

The Impact of Occupational Stress Factors  
related to the Organisational and Curricular Restructuring associated  
with the introduction of  
Technological and Applied Studies as a Key Learning Area  
upon the Professional Self-esteem  
of Secondary School Teachers and Administrators.

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## BACKGROUND

This study examines the relationship between occupational stress factors and professional self-esteem among teachers and administrators associated with the introduction of the Technological and Applied Studies (TAS) Key Learning Area.

The project has extended the results of earlier studies (Kaldas et al [1990] and Roe & Gray [1991]) to aspects of research undertaken in 1993 by Ms Yvonne McDonald and Mr John Gibson.

Kaldas, Warr, Groome and Gray sought to establish links between occupational stress and teachers' professional self esteem. Results suggested that for younger teachers their major source of stress and associated negative feelings of professional self esteem was unsuccessful behaviour management strategies. Experienced teachers however reported negative feelings of professional self esteem and professional competence as a consequence of problems and stress associated with workload and time management. Roe and Gray's study, Teachers' Professional Self-esteem in the Light of Occupational Stress Factors, identified the relative strength of major occupational stress factors in teaching and further investigated the relationship between such occupational stress factors and teacher professional self esteem. Results indicated that workload, time management, resources and working conditions were major sources of occupational stress for teachers and further a high proportion of the respondents reported negative feelings regarding their professional competence as a consequence of these stress factors. A notable feature of those findings was that teachers with many years of experience reported far greater negative feelings of professional self worth than their more junior colleagues.

McDonald and Gibson investigated the effect of organisational and curricular restructuring associated with introducing the TAS KLA in metropolitan and country schools. Curriculum reform in NSW secondary schools resulted in the the reorganisation of teaching subjects into

Key Learning Areas (KLAs). Courses within the traditional home economics and industrial arts areas were combined with other courses to form the Technological and Applied Studies (TAS) KLA. As part of this restructuring the study of technology through a new syllabus, Design and Technology, became compulsory for years 7-10. They reported increased stress linked with resources, workloads, time management, staff development, and the need for support from school administrators for the new curriculum requirements in TAS. There was less confidence among country teachers.

The findings reported by McDonald and Gibson indicate that whilst change is occurring, this change has created problems yet to be resolved. Teachers and administrators surveyed reported increased

stress and identified resources, workloads, time management, staff development, and the need for support from school administrators as problem areas. Further, new curriculum requirements in TAS, administration, staff management, coping with staff with philosophical differences, career paths, top-down innovation and policy responses were identified by McDonald and Gibson as significantly affecting the professional self-esteem of teachers and administrators. They also found that country teachers of the new design and technology courses in the TAS KLA had a lower level of confidence than metropolitan teachers and listed "stress - the effects of restructuring on individual teachers" among the issues requiring further investigation as a result of their study.

These results are consistent with other findings that teachers faced with competing expectations from government and school systems, unions, parents and the media have frequently been found to display symptoms of occupational stress (Louden 1987, Otto, 1986, VTU 1986) Such stress has been described as arising "when discrepancies exist between occupational demands and opportunities on the one hand and workers capacities, needs and expectations on the other". (NSWTF 1988). Recent research by Greenglass and Burke (1988), and O'Connor and Clarke (1990) added the dimensions of sex, status and school systems as factors in the issue of teacher stress. Thus the greatest sources of stress - time and workload pressures - were experienced by permanently employed female teachers with a strong commitment to teaching. System related stress was associated with a perceived lack of promotional opportunities whilst community related stress was more evident among those employed in the government rather than the non-government sector.

Results from this study will augment the findings of McDonald and Gibson's study and indicate concerns for administrators and teacher educators.

## METHOD

Teachers and head teachers in the areas of TAS, Home Economics and Industrial Arts in government and non-government schools in NSW were randomly selected from metropolitan and country areas. A total sample of 169 was achieved; 91 from the city and 78 from the country. There were 91 males and 78 females in the sample. Twenty nine teachers were from non-state schools.

The following areas were probed: the discrepancies between new occupational demands and teachers' capacities, teachers' perceptions of professional competence and self esteem, the influence of sex, status, tenure, age, career progression, salaries, status tenure, location and school system, and academic leadership, budget, human and curriculum resources and parent and community liaison.

These preliminary results look at the impact of the introduction of TAS on occupational stress and on teachers' professional self-esteem. After initial tabulation the results were converted to percentages and t - tests were run on the comparisons; between men and women, school systems, teaching positions and size of school to determine levels of significance.

## RESULTS

The findings related to the introduction of the TAS KLA are reported in the order probed by the questionnaire.

### Professional competence

A significant minority - 40% of all respondents reported that they did not feel competent with the subjects they were teaching. Of these 80% related these feelings of lack of confidence to the fact that they were teaching outside their perceived areas of expertise. This represented nearly one third (31%) of the total sample who reported that they were teaching outside their area of expertise.

Through a flaw in the questionnaire the second sub question in this set appeared to be linked with the negative feelings of competence, and so was missed by 86 of the respondents. Hence we cannot report accurately on the general level of retraining available and how appropriate it is for the new teaching area. However some of the respondents who felt comfortable with their teaching subjects did respond to the retraining questions and some 40 respondents reported that they had had no retraining and only 12 noted that they would consider it met their professional needs. Many of the 24 respondents who reported having had some retraining added comment regarding its inadequacy.

### Workload

90% of all teachers indicated overwork as a major source of occupational stress, and of these 107 reported negative feelings about their teaching competence as a consequence of workload. This represented almost two thirds (63%) of the sample experiencing negative feelings about their competence as teachers as a consequence of their workload.

More significantly however, of the 90% who indicated that workload was a source of stress 87% , some 79% of all the teachers surveyed, considered that their high workload was experienced as a direct consequence of the introduction of TAS.

#### Time Management

This area of stress figured prominently with 82% of the sample reporting it as a problem. Those perceiving the pressures arising from time management as a source of their feeling lack of competence as a teacher represented 56% of all the teachers surveyed.

#### Resources

Many teachers reported that they were unable to teach as well as they wished to, for 80% reported that the lack of resources affected their classroom performance. We stress that this is a perception expressed by the respondents and are not in a position to cite more concrete and objective evidence that would indicate whether these feelings are related to real or imagined shortages of resources. However, it may be important to note that teachers' perceptions of effectively being able to teach evokes in them a sense of professional competence.

#### Career Opportunity

Three quarters of the sample reported dissatisfaction with their potential career paths but of these only two thirds related their dissatisfaction to the introduction of TAS. However 46% of the total respondents reported that the introduction of TAS was responsible for these feelings.

Two other probes offered measures of areas of stress that had an impact on teachers' sense of professional worth. These were:

#### Salaries

Some 79% of respondents considered that their salary level was not commensurate with their perceived level of professional status in the community. This is a greater percentage than the 63% reporting on salary as a measure of professional status in 1991.

#### Media Comment

72% of the sample saw adverse comment in the media as negatively affecting their professional self-concept. This also was an increase on the proportion of respondents in the 1991 survey reporting this

factor.

## OTHER SIGNIFICANT VARIABLES

### Gender

Female respondents reported greater satisfaction with their behaviour management strategies than males, and more importantly on the question of time management females reported significantly less stress. This tends to confirm the anecdotal evidence derived from teacher education students where female students have shown themselves more willing to embrace the gamut of studies incorporated in TAS, compared with a reluctance evidenced by their male counterparts who have trouble going beyond the cooking and catering elements of the new Key Learning area.

### State compared with non-state Schools

State teachers reported a significantly greater level of dissatisfaction with their career opportunities compared with their non-state peers, their level of professional acceptance in the school, and were more likely to relate the loss of career prospects to the introduction of TAS.

### Size of School

Teachers in larger schools were more likely to be concerned with the loss of career opportunities than those in smaller ones. In many cases additional comment was offered in relation to this issue noting that with the introduction of TAS two Head Teacher positions were likely to be collapsed into one at the immediate promotion or tenure level. Thus the introduction of TAS was a factor related to not only future career paths for classroom teachers but the very existence of the position for current Head Teachers.

## RATING OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS FACTORS

This study revealed some further shift of the order of importance given to the major occupational stress factors experienced by teachers.

### A Comparison of Stress Factor Ratings

Stress Factor	Roe & Gray ('94) et al ('90)	Pierce & Molloy	Roe & Gray ('91)	Kaldas
Workload	113	2		
Working Conditions	243	4		
Time Management	321	2		

Salaries 43213

Media Recognition 556 9

Behaviour Management 677 1

Staff Conflict 765 3

## DISCUSSION

### Occupational Stress Factors

In this study teachers continued to acknowledge the chosen variables as significant sources of occupational stress. Two variables gained less than 50% of teachers indicating them as a source of stress. These were Staff Conflict where 39% of this sample compared with 48% in the 1991 study, and Behaviour Management which maintained its rate at 46%

The reordering of priorities as determinants of stress brought an added focus to the immediate working environment of teachers. Workload, Working Conditions and Time Management all concern teachers as professionals and are significant sources of occupational stress for their performance both in the classroom and administration.

The results of this study give further evidence for the erosion of teachers' locus of control for the factors scoring most highly tend to be the result of decisions made by system administrators - the Department of School Education (N.S.W.) and the Board of Studies, and by top school management, the Principal and senior executive team. Although the continued decline of Staff Conflict as a major factor in inducing occupational stress suggests that schools as a whole are working more harmoniously, and that teachers in the TAS KLA receive appropriate collegial respect.

The survey was completed before the current (November 1994) industrial campaign for increases in teachers' salaries was initiated, which may help to explain the continued decline of the ranking for dissatisfaction with Salaries reported. Although at an absolute level the dissatisfaction with salary levels showed an increase from 62% of respondents in 1991 to a level of 78% in the present study.

The results of the study suggest that the factors that emerged at the top of the table (all reported by over 82% of respondents) are related to teachers' perceptions of significant loss of confidence and competence in their chosen area of work. They are related to teachers'

own perceptions of their standing as professionals and not to society in general or the local the community through Media Recognition or Salaries or the more general pedagogical demands of the school, as with Behaviour Management.

#### The Introduction of the TAS KLA

The results shown by the study confirm the work of McDonald and Gibson where major curriculum change was identified as a significant source of teacher stress. The reality of new curriculum area of TAS is not only that there are new collocations of traditional subjects - Computing, Agriculture and Design and Technology all have a place in the KLA, there is the new mandated course (by the Board of Studies) in Design and Technology, which teachers have commented on as poorly constructed and under-resourced.

The decisions concerning these changes have had little teacher input and further contribute to the sense of depowerment among those teaching

in the TASKLA. The high percentage of respondents in the study identifying TAS as a major contributor to their negative feelings of confidence and competence gives rise to concern about the processes of curriculum development and the implementation of change

#### Professional Self-Esteem

The introduction of TAS has had a strong impact on a significant majority of those teaching in the area. Granted that many secondary teachers find their professional identities lie in the academic area they profess, TAS has in some measure been an attack on the basis of many teachers' professional integrity. This has occurred in a number of ways; traditional subjects have disappeared and been replaced by new areas of study, career paths have been significantly narrowed, and teachers have been forced into teaching the new areas of study with they are untrained and underprepared for.

The low response to Behaviour Management as a structural source of stress in the school suggests that the respondents consider themselves to be more than adequately skilled as teachers. What the results suggest is that these teachers are caught in a crisis of confidence and competence at the very centre of the way they construct themselves as teachers. - their standing as independent and valued professionals. The lack of significant difference in all measures other than career opportunities between teachers in different school systems and different sized schools may suggest that such low feelings of professional self-esteem are evenly distributed among all teachers facing significant loss of professional integrity and control of their

workplace.

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER WORK

This study has important implications for those who manage school and curriculum change, particularly in the inservice and retraining arenas.

Further studies might probe how the needs of teachers for adequate retraining and resourcing can best be met.

In addition, the notion of Teacher Professional Self-Esteem needs to be teased out and tested by further investigation of components other than those induced by the structural factors provided by occupational stress.

Finally, theoretical and practical work might be undertaken of what it means for teachers to be genuinely professional in the performance of their work, rather than being the recipients of call to act professionally. Management, from the level of government, down to school executives, has to deliver the conditions which allow teachers to exercise meaningful responsibility for their work rather than continue to heap demand upon demand on a willing and dedicated workforce.

Keywords: Occupational stress; Teacher professional self esteem

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## RESULTS FOR THE SURVEY

Q1A by Q1B Do you find that your behaviour management strategies work?  
If No or Sometimes, would you say that it affects your confidence and  
your feelings of competence?

Q1B

Count

Row Pct | Yes No Sometime Missing

Col Pct Row

12 3 9 Total

Q1A

1

Yes 3 288 93

2

No 1

1

3

Sometime 39 926 1 75

Column 43112689 169

Total

Q2A by Q2B Are there times when you feel threatened when interacting  
with your work colleagues?

If Yes or Sometimes, do you perceive your feelings to be related to  
superiority on the part of the colleague?

Q2B

Count

Row Pct | Yes No Sometime Missing

Col Pct Row

12 3 9 Total

Q2A

1

Yes 7 9 4 20

2

No	2				100	102
3	Sometime	11	1221	2		46
9	Missing	1			1	
Column182325103 169						
Total						

Q2A by Q2C Are there times when you feel threatened when interacting with your work colleagues?

If Yes or Sometimes, do you view these feelings as relating to your perception of your colleagues' competence?

		Q2C				
Count		Yes	No	Sometime	Missing	Total
Row	Pct	Row	Pct	Row	Pct	Row
		12	3	9		Total
Q2A						
1						
Yes	7	3	7	3		20
2						
No	1	3	98			102
3						
Sometime	17	11	12	6		46
9						
Missing		1				1
Column251719108 169						
Total						

Q3A by Q3B Do you feel competent with the subjects you are teaching?

If No or Sometimes, is this because you are teaching outside your area

of expertise?

Q3B

Count

Row Pct | Yes No Sometime Missing

Col Pct Row

12 3 9 Total

Q3A

1

Yes 1 99 100

2

No 7 2 2 11

3

Sometime 36 7 12 2 46

9

Missing 1 1

Column 43 10 12 10 4 169

Total

Q3A by Q3C Do you feel competent with the subjects you are teaching?

If you are teaching outside your area of expertise, have you had retraining in the new area?

Q3C

Count

Row Pct | Yes No Sometime Missing

Col Pct Row

12 3 9 Total

Q3A

1

Yes 6 5 3 86 100

2

No 8 2 1 11

3

Sometime 6 2 7 19 5 57

9

Missing 1 1

Column124024 93 169  
 Total

Q4A by Q4B Do you feel your workload is too high?

If Yes or Sometimes,  
 (a) does it cause you to feel negative about your competence as a teacher?

		Q4B				
Count	Row Pct	Yes	No	Sometime	Missing	
Col Pct	Row					Total
		12	3	9		Total
Q4A						
1						
Yes	542526	5		110		
2						
No	1 15		16			
3						
Sometime	141513		1		43	

Column684139 21 169  
 Total

Q4A by Q4C Do you feel your workload is too high?

If Yes or Sometimes,  
 (b) is it associated with the introduction of TAS?

		Q4C				
Count	Row Pct	Yes	No	Sometime	Missing	
Col Pct	Row					Total
		12	3	9		Total
Q4A						
1						
Yes	861012	2		110		

2					
No	1	15			16
3					
Sometime		21	714	1	43
Column Total	1071826	18	169		

Q5A by Q5B Do you find time management with your classes puts you under pressure?  
 If Yes or Sometimes, does the pressure result in you feeling negative about your competence as a teacher?

		Q5B				
Count	Row Pct	Yes	No	Sometime	Missing	
Col Pct	Row					Total
			12	3	9	Total
Q5A						
1						
Yes	373130	1				99
2						
No	30					30
3						
Sometime	41323					40
Column Total	414453	31	169			

Q6A by Q6B Does lack of resources in your teaching area affect your competence in the classroom?

If Yes or Sometimes, is this because of the demands associated with the introduction of TAS?

		Q6B				
Count	Row Pct	Yes	No	Sometime	Missing	
Col Pct	Row					Total
			12	3	9	Total

Q6A

1

Yes 69 2 3 2 76

2

No 33 33

3

Sometime 42 513 60

Column111 716 35 169

Total

Q7 Does your salary reflect your perception of your professional value  
within our society?

Count

Row Pct | Yes No Sometime Missing

Col Pct Row

12 3 9 Total

Q7

3811615 169

Q8A by Q8B Are you satisfied with the career opportunities available to  
you within your particular education system?

If No or Sometimes, is this because of the restructuring associated  
with TAS?

Q8B

Count

Row Pct | Yes No Sometime Missing

Col Pct Row

12 3 9 Total

Q8A

1

Yes 43 43

2

No 6432 14 1 111

3

Sometime 7 6 2 15

Column7138 16 44 169  
 Total

Q9 Do negative comments in the media affect your professional self concept?

Count  
 Row Pct | Yes No Sometime Missing  
 Col Pct Row  
 12 3 9 Total  
 Q9

904534 169

Significant Variables

t-tests for independent samples of GENDER

Variable	Number of Cases	Mean	SD	SE of Mean
Q1A				
Male	91	1.5385	.523	.055
Female	78	1.3590	.483	.055

Mean Difference = .1795

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances: F= 6.699 P= .010

t-test for Equality of Means					95%
Variances	t-value	df	2-Tail Sig	SE of Diff	CI for Diff
Equal	2.30	167	.022	.078	(.026, .333)
Unequal	2.32	166.06	.022	.077	(.027, .332)

Variable	Number of Cases	Mean	SD	SE of Mean
-----				
Q5A				
Male	91	1.4176	.651	.068
Female	78	1.7949	.858	.097

Mean Difference = -.3773

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances: F= 16.538 P= .000

t-test for Equality of Means					95%
Variances	t-value	df	2-Tail Sig	SE of Diff	CI for Diff
-----					
Equal	-3.24	167	.001	.116	(-.607, -.148)
Unequal	-3.18	142.09	.002	.119	(-.612, -.143)

t-tests for independent samples of SCHOOL SYSTEM

Variable	Number of Cases	Mean	SD	SE of Mean
-----				
Q8A				
State	139	2.4748	.837	.071
Non-state	29	2.1034	.939	.174

Mean Difference = .3714

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances: F= 2.810 P= .096

t-test for Equality of Means					95%
Variances	t-value	df	2-Tail Sig	SE of Diff	CI for Diff
-----					

Equal	2.13	166	.035	.175	(.027, .716)
Unequal	1.97	37.84	.056	.188	(-.010, .753)

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Variable	Number of Cases	Mean	SD	SE of Mean
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Variable	Number of Cases	Mean	SD	SE of Mean
Q8B				
State	107	1.6168	.854	.083
Non-state	18	2.4444	.856	.202

Mean Difference = -.8276

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances: F= .119 P= .731

t-test for Equality of Means					95%
Variances	t-value	df	2-Tail Sig	SE of Diff	CI for Diff
Equal	-3.80	123	.000	.218	(-1.258, -.397)
Unequal	-3.80	23.07	.001	.218	(-1.279, -.377)

\*.  
 One Way Variabls Q8A by SCHOOL SIZE

Analysis of Variance

F	Sum of	Mean	F
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Source	D.F.	Squares	Squares	Ratio
Prob.				
Between Groups .0444	2	4.6627	2.3313	3.1728
Within Groups	166	121.9764	.7348	
Total		168	126.6391	

Group	Count	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	95 Pct	Conf Int
for Mean						
Grp 1 2.4345	29	2.0690	.9611	.1785	1.7034	To
Grp 2 2.5915	105	2.4286	.8419	.0822	2.2656	To
Grp 3 2.8788	35	2.6000	.8117	.1372	2.3212	To
Total 2.5342	169	2.4024	.8682	.0668	2.2705	To

Group	Minimum	Maximum
Grp 1	1.0000	3.0000
Grp 2	1.0000	3.0000
Grp 3	1.0000	3.0000
Total	1.0000	3.0000

Levene Test for Homogeneity of Variances

Statistic	df1	df2	2-tail Sig.
3.5378	2	166	.031

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 -----  
 - - - - - O N E W A Y - - - - -

Variable Q8A

Multiple Range Test

Tukey-HSD Procedure

Ranges for the .050 level - 3.35 3.35

The ranges above are table ranges.

The value actually compared with Mean(J)-Mean(I) is..

$$.6061 * \text{Range} * \text{Sqrt}(1/N(I) + 1/N(J))$$

(\*) Denotes pairs of groups significantly different at the .050 level

Mean	Group	G G G		
		1	2	3
2.0690	Grp 1			
2.4286	Grp 2			
2.6000	Grp 3			*

APPENDIX 2

survey on teacher stress and burnout

school Information Please tick the appropriate box

1. Government- Selectivep

- Comprehensivep

- Technology Highp

2. Non-government- Catholic Systemicp

- otherp

3. Co-educationalp

4.Boys onlyp

5.girls onlyp

6.Size of school- >. 500p

- 501 - 1 000p

-1 001 - 1 500p

2

PERSONAL INFORMATIONPlease tick the appropriate box

1.POSITION ON STAFFPRINCIPALp

DEPUTY PRINCIPALp

LEADING TEACHERp

HEAD TEACHERp

A.S.T.p

TEACHERp

2.TEACHING Subjects\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3.Teaching EXPERIENCE1 - 3 yearsp

4 - 10 yearsp

11 - 19 yearsp

20 - 25 yearsp

26 - 30 yearsp

over 30 yearsp

4.AGE20 - 24p

25 - 34p

35 - 49p

50 - 54p

55 - 64p

4.PRESENT APPOINTMENTcasualp

permanentp

part-timep

3

Please answer questions by putting a circle around the appropriate answer

Q1Do you find that your behaviour managment strategies work?YesNoSometimes

If No or Sometimes, would you say that it affects your confidence and your feelings of competence?YesNoSometimes

Q2Are there times when you feel threatened when interacting with your work colleagues?YesNoSometimes

If Yes or Sometimes, do you perceive your feelings to be related to superiority on the part of the colleague?YesNoSometimes

If Yes or Sometimes, do you view these feelings as relating to your perception of your colleagues' competence?YesNoSometimes

Q3Do you feel competent with the subjects you are teaching?YesNo Sometimes

If No or Sometimes, is this because you are teaching outside your area of expertise?YesNoSometimes

If you are teaching outside your area of expertise, have you had retraining in the new area?YesNoSome

Q4Do you feel your workload is too high?YesNoSometimes

If Yes or Sometimes,  
(a) does it cause you to feel negative about your competence as a teacher?YesNoSometimes

(b) is it associated with the introduction of TAS?YesNoSometimes

Q5Do you find time management with your classes puts you under pressure?YesNoSometimes

If Yes or Sometimes, does the pressure result in you feeling negative about your competence as a teacher?YesNoSometimes

Q6Does lack of resources in your teaching area affect your competence in the classroom?YesNoSometimes

If Yes or Sometimes, is this because of the demands associated with the introduction of TAS?YesNoSometimes

... /4  
4

Q7Does your salary reflect your perception of your professional value within our society?YesNoSometimes

