential impact on the wellness of teachers. This section will mainly focus on the intra-psychic context as a potential source of stressors and a reflector of the potential effects of stress. The experience, appraisal and coping with stress as intra-psychic processes will be dealt with later.

2.5.2.1 *Perceptual processes*

The perceptual processes as a category of experiential processes has to do with the receiving and elaboration of information, in other words, the accompanying perceptual processes and the perceptual meanings. These dynamics focus the attention on the fact that the perceptual sub-context is an interwoven and complex and intra-psychic as well as biological construct. As such, it is in essence part of a continuing process starting when the person is perceiving something happening with the senses (which are in their physical state part of the biological context), and then also using cognitive processes for elaboration. The view that there is only a one-way flow of information is an erroneous one, because cognitive, emotive, behavioural and self-processes in the form of previous experience, knowledge, learning et cetera, are in constant dialogue with the perceptual processes in terms of what is being perceived. Faulty perceptions, according to Gold and Roth (1993:24), are rooted in faulty beliefs or expectations. To conclude: to understand the perceptual processes well, one should not only understand the physical properties of what is being perceived, but also that of the perceiver. A person's intra-

psychic processes do not respond blindly to a stressor, but exercise a fair degree of subjective interpretation.

The two examples given earlier of two teachers experiencing the same circumstances, professionally or recreationally, but perceiving them differently explain the dramatic difference in their psychological perceptions of the events. According to Rogers (1996:13), *"...the way we perceive and process events, and what we say to ourselves about those events, has a direct impact on how stressfully we feel and manage them"*. In similar vein, a red light can be interpreted by one person as a useful object for regulating traffic and by another as a source of irritation. If a teacher as a person perceives his/her situation as threatening it might just as well be a potential source of stressors. On the other hand, a perception of a situation as threatening can also be a potential effect of stress because the person might already feel out of control and therefore seeing new situations as unmanageable. Sapolsky (1994:282) illustrates the powerful effect of perceptions by saying that *"...change the way even a rat perceives its world and you dramatically alter the likelihood of it getting a disease. These ideas are no mere truisms. They are powerful, potentially liberating forces to be harnessed"*.

2.5.2.2 Cognitive processes

Much of what has been said about the perceptual processes is true for the cognitive processes due to the interwovenness of the intra-psychic sub-contexts. It is the theory of the approaches in the field of cognitive psychology which play major roles in the understanding of the experience of stress (Haaga & Davison, 1988:346-376; Eysenck, 1988:133-160; Cotton, 1990:189-213). Cotton (1990:190) points out that according to most cognitive theories, negative, maladaptive or absent cognitions are involved both in the development and maintenance of a psychopathological state, or on emotional well-being and motivation (Braiker *in* Rogers, 1996:16). Therefore, one will be able to apply the same view to cognitions related to potential sources of stressors, stress experience and the potential effects of stress. Klarreich (1990:28) on his part goes so far as to say that *"illogical thinking is what manufactures stress"*. Forman (1990:315) states that irrational beliefs have been found to be significantly related to teacher stress levels. Beck (*in* Cotton, 1990:189) proposed a cognitive model of stress which addresses both the role of cognitions in the formulation of stress (cognitions as sources of stressors), and the role of stress in the formulation of cognitions (reflecting the effects of stress on cognitions). Beck's first principle in this model is that of the construction of a situation, a

cognitive set, as an active continuing process that includes successive appraisals of the external situation and the risks, costs and gains of a particular response. When it happens that the individual's vital interests appear to be at stake, the cognitive processes provide a highly selective conceptualisation. It is the cognitive structuring of the situation rather than the situation itself, which leads to mobilisation of action, if action does in fact occur. The content of the cognitive structure will also dictate the nature of the action, whether it be the desire to attack or avoid, or some other course of action. Unfortunately, at the same time, the presence of stress creates a disruption in cognitive organisation and function; thus concentration, recall, reason and impulse control may all be impaired.

Although Beck's work has originally largely been done in the treatment of depression, his theoretical constructs, as have been pointed out, are well-suited for the understanding of stress, especially the cognitions involved. Beck's (Hollon & Beck *in* Haaga & Davison, 1988:248) cognitive model holds that depression (or stress in the context of this study, of which depression might reflect a potential source or a potential effect of stress) results primarily from pervasive, negative misinterpretations of experience. This misinterpretations give rise to a negative cognitive triad, that is, a negative view of oneself, one's world, and one's future. Such a person's belief in the negative triad can be preserved in spite of contrary evidence, because of the negatively biased manner in which he/she processes this evidence. A number of common distortions in information processing have been identified - generally referred to as cognitive distortions or irrational thoughts or beliefs (Haaga & Davison, 1986:249; Burns, 1980:31-41; Klarreich, 1990:28-37). Applied specifically to teaching, however, Bernard and Joyce (*in* Forman, 1990:316) provide a listing of 16 major irrational beliefs of teachers. These are:

- I must have constant approval from students, other teachers, administrators and parents;
- Events in my classroom should always go exactly the way I want them to;
- Schools should be fair;
- Students should not be frustrated;
- People who misbehave deserve severe punishment;
- There should be no discomfort or frustration at school;
- Teachers always need a great deal of help from others to solve school-related problems;

- Those who don't do well at school are worthless;
- Students with a history of academic or behavioural problems will always have problems;
- Students or other teachers can make me feel bad;
- I can't stand to see children who have had unhappy home lives;
- I must be in total control of my class at all times;
- I must find the perfect solution to all problems;
- When children have problems, it's their parents' fault;
- I must be a perfect teacher and never make mistakes;
- It's easier to avoid problems at school than to face them.

These cognitive distortions can be seen to be potential sources of stressors. Common examples of potential effects of stress (that can also be regarded as potential sources of stressors) in the cognitive domain, are reported by Klarreich, (1990:38-43), Bradshaw (1991:44), Fontana (1994:12-13) and Shafer (1996:125) to be:

- Fuzzy, foggy thinking;
- Delusions and thought disorders increase;
- Short and long-term memory deteriorate;
- Mental block;
- Difficulty organising thoughts;
- Nightmares;
- Concentration and attention span decrease;
- Inward preoccupation, interfering with listening;
- Powers of organisation and long-term planning deteriorate;
- Drop in performance.

2.5.2.3 *Emotive processes*

Due to the interaction between the intra-psychic processes, cognitive distortions often result in negative emotions. According to Lazarus and Folkman (*in* Wells & Mathews, 1994:12), the assumption that emotions are influenced by, or wholly arise from, cognitive appraisal of external and internal events is now commonplace. Mandler (*in* Wells & Mathews, 1994:12) sees emotion as the outcome of cognitive evaluation of the current state of the world. It will however be an over simplification to see the dynamics as only one-directional, because emotion will on its part also influence cognition. Frijda (1986:475) refers to emotions as potential sources of stressors and is of the opinion that:

...the many obvious non-functionalities of emotion: behaviour disturbances; exhaustion and the illness of adaptation; damaging emotions such as panic, depression, nostalgia, emotions contingent with obsolete attachments, many occurrences of every kind of emotion such as jealousy, fears and joys that were better not there, as they turn out to be detrimental to the subject or his relationships.

Partly illustrative of the point above, that negative emotions can have a detrimental effect on well-being, is that several studies have for instance found that depressive patients have an increase in the rate of cancer morbidity and mortality as compared to those in an age-matched general population (Irwin, 1993:203). Hafen *et al.* (1996:1-6) refer also to extensive research done on the role emotions play in disease. Here, negative emotions can both serve as potential sources of stressors (contributing to the development of illness) and reflect potential effects of stress (which can contribute secondarily to the development of illness). Some of the important findings are (Hafen *et al.*, 1996:1-6):

- That it may be too simplistic to say that emotional stress *causes* disease. More accurately, it is only one important factor that appears to create a vulnerability in the body's resistance mechanisms when it is exposed to other causative factors. Normal 'homeostasis', the optimal balance of hormones, immunity and nervous system functioning, protect us from the many threats of health we encounter daily. Disrupted emotional responses, feeling 'out of control', lead to disrupted homeostasis, which results in the physiological process then getting out of control.
- Emotions can and do play an important role in physical illness.

- Persons who have emotional upsets are more likely to have ulcers, hypertension, diabetes, kidney problems, nervous system malfunctions and circulatory difficulties.
- It is believed that 70 percent of people consulting a gastrointestinal specialist have irritable bowel syndrome. Most are women and most have some kind of emotional problem. One-fourth of gastroenterology patients have major depression.
- The symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome are seen as a physical expression of emotions caused by recent loss or ongoing stressful life situations.
- Feeling these emotions constitute only one factor in the subsequent development of disease, but the inability or failure to perceive and express emotions is an even greater cause of disease.
- One of the reasons strong negative emotions can cause illness, even infectious disease, is that they may, over time, disrupt the immune system.
- New research indicates that the immune system may be affected by any kind of emotion, negative or positive.

Negative emotions as potential sources of stressors and emotions as a reflection of potential effects of stress related to the emotional domain are reported by Bradshaw (1991:44), Fontana (1994:13-14) and Shafer (1996:117-125) to be:

- Physical and psychological tensions increase;
- existing personality problems increase;
- changes take place in personality traits;
- moral and emotional constraints weaken;
- most common emotional distress symptoms observable are:

Anxiety	Depression
Anger	Fear
Sadness	Frustration
Guilt	Shame

2.5.2.4 Dispositional processes

The dispositional processes have to do with the typically human phenomenon of wanting something, having an urge to do something, or needing something, the making of plans, and then acting in a way that accords with the want, urge, or need and plans (Jordaan & Jordaan, 1998:238). A specific dispositional process, therefore, often results in behaviour. The want, urge, need or plan generated by the interaction between person and environment, as well as the resultant behaviour, can be both a potential source of stressors and reflect the potential effects of stress. Explosive, even violent behaviour as an example of a need to express anger, can be a serious potential source of stressors due to the problems of control and therefore the consequences it may have. Explosive, even violent behaviour as an example of a need to express anger on the other hand, can also be ascribed to being a potential effect of stress. Whatever the nature of the specific flow of events involved, it depends mainly on the dynamics in the given contexts of existence of a specific person. The so-called 'Type A' behaviour pattern is probably also a good example of the bidirectional relationship between dispositional processes and stress. Broadly conceived, the Type A behaviour refers to an action-emotion complex elicited in vulnerable individuals by environmental stressors (Janisse & Dyck, 1988:58). According to these researchers, three behavioural components are said to comprise the Type A pattern, namely:

- an exaggerated sense of time urgency;
- excessive competitiveness and achievement striving;
- hostility and aggressiveness.

The 'Type B' is said to be characterised by a relative absence of these characteristics. Janisse and Dyck (1988:57-71) come to the conclusion that with regard to control in the Type A behaviour pattern, its maintenance and loss (potential sources of stress) may be related to the emergence and expression of hostility (potential effects of stress). Hostility (potential source of stress), on its part, has long been tied to cardiovascular disease (Rosenman, 1988:18) (potential effect of stress), but it is suspected that this is the key component of the Type A behaviour pattern that makes it a coronary-prone pattern (Janisse & Dyck, 1988:57-71).

Dispositional processes as potential sources of stressors and the potential effects of stress related to the dispositional domain, specifically concerning behaviour, are reported

by Sutherland and Cooper, (1990:146-159), Bradshaw (1991:44), Fontana (1994:13-14) and Shafer (1996:117-125) to be the following:

- Interests and enthusiasms diminish;
- absenteeism increases;
- drug abuse increases (e.g. smoking, alcohol, prescription, illegal and over-the-counter drugs);
- energy levels are low;
- sleep patterns are disrupted;
- cynicism about learners and colleagues increases;
- responsibilities shifted to others;
- behaviour change (e.g. irritability, compulsive actions, easily startled, short-tempered, withdrawn, starting conflict);
- new 'old' behaviour patterns appear (e.g. mannerisms, eating too little/too much);
- seeing a doctor for tension-related health problem.

2.5.2.5 Self-processes

In this study, self processes refers to the way in which people construct an image or impression of themselves and how they evaluate themselves (Jordaan & Jordaan, 1998:238). This self-concept is, according to Burns (1979, introduction): "...a composite image of what we think we can achieve, what we think others think of us and what we would like to be". The premise is that a person evaluates him/herself, and on the basis of this evaluation, forms a self-concept or self-image regarding his/her physical, psychological and social attributes (Jordaan & Jordaan, 1998:616). These writers also remark that the self is regarded generally, as the relatively constant but continually evolving core of human nature. As such it fulfils an integrating function; in a sense it gives direction to our perceptual, cognitive, emotive and dispositional processes. At the same time, given the integration of mind and body, the self is closely interwoven with the person's biological functioning.

The self is actually a construction and continuous reconstruction by different sources of self-construction, namely biological sources, social sources, self-reflection, and observation of own behaviour. A dimension of self-construction, namely, self-regard and self-disregard, can be related to the stress. Self-disregard, as the opposite of self-regard, has an important bearing on stress experience. Self-disregard refers to a relatively constant negative feeling a person might have about him/herself as well as negative self-evaluations, concerning a person's physical, psychological and social attributes and unsureness of his/her worth as a human being (Jordaan & Jordaan, 1998:628). A person might have a self-disregard in respect to one or more of these attributes. The acquisition of self-regard is a complex process, starting early in life, in which interaction with significant others such as family and peers is crucial in co-determining, with the person, his/her self-regard. Failing in the execution of some task or assignment, a person with high self-regard will probably say 'I have failed at this task'; whereas a person with a low self-regard will probably say 'I am a failure'. This means that having a low self regard can serve as a potential source of stressors. Low self regard can also reflect a potential effect of stress due to rejecting communication and feedback from significant others concerning a person's physical, psychological and social attributes and unsureness of his/her worth as a human being.

If self-regard does not develop properly, a low self-concept can result. Studies of teacher burnout indicate that teachers with higher self-concepts are more resistive to stress and more likely to maintain a sense of personal accomplishment while working under pressure (Hughes *in* Gold and Roth, 1993:37). A low self-concept as a potential source of stressors and reflecting potential effects of stress related to the domain of the self, are reported by Lategan (1991:93) to be:

- Problems with the fixation of a realistic identity;
- experience of being threatened by others;
- experience high anxiety levels;
- hypercritical of others and self;
- seeking recognition, but denouncing it if received;
- being emotional;
- doesn't want to expose him/herself;

- discloses him/herself to others as he/she would like others to know him/her, not as he/she is really like;
- often feels insecure.

The interwovenness of intra-psychic processes, in conclusion, are perhaps well illustrated by the famous quote from William Shakespeare: *“Things are rarely good or bad, but our thinking makes them so!”*

The person (self processes) perceives ‘things/events’ (perceptual processes), ‘thinks’ (cognitive processes) about them, resulting in a subjective feeling ‘good or bad’ (emotive processes) and acts upon them (dispositional processes). These processes of the intra-psychic context, including that of the biological context, do not operate in a linear fashion, as has been pointed out earlier, but are in constant interaction by way of feedforward and feedback. This process might lead to potential effects of stress, which can in circulatory fashion operate as new sources of stress. For example, a person experiencing severe stress and not coping with it adequately, might develop a heart condition, which on its own can serve as a new authentic source of stressors on its own, and so on. To this effect Sutherland and Cooper (1990:90) remark: *“However, it becomes less clear when the response becomes the source of stress itself”*. It can therefore be concluded that the intra-psychic context can have a potentially tremendous impact on the wellness of teachers.

2.5.3 Ecological context

“The job of managing a school is a cinch. The job of being a mother at age 42 to a new baby girl is also a cinch. The job of renovating a new house and garden is still a cinch. The task of doing those three together is well beyond me”. -Principal.

Originally the term ecology referred to the interdependent relationship between living organisms and their living and non-living environments. Nowadays, however, people also refer to human ecology. This is the study of the interdependent relationship between a person and his/her living environment (people, animals, plants), and the non-living environment (natural, geographic, climatological and man-made environment). Functionally, the ecological context in this study will be divided into the interpersonal, group-dynamic, work, societal and natural and cultural physical sub-contexts. As is the case with other contexts, clear-cut divisions between these sub-contexts are more often that not arbitrary. It is for example difficult to determine where the teacher’s functioning

in the professional group-dynamic sub-context stops and where his/her functioning in the work sub-context begins, because these two sub-contexts overlap largely. Therefore, the contents of a particular sub-context in the following discussion of stress and the ecological context, can often be placed in a different but equally valid sub-context. Traditionally, most writing and research on the dynamics of stress, it seems, have mainly focused on the ecological contexts or part thereof as the source of stress, especially the stimulus approach referred to at the beginning of Chapter 2. In terms of teacher stress, the focus has mainly been on work stress, which in the context of this study is reductionistic and loses sight of the transactions between all the contexts of human existence. The sociocultural environment as a whole can be a source of stressors, because social and cultural change produces stressors for individuals and for organisations as they attempt to adapt (Ianni & Reuss-Ianni, 1983:83). This can be equally true for the natural and cultural physical environment. Although referring to the American society, Visotsky (1984:81) points out changes which perhaps to a greater extent parallels the current South African situation: *"In the past two decades, people have been bombarded by a rapid series of cultural, political and social changes that have been experienced as intrusive, bewildering, demanding, and threatening"*. The ecological context can serve as a potential source of stressors due to the demands placed upon the teacher, but can also reflect the potential effects of stress experienced by the teacher due to his/her impaired functioning and the potential impact on the wellness of teachers. The reflection of the effects of stress are, however, more indirect in the ecological context than in the case of the biological and intra-psychic contexts, and are often therefore more difficult to illustrate precisely, especially with regard to the natural and cultural physical environments. This is mostly the case because it is the persons within these sub-contexts of the ecological context that experience the stress, which can lead to biopsychological effects of stress in these persons that will impact on the ecological context secondarily. For example, a teacher who experiences distress might develop a physical ailment (such as muscle spasms, hypertension, immunosuppression, et cetera) and/or a psychological ailment (such as depression, irritability, aggression, et cetera) which can have the effect of absenteeism from work and/or conflict with family, colleagues, learners, and others in other sub-contexts. Persons might also become despondent in as far as the upkeep of their natural and cultural environments are concerned because of the effects of stress experienced. This section will therefore focus on the ecological context as a potential source of stressors and a reflector of the potential effects of stress.

2.5.3.1 Interpersonal sub-context

Teachers' experiences and behaviour are evoked, maintained and modified in interpersonal or person-to-person relationships such as those between husband-wife, colleague-colleague, principal-teacher, teacher-learner, teacher-parent, et cetera. This means that interpersonal relationships can serve both as a potential source of stressors and reflect the effects of stress. Interpersonal relationships are shaped by a person's early contact with parents and other family members and then expand to significant others who are part of their lives (Jordaan & Jordaan, 1998:40). Thereby the developing person becomes aware of communication needs as well as ways in which these are both satisfied or frustrated.

Teachers experiencing a state of understimulation of mental and emotional processes in their personal lives, can experience resultant stress, called deprivational stress (Paterson & Neufeld, 1989:15; Michal, 1991:49). This condition is associated with too little stress and stimulation which can lead to boredom and/or loneliness, a state of emotional deprivation which often results in loss of self-esteem (a potential source of stressors itself) and can eventually lead to self-destructive behaviours. Fontana (1994:37) and Gmelch and Chan (1994:7) point out that poor channels of communication between colleagues, for instance due to mistrust, are often reported to be a potent potential source of stressors. The resulting consequences of these poor channels of communication are that people take decisions without being in possession of accurate facts, are unable to pass on important details to the relevant quarters, attend meetings inadequately briefed, and are generally left with a feeling of reduced control over events. Conflicts with colleagues, inadequate leadership and difficult subordinates can also serve as potential sources of stress (Fontana, 1994:37-40). Poor relationships, defined as low trust, low support, and low interest in listening, produce low job satisfaction and the feeling of being threatened, and consequently, psychological stress (Gmelch & Chan, 1994:7).

One of the other potential sources of stressors facing teachers on an interpersonal level in the school situation is that of the pupils' attitudes and behaviour (Travers & Cooper, 1996:52). Discipline and classroom control (Swick & Hanley, 1985:11-12) are also a major source of interpersonal stress for teachers at all grade levels. Swick and Hanley (1985:11-12) elaborate on this by saying that in many instances, students come from varied backgrounds, and some of them have experienced few personal constraints

before their school experience. Although all role players - public, parents, educational authorities, et cetera – demand educational accountability, educators have to contend with many discipline problems that take time away from teaching. Some learners, for example, have emotional difficulties, and some have developed a negative attitude toward learning and school. Learners (and even teachers) resorting to violence (such as stabbing and shooting) as a preferred mode of solving interpersonal conflicts between learners themselves, and between learners and teachers, is a very serious phenomenon which is being reported frequently by the media in South Africa (Anon, 1999a:4). When learner misbehaviour interrupts or interferes with the teaching learning process, pressure and tension often result which add to teacher stress. Ianni and Reuss-Ianni (1983:85) noted more than a decade ago that the relationship between teacher stress and student behaviour is well established and highly publicised.

As far as marital relationships are concerned, Hafen *et al.* (1996:321-323) note that research indicate that the stress of marital dissatisfaction and conflict has negative consequences for health, for instance contributing to coronary heart disease. A definitive relationship has also been found variously between mental health in general, and depression specifically, and marital dissatisfaction. These findings indicate the significance of marital dissatisfaction as a potential source of stressors.

The interpersonal sub-context can also reflect the potential effects of stress due to the person who is experiencing stress becoming for instance irritable, anxious, depressed or presenting another intra-psychic dysfunction as has been pointed out in the discussion of the intra-psychic context. This can lead to impaired communication which can be a reflection of the potential effects of stress. Thompson, Murphy and Stradling (1994:7) also reflect these sentiments by saying that one particularly significant way in which stress manifests itself is through strain on relationships, both personal and professional. The reason is that irritability, impatience and short temper frequently accompany stress and consequently can be very detrimental to relationships.

2.5.3.2 Group-dynamic sub-context

Teachers' experiences and behaviour are evoked, maintained and modified in group context. This means that group dynamics can serve both as a potential source of stressors and reflect the effect of stress. A person can belong to primary and secondary groups (Kirsten, 1994:69-70; Popenoe, 1980:252), a division which is often

undiscernable due to the interface between the two (as is the case with all the other contexts and sub-contexts, also pointed out numerously). Primary groups are more informal, such as a family, circle of friends, cliques, et cetera. Secondary groups are more formal such as school staff, church groups, professional societies, et cetera, and are not necessarily focused upon knowing each other personally or sharing experiences. Interaction is often task orientated and impersonal. Secondary groups are often also aimed at achieving practical aims instead of providing emotional support and the opportunity for self expression (Popenoe, 1980:252). The group-dynamic sub-context includes participation in group activities and the consequences of this participation. It is this participation (or isolation) which can be a potential source of stressors or reflect the effects of stress.

Cobb (*in* Pines, 1983:156) defines social support as information that leads individuals to believe that they are cared for and loved, esteemed, and valued, and that they participate in a network of communication and mutual obligation. Social support systems, according to Caplan (*in* Pines, 1983:156), consist of enduring interpersonal ties to groups of people who can be relied upon to provide emotional sustenance, assistance, and resources in times of need, who provide feedback, and who share standards and values. Weiner (1992:44) refers to social support, meaning love reassurance, help, guidance, advice, and help available or provided by other persons to the one who is living through stressful experiences. By providing emotional sustenance, supportive others help individuals master their own emotional problems by mobilising their psychological resources. In addition, by providing these people with tangible aid, resources, information, and cognitive guidance, the supporters further enhance the individual's ability to cope with stressful situations. Ideally, according to Caplan (*in* Pines, 1983:156-157), one belongs to several supportive groups at home and at work, in church and in recreational or avocational sites. Social support systems serve as buffers against stressful experiences (Weiner, 1992:44) for the individual; they help maintain the psychological and physical well-being of the individual over time. Lacking or experiencing problems with social support can indeed serve as a potential source of stressors without, or in addition to stressors already encountered. Lacking or experiencing problems with social support can also reflect the potential effects of stress, for instance due to compromised communication (because of irritability, short temperedness, et cetera) which can lead to the alienation of some of the groups from the individual that can provide social support.

In this sense Gold and Roth (1993:123) note that supportive relationships cannot be effective without critical communication skills and supportive interactions.

The potential impact of social ties are well illustrated by research indicating that people with social ties, regardless of their source, live longer than those who are isolated (Hafen *et al.*, 1996:261-262). Conversely, people who are socially isolated has poorer health and dies earlier (at a rate of two to five times higher), regardless of gender, race, ethnic background, or socio-economic status. It is thought that social support influences behaviours that impacts on health (such as excessive smoking and drinking) as well as biological processes (such as neuroendocrine responses and immune responses). Hafen *et al.* (1996:262) state that “...the point remains that social isolation is in itself a pathogenic factor in disease production” and that the conclusion can be made that social support affects physical health both in term of mortality and the onset and progression of disease. It therefore seems that the experience of stress resulting from a lack of social support or isolation (potential source of stressors) can potentially have a very serious effect as far as health is concerned.

Fontana (1994:43-44) is of the opinion that domestic stress often rivals stress at work in pressurising people. Thompson, Murphy and Stradling (1994:37) state unequivocally that the family can be a major source of pressure in itself due to relationship difficulties, communication problems or other conflicts. Constant marital difficulties may make it more difficult for an individual to relax or feel comfortable at work, to fulfil responsibilities, to care for clients (or learners in the context of this study), and ultimately, to garner satisfaction from the job (Farber, 1983:5; Gmeich & Chan, 1994:14). Conversely, Barling (1990:87) also points out the fact that negative job stress is correlated with marital dysfunction. Hafen *et al.* (1996:342) tabulate “the ten top stresses for today’s families” that can be seen as potential sources of stress, as follows:

- Economics, finances and budgeting.
- Children’s behaviour, discipline, and sibling fighting.
- Insufficient couple time.
- Lack of shared responsibility in the family.
- Communicating less with children.
- Insufficient ‘me’ time.

- Guilt for not accomplishing more.
- Poor spousal relationships.
- Insufficient family play time.
- An over-scheduled family calendar.

Although this list is said to represent sources of stress in the family, most of the items (such as poor spousal relationships) can just as well reflect the effects of stress in the family.

Instead of being a significant source of support, the team (or the staff of a school) can become a major additional source of pressure (Thompson, Murphy & Stradling 1994:8). A teacher's colleagues can offer excellent social support as a buffer against stress. However, when dynamics between colleagues become dysfunctional, it can become an important potential source of stressors. Stress often has a spillover effect, as has also been indicated in Chapter 1, between spreading from work to family, from family to work, or in both directions simultaneously (Bromet, Dew & Parkinson, 1990:133-134). The quality of group dynamics at school, in the family and elsewhere, can suffer as a consequence of stress experienced by a person or persons and thereby reflect the potential effects of stress. Thompson *et al.* (1994:8) also remark that stress can place a considerable strain on teams and other work groups. Although these comments were made in the context of social work, it can be argued that these opinions can be equally applicable to the staff of a school.

2.5.3.3 Work sub-context

Employed persons spend a significant part of their day at their work. It is therefore understandable that a person's work plays an important role in his/her life. A lot of experiences and behaviour are evoked, maintained and modified in a work situation and work-related circumstances such as professional status, position in the work hierarchy, membership of professional associations, et cetera. Having a job as well as the contextually determined setting and situation of the particular job, or not having a job, or losing a job, has an important bearing on people's lives in many ways. It is accepted that persons' jobs in many ways reflect their social identity (Kelvin in Jordaan & Jordaan, 1998:40). The work sub-context can serve as a potential severe source of stressors, because various studies have shown that for those in employment, occupation tends to

be the major source of stressors (Thompson *et al.*, 1994:9). The work sub-context can also reflect the effects of potential stress persons are experiencing, because stress is known to affect job satisfaction, performance and productivity (Thompson *et al.*, 1994:9) and health (Reinhold, 1996:5). For teachers the work sub-context ranges from the individual learner in a particular class to the provincial and national education departments, and everything in between. This range of micro and macro environments can all contribute to operate as potential sources of stress.

It is the work sub-context which mainly distinguishes the life of a teacher as a professional person from that of another professional person. All other contexts or sub-contexts in terms of acting as a potential source of stressors or reflecting the effects of stress are primarily the same. Secondly, however, non-work contexts and sub-contexts may differ between a teacher and another professional person in terms of these contexts acting as potential sources of stressors or reflecting the effects of stress due to the transactions between the work and non-work contexts. For example, because of the differences in income between a teacher and an attorney, determined by their work sub-context, they will on average experience different potential sources of financial stressors and different potential effects of financial stress.

The Cooper model (*in* Travis & Cooper, 1996:37-60), however, lists the following categories as main causes (in this study, as indicated, preference is given to the less deterministic reference to 'potential sources of stressors') of occupational stress for teachers largely echoed by Raschke *et al.* (1985:560), Verboon and Westerop (1986:298-290), Sutherland and Cooper (1988:3-23; 1990:25-63), and Gold and Roth (1993:17-19):

- *Stressors intrinsic to the actual job* - for instance physical working conditions, level of participation and decision-making latitude and workload.
- *Role in the organisation* - for instance role ambiguity and role conflict and levels and type of responsibility.
- *Relationships at work* - for instance superiors, colleagues and subordinates and the demands made interpersonally.
- *Career development* - for instance the presence of over- or under-promotion, possible lack of job security.

- *Organisational structure and climate* - these stressors may be those that restrict behaviours, for instance the politics and culture of the organisation and how individuals interact with these. Specific features include level of participation and involvement in decision making.
- *Home and work interface* - this refers to the stressors resulting from a mismatch in the relationship between work demands and family or social demands, which may be viewed as 'overspill' of one life into the other.

In viewing these sub-contexts of the ecological context, it is once more clear that they are artificially discrete, that there is an overlap between them and must therefore not be seen as discrete entities. Kyriacou (1987:148) is further of the opinion that it is naive and simplistic to try to identify the specific sources of stress(ors) (often done in sequence of severity), as done by some researchers (Ferreira, 1994:115) of teachers, because the results of each study should be seen in context. Prinsloo (1990:40) elaborates on this by stating that the main source of teaching stress can vary a lot between teachers or between teaching staffs. Education as a whole, and therefore education as a vocation in South Africa, as has been pointed out in Chapter 1, has undergone rapid changes of immense proportions in the 1990's, especially since 1994. In this sense Visser (1991:39) remarks that: "*Human beings inherently resist change, and therefore a change in organisation, group or post necessarily gives rise to a feeling of insecurity, anxiety and stress*". The effects of stress in the work sub-context are reflected by factors such as high absenteeism, high job turnover, strikes and chronically poor performance (Sutherland & Cooper, 1990:7; 160-163; Travis & Cooper, 1996: 37).

2.5.3.4 Societal sub-context

A person's experiences and behaviour are evoked, maintained and modified in societal situations. The interpersonal, group-dynamic, and work (and other) sub-contexts constitute a structure which shapes, and is shaped by, human actions. The structure of the interactive contexts which is called society, is linked to certain institutional orders. It can therefore be said that society does not exist independently of its elements, namely individuals, communities, groups, organisations and institutions. It is the transactions between these elements that give the society a certain identity, particularly expressed in institutionalised actions or essential institutions, in order to ensure the relatively organised coexistence of people (Jordaan & Jordaan, 1998:40; 748-750). These

institutionalised actions or essential institutions are also called institutional orders. Examples of institutional orders are the political, legislative, economic, educational, health and other orders. The state of the societal sub-context and its institutional orders, as reflected by personal experience and the media, can serve as a potential source of stressors. Apart from personal experience and social contacts, it is usually the media which provide information and insights into the inner workings of these institutional orders for teachers as persons on a day-to-day basis, especially those that are excluded from a person's personal existential environment. In this regard, Toffler (1976:147), points out that: *"No man's model of reality is a purely personal product. While some of his images are based on first-hand observation, an increasing proportion of them today are based on messages beamed to us by the mass media and the people around us"*. More than 30 years later, deeper into the information age, this view is even more significant. Rightly or wrongly, it is this information or insights which are used to form perceptions of the state of the institutional orders of the societal sub-context (Swart, 1993:16) which can serve as a potential source of stressors. Societal stressors are those factors which affect teachers because of societal attitudes and/or pressures (Hayward, 1993:7). The institutional orders of the societal sub-context can also reflect the potential effects of stress persons are experiencing in the form of dysfunctions in any one or more of these institutional orders due to the experience of alienation persons are experiencing, resulting in feelings of antagonism, conflict, and evasion of contributory inputs. However, dysfunctions per se do not necessarily always mean to be a sign of the potential effects of stress. Different institutional orders influence one another, as well as other contexts and sub-contexts due to the transactions between them. The following are some of the most important orders of society:

- ***The political order***

Government policies invariably aimed at change and restructuring, also in education, often act as major sources of stress (Gmelch & Chan, 1994:12). A case in point is the legislation for indefinite affirmative action or the political decision to implement Outcomes Based Education by the year 2005. Some teachers find decisions and policies like these very taxing and potentially stressful. Although the previous political dispensation did have (and still has) huge adverse effects on South Africans, especially Black South Africans, the new government simplistically often uses, as has been done in the past, Apartheid as *"a scapegoat for all wrongs"* (Steyn & Van der Westhuizen, 1993:38-39).

The potential effects of stress are often reflected in feelings of resentment, animosity, criticism, et cetera toward perceived inept political policy, past and present.

- ***The legislative order***

These are institutions which pass laws to regulate and control people's behaviour and relationships in a society (Jordaan & Jordaan, 1998:750). In South Africa the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996 has been drawn up and serves as the highest moral authority in society concerning the regulation, control and freedom of people's behaviour and relationships. This Constitution as one of the most liberal in the world serves as a yardstick against which everything in society is measured. The Constitution also contains a Bill of Human Rights which governs human freedom. It is sometimes said that some citizens of the new democracy are acutely aware of their human rights, but not necessarily of their human responsibilities. To this effect Visotsky (1984:86) remarks that in American society "*we have grown accustomed to people speaking as though calling a point of view a "right" is enough to end all debate*". This is also becoming the norm in South Africa.

The government's aim to redress imbalances in society has been characterised amongst others by the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to review all instances of gross violations of human rights in the past, the movement towards the enforcement of Affirmative Action, and the introduction of the Equity of Employment Bill to ensure the appointment of proportional racial representation in all work environments. Although these and other legislative measures were taken with a view to redress imbalances in fairness to most of the citizens of South African society, they might also as far as its practical implementation is concerned, be experienced as potential sources of stressors by other citizens (Thompson, 1999:7), especially those groups whose former dominance is being challenged (Visotsky, 1984:87). The potential effects of stress can be seen in criticism, opposition and even the experience of existential crisis, especially in the case of the implementation of Affirmative Action, resulting in some professionals such as teachers deciding to leave the country and emigrate to other parts of the world.

- ***The executive order***

This order includes the judicial, policing and military institutions which maintain law and order. They combat crime and secure national borders (Jordaan & Jordaan, 1998:751). Crime, and specifically the perceived incapacity to curb crime, fuelled by the crime

statistics, are a major source of stressors. As part of the liberation struggle a large number of young people were mobilised, and thousands who should have been in school at the time were exploited as political instruments by way of radicalisation (Kirsten, 1994:80). Since 1994 when South Africa's full-fledged democracy was born, the accompanying disregard for law and order in society which formed part of the radicalisation strategies of the youth during the political turmoil of the decades of the Seventies, Eighties and early Nineties, did not subside with democracy. On the contrary, this disregard has skyrocketed into seemingly uncontrollable crime. Prominent illustrative crime statistics for South Africa for 1998 are (Coetzee, 1999:9; Pollux, 1999:10):

- 18 000 murders;
- 36 000 reported rapes;
- 11 500 vehicle hijackings;
- 17 000 cases of house breaking.

In the run-up to the elections of 1999, it was publicly claimed by the Democratic Party in the media, such as the radio (without being challenged by anyone), that:

- 71 persons are murdered on average per day;
- 132 persons are raped on average per day;
- 1 police officer is murdered on average per day;
- R200 milliard have been embezzled by civil servants to date.

The incidence of corruption is also very high. What is especially disturbing is that the corruption seems to be high amongst citizens in high office, that is in government positions, public sector and non-governmental organisations (Wa Afrika & Paton, 1999:2; Wa Afrika, 1999:5). Although measures are frequently announced to deal with the crime and corruption, they seem to the average person ineffective. It is reported that some policemen cannot read or write properly, don't have driving licences, and that there often is no money to fill police vehicles with petrol (Pollux, 1999:10). Statistics, perceptions and experiences like these contribute to the problem of potential sources of stressors experienced by teachers. According to the Centre for Peace Action (Anon., 1992:3), reflecting the potential effects of stress, concerning the crime situation: *"South Africans of all races experience unprecedented levels of mental stress that increase due to a lack*

of intervention". Due to the escalation of crime and relative lawlessness in some circles of South African society, the situation is probably getting worse from day to day. The perceived state of the executive order is currently one of the highest potential sources of stress for persons in South Africa. The effects of stress are reflected in the distrust and disbelief of persons in the effectiveness of the police and the criminal justice system.

- ***The economic order***

South Africa is currently struggling economically. The effects of a world wide recession, labour unrest, tougher labour laws introduced by the government, organised labours' communist stake in the government, low productivity, a weak gold price, high fuel price and the lack of sufficient foreign investment, et cetera, are claiming their toll (Joubert, 1999:2; Gilomee, 1999:11; Mulholland, 1999:1). According to Gilomee (1999:11), a half a million jobs have been lost since 1994, and a third of economic active persons are currently unemployed and the Central Statistical Services indicated that 180 000 people have lost their work in 1998 alone. Only one in ten school leavers can expect to find work in the formal sector. The government, however, estimates that at least 350 000 new jobs are needed a year to keep unemployment rates at current levels (Kobokoane, 1999:8). The national economic policy, and the factors above, have not succeeded so far to promote sufficient economic growth to keep up with the population increase. The population increase of 2,5 percent per year dictates an economic growth of at least 4 percent (Schrire, 1990:199). It is currently at 3 percent, far from the target of 6 percent for the year 2000. Due to exceptionally high exchange rates resulting from the weak economy, fuel and other products are extremely expensive, and as a consequence also the cost of living. Seventeen million people in South Africa lived under the bread line in 1993 (Ingram, 1993:8); currently it may be more, due to the weakening economy and the loss of job opportunities (Gilomee, 1999:11). The significance of this statistic is that *"the experience of poverty almost invariably brings with it a host of psychological injuries"* (Halpern, 1990:14). Visotsky (1984:84) states that *"economics touches the lives of everybody, and the stress of long-term economic decline appears in the degree to which society's institutions are perceived as at least partially dysfunctional"*. These contributors to the state of the economy, as have been referred to in the economic order, suppress and burden economic growth and can secondarily contribute to other social problems, such as crime, which on their part can further economic decline. Because of an embattled economy many teachers also struggle to keep their personal financial state

healthy, because their salaries can often not keep up with the cost of living and paying for their houses, transport and their own children's educational expenditure. This state of affairs can serve as enormous potential sources of stressors for teachers with dire consequences for the potential effects of stress on family, health, et cetera.

- ***The educational, technological and research order***

Politics in South Africa has done a great disservice to a large number of learners, those who are currently at school and those who have already left school. The radical politicisation of the youth during the struggle years was signified by slogans such as "*Liberation now, education later; People's education for people's power*" (The Transvaal Education News, 1991:16) and "*Revolution now education later; Pass one, pass all*" (Van Wyk-Smith, 1987:15). This resulted in a generation of learners often referred to as the 'lost generation', because they have lost valuable years and opportunities in their lives. It seems as if a generation of young people has grown up that believe that education and learning have no worth (Draft Education Policy of the African National Congress, 1992:2). The matric/grade 12 results of the national examination at the end of learners' school career seem to indicate that marks have been getting progressively poorer year after year since the inception of democracy. These young people as well as society at large are, and will be paying the price in years to come, because of joblessness, non-contributory burden on the economy and their involvement in crime as their only way to make a living. A few instances with serious stressor-potential have also been reported in the media where teachers were shot and killed in schools (Kruger, 1999:2).

Education in South Africa, as has been pointed out in Chapter 1, has been facing rapid changes of immense proportions in the 1990's, especially since 1994. Due to the poor state of the economy, teachers are being made redundant and posts rationalised, although learner numbers are actually dictating otherwise. The educational order finds itself in a crisis because teachers are losing their jobs, learners are more demanding (and very much aware of their rights, but less of their responsibilities), results are poor, schools lack infrastructure, resources and discipline, parents are not involved and often uneducated themselves and some teachers are behaving very unprofessionally (Eskridge & Coker, 1985:335; Gilomee, 1999:11; Pretorius, 1999:5). A recent report by the Joint Education Trust (Bonhuys, 1999:7) compiled by 35 research teams, reflects the critical state of South African education further by concluding that:

- Some schools only provide 21 days tuition per year: 170 out of 190 school days are used for registration, attending sports meetings, examinations, marking of papers, attending memorial services, and striking.
- A huge number of learners spend 6 years longer at school than they are supposed to.
- Subject knowledge of teachers must be improved and their learning, reading and comprehension skills should be improved.
- 4% of learners' time is used for reading.
- Only one out of every five official documents reach their destination.
- Provincial departments of education often overspend their budgets.
- Money currently available for books has decreased by 90% in comparison with 1995/1996 and 1997/1998.
- Provincial departments of education are often guilty of inefficiency, mismanagement and chaos.
- Low productivity exists amongst teachers and officials.
- Available handbooks are not always used because the lesson material is deemed by some teachers as irrelevant, too difficult, or they are not sure if it is still suitable within the context of Curriculum 2005.
- Most teachers have not enough skills and knowledge to implement Curriculum 2005.

If one were to take heed of the opinion of Van Niekerk (1986:13) that *“education must be the starting point and core of a healthy society”*, then there is still a lot left to be done education-wise in creating a healthy society. Faure (in Esteve, 1989:11) describes Spanish education in a way equally applicable (but even more serious) to the South African context, by saying that: *“...For the first time in history, society is not asking those who educate to prepare the new generations for conditions which exist at present, but for the needs of a future [healthy] society which, as yet, does not exist”*. Situations like these, associated with a lack of control (Tuettemann & Punch, 1992:181), inadequate

access to facilities, student misbehaviour, excessive societal expectations and intrusion of school work into out-of-hours time (Punch & Tuettemann, 1991:65), can indeed serve as severe potential sources of stressors for teachers, especially for those teachers who are serious in their professional endeavours. The effects of stress can, on the other hand, also be reflected by the quality of teachers' engagement in the status quo of their profession.

- ***The health order***

In contrast to primary health care provision which has been quite successful in South Africa, provincial health departments in charge of urban hospitals has been a dismal failure, with a lot of the conditions in these hospitals becoming terrible (Lunsche, 1999:10). The importance of this view is related to the fact that most South Africans are totally dependent on these state institutions. According to Hoffman (in Anon, 1999d:9), medical director of Sanlam Health, heart disease and depression are common ailments among working people. South Africa is also currently and more and more plagued by massive HIV and AIDS infections of epidemic proportions, of which HIV infection has increased by 34% in a year amongst pregnant women (Fram, 1999:4). It is reported that about 12% of South African educators are currently HIV/AIDS infected, as well as an estimated 1 in 8 of the country's sexually active population (those over the age of 14 years) (Pretorius, 1999:5). The situation is described by Bigalke (1991:66) as one of the three greatest world disasters of the Twentieth Century. This situation will worsen the projected shortage of teachers, affect their ability to teach, increase infection rates among pupils, change enrolment patterns and generally disrupt schooling, because of erratic attendance rates as teachers and pupils take time to care for family members with AIDS (Pretorius, 1999:5). It is calculated that the disease will generally have dire consequences for the economic, health, social and other orders not only in South Africa, but for the whole of Africa.

A Global Alliance of Mental Illness Advocacy Networks' survey of ten countries shows South Africa suffers from a dire lack of education and information about mental illness (Bennett, 1999:1). A belief that seeking treatment is a sign of failure plays a role, which underlines the pervasive stigma surrounding mental illness in South Africa, was also found (Bennett, 1999:1).

Medical Aid Schemes in South Africa are reportedly not on a sound financial footing any more (Anon, 1999d:9), due to an ageing population, rising medical costs, a growing number of young people with HIV and medical science that allows people to live longer. Added strain on resources is proposed legislation calling for open enrolment, a process whereby medical schemes have to accept members regardless of their state of health and are not able to load premiums based on age (Anon, 1999d:9). This results in the dramatic rise of personal monthly contributions to the Medical Aid Schemes of which a family are members, causing yet another financial burden on households. The state of certain elements in the health order can be potential sources of stress to some teachers and their families, especially those who experience special needs. The effects of potential stress can be seen in persons becoming even more stressed because of the potential inability of the health order to cope with demands, a perceived backslide of curative medical services, et cetera.

- ***The bureaucratic order***

The media often report cases of massive fraud, corruption, nepotism and other irregularities taking place in the bureaucratic order (Wa Afrika & Paton, 1999:2; Wa Afrika, 1999:5). Such is the case against the Home Affairs Director-General who has currently been suspended and is under investigation by the Public Protector and the Director of Public Prosecutions (Wa Afrika, 1999:5). Other scandals have also been reported on, for instance, bribery in motor vehicle licensing offices. The national outcry against the newly appointed Premier of Mpumalanga, Ndaweni Mahlangu's public statement on national television about lying politicians (Anon, 1999b:1) further arouse suspicions about inept, unethical and immoral local government:

"It is nothing new, Many politicians publicly deny they did certain things but then later admit to them. It is accepted and is not unusual anywhere in the world". And:

"It wasn't the end of Bill Clinton's life and I personally don't find it to be a very bad thing."

Allegations and convicted cases like these often confirm perceptions of the emergence of typical Third-World problems. This perception can lead to potential sources of stress when teachers have to deal with the frustration of an inapt system, marked by long waiting in long queues, despondent officials, disorganisation, corruption, et cetera. The potential effect of stress can be found in irritability, anger, conflict, et cetera.

- ***The religious order***

Although South Africa is seen as a Christian country according to general statistics, it seems as if there is in some quarters a general alienation of people taking place from the churches, especially amongst young people. Jordaan (*in* Kirsten, 1998:34) is of the opinion that the problem is that the church gives answers to questions that are not asked any more, and upon questions that are relevant, the church has no answer. Another prominent problem sited in the White community about the church is that it finds itself in a moral dilemma, because of its often close ties with the previous ruling National (Apartheid) Party, and not only its failure to voice opposition to the policy of Apartheid, but also even sanctioning it (Kirsten, 1998:34). Some persons are, therefore, weary of the church's guidance concerning other issues in the light of a perceived previous hypocritical stance. Although this might be the case in some churches, it is indeed unfortunate that some teachers might have these or other problems with churches, because it can lead to a lack of spiritual growth and experience and support which can result in potential sources of stress, a point which will be elaborated on further under the Metaphysical Context. The potential effects of stress can be found in the fact that some teachers as persons might feel that they do not have the time and energy to attend religious activities, due to the spillover of stress from work and extra-mural activities, resulting in effects of stress such as exhaustion and burnout.

- ***The mass communication order***

The mass media by way of conveying and reflecting pop-culture with its associated life styles, have a truly massive effect on people, especially children and youths as eloquently described by Popenoe (1980:385): *"This alternative life is a life; it is not a diversion, a hobby, an amusement. It offers its own disciplines, curriculum, its own language. It works on children and youths every day, year after year, teaching them, forming them, conditioning them."*

Schools cannot compete with the media to provide a better reality to this alternative life. What makes it even more serious is the conflicting norm and value systems in the media to that in the home and school, that are often portrayed. The conflict between pop-culture and the culture of communities where schools are situated can serve as a potential source of stressors for teachers in the school environment, due to a variety of reasons. Where learners, for instance, have not been taught appropriate norms and values, or to

be critical viewers, listeners and readers in the home environment of behaviour, attitudes and lifestyles portrayed in the media, they might internalise norms and values reflected by the media which can be in conflict to those embodied by the school. Visotsky (1984:88) is of the opinion that mass communication and the media have impacted the changes in society to short transient cycles. When a change in patterns or mores begins, it is rapidly picked up by the media. These changes are then passed on to people who are not normally exposed to these changes. They therefore accept them and are ready for the next change.

The state owned South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) is often perceived as being a mouthpiece of the government in power. Criticisms of its affairs are not taken well, which fuels the suspicions (Donaldson, 1999: 1). According to Du Preez (*in* Retief, 1999:11), freedom of speech in the public broadcaster is not so free anymore, with the hiring and firing of journalists to suit their (SABC's) agenda. Journalists are afraid to practise critical journalism, because they might lose their work. Items on the news and actuality programs, especially on the SABC television, regarding crime, certain sociopolitical events, the state of the economy, health services, et cetera, might serve as potential sources of stressors. This information can also sometimes be perceived as racially, culturally or ideologically biased and can therefore also serve as a potential source of stressors for teachers as persons, directly or indirectly experienced through the internalised attitudes and behaviours of learners. The effect of stress can be seen in the reaction of frustration that teachers as persons have upon the exposure to the above and other media-related stressors.

- ***The recreation order***

According to Wilson and Ramphela (1989:132), people have a need for facilities for recreation and relaxation away from the daily hustle and bustle of survival, to ensure the maintenance of a healthy life-style. The problem in South Africa, however, is that there is an inverse relationship between the need for recreation facilities and social and financial needs. As an example in this regard, Irwin (1991:7) points out that more than 80 percent of South Africa's population have no access to the country's national parks and asks therefore the following question:

"Who, we must ask, can afford to use our parks? The fact that they are often fully booked is not an answer in itself. Should national assets and their utilisation be subject

to 'market forces'? Put another way, should something which belongs to all South Africans be accessible to only a small minority of our population, and to overseas visitors (for whom the cost is laughably low)?"

It is generally considered that a lack of recreational opportunities often leads to the development of alternative and often damaging recreational behaviours such as drug abuse, sexual activities (Wilson & Ramphele, 1989:133; 247), crime (Cronje, Van der Walt, Retief & Naude, 1985:200), et cetera. These activities practised by learners can compromise teacher-learner relationships as well as the teaching-learning situation which can result in potential sources of stress for the teacher. Due to teachers' financial battle for survival, they and their families too find it often difficult to realise their recreational needs, and hence might experience it as a potential source of stressors. The potential effects of stress in a recreational sense might be found in the abuse of cigarettes, alcohol and other recreational drugs and prescribed drugs such as tranquillisers, antidepressants et cetera.

- ***The cultural order***

It is the difference in shared meanings between groups which gives rise to, and often maintains cultural and racial stereotypes, and causes members of one cultural group to offend members of another group with their cultural practices, deliberately or not. This can serve as a severe potential source of stressors for teachers. The potential effects of stress can be seen in teachers as persons becoming aggressive and feeling resentment and blaming others for what has happened in the past or for what is happening now, or some members of some cultural groups closing their ranks due to feeling threatened and anxious. Sutherland and Cooper (1990:88) point out that membership of a particular racial group (or cultural group for that matter), can effect an individual's response to stress, in addition to being a source of stress itself.

2.5.3.5 Natural and cultural physical sub-context

The natural physical sub-context as part of the environment includes everything natural from the smallest particle of matter to the greater cosmos and anything in between in, for example climate, water, geography, vegetation, animals, et cetera. The cultural physical sub-context as part of the environment includes everything constructed by humans, for example buildings (schools, houses, et cetera), roads, water and sanitation works and

other forms of infrastructure. The nature and status of the natural and cultural physical sub-context can both serve as a potential source of stressors (Hayward, 1993:8; Greer & Gresso, 1994:12-13), but can also reflect the potential effects of stress persons are experiencing for example in persons' behaviour impacting on and shaping their physical surroundings, the latter perhaps more indirectly.

- ***Energy***

South Africa has embarked on a large scale electrification programme driven by central government in an effort to provide basic services, especially in the townships and rural areas to deliver to their constituents on their promises. Problems arise, however, due to the new energy users not paying their accounts, causing local government, who must maintain these services, to run into debts of millions because they cannot repay the provider of electricity (Lunsche, 1999:10). Government figures show that up to 30% of services are not being paid for (Lunsche, 1999:10). This causes an increase in property taxes and municipal fees which further taxes the income of the teacher and his/her family living in a middle-class neighbourhood. Schools without electricity is often dark and cold and lack facilities and aids such as overhead projectors.

- ***Water***

Although a lot of people in South Africa do not have sufficient access to clean water, which has serious health consequences (Huntley, Siegfried & Sunter, 1989:71; Timberlake & Tinker, 1986:49), the situation and problems with the provision of water is essentially the same as that of electricity.

- ***Climate***

According to Huntly, Siegfried and Sunter (1989:45-46), South Africa is a dry country with an average rainfall of 497 mm per annum as opposed to the world average of 860 mm. These writers also indicate that the annual potential evaporation over the greatest part of the country amounts to between 1100 and 3000 mm. In times of drought, especially such as when the El Nino effect takes place, it causes an enormous demographic shift in South Africa, because people lose their employment, they flock from rural areas to towns and cities. This results in a potential huge change in the school population in some schools. Apart from the swelling numbers of the school population, it also changes the

homogeneity of the population and brings with it a host of other social problems due to unstable family life, unemployment of parents and housing problems.

- ***Sanitation***

Proper sanitation has enormous benefits for people and their well-being. Payment for services of the less affluent areas, (decided by the town council of whom the majority is from the less affluent areas) is often subsidised by others, including the teacher and the inhabitants of his/her neighbourhood. This taxes the teacher financially even more. Children from communities and schools without proper sanitation and clean water often suffer from related diseases. Some schools have even been closed due to sanitation related health concerns (Govender, 1999:8). The seriousness of the situation is related to the fact that 80% of all illness in developing countries can either directly or indirectly be ascribed to inadequate availability of water and sanitation facilities (Timberlake & Tinker, 1986:48). Apart from being life-threatening, it can also mean that teachers and especially children in these circumstances, can potentially be absent from school often due to illness, or influence the teaching-learning situation, resulting in learners not performing according to their potential in class, which can also become a potential source of stressors for teachers. This can leave teachers with feelings of being unfulfilled and frustrated as far as their vocational self-actualisation is concerned.

- ***Transport***

Sutherland and Cooper (1990:41-42) state that the stress associated with travel related to work tends to be additive in that it often exacerbates other stressor sources. The cost of fuel and the continuous rise of fuel costs which causes secondary price hikes of other commodities, the cost of motor vehicles, the high incidence of road accidents, traffic jams, delays in public transport, long distance commuting to and from work (Hayward, 1993:8) and vehicle hi-jackings are among the most significant potential sources of stressors which teachers have to face as far as transport is concerned. This also results in high insurance premiums. Due to a lack of transport a lot of learners has to walk long distances to school. Tiredness and not attending school due to the distance that have to be walked, can also frustrate the teachers' efforts in teaching, which can also become a potential source of stressors for teachers.

- ***Housing and Schools***

The cost of housing, as well as one of the highest rates of interest on housing loans in the world and the effect of the fluctuations on the interest rate and as a consequence the monthly payments, places an extreme financial burden on the teacher and his/her family. The situation is further impeded by high crime such as murder, robbery and burglary occurring in some residential areas and the resultant high insurance premiums. Destroyed and vandalised classrooms, due to political or criminal reasons - or simply the lack of classrooms can lead to learners being subjected to the elements outside or being taught in overcrowded classrooms, which can also become a potential source of stressors for teachers (Hayward, 1993:8).

- ***Urbanisation***

Rapid urbanisation due to drought and labour legislation by the government causes a lot of unemployment and places significant stress on the available infra-structure. The unemployment potentially leads to a number of social problems such as crime (Kirsten, 1994:102).

One of the most negative social consequences of urbanisation is insecurity because of high crime rates, inadequate housing and unemployment which result not only in psychological damage, but also in the neglect of the environment (Viljoen, Van Staden, Grieve & Van Deventer, 1987:215). The disruption and ultimate rejection of socio-cultural mechanisms which regulated persons' (and especially young persons') existence in rural areas, and the undermining of parental authority (and parental absence), leave them exposed to crime and wayward political influences (Kirsten, 1994:102). These circumstances can lead not only to overcrowded classrooms, but also to highly politicised and/ or criminal learners, often with a high degree of ignorance and arrogance. This results in schools often being unsafe for teachers and learners and school management being manipulated, even threatened by learners, which can also become a potential source of stressors for teachers.

- ***Population increase***

According to a projection by Bernstein (in Schrire, 1990:241-242) South Africa's population will reach the number of almost 60 million by the year 2010 with the rate of the current population increase. The official population estimation is 80 million by the year

2010, which South Africa will not be able to accommodate and feed humanely (Jordaan *in Metelerkamp*, 1992:16). The looming of this potential catastrophe as well as the influx of millions of illegal immigrants from all over Africa, due to the heavy pressure on the infrastructure and greater escalation of crime, makes this a very serious potential stressor. Population increase often leads to a lack of classrooms and schools, that can contribute to overcrowded classrooms and resultant attention and discipline problems, which can also be a potential source of stressors for teachers.

- **Natural resources**

The extent of seriousness of the depletion of the natural resources stems from the fact that as long as two decades ago it was calculated that natural resources which took 100 million years to form, will be used up within 100 years of industrialisation (Haggett, 1975:202). South Africa is a country rich in natural resources of which gold is the most important earner of foreign exchange. Unfortunately, factors such as high production costs, labour unrest, labour legislation, the selling of huge amounts of gold stockpiles by other countries on international markets, *et cetera*, have the effect of mines being closed and/or mine workers being laid off. This has serious effects on families with school-going children, of which impoverishment and the resultant effect on their well-being and therefore all other spheres of life, is immanent. This situation also impacts on the teaching-learning situation and can therefore serve as a potential source of stressors for the teacher.

- **Pollution**

Pollution can be caused in various ways. Air pollution by industry, exhaust fumes, and wood and coal fires, can lead to a multitude of illnesses of which upper respiratory tract infections are probably the best-known. Sulphur dioxide which rains down on the earth has an accumulative negative effect on plant and animal life. Carbon dioxide has a so-called 'greenhouse' effect due to the warming of the atmosphere with serious detrimental climatological effects (Huntly *et al.*, 1989:25). Chlorofluorocarbons (CFC) in the air can lead to the destruction of the ozone layer which shields the earth against harmful ultra-violet rays. This can increase the incidence of skin cancer and lowered immunity and influence the photochemical processes of plant production in both land and marine ecosystems. Water pollution by industry and insufficient sanitation create serious health risks for people who are dependent on rivers for water and sport. Littering costs South

Africa millions annually - estimated R55 million more than a decade ago (Viljoen *et al.*, 1987:257).

Over and above the personal or industrial disrespect for the environment in polluting the environment, it is also a sign of either environmental uneducatedness or self-centeredness and greed. Whichever, the effect translates into possible health problems, for amongst others, learners and/or teachers who are perhaps living and going to school situated in a neighbourhood or township in a polluted environment (Hayward, 1993:8). It can also mean, a lack of pride in their surroundings, and often in themselves, and therefore results in the perpetuation of pollutive behaviour. Whatever the type of pollution, the absence of health and well-being and/or aesthetic considerations can form a potential source of stressors.

It can be concluded that the status quo of the different sub-contexts of the ecological context can clearly be viewed as potential sources of stressors for teachers. Some potential sources of stressors can have a direct impact on a specific teacher as a person, whilst on others it will have a more indirect impact. As time goes by, or in the life of a different teacher, the situation might be totally different with regard to the specifics of potential sources of stress. The same can be said for the reflected potential effects of stress. The potential impact of the ecological context upon the wellness of teachers, can be concluded, is very evident.

2.5.4 Metaphysical context

People's experiences and behaviour are also evoked, maintained and modified by how they interpret ultimate reality. This is, according to Jordaan and Jordaan (1998:40), a matter of human beings' metaphysical yearning, that is, their attempts to discover what lies beyond all of existence; what the origins, nature and purpose are; what the meaning of life is. The two sub-contexts that will be referred to are the spiritual and religious, and philosophical and ideological sub-contexts. Although related reference was made to them under the institutional orders, especially the religious and political orders, this was only in their institutionalised forms and not in their symbolic forms. Institutionalisation, according to Jordaan and Jordaan (1998:750), is the name given to the processes through which ideologies, views and customs are sanctioned and/or legitimised into a system designed to organise human coexistence. These ideologies, views and customs are on their part greatly influenced by the religious and philosophical sub-contexts of the

metaphysical context. The metaphysical context refers to the world that is not perceivable by senses; its existence or non-existence cannot be proven in a rationalistic sense. This symbolic world, however, serves as the impetus that is the fuel that also drives the institutionalised world. None the less, its bearing on stress is unmistakable. This section will mainly focus on the metaphysical context as a potential source of stressors and a reflector of the potential effects of stress and the potential impact on the wellness of teachers.

2.5.4.1 Spiritual and religious sub-context

Spirituality is not the same as organised religion, although spiritual experience is the cornerstone of religion (Hafen *et al.*, 1996:378). Schafer (1996:387) reports that the quest for meaning and purpose is the core of spiritual wellness. Schafer (1996:386) also reports that the stronger the sense of meaning and direction, the lower the distress-symptom score and the greater the proportion of people who report being very healthy and very happy. As far as religion is concerned, it can be said that godhead concepts or conceptions of a deity differ for different people, but whatever their conceptions are, the fact is that people's belief in the existence of a deity greatly influences their understanding and experience of the world, their attitudes towards and relationships with others, and their behaviour. Cole (*in* Jordaan & Jordaan, 1998:40) is of the opinion that all godhead concepts entail certain tacit and explicit doctrines that radically affect human lives through their effect on perceptions, cognition and behaviour. Conversely, not believing in the existence of a deity should also influence people's perceptions, cognition and behaviour.

It has been found that patients with high levels of religious activity enjoy better overall physical and mental health (Hafen *et al.*, 1996:383). This means that the teacher who does not experience spiritual fulfilment through religion or wider spirituality, might also lack meaning and direction, might have negative perceptions, cognitions and behaviours, which can result in it being a source of potential stressors. Subscribing to a religion, on the other hand, can in itself also serve as a potential source of stressors, due perhaps to a very strict, fundamentalist and regimented lifestyle or dogma which ought to be followed and which can leave certain persons with feelings of extreme guilt if they fail to comply with the set demands. A decline in religiosity and as a consequence, spiritual wellness, can also be due to the effects of stress, because of persons working so hard that they simply are too tired and stressed to find time to pursue, and this watering down,

any meaningful religious encounter. A decline like this can also be brought about by socio-political changes that transpired the past few years that brought about significant changes also in the mainly white churches in South Africa, publicly declaring and confessing that apartheid was a sin (Anon, 1992/1993:24-25). This realisation left many people feeling morally bankrupt as it were, because of the about-face of an authoritarian society in which the boundaries between politics and church were too thin.

2.5.4.2 Philosophical and ideological sub-context

Over the centuries various philosophical schemes have been devised to describe the nature of ultimate reality. The outstanding feature of all these schemes is that the propositions of which they are composed are derived by argument, hence the concept of ultimate reality is arrived at rationally (Jordaan & Jordaan, 1998:786-787). Philosophy is not based on physical laws (natural sciences) or indisputable historical facts, and therefore makes it difficult to define (Landman *et al.*, 1994:449). It does, however, include metaphysics, ethics, logic, aesthetics, philosophical anthropology, et cetera. It is in fact very theoretical. Ideology, on the other hand, is very practical and has to do with a specific doctrine concerning institutionalised orders. That is, for example: a doctrine of ideas; principles or views of a certain system or theory; a specific philosophy of life or attitude towards life; the ideas or kind of thinking characteristic of an individual or group; specifically, the ideas and objectives that influence a whole group or national culture, shaping particularly political and social procedure (Landman *et al.*, 1994:371-372). Examples of philosophies and ideologies that are playing or have been playing an important role in South African society are for example: Rationalism, Modernism, Liberalism, Socialism, Communism, Colonialism, Calvinism, Afrikaner Nationalism, African Nationalism, and so on. Fact is that most of these schemes are so woven into the ordinary person's fabric of existence, that most are not even aware of the impact they have on their lives because they already form part of their ultimate reality.

It is currently often fashionable for organisations, as part of the institutionalised orders, to formulate a vision and a mission to direct their actions. These visions and missions are consciously or subconsciously determined mostly by philosophical and ideological (and often religious) sub-contexts. Although it can be argued that formally formulated vision and mission statements were not common in the organisations of the institutional orders of the pre-democratic South Africa, the official policy of apartheid was very well institutionalised in society. Apartheid, in a way, served as an official vision and mission

statement of society at large, because it orchestrated the coexistence of individuals, groups and communities at the most fundamental levels by means of laws and other forms of social engineering, for example, the Group Areas Act and the Mixed Marriages Act. This, of course, had a huge impact on the stress all South Africans experienced, not only as a direct consequence of Apartheid, but also due to large scale reactionary social and political conflict and economic decline (Dawes, 1985:57;60; PASA, 1989:4;12).

Currently - as reflected in social commentary in the media (Ronge, 2000:5) - in the post-Apartheid and democratic South Africa, human rights and a liberal Constitution has theoretically created equity amongst all South Africans. However, only theoretically, because of the perceived contra-ideology making itself felt in the form of for example, legislated indefinite Affirmative Action, the sacrifice of effectiveness and righteousness for political correctness, criticism denounced as racism, and so on. This often results in frustration and serves as severe sources of potential stressors for persons. The effects of stress can often be found in the resultant polarisation that takes place. Persons with excellent qualifications and experience and good intentions concerning the new dispensation become disillusioned causing them to leave institutionalised orders and even emigrating to other parts of the world (Ronge, 2000:5). In this sense it has been reported that there are 450 000 or more South Africans living and working in London alone (Malala, 2001:16).

This is the end of the discussion on the four contexts of human existence as far as their relevance are concerned in acting as potential sources of stressors and reflecting the effects of stress. In some instances the demonstrability of a context or sub-context to act as a potential source of stressors was easier. In some instances the demonstrability of a context or sub-context to reflect the effects of stress was easier. It can be concluded that marked individual differences are seen in response to stressful experiences. This variability makes the outcome unpredictable. It explains the often low (linear) correlations between stressful experiences and disease onset. Persons vary in their capacity to appraise, and to respond to, challenge, tasks, danger, and sickness by virtue of many factors - genetic endowment, age, previous life experiences, intelligence, enterprise, courage, capacity for human relationships, economic and other resources, and the individual meanings that stressful experiences have for them. It will therefore be easier to construct a specific inter-actional or transactional profile of potential sources of stress out of, and reflected potential effects of stress in, all the contexts of existence of a

specific teacher, as an individual. In doing so, one will be able to take cognisance of the specific situatedness of the teacher as an individual, and take stock of the dynamic relatedness of all the individuals' contexts of human existence due the mechanisms of feedforward and feedback.

What is important to note, as has been mentioned earlier, is that a definite singular source-stressor, or singular effect of stress is theoretically easier to determine in theory than in practice. A number of continuously operating factors may contribute to, or be the sources of stressors leading to the experience of stress and the potential impact upon wellness. The exposure to increasing sources of stressors, the experience of stress and ultimately the effects of stress may in itself function as potential stressors and lead to greater stress, an exponential effect reflecting the principles of both the domino-effect and snowball-effect extrapolated from the conclusions of Punch and Tuettemann (1991:67-69). Weiner (1992:28) points out that the separate categories of stressful experience are made up of many complex components: an earthquake (or encounter with violent crime, or myocardial infarction, et cetera) is not only an unexpected, uncontrollable and frightening event; an earthquake may also deprive a person of his/her food and water supply, property, transportation, place of work and savings, investments and income, et cetera, and in doing so compromise his/her wellness. It may eventuate in injury or death. All facets of such an experience need to be first separately, and later cumulatively, analysed and assessed. Not only is the actual experience complex, but many other factors in interaction determine what each person experiences and how his/her actions are designed to meet the danger, threat, or challenge and to protect him/herself against it. Because the relationship between source and effect is not linear but rather multiple, one is working with potentialities and not sureties. The extent to which the different contexts of human existence will act as potential sources of stressors (stimulus) for a person, will be mediated by the cognitive appraisal of resources and coping strategies available to the person. If these potential stressors are deemed stressful (appraisal), it will finally be reflected in the potential effects of stress (response) and the potential impact on the wellness of teachers, especially if the resources and/or coping strategies available are inappropriate, insufficient or lacking. To once more return to the graphic conceptualisation given at the beginning of the discussion on the potential sources of stressors and potential effects of stress, it can be said that an attempted explanation has so far been focused on just that: the potential sources of stressors and potential effects of stress and the potential impact on the wellness of teachers. The last

part of this chapter is concerned with what makes potential stressors stressful for a specific person, and depending on the effectiveness of coping strategies employed, possibly and ultimately leading to potential effects of stress and the associated potential impact on the wellness of a teacher as a person. That is, in other words, the middle section of the process in the Conceptual Model, concerned with the experience/ interpretation of stress (see Figure 2.4).

2.6 THE PROCESS OF INTERPRETATION / EXPERIENCING OF STRESS AND COPING

An interaction model of stress, as is embodied by the ideas of Lazarus (*in* Green & Shellenberger, 1991:69), emphasises the fact that a person's experience of stress and ultimately the impact on wellness, depends upon a continual process of interaction with the stressor, appraisal and reappraisal, and coping (interpretation/ experience of stress in Fig. 2.5).

2.6.1 Different types of stressors

There are various ways in which stressors can be typed. Different researchers use different methods of typing and will therefore typify and describe actual stressors in their own idiosyncratic theoretical way. Hurrell *et al.* (1988:45) point out that stressors can be differentiated depending on how they vary on four orthogonal dimensions namely, specificity of time-onset; duration; frequency or repetitiveness; and severity. Depending on the specific individual teacher as a person, one would be able to classify different potential stressors from the contexts of human existence in certain types. Lepore and Evans (1996:353) propose the following five types or general categories of stressors and their characteristics:

2.6.1.1 Cataclysms (*disasters and crises*)

Cataclysms are sudden, tumultuous, irrevocable events that impose great adaptive demands on many people. Cataclysms tend to be severe stressors to the average person. Examples are ecological problems such as natural disasters (floods, droughts et cetera), and technological or human-made catastrophes (nuclear accidents, war, societal exposure to violent crime, et cetera). It can also be classified along other

dimensions namely the threat to life, prolonged suffering, the scope of the impact, and also the way in which the event influences an entire community (Hurrell *et al.* 1988:44-46).

2.6.1.2 Major life events

Major life events are episodic and often irrevocable events that impose great adaptive demands on one of a few individuals. Major life events tend to be severe stressors to the average person. They can include biological problems such as serious illness or disability; intra-psychic problems such as the onset of anxiety attacks or bipolar disorder; ecological problems such as social losses through death, divorce, relocation or other transitions, job loss, criminal victimisation; metaphysical problems such as the introduction and implementation of a new ideology by a new government. The type of change does not matter so much as the extent to which change disrupts normal patterns of life (Cockerham, 1992:78).

2.6.1.3 Daily stressors (or daily hassles or minor life events)

Daily stressors are constellations of related and ongoing stressors experienced in day to day life. Daily stressors can range from being relatively minor to severe to the average person. Minor life events and daily hassles are different terms offered by different researchers to represent the same idea. Daily hassles are defined as "*irritating, frustrating, distressing demands that to some degree characterise everyday transactions with the environment (or between the contexts of human existence in this study)*" (Pratt & Barling *in* Hurrell *et al.* 1988:44-46). They can include health problems such as diarrhoea, or muscle pain, intra-psychic problems such as feeling disappointed, ecological problems such as financial problems, such as too little money to buy basic necessities, bureaucratic inefficiencies, having to set examination papers, marking books, doing school/ class administration, being caught up in traffic, losing or misplacing things, metaphysical problems such as trying to be politically correct, et cetera.

2.6.1.4 Ambient stressors

Ambient stressors are often intractable environmental conditions, that impose ongoing demands on people. Ambient stressors can range from relatively minor and unnoticed to severe to the average person (Lepore & Evans, 1996:353). Examples are ecological

problems such as noise, crowding, pollution, traffic congestion, and extreme temperatures.

2.6.1.5 Role stressors

Role stressors are ongoing difficulties related to fulfilling role obligations; problematic social relations encountered while performing role-related obligations. Role stressors are typically severe to the average person, especially when they occur in personally important roles (for instance marital, family or work roles) (Lepore & Evans, 1996:353). Examples are ecological problems such as competing role expectations and demands, excessive workload, role ambiguity, too many responsibilities for people or objects, lack of social support or cohesion, lack of control or appropriate decision latitude, other examples are metaphysical problems such as being exposed to other cultural practises and philosophies that are deemed offensive, whilst the self behaves in a continuously culturally sensitive way.

2.6.1.6 Miscellaneous stressors

Hafen *et al.* (1996:58) also add and refer to miscellaneous stressors. These are stressors that can sap energy and contribute to physical illness, regardless of age. These include poor diet, inadequate nutrition, cigarette smoking (even living with someone who smokes), drinking too much alcohol, insomnia, irregular sleep patterns, or the overuse of over-the-counter prescription drugs as well as the use of illegal drugs.

2.6.2 Multiple exposure to stressors

Evident from the above is that stressors can be sorted into five general categories, plus the last one added. According to Lepore and Evans (1996:352), much empirical stress research focuses on how people cope with one of these general types or categories of stressors. However, a close inspection of the characteristics of these stressors reveals that each of them represents not a singular or unique source of threat, damage, harm, or loss to an individual person, but instead compromises a wide range of unique combinations of interrelated stressors of varying magnitudes and durations.

A person might be exposed to multiple stressors because one stressor causes additional, secondary stressors to occur or because two or more unrelated stressors from independent, or discrete origins, co-occur. In addition, a person could be exposed to

different combinations of related and unrelated stressors with discrete or common causes. Multiple stressors may also be perceived as causally related or stemming from a common underlying cause even though they are objectively independent from one another in the external environment. There have been few analyses of how different stressors are related, partly because of assumptions many investigators have adopted from the stressful life events tradition of research (reflected in the stimulus approach at the beginning of Chapter 2) that conceptualises stressors as discrete, perhaps even random, occurrences with additive effects (Lepore & Evans, 1996:352). This effect of multiplicity is quite evident from the discussion of the potential sources of stressors and potential effects of stress as reflected in the contexts of human existence of the meta-approach. The distinction between potential sources of stressors and the potential effects of stress and its potential impact on the wellness of teachers, as said, is often easier to determine in theory than in practice. Due to continuous transactions between different contexts and sub-contexts, the roots of potential stressors may lie in experiencing stressors, or in the effects of stress already experienced.

Concerning the multiple exposure to stressors, in summary one can say that when people cope with a focal stressor, such as a cataclysm or major life event, they are often coping with the focal stressor as well as a cascade of other stressors triggered by the focal stressor. In addition, a case can be made out for some persons being more prone to be exposed to multiple stressors because of their personal characteristics (reflected in their biological and intra-psychic contexts) and/ or the state of other resources such as social roles (ecological context or wellness). Finally, some stressors, such as ambient stressors (for instance classroom noise and overcrowded classes) have a tendency to covary (Lepore & Evans, 1996:353).

In closing, it is important to note that the four dimensions mentioned at the beginning of the section on the types of stressors (specificity of time of onset, duration, frequency and intensity) vary independently of each other (Hurrell *et al.*, 1988:45). For example, if a stressor occurs frequently, this does not imply that the stressor is more intense or severe; a high frequency stressor is not to be equated with a high intensity stressor. These are all differential variables that determine the specific nature of different potential stressors in the life of a specific teacher as an individual person. The potential effect these potential stressors may, however, depend on the subjective experience of stress

(Swanepoel & Van Oudtshoorn, 1988:20:22). The subjective experience of stress will on its part be determined by the process of cognitive appraisal involved.

2.6.3 Cognitive appraisal

Cognitive appraisal is the process by which an event is evaluated or interpreted as threatening or dangerous (Fontana, 1994:62; Wells & Matthews, 1994:166; Auerbach & Grambling, 1998:26). As Carrol (1992:5) puts it: "*Stress, like beauty, lies in the eyes of the beholder*". This process can be divided into two aspects, namely primary appraisal and secondary appraisal.

2.6.3.1 Primary appraisal

Primary appraisal refers to a person's initial assessment of an event in terms of how it might effect his/her wellness. An event may be construed as irrelevant, positive, or harmful. Harmful appraisals may involve anticipated threats, ongoing stressors or past events that are producing negative evaluations of the self because of harm or loss due to sustaining physical or psychological damage or anticipated harm or loss (Patterson & Neufeld, 1989:16; Fontana, 1994:63; Wells & Matthews, 1994:166; Auerbach & Grambling, 1998:27). Primary appraisal is greatly influenced by the individual person's situatedness or contexts of human existence as distinctive frames of reference. Through the monitoring process and rapid feedforward and feedback of information, these frames of reference become part and parcel of primary appraisal (Jordaan & Jordaan, 1998:554). The contextual situatedness of a teacher as an individual person stands at the centre of the primary appraisal he/she is making.

The contexts of human existence as frames of reference include for instance (analogous to Jordaan & Jordaan (1998:554)):

- An individual's *psychobiological dynamics*, for example basic tension level, emotional tension threshold, lability and temperamental traits (such as emotionality, impulsiveness, social disposition). These factors are often, at least partly, genetically co-determined.
- An individual's *psychosocial dynamics*, for example his/her political, economic and educational power or status in society and the way in which individual social identities are formed and maintained.

- Unwritten but cogent *cultural 'rules'* according to which a person (and his/her group and community) have developed shared meanings and have expectations of each other in the form of prejudices and stereotypes.
- The prevailing *emotive perceptions* of society in which a person functions from day to day, giving rise to dominant moods - cynical, pessimistic, fatalistic, optimistic, hopeful, helpless, despairing and so on.

When a person's primary appraisal is as such that an event (as a potential stressor) is subjectively perceived as having a possible negative effect on the person's wellness, a stress experience will result. The stress experience will usually be in the form of a more or less intense feeling of emotional and physical tension, experienced as 'pressure' (Jordaan & Jordaan, 1998:555). Negative primary appraisal leads to negative stress experiences, characterised by anticipation of current or future threat, injury or loss. Positive primary appraisal results in the opposite, namely current or future challenges or opportunities to benefit from or being able to overcome problems.

Stressors may also be simultaneously experienced as negative and positive, because they present both threats and challenges - a stress experience of ambivalence. It is also possible that a stressor will lead to neutral experiences which, depending on the circumstances, may change into negative, positive or ambivalent experiences.

2.6.3.2 Secondary appraisal

Secondary appraisals are made of the impinging stressors and involve evaluations of the resources that persons have at their disposal (that is, coping options) that might be useful in escaping from, or minimising the stress in a harmful or potentially harmful situation (Patterson & Neufeld, 1989:16; Fontana, 1994:63; Auerbach & Grambling, 1998:27). Apart from evaluating the available coping options, the person involved will also evaluate whether or not the coping options will be effective, and whether or not the individual is capable of applying the particular coping strategy effectively (Cotton, 1990:38). If a person forms the perception that the demands of the situation exceed his/her coping ability, the initial negative stress experience becomes even more negative. The opposite is also true. Secondary appraisal may well affect and interact with primary appraisal. If a person is confident that he/she can cope with a given event, that event's potential as a stressor may be reduced.

Secondary appraisal fulfils a key function in the stress process in that it can bring about reversals of people's stress experience. An initial negative experience might be reappraised (regarded as a third type of appraisal) and change into a positive experience due to the situatedness of a person, for instance receiving encouraging social feedback from the ecological context or changing irrational cognitions in the intra-psychic context. Reappraisal per se refers to a changed appraisal, usually based on new information from the environment and/ or from the person (Cotton, 1990:38; Wells & Matthews, 1994:166), as has been pointed out. Similarly, reappraisal may also be the result of cognitive coping efforts. The assessment or evaluation made as part of the secondary appraisal is influenced by previous experiences in similar situations, generalised beliefs about the self and the environment, and the availability of personal (for example physical strength or problem-solving skills) and environmental (for example social support or money or even present state of wellness) resources (Holroyd & Lazarus, 1982:23). Personal factors and characteristics such as commitments (what is important to the person), beliefs (particular beliefs about personal control, and existential beliefs), and point-in-time perceived status of wellness interact with situational factors as represented in the situatedness of the person who is experiencing stress. To this effect, Wortman, Sheedy, Gluhosky and Kessler (1992:229) note that they believe *"that individuals' appraisals of and reactions to stressful life events are importantly influenced by their philosophical perspective on life or their view of the world. Events that can be incorporated into a persons' view of the world may cause little disequilibrium and resultant distress; those that shatter a person's view of the world may cause intense distress and result in subsequent health problems"* – or have dire consequences for a person's wellness.

The perceived control a person has over his/her situation is of great importance in the secondary appraisal. The less perceived control, the more threatening the situation will be and the greater the probability of mental and physical distress (Schafer, 1996:326). Taking into account that what has been said about primary and secondary appraisal, it is evident that all contexts of existence are involved in the process. The contexts of existence do not only serve as potential sources of stressors, but are also involved, via continuous transactions, in the process of appraisal. Consequently, the Conceptual Model (Fig. 2.4) proposed can therefore be adapted to a Reconceptualised Model of Stress dynamics to reflect this transaction also. This can be done by linking the contexts of human existence related to the potential sources of stressors to the interpretation and

experience of stress cyclically, over and above the already existing feedforward and feedback links:

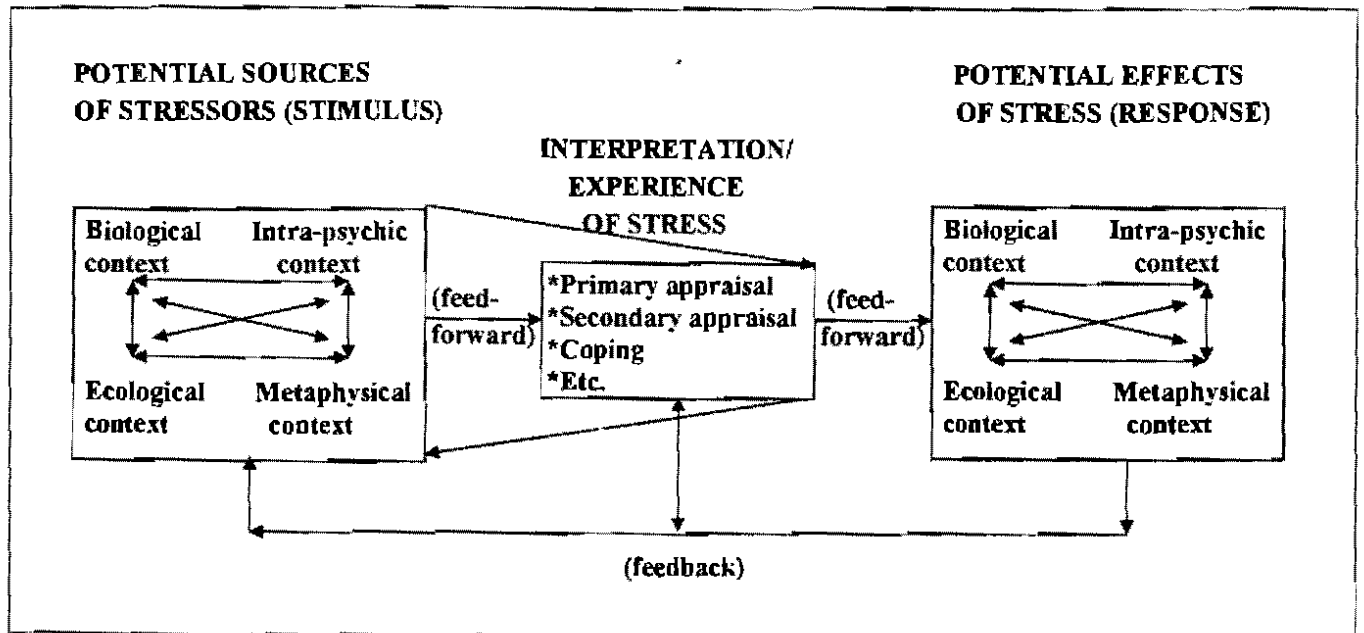


Figure 2.6: Reconceptualised model of stress dynamics

2.6.4 Coping

Secondary appraisal, in as much as it constructively influences a person's perceptions of stressful situations, is in itself a way of coping with stress. Secondary appraisal, however, can lead to the following phase, namely the conscious (or unconscious) application of coping strategies (Auerbach & Grambling, 1998:27). Coping, as it is defined by Lazarus and Folkman (1984:178), represents *"the constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/ or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person"*. Coping does not represent a homogeneous concept, instead it is a diffuse umbrella term. Coping can in

fact be described in terms of strategies, tactics, responses, cognitions and behaviour (Schwarzer & Schwarzer, 1996:107). In using the term 'coping', it is important to distinguish between coping as a set of processes and coping outcomes. Coping processes refer to the different strategies, tactics, responses, cognitions and behaviour (such as meditation in the context of this study) that a person uses to deal with stressful situations and the emotions elicited by them. Coping outcomes refer to how effective these strategies, tactics, responses, cognitions and behaviour are in dealing with environmental demands or damping stressful emotions (Auerbach & Grambling, 1998:27).

The appropriateness and effectiveness of specific coping strategies, tactics, responses, cognitions and behaviour (processes) and the success with which the coping strategies, tactics, responses, cognitions and behaviour are applied (outcomes), will to a great extent determine the levels, and as a consequence mediate the effects (Lepore & Evans, 1996:351) of stress and wellness experienced. The greater the effectiveness of coping strategies applied, the fewer effects of stress and compromised wellness will generally be experienced, and vice versa. The feedback process constantly supplies information on the outcomes of applied coping strategies. This can result in unsuccessful coping leading to additional stress, whereas stress may be relieved by success (Jordaan & Jordaan, 1998:558-559). Coping can therefore be seen as a process and not a trait. Coping is part of the process of appraisal (more specifically, secondary appraisal), yet it is also part of the process of managing stress (Cotton, 1990:38). Coping outcome is, however, not only effected by coping processes, but also by coping resources. Lepore and Evans (1996:350) describe coping resources as properties of individuals (such as self-efficacy), their social environment (such as social support), and physical environmental resources (such as privacy) that enable persons to respond to stressors. In the context of this study, one can add the functioning and status of a person's physical well-being (biological context) and spiritual and religious commitment (metaphysical context) or in a more holistic sense, the person's wellness, for instance. In this sense Beard (1990:110) and Gascoyne (1997:9-10) refer to three particular constructs as part of personality characteristics that can be seen as coping resources, namely hardiness (developed by Kobasa), optimism (suggested by Seligman) and sense of coherence (used by Antonovsky). According to Cohen and Edwards (1989:237), resources (such as social support, wellness et cetera) may intervene between stressful events (or event expectations) and a stress reaction by attenuating or preventing a stress appraisal. For

instance, the perception that necessary resources are available, may redefine the threat posed by a situation and/or bolster perceived coping efficacy and therefore possibly wellness, thereby preventing a particular situation from being appraised as highly stressful. Second, resources may intervene between the experience of stress and the onset of the pathological outcome by influencing coping ability or effort in a way that facilitates successful coping with either the stressor itself (problem-focused) or stress reaction (emotion-focused), or by facilitating healthful (or wellness) behaviours that not only counteract the effects of stress reactions but can potentially promote wellness. Although meditation was earlier described as an emotion-focused coping strategy, competency in meditation practise can essentially also be seen as a coping resource.

Similarly, as has been pointed out in the section on appraisal, it can be concluded that the interpretation and experience of stress and the coping strategies applied, cannot be seen as separate from the effects of stress reflected in the contexts of human existence. Coping resources should also be added to this equation. All the components contribute to form part of a process due to the transactions between coping resources, coping strategies applied and the successful outcomes, or not, reflected by the incidence or absence of effects of stress and ultimately the impact on wellness, observable in the contexts of human existence. The Reconceptual Model (Fig. 2.5) proposed, can therefore be adapted to form a (final) Model of Stress Dynamics to reflect this transaction also. This can be done by linking the interpretation and experience of stress to the contexts of human existence related to the potential effects of stress cyclically, over and above the already existing feedforward and feedback links and by linking the interpretation and experience of stress to the coping resources available:

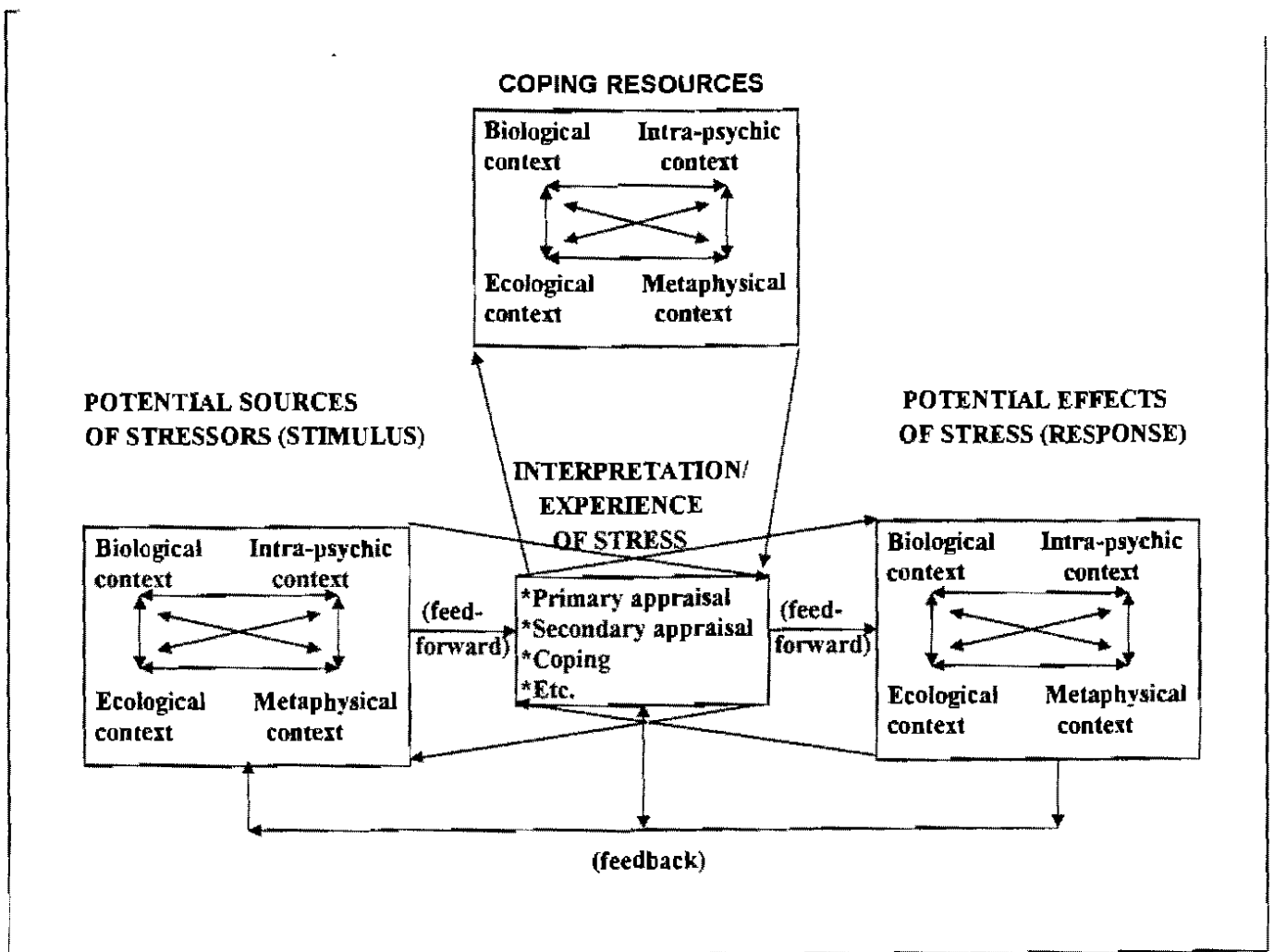


Figure 2.7: Model of stress dynamics

As has been pointed out in Chapter 1, coping may be directed toward lessening emotional distress which is the result of a stressful encounter (called emotion-focused coping), or it may be directed toward altering the definition of the problem itself by redefining the stressor, or by solving the problem that gives rise to the experienced stress (problem-focused coping). To this effect, Lazarus and Folkman (1984:150) point out that "common to the coping functions described...is a distinction of overriding importance, namely, between coping that is directed at managing or altering the problem causing the distress and coping that is directed at regulating emotional response to the problem". Parry (1990:45) and Wells and Matthews (1994:167) entertain the same view. In general, emotion-focused forms of coping are more likely to occur when there has been an appraisal that nothing can be done to modify harmful, threatening, or challenging environmental conditions. Conversely, problem-focused coping is more

probable when such conditions are appraised as amenable to change (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984:150; Cohen & Edwards, 1989:264; Wells & Matthews, 1994:167). Research shows that persons use different methods of coping for different stress agents (Sutherland & Cooper, 1990:96). The concepts of problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping are currently not only being refined into sub-concepts (Auerbach & Grambling, 1998:29), but other coping categories are being added. Zeidner and Saklofske (1996:514-515) also refer to avoidance coping as a separate category, in addition to the two other categories of coping. Avoidance coping is just that - the avoidance of a stressor. Other researchers have also created other categories of coping. Parkes (in Wells & Matthews, 1994:168) for instance, identifies suppression as another form of coping which is defined as the selective ignoring of threatening stimuli, and seeking social support from others. It seems, however, as if the jury is not out on the specifics of different coping categories, or on which coping strategy, tactics, et cetera, should fall under which category. Some researchers, for instance, classify social support under problem-focused coping, yet others classify social support underneath emotion-focused coping, and others as part of avoidance/ suppression coping. All of them are probably correct, depending on the nature of the social support.

According to Wells and Matthews (1994:168), there appears to be reasonable consensus about the three-factor model of coping of Endler and Parker (in Wells & Matthews, 1994:168). It is further pointed out that the three-factor model distinguishes between task-orientated, emotion-orientated and avoidance strategies, which correspond to problem and emotion-focused coping and suppression, respectively. Due to the fact that these coping focuses are at the heart of this research, it is important that they are explored somewhat further.

2.6.4.1 *Problem-focused coping*

When a person is using problem-focused coping, he/she attempts to short-cut the negative emotions experienced by doing something to modify, avoid, or minimise the situation that is perceived to be threatening. This translates into doing something to change or get away from the things that are causing an emotional upset, in other words, engaging the stressor with a view to deal with it. Problem-focused coping embraces a wider array of problem-orientated strategies than problem solving alone and are directed at the environment and/ or the self, or outward and inward strategies (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984:152; Wells & Matthews, 1994:167-168). Outward strategies are primarily

efforts at problem solving: defining the problem, generating solutions, assessing their advantages and disadvantages, choosing one to implement, and responding to feedback following implementation. Inward strategies are intended to help the person solve the problem by, for example, increasing personal competence, by learning new skills and procedures (Wells & Matthews, 1994:168).

Problem-focused coping methods will vary widely in their specific details because of the range of difficulties to be tackled, unlike emotion-focused coping, which, because the emotional responses to crises are universal, can be described in general terms (Parry, 1990:51). In the event of the use of a problem solving strategy, it is important to note that emotional variables may also significantly effect problem recognition, the setting of problem solving goals, the evaluation of solution alternatives, and the assessment of solution outcome (D' Zurilla, 1988:95). Because awareness and control of emotional responses are important for efficient and effective problem-solving performance (D'Zurilla, 1988:96), emotion-focused coping strategies can be employed to facilitate this effect.

2.6.4.2 Emotion-focused coping

When a person is using emotion-focused coping, he/she tries to moderate or eliminate the unpleasant emotions by using mechanisms to lessen the experience of emotional distress which is the result of a stressful encounter (Parry, 1990:45-51). This translates into trying to minimise the stress reaction directly without confronting or trying to do something about the stressor itself. Parry (1990:45) also points out that failure to cope with these unpleasant emotions often causes the crisis to intensify. Cognitive processes directed at lessening emotional distress include cognitive emotion-focused strategies such as avoidance, minimisation, distancing, selective attention, positive comparisons, self-criticism, and wresting positive value from negative events (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984:150). Certain cognitive emotion-focused coping strategies lead to a change in the way an encounter is construed without changing the objective situation. These strategies are equivalent to reappraisal (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984:150; Wells & Matthews, 1994:168). Other emotion-focused coping strategies, for example behavioural emotion-focused strategies (such as physical exercise, meditation, having a drink, venting anger and seeking emotional support) do not change the meaning of an event directly, but can improve subjective well-being (Wells & Matthews, 1994:168) or wellness in the context of this study. They can also lead to reappraisals, but are not reappraisals themselves

(Lazarus & Folkman, 1984:150). Some emotion-focused coping strategies can be ineffective, even harmful, in the medium to long term, such as wishful thinking ('if only ...'), the use of drugs to evade psychological pain and ways of avoiding pain through either suppression or distraction (Parry, 1990:46-51). The latter example actually forms part of the following section, namely Avoidance Coping.

2.6.4.3 Avoidance coping

When a person is using avoidance coping, he/she tries to avoid a stressor altogether by actions such as wishful thinking, escapism, overt effort to deny, and self-distraction and mental disengagement (Zeidner & Saklofske 1996:514-515). Avoidance coping, to a great extent, can sometimes overlap with problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping.

2.6.5 Effectiveness of different coping strategies

Although these coping strategies are referred to separately in theory, in practice they are often used simultaneously, or in succession. In fact, theoretically, problem-focused and emotion-focused coping can both facilitate and impede each other in the coping process (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984:150) due to the fact that they are often both involved in the coping process of a person experiencing stress. In the context of this study it can mean that a teacher as a person experiencing distress due to whatever reason(s), can, by learning and becoming proficient in meditation (coping resource) and using meditation (a coping process – more specifically emotion-focused coping), moderate or eliminate the unpleasant emotions (and therefore also the physical response) and thus become more relaxed and experience greater wellness. This person can possibly then, from a more relaxed disposition, ultimately be in a better position to deal with the stress by engaging the stressor with a view to managing, altering or solving the problem itself (problem-focused coping) that is causing the distress (Auerbach & Grambling, 1998:130) and in doing so promote his/her wellness further. This was found to be the case by Long and Haney (1988:466), where both the exercise and relaxation groups, in research done on stressed working women, decreased their emotion-focused coping and increased their problem-focused coping after becoming more relaxed.

A common assumption is that direct problem-solving is always a more effective way of dealing with stress than suppressing or directly moderating emotions (Auerbach &

Grambling, 1998:30). Research done on teachers and published by Prinsloo (1990:43), Niehaus, Myburgh and Kok (1995:74; 77; 1996:104;110) and Myburgh, Niehaus and Kok (1997:58) reflects, erroneously perhaps, this viewpoint. Emotion-focused coping is indeed useful under certain conditions, especially as a way of managing largely uncontrollable situations in contrast to the relative ineffectiveness of problem-focused coping in such situations (Auerbach & Grambling, 1998:30). The conditions in South Africa with its changed and continuous changing and transitional society, is currently a case in point. The research done by Niehaus, Myburgh and Kok, and Myburgh, Niehaus and Kok referred to above, indicates that a positive realistic self-concept and the use of mostly problem-focused coping by teachers contribute to *"successfully holding their own"* (coping well). They conclude that problem-focused coping is a superior coping strategy, used more often by persons in managerial posts (in former White schools), and used more often by men. Against the backdrop of the highly centralised and authoritarian nature of educational administration and control in South Africa (Steyn & Squelch, 1997:5), and a male-dominated pre-democratic society (when this study was done), this conclusion is understandable, even logical, and does not shed any new light on the supposed superiority of problem-focused coping. In fact, it can be strongly argued that the Apartheid system of education has served to disempower ordinary teachers by preventing them from having a voice in fundamental aspects of education (Steyn & Squelch, 1997:5). Educational managers who were propped-up and stratified by the hierarchy of the teaching system, and therefore being always in control, can very well lead to these persons having a positive self-concept and using problem-focused coping strategies. In fact, control is central because it fosters self-esteem, perceived influence and autonomy, and a sense of self-efficacy and achievement and it fosters the development of successful coping skills and mastery (Green & Shellenberger, 1991:69; Tuettemann & Punch, 1992:181; Rogers, 1996:15). Self-esteem, self-efficacy, and control are variables that enhance one another. The opposite, however, is equally true. Persons not in managerial positions and being more often women, have understandably made more use of emotion-focused coping strategies because they had less control over their professional lives. The dawning of democracy in South Africa since 1994 has changed the perceptions, expectations and context of teaching and society at large. Drastic changes in certain aspects have given rise to much of uncertainty and perceived lack of control, also to those in managerial positions. Sureties and control of the recent past have made way for the uncertainty of continuous change in society.

Emotion-focused coping by teachers as persons should therefore not be rejected out of hand. Strentz and Auerbach (1988:654-655) demonstrate the superiority of emotion-focused coping in a situation in which there are minimal opportunities to modify a stressful situation through problem-solving. The point is that one form of coping should not be seen as superior to the other. As has been shown previously, both can facilitate and impede each other in the coping process because they are often both involved in the coping process of a person experiencing stress, and in some situations one may be more effective than the other. As Parry (1990:45) points out, "...no single coping strategy is the right one for all people in all situations".

Due to the recent past and current changes in South Africa and individual circumstances - potential stressors indicated earlier in this Chapter - teachers as persons often feel a general lack of control, unsure about the future and hence experience high levels of stress. Because of this status quo, it was deemed necessary in the interest of whole-school development, to instruct teachers to such a level of proficiency in the use of meditation that it might serve as a coping resource and strategy and life-skill do deal with distress. Teachers proficient in the use of meditation as a life-skill might hopefully become empowered to:

- manage their feelings of distress resulting from the experience of stress
- prevent or limit the potential negative effects of stress
- grow and develop as persons
- which will potentially put them in a position to make use of more problem-focused coping strategies
- so that they will ultimately better functioning persons and ultimately better teachers due to the promotion of their wellness.

Nash (1990:3856) points out to this effect that "*you can't change things until you are clear and confident, until you have a grip on yourself*". Solutions therefore to the problem of stress in teachers are needed, in order to ensure the welfare of both the students dependent on the system and of the teachers who are essential to its survival (Tuettemann & Punch, 1992:181). Thus, helping teachers to cope more effectively with their stress and to promote their wellness can be viewed as beneficial in terms of increased student learning and in creating an educational environment more conducive to mental health (Friedman, Lehrer & Stevens, 1983:546; Eskridge & Coker, 1985:389)

or wellness in general. Therefore, heed should be taken of the suggestions by Eskridge and Coker (1985:398), Buwalda and Kok (1991:21) and Marais (1992:311), that teachers should be exposed to a stress reducing training programme and learn stress reduction (and argueably wellness promoted in the context of this study) techniques or strategies as part of pre-service as well as in-service training, the former perhaps by training institutions, and the latter by Education Departments, training institutions or private consultants. This study is an effort in that direction.

2.7 SUMMARY

To summarise, one can say that there are different ways of conceptualising stress by way of different approaches to the stress phenomenon. Of these approaches, the interactive approach with its transactions between different contexts and sub-contexts which is the most comprehensive approach in a holistic sense. These contexts are reflected in a meta-approach by the contexts of human existence, namely the biological, intra-psychic, ecological and metaphysical contexts with their implied sub-contexts. The interactive approach and meta-approach have been converged to provide a rich and detailed systemic understanding of stress dynamics. It was indicated that these dynamics can be reflected in the contexts of human existence both in terms of serving as potential sources of stressors and in reflecting potential effects of stress and the potential impact on the wellness of teachers. Teachers are first of all persons and not only teachers. It has therefore been argued that the stress as a phenomenon should be viewed as such, because teachers as persons do not only exist in the sub-context of teaching as a profession, but are on a daily basis involved in a multitude of sub-contexts. This holistic view presupposes that the dynamics and experience of stress and its impact on wellness does not reflect a singular or linear process, but a multiple cause and multiple effect exponential process, different for each person.

Stressors from any one or more of these contexts of existence are appraised by the teacher as a person by way of primary and secondary appraisal. If such a stressor is perceived, interpreted and experienced to be stressful, the teacher as a person has to make use of one or more coping strategies to deal with the impinging stressor. The outcomes in terms of the coping process (the use of Clinically Standardized Meditation in the context of this study) may not only serve as an effective strategy for stress management, but may hopefully serve to enhance well-being in all the contexts of human existence and therefore promote the general wellness of teachers.

In conclusion it can be said that this study is not only directed towards a 'treatment' in order to obtain a decrease in perceived stress, but just as importantly, to promote the wellness of teachers because of the positive impact it may have on the teachers themselves as persons as well as on the teaching-learning environment. Meditation as the chosen strategy for this research, and Clinically Standardized Meditation specifically, as well as its impact on stress management and wellness, will be discussed in the following chapter.