DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 350 713 EA 024 414

AUTHOR Dinham, Steve
TITLE Human Perspectives on Teacher Resignation: Preliminary Results of One Investigation.
PUB DATE Jul 92
NOTE 35p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Australian Council for Educational Administration (Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia, July 1992).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Secondary Education; *Employment Patterns; Foreign Countries; Job Satisfaction; *Labor Turnover; Models; *Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Burnout; *Teacher Employment; Teacher Morale; *Teacher Persistence; Teaching (Occupation); Teaching Conditions
IDENTIFIERS *Australia (New South Wales)

ABSTRACT

Findings of a study that examined teachers' personal reasons for resigning are presented in this paper, which develops a model of teacher persistence. Interviews were conducted with 57 teachers who resigned from primary schools, and various regional and Head Office positions with the New Wales (Australia) Department of School Education during the 1991-92 school year. Findings suggest that teacher resignation results from teachers' reaching a critical point in their attitude toward teaching. Teacher attitudes toward teaching are influenced by the lack of teacher input for change, commitment to change, and support. The attitude toward teaching is shaped by a complex interplay of many factors, some of which are out of the control of teachers, schools, departments of education, and governments. The appendix contains the interview schedule, three figures, and two tables. (Contains 18 references.) (LMI)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL CONFERENCE, DARWIN, JULY 1992

Human Perspectives on Teacher Resignation: Preliminary Results of One Investigation

ED350713

**Steve Dinham, Faculty of Education,
University of Western Sydney, Nepean.**

Abstract

Teacher resignation is a not well understood phenomenon with distinctly negative connotations. It appears to be linked to the equally contentious issues of teacher morale, teacher stress, teacher burnout and teacher job satisfaction and is a major factor contributing to teacher supply and demand, something of interest and importance to both providers and consumers of the educational service.

Where research has been carried out into the field of teacher resignation, invariably this has consisted of the analysis and forecasting of teacher supply and demand, and the statistical analysis of data gathered by questionnaires administered to teacher trainees, practicing teachers and administrators, and resigned teachers. In addition, there has been a tendency on the part of some researchers to equate the destinations of resigned teachers with the reasons for their resignation, a situation where cause and effect -- although intertwined -- have been confused.

This paper reports on work in progress in which 57 teachers who resigned from primary schools, secondary schools, and various regional and Head Office positions with the Department of School Education in N.S.W. during 1991 were interviewed and the data analysed using grounded theory procedures.

The backgrounds, experiences, and feelings of those interviewed were examined and this data related to previously completed research. It is the intention of this study to utilise the information gained in this way to formulate a model of teacher persistence which might have some relevance to providers and consumers of the education service.

Aims and Context of the Study

Any research study should be placed in context, both theoretically and socially. The research project to be described today began in mid-1990 and arose because of a degree of uncertainty concerning the issue of the phenomenon of teacher resignation. Eighteen months prior to the commencement of the study, I had resigned from the then New South Wales Department of Education to take up my present position, and at the time, I can recall a great deal of debate in educational circles and the media concerning the issues of teachers' salaries, teacher morale, the quality of teaching and learning occurring in schools, the restructuring of management structures under the then Minister for Education Dr Metherell and debate over issues such as "basic skills testing" and the future of the Higher School Certificate.

The National Board of Employment, Education and Training noted at the time (1990, 1) that:

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
S. Dinham
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

> The last three years have ... been marked by a heightened sense of unease within the teaching profession: dissatisfaction, low morale and consequently increased resignation rates, and less willingness by tertiary students to consider teaching as a career of first choice. On a broader level, however, the economic and social imperatives facing the country have resulted in a greater recognition of education as a critical factor in skills formation which will increase the level of competence of the workforce and, thence, Australia's competitive edge in the world economy.

My own background and experience had led me to believe that the resignation decision was a fairly complex one and I felt that there might be benefits for teacher selection, teacher pre-service training, teacher induction, teachers' professional development and, ultimately, the education of young people, if the phenomenon of teacher resignation could be better understood. Later, it was determined to try and use this understanding to develop a model of teacher persistence to the above ends.

Early investigations into teacher resignation revealed that it was an issue with distinctly negative connotations, and was considered something akin to bad weather, being regrettable but inevitable, and thus, right from the beginning, there was the aim implied above to adopt a pro-active stance within the study in that it was hoped to gain understanding of teacher satisfaction and persistence through an examination of teacher resignation. While it would be impossible and probably undesirable to completely eliminate teacher resignation, it was felt that there could be important lessons with economic, human, and educational benefit that could be learned through gaining greater understanding of teacher resignation.

These early investigations also revealed that teacher resignation is not a phenomenon confined to only Australia. Public education systems world-wide and private education authorities were found to be experiencing the twin problems of attracting and retaining suitably qualified teaching staff. There appeared to be a number of broad pressures or factors exerting influence upon the attractiveness of teaching as a career, teacher persistence and teacher resignation.

Tertiary educational institutions and educational authorities were faced with the problem of attracting students interested in pursuing a teaching career, a situation which may have led, at times, to a decline in entry standards to teacher pre-service training at those institutions in order to meet the perceived demands for future teachers. Indeed, where local supply of teachers had been deficient, it had been necessary to meet the shortfall from other educational systems and even from overseas.

At times, serious concerns had been raised over the attractiveness of teachers' salaries and some had perhaps simplistically attempted to link resignation rates to the higher salaries available outside the teaching profession, particularly for those teachers possessing marketable or transferable skills in areas such as mathematics and computing. In fact, opportunist organisations, often staffed by former teachers, had sprung up to assist teachers to leave teaching and to find alternative employment. In New South Wales, the union representing government teachers, the New South Wales Teachers Federation, had even established the "Teachers Career Service" to assist its members and other teachers to find alternative employment.

The attractiveness of a teaching career and teacher persistence once that career had been commenced also appeared to be related to such factors as the state of the economy and hence, opportunities for alternative employment. "Conventional wisdom" has it, for example, that teaching as a career becomes more attractive in times of economic recession or downturn when less opportunity for employment exists in the wider community, teaching being perceived as a "safe" occupation. This appears to have been the case in 1992 and to a lesser extent, 1991, when entry requirements for teacher

training courses rose sharply in New South Wales universities while teacher resignation rates fell.

In addition, educational systems in many countries were found to be in the midst of substantial educational reform and restructuring, an unsettling influence which can place increased pressures and demands upon teachers, schools and administrators. Education has increasingly been seen as being of critical importance, not just to the individual student, but to the economic performance of nations attempting to come to grips with a post-industrial interlocking international order and thus there had been pressure to restructure and reform education along industrial or corporate lines (Beare, 1988: 248).

Serious concerns had also been expressed about teachers' morale, stress and teacher "burnout" as the teaching service aged in the aftermath of the post-World War II "baby boom" era and as demands upon teachers seemingly increased. In addition, it seemed that the esteem with which the community regards teachers was not as high as it once was.

However, if the status of teachers has declined in the community, the expectations that the community held for teachers and schools had certainly increased, with the school being expected to solve many of the problems that the community itself seemed unwilling or unable to deal with.

At the same time as these diverse pressures were exerting influence upon teachers and schools, many were questioning whether the educational innovations of the 1960s and 1970s such as "school based curriculum development", "open" classrooms and the abolition of some external examinations achieved their aims, with the result that there appeared to be a world-wide trend to centralise curriculum and to control more closely certain aspects of education which were formerly within the domain of "professional autonomy" (Beare, 1989).

However while schools had lost certain responsibilities, paradoxically they were also being asked to take on greater responsibility in areas such as financial planning and accountability and the hiring, professional development, and evaluation of staff.

There was thus pressure for schools and teachers to demonstrate effectiveness through such measures as "performance appraisal" and financial viability. The days of financial largesse such as occurred in Australia during the 1970s seemed to be behind schools. Thus, as well as providers of an educational service to the community, increasingly, schools, their administrators and teachers were also expected to be effective managers and entrepreneurs.

In 1990, the New South Wales public education system, one of the largest in the world, exhibited many if not all of the above turbulent and at times contradictory aspects, with concern over the quality and quantity of students being attracted to teacher training, demonstrated dissatisfaction with public education yet increased expectations for teachers and schools, concern over teacher salaries and career paths, teacher shortages in certain disciplines and geographic areas, concern over teacher morale, and seemingly high rates of teacher resignation, all occurring within the context of rapid and substantial educational and economic restructuring and change.

Studies of teacher resignation to date had, in the main, concentrated upon quantifying both the extent of the phenomenon and the characteristics of those resigning i.e. comparisons of resignation rates, forecasts of teacher supply and demand, attention to length and type of training, length of service at resignation, aggregation of reasons for

resignation and the financial costs of training and replacement of resigned teachers. However, to generalise about teachers and to rely too heavily upon aggregated data poses the danger of losing sight of the individual and personal side to resignation. As the Schools Council (1990: 46) noted:

> Understanding teaching as an occupation means coming to terms with one critical factor -- size. One in thirty members of the labour force is a teacher. A group of that size will inevitably produce an enormous range of personality types and work capabilities. As a result, generalising about teachers as a group ... is somewhat perilous. The variety among them will be significant. Inevitably, there will be good teachers and there will be bad teachers. There will be optimists and there will be cynics. There will be those who work very hard and who are consistently responsible, and those who do not and are not. The amount and type of occupational experience they have had will affect how they perform their work. They will be affected too by their own life situation, their age, their gender, their cultural background and, particularly perhaps, by whether or not they have children of their own.

While the issues of age, gender, training, length of service, and so on are variables of importance and were addressed in this study, it was decided that its emphasis would be different to that of previous research in that attention would be given more to the personal characteristics, experiences and feelings of those former teachers interviewed and how these factors related to the more commonly explored variables or factors mentioned above.

Thus, the study tended to fall within Morgan's (1980) "radical structuralist" paradigm, in that the emphasis was upon feelings, forces, structures and procedures, tensions and actions which contribute to teacher resignation and the set of factors -- which the literature review had suggested are different from those contributing to resignation -- influencing teacher persistence.

The purpose of the study was thus to ascertain the reasons why, at a personal level, teachers had resigned from the New South Wales Department of School Education and to utilise this knowledge to develop a model of teacher persistence.

The focus of the study was upon the individual teacher within various structures (the institution i.e. the school; the local community; the organisation i.e. the New South Wales Department of School Education, and society as a whole), and of the tensions and forces, both intrinsic and extrinsic, both human and structural, leading an individual to resign from his or her chosen occupation after gaining entry to pre-service training and gaining employment as a teacher.

The rationale for the study thus hinged upon gaining access to human and personal insights to teacher resignation. In this respect, it was a study more of depth than breadth. Because of this rationale, it was thought that this favoured a qualitative methodology utilising largely open-ended interview questions provided by the researcher. The nature of both this methodology and these questions was determined by the review of the literature which revealed a great range of variables or factors as possibly having some bearing upon teacher resignation and teacher persistence, and the need to probe individual experiences and feelings more fully to better understand the relationship and influence of these variables on both resignation and persistence.

One of the intended outcomes of the large scale use of questionnaires and quantitative methods in previous research into teacher resignation had been the quest for universality. A number of such studies examined in the review of literature utilised data from literally thousands of respondents, with some studies extending over long periods of time. However McCarthy (1986: 3-5) noted that reality is culturally and

contextually dependent and he discerned a movement away from the quest for universality towards what Van Fraassen termed "constructive empiricism", grounded in the naturalistic paradigm and "based upon the assumption that reality can only be portrayed as subjective and value bound".

This stance sat more comfortably with the study's purpose of understanding why, at a personal level, teachers had resigned from the New South Wales Department of School Education, than might the quest for universality through the use of large scale survey techniques. However, the study did attempt to develop a model of teacher persistence which might have application wider than the context of the study and those involved in it. In this sense, the universality sought by larger scale studies might hopefully be achieved through deepening understanding of resignation and teacher persistence, rather than attempting to aggregate and analyse data from very large samples, although the points raised by Van Fraassen concerning subjectivity and values were recognised.

To take the matter of universality and applicability further, Foster (1986: 10) noted that "the school as a social institution has tremendous impact on an individual's life. School is ... a living statement of culture and values that forms a part of the consciousness of every social member". As a result, Foster advocated a "critically informed theory of administration" that links "administrative practice to social and cultural issues". Foster (1986: 11) believed that the difficult questions that relate administrative practice to relationships and social context are too rarely asked and that, if they are not asked "our administration and our patterns of education will remain in the same rut that has led to a crisis of confidence in education and schooling". Foster believed that despite the volume of research and reports in education and despite the fact that such reports are often quite critical, "they are strangely unreflective, with an underlying reluctance to explore the causes of school failure or to put the school experience into the context of larger social relations".

Thus, there was an element of such "critical theory" underpinning this study, critical being used in the sense of a recognition that there is no one "best" way, and that events, structures and methods must be viewed in perspective and in context if human relationships, values, attitudes and behaviours are to be understood. Rather than formulating "hard" general theory, this study sought to illuminate and reveal the background to resignation for one group of teachers in one particular system of education during a limited period of time and to identify the key variables that might impinge upon teacher persistence, based upon the findings of the study. The dangers about generalising about teachers have already been raised above, but it was hoped that the case study utilising the teachers interviewed in the study would permit the development of a model of teacher persistence that recognised the diversity of the teaching population and the complexity of the teaching task.

Within the study, teachers were encouraged, as Wolcott (1985) advocated, to "tell their own story", but within the structure of the interview provided by the researcher, a possible threat to objectivity, and thus the task of the researcher was to discern reality (or indeed multiple realities) from the interviews conducted with the subjects in order to develop a grounded theory of resignation and from this, to construct a model of teacher persistence which might have relevance for the administration of public education in New South Wales and for other educational systems.

The aims of the study and its significance have partly been alluded to above. Obviously, education is a vital element of every society, and a modern post-industrial society such as Australia relies to a large degree upon the education system to educate, train, and socialise its young people.

A corollary of the importance of education is the importance of teachers. If it is harder to attract and retain teachers, then there are obvious problems for a society which relies so heavily and increasingly upon education and appears to place so much store in it.

It would thus be very valuable to discover who is resigning from teaching, and more importantly, why these people are resigning, and what would be needed to revitalise and retain them, given the level of human, economic, and social investment in education at all levels.

If a model of teacher persistence could be developed there are a number of potential benefits. While such knowledge and understanding of teacher resignation would no doubt prove to be economically valuable to educational planners and policy makers with its implications for teacher selection, pre-service training, induction and professional development, it could also contribute to the mental and physical well-being of all teachers, for teachers are more than just an economic resource to be exploited for the benefit of society. Ultimately of course, the study might be able to make some contribution towards improving the quality of education for students, something which should be the central aim of all educators.

Given the study problem and its context, the study addressed a number of key questions:

1. What feelings and experiences pertaining to education before teaching, during the teaching career, and after resignation, were noted by those interviewed in the study?
2. What forces, factors and tensions contributed to the decision of the interviewed subjects to resign?
3. How important are the first few years of teaching in influencing teacher resignation and teacher persistence?
4. What factors or variables contribute to teacher persistence? Are these factors different from the factors contributing to teacher resignation?
5. Can a grounded theory of teacher resignation be developed as a result of the analysis of the interview data?
6. Can a model of teacher persistence be developed from this grounded theory which recognises key variables or groups of variables contributing to teacher persistence?
7. What implications might this model of teacher persistence have for teacher selection, teacher training, and teachers' personal and professional development?

The Literature

An understanding of what has gone before and how it might relate to the central phenomenon under investigation is important in any research project. Figure 1 provides an overview of the review of literature carried out in this particular study.

<<Insert Figure 1: Overview of the Review of the Literature somewhere below here>>

As can be seen from the overview, it was determined to review the context of teaching, including how this context had changed, the characteristics of the Australian teaching force, the status of teachers and community expectations and the teaching environment.

The review then turned to the teaching task itself, and looked at the products of this, including the literature on teacher morale, teacher stress, teacher burnout and teacher job satisfaction. The review then considered the literature on both teacher resignation

and retaining teachers, before considering the question of research methodology and the relationship between the study and previously completed work.

What emerged from this review was that the context of teaching had indeed been a turbulent one since the 1960s, with change increasing in the late 1980s in the wake of international developments, both socio-economic and educational. Demands on schools and teachers had seemingly increased, with society having higher expectations for teachers while at the same time the status of teachers had declined. The curriculum had become increasingly overcrowded as schools had various subjects and "perspectives" "bolted on" in order to solve or alleviate some of the economic and social problems of society while at the same time there was pressure for schools and an aging teaching force to better teach the "basics", be educational entrepreneurs and be more accountable.

The literature on morale, stress and burnout was far from conclusive, with varying opinions as to the sources and best methods to manipulate each and with various 10 or 20 point palliative checklists to reduce stress or to increase morale provided by some researchers (see Andrew, et. al., 1985; Dunham, 1984) being indicative of the problems inherent in coming to grips with this general area. Research on teacher satisfaction and dissatisfaction was however, illuminating, with the finding by Herzberg et. al. (1959) that there were two sets of factors largely responsible for each being supported by others such as Sergiovanni (1967), Holdaway (1978) and Kaufman (1984). It appeared from this work that teacher satisfaction was largely the result of personal achievement, the achievement of one's students, and recognition by others, while teacher dissatisfaction appeared to be more the result of administrative factors, criticism and how the teacher was treated by superiors.

As mentioned previously, the literature on teacher resignation was also far from conclusive, with a concentration in official reports on teacher demand and supply or a simplistic attempt to link resignation with salary in teachers' union publications.

The literature on retaining teachers was also inconclusive, with debate in the literature over the efficacy of such measures as promotion on merit, merit pay, career ladders, job enrichment, and the like.

As a result of the review of the literature and the uncertainty surrounding the key aspects of it, literally hundreds of factors potentially influencing the central phenomenon of teacher resignation were identified. Because of this uncertainty and the general lack of a personal perspective, it was thus determined to utilise structured personal interviews with recently resigned teachers in an inductive, qualitative approach using grounded theory procedures advocated by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and developed by Strauss and Corbin (1990), to gain greater understanding of teacher resignation.

Methodology of the Study

The rationale behind the adoption of the methodology employed in the study has been outlined above. The total cohort for the study was all teachers who resigned from the New Wales Department of School Education between the first day of school in 1991 and the beginning of the 1992 school year. On previous experience this would normally represent some 5 per cent or more of 47,000 teachers or at least 2,350 individuals. However, as Garcia (1992: 14) has reported, the N.S.W. Minister for Education released figures in March 1992 which showed that the resignation rate for teachers from Government schools between the beginning of the 1991 school year and

the beginning of the 1992 school year fell to 3.2 per cent, or "just over 1,440 teachers", the lowest rate since "the mid-1980s" and "probably due in part to the recession".

Both primary and secondary teachers were included in the study, although gaining access to the cohort did pose some problems, as will be explained below.

Because of privacy considerations, amongst other factors, it was not possible for the Department of School Education to provide the researcher with access to Departmental records of resignation. Conversations with personnel involved in the "human resources" area of the Department revealed that responsibility for handling teacher resignation had been largely devolved to the ten educational regions and that centralised records, except those of a broad statistical nature, were not kept and would not have been available in any case.

The New South Wales Teachers Federation was also approached for assistance in locating resigned teachers, but was also unable, because of policy on members' privacy, to provide the researcher with contact details of resigned teachers. How then were the resigned teachers interviewed in the study reached?

A letter to the editor was published in "Education", the official journal of the N.S.W. Teachers Federation, in the latter half of 1991 and this was followed by a brief article in the same journal in December 1991. These approaches yielded six of the seven respondents who took part in the pilot study.

In addition, a letter requesting assistance was written to the principals of one in five secondary schools and one in twenty primary and central schools in the state in November 1991 This measure of contacting schools directly yielded only one usable reply, possibly due to the fact that the end of the school year is a particularly busy time for schools and the request for assistance from the researcher was undoubtedly of low importance to principals.

Later, following the pilot study, an advertisement was placed in the first two editions of "Newsmonth", the official journal of the Independent Teachers Association, in Term 1 1992. Letters to the editors of the major newspapers the "Sydney Morning Herald", the "Sunday Telegraph" and the "Sun-Herald" were also written seeking assistance, the latter two not being published. However, the most successful approach was placing an advertisement in the high circulation "Sun-Herald" on March 8th 1992, despite the cost of $670, as it yielded in excess of 35 respondents.

Eventually, seven resigned or resigning teachers were contacted and were interviewed as a pilot study in late 1991. This study confirmed the appropriateness of the interview schedule, the use of the telephone interview, and the analysis of the data using grounded theory techniques as described by Strauss and Corbin (1990) and provided a large number of concepts or phenomena, a series of categories, the core category, the relationship between the categories and a tentative grounded theory.

An additional 50 teachers were interviewed from early February to late April 1992 following the completion of the pilot study. Because of satisfaction with the conduct, methodology and results of the pilot study, there was little change to the methodology employed when the additional 50 teachers were interviewed following the pilot study analysis, giving a total of 57 completed interviews which provided the data for the study. This number of interviews, while fewer than the number of respondents typically utilised in more quantitative studies, did represent almost 4 per cent of the number of resigned teachers for the period under study and produced in excess of 65,000 words of transcript.

Obviously with such an approach to the contact of members of the cohort, the study can make no assumptions about the randomness of such a sample gathered, although as will be seen later, there did appear to be a representative range of respondents on the criteria of gender, age, qualifications, experience, position held and educational regions taught in.

Gay (1987: 201) has raised the problem of non-response in such a situation and the consequent problem of "generalisability" since the researcher does not know if the respondents represent the total population: "The subjects who responded may be different in some systematic way from non-respondents ... they may be better educated, feel more strongly about the issue (positively or negatively), or be more successful". As mentioned previously, it is because of these reasons and others pertaining to its theoretical context that this study makes no claims to universality nor to objectivity in the strictly scientific positivist sense. However, what the study has provided is a series of 57 interesting and intensely personal case histories which have added depth and complexity to previously undertaken research, and have in many instances either tended to confirm or cast doubt on previous findings of the literature and what passes for conventional wisdom, while at the same time offering valuable new insights into both teacher resignation and teacher persistence.

Because resignation is undoubtedly difficult for many people, sensitivity was required in dealing with the subjects and as is the case with this type of research, the anonymity of all subjects was assured, although the bulk of the interview subjects had few qualms about being quoted or identified and spoke openly and freely with the researcher.

Once the study had been publicised in the ways mentioned above and the subjects had contacted the researcher, telephone interviews were carried out with the former teachers. This method was chosen in order to reach the largest number of subjects given the geographical spread of the ten educational regions across the state.

In the pilot study and the study proper, the interviewees were in a number of cases given access to and asked to comment upon the accuracy of the interview transcripts. Frequently, whole or part answers to questions were also read back to the subjects during the course of the interview. Two subjects were given the entire transcript to check for accuracy.

In addition, one of the seven pilot interviews and two of the remaining interviews were conducted in a face-to-face fashion and this tended to confirm certain advantages that the telephone interview can enjoy over the more traditional face-to-face format.

During the interviews the subjects were asked two sets of questions. The first were closed questions related to such variables as age, gender, teacher training and qualifications, experience and length of service, position held, present employment status, and salary. These questions yielded exploratory variables which were related to the different reasons and factors found to be contributing to teacher satisfaction and dissatisfaction and resulting in resignation and persistence. Appendix 1 Part A contains a list of such questions which were utilised in the pilot study. It had been intended to modify these following the pilot study, but ultimately this was not required.

More importantly, teachers were asked to "tell their story" through the use of open-ended questions deliberately designed to encourage reflexivity in that the questions asked the resigned teachers to describe why they became a teacher, their positive and negative experiences during their pre-service training and teaching career, the

circumstances leading to their resignation and how they felt about resigning (Appendix 1, Part B). They were asked to reflect upon and trace how and why they gradually -- or suddenly as the case might be -- became disillusioned or dissatisfied with their occupation and/or their employer.

Teachers were also asked to reflect on what gave them greatest satisfaction in their teaching career and what would be required to induce them to work once more for the Department of School Education in an attempt to throw some light on factors or variables that might contribute to teacher persistence.

There was a deliberate intention in the construction of the interview schedule to avoid leading questions or having too narrow a focus on the topics canvassed, hence for example, there were no questions asked directly about stress, or about relationships with others, despite the fact that the literature had suggested that these factors were likely to be important. The open-ended questions were devised to allow these issues to emerge, if in fact they were of significance. It was hoped that the responses would shed light on the forces, tensions and structures that precipitated resignation, without actually asking those interviewed "what made you stressed?" or "why did you resign?".

It had been originally intended to carry out face-to-face interviews with resigned teachers in attempt to provide additional depth to the telephone interviews, but the conduct of the seven pilot interviews, which included one face-to-face interview, and the remaining interviews which included two face-to-face interviews, revealed that in this particular case study, the method and the instrument were effective and that face-to-face interviews would not have added to the data gained through the telephone interviews. There was only one exception to this in the 57 interviews conducted. "Joseph" was an overseas trained teacher and he and the researcher experienced a great deal of difficulty communicating when the interview was being arranged via telephone. Fortunately, Joseph lived close to the researcher's workplace and a personal interview was undertaken.

Gathering background data relating to teacher characteristics at the start of the interviews tended to "break the ice" in that the questions were easy for the respondents to answer, while providing the interviewer with a feel for the background and experience of the interviewees.

Data gathered during the open-ended questioning was entered directly onto the interview schedule and written up at the earliest convenience with direct quotations noted. Sometimes transcription was directly following the interview while in other cases it took place the following morning. The methodology relied heavily upon the subjects telling their own story with the key themes or variables to be employed in the content analysis hopefully emerging from this in an "a posteriori" fashion in the manner of grounded theory advocated by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss and Corbin (1990).

Interviews took place both from the researcher's office at the University of Western Sydney, Nepean or from the researcher's home. The latter from found to be more suitable because of quiet and lack of interruption, essential when conducting telephone interviews, and it was decided in the study proper to utilise evening interviews from the researcher's home wherever possible. In most cases then, the interviews took place in the evening, usually from 8-00 pm, after children of the interview subjects had been put to bed or other commitments had been completed. This timing and setting in the familiar surroundings of the subject's home seemed advantageous to concentration and reflection, and in some cases it was obvious that the interview had almost a cathartic

effect. Several subjects even stated that they had not previously spoken about some aspects of their resignation, and that some of the questions had helped them to clarify their feelings. One subject thanked the researcher for taking the time to listen and said that the experience had been "like going to confession". A number of the subjects even complimented the researcher on being "brave" in conducting the study, an unanticipated response.

Printed copies of the interview schedule (Appendix 1) were used by the researcher with notes written directly upon this. It was found that it was possible to make sufficient notes to capture the interviewees' responses while concentrating upon what was being said, although at times, when transcription was difficult or when meaning was unclear, it was necessary to restate what had been recorded and to clarify or correct this as necessary.

It was also found useful in the early interviews to read back to the subjects the notes written by the researcher to determine the veracity of recorded responses. Reaction to this measure was encouraging. In addition, one of the interview subjects "Bob", was interviewed in a face-to-face fashion and was later given a copy of the transcribed interview. "Bob", experienced in educational research, was satisfied that the interviewer had correctly interpreted and captured his thoughts, feelings and experiences. He commented later after reading the transcript that "I sound a bit negative, but that is what I said ... I guess I had not thought deeply about the whole thing before".

As suggested by the literature, it was necessary to use such comments as "tell me more about that" or encouraging prompts such as "mm", "right", and so forth, to keep the interviewee "on track" and to assure he or she that they were still being listened to. As mentioned previously, it was necessary to clarify certain points on occasion but as the literature had suggested, the interviewer avoided entering into debate and simply accepted the responses of the subjects at face value. The researcher's recent and extensive experience with face-to-face interviewing in three states in two allied major research projects gave confidence to the conduct of the telephone interviews and in fact confirmed some advantages of this approach over face-to-face interviewing.

As mentioned previously, the data contained within the interview transcripts was analysed using grounded theory techniques as detailed by Strauss and Corbin (1990). Space precludes a detailed description of these processes but the techniques advocated by the authors were adhered to with encouraging results. Briefly, the mode of qualitative analysis termed grounded theory was first presented by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and developed in a number of subsequent publications culminating in the most recent publication by Strauss and Corbin (1990), who maintained that:

> The books collectively offer one approach to doing quantitative analysis and their purpose is very specific: that of building theory. The philosophic beliefs and the scientific tradition that underlie the books give rise to their mission of building theory through qualitative research. Formulating theoretical interpretations of data grounded in reality provides a powerful means both for understanding the 'world out there' and for developing action strategies that will allow for some measure of control over it.

Qualitative research techniques were chosen as being most suitable for this present study because the exploration of personal experiences and feelings more naturally leads to a qualitative methodology. Qualitative methods can be used where the aim is to uncover and understand fresh slants or novel approaches and insights to what is a known but yet not fully understood phenomenon such as teacher resignation (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 19). The review of the literature pointed towards the suitability of

qualitative techniques to explore what appeared to be a gap in the literature, that being personal perspectives of teacher resignation. This review and the thrust it suggested enabled the development of an interview schedule designed to explore personal feelings and experiences, and the transcripts of these interviews, both at the pilot study stage and later, were made with minimal reduction and with no attempt at analysis.

What then is grounded theory and what is its purpose? Strauss and Corbin (1990: 23-24) state that:

> A **grounded theory** is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to the phenomenon ... one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that study is allowed to emerge ... The purpose of grounded theory method is ... to build theory that is faithful to and illuminates the area under study. Researchers working in this tradition also hope that their theories will ultimately be related to others within their respective disciplines in a cumulative fashion, and that the theory's implications will have useful application.

Like other methods, grounded theory begins with a research problem. However, there is, according to Strauss and Corbin (1990: 29), a fundamental difference between mere description of a phenomenon or problem, and theory. That difference is the use of concepts in the latter. Concepts involve the grouping of similar data and giving these groups conceptual labels. To achieve this, interpretation of the data is required. The concepts developed in this fashion can then be related by means of statements of relationships. However in description, data is simply organised into themes with little or no interpretation and with no attempt to relate the themes to form a conceptual scheme, something which does occur in theory development, according to the authors.

Following the transcription of data, the next task of the grounded theory researcher is that of coding. In grounded theory, three related types of coding of increasing sophistication are undertaken: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The nature and importance of each type of coding follows, but to begin with, an explanation of coding is provided by Strauss and Corbin (1990: 58):

> Coding represents the operations by which the data are broken down, conceptualised, and put back together in new ways. It is the central process by which theories are built from data.

The first level of coding, "open coding", is described by Strauss and Corbin (1990: 62) as:

> the part of analysis that pertains specifically to the naming and categorising of phenomena through close examination of data ... During open coding the data are broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, compared for similarities and differences, and questions are asked about the phenomena as reflected in the data. Through this process, one's own and others' assumptions about phenomena are questioned or explored, leading to new discoveries.

In open coding, as opposed to mere description of phenomena, phenomena are labelled and in this way the transcripts are used to form concepts. By grouping concepts or labels that seem related to the same phenomena, categories are discovered. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990: 65), categories are more abstract than concepts and have "conceptual power because they are able to pull together around them other groups of concepts or subcategories".

Thus, to sum up, in open coding the transcripts are examined and questions asked about the data. Comparisons are made as the researcher searches for similarities and differences. The researcher then attempts to group and label similar events and incidents to form categories, which have particular properties and/or dimensions.

"Axial coding", the next step, is "A set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 96). This is achieved by means of the "paradigm model" in which (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 99):

> we link subcategories to a category in a set of relationships denoting causal conditions, phenomenon, intervening conditions, action/interaction strategies, and consequences. Highly simplified, the model looks like this:
>
> (A) CAUSAL CONDITIONS --> (B) PHENOMENON -->
> (C) CONTEXT --> (D) INTERVENING STRATEGIES -->
> (E) ACTION/INTERACTION STRATEGIES -->
> (F) CONSEQUENCES.

Thus, according to Strauss and Corbin (1990: 114-115):

> Axial coding is the process of relating subcategories to a category ... we develop each category (phenomenon) in terms of the causal conditions that give rise to it, the specific dimensional location of this phenomenon [e.g. high-low, small-great] in terms of its properties, the context, the action/interaction strategies used to handle, manage, respond to this phenomenon in light of that context, and the consequences of any action/interaction that is taken.

Following axial coding which relates the subcategories, an important process termed "selective coding" takes place in which the "core category" is selected. Strauss and Corbin define selective coding as "the process of selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 116).

Selective coding is considered the final step between creating a list of concepts which occurred in open coding and producing a theory. This brief examination of grounded theory does not by any means fully explain the process in any other than the simplest fashion and those interested in exploring the methodology further are referred to the work of Glaser and Strauss and Strauss and Corbin outlined above. Figure 2 below provides an overview of the process, although not all the processes shown in the overview have been explained above.

<<Insert Figure 2 here>>

The Interview Subjects

Background information gleaned from Part A of the interview schedule for the 50 subjects interviewed in the study proper is outlined below. This is summarised in Table 1 which follows.

The predominance of women teachers (33) in the sample of teachers interviewed in the study proper (50) was consistent with the observed feminisation of the Australian teaching force, particularly in the pre-secondary years. The current recession probably

exacerbated this situation, if the tendency for males to be the major "breadwinner" and thus be less likely to resign in a time of high unemployment is true.

The fact that the males in the sample were older than the females interviewed is consistent with other findings of research into the Australian teaching force, as was the finding of the overall average age of the sample (41 years) which was close to recent estimations of the age of Australian teachers (approximately 42 years on average, see Beazley, 1992).

Consistent with both the ages of males and female teachers and the tendency for female teachers to experience more broken patterns of service, the males interviewed tended to be more experienced (20.6 years) compared to the average experience of the female teachers interviewed (13.2 years).

Due to their more recent training, females tended to have higher initial teacher qualifications than the males interviewed, while secondary teachers generally had higher initial qualifications in turn than primary teachers, findings again consistent with the literature.

Just under half those interviewed in the study proper (24) had formally up-graded their teaching qualifications.

In part due to their age, longer service and the previously operating promotion system which included an element of seniority, males tended to be better represented in promotions positions, with five of the 14 male teachers still in schools at the time of their resignation being "executive teachers", while only two of 26 female teachers still in schools occupied such a position.

In line with the findings of previous research, the bulk of those interviewed (41 of 50), received their initial permanent teaching appointment to one of the perceived "unfavoured" educational Regions in N.S.W., these being Western Region, North West Region, Riverina Region, Metropolitan East Region, Metropolitan South West Region, and Metropolitan West Region. All five of the overseas trained teachers interviewed were posted to either Metropolitan South West or Metropolitan West regions. It should be pointed out that the tendency on the part of some to think of regions as being "unfavourable" or "favourable" is questionable, as the regions themselves are hardly homogeneous, Metropolitan West Region for example, containing rural areas such as Richmond and Windsor and desirable locations such as the Blue Mountains and the Hills District, as well as the more "well known" areas which for some, unfortunately, typify the whole region.

Of the 45 teachers still in schools at the time of their resignation, 31 were teaching in one of the "unfavoured" regions mentioned above, including 17 teachers in Metropolitan West Region.

Time spent in last school or position varied considerably, ranging from five weeks to 29 years, although because they tended to resign earlier than males, female teachers dominated in the lower categories of time spent at last appointment prior to resignation.

The majority of those interviewed (37 of 50) had no real experience of employment other than teaching, and of those who did have experience in other occupations, the bulk had turned to teaching because of career disappointments in other fields or because other work was found to be unappealing.

After leaving the Department of School Education, the majority (28) were still involved in education in some way, and in fact a number had returned to teaching with the Department in some altered capacity such as voluntary demotion, casual teaching, or re-training in another aspect of teaching.

Of those with no employment following leaving the Department, females dominated with seven women either looking after their family (four) and/or being unemployed (three of four interviewed).

As suggested by prior research, males ($41,941) tended to earn higher annual incomes than females ($35,363), a function both of their experience and their greater propensity to occupy promotions positions.

Following resignation, both males and females experienced a drop in average income (to $35,411 and $25,000 respectively). Even when the average incomes for those not presently in employment was discounted, incomes generally fell following resignation, with only 17 individuals (six male and 11 female) earning more in their new occupations, and with only nine of these saying that salary was a "minor" factor (four) or "one" of the factors (five) in their leaving the Department.

While salary was not found to be a significant factor in the majority of cases, this is not to imply that teachers' salaries are not of importance. Obviously, if teachers' salaries are relatively low, there will be real difficulties associated with attracting talented potential teachers in the first place. It should also be remembered that this particular study coincided with a severe recession, and if circumstances had been different, salary might well have emerged as a more powerful influence on teacher resignation and persistence.

Turning to more general aspects of the personal backgrounds of those interviewed in the study, positive role models experienced during their own education and the type and nature of school attended tended to influence the decision of those interviewed to become a teacher, although not all of those interviewed had fond memories of their own education.

Family influence on becoming a teacher varied, although female teachers, particularly those who entered pre-service training prior to the 1980s, spoke of being pressured by family members to take up teaching as it was considered a "good" occupation for a woman. Where the family members of both male and female teachers interviewed were "less educated" themselves, there appeared to be a degree of family pride in the upward social and economic mobility that a teaching career promised for their offspring. On the other hand, several of those interviewed who came from "higher class" families spoke of family pressure to take up a higher status occupation such as law rather than "waste"" their high H.S.C. marks on teaching.

Female teachers, particularly the older teachers mentioned above, spoke of having only the three traditional options open to females of teaching, nursing and secretarial work. Both males and female teachers from rural areas spoke of teaching being a means of both obtaining a qualification and of leaving home due to a lack of other local employment opportunities.

Younger teachers, and particularly younger females, spoke of greater options being available to them than was the case with their older colleagues, although for a large number of those interviewed, teaching was a second or later option after they missed out on the career of their choice.

Teachers' scholarships were found to be an important influence on many of those interviewed becoming a teacher, as a scholarship was the only way that they and their families could afford tertiary study.

Initial personal orientation to teaching varied, with around a third of those interviewed saying that they had "always" wanted to be a teacher, while for the remainder, the decision to take up teaching was more calculative due to a lack of other options or in a small number of cases, the supposed short hours and long holidays that a teaching career promised, although it was seen that many of the latter "calculative" group became dedicated teachers once they became involved in education, while a small number of the former "always wanted to be a teacher" group found teaching to be not what they had expected.

<<Insert Table 1 here>>

Other Findings of the Study

Grounded theory techniques had revealed the existence of categories and sub-categories which were modified as a result of the analysis of the remaining interview data. These are shown in Table 2 below.

<< Insert Table 2>>

As a result of axial and selective coding procedures, the categories were related and the core category of "Attitude to Teaching" was selected. Figure 3 below illustrates the relationships between the core category and the other categories identified and how change in any of the categories can influence the core category and hence might contribute to the resignation decision.

<<Insert Figure 3 here>>

Information concerning the category of "Personal Background" has already been provided above. Using the remaining categories derived from the grounded theory process, the following general findings of the study were gleaned from the analysis of the 50 remaining interviews.

a. Pre-Service Training

Those interviewed in both the pilot study and study proper were generally critical of their pre-service teacher training.

The least highly regarded type of pre-service training was that of the degree followed by a diploma in education, regardless of when this type of training had been encountered, older teachers being equally as critical of this type of training as younger teachers who had experienced the model more recently. All those with this type of training were secondary teachers, and most were highly critical of it. Generally, those interviewed spoke of being stimulated by their degree studies, but of being stifled and treated as a "child" during their end-on diploma, which was largely seen to be irrelevant to the task of teaching in schools.

There was a feeling expressed by some of those interviewed that the lecturers responsible for diploma courses were of lesser calibre than the university lecturers to whom they had been exposed, and being former teachers, the diploma lecturers were

more likely to treat their students as "children". Generally, although it offered the chance to at last visit schools, the end-on diploma model of teacher pre-service training was regarded as being low in intellectual stimulation and practical application.

Generally, the most highly regarded model of teacher pre-service education was the concurrent degree and diploma of education or four year integrated Bachelor of Education degree. These models appeared to offer a more successful marriage of "content" and "method", while offering the opportunity for earlier and longer periods in schools.

The remaining teachers interviewed had experienced a two or three year diploma at a teachers' college or College of Advanced Education and the bulk had become primary teachers. This group was more ambivalent about the quality and appropriateness of their training, but once again the criticism of lack of relevance and practicality of such courses was raised.

Overall, there was a disturbing degree of criticism of their pre-service training from those interviewed in the study, with calls for more "relevance" and "practicality" and less "theory", despite the fact that many of those interviewed claimed to have "enjoyed" their training and to having become more committed to a teaching career as a result of their pre-service experiences.

There was also a strong general feeling that the practicum was where one learned what teaching was really about, although even this could not fully prepare the neophyte for the first experience of full-time teaching.

There was a feeling commonly expressed that society and standards had altered since those interviewed had attended school themselves, and that their pre-service training had not adequately prepared them for the workload they later experienced, and in particular, for the classroom management of their pupils.

b. Employment History

Because of the global nature of this category, the analysis of it tended to be a lengthy one, but a number of commonalities did emerge from this analysis.

Many of the female teachers in particular described how they had experienced broken service, with time away from teaching on leave for family reasons, with resignation being forced upon them when their leave entitlement expired, of waiting for a new appointment, and of being forced to transfer, take leave or resign when their partners were transferred or took up new employment. The result of such breaks in service was that some females interviewed had accrued less seniority and had not moved as far up the incremental pay scales as their male colleagues. For those females desiring promotion, such breaks in service had tended to hinder their career paths, particularly under the previous promotion system in N.S.W. which had an element of seniority.

Both males and female teachers told of unwanted appointments, forced transfers, and the strain that this had caused for themselves and family members. Both males and females experienced multiple resignations in some cases, while others took leave for family reasons or to explore other employment opportunities.

As mentioned previously, six of those interviewed had actually returned to the Department of School Education in some kind of altered capacity following their

resignation, while overall, more than half of those interviewed (28 of 50) were still involved in some aspect of education following their resignation.

Beginning teachers, including some returning to teaching after a break, spoke of problems with classroom discipline, preparation and marking, and with supervisors who, even when friendly, offered little tangible assistance. The one overseas trained teacher with a non-English speaking background experienced severe problems of adjustment after 15 years successful teaching in his home country.

A number of beginning teachers expressed concern that they had not been adequately informed of their employment conditions, including the question of being on probation and being declared "satisfactory", "of concern", or "unsatisfactory", and what these designations implied.

Many of those interviewed spoke of the difficulty they had experienced when placed in unfamiliar socio-economic or cultural contexts, most professing to a stable "middle-class" upbringing and to largely being successes themselves at school.

As will be mentioned later, relationships with superiors was a particular problem for a number of those interviewed, with some of the female teachers citing instances of sexism and even harassment from male superiors.

Disappointment as a result of failure to secure a promotion was seen in several cases to contribute to teacher transfer and in some cases the taking of leave or even resignation. In general, both males and females expressed disappointment with the new "merit" promotion procedures, some female teachers believing it favoured males and some males believing it favoured females. Others were concerned that they were now considered "too old" for promotion. Both males and females expressed concern over the time consuming nature of the new procedures and how some teachers were "selling" themselves while classroom teaching had been devalued in favour of higher profile activities outside the classroom.

Both inexperienced and experienced teachers spoke generally of declining standards of pupil discipline and behaviour and of increased public criticism of teachers and schools over the course of their careers.

A further negative aspect of employment history mentioned by those interviewed was the difficulty in communicating effectively with the Department at Regional and Head Office level and of the tendency on the part of some Departmental officials to treat teachers like "a number" or like "children". More seriously, several of those interviewed spoke of lost files and applications for employment, with the same document being filled out, lost, filled out again, and lost yet again.

For those in Head Office positions, the reduction in Head Office staffing levels in recent times had influenced all of those interviewed to resign, particularly the manner at which the "cuts" were made. The adoption of "Key Learning Areas" in schools was also seen to influence the resignation of several of those interviewed, particularly secondary female Home Science teachers, who saw their subject areas devalued and "wiped out" by the changes being made.

c. Society

As mentioned above, both inexperienced and experienced teachers interviewed noted with concern how the nature of society had changed, with greater social problems

affecting a wider range of society's members and with commensurate pressures upon schools to solve society's problems.

The above situation was exacerbated in some cases by the fact that those interviewed had come from relatively stable backgrounds and were, by their own admission, unprepared for social problems such as incest, violence, broken homes, racism, apathy and hopelessness, and the questioning of authority they encountered in their students and in some cases, the parents of their students.

Clearly, in the eyes of those interviewed, society's demands on teachers and schools had increased, with new curriculum and social "perspectives" having to be incorporated into teaching programs while at the same time schools were expected to increase student performance in the so-called "basics", resulting in an "over-crowded" curriculum.

Not only were schools and teachers expected to solve society's problems while ensuring academic performance increased, but they were also expected to meet the economic and industrial demands of the nation through the production of a trained body of people ready to take their place in the workforce and, in turn, to help build a "clever country".

New indicators and methods of accountability had been introduced for school staff and students to ensure performance and this plus the over-crowded curriculum mentioned above had greatly increased the workload and pressure on teachers and schools, while in some instances detracting from classroom teaching.

At the same time as these pressures were being brought to bear on schools, the esteem in which the public, the private sector and government held teachers appeared to have fallen, with some teachers expressing reluctance to reveal their occupation in public for fear of inviting misinformed criticism about teachers' "easy" conditions.

d. Relationships With Others

Overall, relationships with others were found to contribute both to teacher satisfaction and teacher dissatisfaction. In particular, favourable relationships with fellow teachers was an often cited source of satisfaction, while unfavourable relationships with superiors and the Department of School Education contributed to dissatisfaction for many of those interviewed. Teachers spoke of the dissatisfaction that arose from being treated as a "number" and of the impersonal nature of the Department and the "system". The loss of files and applications for employment mentioned above that some had endured contributed to their negative view of the Department. For many, the final "straw" was the way they were treated at the time of their resignation, with no attempt to find out why they were leaving save for the official resignation form, and no real recognition for the often substantial contribution that those interviewed had made to education and to the Department. Usually, the only recognition received was a simple form letter received some time after resignation with one or two lines of impersonal "thanks" for being a teacher being provided in some cases.

There was a gender difference apparent with this category with a number of female teachers speaking of sexist treatment and attitudes from their male superiors, while male teachers simply termed some of their superiors as incompetent and inefficient, rather than sexist.

For the beginning teacher, the relationship with the supervisor was seen as very important, although more experienced teachers appeared more confident and

autonomous within their particular roles and while they might complain about their supervisor, appeared to take a professional attitude towards the carrying out of their responsibilities.

The relationship with students was seen to be at the centre of the teaching role, with a good relationship being a powerful source of teacher satisfaction while a poor relationship was seen as quite destructive to teaching, learning and teacher self-esteem.

Relationships with parents and the community tended to be underdeveloped, with teachers and schools keeping both groups at a distance, although relationships with parents, where favourable, were seen as a powerful source of teacher satisfaction. However, communication between teachers and parents and community members appeared to be left to occasions when something negative had occurred.

As for the immediate family members of those interviewed, it was found in a number of cases that the pressures of teaching had contributed to the break up of several relationships although the exact contribution could not be determined. Female teachers spoke in a number of cases of the disruption to their careers that the transfer of their partners had caused, with transfers, leave taking and even resignation resulting, while childbirth and looking after children also caused career disruption. Females were also more likely to make the decision to put their own family first when the strains of teaching were found to be impacting negatively upon family members and relationships. A common sentiment for these women was that a major contribution had been made by them to other people's children and that now they were going to make their own family members their priority. While a woman could cope with the teaching role when single or without children, this became much more difficult when there were also family members to consider.

Where the other partner was not a teacher, it was common for there to exist a degree of misunderstanding of the pressures and responsibilities of teaching, while a number of female teachers also spoke of difficulties caused where their partner was less educated than themselves.

Finally, a number of those interviewed, both female and male, had made the decision in conjunction with their partner to have their own children educated in private schools, a decision that caused some degree of anguish given their own ideals about public education.

e. Departmental/School Policies and Procedures

Difficulties related to unwanted postings, forced transfers, and limitations of leave have already been detailed above, as was the fact that these often impacted to a greater extent upon female teachers.

Changes to curriculum have also been noted, as have been changes to school administration, particularly those that had occurred since 1988. Of particular concern to those interviewed, especially those formerly in executive positions, was the increasing expectation that schools should be run as a business, with many of the financial responsibilities formerly borne by the regions and Head Office of the Department now being devolved to schools, with commensurate deleterious effects upon educational outcomes. There was a feeling that in some cases, teachers were taking on extra responsibilities to make themselves "look good" for promotion and that this was at the expense of their students. Concerns were also expressed about equity issues, with some schools having capable and financially secure communities behind

them to assist in fund raising and school management, while other schools lacked this economic and general support base.

Also of concern were changes that had occurred to staffing regulations, with some schools losing teachers and composite classes having to be formed. A number of those interviewed also complained of losing non-teaching staff from schools.

A view expressed on a number of occasions was that such changes frequently lacked philosophical or pedagogic foundation and were being imposed on schools as a result of the politicisation of education. In particular, the former Minister for Education Dr Metherell was still the focus of some antipathy, both for the changes he introduced and the way that he had appeared to denigrate teachers and teachers' work. Although the policies and procedures he introduced were still in place, there was not the same degree of antagonism towards the present Minister, Mrs Chadwick, who was not in fact mentioned by name by a single person interviewed.

Grave doubts were expressed by the introduction of the new promotion procedures, with concern both about the efficacy of the procedures and of the effects that its introduction had made on schools. Both male and female teachers expressed the view that they or their gender had been discriminated against through the introduction of merit promotion procedures. The importance of the interview for promotion and of having the "right C.V." was also cause for concern. There was a feeling, particularly from a number of the women interviewed, that the new promotions procedures had resulted in a down-grading of the status of classroom teaching and that these procedures were being used to increase teachers' workloads in schools.

f. The Teaching Role

Aspects of this category appeared in virtually all the categories identified as a result of the grounded theory process. Three sub-categories were found to contribute to the teaching role, these being classroom teaching, administration and extracurricular activities.

Generally, less experienced teachers were more concerned with classroom teaching, and typically found preparation and marking onerous, with primary teachers finding programming particularly difficult while secondary teachers found the time needed to complete marking of students' work a problem. Both primary and secondary teachers found the maintenance of pupil discipline problematic.

More experienced teachers, particularly those in executive positions, found the amount of administrative and extracurricular work required to make a school function a source of dissatisfaction. There was a commonly expressed view that the administrative requirements of teachers and schools had increased with the devolution of certain responsibilities to schools.

A further aspect of the teaching role which caused concern was the increased social responsibility that schools appear to have acquired in recent times.

Overall, regardless of experience, there was a commonly held view that teaching had become more difficult as a result of changes both to society and to the administration of education, with very experienced teachers recounting how teaching had personally become more difficult despite their accumulated experience and expertise.

g. Teacher Satisfaction

There was a very high degree of commonality as to the sources of satisfaction for those interviewed. Clearly, satisfaction came mainly from personal achievement, the achievement of one's students, and recognition for one's achievements and efforts. The process of learning, which some described as a "light going on", was seen as a powerful motivating experience for those interviewed.

Less experienced teachers tended to gain satisfaction from mere survival and the fairly ordinary achievements of having order in the classroom or successfully organising an activity, while for more experienced teachers, satisfaction came from higher order sources such as whole school responsibilities and leading a department or occupying a promotion position, and thus, less experienced teachers could be said to be classroom centred, while more experienced teachers had a wider perspective and were more school centred, although the classroom remained a potent source of satisfaction for all groups.

Self-growth and the mastery of skills and subject content were also sources of satisfaction, as were positive relationships with students, peers, superiors and parents.

Overall, teacher satisfaction for those interviewed was found to be tied up closely in what could be termed the human or affective domain and centred on achievement, both of pupils and themselves, and recognition by others of that achievement.

h. Teacher Dissatisfaction

Teacher dissatisfaction was found to be the result of two sets of factors, the first being context specific and relating to recent changes in policies and procedures in New South Wales Education, while the second set of factors were similar to those commonly reported in the literature.

As mentioned above, the degree of antipathy expressed towards the former Minister for Education Dr Metherell was somewhat surprising, and there was strongly held dissatisfaction with both the scope and pace of educational change in N.S.W., particularly when those responsible for such changes had implied that schools and teachers were not performing satisfactorily. The lack of agreement with and input to change was clearly a major source of the context specific factors influencing teacher dissatisfaction emerging from the analysis of the interviews. Interestingly, there was also common agreement that many of the changes were necessary and had the potential to improve education, but the chief reason for dissatisfaction was the lack of input to the change and the pressures caused by its implementation, often with insufficient time, resources or information being provided.

Turning to the more general sources of dissatisfaction, these tended to be mainly school and system centred and related more to administrative and extraneous factors than those directly associated with classroom teaching. Relationships with superiors and Department of School Education officials were common sources of dissatisfaction for those interviewed, as were the standing or status of teachers in society and general criticism of teachers and education.

An interesting comment made by a number of those interviewed was that teachers were expected to give out more and more positive reinforcement to their pupils and that the use of rewards had gone "too far", while at the same time, teachers were receiving less and less reinforcement and recognition themselves.

Thus, broadly speaking, the sources of dissatisfaction for those interviewed were found to be more structural or administrative, unlike the sources of satisfaction which were found to be human or affective in origin. It should be noted that salary was neither a significant contributing factor to teacher satisfaction nor dissatisfaction, and was thus a fairly neutral factor in terms of teacher motivation.

i. Teacher Stress

As suggested by the literature, stress was found to be a part and parcel of the life and work of the teachers interviewed in the study. All those interviewed described their sources of stress and how these often lay in the areas of dissatisfaction outlined above. Generally, those interviewed had experienced mounting levels of mental stress which in a number of cases had resulted in physical illness. Several of those interviewed described particularly stressful periods of their career which in their opinion had resulted in burnout.

The stress experienced by those interviewed in some cases spilled over to family members and resulted or at least contributed to marriage breakdown.

As was found with a number of the other categories employed, the sources of stress tended to vary with experience and in some cases gender. Less experienced teachers were more stressed by their workload which was often accomplished by working late at night and at weekends and by their inability to discipline their classes. More experienced teachers were more likely to cite administrative sources of stress, while for those in Head Office positions the restructuring and politicisation of education since the late 1980s was a major source of dissatisfaction. Generally, poor relations with superiors was a common source of stress, while for women, there were perceived elements of sexism and discrimination contributing to these relationships, particularly those with male superiors.

Efforts to alleviate stress were found to be chiefly palliative, with the taking of leave being common, especially for females, while in some cases medication had been prescribed. For some, the only solution to the stress they experienced was resignation.

j. The Resignation Decision

Once again there was a strong degree of commonality in regards to the actual decision to resign, with a pattern of gradual increasing teacher dissatisfaction with commensurate stress and in a small number of cases, physical debilitation, punctuated by several critical incidents, culminating in a final episode which resulted in the taking of leave or resignation. For some female teachers in particular, the resignation decision was forced on them when their leave entitlements expired, leaving only the options of returning to full-time teaching or resigning.

While this pattern of increasing dissatisfaction and increasing stress was observed, it was noted that the sources of satisfaction for those interviewed stayed fairly constant, but with the balance swinging away from satisfaction to dissatisfaction.

For less experienced teachers, the pattern described above tended to be compressed into a shorter time frame with more extreme stress reactions and critical incidents which those interviewed did not have the capacity to deal with. In some cases, inexperienced

teachers were even advised to resign by their more experienced colleagues before they became too tied to the Department.

While the above situation might well be typical of those experienced by teachers at other times and in other systems, it was obvious that context specific forces were at work, such as the changes made to educational management policies and procedures in N.S.W. and the criticism from various parties such as the media and consultants to the Department. As detailed elsewhere, these changes coupled with increasing social problems and criticism of teachers and schools all made for a turbulent, uncertain educational environment in the N.S.W. Department of School Education from the mid-1980s.

However, what teachers might have failed to recognise was that these changes and their context were also being experienced by other educational systems elsewhere in Australia and overseas, part of the world wide "education reform movement" detailed earlier. What may have been unique, however, was the scope and pace of change and the perception held by some teachers that the changes were something being done to "them" only by an unappreciative and critical Government and society.

The feelings of those interviewed at the time of resignation were typically a mixture of elation, uncertainty, and for some, a feeling that colleagues and students were being let down. However, all were convinced that the correct course of action had been taken, and that the act of resignation would benefit both them and their families. A number of those interviewed used emotive imagery, describing themselves as "hitting their head against a brick wall" or "drowning" prior to resignation, but experiencing a "cloud" or "weight" lifting from them with resignation, and with "doors" closing and opening.

Clearly, the resignation decision, particularly for more experienced teachers, was a very significant one preceded and accompanied by a deal of anguish and soul searching, but one which was largely theirs alone, even when family members had been consulted.

It was noted in the examination of this category how more senior school and Departmental personnel were rarely involved in the decision to resign. Some of those interviewed even maintained that they had been forced by superiors or Departmental officials to resign or to take some kind of early retirement or redundancy package.

k. Post Resignation Condition

Following resignation, those interviewed had generally experienced a drop in stress and the mixed feelings mentioned above had in most cases given way to a belief that the correct decision had been made. In a number of cases, those interviewed had overcome physical stress reactions even where their new job involved teaching or some aspect of education. It seemed that the resignation decision had resulted in an easing of accumulated pressure and tension, although some of those interviewed admitted to a degree of lingering frustration and regret at what they had been through.

It was also apparent that some of those interviewed, particularly those no longer working or in menial occupations, had experienced a loss of status and thus self-esteem because they were no longer a teacher. Clearly, "being" a teacher was seen as a bitter sweet existence.

Resignation and leaving the Department had also enabled some of those interviewed to gain a wider perspective on education and society. For those teaching in another context, there was a realisation in some cases that it was not teaching that had led to

their frustration and dissatisfaction, but the particular influence of the Department of School Education. A number of those interviewed described how after a period of teaching in private schools, they were almost "back to their best" and were enjoying teaching once more, while a number of other former teachers working in non-educational backgrounds were experiencing job satisfaction and a sense of personal accomplishment for the first time in years.

More than half of those interviewed said that they would not return to the Department of School Education unless some of the recent changes to policies and procedures were rescinded or modified. There was a general feeling that the changes that had been made since the late 1980s had not resulted in improved educational conditions or outcomes in schools, and that such change was likely to continue and even increase in pace and scope.

Finally, it was felt by those interviewed, particularly the more experienced teachers, that they had made a substantial contribution to education in N.S.W. and that this contribution had not been sufficiently recognised.

1. Attitude to Teaching

The analysis of the interview data from the study proper using grounded theory procedures resulted in the confirmation of the existence of the core category of "Attitude to Teaching". Because of its central position in the schema, elements of the core category were found in all the related categories, the key finding of the pilot study being confirmed that a change in any of the other categories or sub-categories would result in a degree of change in the attitude to teaching held by the individual, and if the change was sufficient, it was possible for the resignation decision to be made, and further, following resignation, it was possible for the attitude to teaching held by the individual to change as the individual reflected upon and re-assessed the results of his or her career with the Department of School Education.

Towards a Model of Teacher Persistence

The grounded theory analysis of the pilot study and the study proper had led to the development of the following grounded theory and its corollary. The study has yet to be completed, and final tasks include utilising both the grounded theory and the data gained from the interviews and the literature to propose a model of teacher persistence. In addition, it is proposed to develop from both this model and the other findings of the study a series of recommendations, both specific in regards to the N.S.W. Department of School Education and more general in nature, and to the latter end, the implications of the study remain to be developed.

The following theory concerning teacher resignation is proposed as a result of the conduct of the study:

> A teacher's resignation decision is a r[illegible]t of a critical point in that teacher's "Attitude to Teaching" being rea[illegible]d.
>
> This "Attitude to Teaching" is a result of the interaction of the following broad factors:
>
> > The "Personal Background" of the individual
> > The "Pre-Service Training" undertaken

The overall "Employment History" of the teacher
The nature and demands of "Society"
The "Departmental/School Policies and Procedures" in place
The teacher's "Relationship With Others"
The teacher's "Teaching Role"
The "Teacher Satisfaction" gained by the individual
The "Teacher Dissatisfaction" also felt by the individual
The "Stress" experienced by the teacher

The "Attitude to Teaching" held by a teacher is thus subject to forces of change of both a human and structural nature which might impact upon any of the above mentioned factors.

Failure of a teacher to have input to change, to be committed to that change, to be involved in its implementation and to be assisted in both a personal and material sense in making such change can result in a critical point in the teacher's "Attitude to Teaching" being reached if either the pace of change or its dimensions are sufficient enough, at which time the "Resignation Decision" is made.

Following the "resignation Decision", the individual's "Attitude to Teaching" can undergo further change.

If the above theory holds true in the case of resignation, then the following corollary concerning teacher retention or persistence is proposed:

If teachers are to be retained, then the pace and scope of change needs to be carefully considered by those in positions of authority. Teachers need to understand the reasons for change, to have input to change, to be committed to change, and to be assisted in its implementation.

Where change is outside the influence of Governments, Departments of Education or schools, then its impact on schools needs to be carefully considered and modified or limited if possible.

Where change is of a personal or human nature, teachers need to be assisted to understand the nature of change and to limit its harmful effects where possible through support by educational employers and others.

If teachers are to be retained, there needs to be careful monitoring of teachers' "Attitude to Teaching" and of any reasons for changes in this.

Efforts also need to be made to reduce teachers' dissatisfaction and increase their satisfaction through attention to the factors responsible for each.

In the case of this particular study, the category of "Departmental/School Policies and Procedures" appeared to have a great deal of influence upon the other categories, including the central category of "Attitude to Teaching". However, changes in the other categories also played their part in ultimately influencing the "Resignation Decision". It would be overly simplistic to attribute the resignation of those interviewed to this one factor alone, as resignation has occurred in the past in times of relative stability in so far as educational change is occurred, and thus, for any individual, the total range of

categories and factors illustrated in Table 2 and Figure 3 need to be considered, and addressed, if teachers are to be retained.

It should not be implied from the above that the study proposes a panacea to eliminate teacher resignation. What is does propose is that the total issue of change, both human and structural, is an important one that needs to be addressed, but that teacher resignation remains a complex issue and that the "Attitude to Teaching" held by any individual is the result of the complex interplay of a variety factors, some of which are out of the control of teachers, schools, Departments of Education and governments.

Concluding Points and Reflections on the Study

A number of comments have already been made about the conduct of the study. More subjective and personal observations are given below as a result of the researcher's participation in the study. In some cases, these observations were noted as marginal comments on the interview schedules, while in other cases they were noted in the researcher's diary.

Firstly, the interview subjects impressed the researcher with their obvious sincerity, intelligence, and commitment to education. The interview subjects did not appear to "hate" teaching, and in fact 28 of the 50 (and four of the seven in the pilot study) were still teaching in another context. With the exception of the less experienced teachers, the teachers interviewed appeared to have given a great deal of their lives to education, and virtually all had made significant contributions aside from classroom teaching to the functioning of their schools.

Those interviewed spoke openly and freely, with the interview questions serving as appropriate triggers for reflection. For many of those interviewed, the interview process appeared to be therapeutic, although an element of stress and frustration still remained for some.

The significant administrative changes in N.S.W. education since 1988 and the criticism of teachers and schools that this implied appeared to have been a significant cause of dissatisfaction for those interviewed. Despite the commitment of those interviewed, it appeared that they had found it difficult to "get on top" of the administrative demands being made upon them, with commensurate deleterious effects upon classroom teaching. It appeared that having to compromise upon one's previously held standards was difficult for some. However, as mentioned above, it was not these administrative changes alone that were responsible for the resignation of those interviewed.

Finally, as a purely subjective observation, the researcher felt that the Department of School Education could ill afford to lose teachers possessing the talents, experience and commitment of those interviewed in the study.

References

Andrew, L.D.; Parks, D.J.; Nelson, L.A., & The Phi Delta Kappa Commission On Teacher/Faculty Morale. (1985) *Administrator's Handbook for Improving Faculty Morale*. Phi Delta Kappa, Bloomington.

Beare, H. (1988) School and System Management in Post-Industrial Conditions; the Rationale Behind Corporate Management Structures in Education. *Unicorn*, 14(4), 248-255.

Beare, H. (1989) Managing Schools in the Next Decade: Some Lessons From the Education Reform Movement. Address to the National Conference of Principals of Schools, Auckland, New Zealand, July 1989.

Beazley, K. (1992) Keynote Address to the Australian College of Education, National Conference, A National Teaching Council: Issues and Options, Canberra, May 1992.

Dunham, J. (1984) *Stress in Teaching*. Croom Helm, London.

Foster, W. (1986) *Paradigms and Promises New Approaches to Educational Administration*. Prometheus Books, Buffalo, New York.

Garcia, L.M. (1992) Teachers' Dropout Rate Declines. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4/3/1992, 14.

Gay, L.R. (1987) *Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Application*. (3rd ed) Merrill, Columbus.

Glaser, B.G. & Strauss, A.L. (1967) *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. Aldine, New York.

Herzberg, F.; Mausner, B. & Snyderman, B. (1959) *The Motivation to Work*. John Wiley & Sons, New York.

Kaufman, J.W. (1984) Relationship Between Teacher Motivation and Commitment to the Profession. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, 23-27 April, 1984.

McCarthy, M.M. (1986) Research in Educational Administration: Promising Signs for the Future. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 22(3), 3-20.

Morgan, G. (1980) Paradigms, Metaphors, and Puzzle Solving in Organization Theory. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 25(4), 605-622.

National Board Of Employment, Education And Training. (1990) *The Shape of Teacher Education: Some Proposals*. N.B.E.E.T., Canberra.

Schools Council (National Board of Employment, Education and Training). (1990) *Australia's Teachers An Agenda for the Next Decade*. Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.

Sergiovanni T. (1967) Factors Which Affect Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction of Teachers. *The Journal of Educational Administration*, 5(1), 66-81.

Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1990) *Basics of Qualitative Research Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*. Sage, Newbury Park.

Wolcott, H. (1985) On Ethnographic Intent. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 21(3), 187-203.

Appendix 1: Interview Schedule

Part A: Respondent variable data:

1. **Age** | |
2. **Gender** | |
3. **Training**: 2 year trained; 3 year trained; 4 year trained; 5 year trained or more:
   - initial | |
   - subsequent | |
4. **Primary/Secondary/Other**: |_____|
   - If secondary, subject specialisation: |_____|
5. **Completed Years of Teaching** | |
6. **Position Held at Resignation** |_____|
7. **Educational Region(s) Taught In:**
   - last |_____|
   - previous |_____|
   - other |_____|
8. **Years at last school** | |
9. **Occupation(s) Prior to Teaching** |_____|
10. **Occupation(s) Since Resignation** |_____|
    |_____|
11. **Salary prior to resignation ($000s)** | |
12. **Salary now ($000s)** | |

Part B: Open-Ended Interview Questions

1. Could you tell me why you became a teacher? How did you feel about teaching before being accepted in teacher training?
2. Did your views on teaching change during your pre-service training? If so, why was this?
3. What were you early teaching experiences like? How did you feel about being a teacher at this time?
4. Can you trace how your attitude towards teaching might have changed during your career? Can you find reasons for these changes?
5. What sorts of things gave you greatest satisfaction as a teacher?
6. What sorts of things gave you greatest dissatisfaction as a teacher?
7. Can you describe what led up to your decision to resign? Was there a critical moment or incident that led to this decision or was it a decision that you gradually came to?
8. Did you share or discuss you decision to resign with others? If so, how did they influence or try to influence your decision?
9. Can you describe your feelings around the time that you resigned?
10. How do you feel about teaching now? What would it take to induce you to work again for the N.S.W. Department of School Education?
11. How have your experiences as a teacher affected you?
12. Are there any other comments about teaching or your own experiences as a teacher that you would like to mention?

Figure 1: Overview of the Review of the Literature

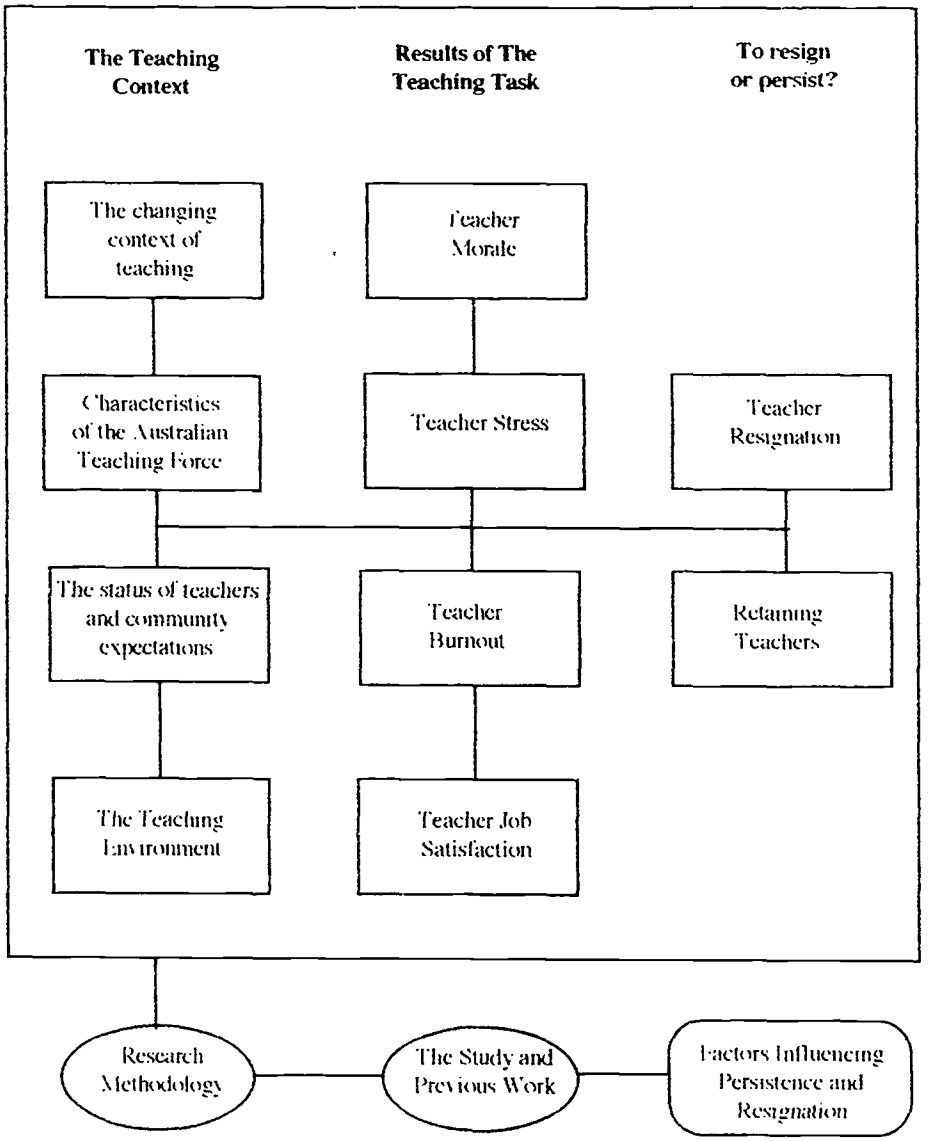
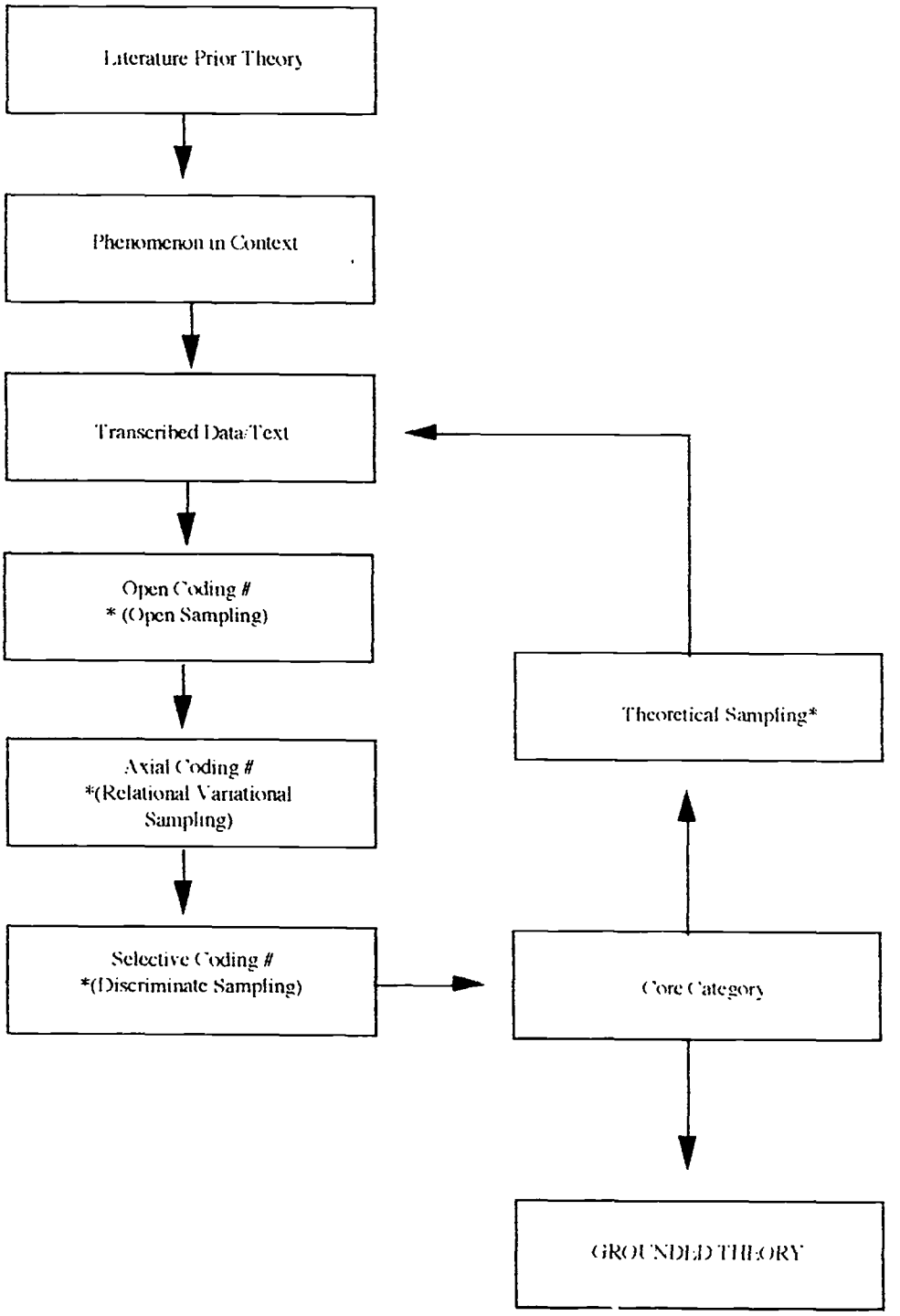


Figure 2: Overview of Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques



Coding Paradigm

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Figure 3: Relationship of Categories Derived from Axial Coding of the Pilot Interview Transcripts

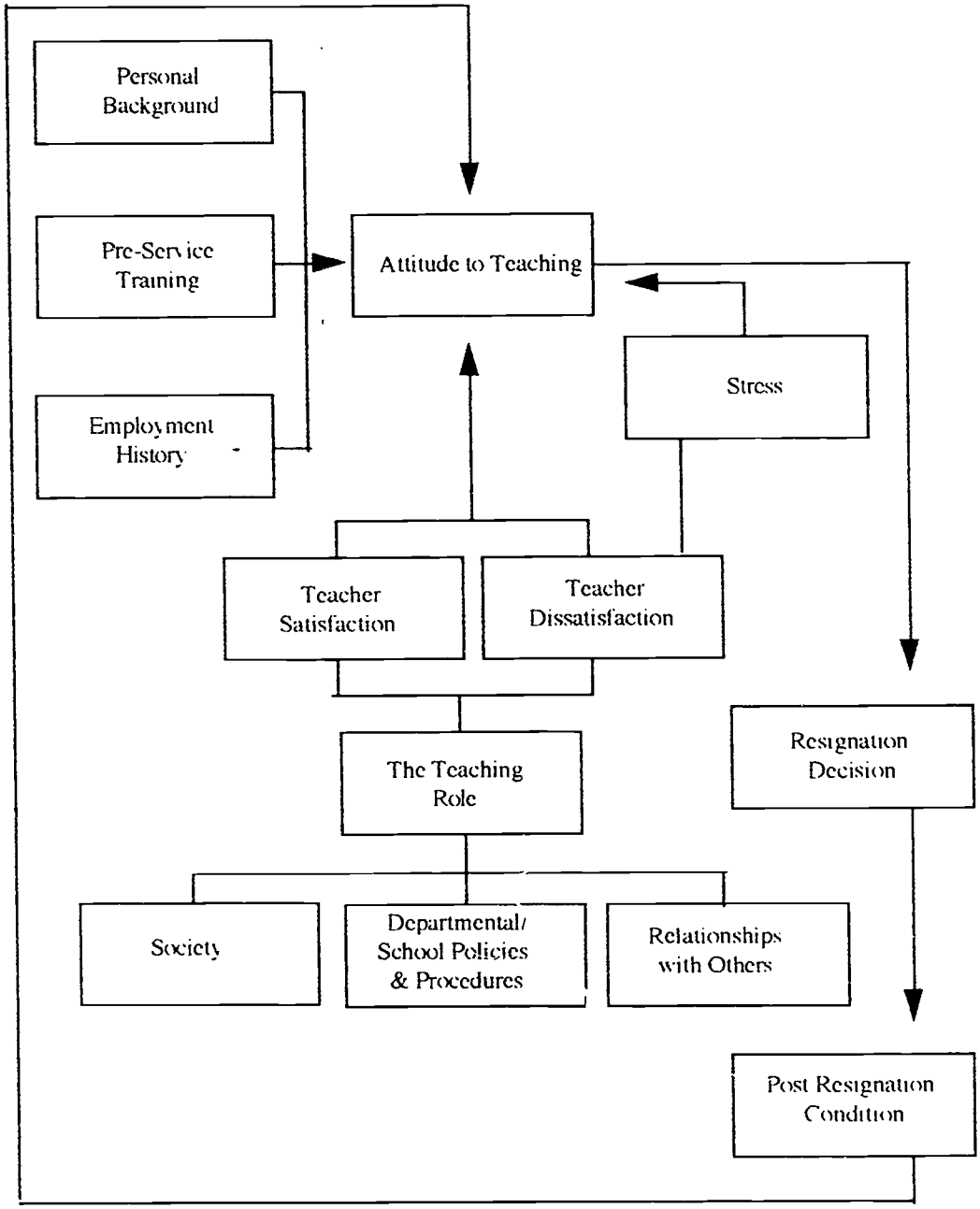


Table 1: Summary of Respondent Variable Data from Part A of the Interview Schedule

	MALES	FEMALES	TOTAL
Subjects Interviewed	17	33	50
Age (average/years)	46.0	34.3	41.0
Experience (average/years)	20.6	13.2	15.7
Training			
Initial (years)			
5 or more	5	1	6
4	2	14	16
3	4	8	12
2	6	10	16
Present (years)			
5 or more	6	9	15
4	7	12	19
3	3	9	12
2	1	3	4
Position at Resignation			
Primary			
Assistant	2	10	12
Middle Exec	1	1	2
Principal	0	0	0
Secondary			
Assistant	7	14	21
Middle Exec	3	1	4
Principal	1	0	1
Head Office	2	3	5
Other	1	4	5
Salary (average)			
Prior to Resignation	$41,941	$35,363	$37,599
Since Resignation	$35,411	$25,000	$28,539

Table 2: Categories Arising From Open Coding of the Remaining Interview Transcripts

PERSONAL BACKGROUND
- a) Own School Experience
- b) The Influence of Family and Others on Career Decisions
- c) Availability of Career Options
- d) Other Employment Experience
- e) Early Opinion and Orientation to Teaching
- f) The Influence of Scholarships and Bonds

PRE-SERVICE TRAINING
- a) Nature of Pre-Service Training
- b) Perceived Benefits of Pre-Service Training
- c) Perceived Deficiencies of Pre-Service Training

RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS
- a) Department of School Education
- b) School Superiors
- c) Other Teachers
- d) Students
- e) Parents and Community
- f) Family

SOCIETY
- a) Nature of
- b) Expectations of Education and Teachers
- c) Status of Teachers
- d) Criticism of Teachers and Schools

TEACHER SATISFACTION

TEACHER STRESS
- a) Physical
- b) Mental
- c) Impact on Others

POST RESIGNATION CONDITION
- a) Personal State
- b) View of Education and the Department of School Education

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY
- a) First Appointment
- b) Transfers and Promotions
- c) Leave and Previous Resignation
- d) Final Resignation
- e) Post Resignation Employment

ATTITUDE TO TEACHING
- a) Prior to Training
- b) During Training
- c) Early Teaching Experiences
- d) Changes During Career
- e) Result of Resignation

DEPARTMENTAL / SCHOOL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
- a) Appointment, Transfer and Leave
- b) Changes to Curriculum
- c) Changes to School Administration
- d) Changes to Promotion
- e) Political Influence
- f) Salary

THE TEACHING ROLE
- a) Classroom Teaching
- b) Administration
- c) Extracurricular

TEACHER DISSATISFACTION

RESIGNATION DECISION
- a) Building Forces
- b) Critical Incident
- c) Impact on Self
- d) Influence of Others