

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

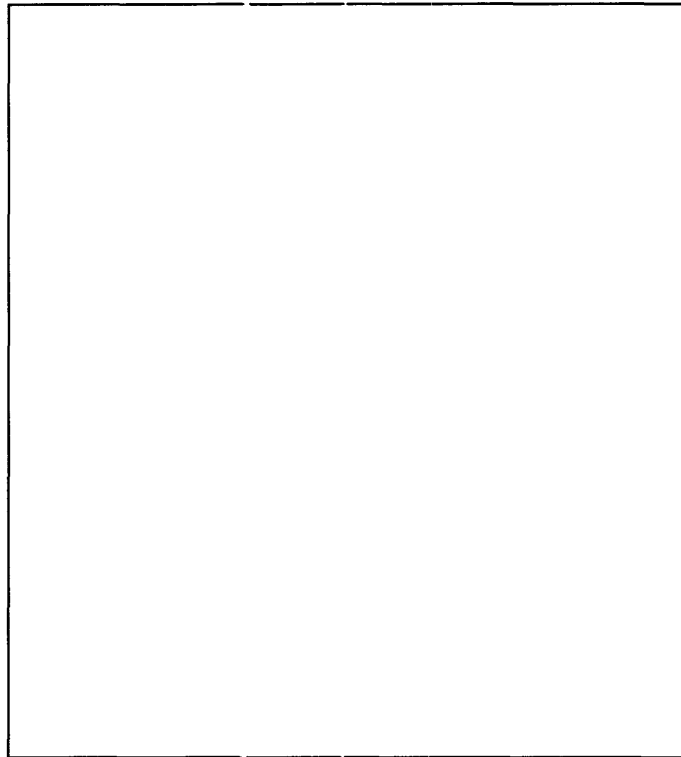
The purpose of this thesis is to observe, describe and analyse the physiological, psychological and work demands that are associated with episodes of stress in a principal's working week. Previous studies by Sieverding (1985) identified a relationship between job stress and certain managerial tasks as defined by Mintzberg (1973). The researcher seeks to test these relationships in a group of primary school principals using a combination of techniques including:

- \* Observation of the principals during their full working week;
- \* Continuous physiological measurement throughout the week by the use of an Ambulatory Blood Pressure Monitor and matching recorded movements in blood pressure with the activities of the principal.

In so doing the researcher also seeks to discover the role of the psychological perspective in the stress equation. A Conceptual Model will be presented which provides the framework within which the study will be conducted. The model guides the research by providing a visual map and organising the literature and overall focus. This investigation is based on a transactional and wholistic understanding of stress and is a field based qualitative study that takes into account aspects of the mind (Psychological Perspective), a life for principals

**outside school (Lifestyle/Workstyle Perspective) and the importance of the body (Physiological Perspective).**

In many respects workplace stress is a vexed question for the public chiefly because the messages related to it are often confused. Examples of the black and white cartoonist's sharp wit are commonplace in all places of employment:



(Finger, 1994: 37)

Commonplace too are articles which portray a vastly different tale. Consideration of the first article below reveals that, while those in authority expect to be challenged on occasions, this situation is almost beyond comprehension. Consideration of the second article reveals the stress involved in a three-month public investigation which called 200 witnesses and then found

no fault or blame thus clearing the principal and teachers. These are examples of the darker, sober side of the problem of stress in schools.

**THREE US SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS MURDERED IN THREE MONTHS.**

When James Adams, superintendent of schools in Lee County, Florida, was shot to death in February this year, he became the third US school administrator in as many months to be murdered on the job.

According to police, Adams assailant was a former teacher who had resigned from his special education job last October, citing stress. After arranging a meeting with Adams, the teacher entered his office, was greeted with a handshake and shot the superintendent six times- including a final shot to the back of the head. The teacher suicided.

The incident followed two other shootings of school executives in recent months...  
(Finger, 1994: 2).

**SCARED TEACHERS DEMAND REVIEW.**

Allegations against four Fig Tree Pocket State School Staff have sparked off calls for a revision of Education Department Guidelines for investigating parent complaints. A meeting of 140 teachers yesterday condemned the department's investigation process.

The dispute, which threatened to escalate to a teacher strike yesterday, was over 22 allegations against three teachers and the principal at the school.

A three month investigation involving interviews of 200 witnesses did not recommend any disciplinary action be taken...  
(Courier-Mail, May 5: 1995).

Perhaps both articles are symbolic of today's world which works in a charged atmosphere "seething and bubbling with change, disorder and process" (Toffler in Prigogine et al., 1984). Instead of stability and order, organisations operate in a social, political and economic climate characterised by uncertainty

and disillusionment. This in turn, affects every level of the organisation and in schools the phenomenon is felt "from the classroom to departmental head office, and, more often than not these days, onto the Ministerial suite in Parliament House" (Sungaila, 1990: 4). The chaotic nature of our society requires heroic things of leaders at every level. Sungaila believes that large-scale administrative reform will never achieve a qualitatively different regime even though the emphasis on leadership is greater than ever before (1990: 20). Leadership is an aspect of administrative studies that McCorley (1988) believes reflects "false starts, dead ends and bitter controversies". Indeed the literature in educational management rarely agrees on any particular aspect. There is, however, a growing and increasingly unanimous belief that effective leaders are the essential ingredients of successful schools (Grady, 1989: 36). Murphy espouses the view that "if belief in leadership as the ticket to organisational success waxes and wanes, it is clearly in the ascendant at the moment" (1988: 654). He goes on to proclaim leadership as "today's top tune".

**This study focuses on the school principal as the site leader and the comments on leadership which follow appertain to the function of the principal.**

Leadership has been studied for years and has been the subject of many conferences called to recognise its great importance. Each generation of educational leaders since the nineteenth century has carried labels that "with reasonable accuracy capture the social role and underlying value perceptions for those occupying the role" (Kerchner, 1988: 381). Kerchner identifies four

periods of educational leadership since the turn of the century, lists their core values and suggests a metaphorical role for administrators in the table below:

**Table 1**

**Implications of Four Periods of Educational Leadership**

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- 1 Evangelical Period: Evangelical Ministers- *Morality and Industriousness*
  - 2 Progressive Period: Social Engineers- *Achievement*
  - 3 Period of Discontent: Street Level Politicians- *Equity*
  - 4 Period of Choice: Bureaucratic Entrepreneurs- *Liberty or Choice*
- (1988: 383).

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Grady contends that the most recent perspectives on leadership reflect a change in values. Key words found in the leadership literature in the 1990s to support this claim include: **leadership density, vision building, character values, empowerment, moral behaviour, total quality management and effective habits.** Over the past four years these new watchwords have gained in popularity in the literature and reflect new insights and challenges for school principals.

Greenfield argues that:

Organisations are the facade that cover individual attention and will, they are the marionette show that dazzles and deceives an audience - an audience of people who will themselves to believe the performance. But behind the facade are human actors who will do what they want to do (1986: 152).

If this is true, then the leadership qualities of these "actors" is the most critical aspect of any organisation. Greenfield argues further that our personal values are based on effort, intention and will and maintains that, to the extent that values differ, there will be differences in effort, intention and will. It follows that leaders of successful schools, who hold and espouse certain values, will be

followed by a community that shares the same values (Grady, 1989: 38).

The new watchwords for school principals in the nineties overlap and complement each other. They require principals to be "innovative, practical, open to change, competitive, productive and visionary" (Kaufman and Hirumi, 1992: 33). With such a challenging role description a pertinent question may well be, "Can anyone expect school principals to live up to the watchwords and values that are now emerging?" The realities of working life today are pointed out by Murphy who contends:

For most of us, our workaday lives are swamps, bogs, quagmires of fragmentation and petty detail from which we have trouble extricating ourselves for a moment of reflection on and action towards grander, heroic purposes and processes (1988: 654).

Think back to the grand ideals demanded of today's leaders and the humour in Murphy's line, "When you are up to your ass in alligators it is difficult to remind yourself that your initial objective was to drain the swamp" (1988: 654), makes a telling point. Ideals don't always immediately match up with reality in a fragmented and chaotic world where people live and work in various types of "swamps".

An important aspect of this study is the examination of the new emphasis in the leadership and management literature and the implications for school principals. The nature of schooling and education is rapidly changing and society's expectations are higher and more critical than ever before. Lazarus (1961) coined the term "Age of Anxiety". We are now in a new age, with a

new generation of leaders, and yet we may not have left the Age of Anxiety. Continued study of the principalship is vital. While research points to the way ahead, Fine cautions people in the caring professions to be guarded in the vigorous pursuit of the future because "we sometimes fail to look back and see if we have left something of value behind" (1991: 501). Precious and central components of solid practice may be left in the wake of change. Researchers and practitioners alike need to be careful to identify those attributes that are absolutely essential from the past and blend these with new qualities and methods to ensure that in an age of fluctuation and uncertainty the art of principal leadership remains a powerful force.

In medieval times the life of the Court Jester was fraught with danger. Far from being a simple clown to amuse the Crown and Court, his role was to challenge the King's authority in an irreverent manner, admonish him and draw public attention to injustice and dubious procedures. The jester walked a fine line and no doubt many paid the ultimate price. Sungaila suggests that the principal today must play a similar role to the Court Jester and "make waves, shake and rock the boat" (1990: 11). No one else is in a better position to make these challenges in schools. Alcoholics Anonymous has a regularly used quote at its meetings: "You can't talk the talk until you walk the walk". People will never understand the talk of leadership and all its fine implications until they walk the path of leadership.

Covey quotes T.S. Eliot as his model for continuing discovery:

We must not cease from exploration. And the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we began and know the place for the first time (1990: 319).

The leadership role of the principalship necessitates continued exploration. It is difficult to dispute Greenfield's view that "Education is a deeply mysterious process, and so is the business of being a leader" (1986: 167).

### **1.01 Why We Need to Understand and Manage Stress**

School leaders today labour in a society with changing values. It is a time of great economic and social upheaval where many well established values come under scrutiny. Anecdotal evidence turned up by CBS News in the United States listed the seven top problems of schools in the 1940s as:

- \* Talking out of turn
- \* Chewing gum
- \* Making noise
- \* Running in the halls
- \* Cutting in line
- \* Dress code infractions and
- \* Littering

By the 1980s the seven top problems had changed somewhat and had been identified as: suicide, assault, robbery, rape, drug abuse, alcohol abuse and pregnancy (Courier Mail, July 29: 1993). The American experience may well be what our society is facing now. European countries are also enduring the pains of a disturbing change in attitudes and newspaper reports of the situation in Germany recount stories of teachers undergoing judo courses to combat unruly and violent students in classes where drug abuse leads to ugly confrontations (The Australian, September 29: 1993). Schools are not exempt from close



examination and in times of rapid change they are often blamed as the cause of society's real or imagined ills.

Many people- and particularly parents and those in the worlds of business and government- are looking at schools to achieve continuous improvement in student learning outcomes and at how schools can become more effective as institutions (Evans, 1993: 1).

These high expectations are directed at the typical institution where not everything is perfect. Handy recalls some of his unhappiest moments have been in organisations where:

It seems quite respectable to do things in organisations which you would never do in private life. I have had people insult me to my face in front of my colleagues. I have had my feelings rammed down my throat on the pretext that it would do me good, and have been required to do things which I didn't agree with because the organisation wished it. And then there are all those games which organisations play, the political battles over what we can spend, who works for whom, or who sits where, or who is paid what (1991: 76).

Steering clear of the pitfalls listed above requires a significant level of leadership and management dexterity by principals. In recent years the principal's role has taken on many new expectations, and not all of them in curriculum. Principals now require an appreciation of gender equity, social justice, class, legalities and public relations. Why then, do so many well meaning, knowledgeable, sensible people work in such places? Does it have to be so tedious, so political and so awful? Handy believes not, and suggests that the best organisations are those that are not obsessed with their own innards (1991: 77). Schools that are obsessed with their clients and how to serve them in the finest ways will achieve the above goals and perform at a lofty level.

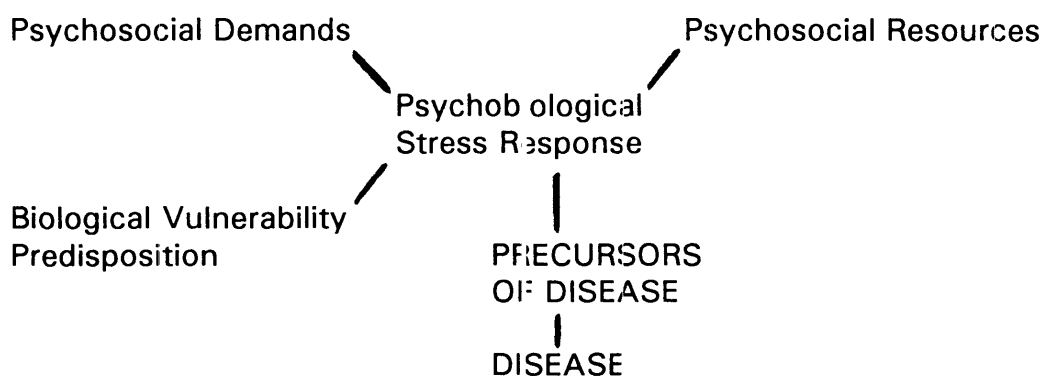
It is because these new understandings are required of principals that this study is so important. The dimensions of the role are multi-disciplinary and require a multi-talented person to perform them with the excellence that society demands. There is no doubt that associated with this challenge is the spectre of increasing stress. **Principals need to know which leadership and management tasks have the potential to cause them stress, where their personal potencies and deficiencies are and how they cope physically and mentally with the job. These specific issues are covered in this study.**

The following section examines two reasons why there is a need to better understand and manage stress in principals. Firstly, the links between stress and illness, while debatable within the medical community, are definitely worth exploring, and secondly, principals face increased stress as the role continues to gather new obligations due to the changing realities of modern society.

## **1.02 Stress and Illness**

The notion that stress and illness are linked has generated a vast literature. Kasl (1983: 79) reports that while stress related illness has a high marquee value with the ability to capture the attention of the mass media and general public, any statement beyond the fact that stressful life occurrences cause illness in populations is "likely to stir up controversy". Kasl cites the example of poverty in large populations where it co-exists and co-occurs with the interrelated problems of "physical illness, mental illness, low income, social disorganisation, broken families, poor housing and so on". The social scientist is

"stymied in any effort to unravel these and label some causes and other effects" (1983: 79). Knight (1987: 53) describes the stress/illness debate as a "real minefield" but still asks the question: "Is it possible therefore, for stress to cause not only the physical symptoms .... but also real physical illness with definite pathology?" Steptoe (1991: 633) argues that the most influential theoretical models of recent years have concentrated on factors such as social support, personal resources and the coping process, while models of the mechanism linking stress with illness have not kept pace with experimental and clinical observations. Steptoe (1991: 634-635) suggests the figure below as a useful way to examine the disease process. Disease occurs when psychosocial demands outweigh a person's psychosocial resources. Important factors in psychosocial demands include intensity, chronicity and complexity of the stimulation and its novelty, predicability and potential controllability. On the balancing side Steptoe lists resources as "prior experience with threatening encounters, personal qualities such as optimism and hardiness, together with external factors such as social networks and support" (1991: 634).



**Figure 1**  
**The Disease Process**

One of the attractions of this view on how disease occurs in the stress process is that it pays great attention to the particular demands on people and the resources they have at their disposal. That the occupation of teacher can be stress laden is amply documented (Cherniss, 1980; Pines, Aronson and Kafry, 1981; Dworkin, 1987). Dworkin, Hanley and Telschow report recent research findings indicate that the correlates and consequences of stress include:

exhaustion, depression, estrangement from work, powerlessness, alienation, burnout, depersonalisation and the meaninglessness of work (1990: 61).

Their research relates specifically to teachers and maintains that a typical urban classroom situation is a breeding ground for stress because teachers must

... interact with a multitude of students, parents, colleagues and administrators, each of whom has different problems and makes different demands, requires that the teacher make personalistic responses to individuals who may have unpredictable problems (1990: 61).

The sentiments expressed here for the class teacher can easily and accurately be related to the school principal. The common physical symptoms of excess stress have been well documented. Adams nominates these as:

tension, headache, diarrhoea or constipation, common cold, backache, infection, allergy, flu, arthritis, migraine, hypertension, dizziness and ulcers (1980: 198).

Figler (1980), Sedgwick (1983), Knight (1987) and Cooper, Sieverding and Muth (1988) are among the many researchers to document lists not dissimilar to the above. Rather than individually list a wide range of possible bodily misfunctions, Sutherland groups them under several systems including cardiovascular, respiratory, gastrointestinal, neurologic, immune and endocrine (1991: 161).

**This study has a special focus on the cardiovascular system and measures pulse and blood pressure in principals as they go about their working day. There is a growing body of evidence that links coronary heart disease (CHD) and stress (Eysenck, 1983: 103). What physiological toll do increased job pressures exact on principals? Is it measurable and able to be related to specific leadership and managerial tasks?**

Stephens's vulnerability model can assist with understanding how disease affects people in different ways. Stress and illness have a close relationship. Productivity is the key word in industry across Australia and the teaching profession is well aware of the problems associated with illness and resulting downturn in efficiency and effectiveness. A Griffith University survey of teachers found 50 percent regarded their jobs as extremely stressful. Stress related problems reported included physical exhaustion, muscular tension, sleep disturbances and headaches (Queensland Teachers' Journal, 1993: 3). Dworkin et al. regard the principal as the key factor in mediating teachers' stress by hypothesising:

Teachers assigned to schools where the principal is seen as supportive will report less stress induced illness than teachers assigned to schools where the principal is seen as unsupportive (1990: 63).

and

The principal has a greater effect upon the level of stress induced illness among teachers than does co-worker support (1990: 63).

Clearly principals are responsible for not only their own health but the health of their fellow workers in the school. Administrative stress and illness need to be

better understood and studied from a more scientific approach. Gmelch and Thomas (1989: 4-6) outline approaches to the study of stress by suggesting that research has been carried out through a medical approach, a behavioural science approach and an integrated approach. They applaud the benefits of using an integrated approach where the approach is not based on competition among disciplines but collaboration (1989: 6).

**This research project uses an integrated approach and examines stress from a physiological, psychological and lifestyle/workstyle perspective. Understanding the possible links between stress and illness is important in gaining a better grasp of the stress phenomenon. A solely medical approach in the end concentrates heavily on a disease and illness orientation, while a behavioural approach can ignore important aspects affecting principals in the work and home environment.**

### **1.03 Changing Realities for School Principals**

The National Project on Leadership and Management Training for Principals produced a report titled Leaders and their Learning in May 1993. This report is characterised in the educational world as a project of national significance underscoring the vital nature of appropriate professional development for school leaders. It comes at a time in our society where economic and social change is fast paced, values long regarded as desirable disappear and restructuring in every business, bureaucracy and endeavour demands better efficiencies and value for money. The report concludes that all

of this means the "role and functions of principals are evolving in different directions" (Evans [ed], 1993:1).

The new realities for principals include:

- (i) a sharper delineation between and definition of leadership and management in schools
- (ii) the need to accept, learn about and develop skills in new styles of leadership previously not part of the principal's repertoire of activities and
- (iii) the essential prerequisite for growth in a growing world - ongoing professional development.

The first changed reality for principals is the sharper definition of leadership and management functions. It is important to acknowledge this as a source of potential stress for principals because it calls for a wide range of competencies at two levels. Principals have leadership and management duties each day. Individual tasks may require a dual role and some may need to be delegated. In real life, it is never as clear as the printed page.

The second changed reality for principals is the need to accept, learn about and develop mastery in modern styles of leadership. The Leadership and Management Training Project identifies the three styles of new leadership as:

- (i) Cultural
- (ii) Political and
- (iii) Reflective.

In cultural leadership principals should possess knowledge of the ethos of the school and of its organisational culture.

Understanding the impact organisational culture has on the working

of the school means that consideration should be taken of outward appearances and actions which are conveying messages about the organisation to those in the school and to the community; the strategic beliefs and actions which are leading to organisational changes; and the values and actions which guide the beliefs and actions (Evans [Ed], 1993: 16).

Another developing leadership form is in the political sphere of school life. Political leadership entails the "ability to negotiate with teachers, parents and community members on the direction the school is charting to achieve its mission and goals" (Evans [Ed], 1993: 17). It complements cultural leadership because its primary focus is in dealing with people. Block likens politics in organisations to discussions of sex in the 1950s "We knew it was going on but nobody would really tell us about it" (1990: 5). He maintains even today, while politics is woven into the fabric of our work, it is next to impossible to get reliable information about it. People who are told they are very "political" may take it as "an insult or at best a mixed blessing" (1990: 5). Principals need superior skills in negotiation at both the school level and within the system and community to ensure resources are adequate. Schools are highly political places because everything about them concerns people - teachers, parents, children and administration. Principals need skills of negotiation, persuasion, clear written and verbal communication, tolerance and even stamina to meet the demands of political leadership.

Politics as oratory, smoke filled rooms, back scratching and bargaining is a game that works but is not worth playing (Block, 1990: 98).



The third developing leadership form as identified in the 1993 publication Leaders and their Learning is in the ability of principals to reflect critically on their practice. The report puts its importance as crucial to strategic planning and action.

Reflection on leadership practices has two components - one personal and the other professional. On the professional side, reflective school principals may ask themselves how their actions can be improved by understanding, choosing and implementing aspects of different literature in their study, and in discussion with colleagues. On the personal side, they may consider how their own personal characteristics and how the actions they take convey messages to students, staff, parents and the community (Evans [Ed], 1993: 18).

This last sentence is worthy of comment in that the other half of this whole story is just what do "the followers" expect of their leaders? Leadership is not just about principals; it is also about followers because these people determine whether or not someone has the qualities required of a leader. Hence the need for skills of personal and professional reflection. Kouzes and Posner surveyed 2500 managers in America to discover the personal traits or characteristics that workers looked for and admired in superiors. It appears that there are several essential credibility checks a manager must fulfil before workers are willing to grant them the title "leader".

Table 2

## Desired Characteristics of Leaders

Characteristic	Ranking	Percentage of Managers Selecting
Honest	1	83
Competent	2	67
Forward looking	3	62
Inspiring	4	58
Intelligent	5	43
Fairminded	6	40
Broadminded	7	37
Straightforward	8	34
Imaginative	9	34
Dependable	10	33
Supportive	11	32
Courageous	12	27
Caring	13	26
Cooperative	14	25
Mature	15	23
Ambitious	16	21
Determined	17	20
Self controlled	18	13
Loyal	19	11
Independent	20	10

(1990: 17).

The third changed reality for principals is the recognition of the need to mature in a growing world. On-going professional development is an extension of reflective leadership. Principals who engage in professional development "prepare" themselves for continued leadership excellence.

These threads are part of the changed realities for principals in the nineties. Principals need to know about these new realities, develop skills that work in this era and continually look to ways to improve performance. By doing

so principals will begin to build schools that they and others are proud of. It is a stressful experience and will cause principals moments of self doubt, confusion, frustration, agony and defensiveness. This is why understanding and managing stress is so important today. To fail to recognise the signs of stress means that performance drops, effectiveness falls away, illness may invade, personality changes and relationships suffer. Connelly assembles a long list of the type of person a principal should be:

... dynamic, ambitious, understanding, energetic, friendly, aggressive, decisive, perceptive, objective, versatile and patient (1991: 18).

Stress problems will wreak havoc in all of these admirable qualities if they are allowed to go unrecognised and unchecked.

## 1.1 APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF STRESS

The quantity of research articles on stress has grown logarithmically over the past decades and it is a topic that "continues to intrigue and plague the practitioner and researcher alike" (Gmelch, 1988 b: 134). It now holds a strong interest for professionals from diverse disciplines including psychology, sociology, psychiatry, anthropology and general medicine. This intense and growing interest in the field has led to confusion, inconsistent theories, lack of clarity on what is an appropriate definition and general chaos on how to bring some order to understanding the concept (Gmelch and Thomas, 1989: 7).

At the same time organisations demand more of all individuals by asking them to work more efficiently with less resources and support, in the name of rationalisation or restructuring. Lansbury and Spillane give an indication of why it should continue to hold strong interest:

In recent years the study of employee health and well-being has become increasingly important as attempts are made to increase productivity through technological innovation (1983: 206).

While practitioners can read more on stress than ever before:

... advances in understanding the nature of relationship between the external and internal antecedent element of the stress process and the consequent cognitive/affective/behavioural/physiological outcomes has not matched the plethora of papers published in the area (Schafer and Fals-Stewart, 1991: 375).

These authors write from a psychological perspective and provide a particular "bias" in their approach and style. This is natural and to be expected, however, within a distinct discipline the emphasis may vary enormously.

Stephoe maintains that a modern medical approach to stress needs to take into account factors other than straight clinical observations:

It is argued that in terms of aetiology and maintenance of illness, the traditional distinctions between psychiatric disorders, physical disorders in which a psychological component can be identified (psychosomatic disorders), and physical disorder without psychological involvement, is outmoded. Rather, psychosocial factors may influence the entire spectrum of health disorders (1991: 633).

Ivancevich and Matterson (1988) suggest that there have been two distinct perspectives in the stress research field: medical and behavioural.

Figure 1 illustrates a modern medical approach to understanding the link between stress and disease. Steptoe goes to some length to point out the fact that individual differences may be taken into account when discussing illness susceptibility in populations. This figure supports his assertion that "greater attention must be paid to the particular demands on people, and the resources they have at their disposal" (1991: 635). Gmelch and Thomas maintain that the medical approach to the study of stress has limitations because the profession looks to diagnose and treat human beings under the separate and distinct aspects of body and mind. Medical doctors concentrate on physiological answers to a person's welfare (1989: 4). Steptoe's view is that the medical profession now realises that "the most influential theoretical developments of recent years have considered factors such as social support, personal resources and the coping process" and that models linking stress with illness have just not kept pace with experimental and clinical observations (1991: 633). If Steptoe's approach is indicative of a general trend it appears that the medical profession may be more accepting of a behavioural/personality perspective in the study of stress.

The behavioural approach is possibly more confounding than a medical approach because of the number of "sub-disciplines" and their unique contributions. Included here are researchers from backgrounds in sociology, psychology, anthropology and behavioural science. One reason why this field has opened up so widely in recent years is the emphasis in workplaces on such things as efficiency, team work, leadership skills, communication, problem

solving, motivation and morale, personality inventories, group dynamics, counselling, problem solving and change processes- a substantial list with each component developing its own emphasis and line of inquiry in terms of stress. These sub-disciplines are all important areas of study, however, they cause "a large number of variables to enter into the equation which are less well identified and defined" (Gmelch and Thomas, 1989: 6). Sociological researchers studying stress:

... cannot define their attention to a single event, or to groups of events, nor can they examine only one role strain on the assumption that it is the only problem or the most important problem faced by the individual. Instead, the presence and the organisation of constellations of stressors need to be discerned and measured independently (Pearlin, 1989: 248).

Pearlin both confirms the problem from a social\behavioural approach and shows the way out. His pivotal point is that:

... important life problems, whether in the form of events or of durable strains, do not exist in isolation from other problems. The very integration of individual's activities and relationships means that disruptions in one area of their lives serve to create other disruptions (1989: 248).

An approach to the study of stress that can do this is needed, bridging the gap between a very strict medical approach and a strict behavioural approach, integrating both styles. In pure form neither can sufficiently explain or guide research on stress but "behavioural medicine bridges the communication gap" (Gmelch and Thomas, 1989: 6). Cooper et al. (1988: 198) recommend methods to research stress that are both "naturalistic and scientific". They are very sceptical of physiological data gathered in "artificial,

calm and insular" medical clinics and equally sceptical of any attempt to induce "physical stress" in laboratory situations.

This research study employs an integrated approach to the study of stress. Data will be gathered using a variety of instruments, both from a social/behavioural perspective and a physiological/medical perspective. There is a balance between naturalistic and more scientific measurements. The research seeks to examine stress via Pearlin's philosophy which intimates "important life problems do not exist in isolation". The measurements gathered will be analysed and discussed, not in competition or as separate scores but in collaboration so a total picture of the individual's circumstances can be entertained. The data gathered in this integrated approach is derived from three perspectives:

- (i) Lifestyle/Workstyle Perspective
- (ii) Psychological Perspective and
- (iii) Physiological Perspective.

Appropriate tools have been selected to examine each perspective on the basis of the research questions and general study focus. In keeping with an integrated approach data will not be treated in isolation.

### **1.11 Stress Affects Everyone**

King, Stanley and Burrows present a unique management method in a cryptical conclusion to their book by suggesting:

One way of avoiding the effects of stress is never to make original decisions, but we have shown that this approach can have disadvantages and it could lead to the end of the world (1987: 126).

Stress is a part of everyone's everyday life. The "father" of modern stress research, Hans Selye, dedicates his book, The Stress of Life, to those people who are not afraid to "enjoy the stress of a full life, nor so naive as to think they can do so without intellectual effort" (1978: dedication). Selye maintains that no one can live without experiencing some degree of stress all the time. Indeed for him it is the "spice of life" (1978: XV). Stress cannot be allocated a straight out good or bad tag. There are many occasions in life when a degree of stress assists in producing a superb and memorable performance. Rarely does a top athlete compete without a careful calculation of what the opposition is capable of producing and he or she surely agonises over mental plans long before taking the field. Behind major decisions in business, school, politics and social organisations there is often a great deal of intensely personal frustration, debate, agony and perhaps anger. Without it, there would be trivial change, superficial drive, and inconsequential achievement. Reed holds the view that:

The management of stress is not to try and manage it out of existence but to anticipate it, to use one's experience of it to develop greater insight into the way systems function, and a better understanding of relations between people (1985: 87).

This constructive use of stress, and a good measure of self-reflection after stressful occurrences, is far more productive than devising elaborate avoidance procedures that deny the problem exists.



## **1.12 Occupation and Stress**

Much has been written on job stress in private enterprise and the economic costs associated with its treatment and on-going management. The negative physiological and psychological consequences of dysfunctional occupational stress are well documented. Karpman (1989: 59) lists some warning signs of occupational stress as "palpitations, stomach pains, insomnia, headaches, persistent fatigue, irritability, nail biting, lack of concentration, increased use of alcohol and drugs, hunger for sweets, and frequent illness". He maintains that the most difficult jobs are those with high responsibility and minimal personal control (1989: 59). Cooper draws attention to three reasons why normal work pressure, which is healthy and stimulating, can turn into threatening stress:

- (i) Lack of autonomy
- (ii) Poor relationship with superiors
- (iii) The dual career family (1985).

Stress researchers have drawn up interesting lists drawn on their studies of those occupations that suffer most stress. These are like "league tables" and offer interesting reading. They should not be read in isolation and need to be put in context. A newspaper headline in The Australian from research in London is a good example of this warning: "Worried About Stress? Then Work in a Library - Not a Mine!" The article lists 57 occupations and rates them from zero to ten. The study was conducted by the highly regarded stress researcher Cary Cooper. His assessment on occupations and stress places occupations in this order of "merit":

**Table 3**  
**Occupations and Stress**

Miner	8.3	Farmer	4.8
Police	7.7	Armed Forces	4.7
Builder	7.5	Vet	4.5
Journalist	7.5	Civil Servant	4.4
Pilot	7.5	Accountant	4.3
Prison Officer	7.5	Engineer	4.3
Advertising	7.3	Estate Agent	4.3
Dentist	7.3	Hairdresser	4.3
Actor	7.2	Local Government	4.3
Politician	7.0	Secretary	4.3
Doctor	6.8	Solicitor	4.3
Tax Officer	6.8	Artist\Designer	4.2
Film Producer	6.5	Architect	4.0
Nurse	6.5	Chiropodist	4.0
Fireman	6.3	Optician	4.0
Musician	6.3	Planner	4.0
Teacher	6.2	Postman	4.0
Personnel	6.0	Statistician	4.0
Social Worker	6.0	Lab Technician	3.8
Manager	5.8	Banker	3.7
Marketing	5.8	Computing	3.7
Press Officer	5.8	Therapist	3.7
Pro Footballer	5.8	Linguist	3.7
Salesperson	5.7	Beauty Therapist	3.5
Stockbroker	5.5	Vicar	3.5
Bus Driver	5.4	Astronomer	3.4
Psychologist	5.2	Nursery Nurse	3.3
Publishing	3.3	Museum Worker	2.8
Diplomat	4.8	Librarian	2.0

(Cooper: 1985)

Karpman maintains that:

The ability to cope with job insecurity, tyrannical bosses, and occupationally related physical or psychological trauma of any form is necessary in order to be successful at any job, but is especially necessary in those occupations that carry a lot of responsibility but little power (1989: 60).

He lists these type occupations as:

Inner city High School Teacher  
Police Officer  
Miner

Air Traffic Controller  
 Medical Intern  
 Stockbroker  
 Journalist  
 Customer Service and Complaints Department  
 Waitress  
 Secretary (1989: 59).

Perhaps a better understanding can be gained from an examination of the sources of managerial stress rather than comparing one occupation against another. Life in general, and working in particular, is often a problem solving exercise and as a result stress is potentially present in any occupation including those who work as secretaries or librarians (the bottom of the league tables).

Cooper and Marshall list six sources of managerial stress as:

1. Factors intrinsic to the job. This includes work conditions, time pressures, decision making and too much or too little work.
2. The person's role in the organisation. This includes areas like responsibility for people and role conflict - ambiguity.
3. Career development. Promotion, security and thwarted ambitions are important considerations.
4. The organisational climate and structure. This includes areas such as politics and consultation.
5. Relations within the organisation. This includes the aspect of relations with the supervisor, colleagues and subordinates.
6. Organisational interface with the outside. Important considerations here are family and personal interests (Cooper and Marshall, 1978: 83).

So a secretary who faces too much work, has an ambiguous role description, can't get a deserved promotion, works in a highly political office, has a poor relationship with the supervisor or fellow worker and who has just suffered a marriage breakup is highly unlikely to be understressed. It is all relative to the

six sources of managerial stress and the individual's personality, health and coping mechanisms. Things of beauty, substance and meaning are often born of stressful work.

Michaelangelo, implementing the precepts of psychology, should have followed his father's request and gone into the wool trade thus sparing himself lifelong anguish, although leaving the Sistine Chapel unadorned (Reed, 1985: 88).

**While a league table analysis does not place principals in the top categories there can be no doubt that the potential for stress is high. Cooper and Marshall's six sources of stress represent fertile ground for conflict, confusion and occasions of high tension in schools. The controlling and high profile role of the principal in a school draws stress. This study examines which managerial activities cause the most stress.**

## **1.2 FOUNDATIONS OF THIS STUDY**

The foundation of this study is an examination of stress from three perspectives: (i) Lifestyle/Workstyle (ii) Psychological and (iii) Physiological. This section will briefly touch on the effects of stress as a precursor for a more detailed analysis of the three perspectives in Chapter 2. As this is such a serious issue it is necessary to bring concerns to the reader's attention in the Introductory Chapter. The Conceptual Model presented in this chapter explains how these perspectives are related and connected. The cause or effect debate

between a possible stress and illness link can be exhaustively argued to an indefinite conclusion as has been shown. Rather than become embroiled in such a complex medical debate, it is perhaps best to concentrate on the effects and symptoms of excess stress. These are well documented and are important considerations for educational leaders working in highly demanding job environments. The effects of stress can be identified in the Psychological and Physiological Perspectives. The Conceptual Model demonstrates that the essence of this research project is integrated and holistic and not compartmentalised with discreet elements. **For the purposes of clear description throughout this thesis the three perspectives will be used as the basis of discussion.**

### **1.21 Lifestyle and Workstyle Perspective**

As a person's reaction to stress is highly individualistic, it is important to note that high stress levels may not be debilitating to some principals. King et al. used the term "giants" to describe those persons who in sport, work or social circles thrive under stress and in fact use it to their advantage (1987: 118). In fact "almost all potential stressors are sources of potential satisfaction" (Savery and Detiuk, 1986: 273). King does point out that while "giants" are known, albeit few in number, ordinary mortals do not fare well in giant country. Most principals, being rather ordinary mortals, will suffer a downturn in efficiency and effectiveness when subjected to sustained pressure to perform and produce if it needs to be conducted in stress filled, tense or uncomfortable situations.

The stated reasons of occupational stress claims by Commonwealth public servants in 1993-1994 have been determined by Comcare (Federal Government Workers' Compensation scheme) to be:

1.	Interpersonal conflict	24%
2.	Pressure form workload and deadlines	24%
3.	Anxiety caused by organisational change	22%
4.	Physical or verbal abuse	17%
5.	Performance counselling	7%
6.	Forced relocation and restructuring	6%

(Courier-Mail, November 11: 9, 1995).

This report covers all federal departments (including education) and reveals a crisis caused by a 20 per cent increase in the number of stress leave claims granted each year. These six factors above can easily be related directly to the Workstyle Perspective in teaching profession and cause a downturn in the efficiency and effectiveness of the principal. The flow-on effects of this downturn may have disastrous implications for the school's overall organisational climate, industrial relations, staff absenteeism, productivity, general atmosphere and job satisfaction. Perhaps the best way to describe what happens when there are efficiency and effectiveness problems with leadership is to look at the situation from the other viewpoint. What do efficient and effective principals "do" in schools? Feltler and Tokar describe it thus:

... exhibit common attitudes and leader behaviours such as supportiveness, tolerance and tender strength, they spend time in classrooms, interact frequently with teachers and have the ability to develop alternatives (1986: 255).

The lifestyle domain in this perspective can suffer from stressful situations either from within or as a result of workstyle practices. In the home situation

the principal may show signs of stressed behaviour by:

- \* Excessive drinking
- \* Emotional outbursts
- \* Lack of attention to family needs
- \* Impulsive behaviour
- \* Decreased interest in sex
- \* Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- \* Lack of attention to exercise or normal relaxation
- \* Bringing excessive work home and
- \* Keeping unreasonably late hours.

Once again, any attempt to categorise human behaviour encounters problems with blurred boundaries, however, the above comments are indicative of the negative effects that stress can cause in the Lifestyle/Workstyle Perspective.

## **1.22 Psychological Perspective**

The thoughts of the mind are our most intimate and precious possessions. What is told to others and what is really thought is often very different. Indeed no one can ever know our true feelings, unless we choose to make them known. Knight reflects on the marvellous and mysterious ways of the mind; something no one has ever seen with its workings "belonging more to philosophy than to science" (1987: 75). Stress and a person's mental health are closely linked to the individual's personality. Eysenck notes that in the past these things were considered quite separate, but cautions, "this is a grievous error. They are closely related" (1983: 121). Greenburg provides a list of fifteen basic warning signs for stress in the educator. While the list includes some of the more physical signs, a substantial number are closely associated with the mental state of the individual. These include:

- \* Abrupt change in typical behaviour pattern
- \* Rapid mood change
- \* Overly suspicious
- \* Extreme defensiveness
- \* Excessive nervous habits
- \* Depression and
- \* Use of excessive violence (1984: 47).

In Chapter 2 an examination of the psychological problems related to stress will include aspects of personality, humour and appropriate and inappropriate avoidance behaviours as part of a wider discussion on this aspect of the issue.

### **1.23 Physiological Perspective**

The common physical symptoms of excess stress have been well documented. Figler suggests that stress affects an individual at four levels:

1. Temporary stress characterised by heart rate increases, breathing rate increases, rise in blood pressure and other changes in physiological metabolic states.
2. Irritability, anxiety, tension, inability to concentrate, restlessness and prolonged level one symptoms.
3. Headaches, stomach upsets, chest pains and other prolonged disorders.
4. Ulcers, strokes, alcoholism, drug addiction, heart attacks and psychosis are indicators of the final stages of debilitating stress (1980: 23).

As stated earlier a patient presenting with an arthritic complaint, headache, constipation, allergy or the flu may not necessarily be under any form of stress. Where there is potential for, or actual stress, the human body may react negatively causing any one or a combination of the above physical disorders.

Karpman provides a sound overview of the linkage between stress, the heart and personality. Carefully controlled studies have been difficult to mount



because of problems inherent in measuring the degree and direct effect of stress without influence from other factors such as age, cholesterol level, dietary habits and social vices. However:

... many highly regarded research studies have carefully analysed the relationship between depression, anxiety and neuroticism to coronary heart disease. They add support to the growing concept that psychological factors may be extremely important in the precipitation of heart attacks and sudden death, events occurring frequently in persons who suffer failure, frustration, intense disappointment or recent bereavement, or who possess certain personality and behavioural characteristics (1989: 57).

Emotions can be experienced psychologically or physiologically. Psychological emotions such as anger, fear and joy are richly varied in humans. The body's physiological response to stress is also abundantly varied and can include changes in blood pressure, oxygen consumption, blood resistance and chemical balance (Karpman, 1989: 57). This argument supports an integrated approach to studying stress because it is extremely difficult to separate the various perspectives.

Cooper (1983: 103) reports that an enormous amount of research attention has been devoted to the field of occupational health and stress as it relates to coronary heart disease. There is a growing body of evidence which links CHD and stress (Eysenck, 1983: 103). Eysenck maintains that certain relationships are appearing that are "replicable, understandable and may lead to a better understanding of these complex factors" (1983: 140). Karpman identifies five indicators to be considered by doctors when screening a patient

for possible heart disease:

1. Family history
2. Cigarette smoker
3. High blood pressure
4. High cholesterol level and
5. Obesity, stress and sedentary lifestyle (1989: 72).

Each of the above will be examined in Chapter 2 as part of a complete review of this perspective. Within each of the three perspectives there are risk factors that can be modified or controlled to reduce the effects of stress. A prevention rather than cure approach will do much to lessen the impact of stress which in pure economic terms costs organisations substantial amounts of money through the provision of medical services, sick leave, relief workers, insurance and workers' compensation levies. Organisations must also recognise the need to adopt a proactive approach to reducing stress by managing employees better. Lansbury and Spillane note the emphasis in recent years on employee health and wellbeing (1983: 206). In the drive for productivity, increased competitiveness and lower overheads, stress on the individual should become a significant company consideration. Repairing and replacing machinery is simple. Repairing and replacing human resources is costly, time consuming and involves training. It should be regarded as avoidable if at all feasible.

## 1.3 IMPORTANCE OF THIS STUDY

Charles Handy, a respected British business analyst uses boiled frogs - metaphorically - to describe how leaders in society need to react to the way the world is changing. Handy maintains that if one puts a frog in water and slowly heats it, the frog will allow itself to be boiled to death. A frog placed in a container of boiling water will jump out. The message is simple enough, jump while the water is still warm (Nicklin, 1993: 40). Schools are caught up in this change process. Handy's study is of consequence because educational leaders need to know four things about these times:

1. They need to know what is going on in society and educational politics in Australia.
2. They need to know and use the new watchwords and language of education.
3. They need to know what's required of them as leaders and managers in these times of change and
4. They need to know the signs of failure associated with not keeping up with the above.

Constant, steady change may place educational leaders in a slow boil situation, with the end result being similar to the fate of the frog.

It seems many in business, politics, universities and social groups crave to assert an opinion of what schools should teach and how to teach it. Schools are blamed for society's real and imagined ills. Consider this quote from the Minister of Education in the Thatcher government:

By now we are in a position to test all these fine theories in the light of experience ... real incomes have risen ... so too have education budgets and welfare budgets; so also have delinquency, truancy, vandalism, hooliganism, illiteracy, and a general decline in educational standards. Teenage pregnancies are rising so are drunkenness, sexual offences and crimes of sadism. If equality in education is sought at the expense of quality, how can the poisons created help but filter down (Bal , 1987: 29).

At a 1993 "think tank" of Catholic educators a reason advanced for this mode of thinking was that schooling and teaching are being remodelled so that schools are now seen as influential in achieving the nation's goals, and the work of teachers is being revisioned to align with the interests of the nation (Curriculum Connections, 1993: 1). Therefore, when the vision of the nation is disturbed, as the Minister describes, then schools are almost automatically thought to have played a role. These issues place pressure on principals. No principal can afford to ruminate nostalgically on the glory days of the past. The new realities of educational politics are spelt out above and the message is clear; principals need to know what is going on and why in the total picture. Informed, well read and knowledgeable principals will have less chance to be stressed by the constant demands to alter practice in their schools. Senge believes that what is required is "metanoia - a shift of mind". Leadership and management of schools are going through metanoia and principals are asked to empower others, build quality circles, provide vision, model behaviour and think in terms of systems (1990: 13). Failure to comprehend and implement these increasingly common terms or deride their worth in schools will not serve a principal well. Bonstingl maintains that these theories are revitalising business, government, schools and social organisations (1992: 4).

While the full role of the principal will be developed later it seems clear that the requirements of the job must match the language associated with quality schooling today and models of the past are no longer appropriate. The emphasis today is on:

1. **Excellence and quality in all facets of leadership management.** The work of Peters and Waterman, Covey, Block and others continually emphasise this as the mark of a performing and productive organisation. Excellence is placed on a pedestal and must be encouraged in all employees.
2. **Leadership that empowers others.** Leadership is an extraordinarily complex and diverse field of research and debate. It is both critical and mysterious and its importance cannot be overstated. This study is meaningful because it does not neglect the leader in school and the stresses they face. These stresses are very real and have the ability to sap energy and enthusiasm lessening leadership quality.
3. **Values, character and ethics.** Greenfield argues that "the business of being a leader is therefore the business of being an entrepreneur for values" (1986: 166). Covey believes that modern society has neglected values such as "integrity, humility, temperance, fidelity, courage, justice, patience, industry, simplicity and modesty" (1990: 18). Instead Covey argues that we are gripped by a personality ethic that says success comes from public image and skills and attitudes that lubricate the processes of human interaction.

## 1.4 ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL TODAY

The current language of Total Quality Management (TQM), site-based leadership, excellence and effectiveness is making its mark on the role of a principal today. New perspectives and definitions challenge principals to think afresh about their function in the school. Perhaps being principal has never been an easy occupation, trapped as it is were a "role prisoner" to the various demands of being "controller, motivator, persuader, disciplinarian, firefighter,

preserver of the culture, special st and parent surrogate" (Gmelch and Swent, 1977: 16). Duignan regards the role as "an amorphous mass of duties and obligations" (1987: 51) where the boundaries are never clear. These dilemmas of the job are sources of frustration and stress because of conflicting expectations from various interest groups. Kefford lists four dilemmas as:

1. Operating as educational leader and chief executive
2. Being accessible to the school community
3. Being pastor as well as prophet
4. Who runs the school anyway? (1987: 66-68).

There is no guaranteed formula for successful school leadership even though the knowledge base in administration continues to grow and gain strength. Hoyle urges principals to adopt "new habits of mind and heart" and to take the known things about successful management to become a fine leader (1992: 86). To this end Hoyle has produced ten commandments based on the axioms of theory and research, best practice and tacit knowledge. They serve to illustrate the wider dimension of the principal's function.

1. Thou shalt look sharp and feel sharp. Your manner, how you appear, your persuasion of others is important. Others watch you all the time.
2. Thou shalt learn the language of effective teaching and learning. People respect principals who know about teaching, curriculum and student motivation.
3. Thou shalt be visible. Walk about, be seen, visit classes and be active.
4. Thou shalt train teachers in the art of decision making and consensus building.
5. Thou shalt be a dream keeper. Have clear goals and a steady vision.
6. Thou shalt tell the truth. Honesty is an important personal trait.
7. Thou shalt make heroes and heroines of others. Praise and

acknowledgment produce stars.

8. Thou shalt have high expectations. Expect the best and see the results.
9. Thou shalt evaluate performance. Principals need to know more about evaluating all aspects of school life.
10. Thou shalt keep a sense of humour. Smile and laugh more. School life is full of stress so good humour lightens the load (Hoyle, 1992: 83-86).

Most people probably have an arduous enough time keeping the original ten commandments. Now these surface to add to the burden. They do point out the themes of principal activity common to the latest literature. These discuss the principal's role around four key result areas:

1. The roles of leading and managing
2. The role of developing school culture
3. The role of expressing vision and
4. The role of guiding curriculum.

Crump maintains that "successful schools have been shown in a number of Australian and international studies to depend to a large extent of the leadership offered by the principal" (1993: 82). It is often described as a "freeing leadership" that liberates and allows people to produce results without misgivings. It replaces old Taylor-esque ideas based on fear and testing. Bonstingl (1992 b: 34) believes in Total Quality Management (TQM) and says that schools of distinction are based on these four pillars:

1. A primary focus on suppliers and customers
2. Constant dedication to continuous improvement
3. A systems/process orientation
4. Strong and consistent total quality leadership from top management.

Point 4 clearly illustrates the distinction being made between leading and managing. Even if one person does both jobs, as in a school principal, "leadership is not management ... management is the second creation ... leadership has to come first" (Covey, 1990: 101). The National Project on Leadership and Management Training for Principals states that principals need high level skills in both leadership and management and maintains, "while we believe that distinctions can be made between the characteristics of leadership and management, each informs and complements the other" (Evans, 1993: 4). The project identifies the following characteristics:

<b>Leadership</b>	<b>Management</b>
* providing vision	* ensuring that management practices reflect leadership actions
* developing consultatively a common purpose	* carrying out restructuring so that the school organisation is more effective and efficient
* facilitating the achievement of educational and organisational goals	* collaboratively designing and carrying out strategic plans
* being responsive to diverse needs and situations	* meeting accountability requirements
* having a future orientation	* getting things done
* providing educational entrepreneurship	* making sure the organisation is running smoothly
* supporting the school as a lively educational place	* working effectively with people
* working creatively with and empowering others	* providing effective financial management
* ensuring that the processes and content of the curriculum are contemporary and relevant	* marketing and promoting the school

(Evans, 1993: 4-5).

English provides an unusual twist to the discussion on leadership and all the fine qualities noted above. For him, the role of the principal, has a "long



unmentioned and often unnoticed 400-year-old shadow that stands to make most of that talk rather hollow" (1992: 10). The shadow cast is identified as Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527) who was a "court schemer, intriguer and devious and duplicitous figure luring in a background of deceit" (1992: 11)- probably not the best role model for today's principal. English draws on Machiavelli's little known substantial traits to argue that, to be effective, principals must on occasion exceed their authority and engage in creative insubordination. Effective action may have to be sudden and secret if the occasion demands it. "Machiavelli understood that boldness meant becoming a momentary tyrant because it involved acting suddenly and sometimes in secret" (English, 1992: 14). This discussion on leadership warrants further attention and will be reviewed in Chapter 2.

In the Effective Schools Project commissioned by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) the role of the principal in developing a school culture where effective teaching and learning can flourish is discussed at length. Culture is considered as "the way in which understandings of the world are constructed, how individual people see and comprehend particular events, actions and utterances, and how behaviour is interpreted" (1992: 78). Schools, being rather complex organisations, have a number of sub-cultures operating within one learning community. The role of the principal is to get things done by working effectively with people. To transform the culture of a school, bring people together and create an atmosphere of shared purpose Leithwood and Jantzi (1990) suggest the following practices:

- \* strengthening the school's improvement culture
- \* using a variety of bureaucratic mechanisms to stimulate and reinforce cultural change
- \* engaging in direct and frequent communication about cultural norms and values and beliefs
- \* sharing power and responsibility with others
- \* fostering staff development and
- \* using symbols to express cultural values.

The ACER project lists a number of indicators that can assist in developing a strong and positive school culture. In each of these the powerful influence of the principal can be a constructive or destructive force. Included are:

- \* Staff work as a network with common goals in the overall school plan
- \* Ability to work as a team, sharing and planning
- \* Recognition of individual strengths
- \* Having a recognition of teachers' effort and dedication from a variety of people
- \* An atmosphere which supports mutual professional respect, praise and encouragement, tolerance of different teaching styles, respect and acceptance of individuals including tolerance of different values, beliefs and interests (1992: 83).

To be effective in these areas and to promote a visibly healthy school culture principals need to have skills and knowledge in a wide range of disciplines. Principals need to have a solid base in curriculum, teaching, assessment and child development. Then they need to be able to communicate, organise and enthuse staff in a unified way and promote the school in the community in a way that raises the morale and profile of the school. The role of the principal in cultural terms is not easy. It is not a job that takes a week or can be costed out in a budget. It requires great personal dedication and clear, strong vision.

Barth defines vision as:

... a kind of moral imagination which gives school people, individually and collectively, the ability to see their school not only as it is, but as they would like it to become. It is an overall conception of what educators want their schools to stand for, a map revealing how all the parts fit together, and above all just how the vision of each individual is related to the collective vision of the organisation (1993: 10).

While everyone in a school has responsibility for visioning, it is the principal's function to bring it all together, make it less fuzzy and more meaningful. In the process, extraordinary energy and ideas can be released in the school. Perhaps it is akin to starting a fire. Bennis and Nanus (1985: 89) speak of the need for the leader to have compelling vision. Through this vision, the leader can do amazing things with dissatisfied staff and those who have doubts, or worse, despair.

Covey maintains leaders are more in need of a vision with a compass and less in need of road maps. "We often don't know what the terrain ahead will be like or what we will need to go through it; much will depend on our judgement at this time. But an inner compass will always give us direction" (1990: 101). The logic is clear. Principals with an "inner compass" and a driving vision of what can be, have a giant headstart in transforming that vision into reality. This is simple in words but immensely complicated to achieve. A prospective principal's vision for a school is always a key question in job interviews and many questions are structured around it, underscoring its importance in "promoting or subverting school improvement" (Barth, 1993: 9).

The fourth role of the principal identified in The Effective Schools Project relates to curriculum. As the distinction has already been made between leadership and management then as well as curriculum leadership, a principal has a management role as well. According to Pajak and McAfee the literature in regard to principal's curriculum responsibilities remains quite limited. "The principal's role as curriculum leader is rarely mentioned despite its obvious relevance to instruction and student learning" (1992: 21). In the ACER research quoted in this section a proposition put to respondents asking them to rate the importance of the educational leadership of the principal received a rating of 83 percent (1992: 81). It is obvious that in the Australian setting teachers regard the curriculum leadership and management of the principal as a vital part of school organisation. If curriculum is defined as all that is taught in schools, it is important to note that the public, through the media and perhaps more directly through parent associations, are actively questioning curriculum directions. Principals who respond poorly, showing at best a superficial understanding, will come across as rather hollow and lacking in what parents perceive as perhaps most important. A comprehensive view of what is required in this role is provided by Pajak and McAfee. The principal's role in regard to curriculum is detailed under the headings of knowledge, attitudes and skills.

Table 4

## Principal's Role in Regard to Curriculum

Knowledge of:

- \* Child and adult development
- \* Curriculum development process
- \* Curriculum theory
- \* Curriculum models
- \* Curriculum research
- \* Learning psychology
- \* Subject area content
- \* Philosophical, sociological, and historical foundations

Attitudes

- \* Willingness to address curricula problems
- \* Commitment to improving curriculum at the school level
- \* Belief in the importance of the curriculum
- \* Commitment to teacher involvement in curriculum development
- \* Belief that curriculum development is an ongoing process
- \* Commitment to a balance among content areas
- \* Encouragement of teacher awareness of various curricula
- \* Sensitivity to the "hidden" curriculum
- \* Commitment to improving curriculum at the district level

Skills

- \* Encouraging teacher initiative in the curriculum
- \* Setting goals and objectives
- \* Relating staff development efforts to curriculum needs
- \* Monitoring curriculum implementation
- \* Articulating curriculum goals and priorities
- \* Applying principles of child development
- \* Ensuring continuity at different grade levels
- \* Assisting teachers in understanding curriculum materials
- \* Establishing reasonable time frames for curriculum implementation
- \* Establishing curriculum planning teams
- \* Limiting curriculum changes to those that are realistic and substantive
- \* Integrating content
- \* Attending to scope and sequence
- \* Piloting curriculum projects
- \* Coordinating text book adoption
- \* Adapting and revising curriculum
- \* Developing curriculum materials
- \* Designing curriculum

(1992: 24).

### **1.41 Hardiness**

It is clear that the function of the principal is extraordinarily complex and diverse. Kefford maintains that the basic problem "is that doing the job is not humanly possible" (1987: 66) and when all aspects of the role are considered then this notion, while somewhat "tongue in cheek", is perhaps not all that preposterous. Implicit in most discussions about stress is the erroneous message that stress is bad and eventually people succumb to the intense pressure. This notion is misleading, for many people who have experienced life threatening and tortuous circumstances, have not fallen ill and come through everything relatively unscathed (Kouzes and Posner, 1990: 65). In the incredible mental, physical and social activity packed in a principal's day there must be a psychological factor that can buffer this constant stress allowing the person to cope, and even transform potentially troublesome events into manageable, desirable or humorous situations. This psychosocial characteristic has been identified by researchers as hardiness, and can be defined as "a general sense that the environment is satisfying" (Maddi and Kobasa, 1984: 50) leading persons to approach situations with curiosity and enthusiasm or commitment. According to Maddi and Kobasa, a hardy person views potentially stressful situations as meaningful and interesting, sees stressors as changeable and sees change as a normal aspect of life, rather than as a threat. Change is viewed as an opportunity for growth (Funk, 1992: 335). According to Maddi and Kobasa the family atmosphere is the most important breeding ground for a hardy attitude. Family life, with its challenges, varied environment, many tasks and support mechanisms, serves to develop in individuals a certain strength that

becomes very useful in later life. However, those who have the misfortune of a poor childhood, or broken home can take comfort in the fact that researchers believe hardiness can be learned any time and people aren't damned by an unfortunate start in life (Kouzes and Posner, 1990: 65).

Hardiness is a general personality quality that manifests itself in feelings and behaviours that are characterised by commitment, control and challenge. Adams describes these three aspects in simple terms. People, who are highly committed to their activities and view them as important contributions, are better able to withstand high levels of pressure than those who simply complete tasks and tick them off once completed. Those who have a sense of control in their lives are better able to cope with stress than those who might feel they are powerless bystanders and victims. This does not mean that all events can be controlled, but that reactions can be controlled. In addition, those who enjoy challenges and create challenges are better able to withstand stress than those who never stretch themselves and do only the minimum to get by (Adams, 1989: 42-43). Maddi and Kobasa (1984) maintain hardiness modifies the strain - exhaustion process through several causal pathways. Hardiness:

- (a) alters perceptions of events to make them less stressful
  - (b) leads to active "transformational" coping
  - (c) influences coping indirectly through its influences on social support and
  - (d) leads to changes in health practices that in turn reduce illness
- (Funk, 1992: 338).

Subjects can be classified as high hardy or low hardy depending on how they use these four causal pathways. High hardy people make less threatening

appraisals of stressors, change potentially stressful events into opportunities for growth and have relationships that support them personally.

**The link between the hardiness factor and stress will be further developed later in this work. This brief introduction was included to demonstrate its relevance to understanding how principals cope with the varied and demanding roles of the job. The hardiness factor is part of the Psychological Perspective which will be shown to be an excellent insulator for stress.**

## **1.5 THE AGE OF TRAUMA AND TRIUMPH**

The words "trauma and triumph" are adapted to the educational world from a psychiatric context. People who move from severe trauma to triumph in the aftermath of disease, illness and disaster can teach the rest of us noble lessons in survival, recovery and rehabilitation. The voices of the resilient send a powerful message. Lazarus (1961) coined the phrase "Age of Anxiety". Perhaps another generation on the "Age of Trauma and Triumph" is upon us. Hugh Mackay, a well known Australian psychologist, author and social researcher, maintains that for the past twenty years Australian social and political institutions have been in a constant process of redefinition, challenge and change. There is no way to predict the future from such an unstable base (Peterson, 1993: 31). Herein lies the dilemma, for education places a heavy emphasis on vision and the future. The National Directions in Education Conference report maintains that "our actions must be grounded in a present



reality". If we look closely at the 'signs of the times" it becomes evident that determining this reality is indeed problematic (Curriculum Connections, 1993: 3). What are the signs of trauma and triumph in society in general, and education in particular, as we move well into the last decade of the twentieth century?

### **1.51 Trauma and Triumph in Society**

Our society appears to be dominated by and even obsessed with economic wellbeing. The nightly news brings a detailed analysis of trade deficits, dollar fluctuations, percentage rises in unemployment, various measures of consumer confidence, inflationary trends, housing interest rates and the like. Undoubtedly most of the listening audience have little concept of how many of these abstruse economic terms affects their daily life and family. Our progress as a nation is measured now in economic terms. Mackay places unemployment and underemployment as top of three challenges Australian society has to face. He maintains that as the year 2000 approaches the political talk is still focussed on jobs, job led recovery and full employment (1993: 31). Handy, another social commentator, believes life long careers are a thing of the past and the jobs that have disappeared will not magically appear again. He uses the phrase "portfolio people" to describe how the future person will work.

Portfolio people have "bits and pieces" of work and the portfolio life is something we are all going to experience sooner or later. The five main categories of work in the portfolio are wage work and fee work, which are both forms of paid work, and home work, gift work and study work, which are free work (Nicklin, 1993: 41).

These are new concepts in society and will cause trauma in many persons. Employment, even the previously "safe" public sector jobs, like teaching, is not a guarantee of a life long career. School closures and forced redundancies in Victoria and other states amply illustrate this point. The National Directions in Curriculum Conference (NDEC) noted the following indicators of disease (or trauma) in society:

- (i) **The increasingly strong thread in our culture which reflects a "life is difficult" rhetoric.** It is negative in that people forego joyous times, devalue the ascetic and spontaneous because life is hard and you never know what's around the corner.
- (ii) **A growing insistence on personal rights accompanied by an erosion in personal responsibility.** Aligned with this is a push towards individualism and the gathering of personal wealth. Society is seeing a decline in any "social consciousness". Looking out for yourself replaces care for fellow man.
- (iii) **A growing social dislocation as evidenced by family breakdown, homelessness, suicide and drug abuse.** In young people this is further evidenced by an eroding sense of personal and social responsibility.
- (iv) **The old stereotypes such as mateship no longer hold.** Replacing these notions of deep relationships are shallow and transitory forms of friendship.
- (v) **The increasing population, crime rates, exploitation of resources, contraction of public services, urban decay and unemployment all lead to a lower standard of living and a poorer quality of life (Curriculum Connections, 1993: 3-4).**

Mackay echoes these comments on Australia's social position and places before people three challenges for consideration:

1. The challenge of employment and underemployment
2. The challenge to create a better system of democratic government and
3. The challenge to rebuild our sense of community and personal responsibility in family and workplace (Peterson, 1993: 31).

While the above commentary seems depressing and divisive, there are indicators emerging which signify moments of triumph in society. There are positive forces at work which value the importance of working together and there seems to be a genuine concern for social justice and equity. As a society we appear willing to begin to debate issues relating to Aboriginal land justice and we are more open to multicultural concerns. Sir Arvi Parvo, chairperson of one of Australia's largest companies, considers that our society is becoming more realistic, down-to-earth and returning to basic and more simple values. He says that as a result people are clearer about their aspirations and future. They know what to value (family, quality of life) and want government and industry to work towards achieving a better result in these areas (Parvo, 1993: 29).

**Schools do not stand alone as islands. If there are symptoms of disease and trauma in society then similar characteristics will be evidenced in the society's schooling system. Being a major social institution, huge employer and a "big ticket" budget item, there is no way that schools can escape the general malaise in society. The ability to triumph locally in the midst of mediocrity and division are the hallmarks of a quality principal.**

### **1.52 Trauma and Triumph in Schooling**

The National Directions in Education Conference identified two principal themes in education since the 1980s. They are fragmentation and reform. Expressions of fragmentation in schooling may be seen in:

- \* **Curriculum overload in schools.** The ability of teachers to absorb curriculum change, not just in content but also philosophy and delivery has been sorely tested. Such change is "across the board" and not confined to one or two major curriculum areas.
- \* **The debate over standardisation in educational endeavours.** This debate can degenerate into a particularly nasty one for people with an interest in education. Politics comes into play along with parental concerns. It seems everyone has an opinion and is determined to be heard. All of this may be seen as particularly healthy, but caught in the middle of the debate are the school teacher and principal.
- \* **The movement that regards education as a business and views it from a retailing perspective.** This is evidenced by the fact that many educational activities are valued only if they can be assessed in relation to performance measured by competency standards (NDEC, 1993: 5).

Savery and Detiuk give some indication as to the complexity of a principal's working life when they write:

... there are now ever increasing demands made on the principals by a number of diverse interests, for instance, parents, school children, the teachers, government and its ever growing regulations, the Education Department and its practices and regulations, all of which the principal must attempt to placate (1986: 272).

It must be remembered that behind every decision, every attempt to placate and justify, there is often a great deal of agonising, debate, frustration and perhaps anger. Aside from the more national perspectives on trauma in education, there are issues of a localised nature which have the ability to impact in a very personal way. Problems of funding inevitably translate to loss of subjects and teacher hours, forced transfers, less resources, less aide time and lower outcomes. Principals have to deal with these "real life" issues in their schools. The industrial arena has been crowded with long term, intricate questions relating to award restructuring and performance improvements. Issues like:

... school improvement and development processes, work organisation, integrated career structures, staff incentives in isolated areas, part time work, child care, recruitment and retention, conflict resolution, selection procedures, school management, a multiskilled training system and support (Foggo, 1990: 15).

have been agenda items for some time now. Very few have had an easy passage through the industrial courts and, as a result, unions have not been tardy to discuss industrial action with members.

Schools' have faced their share of trauma, but there are also signs of triumph in education. Some of these parallel the business world and others are more specific in nature. The NDEC identified several reform themes in Australian education which can be considered triumphs coming out of a period of intense debate and confusion. Among them are:

- \* The start on national schooling goals and a national curriculum framework
- \* Award restructuring progress and the recognition given to Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) positions
- \* A shift from formal qualifications to career paths in education
- \* The press for a national system of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) and a general emphasis on training for jobs.

Education is beginning to gather language and concepts from industry and apply them to excellence in schooling. This is a positive sign of triumph. An increasingly strident strand of research urges educators to carefully consider the benefits gained from Total Quality Management (TQM) and the work of W. Edwards Deming. Deming's work:

... emphasises: the advantages of teamwork, of investing in our ongoing training for all employees to increase their value to the company, of an insistence that research and employee gathered data guide and inform every decision and every

improvement effort (Schmoker and Wilson, 1993: 390).

Deming is not alone in advancing these values. The celebrated work of Peters and Waterman, In Search of Excellence, provides educators with models of success based on the authors' research into highly successful corporate bodies. They provide more than mere lists of habits or simply interesting personal anecdotes. The models are based on good theory and sound philosophy. Excellent companies were brilliant on the basics. As the authors declare:

... these companies worked hard to keep things simple in a complex world. They persisted. They insisted on top quality. They fawned their customers. They listened to their employees and treated them like adults. They allowed their innovative product and service champions long tethers. They allowed some chaos in return for quick action and regular experimentation (1982: 13).

All involved in education can learn from these authors and no doubt their message will become increasingly heard and acted on in the nineties. The message of excellence is a sign of triumph and hope. Selye's belief that stress is "the spice of life" (1978: XV) bears repeating. There is no way to avoid it, short of death. Principals working in today's charged atmosphere face trauma and triumph daily. Be they considerable national issues or local issues they are all unavoidable.

## 1.6 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Gmelch and Thomas (1989: 1) point out that stress research continues to intrigue and plague both the practitioner and researcher alike. Each year an additional 6000 publications are internationally catalogued and many of these

are written directly about stress in schools. The authors indicated that their literature reviews and experience led them to believe that in the past many studies tended to be anecdotal in nature, with little connection to empirical evidence, but there appears to be a growing refined interest in the research on stress. A proliferation of literature does not necessarily mean a coinciding proliferation in knowledge and understanding. Certainly in the case of stress research this is the situation. There has been a heavy reliance on questionnaire-based surveys in previous research. While these have a place in the field the sheer volume of these publications tends to replicate existing statements and beliefs.

**Part of the aim of this research work is to adopt a research stance that is somewhat venturesome.** Using a variety of instruments in a multi-dimensional approach is important but it is critical to ground the research in a strong theoretical base and conceptual framework. From this base a number of research "angles" are pursued. They are initially separate but later are drawn together to provide the reader with a comprehensive picture on how stress affects principals in the workplace. Studies by Sieverding (1985) and Whan (1988) demonstrate that such an approach is feasible. They used a combination of naturalistic and scientific methods to test the complex interaction between the body, the environment and the personality, and found that complex biochemical reactions were triggered under stress. As the stress response is highly individualistic the application of just one research methodology (e.g. a specific survey instrument such as the Holmes and Rahe Social Readjustment Rating

Scale) will not accurately measure the phenomenon. Nor will a battery of three or four of the same instrument types shed great light on the situation. Stress has to be looked at as a "life" event and not just a "work" event. What goes on at home, out-of-hours is as vital to understanding stress as the detailed analysis of work habits, relationships and pressures. Everybody is different. The physiology is important, the mind equally so. This project aims to measure stress in individuals across three perspectives:

1. **Lifestyle/Workstyle Perspective**
2. **Psychological Perspective and**
3. **Physiological Perspective.**

The section on the conceptual framework which follows puts these into place, gives a philosophical basis for the model and demonstrates how all aspects of "life" can be seen interacting with each other. This study will be seen to combine accepted medical measures of stress with current theories of personality and management.

### **1.61 What the Research Seeks to Discover**

Douglas (1976) urges prospective researchers to consider six questions before commencing work. He adds that most researchers begin and end their studies without ever asking them. Perhaps this is a reckless assertion, yet the questions are put before the reader because they have been given due consideration in this study and are worthy of reflection.

1. What are the goals of this research?



2. What, in view of these goals, is the kind of data the writer wants this research to produce?
3. What research will allow the writer to achieve these goals and get these data?
4. Given these goals and this research setting, what research methods should be ideally used?
5. What research methods are practical in this setting?
6. Given the estimate of practical methods, is it possible to approximate sufficiently the goals and kinds of data wanted to make this research practical?

The primary research questions for this study are as follows:

1. **Observe, describe and analyse the physiological, psychological and work demands placed on principals. Is there a relationship between managerial tasks (as defined by Mintzberg and recorded by the researcher) and job stress?**
2. **Is blood pressure a reliable physiological indicator of stress and can these measurements be related to recorded incidents of stress (either recorded overtly by the researcher or reported to the researcher by the subject)?**
3. **What role does the Psychological Perspective play in the stress equation?**

**These questions will be answered through research that is:**

1. **Field based.** Principals are asked to consider at work their day-to-day responsibilities, roles and duties. It involves a measure of note taking and personal reflection which is recorded for later analysis.
2. **Psychological.** The research takes into account personality characteristics - strengths, weaknesses, favoured approaches.
3. **Physiological.** Reliable, medically accepted and easy to administer tests are used to judge stress related impact on the body.
4. **Longitudinal.** Studies are conducted over a working week, on the job and recognise that each day brings high and low pressure events.
5. **Wholistic.** Aspects of home and social life are examined because

everyone has a life outside work where principals spend at least twelve of the twenty-four hours of the day.

## **1.62 The Nature of the Individual**

As a person's reaction to stress is highly individualistic it is important to note that periods of sustained stress may not prove debilitating to some principals. In fact "almost all potential stressors are sources of potential satisfaction" (Savery and Detiuk, 1986: 273). Stress need not be "bad" at all. Indeed it can be a source of personal growth and rouse within the individual resources he or she did not think were available. Some people describe stress as a "pleasant, exciting, stimulating and thrilling experience" (Looker and Gregson, 1989: 29). These people may often place themselves deliberately in challenging situations and feel completely capable of handling whatever demands are placed on them. Champion athletes fall into this category as they stress their bodies and minds to the limit to achieve personal best or victory.

Other individuals react by avoiding stress. People who know they do not handle stress very well:

... make themselves anxious about feeling anxious, depressed about their depressions and inadequate about the lack of adequacy. An enormous vicious circle of self flagellation leading to further self denigration thereby results (Ellis, 1978: 209).

Stress attacks a person's very confidence and in a principal's case can be doubly damaging when the poorly handled situation is judged negatively by peers and subordinates. Schools are certainly fertile grounds for these situations

as almost every fellow worker will want to proffer an opinion on what should have been done at the time.

The character of an individual shows how measuring stress becomes difficult. Simply put, one's pleasure can be another's pain. Ostell (1991: 12) believes any situation can be a problem for someone if it is at odds with his or her beliefs and goals. It is not the disparity which is distressing for people, rather it is the perceived cost(s) linked with the disparity which are the source of distress (e.g. failure to achieve a promotion, thus not gaining the improved status).

Figure 2 (Ostell, 1991: 13) illustrates how people react to and appraise situations. It shows how humans process information and how they might react to potentially stressful situations. At first glance it appears overly detailed but a closer examination will show that it has much utility in assisting to understand the nature of the individual and the stressful reaction.



reactions. Ostell recommends it as a useful tool for psychotherapists who wish to work with clients on interventions to facilitate coping because they can "gain an appreciation of their problem situation(s) and diagnose the ways of thinking and acting which are proving dysfunctional" (1991: 22).

**Measuring stress is not easy because each individual is unique. Ostell's figure clearly shows this and can be easily applied to the school situation where principals in this study have different beliefs, values, memories, models of self, learned requirements, short and long term goals, interpersonal skills and abilities, cognitive abilities, physical health, material resources, staff, peer and family support and so on. All these mix together and play a part in the reaction process. This study closely examines five individuals and it takes into account the relatively stable features of the person as detailed as above.**

## **1.7 A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

It would be very wrong to assume that because our modern world is "seething and bubbling" with change that stress research or even pursuit of the topic is a recent times phenomenon. Karpman quotes the famous eighteenth century surgeon John Hunter's wise observation that, "My life is at the mercy of any scoundrel who chooses to put me in a passion" (1989: 56). Even then thinking people knew stressful events (passion) were not infrequently followed

by sudden death. Earlier again in 1628, another philosophical physician, William Harvey, accurately noted "every affection of the mind that is attended with either pain or pleasure, hope or fear, is the cause of an agitation whose influence extends to the heart" (Karpman, 1989: 56). Stress has always been part of humankind's existence and will remain so but it has only been since the time of Selye, the so-called "father of modern stress research", that societal interest has picked up because of academic research. From rather humble medical beginnings in 1628, the topic now generates intense interest and wide ranging research projects in the diverse fields of medicine, sociology, philosophy, public administration, psychology, psychiatry and anthropology. Great advances in understanding have been made with this new knowledge. However an unfortunate and unavoidable side effect has been the development of inconsistent theories, conflicting definitions and general confusion on what stress means. Depending on the discipline the researcher is working from, stress may mean very different things. Problems are added for those working in a field such as administration which may draw insights, understandings and knowledge from a variety of base disciplines. This researcher finds himself in such a situation.

Senge provides a hint of what is required to bring some order to the research when he says:

From a very early age, we are taught to break apart problems, to fragment the world. This apparently makes complex tasks and subjects more manageable, but we pay a hidden, enormous price. We can no longer see the consequences of our actions, we lose our intrinsic sense of a connection to a large whole (1990: 3).

There is much wisdom here. The Conceptual Model is the "big picture" on stress for this research work. It endeavours to:

1. **Provide clarity in the confusion inherent in the field**
2. **Give the reader a "visual map" of where the research is heading**
3. **Organise the literature and research and**
4. **Provide a theoretical framework and a strong philosophical basis for the arguments to be presented.**

The three perspectives presented and the aspects associated with them are intertwined and constantly changing in emphasis as the daily rhythms of life change. Together they impact on a person, singly or through others, to cause stress. The model shows how a wholistic understanding of stress can be reached by considering all perspectives. The model starts at the "larger whole", as suggested by Senge, and does not fragment and compartmentalise parts of the stress equation.

### **1.71 Philosophical Basis of the Model**

This model is based on a wholistic understanding of stress. It is interactive because, as Pearlin says, "many stressful experiences, it should be recognised, don't spring out of a vacuum but typically can be traced back to surrounding social structures and people's locations within them" (1989: 242). It is therefore centred in real life and recognises that principals have a life outside school and that home life problems can intrude into the working day. The converse is also true.

The research design for this study is based on the work of Sieverding (1985) who used portable heart rate monitors and work diaries to study physiological stress in a small sample of working principals. Sieverding also took into account the psychological profile (using Type A and Type B personalities) in studying the principals' field based stress levels. Sieverding used managerial functions as delineated by Mintzberg (1973). Mintzberg focussed specifically on what managers do and grouped their work under these three headings:

**Informational**

1. Monitor
2. Disseminator
3. Spokesperson

**Decisional**

4. Resource allocator
5. Negotiator
6. Disturbance handler
7. Entrepreneur

**Interpersonal**

8. Figurehead
9. Liaison
10. Leader

The study by Sieverding (1985) is used only as a framework and a number of modifications have been implemented to suit this researcher's style, participant group and new knowledge. This Conceptual Model on page 66 shows by the interlocking circles that a stressor's impact on the person may be mediated by the Psychological Perspective. It is true to say that significant stressors rarely occur singly and they can often trigger chronic strain and stress in another area. For Pearlin the pivotal point is that:



... important life problems, whether in the form of events or of durable strains, do not exist in isolation from other problems. The very integration of an individual's activities and relationships means that disruptions in one area of their (sic) lives serve to create other disruptions (1989: 248).

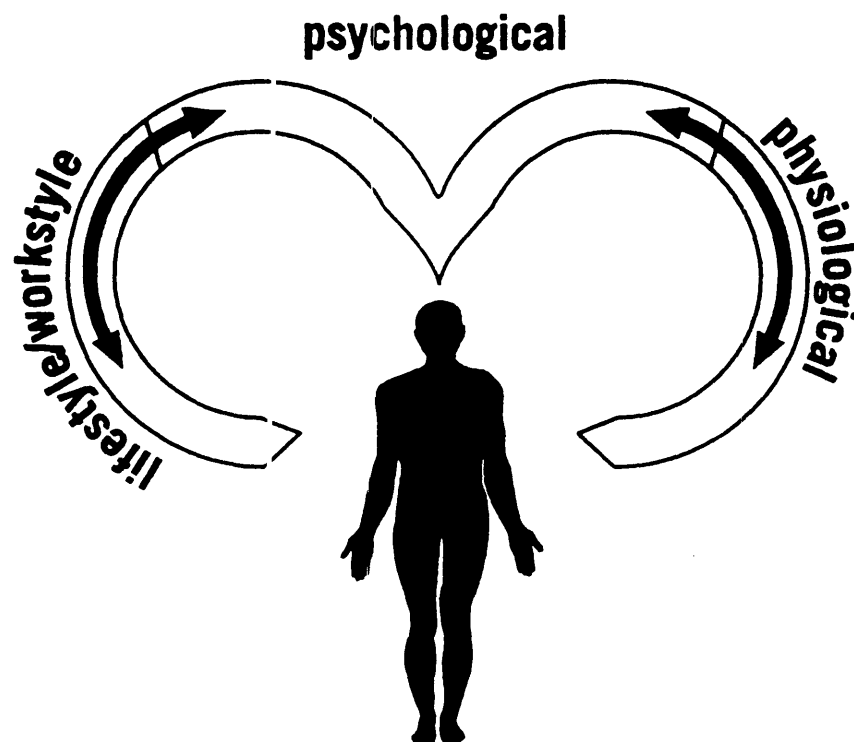
Gmelch and Thomas believe the primary purpose in the development of a suitable model for managerial stress must be based on three premises: prediction, comprehension and application (1989: 10). More specifically, a model addressing the issues and concerns of managers in the stress area should fulfil the following goals:

1. Improve managerial understanding of stress and work relationships
2. Use terminology and concepts that make sense from a managerial perspective
3. Appeal to managers in general and not to a specific or small group of managers
4. Not be viewed as the complete or final solution to issues concerning stress and work
5. Integrate medical and behavioural science variables that are relevant to managers
6. Suggest courses of action that managers can take to counter stress in staff and themselves
7. Offer suggestions for testing and research on stress and work variables
8. Incorporate individual, group and organisational as well as extra organisational variables that are potentially related (Ivancevich and Matteson, 1988: 31).

The researcher believes this conceptual model can amply satisfy these eight goals.

**Psychological Perspective**

- \* Personality and temperament
- \* Sleep patterns
- \* Temper and anger level
- \* Memory ability
- \* Practised avoidance behaviours
- \* Job security concerns
- \* Qualifications and study needs
- \* Job advancement concerns
- \* Level of motivation
- \* Reaction to change events
- \* Sense of humour and fun
- \* Character, ethics and morality



**Lifestyle/Workstyle Perspective**

- \* Relaxation techniques
- \* Support groups available
- \* Employer expectations and demands
- \* Size of responsibility
- \* Hours worked per day/week
- \* Relations within the organisation
- \* Office working conditions
- \* Family demands
- \* Marital status and relationships
- \* Hobbies away from work
- \* Spiritual and meditative resources

**Physiological Perspective**

- \* Family medical history
- \* Level of blood fat
- \* Blood circulation
- \* Personal fitness level
- \* Weight and height ratio
- \* The body's reaction to stress
- \* Medication taken
- \* Cigarette and alcohol intake
- \* Personal energy level
- \* General health

Figure 3

**Stress: A Conceptual Model**

## **1.72 How the Conceptual Model Works**

Stress attacks people in highly individualistic ways and the model demonstrates how the perspectives are linked together. It is possible that potential problems in one perspective may cause disruptions in another. Consider the principal experiencing severe difficulties with adolescent children at home (a factor within the Lifestyle/Workstyle Perspective) which in turn causes anxiety and depression at work and results in a loss of concentration and sense of fun in the workplace (Psychological Perspective). The model shows how principals can be excellent copers in one perspective and deficient in another. An obvious example is in the Physiological Perspective where problems with the heart, smoking, weight or medication can lead to a serious hampering of effectiveness displayed as days off sick, low energy level or extended periods of leave. The model also demonstrates the importance of the Psychological Perspective which acts as a conductor or insulator for possible problems on either side of the model. Those strong in this perspective use it to insulate themselves when periods of high stress threaten to affect their performance. These people practise healthy avoidance behaviours, use appropriate humour and display a relaxed temperament that enables them to see things in a clearer light and react to circumstances without becoming confused or judgemental. Conversely, a principal with a personality prone to temper or suspicion may well blame others and practise inadequate avoidance behaviours such as denial.

Stress and the individual's mental health are closely linked and this model does not isolate the psychological side of a person's life. Schools are places

where people in high pressured jobs often thrive and the model demonstrates how these people use stress to their advantage.

## **1.8 THE STYLE OF THE STUDY**

### **1.81 The Study Setting**

The principals under observation in this study are employed by Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE). They are part of a system of primary schools covering a large area of South-East Queensland. Appendix 1 shows the extent of BCE's operations. South-East Queensland is a rapid growth area and many districts are experiencing increasing enrolments.

### **1.82 BCE Expectations of Primary Principals**

Principals are chosen after an interview process and the person is offered a standard BCE primary contract. Once in the role he or she is expected to comply with all contract conditions and the Director may use sanctioning power to dismiss the employee under contract conditions. A principal must maintain the ethos of the school, ensure the effectiveness of curriculum, care for the welfare of students and staff and provide stable leadership with vision. Part of the primary principal contract is included as Appendix 2.

### **1.83 Instruments Used in this Study**

This research work is a qualitative case study of five serving principals. Principal stress is examined through a detailed investigation of the working lives of the five selected participants. The basic orientation for this study is taken from the approach used by Sieverding (1985) and Whan (1988). This study employs different data gathering techniques but attempts to work with principals in a similar fashion to the way Sieverding conducted his research on American principals and Whan on Australian principals. They chose a field based, observational, psychological, longitudinal and physiological approach to obtain reliable data closely tied to job functions and demands. This study of principals employed by Brisbane Catholic Education combines accepted medical measures of stress with current theories of personality and management. It is both naturalistic and scientific and collects data close to the job.

### **1.84 Continuing Debate and Difficulties Expected in the Study**

There are many complications associated with accurately measuring the level of individual stress and then drawing comparisons across a group of people in a similar role. What may well be destructive, painful and time consuming for one person may be easily accomplished by another without a second thought. Stress is "a complex interaction amongst the environment, personality and the body" (Cooper et al., 1988: 198). This assertion underlies the importance of attempting to focus studies on stress from these three perspectives. The proposed Conceptual Model provides the framework and philosophical base from which a study can be positioned.

William Harvey's quote from 1628 is both fascinating and instructive because the subject is fraught with difficulties where little is cut and dried. Five contentious issues are listed below. In the course of the study each has been addressed.

1. **Wide variance in individuals.** People have their own "unique life histories, experiences, behaviour patterns and personalities" (Glowinkowski and Cooper, 1989: 327). These factors will influence the extent to which any principal finds a single event stressful.
2. **Measuring personality.** Sieverding (1985) relied on Type A and Type B personality profiles obtained from the Jenkins Activity Survey in his study of New York principals. The value of this instrument has been questioned by some authorities. Karpman says that while early indications were that Type A behaviour patterns were suggestive of Coronary Heart Disease (CHD), scientists are now drifting away from a preoccupation with Type A behaviour and heart problems (1989: 61). Other medical specialists like Sedlacek are convinced that CHD and Type A behaviour are closely linked (1980: 63). Some coverage will be given to the personality debate later.
3. **Observational Studies.** There has been some academic debate in the past on the true value of observational studies in the workplace. Structured observation is an essential part of the research design in this study. Researchers such as Gronn (1982, 1987) do not believe that this method can deliver as much as it promises. Thomas (1986) and Willower (1982) hold that it can offer a wide range of possibilities allowing the researcher to be as close as possible to the subject to watch, listen, and learn from the sounds that characterise his or her world.
4. **Blood Pressure monitoring.** Blood Pressure (BP) studies have been limited in the past because of the lack of reliable instrumentation. The more popular methods of measuring physiological body changes have been through ECG recorders, skin and saliva testing. BP testing has been conducted successfully by Dolan, Sherwood and Light (1992) and Sausen, Lovall and Pincomb (1992). These American studies used ambulatory BP devices to measure occupational stress. There are a number of methodological problems with blood pressure monitoring and while care needs to be taken to overcome these it remains a choice worthy of consideration.
5. **Linkage between stress and disease.** This debate has already been covered and is mentioned again as another example of the contentious nature of the research topic. While this study is not concerned with serious disease such as cancer, it is interested in general vitality and personal health in the course of the research.

## 1.9 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

**Chapter 1** details the three research questions that are central to this study and outlines the importance and purpose of the topic. This is critical because stress research is not a new topic and has been the subject of intense academic interest for some years. The available literature is both prolific and widespread. One unfortunate side effect of this interest is the confusion and misunderstandings that arise from researchers approaching the problem from different philosophical bases and disciplines. In an attempt to remedy this and to provide some commonality, Chapter 1 presents a Conceptual Model designed by the researcher. This model is the foundation for the entire study and will guide the research.

**Chapter 2** reviews a selection of the relevant literature on stress. The Conceptual Model provides the basis of the literature review and each of the three perspectives will be examined in this chapter along with a review of definitions and the general concept of stress.

**Chapter 3** establishes the research design and methodology to be used in this qualitative case study approach. Five principals will be surveyed, tested, studied and questioned from both a naturalistic and scientific angle.

**Chapter 4** tenders the findings of the study. Even though stress has been frequently studied and written about this style of approach is perhaps more

venturesome than survey-only quantitative studies.

**Chapter 5** further expands the literature review by an investigation of the demands of quality leadership and management in schools today. After focusing on trauma and triumph in Chapter 1 the messages from those who prosper, not just survive in stressful situations, deserve a fuller accounting. A new age of management literature and related understandings appears to be gaining ascendancy and there are many implications of this for leaders in schools. Stress can never be managed out of existence, however, it can be managed and the habits of those who manage it productively deserve attention.

**Chapter 6** completes the research work and again refers to the Conceptual Model as the basis of the discussion. To have wide utility the model must allow for solutions, coping strategies and possible remediation as well as simply showing where stress comes from in life. Implications and conclusions are presented along with comments on the "right stuff" for principals working in schools filled with trauma and triumph. The concept of Situational Intensities is developed in this final chapter.