

**The needs and demands experienced by teachers in
special needs schools: guidelines for teacher
support to promote wellness**

ELIZABETH CATHARINA JOHANNA JONKER

H.E.D., B.Optom

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Supervisor: Dr. G.J.C. Kirsten

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to the two people who not only formed the foundation and support network on which I built my life, but who are also two of the best friends any child can ask for: my parents,
Tienie and Harda.

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SOLI DEO GLORIA

ABSTRACT

The needs and demands experienced by teachers in special needs schools: guidelines for teacher support to promote wellness

The aim of this study was to investigate the demands, pressures and needs experienced by teachers in special needs schools (referred to as schools with learners with barriers to learning), with the aim of providing guidelines for teacher support to promote wellness.

To attain this aim, the study had the following specific objectives or aims:

1. To determine the demands made on and pressures experienced by teachers as stressors.
2. To determine the needs which teachers experience to alleviate these stressors that arise as a result of the demands and pressures experienced by teachers in a special needs school.
3. The provision of guidelines for teacher support in order to promote wellness.
4. To make recommendations for the promotion of the wellness of teachers in a special needs school.

A qualitative research design was considered to be the most appropriate for gaining in-depth insight into the demands, pressures and needs of these teachers. Data was collected through phenomenological interviews and direct observations. This data was then organised into categories and subcategories and direct quotations were presented verbatim.

Research findings were compared with the relevant literature to identify existing information and possible differences, and the findings were then recorded in the form of two articles.

As explained above, the primary goal of this study was to identify and describe the demands and needs experienced by teachers in special needs schools and to formulate guidelines for support to promote wellness. The study also showed that students need mentally and physically fit adults who can guide them as they find their way in the world. It is thus necessary to develop and promote the use of programmes and instruments to identify specific needs and stressors, so as to more accurately predict, prevent and alleviate demands that can be detrimental to health, and to provide and support guidelines to promote wellness in teachers.

Key words for indexing:

Teacher demands, teacher needs, teacher stress, support, inclusive education, special needs education, guidelines for teacher support, learners with barriers to learning, wellness.

OPSOMMING

**Die behoeftes en eise soos beleef deur onderwysers in skole vir
leerders met spesiale behoeftes: riglyne vir onderwyserondersteuning
ter bevordering van welstand**

Die doel van hierdie studie was om die behoeftes en eise soos beleef deur onderwysers in skole vir leerders met spesiale behoeftes te ondersoek en te bepaal. Riglyne vir ondersteuning ter bevordering van die welstand van hierdie onderwysers word voorgestel.

Om hierdie doel te bereik het die studie die volgende spesifieke doelwitte nagestreef:

1. om die eise en druk wat onderwysers as stressors beleef in skole vir leerders met spesiale behoeftes na te vors;
2. om die behoeftes na te vors wat hierdie onderwysers gevolglik ervaar ten einde die beleefde druk en eise te verlig;
3. om riglyne vir onderwyserondersteuning te verskaf om welstand te bevorder;
4. om aanbevelings te maak om die welstand te bevorder van onderwysers in skole vir leerders met spesiale behoeftes.

'n Kwalitatiewe navorsingsontwerp is as die geskikste instrument geag omdat dit daarop aangewese is om indiepte-insigte te verskaf oor die behoeftes en eise wat onderwysers beleef in skole vir leerders met spesiale behoeftes.

Data is ingesamel deur fenomenologiese onderhoude en direkte observasie. Hierdie data is toe georganiseer in kategorieë en subkategorieë en direkte aanhalings is verbatim aangebied.

Die navorsingsbevindinge is vergelyk met die relevante literatuur om bestaande inligting sowel as moontlike verskille uit te wys.

In die studie is bevindinge gemaak oor die behoeftes en eise soos beleef deur onderwysers in skole vir leerders met spesiale behoeftes, soos hierbo verduidelik is, en riglyne is verskaf vir onderwyserondersteuning ten einde die welstand van die onderwysers te bevorder. Verder het die studie aangetoon dat leerders afhanklik is van volwassenes wat geestelik en fisies gesond genoeg is om hulle op te voed en op die lewenspad te lei. Die ontwikkeling en bevordering van programme en instrumente om spesifieke onderwyserbehoefte, eise wat welstand negatief beïnvloed asook stressors te identifiseer, akkuraat te voorspel, te verhoed en te verlig is dus essensieel. Sodoende kan riglyne geformuleer word vir onderwyserondersteuning ten einde welstand te bevorder.

Sleutelwoorde vir indeksering:

Onderwyserseise, onderwyserbehoefte, onderwyserstres, onderwyserondersteuning, inklusiewe onderwys, spesiale onderwysopvoeding, riglyne vir onderwyserondersteuning, leerders met leergeremdhede, welstand.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	i
OPSOMMING	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	x
CHAPTER 1	1
1. ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 ORIENTATION, MOTIVATION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	1
1.2.1 The reformation process in South Africa	3
1.2.2 De-professionalism	4
1.2.3 The HIV/Aids epidemic	5
1.2.4 The view and support of society	6
1.2.5 Global factors	7
1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS	9
1.4 AIM OF THE STUDY	10
1.4.1 General aim	10
1.4.2 Specific aims	10
1.5 METHOD OF INVESTIGATION	10
1.5.1 Paradigmatic perspective	11
1.5.2 Theoretical assumptions	13
1.5.3 Explanation of concepts	14
1.5.3.1 Education and inclusive education	14
1.5.3.2 Special needs education and learners with special needs	15
1.5.3.3 Demands	17
1.5.3.4 Pressure	18
1.5.3.5 Needs	18
1.5.3.6 Teacher Stress	20
1.5.3.7 Teacher Support	21
1.5.4 Wellness	22
1.6 THE COURSE OF THE STUDY	23
CHAPTER 2	25
2. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD	25

2.1	INTRODUCTION	25
2.2	RESEARCH DESIGN	25
2.2.1	Qualitative research	26
2.3	RESEARCH METHOD	28
2.3.1	Sampling	28
2.3.2	Pilot Study	29
2.3.3	Data collection	29
2.3.3.1	Phenomenological interviews	29
2.3.3.2	The role of the researcher	30
2.4	DATA ANALYSIS	32
2.5	TRUSTWORTHINESS	33
2.5.1	Truth-value	33
2.5.1.1	Credibility	33
2.5.1.2	Triangulation	34
2.5.1.3	Clarification with experts	35
2.5.1.4	Peer group evaluation	35
2.5.1.5	Authority of the researcher	35
2.5.1.6	Structural coherence	36
2.5.2	Applicability	36
2.5.2.2	Transferability	36
2.5.3	Consistency	37
2.5.3.1	Dependability	37
2.5.3.3	Coding and decoding procedure	38
2.5.4	Neutrality	38
2.5.4.1	Conformability	38
2.6	ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	39
2.6.1	Permission	39
2.6.2	Confidentiality and anonymity	39
2.6.3	Privacy	40
2.6.4	Termination	40
2.6.5	Provision of research assistance	40
2.7	LITERATURE CONTROL	40
2.7.1	Guidelines for teacher support for the purpose of the promotion of wellness	40
2.8	SUMMARY	41
CHAPTER 3		43
ARTICLE I: THE DEMANDS AND NEEDS EXPERIENCED AS STRESSORS BY TEACHERS IN SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOOLS AND THE EFFECT ON WELLNESS		
3.1	INTRODUCTION: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	44
3.2	RESEARCH DESIGN AND RESEARCH METHOD	47
3.2.1	Research Design	47
3.2.2	Research Method	48
3.2.2.1	Sampling	48
3.2.2.2	Data collection	49
3.2.2.3	Field notes	52
3.3	DATA ANALYSIS	52
3.4	FINDINGS	53

3.4.1	Negative attitude of the learners	55
3.4.1.1	Towards learning/school	55
3.4.1.2	Negative attitude towards teachers	55
3.4.1.3	Vandalism of school and teachers' property	56
3.4.1.4	Threats made towards teachers	56
3.4.1.5	Absenteeism of learners	57
3.4.2	Dissatisfaction with the management of the system by the Department of Education	57
3.4.2.1	Lack of funds	57
3.4.2.2	Lack of guidelines	58
3.4.2.3	Inconsistency of Department of Education	58
3.4.2.4	Less teaching positions, same amount of work	59
3.4.2.5	The Department of Education are unaware of what goes on in special needs schools	59
3.4.3	Lack of support from outside the school	60
3.4.3.1	Lack of support staff	60
3.4.3.2	Lack of parental involvement	61
3.4.3.3	Negative view of society towards teaching	61
3.4.3.4	No/insufficient community involvement	62
3.4.4	The experience of professional overload	62
3.4.4.1	Multidimensional tasks teachers have to perform	62
3.4.4.2	Hectic schedule: too much to do in too little time	63
3.4.4.3	Teachers having to constantly motivate learners	64
3.4.5	Difficult working conditions teachers face in the classroom as a barrier to effective teaching	64
3.4.5.1	Learners with highly differentiated abilities in one class	64
3.4.5.2	The lack of future plans of learners when they finish school	65
3.4.5.3	The lack of teaching resources	65
3.4.5.4	Too big classes	65
3.4.5.5	Vague objectives of the OBE-system	66
3.4.5.6	Too much paperwork and administrative tasks	66
3.4.5.7	Language barriers causing teaching and learning difficulties	67
3.4.5.8	Learners being promoted to the next grade regardless of their progress	67
3.4.6	Difficult socio-economical circumstances of the learners	68
3.4.6.1	Inadequate resources due to poverty	68
3.4.6.2	Unresponsive parents	68
3.4.6.3	Difficult circumstances at home	68
3.4.7	Summary	69
3.5	EFFECT OF EXPERIENCED DEMANDS AND NEEDS ON THE WELLNESS OF TEACHERS IN A SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOOL	70
3.5.1	Negative effect on the emotions	71
3.5.1.1	Feelings of frustration towards the profession	71
3.5.1.2	Emotionally drained after a school day	72
3.5.1.3	Not in control of emotions	72
3.5.1.4	Feeling emotionally distanced from school and learners	72
3.5.1.5	Experiencing fear and anxiety when going to school	73
3.5.1.6	Teachers experiencing symptoms of depression	73
3.5.2	Negative effect on the self-concept	73

3.5.2.1	Feelings of helplessness	73
3.5.2.2	Changes in character	74
3.5.2.3	Feeling incompetent/incapable/uncertain	74
3.5.3	Effect on interpersonal relationships	75
3.5.3.1	Constantly feeling emotionally responsible for learners' wellness	75
3.5.3.2	Personal life affected	76
3.5.3.3	Negative projections on learners and colleagues	76
3.5.4	Experience of stress and its effects	77
3.5.4.1	Stress	77
3.5.4.2	Physical symptoms of stress	77
3.6	DISCUSSION	77
3.7	CONCLUSION	81
3.8	LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH	81
3.9	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	82
	REFERENCES	83
	CHAPTER 4	88
	ARTICLE 2: GUIDELINES FOR TEACHER SUPPORT TO PROMOTE WELLNESS IN TEACHERS IN SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOOLS	88
4.1	INTRODUCTION: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	88
4.2	GUIDELINES FOR TEACHER SUPPORT TO PROMOTE THE WELLNESS OF TEACHERS IN SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOOLS – EXPERIENCED DEMANDS AND NEEDS	94
4.2.1	Guideline for addressing negative attitude of the learners	96
4.2.2	Guidelines for addressing the lack of support from outside school	100
4.2.3	Guideline for addressing dissatisfaction with the Department of Education	107
4.2.4	Guideline for addressing the difficult working conditions teachers face in the classroom as a barriers to effective teaching	108
4.2.5	Guideline for addressing the experience of professional overload stress and its effect on the physical part-system:	111
4.2.6	Guideline for addressing difficult socio-economic circumstances of the learners	113
4.3	GUIDELINES FOR TEACHER SUPPORT TO PROMOTE THE WELLNESS OF TEACHERS IN SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOOLS – AFFECTED WELLNESS	114
4.3.1	Guideline for addressing negative effect on the emotions	114
4.3.2	Negative effect on the self-concept	118
4.3.3	Guideline for addressing the effect on interpersonal relationships	120
4.3.4	Guideline for addressing the experience of stress and its effect on the physical part-system	121
4.4	DISCUSSION	122
4.5	CONCLUSION	124
	REFERENCES	125
	CHAPTER 5	131
	SUMMARY, LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	131

5.1	INTRODUCTION	131
5.2	SUMMARY	131
5.3	LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH	133
5.4	CONCLUSION.....	134
5.4.1	Specific Aim 1: To determine the demands experienced by teachers as stressful in special needs school (article 1).....	134
5.4.2	Specific Aim 2: To determine the effect of the experienced demands on the wellness of teachers in special needs schools (article 1).....	135
5.4.3	Specific Aim 3: To provide guidelines for support concerning the needs that teachers have due to the demands experienced by them, for the promotion of their wellness (article 2)	136
5.4.4	Specific Aim 4: To provide guidelines for the promotion of the effected wellness of teachers due to the demands they experience (article 2).....	139
5.4.5	General Aim: The investigation of the needs and demands experienced by teachers in special needs schools and how these affect their wellness, with the aim of providing guidelines for teacher support to promote wellness.....	141
5.5	RECOMMENDATIONS	142
5.6	CONCLUDING REMARKS.....	144
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	146
	ANNEXURE	159
	APPENDIX A	159
1.	THE DEMANDS AND NEEDS EXPERIENCED BY THE SUBJECTS (TEACHERS IN SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOOLS):	159
2.	THE EFFECTS OF THE DEMANDS AND PRESSURES, EXPERIENCED BY THE SUBJECTS AS STRESSORS, ON THEIR WELLNESS	180
3.	VIEWS ABOUT THE NEEDS OF THE SUBJECTS IN TERMS OF SUPPORT TO PROMOTE WELLNESS.....	187
	APPENDIX B	197
	FOKUSGROEP: ONDERHOUDVOERING MET ONDERWYSERS VERBONDE AAN SKOLE VIR LEERDERS MET SPESIALE BEHOEFTE/LEERHINDERENISSE	197
	APPENDIX C - VERTROULIKHEIDSVERSLAG	198
	VERTROULIKHEIDSOOREENKOMS:	198

CHAPTER 1

1. ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Since 1994 there have been political changes in South Africa that had implications for almost every sphere of society. This is especially true for education, the school and classroom environment. The transformation in the education system and schools seems to have defined the roles of teachers, the demands they face, their needs and even their own identities (Myburgh & Poggenpoel, 2002:260). Teachers experience stress-related problems which manifest in various forms of destructive behaviour, such as alcohol, abuse, absenteeism, and destructive relations between teachers and learners, teachers and colleagues and teachers and their families. These problems are usually indicators or symptoms of personal health risks, which might lead to stress-related diseases which will in effect influence teacher wellness.

This study will focus on the needs and demands experienced by teachers that can be detrimental to their wellness. It will also provide strategies and guidelines to promote wellness among teachers, and specifically among teachers in special needs schools

1.2 ORIENTATION, MOTIVATION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In South Africa, the history of special needs education and education support services reflects an extreme neglect of and lack of support to let the majority of learners take control of their health behaviour and to support a healthy lifestyle. The introduction of the concept of Health Promoting Schools (HPSs) in South Africa is a step in the right direction towards

reforming schools into centres from which the community, as a whole, can benefit.

Establishment of HPSs in South African schools currently enjoys a low priority due to disorganisation and de-motivation in the education system, which has mainly been caused by the reduction in staff establishments. Teachers have overloaded syllabi and overcrowded classes, and health personnel have to deal with a range of other priorities besides providing services in schools. HPS philosophy, on the other hand, strives towards ensuring that the health, safety, well-being and educational progress of pupils are not jeopardised by teachers who are physically and mentally unfit to teach.

The reality is that the ability of teachers and other educational staff to meet the demands placed upon them is severely hampered by stress. The levels of stress involved in teaching are also a disincentive for potential recruits to the profession.

Stress is the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demands placed upon them (Lardner, 2002:2). It arises when they are worried that they cannot cope and when they feel pressurised. Cooper (1993:131), in his classification of several occupations in terms of the degrees of stress that they cause on the employees, indicated that, as far as the occupations of social welfare are concerned, teachers experience the highest levels of stress and demands from work. Prolonged occupational stress can lead to both mental and physical ill-health and this can impair the quality of teaching (Antoniou, 2000:1).

In South Africa, teachers are also under immense pressure (Swart & Reddy, 1999:47). They are daily faced with demands made on them by different variables in the school environment while their own needs are hardly recognised. Many of these professionals are tired, bedraggled and stressed individuals. They are often more likely to leave the teaching profession than staying (Blair, 2002:5). According to Swart and Reddy (1998:48) this

phenomenon is a global occurrence that affects many countries, including South Africa. Some of the main reasons for this are:

1.2.1 The reformation process in South Africa

Firstly, South Africa has faced and is facing many challenges in its development as a democratic society (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002:10).

Since 1994 policy documents, Green Papers, White Papers and Acts have been produced with the purpose of promoting and protecting the rights of people (and learners) with disabilities. Bringing equity to the education of all children is a complex process (Department of Education, 1995). The Bill of Rights (*Act 108 of 1996*) enshrined in the South African Constitution protects all persons from discrimination, whether this is linked to race, gender, social class, language, religion or ability. A strong human rights emphasis is evident in educational policy and legislation (Muthukrishna & Schoeman, 2000:317). Therefore, education that is appropriate to the needs of all children, whatever their origin, background or circumstances, should be provided in all schools (Oosthuizen *et al.*, 1999:21). This is also in line with the education policy based on the principle of inclusion (Department of Education, 2001).

About a fifth of the country's learning population are classified as learners with special needs or learners experiencing barriers to learning (MacCown, Driscoll & Roop, 1996:499). So far the history of special needs education and education support services reflects extreme neglect of and lack of support for the large majority of learners. Special needs education has to be re-conceptualised within a wider social and community context in which poverty, marginalisation and social exclusion are seen as major obstacles to learning.

Without relevant support groups and support from higher institutions, the implementation of the inclusion policy only means more pressure on the teachers teaching these children. Teaching disabled children in an inclusive setting is a demanding task (Milltler, 1999:6). These demands are driving

thousands of special education teachers to transfer to regular education or to leave the profession each year, at a time when schools are seeing increasing numbers of students in need of special education. Roberts (2002:1) predicts that special education will remain the hardest field to staff in the next five years.

1.2.2 De-professionalism

De-professionalism is the second main reason why educators suffer from a reduced sense of personal accomplishment, resulting in desertion of the classroom. South African teachers feel de-professionalised because of the following reasons (Hughes, 2001:289):

- a lack of information from the government and provincial departments,
- a lack of professional development programmes (Tatar & Yahav, 1999:220),
- a continuous change in outcomes,
- a continuous change in the methods of assessment and
- difficulties in coping with all the changes..

Teaching is a complex task, and substantial time will be required for teachers and other educators to test new ideas, assess their effects, adjust their strategies and approaches, and assess again, in an effort to reach all students and to make learning meaningful. Reform requires that teachers learn new roles and ways of teaching. This translates into a long-term developmental process requiring teachers to focus on changing their own practice.

However, it is a problem for teachers to find time for change in their already busy schedules. Unfortunately, the demands posed by daily teaching and other aspects of reform continue to absorb the bulk of teachers' energy, thought, and attention (Cook, 1997:1). The working conditions that fray a special education teacher's emotions – including a feeling of isolation from other school staff members – can be especially difficult to overcome as well.

The progress of special education learners is often more difficult for inexperienced teachers to gauge, making the teacher feel ineffective. This feeling of ineffectiveness can make an educator doubt his/her own professionalism.

1.2.3 The HIV/Aids epidemic

The third reason more and more teachers desert the classroom or choose alternative professions, is the HIV/Aids epidemic: a problem of such proportion and urgency that its spread and incidence has become a worldwide concern (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002:258). Statistics of the Center of Disease Control show that, South Africa, after India, has more HIV-positive individuals than any other country in the world. Although South Africa has a well-developed health infrastructure, and there is a substantial amount of international interest in the country, there are 4.8 million HIV infected people and over 420,000 AIDS orphans. It is believed that over 90% of all the world's orphans reside on the continent of Africa, where 80% of all AIDS deaths in the world have occurred and 70% of all new HIV infections also occur (Department of Health, 1999).

According to the Medical Research Council (*Mail & Guardian*, 2002) at least 5,7 million children in South Africa – roughly a third of those under 18 – would have lost one or both parents because of Aids by 2015, unless major interventions are implemented. Of these, 1,85 million children under 15 would have lost their mothers because of Aids. Many children grow up before their time, looking after younger siblings, working to earn money and sometimes living on the streets. Children are taking on the role of adults in many places affected by HIV because a generation has disappeared (Bosley, 2002:1). They cannot go through normal development and they have to work 40 hours a week. They struggle for basic survival, while a normal school day offers a few hours of escape from the grim reality of their lives and provides teachers who form an anchor in the rough sea of survival. The very fabric of society is disappearing, with family structures crumbling. Not only children, but also teachers have to cope with the stigma of family

members having died of Aids and the suspicion that they may be HIV positive themselves.

While it is clear that much has been learned about the causes and consequences of occupational morbidity, the demands teachers have to face and the stress they experience as a result of the HIV pandemic, a great deal more is still to be learned (Miller, 1995). There seems to be a need to ensure that insights are translated into effective teacher/staff support processes that may benefit not only staff and teachers, but also those for whom they care so selflessly.

1.2.4 The view and support of society

A fourth reason is related to the image which society in general holds of teaching. Teaching, as a profession, greatly influences the way in which teachers, their learners and the educational system are affected (Burke, 1996:270). Teachers in South Africa (and all over the world) do not only believe that they are undervalued, but also that they are despised (Burke, 1996:270).

Teachers may be reluctant to admit that they are feeling stressed by work, because they fear that this may be interpreted as a sign of weakness. This is often a result of parent and peer pressure or the management culture or both. Teachers need to be encouraged not to feel reluctant when they find they cannot cope with whatever demands and pressures they are faced with, but to admit their need for support and to seek support. For this to happen, teachers first need to be provided with more verbal praise, reinforcement, respect and support for the job they do. It seems that a lot still needs to be done to help relieve teacher stress caused by feelings of undervaluation and diminished social respect for teaching (Money, 2003) and Cooper (1993:130).

According to Cooper (1993:130), diminished social respect for teaching is one of the top five job pressures teachers experience, and therefore also one of the main reasons why more and more teachers desert the classroom.

1.2.5 Global factors

Apart from and intertwined with the reformation process, de-professionalism, the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the view of society, there are, according to Lardner (2002:1), some global examples of organisational issues that can cause teachers to desert the classroom, such as:

- Poor workplace environment
- Excessive working time and workload
- Lack of personal fulfilment and poor career prospects
- Internal politics
- Excessive bureaucracy
- Poor communication
- Low morale
- Resistance to change or excessive change
- A blame culture.

The symptoms of stress due to demands which are not met and personal needs which are not fulfilled, can manifest in a variety of ways over time, and are closely related to classic burnout symptoms.

The well-known definition of burnout offered by Maslach and Jackson (1981:1) describes burned-out people as suffering from emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. Teachers in particular experience many stressful events in their careers (Burke *et al.*, 1996:270). Work stress can have serious consequences on the wellness and happiness of teachers, and also on the learners, professionals and families with whom they interact on a daily basis (Wood & McCarthy, 1999:1).

The needs of and demands on teachers and the stress they experience cannot be denied, but support should be found for a multi-faceted method of measuring these symptoms among teachers in order to prevent deterioration in teacher wellness (Evers & Tomic, 2003:1). It is therefore clear that there is a need to determine and measure the following aspects:

- which demands are experienced among homogenous groups of teachers that can increase pressure experienced as stress;
- what needs do these groups of teachers have concerning the alleviation of the experienced pressures and accompanying stress, and
- what kind of support can be provided for such stressed teachers in order to promote their wellness.

As this study will focus on South African teachers working in a special needs school, teaching varying subjects, adequate conclusions and suggestions can be made to promote the wellness of these teachers. The suggestions made above will make it easier for the Department of Education and the Department of Health, non-governmental organisations, health officers, social workers, physicians, psychologists, parents and teachers to diagnose and decide which specific measures can be taken to prevent the onset, development and aggravation of any symptoms that can be detrimental to the health of any member of the school environment, and, in line with the focus of this study, specifically teachers.

Students need mentally and physically fit adults who can guide them as they find their way in the world. Stressed, burned-out teachers suffer from irritability and they are found to be responsible for student apathy (Evers & Tomic, 2003:1). Teachers are known to continue working in spite of burnout symptoms or reduced classroom management skills (Ever & Tomic, 2003:1) and this will even further enhance feelings of emotional overextension and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment (Schaufeli et al., 1994:804).

The demands and stress teachers experience may have an impact on teachers as individuals, on the schools in which they work and on the pupils they teach. It is also estimated to have an economic impact on the education

system in terms of lost teaching time and additional costs of replacement teachers. Increasing stress and resulting sickness would seem likely if current trends continue (Ryrie, 2003:9). Burned-out, stressed teachers also negatively affect their learners and the educational system, and therefore a school's ability to develop the physical and emotional health of members within the school, and thereby to support and meet the standards of a health promoting school would also be directly affected (Kickbush & Jones, 1996:4).

Teachers play such a valuable role in helping our children grow up (Oosthuizen *et al.*, 1999:57), that any opportunity to promote their physical and mental health should be seized (Evers & Tomic, 2003:1). It is thus necessary to develop and promote the use of programmes and instruments to identify specific needs and stressors, so as to more accurately predict, prevent and alleviate demands that can be detrimental to health, and to provide and support guidelines to promote wellness in teachers.

1. 3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the above description of the problem to be studied in this research, the following research questions may be identified for this study:

1. Which demands are experienced by teachers that can increase pressure so that it is experienced as stress?
2. What needs do the teachers have concerning the alleviation of the experienced pressures and accompanying stress?
3. What kind of support, in the form of guidelines, can be provided for such stressed teachers in order to promote their wellness?
4. What conclusions and suggestions can be made to promote wellness of teachers in special needs schools?

1.4 AIM OF THE STUDY

1.4.1 General aim

The aim of this study is the investigation of the demands, pressures and needs experienced by teachers in special needs schools (referred to as schools with learners with barriers to learning), with the aim of providing guidelines for teacher support to promote wellness.

1.4.2 Specific aims

The specific aims of this research are:

1. To determine the demands made on and pressures experienced by teachers as stressors.
2. To determine the needs teachers have to alleviate these stressors that arise as a result of the demands and pressures experienced by teachers in a special needs school.
3. The provision of guidelines for teacher support in order to promote wellness.
4. Conclusions and recommendations for the promotion of the wellness of teachers in a special needs school.

1.5 METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

To achieve the goal of promoting the wellness and health of teachers in special needs schools, a detailed literature study and qualitative investigation of the demands and needs of such teachers will be undertaken. The research questions, as identified in 3.1, will be answered as follows:

- *Which demands are experienced by teachers that can increase pressure so that it is experienced as stress?*

The demands experienced by teachers that can increase pressure so that they will experience it as stress, will be investigated using qualitative methods which will include a range of interviews and participant observation.

- *What needs do the teachers have concerning the alleviation of the experienced pressures and accompanying stress?*

The needs teachers have concerning the alleviation of the experienced pressures and accompanying stress will be investigated by means of a qualitative method which will include a range of interviews and participant observation.

- *What kind of support can be provided for such stressed teachers in order to promote their wellness?*

The effects and support concerning the promotion of wellness for such stressed teachers will be investigated by means of a qualitative method which will include a range of interviews and participant observation.

- *What conclusions and suggestions can be made to promote wellness of teachers in special needs schools?*

Conclusions and suggestions ensuing from the research findings and evaluations concerning the demands experienced by teachers and the needs they have concerning the alleviation of the experienced pressures, in order to promote wellness, will be made.

1.5.1 Paradigmatic perspective

Paradigm

The word *paradigm* comes from Greek and can refer to a model, theory, perception, assumption or frame of reference (Covey, 1998:23). In a more general sense it refers to the way persons view the world in terms of their perception, understanding and interpretation of it and their experiences in the world (Kirsten, 2001:11). This also has a direct bearing on the planning, execution and findings of research.

The researcher's personal anthropology is also of importance in this study, especially because of the qualitative research component. In this qualitative component of the study, the researcher can be seen as a primary instrument (for the gathering and analysis of data). As such, the researcher's paradigm, bias, assumptions, preconceptions and values need to be reflected explicitly in qualitative research. This increases the consistency of the research and serves to identify potential dangers pertaining to the validity of conclusions made (Maxwell, 1996:26).

It can be stated that the researcher is a graduated mathematics and science teacher and lectures at the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus (formerly known as Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education). The researcher has been trained and graduated as an optometrist and is registered with the South African Medical and Dental Council and came into contact with children with special learning/education needs due to some or other visual handicap. Through her visual screenings and visual therapy for these children, the researcher became interested in the further progress of these children (other than in the consultation room). The researcher has also taught special educational needs (SEN) pupils in a primary school in the United Kingdom, and has had hands on experience with the difficulties and pressures special needs teachers have to face daily. Feelings of exhaustion, irritation, frustration, being overwhelmed, continuous stress which spills over to the home and feelings of guilt about not doing enough are only some of the effects of the pressures, demands and stress that special needs teachers face daily.

In view of future studies, where the researcher will focus specifically on how teachers cope with children with visual disabilities in the classroom, the researcher felt it important to firstly determine the needs and demands of special educational needs teachers in general. Once the needs and demands these teacher experience have been identified and determined, relevant conclusions and suggestions can be made. These suggestions will make it easier to diagnose and decide which measures can be taken to prevent the onset, development and aggravation of any variables that can be

detrimental to the health of a teacher in a special needs school. Students (and particularly students with special needs) need mentally and physically fit adults who can guide them as they find their way in the world. When teacher wellness is ensured, it will promote the wellness of the students, which in effect will promote the wellness of the school environment and the community.

1.5.2 Theoretical assumptions

The theoretical assumptions of this study can be summarised as follows:

- Four contexts of existence can be identified in the life of a teacher as a person, namely the biological, intra-psychic, ecological and metaphysical contexts (Kirsten, 2001:13). These contexts of existence are intra- and interactive.
- The four contexts of existence can both serve as potential contributors of stress as well as to reflect the potential effects of stress due to the dynamics of intra- and interaction.
- Teachers also experience the highest levels of stress and demands from work of all occupations of social welfare.
- Teachers' experience and management of the demands and stress they are faced with daily have an impact on themselves as individuals, and also on the schools in which they work and on the learners they teach.
- The special working conditions of special needs teachers and the high workload exert an additional psychological pressure on the personality and the work performance of SEN teachers.
- Stressed, burned-out teachers suffer from irritability and they are found to be somewhat responsible for student apathy.
- The pressures and stress teachers experience not only directly affect their learners, but also the educational system and a school's ability to develop the physical and emotional health (i.e. the wellness) of members

within the school environment. This means that the standards of a health promoting school cannot be met.

- In identifying the demands made on and the needs teachers experience, specific measures can be taken to prevent the onset, development and aggravation of any symptoms that can be detrimental to the health of any member of the school environment, and in this study, teachers in particular.
- Wellness means far more than only physical well-being. It also includes psychological, environmental (social environment, physical environment, etc.) and metaphysical (spiritual, religious, philosophical, etc.) well-being.
- Research programmes to identify the specific needs and stressors teachers experience can, therefore, help to accurately predict, prevent and alleviate demands and pressures that can be detrimental to a teacher's health.
- These programmes will provide and support guidelines to promote wellness in teachers and can form part of a whole school development which can contribute to healthy school development.
- Healthy school development can contribute to the development of a healthy school population, both in the present and in the future, and to improve and maintain teaching and learning.
- Healthy school development can contribute to the establishment of a Health Promoting School.

1.5.3 Explanation of concepts

A cursory explanation will be given of terminology often referred to in this study.

1.5.3.1 Education and inclusive education

Education, as is the case with psychology, has the person – and more specifically, the development of the person – as the object of study (Van

Niekerk in Kirsten, 2001:20). *Inclusive education* refers to an education policy based on the principle where all children should have the same educational right, whatever their race, gender, social class, language, religion or ability (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002:23). This policy must ensure that the full variety of educational needs is optimally accommodated and included in a single education system. In other words, it must ensure that schools can be continuously restructured in order to respond positively to the diverse needs of *all* learners.

According to the Department of Health's National Guidelines for the Development of Health Promoting Schools/Sites in South Africa (2000), inclusive education is currently one of the major challenges facing education in South Africa. Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana (2002:297) echo this by stating the difficult issues that have to be faced when putting this policy into practice.

1.5.3.2 Special needs education and learners with special needs

Special needs in education refers to the needs or priorities which the individual person or the system may have which must be addressed to ensure effective learning (NCSNET & NCESS in Modise, 2003:12).

history of special needs education and education support services reflects an extreme neglect of and lack of support to let the majority of learners take control of their health behaviour and to support a healthy lifestyle.

Since 1994 various policy documents, Green Papers, White Papers and Acts have been produced with the purposes of promoting and protecting the rights of people (and learners) with disabilities (Van Rooyen & Le Grange, 2003:152). Reconstructing education from what it has been to a system that brings equity to the education of all children is a complex process (Department of Education, 1995). The Bill of Rights (2001) enshrined in the South African Constitution protects all persons from discrimination, whether this is linked to race, gender, social class, language, religion or ability. A strong human rights emphasis is evident in educational policy and legislation (Muthukrishna & Schoeman, 2000:317). Therefore, education that is

appropriate to the needs of **all** children, whatever their origin, background or circumstances, should be provided in all schools (Oosthuizen *et al.*, 1999:21). This links with the education policy based on the principal of inclusion (Department of Education, 2001).

A critical aspect of the general challenge to improve the quality of education for all, is to determine how teachers/educators can become more responsive to diverse learning needs (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002:29). Special needs can result because of impairments such as physical, emotional, intellectual, sensory, neurological, scholastic and ecological factors or a combination of these factors (Jenkins in Modise, 2003:12). This forms part of the policy of inclusion. In education, children with disabilities or impairments are incorporated in a larger group, given the name "learners with special needs" or "learners experiencing barriers to learning and development". This forms part of the policy of inclusion.

In developed countries, terms such as "exceptionality", "special educational needs" or "special needs" have often been used in relation to those who, owing to some sort of internal need (physical, sensory, cognitive or emotional), are seen as different because they require some form of specific educational help (Swart & Reddy, 1998:49). In these countries, children with special needs generally make up a small proportion – approximately 10% – of the school-going population (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002:29). In developing countries like South Africa, exceptionality implies a specific learning need that is generally caused by external factors (and not only internal as in developed countries). These factors include:

- discrimination against people seen as different, whether this is related to skin colour, religion, physical features etc.,
- socio-economic factors like poverty,
- risk factors like violence,
- unsafe schooling environments,

- language and communication blocks,
- lack of parental support and support services for specific disabilities and learning impairments (MacCown, Driscoll & Roop, 1996:499 and Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002:29).

In South Africa it is thus not only physical or internal needs that classify special educational needs, but also, and rather, external factors that cause a specific educational need or barrier to learning.

Special education teachers work with learners – from toddlers to those in their early 20s – who have a variety of disabilities. Most special education teachers are found at the elementary, middle, and secondary school level. Special education teachers design and modify instruction to meet a student's special needs. Teachers can also work with students who have other special instructional needs, including those who are gifted and talented.

1.5.3.3 Demands

The essence of this study will focus on the *demands* experienced by teachers that can be detrimental to their wellness. According to Burke, (1996:270), Hughes (2001:289), Swart and Reddy (1999:47), Tatar and Yahav (1999:220) and Lardner (2002:2), these demands fall mostly in the following categories:

- Workload and time
- Excessive bureaucracy
- Support from school management
- Government inspections
- Resources
- Finances and rewards
- Career prospects

- Parents and students.

Although these demands apply at all workplaces, the unfortunate daily reality for teachers is that they are particularly prominent in schools.

1.5.3.4 Pressure

Meeting the daily learning and behavioural needs of students makes teaching a profession fraught with *pressure*. It reduces a teacher's motivation and can have deleterious effects such as alienation from the workplace, absenteeism and attrition. These pressures can vary from poor workplace environment, excessive workload, lack of control over work and lack of personal fulfilment to poor communication, internal politics, a blame culture and low morale. Cooper and Kelly (1993:130) reported that the five top sources of job pressure were all problematic changes. These included:

- Lack of support from central government.
- Constant changes within the profession.
- Lack of information as to how changes are to be implemented.
- Diminishing social respect for teaching.
- The move towards a national curriculum.

The pressures and demands that teachers experience are interwoven and directly proportional to one another: when the one increases, the other will also show an increase.

1.5.3.5 Needs

The essence of this study will focus on the identifying of specific *needs* teachers experience in order to promote their wellness. Maslow's well-known hierarchy of needs (in Weiten, 1996:381) identifies seven levels of needs:

- Physiological needs (lowest level in hierarchy).

- Safety and security needs.
- Belongingness and love needs.
- Esteem needs.
- Cognitive needs.
- Aesthetic needs.
- Need for self-actualisation (highest level in hierarchy).

The higher levels in the pyramidal hierarchy represent progressively less basic needs, where self-actualisation is the foremost need among these (Weiten, 1996:381). Apart from the basic needs of survival, safety and the need to feel secure, teachers experience needs to excel in their profession as teachers. This study will therefore focus more on the higher level needs of Maslow's hierarchy, such as esteem needs, cognitive needs, aesthetic needs and the need for self-actualisation, assuming that the basic needs of survival of the teachers interviewed in this study's are fulfilled.

A report released by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (Hughes, 2001:289) states that the essential keys to fulfilling higher teacher potential involve providing teachers with

- high-quality instruction
- meaningful induction programmes
- opportunities to advance their careers and
- small professional communities in which to work.

Due to all the demands made on them and because their own needs are unanswered, teachers typically suffer from work stress, emotional exhaustion and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment (Masiach & Jackson, 1981). This can lead to teacher stress and professionals leaving the teaching profession.

1.5.3.6 Teacher Stress

According to the well-known definition of burnout and *stress* (Maslach & Jackson, 1981:1), stressed, burned-out people suffer from emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. Although burnout symptoms occur among blue collar workers, it is the category of human service workers who appear to run the greatest risk of falling victim to the burnout syndrome (Schaufeli et al., 1994:804). Teachers in particular experience many stressful events in their careers (Burke et al., 1996:270). Work stress can have serious consequences for the wellness and happiness of teachers, and also the learners, professionals and families with whom they interact on a daily basis (Wood & McCarthy, 1999:1).

Weiten (1996:523) recognises three reactions/responses to stress:

- emotional responses, like annoyance, anger, anxiety, fear
- physiological responses, associated with a quickening of the pulse, hormonal fluctuations, neurochemical changes and
- behavioural responses, like verbal aggression, lashing out and blaming oneself.

These are also largely reflected by Farber (2000:13) and Kirsten (2001:16). The latter recognises two other domains of wellness, such as social and spiritual domains, which are also affected by pressure and the demands of work that can lead to stress. There are numerous reports in the literature on teacher stress and burnout. A nation-wide survey done in the United States indicates that there has been a considerable rise in the stress levels of teachers over the years (Lauzon, 1999). Stress in teachers not only manifests as various physical ailments and emotional problems, but can result in teachers actually leaving their chosen career. These responses clearly influence a person's health and can, in the long run, be exponentially detrimental.

1.5.3.7 Teacher Support

Research has found teachers to be suffering from greater levels of stress manifestations (Travers & Cooper, 1996:11) such as mental ill-health than comparable groups such as doctors, dentists and nurses. This has a significant impact not only on their health and wellness, but also on the retention, recruitment and morale on teachers. The provision of a service for support will play a significant role in the prevention of sickness, ill-health or nervous breakdown and depression.

Teacher support means helping teachers find positive ways of solving their problems. This can be done by providing teachers with more data on emotional and physical health and the issues and concerns of today's working teachers.

According to the Teacher Support Helpline (2004), a service that provides support for teachers in England and Wales, *teacher support* means:

- providing for the concerns and issues raised by teachers,
- meeting teachers' needs and education objective,
- providing access to information databanks for informing education policies at national and local level,
- laying the ground for new generations of teacher support services.

Recent studies of a number of psychological interventions (Howlett, 2001:29) have suggested that emotional support will lead to enhanced immunological responses. Thus, changes in the incidence of colds, stomach complaints and headaches may also be brought about through provision of teacher support.

In a review of all published studies into the effects of employee assistance programmes (MacCleod, 2000:1) there was strong evidence that counselling is effective. Workplace counselling (in education teacher support) is also cost-effective.

This means that through effective teacher support, teachers could be helped by means of effective stress management techniques, enabling them to put problems into perspective and to find their own solutions.

1.5.4 Wellness

Schafer (1996:624), in Kirsten (2001:18), defines *wellness* as the process of living at one's highest possible level as a whole person and promoting the same for others; maximising one's potentials while enjoying the process and maintaining optimal health along the way. An ideal state of wellness is one in which no single component of health is emphasised at the expense of any other component.

According to Kirsten (2001:18) the term *health* has been somewhat "contaminated" or corrupted by the physical sciences and is more often than not seen to denote physical health only. It is for the same reason that preference is given to the term *teacher wellness* in this study. However, it is important to be open to a broader and deeper meaning of wellness and to go beyond what has been reported in the wellness literature. It may be that a teacher wellness model needs to include not only components such as emotional, physical, intellectual, spiritual, social, and occupational wellness (Hettler, 1984:318), but also components of organisational development theory, such as structure, human resources, political power and symbolism (Bolman & Deal in Lauzon, 1999:2). A model that combines both the personal and the professional aspects of teachers' experiences may assist in a strategic planning process for teacher wellness.

The issue of wellness needs to be addressed, in order to teach centres about the requirements:

- To ensure the health, safety, well-being and educational progress of all children (Gunnyeon *et al.*, 2000:1; Muthukrishna & Schoeman, 2000:318).
- To provide an efficient service which will facilitate learning for children (Donald, Lazarus & Lotwana, 2002:144).

- To manage any risk to the health of teachers which may arise from their teaching duties, including ensuring that those duties do not exacerbate pre-existing health problems (Gunnyeon *et al.*, 2000:6).
- To ensure that the health and safety of teachers and support staff are not adversely affected by a colleague being unwell (Gunnyeon *et al.*, 2000:9).
- To enable all, including those with disabilities, who wish to pursue a career in teaching to achieve their potential within the bounds of reasonable adjustments (Mittler, 1999:1).

The promotion of wellness will therefore mean that the "domains" of well-being or "components" of wellness have been promoted or elevated to a higher level of function (Kirsten, 2001:18). The promotion of wellness in the context of this study will mean that teachers will experience greater wellness when they follow the suggested guidelines. These guidelines and suggestions will be evaluated and validated by qualitative methodologies.

1.6 THE COURSE OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1 of this study acts as an introduction to the research, where the orientation to the research is discussed. It also contains the problem statement and general and specific aims of the research.

Chapter 2 deals with the research design and methodology. The aim of this chapter is to provide a chain of evidence by means of dense, holistic description of the entire research process, to ensure that if a different researcher should undertake the same study in a similar context, he or she would be able to come up with similar, if not the same, findings regarding the demands made on and the pressures experienced by teachers as stressors as well as the needs to alleviate these stressors, which arise as a result of the demands and pressures experienced by teachers in a special needs school.

Chapter 3 will be in the form of an article focusing on the results obtained from the demands and needs experienced by teachers in a special needs school interviewed in the qualitative focus group interviews. It will also focus on how these demands and needs affect the respondents' wellness.

Chapter 4 will also be in the form of an article and will focus on specific guidelines for teacher support to promote the wellness of teachers in special needs schools.

Chapter 5 will provide a summary of the identified demands and needs teachers experience, as well as of the way in which these experienced demands and pressures affect their wellness. Limitations of the study will be presented. Recommendations will be given in the form of guidelines for teacher support to promote the wellness of teachers in a special needs school.

CHAPTER 2

2. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of chapter 2 is to provide a body evidence by means of a dense, holistic description of the entire research process. This will ensure that if a different researcher should undertake the same study in a similar context, he/she would be able to come up with similar, if not the same, findings regarding the demands made on and pressures experienced by teachers as stressors, as well as the needs which teachers have to alleviate these stressors that arise as a result of the demands and pressures experienced by teachers in a special needs school.

The purpose of this research is:

- To determine the demands made on and pressures experienced by teachers as stressors.
- To determine the needs teachers have to alleviate these stressors that arise as a result of the demands and pressures experienced by teachers in a special needs school.
- The provision of guidelines for teacher support in order to promote wellness.

2.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

This research deals with the demands made on teachers and the pressures which teachers experience as stressors in a special needs school, and the needs teachers have to alleviate these stressors. For this reason, a qualitative research design is considered to be the most appropriate

research tool to gain in-depth insight into the demands, pressures and needs of these teachers.

2.2.1 Qualitative research

This study is concerned with the demands and needs experienced by teachers in a special needs school and the guidelines for teacher support for the promotion of wellness. Qualitative research can be seen as a process of systematic inquiry into the means which people employ to make sense of and guide their actions (Grafanaki, 1996:329). A qualitative study offers the opportunity to uncover the nature of people's action, experiences and perspectives, about which little is known as yet (Glasher & Pheskin, 1992:12). This is also contextual research. Qualitative research, according to Amber and Adler (1995:879), seeks depth rather than breadth. Instead of drawing from a large, representative sample of an entire population of interest, qualitative researchers seek to acquire in-depth and intimate information about a smaller group of persons. Qualitative research therefore allows for the unique life-world of every case to be explored individually (Mouton & Marais, 1994:205).

Qualitative research may briefly be defined as research that has at its base (Amber & Adler, 1995:882):

- (a) oral words, whether in conversations, sentences, or monologues;
- (b) written words in journals, letters, autobiographies, scripts, texts, books, official reports, and historical documents;
- (c) the recorded field notes of observers of or participants in meetings, ceremonies, rituals, and family life;
- (d) life histories and narrative stories in either the oral or the written form;
- (e) visual observations (whether live, videotaped, or in pictures) or other modes of self-expression such as facial expressions, body language, physical presentation of the self, modes of dressing, and other forms of self-expression (for example, how one decorates the home).

A qualitative approach to the research is considered fitting, because it requires that the researcher interprets the real world from the perspective of the subjects of his investigation (Mouton & Marais, 1994:205). Other motivations for using this method include:

- Practitioners have often found that the questions and methods researchers use are irrelevant to the daily concerns faced by teachers, administrators and policy analysts, whereas qualitative research allows for the researcher to refine and recognise his questions as his understanding of the phenomena increases (Modise, 2003:20).
- The approach assumes that for an interpretation, the researcher needs inter-subjective personal knowledge and any attempt to penetrate to the essence of a phenomenon can also be made by means of qualitative approaches (Mouton & Marais, 1994:169).
- One major feature of qualitative research is that it focuses on naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings so that a strong indication can emerge of what "real life" is like (Modise, 2003:21). The data of qualitative research is clearly authentic, drawing from the knowledge and perception of the people with whom the researcher is working (Simmons-Mackie & Damico, 2001:32).
- Qualitative research frequently falls within the context of discovery rather than verification (Amber & Adler, 1995:879). The volume of data generated by interviews, journals and anecdotal methods (thus the data generated by qualitative research methods) is considerable. A large volume of layered data promotes authenticity and helps verify results (Simmons-Mackie & Damico, 2001:32).
- The criteria for acceptable qualitative methods are primarily authenticity and conformability (Simmons-Mackie & Damico, 2001:32). This differs from the reliability and validity standards of quantitative research.
- Error in collection and interpretation of subjective data is minimised through the method of triangulation. Triangulation involves the collection

of data from multiple sources on multiple occasions, by means of various data collection strategies. By layering this triangulated data, observations and interpretations are verified and authenticity and conformability are achieved (Simmons-Mackie & Damico, 2001:32).

- Qualitative research methods are often emergent, flexible and also quite dynamic (Modise, 2003:21).

2.3 RESEARCH METHOD

The research takes place in two phases.

The first phase of the research is meant to obtain firsthand information from the subjects themselves regarding their life-world. This phase includes sampling, pilot study, data collection, debating the trustworthiness, and ensuring ethical correctness of the research.

The aim of the second phase of the research includes the provision of support for teachers in special needs schools, conclusions, suggestions and recommendations made to promote the wellness and wellbeing of teachers in special needs schools. Based on the research results, guidelines will be formulated for ways to support teachers in promoting the wellness of teachers in special needs schools.

2.3.1 Sampling

An illustration of the target group, the way in which the participants are selected and the criteria for inclusion in this study, are provided.

- **Target group**

The target group of the research consists of teachers teaching at various special needs schools in Potchefstroom and Klerksdorp. These teachers have been identified as individuals who experience demands and who have various unanswered needs in their daily life as teachers in a special needs school.

- **Selection of participants**

Participants in the research were teachers from a number of special needs schools in Potchefstroom and Klerksdorp. These teachers have been randomly identified as individuals who, because of the nature of their profession, might experience demands that can increase pressure and lead to stress, and as individuals who, as special needs teachers, experience particular needs to alleviate these pressures and to accommodate stress.

- **Criteria for inclusion in the study**

The criteria for inclusion in this study were that teachers had to be:

1. registered as teachers at SACE,
2. able to speak and understand either English or Afrikaans,
3. teaching as a special needs teacher or teaching as a teacher at a special needs school, and
4. willing to participate in the study.

2.3.2 Pilot Study

A pilot study was first undertaken by the researcher, to ensure that all negative aspects of the research process were overcome. It also ascertained whether any adjustments had to be made before proceeding with the research report.

2.3.3 Data collection

The following measuring instruments were used for investigation:

2.3.3.1 Phenomenological interviews

Phenomenology interviews seek answers to the question: "What is it like to have a certain experience?" This experience may be related to an emotion such as loneliness or depression, to a relationship or to being part of an organisation or a group (Law *et al.*, 1998:2).

The essence or nature of an experience has been adequately described in language if the description reawakens or shows the lived quality and significance of the experience in a fuller or deeper manner (Van Manen, 1990:10). Phenomenological research entails an inductive descriptive research technique which aims to describe the total systemic structure of a phenomenon, the essential features, or themes, that characterise human experience (Omery, 1983:50). Horn (1998:603) points out that phenomenological description is less concerned with societal shaping than it is with elaborating on the individual meanings that are embedded in everyday lived experiences.

Interviewing is a flexible way of gathering qualitative data that are detailed and personal (McLeod, 1996:65). Qualitative interviews place an emphasis on listening and on following the direction of the participant/informant (Law et al., 1998:2). In qualitative studies interviews are used as the main data source, and the researcher has an opportunity to interact with the research participants at a personal level.

2.3.3.2 The role of the researcher

The role of the researcher involves the role of the self (2.3.3.2.1), his/her communication techniques (2.3.3.2.2), the creation of a relaxed atmosphere (2.3.3.2.3) and field notes (2.3.3.2.4). These aspects will be discussed in more detail below.

2.3.3.2.1 Role of the self

Use of the self is a key factor in phenomenological research. According to Janesick (1998:61 *in* Modise, 2003:30), one of the amazing strengths of the qualitative researcher is the ability to use all senses to undertake the research act. Face-to-face interviews can promote the building of a "research alliance" between the researcher and the participants, in much the same way that a therapeutic alliance can be built between a therapist and a client (Grafanaki, 1996:331). During the research interviews, the researcher needs to be fully present and engaged in what the other person is sharing with him/her. Qualities like active listening, accurate understanding, warmth,

acceptance and genuineness are of major importance in encouraging and promoting a good rapport between researcher and participants (Barrineau & Bozarth, 1989:479; Mearns & McLeod, 1984:373; McLeod, 1996:66). Empathy and intuition are also deliberately used to assist the interviewer by allowing him to become closely involved with the unique life-world or world of experience of the interviewee. This will, according to Burns and Grove (1987:80), help the researcher to remain open to the perceptions of the interviewee, rather than give his own meaning to their experiences.

Thus the quality of the data developed in an interview seems to be dependent on the skill of the researcher, the recollecting and reflective capacities of the participant, and the relationship that is developed between them (Polkinhorne, 1991:163).

2.3.3.2.2 Communication techniques of the researcher

Important communication techniques that are employed by the researcher include:

- Reflecting on content and feelings that occur when the researcher communicates to the respondent how he/she understands the perceptions, experiences and feelings of the respondent.
- Paraphrasing, which entails reformulating a statement made by the respondent.
- Summarising, which is feedback given to the teacher on the general content of the interview, or part of it.
- A request for clarifications, which is an attempt to obtain greater clarity when the respondent's response is vague, confused or unclear; and
- A request for examples and descriptions (Poggenpoel, 1993:8).

2.3.3.2.3 Creation of a relaxed atmosphere

The researcher's environment is very important in contributing and establishing a good interviewer-interviewee relationship. A warm and

relaxed atmosphere will establish feelings of comfort and ease that will enhance rapport with the interviewee (Thompson & Rudolph, 1992:32). It will also eliminate distrust. A trusting relationship facilitates the gathering of data that are authentically grounded in participants' experience and are thus more complete and rich (Cowles, 1988:170).

2.3.3.2.4 Field notes

Directly after each interview, the researcher records field notes of the interview situation. This ensures that the interviewer is not distracted from the task of observing and listening to the respondent by taking notes during the interview. In these field notes the researcher records notes of the interview situation and of his/her own impressions of it.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985:183), field notes can be divided in four categories, namely:

- Observation notes – in which the researcher records what he/she saw and heard during the interview.
- Theoretical notes – which refer to deliberate, controlled efforts to extract meaning from observation notes.
- Methodological notes – which include notes on operational practices such as the time schedule, the sequence and the physical setup.
- Personal notes – such as the researcher's feelings, assumptions, reactions and experiences during the interview.

2.4 DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data is collected through transcribed interviews, observations and the researcher's field notes. This data is integrated with information obtained from the literature study.

After the data has been collected, it is analysed according to a combination of methods.

2.5 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness refers to an assessment of the entire research process to determine whether the research findings are valid, internally coherent and trustworthy.

The reputation of the researcher as being an honest, ethical professional will determine whether the interviewees see him as trustworthy. Establishing trustworthiness ensures the quality of the findings. To assess the trustworthiness of qualitative data, Lincoln and Guba (1985:290-301) propose a model for assessment. This model identifies four aspects of trustworthiness. They are truth-value (2.5.1), applicability (2.5.2), consistency (2.5.3) and neutrality (2.5.4).

2.5.1 Truth-value

The truth-value establishes how confident the researcher is with the truth of the findings based on the research design, informants, and context (Lincoln & Guba in Krefting, 1991:215). The truth-value of the research thus refers to the trust in the authenticity of the findings from the interviews. Authenticity is the primary criteria for acceptability of qualitative measures and refers to the detailed and credible depiction of natural events as experienced by the participants. According to Krefting (1991:215), the truth-value is obtained from the discovery of human experience as it is genuinely actualised, and involves the aspects of credibility (2.5.1.1), triangulation (2.5.1.2), clarification with experts (2.5.1.3), peer group evaluation (2.5.1.4), the authority of the researcher (2.5.1.5), structural coherence (2.5.1.6).

2.5.1.1 Credibility

In qualitative research, data must be auditable through checking that the interpretations are credible, transferable, dependable and confirmable. To

raise the credibility of the researcher, the following techniques can be applied.

2.5.1.2 Triangulation

Triangulation involves the collection of data from multiple sources on multiple occasions by means of various data collection strategies. By layering the triangulated data, observations and interpretations are verified and authenticity and conformability are achieved (Simmons-Mackie & Damico, 2001:32). Triangulation is therefore a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study (Modise, 2003:42). There are four main types of triangulation:

1. by source: data is collected from different sources (different people, resources etc.);
2. by methods: different data collection strategies are used, like participant observation, individual interviews and focus groups;
3. by researcher: this involves the use of more than one researcher to analyse the data, develop and test the coding scheme; and
4. by theories: multiple theories and perceptions are considered during data analysis and interpretation (Law *et al.*, 1998:8).

The first use of triangulation is introduced by virtue of the fact that data regarding the experienced demands and needs that can cause pressure and lead to stress of special needs teachers, are collected by means of phenomenological interviews with these teachers. These are recorded on audio-tape and by means of direct observations, which are recorded as field notes.

The second triangulation measure is applied with the data analysis, where the data is interpreted according to a combination of descriptive and content analysis, as proposed by Kerlinger (1986:3).

The literature study is a further control measure. Through the literature control, the findings of this research are compared with relevant other research findings, in order to identify similarities, differences and unique contributions.

2.5.1.3 Clarification with experts

The experts in this research are the teachers in special needs schools identified as experiencing demands that can cause pressure which may result in stress and who have needs to alleviate the experienced pressures and to accommodate stress. To ensure that their original meanings are reflected in the findings of the research, the researcher returned to some of the teachers and cleared her findings with them. The guidelines to provide support for such stressed teachers to promote their wellness were generated from the research findings and were discussed with registered educational psychologists in order to control their feasibility and validity.

2.5.1.4 Peer group evaluation

The input of other educational psychologists provided the researcher with the opportunity to remain open and honest, and in this way to rid herself of emotions and feelings which may have influenced her good judgement.

2.5.1.5 Authority of the researcher

The researcher has completed the degree B.Optom (Honours) at the Rand Afrikaans University as well as the course formerly known as HED (post-graduate) at the former Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education. Through performing visual screenings and visual therapy for various children in the optometric consultation room, the researcher developed an interest in the further progress of these children (especially in the special needs classroom). The researcher has also taught special educational needs (SEN) pupils in a primary school in the United Kingdom, and has had hands on experience with the difficulties and pressures special needs teachers have to face daily. In view of envisaged future studies, in which the researcher plans to focus specifically on how teachers cope with

children with visual disabilities in the classroom, the researcher felt it important to firstly determine the needs and demands experienced by special educational needs teachers in general. Once the needs and demands of these teachers have been identified and determined, relevant conclusions and suggestions can be made. This was what prompted the researcher to undertake this investigation.

2.5.1.6 Structural coherence

Consistent focus was placed on a certain group of teachers in SNS. These teachers were identified as those:

- experiencing demands that cause pressure; and
- in whom the pressure leads to stress.

The needs they have to alleviate these pressures and the resulting stress were a point of focus that manifested throughout the interviews, coding and analysis of the data.

2.5.2 Applicability

Quantitative research, according to Smith (1996:23), studies a phenomenon in its unique, natural context, which allows little opportunity for external control of variables. Applicability in qualitative research refers to the degree to which the findings can be applied to other contexts and settings or with other groups (Krefting, 1991:216). It is for this reason that reference is made to the applicability of findings when dealing with qualitative research.

The control measures to ensure the applicability of the research are sample selection and transferability.

2.5.2.1 Sample selection

A purposive sample is selected from the target group, while at the same time it is ensured that each participant duly fulfils the criteria for inclusion in the research (see par. 2.3.1).

2.5.2.2 Transferability

Transferability of the research is the way in which it may be applied to contexts beyond the study situation, as determined by the degree of similarity between the two contexts. This transferability depends on time and context-bound experiences and not on the researcher of the original study (Krefting, 1991:216). In order to make the study transferable for other research situations, Smith (1996:24) suggests that the researcher envisages presenting a sufficient database of the research, including a description of the selection criteria for inclusion in the sample, as well as verbatim quoting from the interview.

2.5.3 Consistency

The third criterion of trustworthiness considers the consistency of the data (Krefting, 1991:216). That is, whether the findings would be consistent if the inquiry were replicated with the same subjects or in a similar context. Factors involved in consistency are dependability (2.5.3.1), step-by-step replication (2.5.3.2) and the coding and decoding procedure (2.5.3.3).

2.5.3.1 Dependability

A sufficient description of the research methodology must be presented to enhance the reliability of the research. The concept of dependability implies trackable variability.

2.5.3.2 Step-by-step replication

The second measure of control is step-by-step replication. To enhance the standardisation in this research, for instance, the same steps were followed with each interview, namely:

- Written permission was obtained from the District Director of Education and the principal of the institution where the teachers were teaching.
- Each subject was interviewed.

- The consent of each subject of the research to be interviewed was obtained.
- It was explained to the subject what was expected of him/her.
- The central request was presented to each subject in exactly the same words.

2.5.3.3 Coding and decoding procedure

The third and final measure of control is the application of a coding/decoding procedure (Krefting, 1991:216). This involves that an expert with extensive experience in the field of qualitative research is appointed as an independent coder. After the interviews have been transcribed and coded by the researcher, a protocol of the data analysis is presented to the independent coder, who encodes and categorises the data on his/her own, before meeting with the researcher to discuss the results and to obtain the greatest possible degree of consensus.

2.5.4 Neutrality

Neutrality describes the freedom of bias in the research procedure and results. It refers to the degree to which the findings are exclusively a function of the respondents and the conditions of the research and not those of the researcher (Guba, as quoted by Krefting, 1991:217). The criterion for neutrality is conformability.

2.5.4.1 Conformability

The two techniques used to ensure the verifiability of the research, are:

2.5.4.1.1. Chain of events

Smith (1996:26) points out that, in order to make a chain of events possible, records must be kept of the following:

- Raw data, including audiotapes of the interviews, field notes and research results.

- Data reduction and analysis – the description of the field notes, collective information, quantitative summaries and theoretical notes.
- Reconstruction of the data and the summaries – such as the structuring of categories (themes, definitions and relationships), findings and conclusions, the final report with the integration of the concepts relationships and interpretations.
- Process notes, which include notes about the methodology, trustworthiness as well as chain of evidence notes.
- Research presentation and personal notes.
- Pilot study forms, preliminary schedule and observation format (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:327).

2.5.4.1.2 Triangulation

Triangulation is also a means of controlling variability. This entails the same measures as explained in paragraph 2.3.5.1.

2.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations for this research involved permission (2.6.1), confidentiality and anonymity (2.6.2), privacy (2.6.3), termination of involvement of respondents (2.6.4) and the provision of research assistance. (2.6.5)

2.6.1 Permission

Permission was obtained from the District Director of Education (Potchefstroom/Klerksdorp) of the North-West Department of Education, as well as the principal of the institution where the teachers were teaching, and from the teachers themselves.

2.6.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

The names of the teachers participating in the research were withheld in this dissertation. If their anonymity would ever be threatened, all research records will be destroyed.

2.6.3 Privacy

The researcher applied the necessary precautionary measures to ensure that the dignity and integrity of the teachers were protected. They were free to think and behave as they pleased, without interruption and without the possibility that their private thoughts or behaviour would ever be misused or used in such a way that they would be embarrassed.

2.6.4 Termination

Despite the fact that a teacher may have initially agreed to participate in the study, his/her involvement would be immediately terminated should such a teacher wish to withdraw from the study. Research would also be terminated in the event of the study not proceeding according to the standards laid down as planned.

2.6.5 Provision of research assistance

Feedback on the findings and recommendations regarding the research were provided by relevant persons as soon as it was convenient for them.

2.7 LITERATURE CONTROL

The results of the research were compared with those of similar research and with relevant literature. In this way, similarities, differences and unique contributions of the research were identified.

2.7.1 Guidelines for teacher support for the purpose of the promotion of wellness

Information obtained from the research and literature control were utilised to form the basis, together with other research findings in the literature, for the development of guidelines for teacher support in order to promote wellness. These guidelines were logically inferred from both the present empirical research and the literature control, and were eventually discussed with (an) educational psychologist(s) in order to obtain clarity on their applicability.

2.8 SUMMARY

This chapter provided a concentrated, holistic description of the entire research process, including the qualitative research design and method. The qualitative approach to research is employed in this study, and data is collected by means of phenomenological interviews and direct observation. The way was analysed and the method implemented to ensure trustworthiness of the research were also explained.

The chronological process of the research was explained as follows:

- Formal written request to principals of schools for learners with barriers to learning, to interview three to six teachers teaching at the specific institution.
- Random identification of teachers within a specific institution to be interviewed.
- Permission granted from identified teachers (interviewees) to be interviewed.
- Formal arrangement of appointments with respondents to be interviewed and clarification with the school.
- Group interviewing of teachers in three independent interviews.

- Coding of interviews:
 - Transcribing of audiotaped interview
 - Presentation of protocol of the data analysis to an independent coder, who encodes and categorises the data on his/her own, before meeting with the researcher to discuss the results and to obtain the greatest possible degree of consensus.
- Quantification of results – prioritising the data and tabulating the results according to corresponding themes into main and sub-categories.

The next chapter (3) will concentrate on the discussion of collective results and will be in the form of an article on the demands made on and pressures experienced as stressors by the respondents (teachers in a special needs school), as well as the needs they (the teachers) have to alleviate these stressors that arise as a result of the demands and pressures experienced by teachers in a special needs school.

Chapter 4 will discuss the results of the research, and will also be in the form of an article. It will focus on how the experienced demands and needs affect the respondents' (teachers in special needs schools) wellness and the provision of guidelines for teacher support in order to promote wellness.

The last chapter (5) will give a summary and will identify the limitations of the study. Recommendations to promote wellness will be given and a conclusion will be drawn.

CHAPTER 3

ARTICLE I: THE DEMANDS AND NEEDS EXPERIENCED AS STRESSORS BY TEACHERS IN SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOOLS AND THE EFFECT ON WELLNESS

Elza Jonker

P.O. Box 6776, Baillie Park, Potchefstroom 2526, South Africa

ABSTRACT

According to recent international research, special educational needs teachers (teachers teaching at schools for learners with barriers to learning) serve one of the most stressful occupations (Antoniou, 2000:1). Special working conditions, such as the high ratio of teachers to pupils, the limited progress due to the various problems of the pupils with special needs and the heavy workload, exert an additional psychological pressure on the personality and the work performance of SEN (special educational needs) teachers. Meeting the daily learning and behavioural needs of learners makes teaching a stressful job. Although not all stress associated with teaching is negative, the teaching demands that reduce a teacher's motivation can have detrimental effects, such as alienation from the workplace, absenteeism, and attrition. When special education teachers are faced by the demands of an unmanageable work-load, they are more likely to leave the special education classroom (Miller *et al.* 1995).

The ability to successfully manage the demands and needs experienced by teachers and the different forms of stress related to teaching is crucial if special education teachers are to survive

and thrive in the classroom. Teacher wellness forms the essence of this study, which will focus on the needs and demands experienced by teachers that can be detrimental to their wellness. It will also provide strategies and guidelines to promote wellness among teachers, and specifically teachers in special needs schools.

3.1 INTRODUCTION: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

South Africa faces many challenges in its development as a democratic society (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002:18). Since 1994 there have been political changes that had implications for almost every sphere of society. This is especially true for education, the school and classroom environment, where many changes have taken place over the last decade. The eighteen previously existing education departments had to be transformed under one ministry with one policy, redressing the differences in resources and access to education controlled by these departments and making coherent sense of national education needs in areas such as curricula, qualification structures, support services and teacher education (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996; Department of Education, 1998:72). Reconstructing education from what it has been to a system that brings equity to the education of all children is a complex process (Department of Education, 1995). The Bill of Rights (Act 108 of 1996) enshrined in the South African Constitution protects all persons from discrimination, whether this is linked to race, gender, social class, language, religion or ability. This transformation in the education system and schools seems to have confused teachers as to their roles, the demands they face, their needs and even their own identities (Myburgh & Poggenpoel, 2002:260) and has put South African teachers under immense pressure (Swart & Reddy, 1999:47). They are daily faced with demands made on them by different variables in the school environment, while their own needs are hardly recognised. Many of these professionals are tired, bedraggled and stressed individuals with a low morale (Hayward, 2002:61) and they are often more likely to leave the

teaching profession than to stay (Blair, 2002:5). According to Swart and Reddy (1998:48) this is a global phenomenon that affects many countries, and South Africa is no exception.

Many teachers find the demands of being a professional educator in today's schools difficult and at times stressful (Petty, 1993:367). Work stress can have serious consequences for the health and happiness of teachers, and also the students, professionals, and families with whom they interact on a daily basis (Wood & McCarthy, 1999:1; Cooper & Kelly, 1993:131). It can manifest itself in various forms of destructive behaviour, such as alcohol abuse, absenteeism and destructive relations between teachers and learners, between teachers and colleagues and between teachers and their families. These problems are usually indicators/symptoms of personal health at risk which might lead to stress related diseases which will in effect have an influence on teacher wellness.

Special education teachers work with learners – from toddlers to those in their early 20s – who have a variety of disabilities or barriers to learning. According to Du Toit (1995:2) and NCSNET (1997), learners with special educational needs are those learners whose education requires more time, planning and effort in order to help them learn. About a fifth of South Africa's learning population are classified as learners with special needs or learners experiencing barriers to learning (MacCown, Driscoll & Roop, 1996:499). As schools become more inclusive (Departement van Onderwys, 2002:4-5), special education teachers and general education teachers are working together in general education classrooms (Department of Education, 1997a, 2001). With the emphasis on inclusion, learners with special educational needs have become a major concern for teachers (Farmer *et al.*, 1999:1). Helping learners with special educational needs achieve goals and making a difference in their lives can be highly rewarding. Special education teachers enjoy the challenge of working with these students and the opportunity to establish meaningful relationships. However, the work can also be intensely demanding, and attending to physical needs of students can be exhausting. These demands, coupled with relatively low wages and a lack of prestige,

result in a high burnout rate among special education teachers (Milone, 2000:41).

According to recent international research, special educational needs teachers (teachers teaching learners with barriers to learning) serve one of the most stressful occupations (Antoniou, 2000:1). Special working conditions, such as the high ratio of teachers to pupils, the limited progress due to the various problems of the pupils with special needs and the heavy workload, exert an additional psychological pressure on the personality and the work performance of the SEN teacher (Antoniou, 2000:3). Meeting the daily learning and behavioural needs of learners makes teaching a stressful job. Although not all stress associated with teaching is negative, the teaching demands that reduce a teacher's motivation can have physically detrimental effects, such as chronic stress, depression, burnout and even early death (Kirsten, 2001:33), as well as alienation from the workplace, absenteeism, and attrition.

When special education teachers are faced with the demands of an unmanageable workload, they are more likely to leave the special education classroom (Miller *et al.*, 1995). These demands are forcing thousands of special education teachers to transfer into regular education or to leave the profession each year, at a time when schools are faced with increasing numbers of learners in need of special education. Roberts (2002:1) predicts that special education will remain the hardest field to staff in the next five years. The ability to successfully manage the demands and needs experienced by teachers and the stresses related to teaching is critical if special education teachers are to survive and thrive in the classroom.

Questions which this article will address are:

- Which demands experienced by teachers may increase pressure, so that it is experienced as stress?
- What needs do the teachers have concerning the alleviation of the experienced pressures and accompanying stress?

As this study is meant to contribute to knowledge on the needs and demands of South African teachers working and teaching varying subjects in a special needs school, adequate conclusions and suggestions can be made to promote the wellness of these teachers. By identifying the demands made on teachers and the needs teachers experience, it may be possible to take specific measures to prevent the onset, development and aggravation of any symptoms that can be detrimental to the health of any member of the school environment (and, in this study, teachers in particular).

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND RESEARCH METHOD

3.2.1 Research Design

This research deals with the demands made on teachers and the pressures which teachers experience as stressors in a special needs school, and the needs teachers have to alleviate these stressors. For this reason, a qualitative research design is considered to be the most appropriate to gain in-depth insight into the demands, pressures and needs of these teachers. Qualitative research can be seen as a process of systematic inquiry into the meanings which people employ to make sense of and to guide their actions (Grafanaki, 1996:329). A qualitative study offers the opportunity to uncover the nature of people's actions, experiences and perspectives, about which little is known as yet (Glaser & Peshkin, 1992:12). It subsequently makes it possible for the unique life-world of every case to be explored individually (Mouton & Marais, 1994:205). Qualitative research may briefly be defined as research that has at its base:

- (a) oral words, whether in conversations, sentences, or monologues;
- (b) written words in journals, letters, autobiographies, scripts, texts, books, official reports, and historical documents;

- (c) the recorded field notes of observers of or participants in meetings, ceremonies, rituals, and family life;
- (d) life histories and narrative stories in either the oral or the written form; (e) visual observations (whether live, videotaped, or in pictures) or other modes of self-expression, such as facial expressions, body language, physical presentation of the self, modes of dressing, and other forms of self-expression (for example, how one decorates the home) (Amber & Adler, 1995:882).

A qualitative study was therefore the most appropriate research design for this specific study.

3.2.2 Research Method

3.2.2.1 Sampling

The researcher's selection of participants and sites was guided by certain factors and criteria.

Selection of respondents

The criteria for inclusion in this study were that teachers had to be:

- a) registered as teachers with at SACE,
- b) able to speak and understand either English or Afrikaans,
- c) teaching as a special needs teacher or teaching as a teacher at a special needs school, and
- d) willing to participate in the study.

The target group for the research consisted of teachers teaching at various special needs schools in Potchefstroom and Klerksdorp in the North West Province. They were identified because of the demands they experience, which may increase pressure and cause stress, and also because of their need to alleviate these pressures and to accommodate stress.

3.2.2.2 Data collection

Data was collected by means of phenomenological interviews and field notes. These measuring instruments were used as part of the validity procedure of triangulation, where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information, to form themes and categories in a study.

Interviewing

Phenomenological interviews were used in the research. Phenomenology research answers the question: "What is it like to have a certain experience?" It seeks to understand the phenomenon of a real experience. This may be related to an emotion such as loneliness or depression, to a relationship or to being part of an organisation or a group (Law *et al.*, 1998:2).

Qualitative interviews place an emphasis on listening and on following the direction which the participant/informant gives to the interview (Law *et al.*, 1998:2). In qualitative studies interviews are used as the main data source, and the researcher has an opportunity to interact with the research participants at a personal level.

The research process commenced with a formal written request to the principals of three special needs schools in the Potchefstroom and Klerksdorp regions. After written permission was granted by the principals, four to six teachers in each school were identified on the basis of the demands they experienced and on the likelihood that these demands could increase pressure and cause stress, and also on the basis of their need to alleviate these pressures and to accommodate stress.

Once the samples were selected, permission was obtained from the teachers themselves to be interviewed. Formal appointments were then arranged with the respondents for the interviews to be conducted. Arrangements were made with the school for the interviews to be conducted

in the office of one of the participating teachers or in the staffroom at a suitable time.

Participants selected for interviews

12 teachers from 3 special needs schools in the North West region were interviewed. The 12 subjects included five male and seven female teachers, all speaking Afrikaans, English or Setswana. Their ages were as follows:

Table 3.1 Representative age groups of participants

	20-30 years	30-40 years	40-50 years	50-60 years
Male participants	3	2	0	0
Female participants	1	1	2	3

The interviews

The interviews took place at the different schools in the staff rooms or classrooms, depending on the teachers' preferences. Most of the interviews took place after school, but one interview took place during school hours, as the teachers involved did not have to invigilate at the school examinations for that specific session. During the interviews, which were audiotaped, the respondents were asked three questions, based on the research questions and on the demands and needs they experience. The questions were:

- *Question 1: Which demands do you experience that can increase pressure experienced as stress?*
- *Question 2: What is the effect of the experienced demands and needs on your wellness?*
- *Question 3: Which need of support might there be in order to promote wellness?*

Data obtained from question 3 will be discussed in chapter 4 (Article 2): *"Guidelines to Promote the Wellness of Teachers in Special Needs Schools"*.

Participants were encouraged to say anything they thought would help to identify the demands and needs experienced as stressors, and to provide guidelines to promote the wellness of teachers in special needs schools. To give them the opportunity to say things which they might not want to express in the presence of the rest of the group, one-to-one discussions were held after the interviews.

Time-scale of interviews

From 20 October 2003 to 25 November 2003, three schools were visited in the North West region and three group interviews were conducted in Potchefstroom and Klerksdorp. The duration of each interview differed from one to several hours.

Ethical considerations

Written permission was obtained by the District Director of Education of the North West Department of Education, as well as the principal of the institution where the teachers were teaching, and from the teachers themselves. The names of the teachers participating in the research were withheld. If their anonymity would ever be threatened, all research records would be destroyed. The researcher implemented the necessary precautionary measures to ensure that the dignity and integrity of the teachers were protected. They were free to think and behave as they pleased, without interruption and without the possibility that their private thoughts or behaviour would ever be misused in order to embarrass them.

Despite the fact that a teacher may have initially agreed to participate in the study, he/she was free to terminate his/her participation at any time and to withdraw from the study immediately. Research would also be terminated if the study did not proceed according to plan or according to the identified standards. Feedback on the findings and recommendations of the research would be provided to relevant persons as soon as conveniently possible.

3.2.2.3 Field notes

Directly after each interview, the researcher recorded field notes of the interview situation. This ensured that the interviewer was not distracted from the task of observing and listening to the respondent by taking notes during the interview. In these field notes the researcher recorded notes of the interview situation as well as her own impressions of it.

3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

Data generated through the interviews were analysed by examining the responses of each subject in the three schools. Audiotapes of the interviews were transcribed. The researcher then worked through each transcription and identified the units of analysis by underlining words and themes. Corresponding themes were grouped together into main and subcategories, the field notes were integrated into these categories, and finally the categories were grouped into the ecological and the intra-psychic part-systems within which every human being functions.

The data were prioritised according to the degree of correlation with respect to the descriptions and experiences of all the subjects interviewed. The order of priority was then tabulated, after which priority values were accorded to the themes. The suggestion is not that those categories that manifested in only one of the interviews are of less importance; rather, the prioritising of categories is done simply to provide the reader with a more complete and overall picture.

Interviews formed the main thrust of this qualitative study. The data obtained from the interviews was organised into categories and grouped into the part-systems within which they function. The number of teachers describing the same experience is indicated in table 1. In order to distinguish between the themes, they were divided into main and subcategories. The themes must not, however, be regarded as separate, but as part of the greater *Gestalt*. Keeping the method and process of

qualitative data analysis in mind, the following categories and subcategories are reflected in table 1.

3.4 FINDINGS

The following table shows the responses of the participants in interview 1, 2 and 3 on the demands and needs they experience as teachers in a special needs school.

Table 3.2 The demands and needs experienced as stressors by teachers in a special needs school

Category	Subcategory	Respondents n = 12
3.4.1 Negative attitude of the Learners	3.4.1.1 Towards the school/learning	6
	3.4.1.2 Towards the teachers.	6
	3.4.1.3 Vandalism of school/teachers' property.	4
	3.4.1.4 Threats (made towards teachers).	3
	3.4.1.5 Absenteeism from school.	2
3.4.2 Dissatisfaction with the Department of Education	3.4.2.1 Lack of funds.	8
	3.4.2.2 Lack of guidelines.	5
	3.4.2.3 Inconsistency of the Department of Education.	4
	3.4.2.4 Fewer teaching positions, but the same amount of work.	3
	3.4.2.5 Department of Education unaware of the reality of what goes on in schools.	3
3.4.3 Lack of support outside school	3.4.3.1 No/insufficient support staff.	7
	3.4.3.2 No/insufficient parental involvement.	4
	3.4.3.3 Negative view of society towards teachers	4
	3.4.3.4 No/insufficient community involvement.	2
3.4.4 The experience of professional overload	3.4.4.1 Multidimensional tasks teachers have to perform.	8
	3.4.4.2 Hectic schedule – too much to do in too little time.	7
	3.4.4.3 Teachers have to constantly motivate learners.	4
3.4.5 Difficult working conditions teachers have to face in the classroom as barriers to effective teaching	3.4.5.1 Learners with highly differentiated learning abilities in the same class.	5
	3.4.5.2 Learners' lack of future plans after school makes teaching pointless for teachers.	5
	3.4.5.3 Lack of teaching resources.	3
	3.4.5.4 Classes too big.	3
	3.4.5.5 Vague objectives/descriptors of the OBE system.	3
	3.4.5.6 Too much paperwork and administration tasks in addition to teaching.	2
	3.4.5.7 Language barriers causing teaching/learning difficulties.	2
	3.4.5.8 Learners promoted to the next grade regardless of any progress made.	2
3.4.6 Difficult socio-economic circumstances of learners	3.4.6.1 Inadequate resources due to poverty.	7
	3.4.6.2 Unresponsive parents.	4
	3.4.5.3 Difficult home circumstances.	3

Each of the categories identified in the above table will be discussed in more detail in the sections below.

3.4.1 Negative attitude of the learners

3.4.1.1 Towards learning/school

The negative attitude of the learners in general was a common problem in all three schools. It seems as if the learners had a careless attitude towards learning. Burke (1996:270), Cooper (1993:130) and Lardner (2002:2) claim that a blame culture, diminished social respect for teaching and a general feeling of being undervalued are some of the job pressures teachers experience. Remarks such as the following, which were transcribed from the interviews, illustrate this phenomenon:

"The learners don't care about [academic work]. They don't study and do absolutely nothing. The learners aren't interested in school. They don't want to be there [in school]."

"The attitude of the learners towards the school [is negative]. They feel that it is the school's duty to pay for sports kits, tours etc. If they can't get it for free, they don't want it."

3.4.1.2 Negative attitude towards teachers

Half of the subjects interviewed felt that the learners projected a very negative attitude towards the teachers. Teachers in South Africa (as in the rest of the world) do not only feel that they are undervalued, but also that they are despised (Burke, 1996:270). The following remark illustrates this:

"The learners' discontent really gets to me. They don't have any respect for a teacher or a teacher's disciplinary action. They are very aggressive towards the teachers."

It was felt that the learners' attitude towards teachers was challenging and provocative – as if the learners want to see how far the limits and boundaries can be pushed. The learners' attitude towards authority and what it stands for seem to be negative and disrespectful.

3.4.1.3 Vandalism of school and teachers' property

According to Cooper (1993:130), diminished social respect for teaching is one of the top five job pressures teachers experience, and therefore also one of the main reasons more and more teachers desert the classroom.

A reason for this could be that the children never learn to respect authority at home and when they come to school, they cannot cope with the authority and respect there (Donalds, Lazarus & Lotwana, 2002:29). This is linked to vandalism, where the learners do not show any respect for the property of the school or that of the teachers:

"... after school there will definitely be something done to my car – bump in the bonnet, a scratch ..."

Teachers have to lock their own property away but must also accept responsibility for the classroom equipment because theft is a major problem.

3.4.1.4 Threats made towards teachers

Another demand on the teachers is the fact that, in addition to their property, their families are also sometimes threatened by the learners:

"One of the learners threatened last year that he was going to jab my children with a knife."

"If you do something they don't agree with, they will threaten you."

According to Burke (1996:270) and Cooper (1993:130) this is part of the blame culture society adopts towards teaching and teachers. Cooper (1993:130) also points out the diminished social respect that exists for teaching. Hughes (2001:289) and Tatar and Yahav (1999:220) agree with this and add low public self-esteem and increasingly difficult parents and learners as additional particular pressures that schools, and specifically teachers, face.

Evers and Tomic (2003:1), however, look at it from a different angle and claim that stressed, burned-out teachers suffer from irritability and that they

are found to be responsible for learner apathy. This theory may be compared to the classic debate of whether the egg or the chicken came first. This study, however, focused on the demands and needs which teachers experience, while the negative attitude of the learners was one of the more prominent areas identified.

3.4.1.5 Absenteeism of learners

Due to the negative attitude towards school, absenteeism of the learners from school is also a problem. Van Deventer (2003:260) claims that there is a need for teachers to create a more positive atmosphere in schools for the learners. The following experience was reported in this regard:

"Absenteeism [is a problem]. Learners are absent up to 30 days from school in a year. They miss out on a lot of work."

3.4.2 Dissatisfaction with the management of the system by the Department of Education

3.4.2.1 Lack of funds

Most teachers who were interviewed expressed a certain sense of dissatisfaction with the way the Department of Education manages the system. Eight out of the twelve teachers interviewed felt that there was a serious lack of funds and that teachers consequently had the extra responsibility to raise the necessary funds the Department of Education cannot provide. This results in a heavier workload for the teachers and in more stress (Cooper & Kelly, 1993:130). The respondents expressed themselves as follows on this:

"We don't have the necessary funds. We are overloaded with fundraising projects and rarely get to the real classroom work or education of the learners."

"There are no funds ... so we [teachers] have to raise funds or think up ways to raise funds for the school."

"We have to do fundraising to survive."

The problem of a lack of funds not only affected the teachers, but also the learners:

"It is so frustrating, because you want to take these learners on a tour, but it is such a hassle just to raise enough money to go, that it is becoming pointless for me."

3.4.2.2 Lack of guidelines

In addition to failure on the part of the Department of Education to provide funds, the teachers also experienced that the department's failure to provide guidelines increased the demands made on them. Teachers felt uncertain of what was expected of them and they felt that they received no guidance to help them reach outcomes. Lardner (2002:2) stresses the importance of providing teachers with guidelines, so that management can better support teachers to promote their wellness. The following response illustrates the feeling among teachers:

"The outcomes of the curriculum we have to follow are very vague. You don't really know how they [Department of Education] want you to equip a child with knowledge."

Most of the teachers interviewed showed a certain sense of dissatisfaction with the way the Department of Education manages the system:

"There's no guidance for us each time something new has to be tried out."

3.4.2.3 Inconsistency of Department of Education

The inconsistency of the Department of Education is identified as another huge problem for these teachers. They feel that the Department of Education is very unpredictable and they have learnt to expect the worst. A continuous change in outcomes and a continuous change in the method of assessment make teachers in South Africa feel de-professionalised (Hughes, 2001:289), and this is exactly what the respondents experience:

"Almost every few months the Department changes things and then we [teachers] have to start all over again, doing hours of prep work."

"We are under such pressure from the Department because they are so inconsistent we are never guaranteed of our teaching positions at a school."

3.4.2.4 Less teaching positions, same amount of work

Because the Department of Education has declared a number of teaching positions in special needs schools redundant, the workload for many of these teachers has doubled. An extremely excessive workload is one of the main reasons teachers experience pressures and stress (Swart & Reddy, 1999:47). Cooper and Kelly (1993:130), likewise, report that the five top sources of job pressure are all problematic changes, including a drastic change in the amount of work to be done. One respondent gives the following account of the situation:

"A lot of our schools have scaled down on the number of teaching positions. This means that where four people used to do the work, two people have to cope with it now."

Excessive working time and workload, comparatively poor financial rewards, resistance to change or excessive change (Lardner, 2002) and continuous change in outcomes and in the methods of assessment and difficulties in coping with all the changes, (Hughes, 2001:289) were all identified as demands teachers faced in the special needs classroom. In fact, studies have shown that, when special education teachers are faced by the demands of an unmanageable workload, they are more likely to leave the special education classroom (Miller, Brownell & Smith, 1995).

3.4.2.5 The Department of Education are unaware of what goes on in special needs schools

This inconsistency also gave teachers the feeling that the Department of Education seems to be unaware of what really goes on in schools for learners with barriers to learning and that this might be a reason for the reason for the constant, erratic changes in policy. It was generally felt that the Department treated them similar to a mainstream school, and all teachers agreed that these schools were indeed not the same:

"The Department expects us [schools for learners with barriers to learning] to function like a normal [mainstream] school."

"It seems that the Department has the wrong perception of what goes on in special needs schools [schools for learners with barriers to learning]."

3.4.3 Lack of support from outside the school

3.4.3.1 Lack of support staff

The lack of support which teachers experience is apparently a major need which must be addressed. Seven of the twelve teachers interviewed felt that there is definitely insufficient support staff within the schools. Teachers also felt that because many teaching posts were declared redundant, their workload not only doubled (see 3.4.2.4) but they are also expected to perform the roles of previously employed support staff:

"In the olden days we had school psychiatrists, school nurses ... they all vanished and we need them."

The idea of having extra support in classes, especially with learners who have more barriers to learning than others, seems to be an idealistic thought for most of the teachers:

"There's no extra classroom support for these tasks [practical work done on machines] ... I think that only happens in England!"

Overall, it was felt that they did not have enough support staff to help them. Respondents felt that not only the teachers but also the learners they teach need all the extra support they can get. The fact that classes are so big (see 3.4.5) makes the need for more support staff even greater. A lack of support services for specific disabilities and learning impairments is the main cause of stress among teachers, and specifically teachers who teach at special needs schools (schools for learners with barriers to learning) (MacCown, Driscoll & Roop, 1996:499).

3.4.3.2 Lack of parental involvement

Linked to the above is the fact that the teachers receive very little, if any, support from the parents. There seemed to be very little parental involvement in these schools and it was felt that the parents were reluctant to get involved with their children:

"[We have] ... absence of or minimal parental involvement ... some parents seem to feel ashamed of their children."

"A lot learners are placed in this school to get them away from their homes."

"If parents are asked to come to school [for whatever reason] they never show up."

Parents are learners' first teachers and often their most influential teachers (Merideth, 1999:1). Parents who had negative experiences at school during their own education, and parents who have not attained a high level of education themselves may find schools and teachers intimidating (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994:241).

3.4.3.3 Negative view of society towards teaching

A general lack of support from parties from outside the school and the image society holds in general of teaching seem to be another pressure teachers experience. Feelings of undervaluation and diminished social respect for teaching are definite causes of teacher stress (Cooper, 1993:130). A lack of support from the community and its view towards the teaching profession are all stressors for teachers, and even more so for teachers teaching at special needs schools (MacCown, Driscoll & Roop, 1996:499 and Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002:29).

The lack of support which teachers receive may be ascribed to the negative views of society towards teachers. Teachers may be reluctant to admit that they experience stress because of their work because they fear that being stressed may be interpreted as a sign of weakness. This is often a result of parent and peer pressure, or the management culture, or both. A lot still

needs to be done to help relieve teacher stress caused by feelings of undervaluation and diminished social respect for teaching (Money, 2003:1). Teachers felt that they receive very little, if any, support from the community and that the community has a misperception of schools for learners with barriers:

"The community thinks that we [teachers] don't do proper teaching, but are mere babysitters keeping the children occupied during the day."

"The attitude of society towards these schools is very negative."

3.4.3.4 No/insufficient community involvement

This negative view of the schools by society resulted in a lack of involvement by society, according to these teachers. They felt that society should contribute more towards these schools:

"The community is also not as keen to donate money to our type of school [schools for learners with barriers to learning] as to a school for gifted children. My brother-in-law told me that if I asked money for a gifted child centre, he would have considered donating money, but our children can't contribute to society so it would be a waste of his money."

Community support is essential for creating the professional development opportunities which teachers require to help all their learners reach higher levels of learning (Cook & Fine, 1997:2), and the lack of this support causes considerable pressure for teachers. Teaching is a complex task, and substantial time will be required for teachers and other educators to test new ideas, assess their effects, adjust their strategies and approaches, and re-assess in an effort to provide more support for these teachers.

3.4.4 The experience of professional overload

3.4.4.1 Multidimensional tasks teachers have to perform

Reform requires that teachers learn new roles and ways of teaching. That translates into a long-term developmental process requiring teachers to focus on changing their own practice. However, it is extremely problematic

for teachers to find the time for change in their already busy schedules. Unfortunately, the demands posed by daily teaching and other aspects of the reform "continue to absorb the bulk of teachers' energy, thought, and attention" (Cook & Fine, 1997:2). The majority of the teachers interviewed, admitted to be experiencing professional overload.

It appears that teachers must perform far more than mere teaching. They are expected to coach extramural activities, cope with the vast amounts of paperwork and administration work, do fundraising and teach life skills, as many of the learners are not educated in basic hygiene, moral values etc.. What can not be done during school hours has to be done after hours and the fact that the community sees teaching as a half-day job, adds to the frustration:

"We have to educate the learners 80% of the formal teaching time in things like basic life skills such as hygiene, manners, morals etc. and almost never get to the real classroom work. It takes up a lot of the formal teaching time."

"We, as teachers, must be able to be an educator, an entrepreneur, a nurse, a police officer, a peacemaker ... I don't know of any other professional career where you have so many divergent tasks!"

3.4.4.2 Hectic schedule: too much to do in too little time

Due to the multidimensionality of the teaching profession, teachers seemed to struggle to cope with the hectic schedule:

"[There is] too much to be done in too short [an] amount of time."

Professional overload is also experienced by teachers as a demand that can be detrimental to their wellness. This extremely excessive workload is one of the particular pressures schools and teachers face. Teachers felt overloaded with work they had to finish in too little time, while they also had to cope with the additional demands of fundraising, lack of support, extramural activities etc.

3.4.4.3 Teachers having to constantly motivate learners

The fact that learners have to be constantly motivated to achieve, seems to be another source of pressure. Because the learners' attitude towards learning is so negative, the teachers have to work much harder to achieve some outcomes in these learners:

"We [teachers] work hard towards a specific goal for these children, but it is pointless really."

"We have to be motivational speakers because no one else will motivate these learners."

The multidimensional tasks they have to perform, together with the vast amounts of work to be done in short spans of time while trying to educate learners that need constant motivation, are the main reason why these teachers experience professional overload. Professional overload can definitely be identified as an area that makes teachers feel more pressurised.

3.4.5 Difficult working conditions teachers face in the classroom as a barrier to effective teaching

Eight factors were identified as either barriers to effective teaching or factors that influenced the teachers' working conditions, namely the fact that learners with highly differentiated abilities were in the same class (3.4.5.1), the lack of future plans of learners when they finish school (3.4.5.2), The lack of teaching resources (3.4.5.3), classes that were too big (3.4.5.4), the vague objectives of the OBE-system (3.4.5.5), too much paperwork and administration tasks (3.4.5.6), language barriers which caused teaching and learning difficulties (3.4.5.7) and the fact that learners were promoted to the next grade regardless of their progress (3.4.5.8). Each of these factors will be explained in the sections below.

3.4.5.1 Learners with highly differentiated abilities in one class

Teachers report that they have to teach classes with too many learners in one class and classes in which there are learners with divergent barriers to

learning, without any extra support. A lack of support services for specific disabilities and learning impairments is the main cause of stress among teachers, and specifically among teachers teaching at special needs schools (MacCown, Driscoll & Roop, 1996:499). One respondent reported that:

"The abilities and ages of the learners in the same class [are] very differentiated."

3.4.5.2 The lack of future plans of learners when they finish school

Learners seem to lack ambition and regard lifelong learning as pointless. Burke (1996:270), Cooper (1993:130) and Lardner (2002:2) claim that diminished social respect for learning forms part of the job pressures teachers experience. One teacher reported:

"We work really hard in educating a child and bringing him/her up to a certain standard, but the reality is that he/she has no future."

3.4.5.3 The lack of teaching resources

Access to teaching materials such as textbooks, workbooks, handouts and reference books clearly has an influence on the process of teaching/learning (Donalds, Lazarus & Lolwana, (2002:182). The effect of a lack of teaching resources for specific disabilities and learning impairments was already identified in 3.4.5.1. Remarks like the following were recorded in the interviews:

"There are no textbooks for us and that is, for me, a big problem. We're neither here nor there ... it's difficult because we have to prepare lessons but we don't have the resources for it."

3.4.5.4 Too big classes

Teachers report that they have to teach highly differentiated and very big classes without any extra support. According to Donalds, Lazarus and Lolwana, (2002:169) the physical aspects of classrooms (like the class size) can have positive or negative effects on the process of teaching/learning. Excessively large classes, particularly when they are overcrowded, can

affect both the social and the instructional aspects of the classroom environment (Donalds, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002:171). Again, the lack of support services for specific disabilities and learning impairments as a cause of stress (see 3.4.5.1; 3.4.5.3) is relevant here as well. A teachers indicated that:

"In the practical centre, I have grade 8, 9 and 10 Spec's [learners who take the subject in their final school year and specialise in it] in one class at the same time."

3.4.5.5 Vague objectives of the OBE-system

It seems that the objectives for the implementation of the OBE-system as provided by the government, are very vague and teachers are never quite sure what is expected of them. There is an overall lack of management. Lardner (2002:2) describes teachers as professionals who usually have high levels of personal commitment to perform their tasks at hand. A management team that recognises this and encourages responsibility among its staff by providing realistic objectives, can decrease the levels of pressure and stress experienced by staff (Lardner, 2002:2). The following comment was made in this regard:

"The whole OBE-system is very vague. The Department is very inconsequent about the 'how to' of OBE."

3.4.5.6 Too much paperwork and administrative tasks

Special needs teachers are not only faced with the varied needs and demands of the learners they have to teach, but also with vast amounts of paperwork and administrative work that must be completed (Smylie, 1999:72,73,81). The lack of support in the classroom makes it even harder for these teachers:

"There's too much paperwork and admin to be done and sometimes it is not even looked at."

3.4.5.7 Language barriers causing teaching and learning difficulties

Due to the policy of inclusion, schools must now incorporate learners with language barriers which cause teaching and learning difficulties. Many schools in South Africa had to register learners who experience severe barriers to learning because of language problems (Donalds, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002:213). One teacher reported that:

"Language is an issue because a lot of learners don't speak either Afrikaans or English [in an Afrikaans/English medium school] and classes are taught in those languages."

3.4.5.8 Learners being promoted to the next grade regardless of their progress

A strong human rights emphasis is evident in educational policy and legislation (Muthukrishna & Schoeman, 2000:317). Education that is appropriate to the needs of all children, whatever their origin, background or circumstances, should therefore be provided in all schools (Oosthuizen *et al.*, 1999:21). As a result, learners are promoted to the next grade regardless of their progress or lack of progress. Learners with barriers to learning require essential support if they are to thrive in the classroom, but this has not yet been fully implemented in schools in South Africa. The result is that these learners fall even further behind:

"Children can't do basic things like read or write, but the system puts them through to the next grade."

A lack of information from the government and provincial departments (Hughes, 2001:289), physical numbers in classes, diverse abilities in one class, dissatisfaction with the curriculum, constant changes within the profession (Cooper & Kelly, 1993:130) and the management of outcomes-based education are all contributors that devalue the basic classroom work (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002:29) for which most teachers joined the profession (Blair, 2003:4).

3.4.6 Difficult socio-economical circumstances of the learners

Learners experience difficult socio-economical circumstances in that they have inadequate resources due to poverty (3.4.6.1), unresponsive parents (3.4.6.2) and difficult circumstances at home (3.4.6.3), as will be explained below.

3.4.6.1 Inadequate resources due to poverty

It seems that children who fail to benefit from schooling tend to come from families and communities characterised by poverty, high rates of unemployment, poor health, sub-standard housing and family breakdown (MacCown *et al.*, 1996:499). The socio-economic circumstances of the learners make teaching them very demanding for many teachers. Poverty plays a huge role in this, especially where learners cannot afford their own resource materials and school equipment:

"There are learners [in the school] who don't even have food to eat, some of them are famished and undernourished."

3.4.6.2 Unresponsive parents

One of the teachers pointed out that a number of the learners are not scholastically weak, but their learning is influenced by severely negative conditions at home. It seems that many of the parents of these learners (with barriers to learning) are uninvolved and disinterested in their children's scholastic progress and expect the teachers to take sole responsibility for it:

"In a lot of cases the family will drop the child and never bother to come and see him again until he turns eighteen and receives disability pension from the government."

3.4.6.3 Difficult circumstances at home

The difficult circumstances at home which the learners experience are yet another factor that increases the demands teachers experience in teaching learners with barriers to learning. A number of children and even their parents have never mastered basic life skills, like hygiene, healthy eating and morals, and the fact that teachers now have to teach these values to

them in addition to the curriculum work, puts extra pressure on the teachers (see 3.4.4):

"The children come from poor communities where the parents themselves have not yet mastered these skills [life skills like hygiene, morals etc.]"

Poverty and poor educational and social conditions often reinforce one another, according to Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2002:205). These authors also point out the relationship between poverty and parenting, where the one can have a negative effect on the other. This might be one of the reasons why teachers in schools for learners with barriers to learning experience a lack of parental involvement and unresponsive parents.

In developing countries like South Africa, *exceptionality* (when a learner has some or other barrier to learning) implies a specific learning need that is generally caused by external factors (and not only internal factors, as in developed countries). According to MacCown, Driscoll and Roop (1996:499) and Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2002:29) these factors include:

- discrimination against people seen as different, whether this is related to skin colour, religion, physical features etc.,
- socio-economic factors like poverty,
- risk factors like violence,
- unsafe schooling environments,
- language and communication blocks, and
- lack of parental support and support services for specific disabilities and learning impairments.

3.4.7 Summary

In this section the findings of the research with regard to the reasons for the difficult working conditions of teachers in special needs schools were presented. Whereas this section focused on the demands and needs

teachers identified as a result of these problems, the focus will shift to the way in which teachers are affected by these adverse conditions in the next section (3.5).

3.5 EFFECT OF EXPERIENCED DEMANDS AND NEEDS ON THE WELLNESS OF TEACHERS IN A SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOOL

The following table shows the responses of the participants in interview 1, 2 and 3 on how the demands and needs they experience as teachers in a special needs school affect their wellness.

Table 3.3 Responses of the participants in interview 1, 2 and 3 as to the effect the experienced demands and needs have on their wellness

Category	Subcategory	Respondents N = 12
3.5.1 Negative effect on the emotions	3.5.1.1 Feelings of frustration towards the profession	6
	3.5.1.2 Emotionally drained after a school day	5
	3.5.1.3 Not in control of emotions	4
	3.5.1.4 Emotionally distanced from school and learners	3
	3.5.1.5 Experiencing fear and anxiety when going to school	3
	3.5.1.6 Depression	2
3.5.2 Negative effect on the self-concept	3.5.2.1 Feelings of helplessness	6
	3.5.2.2 Changes in character	4
	3.5.2.3 Feeling incompetent/incapable/uncertain	3
3.5.3 Effect on interpersonal relationships	3.5.3.1 Constantly feeling emotionally responsible for the learners' wellness	7
	3.5.3.2 Personal life affected	4
	3.5.3.3 Negative projections towards colleagues and learners	3
3.5.4 The experience of stress and its effects	3.5.4.1 Stress	5
	3.5.4.2 Physical symptoms of stress	3

It has become clear that teachers in special needs schools are daily faced with a multitude of problems: numerous demands are made on them professionally, emotionally, socially and personally and they have many unanswered needs. All teachers who were interviewed had demands and needs which they experienced as affecting their wellness in some or other way.

Teachers' wellness was affected in 4 areas, as identified by the research (see table 3.3). These areas were categorised as a negative effect on emotions (3.5.1); a negative effect on the self-concept (3.5.2); an effect on interpersonal relationships (3.5.3); and an experience of stress and its effect on the physical part-system (3.5.4).

3.5.1 Negative effect on the emotions

The negative effect on teachers' emotions include feelings of frustration towards the profession (3.5.1.1), being emotionally drained after a school day (3.5.1.2), not being in control of their emotions (3.5.1.3), feeling emotionally distanced from the school and the learners (3.5.1.4), experiencing fear and anxiety when they have to go to school (3.5.1.5), and experiencing symptoms of depression (3.5.1.6).

3.5.1.1 Feelings of frustration towards the profession

The demands and unfulfilled needs experienced by these teachers had an intense emotional effect on these teachers. Feelings of frustration and helplessness were mentioned by various teachers. The fact that they did not know exactly what was expected of them, the negative attitude of the learners and society towards teachers and education, the way the Department of Education manages itself and the lack of support all contribute to this feeling of frustration. Teachers feel powerless to improve the situation. Frustration is described as a maladaptive coping mechanism by Friedman (1995:192).

3.5.1.2 Emotionally drained after a school day

Teachers are very intensely involved with school and their work (teaching), and in some cases this led to a feeling of being emotionally drained after a school day. Some respondents also felt increasingly irritable and withdrawn. Seven of the twelve teachers interviewed claimed that they felt either emotionally drained and tired after a school day, or not in control of their emotions. These feelings were experienced both by female and male teachers. Physical and emotional fatigue is one of the first symptoms of stress and one of the last to disappear. If regular or persistent fatigue (tiredness, lack of energy) is experienced by an individual, he or she may already be on the road to ill health (Posen, 1995:1).

3.5.1.3 Not in control of emotions

It seems that the increasing amounts of stress and pressure the teachers have to face, have a definite effect on how they cope emotionally. They do not always seem to be in control of their emotions:

"I've cried many times in this school."

"I have to contain myself the whole time ... I can get so terribly angry."

3.5.1.4 Feeling emotionally distanced from school and learners

Emotional exhaustion is a key aspect of the burnout syndrome and individuals experiencing a high level of burnout consider that they are no longer able to commit themselves at a psychological level (Antoniou, 2000:1). This was clearly seen where some of the teachers interviewed distanced themselves emotionally from pupils or anything relating to school:

"I've learned not to become emotionally involved ... I switch my emotions off."

"I don't want to get involved anymore."

A reduction in the intensity of contact which the individual has with the recipients of his/her services is seen as part of maladaptive coping mechanisms (Friedman, 1995:192). Probably the most direct action teachers

can take to mitigate their stress is to remove themselves from the situation they think is causing the stress (Wilson, 2002:22).

3.5.1.5 Experiencing fear and anxiety when going to school

While some teachers distanced themselves emotionally, others experienced feelings of fear and anxiety. This is a clear indication that these teachers are hampered by stress, because fear and anxiety are "fellow-travellers to stress" (Lardner, 2002:1). This may be due to the negative attitude of the learners towards the teachers, especially in cases where female teachers or family members were threatened:

"[I feel] oversensitive ... and I'm so scared."

3.5.1.6 Teachers experiencing symptoms of depression

Symptoms of depression were also mentioned by a few teachers and antidepressants seemed to be commonly and openly used by the teachers who were interviewed:

"I am sporadically depressed and I'm not ashamed to admit it."

Posen (1995:2) explains that feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, uselessness and inadequateness are all symptoms of depression. These feelings were mentioned by many of the respondents.

Concerns over work-related issues leading to stress and anxiety produce a catalogue of associated deleterious effects, including increased sickness absence, increased rates of staff turnover, decreased morale and a decreased number of applicants for vacant posts.

3.5.2 Negative effect on the self-concept

Symptoms of the negative effect on the self-concept of the respondents included feelings of helplessness (3.5.2.1), changes in their character (3.5.2.2) and feelings of incompetence, incapability and uncertainty (3.5.2.3).

3.5.2.1 Feelings of helplessness

Feelings of helplessness were experienced by teachers:

"I walk around feeling helpless and hopeless."

Feelings of helplessness and a preoccupation with negative self-talk, as reported by the teachers, are described by Hawkins-Eskridge and Coker (1985:389) as symptoms which negatively impact on a person's health.

3.5.2.2 Changes in character

Teachers reported that they experienced changes in their character:

"My femininity vanishes as soon as I arrive at school."

Depersonalisation and a change in character are part of the three-dimensional phenomenon of burnout as described by Maslach and Jackson (1981) in Lauzon (1999:3). This is caused by intense and continuous periods of stress. Behavioural symptoms such as mood swings and increased irritability are part of the health problems reported by teachers experiencing great amounts of pressure and stress at the workplace (Hawkins-Eskridge & Coker, 1985:389; Jenkins & Calhoun, 1991:14).

3.5.2.3 Feeling incompetent/incapable/uncertain

Teachers' self-concept were clearly negatively affected, as they felt incompetent and incapable:

"It makes me feel incompetent and incapable."

Teachers experienced feelings of reduced personal accomplishment, and according to Maslach and Jackson's definition (1981) in Lauzon (1999:3) this suggests possible feelings of unhappiness and a tendency to evaluate oneself negatively, particularly with regard to one's work. Teachers also seem uncertain and unsure of themselves and their profession:

"I'm not sure what to do."

Feelings of insecurity and inadequacy are intermediate-stage symptoms of classic stress and burnout (Friedman, 1995:193).

3.5.3 Effect on interpersonal relationships

Specific phenomena in this category were teachers' feelings that they were constantly responsible for learners' wellness (3.5.3.1), the effect on their personal life (3.5.3.2), and their negative projections on learners and colleagues (3.5.3.3).

3.5.3.1 Constantly feeling emotionally responsible for learners' wellness

According to Boss (2000:2), teaching as a career is a continuum, not a series of disconnected steps stacked on top of each other. Teachers are committed to students and their learning. They make knowledge accessible to all students by adjusting their teaching to learners' abilities, skills and backgrounds. The teachers who were interviewed, however, felt continuously emotional for the learners' wellness, even though they realised there was very little they could do about it. It is a global occurrence, however, as described by MacSpaddan (2002:1), that teachers sometimes feel that the rest of the community has exhorted them to "leave no child behind" while they (the community) have scurried off ahead of them in search of more lucrative dreams, and the teachers are the only ones holding the hands of the children:

"I worry so much about these children."

The teachers admitted that they grow quite attached to the learners in spite of the negative attitudes of the learners towards the teachers:

"One gets very attached to and grow to love these children; the day a child leaves the school, you cry along with them."

The fact that many of the learners in these schools experience very difficult socio-economic circumstances (poverty, abuse etc.; see article 1) contributes to teachers feeling responsible for the wellness of the learners:

"Sometimes you almost can't believe how bad some of these learners have it ... it bothers me a lot."

3.5.3.2 Personal life affected

The teachers interviewed felt that their relationships with family members, colleagues and learners were affected. Teachers also claimed that their personal lives were affected by this:

"It affects my personal life ... after school, at home, you can't forget about them [learners at school]."

Teachers felt their relationships with their families were also affected:

"I expect my little girl in grade 1 to achieve and manage a lot more than what I would have expected of her if I didn't teach here."

Troman (1998:1) describes the cost which he thinks some teachers pay by continuing to work with high levels of stress. The consequence is chronic strain on their personal lives. Teachers reporting symptoms of or experiencing chronic stress were often involved in a break-up of marital or personal relationships.

3.5.3.3 Negative projections on learners and colleagues

One of the symptoms of developing stress and burnout is becoming increasingly frustrated and angry and projecting the blame for one's difficulties onto others (Miller & Smith, 1997:1). These teachers admitted that the demands and needs they experience cause them to project themselves negatively on colleagues and learners:

"The staff experience each other negatively ... I sometimes feel why do I have to work myself to death if my colleague doesn't do a thing!"

Teachers not only project this negativity on their colleagues but also on the learners they teach:

"I'm in a bad mood the moment I walk into class."

"You feel sometimes you don't want to see them [learners] ... if something happens at school and a lesson falls away, you feel glad about not seeing them [learners]."

3.5.4 Experience of stress and its effects

Below the actual experience of stress by the teachers will be indicated (3.5.4.1), as well as the physical symptoms of stress (3.5.4.2).

3.5.4.1 Stress

The teachers interviewed seemed to experience intense levels of stress. These stressors varied from the hectic schedule at school to concerns about the wellness of the learners and the uncertainties of the profession:

"... [the hectic schedule] causes stress ..."

It is likely that chronic high levels of stress will adversely affect other priority areas, including teacher performance and thus pupil attainment (MacCormick, 1997:19).

3.5.4.2 Physical symptoms of stress

Teachers reported:

"My blood pressure is sky high ... I wake up at night, sweating and stressed out."

"You can see it on my skin, as soon as I stress I get problem skin."

It is widely accepted that concerns and problems that are not appropriately addressed will be exacerbated so that eventually emotional symptoms will progress to physical symptoms, resulting in sickness and absence from work (Wilson, 1997:40). Some of the teachers already experienced physical symptoms as a result of the fear and anxiety they experience:

"I'm nervous ... even my stomach gets upset."

3.6 DISCUSSION

It is clear that the teachers in special needs schools are daily faced with a multitude of problems: numerous demands are made on them professionally, emotionally, socially and personally. All the subjects

interviewed had some unanswered needs which had some effect on the manner in which they taught and on their wellness.

Six main areas of needs and demands were identified as causing pressure which could result in stress. These areas were categorised as negative attitude of the learners, dissatisfaction with the Department of Education, lack of support outside the school, the experience of professional overload, difficult working conditions in the classroom as barriers to effective teaching, and the difficult socio-economic circumstances of the learners.

These teachers have to maintain a professional attitude and remain positive, but they experience much negativity within the school. The learners' attitude towards learning and the school is very negative and they do not have an academic mindset. Their attitude towards teachers and teaching also seems to be negative, challenging and defiant. The teachers experience this negative attitude in the form of vandalism of the school and also their own property, and many teachers have been threatened by the learners. In many cases learners fail to turn up for school and the teachers have the extra pressure of teaching learners that are absent for up to sixty days a year.

Teachers are dissatisfied with the management of the Department of Education. Insufficient funds are provided for special needs schools and fundraising becomes the sole responsibility of the teachers, as most of the parents of children in these schools are not involved in school activities or are not financially able to support in any way. The Department of Education does not provide proper guidelines for the teachers and is also very inconsistent. This creates feelings of uncertainty and puts extra pressure on the teachers. Although the Department of Education has declared many posts redundant, the workload remained the same, which means that the remaining teachers now have double the workload, with even less support. All these factors create the idea that the Department of Education does not know what teaching in a special needs school actually involves or what the specific needs are of both the learners and teachers in such a school.

There appears to be no support for teachers in special needs schools. Teachers are expected to teach forty plus learners (each with their own barrier to learning) in a class, without any support. Firstly, there is a serious need for support services and support staff to help the teachers with specific learners. There are very little (if any) parental involvement and community involvement and the overall view of society towards teachers (especially teachers teaching in special needs schools) is very negative.

All the teachers in this research experience professional overload. The multidimensional tasks they have to perform make teaching a very demanding task. Teachers are expected to teach, coach, nurse, counsel, raise funds, teach basic life skills and to constantly motivate learners. Many teachers felt this was proving to be too demanding. The hectic schedule they have to follow is another demand they face. Because the Department of Education has declared many teaching positions redundant, more work must be done per teacher and these individuals feel that they have too much to do in too little time.

In the classroom the difficult working conditions are barriers to effective teaching. Teachers have to be able to cope with big classes, with learners with many diverse abilities and language barriers as well as a total lack of teaching resources and support services and vague objectives to follow. Learners are promoted to the next grade, regardless of any progress made. The learners also have a negative attitude towards learning and the fact that the learners lack future plans for when they finish with school makes teaching for many teachers a pointless task. They admitted that their commitment towards the profession has suffered as a result of this.

Many of the learners experience difficult socio-economic circumstances. Poverty, inadequate resources, unresponsive parents and difficult circumstances at home are all factors that make teaching in special needs schools more demanding. There is a damaging relationship between poverty, malnutrition and cognitive development. This means that teaching learners from poor socio-economic backgrounds is much more demanding and challenging than teaching learners from a more fortunate background.

This only adds to the pressures and stress teachers teaching in special needs schools experience.

As all the teachers interviewed experienced demands made on them daily and had unanswered needs that affected the way they taught, they reported that their wellness suffered in some or other way. This situation particularly had a negative emotional effect. Whereas some of the interviewed teachers suffered from fear and anxiety, most mentioned feelings of helplessness, frustration and of being emotionally drained after a school day. Teaching, and specifically teaching learners with barriers to learning, means getting intensely involved in a learners' development, the barriers he/she experiences and any factors that influences the learning experience. This implies a high level of commitment from the teachers, and consequently many of the interviewed teachers felt emotionally responsible for the wellness of the learners. The fact that they can only provide help and guidance up to a certain limit intensifies the feelings of frustration and helplessness and also their feeling incapable and incompetent as a professional. Overall, it would seem that teacher morale is low.

Teachers use different coping mechanisms, some which are more destructive than others, like changes in character, changes in lifestyle, distancing themselves emotionally, negative projections made on colleagues and learners and depression. These destructive or negative coping mechanisms have an impact on the teachers' personal lives as well and some teachers reported that relationships with their families suffer.

The teachers who were interviewed seemed to experience intense levels of stress. These stressors varied from the hectic schedule at school to concern about the wellness of the learners and the uncertainties of the profession. Some of the interviewed teachers reported that they also experience physical symptoms of stress, like high blood pressure, palpitations, sweating, skin breakouts, indigestion, chronic fatigue and insomnia.

3.7 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, based on the findings of this study, it is evident that the teachers teaching in special needs schools in South Africa (also referred to as schools for children with barriers to learning) are under immense pressure. This is due to the various demands which are daily made on them and their many unanswered needs. It became clear that these demands and pressures experienced by the teachers have an impact on them as individuals, on the schools in which they work and on the pupils they teach. Ryrie (2003:9) also estimated this to have an economic impact on the education system in terms of lost teaching time and additional costs of replacement teachers. Teachers teaching learners with barriers to learning also reported that the demands made on them daily and the many unanswered needs they experience, have an impact on their wellness. Increasing levels of stress and stress-related symptoms and resulting sickness would seem likely if current trends continue. Burned-out, stressed teachers do not only suffer from the effects, but also affect their families, their learners and the educational system as a whole. It would also directly affect a school's ability to develop the physical and emotional health of members within the school and thereby to support and comply with the standards of a health promoting school (Kickbush & Jones, 1996:4).

3.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

During the study the researcher experienced the following limitations:

- Of the twelve teachers interviewed, most were white. This is because most of the teachers at the schools which were contacted were white, and the participants were randomly selected.
- The interviews took place in the last and second last month of the school year. This could have led to teachers being more exhausted, feeling the strain of teaching more intensely and reporting more negative experiences than if interviewed earlier in the year.

- The “special schools” selected (schools for learners with barriers to learning) included a school for learners with barriers to learning that could be described as “severe difficulties” (learners with severe mental handicaps or suffering from neurological disabilities, hearing disabilities, visual disabilities and physical disabilities) and schools for learners with “mild difficulties”, in other words, learners who experience barriers to learning due to factors such as mild and moderate mental handicaps, poverty, health risks, abuse, communication difficulties, specific learning difficulties and emotional difficulties etc. Teachers teaching at the different schools faced and experienced different demands and needs due to the nature of their teaching.
- Teachers were encouraged to think freely and behave as they please without interruption and without the possibility that their private thoughts or behaviour would ever be misused to embarrass them. Nevertheless, some of the younger teachers might possibly have been intimidated by their senior colleagues and it is possible that not all questions were equally truthfully answered.
- The subjectivity of the researcher may have influenced some of the interpretations and conclusions of the study, as the researcher personally knew some of the interviewees.

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CHAPTER 4

ARTICLE 2: GUIDELINES FOR TEACHER SUPPORT TO PROMOTE WELLNESS IN TEACHERS IN SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOOLS

Elza Jonker

P.O.Box 6776, Baillie Park, Potchefstroom 2526, South Africa

ABSTRACT

Demands made on teachers teaching at special needs schools and the unanswered needs of these individuals can, in the extreme, manifest in various forms of destructive behaviour and destructive relations between teachers and learners, between teachers and colleagues and between teachers and their families. These problems are usually indicators or symptoms of personal health at risk, which might lead to stress-related diseases which will in effect influence teacher wellness. Experts on wellness suggest that attention to personal lifestyle can improve well-being. Using the knowledge gained from the needs and demands experienced by South African teachers working in a special needs school (see article 1), a contribution can be made based on the knowledge of how the wellness of these interviewed teachers is affected. Recommendations for teacher support were made by teachers themselves.

4.1 INTRODUCTION: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

All teachers experience stress-related problems, but this even more true for teachers working in special needs schools (referred to as schools for learners with barriers to learning). This was explained in the first article

written by the researcher, where the focus was on the demands and needs which teachers in special needs schools experience and how this affected their wellness. These demands made on the teachers and their unanswered needs may, in extreme cases, manifest in various forms of destructive behaviour and destructive relations between teachers and learners, between teachers and colleagues and between teachers and their families. Problematic relationships are usually indicators or symptoms of personal health at risk, which might lead to stress-related diseases which will in effect influence teacher wellness.

Six main areas were identified as demands made on teachers or as unanswered needs that lead to pressure that can be experienced as stress (see Article 1: The Demands and Needs Experienced as Stressors by Teachers in Special Needs Schools in North West). These areas were categorised as:

- Negative attitude of the learners:

Learners apparently had a careless attitude towards learning. Burke (1996:270), Cooper (1993:130) and Lardner (2002:2) claim that a blame culture, diminished social respect for teaching and generally feeling undervalued are some of the job pressures teachers experience. Hughes (2001:289) agrees with this, and Tatar and Yahav (1999:220) add that increasingly difficult parents and learners are additional particular pressures that schools, and specifically teachers, face.

- Dissatisfaction with the Department of Education:

A lack of funds, inconsistency in the Department of Education and a lack of guidelines all cause a heavier workload and more stress for the teachers (Cooper & Kelly, 1993:130).

- Lack of support outside the school:

Teachers indicate the lack of support they experience as a major need that must be addressed. A lack of support services for specific disabilities and

learning impairments are some of the main factors responsible for stress among teachers, and specifically teachers teaching at special needs school (MacCown, Driscoll & Roop, 1996:499). Parents seem reluctant to get involved with their children. Merideth (1999:1) stresses the importance of parental involvement in a child's education, as parents are learners' first teachers and often their most influential teachers. A lack of support by the community and its view towards the teaching profession are all stressors for teachers, and specifically for teachers teaching at special needs schools (MacCown, Driscoll & Roop, 1996:499; Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002:29).

- The experience of professional overload:

The majority of the teachers interviewed admitted to experiencing professional overload. Research has found teachers to be suffering greater levels of stress manifestations due to professional overload (Travers & Cooper, 1996:11), such as mental ill-health, than comparable groups such as doctors, dentists and nurses.

- Difficult working conditions teachers face in the classroom as barriers to effective teaching:

Within the classroom the difficult working conditions are barriers to effective teaching:

- Teachers have to be able to cope with learners with many diverse abilities.
- Some learners experience severe barriers to learning due to language problems (Donalds, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002:213).
- There is a lack of access to teaching materials such as textbooks, workbooks, handouts and reference books (Donalds, Lazarus & Lolwana, (2002:182).
- Classes are excessively large and overcrowded.

- Learners are promoted to the next grade regardless of any progress made (Muthukrishna & Schoeman, 2000:317).
- Vast amounts of paperwork and administrative work must be completed (Smylie, 1999:72,73,81).
- Difficult socio-economic circumstances of the learners:

Poverty, inadequate resources, unresponsive parents and difficult home circumstances are all factors that make teaching in special needs schools more demanding. Poverty and poor educational and social conditions often reinforce one another (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002:205; MacCown *et al.*, 1996:499).

It is therefore evident that teachers in special needs schools are daily faced with a multitude of problems: numerous demands made on them professionally, emotionally, socially and personally and many of them experience numerous unanswered needs. This was confirmed by all the teachers who were interviewed, and they also indicated that this situation had some effect on the way they taught and on their wellness. Four areas were identified where teachers felt the demands and needs they experience in their profession as teachers at special needs schools affected their wellness (see Article 1, table 3.3). These areas were categorised as:

- Negative effect on emotions:

The experienced demands and unfulfilled needs negatively affected teachers emotionally. Maladaptive coping mechanisms like frustration (Friedman, 1995:192), feelings of being emotionally drained, tired and ill (Posen, 1995), depression, fear and anxiety were also reported by participants.

- Negative effect on the self-concept:

Feelings of helplessness and a preoccupation with negative self-talk are described by Hawkins-Eskridge and Coker (1985:389) as symptoms identified by teachers as having an impact on their health. Participants

reported these feelings as well as changes in character. Behavioural symptoms such as mood swings and increased irritability are part of the health problems reported by teachers who experience much pressure and stress at the workplace (Hawkins-Eskridge & Coker, 1985:389; Jenkins & Calhoun, 1991:14).

- Effect on interpersonal relationships:

The teachers interviewed constantly felt emotionally responsible for the learners' wellness, even though they realised there was very little they could do about it. This is a global phenomenon MacSpaddan (2002:1). Teachers also claimed that their personal lives were affected by this. Troman (1998:1) refers to chronic strain on teachers' personal lives: one of the symptoms of developing stress and burnout is that one becomes increasingly frustrated and angry and projects the blame for one's difficulties onto others (Miller & Smith, 1997:1).

- Experience of stress and its effects:

High, intense levels of stress were experienced by the teachers interviewed. These stressors varied from the hectic schedule at school to concern about the wellness of the learners and the uncertainties of the profession. It is likely that constant high levels of stress will adversely affect other priority areas, including teacher performance and thus learner attainment (MacCormick, 1997:19). Health problems reported by teachers include physical problems such as chronic fatigue, insomnia, high blood pressure; and cardiovascular difficulties – conditions that require immediate or prolonged medical attention (Hawkins-Eskridge & Coker, 1985; Jenkins & Calhoun, 1991).

Teachers' stress may have an impact on them as individuals, on the schools in which they work and on the learners they teach. It is also estimated to have an economic impact on the education system in terms of lost teaching time and additional costs of replacement teachers. Unfortunately, it is difficult to quantify these costs because reported effects may actually be strategies to help teachers cope and it would be unsafe to assume that those who

report no symptoms are necessarily stress-free. In fact, when special education teachers are faced by the demands of unmanageable workload, they are more likely to leave the special education classroom (Miller, 1995). The ability to successfully manage the demands and needs experienced by teachers and the stress related to teaching is crucial if special education teachers are to survive and thrive in the classroom (Hughes, 2001:1).

This study addressed the following question:

- What kind of support, in the form of guidelines, can be provided for such stressed teachers in order to promote their wellness?

The needs of and demands on teachers, and the effect of the experienced demands and needs on teachers' wellness, were determined and results were discussed in the previous article. It became clear that there is also a need to provide guidelines for support for such stressed teachers in order to promote their wellness.

The aim of this article is to use the knowledge gained regarding the needs and demands experienced by South African teachers working in a special needs school (see article 1) and the recommendations made by teachers themselves, to provide adequate guidelines for support to promote the wellness of these teachers.

By identifying the demands made on teachers and the needs teachers experience as well as the effect of this on teacher wellness, specific guidelines for support to promote teacher wellness could be provided. Such guidelines will help prevent the onset, development and aggravation of any symptoms that can be detrimental to the health and the wellness of teachers (see article 1).

The method and process of data collection are discussed in detail in article 1. Interviews formed the main thrust of this qualitative study. The data obtained from the interviews were organised into categories and grouped into the part-systems within which they function. The number of teachers

describing the same experience are indicated in tables 1 (responses of the participants in terms of support to promote wellness). In order to distinguish between the themes, they were divided into main and subcategories. Keeping the method and process of qualitative data analysis in mind, the following categories and subcategories are reflected in table 1.

4.2 GUIDELINES FOR TEACHER SUPPORT TO PROMOTE THE WELLNESS OF TEACHERS IN SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOOLS – EXPERIENCED DEMANDS AND NEEDS

Research has found teachers to be suffering greater levels of stress manifestations (Travers & Cooper, 1996:11), such as mental ill-health, than comparable groups such as doctors, dentists and nurses. This has a significant impact not only on their health and wellness, but also on the retention, recruitment and morale of teachers. The provision of a service for support will play a significant role in the prevention of sickness, ill-health or nervous breakdown and depression. The promotion of health and wellness, as a form of prevention, is likely to decrease the number of people who develop a health problems or illness (Fuller, 1998:2).

Teacher support means helping teachers find positive ways of solving their problems. This can be done by providing more data to teachers on emotional and physical health and the issues and concerns of today's working teachers.

According to the Teacher Support Helpline (2004), a service that provides support for teachers in England and Wales, *teacher support* means:

- providing for the concerns and issues raised by teachers;
- meeting teachers' needs and education objective;
- providing access to information databanks for informing education policies at national and local level; and

- laying the ground for new generations of teacher support services.

Recent studies of a number of psychological interventions (Howlett, 2001:29) have suggested that emotional support will lead to enhanced immunological responses. Thus changes in the incidence of colds, stomach complaints and headaches may also be brought about through provision of teacher support.

In a review of all published studies into the effects of employee assistance programmes (MacCleod, 2000:1) there was strong evidence that counselling is effective. The provision of workplace counselling (in education teacher support) is also cost-effective. This means that, through effective teacher support, teachers could be helped by means of effective stress management techniques, enabling them to put problems in perspective and to find their own solutions.

The aim of this article is to provide guidelines (as obtained from the responses of the teachers as well as the researcher) for teacher support to promote the wellness of teachers teaching in special needs schools. Responses from the teachers are shown in the following table (table 4.1) in terms of guidelines for support to promote wellness of teachers in special needs schools. The researcher used the essence of these responses to provide the guidelines for teacher support to promote the wellness of teachers teaching in special needs schools.

Table 4.1 Responses of the participants in interview 1, 2 and 3 in terms of support to promote wellness

Category	Subcategory	Respondents n = 12
The need for more support	❖ Community more actively involved ❖ More support staff needed ❖ More parental involvement needed ❖ More staff development programmes ❖ More funds needed ● More support from management needed	8 6 4 4 3 2
Develop personal coping strategies	❖ Implementing a successful and effective disciplinary system ❖ Do not get too involved – distance yourself emotionally ❖ Learn coping strategies from colleagues ❖ Teacher should have own children before teaching at a SEN school in order to gain more experience of children	4 2 2 2
Restructuring efficient school governance to enable better management, decision-making and support	❖ More consistency by the Department of Education ❖ Efficient school management	5 2
Changing the physical set-up in classes	❖ Smaller classes ❖ More homogenous classes	2 2
Teacher finding more time to relax and unwind	❖ Teachers doing recreational activities together	2

4.2.1 Guideline for addressing negative attitude of the learners

Teachers experienced that learners in general had a very negative attitude towards the school and especially towards the teachers. They claim that the learners' attitudes are challenging and provocative and that they are constantly pushing the boundaries. Burke (1996:270), Cooper (1993:130) and Lardner (2002:2) claim that a blame culture, diminished social respect

for teaching and a general feeling of being undervalued are some of the job pressures teachers experience. This has also been found by Hughes (2001:289) and Tatar and Yahav (1999:220), who also add to this low public self-esteem and increasingly difficult parents and learners as additional particular pressures that schools, and specifically teachers, face.

According to Cooper (1993:130), diminished social respect for teaching is one of the top five job pressures teachers experience, and therefore also one of the main reasons more and more teachers desert the classroom.

- **Negative attitude of learners towards school**

- Guideline: Implementing a successful and working disciplinary system

The tremendous effect that sincere, shoulder-to-shoulder compliments have on children, makes them (even the seemingly hard-boiled ones) sit up and want to do things to ensure they will get these honest appraisals. De Andres (1999:39) and Head (2003:3) suggest the following to nurture a positive and growing teacher-learner relationship:

- Enhance the awareness of individuals by making a mental note of something about each one that is unique and positive. This will help to separate the person from the behaviour when you need to respond to a breakdown in the classroom discipline.
- Teachers should make an effort to get to know learners as people and to let them get to know the teachers. Learners tend to like teachers who they perceive as genuine, honest and interested in them.
- Avoid using behaviour in class that can be damaging to self-esteem: criticism, ridicule, put-downs, comparing learners with each other and ignoring learners so that they feel invisible. The key is to use kindness and firmness at the same time.

If learners continue to be disrespectful to teachers or their co-workers, teachers could ask for solutions to this problem that seems to occur to them outside of class meetings.

- Guideline: More parental involvement

See Lack of parental involvement.

- **Negative attitude of learners towards teachers**

- Guideline: Nurture self-esteem among learners

People with a good self-esteem have a sense of inner well-being; they do not need to make uncomfortable remarks or threaten the security of others (Head, 2003). It is a well-known fact that teacher beliefs and teacher expectations can turn into self-fulfilled prophecies in the classroom. Head (2003:3) suggests the following to nurture the self-esteem among learners in a classroom:

- Teachers have to enhance their awareness of learners as individuals by making a mental note of something about each one that is positive and unique. This will help to separate the person from the behaviour when a teacher has to respond to a breakdown in classroom discipline or behaviour.
- Make an effort to get to know the learners as people and let them know about it.
- Avoid using behaviour in the class that can damage self-esteem: criticism, sarcasm, ridicule, put-downs, ignoring learners etc.
- Reward effort, not just performance. Highlight progress and make suggestions to where further effort is needed.
- Teachers should ensure that those learners with low self-esteem who need their attention and approval, receive it. This can be done by giving such learners small "jobs" to do in the classroom.
- Guideline: Teachers to have their own children first before teaching at a special needs school in order to gain more experience about children

Although research does not prove this, it was pointed out by the interviewed teachers that having one's own children gives one a sense of objectivity when working with learners in the school and one gains valuable experience about children.

- **Threats made by learners towards teachers**

- Guideline: Do not get too involved – distance yourself emotionally

Instead of getting too involved and having to suffer severe consequences to their emotional health, teachers should remember why they have chosen to be a special education teacher or a member of the special services staff. Focussing on the personal, professional, and philosophical reasons that give meaning to working hours will help them see emotional exhaustion in a different light. Teachers should keep their thoughts on the children they serve, their pride in professional accomplishments, and empathy for those whom society often rejects. This means that without getting too emotionally involved, teachers can see the demands that are made of them in a more objective light and this will help them to cope better (Shaw, Bensky & Dixon, 1981:1).

- Guideline: Implementing a successful and effective disciplinary system

See *Negative attitude of learners towards school*.

- Guideline: Learn coping strategies from colleagues

A collaborative involving and sharing of knowledge among educators forms part of the professional development strategies for teachers (Boss, 2000:1).

- **Vandalism of school's/teachers' property**

- Guideline: Implementing a successful and effective disciplinary system

See *Negative attitude of learners towards school*.

- Guideline: Teachers should have their own children first before teaching at a special needs school in order to gain more experience of children

See *Negative attitude of learners towards teachers*.

4.2.2 Guidelines for addressing the lack of support from outside school

The lack of support teachers experience has been identified as a major need to be addressed. Seven of the twelve teachers interviewed felt that staff at the school does not receive adequate support. Teachers also felt that because so the many posts were declared redundant, their work doubled (see *Dissatisfaction with Department of Education*), and that it is also expected of them to fulfil the roles of previously employed support staff. A lack of support services for specific disabilities and learning impairments is the main cause of stress among teachers, and specifically teachers teaching at special needs schools (MacCown, Driscoll & Roop, 1996:499). There also seemed to be very little parental involvement in these schools. A general lack in support from parties from outside the school and the general image society holds of teaching seem to be another pressure that teachers experience. Feelings of undervaluation and diminished social respect for teaching have been identified as causes of teacher stress (Cooper, 1993:130). A lack of support by the parents, the community and the community's view towards the teaching profession are all stressors as well (MacCown, Driscoll & Roop, 1996:499 and Donald, Lazarus & Loiwana, 2002:29).

- **Lack of community involvement**

- Guideline: Get the community more actively involved in the school

The community provides a unique resource, namely the opportunity to bridge the gap between the "real world" and that of the school. Several factors in combination contribute to successful parental and community involvement. The enthusiasm and commitment of the administration towards parental and community involvement is an important factor (Becher, 1984:3).

Several other factors, including a welcoming atmosphere, appreciation, consideration of parent needs and communication, also contribute towards the general tone of the relationship between parents and school (Berner, 1993:26).

The barriers most commonly identified as hindering successful parental and community involvement are:

- lack of time on the part of parents;
- administration and staff;
- apprehension on the part of both parents and teachers; and
- location or transportation problems.

Lack of time on the part of parents and community is viewed as a significant barrier by all groups at all schools (Becher, 1984:5). Work, family commitments and participation as volunteers in other community groups all contribute to the pressures on the time of parents and members of the community. Parents who help in the schools during the day are usually mothers who do not work outside the home. Even those individuals who are willing to find time to help have scheduling problems; for example, the six-day cycle often used in schools does not mesh with the five-day week of the rest of the world; and shift workers find it difficult to attend evening meetings. It is not, however, a lack of time but the use of time which is at issue (Henderson & Berea, 1994:6).

- **Lack of support staff involved**

- Guideline: More support staff needed

Most teachers in the special needs schools experience a strong need for more support staff. Teachers felt that invaluable support services they had in the past has been taken away and that the gap has not been filled, but only left to become bigger.

It is suggested that the system of support services in special needs schools should be based on systems and methods used by international experts, for example the British Educational System. In the British Educational system, the local educational authority (LEA) has four Special Educational Needs (SEN) Services which support schools (Lardner, 2002:1):

- Social Inclusion Service (SIS)
- Educational Psychology Service (EPS)
- Support for Learning Service (SLS)
- Special Educational Services (SES).

In addition, the SEN Inspector ensures constant high standards and helps each school to develop policy and practice, while each school has a SEN Co-ordinator (SENCO) who ensures the effective management of services.

The Social Inclusion Service includes behaviour and learning support, Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), school attendance service and support for excluded learners. These staff members support learners across the whole range of special needs, from behavioural, emotional and social needs to sensory impairment, specific learning difficulties and speech problems. They are available to work with schools on a day-to-day basis to give advice and additional specialist teaching, and to help schools and parents create Individual Education Plans. Specialist support for learners at risk of exclusion are also included and, via Education Welfare Service, promote regular attendance at school and access to the curriculum. The LEA also has two Pupil Referral Units for children with behavioural or emotional problems. Here, learners are helped with reintegration into schools or special provision is provided when this is not feasible (Lardner, 2002:1).

The Pre-School SEN Support Service assesses and supports the needs of pre-school children with special educational needs, and ensures a co-ordinated approach to supporting them as they start school. The Support for Learning Service works with schools to help develop Individual Education

Plans for learners with a SEN statement. School SEN co-ordinators are also advised on strategies to support learners.

- **Lack of parental involvement**

- Guideline: More parental involvement needed

At each stage of the reform process – planning, implementing and sustaining – it is helpful for schools to involve communities and parents. Parents and school communities offer valuable perspectives that may provide assistance during school decision-making processes (Pryor, 1994:11).

Parents are learners' first and often most influential teachers. Most parents care deeply for their children and offer teachers the opportunity to be partners in the teaching-learning process when healthy levels of involvement, communication, and trust exist (Becher, 1984:3). Parent participants mentioned several benefits of involvement for themselves. Parents who are involved at the school are better informed about facilities, resources and expectations at the school (Grolnick & Sloviazcek, 1994:237). The result therefore is that parents become better acquainted with their children's teachers and build a rapport that facilitates a cooperative approach to dealing with problems. They are also better able to help their children at home, such as assisting with homework. Some parents also gain confidence and self-esteem through their role as volunteers, which for some has led to a decision to apply for employment or return to school (Grolnick & Sloviaznick, 1994:238). Parents build up a network of other parents on whom they can call for support and help to deal with problems that arise with children. Parents are able to observe the school more closely and may become aware of situations which may cause them concern. They are then better informed and can bring these matters to the attention of the school more quickly.

- **Lack of guidelines**

- Guideline: More staff development programmes implemented, requests for professional development presentations on *teacher wellness*; to develop and implement teacher wellness programme

Community support is essential for creating the professional development opportunities teachers require to help all their students reach higher levels of learning. Parents and community members must understand that professional development is the linchpin for any reform efforts, not an addition to them. After all the reform policies are written, the true interpretation and implementation of reform is made in the individual classroom. Since 80 percent of the funding for professional development is controlled locally, the public must be convinced that professional development is an important part of teaching (Corcoran, 1995:1). Parental support is essential because scheduled changes to accommodate professional development may interfere with family schedules, which often are planned around the school day. If parents are to support this effort, they must feel that their children will benefit from the time teachers spend on professional development.

According to Corcoran (1995:1) and MacDiarmid (1995:2) teachers can take the following steps to ensure that time is provided for professional development:

- Establish a state-wide and/or regional task force on professional development that focuses on identifying the time, resources, and opportunities for professional development as well as on gaining the support of the public and policymakers for professional development. The task force would bring together a broad-based group of practitioners, policymakers and scholars in professional development.
- Work with a group involved with the establishment of professional development programmes to help teachers implement professional development.

- Meet with businesses, community groups, and parent organisations to explain school goals and the role of professional development in meeting them.
- Involve the school board, central office administrators and school staff members as a study group. This group can review the literature that suggests a need for additional time for professional development and consider alternative ways in which that time will be used.
- Discuss the elements of high-quality professional development and review descriptions and examples of professional development programmes.
- Study example plans for finding time for professional development from states, districts, and schools.
- Explore methods for creating time for professional development and brainstorm alternative methods for the school.
- Link school and individual improvement goals with purposes and use of the time created for professional development. Plan for how the time will be used.
- Develop a plan for implementing more time for professional development that includes communicating with parents and the community to ensure their support.
- Assess professional development programmes to ensure they are building bridges between where educators are now and where they need to be to meet the needs of their learners.
- Guideline: More support from management and efficient managerial skills

Lardner (2002:2) describes teachers as professionals who usually have high levels of personal commitment to do their tasks at hand. A management team that recognises this and encourages responsibility among its staff, can

decrease the levels of pressures and stress among staff. Lardner (2002:2) also identifies areas or guidelines where management can better support teachers to promote their wellness:

- Being effective at working on and enthusing staff.
- Having good decision-making and analytical skills.
- Having consistent values.
- Having the mental and physical staying power required of effective leaders.
- Being imaginative, yet practical.
- Being open to learning new ways of doing things.

- **Lack of funds**

- Guideline: More funds needed

Teachers' salaries need to be adjusted to be brought on a par with other professions (Travers & Cooper, 1996:177). This will ensure that the negative view society holds of the teaching profession will change when school staff, parents, and the community engage in a democratic decision-making process, and develop a sense of joint ownership of local schools.

- **Negative view of the society**

- Guideline: Community more actively involved

There is a need for community organising groups, working in low- to moderate-income communities, turning their attention to improving public education for their constituents (Brown, Gold & Simon, 2002:1). These groups work at the neighbourhood and policy levels to address the range of issues urban public schools face – such as overcrowding, deteriorating facilities, inadequate funding, high turnover of staff, lack of up-to-date textbooks, and children who perform below grade level. Involvement by the community means bringing new resources to schools with the highest need,

improving school climate, and creating better conditions for teaching and learning. When school staff, parents and the community engage in a democratic decision-making process, they develop a sense of joint ownership of local schools. Community and family involvement creates joint partnerships to support learners' health and academic achievements by making the most of available resources and expertise (Marx & Northrop, 2000:22).

4.2.3 Guideline for addressing dissatisfaction with the Department of Education

Most of the teachers interviewed indicated some dissatisfaction with the way the Department of Education managed the system. Not only was the failure of the Department of Education to provide funds a serious problem for the teachers interviewed, the lack of guidelines also increased the demands made on them. Teachers felt uncertain of what was expected of them and they felt that they received no guidance to help them reach outcomes. They felt that the Department of Education was very unpredictable and they had learnt to expect the worst. A continuous change in outcomes and a continuous change in the method of assessment, make teachers in South Africa feel de-professionalised (Hughes, 2001:289), and this was also the experience of the teachers in this research.

- **Inconsistency of the Department of Education**

- Guideline: More consistency on the part of the Department of Education

Any changes have to be motivated. Effective change implies teachers understanding the rationale and taking full ownership of the changes. Planning and communication are essential if change is to work (Travers & Cooper, 1996:178).

- **Less teaching positions, same amount of work**

- Guideline: More support from management and efficient managerial skills

See More support from school management.

- **Department unaware of what really goes on in special needs schools (schools for learners with barriers to learning)**
- Guideline: More consistency on the part of the Department of Education

See Inconsistency of the Department of Education.

It is important for the authorities of the Department of Education and individuals implementing the changes to face the reality of what really goes on in special needs schools. Travers and Coopers (1996:179) advise that authorities spend certain amounts of time at schools, in classrooms, in staffrooms etc. This will ensure that the changes the authorities want to make, can work in practice.

4.2.4 Guideline for addressing the difficult working conditions teachers face in the classroom as a barriers to effective teaching

Teachers felt that certain factors or conditions in the classroom barred them from teaching effectively and placed more demands on them. A lack of information from the government and provincial departments (Hughes, 2001:289), physical numbers in classes, diverse abilities in one class, dissatisfaction with the curriculum, constant changes within the profession (Cooper & Kelly, 1993:130) and the management of outcomes-based education are all contributing factors that devalue the basic classroom work (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002:29) for which most teachers joined the profession (Blair, 2003:4).

- **Classes which are too big**
- Guideline: Smaller classes

It is essential that learners with barriers to learning receive support, and more specifically, one-to-one (individual) support to aid them in their learning process. Classes need to be made smaller or, according to Lardner (2002:2), more support staff needs to be employed. Teachers

need support staff to help support learners across the whole range of special needs, from behavioural, emotional and social needs to sensory impairment, specific learning difficulties and speech problems.

- **Learners with highly differentiated learning abilities in one class**

- Guideline: More homogenous classes (ability-wise)

The nature of any special needs classroom (learners with barriers to learning) is based on differentiated abilities. For teachers to ensure optimal learning for every learner in a class, support services are needed (see *Lack of Support Staff*) More support staff should be employed in special needs schools (Lardner, 2002:2).

- Guideline: Learn coping strategies from colleagues

A collaboration involving the sharing of knowledge among educators forms part of the professional development strategies for teachers (Boss, 2000:1).

- **Language barriers**

- Guideline: More support from community

See *Lack of community involvement*.

- Guideline: More support from parents

See *Lack of parental involvement*.

- Guideline: Strategies to improve learning through a second language

There are many different teaching and remedial techniques to develop language in learners with language barriers to learning. Donalds, Lazarus and Lotwana (2002:213) identified the following steps:

- Getting learners to talk about something meaningful in their lives.
- Deciding, together with students, what the main ideas are.

- The teacher should write it down in simple, clear and direct sentences.
- Getting learners to copy down these sentences. (With progress each learner can decide and write what he/she wants to.)
- Encouraging learners to illustrate their sentences.
- Using this material – which can be stapled together into simple “books” – as reading material for individuals or the group as a whole.
- **Lack of teaching resources**
 - Guideline: More support from the government
See Lack of support services from outside the school.
 - Guideline: Learn coping strategies from colleagues
See Threats made by learners.
- **Too much paper work and administration in addition to teaching**
 - Guideline: More consistency from the Department of Education
See Dissatisfaction with the Department of Education.
- **Learners' lack of future plans after school makes teaching pointless for teachers**
 - Guideline: Do not get too involved – distance yourself emotionally
See Negative attitude of learners.
- **Vague objective/descriptors of the OBE system**
 - Guideline: More consistency from the Department of Education
See Dissatisfaction with the Department of Education.

- **Learners promoted to the next grade regardless of any progress made**

- Guideline: More effective methods of assessment

A policy for assessment should be implemented to provide teachers with sensible and effective strategies to assess learners. This should also serve as a guide for the teachers as to the contents of the learners' learning (Smylie, 1999:72).

4.2.5 Guideline for addressing the experience of professional overload stress and its effect on the physical part-system:

- **Multidimensional tasks teachers have to perform**

- Guideline: More support from management

See Lack of guidelines.

- Guideline: More staff development programmes implemented, requests for professional development presentations on *teacher wellness*; to develop and implement teacher wellness programme

See Lack of guidelines.

- **Hectic schedule – too much to do in too little time**

- Guideline: Teachers doing recreational activities together

Work settings which support positive development of energy, vigour, involvement, dedication, absorption and effectiveness among employees should be successful in promoting their well-being and productivity (Hughes, 2001:294).

- Guideline: More support from management

See Lack of guidelines.

- Guideline: Strategies to relieve pressure

School-based programmes to promote well-being and reduce burnout should include the following key elements according to Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter (2001:399):

- in-service programmes that account for interests, strengths, weaknesses and limitations,
- approaches that overcome avoidance motivation,
- structure that provides personalised support and guidance, and
- instruction designed to enhance and expand intrinsic motivation for learning and problem solving.

- **Teachers having to constantly motivate learners**

- Guideline: Do not get too involved – distance yourself emotionally

See *Negative attitude of learners*.

- Guideline: Strategies to motivate learners

In order to grow in understanding, learners of any age and ability have to be challenged to think differently from the way they currently do – to move forward, or up a step, in their construction of knowledge. They also make the point that the challenge has to connect effectively with where individuals are at in their understanding. According to Donalds, Lazarus and Lolwana (2002:129) presenting learners with activities and learning materials that connect with their interest or challenge them at a particular stage of development, will be motivating. Cooperative learning has also been found to increase academic achievement in general, and problem solving more particularly, in comparison with conventional methods (Donalds, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002:130).

4.2.6 Guideline for addressing difficult socio-economic circumstances of the learners

- **Inadequate resources due to poverty**

- Guideline: Implementing social support networks

Social support networks are crucial in balancing and containing the kinds of strain resulting from poverty and inadequate resources (Donald, Lazarus & Lotwana, 2002:208). Research has consistently shown that the stronger the support networks, the more parents can withstand the stress associated with poverty (Cochran & Brassard, 1979) in Donalds, Lazarus & Lotwana (2002. 213).

- **Unresponsive parents**

- Guideline: More parental involvement

See *Lack of support services from outside the school.*

- **Difficult circumstances at home**

- Guideline: More government-provided support services that cater for teachers' and learners' needs

See *Lack of support services from outside the school.*

- Guideline: Implementing social support networks

According to Marx and Northrop (2000:22) learners face a multitude of health-related challenges: unsafe neighbourhoods, violence, family problems and chronic, untreated health conditions as well as individual problems such as asthma, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, drugs and even eating disorders.

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the stronger the support networks, the more parents can withstand the stress associated with poverty (Cochran & Brassard, 1979).

4.3 GUIDELINES FOR TEACHER SUPPORT TO PROMOTE THE WELLNESS OF TEACHERS IN SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOOLS – AFFECTED WELLNESS

4.3.1 Guideline for addressing negative effect on the emotions

- **Affected wellness: Feelings of frustration towards the profession**
- Guideline: Developing a support network that offers a range of support for teachers

In South Africa the development of a support network that offers support for teachers has not yet been fully developed or implemented. Lauzon (1999:1) describes the current support network for teachers in the United Kingdom who experience the day-to-day mechanics of teaching as stressful or frustrating. This support network offers a range of support in various forms:

➤ **Government initiatives**

The British government has developed the National Healthy Schools Standard that offers a range of support for teachers teaching at any key stage. Teachers have access to an electronic website or a teacher support phone line that offers them invaluable information on how to cope and promote their learners' and their own wellness (Kickbush & Jones, 1996:1).

➤ **Policy development**

Schools can develop an internal support mechanism by developing a shared stress management policy. These may be described as a stress, well-being or employee wellness policy, but all cover a similar range of issues. In conjunction with the staff members in school, management can

develop a statement relevant to their school, which could be something along the lines of:

"This school is committed to developing a working environment that promotes the health and wellbeing of staff, learners and the organisation as a whole."

➤ **Monitoring**

According to Lauzon (1999:1) it helps to monitor the school regularly for its well-being and to assess all the activities of the school against well-being criteria.

➤ **Unions**

Teacher unions or professional support groups will be familiar with issues relating to stress and will have developed a number of responses teachers may find helpful.

➤ **Networking**

It may also be a useful approach to informally meet with teachers from other schools at a similar level.

➤ **External consultants**

Local consultants familiar with stress-related initiatives relevant to teachers' situations may be helpful.

● **Affected wellness: Feeling emotionally drained after a school day**

○ **Guideline: Reflect on issues more objectively**

Instead of getting too involved and having to suffer severe consequences of their emotional health, teachers should remember why they have chosen to be a special education teacher or member of the special services staff. Focusing on the personal, professional and philosophical reasons that give meaning to working hours will put emotional exhaustion in a different light. Teachers should keep their thoughts on the children

they serve, their pride in professional accomplishments and empathy for those whom society often rejects. This means that teachers can face the demands they meet in a more objective light, without getting too emotionally involved, and this will help them to cope better (Shaw, Bensky & Dixon, 1981:1).

- **Affected wellness: Not in control of emotions**

- Guideline: Teachers should nurture their own self-esteem

Teachers should strive to feel as good as they can about themselves. A teacher with a good self-esteem is more likely to encourage learners in ways of learning that are effective in improving self-esteem and enhancing performance (Head, 2003:3).

- Guideline: Reflect on issues more objectively

See Emotionally drained after a school day

- **Affected wellness: Emotionally distanced from school and learners**

Guideline: Implement strategies to cope with pressure

Posen (1995:3) suggests two important strategies for the management of pressure: pacing (monitoring and adjusting pressure levels) and taking breaks (something that many teachers – and schools – ignore).

Other strategies suggested by Posen (1995) include:

- decrease or discontinue caffeine,
- take regular exercise,
- learn relaxation techniques,
- get enough sleep,
- achieve an adequate work-leisure balance,
- modify unrealistic expectations,

- change the way you look at things by "reframing",
 - change unfounded opinions, and
 - make use of humour.
- **Affected wellness: Experiencing fear and anxiety when going to school**

- Guideline: Treat the symptoms

A teacher experiencing fear and anxiety when going to school is hampered with stress because fear and anxiety; Lardner (2002:3) describe fear and anxiety as "fellow-travellers to stress". Worrying and anxiety must be changed into problem-solving. One of the first steps to regain a sense of power is giving oneself some time and space. It is essential to take it slowly, one step at a time.

- **Affected wellness: Depression**

- Guideline: Management of the problem

Lardner (2002:3) identifies the following steps for the management of stress and depression:

- Assessing the problems

The first step with any problem is to recognise that the problem exists.

- Changing thinking

Some of the most productive and rewarding techniques involve adjusting the way one thinks about a situation. Small shifts can quickly free up creative energy and increase options.

- Keep fit

A key component of any approach involves making a change, doing something different. This often involves doing something physical, not

necessarily taking up jogging or going down the local gym. Even a quick 20-minute walk can help to relieve pressure and increase serotonin levels. In the slightly longer term, changes in the daily diet will have beneficiary physical and emotional effects. Changing to a healthy diet is a good thing in itself but there are also advantages in learning to take the time to prepare and cook fresh food. This can be a relaxing activity in itself. The consumption of alcohol or caffeine should be kept to a minimum.

➤ **Relaxation**

Relaxation means doing something that forces one to think about something other than work (and school), something that needs active involvement. Learn new relaxation techniques. There is a great variety of approaches available: courses, books, tapes, exercises etc.

➤ **Rest**

Sleep is also very important and, again, there are a number of guidelines available to getting a good rest.

➤ **House doctors/specialists/psychologists**

Visiting a doctor or specialist when one is feeling particularly low, is an important part of planning to get well.

4.3.2 Negative effect on the self-concept

• **Affected wellness: Feelings of helplessness**

○ **Guideline: Setting realistic expectations**

As a teacher, one can alleviate some of the stress caused by role overload by setting realistic expectations for oneself (Greer & Greer, 1992:170). As part of their pre-service education, special education teachers are taught to identify the individual needs of learners and to develop individualised programmes for these students. Thus, teachers may develop the expectation that being a successful teacher translates into the ability to solve

all learners' problems (Greer & Greer, 1992:170). Although this expectation is commendable, it is not always possible, particularly for beginner teachers. To competently manage the challenging, diverse needs of learners with disabilities, professionals need to perform at a high level in the areas of curriculum, behaviour management, instructional management, collaboration, and paperwork completion. Attempting perfection in each of these areas, especially early in one's career, may be unrealistic.

- **Affected wellness: Changes in character**

- Guideline: Using specific coping strategies

Many teachers enter special education because of their desire to help children and youth. While the desire to help others can lead to strong learner-teacher relationships and can provide teachers with commitment to education, this same desire can also make it difficult for teachers to leave their work at the schoolhouse door. In fact, professionals who are empathic, sympathetic, dedicated, idealistic, and people-oriented are vulnerable to experiencing excessive stress (Cherniss, 1980:3; Pines, Aronson & Kafry, 1981:1), particularly when they face the multitude of problems that learners with disabilities present. Although special education teachers have many reasons to feel stressed, they can deal with stress more effectively by using specific strategies.

- **Affected wellness: Feeling incompetent/incapable/uncertain**

- Guideline: Teachers should nurture their own self-esteem.

See Not in control of emotions.

- Guideline: Setting realistic expectations

See Feelings of helplessness.

4.3.3 Guideline for addressing the effect on interpersonal relationships

- **Affected wellness: Constantly feeling emotionally responsible for the learners' wellness**

- Guideline: Learners responsible for their own actions

Learners should be encouraged to take responsibilities of their own actions (Rogers, 1996:62). They should be willing to bear the consequences of their actions even if those consequences are negative.

- **Affected wellness: Personal life affected**

- Guideline: Make distinctions between professional and personal life

Today, a host of sociological factors, such as poverty, child abuse, and single parent families, affect many school-age children. Consequently, teachers are faced with educating students who present a complex array of problems. It is crucial to be able to show empathy for learners and their problems without being consumed by these problems. Teachers who become closely involved and preoccupied with the personal and family problems of their learners may increase their vulnerability to burnout (Greer & Greer, 1992:170). When leaving the classroom, do the mental work necessary to leave thoughts of learners in the work environment. Set aside a time once or twice a week to discuss problems with another teacher, friend, or significant other. This will help to vent frustrations (Brownell, 1997:1). Try to find solutions to the stressful situation. Repeated discussion about one's frustrations without any solution only heightens them.

- **Affected wellness: Negative projections towards colleagues and learners**

- Guideline: Implementing problem solving strategies among staff members

Problem solving strategies should be implemented among staff members to avoid and manage conflict. Van der Merwe (2003:34,35) identifies the following guidelines for effective problem solving strategies:

- problem identification and definition,
- possible solutions,
- evaluation of possible solutions,
- choosing the best solution,
- implementing the solution, and
- reflecting on the solution.

4.3.4 Guideline for addressing the experience of stress and its effect on the physical part-system

- **Affected wellness: Stress and physical symptoms of stress**

- Guideline: Implementing a teacher wellness model

There are many different wellness models teachers can follow. Lauzon (1999:2) identifies the following model that links teacher wellness to five dimensions of wellness to relieve stress and promote wellness in teachers:

- **Nutrition:** From cardiovascular diseases to obesity, to diabetes, eating like kings and queens are starting to take its toll. Changing diets to basic menus, which includes eating grains and cereals, vegetables and fruits, low-fat milk products and low-fat meat and alternatives, can make a difference.
- **Physical fitness:** Anyone can benefit from a regular exercise programme. Make fitness fun and set up for success by starting out easy and working up gradually. This dimension of wellness can be incorporated into daily living.

- **Stress management:** Determining the stress factors in one's life is one thing, but doing something about it is another. Meditation, positive visualisation, taking time out, listening to music, journal writing, and regular physical activity are all things teachers could do to manage their stress levels. Mini-meditation sessions and positive self-talk tapes to which you can listen on the way to school, practicing a religion and sessions on stress management the day before an important event can all help.
- **Environmental sensitivity:** Living lightly on the earth, helping in any way to keep the planet healthy, is important as personal wellness depends on planetary wellness. Awareness of this dimension of wellness also links with the other dimensions of wellness.
- **Self-responsibility:** All dimensions of wellness are important, but self-responsibility seems more so than all the rest. Personal accountability for one's own lifestyle is of the utmost importance. Teachers cannot assume that ministry officials, school board trustees, administrators, parents and learners are totally to blame for their stress levels and health issues. In every organisation and profession there are problems, but there is much to do to enhance one's wellness by implementing a teacher wellness plan.

4.4 DISCUSSION

Changes in the current education system have created a variety of changes in the working conditions of teachers across the whole of South Africa. Many educators (also the respondents interviewed) believe that these ongoing changes have created not only a demanding and stressful working condition, but also a stress epidemic. Several guidelines surfaced for intervention to promote the wellness of teachers, focussing on teachers in special needs schools.

Firstly, parents and the community should become more involved in special needs schools as the enthusiasm and commitment of the administration to

parental and community involvement is an important factor. The lack of support services in schools leads to the suggestion that the government bases its system of support services in special needs schools on systems and methods used by international experts, for example the British Educational System, that has been known to be successful.

More support from management and efficiency in managing the special needs school are essential. Management teams should recognise the high levels of personal commitment special needs teachers put into their work and encourage responsibility among its staff. Professional development presentations which also focuses on teacher wellness, as well as consulting services to develop and implement teacher wellness programmes, should become a greater priority in schools.

The government should adjust teachers' salaries, so that it is brought on a par with other professions. This will also have a positive effect of the view society holds in general of the profession. More consistency is required on the part of the Department of Education. Any changes have to be motivated. Effective change implies that teachers understand the rationale and take full ownership of the change. It is important that both the decision makers in the Department of Education and the individuals who implement the changes must face the reality of what really goes on in special needs schools.

The teacher-learner relationship will also thrive if a successful and effective disciplinary system can be implemented. Once this is done, learners and teachers will know exactly what their boundaries are, where both parties can nurture a positive and growing teacher-learner relationship. It is essential that learners with barriers to learning receive the support and, more specifically, one-to-one (individual) support to aid them in their learning process. Classes need to be made smaller, or more support staff must be employed. A policy for assessment should be implemented to provide teachers with sensible and effective strategies to assess learners.

Developing a support network that offers a range of support for teachers can be beneficial to teachers that suffer emotionally from the demands and

needs they daily face. Teachers can alleviate some of the stress caused by role overload by setting realistic expectations for themselves. Teachers need to find personal coping strategies that work for them individually. Although special education teachers have many reasons to feel stressed, they can more effectively deal with pressures by using specific strategies. They should try to find solutions to the stressful situation. Repeated discussion about one's frustrations without any solution only heightens these frustrations. There are many diverse ways to manage stress and pressures, and teachers need to find a strategy in accordance with their personal needs and lifestyles. Personal accountability for one's own lifestyle is of the utmost importance.

4.5 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it became clear that there is a definite need among teachers in special needs schools for teacher support to promote their wellness. In this article the guidelines provided for teacher support could in the long run be effective to promote teacher wellness. Ryrie (2003:1) also estimated this to have an economic impact on the education system in terms of lost teaching time and additional costs of replacement teachers. Increasing stress and resulting sickness would seem likely if current trends continue. As burned-out, stressed teachers negatively affect themselves, their students and the educational system, it would directly affect a school's ability to develop the physical and emotional health of members within the school and thereby to support and meeting the standards of a health promoting school (Kickbush & Jones, 1996:279). Teachers cannot assume that ministry officials, school board trustees, administrators, parents and students are totally to blame for their stress levels and health issues. In every organisation and profession there are problems, but much can be done to enhance personal wellness by implementing a teacher wellness plan.

Experts on wellness suggest that attention to personal lifestyle can improve well-being. Making healthy lifestyle choices can increase levels of energy, job satisfaction and coping mechanisms (Hettler, 1994; Peltier, 1994:14).

Healthy and well employees are also more productive employees (Blanchard & Tager, 1985:1).

Teachers play such a valuable role in helping our children grow up (Oosthuizen, Botha, Brey, Mentz, Van Kerken & Van der Westhuizen, 1999:57), that any opportunity to promote their physical and mental health should be seized (Evers & Tomic, 2003:1). It is thus necessary to develop and promote the use of programmes and instruments to identify, predict and alleviate specific needs, stressors, and demands that can be detrimental to health, and to provide and support guidelines to promote wellness in teachers.

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CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The research is summarised in this chapter (5.2). The limitations are discussed in section 5.3, and in section 5.4 the conclusions obtained from the interviews as well as proposed guidelines for intervention are discussed. In section 5.5 recommendations are made, while section 5.6 provides concluding remarks.

5.2 SUMMARY

In South Africa the history of special needs education and education support services reflects extreme neglect. There is also a lack of support to allow the majority of learners to take control of their health and to support a healthy lifestyle. Schools have to be reformed into centres from which the community as a whole can benefit. This means that the health, safety, well-being and educational progress of pupils should not be jeopardised by teachers who are physically and mentally unfit to teach. Many factors affect teachers' wellness and their ability to teach well.

The reality is that the ability of teachers and other educational staff to meet the demands placed upon them is severely hampered by stress. The levels of stress involved in teaching are also a disincentive for potential recruits to the profession. In South Africa teachers are also under immense pressure (Swart & Reddy, 1999:47). They are daily faced with demands made on

them by different variables in the school environment while their own needs are hardly recognised. Many of these professionals are tired, bedraggled and stressed individuals. They are often more likely to leave the teaching profession than staying (Blair, 2002: 5). According to Swart and Reddy (1998:48) this is a global phenomenon that affects many countries, and South Africa is no exception.

Due to all the demands made on them, while their own needs are unanswered, these individuals typically suffer from work stress, emotional exhaustion and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment.

In light of these factors it was deemed imperative to investigate the effect of the experienced demands on the wellness of teachers in special needs schools and to provide guidelines for support concerning the needs that teachers have due to the demands experienced by them, for the promotion of their wellness.

In chapter 2 a brief description of the qualitative research design was given. This was considered to be the appropriate choice of research since the research was aimed at gaining in-depth insight into the demands experienced by teachers in special needs schools with the aim to provide guidelines for support concerning the needs that teachers have due to the demands experienced by them, for the promotion of the wellness.

Chapter 3 was in the form of an article focusing on the results obtained from the demands and needs experienced by teachers in a special needs school in the qualitative focus group interviews. It also focused on the effect these demands and needs had on the wellness of the respondents.

Chapter 4 was a second article, focusing on specific guidelines for teacher support to promote wellness of teachers in special needs school. Guidelines were provided for teachers who had needs due to the demands they experienced that affected their wellness.

5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

During the study the researcher experienced the following limitations:

- Of the twelve teachers interviewed, most were white. This is because most of the teachers at the schools which were contacted were white, and the participants were randomly selected.
- The interviews took place in the last and second last month of the school year. This could have lead to teachers being more exhausted, feeling the strain of teaching more intensely and reporting more negative experiences than if interviewed earlier in the year.
- The "special schools" selected (schools for learners with barriers to learning) included a school for learners with barriers to learning that could be described as "severe difficulties" (learners with severe mental handicaps or suffering from neurological disabilities, hearing disabilities, visual disabilities and physical disabilities) and schools for learners with "mild difficulties", in other words, learners who experience barriers to learning due to factors such as mild and moderate mental handicaps, poverty, health risks, abuse, communication difficulties, specific learning difficulties and emotional difficulties etc. Teachers teaching at the different schools faced and experienced different demands and needs due to the nature of their teaching.
- Teachers were encouraged to think freely and behave as they please without interruption and without the possibility that their private thoughts or behaviour would ever be misused to embarrass them. Nevertheless, some of the younger teachers might possibly have been intimidated by their senior colleagues and it is possible that not all questions were equally truthfully answered.
- The subjectivity of the researcher may have influenced some of the interpretations and conclusions of the study, as the researcher personally knew some of the interviewees.

5.4 CONCLUSION

Findings that have been made with regard to the aim of this study are the following:

5.4.1 Specific Aim 1: To determine the demands experienced by teachers as stressful in special needs school (article 1)

With the analysis of the interviews, the following six main areas or categories were identified, each with a number of related sub-areas or categories.

- Negative attitude of the learners

The negative attitude of the learners in general was a common problem in all three schools where interviews were held. It seems the learners had a careless attitude towards learning, the school and the teachers (see 3.4.1).

- Dissatisfaction with the Department of Education's management .

Teacher felt uncertain about what was expected of them and with the way in which the Department of Education managed and guided them (see 3.4.2).

- Lack of support from outside the school

The lack of support staff, parental involvement and support by society added to teacher stress (see 3.4.3).

- The experience of professional overload (see 6.4.1.4)

As a result of the multidimensional tasks teachers have to perform along with vast amounts of paperwork, administration and extramural activities, they experience professional overload (see 3.4.4).

- Difficult working conditions teachers face in the classroom as barriers to effective teaching

Big classes, learners with highly differentiated abilities in one class, lack of teaching resources and vague objectives are all potential barriers to effective teaching (see 3.4.5).

- Difficult socio-economic circumstances of the learners (see 6.4.1.6)

Poverty, high rates of unemployment, poor health, family breakdown and unresponsive parents make teaching these learners very demanding for most teachers (see 3.4.6).

5.4.2 Specific Aim 2: To determine the effect of the experienced demands on the wellness of teachers in special needs schools (article 1)

All teachers interviewed experienced daily demands and had unanswered needs that affected their teaching and their wellness in some or other way. The way in which the stressors (the demands, pressures and unanswered needs experienced by the subjects) affected the wellness were prioritised in four main areas:

- Negative effect on the emotions

Fear, anxiety, feelings of frustration towards the profession and feelings of being emotionally drained and distanced are some of the maladaptive coping mechanisms mentioned by teachers (see 3.5.1).

- Negative effect on the self-concept

Depersonalisation and preoccupation with negative self-talk and uncertainty are all symptoms identified by teachers as having an impact on their wellness (see 3.5.2).

- Effect on interpersonal relationships

Teachers' personal lives are affected by constant feelings of being emotionally responsible for learners' wellness and the effect it has on teachers' personal lives, as well as by the negative way in which they experience and project their colleagues (see 3.5.3).

- Experience of stress and its effect on the physical part-system

High intensities of stress and physical symptoms of stress were also experienced (3.5.4).

5.4.3 Specific Aim 3: To provide guidelines for support concerning the needs that teachers have due to the demands experienced by them, for the promotion of their wellness (article 2)

Guidelines for support to promote the wellness of such stressed teachers were categorised in the following main categories:

Guideline for addressing the lack of support services from outside the school (see 4.2.2)

- Guideline: The community more actively involved in the school

The community provides a unique resource, namely the opportunity to bridge the gap between the "real world" and that of the school.

- Guideline: More support staff needed

A definite need for more support staff is experienced by most teachers in a special needs school.

- More staff development programmes implemented.

Requests for professional development presentations on teacher wellness to develop and implement teacher wellness programmes should be met.

- More support from management and efficient managerial skills

Management teams should recognise and encourage responsibility among its staff to decrease its levels of pressures and stress.

- More funds needed

Teachers' salaries need to be adjusted to be brought on a par with other professions.

Guideline for addressing the negative attitude of the learners (see 4.2.1)

- Implementing a successful and working disciplinary system

Teachers should nurture a positive and growing teacher-learner relationship.

- Nurture self-esteem among learners

Teacher beliefs and teacher expectations can turn into self-fulfilled prophecies in the classroom and increase positive classroom environment.

- Teachers should have their own children first before teaching at a special needs school in order to gain more experience about children

This will give teachers a sense of objectivity when working with learners in the school and will help them gain valuable experience about children.

- Do not get too involved – distance yourself emotionally

Focusing on the personal, professional, and philosophical reasons that give meaning to working hours will decrease symptoms of emotional exhaustion.

- Learn coping strategies from colleagues

A collaboration involving the sharing of knowledge among educators forms part of the professional development strategies for teachers.

Guideline for addressing dissatisfaction with the Department of education (see 4.2.3)

- More consistency on the part of the Department of Education

Any changes have to be motivated.

Guideline for addressing difficult working conditions teachers face in the classroom as barriers to effective teaching (see 4.2.4):

- Smaller classes

It is essential that learners with barriers to learning receive support, and more specifically, one-to-one (individual) support, to aid them in their learning process.

- More homogenous classes (ability-wise)

The nature of any special needs classroom (learners with barriers to learning) is based on differentiated abilities.

- Strategies to improve learning through a second language

There are many different teaching and remedial techniques to develop language in learners with language barriers to learning.

- More effective methods of assessment

A policy for assessment should be implemented to provide teachers with sensible and effective strategies to assess learners.

Guideline for addressing the experience of professional overload and stress and its effect on the physical part-system (see 4.2.5):

- Teachers doing recreational activities together

Work settings which support positive development of energy, vigour, involvement, dedication, absorption, and effectiveness among employees should be successful in promoting their well-being and productivity.

- Strategies to relieve pressure

In-service programmes that account for interests, strengths, weaknesses and limitations.

- Strategies to motivate learners

Cooperative learning has also been found to increase academic achievement generally, and problem solving more particularly, in comparison with conventional methods.

Guideline for addressing difficult socio-economic circumstances of the learners (see 4.2.6)

- Implementing social support networks

Social support networks are crucial in balancing and containing the kinds of strain resulting from poverty and inadequate resources.

5.4.4 Specific Aim 4: To provide guidelines for the promotion of the effected wellness of teachers due to the demands they experience (article 2)

- **Affected wellness: Feelings of frustration towards the profession (see 4.3.1)**
- Guideline: Developing a support network that offers a range of support for teachers

In South Africa the development of a support network that offers support for teachers has not yet been fully developed or implemented.

- **Affected wellness: Feeling emotionally drained after a school day (see 4.3.1)**
- Guideline: Reflect on issues more objectively

Focusing on the personal, professional, and philosophical reasons that give meaning to working hours will put emotional exhaustion in a different light.

- **Affected wellness: Not in control of emotions (see 4.3.1)**

- Guideline: Teachers should nurture their own self-esteem

Teachers should strive to feel as good as they can about themselves.

- **Affected wellness: Feeling emotionally distanced from school and learners (see 4.3.1).**

- Guideline: Implement strategies to cope under pressure

Pacing (monitoring and adjusting pressure levels) and taking breaks (something that many teachers – and schools – ignore) are some of the coping strategies suggested.

- **Affected wellness: Experiencing fear and anxiety when going to school (see 4.3.1)**

- Guideline: Treat the symptoms

One of the first steps to regain a sense of power is giving oneself some time and space. It is essential to take it slowly, one step at a time.

- **Affected wellness: Depression (see 4.3.1)**

- Guideline: Management of the problem

Identify steps for the management of stress and depression.

- **Affected wellness: Feelings of helplessness (see 4.3.2)**

- Guideline: Setting realistic expectations

As part of their pre-service education, special education teachers are taught to identify the individual needs of students and to develop individualised but realistic programmes for these learners.

- **Affected wellness: Changes in character (see 4.3.2)**

- Guideline: Using specific coping strategies

To be able to deal with stress more effectively, specific coping strategies should be implemented.

- **Affected wellness: Constantly feeling emotionally responsible for the learners' wellness (see 4.3.3)**
- Guideline: Learners responsible for their own actions

Learners should be encouraged to take responsibilities of their own actions.

- Guideline: Make distinctions between professional and personal life

Setting time aside will help to vent frustrations.

- **Affected wellness: Negative projections towards colleagues and learners (see 4.3.3)**
- Guideline: Implementing problem solving strategies among staff members.

Problem solving strategies should be implemented among staff members to avoid and manage conflict.

- **Affected wellness: Stress and physical symptoms of stress (see 4.3.4)**
- Guideline: Implementing a teacher-wellness model

There are many different wellness models available which teachers can follow.

5.4.5 General Aim: The investigation of the needs and demands experienced by teachers in special needs schools and how these affect their wellness, with the aim of providing guidelines for teacher support to promote wellness

The needs and demands of teachers in special needs schools were investigated in order to provide guidelines for teacher support to promote wellness. According to the data obtained from this study, it is thus clear that

teachers in special needs schools in South Africa are severely hampered by stress and many factors that can potentially affect their wellness. They are faced with numerous demands made on them by various variables in and out of the school environment. Due to all the demands made on them, while many of their own needs are not met, the wellness of these teachers is negatively affected. Learners in general need mentally and physically healthy and functional adults who can guide them as they find their way in the world, and learners with barriers to learning even more so. The provision of guidelines to develop and promote the use of programmes and instruments to identify, predict, prevent and alleviate specific needs, stressors and demands that can be detrimental to health and wellness, is therefore essential for teacher support, to promote the wellness of teachers in special needs schools.

The general aims of this study were therefore achieved.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher can offer the following recommendations based on the research findings and literature control:

- Similar research can be undertaken to identify the demands and needs experienced as stressors by teachers at other educational institutions, like primary schools, secondary schools, private schools, he farm schools etc., in order to promote the wellness of these teachers.
- There is a definite need for more support to be provided for teachers at special needs schools. This can begin by provincial educational departments providing more support staff, funds and staff development programmes to equip these teachers better for their tasks. Professional and other external service providers, such as psychologists, counsellors, unions and other private partners, should be used. Parents and the community as a whole should get more involved with school activities, so that teachers are better supported and less opposed and ridiculed. Being

part of a staff, teachers can also learn coping strategies from their colleagues – this means teachers can provide support to or gain support from colleagues. Teachers also need to feel that they are supported by management and that the principal's door is always open to them.

- Teachers have to implement a disciplinary system that works for them personally in class and that co-ordinates with the school's behavioural policy. This should be consistent, so that the learners know the boundaries in class and what is expected from them.
- Teachers have to remain objective in class at all times and must never "play their last card". They should learn not to become emotionally involved but to remain (emotionally) at a distance. This does not mean that teachers should become aloof and impersonal in class, but as a coping mechanism, they should not get too personally involved.
- School management needs to provide better school governance. Teachers need a supportive and consistent top management team. They need to have the candour to approach management with any issues that needs discussion and support. This is essential, as the lack of leadership in schools could also lead to de-motivation of teachers, lack of communication, stress related to the lack of leadership, lack of job satisfaction, inconsistencies in adhering to values, lack of staff and learner discipline, and role-players involved do meet the criteria of their work description. Management in schools should be structured so that clear leadership is provided.
- The physical set-up in classes needs to be changed. Smaller classes will help with greater class cohesion and better seating arrangements that will promote accessibility for students with physical and other disabilities. Since classes are bound to have learners with diverse abilities in one class, the quality of the regular curriculum as well as the teaching/learning process within it, need to be developed in such a way that it becomes more flexible and capable of accommodating and addressing all barriers to learning in realistic and effective ways.

- Teachers have to make a point of finding time to relax, especially if it can be done with colleagues. They need to do something that forces them to think of something other than work; something that needs their active attention. Recovering from "high alert" positions in which the human body may have been during the day is important, and sometimes hard to do. Teachers need to learn new relaxation techniques. There is a great variety of approaches available, like courses, books, tapes, exercises, cooking and changing to a healthy eating style. They have to find the best recreational activity that works for them.
- Because schools inevitably reflect the values and priorities of society, school reform can only succeed if it is part of an integrated social policy aimed at creating a more inclusive society. Inclusion, when implemented properly and with supports in place, will change the way in which teachers function in their classes. For teachers, it means becoming familiar with varied techniques, methods, and approaches to learning and a wide variety of disabling conditions. Teachers will have to reorganise their classrooms to accommodate a greater range of intellectual and emotional developments, learning styles, and capabilities.

5.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The general aim, purpose and goal of this research was the investigation of the needs and demands experienced by teachers in special needs schools and the ways in which these affected their wellness, with the aim to provide guidelines for teacher support to promote wellness.

The specific aims of this research were to determine of the demands made on and pressures experienced by teachers as stressors and to determine the needs teachers have to alleviate these stressors that arise as a result of the demands and pressures experienced by teachers in a special needs school. Guidelines for teacher support in order to promote wellness were then provided as well as conclusions and recommendations for the promotion of the wellness of teachers in a special needs school.

It is hoped that the investigation and suggestions made in the research will make it easier for the Department of Education and the Department of Health, non-governmental organisations, health officers, social workers, physicians, psychologists, parents and teachers to diagnose and decide which specific measures can be taken to prevent the onset, development and aggravation of any symptoms that can be detrimental to the health of any member of the school environment, and particularly that of teachers.

Teachers play such a valuable role in helping our children grow up, that any opportunity to promote their physical and mental health, should be seized. Learners need mentally and physically fit adults who can guide them as they find their way in the world. It is thus necessary to develop and promote the use of programmes and instruments to identify, predict, prevent and alleviate specific needs, stressors and demands that can be detrimental to health, and to provide and support guidelines to promote wellness in teachers.

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ANNEXURES

ANNEXURE

APPENDIX A

1. THE DEMANDS AND NEEDS EXPERIENCED BY THE SUBJECTS (TEACHERS IN SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOOLS):

1.1 Category 1: Negative attitudes of the learners

Table 1.1: Negative attitude of the learners

Category 1	Negative attitude of the Learners	n = 12
Subcategory	Negative attitude of learners towards learning/school	6
	Negative attitude of learners towards teachers	6
	Vandalism of school/teachers' property	4
	Threats made by learners	3
	Absenteeism of learners	2
	Learners not motivated	2

The category 'Negative attitude of Learners' and its subcategories are formulated from the following direct verbatim quotations:

Negative attitude towards the school:

2A: "Die kinders voel 'n veer vir akademie. Hulle leer nie. Hulle doen niks."

[The learners don't care about academics. They don't study and do absolutely nothing.]

2B: "Die leerders het nie leer-"attitude" nie...daar is baie min prestasies."

[The learners are not in an academic mindset, and there are very few achievements.]

2C: "Hulle het 'n nonchalante houding ten opsigte van leer. Hulle hele houding teenoor leer is negatief."

[They have a nonchalant attitude towards learning. their whole attitude towards learning is negative]

2D: "Die kinders het geen ambisie nie. Hulle besef dat hulle nooit universiteit of kolleges toe sal kan gaan nie, en nou verstaan hulle nie hoekom hulle skool toe moet kom as hulle dit nooit gaan gebruik nie."

[The learners don't have any ambition. They realize that they won't be able to go to tertiary institutions and can't understand why they have to come to school if they're never going to use it]

3A: "Van die kinders stel net nie belang om daar (die skool) te wees nie."

[The learners just aren't interested in school, they don't want to be there (in school).]

3B: "Die siening van die kinders...hulle voel hulle moet sporttoerusting, toere verniet kry, anders doen hulle niks. As hulle iets nie verniet kry nie, doen hulle niks."

[The attitude of the learners towards the school (is negative). They feel that it is the school's duty to pay for sports kits, tours etc. If they can't get it for free, they don't want it.

Negative attitude towards teachers:

2A: "In die klaskamer, die negatiewe houding van die leerders"

[The attitude of the learners is very negative towards the teachers.....]

2C: "Die leerders se onvergenoegdheid en aggressie teenoor die onderwysers...hulle het geen respek vir my dissipline nie."

[The learners' discontent really gets to me. They don't have any respect for a teacher and are very aggressive towards the teachers.]

2D: "Die slap houding van die kinders (teenoor onderwysers)

[.....the slack attitude of the learners (towards the teachers)..]

2E: "Hulle hele houding is uitdagend, hulle wil kyk hoe ver hulle jou kan "push".

[Their (the learners') attitude towards teachers are challenging and provocative – they like to see how far they can push you.]

2F: "Die kinders het nooit geleer om gesag en outoriteit te respekteer nie...ook nie by die skool nie."

[The children never learn to respect authority and when they come to school, it's the same thing]

3A: "...veral die onderwyseresse kla baie – die kinders het net nie respek vir hulle nie."

[The female teachers especially complain that the learners don't show them any respect at all]

Vandalism of school/teachers' property:

2C: "...as ek vanmiddag by my kar kom is daar 'n duik in die "bonnet" of 'n skraap.."

[... After school there will be something done to my car - a bump in the bonnet, a scratch...]

2E: " hulle (die leerders) is aggresief en vandalisties. Hulle het geen respek vir ander mense se eiendom of vir skoolseiendom nie."

[They (the learners) are also aggressive and vandalistic. They show no respect for other people's property or for the school's property.]

2F: "Jy moet konstant deur jou goed oppas of toesluit."

[You also have to look after your own things or it them up constantly.]

3B: "Vandalisme is vir my 'n groot probleem."

[Vandalism is a huge problem for me]

Threats made by learners:

2A: "Een van die kinders het laasjaar gesê hy gaan my kinders kom "lem".

[One of the learners threatened me last year that he was going to jab my children with a knife.]

2C: "...as ek vanmiddag by my kar kom, is daar 'n duik in die "bonnet" of 'n skraap om my te waarsku..."

[... After school there will be something done to my car – a bump in the bonnet, a scratch...just to warn me...]

2E: "As jy iets doen waarvan hulle nie hou nie, sal hulle jou dreig met iets"

[If you do something they don't agree with, they will threaten you.]

Absenteeism of learners:

3A: "Afwesighede (is 'n probleem). Leerders is tot 30 dae afwesig in 'n jaar en mis verskriklik baie werk."

[Absentees (is a problem). Learners are up to 30 days absent from school in a year. They miss out on a lot of work.]

3B: "Hier by my is 'n kind wat al 60 dae die jaar afwesig was en sy ouers weet dit, maar hulle was self nog nooit persoonlik hier nie."

[There's a boy in my class that's been absent for 60 day this past year and his parents know it, but they have never come to sort it out!]

Unmotivated learners:

2D: "Die kinders het geen ambisie nie.....ons (onderwysers) moet hulle (leerders) probeer motiveer en hulle binne hulle vermoëns laat ontwikkel."

[The learners don't have any ambition.....we (teachers) have to motivate them (learners) and develop their potential within their abilities.]

2F: "Ons moet motiveringsprekers wees, want niemand anders wil of sal hierdie kinders motiveer nie."

[We have to be motivational speakers because no one else motivate these learners.]

1.2 Category 2: Dissatisfaction with the Department of Education's Management

Table 1.2: Dissatisfaction with the Department of Education's Management

Category 2	Dissatisfaction with the Department of Education's Management	n = 12
Subcategory	Lack of funds	8
	Lack of guidelines from the Department	5
	Inconsistency of Department of Education	4
	Less teaching positions, same amount of work	3
	Department unaware of the reality of what goes on in Special Educational Needs Schools	3

The category 'Dissatisfaction with the Department of Education's Management and its subcategories are formulated from the following direct verbatim quotations:

Lack of funds:

1A: "Die personeel moet alles doen.....tot fondsinsamelings reël.

[The teachers have to do everything, even fundraising.]

1B: "Ons het nie genoeg fondse nie en moet self werwing doen. Ons is so oorlaai met fondswerk dat ons nie by die skoolastiese deel uitkom nie."

[We don't have the necessary funds. We are overloaded with fundraising projects and rarely get to the real classroom work or education of the learners.]

1C: "Fondsinsamelings verg te veel tyd en dit het 'n negatiewe invloed op die klaskamersituasie. Die regering moet hul geld sit waar hul monde is."

[Because of all the fundraising we have to do, we have less time and it influences the classroom situation negatively. The government must put its money where its mouth is!]

1D: " Ek stem saam oor die fondsinsameling - dit veroorsaak baie ekstra druk en stress."

[I feel the same about the fundraising – it's a lot of extra pressure that can lead to stress.]

2A: "Daar's nie geld nie....so dit word ons (onderwysers se) taak om maniere te kry om geld vir die skool in te samel."

[There are no funds....so we (teachers) have to raise funds or find ways to raise funds for the school.]

2F: "Ons moet fondsinsamelings hou om te oorleef."

[We have to do fundraisings to survive.]

3A: "Dis frustrerend, want op die ou end wil jy moeite doen vir jou span en hulle laat toer, maar die geld is so groot gesukkel dat mens dit maar los."

[It is so frustrating, because you want to take these learners on a tour, but it is such a hassle just to raise enough money to go, that it becomes pointless.]

3B: "Dit word van jou verwag om jou span op toer te neem, maar geld het so 'n kwessie geword."

[It's being expected of you, as a sports coach, to arrange tours for your team, but lack of money has become a huge issue.]

Lack of guidelines from the Department

2A: "...daar's nie spesifieke riglyne nie"

[...there's no specific guidelines.]

2B: "Die uitkomstes van die kurrikulum wat ons moet volg, is baie vaag omskryf. Ek weet nie werklik hoe om 'n kind toe te rus met kennis nie."

[The outcomes of the curriculum we have to follow are very vague. You don't really know how to equip a child with knowledge...]

2F: "Daar's geen leiding vir ons (onderwysers) elke keer as daar iets nuuts uitprobeer word nie."

[There's no guidance for us. Every time something new has to be tried out.]

3A: "Daar's nie riglyne nie; jy gaan basies op jou eie aan en dis moeilik"

[There are no guidelines; you have to go on on your own. That is difficult.]

Inconsistency of the Department of Education

2A: "Elke paar maande verander die Departement iets en dan moet ons (onderwysers) weer oor begin met ure van voorbereiding."

[Every few months the Department changes things and then we (teachers) have to start all over again, doing hours of prep-work.]

2B: "Ons is onder geweldige druk van die Departement af omdat hulle so onvoorspelbaar is en ons nooit seker van ons poste kan wees nie."

[We are under such pressure from the Department, because they are so inconsistent and we are never guaranteed about our teaching positions at a school.]

2C: "...mens is nooit seker of jy volgende week nog 'n pos gaan hê nie..."

[...you never know whether you'll have a teaching position next week or not.]

2F: "Die onderwysstelsel is so onvoorspelbaar – vandag het jy hierdie kurrikulum, volgende week daai een..."

[The education system is very unpredictable – today we have this curriculum, tomorrow another one...]

Less teaching positions, same amount of work to be done:

1B: "As gevolg van die afskaling van ondersteuningsposte soos spraakterapeute, het ons (onderwysers) baie meer om te doen as net bloot skoolhou."

[Due to a lot of posts having been claimed redundant, we, as teachers are expected to do a lot more than just teaching.]

1C: "Die afskaling van poste het veroorsaak dat ons baie meer werk het om te doen."

[Due to the redundancy of teaching positions, we (teachers) have a lot more to do.]

2F: "Baie skole het afgeskaal op poste....nou moet twee mense dieselfde werk doen wat vier voorheen gedoen het."

[A lot of schools have scaled down on the amount of teaching positions. This means that where four people used to do the work, two have to cope with it now.]

Department unaware of the reality of what goes on in Special Educational Needs Schools:

1B: ".....die Departement sien ons skole (skole vir leerders met leerhindernisse) as dieselfde as normale (hoofstroom) skole"

[The Department expects us (schools for learners with barriers to learning) to function like a normal (mainstream) school.]

1C: "Die Department het 'n wanpersepsie van wat in spesiale skole (skole vir leerders met leerhindernisse) aangaan."

[It seems that the Department has the wrong perception of what goes on in special needs schools (schools for learners with barriers to learning).]

2F: "...selfs die owerhede het nie 'n benul van wat aangaan nie..."

[...even the authorities don't have a clue...]

1.3 Category 3: Lack of support from outside the school

Table 1.3: Lack of support from outside the school

Category 3	Lack of support from outside the school	n = 12
Subcategory	No/lack of support staff	7
	No/lack of parental involvement	4
	Negative view of society towards teachers	4
	No/lack of community involvement	2

The category 'Lack of support from outside the school' and its subcategories are formulated from the following direct verbatim quotations:

No/lack of support staff:

1A: "Ons het nog klashulp nodig, veral as die onderwyser nie daar is nie."

[There's a need for more support staff in the classes, especially to take care of the class in case a teacher has to leave the classroom.]

1B: "As gevolg van die afskaling van ondersteuningsposte soos spraak-terapeute, het ons (onderwysers) baie meer om te doen as net bloot skoolhou."

[Due to a lot of posts having been claimed redundant, we, as teachers are expected to do a lot more than just teach.]

1C: "Ons het nie genoeg klashulp om ons te help nie."

[We don't have enough support staff to help us.]

2B: "In die ou dae het ons skoolsielkundiges en verpleegsters ens. gehad. Dit het al's verdwyn en ons het dit nodig."

[In the olden days we had school psychiatrists, school nurses...they all vanished and we need them.]

2E: "Hoe kan jy presteer as jy geen ondersteuning het nie?"

[How can you perform at your best if you don't have any support?]

2F: "Daar's 'n tekort aan ondersteuning en ondersteuningsdienste vir onderwysers."

[There's a lack of support staff and support services for teachers.]

3B: "Ons het nie 'classroom support' vir hierdie werk (praktiese werk op masjiene) nie....ek dink dit gebeur net in Engeland!"

[There's no extra classroom support for these tasks (practical work on machines)...I think that only happens in England!]

No/lack of parental involvement:

1A: "Ons het feitlik geen ouerkorps nie."

[We barely have any parental involvement.]

1B: "...minimale ouerbetrokkenheid....party ouers voel skaam vir hul kinders."

[..absence of or minimal parental involvement...some parents seem to feel ashamed of the children.]

3A: "Baie van die kinders is in ons skool geplaas om hulle van hul huise af weg te kry."

[A lot of learners are placed in this school to get them away from their homes.]

3B: "...dan word 'n brief aan die ouers gestuur om skool toe te kom, maar hulle daag net nooit op nie."

[If parents are asked to come to school (for whatever reason), they never show up.]

The negative view of society towards teachers:

1A: "Die publiek is baie "ignorant" (teenoor onderwysers van skole vir leerders met leerhindernisse)

[The community is very ignorant (towards teaching learners with barriers to learning.)

1B: "Die gemeenskap dink dat ons (onderwysers) net babawagters is wat die kinders bedags besig hou."

[The community thinks that we (teachers) are just babysitters keeping the children busy throughout the day.]

1C: "Die houding van die gemeenskap teenoor die skole (skole vir leerders met leerhindernisse) is baie negatief."

[The attitude of society towards these schools (schools for learners with barriers to learning) is very negative.]

2F: "Mense dink as jy skoolhou by 'n spesiale skool (skool vir leerders met leerhindernisse) het jy ook een of ander probleem."

[People think if you teach at an institution for learners with barriers to learning, you as a teacher, also have one or other barrier or special need.]

No/lack of community involvement:

1A: "Hulle (die gemeenskap) behoort eintlik die opvoedingstaak van die onderwyser na skool oor te neem om die kind verder te lei, maar dit gebeur nie."

[They (community) should in effect take over from the teachers when a learner leaves school in caring for and teaching the child, but it doesn't happen.]

1B: "Die gemeenskap se hande en beursies is nie so oop vir spesiale skole (skole vir leerders met leerhindernisse) nie – my swaer het pertinent vir my gesê: 'as jy nou geld vir my gevra het vir 'n begaafde kind, het ek vir jou gegee, maar hierdie kinders (leerders met leerhindernisse) beteken vir die samelewing niks!'"

[The community is also not as keen to donate money to our type of school as to a school for gifted children. My brother-in-law told me that if I asked money for a gifted child, he would have considered donating money, but our children (learners with barriers to learning) can't contribute to society, so it would be a waste of his money.]

1.4 Category 4: The experience of Professional Overload**Table 1.4: The Experience of Professional Overload**

Category 4	The Experience of Professional Overload	n = 12
Subcategory	The multi-dimensional tasks teachers have to perform	8
	Hectic schedule – too much to do in too little time	7
	Teachers having constantly to motivate learners	4

The category 'Nature of the job/ multidimensional roles teachers have to play' and its subcategories are formulated from the following direct verbatim quotations:

The multi-dimensional tasks teachers have to perform

1A: "Die onderwysers moet ALLES doen."

[The teachers have to do EVERYTHING.]

1B: "... (het) ons (onderwysers) het baie meer om te doen as net bloot skoolhou."

[...we as teachers are expected to do a lot more than just teaching.]

2B: "Ons werk na-ure, veral as ons leerders na buitemuurse aktiwiteite moet vergesel en ons word nie daarvoor vergoed nie."

[We work afterhours, especially if we have to escort learners to extra-mural activities, and we are not compensated for that.]

2D: "Ons doen 80% opvoedingswerk (lewensvaardighede soos higiëne, respek, morele waardes) en 20% opleidingswerk (skolastiese werk) en dit neem baie formele lestyd in beslag".

[We have to educate the learners 80% of the time on basic life skills like hygiene, manners, morals etc. and almost never get to the real classroom work. It takes up a lot of formal teaching time.]

2E: "Jy, as onderwyser, MOET die eerste span laat wen....as 'n span nie wen nie, reflekteer dit op die onderwyser – dan is jy 'n slegte afrigter."

[You, as a teacher, are expected to get the first school team to win...if the team doesn't perform, it reflects badly on the teacher – then it means he/she is a bad coach.]

2F: "Ons (onderwysers) moet iets van alles wees: opvoeder, entrepreneur, verpleegster, polisieman, vrederegter...Ek weet van geen ander professie waarin mens soveel verskillende take het nie."

[We, as teachers, must be able to be an educator, an entrepreneur, a nurse, a police officer, a peacemaker...I don't know of any other professional career where you have so many diverting tasks!]

3A: "Al die ekstra verantwoordelikhede – selfs na 'n wedstryd moet ons (onderwysers) sorg en kinders huis toe vat, anders sal hulle heeltnag net daar by die skoolhek bly wag...alles word jou probleem."

[All the extra responsibilities – after a match we (teachers) have to take learners home, otherwise they will spent the night at school...it all becomes our responsibility.]

3B: "Hulle (ouers en gemeenskap) verwag hier by die skool moet ALLES gedoen word. Jy (onderwyser) moet hulle (leerders) opvoed en hulle laat deurkom. Jy moet alles doen, anders gaan daar niks aan nie.

[They (parents and society) expect us to do EVERYTHING The teachers have to educate the learners and ensure that they pass. If you don't do every thing, nothing will happen.]

Hectic schedule – too much to do in too little time

1A: "Daar's te veel goed om te doen in te kort tydjie."

[Too much things to be done in too littlef time.]

1B: "...ons (onderwysers) moet baie meer doen as net skoolhou."

[...we (teachers) are expected to do a lot more than just teaching.]

1C: "(As gevolg van al die fondsinsamelings) het ons al minder tyd."

[(because of all the fundraising) we have less time....]

2A: "dit (ure voorbereiding) mors net tyd wat ons nie het nie..."

[It's (hours of prep) all a waste of precious time we don't have.]

2B: "Die druk program (veroorzaak spanning)".

[The hectic schedule (causes stress).]

2F: "Ons is oorlaai met werk."

[We are overloaded with work.]

3A: "Ons is lang ure op die pad om leerders na wedstryde toe te vat..."

[We're on the road for long hours to take learners to matches...]

Teachers having to motivate learners constantly

1B: "Ons werk hard na 'n spesifieke doel toe met 'n kind, maar wat help dit?"

[We (teachers) work hard towards a specific goal for these children (with barriers to learning), but it is pointless really.]

1C: "Ons werk hard om 'n kind op 'n sekere standaard te bring...hulle konsentrasievermoë is kort en hulle het heeltyd iemand nodig wat oor hul skouer kyk."

[We work really hard to bring a child up to a certain standard....their attention span is short, so they constantly need someone to reprimand them.]

2D: "Die onderwysers moet die leerders heeltyd motiveer en binne hul vermoë laat ontwikkel."

[The teachers have to motivate them constantly and develop their potential within their abilities.]

2F: "Ons moet motiveringsprekers wees, want niemand anders sal hulle (die leerders) motiveer nie."

[We have to be motivational speakers, because no one else will motivate these learners.]

1.5 Category 5: Difficult working conditions teachers face in the classroom as barriers to effective teaching

Table 1.5: Difficult working conditions teachers face in the classroom as barriers to effective teaching

Category 5	Difficult working conditions teachers face in the classroom as barriers to effective teaching	n = 12
Subcategory	Learners with highly differentiated abilities in one class	5
	Learners' lack of future plans when finished with school	5
	Lack of teaching resources	3
	Too big classes	3
	The vague objectives of the OBE-system	3
	Too much paperwork and admin to be done	2
	Language barriers causing learning/teaching difficulties	2
	Learners put through to the next grade regardless of any progress made	2

The category 'Difficult working conditions teachers face in the classroom as barriers to effective teaching' and its subcategories are formulated from the following direct verbatim quotations:

Learners with highly differentiated abilities in one class:

1C: "Die klasse is baie gedifferensieerd in ouderdom en vermoëns."

[The classes are very differentiated in terms of age and abilities.]

2C: "Die vermoëns van leerders in dieselfde klas is baie gedifferensieerd."

[The abilities of the learners in the same class are very differentiated.]

2E: "Dit maak dit net nog moeiliker om skool te hou, want daar's soveel verskillende "abilities" in een klas."

[This (differentiated classes) makes it even harder to teach because you have so many abilities in one class.]

3A: "Daar's te min onderwysers om vir al die kinders te "cater".

[There are not enough teachers to cater for all the learners' needs.]

3B: "By ons in die sentrum het jy Gr.8, Gr.9, Gr.10 en Spes'e (leerders wat die vak in hul laaste skooljaar neem) in een klas op dieselfde tyd...nou moet jy differensieer tussen vyf groepe tussen 12 jaar en 19 jaar."

[In the practical centre, I have Gr. 8, Gr.9, Gr.10 and Spec (learners who take the subject in their final school year) in one class at the same time...so I have to differentiate between five groups from 12 years up to 19 years.]

Learners' lack of future plans when finished with school

1B: "Ons onderwysers werk hard na 'n spesifieke doel toe met 'n kind, maar wat help dit."

[We feel that we as teachers work hard toward a specific goal for these children, but in the end its pointless really.]

1C: "Ons voel almal ons werk rênig hard om 'n kind op 'n standaard te bring waar hy iets kan doen, maar daar is vir hom geen toekoms."

[We work really hard in educating a child and bringing him/her up to a certain standard, but the reality is that he has no future.]

1D: "Hulle (die leerders) werk so hard, maar ek besef hul toekoms hou niks in nie...wie gaan na hulle kyk?"

[They work so hard, but you know they don't really have much of a future...who's going to look after them?]

2D: "Ons leerders is die skoonmakers (ongeskoolde aarbeidsmag) van die samelewing....hulle besef dat hulle nooit na 'n universiteit of kollege sal gaan nie."

[Our learners form the cleaners (unschooled workforce) of society....they realize that they won't be able to go to tertiary institutions.]

3B: "...hulle (leerders) presteer nie en dit voel of jy niks regkry nie...jy (onderwyser) voel jammer vir hulle, want dis goeie kinders."

[I feel sorry for these learners, because they are good kids, but they don't show any progress.]

Lack of teaching resources

2F: "Daar's nie hulpmiddels of bronne om ons te help nie, nie eers handboeke nie."

[There's no resources or teaching aids to help us, no proper textbooks.]

3A: "Daar is nie vir ons handboeke nie en dis vir my 'n probleem. Ons hang so half in die lug....dis moeilik, want daar's nie leerstof nie en jy moet maar goed uitdink."

[There are no textbooks for us and that is a big problem. We're neither here nor there....it's difficult, because we have to prepare lessons, but we don't have subject material.]

3B: "Handboeke is ook vir my 'n groot probleem. EK moet 35 leerders spuitverf leer met slegs 3 spuite tot my beskikking."

[Textbooks are a huge problem for me. I have to teach the learners spray painting, but there are only 3 spray guns for 35 learners available.]

Big classes

1C: "Die klasse is te groot."

[The classes are too big.]

3A: "Daar's te min onderwysers om vir al die kinders te cater."

[There are not enough teachers to cater for all the learners..]

3B: "By ons in die sentrum het jy Gr.8, Gr.9, Gr.10 en Spes'e (leerders wat die vak in hul laaste skooljaar neem) in een klas op dieselfde tyd."

[In the practical centre I have Gr. 8, Gr.9, Gr.10 and Spec (learners who take the subject in their final school year) in one class at the same time]

The vague objectives of the OBE-system

2A: "Die hele OBE stelsel is baie vaag omskryf en die Department is nie konsekwent oor hoe om OBE aan te bied nie."

[The whole OBE-system is very vague. The Department is not consequent about the 'how to' of OBE.]

2B: "...en veral die OBE stelsel vat geweldig baie tyd in beslag en die papierwerk!"

[..and especially the OBE system takes up an immense amount of time and paperwork.]

2C: "Ek kan nie waag om OBE werk met my kinders (leerders) te doen nie, veral nie groepswerk nie, dit sal totale chaos wees."

[I can't risk to do OBE work, especially not group work, because it would be utter chaos.]

Too much paperwork and admin to be done

2B: "Dit vat ure om die admin af te handel."

[We spend hours sorting out admin.]

2F: "Daar's te veel papierwerk en admin om te doen...partykeer word dit nie eers nagegaan nie."

[There's too much paperwork and admin to be done and sometimes its not even read.]

Language barriers causing learning/teaching difficulties

2F: "Taal is 'n "issue" omdat baie van die leerders nie Afrikaans of Engels verstaan nie en klasse slegs in hierdie tale is."

[The language is an issue, because a lot of learners don't speak either Afrikaans or English and classes are taught in those languages.]

3B: "Hier is leerders wat nie Afrikaans of Engels verstaan nie en hulle drup amper alles.."

[There are learners here who can't speak Afrikaans or English and they never pass a subject.]

Learners are promoted automatically to the next grade

2C: "Hulle (leerders) word net deurgesit na die volgende graad toe en dan gebeur dit dat jy 'n twaalfjarige in jou klas het wat nie kan lees of skryf nie."

[They are just promoted to the next grade and so it happens that a twelve year old cannot read or write.]

2E: "Die kinders kan nie basiese goed doen soos lees en skryf nie, maar die stelsel sit hulle deur."

[Children can't do the basic things like read or write, but the system promotes them.]

1.6 Category 6: Difficult Socio-economical circumstances of learners

Table 1.6: Difficult Socio-economical circumstances of learners

Category 6	Difficult Socio-economical circumstances of learners	n = 12
Subcategory	Inadequate resources due to poverty	7
	Unresponsive parents	4
	Difficult home circumstances	3

The category 'Difficult Socio-economical circumstances of learners' and its subcategories are formulated from the following direct verbatim quotations:

Inadequate resources due to poverty

1A: "Die leerders se sosio-ekonomiese omstandighede is baie swak"

[The learners mostly come from poor socio-economic circumstances.]

2A: "Die ouers kan nie die skoolgelde bekostig nie."

[The parents can't afford the school fees.]

2B: "Hier's baie kinders (in die skool) wat nie eers kos het om te eet nie, hulle is verhongerd."

[There are learners (in the school) who don't even have food to eat; some of them are famished and undernourished.]

2D: "By my vorige skool was een van die outjies baie af en toe ek hom vra, kom dit uit hy en sy ouers en sy boetie bly in hulle kar al vir 'n klomp maande."

[At my previous school one of the learners in my class looked very down and depressed. When I asked him about it, it came out that he and his parents and his brother have been living in their motor car for a few months now.]

2F: "Ons is welsynswerkers, want ons moet kos en klere vir die armes (leerders) in die skool soek."

[We are social workers because we have to provide food and clothing for the poor (learners) in the school.]

3A: "Baie van die leerders is nie skolasties so swak nie, maar dit gaan so sleg by die huise..."

[A lot of the children are not scholastically that weak, but things are really bad at home and influence their learning.]

3B: "Die ouers bly in ander dorpe...(hulle) kan nie bekostig om skool toe te kom nie."

[The parents live in other towns...they can't afford to come so far to the school.]

Unresponsive parents

1A: "Meeste kinders is in die koshuis en sien hulle families net in die vakansies."

[Most of the learners are in the school hostel and see their families only during the holidays.]

1B: "Baie gevalle kom laai (die ouers) die kinders net hier af en jy sien of hoor nooit weer van hulle (ouers) nie, tot die kind 18 jaar oud word en subsidie van die staat kan kry..."

[In a lot of cases the family will drop the child and never bother to see him/her again until he (the learner) turns 18 and receive pension from the government.]

1C: "...sodra die ouers 'n kind kom haal, val daai kind net weer so terug ..."

[...the day the family arrives to claim him/her (learner) you (teacher) see him (learner) regressing back to his/her old (uneducated) ways.]

1D: "Wie sal na hulle (leerders) kyk na skool?"

[Who's going to look after them (learners) when they finish school?]

Difficult home circumstances

2D: "Die kinders kom van arm gemeenskappe waar die ouers nog nie hierdie vaardighede (lewensvaardighede soos higiëne, morele waardes ens.) aangeleer het nie."

[The children come from poor communities where the parents themselves have not mastered these skills (life skills like hygiene, morals etc.).]

2F: "Ek voel skuldig as ek met 'n kind raas, want ek weet nie wat by sy huis aangaan nie..."

[I feel guilty if I scold a child, because I don't really know what's going on at home...]

3A: "Baie van die kinders word in ons skool (vir leerders met leerhindernisse) geplaas om hulle weg van die huis af te kry."

[A lot of the children are placed in our school (for learners with barriers to learning) to get them away from their homes.]

2. THE EFFECTS OF THE DEMANDS AND PRESSURES, EXPERIENCED BY THE SUBJECTS AS STRESSORS, ON THEIR WELLNESS

2.1 Category 1: Negative effect on emotions

Table 2.1: Negative effect on emotions

Category 1	Negative effect on emotions	n = 12
Subcategory	Feelings of frustration towards the profession	6
	Emotionally drained after a schoolday	5
	Not in control of emotions	4
	Emotionally distanced from learners and school	3
	Living in fear and anxiety when going to school	3
	Teachers experiencing symptoms of depression	2

The category 'Effect on emotions ' are formulated from the following direct verbatim quotations:

Feelings of frustration towards the profession

1B: "EK voel gefrustreerd."

[I feel frustrated.]

1D: "Ek voel gefrustreerd."

[I feel frustrated.]

2D: "...dit is baie frustrerend."

[...it is very frustrating.]

2F: "Ek kan dit (wat welstand beïnvloed) opsom in twee woorde.....en frustrasie."

[I can sum it (that affects wellness) up in two words.....and frustration.]

3A: "Dis frustrerend omdat jy (onderwyser) nie weet wat om te doen nie..."

[Its frustrating because you (teacher) don't know...]

3B: "Ek moet myself die heeltyd inhou."

[I have to contain myself the whole time.]

Emotionally drained after a schoolday

1B: "....dit tap jou emosioneel."

[...its emotionally draining.]

2B: "EK is moeg."

[I am tired.]

2D: "Ek is emosioneel moeg."

[I'm emotionally drained.]

2E: "Dit vat emosioneel aan my."

[It gets to me emotionally.]

2F: "Ek kan dit in two woorde opsom: emosionele moegheid...."

[I can sum it up in two words: emotional fatigue...]

Not in control of emotions

1B: "....ek sal elke dag huil."

[...I'll cry every day.]

1C: "EK het al baie keer in hierdie skool gehuil."

[I've cried many times in this school.]

2A: "Ek het op 'n punt gekom laasjaar waar ek vir die kinders presies gesê het wat ek dink...ek het nie omgee nie."

[I came at a point last year where I told learners exactly what I thought...I didn't care.]

3B: "Ek moet myself die heeltid inhou...,ek kan SO kwaad raak!"

[I have to contain myself the whole time....I can get SO terribly angry!]

Emotionally distanced from learners and school

1B: "Ek het nou al geleer om nie emosioneel betrokke te raak nie...ek skakel my emosies af."

[I've learned not to become emotionally involved...I switch my emotions off.]

2A: "...ek het net nie omgee nie..."

[...I didn't care.]

3B: "Ek wil nie meer betrokke raak nie..."

[I don't want to get involved any more.]

Living in fear and anxiety when going to school

1D: "Ek is so bang en oorsensitief"

[I'm oversensitive... and I'm so scared.]

2A: "Angstigheid....ek is r rig bang."

[Anxiety...I'm really afraid.]

3A: "Ek is op my senuwees...selfs my maag raak omgekr p."

[I'm nervous...even my stomach gets upset.]

Teachers experiencing symptoms of depression

2A: "Ek gebruik anti-depressante."

[I take anti-depressants.]

2B: "Ek ly aan sporadiese depressie."

[I'm sporadically depressed.]

2.2 Category 2: Negative effect on the self-concept:

Table 2.2: Negative effect on the self-concept

Category 2	Negative effect on the self-concept	n = 12
Subcategory	Feelings of helplessness	6

	Changes in character	4
	Feeling incompetent/incapable/unsure	3

The category 'Negative effect on the self-concept ' are formulated from the following direct verbatim quotations:

Feelings of helplessness

1A: "Hulpeloosheid"

[Helplessness.]

1B: "Die situasies waarmee jy in aanraking kom en die ouers wat jy moet hanteer, laat jou hulpeloos voel."

[The situations you have to deal with and the parents you have to deal with makes you feel helpless.]

2A: "Ons weet nie meer wat om te doen nie, want ons het al alles probeer."

[We don't know what to do because we've tried everything.]

2B: "Ek loop rond en voel hulpeloos en hopeloos."

[I walk around feeling helpless and hopeless.]

2E: "Jy voel magteloos en hulpeloos.."

[You feel powerless and helpless.]

3B: "Dit voel of jou hande afgekap is, ek kan niks doen nie."

[It feels if your hands are tied behing you back, you can't do anything.]

Changes in character

1D: "Ek verwag van my (eie) dogtertjie in Gr.1 baie meer as wat ek sou as ek nie hier skoolgehou het nie."

[I expect my little girl in Gr.1 to achieve and manage a lot more than what I would have expected of her if I didn't teach here.]

2A: "My vroulikheid verdwyn die oomblik as ek by die skool kom..."

[My femininity vanishes as soon as I arrive at school.]

3A: "Ek's in 'n goor bui die oomblik wat ek in 'n klas instap."

[I'm in a bad mood the moment I walk into class.]

3B: "EK wil die absolute minimum doen...dit klink selfsugtig..."

[I want to do the absolute minimum....sounds selfcentered...]

Feeling incompetent/incapable/unsure

1C: "Dit maak my as onderwyser nutteloos voel..."

[It makes me feel incompetent and incapable.]

2B: "Dit laat my (onderwyser) nutteloos voel, soos 'n "failure".

[It makes me (teacher) feel worthless and a failure.]

2F: "Dit laat my onseker voel..."

[I feel unsure...]

2.3 Category 3: Effect on interpersonal relationships

Table 2.3: Effect on interpersonal relationships

Category 3	Effect on interpersonal relationships	n =12
Subcategory	Feeling continuously emotionally responsible for learners' wellness	7
	Personal life affected	4
	Negative projections on colleagues and learners	3

The category 'Effect on the interpersonal relationships ' are formulated from the following direct verbatim quotations:

Feeling continuously emotionally responsible for learners' wellness

1C: "Mens raak baie lief en geheg aan hierdie kinders en as 'n kind die dag die skool verlaat, huil jy saam."

[One gets very attached to and grow to love these children; the day a child leaves the school, you cry along with them.]

1D: "Ek worry oor hulle."

[I worry about them.]

2B: "EK raak so bekommerd oor hierdie kinders (leerders in die skool)."

[I worry so much about these children (learners in the school).]

2D: "Dit (kind se swak sosio-ekonomies omstandighede) het my so geraak."

[That (learner's poor socio-economic circumstances) touched me so...]

2E: "Hier's baie kinders met emosionele probleme en dit vat aan jou (onderwyser)."

[Here are many learners with emotional problems, it really gets to you (teacher).]

2F: "Ek worry heeltyd of hulle (leerders) okay is."

[I constantly worry whether they (learners) are OK.]

3B: "Jy kan partykeer nie glo hoe "bad" party kinders dit het nie....dit pla my baie..;"

[Sometimes you almost can't believe how bad some of these learners have it....it bothers me a lot.]

Personal life affected

1D: "Dit het 'n effek op hoe ek my kinders grootmaak."

[It affects how I raise my children.]

2A: "Ek's die heeltyd bang vir my (eie) kinders se veiligheid."

[I'm constantly afraid for my (own) children's safety.]

2E: "Dit beïnvloed my persoonlik lewe...na skool, by die huis kan jy nie vergeet van hulle (leerders by die skool) nie..."

[It affects my personal life...after school, at home, you can't forget about them (learners at school).]

Negative projections towards colleagues and learners

2C: "Die personeel beleel mekaar negatief...ek voel partykeer hoekom moet ek myself doodwerk as my kollega niks doen nie."

[The staff experience each other negatively...I sometimes feel why do I have to work myself to death if my colleague doesn't do a thing.]

3A: "Ek's in 'n slegte bui die oomblik wat ek die klas binnestap."

[I'm in a bad mood the moment I walk into class.]

3B: "Jy voel partykeer jy wil hulle (leerders) glad nie sien nie...as iets gebeur by die skool en 'n periode verval, is mens maar net te bly jy sien hulle (leerders) nie."

[You feel sometimes you don't want to see them (learners)...if something happens at school and a lesson falls away, you feel so glad about not seeing them (learners).]

2.4 Category 4: Experience of stress and the effect on the physical part-system

Table 2.4: Experience of stress and the effect on the physical part-system

Category 4	Experience of stress and the effect on the physical part-system	n = 12
Subcategory	Stress	5
	Physical symptoms of stress	3

The category 'Experience of stress and the effect on the physical part-system' are formulated from the following direct verbatim quotations:

Stress

1A: "Dis spanningsvol..."

[Its stressful...]

1C: "...dit (druk program) veroorsaak stress..."

[...it (hectic schedule) causes stress...]

1D: "...dit (bekommernis oor leerders) veroorsaak stress..."

[...it (worry over learners' wellness) causes stress.]

2B: "Ek is die heeltyd gespanne."

[I am constantly stressed.]

2C: "(Die onsekerheid) veroorsaak baie spanning."

[(The uncertainties) causes a lot of stress.]

Physical symptoms of stress

2B: "My bloeddruk skiet die hoogte in....ek word snags wakker, gesweet en gespanne."

[My bloodpressure is sky high....I wake up at night, sweating and stressed out.]

2C: "...jy kan dit (spanning) op my vel sien. Sodra ek stress, kry ek 'n probleemvel."

[..you can see it on my skin. As soon as I stress, I get a problem skin.]

3A: "Ek is op my senuwees en my maag raak sommer omgekrap."

[I'm nervous and my stomach gets upset.]

3. VIEWS ABOUT THE NEEDS OF THE SUBJECTS IN TERMS OF SUPPORT TO PROMOTE WELLNESS

3.1 Category 1: The need for more support

Table 3.1: The need for more support

Category 1	The need for more support	n = 12
Subcategory	Community more actively involved	8

	More support staff needed	6
	More parental involvement needed	4
	Staff development programs implemented	4
	More funds needed	3
	More support from management needed	2

The category 'The need for more support' are formulated from the following direct verbatim quotations:

Community more actively involved

1A: "Hulle (gemeenskap) behoort die opvoedingstaak van die onderwyser oor te neem na skool."

[They (community) should in effect take over from the teachers after school.]

1C: "...al hoe dit gedoen kan word is om die gemeenskap meer bewus en betrokke te maak van die skole (skole vir leerders met leerhindernisse)."

[The community should be made aware of special needs schools and get more actively involved.]

2A: "Ons moet die gemeenskap waar ons leerders van kom opvoed, nie net die leerders nie."

[We need to educate the community of our learners, not just the learners.]

2B: "Ek voel ons moet saam met die gemeenskap (rekreasie) aktiwiteite beoefen."

[I feel we must do recreational activities with the community.]

2C: "Ons moet die gemeenskap opvoed, die volwassenes dissiplineer."

[We need to educate the community, we have to discipline the adults.]

2D: "Ek dink die gemeenskap moet meer betrokke raak by die skool."

[I think the community should get more involved with the school.]

2F: "Die houding van die samelewing moet verander."

[The attitude of society must change.]

3B: "...die gemeenskap moet hierby (rehabilitasieprogram in skole) betrokke wees."

[...the community must all be involved (in a rehabilitation program).]

More support staff needed

1A: "Meer onderwysers moet aangestel word en meer ondersteuningsdienste."

[More teachers to be appointed, and more support services.]

1C: "Die Departement moet meer poste vir "support staff" skep sodat mense wat die verantwoordelikhede kan hanteer, aangestel word."

[The Department should create more support staff posts so that people that can handle the different responsibilities are employed.]

2B: "Ek dink ons kort meer personeel vir ondersteuningsdienste."

[I think we need more support staff.]

2D: "(Die department) moet beter ondersteuningstelsels beskikbaar stel."

[(The Department) should provide more support systems.]

3A: "Meer hulp moet deur die staat beskikbaar gestel word deur middel van subsidies."

[More support must be incorporated into schools by the Department through subsidies.]

3B: "Jy (onderwyser) moet weet dat jy enige tyd kan vra vir hulp en dit sal kry."

[You (teacher) must know that you can ask for help or support any time and you will receive it.]

More parental involvement needed

1A: "Meer ouerbetrokkenheid."

[More parental involvement.]

2C: "Ons moet met die ouers saamwerk om die leerders op te voed."

[We must work together with the parents to educate the learners.]

3A: "Die ouers moet meer betrokke raak by skoolaktiwiteite...maar dis moeilik."

[The parent must be more involved in school activities, although I know its not easy.]

3B: "...die ouers...moet almal hierby (rehabilitasieprogramme) betrokke wees."

[...the parents...must all be involved in this (rehabilitation programmes).]

Staff development programmes implemented

1A: "Verdere opleiding en kursusse."

[Further education, courses etc.]

1B: "Verdere opleiding en kursusse sal help, 'n tipe in-diensopleiding."

[Further education and courses will definitely help, staff development programmes.]

1C: "Ek glo 'n mens moet nooit stagneer nie, jy moet jouself heeltyd op hoogte hou met die jongste gebeure en jouself so ver as moontlik bekwaam."

[Further studying keeps you up to date with the latest developments. I believe one should qualify yourself as much as you possibly can, otherwise you stagnate.]

1D: "Kort kursusse is 'n goeie idee....sou beslis gehelp het."

[Short courses would be a good idea, would've helped.]

More funds needed

1A: "Meer fondse."

[More funds.]

1C: "Die staat moet hulle geld sit waar hulle monde is en spesiale skole (skole vir leerders met leerhindernisse) beter subsidieer."

[The government should put its money where its mouth is and better subsidize special needs schools (schools for learners with barriers to learning.)]

3A: "Die staat moet sekere poste subsideer."

[The government must subsidize certain positions.]

More support from management

3A: "Die hoof kan 'n skool maak of breek – die hoof moet saam met die onderwysers goed doen en betrokke raak."

[The headteacher (principal) can make or break a school – the headteacher must do things with the teachers and get involved.]

3B: "Die bestuur moet daar wees vir die onderwysers, 'n mens moet weet jy kan enige tyd vir hulp vra en dit kry."

[Management must be there for the teachers' wellness, you must know that you can ask for help or support anytime and you will receive it.]

3.2 Category 2: The need for developing personal coping strategies

Table 3.2: The need for developing personal coping strategies

Category 2	The need for developing personal coping strategies	n = 12
Subcategory	Implementing a successful and working disciplinary system	4
	Don't get too involved – distance yourself emotionally	2
	Learn coping strategies from colleagues	2
	Teachers to have own children first before teaching at a SEN-school in order to gain more experience of children.	2

The category 'the need for developing personal coping strategies' are formulated from the following direct verbatim quotations:

Implementing a successful and working disciplinary system

2A: "Ons moet 'n (dissiplinêre) stelsel vind wat werk en daarby hou."

[We must find a (disciplinary) system that works and stick to it.]

2C: "Daar moet 'n doelgerigte gedragskode wees."

[There must be a purposeful code of conduct.]

2E: "Daar moet 'n definitiewe plan wees om die dissipline te verbeter en ons moet daarby hou."

[There must be a definite plan to better the discipline in the school and we must stick to it.]

3B: "Die Departement.... moet die leerders met gedragsprobleme 'n rehabilitasieprogram laat deurwerk."

[The Department.... should work out a rehabilitation programme for learners with behavioural problems.]

Don't get too involved – distance yourself emotionally

1B: "Distansieer jouself (van emosioneel betrokke raak)."

[Distance yourself (from getting emotionally involved).]

1C: "Jy moet leer om jouself emosioneel te distansieer van elke geval, maar dis nie so maklik nie."

[You have to learn to distance yourself emotionally from each case, although its easier said than done.]

Learn coping strategies from colleagues

1C: "...om onderwysers op 'n gereelde basis bymekaar te kry om sake om probleme te bespreek...om dalk 'n gekombineerde stelsel te skep wat regtig toegepas kan werk in verskillende skole."

[...to get different teachers from different schools together to talk about all these issues...this will help to develop a system that can only be better than the present one.]

1D: "EK het baie by my kollegas geleer...vrae vra en gesels..."

[I've learned a lot from my colleagues, by talking and asking.]

Teachers to have own children first before teaching at a SEN-school in order to gain more experience of children

1B: "Ek dink onderwysers moet eers self hul eie kinders hê voor hul by 'n spesiale skool kan skoolhou...dit help mens hierdie kinders beter verstaan en met meer empatie hanteer, ook met die fisiese versorging van hulle (leerders)."

[I think a teacher must first have their own children before they can teach at a special needs school. It helps you to beter understand these children (learners at special needs schools/schools for learners with barriers to learning), be more empathetic and also to better handle the physical caring.]

1D: "Ek stem saam dat 'n mens eers self 'n ouer moet wees om werklik hierdie kinders (leerders met leerhindernisse) te verstaan en op te voed."

[I agree that you need to be a parent first to treally understand and take care of these children (learners with barriers to learning).]

3.3 Category 3: Restructuring efficient school governance to enable better management, decision-making and support

Table 3.3: Restructuring efficient school governance to enable better management, decision-making and support

Category 3	Restructuring efficient school governance to enable better management, decision-making and support	n = 12
Subcategory	More consistency from Department of Education	5
	Efficient school management	2

The category 'Restructuring efficient school governance to enable better management, decision-making and support ' are formulated from the following direct verbatim quotations:

More consistency from Department of Education

2A: "Die Departement moet meer konsekwent wees, hulle moet 'n manier van doen vind en daarby hou."

[The Department must be more consequent, they must find a way of doing things and stick to it.]

2C: "Meer bestendigheid van die Department af."

[More consistency from the Department's side.]

2D: "Die Departement moet meer konsekwent in hul beplanning wees."

[The Department should be more consistent in their planning.]

2E: "Ek wil weet wat die Departement volgende beplan, wat die langtermynbeplanning inhoud."

[I want to know what the Department is planning next, what the long term planning involves.]

2F: "Ons het 'n vaste, goed beplande sisteem nodig wat nie kort-kort verander nie."

[We need a fixed, planned structure that won't change ever so often.]

Efficient school management

3A: "Dis vir my meer belangrik as enigiets dat die topbestuur van die skool reg is.

[It is for me more important than anything that the management of a school is functioning properly.]

3B: "'n Goeie bestuurspan maak alles net makliker."

[If management is functioning well, everything else is easier.]

3.4 Category 4: Changing the physical setup in classes

Table 3.4: Changing the physical set up in classes

Category 4	Changing the physical set up in classes	n = 12
Subcategory	Smaller classes	2
	More homogenous classes	2

The category 'Changing the physical setup in classes' are formulated from the following direct verbatim quotations:

Smaller classes

1C: "Kleiner klasse sal definitief help."

[Smaller classes will definitely help.]

2D: "Ons het kleiner klasse nodig."

[We need smaller classes.]

More homogenous classes

1C: "Meer homogene klasse sal definitief help"

[More homogenous classes will definitely help.]

2D: "(Ons het) minder gedifferensieerde klasse (nodig)."

[(We need) less diverse abilities in one class.]

3.5 Category 5: More time to unwind and relax for teachers

Table 3.5: More time to unwind and relax for teachers

Category 5	More time to unwind and relax for teachers	n = 12
Subcategory	Teachers doing recreational activities together as a staff	2

The category 'More time to unwind and relax ' are formulated from the following direct verbatim quotations:

Teachers doing recreational activities together as a staff

2B: "Ek voel ons as skool (personeel en gemeenskap) moet dinge saam doen, saam ontspan."

[I feel we as a school (staff and community) need to do recreational activities together.]

3B: "Personeel moet saam dinge doen vir ontspanning, dit help bou aan spangees en 'n gevoel van behoort."

[Staff members should do recreational activities together for relaxation, it builds team spirit and a feeling of belonging.]

APPENDIX B

FOKUSGROEP: ONDERHOUDVOERING MET ONDERWYSERS VERBONDE AAN SKOLE VIR LEERDERS MET SPESIALE BEHOEFTE/LEERHINDERNISSE

Geslag: _____ Ouderdom: _____

Posviak: _____

Beskryf kortliks u huidige pos: _____

Hoe lank onderrig u al leerders met spesiale behoeftes ("barriers to learning")

Ons weet dat onderwysers deesdae baie druk beleef en dat daar baie eise aan hulle gestel word. Die volgende 3 vrae sal deur middel van onderhoudvoering in u onderskeie fokusgroepe aan u gestel word:

1. Vertel my watter eise/druk u as onderwyser beleef? _____

2. Hoe affekteer hierdie eise/druk welstand? _____

3. Watter behoeftes het u in terme van ondersteuning vir die bevordering van u hantering van die eise/druk ten einde u welstand te bevorder? _____

Baie dankie.

APPENDIX C - VERTROULIKHEIDSVERSLAG

VERTROULIKHEIDSOOREENKOMS:

TUSSEN DIE NAVORSER EN BETROKKE ONDERWYSER VERBONDE AAN 'N SKOOL VIR LEERDERS MET SPESIALE LEERBEHOEFTE TYDENS DIE FOKUSGROEP ONDERHOUDVOERING WAT DEEL VORM VAN DIE KWALITATIEWE NAVORSINGSMETODE VAN DIE NAVORSER SE M.ED-STUDIE MET DIE TITEL: " THE DEMANDS AND NEEDS EXPERIENCED BY TEACHERS IN SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOOLS: GUIDELINES FOR TEACHER SUPPORT TO PROMOTE WELLNESS".

Hiermee onderneem ek, as die navorser, om alle inligting wat op hierdie vorm en meegaande vraelys verstrekkend word, asook alle sake bespreek tydens die fokusgroep onderhoudvoering as hoogs vertroulik en konfidentsieel te hanteer. Geen inligting verstrekkend tydens die onderhoudvoering mag/sal teen 'n persoon gebruik word om haar/hom leed aan te doen of in enige mate te na te kom nie, hetsy fisies, psigies, emosioneel of sosiaal.

E.C.J. Jonker
(Navorser)

Datum

Ek, as onderwyser verbonde aan 'n skool vir leerders met spesiale leerbehoefte of leerhindernisse, is vertrou met die doel van die navorsing, asook wat van my verwag word tydens die fokusgroep onderhoudvoering. Ek onderneem om alle sake bespreek tydens die fokusgroep onderhoudvoering as hoogs vertroulik te hanteer. Ek onderneem verder om geen inligting verstrekkend deur 'n persoon tydens die onderhoudvoering teen hom/haar te gebruik om die persoon leed aan te doen of in enige mate te na te kom nie, hetsy fisies, psigies, emosioneel of sosiaal.

Naam

Handtekening van Onderwyser

Datum