CHAPTER VI

A MODEL OF TEACHER PERSISTENCE FOR THE N.S.W. DEPARTMENT OF SCHOOL EDUCATION DERIVED FROM THE STUDY WITH RELEVANCE FOR OTHER SYSTEMS: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

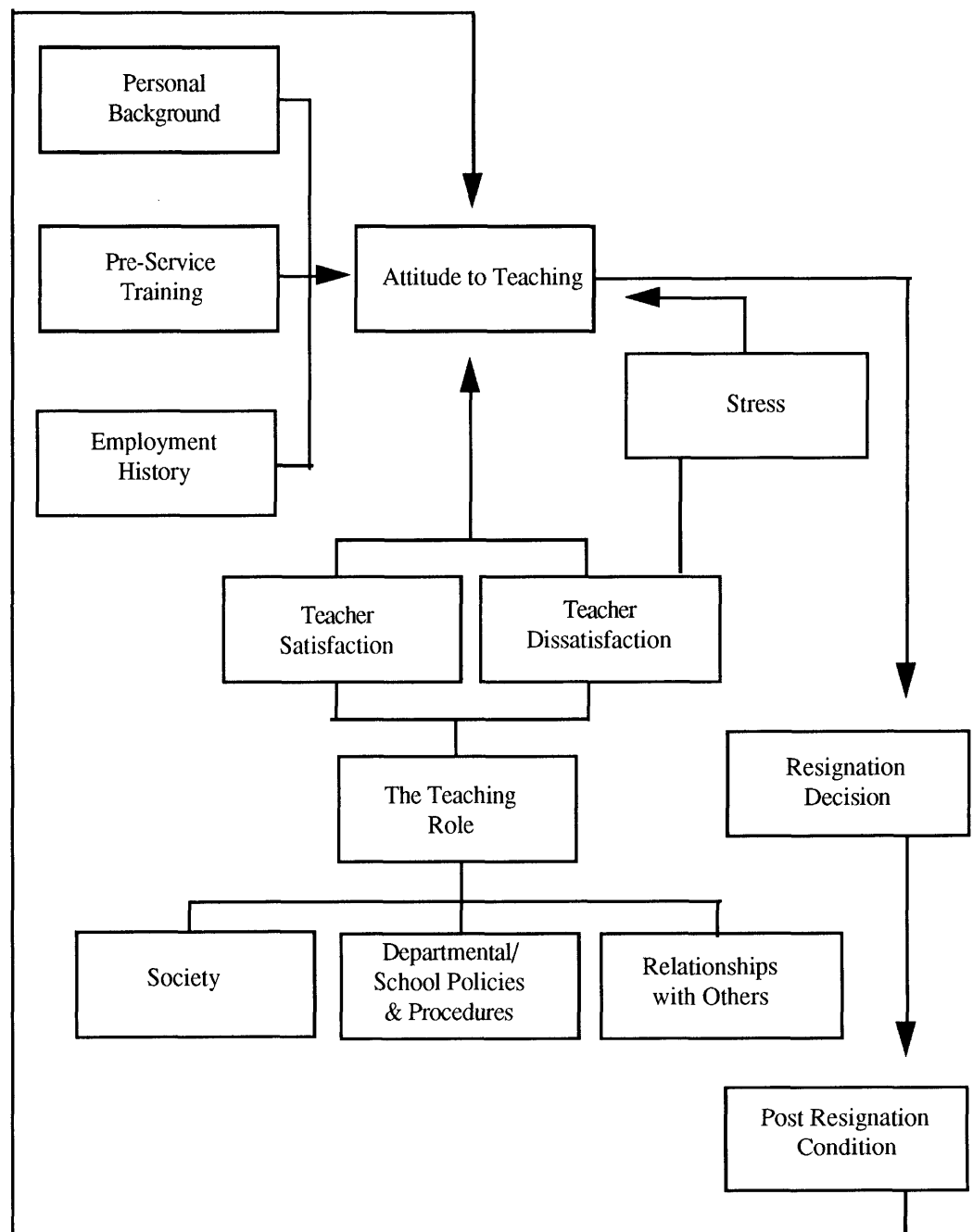### Introduction

As a result of the findings of the study, a model of teacher persistence has been postulated. Inherent in this model is the realisation that teacher persistence is a complex phenomenon. As a result, any attempt to increase teacher persistence will require attention to a related series of factors as each was found in the study to impinge upon the "Attitude to Teaching" held by an individual. What follows are some general areas that any program designed to reduce teacher resignation and hence increase teacher persistence will need to consider.

Attention to these general areas by the New South Wales Department of School Education and other interested parties in a systematic manner following larger scale research is considered necessary because none of the factors or measures in isolation would be likely to significantly influence teacher retention or persistence. However, when part of an overall package of strategies and measures, the model has the potential to reduce teacher resignation and promote teacher persistence. This approach is advocated because the study demonstrated that teacher persistence and the factors impinging upon it are quite complex and that the influence of these factors will vary from individual to individual, and thus, there are no "quick fix" solutions to teacher resignation, but rather a number of related areas which require the attention of the various parties concerned.

However, it needs to be stated once more that teacher resignation will never be eliminated nor should it, if teachers decide that the profession is not for them or they cannot meet the demands of teaching. The real benefit of increasing understanding of teacher resignation and persistence lies in attracting suitable potential teachers in the first place and ensuring that they are suitably prepared, happy, satisfied, challenged by their role and rewarded and recognised for it. If this can be achieved, then the benefits for students, teachers, education, and society generally would be substantial. The alternative is to continue with the present situation where teacher resignation continues to incur a high economic, personal, and educational cost from society while the causes of teacher resignation remain largely unidentified and unchanged and an unknown number of teachers continue to experience high levels of dissatisfaction to the detriment of themselves and their students.

Figure 6: **A Model of Teacher Persistence for the N.S.W. Department of School Education Showing Areas Where Specific Measures are Required**

The Model: General Measures to Promote Teacher Persistence Within the N.S.W. Department of School Education

Introduction

Cohen and Manion (1989: 15-16) contrasted theory in the "natural sciences" which the authors contend is characterised by "a high degree of elegance and sophistication", with educational theory, which tends to be "at the early stages of formulation and thus characterised by great unevenness". Cohen and Manion (1989: 16-17) also went on to note that:

> Sometimes the word *model* is used instead of, or interchangeably with, *theory*. Both may be seen as explanatory devices or schemes having a broadly conceptual framework, though models are often characterised by the use of analogies to give a more graphic or visual representation of a particular phenomenon. Providing they are accurate and do not misrepresent the facts, models can be of great help in achieving clarity and focusing on key issues in the nature of phenomena.
> Scientific theories must, by their very nature, be provisional. A theory can never be complete in the sense that it encompasses all that can be known or understood about the given phenomenon. As Mouly says, 'Invariably, scientific theories are replaced by more sophisticated theories embodying more of the advanced state of the question so that science widens its horizons to include more and more facts as they accumulate. No doubt, many of the things about which there is agreement today will be found inadequate by future standards. But we must begin where we are'.

It has been found as a result of the study that the resignation decision, and hence teacher persistence, is more complex than perhaps previous research recognised. As a result of the grounded theory process applied to the data gained from the interviewing of 57 teachers from one educational system in one particular period, a schema or model was developed which included a number of categories and sub-categories which were found to impinge upon the core category or construct of "Attitude to Teaching" and hence the "Resignation Decision".

However, the model proposed is by no means what Strauss and Corbin (1990) would term "formal theory", being derived as it was from one particular case study at one particular time, there being no way of knowing just how "representative" of the total teaching body those interviewed were. In addition, no relative weighting can be applied to the various factors found to impinge upon the "Attitude to Teaching" and hence the "Resignation Decision". While all factors were found to be significant in all cases, the relative importance of each factor was found to vary from individual to individual interviewed. However, it is hoped that the model will serve as a foundation for further studies into teacher resignation using larger and possibly more random groups of both teachers and former teachers, for one thing that the study did not attempt to do was to compare the teachers interviewed with teachers as a whole, although comparisons were made with the literature.

What is hoped is that by beginning "where we are" as Mouly advocated, this model and the theory it derives from might be a starting point for more "sophisticated" and wider approaches to increased understanding of the phenomena of teacher resignation. Certainly, it should have direct relevance to the New South Wales Department of School Education, although it is acknowledged that more precise detail will need to be formulated through the cooperation of the various parties affected by the proposals. While what is contained below is thus geared towards one educational system, it is hoped that it will have wider application, given the fact that the study tended to confirm and bring into sharper focus much of the previous findings contained within the literature.

It is recognised that attention to the measures outlined below is likely to be difficult and/or expensive to achieve in some cases, and that some areas are already been addressed by the Department and schools, at least in part, but the value to society of good teachers and effective education is difficult to overestimate and thus full rather than piecemeal implementation of the measures following further research with larger groups of teachers is advocated.

It also needs to be noted that the implementation of the measures outlined below needs to be carefully planned and not appear as just another series of impositions on schools and teachers, the negative impact that such structural changes can have being a key finding of the study.

However, even with full attention to the factors comprising the model, occasions will still arise when change in one of the broad categories contained within the model will result in teacher resignation, particularly when such change is largely outside the influence of the Department of School Education.

Areas Where Measures Need to be Taken in Order To Increase Teacher Persistence

### 1.	Personal Background

This category was seen as more global, but one still with influence upon the core category of "Attitude to Teaching". Broad strategies to increase teacher persistence are suggested below based upon the data derived from the study.

To begin with, teaching as a rewarding, challenging and fulfilling career needs to be actively promoted within schools and the community. It may be possible to target potential outstanding teachers in schools and encourage them to take up a teaching career, possibly through scholarships in the post-compulsory secondary years. On a broader level, if teachers in schools

are happy and satisfied with their role, they are more likely to create a climate whereby teaching as a career is viewed positively by their students.

On the other hand, the study did find that other employment experience widens the perspective of the teacher and thus there may be ways that this could be facilitated. For example, potential teachers could be permitted to defer their pre-service training to gain such experience while other teachers could be actively recruited from non-teaching occupations and given advanced standing where appropriate for their employment experience. Practising teachers could be permitted to work in other occupations while on official leave from the Department of School Education. It may even be possible for outstanding practitioners to be recognised through the award of industry scholarships to gain wider employment experience e.g., English teachers in publishing, Science teachers with environmental authorities, primary teachers according to interest.

Scholarships were found to enable students who could not otherwise afford it to enter tertiary teacher education and could be awarded to targeted groups including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, but also individuals who are deemed to have outstanding potential for teaching.

2. Employment History

Once again this was found to be a more global category and thus there will be a degree of overlap with some of the more specific categories such as Departmental/School Policies and procedures. Be that as it may, the following general measures relevant to this category are proposed based on the data.

To begin, careful consideration should be given to a beginning teacher's first appointment. The problematic situation whereby the most inexperienced teachers are posted to the most difficult and/or isolated areas needs to reassessed. Beginning teachers also need prior warning of their first appointment to enable them to travel to the area if necessary, meet the staff, secure accommodation, receive orientation to their school and begin the induction process.

Beginning teachers also need to fully understand the conditions of their employment and requirements of them as regards school duties and certification. To this end and others, beginning teachers need to undertake a formal teacher induction program. Teachers in their first year, as part of their induction, should liaise with mentors and their supervisors, and should receive a reduction in duties in order to facilitate their participation in their induction program and their general adjustment to teaching. Those interviewed in the study were typically overwhelmed in their first year of teaching. The major problems experienced by the teachers in their early years centred on pupil discipline and classroom management, preparation and

marking. Assistance needs to be provided by schools, other Departmental officers, tertiary institutions, and possibly professional associations and unions in order to address these problem areas.

The study also found that teachers returning from a break in service, overseas trained teachers and mature-aged beginning teachers have special needs which should be assessed and met.

The practice of "forced transfers" needs to be carefully considered. Where it is deemed necessary to shed staff from a school, attention needs to be given to the selection of the staff member designated to leave and to the support that person will require to change schools and take up a new position. The study found that movement of teachers in their first year of teaching can be problematic as the induction process may be interrupted, and thus this practice should be avoided.

More flexible arrangements for the taking of leave also need to be explored. The taking of leave can benefit both the individual and the educational system. However, where leave is extended, this can prevent other teachers awaiting a full-time position from taking up the position held 'in absentia' for the person on leave, and so the whole matter of leave needs sympathetic and careful examination.

Where teachers have resigned previously, the reasons for this resignation need to be determined and an individual staff development program put in place where necessary to enable the teacher to take his or her place in the system once more. It was found in the study that teachers returning to employment after a period of leave or after a previous resignation need advice and support to enable them to appreciate and cope with present conditions and requirements and to overcome their previous difficulties, where these have been identified. Further comments about resignation are made under the category of "Resignation Decision" below.

3.   Pre-Service Training

The general level of criticism of the pre-service training of those interviewed is cause for concern. In particular, the "end-on" Diploma of Education which follows a degree was roundly criticised by those who had undertaken this type of training. Unfortunately, this model is still needed to enable graduates who had not previously considered teaching to be trained as a teacher and to meet shortfalls in certain categories of teaching. Where the "end-on" diploma is considered necessary, steps should be taken to assess student and teacher criticism of the model and address these criticisms in the most appropriate ways.

Where possible, the concurrent or integrated four year model of teacher pre-service training is advocated, based upon the more favourable rating given to this model by those interviewed. However, this model was also criticised, and thus these criticisms also need to be addressed. Whatever the model, lecturers need recent school experience and should be capable of putting theoretical aspects of pre-service training into a practical perspective. There would seem to be value in closer on-going contact between tertiary, school and Departmental staff as there appears to be a need for greater articulation between pre-service training, the practicum, beginning teaching, and on-going professional development of teachers with teacher induction being seen as a longer, more formal process.

Pre-service students need earlier and more frequent contact with schools in a variety of settings. They could be attached to a "home-base" school quite early in their training while visiting and teaching in that and other schools and experiencing non-educational contexts such as industry and social services during the course of their studies.

Finally, entry to pre-service training based on secondary school academic performance only needs to be questioned.

4. Attitude to Teaching

As suggested by the study, this is a central matter for concern. Attention needs to be given to the attitude to teaching held by individuals prior to entering pre-service training, during that training, during early teaching experiences and during the later career of all teachers, including those contemplating resignation. This may involve professional assessment of the attitude to teaching and the causes of any change in the attitude to teaching held by an individual. This will enable the most appropriate personal and professional development program to be devised and for the causes of any decline in the attitude to teaching to be identified and thus dealt with.

To accomplish the above will require regular surveying and interviewing of pre-service students and practising teachers. In schools this should not be seen as an additional burden on school executive but should be part of an on-going process of research, consultancy and personal and professional development carried out by employing authorities, tertiary institutions, professional associations and teachers' unions in a climate of meaningful partnership and cooperation.

5.   Relationships With Others

Relationships with others, both personally and professionally, were found to be a key influence on the "Attitude to Teaching" held by those interviewed. It was found that efforts need to be made to personalise communication between teachers and Departmental officials. Teachers' complaints and requests for information and other assistance need to be acted upon quickly and efficiently, with the teacher being seen as a valued person rather than as a "number" or "human resource". More emphasis also needs to be given to two-way communication, with teachers having the opportunity to make their views known to those in positions of authority and with teachers having the opportunity to contribute to and react prior to proposed changes being implemented.

The Department of School Education needs to be seen as being responsive to teachers' concerns and needs, as well as reacting positively to student, teacher and school achievement through the personal recognition of such achievement, rather than leaving communication to those times in which there is a problem. Personalising the relationship between the Department and its many employees will go some way towards breaking down the "system" (them) versus "us" mentality.

One unexpected and easily rectified negative aspect of the relationship between teachers and the Department was the use of the term "assistant teacher" to denote an unpromoted teacher which some found demeaning and which could be replaced with a more suitable designation such as "classroom teacher" or simply "teacher".

Relationships with immediate superiors was also a source of ill-feeling. It is suggested as a result that those in executive positions need to be selected, at least in part, on their ability to relate to and support their fellow teachers and must be able to listen to, advise, lead, encourage, professionally evaluate and professionally develop those around them. To this end, a collegial atmosphere needs to be established and maintained where the executive teacher is seen as more experienced but being prepared to involve his or her subordinates in a climate of democratic decision making devoid of partisanship, discrimination and elitism. Executive teachers themselves need a personal professional development program and to be supported in turn by their superiors in a like fashion. Where poor relationships do exist between superiors and sub-ordinates, this needs to be recognised and corrective action taken in a positive, professional manner.

Teachers need to possess inter-personal skills and where these are lacking in certain individuals, efforts need to be made to improve such skills. Particular attention needs to be given to the new teacher at the school, with those more experienced with the school and its context offering support and guidance to enable the newly arrived teacher to adjust to the school

and to establish productive and satisfying relationships which can be a great contributor to teacher satisfaction.

Teachers need to be able to relate to their students at a professional and personal level, recognising the worth of each individual and with this recognition being reciprocated. Open and positive relationships between schools, their teachers and parents and the community also need to be forged. Parents need to become more involved in schools so that they can see more accurately both teachers' and schools' problems and achievements, while teachers need to venture to a greater extent into the community to more fully appreciate the backgrounds of their students. To these ends, the nature and effectiveness of school/community communication needs examination. There is much to gain and very little to lose from enhanced communication and more positive relationships between teachers, parents and community members.

It was also found that teaching responsibilities can impact negatively upon teachers' families. There are thus persuasive arguments for involving teachers' families more fully in school life, particularly where a teacher's partner is a non-teacher, so that the joys and pressures of teaching can be more readily appreciated. Teachers need to be encouraged to employ time management techniques and to receive other assistance so that they do not neglect their family commitments.

It would be wise for students involved in pre-service training to be informed of the potential for pressures experienced in fulfilling the teaching role to cause family problems and of the steps that can be taken to avoid and alleviate such problems.

6.   Society

Education both reflects and influences society, and there have been significant changes in the nature of society with commensurate changes in education since the late 1960s. It is difficult to alter something as complex as the society that individuals and schools have to deal with, but the following general measures suggested by the study are proposed to assist teachers and society to come to a closer accommodation of the needs and expectations of each.

To begin, students involved in pre-service training need to be exposed to a wider spectrum of society than that in which they grew up. They need to be exposed to different geographic, cultural and economic groups to enable them to deal more effectively with the students in their care and the range of communities where they will teach to reduce the "culture shock" that some of those interviewed experienced. Regardless of grade taught or subject discipline, teachers need knowledge of social issues, they also need to be able to recognise the nature of social change, its causes and effects.

More meaningful two-way communication is needed between society and the various interest groups it contains, and schools, so that the expectations of each are seen as informed, reasonable, appropriate and capable of being fulfilled. This communication needs to take place at all levels from national to local. Where expectations for schools and teachers are seen as being unable to be achieved or where the fulfilment of such expectations is likely to impact negatively on other school and teacher responsibilities, other avenues for the achievement of such expectations need to be identified and utilised to avoid the continued "overcrowding" of the curriculum and the increased administrative burden on teachers and schools which many of those interviewed described. The almost automatic response that occurs when a new social problem arises and schools are given responsibility for its solution needs to questioned.

Where there are increased expectations for teachers and schools, the necessary support needs to be provided to enable these expectations to be fulfilled, with some rationalisation of existing expectations and responsibilities taking place. For example, it might be possible for some responsibilities to be handed over to other community or service organisations or para-professionals within the school.

Efforts need to be made to raise and restore the status of teachers within the community. This can be achieved through some of the measures already outlined above such as better school/community communication and increased community involvement in schools and education. Other measures to raise the status of teachers could include the public recognition of school, student and teacher achievement.

Efforts also need to be made to attract more suitable and higher calibre people to teacher pre-service training and through the production of higher quality and better trained graduates. The issue of teacher salary is complex and is explored further below, but it was found that teachers' salaries need to be geared more to the undertaking of post-graduate qualifications and to the mastery of additional knowledge and skills.

It has been demonstrated that the identification of merit is far from easy, but attempts to do so should be persevered with so that teachers performing above commonly held expectations can be adequately rewarded and recognised, either financially, or in other ways.

The measures outlined above and many of those still to come have the potential to lead to greater understanding of the difficulties and the achievements of teachers and schools, and hence any criticism that still arises will be more informed criticism. However schools and the Department of School Education still need to set in place mechanisms for the identification of criticisms of education, both generally and in specific schools, and be prepared to thoroughly investigate the substance of such criticisms and act upon them in partnership with the school and the community in a spirit of co-operation for the improvement of education. In addition to

the investigation of criticisms of education, the Department of School Education would be advised to set up measures to identify and recognise achievement and to adopt a pro-active stance to the promotion of excellence, thereby reducing overall the level of criticism of schools, particularly that of a misdirected or misguided nature.

7.   Departmental/School Policies and Procedures

In this study, this category appeared to be a major cause of teacher dissatisfaction and it is here where the Department of School Education has the most capacity to influence or alter those sources of dissatisfaction.

Measures to improve appointment, transfer and leave procedures have already been mentioned above. In particular, the practice of posting the most inexperienced teachers to the most difficult parts of the state requires attention. Problems caused by the "overcrowded curriculum" have also been mentioned. There also needs to be an examination of the post-compulsory curriculum offerings in schools to determine whether the needs of all students returning to post-compulsory education are being met in the light of the increased student retention, a concern raised in the interviews.

An assessment of the administrative loads of teachers and schools and the degree to which these are impacting, both positively and negatively, upon teacher and student performance would also be advisable. Following this assessment, it might be considered more cost-effective for some of these administrative duties to be delegated to other professionals such as accountants, or to clerical staff, teachers' aides or other para-professional staff to leave teachers and school executive more time to fulfil their other responsibilities. For example, it may be decided that it is not cost-effective to have teachers marking rolls, taking playground duty, collecting money for excursions, typing or word processing, stock-taking or completing documentation, and that these duties could be more economically performed by others employed for the task.

Future changes to the administrative requirements of teachers and schools need to be carefully considered prior to implementation and full support given to staff members charged with the responsibility for this. Contribution to change, agreement with change, and the pace of change are just as important as the nature of the change itself and should not be neglected. More generally, attention needs to be given to the established principles of change management where it is necessary to alter administrative practices in schools. It was apparent that the period since the late 1980s has seen rapid and wide change in schools.

The generally negative feelings expressed by those interviewed about the new promotions procedures in the Department of School Education are cause for concern. It may be reality, or only perception, but the efficacy of the new procedures and the burdens that they have placed on individuals, schools and the Department have been called into question. Not only must the new procedures be made to work fairly and efficiently, but they must be seen to be fair and efficient in identifying those most worthy of promotion. The time that some teachers apparently spend on self-promotion, preparation of a "C.V.", and attendance at interviews is of concern, as are the resultant effects on their teaching responsibilities. Existing procedures need to be carefully evaluated and streamlined or modified where necessary.

The politicisation of education in recent times has been well documented and caused concern for many of those interviewed, with business, industry and community groups being seen to lobby governments to bring about change in education. If teachers and others involved and concerned with education fail to act, then the politicisation of education is likely to increase.

The study found that, for the majority of those interviewed, low salary in teaching and/or higher salaries available outside the Department were not major influences on resignation. However, as has been noted, the study coincided with a recession when opportunities outside education were perhaps restricted and it followed what was generally considered to be a significant and overdue increase in teachers' salaries in New South Wales and Australia generally. Be that as it may, parity needs to be maintained between teachers' salaries and those of other similar occupations requiring similar training and responsibilities. Teachers' salaries must be geared to attracting high calibre persons to the profession and retaining them.

8.   The Teaching Role

Classroom teaching was rightly found to be the key aspect of education and was a potent source of both satisfaction and dissatisfaction for those interviewed, regardless of experience or position held. Full-time administrators, for example, were concerned with maintaining this central facet of education despite their administrative responsibilities. Some measures designed to improve classroom teaching conditions and outcomes have already been outlined. To summarise these, less experienced teachers need better preparation and support for their first years of teaching and need to engage in formal programs of teacher induction, while reduced or shared responsibilities for beginning teachers will assist them to make the transition to full-time teaching. Primary teachers and teachers in small isolated schools have special needs and measures should be taken to overcome the professional and personal isolation that can occur in such cases. Teachers generally would benefit from additional training and support to enable them to cope with the social problems and issues that both affect their students and which they are expected to incorporate into the school curriculum.

Consideration also needs to be given to the utilisation of specialist support staff in schools and in classrooms to assist teaching staff better to meet the needs of their students, particularly those with disadvantaged backgrounds.

Additionally, there needs to be greater recognition of the vital role played by the classroom teacher, a role which has tended to be devalued, according to those interviewed, as a result of the adoption of new promotion procedures and the culture of "doing things outside the classroom to be noticed" which appears to have resulted from this. There needs to be an assessment of the administrative responsibilities of both teachers and those in executive positions, particularly where these are seen to impact adversely upon the central task of classroom teaching.

As is evident from the study, teachers perform many extracurricular duties to enable their students to experience a rounded education. There needs to be adequate recognition and reward for teachers who take on additional duties for the benefit of the school and its students. Time is sometimes as important as money, and thus the granting of reduced teaching duties for the performance of extracurricular duties needs to be explored. The extracurricular duties performed by teachers are frequently not fully appreciated by the general public, and so there needs to be greater efforts made to inform parents and community members of the often substantial additional contributions made by teachers to the functioning of schools and for the betterment of students' educational, cultural, personal and social outcomes through participation in extracurricular activities.

9.   Teacher Satisfaction

Given the strong commonalities regarding teacher satisfaction revealed by the literature and confirmed by the study, the following measures designed to enhance teacher satisfaction are advocated.

Teacher achievement, pupil achievement, influencing students in a positive direction, being recognised for one's achievements, the mastery of content and skills, positive relationships with others and advancement were all found to be powerful sources of teacher satisfaction and many of the general measures advocated as result of the study have the potential to increase teacher satisfaction. Teachers, school executive, Departmental officials and parent and community groups need to act to ensure that teacher satisfaction both individually and collectively is maintained at a high level through attention to the factors found to contribute to it.

Schools and the Department of School Education should take steps to monitor the satisfaction levels of all teachers through both regular survey techniques and interview. Both the sources of satisfaction and the scope and causes of any change in individual and group satisfaction levels need to be noted and acted upon.

10. Teacher Dissatisfaction

Teacher dissatisfaction was found from the study to be mainly the result of factors or forces which prevented the teacher from performing his or her role satisfactorily.

Schools and the Department of School Education need to take the measures outlined elsewhere in this section to reduce the administrative burdens on teachers, to assist them to more effectively cope with change, to help them establish favourable relationships with others, to provide adequate resources and facilities and to alter those aspects of school and Departmental policies and procedures which give rise to teacher dissatisfaction. Improving the status of teachers and reducing public criticism of teachers and education through attention to the measures already detailed will also help to alleviate teacher dissatisfaction.

11. Teacher Stress

All those interviewed in the study showed some evidence of mental stress attributable, at least in part, to their teaching experiences. The fact that stress appears to be part and parcel of the everyday lot of the teacher and that a certain level of stress appears to be beneficial to performance does not mean that the matter of teacher stress can be ignored or dismissed either as inevitable or a sign of personal weakness or failing. To begin the process of redressing this situation, the following measures are advocated.

Potential teachers involved in pre-service training need to be made aware of the sources of teacher stress and of ways both to avoid and cope with stress associated with teaching. Beginning teachers' sources of mental stress were found to lie mainly within the classroom, and some of the measures already advocated such as adequate pre-service preparation, induction and in-school support will go some way towards preventing or reducing the effects of stress associated with classroom teaching.

The stress experienced by more experienced teachers appears to centre on school and Departmental administration, policies and procedures, and relations with superiors. The measures already advocated in these areas will also go some way towards preventing or reducing the stress experienced by teachers.

Thus, the identification of the sources of teacher stress is advocated so that these can be eliminated or acted upon, rather than the present practice where the approaches to dealing with the stress experienced by teachers (if in fact anything is done at all) appear to be more palliative. That is not to say however, that palliative solutions to teacher stress do not have a part to play, but they should be seen as part of an overall strategy designed to deal with the sources of teacher stress and enable teachers to cope with the stressful situations that they will no doubt continue to encounter in the future.

Thus, the first step in dealing with teacher stress lies in the recognition by educational authorities of its existence and in the formulation and provision of programs designed to monitor stress levels in teachers and to deal with teacher stress, this process being supported by trained professionals where necessary. If the sources of teacher stress can be recognised, reduced or eliminated, then the incidence of the more serious consequences of stress such as physical debilitation and burnout can be reduced. It should be noted that stress was also seen to adversely affect teachers' families, and thus they need to be part of any stress identification and amelioration program devised.

12.   The Resignation Decision

It is a contention of this study that the formulation and implementation of policies and procedures to achieve the measures outlined above will result in a greater propensity on the part of teachers to persist with their careers. However, the following measures should also be part of any overall program designed to reduce teacher resignation.

Those interviewed in the study typically described a series of critical incidents culminating in a final incident which precipitated the resignation decision. Thus, those in supervisory positions need to monitor the sources and levels of dissatisfaction and teacher stress of staff under their control, and maintain a collegial and trusting climate where problems can be aired and thereby dealt with. Small problems should hopefully be prevented, but where they arise should be dealt with before they become larger problems.

When a teacher is considering resignation, that teacher should undertake a program of interview and counselling in an attempt to get to the heart of the matter and deal with it if possible. When a teacher still decides to resign, that teacher should be given a full exit interview by someone trained for the purpose outside the immediate workplace to fully ascertain the reasons for resignation. The reasons for resignation revealed by the exit interview should be thoroughly investigated for substance and acted upon where considered necessary. If they are to speak

frankly, teachers undertaking an exit interview need to be assured that the information they provide will not prejudice any future employment with the Department.

Following resignation, teachers should be thanked in writing for their contribution to education, such recognition and thanks to be personalised mentioning actual contributions and achievements of the person concerned, something that did not take place for those interviewed in the study. The longer the level of service and the greater the contribution, the more detailed should be the written commendation received. Where possible and appropriate, personal thanks should also be given by a senior Departmental official following the final exit interview and actual resignation.

Teachers who resign should also be encouraged to seek re-employment with the Department sometime in the future should they wish. In short, the door should be left open, but where by common consent a teacher has proved to be unsuited to teaching, that person should be allowed to resign with dignity and due recognition for his or her efforts with the Department.

The Department of School Education would be advised to conduct on-going research into teacher resignation and the forces or factors found to contribute to this and to act upon the information gained from such research.

13. Post Resignation Condition

As part of such on-going research into teacher resignation, teachers who have resigned need to be surveyed as to their new employment destinations and how such matters as stress and satisfaction levels have altered following resignation. This will be of particular interest where the individual concerned has remained in some area of education such as teaching in a non-government school. After a suitable time has elapsed, such resigned teachers could be asked to reflect, in the light of their new experiences, on the state of education in the N.S.W. Department of School Education and of the changes they believe would need to be made to the Department and education generally before they would consider returning. Teachers who return to the Department following a previous resignation should also be part of such research programs, as they will offer yet another perspective.

Conclusion to the Discussion of the Model and General Measures Advocated

As mentioned in the introduction to this Chapter, the general measures outlined above need elaboration and refinement based on further research and each would be unlikely in isolation to make a significant impact on teacher resignation. What is advocated is an overall program

which addresses all aspects of the model represented in Figure 6 and which recognises that the influence of any one area or aspect is likely to vary both from individual to individual and over time, and thus as well as an overall program designed to encourage teacher persistence, individual teachers and others within the Department of School Education need to have their own negotiated, needs based and goal directed program of personal and professional development.

The overall thrust of the model advocated is upon prevention, identification, and action for the benefit of the individual teacher, his or her students, the school, educational outcomes, and society generally.

Previous research into teacher resignation had not adequately examined the phenomenon from a human, personal perspective. This study set out to explore the feelings and experiences pertaining to education before teaching, during the teaching career, and after resignation for one group of teachers from one educational system during one particular period for the purpose of redressing the previous missing element in the literature. It is the contention of this study that its completion has enabled teacher resignation to be better understood and that the understanding gained from the study will prove of value both to the system concerned and to other educational systems and providers.

While the model of teacher persistence developed as a result of the application of grounded theory procedures has direct application to the case study, the fact that the model contains 12 key elements which were found to influence the central construct or category of "Attitude to Teaching" should enable its application to other individuals and other settings, bearing in mind that the relative influence of any element in the model will vary. Thus, the model derived from the study does not provide a "quick fix" to the phenomenon of teacher resignation, but rather a schema that enables it to be more fully understood and thereby dealt with by those involved.

What follows are the broad conclusions of the study and the wider implications of the study for other educational settings and systems. Concluding remarks bring an end to this record of the study which began in mid-1990 and concluded in the latter half of 1992.

Broad Conclusions of the Study

The first key conclusion to be drawn from the study was that the resignation decision for any individual is the result of the complex interplay of human and structural factors which have been depicted in both Figure 5 and Figure 6.

Because of the complexity of the resignation decision, increasing teacher persistence within the New South Wales Department of Education will require attention to a variety of areas outlined previously such as the promotion of teaching as a career, better methods of selection of students for entry to teacher pre-service training, more relevant and suitable pre-service training courses, greater liaison between tertiary educational institutions, the Department of School Education, the New South Wales Teachers Federation and teachers' professional associations, more effective formal programs of teacher induction, greater support for beginning teachers, revision to Departmental and school policies and procedures, more concentration upon the importance of relationships, raising the status of teachers within the community, reassessment of the administrative and extracurricular responsibilities of teachers and how these might best be met, an evaluation of the efficacy and impact of the newly introduced "merit" promotion procedures, monitoring of both teacher satisfaction and teacher dissatisfaction sources and levels coupled with preventative programs designed to deal with teacher stress, and an on-going emphasis upon research into the role of the teacher.

The Department of School Education needs to personalise its relationship with its employees and to be more aware and responsive to the difficulties experienced by teachers in schools. The Department also needs to concentrate upon encouraging and recognising teacher and student achievement and to develop individual personal and professional development programs for all staff members.

The implementation of change is one area where the Department of School Education needs to be more responsive to the needs and concerns of teachers and schools, with all interested and affected parties contributing to change and with change being implemented within a realistic time frame with an appreciation of the possible deleterious effects that such change can have when poorly implemented, and with sufficient support in the provision of time, financial and other resources being provided. It has been shown that for many of those interviewed it was not change *per se* that had been the problem, but the manner and pace at which such change had been implemented in New South Wales schools in recent times and that this had been a major contributor to teacher dissatisfaction and stress and hence teacher resignation.

The reasons for change also need to be questioned. The focus and reason for any educational change should be on improved educational conditions and outcomes for students teachers and not just political or economic exigency.

Above all, teachers need to feel that they have been adequately prepared for the task of teaching, supported in their role by their superiors and the community, and valued for their contribution to society. There are very real benefits to be had from a satisfied, productive teaching force. The present lack of attention to the "human" aspects of the teaching task, while structural changes to education show no signs of easing, cannot be allowed to continue, and thus the Department of School Education needs to re-focus its attention upon the classroom and to act to prevent any extrinsic factors or forces from impacting negatively upon the vital process that occurs there and within the school.

However, as well as attending to potential sources of teacher dissatisfaction, the Department of School Education also needs to take steps to increase teacher satisfaction through attention to the factors found by this and other studies that contribute to such.

Wider Implications of the Study

As mentioned previously, the model of teacher persistence developed as a result of the study is sufficiently complex and comprehensive to enable its application to other educational settings and many of the measures outlined above will no doubt have wider relevance. In addition, the study also raised a number of important considerations for the promotion of teacher satisfaction.

Firstly, the study found that the resignation decision is the result of the complex interplay of a number of both human and structural factors, and so any system or educational employer needs to address the problem of teacher resignation in a comprehensive fashion because there are no simple solutions to the phenomenon.

In the case of this particular study, the politicisation of education and the management of change within the New South Wales Department since the mid to late 1980s appeared to be significant factors behind the resignations of many of those interviewed. These were not the only factors responsible for resignation, and others involved in education are advised to consider the whole question of the pace, scope and implementation of change very carefully, particularly in view of the fact that most if not all educational systems appear to be in the midst of continuing change.

The study also found that different teachers have different needs and thus personal and professional development programs need to be negotiated, needs based, and goal directed. Blanket provisions or programs are thus less likely to be successful than such individualised programs for teachers.

The general level of criticism of teacher pre-service education revealed by the study is also a finding with wider significance that others involved in education need to consider. Entry to tertiary courses, the nature of pre-service teacher training and the issue of teacher induction are all areas where re-examination of existing policies and procedures is thought necessary.

More generally, there is a persuasive argument inherent within the study findings for considering the nature of teachers' professional development to be an on-going process extending from pre-service raining through induction and continuing indefinitely through teachers' careers.

As a result of the study, the promotion of teacher satisfaction and the reduction of teacher dissatisfaction through attention to the factors responsible for each is also advocated for education generally.

Finally, the differing and changing expectations held for teachers and schools by various interested parties is another area worthy of the attention of other providers of the educational service.

Concluding Remarks

The study set out to gain greater understanding of teacher resignation from a personal and human perspective. It is the contention of the study that this has been achieved through the methodology employed which involved interviews with former employees of the New South Wales Department of School Education and the analysis of the data gained from these interviews through the utilisation of grounded theory procedures.

While some may take issue with the fact that the findings of the study were derived from only 57 individuals, commonalities both with the literature and within the sample itself give confidence that the findings do in fact have wider relevance and that the individuals interviewed have acted as barometers for both the system under study and, to a degree, education in general.

It is hoped that the greater understanding of the phenomenon of teacher resignation revealed as a result of the study will enable positive gains to be made for the benefit of teachers, their students, and society as a whole, for teachers are more than just a "human resource" to be used for the benefit of such.

Given the universal agreement as to the importance of education, then teachers too and their welfare should be considered of importance. Thus the recent preoccupation with restructuring the management of educational systems and schools needs to give way to a greater consideration of the work and lives of teachers within communities, schools and classrooms.

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