CHAPTER-III

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

3.1 Introduction

This chapter mainly discusses about the title of the study, the definition of key terms involved in the title both theoretically and operationally, the variables of the study, population of the study, the objectives set for the study, the assumption based on which the study has been done, the hypotheses set for the study, the scope of the present study in educational and psychological field, the need and importance of the study in research perspective and delimitation of the present study. In brief this chapter provides the detailed syntax of the research work done by the investigator.

3.2 Statement of the Problem

The present study has been taken up to examine “Occupational Stressors and Coping Strategies of Teachers with Special reference to Inclusive Education”.

3.3 Operational Definition of Key Terms Used in the Study

Occupational Stressors

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) defined stressors as an element in the environment that is appraised by the individual as threatening their well being.

Operationally the term occupational stressor refers to the something in the environment that acts as a stimulus, and is physical, psychological or behavioural in nature of teachers in inclusive educational settings.
Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is the practice that provides school experiences to children with special needs, in the same school and classrooms they would have attended anyway had they not had special needs. It is a process during which all children, regardless of their abilities and need, participate in the same school (Thomas, 1997).

Operationally the term Inclusive education means all type of children who are abled and disabled being able to learn together in regular education setting from childhood to adulthood or in community education settings, with appropriate networks of support and resources.

Coping Strategies

Folkman and Lazarus (1980, cited in Rice, 1992, p. 269), define coping “as all cognitive and behavioural efforts to master, reduce, or tolerate demands.” Adding to this definition, Matheny (1986, p. 509), defined coping as “any effort, healthy or unhealthy, conscious or unconscious, to prevent, eliminate, or weaken stressors, or to tolerate their effects in the least hurtful manner.”

In this study operationally the term coping strategies refers to the techniques or methods teachers adopt to overcome the occupational stress.

3.4 Objectives of the Study

Major Objective of the Study

The major objective of the study is to find out the occupational stressors and coping strategies of teachers with special reference to Inclusive Education.
Specific Objectives of the Study

1. To develop a tool to assess the occupational stressors of special teachers and general teachers with special reference to inclusive education.
2. To develop a tool to assess the use of coping strategies of special educators and general teachers with special reference to inclusive education.
3. To identify the level of occupational stress experienced by the special educators and general teachers in inclusive education.
4. To identify the level of utility of coping strategies by special educators and general teachers working in inclusive education.
5. To develop and implement Inclusive Coping Strategies (ICS) for Occupational Stress experienced by the special educators and general teachers working in inclusive education.
6. To find out the significant difference if any in the occupational stress experienced by the experimental and control group before implementing Inclusive Coping Strategies (ICS).
7. To find out the significant difference if any in the occupational stress experienced by the experimental and control group after implementing Inclusive Coping Strategies (ICS).
8. To find out the significant difference if any in the occupational stress and use of coping strategies experienced by special educators and general teachers in inclusive education due to variation in their personal variables.
3.5 Assumptions of the study

1. It is possible to develop a tool to assess the occupational stressors of teachers working in inclusive educational set up.
2. The occupational stress level may vary in the teachers working in the inclusive educational set up.
3. It is possible to develop and implement Inclusive Coping Strategies (ICS) for special educators and general teachers in inclusive education.

3.6 Hypotheses of the Study

The hypotheses of the study are:

1. There exist different levels of occupational stress among special educators and general teachers working in inclusive education as a whole.
2. There are different occupational stressors that induce occupational stress among special educators and general teachers working in inclusive education as a whole.
3. There exist difference in the use of coping strategies to reduce the occupational stress among special educators and general teachers working in inclusive education as a whole.
4. Inclusive coping strategies (ICS) are effective to reduce the occupational stress of special educators and general teachers working in inclusive education.
5. There exists no significant difference in the mean scores of occupational stress of control and experimental group of teachers working in inclusive setup in pre assessment.
6. There exists significant difference in the occupational stress mean scores of control and experimental group of teachers working in inclusive setup at post assessment.

7. There exists no significant difference in the occupational stress mean scores of control group teachers working in inclusive setup at pre and post assessment.

8. There exists significant difference in the occupational stress mean scores of experimental group teachers working in inclusive setup at pre and post assessment.

9. There is no significant difference in the mean scores of occupational stress of teachers working in Tamilnadu and Kerala control group of pre and post assessment

10. There is no significant difference in the mean scores of occupational stress of teachers working in Tamilnadu and Kerala experimental group of pre and post assessment

11. There is no significant difference in the mean scores of occupational stress of teacher working in Tamilnadu due to variation in their personal variables

12. There is no significant difference in the mean scores of occupational stress of teacher working in Kerala due to variation in their personal variables

3.7 Scope of the Study

The success of inclusive education programs depends to a large extent on the teachers working in inclusive education schools. The multiple roles played by the special teachers in varied conditions exert lot of stress and strain on them. The prolonged stress and strain ultimately leads to job dissatisfaction. Research
studies on the occupational stress of inclusive school teachers helps them to identify the hard spots of the systems and facilities for providing better conducive environment to the students with diverse needs and to overcome their occupational stress. The present study intends to study the occupational stress and the source of stress/stressors and the coping strategies used by the teachers in an inclusive set up. The study is aimed to find out the levels of stress experienced by the special and general teachers while handling children with special needs. The study also aimed to study different types of coping strategies adopted by the teachers to overcome their occupational stress. With the survey result the study also intend to develop an Inclusive Coping Strategies (ICS) for teachers in inclusive education. Further the developed strategies will be implemented to the batch of teachers who exhibited high level of occupational stress. Effectiveness of the inclusive coping strategies and the effect of personal variables on the occupational stress will be statistically studied in this study. Thus this study aimed to provide inclusive coping strategies for the special and general teachers to overcome their occupational stress in inclusive educational settings and to make the inclusion concept to be functional.

3.8 Need for the Study

Teaching is considered as an important occupation with high responsibilities and commitments and the role played by teacher is very important in the scenario of education. Teachers play a diversified role inside and outside of the class room. A class room is considered as a miniature society representing different types of pupils with difference in abilities and disabilities. It is therefore,
the duty of the teacher to provide learning experience suited to all types of
children to achieve better outcome and all round development of the child. It is
very essential that teacher should be aware about the suitable teaching approaches
and theories to provide suitable learning environment for a heterogeneous group
of learners. Several studies have been undertaken to study the teachers’ roles and
responsibilities in an inclusive schools. Some studies have also been carried out to
find out the stressors and coping strategies of teachers in inclusive schools. An
toniou, Alexander-Stamatos et.,al (2009) investigated the specific work
related stressors affecting special educational needs teachers in Greece and the
coping strategies applied by them. The results identified five key stressors loading
mainly onto the domains of working conditions, work load and organizational
problems which appear to have an impact on teachers of special educational needs
students in Greece. Platsidou, Maria and Agaliotis, Joannis (2008) studied the
burnout, job satisfaction and Instructional Assignment- related Sources of Stress
in Greek Special Education Teachers. The results indicated that the teachers
reported average to low levels of burnout. They reported moderately high levels
of satisfaction with their job, the principal, and the school organization as a
whole. They also reported average satisfaction with work conditions and low
satisfaction with prospects of promotion and pay. Four factors were identified on
the job related stress factors: teaching in a multi-category classrooms, programme
organization and implementation, assessment of students, and collaborations with
other special education experts and parents. Forlin, Chris (1996) questioned
inclusion – Is it stressful for teachers. The researcher involved 225 regular
primary school teachers and 42 principals in Western Australia found that the inclusion of a child with a mild intellectual disability significantly increased the educator’s appraisal of stress severity. Forlin, Chris (1998) investigated the ways in which Australian regular class teachers cope during inclusive education and the specific issues which are stressful for them. The study was undertaken in primary schools in Queensland, Australia, during 1997. The discussion with the teachers focused on aspects of inclusion that regular class teachers found stressful and the ways in which they coped with the difficulties they encountered, the availability and usefulness of support structures, and the benefits obtained. The top four stressful issues included teacher accountability for the child’s educational outcomes, the child physically attacking others, obtaining funding, and reduced ability to teach other students. Effective coping strategies were maintaining a sense of humour, making a plan of action and following it, and discussing the situation with specialist personnel. Forlin, Charis (2001) identified the potential stressors for regular class teachers in inclusion. Source of stress included their perceived competence, their concern that the education of the majority of students not be affected, and the behaviour of the child with disabilities. Gyimah, Emmanuel et al. (2008) investigated the emotional reactions to inclusion of Ghanaian Mainstream Teachers. The analysis involved five bi-polar emotional reactions; namely anxious / relaxed; encouraged / discouraged; confident/ diffident; satisfied/dissatisfied; self-assured/worried. The results confirmed that in teaching children with special needs in the mainstream, teachers experienced psychological stress. On the basis of the findings, suggestions for more
information about special needs education, supply of resources and inter-agency collaboration were made.

Teachers working in inclusive school settings set back in their work situation when there is too much demand and over expectations of the job in inclusive classroom, lack of facilities for inclusion to carry out the teachers’ professional responsibilities, lack of clarity on the teacher’s roles and responsibilities in an inclusive classroom, conflict on the policy vision of inclusion with realities of daily teachers’ professional life, lack of flexibility in organisation of inclusive class, lack of flexibility in using creative methods for inclusive class, school leader’s attitude and behaviour of authorities towards inclusion, lack of recognition from the school leaders for the job well done by the teachers in an inclusive classroom, lack of effective management in the school for inclusion, lack of cooperation from school leaders for inclusion, pressure for individual attention in inclusive classroom, lack of evaluation procedures for students in inclusive classroom, pressure of sharing responsibilities between special and regular class teachers, too much time for preparing Individualised education plan (IEP) for all students in inclusive classroom, lack of knowledge to design Individualised education plan (IEP), too much time on development of curricular adaptations and materials, lack of special education training to meet the demands of the inclusive class, lack of opportunities for professional enhancement in the form of participating in professional meetings/seminars/conference related to inclusion, working hours allotment for instruction in inclusive class, difficulty in evolving the methods to meet the needs
of an diversified special needs students in inclusive classroom, frequent feeling of mental and physical discomfort that impair the working relationship with the school leaders in the school and too much expectation from the parents of children with special needs. The above issues create stress on teachers to accept and deliver inclusive classroom responsibilities. It can lift the teachers’ mood, increase their energy, and make them to feel stressed in their work situation.

But as the concept of inclusion is gaining momentum an in depth analysis is warranted in to find out the coping strategies to reduce the stress factors to implement inclusion successfully. It is very essential to explore the occupational stressors of teachers and necessary coping strategies to enhance the academic achievement of the children with special needs in inclusive set up. The Inclusive Coping Strategies will make the teachers to develop better insight to reduce their occupational stress and the ways and means to improve scholastic achievement and core intelligences of the diverse group of children in inclusive schools. The present study also aimed in this direction to identify the professional stress with special reference to Inclusive Education and suggest some coping strategies to the teachers.

3.9 Delimitation of the Study

1. The present study is confined only to the special educators and general teachers in Tamilnadu and Kerala State of India.

2. The study is further confined to the districts - Sivagangai, Ramanathapuram, Erode, Vellore of Tamilnadu and districts - Palakkad, Malappuram, Wayanad in Kerala
3. Rating Scale is the only tool used to assess the occupational stress among teachers working in inclusive education

4. Rating Scale is the only tool used to assess the use of coping strategies among teachers in inclusive education

5. An Inclusive Coping Strategies (ICS) included in the study is a collection of Strategies designed with literature base

The methodology is presented in the next chapter.