

**A COMPARISON OF TEACHER
STRESS, COMMITMENT AND
SCHOOL CLIMATE IN SCHOOLS
WITH DIFFERENT SUCCESS RATES**

BY

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RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
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Declaration

I hereby declare that the research report submitted for the degree to the University of Witwatersrand, apart from the help recognised, is my own work and has not been submitted to any other university for any other degree

Signature _____

Date 09 December 2004

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Abstract

It has been established that South African schools often experience vastly different matric success rates, even in schools from the same areas, with similar resources (Snyman, 1998). This study was conducted to compare teacher stress, professional commitment and school climate in schools with different matric success rates, in an attempt to uncover some of the reasons behind differing pass rates.

The sample consisted of teachers from four high schools with different matric pass rates. The schools were selected from twelve high schools in the same rural area, same education district and circuit. The two high schools which performed very badly were matched with two high schools which produced a hundred percent pass rate in their recent matric results.

A questionnaire was used as a data collection instrument. The questionnaires consisted of the Job Stress Survey, Professional Commitment Scale, as well as the Organisational Climate Index.

The research questions for the study were: (i) Do teachers from schools with different matric success rates perceive the same sources of stress? (ii) Are teachers in schools with different matric pass rates experiencing the same levels of stress? (iii) Is there any difference between teachers' perceptions of school

climate in schools with different matric pass rates? (iv) Do teachers in schools with different matric success rates differ in terms of their levels of professional commitment?

The results indicated similarities in terms of the levels and sources of stress among the teachers from the two school types, as no significant differences between the schools were found. However, the teachers in schools with excellent matric pass rates have higher levels of commitment, and perceive their schools more favourably than the teachers in schools with poor matric pass rates. Significant correlations were also found to exist between teachers' professional commitment and organisational climate.

These findings indicate that there is a need in South Africa to seek out ways of improving the climate of the schools as well as teachers' professional commitment in order to produce quality education.

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CHAPTER 1

1. Introduction

South Africa is a country characterised by a shortage of skilled and professional labour. In 1999, the World Competitiveness Organisation rated South Africa second last out of 59 countries in terms of its competitive position (Gerber et al., 2001). Gerber et al. (2001) regard education as a remedy to South African's competitiveness problems. Education is defined as the activities directed at providing the knowledge, skills, moral values and understanding required in the normal course of life (Gerber et al., 2001). Van der Linde, Van der Westhuizen and Wissing (2000:377) pointed out that "if the quality of education is hampered and teachers are unproductive, a country's economy is also affected".

From early 1990s, South African education has been changing fundamentally because of political changes in the country, and teachers need to adapt to this new reality (Van Zyl & Pietersen, 1999). Ngwezi (1989) indicated that the unstable nature of the teaching profession will constantly challenge teachers to adapt effectively to all changes encountered in their profession. Thus, the changes in the occupational structure of teaching are likely to result in stress for teachers, and may also influence their commitment to their profession.

Researchers have found that teachers' work is becoming more complex and more demanding (Niehaus & Myburgh, 1997). For example, In South Africa, the demands facing teachers have changed drastically with the emergence of the

South African School Act (1996). The demands imposed by the Curriculum 2005 approach with its Outcome Based Education (OBE) policy leads to greater responsibility on teachers, for example, continuous assessment of learners' progress without the emphasis on passing or failing them as well as abolition of corporal punishment (Bengu, 1997). These may have an impact on teachers' performance as well as learners' achievement or pass rates.

The former DET Grade 12 (matric) results have been disappointing for a number of years. There has been a decline in the DET pass rate from 48% in 1985 to 41% in 1991 and again to 38% in 1993 (Calitz, 1998). The results have not been better since the dissolution of the DET after the 1994 democratic elections. The former Northern Province is a province which has experienced a particularly low matric pass rate. In 1997, Gauteng had a pass rate of 52%, Kwazulu-Natal 54%; Free-State 42% and 32% for the former Northern Province (Snyman 1998). In 2003, the two provinces with the highest pass rates were Northern Cape, 91% and Western Cape (with 87%), and the last two provinces were Limpopo (former Northern Province), with 70% and Mpumalanga, with 58% (Monare, 2003). Although the matric pass rate has improved more recently from 1997's 47% to 73% in 2003, the quality of the results is still poor. For example, more than two third of pupils who wrote mathematics higher grade failed, and 50% of those who wrote physical science higher grade also failed in 2003 (Molakeng, 2004; Motlounge, 2004).

Various reasons for the poor quality of matric results have been suggested, including demoralisation and disillusionment of teachers, the irresponsibility of teachers, poor administration, and lack of a culture of learning, laziness of teachers, lack of parents' support, poor working conditions and lack of commitment among teachers (Gamaroff, 1999; Makgotho, 2004).

However, it appears that not all schools fall into the scenario outlined above. For example, from the popular literature, (i.e. Drum and Pace magazines), Molokoane (1998) and Snyman (1998) identified two schools from the former Northern Province which drew the attention of the whole country because of their different matric pass rates. The first school produced excellent passes, whereby every pupil passed matric with exemption, while in the other school none of the pupils who wrote end-of-year exams passed. While this example is from a number of years ago, recent matric results show similar patterns. For example, Makgotho (2004) indicated that the Limpopo Education Department has investigated the 17 identified schools that performed very badly in grade 12, with pass rates ranging from 0% to 20% while there are those which performed well. Clearly, this suggests a need to understand how the environment or the climates of schools with different success rates differ as well as how teachers' experiences differ in those different schools. Obtaining insight into such issues may help in finding ways of improving teachers' performance. However, no empirical studies appear to have been conducted to compare the experiences of teachers in schools with different success rates. The aim of this study is therefore

to address this lack and investigate teachers' experiences in schools which have different success rates, but are situated in the same rural area and which offer similar subjects.

The research objectives

The aim of the current research is to compare teachers' experiences in high schools with different matric success rates, but situated in same rural area, same educational district, offering similar subjects and possessing similar resources.

The specific objectives of the study are:

- To compare the sources of occupational stress experienced by teachers in schools with different matric success rates.
- To compare teachers' levels of occupational stress in schools which have different success rates.
- To investigate any differences in the organisational climate of the schools.
- To compare the teachers' levels of professional commitment.

The study is useful in the sense that understanding the different experiences of teachers in schools with different success rates may help in gaining insight into the differences in their performance, as well as the differing pass rates. Literature has identified various factors that may have an impact on employees' performance in the workplace. Among other factors, there are occupational stress, job satisfaction, organisational climate, organisational commitment, job

involvement, levels of motivation as well as levels of professional commitment (Berry, 1997; Miskell & Miskell 1994; Klatt, Murdick & Schuster, 1985; Van Zyl & Pietersen, 1999). The central concepts chosen for this study are occupational stress, professional commitment and organisational climate, and the literature relating to these constructs will now be reviewed.

CHAPTER 2

2. Literature Review

In reviewing literature on the chosen variables, the following sections will be discussed; occupational stress, teacher stress, organisational climate, school climate, professional commitment and teacher commitment. Afterwards, research questions and rationale for this study will be stated.

2.1 Occupational Stress

The stress phenomenon is an integral part of our daily life. The common causes of stress are the demands of our everyday life, which can produce distress when people feel or find out that they cannot cope with them (Hockey, 1983). Although substantial research has been conducted on stress, there is no clear definition of the term but many definitions cover similar aspects.

Claxton (1989) states that people use the word stress to refer to both external pressures and demands they are subjected to and the effects that such stressful circumstances have on their performance, feelings and health. Johns (1996) defines stress as a psychological reaction to the demands inherent in a stressor that has the potential to make a person feel anxious. Robbins (1996) defines stress as an interaction between a person and the environment that requires adaptation on the part of the individual, while Joseph (2000), defines stress as an excess of demand made upon the adaptive capacities of the mind and body.

From these definitions, it appears that stress can prevail in the workplace if the work demands made upon an employee exceed his or her adaptive capacity.

Occupational stress has now become a very serious problem within many organisations due to its impact on employees' health, well being and effectiveness. Research has suggested that there is a positive relationship between stress levels at work and frequency and duration of absenteeism, and tendency for progression from absenteeism to labour turnover (Cooper & Sutherland 1990; Monteith, Smith & Marais 2001; Travers & Cooper 1996). This shows that occupational stress imposes a major threat on the productivity and effective functioning of organisations.

Stress can be produced by a number of conditions in the workplace. Attempts to identify and organise the variables that function as stressors have been made through research. Individual, work design and organisational sources have been identified as three major sources of work-related stress, and will be explored below (Klatt et al., 1985; Lau & Shani, 1992).

Individual sources of stress

Individual sources of stress refer to stressors that can arise from a person's personality, tolerance of ambiguity as well as skills level and ability. These may explain why employees vary in the extent to which they perceive or experience

stress, i.e. their stress vulnerability. A situation that is stressful to one individual may not be stressful to another. The personality of hardiness may determine how individuals perceive stress. A study undertaken by Dolbier, Soderstrom and Steinhardt (2001) demonstrated that hardy individuals have the ability to bounce back and readily recover from situations requiring their adaptation and remain healthy during times of stress. According to Gerber, Nel and Van Dyk (1999), employees who feel driven to give their best at all times place themselves under greater stress than others. Grobler, Warnich, Carrel, Elbert and Hatfield (2002) identified the following individual sources of stress in the workplace; unrealistic expectations of self, inability to set limits, inability to delegate, under or overestimating abilities as well as inability to manage time effectively.

Work design sources of stress

Work design as a major source of stress involves factors such as work over-load, role ambiguity, role conflict, time pressures, scheduling, communications and working relationships with colleagues and supervisors (Klatt et al., 1985). Berry (1997) supported these by indicating that the amount and difficulty of work a person does can be stressful, and so is the incompatibility between his or her tasks requirements and other aspects of his or her job. Grobler et al. (2002) indicated that the nature of work and inter-role conflict of interests with colleagues as well as with those who characterise the employee's social circles may result in stress.

Organisational sources of stress

Organisational demands can be stressful if they require extensive or unwanted adjustment, when accompanied by changes in other parts of employees' lives, when they are unexpected and forced on employees as well as when the employees' coping mechanisms are absent or ineffective (Klatt et al., 1985).

Organisational sources of occupational stress includes factors such as complexity of the organisational technology, complex organisational policies and procedures, poor working conditions, career transitions such as promotions and relocations, change in organisational structure and organisational culture (Gerber et al., 1999). Poor professional communication, extremes of management style, working with an inexperienced staff, lack of clarity and agreement about organisational values and goals, lack of consideration for the individual within the organisation as well as an uncomfortable working environment have all been identified as organisational sources of stress (Grobler et al., 2002).

Whatever its source, excessive work stress has serious consequences for both employee and organisation. Occupational stress may have impact on employee's health, well-being and effectiveness. These imply that occupational stress can have undesirable consequences. The undesirable consequences of occupational stress have been classified into three categories, namely, physiological, psychological and behavioural consequences (Driskell, Johnston & Salas, 2001).

Physiological consequences of stress

Occupational stress can result in a variety of physical illnesses caused by change in bodily functioning. Physical illnesses associated with stress include cardiovascular problems, headaches (migraine), change in metabolism, high blood pressure, recurrent viral infections, stomach ulcers, sleep difficulties, excessive appetite or loss of appetite as well as illness associated with alcoholism and drug addiction. However, there is no consistent evidence for establishing an objective relationship between occupational stress and physiological health (Berry, 1997; Everly, 1998; Woodbridge, 1998). Physical illnesses arising from stress have a negative impact on the organisation's productivity because they may result in workers absenteeism due to stress-related ill-health.

Psychological consequences of stress

Occupational stress can cause employees to develop feelings of depression, anxiety, irrationality, unstable behaviour, lowered self-esteem, anger, nightmares, panic, dramatic mood changes, fatigue, psychosomatic pains, frustration, and loss of interest in appearance, isolation and resentment as well as poor interpersonal relationships (Klatt et al., 1985; Woodbridge, 1998). These imply that psychological consequences of stress may not affect an employee under stress only, but they also affect people he or she works with.

Behavioural consequences of stress

Research indicates that the effects of stress are costly in terms of individual performance and organisational productivity (Driskell et al., 1999). Occupational stress may lead to a reduction in the output of the employee, increased absenteeism, labour turnover, more grievances and increased accidents in the workplace (Gerber et al., 1999). Deteriorating relationships with colleagues in the workplace as well as impulsive behaviour (e.g. fighting and anger) due to stress may create a difficult working atmosphere for other employees, which may in turn influence their performance.

Because occupational stress may have negative consequences, it is important to understand what employees perceive as being stressful so as to develop ways of dealing with it. There is a common belief that certain occupations are intrinsically more stressful than others. Previous research on teacher stress, where teachers were required to rate their experience of stress at work, revealed that teachers regard teaching as a very or extremely stressful job (Kyriacou, 2001). Grobler et al. (2002) identified ten tough jobs, and high school teaching job was on top of the list. The current study focuses on the occupational stress experienced by teachers, and therefore research conducted on teacher stress will now be discussed.

2.2 Teacher Stress

Studies have been conducted on teachers' experiences both internationally and nationally. The studies focus on stress, school climate, professional commitment, job satisfaction and personality dimensions (Hausman & Goldring, 2001; McEvoy, 2000; Ngidi & Sibaya, 2002; Van Zyl & Pietersen, 1999). Occupational stress is significant for teachers since it may affect not only teachers, but it may have impact on their pupils as well (Rigby, Bennet & Boshoff, 1996). Teacher stress is therefore a problem for the individual teacher, the students, the school, the teaching profession and the educational system.

Kyriacou (2001) defines teacher stress as an experience by teachers of unpleasant, negative emotions such as anger, anxiety, tension, frustration or depression resulting from aspects of their work as teachers. Researchers have identified different factors as causes of teacher stress. These factors include role conflict, role uncertainty, pupil misbehaviour, poor working conditions, time pressure and poor school ethos, administrative work, financial matters, time and communication (Buwalda & Kok, 1991; Monteith et al., 2001; Ngidi & Sibaya, 2002; Van der Linde et al., 1999).

Drake and Herbert (2002) conducted research on two female teachers in the Southern United States. Their research relates to the current study as it was aimed at comparing perceptions of two teachers in different schools. Attention

was paid to teachers perceptions about job related stress and strategies for managing stress and avoiding burnout. The research design for their investigation was interview- based, i.e. a qualitative case study. It was characterised by an in depth investigation of two experienced and successful teachers from two schools. The Maslach Burnout Inventory was the measuring instrument used for stress. The results showed that there were similarities in terms of sources of stress and conflict between the two teachers. Role conflict and role strain were factors contributing to teachers' stress and burnout. Drake and Herbert (2002) also found that differences exist between the two schools, where the two teachers worked. For example, they found that in the first school, high priority was given to education, while in the other school discipline was given high priority. Drake and Herbert's (2002) study was in-depth, and managed to uncover details about factors contributing to the two teachers' stress, yet the extent to which those teachers experienced stress was not measured. The current study was aimed at bridging that gap by investigating the extent to which a larger number of teachers in different schools experience stress.

In South Africa, there has also a fair amount of research conducted on teacher stress. Monteith et al. (2001) investigated work stress in principals, deputy principals and heads of department in secondary schools. The aim of the study was to examine differences in perceptions of the secondary school management personnel regarding the intensity of work stressors and the frequency of occurrence. To evaluate the differences in perceptions of work stressors between

the participants, a quantitative design was adopted, and questionnaires were used to collect data. The Job Stress Survey was used to measure stress. The research findings indicated similarities between stressors causing the highest intensity in principals, deputy principals and heads of department. For example, the principals, deputy principals and heads of department experienced the highest levels of stress intensity related to inadequate salary, colleagues not doing their work, poorly motivated colleagues and lack of opportunity for advancement. Monteith et al. (2001) also discovered that there were other factors reported only by the principals and heads of department as contributors to their stress. These factors included insufficient personnel to handle an assignment and excessive paper work. In their study, Monteith et al.'s (2001) focus was hierarchical as only school management personnel from different secondary schools were investigated, without comparing the different schools' responses. It can however be concluded that differences in perceptions of stress do not necessarily exist among different schools management only, but also among teachers in different schools. This current is therefore aimed at comparing stress perceived by different schools' teachers.

In another study on South Africa, Ngidi & Sibaya (2002) conducted research on black teachers' personality factors and work-related stress factors in Kwazulu-Natal. Their study was aimed at examining the extent to which black teachers in Kwazulu-Natal experience stress from work-related factors. Their sample consisted of both primary and secondary teachers from different schools, and a

quantitative research design was used. To measure the level of stress, the Occupational Stress Inventory for teachers was administered. The results of their study indicated that teachers differ in the extent to which they experience stress from factors related to their work since there were teachers who reported below and above average levels of stress. They also discovered that a relationship between introversion and educational changes exist. Introverted teachers were more prone to stress related to educational changes than those who were extroverted. Ngidi and Sibaya (2002) concluded that even though people differ in the extent to which they experience stress, i.e. some are more likely to be stressed than others; some work environments are more stressful than others. This enhances a need to understand how stress is perceived in the different schools to be examined in the current study.

Based on the literature just reviewed on teacher stress, it may be concluded that the teaching profession can be a stressful one. It is therefore important to discover whether teachers from schools with different success rates differ in terms of their level of stress or not, and to identify the stressors to which they are prone to. Since the current study does not focus on occupational stress only, organisational climate as the next variable will now be discussed.

2.3 Organisational Climate

Organisational climate is defined as a set of measurable properties of the work environment, perceived directly or indirectly by people who live and work in this environment, and assumed to influence their motivational behaviour (Mok & Au-Yeung, 2002). Hemmingway and Smith (1999) define organisational climate as the shared perceptions of employees about a given work environment, as its personality or as the feel of the work place. According to Hemmingway and Smith (1999), organisational climate may foster or deter certain outcomes and can be manipulated to facilitate organisational goals.

Oi-ling (2002) defined organisational climate as shared perceptions of organisational policies, practices and procedures, formal and informal, indicative of the organisations' goals and appropriate means to goal attainment, while Allmann (2000) defines organisational climate as employees' perceptions of their working environment. From these definitions, it can be concluded that organisational climate is influenced by the organisational characteristics and the perceptions of individuals about their organisation.

Various dimensions constituting organisational climate have been identified in previous studies. These include autonomy, work pressure, support, trust, recognition and innovation (Mok & Au-Yeung, 2000; Van Zyl & Pietersen, 1999). Each dimension is briefly outlined below:

Autonomy - refers to the degree of independence and authority a person has to make decisions in an organisation.

Work pressure - refers to nature of demands of a person's job, the amount as well as the deadlines of the job.

Support - the relationship between an employee and his or her co-workers, as well as with his or her supervisor(s) is regarded as another dimension of organisational climate.

Trust - Hoy, Smith and Sweetland (2002) regard trust as an expectancy held by individuals or group that the word, promise, verbal or written statement of another individual or group could be relied.

Recognition - involves acknowledgement of good performance through praises or rewards.

Innovation - as a dimension of organisational climate includes giving employees opportunity to introduce or initiate new ideas in the workplace.

Mok & Au-Yeung (2002) conducted a study on these dimensions on nurses in Hong-Kong. They discovered that nurses who perceived these dimensions more favourably were more satisfied and perform better in their jobs. This implies that

the manner in which organisational climate dimensions are perceived may have an impact on employees' performance.

Research on the effects of organisational climates on motivation, productivity, job satisfaction and occupational stress has been undertaken (Hemmingway & Smith, 1999; Miskell & Miskell, 1994, Oi-Ling, 2002; Steyn & Van Wyk, 1999; Van Zyl & Pietersen, 1999). For example, Hemmingway and Smith (1999) proposed a framework of possible relationships among organisational climate, occupational stress and stress related outcomes. They discovered that favourable climate dimensions led to lower level of occupational stress, while Oi-ling (2002) identified organisational climate as one of the predictors of job satisfaction and absenteeism among nurses in Hong-Kong. According to Miskell and Miskell (1994:11), "employees may be unmotivated and unproductive because of issues such as the climate of the workplace". They also indicated that managers can motivate workers by providing a work environment that satisfies workers' inner needs while achieving objectives of the organisation.

From what has been discussed so far, it becomes apparent that organisational climate may have an impact on employees' performance, including teachers. The aim of the current study is to investigate the climate of schools with different success rates, and therefore literature on school climate will now be discussed.

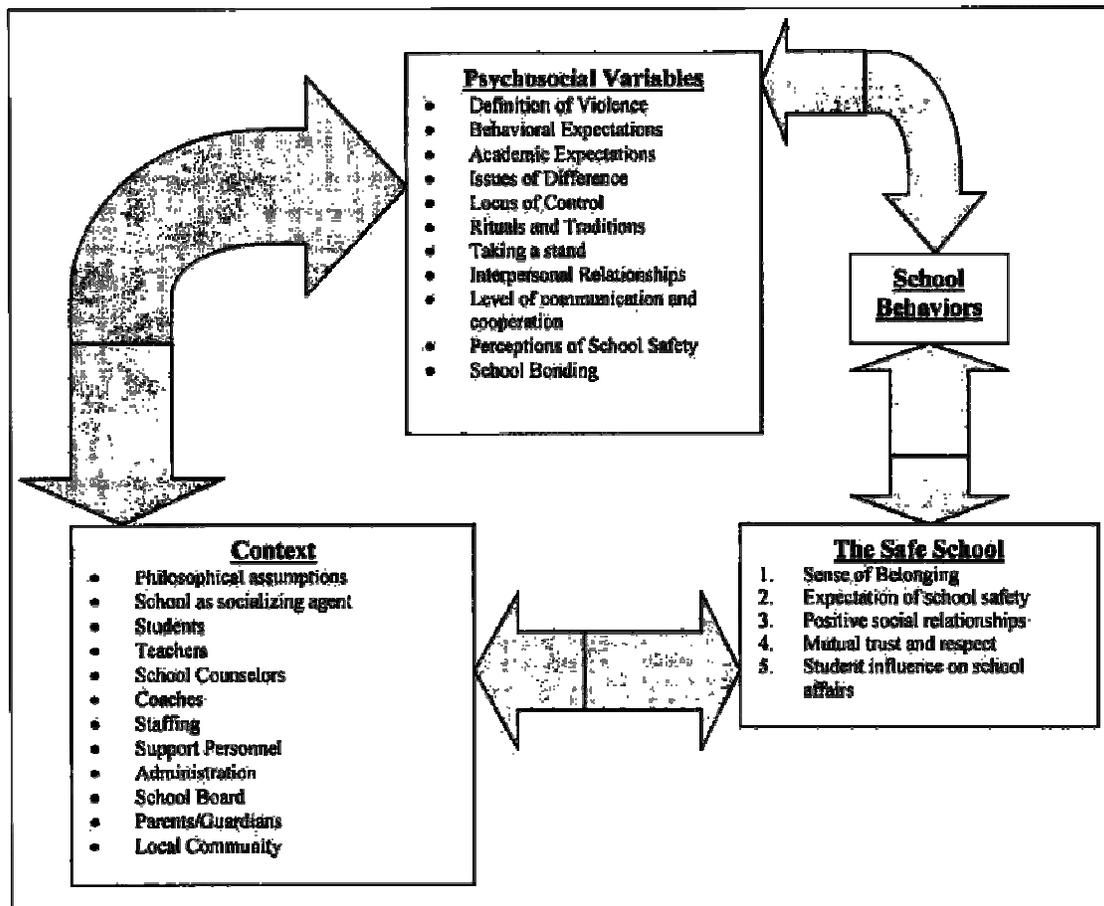
2.4 School Climate

Peterson and Skiba (2001) define school climate as the feelings that teachers have about the school environment over a period of time. These feelings may have to do with how comfortable they feel in the environment or whether they feel that the environment is supportive of teaching (Peterson & Skiba, 2001).

According to McEvoy (2000), school climate consists of attitudes, beliefs, values and norms that underlie the instructional practices, the level of academic achievement and the operation of a school.

Hernandez and Seem (2004) defined school climate in terms of its safeness. They stated that school climate refers to teachers' feelings of how safe their working environment (school) is, and identified three components which comprise a safe school, viz. context, psychosocial variables and school behaviour. These components are demonstrated in Figure 1. Context refers to the school atmosphere, individual members of the school community and their relationships within the school, as well as the societal influences. Psychosocial variables refer to all variables that may have an impact on the school climate, while the components of safe school affect the school member's behaviours and how they perceive the school.

Figure 1 A conceptualisation of school climate



(adapted from Hernandez & Seem, 2004: 258)

In examining school climate, two perspectives have been identified, namely, openness and health, (Hoy et al., 2003). Openness of school climate is about the nature of both teachers and principals' behaviour. An open school climate is based on respect, trust and honesty. A healthy school climate is characterised by positive students, positive teachers as well as interrelationships between students, teachers and school management. Hoy et al. (2003:38) indicated that "in healthy school climates, teachers believe in themselves and their students, and set high but achievable goals".

The four general dimensions of school climate that apprehend both openness and health were identified by Hoy et al. (2003). These dimensions are:

Environmental press – describes the relationship between the school and the community. It includes the extent to which parents and community interfere in the functioning of schools.

Collegial leadership – involves the relationship between the teachers and the principal, i.e. whether the principal treats his or her teachers as colleagues and set clear standards of performance.

Teacher professionalism – describes the relationship between teachers themselves. It is marked by respect for colleague competence, mutual cooperation and support.

Academic press – describes the relationship between the school and the students, i.e. how teachers and students strive for academic excellence.

In order to understand how the dimensions of school climate influence teachers' perceptions of their school climate and their performance, previous research on school climate will be reviewed below.

McEvoy (2000) indicated that previous research conducted in Michigan schools revealed that school climate factors accounted for 63% of the variation in mean school achievement between low and high achieving schools. He however criticised the findings by indicating that other factors such as students' readiness for education might have accounted for the results. This implies that students' commitment to their studies could explain the differing matric success rates in different schools. To account for this, students' readiness for education constitutes part of the subscale or dimension used to measure organisational climate in the current study (i.e. achievement press).

Hoy et al. (2003) measured the climate of 97 high schools in Ohio. The aim of their study was to measure the relationship between organisational climate and faculty trust. The schools were diverse in terms of geographic areas, i.e. urban, sub-urban and rural schools. The design of the study was quantitative. The Organisational Climate Index was used to measure four general dimensions of school climate. The four dimensions were institutional vulnerability, collegial leadership, professional teacher behaviour, and achievement press. The

research findings indicated that achievement press as one of climate characteristics promotes trust in parents and students, which leads to higher commitment to achievement excellence. They also discovered that when students, teachers and the school value academic achievement, press for high standards and improvement was high.

In South Africa, Van Zyl & Pietersen (1999) investigated the effect of organisational climate on secondary school teachers' levels of stress. A self-evaluation questionnaire was used to collect data. The Psychological (Work) Climate Questionnaire was used to measure eight dimensions of school climate, namely; autonomy, cohesion, trust, pressure, support, recognition, innovation and fairness. The findings showed that an atmosphere of inadequate autonomy, inadequate recognition and limited opportunities to be innovative exist within the teachers' working environment, and that they relate to high levels of stress. Van Zyl and Pietersen (1999) concluded that a supportive working climate should be implemented in the schools so as to reduce the levels of stress experienced by teachers.

The literature just review revealed that school climate may influence the performance of teachers as well as that of students. It appears that creating a supportive working climate could be a vehicle for achieving high academic standards. This means that understanding the climates of schools with different

success rates may help in uncovering the experiences leading to poor pass rates.

The last variable that may perhaps help in uncovering the reason behind differing success rates is professional commitment, and it will now be discussed.

2.5 Professional Commitment

Brooks and Swailes (2002) define professional commitment as the strength of a person's identification and involvement with a particular job. Professional commitment is regarded as something that determines whether a person will leave or remain in a particular profession. Professional commitment is of importance as it is associated with greater job effort and involvement, i.e. committed employees are less likely to leave their position and display other withdrawal behaviour such as absenteeism (Singh & Billingsley, 1998).

For example, Brooks and Swailes (2000) conducted research on nurses' commitment and discovered that nurses with high levels of professional commitment were seeking other posts similar to their profession, even though they were dissatisfied with their shift patterns. This shows that the level of employees' commitment to their occupation can influence their attachment to their occupation, which may influence their performance.

According to Meyer and Allen (1997), the three dimensions that form organisational commitment can also apply to occupational (professional) commitment. These three dimensions are affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment. These dimensions are outlined below.

Affective commitment

Affective commitment refers to the employees' emotional attachment to his or her occupation. Employees with stronger affective occupational commitment remain in their occupations because they want to. This implies that employees have passion for their profession.

Normative commitment

Normative commitment reflects feelings of obligation to continue with your profession. Those with stronger normative remain because they feel they ought to.

Continuance commitment

This refers to an awareness of the costs associated with leaving the profession, such as difficulty in getting another job. The employees with stronger continuance remain in their occupations because they need to.

The three dimensions discussed above are regarded as important because they can influence an employee's performance as well as his or her likelihood of remaining in his or her profession. The current study focuses on commitment of teachers to their profession and the literature on teacher commitment will be discussed below.

2.6 Teacher Commitment

Meyer and Allen (1997) define teacher commitment as a psychological state that characterise a teacher's relationship with his or her profession, and has implications for the decision to remain involved with it. Teachers' commitment is regarded as a power or quality needed to approach stress and change. It includes factors such as honesty, responsibility, and tolerance for fallibility, (Claxton 1989).

In understanding teacher commitment, Shen (1998) grouped teachers into three categories, and these categories are; stayers, movers and leavers. Stayers refer

to the teachers who are happy with their jobs and are willing to remain at their schools. Movers are those who like their profession but are unwilling to continue working at their current schools, while leavers are those who want to leave the teaching profession.

According to Hausman & Goldring (2001) teacher commitment is central in improving teacher performance and student learning, and to reducing teacher turnover or intentions to leave the profession. They conducted a study on teacher commitment in the United States. It was aimed at comparing levels of teachers' commitment in magnet (i.e. schools which have teachers who chose where they want to work) and non-magnet schools (i.e. schools with teachers who were assigned). The two schools were matched based on race. The research design was quantitative as surveys were distributed to the participants. The results showed that magnet teachers rated their commitment higher than their peers in non-magnet schools. The magnet schools were characterised by higher levels of teacher autonomy, while the non-magnet teachers reported greater goal congruence. The results showed that teachers had lower commitment in non-magnet schools serving higher proportions of poor students. These results show that teachers' level of professional commitment can be influenced by the nature or type of school they work for.

According to Travers and Cooper (1996), teacher commitment may be reduced by the stress they experience, which may lead to withdrawal from teaching as a

response to stress. This withdrawal includes absenteeism, early retirement and intention to leave the profession. Wesnar (2002) suggested that examining specific factors contributing to teachers continued commitment to their profession can help in understanding how they stay alive in their profession. Committed teachers are regarded as having strong psychological ties to their school, their students or their subject area (Firestone & Pennell, 1993). It has already been indicated that teacher commitment may improve teacher performance and student learning, but very little research appears to have been undertaken on teacher commitment in South Africa. By investigating teacher commitment, some of the reasons for the differences between schools with differing success rates may be learned.

Taking into consideration the literature just reviewed and the objectives of the current study as stated in chapter 1, the research questions guiding this study were formulated and they are outlined below.

2.7 Research Questions

The following questions are addressed in this study:

1. Do teachers from the schools with different matric success rates perceive same sources of stress?
2. Are teachers in schools with different matric pass rates experiencing the

same levels of stress?

3. Is there any difference between teachers' perceptions of the school climate in schools with different pass rates?
4. Do teachers in schools with different matric success rates differ in terms of their levels of professional commitment?

2. 8 Rationale

Education is regarded as an important weapon to gain skills and knowledge, and therefore anything that could lead to teachers' lack of productivity need to be addressed. Occupational stress, school climate and professional commitment are some of the variables identified from the literature just reviewed as having an influence on teachers' performance or productivity. Therefore the aim of the current study was to investigate teacher stress, commitment and school climate in schools with different matric success rates. In the following section, the methodology used in this study will be presented.

Chapter 3

3. Methodology

In discussing the methodology used to investigate teachers in different schools, five areas will be covered, namely research design, sample, procedure, data collection and data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

The research approach used in this study is quantitative. Babbie and Mouton (2001) define quantitative research as the numerical presentation and manipulation of observations for the purpose of describing and explaining the phenomena that those observations reflect. The current study is regarded as quantitative because the researcher has assigned numbers to observations, data was produced by counting and measuring the variables under study and statistics were used to infer the meanings that lay hidden within the data (Leedy, 1993).

3.2 Sample

Teachers in four high schools with different matric success rates at Bohlabele District's circuit constituted the sample. The chosen education circuit comprises 12 high schools. A list of high schools rated according to their recent matric results was used to select the two schools with excellent pass rates, and two schools which produced pass rates of 100% were chosen from the list. The same

list was used to select schools with poor matric results. Four schools at the bottom of the list, with less than 25% pass rates were matched against the two schools which performed well. The process of matching was based on the availability of resources or equipment such as computers, libraries and text books. Two bottom schools which best matched the schools with excellent pass rates were selected. The reason for the matching process was to make a comparison between schools which have more or less similar settings and equipments. For example, all four schools chosen have one computer in their possession and no libraries.

The sampling technique used for this study was non-probability sampling. All the teachers who volunteered to participate in this study were included in the sample. This sampling technique was chosen with ethical considerations of not forcing people to participate in the research against their will. The response rates differ between the schools with different matric success rates. The schools which produced excellent results had higher response rates ($N = 46$), i.e. 80% and 100%, than the schools with poor success rates ($N = 33$), i.e. 63.6% and 76%. Table 3.1 provides summary information on total sample as well as response rate of each school. School type 1 represents schools with poor matric pass rates while school type 2 represents schools with good results.

The four high schools studied offer similar subjects. These subjects are biology, life orientation, technology, arts and culture, human and social science, English,

Afrikaans, Vernacular, physical science, mathematics, mathematic literacy and mathematical science, business economics, economics, accounting, history, geography and agricultural science. All four schools were dominated by male teachers, with little difference in terms of average age of teachers. Table 3.2 provides a summary description of the sample.

3.3 Procedure

Upon receiving a letter of request, the Limpopo Department of Education granted permission to conduct this study in one of Bohlabele District's circuit. The researcher got access to the list of all high schools falling under the chosen circuit, rated according to their recent matric pass rates. Presentations were then made in each of the school selected, a week before school winter break. The researcher informed teachers about the nature and purpose of the study as well as letting them know that participating in the study was completely voluntary. After the presentation, the questionnaires were distributed among teachers in each school and the teachers were requested to seal their completed questionnaires inside the envelopes provided, and deposit them into sealed boxes the researcher left with each school's secretary. The reason for distributing the questionnaires before schools' winter break was to give teachers opportunity to complete the questionnaires in their own pace and time. The boxes were collected two weeks after schools' winter break. After collecting all the questionnaires, the responses were entered into a data base. The questionnaires

were locked in a safe place until analyses were performed. After the analyses, the questionnaires were destroyed.

Table 3.1 Sample and response rate

School	School type	Sample total	Respondents total	response rate
1	1	22	14	63.6%
2	1	25	19	76%
3	2	25	20	80%
4	2	26	26	100%
Total		98	79	

Table 3.2 Biographical description of the sample

SCHOOL	1 (N=14)	N	2 (N=19)	N	3 (N=20)	N	4 (N=26)	N
SCHOOL TYPE	1		1		2		2	
AGE	41.21		37.05		38.40		38.11	
Mean								
SD	10.10		7.23		6.60		6.93	
Range	28 -61		28 -54		31 -56		28 -54	
GENDER	57.1%	8	78.9%	13	65%	13	53.8%	14
Male								
Female	42.9%	6	21%	6	35%	7	46.2%	12
MARITAL STATUS	28.6%	3	73.7%	14	40%	8	46.2%	12
Single								
Married	71.4%	11	21%	4	55%	11	42.3%	11
Divorced	--	0	5.3%	1	5%	1	11.5%	3
HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION	28.6%	4	42.1%	8	35%	7	38.5%	10
Postmatric Diploma								
B. Degree	64.3%	9	47.4%	9	50%	10	42.3%	11
Postgraduate qualification	7.1%	1	10.5%	2	15%	3	19.2%	5
LENGTH OF SERVICE	--	0	5.3%	1	5%	1	23%	6
Less than 2 years								
2 – 6 years	7.1%	1	15.8%	3	20%	4	15.6%	4
7 – 11 years	21.5%	3	26.3%	5	35%	7	19.2%	5
12 – 16 years	35.7%	5	36.8%	7	20%	4	23%	6
More than 16 years	35.7%	5	15.8%	3	20%	4	19.2%	5
DURATION OF SERVICE IN THE CURRENT SCHOOL	--	0	21%	4	20%	4	30.8%	8
Less than 1 year								
1 – 4 years	35.8%	5	21%	4	20%	4	11.6%	3
5 – 8 years	--	0	15.8%	3	25%	5	19.2%	5
9 – 12 years	57.1%	8	42.2%	8	35%	7	19.2%	5
More than 12 years	7.1%	1	--	0	--	0	19.2%	5
NUMBER OF SUBJECTS PER TEACHER	57.2%	8	26.2%	5	45%	9	26.9%	7
1 subject								
2 subjects	35.7%	5	58%	11	45%	9	65.3%	17
3 subjects	7.1%	1	15.8%	3	10%	2	7.8%	2
AVERAGE NUMBER OF LEARNERS IN CLASS	44.2		70.6		66		73.9	
Mean								
Range	20 -56		32 -98		38 -99		38 -88	

3.4 Data collection

The technique used to collect data was a questionnaire. The questionnaire was chosen because of its relatively low cost, small biasing error, accessibility as well as anonymity (Frankhorst-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996). The questionnaire comprised of standardised measurement scales for occupational stress, professional commitment and school climate. A biographical blank was also included in the questionnaire with the aim of obtaining biographical details of the sample (Refer to Appendix B). The measuring instruments are presented below:

Measuring instruments

Stress

The Job Stress Survey (JSS) was used to measure the sources and levels of stress teachers were experiencing. The JSS assesses sources of work related stress for managerial, professional and clerical employees. The instrument was adopted from the police stress survey (PSS) and teacher stress survey (TSS) by Monteith, Smith and Marais (2001:89). It consists of 30-items rated on a scale from 1 to 9, in terms of the amount of work stress associated with the stressor as compared to a standard. A standard stressor has a rating of “5”, and intensity ratings greater or lower than “5” indicate more or less stress. For the purpose of

this study, a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (extremely not stressful) to 5 (extremely stressful) was used, and a standard stressor had a rating of “3”.

Commitment

The Teacher Commitment Questionnaire developed by Hausman & Goldring (2001) was used to determine the level of teachers' professional commitment. It consists of 3-items rated on 4-point scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The scale has an alpha coefficient of .74.

School Climate

The Organisational Climate Index developed by Hoy, Smith & Sweetland (2001) was used to measure the climate of the schools. The Questionnaire was developed from the Organisational Climate Description Questionnaire and the Organisational Health Inventory. It consists of 27-items, with four sub-scales, namely; institutional vulnerability, collegial leadership, professional teacher behaviour, and achievement press. It is a 5-point scale measure ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Each item consists of description of the property of school. Each sub-scale is defined below:

(i) Institutional Vulnerability is defined as the extent to which the school is susceptible to a few vocal parents and citizen groups. It consists of five items and it has an alpha coefficient of .87.

(ii) Collegial Leadership refers to the principal behaviour directed toward meeting both social needs of the school and achieving the goals of the school. It has seven items with an alpha coefficient of .94.

(iii) Professional Teacher Behaviour is marked by respect for colleague competence, commitment to students, autonomous judgement, and mutual cooperation and support of colleagues. This sub-scale has eight items and an alpha coefficient of .88.

(iv) Achievement Press describes a school that sets high but achievable standards and goals. There are seven items and an alpha coefficient of reliability is .92.

For the purpose of the current study, one sub-scale (i.e. institutional vulnerability) consisting of 5-items was excluded, as it is not relevant to the South African educational environment. This means that 3 sub-scales together comprising 22-items were used to measure the climate of the four schools.

3.5 Data analysis

Upon collecting all the questionnaires, data was entered into a data base and the SAS program was used to analyse the data. The collected data was analysed by employing descriptive and inferential statistics. Analyses were performed on both individual scores and school means. Descriptive statistics were used to incorporate the scales the teachers used when rating their perceptions according to each source of stress at school level. The reason was to provide a clear picture of how the teachers from different schools differ in terms of how they perceive potential stressors. The stress ratings of 1 and 2 were regarded as indicators of low stress, 3 indicates moderate (standard) stress, while the ratings of 4 and 5 indicate high stress. All the sources which have the mean intensity greater than “3” were regarded as potential stressors in such schools, while the factors with a mean intensity lower than “3” were not regarded as possible stressors (Montheith et al., 2001).

Descriptive statistics were also used to aggregate teachers' ratings of their levels of occupational stress and professional commitment at both individual and school level. The instrument used to measure school climate consisted of three subscales, namely collegial leadership, professional teacher behaviour and achievement press. Analyses were performed on each sub scale. Analyses were done at both individual and school levels.

Since the main objective of this study was to compare teacher stress, professional commitment and school climate in schools with different matric success rates, the individual responses aggregated for each instrument at the school level were again aggregated at the school type level. This means that the responses of the two schools with poor pass rates were combined together, and the same was done with regard to those schools with excellent pass rates. School type 1 represents the schools with poor pass rates while school type 2 represents the schools with good results. This was done in order to compare the means of the two school types in order to discover if there were any differences between the school types.

If any differences between the sample means exist, it is necessary to establish whether the differences are statistically significant. The statistical procedure used to test whether the observed differences between the means of the two school types were statistically significant was t-test for independent samples (means). T-test for independent samples (means) is used to compare means of two samples which are considered independent from one another (Martella, Nelson & Marchand-Martella, 1999). The next section will present the current research's results.

Chapter 4

4. Results

In presenting the results, the following sections will be covered: reliabilities, mean intensity and frequency distributions of stress sources, summary statistics, t-test results and correlations.

4.1 Reliabilities

The internal consistency reliabilities of the scales used in the study were tested. According to Murphy and Davidshofer (2001:118), internal consistency methods are used to “estimate the reliability of a test based solely on the number of items in the test, and the average intercorrelation among the test items”. The internal consistency measures for occupational stress, organisational climate dimensions (collegial leadership, professional teacher behaviour and achievement press), and professional commitment scales are demonstrated in Table 4.1. The internal consistency reliabilities for occupational stress, collegial leadership, professional teacher behaviour and achievement press are adequate. The occupational stress demonstrates an alpha coefficient of .78, .80 for collegial leadership, .77 for professional teacher behaviour and .81 for achievement press. The internal consistency reliability for professional commitment is very low, i.e. .45, and therefore the three items used to measure professional commitment were not combined into a single scale, but were analysed independently.

Table 4.1 Internal consistency reliabilities of occupational stress, collegial leadership, professional teacher behaviour and professional commitment

Variable	Number of items	N	Alpha
Occupational stress	30	79	0.78
Collegial leadership	7	79	0.80
Professional teacher behaviour	8	79	0.77
Achievement Press	7	79	0.81
Professional commitment	3	79	0.45

4.2 Mean intensity and frequency distributions of stress sources

The mean intensity of stressful work-related events reported by the teachers in each school was used to determine the factors perceived as being stressful at school level. The mean intensity of each source was compared to a standard (moderate) stressor which has a rating of “3”. This means that all stressors which have a mean intensity greater than “3,” were regarded as teachers’ stressors for such school, and stressors which have a mean intensity less than “3” were not regarded as perceived stressors (Monteith et al., 2001). The work-related events (stressors) which have mean of 4.0 and above were considered highly stressful factors, while a mean between 3 and 4 indicate stressful work-related factors. All

the stressors which have a mean below 3 were not considered as perceived stressors by the teachers.

Table 4.2 displays the mean intensity and frequency distribution for school 1, Table 4.3 for school 2, Table 4.4 for school 3 and Table 4.5 for school 4. The instrument used to measure stress consists of 30 questions, and each question represents each source. This means that stress 1 – stress 30 refers to the sources identified from question 1 – question 30. As demonstrated in Table 4.2, the following stressors were perceived as being highly stressful by teachers in school 1 because they have a mean of 4 and above, and they were reported by more than 70% teachers ; stress3 (lack of opportunity for advancement), stress5 (colleagues not doing their work), stress6 (inadequate support by staff members), stress8 (lack of recognition for good work), stress17 (personal insults from colleagues), stress19 (inadequate salary), stress22 (noisy work area), stress25 (excessive paper work), stress28 (poorly motivated colleagues) as well as stress29 (covering for other teachers). Stress2 (working overtime), stress12 (periods of inactivity) and stress13 (difficulty in getting along with colleagues) were not perceived as stressful because their mean intensity is less than 3. The other sources are perceived as stressful but not highly stressful because their mean intensity is greater than 3 but less than 4.

Table 4.3, demonstrates that stress18 (lack of participation in policy making) and stress19 (inadequate salary) were perceived as being highly stressful by

teachers in school 2, i.e. they have a mean of 4.0 and above and they were reported by more than 70% teachers. Stress26 (meeting deadlines) is the only work-related event which was perceived as not stressful by the teachers in school 2, because it is the only source with less than “3” mean intensity. The other sources are perceived as stressful but not highly stressful because their mean intensity is greater than 3 but less than 4.

As shown in Table 4.4, the stress19 (inadequate salary) is the only source perceived as highly stressful by teachers in school 3, and was reported by 80% teachers. Stress8 (lack of recognition for good work), stress12 (periods of inactivity), stress13 (difficulty in getting along with colleagues), stress16 (making critical on the spot decisions), stress21 (poor or inadequate supervision), stress29 (poorly motivated colleagues) and stress30 (conflicts with other departments) were perceived as not stressful by the teachers in school 3.

Table 4.5 indicates that stress19 (inadequate salary) is the only source perceived as highly stressful by school 4 teachers, while only two sources were perceived as not stressful, viz. stress9 (performing tasks not in the job description) and stress13 (difficulty in getting along with colleagues). The other sources are perceived as stressful but not highly stressful.

Comparison of sources of stress among teachers in the two school types (i.e. between schools with poor results and schools with good results) were made, and are illustrated in Tables 4.6 and 4.7. The teachers from the both two school

types perceived similar stressors. All work-related factors included in the stress questionnaire, (i.e. stress1 – stress30) were reported as stressful by the teachers from school type 1 because they all have a mean intensity greater than 3. The teachers in school type 2 also perceived all factors as stressful except for stress12 (periods of inactivity) and stress13 (difficulty in getting along with colleagues), which have a mean intensity less than 3.

Table 4.2 Mean intensity and frequency distribution of school 1's stress sources

Stress Int.	Source	Max.	Mean	Min.	Low		Moderate		High	
					N	%	N	%	N	%
Stress1		5.00	3.29	2.00	3	21.43%	5	35.71%	6	42.86%
Stress2		5.00	2.92	1.00	7	50%	1	7.14%	6	42.86%
Stress3		5.00	4.28	3.00	0	0	2	14.28%	12	85.72%
Stress4		5.00	3.07	1.00	4	28.56%	6	42.86%	4	28.58%
Stress5		5.00	4.42	4.00	0	0	0	0	14	100%
Stress6		5.00	4.14	3.00	0	0	4	28.57%	10	71.43%
Stress7		5.00	2.71	3.00	0	0	5	35.71%	9	64.29%
Stress8		5.00	4.00	1.00	1	7.14%	2	14.29%	11	78.57%
Stress9		4.00	3.07	2.00	7	50%	4	28.57	3	21.43%
Stress10		5.00	2.85	2.00	2	14.29	4	28.57	8	57.14%
Stress11		5.00	2.78	1.00	4	28.58%	5	35.71%	5	35.71%
Stress12		5.00	3.93	1.00	6	42.86%	4	28.57%	4	28.57%
Stress13		4.00	3.64	1.00	5	35.72%	4	28.57%	5	35.71%
Stress14		5.00	3.43	2.00	1	7.14%	4	28.57%	9	64.29%
Stress15		5.00	3.64	3.00	0	0	7	50%	7	50%
Stress16		4.00	3.42	2.00	2	14.29%	4	28.57%	8	57.14%
Stress17		5.00	4.36	3.00	0	0	2	14.28%	12	85.72%
Stress18		5.00	3.71	1.00	2	14.29%	4	28.57%	8	57.14%
Stress19		5.00	4.79	3.00	0	0	1	7.14%	13	82.86%
Stress20		5.00	3.07	1.00	5	35.72%	3	21.42%	6	42.86%
Stress21		5.00	3.42	1.00	4	28.57%	2	14.29%	8	57.14%
Stress22		5.00	4.14	1.00	1	7.14%	1	7.14%	12	85.72%
Stress23		5.00	3.42	1.00	3	21.43%	4	28.57%	7	50%
Stress24		5.00	3.42	1.00	3	21.43%	3	21.43	8	57.14%
Stress25		5.00	4.07	2.00	1	7.14%	1	7.14%	12	85.72%
Stress26		5.00	3.50	1.00	3	21.43%	3	21.43%	8	57.14%
Stress27		5.00	3.29	1.00	4	28.57%	3	21.43%	7	50%
Stress28		5.00	4.14	2.00	1	7.14%	1	7.14%	12	85.72%
Stress29		5.00	4.36	3.00	0	0	1	7.14%	13	92.86%
Stress30		5.00	3.29	1.00	2	14.29%	6	42.85%	6	42.86%

Stress Int. = Stress intensity, Source = Sources of stress, Max. = Maximum, Min = Minimum, N = Frequency, % = percentage

Table 4.3 Mean intensity and frequency distribution of school 2's stress sources

Stress Int.	Source	Max.	Mean	Min.	Low		Moderate		High	
					N	%	N	%	N	%
Stress1		5.00	3.68	2.00	2	10.52%	7	36.84%	10	52.63%
Stress2		5.00	3.68	2.00	2	10.53%	6	31.58%	11	57.89%
Stress3		5.00	4.00	3.00	0	0	4	21.05%	15	78.95%
Stress4		5.00	3.52	2.00	3	15.79%	7	36.84%	9	47.37%
Stress5		5.00	3.63	2.00	4	21.05%	4	21.05%	11	57.89%
Stress6		5.00	3.79	2.00	2	5.26%	7	36.84%	11	57.89%
Stress7		5.00	3.42	1.00	4	21.05%	5	26.32%	10	52.63%
Stress8		5.00	3.79	2.00	2	10.52%	4	21.05%	13	68.42%
Stress9		5.00	3.42	1.00	3	15.79%	7	36.84%	9	47.37%
Stress10		5.00	3.89	2.00	1	5.26%	6	31.58%	12	63.16%
Stress11		5.00	3.37	1.00	2	10.52%	9	47.37%	8	42.11%
Stress12		5.00	3.26	1.00	6	31.58%	3	15.79%	10	52.63%
Stress13		5.00	3.47	1.00	5	26.32%	3	15.79%	11	57.89%
Stress14		5.00	3.58	1.00	4	21.05%	3	15.79%	12	63.16%
Stress15		5.00	3.84	2.00	2	10.52%	4	21.05%	13	68.42%
Stress16		5.00	3.31	1.00	4	21.05%	7	36.84%	8	42.11%
Stress17		5.00	3.58	1.00	4	21.05%	4	21.05%	11	57.89%
Stress18		5.00	4.00	2.00	1	5.26%	5	26.32%	13	68.42%
Stress19		5.00	4.42	2.00	1	5.26%	1	5.26%	17	89.48%
Stress20		5.00	3.10	1.00	5	26.32%	6	31.57%	8	42.11%
Stress21		5.00	4.00	2.00	1	5.26%	3	15.79%	15	78.94%
Stress22		5.00	3.95	2.00	1	5.26%	5	26.32%	13	68.42%
Stress23		5.00	3.68	2.00	2	10.53%	4	21.05%	13	68.42%
Stress24		4.00	3.11	1.00	6	31.58%	3	15.79%	13	68.42%
Stress25		5.00	3.26	1.00	3	15.78%	8	42.11%	8	42.11%
Stress26		4.00	2.73	1.00	7	36.84%	7	36.84%	5	26.32%
Stress27		5.00	3.33	1.00	3	15.79%	7	36.84%	9	47.37%
Stress28		5.00	3.47	1.00	4	21.05%	4	21.05%	11	57.89%
Stress29		5.00	3.89	2.00	1	5.26%	6	31.58%	12	63.16%
Stress30		5.00	3.37	1.00	6	31.58%	1	5.26%	12	63.16%

Stress Int. = Stress intensity, Source = Sources of stress, Max. = Maximum, Min = Minimum, N = Frequency, % = percentage

Table 4.4 Mean intensity and frequency distribution of school 3's stress sources

Stress Int.	Source	Max.	Mean	Min.	Low		Moderate		High	
					N	%	N	%	N	%
Stress1		5.00	3.55	2.00	3	15%	6	30%	11	55%
Stress2		5.00	3.35	2.00	2	10%	10	50%	8	40%
Stress3		5.00	3.65	2.00	1	5%	10	50%	9	45%
Stress4		4.00	3.35	2.00	3	15%	7	35%	10	50%
Stress5		5.00	3.65	2.00	1	5%	7	35%	12	60%
Stress6		5.00	3.40	2.00	3	15%	8	40%	9	45%
Stress7		5.00	3.60	2.00	2	10%	7	35%	11	55%
Stress8		5.00	2.75	1.00	7	35%	10	50%	3	15%
Stress9		5.00	3.40	2.00	4	20%	6	30%	10	50%
Stress10		5.00	4.00	2.00	3	15%	3	15%	14	70%
Stress11		5.00	3.05	2.00	4	20%	12	60%	4	20%
Stress12		4.00	2.85	1.00	5	25%	11	55%	4	20%
Stress13		5.00	2.75	1.00	11	55%	3	15%	6	30%
Stress14		5.00	3.00	1.00	6	30%	9	45%	5	25%
Stress15		5.00	3.05	1.00	6	30%	9	45%	5	25%
Stress16		5.00	2.90	1.00	6	30%	9	45%	5	25%
Stress17		5.00	3.20	2.00	6	30%	5	25%	9	45%
Stress18		5.00	3.25	1.00	5	25%	6	30%	9	45%
Stress19		5.00	4.25	2.00	1	5%	3	15%	16	80%
Stress20		5.00	3.25	1.00	4	20%	9	45%	7	35%
Stress21		4.00	2.85	2.00	8	40%	7	35%	2	25%
Stress22		5.00	3.15	2.00	6	30%	6	30%	8	40%
Stress23		5.00	3.00	2.00	7	35%	7	35%	6	30%
Stress24		5.00	3.05	1.00	7	35%	6	30%	7	35%
Stress25		5.00	3.20	2.00	3	15%	11	55%	6	30%
Stress26		5.00	3.40	2.00	1	5%	11	55%	8	40%
Stress27		5.00	3.45	2.00	2	10%	8	40%	10	50%
Stress28		5.00	3.25	2.00	2	10%	12	60%	6	30%
Stress29		5.00	3.90	1.00	6	30%	10	50%	4	20%
Stress30		5.00	2.95	1.00	8	40%	5	25%	7	35%

Stress Int. = Stress intensity, Source = Sources of stress, Max. = Maximum, Min = Minimum, N = Frequency, % = percentage

Table 4.5 Mean intensity and frequency distribution of school 4's stress sources

Stress Int.	Source	Max.	Mean	Min.	Low		Moderate		High	
					N	%	N	%	N	%
Stress1		5.00	3.42	1.00	3	11.54%	10	38.46%	13	50%
Stress2		5.00	3.35	1.00	4	15.39%	10	38.46%	12	46.15%
Stress3		5.00	3.38	1.00	7	26.93%	5	19.23%	14	53.84%
Stress4		5.00	3.38	2.00	6	23.08%	10	38.46%	10	38.46%
Stress5		5.00	3.77	2.00	5	19.23%	5	19.23%	16	61.54%
Stress6		5.00	3.65	2.00	2	7.69%	8	30.77%	16	61.54%
Stress7		5.00	3.46	2.00	4	15.38%	10	38.47%	12	46.15%
Stress8		5.00	3.57	1.00	4	15.38%	7	26.93%	15	57.69%
Stress9		5.00	2.96	1.00	9	34.61%	10	38.46%	7	26.93%
Stress10		4.00	3.12	2.00	7	26.92%	9	34.62%	10	38.46%
Stress11		4.00	3.12	2.00	6	23.08%	11	42.31%	9	34.62%
Stress12		5.00	3.00	1.00	9	34.61%	7	26.92	10	38.46%
Stress13		5.00	2.96	1.00	10	38.46%	5	19.23%	11	42.31%
Stress14		5.00	3.46	1.00	4	15.39%	9	34.61%	13	50%
Stress15		5.00	3.38	1.00	4	15.39%	10	38.46%	12	46.15%
Stress16		5.00	3.46	2.00	3	11.54%	12	46.15%	11	42.31%
Stress17		5.00	3.27	1.00	8	30.77%	4	15.38%	14	53.84%
Stress18		5.00	3.03	1.00	10	38.46%	6	23.08%	10	38.46%
Stress19		5.00	4.00	1.00	3	11.54%	4	15.39%	19	73.07%
Stress20		5.00	3.27	1.00	5	19.23%	8	30.77	13	50%
Stress21		5.00	3.35	1.00	6	23.08%	9	34.61%	11	42.31%
Stress22		5.00	3.77	2.00	4	15.39%	7	26.92%	15	57.69%
Stress23		5.00	3.62	2.00	3	11.54%	7	26.92%	16	61.54%
Stress24		5.00	3.38	1.00	5	19.23%	9	34.62%	12	46.15%
Stress25		5.00	3.04	1.00	9	34.62%	8	30.77%	9	34.62%
Stress26		5.00	3.42	1.00	5	19.23%	6	23.08%	15	57.69%
Stress27		5.00	3.27	1.00	4	15.38%	11	42.31%	11	42.31%
Stress28		5.00	3.23	1.00	7	26.92%	7	26.92%	12	46.15%
Stress29		5.00	3.58	1.00	7	26.92%	4	15.38%	15	57.69%
Stress30		5.00	3.27	1.00	6	23.08%	9	34.61%	11	42.31%

Stress Int. = Stress intensity, Source = Sources of stress, Max. = Maximum, Min = Minimum, N = Frequency, % = percentage

Table 4.6 Mean intensity and frequency distribution of school type 1's stress sources

Stress Int.	Source	Max.	Mean	Min.	Low		Moderate		High	
					N	%	%	%	N	%
Stress1		5.00	3.52	2.00	5	15.15%	12	36.36%	16	48.48%
Stress2		5.00	3.36	1.00	9	27.27%	7	21.21%	17	51.51%
Stress3		5.00	4.09	3.00	0	0%	6	18.18%	27	81.81%
Stress4		5.00	3.27	1.00	7	21.21%	13	39.39%	13	39.39%
Stress5		5.00	3.97	2.00	4	12.12%	4	12.12%	25	75.75%
Stress6		5.00	3.94	2.00	2	6.06%	11	33.33%	22	66.66%
Stress7		5.00	3.64	1.00	4	12.12%	10	30.30%	19	57.57%
Stress8		5.00	3.94	1.00	3	9.09%	6	18.18%	24	72.72%
Stress9		5.00	3.12	1.00	10	30.30%	11	33.33%	12	36.36%
Stress10		5.00	3.82	2.00	3	9.09%	10	30.30%	20	60.60%
Stress11		5.00	3.25	1.00	6	18.18%	14	42.42%	13	39.39%
Stress12		5.00	3.09	1.00	12	36.36%	7	21.21%	14	42.42%
Stress13		5.00	3.18	1.00	10	30.30%	7	21.21%	16	48.48%
Stress14		5.00	3.73	1.00	5	15.15%	7	21.21%	21	63.63%
Stress15		5.00	3.76	2.00	2	6.06%	11	33.33%	20	60.60%
Stress16		5.00	3.37	1.00	6	18.19%	11	33.33%	16	48.48%
Stress17		5.00	3.91	1.00	4	12.12%	6	18.18%	23	69.69%
Stress18		5.00	3.88	1.00	10	9.09%	9	27.27%	21	63.63%
Stress19		5.00	3.58	2.00	3	3.03%	2	6.06%	30	90.90%
Stress20		5.00	3.09	1.00	1	30.30%	9	27.27%	14	42.42%
Stress21		5.00	3.73	1.00	5	15.15%	5	15.15%	23	69.69%
Stress22		5.00	4.03	1.00	2	6.06%	6	18.18%	25	75.75%
Stress23		5.00	3.58	1.00	5	15.15%	8	24.24%	20	60.60%
Stress24		5.00	3.24	1.00	9	27.27%	6	18.18%	21	63.63%
Stress25		5.00	3.61	1.00	4	12.12%	9	27.27%	20	60.60%
Stress26		5.00	3.06	1.00	10	30.30%	10	30.30%	13	39.39%
Stress27		5.00	3.31	1.00	7	21.12%	10	30.30%	16	48.48%
Stress28		5.00	3.76	1.00	5	15.15%	5	15.15%	23	69.69%
Stress29		5.00	4.09	1.00	1	3.03%	7	21.21%	25	75.75%
Stress30		5.00	3.33	1.00	8	24.24%	7	21.21%	18	54.54%

Stress Int. = Stress intensity, Source = Sources of stress, Max. = Maximum, Min = Minimum, N = Frequency, % = percentage

Table 4.7 Mean intensity and frequency distribution of school type 2's stress sources

Stress Int.	Source	Max.	Mean	Min.	Low		Moderate		High	
					N	%	N	%	N	%
Stress1		5.00	3.48	1.00	6	13.04%	16	34.78%	24	52.17%
Stress2		5.00	3.35	1.00	6	13.04%	20	43.48%	20	43.48%
Stress3		5.00	3.50	1.00	8	17.39%	15	32.60%	23	50%
Stress4		5.00	3.37	2.00	9	19.56%	17	36.95%	20	43.48%
Stress5		5.00	3.72	2.00	6	13.04%	12	26.09%	28	60.87%
Stress6		5.00	3.54	2.00	5	10.87%	16	34.78%	25	54.35%
Stress7		5.00	3.46	2.00	6	13.04%	17	36.95%	23	50%
Stress8		5.00	3.52	1.00	11	23.91%	17	36.95%	18	39.13%
Stress9		5.00	3.22	1.00	13	28.26%	16	34.78%	17	36.95%
Stress10		4.00	3.34	2.00	10	21.73%	12	26.09%	24	52.17%
Stress11		4.00	3.09	2.00	10	21.73%	23	50%	13	28.26%
Stress12		5.00	2.93	1.00	14	30.43%	18	39.13%	14	30.43%
Stress13		5.00	2.87	1.00	21	45.65%	8	17.39%	17	36.95%
Stress14		5.00	3.26	1.00	10	21.73%	18	39.13%	18	39.13%
Stress15		5.00	3.24	1.00	10	21.73%	19	41.30%	17	36.95%
Stress16		5.00	3.22	2.00	9	19.56%	21	45.65%	16	34.78%
Stress17		5.00	3.24	1.00	14	30.43%	9	19.56%	23	50%
Stress18		5.00	3.13	1.00	15	32.60%	12	26.09%	19	41.30%
Stress19		5.00	4.00	1.00	4	8.69%	7	15.21%	35	76.09%
Stress20		5.00	3.26	1.00	9	19.56%	17	36.95%	20	43.48%
Stress21		5.00	3.13	1.00	14	30.43%	16	34.78%	13	28.26%
Stress22		5.00	3.50	2.00	10	21.73%	13	28.26%	23	50%
Stress23		5.00	3.35	2.00	10	21.73%	14	30.43%	32	69.57%
Stress24		5.00	3.24	1.00	12	26.09%	15	32.60%	19	41.30
Stress25		5.00	3.41	1.00	12	26.09%	19	41.30%	15	32.60%
Stress26		5.00	3.35	1.00	6	13.04%	17	36.95%	23	50%
Stress27		5.00	3.34	1.00	6	13.04%	19	41.30%	21	45.65%
Stress28		5.00	3.24	1.00	9	19.56%	19	41.30%	18	39.13%
Stress29		5.00	3.28	1.00	13	28.26%	14	30.43%	19	41.30%
Stress30		5.00	3.13	1.00	14	30.43%	9	19.56%	18	39.13%

Stress Int. = Stress intensity, Source = Sources of stress, Max. = Maximum, Min = Minimum, N = Frequency, % = percentage

4.3 Summary statistics

Summary statistics at school level

Summary statistics were performed to calculate the measures of central tendency of occupational stress, professional commitment and organisational climate at school level. Table 4.8 illustrates the summary statistics of school 1, Table 4.9 of school 2, Table 4.10 of school 3, and Table 4.7 of school 4. The results show a little difference between the extent to which teachers from the four schools experience stress, school 1 and school 2 demonstrated a higher level of occupational stress than school 3 and school 4. School 1's occupational stress indicates a mean of 109.35 and school 2's has a mean of 107.21, while occupational stress level of school 3 and school 4 demonstrate a mean of 97.15 and 100.46 respectively. The organisational climate results reveal the differences in terms of the way teachers from the four schools perceived their school climate. School 2 reported collegial leadership, as one of organisational climate subscale, less favourably ($M = 20.42$) than the other three schools. The collegial leadership mean scores for the other schools are 24.56 for school 1, 26.50 for school 3 and 26.96 for school 4. Professional teacher behaviour's results demonstrate that school 1 ($M = 22.64$) and school 2 ($M = 20.68$) perceived teacher behaviour less favourably than school 3 ($M = 25.61$) and school 4 ($M = 27.50$). The results for achievement press are 18.14 for school 1, 16.89 for school 2, 25.60 for school 3, and 24.53 for school 4. The four schools' teachers also differ in terms of their professional commitment levels. In school 1, item1 of professional commitment has a mean of 2.43; item2 has 2.79, while item 3 has a mean of 1.42. In school 2, item1 of professional commitment has a mean of 2.73; item2 has 2.47, while item 3 has a mean of 2.10. In school 3, item1 of professional commitment has a mean of 3.50; item2 has 3.05, while item 3 has a mean of 2.65. In school 4, item1 of professional commitment has a mean of 3.15; item2 has 3.19, while item 3 has a mean of 2.65.

Table 4.8 Summary statistics of school 1

Variable	No. of items	N	Maximum	Minimum	Mean	Median	SD
Occupational stress	30	14	127.0	90.00	109.35	109.5	10.85
Collegial leadership	7	14	35.00	14.00	24.57	24.00	5.15
Professional teacher behaviour	8	14	34.00	14.00	22.64	23.00	5.01
Achievement press	7	14	29.00	10.00	18.14	18.00	5.46
Professional commitment	3						
Item 1		14	4.00	1.00	2.43	2.50	1.08
Item 2		14	4.00	1.00	2.79	2.80	1.05
Item 3		14	4.00	1.00	1.42	1.50	0.64

Table 4.9 Summary statistics of school 2

Variable	No. of items	N	Maximum	Minimum	Mean	Median	SD
Occupational stress	30	19	139.0	81.00	107.21	112.0	13.85
Collegial leadership	7	19	28.00	11.00	20.42	22.00	5.25
Professional teacher behaviour	8	19	29.00	11.00	20.68	20.00	4.46
Achievement press	7	19	28.00	7.00	16.89	16.00	5.30
Professional commitment	3						
Item 1		19	4.00	1.00	2.73	2.75	0.99
Item 2		19	4.00	1.00	2.47	2.50	0.90
Item 3		19	4.00	1.00	2.10	2.10	0.94

Table 4.10 Summary statistics of school 3

Variable	No of items	N	Maximum	Minimum	Mean	Median	SD
Occupational stress	30	20	120.0	85.00	97.15	97.00	7.63
Collegial leadership	7	20	30.00	24.00	26.50	27.00	1.82
Professional teacher behaviour	8	20	32.00	24.00	27.50	27.00	2.06
Achievement press	7	20	31.00	18.00	25.60	25.00	3.09
Professional commitment	3						
Item 1		20	4.00	1.00	3.50	3.50	0.82
Item 2		20	4.00	1.00	3.05	3.00	0.68
Item3		20	4.00	1.00	2.65	2.50	0.67

Table 4.11 Summary statistics of school 4

Variable	No. of items	N	Maximum	Mean	Minimum	SD	Median
Occupational stress	30	26	122.0	100.46	82.00	11.17	97.00
Collegial leadership	7	26	33.00	26.96	16.00	4.13	27.5
Professional teacher behaviour	8	26	34.00	25.61	17.00	3.81	26.00
Achievement press	7	26	30.00	24.53	12.00	4.47	26.00
Professional commitment	3						
Item 1		26	4.00	3.15	1.00	1.00	3.15
Item 2		26	4.00	3.19	1.00	0.74	3.2
Item 3		26	4.00	2.65	1.00	1.01	2.50

4.4 T-test results

To establish whether differences between schools with poor matric success rates and schools with excellent success rates were significant, t-tests were performed at school type level. School type 1 represents the schools with poor matric results while; school type 2 represents schools with good matric results. Table 4.12 presents the t-test results of the three variables under study. The t-test results indicate significant differences ($p < 0.0001$) between the two school types' organisational climate dimensions, i.e. collegial leadership, professional teacher behaviour and achievement press, as well as between the two school types' level of professional commitment, i.e. for each item of professional commitment.

The results on organisational climate show that teachers from school type 2 perceived their school climate more positively than those from school type 1. The mean scores for dimension of organisational climate in school 1 are as follows: 22.18 for collegial leadership, 21.51 for professional teacher behaviour and 17.42 for achievement press, while mean scores for school type 2 are 26.76, 26.43 and 25.02 in the same order. The professional commitment results at school type level reveal that teachers from school type 2 have a high level of commitment ($M = 3.40$ for item 1; $M = 3.13$ for item 2 and $M = 2.65$ for item 3) than the teachers from school type 1 ($M = 2.50$ for item 1; $M = 2.30$ for item 2 and $M = 1.82$ for item 3).

However, no significant differences were found to exist between the school types' level of occupational stress. The results show that teachers from school type 1 have slightly higher occupational stress level (\underline{M} = 108.12) than those from school type 2 (\underline{M} = 99.02).

Table 4.12 T-test results

Variable	Mean (school type 1)	Mean (school type 2)	SD (school type 1)	SD (school type 2)	t	Df	p-value
Occupational stress	108.12	99.02	12.53	12.39	3.61	77	P>0.0005
Collegial leadership	22.18	26.76	5.54	3.31	-4.59	77	P<0.0001
Professional teacher behaviour	21.51	26.44	4.73	3.25	-5.46	77	P<0.0001
Achievement press	17.42	25.02	5.32	3.94	-7.30	77	P<0.0001
Professional commitment							
Item 1	2.50	3.40	1.02	0.93	-4.16	77	P<0.0001
Item 2	2.30	3.13	0.96	0.71	-4.16	77	P<0.0001
Item 3	1.82	2.65	0.88	0.87	-4.16	77	P<0.0001

4.5 Correlations

Intercorrelations of occupational stress, organisational climate and its dimensions, and professional commitment were analysed to discover the degree of association between the variables. Pearson's coefficient was employed, and Table 4.13 summarises the results. Organisational climate dimensions strongly correlate with each other positively as expected. Significant correlations were also found to exist between the three items of professional commitment. The following correlation coefficients were found at significance level ($p \leq .001$); .73 for collegial leadership and professional teacher behaviour, .64 for professional teacher behaviour and achievement press, and .75 for collegial leadership and achievement press, .45 for item 1 of professional commitment (willingness to remain their current schools) and professional teacher behaviour, .43 for item 1 of professional commitment and achievement press, and .41 for item 3 (reluctance to leave the teaching profession) and achievement press.

The following correlations were found at significance level ($p \leq .01$); .34 for item 1 of professional commitment and collegial leadership, .28 for item 2 of professional commitment (intention to remain in the teaching profession and at their current schools) and professional teacher behaviour, .34 for item 1 and item 3 of professional commitment, .29 for item 1 and item 2 of professional commitment, and .29 for item 2 and item 3 of professional commitment.

Significant correlations at level ($p \leq .05$) were found to exist between the following: item 2 of professional commitment and achievement press, i.e. .26, as well as .24 for item 3 of professional commitment and professional teacher behaviour. No significant correlations were found to exist between occupational stress and collegial leadership, professional teacher behaviour, achievement press and the three items of professional commitment.

Table 4.13 Intercorrelations of occupational stress, organisational climate and professional commitment

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Occupational Stress	–						
2. Collegial leadership	-.09	–					
3. Professional teacher behaviour	-.05	.73***	–				
4. Achievement press	-.07	.64***	.75***	–			
5. Item 1 Professional commitment	-.05	.34**	.45***	.43***	–		
6. Item 2 Professional commitment	-.10	.16	.28**	.26*	.29**	–	
7. Item 3 Professional commitment	-.10	.19	.24*	.41***	.34**	.29**	–

* $p \leq .05$

** $p \leq .01$

*** $p \leq .001$

Chapter 5

5. Discussion

This chapter is concerned with interpretation and discussing the findings which have been presented in the previous chapter. The variables examined were useful in explaining some of the reasons behind differing matric pass rates. The discussion will be guided by the research questions stated earlier, in chapter 2. The discussion will address each research question. The following sections will be covered; the occupational stress, organisational climate, professional commitment, theoretical and practical implications of the findings, strengths and limitations of the research as well as future directions for research.

5.1 Occupational stress

Occupational stress was recognised as one of the variables that can influence employees' performance (Cooper & Sutherland, 1990; Monteith et al., 2001). One of the aims of this study was to identify differences in teachers' perceptions of stress in schools with different matric pass rates. The proceeding discussion will focus on addressing research questions 1 and 2, and later, a holistic view of occupational stress will follow.

Research question 1: Do teachers from the schools with different matric success rates perceive same sources of stress?

Occupational stress is regarded as a major threat to the productivity of an organisation (Carrel et al., 1998). By examining and understanding work-related factors which are perceived as stressful by the teachers, ways of reducing or eradicating problems existing within the South African education system can be established. In attempting to answer the question of whether the teachers in schools with different success rates experience same sources of occupational stress, similarities were found.

The following work- related factors were reported as stressful by teachers from both school types; assignment of disagreeable duties, working overtime, lack of opportunity for advancement; assignment of new or unfamiliar duties, colleagues not doing their work, inadequate support by staff members, dealing with crisis situations, lack of recognition for good work, performing tasks not in the job description, inadequate or poor quality equipments, assignment of increased responsibilities, experiencing negative attitudes toward the education organisation/department, insufficient personnel to adequately handle an assignment, making critical on the spot decisions, personal insults from colleagues, lack of participation in policy making, inadequate salary, competition for advancement, poor/inadequate supervision, noisy work area, frequent interruptions, frequent changes from boring to most challenging activities,

excessive paper work, meeting deadlines, insufficient personal time, covering for other teachers, poorly motivated colleagues and conflicts with other departments. These findings support the results of Monteith et al. (2002) and Drake and Herbert (2002) that similarities exist between the stressors perceived by educators in different schools. The two school types only differ in terms of how they perceived two factors, namely, periods of inactivity and difficulty in getting along with colleagues.

Research question 2: Are teachers in schools with different matric pass rates experiencing the same levels of stress?

The next question on occupational stress relates to a comparison of the teachers' levels of stress in schools with different success rates. The findings in relation to this question were very interesting in the sense that no significant differences were found to exist between the two school types. This means that all teachers from the two school types perceived their teaching job as stressful. These findings correspond to Kyriacou's (2001) research results which revealed that teachers regard teaching as an extremely stressful profession. Occupational stress therefore, does not help to explain the differing pass rates, since teachers from the two school types do not differ in the extent to which they experience occupational stress.

It was apparent from the current study's findings that teachers in the two school types were highly stressed, which is in concurrence with previous research's results. For example, Buwalda and Kok 's (1991) study revealed that 84% of teachers in one of South African provinces' English medium schools were experiencing high levels of stress, while Mwamwenda, Monyooe and Glencross (1997) discovered, in their study that 91% percent of Transkei teachers were highly stressed. Clearly, the results of all these studies in combination indicate high levels of stress across the board in South African schools, an issue which needs to be addressed within the South African Education system.

The remuneration system applied in education system was perceived as stressful by the teachers. The present study's results show that a high percentage of teachers in the two schools types, i.e. 91% of teachers in schools with poor pass rates and 76% in schools with excellent pass rates, reported inadequate salaries as highly stressful in their profession. Gerber et al. (1999) indicated that majority of labour in South Africa come from the lowest social class, and with the country's rate of unemployment in consideration, money as a compensation is required for survival. It can be argued that teachers do not differ from the employees in organisations; they also want decent salaries and benefits (Steyn & Van Wyk, 1999). If employees perceive discrepancies between their inputs (their contributions to the organisation) and outcomes (what they get in return for their contribution), they may reduce their inputs until they perceive the inputs as the same as the outcome (Gerber et al., 1999). This implies that inadequate salary

may result in employees lowering their performance in an effort of reducing their inputs. It is therefore necessary for the Education departments to review their remuneration system not only to eliminate inadequate salaries, but to reduce labour unrest or strikes.

5.2 Organisational climate

One way of ensuring employee motivation and productivity in an organisation is by creating supportive working climate (Miskell & Miskell, 1994). A comparison of teachers' perceptions of school climate in schools with different matric success rates was made, and will be guided by the third research question addressed below.

Research question 3: Is there any difference between teachers' perceptions of the school climate in schools with different pass rates?

The research findings on organisational climate revealed that there were significant differences existing between the perceptions of school climate by the teachers in schools with different success rates. In addressing this question, each dimension of organisational climate, viz. collegial leadership, professional teacher behaviour and achievement press will be outlined briefly.

Collegial leadership

The manner in which teachers perceived the leadership styles used by the principals appeared to vary in schools with different success rates. Teachers in schools with high pass rates perceived their principals' leadership styles more positively than teachers in schools with low pass rates. Studies have indicated that effective leadership can make a difference in as far as organisational performance is concerned (Gerber et al., 1999). Leadership style that encourages workers to bring their values and their personal selves to the job is essential in ensuring that workers “perform with their hearts and souls” (Mitchell, 1999: 57). This reinforces a need to discover leadership approach which could be effective or appropriate in an educational setting.

Since the results show that there are school leaders (principals) who were perceived as “good” leaders, (i.e. principals in schools with excellent pass rates), principals from schools with poor matric pass rates may learn from the so called “good” leaders if given a chance. It is therefore essential for the education system to conduct leadership workshops, designed in such a way that will enable principals from different schools to interact freely. Continuous leadership programs may also be helpful.

Professional teacher behaviour

The relationships among teachers themselves tend to explain the varying teachers' experiences in schools with different matric pass rates. Teachers in schools with poor pass rates perceived the relationships with their colleagues less favourably than teachers in schools with good results. The differences between teachers' perceptions of their colleagues in the two school types reflect the findings on sources of occupational stress. Difficulty in getting along with colleagues was reported as highly stressful by teachers in schools with poor pass rates only.

Clearly, the results in combination reinforce a need to assist teachers in developing their interpersonal skills. Studies consider colleagues who are supportive, friendly, listen to others' opinions and show personal interest in them as being essential in the workplace (Robbins, 1992).

Achievement press

The achievement dimension focuses on how academic achievement is valued as well as how efforts to improve and press for high standards are exerted. Hoy et al. (2003) indicated that teachers who show interest in academic excellence believe in themselves and their students, and they therefore set high, but achievable academic goals. This means that academic achievement may be

influenced by the type of academic goals teachers set. Shreuder and Theron (1997) indicate that for goals to be achievable, they must be realistic and measurable.

The results show that organisational climate may explain the differing pass rates in the two school types. From the discussion thus far, it can be concluded that a supportive working climate may be useful in improving teachers' performance, and hence a bureaucratic working climate or factors indicating bureaucratic working climate should be eliminated (Hayward, 1994).

5.3 Professional commitment

Professional commitment is of interest in education as it is associated with greater efforts and involvement (Singh & Billingsley, 1998). The last question relates to a comparison of teachers' levels of professional commitment between the two school types, and it will now be addressed.

Research question 4: Do teachers in schools with different matric success rates differ in terms of their levels of professional commitment

It was discovered that significant differences exist between the teachers' levels of professional commitment in schools with different matric success rates. In all three items of professional commitment, significant differences were found to

exist between the two school types. The items used to measure teachers' professional commitment will be grouped into three categories, namely, movers, stayers and leavers, and the discussion will be guided by these categories (Shen, 1998).

Movers

The first item used to measure professional commitment relates to whether teachers want to transfer to another school or remain in their current schools. Teachers who love their teaching profession but unwilling to continue working in their current schools are regarded as movers (Shen, 1998). Teachers in schools with poor results were thinking about transferring from their current school, while teachers in schools with excellent pass rates were not. This is in accord with Certo and Fox's (2002) discovery that teachers in poor schools were unwilling to remain in their schools.

Stayers

The second item measuring professional commitment was about whether teachers like teaching at their current schools. According to Shen (1998), stayers refer to the teachers who are happy with their jobs and are willing to remain at their schools. Teachers in school with good pass rates liked teaching at their current schools; unlike teachers in schools with poor pass rates. The research

findings are along the lines of Firestone and Pennell's (1993) discovery that committed teachers have strong psychological ties to their school, their students as well as their subject areas. It is therefore necessary for the education system to find ways of creating such ties in an effort of improving academic achievement.

Leavers

The last item involves teachers' perceptions of their profession's worthiness. Teachers who perceive their profession as worthless are likely to leave the profession, and Shen (1998) calls them leavers. Teachers in schools with poor pass rates reported that their profession did not warrant the stress and disappointments involved, in contrast with teachers' reports in schools with excellent matric results. In their study, Certo and Fox (2002) discovered that in America, teachers were leaving their professional field much earlier in their careers than professionals from other fields, more especially in disadvantaged schools. If teachers are really leaving their profession, education departments may lose quality teachers. This stimulates a need to discover ways to retain quality teachers in an effort of improving academic achievement.

5.4 Theoretical implications of the findings

Theory on stress indicates that people react to stress differently, i.e. there are people who can rise to stressful occasions and overcome them (Dolbier et al.,

2002; Johns, 1996; Joseph, 2000; Robbins, 1996). The findings of this study add to this theory, as they revealed that teachers in both school types experienced higher levels of stress, but perform differently and produce differing pass rates. This implies that teachers in schools with good pass rates reacted positively to stressful nature of the teaching profession; unlike teachers in schools with poor pass rates.

Literature regards organisational climate as one of the factors which may foster or deter goal attainment in an organisation, as it may influence employees' motivational behaviour (Hemmingway & Smith, 1999; Mok & Au-Yeung, 2002). The results for this study supplements this theory to a certain extent as positive perceptions of school climate tend to associate with good performance, while unfavourable tend to associate with poor performance. The results give an indication that creating favourable working climate may foster good performance.

Theory associates professional commitment with greater job effort and involvement (Claxton, 1989; Singh & Billingsley, 1998). Teachers from schools which produced excellent matric pass rates reported higher levels of commitment than teachers in schools with poor success rates. This implies that teachers in schools with good pass rates may have put more effort to ensure academic excellence than the teachers in schools which produced dismal matric results.

5.5 Practical implications of the findings

The South African education system is currently dealing with the instability of the teaching profession, brought by political changes in the country. These impose greater demands on teachers, which may result in stress, as it requires teachers' involvement and commitment in order to remain effective. Education is regarded as a means to provide knowledge and skills, and it is therefore necessary for educators to render services of good quality. For teachers to meet these, research could be useful in revealing any obstacles that could hinder their productivity.

The present study's results are interesting, given the fact that the teachers in both school types are experiencing similar levels of stress, but produced different pass rates. These imply that the effects of teachers working under stressful conditions can be overridden by their levels of professional commitment or passion for their profession, as well as the positive perceptions of the climate of their schools. It however does not mean that attention should not be paid to teachers' occupational stress, given the negative effects occupational stress has on both employees and organisations.

It appears that organisational climate also help in explaining some of the reasons of differing pass rates produced by the two school types. The teachers in schools with excellent matric results perceived their school more positively than teachers

in schools with poor pass rates. These findings support Hoy et al.'s (2003) results that favourable work climate leads to higher commitment to achievement excellence. The results of correlations revealed that organisational climate dimensions strongly correlated positively with each other. These correlations imply that the dimensions of organisational climates are valuable in creating positive working climate and it necessitates continuous evaluation of how teachers perceive their school climate so as to be able to revise or eradicate what is perceived negatively by the teachers. By doing this, a climate that promotes effectiveness can be created.

The importance of professional commitment in achieving academic excellence is supported by Rikard (1999) in his findings that strong dedication to teaching and to student learning is important in order to sustain quality education in schools. The present study's findings support this to a certain extent, as they revealed that teachers in schools with excellent matric results reported higher level of commitment than teachers in schools with poor pass rates. Cohen's (2003) findings confirm that teachers have greatest impact on student achievement and that teacher performance is responsible for student achievements. It is therefore important for educational institutions to find ways that will increase teachers' levels of professional commitment in an attempt of pressing for higher academic achievement.

The correlation findings also provided very interesting and useful information, in relation to professional commitment and organisational climate. Teachers' willingness to remain in their current schools and reluctance to leave the teaching profession tend to associate with collegial leadership, teacher professional behaviour and achievement press. Correlation between teachers' willingness to remain in their schools and collegial leadership, and correlation between reluctance to leave the teaching profession and collegial leadership may mean that teachers tend to choose to remain at their current schools because of good or harmonious relationship between teachers and principals, while correlation between teachers' willingness to remain in their schools and professional teacher behaviour as well as correlation between reluctance to leave the teaching profession and professional teacher behaviour imply that teachers' willingness to retain their membership may be related to the openness, friendliness, cooperation and support they got from their colleagues.

Correlation between teachers' willingness to remain in their schools and achievement press, as well as correlation between reluctance to leave the teaching profession and achievement press, imply that teachers who feel attached to their school and to their profession are likely to value academic excellence in their schools, and tend to put more efforts in ensuring excellent pass rates. From these relationships, it can be concluded that the creation of positive school climate may result in maintenance of quality teachers.

5.6 Strengths and limitations of the research

In South Africa, it appears that there is very limited or no literature on the comparison of teachers' experiences in schools with different success rates. Occupational stress, organisational climate and professional commitment were observed, as identified through research as some of the aspects influencing employees' performance in an organisation. The current study has laid a foundation, which requires construction in the form of future research, in order to uncover the causes of poor teacher performance as well as its impact on academic achievement.

The present study was designed in such a way that made it possible to examine and quantify the extent to which the variables were perceived by the participants (teachers). The sample for this research comprised of teachers in four high schools in the same rural area, and can be regarded as appropriate representatives of teachers in 12 high schools. This means that the findings can be transferred to the other schools in the same area.

The high schools investigated were from the same rural area, same education district and same education circuit. Matching was also performed at school level to ensure that schools included in the sample have more or less similar resources. This means that attempts were made to ensure that the research

results were not influenced by the differing privileges between the schools studied.

Another strength of this study relates to research ethics. The ethical issues regarding confidentiality, deception, freedom of consent and anonymity were taken into consideration. All participants were informed about the nature of the study, all participants participated at their own free will and they were not required to provide any information that could identify them. The research was conducted between the second and third schools' terms. Extra care has been taken to ensure that teachers were not inconvenienced or interrupted in performing their duties by allowing them complete the questionnaires at their own time. (i.e. during schools' winter vacations).

The present study does not have strengths only, but also has limitations. Because of the nature of the research design, it was impossible to establish a causal relationship, i.e. to establish whether occupational stress, organisational climate and professional commitment were the causes of differing pass rates. A longitudinal research design could be able to establish causal relationships.

Although the schools were matched based on the availability of resources or equipment, selection bias may have occurred whereby certain schools possess some of the equipment which other schools did not, and which were not easily

detectable. For example, shortage of textbooks may have been reported without considering students enrollment for a particular subject(s).

While the response rates differ in the different schools studied, volunteer bias may also have influenced the results, because the researcher relied only on the information from the teachers who volunteered to participate in this study, i.e. teachers who did not volunteer to participate could have responded differently.

The data collection instrument used was a self-administered questionnaire, which consisted of occupational stress, organisational climate and professional commitment scales. The problems were experienced with the professional commitment scale, as it had low consistency reliability. Although to account for that, analyses were performed on each of the items used to measure professional commitment, the three items with a 4-point scale rating were too little to provide rich enough information on teachers' professional commitment. Self-administered questionnaire as a data collection technique has a disadvantage of the researcher not being absolutely certain that the questionnaires were completed by the intended people.

The present study was aimed at investigating teachers only, while there are other factors which could have helped in explaining differing pass rates, which were not examined in this study, such as schools' reputation. It is possible that parents

who were motivated by the reputations of schools with excellent pass rates, sent their children to such schools, and the children become motivated as well.

5.7 Future directions for research

The possible research direction for future research would be to expand upon the issues that could not be revealed by the present study because of the nature of the research design. A research design that could make it possible to establish causal relationships could be the first step in achieving that, while an in-depth study may be useful in providing rich information or broader picture of teachers' experiences in schools with different matric pass rates. The present study was conducted at a specific time, and it could not account for changes in teachers' experiences through out the year. A longitudinal study could provide information about whether teachers' experiences during the early-days of the year correspond with the mid-year experiences or end-of- the year experiences, and could also be useful in establishing causality.

The sample constituted schools selected from one educational circuit. It could be useful if comparisons are made in schools with different success rates in different education districts or circuits. These do not have the advantage of larger sample size only, but valuable and wealthy information can also be obtained. Future research could also consider applying a more appropriate professional commitment scale, which has more items in order to obtain more information.

Future research could also reveal the effects of teachers' demographic variables in differing pass rates. The current study was very useful in determining what could influence teachers' performance and subsequently affect students' achievement; future research could be valuable in establishing a model of improving achievement press.

Chapter 6

6. Conclusion

Quality education is probable the only weapon South Africa can use to fight against shortage of skilled and professional labour, in an effort of strengthening its economy (Van der Linde et al., 2000). South Africans complain about the poor quality of matric results every year, while there are schools which produce excellent pass rates (Makgotho, 2004; Molakeng, 2004; Motloun, 2004).

The current study has attempted to explore the differences in teachers' experiences, such as perception of occupational stress, school climate and their professional commitment in schools with different matric success rates. Although the study was very productive in establishing some of the differences, extensive research is required to determine the causes of teachers' differences and their impact on academic achievement. These can provide useful information that can assist in changing South Africans' criticisms of matric results into ululations.

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Appendix A

Informant sheet

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2004-06-21

Dear Teacher

My name is Harriet Rivalani Khoza and I am conducting research as one of my requirements for an Industrial Psychology Masters Degree. The focus of the research is to compare teacher stress, commitment and school climate in schools with different success rates. I would like to invite you to participate in this study.

Participation in this research will entail completing the attached questionnaire that will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Complete confidentiality in all your responses is guaranteed since all replies are anonymous and no one will have access to the raw data. In addition to this, anonymity will be ensured by not asking for any identifying information like your name or your ID. Participation is purely on a voluntary basis, and no employee will be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to complete or not complete the questionnaire. Your responses will only be looked at in relation to all other responses. This means that feedback given back to the Limpopo Department of Education will be in the form of group responses and not individual responses.

If you choose to participate in this study please complete the attached questionnaire as carefully and as honestly as possible. Once you have completed the questionnaire, place it in the envelope provided and deposit it in the sealed box provided. I will collect the questionnaires from the box at regular intervals. This will ensure that no one else will have access to your completed questionnaire and confidentiality will be guaranteed. If you complete and return the questionnaire, this will be considered consent to participate in the study.

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. This research will contribute both to a larger body of knowledge on teacher stress and commitment as well as the Limpopo Department of Education's understanding of your workplace dynamics. This can help to inform their development of policies and procedures.

Kind regards
Harriet Khoza (Student)

Karen Miller (Supervisor)

Appendix B

Questionnaire

SECTION : A

Please indicate the amount of stress you experience associated with the following factors by circling the appropriate number. Extremely Not Stressful = 1, Not Stressful = 2, Moderate = 3, Stressful = 4 and Extremely Stressful = 5

	Extremely Not Stressful	Not Stressful	Moderate	Stressful	Extremely Stressful
1. Assignment of disagreeable duties.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Working overtime.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Lack of opportunity for advancement.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Assignment of new or unfamiliar duties.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Colleagues not doing their work.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Inadequate support by staff.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Dealing with crisis situations.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Lack of recognition for good work.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Performing tasks not in job description	1	2	3	4	5
10. Inadequate or poor quality equipments	1	2	3	4	5
11. Assignment of increased responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Periods of inactivity.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Difficulty in getting along with colleagues.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Experiencing negative attitudes toward The education organisation/department	1	2	3	4	5
15. Insufficient personnel to adequately handle an assignment	1	2	3	4	5
16. Making critical on the spot decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Personal insults from colleagues.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Lack of participation in policy making decisions	1	2	3	4	5
19. Inadequate salary.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Competition for advancement.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Poor/inadequate supervision.	1	2	3	4	5
22. Noisy work area.	1	2	3	4	5
23. Frequent interruptions.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Frequent changes from boring to most challenging activities.	1	2	3	4	5
25. Excessive paper work.	1	2	3	4	5
26. Meeting deadlines.	1	2	3	4	5
27. Insufficient personal time.	1	2	3	4	5
28. Covering work for other teacher(s).	1	2	3	4	5
29. Poorly motivated colleagues.	1	2	3	4	5
30. Conflicts with other departments.	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION : B

Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements by circling the appropriate number. Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Agree = 3 and Strongly Agree = 4

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I think about transferring to another school.	1	2	3	4
2. The teachers like teaching at this school.	1	2	3	4
3. I think the stress and disappointments involved at this school are not really worth it.	1	2	3	4

Note: Item 1 and item 3 are reversed scored.

SECTION : C

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements by circling the appropriate number. Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Neutral = 3, Agree = 4 and Strongly Agree = 5

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. The principal explores all sides and admits that other opinions exist.	1	2	3	4	5
2. The principal treats all the staff members with Equality	1	2	3	4	5
3. The principal is friendly and approachable.	1	2	3	4	5
4. The school sets high standards for academic performance.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Teachers help and support each other.	1	2	3	4	5
6. The principal lets the staff members know what is expected of them.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Students respect those who get good grades.	1	2	3	4	5
8. The principal maintains definite standards of Performance	1	2	3	4	5
9. Students seek extra work so they can get good	1	2	3	4	5

grades					
10. Parents exert pressure to maintain high standards.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Students try hard to improve on previous work.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Teachers in this school exercise professional judgement.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Academic achievement is recognised and acknowledged by the school.	1	2	3	4	5
14. The principal puts suggestions made by the teachers into operation	1	2	3	4	5
15. Teachers respect the professional Competence of their colleagues.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Parents press for school improvement	1	2	3	4	5
17. The interactions between teachers are active.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Students in this school can achieve the goals that have been set for them.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Teachers accomplish their jobs with enthusiasm.	1	2	3	4	5
20. The principal is willing to make changes.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Teachers 'go extra mile' with their students.	1	2	3	4	5
22. Teachers provide strong social support for colleagues.	1	2	3	4	5

Note: Item 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 14 and 20 measure collegial leadership.
Item 5, 12, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21 and 22 measure professional teacher behaviour
Item 4, 7, 9, 10, 11, 16 and 18 measure achievement press.

SECTION : D BIOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONNAIRE

This section requires biographical information which will be used to compare groups, and anonymity is assured.

1. What is your age? -----
2. What is your gender? -----
3. What is your marital status? -----
4. What is your highest level of education? -----
5. How long have you been working as a teacher? -----
6. How long have you been working in this school? -----
7. What subjects are you teaching? -----
8. What is the maximum number of learners in your class? -----

