THE RELEVANCE OF THE LEARNED HELPLESSNESS MODEL FOR SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATORS IN A TRANSFORMING EDUCATION SYSTEM.

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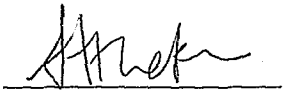
A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION (EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY)

JOHANNESBURG, 2000

DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Education (Educational Psychology) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university.



S. Atherton.

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ABSTRACT

The transformation of education in South Africa has prompted much literature on the increasing pressure and workload on teachers. Relatively little is known, however, about the potentially harmful psychological effects of this transformation. This study aims to investigate the Learned Helplessness (LH) model as a potentially relevant explanatory model for teachers' experiences of powerlessness and helplessness in the face of educational transformation. Levels of LH were correlated with the teachers' perceptions of job satisfaction, social support and depression. The sample for the study consisted of 89 school teachers - 40 teachers from historically black, township schools and 49 from historically white, suburban schools. Generally, the results suggest that the suburban teachers are experiencing significantly higher levels of LH, as measured by lower levels of optimism and hopefulness, than township teachers. While the LH model seemed to be a relevant explanatory model, this study provided some evidence that its application in the South African context may require further understanding. Although lower levels of depression were found for the suburban group, these results suggest discrepancies and are inconclusive. Higher levels of job satisfaction and social support were found for the suburban group. While the variables of job satisfaction and social support appear to be implicated in the LH process, the exact nature of their relationship remains unclear. This research provides the basis for further investigation into the support and needs of teachers in the process of transformation.

Keywords:

Learned Helplessness; optimism; depression; South African teachers; teacher stress

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BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

South Africa is currently undergoing a transformation in its education system. The previous content-based, rote learning curriculum is being replaced with a new outcomes-based curriculum. Teachers are being expected to adapt and change their roles and teaching styles within the classroom, resulting in an overall greater workload and responsibility. Implemented without the necessary support structures, outcomes-based education (OBE) is argued by many to be placing increased pressure on an already overburdened teacher population (Greenstein, 1997; Jansen, 1997a). The reality of the grassroots situation for many South African teachers appears therefore to be one of mounting pressure and stress as they struggle to perform within under-resourced environments and with limited resources.

The Learned Helplessness (LH) model, which describes and explains the feelings of helplessness and passivity that result from believing that important events are beyond one's control, is offered as a possible explanatory model for the experience of South African teachers in a transforming education system. As teachers begin to feel increasingly unsuccessful, ineffective and powerless, within a situation which they perceive is out of their control, it is likely that they are also experiencing heightened feelings of helplessness. Comparing separate groups of white and black teachers, this study attempts to investigate the effect of the current situation on the teachers' attributional styles. In so doing, it hopes to ascertain the extent to which teachers are in fact coping with the present educational transformation. In addition, levels of job satisfaction and social support are assessed as contributing features of attributional style. Levels of depression are also measured as possible correlates of attributional style. It is hoped that the present study will shed some light on the experience of South African teachers and so inform any interventions that may need to be implemented.

1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

1.2.1 The South African Education Context

Education in South Africa has historically served as an instrument to ensure white domination over black (Nkomo, 1990). During the apartheid years, the principle of segregated education ensured that education was fragmented along racial lines into four schooling systems for whites, blacks, Indians and coloureds. The curricula, control and funding of schooling were also structured according to the perceived racial, economic and social differences between whites and blacks (ibid.).

While white education in South Africa has historically been exclusive and enjoyed the majority of allocated state resources, blacks attended poorly constructed and overcrowded facilities (Nkomo, 1990). Black schools suffered from poor management, inferior and inadequate resources and a lack of discipline (MacGregor, 1998). Training for black teachers has also historically been extremely poor, resulting in unacceptably high failure rates among black pupils (ibid.). Furthermore, as apartheid education became politicized in the 70's and 80's, teaching and learning within black schools suffered increasing disruptions (Nkomo, 1990).

With the dismantling of apartheid in 1994, there was a move to implement a more democratic peoples' education that would replace the inferior, segregated and prejudiced apartheid education system. This has taken the form, more recently, of the new Curriculum 2005. However, in spite of government efforts, the growing consensus in the literature is that South African state schooling has not changed much since the end of apartheid (Macgregor, 1998). In fact, recent studies point to a frightening picture of neglect, deprivation and inequality (Motlala, 1997). By far the largest number of pupils are in black schools and so, for the vast majority of South African children, the school experience remains one of overcrowded classrooms; lack of books and basic facilities; ill-qualified teachers and rote learning (Macgregor, 1998; Steyn & van Wyk, 1999). Meanwhile, for formerly white privileged schools, the educational situation remains mostly unchanged. In spite of shifting racial demographics in these schools, formerly white

schools still occupy the superior and advantaged educational position of the past (Macgregor, 1998).

1.2.2 The Learned Helplessness Model

The Learned Helplessness (LH) model is considered to be an important contributor to the advancement of contemporary psychology (Maier & Seligman, 1976; Peterson, Maier & Seligman, 1993; Overmier, 1998). It provides a succinct explanation for the inappropriate passivity that may follow after an individual's experiences with uncontrollable events (Peterson, 1993). According to the helplessness model, people who experience uncontrollability in particular instances may come to believe that they are helpless (McKean, 1993). They then generalize this belief to other situations where it produces difficulties for them (ibid.).

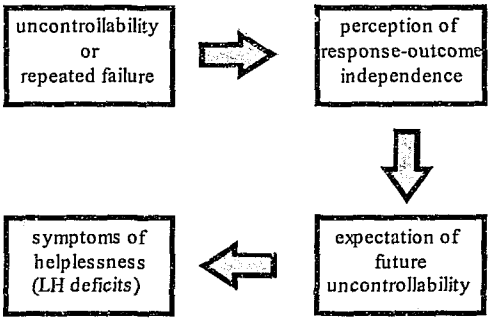
LH describes the maladaptive passivity that results from believing that important, often negative events, are beyond a person's control (McKean, 1993; Prilleltensky & Garnick, 1996). Once a person develops the expectation that many events will be uncontrollable, it is argued that he or she becomes at risk for developing learned helplessness (Maier & Seligman, 1976; Seligman, 1975).

Much research has been conducted investigating LH in animals and the phenomenon has been generalized across species, tasks, stimuli and responses (Maier & Testa, 1975; Mikulincer, 1994; Padilla, 1973) The key proposition is that when people and animals, such as dogs, rats and fish, experience aversive events that occur independently of their responses, they neglect to learn that certain responses are ineffective. They learn rather that no effective responses exist, that they are helpless (Skinner, 1995). When they are subsequently placed in a situation in which events become objectively controllable, these perceptions are generalized and they behave as if they were still in an uncontrollable situation (ibid.).

The earliest work on the LH model used dogs as subjects (Maier & Seligman, 1967; Overmier & Seligman, 1967; Seligman and Maier, 1967). Results of this research suggested a link between LH and expectations - that past experiences with uncontrollable events can lead to the

expectation that desired outcomes are independent of one's responses (Schulman, 1995). This original version of the LH theory is illustrated in Diagram 1.1 below.

Diagram 1.1: The Original Learned Helplessness Theory (Peterson, 1993; Peterson, Maier & Seligman, 1993).



This expectation of future helplessness is then said to be generalized to new situations where it produces deficits of a motivational, cognitive and emotional nature (Olson & Schober, 1993). These deficits that follow as a result of uncontrollability have come to be known as the *LH phenomenon* and their cognitive explanation, as the *LH model* (Maier & Seligman, 1976; Peterson et al., 1995).

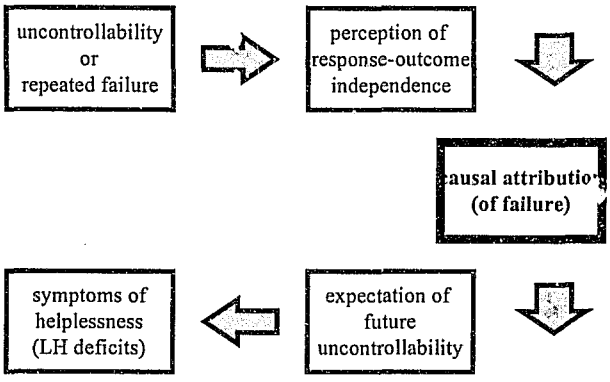
Subsequent to the original formulation of the LH model, parallels were discovered between LH as produced by uncontrollable events in the laboratory and the maladaptive passivity as it exists in the real world. Lines of research looking at LH in people began. The very first LH experiments using human subjects were modelled closely on those using animals, that is, exposing people to uncontrollable events and seeing the effects on their motivation, cognition and emotion (Hiroto & Seligman, 1975; Miller & Seligman, 1975; Roth & Bootzin, 1974). Unsolvable problems were usually substituted for uncontrollable electric shocks, but the critical aspects of the phenomenon remained - following uncontrollability, people showed a variety of deficits in their thoughts, feelings and actions. Deficits in cognition observed usually reflected a decrease in problem-solving ability and a decreased ability to perceive contingencies between actions and outcomes (Schulman, 1995). Emotional deficits usually included sadness, depression, a decrease in

aggression and a lowered self-esteem. Behavioural or motivational deficits observed included passivity, giving up and procrastination (Boggiano, Barrett, Kellam, 1993; Maier & Seligman, 1976; McKean, 1993; Skinner, 1995). Most popular and controversial was Seligman's (1974) proposal that reactive depression and LH showed common critical features such as causes, symptoms as well as consequences, treatments and prevention (Abramson, Metalsky & Alloy, 1989; Peterson et al., 1995; Seligman, 1975).

Ongoing research in the field soon demonstrated that the LH model was an oversimplification when applied to people (Peterson et al., 1993). Most generally, it was viewed as failing to account for the range of reactions that people displayed in response to uncontrollable events (ibid.). Although some people did show the anticipated deficits, general across time and situation, others did not (ibid.). Furthermore, some failures of adaptation that the LH model was supposed to explain, such as depression, were sometimes characterized by a striking loss of self-esteem, something the model could not explain (Peterson et al., 1993; Peterson et al., 1995; Schulman, 1995).

In an attempt to resolve these discrepancies, Abramson, Seligman & Teasdale (1978), reformulated the helplessness model as it applied to people. This reformulation posited that following experiences of uncontrollability, people naturally make explanations about the events they encounter in order to try and make sense of them (Peterson et al., 1993; Skinner, 1995). The nature of their answer - the casual attribution they entertain - is said to affect the way they respond to these events and sets the parameters for the helplessness that follows. In addition to the expectation of uncontrollability, the attributional reformulation of the LH model, therefore adds a second risk factor for helplessness. How and to whom a person attributes the outcome of a response to an undesirable situation is said to determine the expectation of this individual for future situations (Olson & Schober, 1993; Mikulincer, 1994; Peterson, 1993; Peterson et al., 1993; Skinner, 1995). This LH theoretical framework as described by Abramson et al. (1978) is illustrated by Diagram 1.2 below.

Diagram 1.2: The Reformulated Learned Helplessness Theory (Abramson, Seligman & Teasdale, 1978).



(Adapted from: Mikulincer, 1993; Olson & Schober, 1993).

However, irrespective of causal attributions, the reformulated theory still views the expectancy of no control as the sufficient cause of LH deficits. It is argued that no matter which attribution a person makes, if he or she expects lack of control after failure, he or she will exhibit LH deficits (Mikulincer, 1994). As Abramson et al., (1978, p59) state:

> "The attribution merely predicts the recurrence of the expectation of no control, but the expectation determines the occurrence of LH deficits."

Explanatory or attributional style in and of itself is therefore seen not as a cause of problems but rather as a risk factor (ibid.).

According to the reformulation, people learn to be helpless if they explain their misfortune in terms of their own inadequacies and regard their suffering as pervading their entire lives, both in the present and the future. In more cognitive terms, it is argued that internal, global and stable attributions for negative events may lead to LH (Peterson et al., 1993; Schulman, 1995; Skinner, 1995). The LH model therefore utilizes and focuses on 3 dimensions of attributions for negative life events:

1) internal - external

2) stable - unstable

3) global - specific

1) An *internal* attribution explains the cause of a negative event in self-referent terms ('It's me'), whereas an external attribution assigns cause to factors outside of the self.

2) A *stable* attribution explains the cause of a negative event in terms of permanent constant factors ('It will last forever'), whereas an unstable attribution explains the event in terms of temporary factors.

3) A *global* attribution explains the cause of a negative event as one that is pervasive and spans many situations ('It will affect everything I do'), whereas a specific attribution explains the events in terms of limited circumscribed causes. The underlying important dimension here is therefore situational.

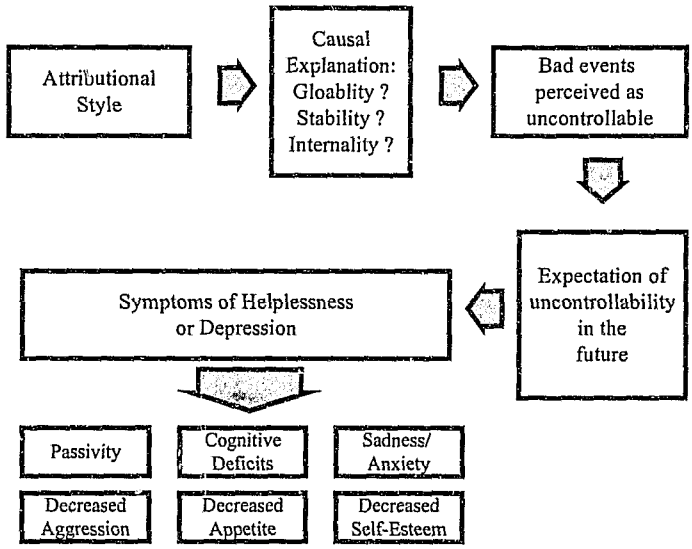
According to the theory therefore, people who habitually attribute negative life events to internal, stable and global causes; and positive life events to external, unstable and specific causes - a pessimistic explanatory style - are at a greater risk for helplessness deficits than those with the opposite, optimistic style (Joiner & Wagner, 1995; Schulman, 1995). The pessimistic explanatory style associated with LH is therefore a defining factor of this.

The reformulated model also makes specific predictions about the effects of each dimension on LH deficits. The internal-external dimension affects self-esteem with internal attributions for negative events leading to a decrease in self-esteem (Peterson et al., 1993). The stable-unstable dimension affects the generalization of deficits across time with the stable attributions for negative events leading to a greater chronicity of deficits (Reivich, 1995). Finally, the global-specific dimension affects the generalization of deficits across situations with the global attribution for negative events leading to deficits across a variety of outcomes and situations (Peterson et al., 1993; Reivich, 1995; Schulman, 1995).

This helplessness model has been used to make sense of a variety of failures of human adaptation: depression, academic failure, victimization, athletic setbacks, poor work performance, illness and even early death (Peterson et al., 1993; Peterson & Seligman, 1983, 1987; Seligman & Schulman, 1986).

The most researched and substantiated deficit resulting from LH has been found to be depression. Abramson et al. (1989) examined the reformulated LH model as it applies to depression and concluded that some but not all cases of depression are the result of the processes specified by the model. According to the theory, increased attributions of failure to factors that are stable, global and uncontrollable by the individual strengthens the risk for depression - people who hold themselves personally responsible for unpleasant happenings and things that go wrong are likely to feel bad about themselves (McKean, 1993; Peterson, 1993). Internal attributions for negative events are then likely to precipitate a drop in self-esteem which in turn leads to depression. Stable attributions are associated with the chronicity of depression while global attributions are associated with the pervasiveness of depression. There is therefore an explicit causal model linking the 3 attributional dimensions to depression - more specifically, reactive depression (Cheung & Kwok, 1996; Maddux & Meier, 1995; Metalsky, Abramson, Seligman, Semmel & Peterson, 1982; Mineka, Pury & Luten, 1995; Oettingen, 1995; Robins & Hayes, 1995; Romney, 1994; Seligman, 1990; Swendsen, 1997). Diagram 1.3 represents the LH theory including the conceptualization of reactive depression.

Diagram 1.3: The Attributional Reformulation of Depression (Peterson & Seligman, 1984, p148).



Although this theory has come under much criticism and resulted in many alternative theories of LH, such as, the cognitive interference hypothesis (Mikulincer, 1996); the cognitive exhaustion hypothesis (Sedek, Kofta & Tyszka, 1993); and the egotism hypothesis (Witowski, 1997), this conceptualization of LH and depression, by and large, has received substantial empirical support.

1.2.3 Teacher Stress in South Africa

It is argued by researchers that in the current South African context, both the legacy of apartheid and the more recent transformation to democracy, has served to multiply the stressors experienced by South African teachers (Bloom, 1996; Boyle, Borg, Falzon & Baglioni, 1995; Hartshorne, 1992; Hayward, 1993). Great social change has increased expectations with respect to the standard of education and the outcomes of the system and increasing pressure is being placed on the education system to correct social and economic problems which are generally regarded to exist as a result of the former apartheid system of schooling (Hartshorne, 1992; Jansen, 1997a, 1997b; Nkomo, 1990). When combined with the current reality of the situation at grassroots level - a reality of increasing teacher-pupil ratios; decreasing salaries and reduced job

security; departmental cutbacks resulting in almost non-existent resources in some areas; as well as inadequate teacher training and support - the situation for teachers becomes desperate and the expectations set, almost impossible to reach (Fong Chong, 1998; Jansen, 1990; MacGregor, 1998; Motala, 1997; Nkomo, 1990).

In particular, the introduction of Curriculum 2005 is seen to be a major stressor for current South African teachers (Fisher, 1984; Jansen, 1997a, 1997b; Travers and Cooper, 1993; Vally & Spreen, 1998). Launched in late March 1997, the new curriculum framework has, as its major goal, the development of human resources and potential (Department of Education Report, S.A., 1997). Underlying the new policy is a concern with traditional 'content-based' methods of teaching and training, and it calls for putting the emphasis on what the learners should know and would be able to do at the end of a course of teaching - instead of the means used to achieve these results (Greenstein, 1997). The adoption of the principles of outcomes-based education (OBE) and cooperative learning, has therefore become a central vehicle for the transformation of teaching and learning in South Africa (Jansen, 1997b).

Teachers under the new framework have been given greater responsibility to both structure learning outcomes and create classroom environments that will support learning in order to meet these outcomes (Vally & Spreen, 1998). The teacher, as opposed to being the centre of all knowledge and wisdom, must now become a facilitator of learning, creating a specific learning environment which will engender the values based on cooperative learning (Jansen, 1997b). Teachers will be required to reorganise their teaching, allocate more time to measure student progress against outcomes, administer various forms of assessment and maintain comprehensive records - an enormous amount of work for any teacher (Greenstein, 1997). The management of OBE is thus viewed by many as placing additional administration on already overburdened teachers (Jansen, 1997b).

As it now stands, it has also been argued that the new framework has been designed in isolation from the specific concrete context of teaching and learning in South Africa (Greenstein, 1997; Jansen, 1998a). The vast majority of teachers, who are required to carry out the curriculum

policy at school levels, have been kept in the dark regarding the policy until after it had been finalized (ibid.). The implementation process of this curriculum has thus been argued to be 'top-down' in nature with both teachers and students having little or no opportunity to contribute (ibid.). This has resulted in what Jansen (1998b, p7) describes as "a pattern of curriculum change which is context-blind". Furthermore, this highly sophisticated curriculum, based on first world assumptions about well-resourced classrooms and highly qualified teachers, is being introduced without the training and resources needed to enable such a curriculum to be implemented (Jansen 1998a, 1998b; Greenstein, 1997; Vally & Spreen, 1998).

As a result, numerous writers have argued that not only is OBE destined to fail, but that it will

> "...further undermine the already weak culture of teaching and learning in South African schools by escalating the administrative burden of change at the very time that rationalization further limits the human-resource capacity for managing such change." (Jansen, 1997a, p10).

Greenstein (1997) has argued that OBE requires an entire restructuring of the education system in order to support the innovation - something which is not occurring.

In addition, recent studies have examined the difficulties that racial integration within schools is creating for teachers (Giessen-Hood, 1999; Skuy & Vice, 1996; Steiner, 1998; Vice, 1991). While most studies have confirmed the relatively positive attitudes of teachers within the black townships towards a non-racial and integrated system of education, white teachers have reported feelings of powerlessness, helplessness and inadequacy as they struggle to adapt to the heterogenous nature of their current classrooms (Cannella & Reiff; Mostert & Reagan, 1997; Steiner, 1998). Formerly white privileged schools have been reported to have undergone a noticeable shift in racial demographics as the racial integration of pupils is encouraged (Macgregor, 1998). The teachers of Vice's (1991) study, who were predominantly white, appeared to believe that they lacked the necessary knowledge and skills to teach children from diverse backgrounds, resulting in feelings of inadequacy and low self-confidence. It appears thus that while all black schools in historically black areas, are, in reality, culturally homogenous, all previously white schools are facing some form of cultural adjustment - something which

teachers, particularly in government schools, appear to be wrestling with. While the variables of age and teaching experience have been found to be important variables in determining positive attitudes to educational change, it would appear from the literature that a large proportion of South African teachers are struggling with the enormous social economic and educational implications that the new system is creating (Giessen-Hood, 1999; Macgregor, 1998; Steyn & van Wyk, 1999).

1.2.4 Teacher Stress and Job Satisfaction

Numerous studies have highlighted the link between an individual's experience of job pressure and psychological distress, with levels of job satisfaction (Jain, Lall, Mclaughlin & Johnson, 1996; Mwamwenda, 1998; Steyn, 1998).

Although the term 'job satisfaction' is viewed as a multidimensional concept in the literature, it is generally seen as encompassing a person's general attitude towards work or towards specific facets of the work (Reyes & Shin, 1995; Tosi, Rizzo & Carrol, 1990). This attitude results from a person's "cognitive, affective and evaluative perceptions of his work and entails pleasurable feelings that the person has towards the work" (Steyn & van Wyk, 1999, p37-38). Job satisfaction is therefore viewed as a work attitude which affects the degree to which an individual experiences satisfaction with both the intrinsic and extrinsic features of a job (Chanoch, 1998; Steyn & van Wyk, 1999; Warr, Cook & Wall, 1979).

The literature lists many factors which can influence the relationship between the individual and his or her evaluation of the job, that is, his or her job satisfaction. Steyn (1988) divides these factors into 3 categories:

1) Organizational structural factors: which include the predominantly contextual factors such as physical working conditions; policy and management; organizational structure of the school; salary; as well as school culture and climate.

2) Organizational practice factors: which include group and interpersonal factors related to the teacher's job performance such as recognition appreciation, workload and nature of the work.

3) Background factors: which include the individual teacher's own experiences and particular demographics and personality, for example, age, gender and tenure of work.

A more recent study by Steyn & van Wyk (1999) revealed that schools in South African townships are beset by multiple problems which appear to be affecting teachers' levels of job satisfaction (Mwamwenda, 1998; Weaver, 1998). Although many factors were found to contribute to decreased levels of job satisfaction, these factors seemed to correspond to the 'organizational structural' and 'organizational practice' factors identified by Steyn (Evans, 1997; Steyn & van Wyk, 1999). Among the more prominent factors were: the physical working conditions; poor salaries and job security; the nature of the work and the tremendous workloads, among others. These factors were found to have significant physical and emotional effects, including feelings of dependency and decreased levels of commitment (Steyn & van Wyk, 1999). The feeling of helplessness was summed up by one teacher in the study:

> "I should think that teaching was a very good profession in the past, but now you just come to work because you've got to work."
>
> (ibid., p41)

Numerous factors are therefore be said to influence teachers' experiences of job satisfaction and are said to reveal themselves in levels of commitment, motivation, absenteeism as well as feelings of helplessness (ibid.).

1.2.5 Teacher Stress and Social Support

Research has shown that there exists an interconnecting and possible reciprocal influence between the work and family contexts (Adams, King & King, 1996). More specifically, it is said that social support provided by members of the work and/or family domain can have a positive influence on workers general and psychological well-being (Cohen & Wills, 1985; VanderZee, Buunk & Sanderman, 1997; Vaux, 1988). This 'buffering hypothesis' of social support suggests that the presence or absence (and quality) of social support has the potential to moderate teacher stress (Billings, & Moos, 1981; Fong Chong, 1998; House, 1981). Sarason, Levine, Basham & Sarason (1983) have proposed that the presence or availability of social support has the potential

to increase an individual's capacity to withstand and overcome challenges and stressors. Findings have shown that people with supportive social relationships are more easily able to cope with potential stressors and therefore avoid experiencing psychological and physiological strain (Fong Chong, 1998)

Although there is no single accepted definition of social support within the literature, there is a growing consensus that social support can come from both work and non-work (family and friends) sources (Adams et al., 1996). Although social support from work related sources probably figures more importantly in the occupational stress process than does support from non-work related sources (Beehr, 1995), non-work sources also seem to play a role (LaRocco, House & French, 1980).

In a study by Kruger (1997) on teachers, social support from colleagues was found to be significantly related to teacher's feelings of self-efficacy or competency. Perceived social support from work colleagues has also been found to be strongly related to overall job satisfaction amongst employees (Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli & Lynch, 1997). However, these factors were also found to be distinct factors. Although an employee may believe that his work strongly values his well-being, he may still have overall low job satisfaction because the employer does not have the resources to promote more favourable treatment (Eisenberger et al., 1997).

Social support from family and friends has been more strongly associated with general health and well-being, than with work-related issues. LaRocco et al. (1980) found that family and friends support did not predict work-related outcomes but it did predict general well-being.

The literature therefore generally suggests that family and friends social support can play an important role in the overall stress process. However, it is probably more strongly related to general health and well-being than to specific work related stress - of which social support at work is more strongly related.

1.3 CONCLUSION

Current literature points to numerous difficulties within the current South African education system. These difficulties have been shown to be creating enormous amounts of pressure and stress for teachers operating within that system. According to Lynenburg & Cadavid (1992), a further consequence could also be feelings of LH as teachers begin to feel chronically unsuccessful, ineffective and powerless. The present status of the South African education system, the nature of Curriculum 2005 itself, as well as the manner in which it is being implemented, may therefore leave teachers feeling increasingly powerless and helpless which may then result in a situation of LH for the majority of South African teachers. The literature further suggests that the variables of job satisfaction and social support may have a role in this process.

THE STUDY

2.1 RATIONALE

The level of stress experienced by individuals employed within the teaching profession has for some time been a subject of concern. Because teachers are regarded as the backbone of the education system, stress is an inevitable and almost inescapable part of teaching. Researchers have found that approximately half of teachers in a number of countries regard teaching as highly stressful due to a combination of extrinsic and intrinsic factors (Boyle, Borg, Falzon & Baglioni, 1995).

In the current South African context, the legacy of apartheid has served to multiply these 'common' stressors. In addition, political and social change has increased expectations with respect to the delivery of education to the majority of learners who were marginalised under apartheid education. Increasing pressure is also being placed on the education system to correct social and economic problems which have resulted from inequalities in educational provision (Nkomo, 1990).

As the realities of educational redress and delivery emerge, it is evident that most schools are experiencing a variety of difficulties, including, increasing pupil-teacher ratios; decreasing salaries and job security; departmental cutbacks as well as inadequate teacher training and support (Fong Chong, 1998; Jansen, 1990, Motala 1997). Furthermore, while for historically black schools the school experience is one of overcrowded classrooms and lack of books and basic facilities, historically white schools are also having to contend with their own difficulties - the reality of racial integration being one of them. White teachers are said to be struggling to cope with the new heterogenous classroom - consisting of learners with different cultural and educational needs (MacGregor, 1998; Skinner, 1998).

All schools however, are experiencing the stress of the introduction of a new education system. Included in this is Curriculum 2005, a sophisticated curriculum based on first world assumptions about well-resourced classrooms and highly qualified teachers. Due to continued educational inequalities however, Curriculum 2005 and its attending Outcomes-Based Education, seems only to be exacerbating the existing educational crisis and widening the gap between historically black and white schools (MacGregor, 1998). Under these circumstances, enormous pressure is placed on the teachers within those schools to meet the needs of learners.

As teachers begin to feel increasingly unsuccessful, ineffective and powerless, within a situation which is out if their control, it is hypothesized that they are also experiencing heightened feelings of helplessness. This study therefore aims to assess whether or not the psychological consequences of such perceived uncontrollable negative situations are resulting in a situation of learned helplessness, and possibly depression, in a sample of the South African teacher population.

In order to gain a holistic understanding of these psychological consequences, levels of job satisfaction and social support are investigated as possible contributing factors. These factors have been shown to impact directly on teachers' ability to perform in the school environment (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Sarason et al., 1983; Steyn & van Wyk, 1999).

2.2 AIMS

2.2.1 General Aim

Given the current crisis in the South African education system; the high expectations of that system and the lack of resources and support for the teacher population, this research seeks to explore the notion that teachers are not coping with the present transformation. The LH model is offered as a model for investigating whether or not teachers are experiencing feelings of powerlessness and helplessness in the transforming education system.

2.2.2 Specific Aims

1) To examine the levels of LH in a sample of South African teachers to establish whether or not it is a relevant construct.
2) To investigate any differences in the levels of LH between a sample of teachers from historically black (township) schools and a sample of teachers from historically white (suburban) schools.
3) To determine whether or not the differing levels of LH, or lack there of, can be understood through measures of job satisfaction and/or social support.
4) To examine the usefulness of the LH model in determining the levels of depression, if any, amongst a sample of South African teachers.

2.3 METHOD

2.3.1 The Sample

The total sample for the research comprised 89 teachers employed on a full-time basis all within public schools. All schools utilized were primary schools within the Gauteng Province. Nine schools participated in the study. Six of the nine schools are historically black schools situated within Soweto, a township on the outskirts of Johannesburg. Three of the schools are historically white schools situated in the Northern Suburbs of Johannesburg. The total number of questionnaires distributed was 146 with a total of 89 completed questionnaires returned (a response rate of 60.9 %).

The six township schools are situated in areas of the township in which poverty and unemployment are prominent features. All six schools showed the typical features of historically black township schools, such as poor staffing, a lack of resources and overcrowding. The number of teachers per school ranged from 5 to 14 depending, but not always, on the size of the school. All teachers resided in the surrounding township areas. A total of 66 teachers taught at the six schools and all received questionnaires to complete. The return rate resulted in a final sample of 40 township teachers.

The three historically white schools were chosen from typically affluent suburban areas in Johannesburg. Schools were chosen on the basis of ease of accessibility and location within historically white areas. The number of teachers per school ranges from 33 to 41. Eighty questionnaires in total were distributed between the three schools. The return rate resulted in a final sample of 49 suburban teachers.

Of the total sample, the majority of the respondents (94.3%) were female. All of the 40 township teachers are 'Black', while 48 of the 49 suburban teachers are 'White'. One suburban teacher is 'Indian'. The age of the teachers in the sample ranged from 21 to 63 years of age. As can be seen from Table 2.1, the township teachers are on average older in age and have more years teaching experience.

Table 2.1: Biographical data for the sample population, in mean years.

Variable	Township	Suburban
Teachers age	54	37
Years Teaching Experience	18	12

Teachers were also asked to indicate their highest level of education. Reported qualifications were grouped into four groups of teaching qualifications namely: Non-professional qualification; Teaching Diploma; Degree or Degree and Diploma; and Postgraduate Degree. As can be seen from Table 2.2, for both groups, the highest percentage of teachers hold Teaching Diplomas.

Table 2.2: Distribution of teacher qualifications for the sample population.

Teacher Qualification	Township - %	Suburban - %
Non-professional qualification	30	0
Teaching Diploma	47.5	63.2
Degree/ Degree + diploma	20	36.7
Post-graduate Degree	2.5	0

Respondents were asked to estimate the average number of pupils taught in one class and these ranged from 22 pupils through to 60 pupils per class, across the total sample. As Table 2.3

indicates, the township teachers reported an average class size of 37 pupils while the suburban teachers reported an average class size of 25 pupils.

Table 2.3: Mean class size (number of pupils) for the sample population.

Variable	Township	Suburban
Class size	37	25

The remaining biographical details regarding the marital status and home language of the sample are given in Table 2.4 below.

Table 2.4: Distribution of marital status and home language for the sample population.

Variable	Township - %	Suburban - %
Marital Status		
Married	52.5	44.8
Single	27.5	36.7
Divorced	15	16.3
Widowed	5	2
Home Language		
English	0	91.8
Afrikaans	0	8.2
South Sotho	57.5	0
Tswana	22.5	0
North Sotho	12.5	0
Sepedi	5	0
Zulu	2.5	0

2.3.2 Measures

The data for this study was obtained by means of the survey method. To obtain data, a 'questionnaire pack' was compiled which included the following five scales:

- The Attributional Style Questionnaire, (Peterson, Semel, von Baeyer, Abramson, Metalsky & Seligman, 1982).
- The Job Satisfaction Scale, (Warr, Cook & Wall, 1979).
- Perceived Social Support Scales, Friends and Family, (Procidano & Heller, 1983)

- Perceived Social Support of Supervisors and Colleagues, (Taylor & Bowers, 1972 in Fong Chong, 1998).
- The Beck Depression Inventory - Short Form, (Beck & Beck, 1972).

The questionnaire pack also contained a questionnaire to gather general demographic characteristics. The information requested was: gender, race group; home language; marital status; number of children; number of financial dependents; highest level of education; length of time taught at current school; number of years teaching experience; and average number of pupils taught in a class.

Attributional Style Questionnaire

The *Attributional Style Questionnaire* (ASQ) (Peterson et al., 1982) is a self-report questionnaire containing 48 hypothetical situations: 24 negative events and 24 positive events. For each event, subjects are asked to imagine it happening to them and to decide what they believe would be the one major cause from two possible given causes. The two causes provided hold constant two of the attributional dimensions while varying the third. Sixteen questions pertain to each of the three dimensions.

As a result, three crucial dimensions to the respondent's explanatory style are revealed: Permanence (Pm), Pervasiveness (Pv) and Personalisation (Ps). For all three dimensions, the higher the score, the higher the level of pessimism.

The *Permanence* dimension relates to the stability attribution and reveals the extent to which the person regards the causes of events to be permanent or transitory. Two subscales are formed within this dimension across good (PmG) and bad (PmB) events.

The *Pervasiveness* dimension relates to the globality attribution and reveals the extent to which the person regards the causes of events to be pervasive and universal or situationally specific. Two subscales are formed within this dimension across good (PvG) and bad (PvB) events.

The *Personalisation* dimension relates to the internal attribution and reveals the extent to which the person regards the causes of events to be due to their own doing or due to factors outside of

the self. Two subscales are formed within this dimension across good (PsG) and bad (PsB) events.

A composite explanatory style score for good events (Total G) is obtained by adding the respondent's scores on each of the three subscales for positive events (PmG + PvG + PsG = Total G). The higher the Total G score, the higher the level of optimism. A composite explanatory style score for bad events (Total B) is obtained by summing the scores for the three subscales for negative events (PmB + PvB + PsB = Total B). High Total B scores indicate high levels of pessimism. An overall explanatory style or optimism score is obtained by subtracting the composite negative score from the composite positive score (Total G - Total B). The lower the overall style score, the more pessimistic the person's explanatory style. A further composite score - the Hopefulness score (HoB) - is taken to indicate levels of resilience or alternately, hopelessness. Taken by summing the stability and globality dimensions for negative events (PmB + PvB), the lower the score, the more hopeful a person is said to be.

Internal consistencies, using Cronbach's coefficient alpha, have been found to be 0.66, 0.85 and 0.88 for the internal, stable and global dimensions respectively (Peterson & Villanova, 1988). These figures were replicated almost exactly by Follette & Jacobson (1987, cited in Robins & Hayes, 1995). Test-retest reliabilities are reported as moderate to high (r's = 0.6 or above). A variety of evidence, mostly from studies of depression, supports the construct validity of the ASQ (0.61 to 0.67) (Robins & Hayes, 1995). Correlates with the corresponding scores for subjects on naturally occurring events of 0.37, 0.18, and 0.36 for internal, stable and global attributions respectively and 0.38 for the composite scores, have been reported (Robins & Hayes, 1995). Together these findings provide strong support for the reliability and moderate support for the construct validity of the ASQ.

Job Satisfaction Scale

The *Job Satisfaction Scale* (Warr, Cook & Wall, 1979) consists of 16 items and measures a person's intrinsic, extrinsic and overall satisfaction level. Intrinsic satisfaction is measured using 7 items, external satisfaction using 8 items, and the one item remaining measuring overall job

satisfaction (Warr et al., 1979). Respondents are required to rate their level of satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) on a five-point Likert-type scale with higher scores representing higher job satisfaction. The responses range from 1= "Very Dissatisfied" through to 5= "Very Satisfied". Possible scores range from 16 to 80 with a higher score indicating higher job satisfaction.

The reliability and validity of this scale has been established both internationally and in South Africa (Bluen & Donald, 1991). Warr et al. (1979) report an alpha of 0.78, while in South Africa Bluen and Donald (1991, cited in Chanoch, 1998) report an alpha of 0.87. Test-retest coefficents of 0.90 over a three month period have been reported (Bluen & Jubiler-Lurie, 1990, cited in Chanoch, 1998).

Social Support Scales

Procidano and Heller's (1983) *Perceived Social Support Scales* consist of separate scales which measure the levels of perceived social support received from family (Perceived Social Support, Family - PSS-Fa) and friends (Perceived Social Support, Friends - PSS-Fr). Each scale comprises 20 items. Responses are restricted to "Yes", "No" and "Don't Know" for both of the scales. Possible scores range from 0 to 20 with an increase in score indicating an increase in social support.

Procidano and Heller (1983) have reported good reliabilities, with alpha coefficients of 0.90 and 0.88 for Perceived Social Support, Family (PSS-Fa) and Perceived Social Support, Friends (PSS-Fr) respectively; in conjunction with high internal consistency for both scales. Tardy (1985, cited in Fong Chong, 1998) reported a high test-retest reliability ($r< 0.80$). The Perceived Social Support of Family and Friends Scales have been used previously within the South African context with similar reported reliability coefficients (Behrman, 1986).

Perceived social support of supervisors and colleagues (PSS-Su and PSS-Co) was measured using the scales of *Taylor and Bowers* (1972, in Fong Chong, 1998). The two scales consist of three items, with the responses arranged in a five-point Likert-type format. The responses range from 1= "To a very little extent" through to 5= "To a very great extent". Possible scores range

from 3 to 15 with the higher score indicating increased levels of support. Cronbach's coefficient alphas of between 0.80 and 0.93 have been reported for this scale (Bluen, 1986, cited in Fong Chong, 1998). Similar coefficient alphas have been obtained in the South African context (Fong Chong, 1998).

Beck Depression Inventory (short form)

The *BDI (short form)* (Beck & Beamsderfer, 1974; Beck & Beck, 1972) requires subjects to report the extent to which they experience 13 common symptoms of depression on a four-point Likert-type scale. Possible scores range from 0 to 39 and are evaluated according to the following ranges: 0-3, none or minimal; 4-7, mild; 8-15, moderate; and 16+, severe. The BDI (short form) has been found to correlate 0.96 with the total BDI (Beck & Beamesderfer, 1974). The total BDI has been found to have a high internal consistency (mean alpha coefficient of 0.81 for nonpsychiatric patients), good test-retest reliablity (r= 0.60 to 0.83) and a high correlation (r= 0.60) with other measures of depression.

2.3.3 Procedure

The principals of the nine chosen schools were contacted telephonically to request permission for their staff's participation in the study. In all cases the researcher met with the principal personally before meeting with the teachers in order to discuss the proposed study and to negotiate terms of access. Although the researcher initially planned to be present at an arranged time with the teachers as a group (per school) so as to ensure the correct completion of the questionnaires, this was not, in most cases, seen as feasible by the teachers given the time constraints of their schedules. Only two schools managed to arrange times during school hours in which the researcher could be present to facilitate the completion of the questionnaire. This profoundly influenced the return rate at these two schools.

In the remaining seven schools, however, the questionnaires were personally delivered to the schools for the teachers to complete in their own time. The principals were given specific directions regarding the correct completion of the questionnaires. The questionnaires were also accompanied by an Information Sheet providing information regarding the researcher and the

research as well as a Consent Form which had to be signed by all teachers participating in the study. A covering letter was attached to each questionnaire which explained the general aim of the study, the approximate time needed to complete the questionnaire, as well as instructions to aid in the ensuring of anonymity and confidentiality of the responses. Teachers were asked to participate in the study on a voluntary basis and the anonymity of respondents was enabled through the absence of any identifying markings on the questionnaire.

Each school was given two weeks to complete the questionnaires. However, only two of the seven schools were able to complete the questionnaires within the allotted time and the majority of the remaining schools utilized up to 5 weeks to complete the questionnaires. The researcher thus had no control over variables which might have affected the answers on the questionnaires. All the questionnaires were personally collected by the researcher upon completion.

2.3.4 Experimental Design

Means and standard deviations were derived for each of the five measures and their subscales.
A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to ascertain whether there existed any significant differences between the teachers in each of the two sample groups across all the above variables.
Pearson Product-moment correlational analyses were conducted between all the subscales of the scales as listed above. These were conducted in order to establish whether any of these variables were significantly related to one another, either positively or negatively.

RESULTS

3.1 RESULTS ON THE ATTRIBUTIONAL STYLE QUESTIONNAIRE

The means (M) and standard deviations (SD) for the Total Optimism scores for the two sample groups were computed and are represented in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1: Means and standard deviations for the *Total Optimism* dimension for the sample population.

Variable Total Optimism	Township n = 40	Suburban n = 49
Mean	3.15	0.08
SD	3.82	0.76

Based on the ASQ score ranges, the results suggest that, overall, the township group of teachers appear to be less helpless and more optimistic than the suburban group of teachers. The mean score for the township group places them in the Average range of optimism; while the suburban group falls in the Very Pessimistic range.

In order to test whether there exists significant differences in the levels of optimism between the township and suburban groups of teachers, a one-way analysis of variance (Anova) was carried out on the Total Optimism scores of the two groups. The results show that the township teachers report a significantly higher level of Total Optimism ($f(1,88)$; $p<0.001$).

A closer look at the distribution of scores per sample group, across the different dimensions of the ASQ, provides further insights into the results. Table 3.2 below shows the distribution of scores across the dimension of Total Optimism for both teacher groups.

Table 3.2: Distribution of the *Total Optimism* (G-B) scores across the sample.

Range	Township - %	Suburban - %
Very Optimistic	5	2
Moderately Optimistic	22.5	2
Average	32.5	18.3
Moderately Pessimistic	15	28.5
Very Pessimistic	25	48.9

The above table suggests that more than half the township teachers fall within the Average to Optimistic range, while the majority of suburban teachers fall within the Moderately to Very Pessimistic range.

The variable of teacher's age was examined across the variable of Total Optimism. The results for this distribution, including the number of teachers in each age range, are shown in Table 3.3 below.

Table 3.3: Distribution of age across the Total Optimism scores for the sample population.

Age (in years)	Township - %				Suburban - %			
	n	Pessimistic	Average	Optimistic	n	Pessimistic	Average	Optimistic
20 - 29	1	100	0	0	19	91.5	5.3	5.3
30 - 39	9	55.5	33.3	11.1	9	88.8	11.1	0
40 - 49	21	40	35	30	12	68.3	41.7	0
50 - 59	7	28.6	28.6	42.9	8	62.5	25	0
60 +	2	0	50	50	1	100	0	0

The township teachers, the majority (75%) of whom are over 40 years of age (M = 54 years), display higher levels of optimism across the board. The suburban teachers, the majority (57%) of whom are under 40 years of age (M = 37 years), display consistently higher levels of pessimism and lower levels of optimism, than township teachers. Table 3.4 below shows the distribution of years teaching experience across the dimension of Total Optimism, including the number of teachers in each range, for both teacher groups.

Table 3.4: Distribution of years teaching experience across the Total Optimism scores for the sample population.

Teaching Experience (in years)	Township - %				Suburban - %			
	n	Pessimistic	Average	Optimistic	n	Pessimistic	Average	Optimistic
0 - 4	1	100	0	0	14	92.9	7.1	0
5 - 9	2	0	100	0	11	90.9	0	9.1
10 - 14	7	71.4	28.6	0	6	83.3	16.7	0
15 - 19	12	33.4	33.3	38.5	7	28.6	71.4	0
20 +	18	33.3	27.8	38.5	11	72.6	18.2	9

Township teachers, the majority (75%) of whom have at least 15 years teaching experience, display overall higher levels of optimism. Suburban teachers, the majority (63.2%) of whom have less than 15 years teaching experience, display overall lower levels of optimism than township teachers.

The analysis of scores on the Permanence, Pervasiveness and Personalisation dimensions yield further interesting results. In order to test whether there existed significant differences between the township and suburban groups of teachers on these dimensions, a one-way analysis of variance (Anova) was carried out. The Anova produced a significant result for the Pervasiveness Good (PvG) ($f(1,88)$; $p<0.05$) and the Personalisation Good (PsG) ($f(1,88)$; p 0.001) dimensions. The results suggest that township teachers, when compared to suburban teachers, tend to perceive the causes of good events to be both more pervasive and more due to their own efforts - something which largely results in higher levels of self-esteem. This also contributes to the overall differences in levels of optimism. No significant differences were found on the Permanence dimension.

On the Permanence dimension it appears that the majority of both the township and suburban teachers are quite optimistic when explaining bad events (PmB), believing that these are temporary or transient conditions. The majority of the sample (Township, 45% and Suburban, 55.1%) use slightly less optimistic explanations regarding the permanence of causes of good events (PmG) - although both groups still fall within the average range of optimism.

On the Pervasiveness dimension, both township and suburban groups again appear to be predominantly quite optimistic about the pervasiveness of the causes of bad events (PvB) - in other words, both groups generally believe that bad events have more specific, circumscribed causes. However, a higher percentage of township teachers appear to be more optimistic about the pervasiveness of good events (PvG), as compared to the suburban teachers.

The distribution of scores across the Personalisation dimension indicate differences in overall levels of self-esteem between the two sample groups. The results show that half the subjects in both groups appear to be quite pessimistic about the cause of bad events (PsB), suggesting they internalise the causes of bad events (blame themselves) and have a moderately low self-esteem. However, while 40% of township teachers show an average level of self-esteem with regards the causes of good events (PsG), 59.1% of suburban teachers have a very low self-esteem with respect to good events. In other words, while both groups demonstrate an equal tendency to internalize the causes of bad events, suburban teachers have a significantly higher tendency to externalize the causes of good events than township teachers. The distribution of the composite scores for both bad (Total B) and good events (Total G) are indicated in Table 3.5 below.

Table 3.5: Distribution of the *Total B* and *Total G* scores across the sample.

Range	Total B Township %	Total B Suburban %	Total G Township %	Total G Suburban %
Very Optimistic	5	0	2.5	0
Moderately Optimistic	27.5	24.5	15	6.1
Average	47.5	28.5	30	24.5
Moderately Pessimistic	20	36.7	42.5	28.5
Very Pessimistic	5	10.2	10	40.8

Table 3.5 indicates thus that overall, the majority of township teachers appear to demonstrate an average to moderately optimistic explanatory style for bad events (Total B) and have a moderate level of pessimism for good events (Total G). The suburban group of teachers however, exhibit lower levels of optimism for the causes of both good and bad events.

In order to test whether there exists significant differences between the township and suburban groups of teachers on the dimension of Hopefulness, a one-way analysis of variance (Anova) was carried out. No significant differences were found between the two groups. Distributions of the Hopefulness scores for the two groups are shown in Table 3.6 below .

Table 3.6: Distribution of the *Hopefulness* (HoB) scores for the sample population.

Range	Township - %	Suburban - %
Very Hopeful	2.5	2
Moderately Hopeful	72.5	44.8
Average	17.5	34.6
Moderately Hopeless	2.5	18.3
Very Hopeless	5	0

As seen in Table 3.6, a very high percentage of township teachers appear to be quite hopeful about the future as compared to less than half of the suburban teachers. The majority of the remaining suburban teachers appear to demonstrate average to moderate hopelessness about the future.

3.2 RESULTS ON THE JOB SATISFACTION SCALE

The means (M) and standard deviations (SD) for the two sample groups were computed for the job satisfaction scale and are represented in Table 3.7 below.

Table 3.7: Means and standard deviations for the *Job Satisfaction Scale* for the sample population.

Variable Job Satisfaction	Township n = 40	Suburban n = 49
Mean	49.50	57.47
SD	1.27	1.46

For the Job Satisfaction Scale, the highest possible obtainable score is 80 and the lowest is 16 - with a higher score indicating greater job satisfaction. Given an average score of 48 for this scale, it appears that the township teachers, with a mean of 49.5, have a level of job satisfaction which is adequate but tending towards the lower end of the satisfied range. The suburban teachers level of satisfaction with their jobs appears to be relatively high, tending towards the upper ranges of the satisfied range.

In order to test whether there exists significant differences in the levels of job satisfaction between the township and suburban groups of teachers, a one-way analysis of variance (Anova) was carried out. A significant difference ($f(1,88)$; $p<0.001$) was found between the levels of job satisfaction for the two groups in favour of the suburban group of teachers. It appears therefore that the suburban group of teachers are, on the whole, significantly more satisfied with their jobs than the township group.

A closer look at the distribution of scores for this scale provides further insights into these results. Table 3.8 below reflects the distribution of job satisfaction scores across the two sample groups.

Table 3.8: Distribution of the *Job Satisfaction* scores across the sample.

Score Range	Township - %	Suburban - %
Tending towards 'Satisfied'	50	89.8
Tending towards 'Dissatisfied'	50	10.2

It appears that 50% of township teachers tend to be 'satisfied' with their jobs while a further 50% tend to be 'dissatisfied' with their jobs. For the suburban teachers, it appears that 89.8% of the teachers tend towards being 'satisfied' with their jobs, while 10.2% tend towards being 'dissatisfied' with their jobs. A much higher percentage of township teachers thus appear to be more dissatisfied with their jobs than their suburban counterparts.

3.3 RESULTS ON THE PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT SCALES

The means (M) and standard deviations (SD) for the two sample groups were computed for each of the social support subscales and are represented in Table 3.9 below.

Table 3.9: Means and standard deviations for the *Perceived Social Support Scales* for the sample population.

Variable Social Support		Township n = 40	Suburban n = 49
Supervisor:	Mean	11.33	11.51
	SD	2.71	3.07
Colleagues:	Mean	10.93	11.94
	SD	2.08	2.32
Family:	Mean	14.58	15.53
	SD	3.62	4.71
Friends:	Mean	13.90	15.16
	SD	3.66	4.74

Both township and suburban teachers reported receiving relatively high levels social support from their supervisors with both mean scores falling in the upper half of the possible spread of scores for this scale (with a possible maximum of 15). Similarly, teachers from both groups appear to receive good social support from colleagues with whom they work, with suburban teachers reporting slightly higher levels of support than their township counterparts. Both township and suburban teachers reported good social support from both family and friends. Suburban teachers' reported social support from family and friends was noticeably higher than township teachers'.

In order to test whether there exists significant differences in the levels of social support between the township and suburban groups of teachers, a one-way analysis of variance (Anova) was carried out. For the two groups, the only significant difference was found on the variable, "Social Support - Colleagues" ($f(1,88)$; $p<0.05$). On this variable, the suburban group of teachers report significantly higher levels of support from fellow workers than the township group of teachers.

A look at the distribution of the scores per sample group across the scales provides further insights into the results. Table 3.10 below indicates the distribution of scores for Perceived Social Support from Supervisors and Colleagues for both sample groups.

Table 3.10: Distribution of the *Perceived Social Support* scores for *Supervisors* (PSS-Su) and *Colleagues* (PSS-Co), for the sample population.

Score Range	PSS-Su Township %	PSS-Su Suburban %	PSS-Co Township %	PSS-Co Suburban %
Good Social Support	72.5	79.6	60	79.6
Average Social Support	17.5	4.1	32.5	12.2
Poor Social Support	10	16.3	7.5	8.2

The majority of the scores for both township and suburban teachers fell in the average and above average range of social support from supervisors. However, a larger percentage of suburban teachers appear to have low levels of social support from supervisors, than township teachers. Furthermore, it appears that a higher percentage of suburban teachers report having above average social support from colleagues.

The distribution of scores for Perceived Social Support from Family and Friends for both groups is shown in Table 3.11.

Table 3.11: Distribution of the *Perceived Social Support* scores for *Family* (PSS-Fa) and *Friends* (PSS-Fr), for the sample population.

Score Range	PSS-Fa Township %	PSS-Fa Suburban %	PSS-Fr Township %	PSS-Fr Suburban %
Good Social Support	90	85.7	75	79.6
Average Social Support	0	0	7.5	6.1
Poor Social Support	10	14.3	17.5	14.3

For both groups, the majority of teachers report good social support from family members. For social support from friends, both groups again show similar distributions of scores across all the ranges, and average to above average levels of social support from their friends.

3.4 RESULTS ON THE DEPRESSION INVENTORY

Due to possible inaccuracies of the data, the results for the depression scale, particularly those for the suburban group, need to be interpreted with caution.

The means (M) and standard deviations (SD) for the two sample groups were computed for the Depression scores. These are represented in Table 3.12 below.

Table 3.12: Means and standard deviations for the *Depression Inventory* for the sample population.

Variable Depression	Township n = 40	Suburban n = 49
Mean	4.33	2.96
SD	3.79	3.02

Based on the results received on the BDI, the average township teacher's level of depression appears to be mild whereas the average suburban teacher reported no depression.

In order to test whether there exists significant differences in the levels of depression between the township and suburban groups of teachers, a one-way analysis of variance (Anova) was carried out. Although no statistically significant differences were found between the means of the two groups on the depression scores, the township teachers report somewhat higher levels of depression than suburban teachers.

A look at the breakdown of the depression scores per sample group provides further insights into the results. The distribution of these scores for both groups is indicated in Table 3.13 below.

Table 3.13: Distribution of the *Depression* scores for the sample population.

Range	Township - %	Suburban - %
None	47.5	63.2
Mild Depression	30	28.6
Moderate Depression	22.5	8.2
Severe Depression	0	0

The results show that for the suburban teachers, the majority of scores (63.2%) on the Depression Scale appear to be very low - indicating the absence of depression. For the township group of teachers however, a lower percentage (47.5%) report no depression, and 30% mild depression.

3.5 CORRELATIONAL ANALYSES

Correlations were conducted in order to ascertain the existence of any relationships between Job Satisfaction and all the subscales of the ASQ. Contrary to what was expected, no significant correlations were found between job satisfaction and either the Total Optimism (TotOpt) or the Hope (HoB) scores for both township and suburban groups of teachers. Results of this correlational analysis for the township group of teachers are represented in Table 3.14 below.

Table 3.14: Pearson correlations between the subscales of the ASQ and Job Satisfaction for the *Township* group of teachers.

Variable	PmB	PmG	PvB	PvG	PsB	PsG	HoB	TotOpt
Job Satisfac.	-0.08	0.25	0.15	-0.06	-0.33*	-0.16	0.05	0.08

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level ($p<0.01$)
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level ($p<0.05$)

For the township group of teachers, the only significant correlation found was an inverse relationship between job satisfaction and the Personalisation Bad (PsB) dimension ($p<0.05$). This suggests that for the township group, low job satisfaction seems to relate to an increased tendency to blame oneself for the causes of bad events (PsB). Table 3.15 below shows the correlational analysis for the subscales of the ASQ and job satisfaction for the suburban group.

Table 3.15: Pearson correlations between the subscales of the ASQ and Job Satisfaction for the *Suburban* group of teachers.

Variable	PmB	PmG	PvB	PvG	PsB	PsG	HoB	TotOpt
Job Satisfac.	-0.11	0.14	0.21	0.06	-0.09	-0.18	0.08	-0.05

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level ($p<0.01$)
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level ($p<0.05$)

For the suburban group, no significant correlations were found for the variable job satisfaction across the subscales of the ASQ.

In order to test the relationship between social support and the presence of LH or optimism, correlations were conducted between social support and its components of Perceived Social Support, Supervisor (PSS-Su); Colleagues (PSS-Co); Family (PSS-Fa) and Friends (PSS-Fr), and all the subscales of the ASQ. The results of this analysis for the township group appear in Table 3.16 below.

Table 3.16: Pearson correlations between the subscales of the ASQ and the Perceived Social Support scales for the *Township* group of teachers.

Variable	PmB	PmG	PvB	PvG	PsB	PsG	HoB	TotOpt
PSS-Su	-0.20	-0.03	-0.02	-0.02	-0.32*	-0.19	-0.14	0.11
PSS-Co	-0.25	0.17	-0.06	-0.10	-0.18	0.003	-0.21	0.24
PSS-Fa	-0.14	0.16	-0.12	-0.01	-0.01	0.15	-0.17	0.23
PSS-Fr	0.04	0.18	0.16	-0.05	0.14	0.07	0.10	-0.04

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level ($p<0.01$)
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level ($p<0.05$)

For the township group, the only significant correlation was found between social support from one's supervisor (PSS-Su) and the Personalisation Bad (PsB) dimension ($p<0.05$). The results show that PSS-Su and PsB have an inverse relationship, in other words, for the township group, there is a relationship between support from one's supervisor and a tendency to internalize or blame oneself for bad events. The results of the correlational analysis for the subscales of the ASQ and the social support scales, for the suburban group, appear in Table 3.17 below.

Table 3.17: Pearson correlations between the subscales of the ASQ and the Perceived Social Support scales for the *Suburban* group of teachers.

Variable	PmB	PmG	PvB	PvG	PsB	PsG	HoB	TotOpt
PSS-Su	-0.06	0.31*	0.13	0.26	-0.16	0.02	0.06	0.23
PSS-Co	0.04	0.03	0.12	-0.14	-0.12	0.03	0.12	-0.07
PSS-Fa	-0.31*	0.22	-0.01	0.03	-0.08	-0.20	-0.21	0.13
PSS-Fr	-0.09	0.12	-0.08	-0.05	0.17	-0.16	-0.12	-0.03

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level ($p<0.01$)
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level ($p<0.05$)

For the suburban group of teachers, the results in Table 3.17 show a significant correlation between social support from one's supervisor (PSS-Su) and the Permanence Good (PmG) dimension ($p<0.05$) and a significant negative correlation between social support from one's family (PSS-Fa) and the Permanence Bad (PmB) dimension ($p<0.05$). These correlations suggest that for the suburban group, increased social support from one's supervisor seems to relate to an increased belief in the permanence or stability of the causes of good events. Conversely, high social support from family seems to be related to a decreased belief in the permanence of the causes of bad events.

In order to test the relationship between depression and explanatory style, correlations were conducted between the depression scores and the subscales of the ASQ. Table 3.18 below shows the results of this analysis for the township group of teachers.

Table 3.18: Pearson correlations between the subscales of the ASQ and Depression scores for the *Township* group of teachers.

Variable	PmB	PmG	PvB	PvG	PsB	PsG	HoB	TotOpt
Depresn	0.24	-0.32*	-0.05	0.09	0.16	0.23	0.12	-0.18

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level ($p<0.01$)
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level ($p<0.05$)

The results show a significant negative correlation between depression and the Permanence Good dimension ($p<0.05$). This suggests an inverse relationship - that for the township group, a decrease in levels of depression seems to be related to a more stable and permanent view of the causes of good events. The results of the correlations between the ASQ subscales and depression for the suburban group of teachers are shown in Table 3.19 below.

Table 3.19: Pearson correlations between the subscales of the ASQ and Depression scores for the *Suburban* group of teachers.

Variable	PmB	PmG	PvB	PvG	PsB	PsG	HoB	TotOpt
Depresn	0.20	-0.25	-0.16	-0.04	0.33*	0.23	0.01	-0.10

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level ($p<0.01$)
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level ($p<0.05$)

For the suburban group, a significant relationship was found between depression and the Personalisation Bad (PsB) dimension ($p<0.05$). This correlation suggests that for the suburban group, there is a relationship between levels of depression and the tendency to blame oneself and internalize the causes of bad events.

Correlations were conducted between the dimensions of Hopefulness (HoB); Total Optimism (TotOpt) and all of the remaining scales namely, Job Satisfaction; Depression; Perceived Social Support from Supervisors (PSS-Su), Colleagues (PSS-Co), Family (PSS-Fa) and Friends (PSS-Fr). As expected, for both the township and suburban groups, the Total Optimism dimension was found to be significantly and negatively correlated with the Hopefulness (HoB) score confirming the notion that as one's optimism increases, so one's hopelessness decreases, or vice versa ($p<0.01$ and $p<0.01$ respectively). Detailed results for the township group are shown in Table 3.20 below.

Table 3.20: Pearson correlations between Total Optimism (TotOpt); Hopefulness (HoB); Job Satisfaction; Depression; and the Perceived Social Support scales for the *Township* group of teachers.

Variable	HoB	TotOpt	Job Satisfac.	Depresn	PSS-Su	PSS-Co	PSS-Fa	PSS-Fr
HoB								
TotOpt.	-0.58**							
Job Satisfac.	0.05	0.08						
Depresn	0.12	-0.18	-0.06					
PSS-Su	-0.14	0.11	0.43**	-0.19				
PSS-Co	-0.21	0.24	0.51**	-0.12	0.50**			
PSS-Fa	-0.17	0.23	0.25	-0.35*	-0.16	0.22		
PSS-Fr	0.10	-0.04	0.09	-0.06	-0.02	0.08	0.04	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level ($p<0.01$)
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level ($p<0.05$)

For the township group, social support from supervisors (PSS-Su) and colleagues (PSS-Co) were both found to be significantly correlated with levels of job satisfaction ($p<0.01$ and $p<0.01$ respectively). This suggests that social support received from supervisors and colleagues is positively related to levels of job satisfaction. Social support from one's supervisor (PSS-Su) was also found to be significantly correlated with social support from colleagues (PSS-Co) ($p<0.01$) suggesting a positive relationship between the two variables. A significant negative correlation was found between perceived social support from family (PSS-Fa) and depression ($p<0.05$), suggesting that for the township group, there is a negative relationship between family social support and depression, with high levels of social support relating to overall lowered levels of depression. The results of this analysis, for the suburban group, are shown in Table 3.21 below.

Table 3.21: Pearson correlations between Total Optimism (TotOpt); Hopefulness (HoB); Job Satisfaction; Depression and the Perceived Social Support scales for the *Suburban* group of teachers.

Variable	HoB	TotOpt	Job Satisfac.	Depresn	PSS-Su	PSS-Co	PSS-Fa	PSS-Fr
HoB								
TotOpt.	-0.40**							
Job Satisfac.	0.08	-0.05						
Depresn	0.01	-0.1	-0.61**					
PSS-Su	0.06	0.23	0.68**	-0.35*				
PSS-Co	0.12	-0.07	0.12	-0.24	0.12			
PSS-Fa	-0.21	0.13	0.22	-0.31*	0.16	-0.08		
PSS-Fr	-0.12	-0.03	-0.02	0.05	0.02	0.09	0.19	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level ($p<0.01$)
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level ($p<0.05$)

For the suburban group, job satisfaction, perceived social support from supervisors (PSS-Su), and friends (PSS-Fr) were all found to be significantly and negatively correlated with depression ($p<0.01$; $p<0.05$ and $p<0.05$ respectively). This suggests that for the suburban group, decreased levels of depression seem to relate to increased levels of job satisfaction. These results further suggest that increased social support from one's supervisor and family members relates to lowered levels of depression. A significant correlation was also found between PSS-Su and job satisfaction ($p<0.05$). This suggests, for the suburban group, a positive relationship between social support from supervisors and levels of job satisfaction.

DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Given the current education reform and crisis in South Africa, the aim of this study was to investigate the relevance of the LH model to the experiences of a sample of South African teachers. Job satisfaction and social support were examined as possible influencing factors in the levels of LH; and levels of depression were examined as a possible consequence of LH. The results of the study suggest significant differences between the two sample groups with suburban teachers displaying high levels of pessimism and township teachers' relatively high levels of optimism. Results for the suburban group show significantly higher levels of job satisfaction and social support from colleagues, as well as higher levels of social support from supervisors, family and friends. Lower levels of depression were also reported for this group.

4.2 INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS

4.2.1 Attributional Style Results

Overall, the results suggest the Learned Helplessness model to be a useful construct in describing the experience of the sample of South African teachers, with significant differences between the two groups. Township teachers seem to employ an optimistic explanatory style while their suburban counterparts employ a pessimistic explanatory style. Suburban teachers are consequently more at risk for LH and its associated motivational, cognitive and emotional deficits. That is, they are more at risk for developing decreased problem-solving ability; increased passivity and giving up; as well as increased risk for depression and lowered self-esteem. The significantly higher levels of pessimism exhibited in the suburban group would therefore seem to suggest that the teachers in this group are not coping with the present crisis and transformation in education to the same extent that their township counterparts are.

The difference in the levels of optimism between the two groups is reflected in the different overall levels of optimism for both bad and good events. Across the board, suburban teachers exhibit higher levels of pessimism in their thinking about the causes of both good and bad events. Results also show a difference in the hopefulness of the two groups with a higher percentage of township teachers being hopeful about the future than suburban teachers.

In terms of the globality attribution (measured by the Pervasiveness dimension), the results suggest that while both groups are quite optimistic about the causes of bad events, a significantly higher percentage of township teachers are also more optimistic about the pervasiveness of the causes of good events. This means that while both groups have a tendency to isolate their misfortunes to a specific context, the suburban teachers are also more likely to isolate their successes to specific situations. Suburban teachers are therefore less likely to generalize their successes to situations of pressure where they need it most. According to Seligman (1993), suburban teachers will be less likely to utilize, and therefore benefit, from their successful experiences in the future because they are less likely to generalize good events to other aspects of their lives.

The results of the distribution of scores across the Personalisation dimension (which relates to internal attributions) for each group also suggest differences between the groups, specifically in the levels of self-esteem experienced. Township teachers, according to the findings, probably experience higher levels of self-esteem than their suburban counterparts. While both groups tend to internalize the causes of bad events to a similar high degree, it appears that a significantly higher percentage of township teachers also internalize the causes of good events. Obviously, the tendency to internalize the causes of bad events, does not bode well for the self-esteem of either group. However, the self-esteem of suburban teachers is further undermined by their inability to internalize the causes of good events. For township teachers however, the ability to internalize the causes of good events will help to bolster their self-esteem.

These attributional style results are somewhat contrary to what would be expected for two such sample groups. While high levels of pessimism were expected within the sample as a whole,

what was less expected was that the suburban group would be the group to have higher levels of pessimism. One could argue that due to the apartheid era of discriminatory educational practices, township teachers have experienced more intense and protracted situations of non-control than their white counterparts. According to Seligman's (1978) theory, an increase in the past experience of situations of non-control should lead to an increase in feelings of helplessness in future situations of non-control - translating into higher levels of pessimism for the township group. This is however, contrary to the results of the present study.

At a glance, one could infer that the township group of teachers, being on the whole older in age and having more teaching experience than the suburban group, are more able to cope with the increased demands and pressure of the changing education system. However, it may also be possible that the South African situation itself is one that is so unique and specific that it causes the LH model to be applied in a different way. This is not to discount the theory and model of LH within the South African context, for it offers a useful description of the experiences of the sample of teachers. It may just be however that the explanation behind the development of LH becomes modified or altered by this unique context.

It could be that the period of apartheid created a situation of lack of control that was so severe and so prolonged that historically disadvantaged teachers were forced to cope in order to survive. Within this environment, black teachers were thus almost 'forced' to create their own *internal* psychological coping mechanisms. Repeated experiences of lack of control may therefore have resulted in a building up of an internal psychological resilience, which protected them against feelings of helplessness and despair.

Furthermore, one could also argue that the experience of being out of control on a daily basis allowed the township teachers to become 'accustomed' to such situations and therefore accustomed to coping in such situations. Coping under the new system of education with its top-down policies and new ideas over which they have no control, is thus easier for township teachers because they have more 'experience' in coping within these situations. They may thus be more resilient in many future situations of non-control.

In addition, it may also be argued that the township teachers' ability to cope and survive was affirmed by the breakdown of apartheid and its racist education system. The township teachers' survival of apartheid could have affirmed for them their ability to cope in the face of out of control and seemingly helpless situations. Ironically, the apartheid government's attempts to increase helplessness among the black people of South Africa, actually seems to have led to a decreased helplessness and increased optimism and hope for this sample of teachers.

On a more practical level, any new education system which promises improvements in resources, training and support - exactly those things lacking in the past - would probably be viewed in a more favourable light by township teachers. Given the education system from which they came, township teachers would then quite obviously be more optimistic and hopeful about the future of education in this country than their suburban counterparts. This is supported not only by the higher levels of hope found in the present study for this group, but also by recent literature which confirms the positive attitude of township teachers towards the new integrated system of education and OBE (Mostert & Reagen, 1997).

Historically, white teachers have by and large come out of a fairly protected, advantaged and supportive educational environment, within which they have experienced a good deal of control. Teachers within this educational environment had little need to develop the internal psychological coping mechanisms so vital to the township teachers. Suburban teachers may therefore struggle with increased feelings of non-control, helplessness and not coping when placed within situations which are out of their control. The current education system thus places suburban teachers in foreign and unfamiliar territory and may leave them feeling out of control and helpless. The LH model may thus apply in such a way that *no* past experience of situations of non-control may lead to a deterioration in internal psychological coping mechanisms such that the introduction of a situation of non-control in the future, creates enhanced pessimism and feelings of helplessness.

Furthermore, a system that is viewed as reducing one's control and increasing one's feelings of helplessness will not be seen in a positive light by suburban teachers. One would therefore expect that the suburban group would be more pessimistic and less hopeful about the future.

On a more practical level, it may also be argued that the suburban teachers are having to deal with the added stressor of racial integration within their classrooms - a factor which is not, as yet, a feature of township schools. Recent research confirms the difficulties that white teachers are experiencing in coping with the heterogenous nature of their current classes that require both racial and cultural adjustments on their part. Suburban teachers may thus be experiencing additional stressors which may be creating and/or exacerbating feelings of helplessness.

4.2.2 Attributional Style and Other Factors

4.2.2.1 Depression

If Seligman's (1978) theory is correct, then people who constantly hold themselves responsible for unpleasant happenings are more likely to feel bad about themselves and thus be at risk for developing depression (Abramson et al., 1989). According to the theory therefore, the suburban group of teachers are at risk for developing depression and should be exhibiting higher levels of depression than township teachers. According to the results of this study, however, suburban teachers are currently exhibiting lower levels of depression than township teachers. Although the mean depression scores of the township and suburban groups fell in the 'Mild' and 'None' range of depression respectively, the majority of both township and suburban teachers reported no depression. Taken as such, both groups appear to have exhibited non-significant levels of depression. This makes any conclusions regarding the construct of depression and its relationship to other variables utilized in this study, questionable and inconclusive.

However, this does still not explain the unexpected lower levels of depression within the suburban group. While it may be that the LH model is not a good predictor of depression within the South African context, or within this specific sample of teachers, it may also be due to shortcomings in the measuring instrument utilized, that of the Beck Depression Inventory, Short

Form (BDI). It is possible, given that the BDI is a rather transparent self-report inventory, that subjects were able to adapt their responses in order to give a more favourable impression and to gain social approval. Subjects not wanting to be perceived as depressed or not coping with their situation may therefore have answered the questionnaire inaccurately. There could thus reason to believe, given the high levels of LH and low self-esteem of the suburban group that, were the BDI to be answered accurately, higher and significant levels of depression would have been found. While it appears therefore that the LH model in this study was not useful in determining levels of depression, it is also highly likely that given a more accurate measure of depression, that the hypothesized relationship as per the LH theory, would have been found.

For the township group, given their overall average levels of optimism, low levels of depression could be expected. It is more likely thus that reports of depression for this group closer approximate accurate levels. The LH model in this case could therefore be said to have quite accurately predicted levels of depression for this group. The significant negative correlation found between depression and social support from family members suggests that for this group, social support from family members is an influencing and possibly moderating factor in determining levels of depression. This would hold with the "buffering hypothesis" of the current literature (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Billings & Moos, 1981). Further, given the township teachers higher levels of optimism and good overall mean levels of social support, it is possible that social support from family may in fact be linked in some mediating way to feelings of pessimism.

For the suburban group, the absence of depression makes the correlations found between this construct and any other variables, difficult to interpret. However, given more significant levels of depression, the negative correlations found between depression and social support from both supervisors and family members, would hold. In a similar way to the township teacher group, this correlation would seem to support the mediating effect that social support has on feelings of despair and depression. In this case however, the significant effect was found not only for familial support but also for support from supervisors. Further, the significant negative correlation found between depression and job satisfaction, would seem to suggest that depression may be an indicator of job satisfaction, or alternatively, that levels of job satisfaction be an

influencing factor in feelings of depression. The latter would hold true to the findings of current literature with regards the influence that job satisfaction can have on a person's emotional and psychological state (Jain et al., 1996).

4.2.2.2 Job Satisfaction

The results suggest that the township teachers have significantly lower levels of job satisfaction than the suburban teachers. Research by Steyn and van Wyk (1999) suggests that, for township schools, the most prominent factors contributing to decreased levels of job satisfaction are organisational structural (environmental) factors and organisational practice (interpersonal) factors (Steyn, 1988). Given the overall poorer educational environment in the townships, it is thus highly likely that township teachers' job satisfaction will suffer. For this same group, however, levels of job satisfaction were also found to be significantly correlated with social support from supervisors and colleagues - variables more approaching the organisational practice factors of Steyn (1988). It would therefore seem that social support is also in some way related to job satisfaction. When compared to suburban teachers, township teachers report significantly lower levels of social support from colleagues and overall lower levels of social support from supervisors, family and friends - something that could account for the significantly lower levels of job satisfaction for township teachers.

However, when taken as a group, the township teachers reported good levels of social support across the board, which appears to contradict with their decreased levels of job satisfaction. It may therefore be possible that township teachers do not rely that extensively on social support to determine their job satisfaction. Results show that job satisfaction is significantly and negatively correlated with the Personalisation Bad dimension, with township teachers showing overall low levels of job satisfaction and a high tendency to blame themselves for bad events. The teachers' proneness to blame themselves for bad events may therefore be affecting their job satisfaction or, decreased levels of job satisfaction - may somehow be exacerbating township teachers' tendency to blame themselves for bad events. Either way, the township teachers' job satisfaction and their self-esteem appear to be related in some way. Therefore, while the correlations suggest that social support from one's supervisor and colleagues is related to levels of job satisfaction, this

may not be as important as how the teachers choose to explain bad events in their lives to themselves. The relationship between external social support from supervisors and colleagues and job satisfaction appears thus to be somewhat more complex than the simple 'mediating effect' suggested by the literature (Eisenberger et al., 1997).

In terms of the significantly higher levels of job satisfaction for the suburban group, the obvious differences in quality of resources and working conditions could be affecting levels of job satisfaction positively. However, results for the suburban group also show a significant correlation between job satisfaction and social support from supervisors. With suburban teachers reporting higher overall levels of social support and job satisfaction than township teachers, it may be that social support, particularly from supervisors, has a positive effect on their job satisfaction - something which concurs with current literature (Eisenberger et al., 1997).

4.2.2.3 Social Support

Given the findings of job satisfaction mentioned above, it appears that for township teachers, social support from their supervisors may also be linked in some way to their feelings of self-esteem. Social support from supervisors was found to be significantly and negatively correlated with the Personalisation Bad dimension. However, township teachers report good overall social support as well as a tendency to internalize the causes of bad events to a large degree. This suggests that while social support from external sources such as supervisors may have an influence on how they feel about themselves, township teachers rely more on their own internal resources to judge for themselves. Township teachers' self-esteem therefore remains relatively in tact - but this seems to be more due to their own efforts and internal attribution style than to those of external factors like social support. It appears therefore that for both job satisfaction and self-esteem, that township teachers rely more on their internal psychological coping mechanisms than the often variable and undependable external factors like social support.

For suburban teachers, the social support they receive from their supervisors and family appears to have an influence on how permanent they view the causes of both good and bad events respectively. Results show a significant positive correlation between support from supervisors

and PmG as well as a significant negative correlation between familial support and PmB. It may be therefore that suburban teachers rely heavily on external factors such as social support and good quality working environments to determine their levels not only of job satisfaction but also how permanent they believe the status of their environment to be. This is worrying, as these are precisely those factors over which one has no control and which are currently under threat with the introduction of Curriculum 2005. Change in the current levels of support received could therefore lead not only to a reduction in job satisfaction but also to an increase in levels of depression - given that both are related to levels of job satisfaction. It appears that while township teachers seem to depend and rely on their own internal resources to cope, that the suburban group of teachers place a greater emphasis and stake on external factors in order to cope.

What is of concern is that suburban teachers, despite better resources, more social support and overall better job satisfaction, still display high levels of pessimism and a decreased hopefulness about the future. Township teachers on the other hand, with their lowered levels of job satisfaction, relatively lower levels of social support as well as poor educational environment, seem to be armed with a more positive attribution style and greater internal resources, and remain optimistic and hopeful.

4.3 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The results point to high levels of LH and pessimistic explanatory styles among the suburban group of teachers with corresponding low levels of hopefulness about the future. Implications for the transformation of education in South Africa, including the future success of Curriculum 2005 and OBE, are thus extremely important. The results suggest that the suburban group of teachers is not coping with the present transformation as well as the township group of teachers. It appears therefore that the current crisis in education is having a profound psychological impact on some teachers in the form of feelings of helplessness and hopelessness.

While perhaps not as yet immediately apparent in their present performance, the consequences of such deficits could be far-reaching and devastating - not only for the psychological health of the teachers themselves but also for their pupils who rely on the efficacy of their teachers to achieve academic success. Furthermore, if Seligman's (1978) theory is correct, these same teachers run high risks of developing depression in the future - again, a consequence with both personal and societal implications. In view of this, it seems imperative that these teachers are not only monitored to ascertain their ability to cope and function effectively as teachers, but that some kind of active intervention needs to take place to mediate and reduce their feelings of helplessness and possible depression. This is particularly important for the suburban group of teachers who seem to be most at risk. Interventions on a preventative level need to also be implemented so as to better equip teachers to cope in the future.

The research seems to point to a need for support structures within the school environment, in terms of both psychological support as well as practical material support for overworked and stressed teachers. Colleagues, supervisors and family members should be made aware of the importance of social support and be encouraged to offer this coping resource to stressed teachers. In addition, suburban teachers in particular, may be needing extra training and education specifically tailored to assisting them in dealing with the current racial integration difficulties they are experiencing in their classrooms.

Further, while it is clear that educational resources across the board are stretched thin, township schools appear to be hardest hit. Township teachers working in poverty-stricken environments with little resources are experiencing reduced job satisfaction and are in obvious need of material assistance and improved working conditions. Suburban teachers also appear to be of great concern in this respect. The reported high levels of social support and job satisfaction seem to be inadequate to alleviate their intense feelings of helplessness and pessimism and, as such, they appear in urgent need of assistance.

Overall, if teachers are expected to meet the increased expectations of the new education system and continue to teach pupils effectively, levels of stress, helplessness and possible depression,

must be taken seriously. Without the support of an effective, committed and hopeful teacher body, the new education system will be hard pressed to succeed. While township teachers appear to be coping at present, there is no guarantee that this will continue into the future. Suburban teachers are clearly in need of assistance. The powers that be therefore need to take cognizance of the psychological effects of the current educational transformation on its teachers so as to ensure its successful implementation.

4.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The survey method used in this study limited the control of extraneous factors that could have affected the responses. The majority of the questionnaires were completed in the teachers own time and could be taken home for completion. It is possible that various circumstances influenced responses, either events which occurred in the larger society or on the personal level, through discussion or collaboration with other teachers.

A further limitation is that the study relied solely on self-report data. It is possible that teachers may have provided socially desirable responses, rather than honest descriptions of their levels of job satisfaction, social support and feelings of depression in order to enhance their self-image. This is particularly relevant to the BDI which produced inconclusive results.

The generalizability of the findings of this study could be potentially limited by the size of the sample. Considering the relatively small sample size of 89 subjects, it could prove difficult to generalize these results to other situations and groups of teachers. This study was conducted using data collected from a sample of mainly female teachers split along racial lines into historically black, township and white, suburban schools and teachers. The results may therefore not be generalizable to the growing number of black teachers working within historically white, suburban schools and within more multiracial environments than the present township schools. It could also prove difficult to generalize this study's finding to male groups of teachers, owing to the gender bias of the sample. Further, since no randomization of the sample was undertaken, correlational rather than causal relations could only be drawn.

The findings of the study may also be limited over time. Attributional style is not a static phenomenon and so the results may be reflecting the attributional styles of a particular moment in time. Furthermore, it is possible that the findings of the present study are linked to or reflective of broader social and environmental trends in South Africa at present. Given the recent political and social transformation of the country, it is possible that historically white South Africans are generally more pessimistic and less hopeful than their black counterparts. The results may thus be reflecting wider social trends in attitudes outside of, and not limited to, the educational arena or teachers specifically.

An in-depth investigation into the demographic factors possibly implicated in LH was outside the bounds of the present study. Interactional effects among the different demographic variables and LH, job satisfaction and social support may therefore exist and serve to clarify the process whereby teachers develop LH.

4.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

It would appear that further, more in-depth research into the attributional styles of teachers could prove valuable to the successful implementation of Curriculum 2005 in South Africa. More refined case studies, focusing on teachers' attributional styles and their coping strategies needs to be undertaken in order to ascertain the generalizability of the LH phenomenon across the South African teacher population.

Further, if resilience is in fact a factor in the LH process, then it would be important to investigate its effects in more detail. A more direct measure of resilience would need to be undertaken and correlated with levels of LH in order to ascertain any relationship between the two variables.

Given the limitations of the BDI as utilized in this study, research utilizing a more rigorous and perhaps more qualitative measure of depression needs to be undertaken so as to ascertain

accurate levels of depression among South African teachers. The relationship to levels of LH in this population group would then need to be further investigated with cross-validational studies uncovering any racial differences between teachers. It would also be important to cross-validate the results with larger groups of teachers in other school environments, for example: black teachers working within formerly white schools and/or black teachers working within more multiracial educational environments.

More holistic research into the ecosystemic factors contributing to LH on an individual level needs to be conducted. This would also include a more rigorous analysis and investigation of the demographics of those South African teachers displaying LH. Further analysis of the low levels of job satisfaction occurring among township teachers also needs to be conducted in order to explore and tease out the contributory factors on an individual level. The exact nature of the relationship between the different elements of social support and LH needs to be further investigated. Results of this research could then possibly be used to inform the construction of future intervention strategies to combat LH.

Effective methods of intervention to improve levels of LH and coping among white South African teachers need to be formulated, implemented and validated by research. Preventative intervention measures also need to be explored.

4.6 CONCLUSIONS

The primary aim of this research was to ascertain the relevance of the LH model to the experience of a group of South African teachers. In highlighting the difficulties that teachers are facing under the new educational framework, this study provided some evidence to suggest that the LH model is in fact a useful descriptive tool for the experience of a sample of South African teachers. Overall, the results showed lower levels of LH and higher levels of optimism for township teachers and significantly higher levels of LH and pessimism for suburban teachers. This suggests that the suburban teachers are not coping with the current educational transformation and are experiencing heightened feelings of helplessness and decreased self-

esteem. While the LH model is viewed as an important descriptive tool in the experience of the sample of teachers, the results also suggest that the model may need to be applied differently within the South African context. The concept of resilience was employed as a possible explanation for the different workings of the model within the South African situation. While the variables of job satisfaction and social support were found to be related in various and complicated ways to feelings of helplessness and depression, the results were not conclusive and require further in-depth investigation.

The results do provide some evidence, however, that overall, suburban teachers rely more heavily on external environmental factors in order to cope under pressure, while township teachers rely more on their own internal psychological coping mechanisms. Of concern are the higher levels of helplessness experienced by suburban teachers in spite of relatively better resources and support. This study highlights the need for more training and support with regards the implementation of the new curriculum as well as the urgent need for interventions for the suburban group of teachers who do not seem to be coping with the present transformation in South Africa.

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APPENDIX

Tables A-1 to A-7

Table A-1: One-way Analysis of Variance for all subscales of the *Attributional Style Questionnaire* for the sample population.

Subscales		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance level
PmB	Between Groups	1.740	1	1.740	.826	.366
	Within Groups	183.383	87	2.108		
	Total	185.124	88			
PmG	Between Groups	3.114	1	3.114	1.576	.213
	Within Groups	171.897	87	1.976		
	Total	175.011	88			
PvB	Between Groups	5.539	1	5.539	2.379	.121
	Within Groups	202.551	87	2.328		
	Total	208.090	88			
PvG	Between Groups	12.186	1	12.186	6.013	.016 *
	Within Groups	176.308	87	2.027		
	Total	188.494	88			
PsB	Between Groups	.047	1	0.047	.028	.868
	Within Groups	145.459	87	1.672		
	Total	145.506	88			
PsG	Between Groups	83.259	1	83.259	33.820	.000 **
	Within Groups	214.179	87	2.462		
	Total	297.438	88			
Hope	Between Groups	13.490	1	13.490	2.726	.102
	Within Groups	430.488	87	4.949		
	Total	443.978	88			
Total Optimism	Between Groups	207.339	1	207.339	14.422	.000 **
	Within Groups	1250.773	87	14.377		
	Total	1458.112	88			

Table A-2: Percentile distributions of the dimension *Permanence* for bad (PmB) and good (PmG) events, across school area.

Range	PmB Township %	PmB Suburban %	PmG Township %	PmG Suburban %
Very Optimistic	15	4	2.5	4
Moderately Optimistic	47.5	55	20	20.4
Average	22.5	24.5	45	55.1
Moderately Pessimistic	12.5	16.3	17.5	12.2
Very Pessimistic	2.5	0	15	8.1

Table A-3: Percentile distributions of the dimension *Pervasiveness* for bad (PvB) and good (PvG) events, across school area.

Range	PvB Township %	PvB Suburban %	PvG Township %	PvG Suburban %
Very Optimistic	20	6.1	7.5	6.1
Moderately Optimistic	45	46.9	30	20.4
Average	30	22.4	50	36.7
Moderately Pessimistic	0	24.5	12.5	24.5
Very Pessimistic	5	0	0	12.2

Table A-4: Percentile distributions of the dimension *Personalisation* for bad (PsB) and good (PsG) events, across school area.

Range	PsB Township %	PsB Suburban %	PsG Township %	PsG Suburban %
Very Optimistic/ Very High Self-esteem	2.5	0	12.5	0
Moderately Optimistic/ Moderate Self-esteem	12.5	14.2	15	2
Average	22.5	24.5	40	24.5
Moderately Pessimistic/ Moderately Low Self-esteem	52.5	51	27.5	14.2
Very Pessimistic/ Very Low Self-esteem	10	10.2	5	59.1

Table A-5: One-way Analysis of Variance for the *Job Satisfaction Scale* across the sample.

Subscales		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance level
Job Satisfaction	Between Groups	1398.672	1	1398.672	16.194	.000 **
	Within Groups	7514.204	87	86.370		
	Total	8912.876	88			

Table A-6: One-way Analysis of Variance for the *Perceived Social Support Scales* for the sample population.

Subscales		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance level
Social Support Supervisor	Between Groups	.755	1	.755	.089	.767
	Within Groups	741.020	87	8.517		
	Total	741.775	88			
Social Support Colleagues	Between Groups	22.633	1	22.633	4.605	.035 *
	Within Groups	427.591	87	4.915		
	Total	450.225	88			
Social Support Family	Between Groups	20.111	1	20.111	1.110	.295
	Within Groups	1575.979	87	18.115		
	Total	1596.090	88			
Social Support Friends	Between Groups	35.144	1	35.144	1.908	.171
	Within Groups	1602.294	87	18.417		
	Total	1637.438	88			

Table A-7: One-way Analysis of Variance for the *Depression Inventory* for the sample population.

Subscales		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance level
Depression	Between Groups	41.082	1	41.082	3.579	.062
	Within Groups	998.693	87	11.479		
	Total	1039.775	88			