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*Original Paper*

## Teacher Frustration as an Area of Research Interest

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### **Abstract**

The regular education teacher or general education teacher is on the proverbial “front lines” day in and day out in terms of providing educational services to a wide variety of students.

Some of these teachers are well prepared, some poorly prepared in perhaps various realms and some minimally prepared in that they are teaching out of their area of expertise.

Teacher turnover is probably at an all-time high- and statistics indicate that teachers are leaving the field in droves and seeking employment in other related fields.

This paper will attempt to explore some of the reasons that teachers experience frustration, exasperation and in some instances, downright disgust with some situations and some school districts.

It is hypothesized that by bringing these issues to the attention of the American public that policy makers and others will begin to understand the factors and variables that contribute to teacher turnover and teacher burn out.

Some preliminary work has been done by Mee and Haverback (2014) as they explored middle school teachers, their commitment, preparations and early career frustrations and found Keith Trigwell (2012) of Australia examined the relations and relationship between teachers’ emotions in terms of their teaching and realms of pedagogy and their approaches to teaching in higher education.

Chang (2009) did an extensive examination and appraisal of teacher burnout- exploring the sometimes overwhelming emotional work of teachers.

### **1. Causes of Teacher Frustration**

All too often, teachers have students that are included in their classes. These students range from emotionally disturbed to students with hay fever, allergies, asthma and juvenile rheumatoid arthritis. Teachers do not always receive the training that they think they need to work with these various populations, or it is very superficial in a rushed hurried fashion. Often the medical condition is minimized, but in other instances the teacher may even be asked to attend some type of training to learn to administer oxygen.

#### 1) Lack of Supplies.

One perennial realm of concern voiced by teachers is the amount of money that they have to spend on supplies. They purchase large amounts of paper clips, reams and reams of paper and various other objects of instruction.

#### 2) Professional Development and The Issue of Deficiencies

Quite frequently, teachers have a professional development day. They may receive some Danish or pastries or perhaps even donuts and perhaps some luke-warm coffee or watered down orange juice. But the over-riding response to these professional development things is “waste of time”. Now there has been SOME research on professional growth and development endeavors but there does seem to be a disconnect between what the teachers believe that they want and what administrators think that they need (or perhaps the professional development was simply nearby and handy- or a friend of a friend of a friend.

### 3) Legal issues

When there are suspected drugs in the schools, teachers are rightly concerned- but often apprehending and confronting the offenders is difficult. Students will laughingly tell teachers that “they know their rights” and some apparently do know what teachers can and cannot do in a public school in the United States of America.

Further confounding this problem is when students simply get what could be construed as a “slap on the wrist” for a major offense. Rules and regulations are set up for a specific purpose- to ensure the safety of all in the schools. Some schools have a specific disciplinary matrix so that teachers can be guided and be aware that bringing a weapon or drugs to the school can result in fairly severe penalties. Typically, there is some committee that evaluates these cases.

### 4) Changing Nomenclature, Changing Approaches

Every few years teachers are confronted with some new terminology, that seems to darken the educational landscape and portends poorly for teachers. Witness the explosion of new descriptors that have taken place over the last ten years. Further, witness the increase in the number of students with exceptionalities.

For many years, the blackboard was the instrument of instruction, then filmstrips and slides and then those HUGE Video Disks and most lately, “lap tops” so that students can learn at home and receive instruction from faculty via ZOOM or SKYPE or online.

5) Parents--there are parents who never respond to texts or e-mails or correspondences and there are parents who rate the proverbial “helicopter” parent moniker- and they are around all of the time causing some consternation and anxiety. Many beginning teachers indicate that they have minimal skills in terms of conducting a parent teacher conference or have minimal skills in terms of working with complaining parents.

6) Inappropriately placed students. In the current zeitgeist of inclusion, many visually impaired, hearing impaired, children with autism, traumatic brain injury and other health impairments have been placed in regular education classes, and teachers have received minimal, if any, training to work with said students, some of whom have multiple disabilities or handicaps.

7) Changing curriculum changing rules and regulations, changing procedures and in two words- constant change has beleaguered teachers for years. For several years, teachers heard the words “accountability” then “fidelity” then “integrity” and now “substantive”.

While each of these words are important, the constant emphasizing, and then changing from one key critical word to another becomes tedious.

8) Diversity issues- Faced with increased diversity, teachers are often at a loss to cope with the increasing diversity found in the schools. Most teachers are professionals and are sensitive, while other teachers have some difficulty relating and establishing rapport with students from different races, cultures and ethnicities. The vast majority of teachers are culturally sensitive and aware and attempt to treat all students with respect.

## **2. How DO teachers cope with Frustration?**

Ted Sizer, in his “Horace” books (1984, 1992, 1997) outlined the frustrations that teachers feel and indicated a bit about how the typical high school teacher attempted to cope with ongoing interruptions and lack of academic integrity at times. The “Horace” books documented the continual interruptions and the other frivolous non-academic endeavors (pep rallies, assemblies) that confront teachers who want to do a good job of educating students. Each of these books provides a foundational understanding for the realm of frustrations in teaching.

## **3. Resignations and Retraining**

Some teachers decide to leave the field, some leave their state or district, some decide to move up the administrative ladder and some pursue a total career change. For some the change is satisfying professionally, for others, they maintain some contact with the school in other ways- for example,

coaching.

John Goodlad in his seminal work “A Place Called School” (1984) also indicated his concerns about the moral dimensions of teaching and addressed some of these issues in his other later book co-edited by Goodlad, Soder, and Sicotnik (1993).

Currently, the nation has been struck by this COVID-19 virus, putting a great deal of stress on teachers, parents, principals and administrators. Many teachers were totally unprepared and while some were unprepared, some who were “technologically savvy” were able to make a quick transition.

This appears to be a totally new realm of investigation- how teachers have had to cope with becoming online instructors in a very brief period of time.

#### **4. Summary and Conclusions**

Increasingly teachers are being recognized for the immense amount of work that they have been doing and. parents and others are beginning to realize the critical, crucial role they play in the education of their children as well as the optimal functioning of society. One can only investigate if teachers need additional emotional support or even counseling and if so, who would be providing it, and the impact of teacher emotions and frustrations on the teacher’s immediate family.

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