CHAPTER II

CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this chapter is to give a more detailed presentation of the concepts of meaning in life, stress and burnout on which the study is based.

2.1.0 MEANING IN LIFE

The concept of meaning in life is based in Viktor Frankl's existential philosophy that there is a fundamental need for meaning or purpose in a person's life.

Frankl is the originator of the school of psychotherapy known as Logotherapy which literally means 'therapy through meaning'. Frankl believes that we need to develop the capacity for finding our personal raisons d'etre.

As a long-time prisoner in Nazi concentration camps, Frankl found that those who had a reason or goal to survive, were the most likely to survive in such inhuman, brutalising conditions. The prisoners had to make a sense out of their apparently senseless suffering. If there is a purpose in life at all, there must be a purpose in suffering and dying as well. But each must find out for himself what the purpose is and must accept the responsibility that his answer prescribes. If he succeeds he will continue to grow in spite of all indignities. Frankl is fond of quoting Nietzsche - 'He who has a **why** to live can bear with almost any **how**'.

As a psychotherapist Frankl wants to help awaken in his patient the realisation that life holds a meaning for him, that he is responsible to life for something, however grim his circumstances may be.

2.1.1 Basic Assumptions of Logotherapy

Logotherapy's concept of man is based on three assumptions :

The Freedom of Will

The Will to Meaning

The Meaning of Life

2.1.1.a The Freedom of Will

Logotherapy assumes freedom and intentionality of man. Man has the freedom of will to find meaning in his existence and to take decisions. Needless to say, it is freedom within limits. Man is not free from circumstances or conditions, be they biological, psychological or sociological in nature but he is free to take a stand toward these conditions, to decide in what manner he will respond. Man is capable of taking a stand not only toward the world but also toward himself. He is capable of reflecting, judging and even rejecting himself.

Frankl believes that man is free to rise above the constraints of heredity or experiences in infancy. If we conceive of man as 'nothing but' a 'naked ape' and the human personality as merely a battleground of the clashing

claims of Id, Ego and Super Ego, then reasons, meanings and values in the world are excluded and only causes and effects are left, represented by drives and instincts, conditioning processes and S-R bonds. Drives and instincts push but reasons and meanings pull. Man relates to values and meanings and for that he can go outside the self, can transcend himself. So Frankl arrives at humanism as an expansion of freedom but warns that freedom is only half the truth and must be accompanied by responsibility.

2.1.1.b The Will to Meaning

The most powerful motivational force for man is the will to meaning, i.e. the desire to find a meaning or purpose in life. It is the most human phenomenon as an animal never worries about the meaning of its existence.

Both the Pleasure Principle of Freud and the Will to Power of Adler are derivatives of this original will to meaning-fulfilment. Since Freud and Adler had to deal with neurotic patients, i.e. people frustrated in their will to meaning-fulfilment, it is understandable that they thought man was basically concerned with pleasure or power. Lukas found that people frequenting the Prater, the amusement park in Vienna proved to be more existentially frustrated than the average population of Vienna (Frankl, 1972).

According to Frankl, concepts like 'self-actualisation' and 'Peak Experiences' of Maslow must also remain effects of meaning-fulfilment - they too, ensue and cannot

be pursued.

Reacting to, Frankl's criticism, Maslow (1969) says,

> "I agree entirely with Frankl that man's primary concern (I would rather say 'highest concern') is his will to meaning.
>
> . . . My experience agrees with Frankl's that people who seek self-actualisation directly, selfishly, personally, dichotomised away from mission in life, i.e. as a form of private and subjective salvation don't in fact achieve it.
>
> . . . It is more clear to me now that peak experiences may come without obvious insight or growth or benefit of any kind beyond the effects of pleasure itself . . . insight (B-Cognition) can come without emotional ecstasies. Indeed B-Cognition can come from pain, suffering and tragedy, as Dr. Frankl has helped to teach us (1959)."
>
> (Maslow, 1969, Pp.109, 110)

Frankl thus refers to the individual's deepseated striving for a higher and ultimate meaning to his existence. There is a tension between what a man is and what he aught to become, between existence and essence, between being and meaning. This tension is inherent in being human and indispensable to mental well-being - they facilitate the individual to grow and mature.

The importance of this will to meaning has been noted by others. Albert Camus (1955, p.4) expressed the significance of the need for meaning by stating, 'The meani-

ng of life is the most urgent of questions'. Bruno Bettleheim (1976, p.3) says, "If we hope to live not just from moment to moment, but in true consciousness of our existence then our greatest need and most difficult achievement is to find meaning in our lives."

2.1.1.c Meaning of Life

Life has a meaning under any and all circumstances. Meanings are unique to the individual and a matter of personal discovery. The meaning of life must be conceived in terms of the specific meaning of a personal life in a given situation.

Life is a chain of questions which man has to answer by being responsible, by making decisions. Each question, according to Frankl, has only one answer, the right one. This does not imply that man is always capable of finding the right answer or solution to each problem, of finding the true meaning to his existence. As a finite being he is not exempt from error but he has to try to reach the absolute best.

Man is guided in his search for meaning by his conscience, the intuitive capacity of man to find out the meaning of a situation. It follows that a psychotherapist must not impose a value on the patient who must be referred to his own conscience. Logotherapy only acts as a catalyst to start the individual's own wheels of self-analysis turning once again.

According to Frankl, life can be made meaningful through three value areas - creative, experiential and attitudinal. First, through what we give to life, in terms of our creations and achievements. Second, by what we take from the world in terms of our experiences and encounters, e.g. by experiencing truth, goodness and beauty, by experiencing nature and culture, by encountering and loving another human being. Third, through the attitude or stand we take toward life, toward a fate we can no longer change, toward what Frankl calls the 'tragic triad' of human existence made up of pain, guilt and death.

Logotherapy teaches that there are no tragic and negative aspects which cannot be, by the stand one takes to them, transmuted into positive accomplishments. In the case of pain one takes a stand toward one's fate which cannot be changed but in the case of guilt one takes a stand to one's self as man may well change himself. The third aspect, life's transitoriness, adds to man's responsibilities, for he is all the more responsible for using the passing opportunities to actualise potentialities, to realize values, to make life meaningful.

However, conditions may vary in the degree to which they make it easier or more difficult for an individual to find meaning in his life or to fulfil the meaning of a given situation. We can consider the different societies and the different extents to which they promote or inhibit

meaning-fulfilment. In principle, nevertheless, the fact remains that meaning is available under any conditions, even the worst conceivable ones.

2.1.2 Existential Vacuum

The individual's will to meaning, however, is not always satisfied. The failure to find meaning in life leads to feelings of emptiness, futility, absence of purpose and consequent despair which Frankl refers to as 'Existential frustration' or 'Existential vacuum'. It is not necessarily a pathological or abnormal condition. Prolonged existential frustration, however, can lead to a neurotic condition which Frankl terms 'Noogenic Neurosis'.

According to Frankl, this is a problem of increasing proportions and can be called the collective neurosis of our age - an age of meaninglessness, depersonalisation and dehumanisation. Psychiatrists and counsellors are continually being confronted by people, especially young people who complain about the meaninglessness of their life. Many instances of suicide among students is attributable to this (Frankl, 1973). Frankl regards existential vacuum as a concomitant of industrialisation and the affluent society. He found that only 25% of his European (German, Swiss, Austrian) students reported this experience in early 1970's, while it was 60% among his American students. He believes that the indoctrination of American students along reductionist lines reinforces their existential vacuum. (Frankl, 1972)

Psychiatrists more and more meet patients in whom the psychoanalytic treatment has become a substitute for life content - the obsessive compulsion to analyse themselves is another indication of the existential vacuum. Man becomes overconcerned with self-interpretation only when he has missed his mission and has been frustrated in his search for meaning.

For too long the world has been dreaming that if the socioeconomic situation of people is improved, everything will be okay, people will be happy. But as the struggle for survival has subsided, the question has emerged, 'Survival for what?' People today have the means to live but no meaning to live for. On the other hand we see people being happy under adverse, even dire conditions.

Even the marxist societies are not free from this phenomenon. The frequency of existential vacuum has been reported in investigations in East Germany and Czechoslovakia. In Africa too it has been spreading, particularly among the academic youth. (Frankl, 1972)

According to Frankl, existential vacuum arises from man's two-fold loss - the loss of the instinctual security which surrounds an animal's life and the more recent loss of traditions which governed man's life in former times. At present instincts do not tell man what he must do, nor do traditions, conventions and values tell him what he should do. Research findings that the pre-30 age group

is suffering more from existential vacuum than older generations confirm that crumbling of traditions is a major factor since it is in the young in whom the wane of traditions is most pronounced.

Existential vacuum manifests itself chiefly through depression, aggression and addiction. Depression and its sequel, suicide has already been mentioned. Man needs tension and if he does not find enough tensions, sometimes creates tensions artificially as in sports and what is worse, in aggressive antisocial acts. If an individual is not challenged by tasks which would add meaning to his life and is spared the tension, existential vacuum may ensue. Addiction to drugs and alcohol can be traced partially to a feeling of meaninglessness, as shown by various studies. It goes without saying, however, that in addition to these three, other symptoms may also occur, be it on a covert or an overt level.

2.1.3 Noogenic Neurosis

The existential vacuum may or may not lead to neurosis or psychopathology depending upon the dynamic factors but Frankl feels that the incidence of clinical cases thus rooted is of major significance. Noogenic neurosis, in contradistinction to psychogenic and somatogenic neuroses, originates within the spiritual dimension of people and may be caused by 'value collusions, by conflicts of conscience, or by the unrewarded groping for man's highest

value - an ultimate meaning of life'. (Fabry, 1975, p.43)

Crumbaugh and Maholick developed the Purpose in Life Test (PIL) to differentiate noogenic neurosis from the conventional neuroses and arrived at the conclusion that noogenic neurosis existed apart from the usual neuroses as dynamically conceived. It represented a new clinical syndrome which could not be comprehended under any of the classical descriptions (Crumbaugh and Maholick, 1964). Statistical research conducted in London, Vienna, Germany and other places regarding the frequency of noogenic neurosis point out that about 20% of the neuroses one encounters are noogenic in nature and origin. (Frankl, 1969)

Frankl contends that the treatment of neuroses, even noogenic, should be limited to the medical profession, while treatment of existential vacuum should be open to other counselling professions as well. There is no reason why the clinical psychologist, the social worker, the priest and the educator should not offer assistance to people who are seeking or questioning the meaning of life.

2.1.4 Klinger's Study on Meaning and Void

Frankl's philosophy influenced Klinger (1977) who contends that people derive their sense of meaningfulness from involvement with significant incentives. People need to be occupied nearly all the time with something that can make them feel awe, curiosity, pleasure, love, hate, relief, pride, lust, devotion, communion. Young people

search for purpose in their lives, older people seek to revive it. People have the tendency to bless something or someone, their religions, their children, new lovers, new careers, social causes, elaborate hobbies and sometimes even personal catastrophes for having given their lives a new sense of meaning. That is, people are organised around pursuing and enjoying objects, events and experiencs that are emotionally compelling for them, which Klinger calls 'incentives'. When people are deprived of important incentives, either objectively or for reasons within themselves, their lives seem less meaningful and they are more likely to try altering their inner experiences, the void - by drugs or alcohol, by changing major aspects of their life situations such as their marriages, careers, life styles or by ending it all, by committing suicides. Incentives provide purposes which people strive to obtain and maintain and which provide motivation for acting.

Klinger uses the term 'meaning' as something akin to 'purpose' and 'purpose' is thought of as 'aim' or 'goal'.

Some theorists have suggested that for one's life to feel meaningful one had to become dedicated to a single, consuming, relatively lofty purpose, preferably spiritual. But Klinger's work on college students of three American campuses shows that people find their sense of meaning in pursuing and enjoying many kinds of incentives, some lofty and remote, but most every day and homely. In his

study only 23% of the subjects claimed a single important source of meaning and only half reported having any extremely important source at all. And two of the traditionally loftiest sources of meaning - religion and vocation were among the weakest.

Furthermore there is evidence that the more kinds of incentives people can respond to, the greater their sense of meaning or purpose in life. In Klinger's study of the college students who acknowledged finding meaning in more than 20 of the categories given, 81% reported their lives to be 'very meaningful' or 'full of meaning' while it was true for only 35% of the students who found meaning in less than 12 of the categories (difference significant at .001 level). Similar results were obtained with the PIL by Doerris (1970), Tryon and Radzin (1972) and Rude (1981).

The inner process whereby a person becomes set to pursue an incentive as a goal is called 'commitment' by Klinger. People presumably remain committed to their goals until they are attained or abandoned as inaccessible or too costly. The process of giving up a goal is called 'disengagement'. Klinger uses the term 'current concern' to refer to the organism's state of being still committed to a particular incentive. When the incentive has been fulfilled or eliminated (in the case of negative concerns) the concern ends or becomes transformed into a different concern.

Many of life's great personal upheavals arise from disappointments in pursuing incentives. Continued disappointment from attaining an incentive or sheer habituation and satiation may lead to disillusionment and alienation from it. The alienated individuals seem to have a characteristic feeling of meaninglessness, futility, resentment and depression.

Simple pleasures that are innate satisfiers like food, sex as well as some not so simple ones like romantic love, exercising skills and capacities are the most reliable incentives. The other kind of stable incentives are those that cannot be fully attained but are realistic enough. However, these do not constitute a very powerful basis for leading a full life. The kinds of long-term incentive commitments that Frankl regards as especially effective sources of meaningfulness do seem to incorporate a very large share of the most stabilising and purpose-giving influences on human lives.

Klinger has focused on the problem of life's meaning only from the psychological view point - what are the factors that make life feel meaningful or empty? He has not delved into the philosophical or teleological viewpoint. However, the arguments developed in his book suggest that higher purposes or ulterior goals transform the psychological nature of immediate activities and short-range goals by enabling people to transform their emotional

lives here and now, without any change in the objective facts of their life situations, simply by viewing them from a different perspective.

According to Klinger, perhaps the most meaningful life is one that combines many and varied enduring sources of satisfaction. Then pleasure, love and work cease to be separate compartments - each current concern meshes with the others and become facets of a single, integral life-thrust.

2.2.0 STRESS

Stress is the bane of the twentieth century - an inevitable fact of life, the world over. Compared to a generation or two ago, our lifestyles today may be richer in material terms, but whether this has meant a concomitant increase in happiness and well-being is a moot point.

Stress starts early in the life of th individual. A three-year old child is under stress to do his homework, so that he can get through the admission test for a regular school. For the older school student it is no better - mugging for tests so that he can get into a good college or perhaps qualify in the 'joint entrance' examination for professional colleges! Stresss of a career and profession follow, in which, like Alice in Wonderland, everyone has to keep running even to stay in place (that is the jet-age ethos); if he is successful, the unremitting presures of staying ahead keep him on the run, and if he is

not, the stresses caused by frustration is his lot. For a woman, especially the educated urban woman, the stresses are more often than not, worse, trying to cope with so many things. Increased awareness and education have, if anything, added to her stresses, for now she is not content with just cooking and embroidering. If she is a working woman, the hassles of coping with the housework (domestic servants, being a gradually vanishing breed) and her job add to the demands and pressures on her.

All of us use th word 'stress' fairly glibly. What is stress? Stress has been defined as the body's own non-specific response to an excessive demand placed on it. It is impossible to be more specific about this because everyone has his or her own particular stresses and breaking points. Physical stresses are the least likely ones to manifest themselves as illness; social-psychological stresses have more serious repurcussions. Stress-induced health problems have been found to be commonest between adolescence and middle ege; women are more affected than men (puberty and menstruation, marriage, childbirth and menopause, with the corresponding hormonal changes act as a series of stresss) and urban dwellers more than rural ones. According to Hans Selye, there are two kinds of people : the 'race horse' types like to lead a vigorous and fast-paced life and in fact thrive on stress; and the 'turtles' demand a peaceful and tranquil environment and fall apart under the least stress.

The hypothalamus in the brain controls the autonomic nervous system which again controls the functioning of our viscera and smooth muscles. The hypothalamus is sensitive to physical as well as mental stresses. Stresses bring into play the appropriate self-correcting mechanisms; when these become ineffective on account of the intensity of the stress, a pathological condition surfaces and may lead to various illnesses.

2.2.1 Occupational Stress

The subject of work-related stress has received increasing attention on several fronts. Policymakers are recognising the negative aspects of work stress on human resource. Researchers in the areas of organisational behaviour and social psychology are amassing a credible body of empirical evidence about the effects of stress on the organisation, worker output, and the physical and emotional wellbeing of the worker and his/her family. Counsellors and therapists are receiving an increasing clientele who report negative effects from work stress. Majority of these studies have been confined to industrial organisations. There is, however, increasing speculation that stress may be particularly prevalent among the human service professions (Cherniss, 1980; Cooper and Marshall, 1980). Representative of this concern is the mounting speculation that stress within the teaching profession is considerable and may have far reaching consequences for the

entire education system.

Although the term job stress or occupational stress has been widely used, there appears to be little consensus as to how the term should be defined.

Cox (1975) distinguishes three common usages of the term 'Stress' itself.

The Engineering model conceptualises stress as negative pressure exerted by the environment on the individual. This model defining occupational stress as negative environmental stressors like work overload, role conflict/ambiguity, poor working conditions associated with a particular job has been widely employed (Kahn et al, 1964; Cooper and Marshall, 1976).

The Physiological model conceptualises stress as something that happens within the individual. The identification and quantification of the state of individual as stress was initially carried out with response to the physiological response pattern of the individual (Selye, 1956).

The transactional model conceptualises stress as the result of an imbalance or discrepancy between the demands made by the environment upon the individual and his ability to meet or cope with these demands.

However, it is felt that the term 'Stress' should simply be used to denote an area of investigation rather

than a scientific concept with hypothetico-deductive power (Lazarus, 1960; McGrath, 1970).

Finally, although the reactions to stress are usually thought of as negative forces, stress can be a beneficial and positive catalyst in our lives. Selye distinguishes between stress that is positive, **Eustress**, the factor necessary for one to perform well, particularly under pressure and **Distress** or negative stress experienced by an individual who fails to achieve. Feelings of insecurity, helplessness and desperation are associated with negative stress.

2.2.2 Teacher Stress

Much of the literature on stress refers to the concepts of role stress where the worker is faced with ambiguous or conflicting demands from others or of role overload when the work is too difficult or too great in volume, relative to the person's perceived capacity. Stress may occur when the worker dos not 'fit' the job very well or when the job involves responsibility for the safety, welfare or behaviour of others. Teaching contains many elements of these situations and one might predict that dealing with children all day is in itself a stressful occupation.

The school is generally considered to be a major source of stress in the lives of both students and staff. The potential of stress is present in a bureaucratic set

up, intense inter-personal relationships, time-space restrictions and constant evaluation of effort. That many students drop out or fail and many teachers burn out is the evidence enough that the situation is not right for everyone.

Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1977, 1978) have defined teacher stress as a response syndrome of negative affects (such as anger, anxiety or depression) arising from aspects of the teacher's job and mediated by the perception that the demands made upon the teacher constitute a threat to his self-esteem or well-being and by coping mechanisms activated to reduce the perceived threat.

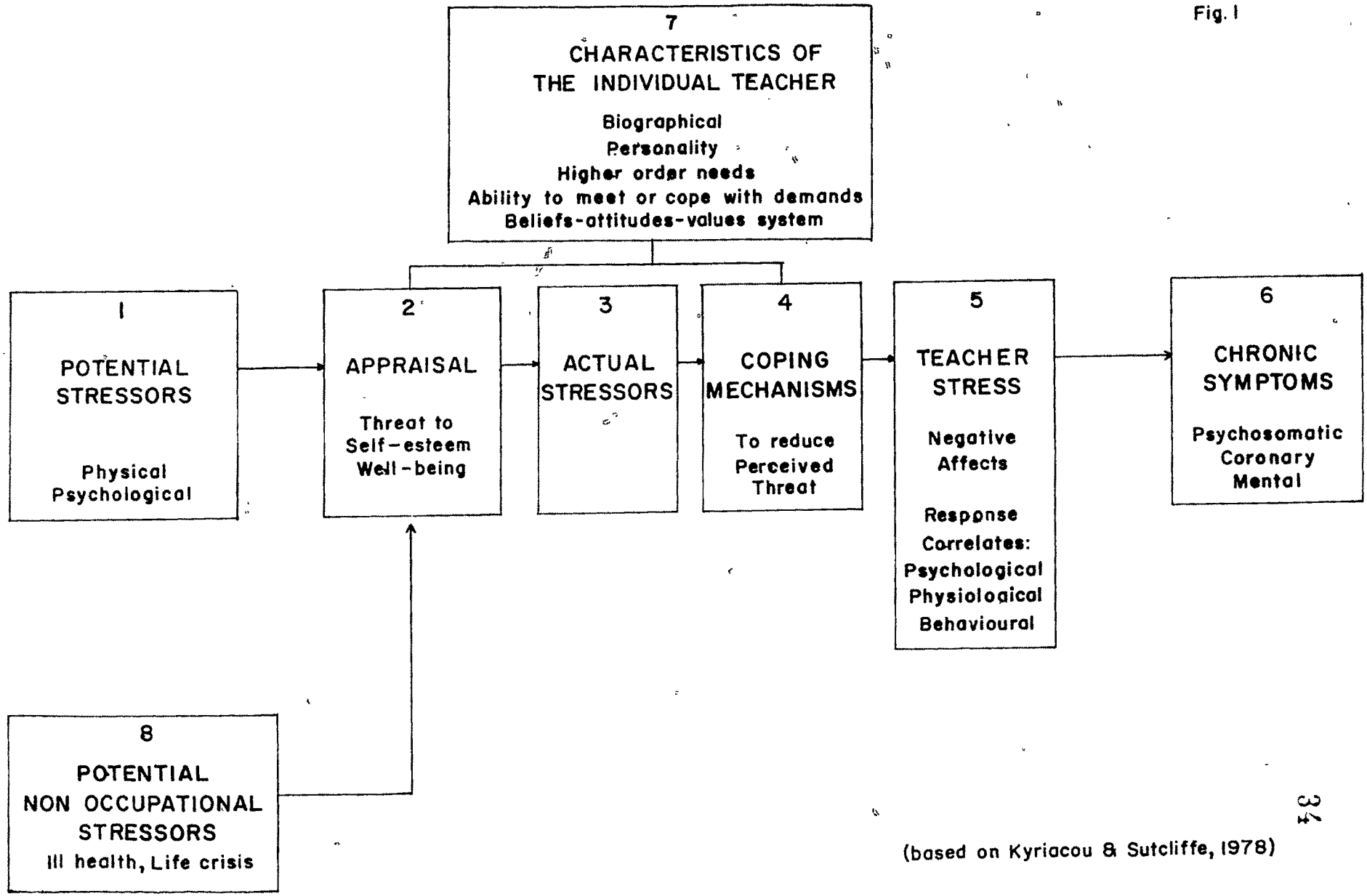
Research on teacher stress is in an early stage of development. A model of teacher stress given by Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1978) attempts to integrate the available research findings and current approaches to stress (Figure 1).

Potential occupational stressors (Box 1) are objective aspects of a teacher's job (e.g. too much work, high noise levels) which may result in actual occupational stressors (Box 3) and teacher stress (Box 5) if only they are perceived by the teacher to constitute a threat to his self-esteem or well-being (Box 2).

A distinction is made between potential occupational stressors that are essentially psychological (e.g. demanding high quality work, poor relationship with colleague)

A MODEL OF TEACHER STRESS

Fig. 1



(based on Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1978)

and those which are essentially physical (e.g. dashing between classes, noisy classrooms) while recognising that some potential occupational stressors (e.g. too much correction work) may be a mixture of the two. Potential occupational strssors which are perceived as threatening become actual occupational stressors (box 3) for the person concerned.

Such an appraisal or perception may occur in two ways. Firstly, the teacher may feel he is unable to meet or cope with the demands made upon him, and such failure has important consequencs for him. Or, secondly, the demands made upon him conflict with his higher order needs (self-actualisation).

This appraisal again will depend on the interaction between the teacher's individual characteristics (Box 7) and his perception of the demands made upon him. The individual characteristics that may be of primary importance include biographical details (e.g. sex, age, teaching experience); personality traits (e.g. anxiety-proneness; Flexibility-rigidity); higher-order needs (e.g. self-actualisation); ability to meet or cope with the demands); and the teacher's beliefs - attitudes - value system.

It should be noted, however, that it is the teacher's perception of his own ability to meet or cope with the demands rather than his actual ability that will partly determine his appraisal. And research has indicated that

people differ in the degree to which they perceive themselves to have control over their environment (e.g. locus of control, attribution). The appraisal may also be affected by potential stressors that are not specifically aspects of the job (e.g., life-crisis or ill-health). These have been termed potential non-occupational stressors (Box 8).

Coping mechanisms (Box 4) are introduced to deal with the actual occupational stressors and are also partly determined by the teacher's individual characteristics. Teacher stress is directly related to the degree to which the coping mechanisms are able or unable to deal with actual stressors and the degree to which the teacher appraises threat.

Thus teacher stress is primarily conceptualised as a response of negative affect such as anger or depression which is usually accompanied by other response correlates (Box 5). These response correlates may be psychological (e.g. high job dissatisfaction, burnout); physiological (e.g. absenteeism). These may also lead to psychosomatic symptoms like asthma, allergies and even more serious ones like coronary heart disease and mental ill-health (Box 6).

Concerns regarding stress among school teachers have been raised for over 40 years (Turk, Meeks & Turk, 1982). Thus although the issue of teacher stress is not new, the severity and scope of the problem appear unprece-

dented. The studies reporting the incidence of stress in teachers in Chapter III show that more and more teachers are reporting experiencing stress in their job. Moreover, teachers appear to perceive their jobs as more stressful than other comparable professionals. Pratt (1978) reports that 60.4% of teachers surveyed reported some nervous strain, in contrast with 51.1% of 'other professionals' and 36.1% of a sample of employed people. Cox, Mackay, Cox, Watts and Brockley (1978) likewise report that, in a study comparing school teachers with semi-professionals matched for sex, age and marital status, 79% of the teachers mentioned their job as a 'main source of stress' in their life, whereas only 38% of the non-teachers did so.

Stress has also been cited as a major factor in teacher's decision to leave teaching. Although there is a large body of literature bearing on teacher stress, much of the research has failed to clearly conceptualise what 'stress' is, and has characterised it in terms of some global construct. Over the years, however, some strong correlates of this global construct have been found. These correlates have included job dissatisction (Rudd and Wiseman, 1962; Kyriacou and Sutcliffe, 1979); absenteeism (Bridges, 1980); greater intention to leave the profession (Kyriacou and Sutcliffe, 1979), and psychological and physical distress (Coates and Thoresen, 1979). These findings suggest that 'teacher stress' should be viewed as a multi-dimensional construct made up largely of these

four components, rather than the unidimensional view held in the past.

Research also points to a host of variables that predict teachers' job satisfaction, turnover, and general distress. Among these are the role teachers perceive for themselves, the organisational factors or school climate, various job-specific problems and their coping resources. However, much of the data have tended to be anecdotal or of a summary nature, obtained through the use of simple problem inventories. Studies that treat stress as a multi-dimensional construct may give a more comprehensive idea of teacher stress.

2.3.0 BURNOUT

Burnout is a concept which was born in mid 1970s in the U.S.A. and with astonishing rapidity has become almost a 'catchword' to convey an almost unlimited variety of social and personal problems of American workers.

There is some doubt about the true extent of the burnout syndrome because the word has become ubiquitous and used in an extraordinarily wide variety of contexts. It is used as an accusation against uncaring workers by undeserving, frustrated clients. It is also used as an excuse by some professionals for half-hearted efforts, as an indication to others of the need for professional renewal, and as a motivation for still others to leave their field altogether. Burnout is used technically to

describe a stress related syndrome that has circumscribed causes and symptoms, but is also used colloquially to describe a transient state of fatigue. Burnout is said to be caused by stress, yet is often used as a synonym for stress. Burnout is said to afflict only human service professionals, but has also been used to describe students, blue collar workers, sportsmen, and indeed, practically everyone. It appears in America as if each week the media identifies yet another group of workers as burned out. The human srvice professionals, especially, have integrated the concept of burnout within their collective self-image as workers.

Burnout though is more than a 'hot topic'. It is a serious issue that affects the welfare of not only millions of human service workers but of their tens of millions of clients as well.

2.3.1 Emergence of the Concept of Burnout

Freudenberger (1974, 1975) is usually given credit for first using the term 'burnout' in its present sense - to denote a state of physical, emotional and attitudinal depletion resulting from conditions of work. He used it to characterise the psychological state of certain volunteers who worked with him at alternative health care agencies like free clinics for drug addicts. Within a few months of work, these young, idealistic men and women would begin to appear as more tired, depressed apathetic

and needy than the clients for whom they were working. These symptoms were accompanied by guilt, paranoia and a sense of omnipotence which made it difficult for them to cut back on their level of activity or involvement.

Freudenberger was trained as a psychoanalyst and is currently in private practice in New York. His model of burnout is based primarily on a paradigm that emphasises the psychology of the individual. His work relies on a case-study approach and focuses on the psychological capabilities and vulnerabilities of individuals placed in stressful work situations. He has studied the individual dynamics of burnout - the psychological reasons why it occurs and the process by which it occurs.

Maslach and Pines, on the other hand, are both social psychologists by training. Maslach, from the University of California at Berkeley was interested in the problems of dehumanisation and depersonalisation. Before coming to the United States, Pines did research on stress for the Israeli army. Their approach has been to study burnout from a more social-psychological, research-oriented perspective with a heavier focus on the relationship between environmental and individual factors. Working individually, as well as collectively, using both questionnaires and interviews, they have collected data on several thousand workers across many types of human service jobs, thus providing an empirical basis for the study of burnout.

Their work documented the presence of three central factors within the burnout syndrome - emotional exhaustion, de-personalisation and lack of personal accomplishment and also explored the role of social support networks as potential mediators of job stress. Thus their research examined the situational factors that contribute to the helpers' reactions.

These two persepectives - the 'clinical' approach of Freudenberger and the 'empirical' approach of Maslach and Pines have complemented each other well. Findings based on each perspective have been mutually corroborative and together, they have generated a wealth of data and insights into the phenomenon of burnout.

However, despite a rapidly growing literature, there is still a notable lack of critical perspective on the field. Because the field is new (just 10 years old), there have been relatively few opportunities for theorists, clinicians, researchers and consultants to collaborate, exchange views or criticise each other's work. Progress in the field has also been hindered by the burden of a 'pop psychology' image. Theories have not been built upon the work of previous researchers, insights proposd a decade ago are constantly being 'rediscovered' and the field in general seems to be in danger of trivialised by popular magazines and other news-hungry media. (Farber, 1982)

Burnout, as opposed to stress, is the more 'popular'

current concern. But aversive working conditions may produce a variety of stressful reactions of which burnout is but one, though severe form. There are many stress reactions of non-burnt out variety and these should not be confused with burnout.

Burnout is the result not of stress per se, but of unmediated stress - of not being able to cope with the stress, having no outlet for it, no buffer, no support system, no compensation. Inability to cope may make the individual unable to maintain the enthusiasm, care and commitment he initially brought to the job and then the process of burnout begins.

2.3.2 The Problem of Definition

Burnout has been defined in a variety of ways.

Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines burnout as 'to fail, wear out or become exhausted by making excessive demands on energy, strength or resources'.

Freudenberger and Richelson (1980, P.15) describe burnout as a 'state of fatigue or frustration brought about by devotion to a cause, way of life or relationship that failed to produce the expected reward'.

Edelwich and Brodsky (1980, P.14) define burnout as a 'progressive loss of idealism, energy, purpose and concern as a result of conditions of work'.

Pines and Aronson (1981, P.15) state that burnout

is 'characterised by physical depletion, by feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, by emotional drain and by the development of negative self-concept and negative attitudes toward work, life and other people . . . it is a sense of distress, discontent and failure in the quest of ideals'.

Most researchers have supported a narrower definition of the term, applying it only to workers in the helping professions, to those who do 'people work'. Pines and Aronson, for example, prefer to distinguish between burnout and 'tedium', a similar constellation of feelings that affect workers in non-human service jobs. Restricting burnout to human service or 'caring' professions acknowledges the unique pressures of utilising one's self as the 'tool' in face to face work with needy, demanding and often troubled clients. Through their work in the helping professions including education, these researchers have indicated that people involved in prolonged, constant, intensive interaction with people in an emotionally charged atmosphere are susceptible to the syndrome of burnout.

According to Maslach and Jackson (1981) burnout has three separate aspects - emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and a feeling of reduced personal accomplishment.

Despite general unanimity of opinion regarding some of the characteristics of burnout, the determination

of whether a worker is or is not burned out is not easily made. Burnout does not lend itself to such clear dichotomies because burnout is a process and not an event. Nor is the process identical for each person - it is a subtle pattern of symptoms, behaviour and attitudes that are unique for each person.

2.3.3 Factors in Burnout

In general burnout can be conceptualised as a function of stresses engendered by individual, work-related and societal factors.

Individual Factors

An understanding of the individual factors underlying burnout must include an assessment of the individual personality variables, mediational processes like cognitive appraisal of stressful events, and current life stresses and supports.

There is a general agreement that burnout-prone individuals are empathic, sensitive, humane, dedicated, idealistic and 'people-oriented' but also anxious, introverted, obsessional, overenthusiastic and susceptible to over-identification with others (Freudenberger, 1975; Block, 1977;Cherniss, 1980; Edelwich and Brodsky, 1980; Pines and Aronson, 1981). People who go into human service work want to help others and have an excessive need to 'give' and may base their self-esteem too exclusively on the attainment of unrealistic goals.

Recent studies have also suggested that 'workaholic' Type A persons are particularly prone to develop physiological symptoms, including cardiac trouble, as a result of stress. Type A personalities are aggressive, intense, competitive, moody, with low frustration-tolerance level and are more likely to get angry and stressed when they perceive their efforts to be unsuccessful or unfairly compromised. How a person reacts to job stress is a function of both the stress encountered and the individual personality type.

Life changes may make individuals especially susceptible to burnout. Consistent relationships have been found between the numbers and types of changes in a person's life and the onset of illness or disease within as little as one year (Holmes and Rahe, 1967). Both positive changes such as marriage and negative changes such as death or divorce are considered stressful in as much as both demand adjustment to new behaviour patterns.

Life changes may also be viewed from a developmental perspective. For example, normative crisis periods occur between each stage of adult development and may involve significant re-evaluation of one's personal and professional life (Ericson, 1968; Levinson, 1978). As such these periods may dramatically affect one's self-esteem, marital relationship or faith and investment in work. These transitional periods are stressful and

leave one with less capacity to cope successfully with other daily stresses and make him more vulnerable to burnout.

Work-related Factors :

The search for causes of burnout, says Maslach (1978), is better directed away from identifying the bad people and toward uncovering the characteristics of the bad situations where many good people function.

For any professional group one could compile an almost endless list of work-related stresses. For example, all human service professionals complain of long hours, isolation, lack of autonomy, client 'neediness', inadequate salary, insufficient resources, lack of criteria to measure accomplishments, excessive demands for productivity, inadequate job training, administrative indifference or interference.

Those who work in the institutional rather than private settings are often faced with stresses endemic to organisational structures, like role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload (Kahn, 1974; Caplan and Jones, 1975). Role overload is the most common complaint of those who work in organisations. This source of stress is likely to become more prevalent in the near future as a result of growth in the number of clients, depleted finances and job freeze. There may be a qualitative aspect of role overload as well, when increasingly complex

work requires skills or abilities that are beyond an individual's current level of functioning.

The common element in most work-related stresses is the feeling of inconsequentiality - a feeling on the part of the professionals that no matter how hard they work, the payoffs in terms of accomplishment, recognition, advancement or appreciation are not there. To balance this discrepancy between input and output, burned out workers begin to give considerably less to their jobs. This sense of inconsequentiality is akin to Seligman's (1975) notion of 'learned helplessness'. Both concepts refer to a state in which individuals feel that their actions can no longer effect desired changes in the environment and, therefore, there is no point in continuing to try.

Societal Factors :

Burnout may also be symptom of broader social concerns. Relatively recent and dramatic changes in family, work and social structures within Western Society, the 'Culture of Narcissism' (Lasch, 1979) rooted in the competitive individualism of Western Civilisation, moving away from a sense of community toward greater anonymity, impersonality and disconnectedness are at the root of increasing stress and burnout. As a result of social fragmentation and uprootedness, workers have become increasingly insistent upon attaining personal fulfilment

and gratification from their work. The combination of these two trends have produced workers with higher expectations of fulfilment and fewer resources to cope with frustrations - a perfect recipe for burnout.

Present economic conditions, like recession and rising unemployment have also made career shifts more difficult. As a result burned out professionals may find few economically comparble opportunities in other fields and may feel 'stuck' and increasingly resentful at remaining in their present job. Their sense of frustration grows and feelings of burnout increases.

2.3.4 Teacher Burnout

Burnout has most often been discussed and written about in relation to teaching and teachers.

2.3.4.a Stages of Teacher Burnout

Clouse and Whitaker (1981) point out three stages of teacher burnout.

(i) Loss of enthusiasm : Most teachers enter the profession with good intentions and a sincere desire to help children. Energy levels are high, ideals are strong. Majority of teachers are also individuals with decent value systems, a high sense of motivation, a desire to be needed and having an inner hope that through their intervention, something positive can be done with young people.

Burnout leads to a drastic reversal in attitude and behaviour within a few years, sometimes even after one year of teaching.

It has been suggested that many who enter teaching exhibit dependency characteristics where personal needs are met through helping others. That is, they obtain an overwhelming component of their self-identity from their work and therefore, have a strong need to be liked. When teachers do not receive positive responses and feedback from students, enthusiasm falters.

(ii) Frustration : Frustration is one of the earliest signs in the process of burnout.

As already mentioned, several factors may contribute to the frustration of teachers within the school environment as well as outside, in the socio-political milieu. Student apathy, growing indiscipline and violence, uncooperative or overcritical parents, low salary and social status and various malfunctions of the organisation and the profession itself are some of the factors. All these and many others may contribute to frustration and lowered morale of teachers and increase their stress and burnout.

(iii) Alienation : Alienation of the professional from the work environment may be viewed as a response or result of powerlessness, frustration and loss of meaning in one's work. Alienation is associated with detach-

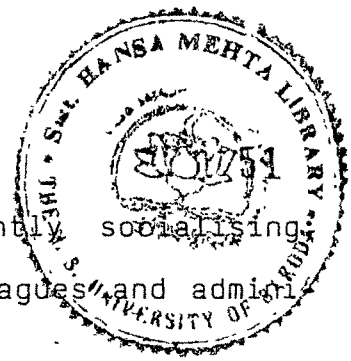
ment, withdrawal and isolation within the work environment. A strong relationship exists between alienation and lack of support and positive feedback. Alienation is also directly related to the number of clients with whom the professional has a direct contact. As the ratio increases, a higher emotional overload is inevitable. Inherent in the teaching profession is a high level of responsibility for a large number of students.

It has been found that teacher alienation increases (a) the less frequently teachers participate in the decision-making process; (b) the more rigid the organisation hierarchy of authority; (c) the greater the degree of job codification; and (d) the more rigidly rules are enforced.

2.3.4.b Symptoms of Teacher Burnout

Teachers experiencing such feelings of burnout show a number of symptoms in their personal and professional life. Research has identified a number of these symptoms.

Personal symptoms include cynicism and negativism; rigid thinking, inflexibility and a closed mind, blocking progress and constructive changes; increased absenteeism and illness frequency; boredom and growing fatigue; loss of idealism and commitment; alienation and minimal compliance; verbalising helplessness and hopelessness and fatalism; changes in behaviour and social contacts, e.g.



becoming a loner, withdrawn or constantly socialising, hypersensitivity and paranoia about colleagues and administrators.

Professional symptoms include growing doubts about professional career, dissatisfaction with level of performance and feeling inadequate and overwhelmed by task, reluctance to go to work or merging self and life with profession and withdrawing from activities previously rewarding. That is, undervaluing or overvaluing professional prerogatives and capabilities.

Stated more descriptively, burned out teachers may plan classes less often or less carefully; assign problems instead of teaching concepts; schedule disliked subjects late in the day and never getting to them; daydream, dwadle, ignore misbehaviour in students. They may have a lower tolerance of frustration in the classroom; shout, scold, pile on busy work assignments and even resort to corporal punishment. They may expect less reward from their job and less effort from their students. They may frequently feel emotionally drained and physically exhausted and may fantasise or actually plan to leave the profession.

Physical signs are fatigue, exhaustion, insomnia, headaches, backaches etc. If stress is left uncontrolled it may lead to psychosomatic illnesses, to use and abuse of alcohol and tension-reducing drugs, seeking counselling

help for a feeling of personal failure and guilt and increased marital and family conflicts.

Symptoms of burnout are very similar to what Jenkins (1979) refers to as 'pathological end states' of stress as exhaustion, despair, apathy, psychopathology, meaninglessness, alienation, victimisation and disruption of inter-personal ties.

2.3.5 Teacher Stress and Teacher Burnout

Many studies on teacher burnout have been equating stress with burnout. Stress is a reality of teaching which can be beneficial or harmful depending on how a person responds. For instance, an able challenging class can be stressful to teach. If efforts to meet student needs lead to increased teacher growth and satisfaction, the effects of stress are beneficial. If such efforts result in emotional and physical illness, the effects of stress are harmful and may eventually lead to burnout.

A number of studies have been attempting to explain burnout by simply enumerating the many stresses teachers may encounter. The error is perhaps motivated partly by the desire for data. Since virtually no hard data on teacher burnout is available, data on teacher stress are often substituted. Secondly, it is due to the implicit and erroneous assumption that a stressed teacher inevitably becomes a burned out teacher. (Farber, 1982)

Farber (1983) points out several theories where certain stress reactions are referred to in terms that are quite similar to those in the description of burnout. For example, Hackman (1970) has noted four general types of strategy for coping with stress : (1) Explicit movement against the stressful factor such as aggression, attack, hostility; (2) movement away from the source of stress, such as avoidance, withdrawal, resignation, inaction or escape; (3) submission or collaborative movement toward the source of stress such as ingratiation or undue cooperation; and (4) distortion of the situation through traditional psycholol gical mechanisms such as denial, displacement, reaction formation or intellectualisation. In this context burnout may be seen as final step in the progression from active problemsolving to anger and depletion (1 and 2) to submission and distortion (3 and 4). When earlier steps in the progression fail to alleviate stress, more severe reactions like those seen commonly in burnout become manifest. Selye (1956, 1976) in his stage theory of stress 'The General Adaptation Syndrome' proposes three stages : (1) 'Alarm reaction', in which the body mobilises forces to defend itself against stresses; (2) 'Resistance', in which a person is able to function in what appears to be a normal fashion; (3) 'Exhaustion', in which the cumulative effects of damaging stress have become too severe to allow for adaptation. The symptoms noted in the last stage are very similar to the symptoms

of burnout.

Burnout, then can be regarded as the final step in a progression of unsuccessful attempts to cope with a variety of negative stress conditions.

It is, therefore, not surprising that both the popular press and the professional literature have often confused or equated stress with burnout, treating them as if they were inter-changeable terms. Such confusions ignore the myriad number of variables that mediate between stressful environmental conditions and subjective perception of being 'burned out', e.g. constitutional vulnerability to stress, cognitive appraisal of stressful events, personality type, other life events, and knowledge and availability of coping mechanisms including social support. These factors explain why there is considerable variance in the ways that individuals react to identical or nearly identical stress situations. (Jenkins, 1979)

However, popular accounts of teacher burnout have opted not to explain the process of burnout, but rather to simply list its most observable and immediate precipitants, without taking into account the entire social, psychological, political and historical context.

It is likely that teacher burnout has always been around, masquerading in the past under labels like job-dissatisfaction, job-anxiety and worker alienation. Even in 1932 Waller described how community pressures, the

need for constant vigilance to control large number of students in classes, and loneliness and isolation could all combine to reduce a teacher's morale.

Stress and burnout in teachers, then are not new phenomena. What is new is that burned out teachers have become more vocal and visible and for many of them burnout is no longer a term of approbrium but rather a symbol of perverse notoriety.

What may also be new is the magnitude of teacher burnout. There is, of course, no way of comparing the percentage of teachers burned out twenty or fifty years ago from the number burned out today. Moreover, determination of the seriousness of the problem is a direct function of the method we choose to define the term.

Few would quarrel with the statement that teaching is an emotionally taxing profession. A teacher's day is filled with constant, intensive interaction with people. In a study of student-teacher interaction, Jackson (1968) indicate that teachers can interact with students more than 1,000 times a day. Besides students, administrators, other teachers, parents, school board members also consistently make demands on the energies of teachers.

However, it is necessary to understand why, since all teachers are involved in such interactions, only some exhibit feelings of burnout. One must keep in mind

that systematic research on teacher burnout is in the infant stage of development and the results of the studies are by no means comprehensive or conclusive.
