15th Edition of the International Conference on Sciences of Education,
Studies and Current Trends in Science of Education, ICSED 2017,
9-10 June 2017, Suceava (Romania)

Studies and Current Trends in Science of Education

Teacher Stress and Coping Strategies

Otilia CLIPA

<https://doi.org/10.18662/lumproc.icsed2017.14>

How to cite: Cîrligeanu, M. (2017). Teacher Stress and Coping Strategies. In O. Clipa (ed.), *Studies and Current Trends in Science of Education* (pp. 120-128). Suceava, Romania: LUMEN Proceedings. <https://doi.org/10.18662/lumproc.icsed2017.14>

Teacher Stress and Coping Strategies

Otilia CLIPA¹

Abstract

The article wants to describe the perceived stressors for teacher from Romania and the appropriate modalities for reducing this professional stress. We try to investigate the perceptions of teacher upon the evaluation as a stress factor and the solutions for this stress. For this study we apply a questionnaire which was administrated to 120 teachers from Suceava County. The research showed that Romanian teachers experience high levels of stress, almost half of them being tempted to give up this profession. The most used coping actions reported were the positive ones, such as enjoyable activities. Final finding is that increasing qualified personnel, creating a positive organizational climate and communicate results of evaluation process.

Keywords: *teacher, stress, coping strategies, evaluate.*

Being a teacher is one of the nicest but also stressful jobs, fact proved by the numerous studies done on this aspect in literature (Boyle, Borg, Falzon & Baglioni, 1995; Clipa & Boghean, 2015, Clipa, 2016; Dick & Wagner, 2001; Griffith, Steptoe & Cropley, 1999; Ignat & Clipa, 2012; Kyriacou 2001; Kitchen et al., 2017; Neves de Jesus et al., 2014). Recent studies proved that the teaching stress can be more profound than the stress related to other jobs (Travers & Cooper, 1996; Clipa, 2016), what makes teaching the job with the highest occupational stress.

European recent reports indicate that teaching is a job which involves interaction to human beings in training and, that is why, it becomes a profession with a high demand on the job market. It results that, though the values and regenerating power are highlighted for the whole society (*The Teaching Profession in Europe: Practices, Perceptions and Policies*, Eurydice Report, 2015; *Assuring Quality in Education: Policies and Approaches to School Evaluation in Europe*, 2015) & Kitchen et al., 2017) people that choose a teaching career are less and that might create a future teachers crises within the educational systems. In order to prevent these consequences, different national actions could be taken in order to invest more in education, increase the number of young people choosing teaching, and keep them in the educational system

¹ Assistant Profesor PhD., Stefan cel Mare University, Faculty of Science of Education, Suceava, Romania, otiliac@usv.ro

(Craşovan & Ungureanu, 2010) on a larger period of time, as well as the teachers' possibility to train others within a secured environment with less stress factors.

International researches (Aldrup et al., 2017; Boyle et al., 1995; Cozolino, 2017; El Helou, Nabhani & Bahous, 2016; Neves de Jesus et al., 2014; Schonfeld, 2001), as well as the Romanian ones (Clipa & Boghean, 2015; Clipa, 2016; Craşovan & Ungureanu, 2010; Hurduzeu, 2009; Jurcăru, 2003; Masari, Muntele & Curelariu, 2013; Miclea, 2010; Pitariu, 2007; Zlate, 2010;) highlight that this matter is all the more necessary as teachers' emotions can affect their performances and the children, pupils' well-being (Aldrup et al., 2017; Ignat & Clipa, 2012; Warren & Dowden, 2012; Sandilos et al., 2018; Sparks, 2017). The teachers suffering of burnout live with high stress levels and lack of sense about their presence in the classroom. As the exhaustion increases, the pupils' acceptance and encouraging decreases, and their results too. As all these happen within school, the teachers develop a negative attitude and become ineffective (Cozolino, 2017). These can be real *burnout cascades* (El Helou, Nabhani & Bahous, 2016; Sandilos et al., 2018) and lead to educational failure.

In the literature teaching related stress is described either as "the teacher experimenting some negative emotions as tension, frustration, anxiety, fury and depression, resulted from some teaching aspects " (Sandilos et al., 2018), as "any other characteristic of the school environment which represents a threaten for the teacher" (Albu, 2013; Popa, Laurian & Fitzgerald, 2015; Sutton, 1984), or as a professional burnout phenomenon which can be the result of performing a difficult task on a longer period of time Cozolino, 2017; Fengler, 2016). Among the major stress sources in teaching are mentioned the chronic stress (Cozolino, 2017), insufficient support from the management (Cozolino, 2017), children's behaviour, high number of children in classes, excessive documentation and communication failure with the colleagues/parents (Blasé, 1986), prestige and social recognition (Gano-Garcia, Padilla-Munoz & Carasco-Ortiz, 2005), role conflict and its ambiguity (Kantas, 1995, Hasting & Bham, 2003; Neves de Jesus et al., 2014), time pressure, work load, pupils' lack of motivation and discipline (Aldrup et al., 2017).

The individual characteristics include the teachers' unique attributes as their personality, gender, living environment, and the ability to connect to the others and maintain these relationships, ability to deal with the requests (Nasser, 2015; Guglielmi & Tatrow, 1998). In this category could be included also the compatibility between the personal and professional values, ambition to succeed, competitiveness or perfectionism (Bachkirova, 2005).

The suggested subject is considered to be of interest for the decisional stuff in the educational system but also for the practitioners because the stress experimented by the teachers is caused by a number of systemic factors:

- lack of adequate resources and facilities (Aldrup et al., 2017)
- external, standardized tests which imply an hierarchy and high responsibility (Albu, 2013);
- Many administrative demands and justifying documents (El Helou, Nabhani & Bahous, 2016);
- Too many professional responsibilities (El Helou, Nabhani & Bahous, 2016; Sandilos et al., 2018),
- Low participation in decision making (Sandilos et al., 2018),
- Conservator and inefficient managing climate, which does not emphasize on collaboration (Craşovan & Ungureanu, 2010; El Helou, Nabhani & Bahous, 2016);
- Large number of pupils both in the classroom and school;
- Low motivation for performance due to the tenure and low promotion opportunities (Sandilos et al., 2018),
- The students affective needs and the children – teacher relationship (Aldrup et al., 2017)
- Low income (Popa, Laurian & Fitzgerald, 2015)
- Low social status;
- Lack of the social support (Cozolino, 2017);
- Integration of the special needs children,
- Small classrooms, with no utilities, accessories or teaching materials,
- Very frequent curriculum changes,
- Continuous training courses (Masari, Muntele & Curelariu, 2013),
- Continuous assessments for the teachers (Albu, 2013; Clipa, 2016; Cozolino, 2017; Kyriacou, 2001; Montgomery & Rupp, 2005; Popa, Clipa & Bonchis, 2015).

Other studies suggest clarifications of the stress factors in the environment and individual factors. Most of the stress factors can be identified in the work environment and include: inadequate work conditions, managerial problems, lack of resources, lack of support or excessive authority, not taking part in decision making, managerial climate. The work environment may include, as well, physical stress factors as: noise, agitation, crowd, small classrooms or school, safety, as well as managerial pressures,

the lack of support from the managers and the role's ambiguity (Hasting & Bham, 2003).

In order to empirically prove some of these stress sources of the teachers an investigative approach was used, based on the *Professional Stress Perception Questionnaire* (PSPQ) – adjusted after Kyriacou & Chien (2004). The study aimed to identify the teachers' perception regarding the stress experienced at work. Among the questions from the questionnaire there were a few which are important in proving the idea of professional stress resulted from their assessments and the ways the teachers perceive it in order to cope with the stressors. Thus, 120 teachers from Suceava answered the questionnaire. The subjective and objective items from the questionnaire aimed at the perception of the stress causes, the way they responded to it, related emotions and how they solved the problem in order to feel better.

The feelings related to the stress state, the estimation of the professional stress, giving up teaching, and stress degree from the actual teaching activity, the extent to which stress influences other aspects of life, stress sources from the teaching activity but also the recognition of some measures taken by the authorized institutions efficiency were also analysed. By filling in the first item of the questionnaire it was aimed at finding out with what terms from the emotional register (feelings) the teachers associate the working place stress. Terms is fear (6,7%), pressure (28 %), uncertainty (10%), frustration (6%), threat (13%), constraint (9%) and requirement (39%). From the data presented it can be noticed that most teachers associate professional stress to requirement, followed by pressure and uncertainty. It may be that requirement and pressure can be the result of the numerous roles teachers have and the tasks resulted from the teaching, but also from other administrative duties.

We think that the uncertainty could be the result of numerous changes done in Romanian educational system which make the profession less predictable. Stress is associated to a lesser extent with constraint, fear and frustration.

Teachers' perception on the fact that it is a very stressful profession was significantly appreciated by those. The great majority of the assessed teachers (84%) consider this job to be moderately to extremely stressful, fact that confirms that this is one of the most stressful jobs. Because of this stress level a high percentage of the teachers asserted that they are tempted to give up teaching. Their percentage is only 27%, fact that rises questions as to the stability of high standard human resources within the educational system. This is proved by the national and European reports which underline the fact that there is an increased tendency to leave the system especially from the beginner teachers (*The Teaching Profession in Europe*:

Practices, Perceptions and Policies, Eurydice Raport, 2015; Craşovan & Ungureanu, 2010).

Regarding the teachers' stress sources there can be mentioned: rapid changes in the system (72% to a great extent), permanent assessments (74%), wage (43 % extremely stressful), attending courses, meetings, and seminars doing overtime hours (41%), extra administrative work (64%), presenting demonstrative activities within the methodical commissions, groups or/and in order to receive teaching ranks which means assessment again (86 %). The large number of possible stress sources presented to the teachers who filled in the questionnaires allowed the shaping of some very important conclusions regarding the stressors.

In the first place, with little exceptions, all the possible stress factors have a medium to extremely strong impact on the participants, so finding solutions to reduce or eliminate the stress in teaching should become a priority for the improvement of the teaching process quality. It results that different stress sources have an important role to, sources linked to either the political instability (very often changes within the educational system), from the education given to the children by their parents in their first years of life (their inadequate behaviour towards the teacher) or even by the specific of the activity (assuming multiple roles).

In order to cope with the accumulated stress at their job, teachers call for some solutions: discussing problems with their family members, friends or colleagues (Aldrup et al., 2017), psychological counselling, taking part in training programs for personal development and resilience (Neves de Jesus et al., 2014; Sandilos et al., 2018), self-examination of the life style (Fengler, 2016) avoiding situations or persons who generated the stress, spending free time in nature, practicing physical relaxation exercises (Fengler, 2016), changing jobs, eating healthy food and taking pills, isolation and reflection on the situation. Among the measures considered by specialized institutions to be efficient for stress relieve are the following: avoiding educational politics changes, improving work conditions, suggesting objectives with a moderate level of accomplishment, a transparent, objective assessment, increasing wage and number of teachers, decreasing the number of pupils in a classroom, orientation on clear objectives, program implementation regarding stress management at the job, mini-brakes during work hours, time keeping (Fengler, 2016), an attitude full of kindness, positivism and gratitude, valuing these and the feeling of membership (Cozolino, 2017), development of the support groups and mentors for professional development (Aldrup et al., 2017), establishing flow in teaching, establishing spaces for stress relief at the job and improvement of the teaching wellbeing (Aldrup et al., 2017).

Conclusions:

The results from both studies reveal to us the whole picture of the assessment process as the teachers perceive it. It was ascertained that the assessment process depends on more factors: the subjects' age, educational system they come from and teaching experience. We can ascertain that a series of researchers from the field reached the same results (Kauchak, Peterson & Driscoll, 1985, Colby, Bradshaw & Joyner, 2002, Clipa, 2016, Cozolino, 2017; Masari, Muntele & Curelariu, 2013; Nasser, 2015; Popa, Laurian & Fitzgerald, 2015). Very important for teachers' assessment and the use of the European teacher portfolio is the introduction of the assessment culture even from their initial training (Clipa, 2016; Ingvarson & Chadbourne, 1997; Popa, Clipa & Bonchis, 2015), raising awareness that the criteria for the assessment should be varied (Albu, 2013; Boyd, 1989; Loup, Garland, Ellett, & Rugutt, 1996) and the competences be thoroughly selected according to the assessment aim and the impact on the teachers.

Studying the literature, it is noticed the multitude of orientations linked to the teachers' stress management, different intervention types being suggested, interventions that aim at either preventing, or diminishing, eliminating the stress from the work place.

Some of these aim at the individuals, namely the teachers, others at the education institution or work environment. We also have as an objective studying other factors that contribute to professional stress diminishing and creating a wellbeing state within school based on the empirical analysis and studying the literature. The conceptualization of the professional stress itself influences directly the way it is managed (Kenny și Cooper, 2003) and brings with it a series of measures to reduce the phenomenon.

The conclusions of the investigative steps as well as the synthesis of the literature indicates us the fact that there are efficient ways to trace the teachers' stress causes, that they have adequate ways of coping with it, and the assessment process, though necessary, could be improved so that it would not become a strong stress factor for the teachers and influence the educational process quality.

Bibliography:

- *** *Assuring Quality in Education: Policies and Approaches to School Evaluation in Europe*, 2015, (<http://bookshop.europa.eu/en/assuring-quality-in-education-pbEC0414939/?CatalogCategoryID=AGwKABstsBgAAAEjpJJEY4e5L>)
- *** *The Teaching Profession in Europe: Practices, Perceptions and Policies*, Eurydice Report, 2015, (<http://bookshop.europa.eu/is-bin/INTERSHOP.enfinity/WFS/EU->

- [Bookshop-Site/en_GB/-/EUR/ViewPublication-Start?PublicationKey=EC0115389](#)),
- Albu, G. (2013). *Grijile și îngrijorările profesorului*, Ed. Paralela 45, Pitești;
- Aldrup, K., Klusmann, U. & Ludtke, O. (2017) Does basic need satisfaction mediate the link between stress exposure and well-being? A diary study among beginning teachers, *Learning and Instruction*, 50, pp. 21-30,
- Bachkirova, T. (2005). Teacher stress and personal values: An exploratory study. *School Psychology International*, 26(3), 340-352.
- Blasé, J., (1986). A qualitative analysis of sources of teacher stress: Consequences for performance. *American Educational Research Journal*, 23(1).
- Boyle, G.J., Borg, M.G., Falzon, J.M. Baglioni, A.J. (1991) A structural model of the dimensions of teacher stress, *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 65 (1995), 49–67.
- Brate, A., Grecu, A. (2006). Diagnoza multidimensională a stresului ocupațional la profesorii din învățământul preuniversitar. *Revista de Psihologie Organizațională*, Vol. VI, nr. 1-2.
- Brown, Z. & Uehara, D. L., (1999) Coping with teacher stress: A research synthesis for pacific educators. *Pacific Resources for Education and Learning*, 1-32.
- Clipa, O. & Gavriluta, P. (2017). Early Childhood Education – Parents Perceptions *The European Proceedings of Social and Behavioural Sciences*, pp.1716-1723,
- Clipa, O., & Juravle, V. (2017). Development of Creativity in Primary School– Challenge and Possibilities. *The European Proceedings of Social and Behavioural Sciences* (EpSBS), pp.1724-1732,
- Clipa, O., (2015) Roles and strategies of Teacher Evaluation: Teacher perspectives. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 180, 2015, pp. 916-923, <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S187704281501589X>
- Clipa, O., (2015) Stress factors and Solutions for the Phenomenon of Burnout of Preschool Teachers. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 180, 2015, pp. 907-915, <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042815015876>
- Colomeischi, A.A., Colomeischi, T., & Clipa, O. (2014) Teacher Works Mentality and Work Satisfaction in Relation with Their Personality Traits. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 159, pp. 345-349, Elsevier – Science <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S187704281406515X>
- Cooper, C.L., & Marshall, J. (1976). Occupational sources of stress: A review of the literature relating to coronary heart disease and mental ill health. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 49, 11–28.
- Cooper, C.L., Cartwright, S., (2001) Organizational Management of Stress and Destructive Emotions at Work. In Payne R.L. și Cooper, C.L. (EDS), *Emotions at Work. Theory, Research and Applications for Management*, Chichester, England, John Wiley and Sons,
- Cozolino, L. (2017). *Predarea bazată pe atașament. Cum să creezi o clasă tribală*. Ed. Trei, București;
- Crașovan, M & Ungureanu, D. (2010). Teachers' convictions and beliefs regarding the professional debut, *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2, pp. 2829–2835.

- Dick, R., & Wagner, U. (2001) Stress and strain in teaching: a structural equation approach, *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 71(2001), pp. 243–259.
- El Helou, M., Nabhani, M., & Bahous, R. (2016) Teacher s views on causes leading to their burnout, *School Leadership & Management*,
- Fengler, J. (2016) *Burnout. Strategii pentru prevenirea epuizării profesionale*. Ed Trei, București.
- Fimian, M.J. (1984). The development of an instrument to measure occupational stress in teachers: The teacher stress inventory. *The British Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 57, 277-293.
- Gano-Garcia, F.J., Padilla-Munoz, E.V., & Carassco-Ortiz, M.G. (2005). Personality and contextual variables in teacher burnout, *Personality and Individual Differences*, vol. 38, pp. 929 – 940.
- Ghiațau, R. (2016). *Evaluarea profesorilor. Evoluții și provocări*, Ed. Institutul European, Iași.
- Gramaticu, O. (2011). *Stresul ocupațional în grădinițele cu program prelungit. Impactul schimbărilor în structura educațională asupra resursei umane din învățământul preșcolar* (teză de doctorat) – Iași.
- Griffith, J., Steptoe, A., & Cropley, M. (1999). An investigation of coping strategies associated with job stress in teachers. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 69, 517-531.
- Guglielmi, R., & Tatrow, K. (1998). Occupational stress, burnout, and health in teachers: A methodological and theoretical analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 68(1), 61-99.
- Hartney, E. (2008). *Stress Management for Teachers*, Continuum International Publishing Group, London.
- Hastings, R., & Bham, M. (2003). The relationship between student behaviour patterns and teacher burnout. *School Psychology International*, 24(1), 115-127.
- Ignat, A.A., & Clipa, O. (2012). Teachers satisfaction with life, job satisfaction and their emotional intelligence. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 33, pp. 498–502, Elsevier – Science Direct
<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042812001796>;
- Griffith, J., Steptoe, A., & Cropley, M. (1999). Una investigación sobre estrategias de afrontamiento asociadas con el estrés laboral en maestros, *British Journal Education Psychology*, 69, pp. 517–531
- Kantas, A. (1995). *Group processes-conflict-development and change- culture-occupational stress*. Athens: Greek Letters.
- Kitchen; H., et al (2017). Romania 2017, OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education, OECD Publishing, Paris,
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264274051-en>
- Kyriacou, C., & Chien, P. (2004). Teacher stress in Taiwanese primary schools. *Journal of Educational Enquiry*, 5(2), 86-104.
- Kyriacou, C. (2001). Teacher stress: Directions for future research. *Educational Review*, 53(1), 27-35.

- Masari, G., Muntele, D., & Curelariu, V. (2013). Motivation, work-stress and somatic symptoms of Romanian preschool and primary school teachers. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 84, pp. 332-335.
- Mongomery, C., & Rupp, A. (2005). A Meta-Analysis for Exploring the Diverse Causes and Effects of Stress in Teachers. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 28(3), 458 -486.
- Nasser, F.A.A. (2015). Teacher Stress and Coping: The Role of Personal and Job Characteristics. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 185, 374-380.
- Neves de Jesus, S., Miguel-Tobal, J.J., Rus, C.L., Viseu, J., & Gamboa, V. (2014). Evaluating the effectiveness of a stress management training on teachers and physicians' stress related outcomes. *Clinica y Salud*, 25, pp. 111-115.
- Popa, C., Laurian, S., Fitzgerald, C. (2015). An insight perspective of Finland's educational system. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences Journal*, 180(2015), 104-112,
- Popa, C., Clipa, O., Bochis, L. (2015). Academic Optimism of Primary School Teachers, *Rethinking Social Action. Core Values*, Ed. Medimond Publishing Company, Bologna, Italy, ed. Lumen, pp. 1059-1061.
- Sandilos, L.E., Goble, P., Rimm-Kaufman, S.E., & Pianta, R. (2018). Does professional development reduce the influence of teacher stress on teacher–child interactions in pre-kindergarten classrooms?, *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 42, 280-290.
- Sparks, S. (2017). *How teacher' stress affects students: a research roundup*, <https://www.edweek.org/tm/articles/2017/06/07/bon-teachers-stress-affects-students-a-research.html>
- Sutton, R. (1984). Job stress among primary and secondary schoolteachers: Its relationship to ill-being. *Work and Occupations*, 11(1).
- Travers, C.J., & Cooper, C.L. (1996). *Teachers under pressure: Stress in the teaching profession*. London, UK: Routledge.