



Understanding Teacher Stress: A Narrative study of London Secondary School Teachers' stressors and their coping strategies

Submitted by

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Abstract

The purpose of this narrative study was to understand the stress that teachers in secondary schools were exposed to and how they lived with this stress on a daily basis.

In this study, 5 secondary school teachers were interviewed; the stress they experienced and how they coped are shared along with their classroom experiences and relationships with students, colleagues and senior management. Their narratives revealed the impact teacher stress has had on their lives. As the nature of this study was to present how these teachers felt, a qualitative approach to gather data through interviews was presented in narrative form to ensure authenticity. The sampling strategy I applied was that teachers be from London secondary schools with at least ten years of teaching experience i.e., purposive sampling. In the telling of their stories, personal and detailed narratives of teachers' teaching lives were shared in great detail exposing the daily teaching they faced. The findings from the study participants revealed that alongside teacher workload, feelings of isolation, depersonalization; Isolation and lack of support, Health issues caused by stress and Fear of being labelled as weak teachers are the main reasons for stress. Exercise, resorting to medication, smoking and praying were also shared as a form of coping, but all believed that stress had become a part of teaching nowadays.

The implications of this study reveal that regardless of what coping strategy teachers applied; forms of coping were seen as being unsuccessful resulting in them suffering from prolonged forms of stress. This indicates a need for further research in understanding why such stress is viewed as a daily part of teaching.

The narratives provided by the teachers indicated a clear imbalance of power and authority leading to an uncomfortable school climate in secondary schools. These are indications that policy makers should address the various roles a teacher is expected to undertake and enable the relevant support and training for teachers who are stressed. All participants in this research believed the stigma involved in accepting stress at work is a factor that policy makers in the field of education need to address.

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Chapter 1: Research Context

This chapter describes the research setting where the current study took place. It will provide an overview of the teaching and learning context in secondary schools in London and then look into the issue of teacher retention within secondary schools in London. This will be followed by a short discussion on teacher appraisal and then present the contextual factors that lead to teacher stress. Finally, the chapter will explain the background of the study and end with outlining the structure of the thesis.

1.1 The teaching and learning context of secondary schools in London

Studies have shown that schools in London have improved significantly over the last fifteen years and that London's success has been well-documented (Annual London Education Report, 2017). The same report highlights that in order for secondary schools in England to be world-class by 2030, 75% of children leaving secondary schools would need to achieve higher grades in their GCSE's. London is recorded as being off target (Annual London Education Report, 2017). International research evidence from Micklewright, Jerrim, Vignoles, Jenkins, Allen, Llie, Bellarbre, Barrera and Hein (2014) reveal that the quality of teaching is a primary driver of educational outcomes and that schools should do more to support teachers. Their research further suggests that being taught by a 'high quality' rather than a 'low quality' teacher can add almost half of a GCSE point per subject to a student's grade.

1.2 Retention within London's secondary schools

There has been an increase in teacher vacancies across the UK and particularly in London where schools are struggling to fill these vacancies, (Sibieta,

2020). This fact raises the question of why London is in such a situation. It could be that many teachers choose to leave the city due to concerns about the cost of living being very high and quality of life. It has also been reported that not enough teachers are being recruited to cope with the number of pupils enrolling into secondary schools. Although, pupil numbers in secondary schools in 2019 were recorded as being the same as 2007, the number of teachers has fallen by 7% (Sibieta, 2020). The differences here will no doubt have a negative impact on the teaching profession. Latest reports suggest that the situation will only worsen as a huge pupil population is expected to hit secondary schools in London with a rise by as much as 10% between 2019 and 2023 (Sibieta, 2020). Whilst government reports show the awareness of the teacher retention problem, the subject of retention has turned towards improving the quality of teaching, where government initiatives like the London Schools Excellence Fund (LSEF) introduced a programme that was delivered over 2013 to 2015, with some legacy projects being delivered until August 2017. The LSEF supported teachers to develop their teaching and subject knowledge. The government is starting to address the issue of retention with higher salaries and incentives, but the challenge of hiring and retaining secondary school teachers in London remains a problem.

1.3 Teacher appraisals

Formal teacher appraisals take place once a year. According to Micklewright et al. (2014), teachers should receive feedback from one or more sources in their current schools, but it was found that 42% of teachers did not receive feedback from their heads. Teacher appraisals are a thorough, supportive and developmental process created to make sure that teachers are assisted with

the skills and support they need to carry out their teaching roles effectively. It is also seen to help teacher development. In September 2012, the UK established the Teachers' Standards to be used in all schools. These standards are set by the government to be utilized by heads or those appointed by heads to assess teachers' performance against the standards. The standards are split in two parts; the teaching part and the personal and professional conduct part. The teaching part relates to honesty and integrity; having strong subject knowledge, keeping their knowledge and skills up-to-date, being self-critical; forging positive professional relationships; and working with parents in the best interests of their pupils. The second part is about personal and professional conduct where a teacher is expected to demonstrate consistently high standards of personal and professional conduct (Department for Education, 2011). It is important to state that from 1 September 2013, new arrangements came into effect with regard to teachers pay where pay progression was linked to performance. Micklewright et al.'s (2014) report states that about half of teachers in England believe that appraisal and feedback that they receive are only done so that the administrative requirements related to government policy are completed. Teachers are also less positive than average in their feedback regarding the appraisals they receive and find the process of being little use to their development (Micklewright et al., 2014).

1.4 Contextual factors that lead to teacher stress

Teacher stress has been a subject of much research. Studies in the field have highlighted pupil behaviour, students challenging teachers authority and threatening boundaries as being the greatest stressors for teachers (Kerr, Breen, Delaney, Kelly & Miller, 2011). Some have argued that exposure to long working

hours, insufficient pay, role ambiguity, poor teaching facilities, lack of social recognition, poor organizational climate, and strained relationships with colleagues as being the problems that are known to make teachers unsatisfied in their teaching careers (Reddy & Anuradha, 2013). Recognizing and understanding the above stressors will enable us to get a clear picture of what factors lead to teacher stress.

1.4.1 Lack of occupational support

Research has shown that education professionals who have experienced mental health issues where work was a contributing factor would most likely turn to friends and family for support. Health professionals were also common sources to turn to (Sibieta, 2020). Unfortunately, seeking support from management is not common and although some would turn to colleagues for support (23%), only 13% of teachers would turn to management for support. This is seen as a consistent finding across job roles, demographics and organisation sectors (Sibieta, 2020). A recent Ofsted report highlighted that not enough support is being given by management (Ofsted, 2019). It seems that a culture of open communication and trust is needed.

1.4.2 Impact of long working hours

Teachers have been reported as working up to 51 hours a week and accepting this to be a normal week (Education Support Partnership, 2017). As a result, a healthy work-life balance is difficult to achieve. This culture has caused teachers to suffer from physical and mental health issues. Having a heavy workload is one of the main sources of teacher stress. Work overload has been associated with aspects of burnout such as exhaustion (Ofsted, 2019).

1.4.3 Lack of Job Satisfaction

According to Micklewright et al. (2014), it is reported that fewer teachers in England express overall satisfaction with their jobs than in any other country. It is said that up to 73% of teachers in the UK felt underpaid due to the long working hours. Many teachers also believed that the teaching profession was undervalued. Approximately 51% of teachers believe that their workload is unmanageable and 85% report that the accountability system (e.g., Ofsted, performance tables) adds significantly to the pressure of their jobs (Micklewright et al., 2014).

1.5 Background of the study

The research took place in London. There are approximately 59 state-run secondary schools in north London with class sizes of around 22 pupils (Department for Education, 2019). The schools in north London are spread around the Enfield, Haringey and Barnet authorities. The vast majority of the schools in the area are co-educational with around 400-600 pupils in each school. The participants in the study teach at co-educational schools. The average secondary school budget in 2016/17 was £4,617,000 and the expenditure in 2016/17 on resources was £172,560, a 5.7% decrease from the previous year (BESA, 2017). Children start from year 7 at the age of around 11 and leave school at the age of around 16 after completing their GCSE's in year 11. English, Maths and Sciences are the core subjects. The 5 participants chosen for this study are male teachers in their 40's and are teaching Key Stage 3 and 4 English in secondary schools in the boroughs of Barnet, Haringey and Enfield. They were specifically chosen as they came from the same area, taught the same subjects (English) and worked in north London, therefore representing the secondary school English teacher.

Teachers in these schools normally work around 48 hours a week, but those that are key stage 4 teachers tend to work longer preparing students for their GCSE exams. Teachers spend hours marking, planning classes or events, have extra lunch duties, break duties, after school duties, administrative work as well as teaching to do. Taking work home is normal and to spend the weekends marking is seen as being necessary by teachers. Although schools do have teaching assistants, it was very common for the teaching assistants to either sit with a weak student in class or take the student out of the class to offer support. According to the Annual London Education Report (2017), teachers in London have the lowest retention rate after three years (an estimate of 81-84 per cent).

1.6 Structure of the thesis

This introductory chapter provided the context of the research. Chapter 2 provides the introduction to teacher stress, presents the problem statement and the research questions, explains the significance of the study and finally introduces the rationale behind the narrative research. Chapter 3 gives a review of the related literature and chapter 4 outlines the methodology and design used for the research. I will present the results in chapter 5, where priority is given to the voices of the participants' narratives. The common themes will be presented in chapter 6 and will be discussed in relevance to previous research. Finally, chapter 7 will conclude with the implications, further research and the limitations to my study.

Chapter 2: Introduction

“by exploring a particular life, I hope to understand a way of life”

(Ellis & Bochner 2000, p. 737)

This study investigates the feelings, emotions, views and experiences of Secondary School teachers from London; why they felt they were suffering from teacher stress and how they coped is shared through interviews.

2.1 Problem Statement

Teaching can be a challenging, stressful job and is considered to be one of the most stressful occupations in the world (Carlyle & Woods, 2002). According to Jarvis (2005), teacher stress is a serious concern in the United Kingdom (UK). Despite the fact that many are entering the profession, statistics show more and more are leaving (Foster, 2019). Studies in the topic of teacher stress reveal that teachers can be exposed to a great deal of problems from workload, poor colleague relationships, student misbehaviour, challenging pupil control and threatening boundaries (Kerr, Breen, Delaney, Kelly, & Miller, 2011). In addition to this, teachers can also be exposed to long working hours, insufficient pay, role ambiguity, poor teaching facilities, lack of social recognition, poor organizational climate and strained relationships with colleagues (Reddy & Anuradha, 2013). Work related stress continues to affect a large number of workers in the UK, particularly those working in Education (Health & Safety Executive, 2018). This figure seems to be rising and deserves to be understood in order for correct policies to be practical. Teaching is not just about delivering a subject to students in a class; it also involves developing emotions that can be mentally demanding (Linda & Graham, 2014). Many teachers may not know whom to turn to at times of

such stress (Burchielli & Bartram 2006). Teachers that are exposed to stress must not only learn how to overcome such an ordeal in isolation, but also have to learn where and how to seek such advice. The issue of teacher stress has been so prevalent that it has been headline news in many public media such as the Guardian (Ferguson, 2019). It is true that the teaching profession attracts many to its profession with attractive packages like long holidays, short working school hours and being able to make use of one's qualifications, yet it is no secret that at the same time the teaching profession finds it difficult holding onto its teachers. Even after so much training (and for many the training is one they have to personally pay for), many are forced to leave the profession due to the stress they are experiencing (Perryman & Calvert, 2019).

Teacher stress is a serious concern not just for teachers, but administrators, managers, parents and of course students. According to the World Bank EdStats (2017) there are approximately 84.23 million teachers in the world, with the majority of them (32.12 million) being in secondary education (Kim, Jorg & Klassen, 2019). Holding onto these teachers is a discussion all over the world. It is well documented in the House of Commons briefing paper that over 60% of teachers leave within five years of teaching (Foster, 2019). Estimates suggest that by 2020, stress-related deaths would be second only to cardio vascular disease in most western countries (Lupien, McEwaen, Gunnar, & Heim, 2009). The effects stress has on the brain, behaviour and cognition are facts that should not be underestimated (Lupien et al., 2009). The manner in which the teaching profession is glamorized through television series like Waterloo road, where teachers are shown to have fun and party can be misleading. For many policy makers and

educators involved in senior management, the rise in teacher stress could be argued as being a result of the restructuring of educational systems and policies (Hargreaves, 1998). This is a point that should not be ignored; however, it is fair to agree with Carlyle & Woods (2002), who argue that other factors like excessive workloads and conflicts with managers and colleagues tend to cause stress. Teachers are under constant pressure to be seen as being 'good' teachers, especially with discussions of having the teaching profession being rated based on performance (Hood & Margetts, 2009). With the already present stress that teachers are exposed to, the discussion of performance and pay would only add to the stress a teacher is experiencing. It is not surprising that over the past twenty years, with the great responsibility and workload that teachers are facing, it is only natural that they are more stressed than ever. In fact, according to Jarvis (2005), the annual number of days taken off work due to stress in 2001 was around 13,500,000, double the figure recorded in 1996. For many teachers, job satisfaction is highly important, yet still many suffer from stress due to factors like work load, student teacher relationships, parental issues, issues with colleagues and administration duties (Klassen & Chiu, 2010). According to Klassen and Chiu's (2010) research, teachers with a higher teaching stress have less job satisfaction, which in turn affects their classroom management self-efficacy. Pressure from the government through its Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) is something that teachers along with their other many responsibilities have to be concerned about. As workplace stress is associated with job satisfaction, it is important to try to resolve professional problems that will affect workplace productivity (Tafrate & Kassinove, 2009).

There is a need for further research to explore the sources of secondary school teacher stress and their coping techniques (Burchielli & Bartram, 2006). According to Sarros & Sarros (1992), there are many problems that are too large and complex for individual efforts, meaning it is not just the usual workload and student problems that are difficult to solve, but other issues like interpersonal relationships with colleagues, parents and others that are deserving of solving when understanding teacher stress. If we are to have healthy teachers who are to be innovative, then it is significant that teachers who have had to face such experiences and constant challenges are supported.

Teaching is an emotional practice (Hargreaves, 1998). Educators cannot deny the fact that the role of the teacher is a lot more complex than just teaching a subject to students (Durka, 2002). Teachers are expected to communicate with students, parents, colleagues and senior management whilst at the same time maintaining a relationship of great responsibility. Being an experienced secondary school teacher from London and having been through the extreme pressures of secondary school teaching, my aim is to promote a reflexive narrative that can allow others to fully understand the stressful experiences many teachers are exposed to. Bloom (1998, p. 65) refers to such a reflexive approach as “individuals’ experiences of becoming”. Only by knowing what others are going through and having experienced it for oneself can one truly appreciate such stories. The pressure of having to maintain a firm, yet polite and respectable image with students can be strenuous. Teachers are expected to show passion, pleasure and creativity and at the same time having to deal with stress or not show signs of stress is extremely difficult. When looking at the topic of emotions and

teaching practices, I believe that since it is related to our mental wellbeing, it tends to be viewed as the 'Cinderella' area of discussion. According to the Confederation of British Industry (CBI, 2013), mental health is the 'Cinderella' area of occupational healthcare; hence trying to give it the attention it deserves is difficult. It is here that I believe that the need to understand the characteristics that a teacher needs, or is expected to hold, is an area that needs more recognition. Although most research seems to focus on what coping strategies are available for teachers to cope with this stress (Kyriacou, 2000), little is displayed about how teachers themselves feel on a daily basis in their teaching professions. Their voices, experiences and concerns are just as important as education itself (Liefshitz, 2015). Teachers feel these emotions need to be shared with all, not just those that are involved in the world of teaching. Teachers that are currently feeling stressed are either too afraid to discuss such matters openly or may not even feel they should. Despite many teachers holding significant experience, many continue to leave the teaching profession. Their experiences and struggles have much to offer in understanding how and why my participants felt stressed at work. Yoon (2002), argues that the need for understanding teacher experiences and emotions in relation to stress is extremely important as it has been observed that teachers that are known to be more emotionally responsive to students are seen as having better teacher-student relationships (Yoon, 2002). This point helps one understand the connection between how teachers' stressors in particular with students can be better understood. The aim of my research is to contribute to the growing literature on teacher stress and share real personal stories that my participants are feeling and experiencing on a daily basis. The core of this study concentrates and

highlights the voices of 5 teachers, their experiences and how stressful they actually view the teaching profession and what it is in their day-to-day teaching that makes them stressed to the verge of leaving the profession.

Vaezi & Fallah's (2012) investigation of teacher stress and the importance of sense of humour and emotional intelligence among English teachers in Tehran, revealed the correlation between emotional factors, sense of humour and how important understanding emotional intelligence is in teaching. It is not strange to see that many teachers are isolated in their classrooms. Due to such isolation, it is to be expected that the teachers that get stressed or suffer from emotional issues due to work will eventually view their struggle as a personal failure, or even feel that their students would learn better if they were better teachers. Educators' emotional skills are essential for teacher and student success, whether it is effective teaching, classroom management or even building and maintaining relationships with colleagues. It has been suggested that those teachers who are good at regulating their emotions are more likely to display positive affect and higher job satisfaction (Brackett, Palomera, Mojsa, Reyes & Salovey, 2010). An interesting point that relates to this study is that it also raises the understanding between teacher stress and certain teacher characteristics. My participants' experiences as well as their claims suggest that certain characteristics like being lenient and less authoritative may have helped in their manner of coping with stress, but other factors like lack of support were beyond their control. Harris, Halpin & Halpin (1985) echo my opinion by arguing that understanding the connection between teaching and teacher characteristics can help improve understanding of teacher stress and prevention/intervention practices. As

teachers, it is necessary to understand the relationship between teachers' characteristics and stress. Gaining knowledge on teacher characteristics can help understand such teacher stress and the related stressors. According to Vaezi & Fallah (2012), Sense of Humour and Emotional Intelligence are points that deserve recognition as predictors of stress. According to Harris et al. (1985), it is factors within educators themselves that cause excess stress and it is necessary to have further research in this field. It is unfortunate that the participants in this study feel that their students are able to pick up on the stress of some teachers, yet the secondary schools that the teachers worked for were either slow in recognizing this serious issue or simply avoided the whole issue of teacher stress. According to Kipps-Vaughan (2013), this is the case for many teachers where students were easily able to notice how stressed and unhappy their teachers were. Jarvis (2005) highlights an important factor for educators and policy makers that not all teachers hold the same emotional skills and competencies and that individual teachers vary in their particular responses to stressors; not all teachers are the same and teach in the same manner and neither do they all hold the same skills. This does not mean that such skills cannot be obtained, but it is highly important that establishments take the first step of recognizing the necessity of understanding emotional competence within teachers and then offer some form of coaching or an in-service program led by counsellors (Moracco & McFadden, 1982). Is there evidence to suggest that a teacher with an authoritarian style of teaching would be seen as having more stress? Or is the teacher that is more humanistic in pupil control more successful in dealing with stress? These are questions that are important to explore which unfortunately, could not be researched in my study.

According to Ignat & Clipa (2012, p. 502) “a teacher’s emotional intelligence is correlated with a positive attitude toward work and with satisfaction with life and with work itself”. This clearly argues that the amount of stress a teacher is exposed to will no doubt affect one’s professional development. Undoubtedly, if one is feeling positive at work, the interest on developing further as a teacher tends to be higher. One should remember that developing professionally is not just about working, but also about finding out more about ourselves and how we can better ourselves as teachers (Bailey, Curtis & Nunan, 2001).

2.2 Research Questions

Much has been written about teacher stress, yet little is known on how teachers cope with this stress and even less is known about how current teachers feel. Previous research has concentrated mainly on the stressors in the teaching profession and not enough on voicing teachers’ experiences and understanding their emotions (Hargreaves, 2000; Travers & Cooper, 2000; Austin, Shah & Muncer, 2005; Ofsted, 2019). Based on this, the goal of this study is to present why teachers feel stressed and what they are doing to cope with this stress. Their words and feelings are presented in the way that best expresses their voices. Allowing participants to present their stories in this way gives not only a detailed texture to the study, but adds plausibility (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2007). The participants in my study present their stories with words and meanings that are specific to their experiences and way of life. It is important to not only hear them, but to also understand what they are doing to deal with this stress and investigate the barriers they are experiencing that causes such stress (Riessman, 2008). In order for me to conduct this study the following questions guided my research:

1. What are the causes of Secondary School male teachers' stress in the North London area?
2. What coping strategies do Secondary School teachers use to alleviate teacher stress in their context?

2.3 Significance of the study

The significance of this study lies in the fact that despite there being extensive research on teacher stress throughout the world, there continues to be an increase in the number of stress related illnesses (Troman & Woods, 2001). The study of teacher stress can be extremely useful for better teaching, learning, policy making and practice. Listening to the participants helps paint a better picture in the voice of those who are carrying out the teaching. The stories, experiences and feelings of my participants are more than just teachers' experiences; they are voices that deserve to be heard. They share feelings that many may share, yet due to various reasons are not easily disclosed. There is no doubt that it is difficult to determine what factors in what combination lead to stress for individual teachers. As a teacher myself, I fully understand the experiences and challenges that teachers both novice and experienced can encounter. Just because one teacher has not experienced the same as another teacher, the discussion of such difficulties should not be avoided (Kyriacou & Harriman, 1993); as mentioned earlier there are many reasons why teachers can get stressed. The experiences and stories my participants offer will allow many teachers and policy makers to understand the emotional aspects involved in the field of teaching. This study highlights the many important and necessary factors which many teachers have experienced, are experiencing, or may even experience in the future. The

fact that teachers experience stress on a daily basis has been the subject of great research (Griva & Joekes, 2003); such research proves its significance as a study. Such a study should also generate discussion among policy makers and make way for an arena where help and prevention for teachers from facing such feelings of stress and unhappiness can be delivered before it is too late and more teachers are lost from the profession. According to Foster (2019), pupil numbers are expected to rise by 19% between 2017 and 2026; this indicates that pressure on teacher recruitment will surely increase. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics announced that in the next 14 years, countries around the world must recruit approximately 68.8 million teachers in order to provide every child with primary and secondary education; 24.4 million primary school teachers are needed and 44.4 million teachers will be needed for secondary schools (UNESCO, 2016). Such statistics are alarming and indicate a serious need to try to understand what can be done to hold on to teachers, especially when figures have shown that the increase of teachers has not kept pace with the increase of pupils since 2010, particularly in the last two years (Foster, 2019).

This study explores the lives of five stressed teachers and narrates their experiences of teacher stress. As educators, it is important to know what stressors our teachers are being exposed to and how these teachers are coping. A lack of this understanding will no doubt affect the efficacy of teachers (Klassen & Chio, 2010).

2.4 Rationale behind my Narrative Research

Storytelling is seen as the most common form of human communication (Webster & Mertova, 2007). By listening to such stories, we can not only learn

about what has happened in the past, but plan for how to prevent teacher stress or at least tackle teacher stress using the correct methods in the future. The narrative approach has been praised for its acknowledgment of the subjective experiences of individuals (Parker, 2005). Hence, understanding my participants' stories is important in this study. Advocates of positivistic research may question the reliability or validity of my research, especially since those who do embark on such a style of research are regularly questioned over its rigor and quality (Loh, 2013). However, it is interesting to note that according to Clough (1992) all factual representations of reality, even those that claim to be statistical representations are narratively constructed. The aim of choosing this particular methodology is to be able to transport the reader into the narrative world (Gerrig, 1993). According to Hammersley & Atkinson (1995), validity in research is not about data or methods, but accounts, and essentially narrative meaning is created by noting that something is a part of a whole. According to Connelly and Clandinin (2000), verisimilitude is seen as an important criterion when assessing any narrative inquiry. Only if my study and the participants' sayings are recognised as being 'believable', will my study be seen as being trustworthy. As Riessman (2008, p. 193), argues: if the research is relevant for members of a community, then it passes what is known as the "ultimate test". Although my study focused on stressed teachers, it still is of use to all involved in the field of education be they teachers or management. Eisner (1998) further explains how a study can be seen as being useful or relevant through Comprehension (does it help us understand a situation), Anticipation (provide descriptions and interpretations) and Guide (highlight or explain directions the reader can take into account).

An attempt was made to observe the following three criteria in this study:

1. **Comprehension:** I will be looking into understanding why teachers are feeling so stressed.
2. **Anticipation:** I will be describing teachers' feelings as current teachers and interpreting their stories.
3. **Guide:** I will be highlighting that teachers are leaving the teaching profession due to stress and that if the reasons are not fully understood, more and more valuable teachers will continue to leave.

It is anticipated that the insights provided by the study participants could shed light on the subject of teacher stress by explaining what stressors secondary school teachers experience and what coping strategies they employ to alleviate this stress. My participants' experiences are personal in nature, but they are 'believable' and it is highly likely that there are many other teachers experiencing similar, if not the same. As Laslett (1999, p. 392), explains "analysis of personal narratives can illuminate individual and collective action and meanings as well as the social processes by which social life and human relationships are made and changed". By listening to my participants and giving them a voice, we can begin to understand what can be done to save huge losses to the teaching profession. It could be argued that by using a questionnaire I could have been able to find out how many teachers are facing stress and possibly what factors in the teaching profession cause such stress; however, that is not the main aim of my study. I believe that through narratives we can fully understand why teachers suffer from stress. The coping mechanisms of educators and their beliefs regarding the

causes of stress needs to be communicated to policy makers in order to mitigate stress levels or at the very least, increase understanding of the underlying causes.

Chapter 3: Review of the related literature

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review the findings regarding the topic of occupational stress and in particular teacher stress, the stressors that teachers face, the reasons for such stressors and the coping mechanisms they use. The review in this chapter focuses on research conducted within recent years; however, older studies have also been mentioned, especially when found to be critical to the study. I have divided this chapter into four parts; Understanding Stress with focus on teaching stress, exploring teacher stress coping strategies, teachers internal characteristics and teacher stress and coping strategies in narrative literature research.

3.1.1 Understanding Stress

When looking into the topic of stress, it is correct to say that there is no one common definition (Moracco & McFadden, 1982), although some would argue that stress is viewed as pressures upon the individual from the environment (French, Caplan, Van Harrison & Pinneau, 1976) and others psychological (Selye, 1976). Kyriacou (2000) refers to stress as being the general level of challenge a person faces whether it is of a positive or negative nature and to the degree of mismatch between the demands that are made on an individual and the ability of the individual concerned in meeting those demands. Despite the many definitions and understandings that stress may have, it is clear that stress is normally referred to as a negative emotional experience (Kyriacou, 2000). Research on stress has proven that suffering from stress cannot only affect the teaching practice of teachers, but can also lead to ill health (Kyriacou, 2000). Another way of

understanding stress is by looking at the relationship between an individual and the environment in their everyday life. As mentioned before, life is constantly throwing us events that we sometimes do not expect. As humans we are exposed to stress everywhere, whether it is at work or home; Selye, (1956) highlights this fact of life. Although it is fair to say that the link between stress at work and the occurrence of a stress related illness is a complex one, literature suggests that many illnesses like feeling tense, feeling tearful, sleeplessness, loss of sex drive, feeling tired, mouth ulcers, indigestion and panic attacks are just some of the symptoms stress causes (Kyriacou, 2000). These symptoms should not be underestimated. Despite the huge body of research showing that stress is inevitable, and that a certain level of stress is necessary to wellbeing (Eustress), it is the constant exposure to stress as in long term stress that is known to cause somatic illness and maladaptive emotional or social functioning (Lazarus, 2000). Due to the modern world we are now living in and with the amount of responsibilities humans have to cope with, stress is most probably inevitable. Regardless of our culture, background, upbringing or occupation; stress is something that is known to affect us all (Reddy & Anuradha, 2013).

3.1.2 Occupational Stress

According to the HSE (2018), statistics show that approximately 26.8 million working days were lost in 2017/18 due to occupational stress. It is interesting to highlight the fact that the education industry had the highest figures followed by health and social care. Under the Health & Safety Act 1974, all employers in the UK have a responsibility to ensure that there is a duty of care towards their health and safety whether it is of a physical or mental nature. The HSE is responsible for

occupational safety and health and has undertaken extensive research in recognizing work related stress and on finding ways to tackle this problem (Cox, 1993). Despite such research, it still seems difficult in recognizing the psychological harm involved in occupational stress (Cousins, Mackay, Clarke, Kelly, Kelly & McCaig, 2007). Attention to the topic of Occupational Stress is necessary, so that both employees and employers are aware of how to overcome and minimize this problem. In particular, the topic of Occupational Stress is of great relevance in the field of stress and for the welfare of the teaching profession. Suffering from occupational stress is simply suffering from stress at work and famously known as job stress (Cavanaugh, Boswell, Roehling & Boudreau, 2000). The issue of occupational stress may be better understood when one has to think about the numerous workers that smoke or drink after having a tough day at work. According to the Office for National Statistics (2019), there are approximately 7.2 million adult smokers in the UK. This statistic may not be the scope of this thesis, but is relevant to the fact that a large number of people who suffer from stress are smoking to gain anxiolytic effects (Acierno, Kilpatrick, Resnick, Saunders, 1996). File, Fluck & Leahy (2001) examined the effects of nicotine on the cognitive performance of non- smoking students and on mood changes following a stressful task. Their research suggested that there is evidence that exposure to stress has caused many females to smoke due to the fact that nicotine seemed to block their stress induced mood changes. It is interesting to note that this was not the case with men who seemed to feel relaxed at first, but only to have a more enhanced effect of stress later. Under conditions of stress, nicotine was found to make women calm and men not so calm and actually more aggressive. By looking at the

above points one can see how the popular consumption of nicotine could be down to the suggestion that it does give a rewarding effect. A study on occupational stress and Malaysian secondary school teachers found their reasons for smoking was because it helped them feel relaxed and overcome stress (Al-Naggar, Jawad & Bobryshev, 2012). Similar findings are found around the world with India, Turkey, Bahrain, Nepal, Spain, Bangladesh, Japan and Romania all revealing high prevalence of smoking amongst those dealing with occupational stress (Al-Naggar et al., 2012). As with all research, the above-mentioned factors can be questioned, but the fact is that if people smoke and experience calming effects, then it is even more likely that the possibility of giving up smoking would be a demanding task. As mentioned before, regardless of our background and experience, our daily lives expose us to various degrees of stress, so knowing the symptoms and even more importantly, knowing how to minimize stress is crucial. Work related stress has become such a serious issue that according to the Confederation of British Industry (CBI, 2013) report, despite levels of employee absence declining during the depths of recession in 2008/9, it still cost the economy over 14 billion pounds in 2012 (CBI, 2013). However, very little is actually done to combat such stress related illnesses (Woodham, 1995). It is interesting to note that although minor illnesses like colds are the most common cause of short-term absences; stress, anxiety and depression are the main causes of long-term absences (CBI, 2013). The topic of understanding stress and in particular job satisfaction (an important element within teaching) is indeed a complex study. Kyriacou (2001) observes that as there is extensive evidence that stress and job satisfaction are related, it is also extremely difficult to understand due to the differences in the main sources of teacher stress.

According to the Health and Safety Executive (2018), the most commonly reported type of work-related illness is stress. The following information was obtained from their summary statistics:

- 0.6 million work related stress cases in 2017/18
- The industries that reported the highest rates of work-related stress were education followed by human health and social work
- The occupations that reported the highest prevalence rates of work-related stress were health professionals, teaching and educational professionals and caring personal services
- The main work activities attributed as causing work-related stress were workload (44%), lack of support (14%) and violence, threats or bullying (13%)

HSE (2018, p. 3-4)

The Labour Force Survey is a survey of the employment circumstances of the UK population, the information they provide through the HSE is extremely useful in showing the official measures of employment and unemployment. The survey is managed by the Office for National Statistics in Great Britain and by the Central Survey Unit of the Department of Finance and Personnel in Northern Ireland on behalf of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETINI). The reliability of such reports can be viewed as being high as the respondents that took part in this survey were re-interviewed and asked to elaborate on their stress and its connection with work. At a later stage, with their permission their doctors were contacted and further information was obtained to view the link between work and stress. After all this was completed, an expert panel reviewed all the obtained

information to make an assessment of the nature of the link. The results of this investigation were published in March 2013 after careful scrutiny. The report concluded that self-reports of work-related illnesses are broadly reliable (Jones, Hodgson & Webster, 2013). It is worth mentioning that although the topic of occupational stress has received a great deal of attention, especially over recent years, the difficulty in measuring stress has not become easier (Health & Safety Executive, 2018).

3.1.3 Teacher Stress

One simple, yet clear definition of teacher stress is vulnerability in the teacher and having excessive demands in their environment (Jarvis, 2005). Other more comprehensive definitions that are of more particular relevance to the study of teacher stress include: “... *stress is an alteration of psychological homeostatis resulting from aspects of the teacher’s job that are perceived as threats to the individual’s wellbeing or self- esteem*” (Moracco & McFadden, 1982, p. 549). And “...*teacher stress is a specific type of occupational stress. It is the experience by a teacher of unpleasant emotions such as tension, frustration, anger and depression resulting from aspects of his/her work as a teacher*” (Reddy & Anuradha, 2013, p. 10). Teacher stress is also defined as, “...*the experience by teachers of unpleasant, negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety, tension, frustration and depression, resulting from some aspect of their work as teachers*” (Kyriacou & Harriman, 1993, p. 297). Teachers having to deal with death in the family, divorce, partners with alcohol or health problems or money concerns, are just some of the reasons why teachers may come to be classed as stressed. Antoniou, Polychroni & Vlachakis’ (2005) study on work stress in high school teachers in Greece

discovered that female teachers experienced higher levels of stress; a finding supported by the majority of international studies (Antoniou et al., 2005). In their study, younger teachers aged up to 30 experienced higher levels of emotional exhaustion and burnout, while older teacher's experienced higher levels of stress due to a lack of support. Despite there being extensive research in the field of occupational stress, in particular teacher stress from (Kyriacou, 2001, Rogers 1992, Carlyle & Woods 2002, Nakka, 2014, Jarvis, 2005), there still remains many differences in the main sources of teacher stress. Such differences are necessary to understand as international research has shown that student outcomes and teacher retention are affected by teachers that suffer from stress (Crossman & Harris, 2006). It is argued that the effects of teacher stress on individual teachers affect the classroom environment and student learning (Kipps-Vaughan, 2013). Apart from affecting students, it is also argued that such stress leads to frustration that eventually leads to burnout (Bailey et al. 2001). Antoniou, et al. (2005), describe the conditions that make work stressful as being exogenous or endogenous. Stressors such as having an excessive workload, lack of collaboration etc., are seen as being exogenous, whereas suffering from emotional exhaustion and frustration due to unrealistic expectations were seen as being endogenous. Their study also revealed that apart from a heavy workload, a lack of involvement in school decisions, difficult relationships with colleagues and inadequate training were found to be the main stressors at work. Regardless of age, female teachers reported higher levels of stress compared to males; however, both men and women agreed that problems in the classroom were the most serious. In their study, older teachers reported higher levels of stress due to a lack

of government support, with younger teachers (teachers aged up to 30) reporting lower levels.

It is true that the experiences of stress vary from one individual to another, therefore making it a very subjective experience, but literature has managed to highlight a serious matter: that the inability to cope with stress at work is an important challenge not just for the teachers concerned, but for the teaching profession and government as a whole. If work stress is ignored or not fully understood a chronic series of job stress can lead to burnout.

3.1.4 Stress and Burnout

Burnout is a necessary factor that cannot be ignored when discussing the topic of Stress. According to Fisher (2011), stress is statistically seen as a significant predictor of burnout. It is argued that secondary school teachers leave due to feeling either severely stressed or suffering from burnout (Jarvis, 2005). According to Jarvis (2005), burnout is seen as being understood as a serious consequence of prolonged work- related stress. Despite it being accepted that stress is inevitable and that most teachers experience stress at some point of their teaching careers (Pishghadam & Sahebjam, 2012), it seems that it is the prolonged experience of stress that can lead to burnout. Another interesting definition of burnout according to Goddard, O'Brien, & Goddard (2006, p. 857) is *“a chronic state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion that arises in personnel from the cumulative demands of their work”*. In simpler terms teacher burnout tends to occur following a long period of exposure to high levels of stress accompanied with unsuccessful coping strategies. The seriousness of burnout can be better understood when one learns that approximately a quarter of burnout research has

involved teachers (Schaufeli, 1998). Of course, it would be wrong to argue that teaching is the only profession that deserves a lot of attention, but the fact that so much research on the topic of burnout focuses on the teaching profession, shows how serious teacher stress is. It is argued that depersonalization by distancing oneself from others; reduced personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion where the teacher spends less time than normal feeling positive are all identified as elements of burnout (Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993). If teachers are left alone in their classrooms with little or nothing to say to their colleagues, then it is difficult for them to know what is going on in the teaching profession in terms of innovation, styles and techniques. According to Davis (1987), it is this very lack of sharing that is becoming the basis for many teachers suffering from burnout. Apart from affecting students, colleagues, friends and family, it is also argued that such stress leads to frustration that eventually leads to burnout (Bailey et al. 2001). Teachers are expected to care for their students' well-being and want their students to do well. The care that teachers have for their students is a reason for teacher stress and it is for this reason why it is argued that those in the caring profession are viewed as being particularly susceptible to burnout (Maslach, 1982).

3.1.5 Lack of Job Satisfaction from a micro level perspective

Darmody & Smith (2010) describe teacher stress and job satisfaction as being associated with a certain background and school level factors. These levels are described as Micro, Meso and Macro. The Micro level category within job satisfaction consists of teacher background factors such as age; gender, experience of teaching and meaning attached to their work as moderators of teacher stress. The same research demonstrates that although there is evidence to

suggest that the more experienced teacher was shown to deal with stress better than the less experienced, other studies proved differently (Smith & Bourke, 2002, Bishay, 1996), The term 'Honeymoon Period Theory' has often been used to describe less experienced teachers with a higher level of job satisfaction (Schmidt, 1999). Such a theory is used to describe teachers, who early in their careers, accept whatever challenges and responsibilities they are faced with and as a result portray a higher level of job satisfaction. Of course, this is merely a theory as numerous amounts of first year young teachers leaving the profession due to being burnout has been well documented (Schlichte, Yssel & Merbler, 2005). Another reason why less experienced teachers may have higher level of job satisfaction could also be explained by arguing that such teachers are new to the profession and haven't fully experienced the real responsibilities and practice that the teaching profession can bring. However, it is interesting to see that Bishay (1996) later found in his research on US secondary school teachers that stress levels reduced with years of teaching experience. Age might be seen as being highly relevant in understanding the topic of teacher stress as it could be argued that the years of teaching experience teachers have would have prepared them for what to expect and therefore such experiences, pleasant or otherwise, would have given them the ability to deal with the relevant stressors they are faced with.

Stress varies amongst men and women (Chaplain, 1995). This is not simple to understand as various factors are highlighted in a variety of research. According to Vandenberghe & Huberman (1999), male teachers are more at risk of stress and burnout than women or any other profession. Another argument held by Chaplain (1995) is that male teachers receiving very little social support is another reason for

them to suffer from stress. Chaplain's (1995) study on job stress in UK primary schools indicated differences in both the stressors that male and female teachers experienced as well as the manner in how they viewed job satisfaction. Male teachers reported more stress than female teachers in relation to professional tasks and pupil behaviour whilst their female counterparts highlighted professional concerns. Similar findings can be found in Ma & Macmillan's (1999) survey where female teachers showed more satisfaction in their professional roles than the male teachers.

3.1.6 Meso Level factors and Job Satisfaction

The majority of existing studies on teacher job satisfaction and stress deal with Meso-level factors (Darmody & Smith, 2010). Meso level factors are focused around the teacher, school and student. An interesting piece of research is Crossman & Harris's (2006) research on secondary school teachers in the United Kingdom. This research suggested that those teachers that worked for private schools showed a higher rate of job satisfaction and those in state schools displayed the least satisfaction. School location was thought to affect job satisfaction. Those that worked for urban secondary schools in the US displayed high stress levels than those that taught in rural schools (Abel & Sewell, 1999). An interesting topic to explore would be to see how private schools function differently from state schools as this could raise important questions like what support is available in both types of schools or whether the stress factors vary between such schools. Another factor that was known to cause significantly more stress for all teachers was workplace conditions such as administrative control, teaching competence and organizational culture (Ma & Macmillan, 1999). Griffith,

Stephoe & Cropley (1999) investigated the coping strategies and job stress among teachers in the UK and found that high levels of stress was linked with low social support. Although the topic of social support will be discussed later, it nevertheless is an important factor to remember when understanding what factors are known to cause and aggravate teacher stress. Numerous studies have suggested that teachers that find little or no support available have demonstrated high levels of stress (Darmody & Smyth, 2010). As the majority of research around teacher job satisfaction has focused on meso-level factors, it has been established that the above-mentioned factors have found to affect teacher retention and negatively affect the teaching profession in general (Kyriacou, Kunc, Stephens & Hultgren, 2003).

3.1.7 Macro Level factors and Job Satisfaction

An example of a Macro level factor which affects teacher job satisfaction is the constant change in education policies. Teachers like many other professionals are strictly confined to working in accordance with government policies. Decisions like holding detentions after school, teacher-parent disagreements, observations and performance are just examples of the pressures teachers are exposed to. According to Kyriacou & Chien (2004), teachers in Taiwan found their teaching profession to be very or extremely stressful due to the changing policies that the government would introduce. Although some research may indicate that salary level and welfare conditions are causes for stress (Darmody & Smyth, 2010), other aspects of research indicates that national contexts of teaching may have different impacts on teachers' perceived job satisfaction. According to Parsons (2005), the changes in UK government policies in relation to teaching is a major reason for

why stress is viewed as a major concern in the teaching profession, especially due to the major changes and increase in the teacher's workload in the past twenty years. There is no doubt that major changes have occurred in the teaching profession. With the recent technological advances and the manner in which business organizations are changing, it should not be a surprise that the education sector is also changing. Bridges (1995) argues that jobs can no longer be taken for granted and that companies are now downsizing due to modern technology; this does not imply that teachers get stressed due to companies downsizing, but the fact that modern technology is constantly being introduced is a matter of interest. Research conducted by Robinson & Smithers (2005) suggested that teachers that have taught for years and who feel comfortable and set in their teaching styles would feel threatened and then eventually stressed, due to not being able to adapt to such modern measures. Similar suggestions were made by Faragher, Cass & Cooper (2003) who also argue that the demands of the teaching profession are a reason for stress and burnout. The fact that having less control over workload was a major stressor is necessary to highlight here, as control is one of the key risk factors identified as being a cause of work-related stress (Mackay, Cousins, Kelly, Lee & McCaig, 2004). The UK Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in order to reduce the level of work-related stress reported by British Workers conducted extensive research and found that the following six factors to be seen as causing stress in the British work place: Control of the teacher, Demands of the Job, Support received from managers and colleagues, Role of teachers in the organization, Relationships at work and how Change is managed at work (Mackay et al. 2004). The Health and Safety Commission (HSC) is seen as the overall body

responsible for Health and Safety matters in the UK. Like many organizations in the modern world the teaching profession is changing and will continue to change, but when teachers feel that not enough is being done to help them, mental health problems are likely to increase. Teachers' workload has changed and increased a great deal in the past twenty years (Parsons, 2005). Such a change can understandably lead to more stress. Evidence suggests that such changes link teacher stress with the restructuring of national education systems starting from the 1980's (Troman, 2000). Not being able to catch up and stay in touch with modern technology and employ such tactics at work has caused many teachers to feel highly stressed as not only do they feel they are falling behind, but feel the stress of not doing what is perceived as an important element of their job (Terry, 1997). Hargreaves (1998) mentions how the current style of naming and shaming of failing schools by the government is an example of the stress that is adding to the already prevalent teacher stress. Research has shown that management cultures have changed, roles have diversified and definitely intensified, and even the way governments have emphasized quality in terms of demonstrable performance and measurable outcomes which are then measured through observations, results, school inspections and student tests both internally and externally have all been factors in affecting teachers' wellbeing (Gu & Day, 2013). It is interesting to note that at a time when teaching in the UK is seen by many as one of the most stressful professions (Troman, 2000, Kyriacou, 2000, Hargreaves, 1998) not enough research on what causes teachers to remain in the profession is available (Gu & Day, 2013). Gardner & Oswald (1999) conducted research suggesting that

teachers' job satisfaction revealed 'unhappiness' being experienced at a personal level.

The above factors on Micro, Meso and Macro levels provide an important insight into understanding which elements result in higher job satisfaction. These factors highlight the important need to investigate the personal and social conditions that teachers are exposed to in their everyday lives. Based on the available worldwide research on this topic, I believe it would be fair to admit that a lack of job satisfaction amongst teachers is apparent across all cultures (Reddy & Anuradha 2013, Darmody & Smyth, 2010). International studies have suggested that teachers that are assigned large class sizes end up with little job satisfaction (Darmody & Smyth, 2010). The demand to teach a large class and catering for all professionally is a tough task which is most likely to have a detrimental effect on the teacher. Other common symptoms of stress at work are irritability, depression, feeling unsettled at work, short temper, feeling off colour, stomach complaints and general aches and pains (Kyriacou & Platt, 1985). Lloyd & Sullivan (2012) mention job satisfaction and having good working relationships with supervisors and colleagues as being paramount to the teaching profession. Investigation into the field of teacher stress has highlighted a lack of comfortable physical environments, professional development and adequate resources as being other reasons to cause stress (Merike & Smyth, 1993).

3.1.8 Lack of Support

Lack of support in the teaching profession has been seen as a major issue for a long time. Goodlad's (1984), study of 1,350 teachers found that teachers perceived themselves as being isolated. This isolation not only made such

teachers feel like not approaching others for help, but the isolation was also seen as a reason for the teachers being unable to adapt to new teaching strategies. Research has shown that this study is not alone in its findings and despite being over three decades old, is still very relevant today. It seems this practice of isolation and lack of support still is considered a widespread and common problem (Ofsted, 2019). An Ofsted report published in July 2019 states a lack of overall support from senior leaders and line managers contributes to teacher stress. When teachers are alone in the classroom and the door closes it can be what some may call “the egg carton profession” (Lortie, 1975, p. 223). It is understandable then to see how a sense of depersonalization can develop. It would be difficult for teachers to speak to others who may not have experienced the same level of stress for various reasons due to this very isolation in the classroom. What happens in one classroom with one group of students does not necessarily mean another teacher with the same class will encounter the same experience (Kyriacou & Pratt, 1985). It is also true that some teachers prefer to work in isolation and don’t feel that they need any support; Davis (1986) explains such teachers having a nature where they may function better when isolated and independent from others. However, it is worthy to note that circumstances can change and literature has proven how even the most experienced teachers can suffer from severe stress (Hall, Hall & Abaci, 1997, Jarvis, 2000, Weiss & Garcia, 2019). Research at the University of Central Florida revealed that teachers did feel isolation due to factors like a lack of trust, lack of shared decision making and lack of adequate training and staff development (Rothberg, 1986). Similar studies are echoed now in 2019 by Holmqvist (2019) who highlights a lack of shared decision making and adequate

training as being major reasons for teachers leaving the profession. Teachers need mentors that are able to support them and who they can trust (Schlichte et al. 2005). The need to have someone who the teacher can talk to when things are not working out is necessary. According to Schlichte et al. (2005, p. 39), “*when relationships are poor, attrition is increased*”. The same authors argue that according to their research those teachers that did have strong support and strong mentors who offered practical advice and understanding, had students whom they felt close to. They also felt connected with the administration and had a general overall sense of belonging to their school; evidently, such teachers would have less reason to suffer from stress due to the system of strong relationships developed through such support. Lack of trust, shared decision making and training in communication are seen as the core of causing isolation for many teachers. It seems that the need for a strong social support is highly necessary for a successful teaching career. The term social support is widely used to explain the manner in which interpersonal relationships are used to deal with stressful situations; this can be at home, work or anywhere. According to Lazarus (1966), the need for social support can help the teachers’ assessment of various situations. If information is provided to explain the situation as being threatening then it is only likely for the teacher to get stressed, if on the other hand information is given that support is available or the situation in itself is not too threatening then it is probable less stress would occur. Festinger’s (1954) Social Comparison Theory argues that when people are stressed and need support, they tend to look to others for information about the appropriate emotional reaction. A teacher, who may suffer from stress, may want to talk to a fellow teacher and ask for advice on what needs

to be done or avoided to overcome such stress. However, a modification of this theory later argued that some may not even ask for help due to a fear or concern that they may be seen as being weak or incompetent, resulting in isolation.

Approaching the head of the school or even other teachers with a claim that one is feeling stressed may not be possible for many teachers, especially if they feel that they are in an organization where no other teachers are complaining or suffering from stress. In today's world of teaching where pressure from governments, heads of schools and teacher expectations is high, gaining such appropriate support is necessary for all teachers regardless of how long they have been in the teaching profession. One of the major researchers in the field of stress is Karasek (1979) whose research model consisted of two aspects of the work situation: one being job demands and the other being job control. It is interesting to note that the importance of support from colleagues and management was later added to Karasek's model (Griva & Joeke, 2003). Such an acceptance shows credit to the topic of support. Teachers, regardless of their experience and age need support; studies have shown how new teachers feel comfortable talking to the more experienced and feel part of a welcoming community (Schlichte et al. 2005). In Schlichte et al's. (2005) study on teacher isolation and alienation, one of the biggest reasons for teachers suffering from burnout or even leaving the teaching profession was due to not receiving the support they needed. House & Wells (1977) have suggested that rather than having groups that merely offer suggestions as to how to combat stress, support groups should be there to facilitate certain kinds of behaviour that can minimize or eliminate the stressors, both of a psychological and non-psychological nature.

3.1.9 Depersonalization

As mentioned in chapter 2, Burnout (2.2), depersonalization is an important element to burnout (Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993). This does not of course mean that teachers that choose to sit alone or refuse to socialize with others by going for a drink or going to eat out at a restaurant are not at risk of Burnout, but it could indicate a sense of unhappiness or a sense of alienation from a community where emotional and social support may be available (Rothberg, 1986). The need for social interaction and communication should not be ignored. According to Kikusui, Winslow & Mori (2006), social interaction and communication are necessary not only for cooperation within a group, but also for protection from environmental threats. Their ethological research on mammals clearly indicated that solitude is not healthy and was seen as a major stressor. The study looked at how mammals used other mammals to help overcome fear and anxiety. The same research further elaborated on how humans, like animals, use visual cues to communicate emotional status. The authors give an example of how common it is amongst us all to place pictures of our close ones on our desks at work to feel a sense of relief after experiencing a stressful experience. The same authors suggest the combination of social interaction and communication is a way of coping with stress and call this phenomenon social buffering. This finding concentrated on social buffering effects and stress responses. This area of research further indicated that it is not just quantitative, but qualitative social interaction that is important. This highlights the argument that not just any communication, but positive and adequate social interaction is necessary in order for social buffering to be successful (Kikusui et al. 2006). Social union may not always be seen as a positive influence in

dealing with stress, but this factor highlights a critical issue which is to have a better understanding of what kinds of relationships in the teaching profession are important and useful and which are damaging. Although the factors mentioned in Kikusui et al's (2006) research are ethological in nature, the authors have successfully brought to our attention that understanding the mechanisms of social buffering could definitely be beneficial for human health. Their research has shown that the observation and understanding of how animals (mammals in particular) use social interaction and communication to deal with stress, whether it is the fear of another animal or fear of doing a particular task, is useful as a model in understanding the type of social support teachers need. Kikusui et al's (2006) findings have highlighted an interesting observation: that social contact does seem to have a positive influence on the psychological and physiological aspects of social animals, including human beings. Research has argued for years that little is done to encourage teachers to share their knowledge and experiences and that they mostly work alone (Tye, 1984). Kyriacou (2001) argues that teachers need to work in a school environment where there is social support; he further highlights that setting unrealistic targets or failing to communicate adequately are reasons for stress, which can easily be avoided. One of Kyriacou's (2001) methods of dealing with stress is discussing problems and expressing feelings to others; it could be argued that having someone to talk to is an important way of coping with stress. Griffith, et al. (1999) also argues for the necessity of having social support and that the presence of such support can affect the teacher's perception of stress. The need for social support can also be better understood when looking at the roles that teachers have to perform at work. Blase (1986) argues that the multiple roles

like babysitter, policeman, disciplinarian and finally the teacher all add to teacher stress. The multiple roles that teachers are expected to display and perform throughout their teaching careers are seriously underestimated. All of the mentioned roles that Blase (1986) highlights are jobs that equally attract stress due to their demands and responsibilities. Having all of these roles to maintain within the field of teaching would undoubtedly be a difficult task to maintain. It is therefore understandable that not being able to gain support related to these roles can lead to severe stress. Studies have demonstrated that social support can significantly decrease the risk of cardiovascular diseases, depression, stress, suicide, schizophrenia and even stroke (Kikusui et al. 2006). The benefits of having social support are seen to be so huge that literature in this field has even suggested that patients that have a social support tend to heal better than those that don't and that the study of stress and isolation in particular are important factors to investigate relating to diseases (Rojas, Padgett, Sheridan & Marucha, 2002). It is necessary for teachers to be able to attend lectures, talks or basic teacher gatherings where such feelings are shared so that it is understood that such feelings may be individual, but are normal and probably common. According to Kipps-Vaughan (2013), supporting teachers that are stressed through stress management courses can not only help reduce teacher absenteeism and turnover, but can also play a huge role in avoiding stress and burnout. The author further goes on to argue that having such support will not only be of advantage to stressed teachers, but can also help in teaching novice and experienced teachers the effects of teacher stress. Such discussions will not only help teachers overcome isolation and problems but will highlight issues that otherwise would have been left

alone such student behavioural problems and weak school leadership. The ignorance of negative feelings that many teachers can face is a serious mistake that can only lead to serious repercussions. If such negative emotions are not understood then the whole teaching profession can get affected. This can be the teacher's relationship with students, other adults, colleagues, parents, school governors and inspectors. The role of today's teacher is not only in the classroom; standing in the classroom and teaching to a class is only one part of the teaching profession. To ignore this fact will cause many to not fully understand the emotions, roles and psychological demands teachers face. How teachers maintain relationships with the above-mentioned factors has been shown to lead to emotional and psychological problems in their work and lives (Troman, 2000). Not understanding the stress that many secondary school teachers are exposed to will only end up adding more to the already apparently felt division between teachers and management. The separation of teachers and managers in secondary schools is already better known as the 'us and them' culture (Ball, 1998). It would be naïve to consider that this culture does not exist in many schools. Just because many teachers choose not to disclose true feelings, it does not mean that such a culture does not exist. According to Howard & Johnson (2004), many studies of teacher stress have focused on the dysfunctional strategies of individual teachers (Howard & Johnson, 2004). There seems to be a separate image portrayed for the individual teacher. The blame or failure seems to be made towards the individual rather than the institution (Howard & Johnson, 2004). With the greater role that parents now have in their children's education and the constant policies being implemented by the government, one can begin to see the pressure that teachers

are being exposed to. For teachers that teach in disadvantaged areas the pressure of having to deliver a form of education that will instantly deliver results can be extremely demanding which can easily lead to teacher stress (Howard & Johnson, 2004). The role of society in adding to the stress of teachers is an issue that deserves recognition and a better understanding.

3.2 Stress Coping Strategies

As mentioned before, teachers are exposed to a variety of stressful issues like workload, pupil attitudes and behaviour, lack of promotional prospects, unsatisfactory working conditions, poor relationships with colleagues and superiors, advances in technology, changes in the working environment and the organizational climate (Griva & Joeekes, 2003). Having to cope with all of these stressors and facing negative criticism from outside of the workplace can definitely affect the psychological state of teachers. It would not be surprising to hear that such stressors can lead to not only emotional exhaustion and burnout, but also affect teachers' personal lives. This part of the review highlights the literature on the coping strategies teachers use.

3.2.1 Strong Support Groups

Frydman and Pitre's (2019) study on the topic of reducing teacher stress suggests the need for intervention models like drama therapy being available to tackle stress. Their argument being teachers need opportunities to directly engage with their occupational stressors for their overall well-being. Teachers work with children and sometimes have to be exposed to behaviours from children that have been traumatized in some way or another. It has been reported that approximately one third of young people in the UK have been exposed to traumatic experiences

by the time they are 18 and that young people being exposed to trauma are twice as likely to have a conduct disorder than young people who have not had traumatic exposure (Lewis, Arseneault, Caspi, Fisher, Matthews, Moffitt, Odgers, Stahl, Teng & Denese, 2019). Working with children who have such trauma exposure is known to affect a teachers' own psychological well-being and is an example of how secondary traumatic stress affects another (Alisic, 2012). In a study conducted on pregnant women, it was found that those that received support were able to give birth to babies that had greater birth weight as compared to those women who lacked such social support (Kikusui et al. 2006). This indicates that the social environment we live in and of course work in can affect us mentally and physically. According to Howard & Johnson's (2004) study on resilient teachers, having a strong support group is one of the techniques to help cope with the stress they were exposed to. Having a group of people who the teachers believed cared for them was very important for these teachers. Apart from having caring partners, teachers in Howard and Johnson's study, considered having supporting colleagues and school leadership to be extremely necessary. The research made it evident that the strong support from colleagues, principals and counsellors was required on a daily basis and aided in combating a build-up of stress.

3.2.2 Stress Reduction Sessions and Counselling

Having stress reduction sessions has been noted to be useful for teachers to be more equipped to cope with their roles and responsibilities as teachers (Frydman, et al. 2019). Such a service, helped teachers to not only de-stress, but gave them the support they felt they needed through a caring environment. The role of the counsellor in reducing teacher stress has been underestimated. Having

a counsellor who can help a stressed teacher demonstrates that there is someone who cares. The support factor is crucial in helping to overcome or minimize stress. The facilitative social-professional support system in an organization is known to reduce stress related behaviour significantly (Moracco & McFadden, 1982).

Having someone who a teacher can talk to without the worry or concern that it may be interpreted as a weakness is something that can appeal to many teachers, especially if confidentiality is assured. Other rationale for having counsellors for teachers is that counsellors are based at the school, which means they are then exposed to the culture of the school and will be in a better position to understand the stressors that teachers are exposed to. In this manner, counsellors will be able to better support the teachers. According to Kipps-Vaughan (2013), supporting teachers through stress management sessions is a major technique to be employed to prevent burnout. Having sessions designed for teachers suffering from stress will no doubt be useful, but giving personal support rather than being told what to do by external members of staff who do not work at the same school may not always be well accepted by many teachers. Stress management programs can be of great use if designed carefully and focused on teacher weaknesses. Offering yoga classes, breathing techniques, relaxation techniques, healthy eating and exercising are definitely useful ideas to help cope with stress in any occupation, but in order for stress management programs to succeed for teachers, it would need to take into consideration current literature and the stressors that teachers are exposed to. Not all teachers feel the same and not all cope using the same techniques and this is why studies where teachers are encouraged to share their real feelings about the teaching profession will be of

great help. Kipps-Vaughan (2013) argue that programs should be offered not just because teachers are stressed, but because the teaching profession is stressful and that there are useful techniques and strategies available to overcome this problem. There is a need to understand by listening to teachers what these techniques and strategies are. There is scope for improvement in teaching at secondary schools that needs to be discovered and that should be done through stressed teachers. The lack of support and the lack of a support network especially in secondary schools have been seen as an obstacle for teacher's professional development (Dodor, Sira & Hausafus, 2010, Frydman. et al. 2019)). This suggests that the manner in which the teaching profession is structured needs addressing. Factors like isolation and alienation from colleagues, personal problems at home which are fuelled by problems from work, undermining from senior staff, insecure contracts, and the feeling of being spied upon are just some of the causes many teachers face (Troman, 2000). According to Chen & Kristjansson (2011), personal factors do impinge upon education and according to their study, teachers' emotions and jealousies in particular were issues that caused teachers to suffer from stress, yet despite this finding the attention given to personal and professional feelings and how or even why teachers may feel this way seems to be neglected in most teacher training courses (Chen & Kristjansson, 2011). Studies within the field of social support seem to be abundant in psychology, sociology, epidemiology and industrial psychology (Nagel & Brown, 2003) and despite literature showing extensive research in the field of teaching, not enough is discussed regarding social support and stress in the teaching profession. If teachers are expected to be able to deal with the responsibilities and

duties that come with the teaching occupation, then it is of great relevance for both teachers and students that such emotional and personal issues are discussed, supported, and if necessary, challenged within teacher training courses. For teachers to be aware that some form of tangible aid is available would no doubt be beneficial in coping with stress. Caplan, Cobb & French's (1975) research argues clearly that the feeling of emotional support being available leads those that are stressed to believe that not only is there help available, but there are people there who care for them. The same author argues that having such support available would also make the stressed person feel that their work and efforts (regardless of how successful they are) are valued; and that there is an adequate network of communication and mutual obligation. Numerous researchers have argued that the lack of understanding of emotional support and the importance of one's feelings of control and self-esteem results in suffering (Krantz, 1980; Schroevers, Ranchor & Sanderman, 2003). Many teachers have expressed throughout the extensive research available that the lack of control in their jobs is a reason of concern (Darmody and Smyth, 2010, Kyriacou, 2001). It is important to remember that Control is one of the six key risk factors that has been identified as a cause of work-related stress by the Health and Safety Executive in the UK. Teachers' styles and their characteristics are necessary to understand so that the connection between teacher emotions and effective teaching can be explored; such aspects of understanding teachers' emotions and teaching have been ignored by many researchers (Coleman, 2014). Understanding the levels of stress by looking at the organizational structure of secondary schools is a useful way to explore the possible hierarchical stressors that teachers are exposed to. Carrying multiple

responsibilities in a short span of time, lack of information in carrying out the professional responsibilities and not having enough time to pay attention to weak students are just some of the organizational problems that cause teachers to get stressed (Reddy & Anuradha, 2013). Opportunities for teachers to be able to talk to somebody about this has known to help teachers (Reddy & Anuradha, 2013). Kerr et al.'s (2011) study on secondary teachers coping with stress in Ireland mentioned similar organizational structures as being stressors. In their study, support through colleagues was one of the ways of coping with stress. Literature has clearly shown that the need for having a strong support group, be it through colleagues or organizationally helps cope with stress.

3.3 Teacher Internal Characteristics

Teachers' internal characteristics have been seen to be one of the most important sources of understanding teacher stress (Adams, 1999, Zuber & Altrichter, 2018). An analysis of teacher characteristics gives an insight into the extent of secondary school teachers facing stress at work. The teaching occupation is stressful (Jarvis, 2005), and literature suggests that factors like characteristics and emotional feelings and unsatisfactory relationships in the workplace are also major sources of stress and should not be ignored (Troman, 2000). This part of the review concentrates on the personalities, self-esteem, emotional characteristics and emotional dimensions of teachers.

3.3.1 Personalities

Despite there being extensive discussion by policy makers and educators on what personality a good teacher should have, there is no guiding framework as to which qualities are important for teachers (Kim, et al. 2019). According to

studies in the field of personality and work stress there is evidence linking certain personality traits with success in the work place (Chiaburu, Oh, Berry, Li & Gardner, 2011, Kim, et al. 2019, Grijalva & Newman, 2015). Teaching is a social profession requiring regular interaction with people with different personalities coming from a range of positions in society, i.e., colleagues, students, parents, management and government bodies. Data has constantly indicated how the effects of stress, impacts personality, but as a result of such affects the individuals' work, friendship and family too (Harris et al. 1985, Macintyre, Ross, Talbot, Mercer, Gregersen & Banga, 2019). Although there has been research on teacher efficacy, little has been investigated on teacher personalities (Kim, et al. 2019). Research into teacher stress has explained the causes and outlined how teachers should try to overcome or tackle such stress, yet not enough is said about the importance of understanding teacher personalities. This is in spite of the fact that research suggesting that both characteristics and personalities have been identified as being important factors in coping and contributing to stress (Kaiser & Polczynski, 1982, Macintyre et al. 2019). It has been argued that having an understanding of teacher personalities can lead to a clearer understanding of issues like absenteeism, performance motivation and work engagement (Macintyre et al. 2019). Understanding teacher personalities can help explain why some react to stressors differently from others. Macintyre et al. (2019) argue that personality is important to understand as it is connected to subjective wellbeing and that teachers react to stressors depending on their personality traits. Macintyre et al's (2019) study on ESL teachers at tertiary level argued that although stress is consistently correlated to teacher stress, certain personality traits can support wellbeing and the need for

supporting wellbeing should be promoted. Understanding the topic of stress is not just about how an individual reacts to a stressor, but also about the interaction between the person and the environment. Studies have argued that stressed individuals are known to use various tactics to help cope with stress like practicing religion, positive thinking and taking part in exercise or sports to look after one's body (Tosevski, Vukovic & Stepanovic, 2011). Such practices are believed to help gain resilient personalities (Tosevski, et al., 2011), but prolonged periods of stress will no doubt leave an impact. This raises an interesting point that the internal characteristics some teachers possess could be the reason why some teachers react differently to various stressors (Macintyre et al. 2019). Goodall & Brown (1980) conducted extensive research in the field of stress arguing that stressors can be classified into two types, without and within. Without stressors would be explained as originating outside the individual and would consist of their environment and their occupation and within stressors was explained as being inside the individual, such as their personal values, behaviour, and attitudes. The need for this information is important for teachers and students and represents a gap in the area of teacher personalities and stress.

3.3.2 Self Esteem

According to research conducted by Byrne (1992), teachers that suffer from having low self-esteem tend to show great difficulty in dealing with stress. At the same time those teachers that show a higher level of self-esteem suffered from lower stress levels and seemed to be able to handle stressors better and more productively. Adams' (1999) study concluded that ailments like headaches and stomach pains tend to be common amongst teachers who suffer from work related

stress and this in turn can lead to reduced self-esteem. According to Moracco et al. (1982), stress is seen as a threat to the individuals' self-esteem; and if teachers are feeling stressed then it is most likely that their self-esteem is low. Abramson, Seligman & Teasdale's (1981) research led them to believe that people who feel they are unable to control important outcomes due to their own incompetence (personal helplessness) are also more likely to have low self-esteem; and those that feel helpless due to something beyond their control (universal helplessness) would not show a low level of self-esteem. Such an understanding of personal and universal helplessness is useful when thinking about how stressed teachers feel.

3.3.3 Emotional Characteristics

The emotional characteristics of a teacher and their approach in dealing with students is necessary to understand if teacher problems are to be addressed. Offering teachers help at the later stages of severe stress or burnout is what Goleman (1995, p. 256) labels "wars". Instead of waiting till a problem becomes too huge, it is better to try to follow the logic of prevention. In other words, teachers need to be offered the skills to face such stressors before they actually get stressed. If a teacher is caught shouting at a student, is it because he/she is annoyed at the student or venting frustration about something else? Answers to such a question can only be found if one was to actually ask the individual teacher or understand the emotions the individual teacher may be experiencing. If teachers are feeling severely stressed at work and have no one to speak to, it is most likely that students will pick up on this and in turn this will negatively impact student learning. (Jones, Bouffard & Weissbourd, 2013). According to Jones, S.

M. et al. (2013), the need for understanding emotional factors in teachers is necessary more now than ever. An interesting topic raised here is that not all teachers hold the same emotional competencies. Not all teachers react to stressors in the same way and according to Jones, S. M. et al. (2013) teachers with stronger emotional competencies are known to have more positive relationships with their work colleagues, managers, and students. A similar finding is mentioned by Brackett et al. (2010) who argue that teachers who are successful at controlling their emotions are more likely to have higher job satisfaction. Brackett et al's. (2010) research raises an interesting question as to whether teacher characteristics should be understood to determine how stress can vary from one teacher to another. If it is to be suggested that internal characteristics are seen to be one of the most important sources of teacher stress (Adams, 1999), then this could suggest that dealing with the topic of teacher stress is not just about teaching, but needs equal attention to understand the personality and characteristics of stressed teachers. Such a suggestion highlights the great importance of understanding how current secondary school teachers feel. Further research in the field by Jennings & Greenberg (2009) suggests similar results. They found that those with higher emotional competencies have positive student relationships, manage their work better and are less likely to suffer from stress. According to Intrator (2006), there are multiple evokers of intense emotions like having to discipline a student or having a classroom observation and therefore judging the teacher's performance and subject knowledge. It is also mentioned by the same author that even experienced older teachers may feel the stress when having to deal with the rapid changes in educational policies. It is worth noting that

there is little agreement as to how emotional competencies are to be measured and understood, despite there being many models (Corcoran & Tormey, 2012). However, there is agreement on the understanding that emotional intelligence is characterized as a restricted set of mental abilities involving the processing of emotional information and as a broad range of personality traits, skills and abilities (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Researchers have demonstrated how having a high level of emotional intelligence is seen as a valuable part of a teacher's skill set (Vaezi & Fallah, 2012). These skills have been shown to help cope with stress, to have better relationships with students and colleagues and have been shown to improve academic performance in teachers (Brackett, Mayer & Warner, 2004). It is interesting to note that despite Corcoran & Tormey (2012) emphasising the importance of emotional intelligence and characteristics as being important for the study of teacher stress, in a later and larger study on post primary Irish student teachers, their study indicated an interesting finding: no association was found between any of the independent variables (emotional intelligence scores, gender, prior achievement) and the student teachers' teaching performance (Corcoran & Tormey, 2013). The same study however does suggest that the reason for such a finding could be due to the fact that as participants were student teachers, they could still have been in the process of developing a professional teacher identity and may have been suppressing their teaching emotions. Teaching is about human relationships and like all relationships in life these relationships can easily go wrong (Kyriacou, 2000). The need to understand how teachers behave at work and show or hide their emotions are necessary to explore in order to understand why one teacher would suffer from stress and another may not. According to

Harris et al. (1985) personalities and ideologies are both used as coping mechanisms by stressed teachers and teachers that focus more on authoritarian and pupil control orientation tended to report higher levels of stress compared to teachers that were more humanistic and less demanding. Humour is considered by many theorists as a highly adaptive mechanism for coping with stress and helps in defusing stressful situations (Vaezi & Fallah, 2012). Use of such humour is suggested to be both the reasons for better teacher-student relationships and is also known to produce better results in terms of student learning (Martin, 2007). Slaski & Cartwright (2002) suggest that according to their research on retail managers' emotional intelligence and subjective stress, their findings indicated a significant link between emotional intelligence, health and performance. Findings such as these may suggest that emotional intelligence may play an important role in controlling the stress process and help increase individual resistance to the stressors. Literature has suggested that teachers that are able to regulate their emotional states are healthier as they are able to know when and how to express their feelings (Vaezi & Fallah, 2012). Recognizing that the teaching profession is emotionally demanding is not enough; literature suggests that understanding teachers' emotional intelligence and how they use it is of great importance (Corcoran & Tormey, 2012). Gardner & Oswald (1999) conducted research suggesting that teachers' job satisfaction revealed 'unhappiness' being experienced at a personal level. Such research highlights the importance of teachers' emotions and feelings in understanding teacher stress and how the stress they experience becomes more than just a work situation. Teaching is an emotional practice (Hargreaves, 1998), so if teachers are not able to trust their

place of work or feel that there is a lack of cooperation from their organization, then it is likely for them to feel uncomfortable in the teaching profession where care, feelings and emotions are constantly shown. These educational relationships are difficult to establish and maintain if trust between teachers, pupils and colleagues if a strong bond is not there (Troman, 2000). It is interesting to see that the focuses of much literature around the area of teacher stress are on aspects of the teacher's job. This is important to remember because despite literature accepting that the teaching occupation is stressful (Jarvis, 2005), literature also suggests that the characteristics and emotional feelings of teacher's and the lack of unsatisfactory relationships are also major sources of stress (Troman, 2000, Hargreaves, 1998). It is necessary for the well-being of both teachers and students that teachers' feelings are understood. If a lack of these feelings is not understood and explained then no doubt the teaching profession will suffer; that will then cause the remaining teachers to work more or simply leaving the profession. It is argued that the effects of teacher stress on individual teachers can impact the classroom environment and student learning (Kipps-Vaughan, 2013). Naring, Vlerick & Bart Van de Ven (2011); Hagenauer & Volet (2013) highlight that teachers are expected to hide their emotions despite having to be deal with issues that may not be teaching related, such as lack of support from colleagues or having weak communication with management. According to a study by Kyriacou and Pratt (1985), stress was linked to teachers' 'coping strategies'. Gardner & Oswald (1999) conducted research suggesting that teachers' job satisfaction revealed 'unhappiness' being experienced at a personal level. Such research highlights the importance of teachers' emotions and feelings in understanding teacher stress. The importance

of understanding emotional intelligence in the work place can be further strengthened by Brackett et al. (2004) whose research also suggested that teachers with a higher level of emotional intelligence also received more support from their principals. If teachers are not able to trust their place of work or feel that there is a lack of cooperation from their organization, then it is likely for them to feel uncomfortable due to a feeling of being unable to show emotions. Literature has shown again and again that the teaching profession is a profession where care, feelings and emotions are needed. According to the Teacher Support Network Service Usage Report (2014), there has been an increase in need for teacher emotional support with the top most enquiries after financial issues being mental health issues. Literature shows that there is a growing body of research on the topic of emotions and characteristics, yet this seems to be under emphasized when investigating the topic of teacher stress. The subject of stress in teaching has highlighted the important connection that the characteristic response to stress has: that there are good theoretical grounds for recognizing emotional intelligence and teacher characteristics when researching the topic of stress within the teaching profession.

3.3.4 Emotional Dimensions within Teaching

Despite the term Emotional Intelligence being originally coined by Salovey and Mayer (1990), the concept of using, controlling and understanding emotions at work has gained a lot of popularity, especially through the works of Daniel Goleman's (1995) bestselling book 'Emotional Intelligence'. Emotional Intelligence can simply be explained as being a restricted set of mental abilities involving the processing of emotional information and as a broad range of personality traits,

skills and abilities (Mayer & Salovey, 1990). It is interesting to note that although the discussion of being emotionally intelligent has been well researched, there is little agreement on how emotional competencies are actually made operational or even understood (Humphrey, Curran, Morris, Farrell, & Woods, 2007). The emotional aspect of how teachers feel and how or why they feel this way is one major aspect of teaching that needs to be addressed. One of the interesting factors regarding research on emotions is that there seems to be extensive research and information on the topic through Hargreaves (1998), Kyriacou (2010), Schlichte et al. (2005) and of course Goleman (1995); however, little seems to be discussed about the powerful impact of relationships between them (Schlichte et al. 2005). According to Schlichte et al. (2005), the lack of communication or not being able to express emotions clearly caused the teachers in their study to suffer from burnout and to eventually leave the teaching profession. Feelings of insignificance and dissatisfaction were reasons that caused the teachers in the study to consider moving out of the profession. At the same time their study revealed that the teachers kept themselves going by gaining an emotional reward by helping their students and feeling appreciated by their teachers. Despite teachers gaining emotional rewards from the students, this was not enough to protect the teachers from suffering from burnout or to even keep the teachers in the profession. Emotions are at the heart of teaching (Hargreaves, 1998) and research in this field shows the necessity for successful teachers to gain emotional rewards from both colleagues and students. Many have argued that teaching is an 'emotional practice' (Hargreaves, 1998; Chen & Kristjansson, 2011; Coleman, 2014; Schultz, 2014), therefore knowing and understanding how teachers feel is a

valuable contribution to this area of research. Many researchers in the field of teacher stress have adopted Goleman's (1995) famous ideas to discuss the various differences in teachers' emotions, but the focus tends to be on the teachers (Hargreaves, 1998). Not enough is produced to explain about the actual environment or circumstances teachers are exposed to that affects their emotions. Hargreaves (1998) talks about how emotions are located and represented in teachers' relationships with both colleagues and students: teaching as an emotional practice, teaching involving emotional understanding, teaching involving emotional labour and how teachers' emotions are inseparable from their moral purposes. His research is of particular relevance as it helps us understand that as an emotional practice, relationships with others is necessary whether it is relationships with students, parents or colleagues and it is these experiences that affect the emotions of the teacher. Emotional understanding is more about understanding what others do and why; it helps us to recognize what we see and to understand whether the emotions in question are justified or not. However, such an understanding cannot be easy especially if the experiences are not shared or if there is not a close and common understanding (Denzin, 1984). Examples can be seen when students and teachers argue over a misunderstanding or when colleagues feel they are being intimidated or harassed over a heavy workload. Research has demonstrated that an emotional quality such as being caring is an important characteristic of a teacher (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) and it is also clear that occupations like nursing, general health care and teaching all require caring. Therefore, the expectations that a teacher (like the other professions) is required to deliver are demanding. The link between emotional labour and

emotional exhaustion has been well documented (Yin, Lee, Zhang & Jin, 2013). Professions such as nurses, social workers, mental care workers, and teachers are known to suffer from emotional labour. Emotional labour for teachers is when they are expected to cater for all students by motivating them, but are also expected to show certain emotions and also suppress others (Naring et al. 2011). Hagenauer & Volet (2013) also argue that according to their research on teachers' emotional displays, many teachers had to control or at times hide their true feelings. It is such managing of emotions that is considered to be a difficult factor to control and therefore a cause for stress (Naring et al. 2011). The moral purposes of those who teach are another important element in the field of understanding emotions and stress. Many teachers feel guilty when they are unable to live up to the expectations that are expected from them. This feeling of guilt can be a result of not achieving some goals like student results being weak, or not developing professionally as a teacher. Such a feeling is believed to make such teachers feel demoralized (Nias, 1996). Ignat & Clipa (2012) discuss the importance of emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. In their study, it was found that having a positive attitude to work and having a higher level of emotional intelligence led to a positive attitude to life and the teaching profession itself. The study itself showed an interesting correlation between the emotional intelligence, work mentality, general job satisfaction and satisfaction with their lives. Ignat & Clipa (2012) argue for raising the level of teachers' wellbeing by enabling them to be more emotionally intelligent. This they believe is important for the teaching profession and can be used as a prediction for teacher problems. Kerr et al. (2011) interviewed 15 secondary school teachers in Ireland and found that one major reason for stress

was the lack of suitable training and emotional support felt by the participants. They (the authors) further suggested that developing new skills can reduce stress by gaining effective coping skills that include emotion focused strategies through exercise, meditation or talking. According to research on emotional competence, Garner (2010) observed that students in school are easily able to note teachers' emotional expressions and that teachers' expressions of emotions can either positively or negatively affect their learning. When students are able to pick up on the negative emotions that teachers are displaying, their learning is negatively influenced. According to Ciarrochi, Chan & Caput (2000), emotional intelligence can protect teachers from suffering from stress. Being able to remain positive and use humour can not only prevent stress, but also help in better teaching. Indeed, some have argued that having the ability to portray positive emotions is seen as a key element in effective and successful teaching (Kremenitzer, 2005). Jennings & Greenberg (2009) raise the topic of social competence alongside emotional competence (SEC), and highlight the importance of such competence for their well-being personally as well as for their pupils. Jennings & Greenberg's (2009) study suggests that getting teachers to improve their social and emotional competence can help lead to a better teaching profession and eventually help prevent teacher burnout. Such literature highlights the need to understand how teachers teach and manage their emotions, especially when it is clear from such research that teachers are expected to hide their feelings at times. Corcoran & Tormey's (2012) study on emotionally intelligent student teachers reveals that little is known about the emotional demands of teaching and that it is necessary to understand this factor to support the development of teachers through teacher education programs.

Yin et al. (2013) stress on the importance emotions have on teaching satisfaction and the implications of not understanding the role emotional intelligence has within the field of teaching. They argue that teachers' job satisfaction is an important indicator of a teachers' psychological wellbeing.

3.3.5 Teacher Stress and Coping Strategies in Narrative Literature

Despite their being a lot of research using both qualitative and quantitative approaches on teacher stress, there seems to be less from a purely narrative approach. In this section of the review, I believe it is important that I highlight the narrative aspects of teacher stress and how teachers cope.

Lloyd & Sullivan's (2012) narrative approach to investigate the stressful experiences of a young novice mathematics secondary school teacher in the US, highlights how an exemplary teacher who was full of joy and excitement at the prospects of being a teacher left the teaching profession at the end of her second year after she felt herself changing from empathetic to apathetic. The fact that she was beginning to suffer from physical, mental and social health problems left her no choice. Through her narratives, she was able to share how necessary it is for educators to understand the multi-faceted struggles that many teachers face and the tensions they must negotiate. Unfortunately, her coping strategies were not discussed. Although some may argue that this study took place in the US and that her experience may be unique to her, International literature has shown that her reason for leaving the teaching profession is not. This is just one narrative example where the factors I have mentioned above like having an excessive workload, lack of support from supervisors/colleagues, excessive paperwork and a sense of under appreciation are all shared. In other words, it can be suggested

that a pile up of emotions and feelings of helplessness caused this particular teacher to not only develop a drastic change in her behaviour towards teaching, but also caused her to change her personality from being an empathetic person to being an apathetic one.

Another example of teachers leaving the profession as a result of stress can be seen in the case studies of Schlichte et al. (2005). In their research, the authors interviewed 5 teachers to determine if there were any protective measures that could have been taken to prevent burnout. Their case studies showed that teachers suffered from stress due to isolation, feelings of frustration and lack of emotional rewards from colleagues, causing the teachers involved in the research to suffer from burnout. The only coping strategy mentioned as being employed by teachers was to continue working in the belief that there would be change; unfortunately, the teachers ended up leaving the profession. Such a study is useful in the field of teacher stress as it does suggest that if teachers are constantly being exposed to stress and find that they are unable to deal with stressful situations appropriately or not able to get the support they need, then it only seems wise (in the interests of their health) to leave the profession.

Darmody et al.'s (2010) extensive research on teacher job satisfaction in primary schools in Ireland reveals similar information. Their research was supported by the Department of Education and Skills and focused on interviews and detailed case studies of six primary schools. The findings of their study revealed an interesting mix of an overall majority of Irish primary school teachers being happy in their jobs. Some teachers did experience occupational stress due to the schools, affecting their mood and sense of being. Due to the school not receiving funding, teachers

felt neglected, which as a result affected their teaching. After a while, feelings of frustration, lack of recognition and a lack of respect as teachers caused them to suffer from stress. In this study too, coping strategies were not discussed.

Kerr et al. (2011) also conducted a qualitative study of work place stress and coping in secondary teachers in Ireland. Their study focused on 15 secondary teachers from a variety of school types in eastern Ireland. Through the course of interviews, teachers revealed that having a heavy workload, dealing with disruptive student behaviour and dealing with students with personal problems were highlighted as being the major reasons for severe stress. Despite having many similarities with other studies in terms of what caused teachers to feel stressed, an interesting finding in this study was the lack of suitable training and preparation felt by the teachers. The topic of emotions and teaching has already been discussed earlier, and the study of Hagenauer & Volet (2013) serves as a reminder of how through the course of in depth semi structured interviews, feelings such as hiding emotions can be brought to our attention. The participants in the research consisted of six males and nine females revealing the criticality of controlling such experiences and that it is only through talking about this through interviews that such experiences were able to be shared. Their study highlighted the need for having a supportive network. Coleman's (2014) study involving phenomenological interviews were conducted to understand the emotions a teacher would experience while teaching in a special program for gifted and talented children in America. Being a teacher and having to go through a variety of emotional states is just one of the stories shared; such emotional experiences that many teachers experience have not been well researched and is even apparent in the narrative when his

participant actually said that no one other than the interviewer (Coleman, himself) had ever asked him about his feelings before as a teacher (Coleman, 2014). The aim of the study was to show how positive some teachers felt in the teaching profession when experiencing such extraordinary emotional experiences. The information provided in this study, suggested that being able to share their emotions with other teachers was a way of coping.

In a similar study by Mackenzie (2012), 19 SEN teachers were interviewed and shared their stories of how despite being stressed, their wonderful emotional experiences are just one of the reasons why they wouldn't leave the profession. The narratives shared stories of having a challenging role, appreciation for other colleagues and emotional satisfaction as being some of the major reasons for coping. Although, I accept Day & Gu's (2009) argument that despite many teachers leaving the teaching profession, there are many that join; I also agree with Mackenzie (2012) who argues that what keeps them in the profession is not entirely clear.

Webe & Macdonald's (2014) narrative study on the topic of complexity in teachers' work lives shows the struggle that some teachers face for recognition, personal happiness and security. This study focused around the experiences and stories that seven teachers wished to share. The authors suggest that such narrative writing can be a major means of forming a critical stance. In accordance with the general literature review, this research also highlights the challenges and obstacles that many secondary school teachers face; however, the very fact that the participants were telling their stories, experiences and how they made sense of it was what makes the whole story visible to us (Freeman, 2007).

An extremely interesting study in the field of teacher stress narratives is the example of Lyle (2009). Lyle's passion for the teaching profession and determination to succeed was shared through her thoughts and experiences as a researcher and practitioner. Lyle narrates her story of how she left teaching after 4 years due to being diagnosed with panic disorder and clinical burnout. After taking a three-and-a-half-year break, she decided to return to teaching to prove to herself that she could survive. After completing her year, she left after realizing that nothing had changed regarding the teaching profession, except her. Lyle found a way of contributing to teachers and herself by creating development programs. She also used her reflexive narrative experiences as a guide for her own understanding and to help others to engage in critical thought. She further argued that because teaching and teacher development are rooted in the personal, reflexive inquiry involves the study of how the personal influences the professional (Lyle, 2009). For Lyle, this approach was what is needed to understand the complexities within teaching and learning, as she further explains "...there is no need for a full life history; just a keen understanding" (Lyle, 2009, p. 294).

Mujtaba & Reiss (2013) conducted narrative interviews with twelve maths and science teachers in six secondary schools in the UK on the topic of coping with stress and their findings revealed that with professional and personal support, and having a positive attitude (seeing stressors as capable of being overcome), teachers were able to overcome stress and prevent it from becoming a long-term problem. Their research involved both the positive and negative stress that teachers experienced. According to the National Curriculum of the UK, English, Maths and Science are the core subjects; hence there is more pressure on the

teachers of these subjects. However, in Mujtaba & Reiss's study none of the participants were English teachers and it would have been interesting to explore whether English teachers shared the same stories of stress (negative or positive) as their Maths and Science counterparts. Plus, as we all know, what causes one teacher to feel stress may not be the same for another and perceptions of stress are dependent on individual characteristics and contextual situations which probably explains why the vast amount of literature on the subject of teacher stress differs.

Sinner (2012) conducted research on 3 female art teachers in Canada who, through the use of narratives, were able to offer an insight into dimensions of teacher cultures that can often be unacknowledged. In her narrative interviews, stories of teacher education and apprenticeship traditions are shared where the actual work and behaviour new teachers are exposed to were different from that which they are trained on. Such a story, which when put together with international literature, shows the other sides of stories that many are unaware of. The dramatic contrasts of identity formation, teacher cultures, teacher training and emotions are just some of the available themes that are to be found through similar narratives.

As mentioned earlier, there is extensive research in the field of teacher stress using a variety of approaches, but little is found on narrative research where the actual meanings secondary school stressed teacher's give to their experiences is available, especially here in the UK. Most research either focuses on pre-service teachers or on narratives of teachers that have left the profession. Either way most of these studies tend to be outside of the UK (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). This of course does not mean that such research is not useful, quite the

contrary. Such research serves as a reminder that my topic of stress in teaching is universal; however, my choice of narratives with teachers that are thinking of leaving the profession is an area of research that is clearly necessary. The narrative style of research allows us to explore the development of stress and allows the participants the opportunity to answer the questions that many may not find in quantitative research. Questions like the role individual personalities play, why teachers feel they cannot talk to colleagues or supervisors, or how and why their family lives are affected can only be explained clearly through narrative interviews. Like Todd (2002) reminds us that attentive listening leads to an ethical response to stories; especially stories of suffering. Without listening to such stories, we are unable to respond or take a position of responsibility. Voices of the marginalized are then kept away or are at danger of being misunderstood. It is clear that the stressors mentioned in the narrative research mirror those stressors described in general international literature regardless of the methodology used.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology and Design

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the research methodology and design used in my research. It will start by discussing the ontology of my narrative inquiry, the influence of constructivism and the life history approach has on my study. I will then discuss the narrative epistemology, followed by the methodology of narrative research and how I designed my narrative study. Information on my participants and the role snowball and critical case sampling played is discussed. A detailed account of the data collection methods including the design, the process of piloting and administration of each instrument will be discussed. This will be followed by the data analysis procedure and ways of presenting the findings using thematic analysis. The chapter concludes by highlighting the significance member checking played in the study and then finally discusses the ethical considerations involved.

4.2 Research Methodology

When I first started my proposal, I was not certain as to what approach I should use to gather data. Using the positivist approach did cross my mind as a possible method of gaining the data for this research, especially when some may argue that doctoral candidates using qualitative rather than quantitative methods have to fight a stiffer battle to establish themselves as credible (Seidman, 2006). However, I felt that using an interpretative approach would be more suitable as it would allow me to understand the problem of teacher stress by building a holistic picture (Creswell, 2009). The study questions dictated the methodology and based on this; I believed the qualitative methodology was appropriate as suitable for the study. After speaking to my thesis supervisors, I admit that at first, I believed that I

could benefit from using both positivist and interpretative methods; hence, I initially decided to go for a mixed method approach in gathering data. However, as I started to gather more information on the mixed methods of research, I began to realize how I was drifting away from the purpose or aim of my study, in particular my research questions. I had spent a considerable amount of time obtaining information from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and even spent many Skype meetings with their site psychologist, who explained about the nature of their findings on occupational stress and the aim of the HSE in identifying the main causes. It was only after obtaining all this information and after numerous amendments to my research questions, did I realize that I was obtaining information that wasn't the aim of my research. There is no doubt the information gained was useful and I am extremely grateful to the HSE for answering my questions, but my aim was to give a detailed account of the teaching experiences of stressed teachers and how they coped. I had always displayed an interest in the wellbeing of teachers and how stress affects them, which is what guided me into the narrative approach as a methodology. I could identify with the causes that literature highlighted, but wanted to know if these causes provoked similar feelings amongst teachers like my participants, my focus being why teachers were so stressed and how they were coping with this stress on a daily basis. Using Robson (1993), I decided to let my participants tell me themselves the answers to my two research questions through semi structured interviews and narrative interviews. Adopting a qualitative approach demanded that I also adopt a highly reflexive manner that required me to take on a questioning stance (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and I believed that by using this approach, I was able to form a critical

stance. According to Miles & Huberman (1994, p. 141) “reflexivity recognizes that researchers are inescapably part of the social world they are researching, and indeed that this social is an already interpreted world by the actors, undermining the notion of objective reality”. Giddens (1991) and Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007), similarly echo this important point; the researcher must be careful when questioning, listening, interpreting and representing participants. I agree with Clandinin & Connelly (2000) that narrative inquiry is both phenomenon under study and methodology for its study, and that my interest is in the experiences of stressed teachers. I believe that taking a narrative perspective can offer rich insights into the field of teacher stress.

4.3 Ontological considerations

This interest of mine itself proceeds from an ontological position; a curiosity about how stressed teachers feel and still work despite claiming to be severely stressed. As in the words of Caine, Estefan & Clandinin (2013, p. 576) “*to engage deeply with experience, an ontological commitment is, then, a relational commitment. It is a commitment to a form of togetherness in research that seeks to explore how we are living in the midst of our stories*”. A narrative inquiry is not just research but also seen as a transaction between people, where information is being told and retold (Caine, et al., 2013). I agree with Clandinin & Murphy’s (2009) concerns that focusing exclusively on issues of representation may lead to misunderstandings. In their view the research had to speak to the everyday experiences of the participants in order for these experiences to come out as storied phenomena. For me, my study was not to focus solely on representation, but to also question the practices within their teaching experiences that led to

teacher stress. The same authors argue that research texts need to speak to the everyday experiences of researchers and participants to arrive at a clearer understanding of the experiences narrated; this argument is what I decided to follow as a narrative researcher. Through narrative inquiry, I was entering into my participants world and I intended to see and understand their experiences. Narrative inquirers understand the narratives as storied phenomenon (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007) and it is for this reason I believe the choice of allowing my teachers to narrate their stories to be most suitable.

Constructivism forms the ontology of my research and argues that knowledge is a constructed reality where meaning is imposed upon the actual world in ways that are seen as familiar and understandable, in ways that fit what we understand already (Mildon, 1992). Simply put, to have an account of the world that we are given is no longer seen as being representational; knowledge must be understood and shown by theories put forward. Schafer (1981) points out that humans are always telling stories about themselves and others that are either life histories or autobiographical, but these may not reflect events as they actually were. Bearing this thought in mind, Schafer further explains that narrativist researchers set out their narrative purposes and an appropriate context and then counsel readers to play the believing game to ascertain the truth. A narrative can therefore be seen as not only possible meanings, but also other ways of storytelling. Dhunpath & Samuel (2009) conducted narrative research on trainee teachers in South Africa in the post 2009 election period and argued that the narrative research methodology should therefore not be seen just as a methodology for researchers in the ivory towers of academia working within an

interpretivist, constructivist frame (telling stories of lives), but a public enterprise with a national agenda (telling stories as an act of realising the national agenda of justice for all). For Dhunpath & Samuel (2009), telling and sharing stories was one of the important ways that justice could be served. For them, constructing the narratives and showing their participants' optimism was one manner where the view for a wider social justice project could be shown.

Another theory that is closely connected to narrative research and is extremely important for my study is the life history approach. The life history or story approach presents a framework for working with my participants and their interviews in a way that will enable their stories to emerge; it also allows for the political, social, historical, cultural, familial and psychological contexts to be explored and as a result, life histories are explained (Matiss, 2005). Such an approach is useful when aiming to capture data at a deeper level. According to Dhunpath & Samuel (2009), the life history approach is a genre that promotes methodological pluralism, allowing other readers themselves to decide on how credible, trustworthy and authentic the stories appear in relation to the readers' own experiences. This approach has been viewed as being more than just telling the stories of people; it is about interpreting, exploring and analysing the gaps, biases and even the exaggerations of the tellers of the tales (Dhunpath & Samuel, 2009). By choosing to speak about teacher stress, I do not aim to test out a pre-formulated hypothesis (the life history researcher does not aim for this), but aim to develop an understanding, in its complexity, of how they make sense of their stressful experiences. In other words, I wish to be generative of alternative ways of seeing, knowing, understanding and interpreting life experiences. Hatch &

Wisniewski (1995) explain life history as going beyond the personal; and draw on individuals' experiences to make a broader contextual meaning. The following section will further discuss narrative research from an epistemological point of view.

4.4 Narrative Epistemology

Bryman (2008) discusses epistemology as being the discussion of what is or should be accepted as knowledge. It is important to remember that for some teachers the stories of my participants may be acceptable sources of knowledge on this topic. The manner in how we understand knowledge and the assumptions we make regarding knowledge are important elements of any research that has to be clear from the start of the study, as it is the epistemological approach that directs the course of the research (Richards, 2003). This is what clearly directed the course of my research by getting participants to narrate their stories. My approach to this study is from a narrative perspective and is influenced by constructivist theory and the life history approach. Some researchers argue that due to the influence of other theories such as the above, the narrative is an appropriate style due to it being a major starting point for understanding, interpretation and imagination (Ching-Jung, 2011; Mildon, 1992).

4.5 Methodology of Narrative Research

After spending a great deal of time researching what methodology to apply to my research, I found that in agreement with Creswell (2009), it is my research questions that should determine the most suitable type of methodology and as my research questions was about what experiences my teachers were having and how they felt this was to be portrayed to the world. The very fact that my participants

wanted to tell me their stories made it very clear to me that using the narrative approach would be ideal for my research. According to Plummer (1995, p. 87), “For narratives to flourish there must be a community to hear.... for communities to hear, there must be stories which weave together their history, their identity, their politics”. In order for me to represent the true feelings and experiences that many teachers face, I believe the best way to justify this would be telling my participants’ stories. Clandinin & Connelly (1995, p. 12) state:

“In this view of teachers’ knowledge, teachers know their lives in terms of stories. They live stories, tell stories of those lives, retell stories with changed possibilities, and relived the changed stories. In this narrative view of teachers’ knowledge, we mean more than teachers’ telling stories of specific children and events. We mean that their way of being in the classroom is storied: as teachers they are characters in their own stories of teaching, which they author”.

Such a statement makes it clear as to why a narrative approach suits participant that wish to share their stories of teacher stress as it would allow them to tell their stories that they author. This study is about the teachers being characters in their own stories of which they are authors. This methodology was not about finding out how true my participants’ experiences are, but like Polkinghorne (2007) explains; it is about the meanings experienced. Webster and Mertova (2007) argue that using the narrative tradition is seen as being the perfect approach when addressing human experiences in teaching. As an experienced secondary school teacher who had left the teaching profession due to stress, I felt a personal justification in conducting a narrative inquiry. According to Clandinin &

Huber (2010), having a personal justification (as I mentioned above), a practical justification (how my teachers felt that teacher stress needs to be understood) and social justification (the fact that narrative inquiry addresses the 'so what' and 'who cares' is important as teachers need to feel that people do care) are the three ways narrativists use to justify why narrative research is most suitable. Understanding how and why teachers get stressed is not only useful to teachers, but the social community at large. Accounts of the perspectives and interpretations of people involved in educational settings are seen as being both significant and pertinent for it is through such accounts that educational personnel learn and understand about the constraints and conditions involved (Goodson 1983 as cited in Cohen et al., 2007). My participants wanted to tell me how they felt and why they could not speak to their managers or even colleagues. A questionnaire would not be appropriate nor do justice to their thoughts, stories and feelings, where how they actually felt would not be clearly explained. However, through the narrative interviews, they will have the opportunity to express exactly how they feel and tell their stories in detail. A great advantage a narrative interview holds is that through the course of interviews, collaboration and exchange and dialogue between the interviewee and interviewer, participants are free to elaborate and even ask the interviewer questions especially if it helps explain a specific point (Bauer, 2000; Camila, Vicente, Paulo, Modesto & Alberto, 2014). As Riessman (2000) argues the whole narrative approach is not to assume objectivity, but privilege positionality and subjectivity; being a victim of teacher stress I can clearly appreciate the benefits and advantages the narrative approach has to offer.

4.6 Design of my Narrative Study

Narrative Research is to understand the meaning people attach to events and not to question whether their stories or experiences are accurate reflections of actual events (Callary, 2013). In this study, it is the meaning teachers attached to their stressful experiences that warrants thorough consideration. Through the use of semi structured interviews and personal narratives of teacher stress, I have tried to present rigorous evidence and original experiences from teachers who will provide a good study where the narrative can not only transport the reader into the narrative world, but also cause the reader to use their own experiences of teaching to gain a better understanding on the topic of teacher stress.

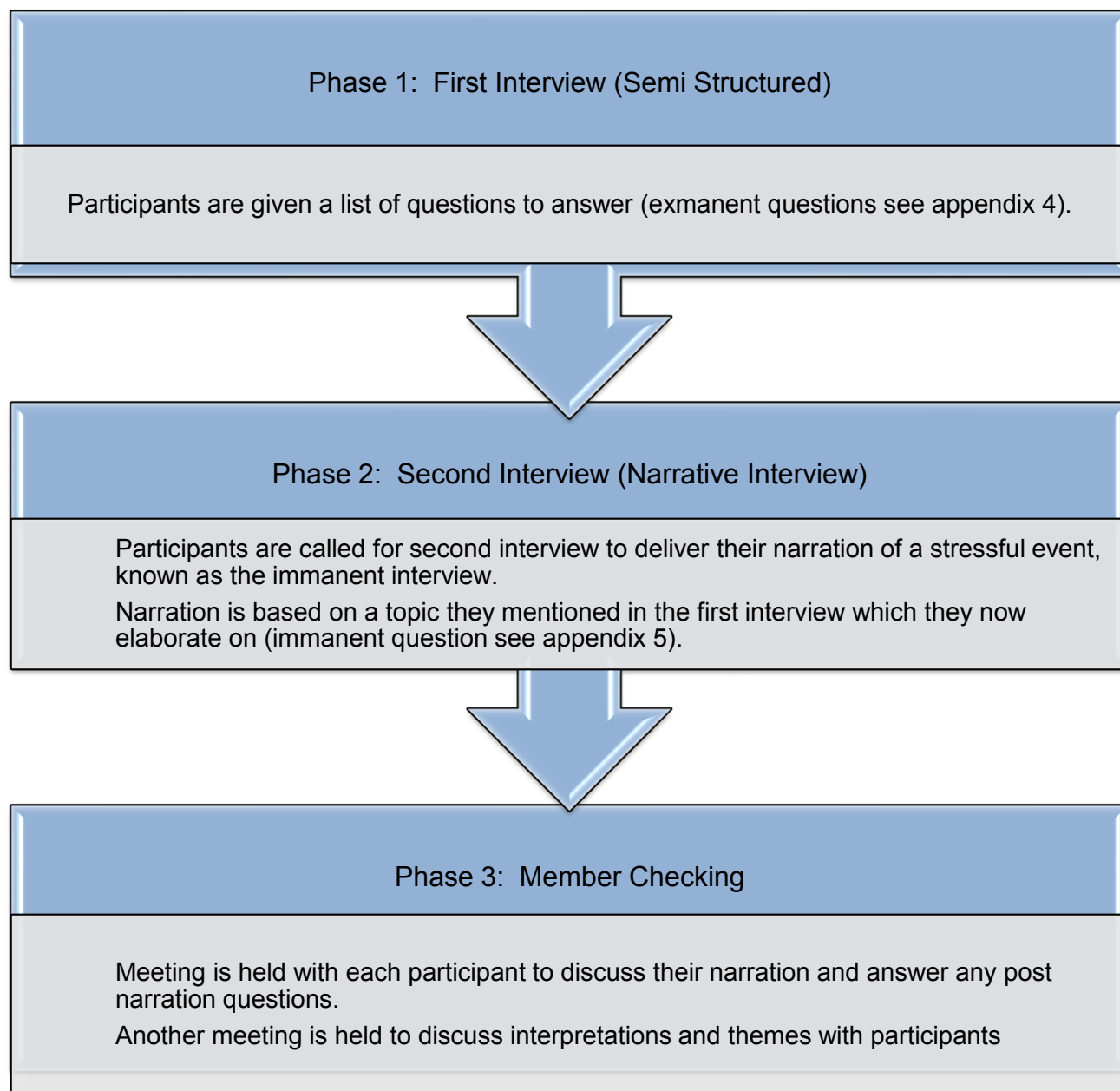


Figure 4.1 Study Phases and data collection

4.6.1 Participants

The aim of this research is to understand how secondary school English language teachers in London feel about their teaching professions, what makes them stressed and how they cope. Due to time constraints and busy schedules, it was difficult to accommodate all teachers that expressed an interest in the study. At first there were approximately 17 male teachers who were interested, but this

number was reduced as I was unable to fully accommodate the participants with the times they wished to meet. Eventually the numbers dropped to six teachers who agreed and started to meet to discuss the study, but after one recording, one teacher decided to withdraw due to personal concerns. This left me with five male English teachers who have been teaching English in secondary schools for approximately 10-17 years (more information is shown in table 4.1), as I wanted to explore teacher stress amongst experienced teachers. These are teachers who all live and work in the north London area. With the exception of one, all are qualified with qualified teaching status (QTS). The reason for selecting teachers that were married or in a long-term relationship was because I also wished to explore how teacher stress affected their personal lives. All of the participants are teachers who I met through meetings with friends and ex-colleagues who have described how stressed they are. It is important to state that despite my participants stating how stressed they are, they are still in the teaching profession and felt that taking part in my research made them find an opportunity to show to all interested in the field of education what many teachers can experience. Their love and passion for, as well as their dedication to, the teaching profession are factors that caused me to select them for this study. Although many teachers that I spoke to told me that they had suffered from stress, many also admitted to being able to deal with it; this was one of the reasons why I chose my participants carefully. The fact that my participants were all currently stressed and were all thinking of leaving the teaching profession due to the stress involved was the defining criteria that made me select them for my research. My study required me to talk to them and get them to share their feelings so that a clearer and better understanding was presented. After working

as a secondary school teacher for over 5 years, I was fortunate to gain many contacts with other teachers that were stressed or had experienced stress at some point in their teaching careers. During my period as a teacher, the numerous conversations I experienced in the staffroom or canteens of many schools provided me with enough information to understand the nature of trust I had to build on if I was to gain personal experiences that was necessary for my research. At first, I was able to obtain many comments, views, opinions from many teachers who knew or heard that I was undertaking a study on teacher stress. *“... yes, I have lots to confess on”, “you’ll love the stories I have to share..... I’m stressed every bloody day” or “just wait till you hear my experiences.....people will think twice before getting into teaching”* are all comments that I heard many times and I accept that such comments were worthy of noting. I was very grateful to hear these comments and opinions about the teaching profession, but I felt I was not hearing the voices that were trying to call out. The teachers that were stressed, quiet or isolated were whom my criteria targeted and whom I felt needed to be voiced.

Table 4.1 Participant Information

| Pseudonyms | Age | Years of teaching experience | Married or with a partner | Qualifications |
|-------------------|------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Lance | 45 | 16 | Married for 16 years with 3 children | BA + PGCE with QTS |

| | | | | |
|-------|----|----|--|-----------------------|
| Rand | 47 | 17 | Married for 16 years with 4 children | BA + PGCE with QTS |
| Harry | 43 | 15 | Married for 10 years with 2 children | BA + PGCE with QTS |
| Terry | 40 | 12 | With a partner for 10 years with no children | BA + PGCE with QTS |
| Jimmy | 45 | 15 | Married for 20 years with 2 children | BA but no PGCE or QTS |

4.6.2 Snowball sampling and critical case sampling

The most popular and effective method of finding participants from out of one's circle can be achieved successfully through snowball sampling (Cohen et al. 2007; Johnson & Christensen, 2014). This method means having to find a few teachers myself for my research and then asking those teachers to find other teachers who would be interested to take part in my study. The term snowball can be better understood when viewing it as an actual snowball that gets bigger and bigger as it tumbles down the snow (Johnson & Christensen, 2014); the more the participants put the word out about the research and who is needed, the more people get involved. Such a technique proved highly useful, as like I mentioned before, I was able to find many teachers with stories of stress, but not many that

were currently stressed (or willing to disclose such stress) and not many that were threatening to leave the teaching profession (or it could be that many were afraid to disclose such information due to fear). Using Snowball sampling, I was extremely grateful to have met 5 secondary school teachers in London through a number of individuals who had told other teachers about the nature of my research. Although Cohen, et al. (2007) argue that such a method of finding participants is normally used where access is difficult, I must admit that the response to my interest was very positive. Many teachers had a lot to say about their teaching experiences, but for me personally choosing who to consider and involve in my study was very demanding. Although I was looking for teachers that were stressed and willing to share their experiences with me, I had criteria (based on my research questions) that helped in my selection process. Apart from wanting teachers that were stressed and thinking of leaving the profession; my criteria required secondary school teachers that were well experienced (at least 10 years of teaching experience), were with a partner (preferably with children) and were able to dedicate at least two interviews (60 minutes for each interview) and willing to meet for discussions over a 6-month period. The reason why participants needed a certain amount of teaching experience was because the study required the stories of those that despite being well experienced were also stressed. It is established that teachers both novice and experienced suffer from stress (Travers & Cooper, 2000, Montgomery & Rupp, 2005). Given this information, there was a need to hear the stories of those teachers who despite being experienced, still wanted to leave the profession rather than stay. The criteria for participants in having partners was necessary to understand and highlight how stress affected teachers

professionally and personally, especially when it is suggested that married teachers experience greater occupational stress in comparison to unmarried teachers (Nagra & Arora, 2013). Although I had met many teachers that had a lot to say about their experiences, finding an appropriate time for sitting down and conducting interviews was not easy (due to their workload), hence the criteria for participants to be available for interviews was necessary. For me the best form for my research could be no better than critical case sampling. According to Cohen et al. (2007, p. 176) "critical case sampling is regarding people who display the issue or set of characteristics in their entirety or in a way that is highly significant for their behaviour". As the nature of my research is sensitive, it was most suitable for me to use critical case sampling to find teachers who displayed characteristics of severe stress. My teachers were stressed and were displaying this characteristic through their own admission. All but one was married and had responsibilities (family, mortgage, commitments) and had been teaching for over 10 years, plus all were currently suffering from stress. It is suggested that cases are more likely to produce the most information in critical case sampling (Patton, 2001). I agree with Patton's view because by choosing these participants with their particular experiences of teaching and the fact that they all felt like leaving the teaching profession, I was invited to a world where information and feelings may not be known to many. As such, the cases my participants had were critical to hear and document. According to Jovchelovitch & Bauer (2007), the word a researcher chooses to refer to a person being interviewed in a narrative research is commonly called an informant; some have used other terms like interviewee, respondent (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), co-researchers (Reason, 1994) or subject or volunteers

(Chalmers, 1999). However, based on recommendations from the British Psychological Society, it is recommended to drop the term 'subjects' due to it being found offensive (Boynnton, 1998) and adopt the term 'participant'. As a researcher whose research is solely dependent on the voluntary participation of teachers, it is evident the term participant most strongly suits the teachers involved in this research.

4.6.3 Interview 1: Semi structured Interviews

Interviewing has been seen as a basic mode of inquiry and recounting narratives of experience has been the major way throughout recorded history (Seidman, 2006). I did not choose interviewing as a form of data collection to just answer questions or evaluate, but to make meaning of the experiences of my participants and make sense of their history. My interviews were semi structured with specific features such as ensuring that the interviews were in depth, interviewees were using spontaneous language in the narration of events and that a self-generating schema is being built (Bauer, 1996). Interviewing involves having initial questions followed by "active following strategy" (Wengraf, 2001, p. 159). Although I later held narrative interviews, this point was highly relevant as the exmanent questions I designed for interview 1 were based on problems that had been mentioned in current literature on what causes teachers to feel stressed. Camila, et al (2014) describe exmanent questions as being the preparation part of the narrative interview. It is this part that allows the interviewees to feel comfortable and to talk freely on issues that are related to the subject of the interview. Roulston (2012) highlights the importance of rapport building and that it is difficult starting conversations with strangers; it can also be the case with

participants. By following this technique, I was fortunate to get my participants to talk about their stressful experiences in teaching that would then get them to later narrate their stories (Interview 2), hence the actual narrative. An example of this structure can be seen from one of my participants' interviews:

Exmanent question: *"How often do you feel stressed? How does it feel?"*

Participant: *"how often..... [laugh]..... everyday, I'm stressed, I mean come on, where do I start... you need to understand how they make us work hard and just don't care. They even blame us for the latest Ofsted Report. I know they look at me and think I'm not professional and this nonsense and that nonsense."*

After listening to the participant talk about his experiences and letting him answer the rest of the exmanent questions, I then based my immanent questions that were later used for the narrative interview (interview 2) on these responses. As seen above, the exmanent question caused the participant to talk about the blame he felt. Based on this answer, my immanent question for interview 2 was *"explain why you felt that the result of the Ofsted report was your fault?"* The answer to this immanent question then led to the actual narration.

Careful designing of my exmanent questions made it easier for me to allow my participants to discuss immanent topic/experiences which led to their narratives. As mentioned earlier, topics that were taken from my questions were based on Cousins et al. (2007) report on work stressors. Following Mishler's (2006) advice on not limiting my participants or interrupting them, the interviews were designed in a manner that allowed my participants to feel comfortable in sharing their experiences. I used everyday language with the sole intention of allowing my participants to open the doors of their experiences and let them

express their thoughts and experiences freely. Mishler (2006) also argues that many forms of research interview suppress stories either by 'training' the interviewee to limit answers to short statements, or by interrupting narratives when they do occur. In practice with Knapic (2006) participants were offered the opportunity either to read the consent forms by themselves or go through it with me in order for all concerns to be addressed. All teachers read the consent forms themselves and spoke to me beforehand about my research. All questions and concerns they had were answered in detail and assurances were given that no names or indications of what school they were working at would be disclosed. I am aware that my teachers may have answered questions and talked about how they made sense of their experiences, but it is necessary to understand that after all, reality, especially social reality is what its members make of it (Tomlinson, 1989). Interviewing my participants not only provided access to their actions in teaching, but also provided a way for understanding what reality these participants made of their experiences. How my participants interpreted or understood the topic of stress in teaching is very important and is why I spent a substantial amount of time designing Interview 1 questions (see appendix 4). Tomlinson (1989) argues that the very reason why an individual would choose the option of interviewing as a research tool implies an awareness of the fact that having the correct interview questions is necessary in order for interviews to be successful. In this study, the focus has been on teachers reporting their experiences of stress and how they interpreted these experiences. In the words of Loh (2013, p. 7) "I seek to learn not of facts, but of interpretation of facts". In agreement with Tomlinson (1989), I aimed to let the interviews drive naturally as a form of conversation so that my

participants felt comfortable. I was then able to use the answers from these questions and steer these into the questioning phase towards the topic of teaching and stress. Kvale (1996 as cited in Cohen et al. 2007) argues that the interview is seen as self-communicating and a story contained in itself that hardly requires much extra description and explanation, and that the shorter the interviewers questions and the longer the subject's answers, the better. Taking this criterion into consideration, I initiated the topic of teacher stress by having a general discussion at first (through the use of exmanent questions) with participants to ensure that they are comfortable and then allowed participants to start communicating their stories in their manner and style (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2007). Cohen et al's. (2007) guideline for conducting interviews advises the interviewer to consider his own non-verbal communication such as eye contact, signs of anxiety and showing respect. Such a point is important for the interviewer to remember as it shows that not only the participant's actions, but even the interviewer's actions can affect the whole interview process. Knapic's (2006) analysis of participants' accounts of past research interviews echoes Cohen et al's, (2007) guideline. In Knapic's (2006) research, even the raising of eyebrows from the interviewer can be interpreted by participants as a sign of disagreement to what was being said; the same research suggests that interviewers can sometimes come across as being cold and distant. Another important aspect that requires attention during interviewing is ensuring that participants are not only comfortable, but also to remember that not all questions or concepts will be regarded as relevant. As Brinkman & Kvale (2005) warn us, a qualitative interview is frequently oriented as a one-way dialogue; a trap I wish to avoid. Knapic (2006) found that in his analysis participants would answer

questions which sometimes had no meaning to them, but due to it being a question, felt they had to just give an answer. My interviews were not just a matter of questions and answers, but a back-and-forth dialogue, stopping and recapping, discussions and sharing experiences where I too showed recognition of the facts of daily classroom teaching. As Knapic (2006, p. 9) quotes “my analysis does not suggest a need to do research only as participants want.....rather, I want to spur dialogue that considers carefully the reflexive participation inherent in the interview”. I, as a researcher wished to create social conditions where my participants could bring forward concerns that were meaningful to them. Seidman (2006, p. 11) states “if the researcher’s goal, however, is to understand the meaning people involved in education make of their experience, then interviewing provides a necessary, if not always completely sufficient, avenue of inquiry”. Based on this view, I wished to gain a subjective understanding of my participants’ experiences and what meaning they make of these experiences.

The first set of interviews took place over a period of 6 months, from August 2016 to January 2017. This period had been specifically set due to it being agreed by my participants. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes and was transcribed verbatim to my participants to ensure that full cooperation and understanding was practiced. After these first set of interviews, a second meeting was arranged for participants to then give their second interview: the narrative interview (main narration). This second interview took place during the last week of January 2017.

4.6.4 Narrative Interviews

This narration was based on a topic they had chosen to share related to teacher stress in their first interview. The manner in which the narration reveals details, relevance and closing is what self-generating schema consists of (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2007). In fact, it is this narration schema that replaces the question-answer schema that dictates normal interviews (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2007). A schema structures a semi-autonomous process activated by a pre-determined situation and despite a narrative interview allowing a great deal of freedom for the participant, it would be naïve to think that the whole process lacks any structure. The narration is based on particular clues once the participant starts. According to Jovchelovitch & Bauer (2007) three characteristics are necessary for a successful self-generating schema:

- The first point to be considered is that the texture of the narration must be detailed, where the narrator provides as much detail as possible so that the story can flow and that there is a transition. A key point here is that the story has to be plausible.
- The second characteristic is called Relevance Fixation; this relates to information provided by the narrator that is seen as being relevant according to his or her perspective on the world, or in this research on the topic of teaching and stress.
- The third characteristic is known as Closing of the Gestalt; this refers to the ending of the actual story. The whole story should have a beginning, middle and an end; the end doesn't have to be in the past; it can be in the present if the story or the events that the participant is sharing are not finished.

In other words, according to Jovchelovitch & Bauer (2007) the perspective of the participant is best revealed when using their spontaneous language.

4.6.5 Stages of the Narrative Interviews

According to Jovchelovitch & Bauer (2007), the narrative interview can be characterized into four stages, these are: initiation, main narration, question phase and concluding talk. Initiation is defined as formulating the initial topic or in this study, asking the participants the list of exmanent questions from interview 1, ranging from their daily teaching lives to actual experiences of teacher stress. The main narration was the story telling and in the narrative interviews, this was where the participants would narrate an actual experience that they had highlighted during the initiation. Jovchelovitch & Bauer (2007) describe the question phase as being the point of the narrative interview where the exmanent move on to the immanent, but I have to admit to diversion here. As I had already allowed my participants to answer the exmanent questions during the first interview, the next step of storytelling was inevitable and for my study more convenient. The final stage here known as the concluding talk is explained as the part where the recording is switched off and any questions from the participants or the interviewer are answered. This part I found to be very helpful, as it allowed me to answer any of my interviewees' queries and for me to ask any further questions.

4.6.6 Initiation

After extensive reading in the field of teacher stress and designing my initial interview questions, I initiated the interview by explaining in detail about the topic of teacher stress and asked for my participants' permission to have the interviews

recorded. I followed Jovchelovitch & Bauer's (2007) steps for conducting the interviews:

- **The initial topic needs to be experiential to the informant. This will ensure his or her interest, and a narration rich in detail.** This step was the first point of reference as my participants were teachers suffering from stress.
- **The initial topic must be of personal and of social or communal significance.** The topic of teacher stress is significant to my participants personally and does affect the teaching community in general.
- **The informant's interest and investment in the topic should not be mentioned.** This is to avoid taking positions and role-playing from the beginning. This step was difficult to implement as the purpose for my participants to be members of the study was because they were sharing their stories of teacher stress with me.
- **The topic shall be broad to allow the informant to develop a long story from an initial state of affairs, through past events and leads to the present situation.** This step started from the beginning of the interview and caused participants to produce rich valuable stories.
- **Avoid indexical formulations. Do not refer to dates, names or places. These should be introduced only by the informant as part of his or her relevance structure.** Throughout the interviews, caution was taken not to introduce any such information that may have influenced the participants' response.

4.6.7 My approach to the Narrative Interview

Kartch (2017) states that narrative interviews can be approached in a number of ways, such as:

1. Interviewing the participants once and therefore eliciting the narrative in one interview
2. Participants are interviewed multiple times to collect the narratives
3. Narrative interviews are combined with other methods that will assist in the narration of the participants' story

I chose to follow the third way by having the semi structured interview first, followed by the narration at a later date agreed with my participants. Once the participants were clear and ready to start talking about their stressful teaching experiences in more detail after completing the first interview, I conducted the narrative interviews where I asked my participants to elaborate on particular experiences, they disclosed in the first interview. I ensured that my immanent questions for the narratives (see appendix 5) were based on their answers to the exmanent questions. Based on their actual answers, I asked them to narrate their experiences of teacher stress. During this stage I did not interrupt them or stop them from speaking unless there was a need for explanation. Powell, Fisher & Wright, (2005) suggest that upon a signal or indication that the participant is about to stop speaking, the participant should be asked if there is anything they would like to add or expand on. Sometimes a coda such as 'that's all really', or 'that's what happened' is used by participants to indicate the end of a story (Flick, 2009). The coda mentioned by Flick (2009) were very similar to what my participants used towards the end of their point or narratives.

4.7 Data Collection Procedure

In this chapter, five teachers' voices are heard. Stories of their stressful experiences and causes of their stress along with how they cope is shared. Their narratives offer an insight into the world of teacher stress over the course of their teaching careers. Each of my participants gave detailed narratives on the causes of their stress and the coping strategies they used. The interviews were held between the periods of August 2016 and January 2017. The sequence of interviews was split in two: the exmanent semi structured interview that consisted of a list of questions on the topic of teaching (see appendix 4) and the narrative interview that consisted of one question based on an answer they had been given from the first interview (see appendix 5). Teachers were contacted through personal phone calls and emails to agree on specific days and times for meeting. Six teachers had initially guaranteed me their time to allow me to interview them, but one teacher had chosen to leave teaching in the UK and had moved abroad to South Korea. This caused me to concentrate on the five participants I had. The main reason why I believe interviewing as a specific form of data collection is necessary is because I intended to gain access into a complicated social and educational issue (Teacher Stress). As Seidman (2006, p. 8) argues, "if given a chance to talk freely, people appear to know a lot about what is going on". It is important to note how the term 'freely' is used here. For me, the term 'freely' is crucial for my research as this is what I wanted my participants to do: to speak freely. For this to be successful, the influence of the interviewer must be minimal.

4.7.1 The Questioning Phase

Once the participants had finished their narratives, I started my questioning part. In this part of the interview, I asked questions that did not ask about opinions, attitudes or causes, but rather questions that elicited their feelings about their experiences. The questions were immanent and based on the narratives provided by the participants. The questioning phase was used to elicit new and additional material beyond the self-generating schema of the story. I made a point of not highlighting any contradictions the participants made, so as not to have a climate of cross-examination (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000).

4.7.2 Concluding Talk

This stage was the end of the narrative interview, where the tape recorder was switched off and participants were thanked for their support and participation. As this stage is seen as an important phase, it is recommended for me to answer any questions that the participants had and for me to have a notebook to hand to add any extra notes that I then used later when analysing the data (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). This stage, despite being at the end of the interview, is viewed as an equally important part of data collection as many important points, issues or concerns that the interviewee or interviewer had were discussed and explained. Flick (2009, p. 179) calls this stage the “balancing phase” where more questions, like ‘how’ questions complemented by ‘why’ questions, are asked to aim for a clear description and argumentation. Although I aimed for all narratives to be rich in detail, it was necessary for me to ask further questions at this stage to ensure that I did not misunderstand or quote my participants incorrectly. An example was when

one of the interviewees said *“I couldn’t do sports or anything in life”*. I needed him to elaborate on what he actually meant by *“anything”*.

4.7.3 Keeping Field Notes

Whilst interviewing my participants, it is recommended that a set of notes be kept aside for referring to later (Creswell, 2009). These notes were useful when exploring body language and any matters that were of importance towards understanding my participants. How they sighed, paused or even used a hard tone was noted. According to Newman (2014), field notes can be extremely useful to have when conducting interviews. Newman (2014) suggests five ways of taking notes: jotted notes (short words, phrases), direct observation notes (things I saw that I believed needed to be described), research inference notes (thing that interpreted particular scenes), analytic notes (addressing methodological ideas and issues) and personal notes (where I would assess myself and how my feelings and comments affected the conversation). Along with the recordings, these notes were used to analyse data. The notes proved to be useful in reminding me to ask questions that I needed to ask to get a better understanding, like concrete examples. The notes also helped in controlling a diversion from the research questions.

4.8 Stages of Data Collection

There were three phases involved in my data collection and each phase consisted of three stages (see table 4.2). Phase one was interview 1 that consisted of the semi structured interview (see appendix 4). The first stage involved interviewing participants separately at an agreed place; their interviews were recorded on an iPhone and iPad (for back up) and stored at my place of

residence. The second stage involved me listening to the Interviews with my participants; however, due to time constraints it was decided to hold these discussions through the use of WhatsApp mobile application. Voice and video calls were held and points related to the interview were discussed. The third stage was holding meetings with interviewees where further elaboration and amendment was made for anything that was not clear. This meeting was held approximately a week after the interview. In this meeting, any further points that needed clarification or amending were done.

The second phase was planned around the narrative interviews (see appendix 5). The first stage involved meeting participants at a mutually agreed convenient place where participants narrated their stories. Like their first interviews, these narrative interviews were also recorded on an iPhone and iPad and stored at my home. During the second stage, the recordings were first listened to by me and then sent to each participant (through the use of WhatsApp due to difficulties in meeting). Again, the purpose of sending the recorded narratives via WhatsApp to participants was to ensure that participants could add further points if required. Finally, stage 3 consisted of me transcribing the interviews and coding recurring patterns from the narratives.

The third phase of data collection was member checking. The first stage required me to read the transcription numerous times for coding and to generate themes. The second stage was to then review the themes I had discovered. Each participant was met via WhatsApp for a joint discussion. The third and final stage was to then meet all participants at an agreed time to discuss all themes and coping strategies that I had decided to present in my study.

Table 4.2 Data Collection Phases

| Interviews | Stage 1 | Stage 2 | Stage 3 |
|--|--|---|---|
| Phase 1: Semi structured interviews | Interviewing participants | Listening to interviews with participants via WhatsApp | Contacting and meeting Interviewees for elaboration and clarity |
| Phase 2: Narrative Interviews (Main Narrative) | Stories narrated by participants | Narratives listened to with each participant via WhatsApp | Interviews transcribed and all recurring patterns are coded. |
| Phase 3: Member checking | Coding and generating of themes and subthemes done by myself | Review of all themes and subthemes with participants where joint construction of all themes was agreed upon. Done via WhatsApp | All themes agreed upon and then presented in my study |

4.9 Data Analysis

The use of qualitative research has been seen as an ideal tool in multicultural counselling research (Seidman, 2006), and as the nature of this study was around teacher stress, I believed such qualitative research was correct for my

participants. Through my choice of interviews, participants are considered more likely to respond better which allowed for the collection of more data (Jarvis, 2005) and as narrative interviewing is a research methodology (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003), analysing my data entailed an analysis of both the interviews and narratives. Such a manner of obtaining data is considered to be not only popular and reliable, but is also known as the interview society (Atkinson & Silverman, 1997). Using a narrative approach proved to be a powerful tool in helping develop a deeper and clearer understanding of how teacher stress occurs. Through my choice of interviews, participants are considered more likely to respond better which allowed for the collection of more data (Jarvis, 2005). One of the advantages when interviewing participants is the noting of particular cues, interests and body language shown towards the questions and the topic in general (Creswell (2003). Therefore, the interpretation of data is based on the interviews and narratives whilst also paying attention to those cues, interests and body language. The following discusses details of data processing and analysis procedures.

4.9.1 Transcription

Transcribing may appear to be a simple and straightforward task, but in fact involves judgments about what level of detail should be chosen (Bailey, 2008). I agree with Riessman (1993) who argues that the process of transcription is an excellent way to familiarize oneself with the data. The option of getting someone to transcribe for me was not possible, so transcribing the data myself allowed me to get a deep insight of the interviews. I chose to transcribe verbatim so how they spoke was noted. When transcribing the interviews, it was necessary that the manner in which my participants said things were recorded for example the speed,

tone of voice, timing and pauses are crucial for interpreting data accurately (Roberts, 2007). An example of understanding the importance of gestures and non-verbal features is seen in Bailey's (2008) research on doctor-patient relationships. In her study the representation of non-verbal features demonstrated by the patient showed disagreement (the patient shrugged his shoulders) with the doctor although the patient verbally agreed by using the words 'fine, thank you very much'. Such an example highlighted the need for me to ensure that transcribing took features such as these into account. Bailey (2008) argues that even manners in which a mood like laughter is displayed, it is necessary to be reflected appropriately from 'he, he, he' 'laughter (2 seconds), 'nervous laughter' 'quiet laughter' or 'giggling' as all display laughter, but of course to different levels and then this in turn would give multiple meanings. Transcriptions contained conversation symbols since I believe this point to be important as my participants at times showed their mood like, deep sigh (3 seconds), pausing (5 seconds) or even raising their voices. Such manners need to be shown in order for a clearer and more personal feel to their narratives. UK standard written English was used to aid readability, although some would argue that this style would lose the linguistic variety (Roberts, 1997); the fact that my participants are all teachers with similar backgrounds means their linguistic ability will be similar if not the same. They all used UK standard English during the narratives and when certain words were used that I was not familiar with, I asked for an explanation. Transcribing took a lot longer than expected as I wanted to ensure that all material was understood very clearly, therefore I took approximately 3 hours transcribing per

participant, totalling 15 hours. I transcribed the data after each interview; this then allowed me to review them for emerging themes.

4.9.2 Interpretation and themes: Examining sections of the transcript

Following Braun & Clarke's (2006) guidelines (see Table 4.3), I chose thematic analysis to examine the data. Thematic analysis is a method that is known to identify, analyse and report patterns of data in research and is viewed as a highly flexible method to be used and accepted as being compatible across both essentialist and constructionist paradigms (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method required me to thematically analyse narrative materials related to my research questions from the interviews. Whole passages or paragraphs from the transcript were paraphrased into summary sentences and then these summary sentences were then paraphrased into key words. The transcripts were analysed to construct narratives of teacher stress. I conducted a thematic analysis where occurring points were explored. The focus of the analysis was on the values that were expressed or implied. Analysing the transcripts was important and most appropriate for this research as it focused on the values that were expressed or implied (Davis, 2008). By analysing the transcripts, my study aimed to help identify the relevant codes. The approach was to organize content in order to bring out the key themes that had arisen amongst my participants. This followed Riessman's (2008) practice of interpreting what is said in the interviews; I had to ensure that throughout my analysis, the stories my participants shared were exactly reflected without any alteration. The issues my participants chose to share with me were made very clear through their stories. Teachers spoke of their stressful experiences and as a result disclosed information that they believed as being

important to share within the topic of teacher stress. These themes were then used to build upon theoretical discussion in this study. The great bulk of my analysis was around interview quotes; this was necessary especially if we are to explore the meanings that underpin peoples' lives (Arksey & Knight, 1999; as cited in Elliot, 2005). Each participant's story was produced through their interviews, which were then told with various narrative accounts being used to connect to a) hearing their experiences in their words, and, b) finding the answers to my research questions. As thematic narrative analysis is seen as being the most widely used method due to its focus on what is actually being said (Riessman, 2008, Braun & Clarke, 2006), data was divided into thematic categories, and analysed to interpret each narrative and then discussed as a whole story. The narrative accounts of my teachers explicitly told stories in order for the data to be clear. Despite the narratives being subjective and individual experiences, similarities and a number of themes were looked for. Sections that stood out as being common amongst participants or agreed with current literature was used for data analysis. The directions I employed for analysis are suitable for any researcher wishing to conduct a study where experiences can be narrated without distortion or researcher interference. The analysis did affirm certain beliefs that I as a researcher had, but to my surprise highlighted other stressors that I was not aware of.

Table 4.3 Steps involved in thematic analysis

| Steps | Description of the process |
|--------------------------------|---|
| I. Familiarizing with the data | Reading of data, transcribing audio and taking initial notes. |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>II. Coding</p> | <p>Highlighting sections of the interview material, and creating labels or codes that describe the content.</p> |
| <p>III. Generating themes</p> | <p>Go over the codes, identifying the patterns among them and then turn code into subthemes.</p> |
| <p>IV. Review subthemes and themes</p> | <p>Subthemes and themes are reviewed, combined, deleted or new themes are created.</p> |
| <p>V. Naming of themes</p> | <p>Ensuring themes are named clearly to ensure data is clearly understood.</p> |
| <p>VI. Writing</p> | <p>Write up of the analysis of the data, showing extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts and relating it to the research questions and literature.</p> |

4.9.3 Identifying themes

Despite there being an absence of rules when implementing a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), the flexibility in choosing what codes were to be identified as themes was a task that required serious thought. It was not necessary for the themes to be mentioned many times in the data, but it was important for the themes to relate to the research questions and for me to provide a

detailed account of the themes. My intention was to provide themes at a latent level where I can identify the features of the themes within a constructivist framework. I wished to theorize the sociocultural and structural conditions that would help understand my participants' stories in order to do justice to the participants' themes. After going back and forth to the data, codes were applied to segments of the data that were seen as being related to the research questions or interesting and relevant. An example can be seen in table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Extract from Lance's interview with codes applied

| Interview extract | Codes |
|---|--|
| <p><i>"I mean it's all because in this job, you are alone. There is no one there really for you.... You can talk as much as you want in the staffroom, but that just turns into gossip..... then fake news goes around and plus nothing important is done anyway. You can call certain teacher helplines, but all they say is ok, yes we understand, have you spoken to the deputy? etc, etc. I don't bother now.....My colleagues are nice and understanding, but they all hide the fact that they are stressed..... No one cares, no one gives a damn really.....I actually hide myself in the classroom. I don't even go to the staffroom much, because I know I will end up getting roped into something that I physically am too weak to do. I mean I'm not weak, but just tired"</i></p> | <p>Feeling alone, no one to talk to.</p> <p>No one understands what I am going through.</p> <p>Feeling ignored.</p> <p>Being isolated from everyone.</p> |

Once all codes had been created and a condensed overview of the main points of the interviews was done, it was then time to turn the codes into themes. This stage required me to review the codes that had been collected and to note the patterns there. Most of the time, there was more than one code that I had combined into one theme as can be seen in table 4.5. The next step was to then review all themes and to ensure that no misrepresentation or omission of an important code or data had occurred while writing up my data. The writing up of my data required that I provide sufficient evidence of the themes from the interviews and that the narratives were linked to my research questions (Frith & Gleeson, 2004, Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Table 4.5 Interpreting Codes into Themes

| Codes | Themes |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| Feeling alone, no one to talk to. No one understands what I am going through. Feeling ignored. Being isolated from everyone. | Isolation and lack of support |
| Not knowing who turn to for help. Smoking seen as a relief from stress. Forced to take medication Heavy workload leaves no time for exercise. | Health issues caused by stress |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Hiding true feelings and emotions.</p> <p>Not trusting colleagues and management.</p> <p>Seeing how other stressed teachers being bullied.</p> <p>Worried about stigma attached.</p> | <p>Fear of being labelled as a weak teacher</p> |
|---|--|

4.9.4 Member Checking

As a form of ensuring that my research was clear to my participants and to pursue the validity of my transcriptions, I used a process known as Member checking. I agree with Richardson (2000) who argues that there are no correct versions of data, but only interpretations that are formed according to how we see it. The process required me to present the transcripts and the interpretation to my participants for their comments. This is seen as a way of validating what I as a researcher had found and to ensure that the interpretation of themes that I had were authentic (Creswell, 2009; Chase, 2017). Such a joint construction of member checking was time consuming and demanding as it required me to elaborate on what my participants meant and whether the themes that I was highlighting actually were correct. My participants were busy people and I had to wait months for each participant to sit down and review the transcripts together. It was after I had read the transcripts and found what I believed to be the relevant themes that I was then able to sit with each participant and spend hours (approximately 6 hours with each one) on each theme. Fine (2002) argues that the 'giving voice' approach can be used by researchers to build their own arguments by picking out pieces of narratives they seem worthy. This is one accusation I wanted to be free from. As a result, there were many instances when I had to

listen to a participant explain why he had mentioned a particular example that I at first did not deem to be related to this study and if not explained to me, would definitely have omitted. It has been rewarding to know that my participants' stories are as authentic as possible; after all it is their voices and stories. The use of such member checking was seen as a valid way of minimizing discrepancies and as being ethical for participants to look at the data, its interpretations and offer their views regarding how they felt about what I had written (Loh, 2013). The sharing of the transcripts, themes and findings not only ensured my participants that everything presented was purely from them, but enhanced the credibility of the data analysis. Like Chase (2017, p. 2690) explains *"I wanted to develop their narratives with them, allowing them to feel ownership and verify their voices"*.

I strongly agree with Lincoln & Guba (1985) that member checking is the most crucial technique for establishing credibility; for I heavily relied on my participants for checking that I analysed my findings appropriately and nothing but their stories were presented.

4.10 Ethical Considerations

One way of understanding my participants' experiences was to get them to speak freely and comfortably. I wanted others to understand the interviews in the same way that my participants wanted to. Having such an approach made me realise the importance of being ethical in my study. The role of ethics in research remained in my thoughts throughout the whole research process.

4.10.1 Building the researcher and participant relationship

Revealing the truth is not an easy task and an interesting example to present here can be seen in Whitmore's (1994) discussion on oppression and truth

where she evaluated a prenatal program for single expectant mothers conducted by a group of program participants. In her evaluation she questioned why the group felt they were more successful in gaining better information than herself (a university-trained evaluator). One of the mothers explained:

“...you’re dealing with a lot of people on social assistance and welfare. You’re dealing with real hard to reach low self-esteem people. And when they see anybody coming in that they think is high class or has anything to do with welfare and you working with them, they are scared to death that you’re going to squeal on them... they (the respondents) are just scared that you work with those people (social workers), you deal with them, you’re high up there so that they can’t trust you coz you’re right in with them. But we’re not in with them (social workers) and we’re not in there to tear them apart. And I think they really know that”

(Elizabeth Whitmore, as cited in Reason 1994, p. 352)

Whitmore’s (1994) research highlights the importance of the relationship between participant and researcher and that a marginalized group can exist anywhere. My participants did not feel comfortable talking about their experiences to the school head, their head of department or even their colleagues, but the fact that I am a complete outsider and lived in a different city made it easier for them to trust me more than the very people they worked with and saw on a daily basis. Getting my participants to understand that the study was strictly confidential required a lot of participation negotiation, respect, mutuality and openness; as Clandinin (2007, p. 537) argues “narrative research is inherently a relational endeavour”. I had to build on a relationship that was initially through introductions.

My participants were concerned that if they were even seen with me this would prove that they were taking part in my research. Although my participants claimed that there was no fear from their schools or managers if they were known to take part in my study, their main concern was that this study might reveal information that could be sensitive or even provoke some misunderstandings amongst their colleagues, senior management or even students. It was after numerous discussions with my participants (prior to interviews) that I began to fully understand Josselson's (2007) position of having an ethical attitude. As a result, I began thinking about the harm and negative attention I could draw to my participants and understood how I was responsible for them. As the ethical considerations in a narrative research are embedded in the relationship between researcher and participant, the greater respect and empathy I showed the more relaxed they became and dedication they began to show. Beginning with an exploration of self allows the researcher to feel more equipped to investigate this phenomenon (Cole & Knowles, 1994). After explaining and disclosing certain personal stressful experiences to my participants I was able to make them feel comfortable.

4.10.2 Assuring anonymity

The need to stay anonymous and yet be able to disclose feelings in my research was not easy for my participants. To avoid bias, data was analysed using Reflexivity where identifying the interconnections among the researcher, the text, the participants and the larger world is explored (Lichtman, 2011). As a researcher, I was fully aware that it is possible that my participants may have acted differently in my presence, but following the practice of reflexivity, I made it clear to

the participants that I was not going to judge or question their actions. If I did ask any questions, it was only for further clarification and for the benefit of a clearer understanding. Having such a reflexive approach provided a unique framework. Due to the sensitivity of this research, no real names were used and participants were given pseudonyms. Even the choice of having pseudonyms was a difficult and challenging task as participants had to ensure their favourite names or nicknames did not lead to their identities being revealed. One participant changed his pseudonym after a few months, as he remembered that some of his colleagues at work were aware of his liking for that name. The fact that my supervisors worked in Exeter made my participants feel comfortable as they worked in London and were concerned that they could be recognized by other teachers especially if the supervisors worked in London. This concern was because participants had attended teacher training courses in London, but not in Exeter. The reason for my participants not wanting to meet or contact my supervisors was because the nature of my research was around education; it could have been a possibility that they may have seen or met them before at a conference. Another ethical consideration I found to be of great use was to ensure that not only participants' names, but names of partners, friends, schools, colleagues and even addresses were changed. This made my participants feel relaxed that all forms of ethical considerations were being practiced. Participants were also reminded that all notes, transcripts and recordings would be kept locked in a secure place and then discarded at the end of the research. For the sake of anonymity, I also advised my participants that it would probably be best if they were to keep the fact that they were involved in my research confidential.

4.10.3 Information and Consent sheets

All participants were given information sheets (see appendix 2) that explained the nature of my study, details of my university and even contact numbers of my supervisors should they feel the need to contact anyone from my university. This information sheet was clear for my participants to understand and gave them the comfort of knowing my research title, its research questions and the fact that they were free to withdraw at any point of this study. I also presented a consent form (see appendix 3), explaining that they were agreeing to take part in my research and that the interviews are to be recorded with their approval. The length of each interview lasting around 30-60 minutes was made clear, along with details of my supervisors in case they felt they wished to make any checks regarding the authenticity of my study. I had presented the consent sheet to my participants explaining what they as participants were committing themselves to. This in itself is not seen as being fully informative as Gilligan (1982) reminds us that a participant is not really aware of what he/she is fully consenting to until the actual research starts; in fact, consent has to be seen as a part of the whole relationship process between the narrative researcher and the participant. Although some may argue that presenting specific information (regarding the study) to participants can cause them to behave or present the phenomena in a particular way and therefore affect the study (Holloway & Jefferson, 2000), I agree with Jossellson (2007) who argues that participants have the right to fully understand the study beforehand so that no misunderstandings or feelings of deceit are felt later. If I was to withhold information or refrain from answering questions related to my research then I would not only invite major

misunderstandings and not develop the trust that I needed, but would also run the risk of my participants dropping out of the study.

4.10.4 My ethical stance

In practice with Josselson (2007), I made it clear to my participants that although I aimed to conduct research that would be of benefit to educators and those interested in the field of teaching, their participation in my study may not help them personally. I found this to be very important as my participants disclosed emotional experiences and trauma that were both emotional and alarming and I did not want them to feel that by disclosing their experiences their stress would disappear. As Seidman (2006) reminds us often research is done by people in the guise of reform and yet all too often the only interests served are of the researchers personal advancement. I agree that yes, I too fall under this category as the information gained will no doubt serve my interest, but at the same time I do believe that by presenting my participants' stories all that are interested in stress and education will benefit. All interviews were recorded, but from experience, I had learnt that not all participants agree to have their information recorded. One participant requested to have his recording deleted after member checking and his request was accepted. Therefore, I was aware that I had to gain permission beforehand, but could still face resistance or a change of mind later.

4.10.5 My ethics form

In accordance with the University of Exeter ethical procedures, I had to ensure that guidelines like anonymity and confidentiality were upheld. Interviews were conducted at mutually convenient places, mostly at my home or my participants' homes; wherever they felt comfortable. This practice acknowledges

Cohen et al's. (2007) argument that the interviewees may feel hesitant to 'open up' if interview situations are seen as being too threatening and that the interview is not merely a data collection exercise, but a social interpersonal encounter. No harm or unreasonable stress was caused to the participants during data collection as they were told that they can choose to withdraw at any time if they wish. All material was saved on my iPhone and iPad and stored at my place of residence in a safe cabinet to which only I had access.

4.10.6 Obtaining data after interviews

Gaining data through the use of emails proved to be an extremely useful and practical way to get additional information. McCoyd & Merson (2011) argue that the use of computer mediated methods allows research to include groups that are isolated or overlooked and ignored. There were times when I felt that my participants were not completely comfortable on a specific point and needed more time to elaborate. Due to time constraints, it was not always possible to gather all data from the participants during the interview; therefore, gaining answers via emails to questions that were difficult for my participants to answer in greater detail was a great help. There were occasions when some matters or topics needed further explanation or sometimes the participant simply wished to elaborate or explain further on a point they had mentioned in the interview. They all had busy lives and wanted to keep their involvement in my research as confidential as possible; having the ease of sending an email from their smartphones was a great benefit for them. As per my participant's statement: *"I feel I can write better than how I say it"*.

Chapter 5: Results: Teachers' voices

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter the focus will be to present the stories that the participants wished to share on the two research questions: what were the causes of their teacher stress and what coping strategies they used. A summary of the two interviews and thematic analysis is presented. My participants are introduced with information about their teaching experiences and beliefs. Personal quotes from their interviews are shared as themes in relation to how teacher stress has affected their lives.

5.1.1 Semi structured Interviews

During the semi-structured interviews, thematic analysis identified four themes: losing faith in the teaching profession, feeling helpless, feelings of self-blame and being apathetic. Tables 5.1.1 to 5.1.4 illustrate these themes, subthemes and how many times the codes arose from the semi structured interviews. The letter 'x' represents the number of times a code was mentioned by a participant in their interviews. Topics that participants chose to discuss in detail in their first interview led to choosing the main narrative interview question for each participant. After their semi-structured interviews, all participants agreed (during member checking), that the themes, subthemes and codes presented were accurate representations of their interviews. During member checking, it was also decided what each participant would share for their narrative interview.

Table 5.1 Summary of Theme (Losing faith in the teaching profession) that emerged from the Thematic Analysis (Semi-structured interview).

| Theme | Subtheme | Codes and frequency |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| Losing faith in the teaching profession | Can't do anything | Feeling fed up (Lance 2x, Rand 2x, Terry 1x and Jimmy 1x) Feeling helpless (Lance 1x, Rand 1x, Terry x1 and Jimmy 1x) Feeling tired (Lance 1x, Rand 1x, Terry x1, Harry 1x and Jimmy 1x) |
| | Can't fight the system | Feel like you're fighting a losing battle (Lance 1x, Rand 1x, Terry 1x, Harry 1x and Jimmy 1x) Keep getting knocked down (Lance 1x, Rand 2x, Terry 1x and Jimmy 1x) Always feeling powerless (Lance 1x, Rand 2x, Terry 1x and Jimmy 1x) |
| | Us versus them culture | Feeling separated (Jimmy 1x, Rand 2x, Terry 1x, Lance 1x and Harry 2x) Having opinions ignored (Jimmy 1x, Rand 2x, Terry 1x, Lance 1x and Harry 2x) |
| | Misguided sense of being able to help | Felt the teaching profession did not care for its teachers (Jimmy 1x, Rand 2x, Terry 1x, Lance 1x and Harry 2x) Sent to workshops or training that were seen as being of no use (Jimmy 1x, Rand 1x, Terry 1x, Lance 1x and Harry 2x) |

All four participants expressed feelings about losing faith in the teaching profession. The belief that there was nothing they could do to convince management that teachers were tired and feeling unhappy with teaching was agreed upon. The clear separation between teachers and management was shared and even the belief that teachers were made to act like they cared was disclosed. Teachers felt that their opinions were ignored and even when they did try to put up a fight, they felt they were overpowered by the powerful management due to the imbalance of power.

Table 5.2 Summary of Theme (Feeling helpless) that emerged from the Thematic Analysis (Semi-structured interview).

| Theme | Subtheme | Codes and frequency |
|------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Feeling helpless | Believing it's the same everywhere | Seeing teaching as being the same in all schools (Jimmy 2x, Rand 2x, Terry 1x, Lance 1x and Harry 1x) Contemplating leaving the teaching profession (Jimmy 1x, Rand 2x, Terry 1x, Lance 1x and Harry 2x) |

Participants disclosed that feeling helpless was due to the belief that no matter where they went all schools would lead to the same stressful experiences. The teaching profession was seen as being a stressful occupation where teachers would have no say. All teachers disclosed that due to this feeling of helplessness, leaving the teaching profession in the UK was highly probable.

Table 5.3 Summary of Theme (Feelings of self-blame) that emerged from the Thematic Analysis (Semi-structured interview).

| Theme | Subtheme | Codes and frequency |
|------------------------|---------------------|---|
| Feelings of self-blame | Feeling undervalued | Start questioning your teaching abilities (Jimmy 1x, Rand 2x, Terry 1x, Lance 1x and Harry 2x) Start questioning whether you have the right personality for teaching (Jimmy 1x, Rand 1x, Terry 2x, Lance 1x and Harry 2x) Start blaming yourself for not managing the stress (Rand 2x, Terry 1x and Lance 1x) |
| | Mentally tired | Pressures are building up that can't be explained |

| | | |
|--|-------------------|--|
| | | (Jimmy 1x, Rand 2x, Terry 1x, Lance 1x and Harry 2x) Can't focus in the classroom (Jimmy 1x, Rand 2x, Terry 1x, Lance 1x and Harry 2x) |
| | High expectations | Told to improve student grades regardless of how weak or uninterested they are (Jimmy 1x, Rand 2x, Terry 1x, Lance 1x and Harry 2x) Work long hours (Jimmy 1x, Rand 2x, Terry 1x, Lance 1x and Harry 2x) Take marking and planning home (Jimmy 1x, Rand 2x, Terry 1x, Lance 1x and Harry 2x) |

Teachers felt that there were times they would question their own teaching abilities. Being unable to improve student grades, mark papers, plan effectively and cope with the long working hours made them feel that they were at fault. Participants discussed how not coping with stress made them blame themselves for not being strong enough. As a result, teachers felt mentally tired and unable to cope with the high expectations placed upon them.

Table 5.4 Summary of Theme (Being apathetic) that emerged from the Thematic Analysis (Semi-structured interview).

| Theme | Subtheme | Codes and frequency |
|-----------------|-------------------|--|
| Being apathetic | Too much pressure | Ofsted reports and blame being put on teachers (Jimmy 1x, Rand 2x, Terry 1x, Lance 1x and Harry 2x) Dealing with unruly children and being given no assistance (Jimmy 1x, Rand 2x, Terry 1x, Lance 1x and Harry 2x) |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | Hiding of emotions | <p>Have to pretend all is ok (Jimmy 1x, Rand 2x, Terry 1x, Lance 1x and Harry 2x)</p> <p>Have to agree with incorrect policies (Jimmy 1x, Rand 2x, Terry 1x, Lance 1x and Harry 2x)</p> <p>Have to hide the stress from others (Jimmy 1x, Rand 2x, Terry 1x, Lance 1x and Harry 2x)</p> <p>Have to hide stress related sicknesses (Jimmy 1x, Rand 2x, Terry 1x, Lance 1x and Harry 2x)</p> |
| | Difficulty with teaching and managing unruly children | <p>Feeling threatened by pupils (Jimmy 1x, Rand 2x, Terry 1x, Lance 1x and Harry 2x)</p> <p>Unruly pupils would be sent back to classes (Jimmy 1x, Rand 2x, Terry 1x, Lance 1x and Harry 2x)</p> <p>Being told that students had to be taught using different methods without the support of an SEN assistant (Jimmy 1x, Rand 2x, Terry 1x, Lance 1x and Harry 2x)</p> |

All teachers felt that as a result of getting no support from management, feelings of apathy were developing. Participants shared that matters like dealing with SEN students and being told that they had to stay in classes despite there being no SEN support in the classroom was extremely tough. Trying to teach unruly pupils with no support and knowing that complaints are ignored, my participants felt that hiding their emotions was necessary. Teachers shared that even stress related sicknesses had to be hidden from the school.

5.1.2 Narrative Interviews

Thematic analysis revealed three main themes from the narrative interviews; Isolation and lack of support, Fear of being labelled as weak teachers and Health issues caused by stress. Using the same approach as I did for my semi structured interview, each theme with its subthemes and codes can be seen in Tables 5.2.1 to 5.2.3 and highlights how often codes arose in each participant's interview.

Table 5.5 Summary of Theme (Isolation and lack of support) that emerged from the Thematic Analysis (narrative interview).

| Theme | Subtheme | Codes and frequency |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|---|
| Isolation and lack of support | Feeling devalued. | No role in decision making (Lance 1x, Harry 1x, Rand 2x and Terry 3x). No respect (Lance 2x, Harry 1x, Rand 1x, Terry 1x and Jimmy 2x) Felt ignored (Lance 1x, Harry 2x, Rand 3x, Terry 2x and Jimmy 2x). Fear of being attacked in the classroom (Rand 1x, Lance 1x and Jimmy 1x). Lack of trust (Lance 2x, Harry 2x, Rand 3x, Terry 1x and Jamal 2x). |
| | Feeling alone. | Feeling alone with no one to turn to (Lance 2x, Jimmy 2x, Harry 1x and Terry 1x). No real friends (Lance 1x, Harry 1x, Rand 1x, Terry 2x and Jimmy 2x) No socialising (Lance 1x, Rand 1x, Terry 1x and Jimmy 1x) Did not know how to share concerns (Lance 1x, Harry 1x, Rand 1x, Terry 1x and Jimmy 1x) |
| | Ofsted inspections. | Ofsted inspections cause stress (Lance 1x). Pressure from senior management when inspections are taking place (Harry 1x, Jimmy 1x, Rand 1x and Terry 1x) Teachers are unnecessarily blamed (Lance 3x, Jimmy 1x, Harry 1x and Rand 1x). |
| | Weak leadership. | There is no support from senior management (Lance 1x, Harry 1x, Rand 1x, Terry 1x and Jimmy 1x) Management don't really care (Lance 1x, Harry 1x, Rand 1x, Terry 1x and Jimmy 1x) |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | | Management just wants to see good grades (Lance 1x, Harry 1x, Rand 1x, Terry 1x and Jimmy 1x) Complaints are ignored (Lance 3x, Harry 1x, Rand 2x, Terry 1x and Jimmy 2x) |
| | Lack of training on SEN. | No training on how to teach children with SEN (Lance 1x, Harry 3x, Rand 1x, Terry 1x and Jimmy 2x) Teachers just do as they please (Lance 1x, Harry 2x, Rand 1x, Terry 2x and Jimmy 1x). Teachers are confused over policies (Lance 2x, Harry 1x, Rand 1x, Terry 1x and Jimmy 1x). Being told to just keep pupils in class (Lance 1x, Harry 1x, Rand 1x and Jimmy 1x) |
| | Lack of recognition. | No recognition for hard work (Jimmy 3x, Lance 1x, Harry 1x, Rand 1x and Terry 1x), Good teachers end up with more work (Lance 3x, Harry 2x, Rand 1x, Terry 1x and Jimmy 1x) No one would discuss important issues (Lance 1x, Harry 1x, Rand 1x, Terry 1x and Jimmy 1x). |
| | Difficulty in teaching disruptive students. | Keep disruptive students in classes no matter what (Lance 1x, Harry 1x, Rand 3x, Terry 1x and Jimmy 2x) Can't complain about student behaviour (Lance 1x, Harry 1x, Rand 2x, Terry 1x and Jimmy 1x). Not knowing what to do (Lance 1x, Rand 3x, Terry 1x and Jimmy 1x) |

Isolation and lack of support appeared as the most common factor amongst all of my participants. Each one of them in their main narratives highlighted how they felt devalued, alone and not supported by management. Although only one participant spoke about the pressures of Ofsted and how management would like to blame teachers; all teachers did agree on management not being supportive or taking action to help stressed teachers. Lack of training on SEN and dealing with disruptive students were also shared in both interviews. In general, a lack of recognition from management was felt by all participants.

Table 5.6 Summary of Theme (Fear of being labelled as weak teachers) that emerged from the Thematic Analysis (narrative interview).

| Theme | Subtheme | Codes and frequency |
|---|--|---|
| Fear of being labelled as weak teachers | Fear of being labelled as weak teachers. | Had to hide true feeling and emotions (Jimmy 1x, Rand 2x, Lance 2x, Terry 2x and Harry 2x). Could not talk about the truth (Lance 1x, Harry 1x, Rand 1x, Terry 1x and Jimmy 1x). Scared of management knowing (Lance 3x, Harry 2x, Rand 2x, Terry 2x and Jimmy 2x). Scared of being labelled (Lance 3x, Harry 2x, Rand 2x, Terry 2x and Jimmy 2x). |

Fear of being labelled as weak teachers was apparent in both interviews and easily agreed upon during member checking. It was also agreed that the theme and subtheme was exactly the same. The stigma and concern over how they would be treated if others knew they were stressed was a major concern.

Table 5.7 Summary of Theme (Health issues caused by stress) that emerged from the Thematic Analysis (narrative interview).

| Theme | Subtheme | Codes and frequency |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|---|
| Health issues caused by stress | Treated like robots. | Lack of sympathy and empathy (Lance 1x, Harry 1x, Rand 1x, Terry 1x and Jimmy 1x) Constantly feeling tired (Lance 1x, Harry 1x, Rand 1x, Terry 1x and Jimmy 1x) Feeling sick and uncomfortable (Lance 1x, Harry 1x, Rand 1x, Terry 1x and Jimmy 1x) Losing interest in recreational activities |

| | | |
|--|--------------------------------|--|
| | | (Lance 1x, Harry 1x, Rand 1x, Terry 1x and Jimmy 1x) Excessive workload (Lance 1x, Harry 1x, Rand 1x, Terry 1x and Jimmy 1x) |
| | Multiple roles of the teacher. | Too many roles to cover as a teacher (Lance 1x, Harry 1x, Rand 1x, Terry 1x and Jimmy 1x) Dealing with school and private life (Lance 1x, Harry 1x, Rand 1x, Terry 1x and Jimmy 1x) Dealing with pupils' problems (Lance 1x, Harry 1x, Rand 1x, Terry 1x and Jimmy 1x) |
| | Teacher bullying. | Unable to speak up (Jimmy 3x, Lance 2x, Harry 1x, Rand 2x and Terry 2x) Seeing other teachers being bullied (Lance 1x, Harry 1x, Rand 1x, Terry 1x and Jimmy 1x) Pupils picking up on teacher stress (Lance 1x, Harry 1x, Rand 1x, Terry 1x and Jimmy 1x) |
| | Dirty politics. | Seeing others treated differently (Terry 1x, Jimmy 1x, Lance 1x and Rand 1x and Harry 1x) Favouritism (Lance 1x, Harry 1x, Rand 1x, Terry 1x and Jimmy 1x) Seeing others being ostracised (Lance 1x, Rand 1x, Terry 1x and Jimmy 1x) Seeing teachers ignore important issues (Lance 1x, Harry 1x, Rand 1x, Terry 1x and Jimmy 1x) |

All participants agreed that they suffered from Health issues caused by stress. All discussed the impact stress had on their health. The heavy workload of working like robots and having multiple roles were subthemes that highlighted how the demands of teaching was impacting their health. Only one was able to make

time for exercise, but the rest couldn't. Some teachers spoke of how favouritism, bullying and the role politics played in their working environments caused them stress. Not being able to complain due to fear of being labelled as a weak teacher caused teachers to suffer in silence.

5.2 Lance's story

Lance is an English teacher with over 12 years of teaching experience in many secondary schools around the UK. His story of stress and why he is considering leaving teaching in the UK can be understood in his words. Although he has been teaching in secondary schools in the UK for 12 years, he has also taught abroad in the Middle East and in France, where he was born. He moved to the UK with his wife and three children in 2000 from France. Lance made his reason for teaching apparent when answering the first question during the exmanent interview; he clearly loved London and had spent his childhood in the city due to his father working here. For him, moving and teaching English was more than just a job. When asked why or how he became a teacher, Lance answered:

'I have always loved the English language and teaching it in the UK was like a dream come true. I knew from a young age that I was going to settle and teach in London as I love this city (London), even more than Paris..... I used to spend my childhood here (London).... and would go to the museums and libraries. I love the old libraries, especially when it has that old smell; it reminds me of my childhood'.

Lance continued to describe how he got into teaching due to his passion for the English language and a natural passion 'to care' as he quoted. He has not regretted his move to London and sees himself as a good citizen, especially in his community where he is a member of a book club and offers support to the local Citizens Advice Bureau assisting French speakers with form filling. For Lance, a typical day of teaching would comprise of hard work, managing unruly behaviour, dealing with a great deal of paperwork and having to constantly deal with the everyday pressures of working in a busy secondary school in London. Lance also talks about how his family life has been affected. Despite being at home, he doesn't want to do anything that he finds physically demanding, playing football with his son and going shopping with his wife are just two examples he shared. He doesn't want to go out and socialize and admits that all he wants to do is sleep. When asked if he slept well, he admitted to sleeping too much. In fact, due to the constant feeling of being tired, all he wanted to do was sleep. Another factor that he highlights is that despite having good work relations with his colleagues, drinking in the pub and gossiping is not what he wants as he feels that this will certainly not solve the problems at work. The fact that he has chosen not to disclose his problem of stress with the school shows that he is concerned about a stigma that he may get especially if the school were to know he was taking medication to deal with his stress.

5.2.1. Feeling devalued

'I'm not saying I want someone to teach my class while I sit down drinking tea, but all I would like is for them to stop making me feel weak. What good is one day a year when we don't teach and have yoga classes or dance

classes??? That's nonsense, we all get back to the same stress the next day...it's all about keeping up appearances, you know showing that we are all fine and the school is good and so they (the school) can show oh yes look at us we offer yoga classes to our teachers once a year, look how caring we are. ...so many times someone from senior management team (SMT) would just walk in and say why is so and so making so much noise? I mean they know we are all doing our best.... If I send a student out, he gets sent back in. That really puts me down... no wonder the students don't respect us"

Lance felt that he was feeling devalued at work. Having a member of the SMT walk in unexpectedly and questioning him over his decisions made Lance feel stressed. He also believed that whatever he had to say at work was not being heard.

5.2.2. Feeling alone

"I mean it's all because in this job, you are alone. There is no one there really for you.... You can talk as much as you want in the staffroom, but that just turns into gossip..... then fake news goes around and plus nothing important is done anyway. You can call certain teacher helplines, but all they say is ok, yes we understand, have you spoken to the deputy? etc, etc. I don't bother now.....My colleagues are nice and understanding, but they all hide the fact that they are stressed..... No one cares, no one gives a damn really.....I actually hide myself in the classroom. I don't even go to the staffroom much because I know I will end up getting roped into something that I physically am too weak to do. I mean I'm not weak, but just tired"

The fact that Lance hid himself in the classroom demonstrates the feeling of loneliness he has experienced. Lance's feelings of frustration are clear in his quote. His helplessness and lack of support from his management team had caused him to withhold the fact that he was suffering from stress and burnout and caused him to have a feeling of resentment towards the SMT that he felt was only interested in what he called 'keeping up appearances'. He felt that the SMT either doesn't understand or doesn't make a genuine effort to deal with the pressure teachers like him are going through and it is clear from his statements that this feeling of stress is not just about him, but involved other teachers too. The fact that his colleagues gossip about those are perceived to be suffering from stress makes it difficult for him to come forward and speak to his management about himself.

5.2.3. Ofsted

"A few months back we had Ofsted and it was embarrassing. The deputy came in to my class and said why isn't there much work to display? I know I'm an experienced teacher, but still, all they (SMT) say is just keep the pupils in the class. I know they (SMT) are holding me responsible... well not only me, but erm....., you know, you've taught here (in the UK) you know what I mean..... They are just saying ok this is good, but 'we' need to do more. Well, who are 'we'.....? I know very well that they mean me and one or two others. I know and admit they [management] too are stressed with all these educational policies etc, but come on, shouldn't we then be working together.... Instead of just pointing fingers.... The thing is, the other teachers agree with me, but they are older and are just waiting to take an early retirement.... Erm, the day when the Ofsted report came out, I was

actually made to feel that my classes could have achieved more if I was to be a little bit more enthusiastic..... Is that caring? [sigh] The thing is they don't seem to understand that I'm drained... You know deep down, I know that the low Ofsted report was not my fault, but why do I feel that it is?... I mean, I can tell from their faces and expressions, the way they (SMT) make you feel. [sigh]"

It seems that although Lance had been suffering from stress for a while, it was the actual incident regarding the Ofsted report that seemed to increase his stress levels even more. Not only did he feel that he was to blame, but as a result had contacted helplines for support and assistance, but found that despite them being available for him, it was still not enough to get him through.

5.2.4 Lance's coping strategy: Medication

After visiting the doctor, Lance was shocked to hear that he was suffering from burnout. He knew he was stressed due to the way he was feeling: tired, sleepless nights, anxious; but he didn't realize it had reached such a level. Although, he is hiding his feelings of stress from the school, he still takes sick days, days he believes he needs in order to feel better and recover for the next day. Taking medication is the only coping strategy Lance has. Although he admits that the medication does help, he also wants to stop taking this as he feels he is getting dependent upon the medication. As a result, he is unable to go out, spend time with family or do any of the leisure activities he wished he could.

Later, after the interviews, I continued to keep in contact with him and found that neither his health nor his feelings towards teaching in the UK had changed and that he and his wife have both agreed that if his health continues to suffer, then by

the end of the academic year (2019), he will leave the school and take up a teaching position in Egypt. When asked why he would consider leaving the city he loved the most to go abroad, he said that he knew a teacher friend who too suffered from stress with the same symptoms as he did and found teaching abroad in the Middle East to be less stressful.

5.3. Harry's story

Harry joined the teaching profession to make an impact and have a job that would be seen as being meaningful. After leaving the civil service he joined the teaching profession believing it would be rewarding for him. He felt that his first year of teaching was extremely difficult because of the stress he experienced and believed it showed him what the real picture of teaching was about due to the little support he received in the profession. A typical day for him would be pretty much the same for most secondary school teachers where planning, marking and prepping for classes is the norm. Harry has no time for socializing or other personal activities as he feels that the marking and workload is too much and takes up most of his time. He is married with two children, but leaves his wife to entertain the children mostly. The only time he feels he can award the children much attention is when he is free one weekend or when the schools have a day or so off. He is happy to say that he shares a good relationship with his colleagues where they share their stories of stress and offer each other advice, but this is not shared with senior management as there is little trust.

5.3.1 Weak leadership

"It's my new head. He's nuts.... All he does is introduce this and that.

Nothing works.... I mean come on you know how it is when everyone is

happy and working together for a better school. Then all of a sudden, we have this new head come in and starts telling us how we need to encourage the students to produce more work. [sigh followed by laugh]. I mean fine, it's good to say that we should get our students to produce more work and I know this all means a lot, especially when the damn Ofsted is starting, but what else can we do other than teach... Ok, let's say for arguments sake I get the students to draw more pictures of Shakespeare or one of his plays, is that really what the answer is? I mean what he doesn't understand is that the students don't want to do more. I am not saying I don't push my students or we are being lazy, but why rock the boat..... [long pause] It's not that we don't want change; it's just that it's really difficult. So now listen to this, did you know the head decided to make all teachers take on citizenship projects with students and get them to draw or produce plays.... I mean come on this is wrong.... it's causing resentment between teachers. Why? Because all the teachers are looking for the bright and enthusiastic children. Then if I don't get into a group of talented students first then who am I left with? What do I do if my students are not interested? Also, another bloody rule he is pushing for is lowering the number of students we send out of the classroom? I'm tired, honestly, it's like after all those years of experience I would be strong, but now I feel weak and demotivated as ever.

Harry's experience of stress is not unique from other stressed teachers. He too feels stressed on a daily basis, but it is not so much the workload or even the demotivated students that he mentions as being stressors. He believes the new head had made changes that completely changed the dynamics of the school.

There was no more support and trust among colleagues and hardly any respect or trust between teachers and management. As a result, everyone did what they wanted. Listening to Harry's narrative is disturbing. Previously, he left a stressful school where he hoped to find the missing support and reward that he desperately sought in the teaching profession, but now finds himself back to square one. He is now in a situation where the clear lack of support from the Head has caused a massive division between the teachers. The very coping mechanism that he had managed to work on had collapsed due to a new head and his new policies.

5.3.2 Lack of training on special educational needs

"I mean come on what do I do if I have a really unruly child who is not in the mood of studying? The thing is he (Head) doesn't want us to send students to the SEN department as they seem to have the pressure too. This boy had severe dyslexia and ADHD and just would not want to be in class... I am not aware of how to cope in such circumstances.... we are not trained as psychology counsellors, or nurses... I mean I really don't know how to handle them. I sometimes spend hours online reading how to cope with such children, but even that requires time. Do you think I am going to be able to teach in a class full of 15/16-year-olds effectively if a student is going to go around the classroom pulling hair or throwing gum....? I mean you know how it is? You have taught here in the UK. If the school is bad, then you know how to deal with it, but if the head is not supportive, then I'm sorry then that's ten times worse. (sigh). I don't know what to say? I mean, we are all feeling the pressure now. Don't misunderstand me, I'm not saying that I don't want to work hard or I am running away from the

pressure, but we need support? If it was normal stress of day-to-day teaching, then at least we teachers can help each other, I mean that's how we coped in the past, but this is too much because this head has now destroyed that support, we had for each other; it's like everyone is just looking out for themselves. Basically, this is the reason why I feel stressed now as I feel alone. Who else can I turn to? I am just going to do what I can and then leave..... But then again, this sort of thing will probably happen at another school, then what do I do?... I really don't know what to do".

Harry spends hours every weekend reading about how to teach children with psychological needs because he has to look after students who should be in the SEN department, but due to the new head's policy, he has to keep them in class and cater for them; a task he finds himself unqualified for.

5.3.3 Harry's coping strategies: Jujitsu and Swimming

Although Harry is unable to play sports as regularly as he used to due to the workload he has, he enjoys jujitsu and swimming. These two sports are what Harry grew up with and now find them as being therapeutic. He takes part in these two sports once a week at the expense of missing out on important school work and spending quality family time, both of which, he is not proud of.

Although Harry is stressed with his work and tries to take part in recreational activities, he believes that due to the current culture at work he has lost the enthusiasm and that the sense of reward that he once worked hard for is no longer there.

5.4 Rand's story

Rand is the oldest of all the participants and is the most experienced. He has over 17 years of teaching experience and started teaching as soon as he left university in 1998 where he felt that the advertisements and promotion of teaching as a career made the whole profession seem very attractive. The notion of making use of his degree, short working hours and long holidays are what he claims lured him into the world of teaching. Rand claims that the image of teaching back then was portrayed very differently to what teaching really entailed, although he believes that even now the real face of teaching is hidden. His usual day consists of a typical secondary school teacher's schedule with marking and planning taking up most of the time. Sometimes he would miss his lunch due to the workload. His relationship with his colleagues and management were cordial, but due to the workload, many were too busy to talk about how stressed they were. Rand recalled a teacher being labelled a 'moaner' by the SMT because he was complaining of the workload.

5.4.1 Fear of being labelled a weak teacher

"OK, erm.... well like I said to you the other day, I am always stressed at work...[laughs] I mean we all are, all the teachers are. They are good at hiding it I suppose and they know that, but they don't want others to know because it's a bit shameful really. Well.... what do you think? Grown men like us saying we are stressed school teachers; that's not very good is it? Oh yes that's really going to show how good we are as teachers. You know what.....People think with all the experience we have we should know better how to deal with it, but that's not true and it's not fair. That's the reason why

I don't want you to show my recordings to anyone, I'm scared somebody will recognise my voice, even your supervisors...(laugh)..... Teaching is a small world"

Rand was concerned that his voice, if ever heard by anyone other than me, could be recognized and as he did not want to disclose his identity as a stressed teacher, asked me to delete his recording after the study had been submitted. His request was accepted. For Rand, the fear of being labelled a stressed teacher was something he did not want as he had seen how others who were stressed were treated. He didn't want to complain and be labelled as a "moaner", like a colleague had been. When asked as to why he didn't seem to be able to talk to his colleagues, he said that he didn't trust them as the fear of being labelled as a stressed teacher carried a stigma nobody wanted. The fear of being identified as a stressed teacher added to his stress.

5.4.2 Difficulty in teaching disruptive students

"Ahh, yes going back to your question, well as I said a few months ago, there was this new student who had joined the school, I think year 10, erm yes year 10, so he is around 15/16. You know typical rude year 10 boy, always late, rude and extremely aggressive to everyone. All of us were scared to have him in our classes. So, one day he was in my citizenship class... ..he was like crazy, really hyper, was shouting at others, bullying weaker students and was just being extremely difficult to manage. I tried to ignore him as much as possible, but felt that he was starting to distract others, so I went up to him to tell him to leave the class as he wasn't listening to me and wasn't letting others do the work. Can you believe that

he just refused and said what would I do about it? I was shocked, I was so angry, my heart was beating fast, I felt sick. You know, it was like a horrible scene from a movie. Anyway, I shouted at him to get out, but it all went out of control, he stood up and was right in front my face and was looking straight at me. [sigh] I, erm, shouted like I was getting ready to fight, yes, I know I did get aggressive because that is exactly what he was doing to me. You should have seen him. I honestly felt we were going to fight. You know what?... while this was going on, I honestly felt that if I lose my job over this, then fine. I personally didn't give a damn. I mean I wasn't going to hit him, but he was big and I just had all these weird thoughts in my mind like what if he tries to punch me, should I punch back or just shout for help. So anyway, we just kept shouting at each other, me shouting at him to get out and him refusing. Now, erm, after about a minute of this staring drama he just walked out and slammed the door behind him. I was so angry that I too slammed the door after him. I don't know why I did that, (long pause) but I think it's erm, because I was fuming and just wanted to retaliate.

(Interview paused for 5 minutes for Rand to have a break).

Where was I? Oh yes, so when he left the room, I was mad; I was so angry, my mind went blank, I really don't know what happened to me. Oh, I forgot to mention that, when he was leaving the room, he said he would see me after school (laughs) funny yes? I mean the boy was threatening me. Well, nothing happened after that, but it was the worst experience of my teaching life or life in general to be honest. I know you're thinking why didn't I just call management, well Jamal, you're a teacher, you have worked here, you

know how it is? I didn't want them to know I was weak and couldn't deal with these issues because I know how they look at the weak teachers. I'm not saying I am a strong teacher. You know that's when the heart pains started... I mean my wife doesn't know about this and I haven't even been to the doctor about that. Oh well, I suppose the smoking isn't helping (laughs) either. I remember that day my heart hurting and my body shaking like I was about to collapse. The worst thing is that I so wanted to show my emotions, I mean I wanted to forget the fact that I was a teacher and act normal, I mean I wanted to just swear and lose control. I didn't care about the fact that I was a teacher and had to act professionally. At that point, I was just angry and provoked and felt that taking this nonsense at work when I am all alone in the classroom is just not worth it. I think that boy had serious psychological problems. I'm not saying what I did was right, but you tell me what would you do in such a situation? This guy was literally in my face, I had to stand up to him. I don't want you to think that I was actually going to fight this boy, no of course not... it's just that I erm, felt that I had had enough and that being treated that way and err not responding was like erm (long sigh followed by long pause). I mean I couldn't just let him treat me like that..... The thing is this kind of behaviour happens a lot in classes, but the thing is, who is going to tell you? I am telling you this because I want you to know that this is not right. Where's the support? Why was there a student like that there in the first place? Who do I talk to about this? It's all nonsense, no one really cares. What if I had a heart attack that day, do you think they'd really care and change the policies, do you think they will say

it's the stress, I don't think so. I spoke to my wife about the stress, and she understands; in fact, she was the one who told me for ages that I need to change my career because it's affecting my life at home. I'm getting home late, too tired to do anything, all I do is sleep and mark papers. Actually, I have decided to leave. My wife believes I need to leave this job and stop smoking (laughs) otherwise our marriage will suffer. I erm....., am not sure what I am going to do but teaching here in the UK is probably coming to an end. That's all really that I want to share"

Out of all my participants, Rand's narrative was the longest and most demanding. Demanding in the sense that although I felt the interview was under control, I had this feeling that my participant was passionate and emotional and needed to have a break. At times, I had to stop the recording. Rand smoked during his interviews and took a break during the narration. Although all participants were free to stop and have a break when they felt like, it was only Rand who actually felt he needed it as the experience he was sharing was traumatic for him. Despite being an experienced teacher who felt he was able to cope with the usual stress that teaching involved, he still felt extremely agitated over his recent experience of stress.

5.4.3 Rand's coping strategy: Hiding emotions and smoking

The lack of support and the feeling of having to cope with a teenage boy whose behaviour he felt threatened by caused him severe stress. Rand knew he wouldn't hit the student, but the fact that he felt he was so angry and wanted to just retaliate even by slamming the door shows his frustration. The thoughts going through his mind of not knowing how to react are clear signs of the stress that he is

experiencing. He knew he wouldn't strike the student even if the student struck him, but the notion going through his mind was how to react if the student did. The hiding of his emotions is a factor he acknowledges, yet he so wanted to display how he felt. Rand felt that the only way of coping with his stress was to hide his feelings, his emotions and to ignore the stress he was experiencing for as long as he could. Another coping strategy that Rand disclosed was smoking. As many of his colleagues would smoke, he also started and found it to be therapeutic and since the event with the challenging student, describes himself as a *"full time smoker"*. The fact that he is smoking and enjoys it is alarming news as his wife is not happy about it despite Rand's claim that by smoking, he is now able to momentarily cope with stress. He admits he needs to stop especially as his health has begun to suffer.

As a result, he has now decided to leave the school and go abroad for an easier life.

5.5 Terry's story

Terry joined the teaching profession in 2006 and is the youngest of all participants. Although not married, he describes himself as a devoted partner to his girlfriend with whom he has been living for over 10 years. Terry's experience of stress in teaching is different in the sense that he has been suffering from stress from a very long period due to an experience at his last school. After working at a school for over 10 years, he is currently taking a break from teaching and unsure about returning, either way he has decided to not return to his school. In fact, he claims that he may study for a Masters and consider teaching at University or even go abroad. During the first interview, Terry describes his reason for teaching being

due to a *“misguided sense of the youth needing my help and that I could make a difference”*. The very use of the word *“misguided”* is an indication of my participants’ experience. He also believes that his university lecturer saw his passion to help and thought that he would make a good teacher and encouraged him to look into the profession. For him a typical day was very much like my other participants; however, Terry describes the nature of his work being more pastoral than anything else. The stress and daily challenges of having to deal with student pressures from teenage pregnancies to students not wanting to be in class are just some of his experiences that he believed are worthy of sharing. Like my other participants, he echoed that he had no time for socializing, stopped exercising due to the workload and as a result has put on a lot of weight. At one point, in the interview, he claimed that he would have married his partner years back if he only had the time. His relationships with his colleagues were normal, as he felt that he could at least talk to some of them on similar issues, but this wasn’t the case for management as he felt he had nothing in common with them. When talking about teacher qualities he replied *“Simple! Discipline and undivided dedication”*. According to Terry, juggling both a social life and teaching career are just not possible.

5.5.1 Dirty politics

“Well, you know what? Some didn’t fit in; I mean there was a lot of politics...this new head was shocking.....I think he wanted to send a message that you either work with me or you’re out. I mean this wasn’t the usual politics, this was mean and dirty..... I mean some didn’t fit in as they just couldn’t.....they kept to themselves mostly and plus I didn’t have much

to say..... the teachers can be rude, especially if they were part of the SMT..... but the way they treated the new teacher was awful [sigh]..... That was very upsetting for me, it made me realize how I really felt about teaching”.

Terry's stress was due to the arrival of a new Head teacher. The pressure and introduction of favouritism at the school had started to cause stress where teachers would either fall into a group of teachers who did the job without questioning and be “in” with the SMT as he says or be outspoken and suffer the consequences.

5.5.2 Teacher bullying

“Well, I felt really bad.... It was sad. She wasn't a bad teacher or a bad person. She just wasn't very friendly with the other teachers and used to keep to herself..... I think the real problem was she would question the head; I personally feel that was the reason why she didn't last. Our previous head was ok, I mean he didn't do much, but he never made an issue if people displayed their concerns. Anyway, this new head comes and everything changes. This new teacher, Ms Sara, well she didn't have much to say to anyone; she was very quiet. She would only stay in her classroom and stay away from anyone. Looking back, I believe the reason why she was always alone in her room was because nobody made her feel welcome. I think she was being ostracized for just being herself (sigh) she had all the bad classes and I noticed how the teachers would ignore her or talk to her as if she was a headache. The thing is, she was new in the UK and needed experience. I won't go to extreme lengths and say that staff took a

disliking to her because of her strong north Indian accent and great knowledge of English literature, even better than us {laughs}..... I'm not saying they were racist, or anything like that, but I just couldn't help notice how most of the teachers would just not give her a chance. When I think about it, I realise that despite me feeling stressed as a teacher, I never once had the courage to complain purely because I was scared of the other teachers. For years, I had been stressed; it had become a part of my life. It's only after she left that I realised how stressed I was and scared. I was always stressed about everything we had to do. I couldn't open my mouth, as I knew I also would be ostracized. If I was going to open my mouth, then I would have been treated like her. The only way I coped at that school was by hiding how I felt. I'm a good actor (laughs), seriously I hated every day at that school, but had to endure it as I needed the experience and it was a convenient school near to my parents...., but now this is not necessary as I have the experience for a job abroad So, Ms. Sara was about 36 she had just finished her NQT and was looking to get the necessary experience, but she was given horrible classes, rough students that were extremely difficult to manage and her mentor just didn't want to understand or take this into account. I spoke to her on many occasions and believe she was a nice lady, but there was nothing I could do to help. I was the only one she confided in; she would tell me how she was told that her classes were noisy, but I just took it in and didn't say a word to anyone I think she was in a way getting bullied because she mentioned how she didn't get the support she expected to the deputy.... who then went and told the Head and the

mentor, so you can imagine how that went for her? While I was watching all this, I realized how stressed I was and that's when I decided to leave because I knew that if I don't leave then I will end up opening my mouth and probably get sacked".

Terry said that he had been suffering from stress for years; it was only after seeing a fellow colleague get bullied, did he realise how stressed he was. It was watching his colleague's experiences that made him realise how he too was being bullied. He believed he was bullied into keeping quiet. Witnessing a colleague speaking out against policies that were taking place at the school caused him anxiety and made him realise that he had to keep quiet and tolerate what was happening.

5.5.3 Terry's coping strategy: Silence and pretence

Terry's coping strategy was to keep quiet and keep to himself. He never used to say anything to the head and kept his work concerns to himself. He admits that the reason why he and others have managed to last so long at the school was due to this very practice: silence and pretending like everything was normal.

Terry stayed till the end of that academic year and then decided to leave. He has been out of work for over a year now, but still not sure whether he actually wants to return to teaching or not.

5.6 Jimmy's story

Jimmy has been teaching as a temp teacher since 2002 after leaving the civil service. He graduated in 1999 and had no intention of joining the teaching profession, but got involved whilst helping some friends' children with their studies and then decided to go into teaching. Due to fees and financial commitments, he

decided to contact a local school for the Graduate Teacher Training Program (GTTP) and then managed to start the program in 2002. Despite starting the GTTP, he decided to leave after a few months due to a lack of support that he claims was necessary for his wellbeing as a teacher. Up to now, Jimmy has been working as an unqualified teacher and has taught in many secondary schools across the London area, particularly in north London. He has had extensive experience with short term and long-term teaching positions around many schools in north London. He is now studying for a Master's degree in education which he intends to use to teach at tertiary level. Jimmy describes a typical day of teaching as *"keeping the students in class"*.

5.6.1 Treated like robots

"I have worked for so many schools that I think I've lost count ... I've never felt valued, what do you mean by valued?..... Do I ever get asked how something should be done? Well, no, not really and plus who would really listen? We are just robots, who are expected to do what robots are expected to do...."

Jimmy did not feel valued and felt that teachers in his current school, and in most of the schools where he has worked were not valued by the schools. Jimmy believed teachers were seen as robots who were expected to just go into the classroom at a particular time, teach and leave at a particular time.

5.6.2 Multiple roles of the teacher

"We are used as robots who have to work in the classroom as babysitters, policemen, nurses, psychiatrists. Everything they ask us to do, we do... to be honest with you, It erm, becomes a part of your life. I feel like I'm just

babysitting a child, then it's like someone's gone crazy in the classroom so I'm having to shout and scream to maintain order like a policeman, then I have to listen to someone who I think is suffering from abuse.... You mentioned burnout and you know what, to be honest I don't know what burnout actually means {sighs}. All I know, is I am suffering from this stress all the time and everywhere I go, I don't enjoy what I'm doing and I'm taking steps. I'm moving.... where to, I don't know? I'm definitely moving onto other things". No more teaching in the UK, no way".

Jimmy's tone displayed clear signs of stress. The fact that he had to cover roles of discipline, advice, care and supervision relate to why he felt he had to act as a babysitter, policeman, nurse and psychiatrist through the role of a teacher.

5.6.3 Lack of recognition

"I have seen so many stressful situations that it has become normal for me. One particular incident that occurred goes back to 2002 when I was doing the GTTP. At that time, I had started with a few others on this training program that was to train us on becoming teachers..... We were working and studying at the same time, but soon the focus of everything seemed to be more on just being in the classroom and coping with the students than anything else. When I saw the reality, I thought that's it....., I need to get out soon. I left after 4 months.....I, erm, dropped because I realized very early how stressful teaching in secondary schools is. [sigh] There's no respect left in the profession, no matter where you go, what school you're in... I mean you might be lucky and get into a fancy posh school, but what's the likelihood? I've worked in so many schools, that I've lost count and I

haven't seen any... You get grief from students, parents and even the managers.... I remember, there was a colleague called Helen who was studying on the GTTP with me who dropped due to the stress that she was getting. I mean, I didn't drop because of her..., I saw how the school, the management could be so mean; she wasn't getting the support from the mentor. We all felt that there was no recognition as a teacher who was putting so much effort in. Not even a thanks... I mean don't you think it's nice to say well done or you did a fantastic job with 11C; it must have been hard.... No one seems bothered... you just do the job... It's like you either sink or swim here. Well, I knew that I wasn't going to suffer; it wasn't the end of the world; I don't need my health to suffer for it... that's the way I looked at it all. I even started to stop caring... I mean I knew that the only way I could cope is by actually not giving a damn. [sigh...]. I enjoyed the teaching part, we all did, but erm, I don't know. Helen couldn't get the recognition she needed, in fact none of us could. I just didn't bother as I had that attitude. Can you imagine if the mentor makes you feel this way then I'm sorry, no one will want to stay, would you? I mean we are not taught about SEN or dyslexia and then we are expected to know how to deal with children with psychological issues (long pause). I remember noticing how passionate Helen was as a teacher, but I mean, come on isn't your health priority number one? Anyway, soon she left. That was really sad. I'll never forget the day the mentor put us in a class to deal with a really disruptive boy called Jake. That boy was really tough to manage. He was told to fight in class. Yes, we later found out from the mentor that Jake was told to

disrupt the class and start a fight just so we could use our 'CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT SKILLS [air quote] to control him. Can you believe that? ... Well do you know what I did? (sigh).... I just went up to him and said 'listen, do me a favour and give him (the other boy) time till after the class, because I've got an observation now and I'll owe you one big time'.... I admit what I did was wrong, but how else could I as a young inexperienced teacher deal with a student like Jake, sorry but I couldn't. Going back to Helen, well she just sent both boys out to the cooling room and thought that was best, and guess what? She was told that was wrong to do. What's worse is that she (the mentor) knew what I actually said to Jake..... But because I had kept him in the class it's all great! Anyway, poor Helen was told that she lacked classroom management... where's the recognition there for doing what is correct? What she did was right, if anything I was the one who was wrong, but I think I got away with it due to doing what they wanted which is to just do what you have to do to keep the students in class. Anyway, this all changed me and I thought that's it. I'm not staying. Why? The money? The holidays? No thank you. It was shortly after this experience with Jake that Helen left the GTTP and went back to Ireland. This all taught me how to deal with stress and one of the things I do is remind myself of her story.... I remember and say that I'm not going to be like that. I told myself that I have gained experience in the UK and know that I can teach, and not to bother myself with recognition or job satisfaction. (long pause) don't get me wrong I enjoy teaching, but sorry not in the UK. After Helen left, I questioned why I should stay. I can find better jobs abroad from China to the Middle East with

more money and less work, and much less stress.... my health comes first. I left shortly after her as I was not getting any recognition for the hard work I was doing”

Jimmy’s detailed narrative shows the frustration and despair he has experienced over the years of working as a secondary school teacher. Despite having extensive experience from many schools, he believes the lack of recognition over the years from the very first school he worked in, and the way another colleague was treated, only added to his distrust of the teaching profession. Jimmy felt that after doing everything that was asked of him by schools, the feeling that he was never recognized for his hard work caused him stress.

5.6.4 Jimmy’s coping strategy 1: Praying and being emotionally strong

Jimmy found his faith to be powerful in dealing with the daily stress that he was exposed to. He admits that the stress would not go away, but having faith that God would provide for him made him cope. His faith made him emotionally strong enough to cope at work. Whenever he would experience a stressful situation, remembering God would help him cope by believing that something better would eventually happen.

5.6.5 Coping strategy 2: Spending valuable time with family

Another way of coping with stress that Jimmy used was spending as much time as possible with his family. Jimmy believes that this was only possible as he always worked as a temp on short term contracts. Working as a temp teacher allowed him to work with the flexibility of taking a few months off here and there, especially when he felt too stressed. He says there were times when he felt he

would just leave teaching altogether, but the fact that his kids were young and the financial commitments he had undertaken, had left him with no choice but to continue regardless of how he felt. Spending time with family and just going for a walk with them was a coping factor. Jimmy takes solace in watching his children grow and feels it is a therapeutic pastime for him that helps him in blocking out all thoughts of work.

It can be seen that Jimmy chose to narrate a particular experience of stress that he experienced in 2002. The incident with Helen caused him to leave the GTTP as his feelings of teacher stress had increased. He felt that working as a temp teacher over the years was the only way he could teach and not feel obligated to any school. Jimmy maintains that the lack of recognition is present in every school that he has taught at.

Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify the reasons for teacher stress and to hear the coping strategies teachers used to alleviate this stress. This chapter describes teachers' insights about their stressful teaching careers, in particular the teacher stress they are experiencing. I will be summarizing their findings and comparing the findings to current literature. My discussion will first address research question 1 by presenting the common themes shared by the participants. While the stories may include variation in terms of themes, each of the three common themes for research question 1(RQ1) was seen as prominent stressors in their teaching careers. Each theme is described in detail. Although not a theme, I will briefly discuss if lack of training may be seen as causing stress. I will then go onto discuss why some of the themes discussed in chapter 5 were chosen and other not in this chapter. When answering research question 2 (RQ2), all coping strategies used by participants and how successful they are will be discussed. Due to the themes interconnecting, a certain degree of overlap will be noticed. I will then discuss the implications of my study and present recommendations to suggest ways for further research.

6.2 Summary of findings for Research Question 1: What are the causes of Secondary School Male Teachers stress in the North London area?

6.2.1 Common Theme 1: Isolation and lack of support

My study revealed that all teachers shared the theme of feeling isolated and not getting the relevant support they needed. Harry mentioned how his first year showed him what teaching was really like as he was alone and began to realize

how lonely teaching was as a career. Being alone in the classroom was something that at first felt like being *'the boss'* as he mentioned, but after a while it felt like being away from everybody. Likewise, Jimmy shared his feelings of how being alone in the classroom was exactly what senior management in his school wanted; *'just keep them in'* he was told. This is what triggered off his feelings of depression. *"...once the bell goes and the door shuts, that's it, you're all alone"*. He further mentions how teachers felt like they were in a *"weak league of their own"*. He knew that there was no point in asking for support as such a system just didn't exist in his school. Lance described working all alone as being one of the features of a typical teaching day. He stated there were teachers he could talk to, but felt that it only ended up turning into gossip that caused more rumours to spread. He knew that management were aware of the stress that was going around, but it was just being ignored. For Lance, the classroom, despite being an isolated place was also the perfect place to hide, where he would often stay in order to not be pushed into doing tasks he didn't want to do. *"There's no support here.... you're on your own"* he stated. Rand believed that one particular quality a successful teacher needed was accepting the isolation that is involved in the teaching profession, or as he elaborated *"the isolation in dealing with issues that no one else wants to deal with"*; in other words, having to do challenging tasks (that nobody wanted to do) all alone. Another experience shared by Rand was the incident of having to deal with a challenging and aggressive student in the classroom. The feeling of being alone and the possibility of actually being attacked with no colleague there to assist is what caused him to realize how lonely teaching in the classroom was. Although he had shared his feelings of isolation with teacher

support agencies, the fact that they kept asking him to speak to his managers didn't help him. Terry's experience of isolation is interesting as it was a colleague's experience that led him to realise how isolating teaching was "*I can't believe they (the school) got away with it*". It wasn't just isolation in the classroom, but the manner in which a colleague was being treated that caused the isolation. He saw how this teacher spoke up and shared her concerns regarding the workload and policies only to be ostracized. When he saw how stressed she had become as a result, this in turn caused him to realize his true feelings of isolation. Although he wished he was brave enough to speak up about the stress, he admits his fear prevented him from raising any subject of dissatisfaction, especially to management. After listening to my participants, it seems that although teachers are expected to work independently in the classroom, they also felt that there wasn't a level of support available to them. They all expressed a profound sense of lack of support from management and colleagues. Lance mentioned he could talk to his colleagues about work, but he felt that after a while this would end up turning into gossip. He also mentions how such discussions would normally take place in the pub where smoking and drinking would occur; both of which he didn't participate in. For Jimmy and Terry, the notice of such a lack of support was seen as such a serious issue that it marked the beginning of their stressful teaching careers. The lack of support and feelings of isolation left such an impact on my participants that they all believed that if no action was taken to deal with this stress, their health would get worse. Harry, in his first interview, when talking about a typical day at work, compared his feelings to that of a 'Zookeeper'. Comparing

unruly children to animals that wouldn't listen and keeping them in the classroom until the bell went was normal in his school.

Studies have shown that isolation and lack of support in teaching has been noted since the beginning of the 19th century (Lortie, 1975). To hear participants, share how they felt isolated and depersonalized due to the demands they were under indicates this still is very much an issue. Being alone in the classroom is what they all shared. Some chose to stay in their classes out of fear of getting involved in work they wished to avoid, not out of laziness, but purely due to being tired and overworked. According to Maslach & Schaufeli (1993), my findings are signs of burnout. Not being able to find the correct support and knowing what to do was one of the major reasons for stress at work. The results of this study indicate that most teachers chose to hide the fact they were stressed and just lived with it or some showed their stress and ended up being alone. This study agrees and serves as an example for Jarvis (2005) who argues that prolonged stress with unsuccessful coping strategies is what leads to burnout. Teachers are alone in a classroom where they are expected to be counsellors and teachers; this is demanding as the two roles are different and have different goals and tasks involved. Over the years of isolation that my participants experienced, it is not surprising that elements of trust deteriorated. According to Rothberg (1986) the very reason for this isolation is the fact that there is no trust. All participants shared how they felt very little trust for their mentors; an element that Schlichte et al. (2005) claim is necessary for healthy teachers. My participants felt that as they could not confide in someone at work who could make a difference, there was little or no point in raising the issue of stress so as a result chose to stay in their

classrooms during lunch breaks. In agreement with Taylor & Singer (1984), it is clear from this study that my participants suffer from a lack of social support both psychological and none. The teachers in my study felt alone despite being in a classroom full of children. According to Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954), the need for having someone to turn to for support is an important aspect of healthy living. It is important to note here that even if such a facility is available, some teachers choose not to ask for help due to fear or other concerns. Taylor et al. (1984) argue that support is only successful in dealing with stress if the stress is socially acceptable; it is clear from my participants that they did not feel that the stress they suffered from was socially accepted. All participants stated they did not want to share their stories with everyone without being guaranteed anonymity. It is worthy to note here that research suggests that there is a serious lack of support in secondary schools and a lack of a support network in general (Dodor et al, 2010). The lack of such recognition is a major aspect within teaching especially in teacher training courses that seems to be neglected (Chen & Kristjansson, 2011).

6.2.2 Common Theme 2: Health issues caused by stress

Theme two found that my participants' health was negatively affected by the stress they experienced at work. All believed that in some way their health had turned for the worse. Being forced to ignore the topic of teacher stress had a negative impact on teachers' health. Not having the opportunity to accept and discuss teacher stress openly caused my teachers to suffer from even more stress. Jimmy had realised from the very first few months of his teaching experience that teaching was going to have a negative impact on his health; seeing another colleague going through severe stress triggered a level of stress that has become

a part of his teaching life. For years he has been suffering from migraines that he believes is a result of the stress and has been on Zepain, a strong painkiller that causes him to feel drowsy. Fortunately, he takes this in the evenings after marking papers and as a result ends up sleeping without getting a chance to spend any quality time with family. Interestingly, Jimmy's attitude to stress was different to the other participants because although he quoted "*everyday I'm stressed....it becomes a part of your life*" he also had an optimistic attitude in the sense that he was not going to tolerate it anymore and "*take action*". Rand states the stress at work made him take up smoking. He claims that for colleagues who had a common problem, smoking seemed to be a way of "*dealing with stress*". As Rand didn't drink, he felt happy that at least he wasn't drinking like his colleagues to forget about work. Recently, he had chest pains due to losing his temper with a student; when asked if he went to see the doctors about it, he said he didn't as he believed it was smoking related and that he planned to quit once he left the school. It is interesting to hear from him that he enjoys smoking and that although he doesn't smoke at home in front of his family; he looks forward to smoking especially during his lunch break and at the end of the day. Rand felt that the issue was not just the fact that he was smoking, but the feeling that he was beginning to lose his temper more often. He claims that at home he would shout regularly and find small things to be an issue only to later regret losing his temper. It was his behaviour in general that was beginning to change. Another of my participant's (Lance) experience of stress led to severe health issues that caused him to take time off, but he chose not to disclose the reasons to his school. He would wake up suffering from anxiety knowing that he was going to a place of work he had begun

to detest. After feeling this way for years, he went to see the doctor only to be told he was burnt out. One day he woke up with a swollen face and after visiting the hospital he was told that it was stress related. He is now on Lexapro anxiety tablets and refuses to let his school be aware of this. All he wants to do now is sleep; because of this. His relationship with his family has been affected. His colleagues smoke and drink; he believes they do this to deal with the stress they are going through, but they won't admit it. Lance is adamant that he would not start drinking and smoking because of work. Like my other participants, Terry too spoke of how stress had affected his health. The fact that he used to play football often, but due to feeling stressed no longer plays, shows the impact of stress on his wellbeing. The amount of weight he has gained is surprising when he shows a picture of his from 3 years ago. Like Jimmy, the traumatic experience of seeing another colleague being treated unfairly and the school not doing anything about it started the beginning of a stressful teaching career. Seeing a colleague stand up for herself, but then suffering caused Terry to keep quiet. He admitted he felt powerless and scared at work, but was made to accept the stress as being a normal thing. The fact that his behaviour was changing was worrying him. Terry knew that he was stressed purely because he was unable to speak up, "*I was like a bullied child*", he claims. He felt that all the years he spent in school he was bullied into just keeping quiet.

The impact that stress has on our health is a recognized fact. According to the CBI (2013), stress is one of the most common causes of long-term absences. In connection with this serious fact is the argument that stressed people may turn to unhealthy habits like excessive drinking and smoking for temporary relief. The

fact that one of my participants started smoking as a result of stress echoes Acierno, et al's (1996) discussion on smoking and stress where it is argued that smoking gives a rewarding effect. This matter of smoking when stressed is shared by Al-Naggar, et al (2012) who also conducted research on the topic of teachers smoking when stressed and observed that smoking as relaxation was practiced by teachers in Malaysia, Bahrain, Nepal and Iran. In this study, participants announced that it is not a hidden practice that many teachers take part in heavy drinking after work to feel better and forget their experiences at work. Apart from one participant all were unable to exercise due to fatigue. It is well established that exercising and having a healthy diet is necessary to avoid illnesses and have a healthy immune system, yet the impact of stress on my participants' health is clear in their voices. Having a heavy workload and being stressed caused my participants to lead a lifestyle that they admit is unhealthy. Results showed participants are unable to exercise and even those that were active in playing sports had to sacrifice playing due to feeling unwell and tired all the time. Effects of stress caused one participant to gain a lot of weight. Another participant had become so dependent on his anti-depressants that he cannot take part in energetic pursuits due to feeling lethargic. It is well documented in research that many illnesses are caused by stress (Kyriacou, 2000) and the stories from my participants support this argument.

6.2.3 Common Theme 3: Fear of being labelled as weak teachers

Despite the varying degrees of stress shared from my participants, if there is one thing that all strongly shared as a contributor to teacher stress was the fear of not disclosing their stress. They all believed that disclosing their teacher stress

would award them a certain stigma; a stigma of being seen weak and not a good teacher. Harry stated that those who were known to suffer from stress were not spoken to, would sit alone and get treated like *“new kids in a playground”*. He felt that he had no one to really turn to other than his partner. He added that his wife would often tell him to raise the issue of stress at work so others would follow suit and speak up, but because he had seen the reputation of those that did in the past; he chose not to. Jimmy was more forward in stating his thoughts over policies that he disagreed with at work, *“I don’t care anymore”*, he shared, but nevertheless refused to admit to colleagues (except a few he knew who were also stressed) and senior management that he was suffering from stress. Although he agrees that it is a common feature for all teachers to moan over workload and student behaviour, no one would actually trust each other (especially management) and help create an environment that encouraged teachers to support one another and talk about stress. Jimmy recalls how a senior teacher, who had been there for years and is known to be suffering from severe stress for years, had little or nothing done to help him. In fact, it was observed that he would be sitting alone and not socialising with anyone. Jimmy noticed this and felt very sympathetic to him, yet due to fear of being treated like him, refused to admit he too was stressed. Lance felt that even admitting to certain colleagues that one was suffering from stress would only lead to gossip. *“All they do is drink in the pub and gossip over each other”*, he claimed. He admitted calling various helplines, but felt that as they all recommended him talking to management to work out a scheme to help him, he felt that it was a *“waste of time... they’re not in the classroom”* as his experience at work showed the real picture of teaching; a point he felt the helplines didn’t fully understand.

Rand described his colleagues as “*nice*”, but added that he “*didn’t trust them*”. The reason being that although everyone mentioned how stressful work was, no one actually helped but only gossiped about each other. This gossiping was only making it worse for all teachers to come forward. When he complained to the senior management team about a challenging student, they only told him not to worry as these things happen. He admits that it’s not just him that experiences this, but most of the other teachers “*they don’t want others to know because it’s a bit shameful really*” he adds. For Rand the shame factor was very clear. He later stated that for a grown man with years of teaching experience to accept he was a stressed teacher was something he did not want people to know. It was due to this fear of being stigmatized that caused him to ask for his recordings to be deleted.

Terry too echoed similar issues of not disclosing his stress to his school. Although he has left the school and has been on a long break (2 years), he still hasn’t shared his reasons for leaving with the school. When asked why, he stated, “*teaching is a small world*”. Terry spoke of how he felt “*bullied like a child*” and how it changed his personality to such an extent that he “*just did things*” and felt like a “*push over*” as he didn’t have the courage to say no. His working environment was not an environment that encouraged support and made him feel that to disclose any stress would be to admit a weakness and after experiencing how a stressed colleague was treated made him decide to keep quiet or leave. After working ten years as a secondary school teacher Terry decided he couldn’t take any more stress and left teaching.

This study has highlighted the topic of emotions and that the emotional dimensions within teaching seem to be minimal, especially in mainstream literature

(Schlichte et al. 2005). One of the noticeable differences in the results of this study, as compared to existing studies was the fear of being labelled as a weak teacher. The constant mistrust of senior management was apparent in my study and inquiry in this topic confirms that with professional and personal support teachers can overcome stress, studies by Mujtaba and Reiss (2013) support this opinion where they argue that with correct support and guidance then teachers can deal with matters related to teacher stress that can be difficult to deal with; teachers are constantly worried about being stigmatized as being weak or bad teachers. The participants in my study stressed that the opportunity to discuss emotional aspects of teaching did not exist in their places of work. My participants' experiences highlight Kyriacou's (2001) view that by discussing feelings, stress can be alleviated. The fact that participants could not talk to their colleagues or managers due to a fear made the stress even harder to deal with. Ignoring or underestimating the issue of emotional dimensions in teaching has caused the teachers in my study to argue that students have noticed this stress better than the managers. Jones, S. M. et al (2013) argues that the need for understanding teacher emotions to prevent stress is becoming necessary more now than ever. Studies in teacher stress have argued that those with higher emotional competencies are less likely to suffer from teacher stress (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

6.2.4 Lack of training

Out of all of my participants only one teacher, Jimmy was unqualified. Due to his bad experience at his first school, he decided to not 'bother' (his words) with getting qualified. Gaining the qualified teacher status no longer appealed to him.

He felt that regardless of qualifications, most teachers felt undervalued and were treated as robots. The multiple roles that he mentions, were expected to be fulfilled by him and his colleagues. It can be seen here that even a senior colleague of Jimmy's was seen to be suffering from severe stress despite being a qualified teacher. It seems that the topic of being unqualified was not understood as being a cause for the difficulties he experienced. Despite being unqualified, Jimmy like many of his qualified colleagues would attend training courses, but in his interviews believed they had little or no use and were only there to show that training was being offered. Another participant (Harry) also highlighted the need for training in topics like SEN. Despite changing schools due to stress, he finds the same approach is adopted in his new school where little is done. He spends the weekends studying the topic of dyslexia as he feels he has little knowledge on a subject that he is having to spend a considerable amount of time on. The question of a lack of training is a matter that has been raised by Ofsted in their 2019 report and is considered to be a cause of heavy workload for teachers.

According to a National statistical report, the number of full-time unqualified teachers in all government funded schools in the UK increased from 15,000 in 2012 to 17,000 in 2013; a rise of 16% (National Statistics, 2013). Such a fact demonstrates the desperation the UK government is experiencing to fill teaching positions. It can be seen that some of my participants did discuss the issue of there being a lack of training in the teaching profession, especially in areas like special educational needs.

6.2.5 Choosing of themes

I wished to choose a valid argument for choosing the main themes and not simply report themes that appeared in the transcripts. A great deal was discussed and shared by my participants, but I wanted to ensure that the themes presented as the main themes were not seen as being too similar. Due to having a small participant group, member checking was extremely effective and found that some themes discussed in chapter 5 like weak leadership, lack of training in SEN, difficulty in teaching disruptive students, the role of politics and bullying; were themes that were felt due to being isolated and not receiving the relevant support required in their jobs. After careful discussion, these themes were then decided to be better entitled as Isolation and lack of support. A similar approach was used when participants discussed about how they felt devalued and felt alone which then caused them to suffer from stress related illnesses. As a result, it was decided to replace the two themes with the main theme; Health issues caused by stress.

6.3 Summary of findings for Research Question 2: What coping strategies do secondary school teachers use to alleviate teacher stress in their contexts?

6.3.1 Coping strategy theme 1: Suppressing ones' emotions

Being stressed and having to hide this feeling is what all participants shared. None of my participants believed that teaching was a horrible profession to be in, but did believe that it was a career where people would not be honest about their feelings. Coping with stress by hiding or ignoring their true feelings and emotions was how all participants felt. An issue not mentioned in the literature review, I

encountered in my study is that of suppressing one's emotions. Although my participants did not use the term suppressing but used hiding, it was during the member checking phase when it was agreed that my teachers were suppressing and not really hiding their emotions to cope with the teacher stress they were exposed to. *"we just keep our thoughts to ourselves, cos what's the point"*, Harry shared. He spoke about his shock when no one was willing to share their concerns especially when new policies were introduced, yet it was normal for all to suppress their emotions knowing very well change was going to lead to more stress. Harry believed that stress was extremely common in his school, yet as everyone knew nothing was going to be done about it, it was best to just pretend it did not exist. It was seen as the only way to cope; to simply suppress the topic of teacher stress. Jimmy used the term *"robots"* to describe himself and teachers in general nowadays; the lack of speaking about one's feelings and emotions was not encouraged. According to him, teachers were to just go into classrooms and keep all students there until the bell goes. Although Jimmy admits that not thinking about the stress and suppressing his emotions helped for a while, he highlights a colleague's experience of stress as being so traumatic that it caused him to release his feelings of stress. He also narrates how he knew he was supposed to defuse a situation between two students, but told the boys to wait till after the class as he was being observed. Jimmy admitted he had taken the wrong course of action, but due to the attitude he had seen in the school he realized that if he wanted to fit in to the school and cope with stress, he would have to suppress his emotions. Working with SEN students and the fact that nearly all of the teachers were untrained on dyslexia or other special educational needs was very upsetting for him *"I hated it...."*

I would just make them watch movies”, he claimed, admitting he pretended to like it only so that he could get out of the classroom to avoid teaching some horrible classes. He knew deep down, many teachers did not agree with the practices that were taking place, but chose to hide their emotions. Some teachers like Lance would suppress their emotions by not disclosing the fact that they were ill or were on medication. *“I know they are all stressed, but they are good at hiding it”* he shared. He never told his colleagues how bad certain students or practices were as it just wasn’t being shared on the same level. *“we talk, but it’s more like gossip as no one really wants to really share the truth……. Do you think they will say sorry, don’t worry, we will support you we understand?”* he added. Another participant, Rand also felt that hiding one’s emotions was a natural part of his job as a teacher, *“I know that everyone is stressed…. I don’t bother telling them too much……. I don’t trust them”* these are just some of the comments that demonstrated the level of insecurity that was around in his school. For Rand as long as there were *“no complaints”*, then there was no reason for anyone to be honest about how teachers really felt in his working environment, similar to Jimmy’s thoughts; teachers were just like *“robots”* without the need to show emotions. His views on how important it was for teachers to hide their emotions can be better understood when mentioning the fact that out of all my participants, Rand was the only participant who was very close to withdrawing from the study due to the concerns he had regarding anonymity. He was extremely keen on participating and sharing his story of stress, but was worried that his voice could be recognized by another educator. It was only after me assuring him that his recording would be deleted after transcriptions did, he agree to continue. An

example that Rand chose to share was his self-control over a situation with an aggressive student who he was very close to physically attacking. Although he admits he did show his true emotions at this point, he also felt that he didn't bother raising the matter with senior teachers as he didn't want to show how he really felt at work again, feeling that the only way to cope was to suppress the topic. Terry believed that it was best to just *"keep to yourself"* and that he preferred it that way, it was the only way of coping or *"surviving"* he says. For him keeping quiet and not sharing ones concerns were the best way of not getting any more stress than he already had. He later revealed that *"teaching is all about acting and pretending everything is ok... no one really cares"*. Such a statement reveals how *"acting and pretending"* are examples of how feelings and emotions are suppressed and how teacher stress is coped with. Terry admitted that although hiding ones feelings is necessary and it was a coping strategy, he implemented in his teaching career, he later stated that he regretted not helping a colleague who was being ostracized for merely sharing her thoughts or in his own words *"the only way I survived at that school was by suppressing my emotions and stress"*. Terry believed that the school had changed him to such an extent that his personality had been affected.

Although it is argued by Brackett et al. (2010) that those who can control or suppress their emotions are more likely to have higher job satisfaction, my study showed a noticeable difference; all managed to hide their true emotions and feelings and actually claimed to pretend to be happy yet felt there was little or no job satisfaction in their teaching careers. It seems to be normal for teachers to avoid raising the topic of stress in schools due to the stigma of being labelled weak. Another observation by Harris et al. (1985) is that teachers who are

authoritarian are more likely to get stressed than humanist teachers, yet in my study all teachers claimed to be humanists and still suffered from stress. The argument that the more experienced the teacher the more equipped they'll be to deal with stress does not seem to be the case with my teachers who even reported senior teachers suffering from stress for years. My study revealed that discussing issues with senior management seems to be frowned upon, leading to a culture of mistrust, discomfort and fear. It is this very fear that has caused teachers to suffer in silence. My research echoes Beck's (2017) belief that the challenges of maintaining one's identity as a teacher is not easy and causes many to leave. My study has shown that those who do choose to stay in the teaching profession develop practices that may help them survive, but these practices may not serve the education needs of the students. This point echoes Jimmy's claim that teachers are like "robots" with no real emotions and do what they are expected to do. The outcomes of my study raised the issue of emotional labour and how teachers take on pastoral roles that they are not qualified to. Teachers are always expected to teach and act as nurses, police, social workers and counsellors and do not receive the credit for undertaking such roles and responsibilities. My research is in agreement with Yin et al's (2013) argument that teachers not only have to act different roles, but are expected to show certain emotions and hide others. My findings point to the fact that teachers are expected to do what the culture of the school believes is correct, even if the role expected is beyond their capability.

6.3.2 Coping strategy theme 2: Exercising

All participants stated that the stress had physically drained them. Exercising was something they did not have the time for and felt too tired to take

part in. With the exception of Harry, no one was able to take part in sports. Despite being stressed and having a heavy workload Harry would religiously devote an hour a week to Jujitsu, an art that he believes is the only thing that would keep him going or as he says “*ignore what I feel I have to*”. The only way that he could cope with the everyday stress at work would be through practicing a sport that not only allowed him to release his stress, but also allowed him to learn self-control; an act he believes is necessary for a teacher to cope. However, he admits that even this weekly form of therapeutic exercise is affecting his relationship with his wife; she is complaining that he does not spend enough time with her and the family.

The positive effects of exercise on stress levels have been well discussed, but the focus of exercise and its effectiveness on coping with stress has been accused of being scarce in non-clinical cases (David & Tenenbaum, 2017). The participants in my study wished they could do more, but could not due to the pressures they were facing. Studies in the field of stress and exercise have shown the positive benefits aerobic exercises such as swimming, walking, running and dancing can have on coping with stress (Gillis & Macdonald, 2005). Harry made a point of exercising once a week, but at the expense of losing valuable time with his family. For him doing something to cope with stress was seen as a priority.

6.3.3 Coping strategy theme 3: Medication

Another coping strategy shared by a participant was taking medication to overcome anxiety. As soon as Jimmy had started his teaching career, he realized that teaching was going to affect his health. The pressure, stress and not knowing how to cope made him suffer from ill health. After visiting his doctor, he was

prescribed medication that he believes are helpful. The medication he takes is now a part of his life and despite saying he feels healthy, he believes that if it was not for the painkillers, he would have not been able to cope with the stress he faced at work. Although Jimmy has been told to take these tablets at night due to them causing drowsiness, he does occasionally take it during the day. As a result, he spends most evenings falling asleep early in the evenings after marking papers and admits this causes him to spend very little quality time with his family. Lance also shared his story of taking anti-anxiety tablets to help cope with stress. He feels that it is because of the medication that he is able to continue working and like Jimmy, believes he is in need of such medication to cope with the stress he is exposed to at work.

The side effects from medication are well established (Mental Health Commission, 2015). The side effects are known to vary with takers citing weight loss/gain and mood swings to high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol and an increase in uric acid levels (Mental Health Commission, 2015). The dependency on medication two participants shared is worrying and highlights the levels of desperation they are experiencing.

Although it is difficult to predict whether or not a person will become addicted to a drug, there is strong evidence that stress is an important risk factor for the development of addiction (Schwabe, Dickinson & Wolf, 2011). The daily and prolonged exposure to stress caused Jimmy and Lance to form dependencies on medication. Such practices are worthy of highlighting especially when longitudinal research has linked teaching related stressors to depressive and

psychosomatic symptoms and alcohol consumption (Schonfield, Bianchi & Luehring-Jones, 2017).

6.3.4 Coping strategy theme 4: Smoking

Rand believes the stress at work caused him to start smoking. Having colleagues that smoked was a major starting point for him. Meeting colleagues outside the offices where they would talk about workload, meetings and unruly students and not knowing what to do made him feel that he shared a common problem with them. Before long, Rand started smoking and is now a regular smoker. For him, smoking is helpful as it helps him feel less stressed. He admits that this will not help his health and suffering from chest pains was beginning to worrying him. However, he believes the chest pains were stress related and that smoking did help him cope or at least provide a relaxing effect. An interesting observation shared by Rand is that despite enjoying smoking and claiming to feel relaxed when smoking, he has noticed a rise in losing his temper.

Al-Naggar et al. (2012) have highlighted in their study that it is common for many stressed teachers worldwide to smoke. It would be wrong to conclude that all stressed teachers would contemplate smoking, but their study does suggest that there is a correlation between teacher stress and smoking worldwide. As with all research, the above-mentioned study can be questioned, but the fact is that if people smoke and experience calming effects; then it is even more likely that giving up smoking would be a demanding task. And it could be this very reason why many people like Rand find it difficult to give up smoking, unless adequate alternative means of stress reduction are made available (Perkins et al., 1999).

Such research in the field of smoking and stress reveals that stress can cause people to develop habits that are injurious to health.

6.3.5 Coping strategy theme 5: Praying

Harry believes it is his faith in God that has helped him cope with the daily stress at work. He spoke about how he had been invited to bars and pubs many times by colleagues, but refused because he did not drink and did not wish to start drinking. Harry felt that the reason why many of his colleagues drank was so they could forget the stress they had faced during the day. Harry believed that praying was the best way to cope with his stress and despite admitting that praying did not make the stress disappear, he believed a stronger force gave him that added support to cope with stress at work.

Beckham's (2013) research on religion as an effective coping strategy that states a balance of positive and negative emotions can contribute to a human's perception of life satisfaction helps us understand Harry's reliance on religion as coping mechanism. Harry believed that by praying he was able to cope by feeling positive after praying. The spiritual peace, calm and reduced anxiety he gained through prayers helped him, but only temporarily as he claimed. It could be argued that Harry's attitude to teacher stress was different to the other participants, and therefore his praying is not what helped, but his optimistic personality type (Pargament, Kennell, Hathaway, Grevengoed, Newman & Jones, 1988).

My study shows that all of the participants felt that despite trying to tackle their stress through various coping strategies, they were still unsuccessful at eliminating their stress.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter will summarize briefly the study's main findings. I will then discuss the implications of my findings and relate the study towards education and policy makers in particular. Recommendations for further research will be made and finally the limitations of the study encountered are highlighted.

Findings from research question 1 showed the causes of secondary school male teachers' stress in the north London area; I believe this question was answered through the two interviews that my participants took part in. In the first interview, they answered a list of questions (see appendix 4) that demonstrated their attitudes towards their teaching, colleagues, typical day at work, how valued they or other teachers felt, how often they felt stressed, and how they coped with their stress. Their answers were clear and concise and upon request, were further elaborated upon. In the second interview that consisted of their narratives, my participants spoke with passion and great detail about stressful teaching experience that was mentioned in their first interviews, the result being the themes that are discussed in this study. By focusing on their narratives, I have been able to identify the deep personal experiences that have caused my participants to suffer from severe teacher stress in secondary schools in London. I have argued that these personal narratives that I am fortunate to obtain suggest that there is a wider need to understand the topic of teacher stress. Their narrations have led me to identify that despite there being many stressors that cause teacher stress, the common issues of concern voiced by my participants and in agreement with literature are:

- isolation and lack of support from colleagues and senior management
- the negative impact of stress on health causing teachers to lose interest in sports or leisure activities
- the fear of discussing teaching stress due to the stigma attached of being labelled as a weak teacher.

Research question 2 examined what coping strategies secondary school teachers in London use to alleviate teacher stress in their context. Participants in the study revealed that they coped with their stress in any manner that they felt they could. Only one participant tried to take part in sports, but due to work demands, did not have the time to continue. Two teachers used medication and have now become dependent on the medication due to the relaxing effects felt. It is not uncommon for many to become dependent to painkillers or antidepressants. One participant just accepted teaching as being stressful and gave in to the misery he was so used to. The one coping strategy that all participants demonstrated was the fact that they chose to suppress their emotions. By choosing to ignore or suppress their feelings the stress would be pushed away, and the stress would then become a part of their everyday life. It was only when it had become out of control was it realized that choosing to ignore or suppress the problem was not a solution and caused severe tension. The nature of my study leads me to believe that the coping strategies presented by my participants were of a temporary nature as the strategies employed did not seem to eliminate the problem of stress.

7.2 Pedagogical implications

The relationship between teachers and learners is too important a matter to overlook. Not understanding why teachers suffer from stress will no doubt affect

the teaching and learning relationship (Jarvis, 2005). The emotional factors involved in teaching have been discussed in literature and schools should have counsellors available for stressed teachers. Studies such as mine, that highlight the issue of teacher stress and the difficulty of coping is necessary for all those involved in the field of education. Schools should offer more fun days or arrange guest speakers to come in and talk about teacher stress. The need for support from senior management and colleagues needs to be encouraged.

The teaching profession is losing its teachers. Pupils are motivated by good teachers and will also suffer from teachers leaving. Jones et al. (2013) is of the opinion that if no stress management facility is available for teachers, then students will eventually pick up on this, which will leave a negative impact on the students. The loss of teachers will have a negative effect on the government and on pupils, especially if numbers of pupils are to increase at alarming rates.

Having strong support groups that include teachers, management, counsellors and parents can help overcome such stress. The literature discussed in this study is proof of this statement. The lack of opportunities for teacher talk on the topic is clear. This is not to say that such facilities do not exist, but it is important for the well-being of teachers that schools start to implement more in their schools to help understand the problem of teacher stress. There needs to be a culture where teachers feel comfortable addressing issues that are necessary for their wellbeing. The emotional aspects of teaching should be given more attention, be it weekly meetings where feelings and experiences are discussed or by management showing increased interest through meeting teachers privately and

showing support. My study indicates the need for a more open environment where emotions and feelings can be shared.

7.3 Policy making implications

The nature of the narratives presented by my participants leads me to argue that reform in the teaching profession is overdue and highly necessary. The UK's aim for 90% of pupils to be entered for GCSE's in the 5 EBacc subjects will be very difficult to achieve if teachers continue to leave. The 5 EBacc subjects are English, Maths, Science, Humanities and a language. Reports show that teachers of core subjects like Maths, Science and English leave within the first five years (Worth & Lazzari, 2017). If teachers of core subjects leave at a high rate, then greater policy attention is required on how to recruit and retain teachers. The need for action to be taken is urgent if the teaching profession wishes to hold onto its valuable teachers.

All schools and policy makers have a duty of care for their employees. Policy makers in the field of education should make use of such powerful narratives where valuable information is shared. Teacher support, teaching and learning in the classroom and professional development courses need to be revised. It is important for the welfare of all teachers and also for a healthy educational system that all are made aware of the possible types of stress involved in secondary school teaching. Measurements to deal with stress should be offered in teacher training courses like the PGCE or at least through internal school training. There is a need for teachers to feel supported through stress management that should be offered by their respective establishments. It has been suggested that stress reduction programming helps reduce teacher burnout

(Kipps-Vaughan, 2013). There is no doubt that the physical, mental and social health of teachers is necessary for a successful school and of course for successful teaching. Having stress management programs set up in schools by policy makers that focus on the signs of teacher stress may prevent teachers from suffering and assist with better coping strategies. It is important to recognise that many of the stressors experienced by my participants are influenced by structures, policies and processes within the teaching field itself which are beyond the control of management and administrators. Policy makers and other decision makers have the capacity to implement strategies to prevent and reduce stress in teaching.

7.4 Further research

My study was limited to only five participants. Their voices are powerful and provide a deeper understanding in to many aspects of teacher stress. However, I do believe that there is great scope for development and further information that will be of great use in improving the teaching field if a similar study was to take place on a larger scale such as a questionnaire study with a larger number of participating teachers from diverse groups.

An interesting area of research in the field of teacher stress that deserves more recognition would be to identify whether male teachers suffer from stress more than females. According to Vandenberghe (1999) and Chaturvedi & Puroshothaman (2009), research conducted in the field of teacher stress indicates that females do tend to cope better due to the stronger social support they have.

Teacher stress is a well-researched area and it is well established that changing educational policies affect teachers. The pressure to perform well with students' achieving high grades is demanding. The use of modern technology and

naming and shaming of falling schools puts pressure on teachers that is likely to add to teacher stress. Despite this and other factors mentioned in this study, it is interesting to see that many teachers still choose to stay in the teaching profession; it would be enlightening for the teaching profession if studies were conducted on what causes teachers to stay.

7.5 Limitations

I believe I have been extremely fortunate to experience few problems when conducting this study. The participation and warmth I received from my teachers are beyond explanation. I chose to interview male teachers for my study due to the fact that as most of my contacts were men whom I had worked with in the past, they passed on my information to their friends. Unfortunately, only male teachers expressed an interest. Although, there were a few female teachers who did initially express an interest, due to family commitments and personal issues were not able to award me the time I needed. As mentioned earlier in this study, I initially received interest from many teachers who wished to 'voice' their thoughts on the topic of teacher stress; however, I felt that having too many could open a door for complaints about the teaching profession. This was not my aim, which is why I decided on lowering the number of participants who would have to meet certain criteria.

Another limitation I confronted was the issue of interviewing. After spending a considerable amount of time designing my interview questions, the matter of arranging dates and times for interviews was a demanding task. My participants were busy individuals who were stressed enough in their lives and asking them to dedicate days for me was difficult for them. Initially, dates were chosen around

their schedules, but due to the confidentiality of this study, certain meetings were not possible so each participant required a day that would be most suitable for them. At times, I would meet them only to find that they were in a hurry and therefore could only answer some of the questions and to continue later. I did ensure they had the questions beforehand so they could prepare themselves, but they all felt that their hectic lifestyles did not allow the time for the preparation. Even when I did meet them and manage to take their narratives, it was necessary to meet them again at a later stage for elaboration, editing and clarification, which presented on going challenges due to the busy nature of my participants' teaching careers.

Appendix 1: Approved Ethics Sheet



GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

St Luke's Campus
Heavitree Road
Exeter UK EX1 2LU

<http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/education/>

CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

Title of Project: Teacher stress amongst secondary school teachers in UK: A narrative inquiry.

Researcher(s) name: Jamal ALDin Said

Supervisor(s): Esmaeel Abdollahzadeh
Andrew Richards

This project has been approved for the period

From: 17/06/2016

To: 01/09/2017

Ethics Committee approval reference:

D/15/16/49

Signature:  Date: 17/06/2016
(Professor Rupert Wegerif, Director of Research, Graduate School of Education)

Appendix 2: Information Sheet

Date:

Dear Participant,

I am a postgraduate student studying for a Doctorate in Education (EdD) at the University of Exeter, UK. I am carrying out a small-scale research on the topic of **Teacher Stress amongst Secondary School Teachers in London**. The aim of my thesis is to voice your experiences, feelings and present your opinions on how stress in the teaching profession has affected you as a teacher and personally. Your opinions and experiences are a valuable source of information. For this reason, your participation through Narrative interviews is very important to my research. For the purposes of analysis, the interviews will be recorded, used and be heard only by myself.

In accordance with research ethics, information obtained in these interviews will remain anonymous and confidential, and will only be used for the purpose of my research. If at any time during the course of the research you wish to withdraw, you are free to do so and nothing that you may have submitted will be used without your consent.

Thank you very much in advance for your contribution.

Yours sincerely,

Jamal Alsaïd

Email: alsaidj633@gmail.com (Personal) jass201@exeter.ac.uk (University)

Supervisor: Dr Esmaeel Abdollahzadeh. E.Abdollahzadeh@exeter.ac.uk

Appendix 3: Consent Sheet

Date:

Dear Participants

I would like to include your experiences of **Stress in your teaching careers**. This is part of my research on **Teacher Stress for my Doctoral Program**. This study will be conducted by myself, Jamal Al Din Alsaied and presented to the Graduate School of Education at the University of Exeter. I intend to submit this research by July 2019.

If you consent to the interviews, then they will take place at an agreed place.

Each interview will last approximately 30- 60 minutes and will be audiotape recorded with your permission. If you opt for not having the interview recorded please state so at the bottom of this consent sheet. Any recording will not be heard by anyone other than me. Neither your name nor distinguishable details will be used in my written work. I am willing to discuss this research with you at any time. If you wish you might also contact my supervisors Dr Esmaeel Abdollahzadeh and Dr Andrew Richard from the Graduate School of Education to confirm this research and to answer any queries you may wish to query. Participation in this project is voluntary and you may rescind your permission at any time and recording would not be used.

If you agree to participate, please authorise by signing below.

Sincerely,

Mr J Alsaied (Researcher's Name)

I (insert name) _____ give consent to be interviewed
and recorded for the purposes of research taken by Mr J Alsaid.

I also agree to have my interview recorded.

Signature of Participant: _____

Signature of Researcher: _____

Appendix 4: Semi Structured Interview 1 (Exmanent questions)

Q1. Tell me about your career as a teacher? When did you start? What made you go into teaching? (to understand whether it was a career they always wanted or due to other factors)

Q2. Explain a how typical day of teaching would be for you? (this should highlight the demands, such as workload, environment and feelings)

Q3. Could you describe your relationship with your colleagues and management? (this should answer the support or lack of support from them, help understand the relationships whether positive or not and how much control the teacher has in the way they do their work)

Q4. What do you think are the qualities of a successful teacher? (to understand what characteristics are regarded as important)

Q5. How much do you think that teachers are valued in your school? (to understand whether teachers felt they were not being appreciated or valued)

Q6. (a) How often do you feel stressed and how does it feel? (b) have you ever felt burnout? (to get actual experiences of stress shared)

Q7. How do you cope with the stress that you are suffering from? (to learn of their actual coping methods)

Appendix 5: Interview 2 (Main Narrative)

Questions used for each participant (Immanent questions)

Lance

Q. Explain why you felt that the result of the Ofsted report was your fault?

Terry

Q. Explain the incident with the new teacher and why it upset you so much?

Jimmy

Q. Explain what made you decide to leave teaching in the UK and not want to teach in the UK again? And why did you feel you had to hide your true feelings and emotions?

Harry

Q. Tell me why you are now feeling so stressed despite leaving a stressful school?

Rand

Q. Can you narrate to me about the issue you had with this student and why you feel so stressed over it?

Appendix 6: Exmanent Interview Sample Transcript

Interviewer: Jamal Alsaïd [I]

Participant: Jimmy [P]

Date: 30 September 2016 at 18:00

Location: Jimmy's sisters' home

Teacher Stress: Exmanent Interview

I: Hi, how are you?

P: I'm fine thanks... you *know* the usual this and that.

I: yes, I can imagine. It must be busy especially now that your car is in the garage. In this cold, it's tough catching buses and trains.

P: I know, it's become freezing nowadays, I hate this weather.

I: keep warm and drink lots of coffee [laughs], that's my key for survival during the winter.

P: definitely, I agree..... can't get sick [sigh] not now...not with all the work I have.

I: well, thank you for being here and agreeing to take part in this study, I really do appreciate it.

P: you're welcome, I'm actually excited about this and think what you're doing is great... especially if it gets heard by the right people.

I: shall we start?You've seen the questions so please feel free to ask me to explain or repeat anything you want. Just feel relaxed and take your time. If you need a break go ahead whenever you want.

P: thanks, sure I will ...ok... so where do we start?

I: so, tell me about your career as a teacher? I mean when did you start and what made you go into teaching?

P: Ok.... Well, I erm, started teaching in 2002 when I was a civil servant, working for the Department of Pensions, which was so boring.....I mean all I did was file and file papers all day.... Anyway one day, a friend of a friend said he needed help with his studies and I had just finished Uni around a year that time, so I was “sure no probs”.....I started helping him with his work and before I knew it I was helping a few of his friends. It wasn’t difficult at all,... I mean... it wasn’t tough to do and from there I just thought to myself “I like this, so you know what.... I’m going to become a teacher”. I mean, I enjoyed it, so I decided to leave and take up teaching. I erm, wanted to do the PGCE but I couldn’t afford it as it was too expensive. But I was really serious about teaching and I somehow managed to find a GTP at a local schoolbut only ended up leaving for personal reasons [laugh]

I: Why did you leave?

P: Why I left?...well... the first thing that I found was that I wasn’t getting the support from the school....it was a joke... so I just left and started to work as an unqualified teacher somewhere else, that’s what I’ve been doing ever since.... I mean there was so much going on, you know things that I found shocking that I just thought best to leave now before I end up getting sick. I mean come on; I knew that if I didn’t leave that school then I probably would have got into big trouble.

I: Tell me more about how your teaching day would be, I mean.... can you explain how a typical day of teaching would be for you?

P: A typical day is just keeping the students in class, it’s all about class mgt. no matter where you are, what school you’re in its all the same[sighs] keep the guys in... that’s all, making sure they are in that’s all it is..... no one cares if they are

learning. I mean everyday as a teacher we are expected to keep the students in class...I mean, don't let the management put you down. It's all about being strong and resilient to the pressures you're exposed to.... You know I always believe that Allah will provide. {sigh.....}. The thing is, yes the students are nuts.... I mean we all know how hard it is to control a student that doesn't want to be in the class and we know that we're not talking about one or two..... the whole bloody class is the same {laugh}. Anyway, all I'm saying is that if you're not emotionally strong and get upset when management complain, then teaching is certainly not possible for you..... a tough character, without that you'll struggle.....have you visited London Zoo?

I: London Zoo...yes [laughs], why?

P: well, imagine having to keep children in a class that don't want to be there? It's like controlling animals [laugh] you can't let them out until the bell goes, you can't let erm senior management know that you're struggling with a certain class...well, basically that's a typical day.

I: Tell me about your relationship with your colleagues and management, I mean how would you describe your relationship with them

P: My relationship with management? erm..... well I don't have one to be honest, I just stay away from them! I erm.....I really don't have much to say about management, for me management is something to stay away from, they know I don't like their way of management, I don't have many positive things to say about them. They know I don't agree with their policies. That's just me anyway.

I: what would you say are the qualities of a successful teacher?

P: The qualities of a successful teacher need to be communication, erm..... I mean with students from a variety of levels, you need to be able to motivate, a tough strong character without that you'll struggle., that's my personal opinion (laughs) being tough... yes that's definitely the main one [laugh].

I: How much do you think the teachers are valued in your school?

P: valued....not much really.... I have worked for so many schools that I think I've lost count {laughs}... I've never felt valued, I mean what do you mean by valued?..... Do I ever get asked how something should be done? Well, no not really and plus who would really listen?... We are just robots, who are expected to do what robotic teachers are expected to do....We are used as robots who have to work in the classroom as babysitters, policemen, nurses, psychiatrists , I mean come on. Everything they ask us to do, we do...I mean we are used as robots who have to work as expected to keep children in classroom as babysitters or erm like the police... you know sometimes you're a nurse and bloody counselling a student.... I mean come on.

I: Could you tell me how often you feel stressed and how does it feel? And have you ever felt burnout?

P: Everyday, to be honest with you... it becomes a part of your life. You mentioned burnout and you know what, to be honest I don't know what burnout actually means? {sigh} All I know is I don't enjoy what I'm doing and I'm taking steps. I'm moving.... where to, I don't know? I'm definitely moving onto other things". No more teaching in the UK, no way...erm ...to be honest I feel the same all the time, it's like...part of your life you know... what was the other question?

I: Tell me how you cope with this stress that you are suffering from?

P: I erm...just continue as I know that I am going abroad [sigh]..... here [points index finger to the floor] stress is part of everyday life....I just continue with life as I know that I am going abroad..... I'm stressed every day, what can I do? No matter where I go, teaching is going to be stressful, so I really don't know what to say here except that I have had enough and moving abroad is how I am doing something about it? I've chosen this field of work so I guess I erm, am stuck with it.....

Actually, I love spending time with my son and daughter, just going out with them and watching them grow makes me forget about work...I'm stressed every day, what can I do?..... No matter where I go teaching is going to be stressful, so I really don't know what to say here except that I have had enough and moving abroad is how I am doing something about it?

END OF INTERVIEW 18:51

Appendix 7: Immanent Narrative Interview Sample Transcript

Interviewer: Jamal Alsaïd [I]

Participant: Jimmy [P]

Date: 09th January 2019 at 18:00

Location: Jimmy's home

Teacher Stress: Main narrative question: Explain what made you decide to leave teaching in the UK and not want to teach in the UK again? And why did you feel you had to hide your true feelings and emotions?

I: Thank you for your time. I know how busy you are.

P: No, thank you for being patient. It's just been crazy with the New Year kicking in and everything [sigh].... oh well, it's a new year, let's hope it's better than the last one [laughs].

I: Oh yes, happy New Year, sorry I forgot.

P: You too.

I: So, Jimmy do you remember in your first interview when you spoke about how you wanted to leave teaching in the UK?

P: Yes, I do.

I: Do you still feel the same?

P: Yes absolutely.

I: For today's interview, would it be possible for you to narrate the whole story as to why you feel this way?

P: Sure, well erm, I have seen so many stressful situations that it has become normal for me. I remember you asking me why I left the training program in 2002.

I left after 4 months in a school in East London [pause] actually, I chose to drop out after seeing a colleague called Helen who was studying with me leave due to the stress that she was getting. [pause] I mean, the teachers could be so mean, she wasn't getting the support from the mentor, to be honest she (the mentor) made her feel more stressed [pause] I think she was made to drop, if you understand what I mean?

I: Sorry, I don't understand. Can you elaborate?

P: I'm not saying they treated her badly because they wanted her to leave, but it's just sad to see how teachers get stressed and no one really cares.

I: Please explain more.

P: I have seen so many stressful situations that it has become normal for me.

One particular incident that occurred goes back to 2002 when I was doing the GTTP. At that time, I had started with a few others on this training program that was to train us on becoming teachers..... We were working and studying at the same time, but soon the focus of everything seemed to be more on just being in the classroom and coping with the students than anything else. When I saw the reality, I thought that's it....., I need to get out soon. I left after 4 months.....I, erm, dropped because I realized very early how stressful teaching in secondary schools is. {sigh} There's no respect left in the profession, no matter where you go, what school you're in... I mean you might be lucky and get into a fancy posh school, but what's the likelihood? I've worked in so many schools, that I've lost count and I haven't seen any...You get grief from students, parents and even the managers....I remember, there was a colleague called Helen who was studying on the GTTP with me who dropped due to the stress that she was getting. I mean, I

didn't drop because of her..., I saw how the school, the management could be so mean; she wasn't getting the support from the mentor. We all felt that there was no recognition as a teacher who was putting so much effort in. Not even a thanks... I mean don't you think it's nice to say well done or you did a fantastic job with 11C; it must have been hard.... No one seems bothered... you just do the job... It's like you either sink or swim here. Well, I knew that I wasn't going to suffer; it wasn't the end of the world; I don't need my health to suffer for it... that's the way I looked at it all. I even started to stop caring... I mean I knew that the only way I could cope is by actually not giving a damn. [sigh...]. I enjoyed the teaching part, we all did, but erm, I don't know. Helen couldn't get the recognition she needed, in fact none of us could. I just didn't bother as I had that attitude. Can you imagine if the mentor makes you feel this way then I'm sorry, no one will want to stay, would you? I mean we are not taught about SEN or dyslexia and then we are expected to know how to deal with children with psychological issues (long pause). I remember noticing how passionate Helen was as a teacher, but I mean, come on isn't your health priority number one? Anyway, soon she left. That was really sad. I'll never forget the day the mentor put us in a class to deal with a really disruptive boy called Jake. That boy was really tough to manage. He was told to fight in class. Yes, we later found out from the mentor that Jake was told to disrupt the class and start a fight just so we could use our 'CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT SKILLS [air quote] to control him. Can you believe that? Well do you know what I did? (sigh).... I just went up to him and said 'listen, do me a favour and give him (the other boy) time till after the class, because I've got an observation now and I'll owe you one big time'..... I admit what I did was wrong, but how else could I as a

young inexperienced teacher deal with a student like Jake, sorry but I couldn't. Going back to Helen, well she just sent both boys out to the cooling room and thought that was best, and guess what? She was told that was wrong to do. What's worse is that she (the mentor) knew what I actually said to Jake..... But because I had kept him in the class it's all great! Anyway, poor Helen was told that she lacked classroom management... where's the recognition there for doing what is correct? What she did was right, if anything I was the one who was wrong, but I think I got away with it due to doing what they wanted which is to just do what you have to do to keep the students in class. Anyway, this all changed me and I thought that's it. I'm not staying. Why? The money? The holidays? No thank you. It was shortly after this experience with Jake that Helen left the GTTP and went back to Ireland. This all taught me how to deal with stress and one of the things I do is remind myself of her story.... I remember and say that I'm not going to be like that. I told myself that I have gained experience in the UK and know that I can teach, and not to bother myself with recognition or job satisfaction. (long pause) don't get me wrong I enjoy teaching, but sorry not in the UK. After Helen left, I questioned why I should stay. I can find better jobs abroad from China to the Middle East with more money and less work, and much less stress.... my health comes first. I left shortly after her as I was not getting any recognition for the hard work I was doing. I know me leaving because of what I experienced sounds strange, but you don't understand it was getting really stressful. [pause] What I'm saying is that as teachers we don't get the support. When I saw someone like Helen, who worked so hard not getting the support she needed, it made me realise that none of us would [sighs] and it is true, I never did and still don't expect to. Anyway, I also

think the mentor had a big part to play in this. [pause] She was not supportive and at the same time was very close to senior management, so we knew not to bother complaining. In fact, none of us could talk to this mentor. Me and another teacher called John just didn't bother as we had that attitude.... It's not like we didn't care [pause] it's just that we knew what teaching was really going to be like. I remember this one teacher who was always alone in his room. Everyone called him a weirdo.... both students and teachers called him that. I spoke to him a few times, but he always kept to himself and he was just so stressed that it was shocking. He never really told me why he was stressed, but erm, rumors were spreading that he couldn't cope with teaching and that he had a weak personality. The poor guy knew no one liked him as he was different from the others.... I felt really sorry for him. I mean where's the support he should be getting? The teachers would go out socialising after school but he never got invited, poor guy was just so isolated. [long pause] Also, he was the one who told me not to let anyone know I was stressed or the teachers would start gossiping. You see? This is how some teachers feel... it's like hide your feelings or you'll suffer more. John and I knew that after a while we would go abroad and make use of our training, but Helen, well she felt like she wanted to make a serious career of teaching in the UK. I mean, erm, I knew that I would leave especially after seeing how teaching was here in the UK.... anyway, going back to Helen's story, I have to admit her experience got me stressed even more. I remember another time, Helen came in and she had just completed her classroom observation that day, she was full of joy and positive, but then in the post observation she was told she lacked certain skills to be a teacher, can you believe that? Come on how would you feel if you were

told that by a senior teacher? Anyway, after that she was in tears and I thought to myself no way, this is not how we teachers should be treated or trained [pause]. I mean we are not taught about SEN or dyslexia and then we are expected to know how to deal with children with psychological issues [long pause]. I would always go home and tell my wife to draw the curtains so I could just rest as I had horrible headaches.... every bloody day [long pause]. Anyway, Helen spoke to John and found out that we were going to leave the UK after our GTTP, she was really sad [pause] we were the only ones she could speak to. It's not like you could just walk out of the classroom and speak to a colleague.... I mean when the bell goes and you shut the door that's it, you're all alone [long pause] she made us feel that she was the only one who had a strong passion to teach. Anyway, I did feel sorry for her because she was the one that left before us. That was really sad [pause]. I always remind myself of her story.... I mean, I remind myself of how she suffered and tell myself that I'm not going to be like that. I told myself that I have gained experience in the UK and know that I can teach, (long pause) don't get me wrong I enjoy teaching, but sorry not in the UK. This is the main reason why I never got qualified? [long pause]. Yes, I know that being qualified means I can get paid more, but to be honest the money I make now is enough and I don't intend to stay teaching in the UK for a long period and after seeing what real teaching is about, I knew what I needed to know. A certificate is not what teaching is about.... I left because I was feeling sick all the time and not getting any recognition for the hard work I was doing. Teaching is not the same anymore, it's all about showing off with your pupils in the class and that's it. No one really cares [sighs]. I have worked as an unqualified teacher for years and only work when I need to.

Whenever I work in a school for more than a year or so, then I do attend training courses and workshops despite being unqualified, but let's be honest, we all know these workshops etc., are only there to put a tick by your name so it shows that the schools are offering training [laughs] [pause]. For me working as a temp helps because I work for a year or as long as I want and then just take a break when it gets too much. If I be honest, I feel all schools are the same so it's not like I can expect to find a good school. Plus, with all the sick leave teachers take, it works to my advantage, there's plenty of teaching work [pause], I think that in itself proves how stressful teaching is [laughs]. Now I have finally decided to leave the UK for good and am applying for jobs in the Middle East. It pays more and there's less stress involved. [long pause] The thing is it's not just Helen's experience that made me feel this way, it's the fact that in schools I feel alone. We don't get the recognition or the support we deserve... I saw Helen's lack of support and how she worked so hard yet got the opposite [sighs], instead of support she got criticised and that's how it is. The harder you work the more stress you get. It's best to just ignore everything, hide your feelings and pretend for as long as you can. [pause] Another thing I want to mention was that the head of citizenship at that school wanted me to complete the GTTP and take his position as he wanted early retirement [laughs]. The compliments he would give me were a joke, I mean come on, do you really think he was serious? He would say, 'you're good, you're strong, you have the right attitude, you know how it works [laughs] I mean, I know he just wanted me to take a very stressful position that no one else wanted. I'm not stupid. The poor guy would shout so much in his classes that I felt he was going to have a heart attack [long pause]. I know my particular experiences are old, but it's

these particular experiences that caused me to get stressed. I will never forget them. I'm stressed pretty much every time when I teach to be honest because I am experiencing the same thing everywhere. I feel working in new schools every year or so helps me recover as I keep putting the previous teaching posts as bad experiences. That's what I've been doing till now [laughs]. Plus, I am going abroad to start a new teaching career this year, so erm let's see what the future has for me.

END OF INTERVIEW 19:28

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