



'Building leadership capacity'

Principal Health and Wellbeing in Australian Lutheran Schools

A Camp Australia and ALITE Research Project

Final Report



Prepared by Australian Lutheran Institute for Theology and Ethics for Lutheran Principals Australia

September 2013

Acknowledgements

The researchers would like to thank CAMP Australia for a generous grant in support of this research. The assistance of Australian Lutheran College in allowing the use of ALITE staff on the project is also greatly appreciated. We would also like to acknowledge the support provided by Lutheran Education Australia, and by the three regional districts of LEA, viz. LEQ, LESER and LSA for support and for allowing access to their principals and facilities to conduct focus group interviews. We acknowledge also the commitment of the many Lutheran principals who took time from their hectic schedules to complete surveys or participate in focus groups.

Dr Mark Worthing

Senior researcher

Australian Institute for Theology and Ethics

Australian Lutheran College

Shane Paterson

LEA Assistant Director: Leadership

Lutheran Education Australia

Contents

Executive Summary	4
Introduction	6
Part One: Review of Literature on Principal Wellbeing	7
Australian Studies	7
Joint Principals Association Study, 2008	7
Australian Principal Health & Wellbeing Survey, Monash, 2013	7
Privilege and the Price, Victorian Dept. of Education Study, 2004	10
Principals Australia Institute, case studies, 2005	11
Australian Council for Educational Leaders Study, 2007	11
Australian Primary Principals Association Review of Resources, 2007	11
International Studies	12
Centre of the Future of Teaching and Learning Study, Sacramental, 2011	12
Lutheran Church-Missouri Study School Leadership Development Project	12
International Confederation of Principals Wellbeing Survey, 2008	13
Observations and conclusions from existing studies on principal wellbeing	13
Part Two: Principal Wellbeing in Australian Lutheran Schools	15
Data from the Better Schools Project, 2004, 2009 and 2011	14
The CAMP Australia-ALITE Study, 2013	17
Part Three: Possibilities for Future Action	26
Summary and Conclusions	34

Executive Summary

ALITE has conducted a survey of principal wellbeing in Lutheran schools at the request of LPA, supported by a generous grant from CAMP Australia. The first part of this project was a review of existing literature on principal health and wellbeing in Australia and overseas. A number of recent studies on principal wellbeing exist, and Australia is at the forefront of this area of research, so the quality of data available and relevance to our situation is very high. The Monash study, which is the largest of its kind, has just released its final report on its 2011 survey findings and this data has been reviewed and summarised. In order to inaugurate programmes specifically targeted at principal wellbeing among Lutheran principals, specific information was needed to clarify the situation that currently exists among our principals. To that end an electronic survey was sent out to all LEA principals in May 2013. We were very pleased to have achieved a 77% response rate to this survey (of available principals), which means that the data collected is very accurate and representative. Additionally, 18 principals were interviewed in three separate focus groups conducted in late May and early June through the three regions.

Our survey of Lutheran principals found that stressors and motivators were similar to those of principals in other systems. What we found in the survey and focus groups was that Lutheran principals as a whole are very satisfied with life, very positive, highly motivated, and spiritually active. The scores on the wellbeing and positive feeling tests were above the national average for the general population and also above the average for other groups of principals for which data is available. This is all good news for Lutheran principals and Lutheran schools. We also found, however, that our principals experience more stress than those in other professions, would like more support both in the early years of being a principal and in subsequent years, and that many feel the stress is such that they do not contemplate being able to continue serving as a principal until retirement.

The study recommends that LPA consider a range of ‘interventions’ that will serve to maintain the high quality of principals we currently have, assist them to cope with stress and help them experience high levels of wellbeing and enjoy a long tenure of leadership within our schools. After consultation, it is anticipated that many of these programmes will commence in 2014. The progress and impact of these ‘interventions’ will be tracked and evaluated and will be reported on as the programmes progress.

'You left the house this morning while it was dark. It's now fifteen hours later, dark again, and you're just returning from your last meeting.

So far today, among many other things, you've spoken into a crackling megaphone at a school assembly, listened to a phone message in which a parent yelled about parking rules at drop-off time, added four new students to your already overflowing classrooms, helped one teacher with a science-curriculum question and another with an email problem, met with the school site council, worked with the PTA to keep a canceled after-school arts program alive, fetched children in time for the late bus, snuck home for a quick dinner with your extremely forgiving family, and then (once your meal was quickly scarfed down) slipped out to explain to the local neighborhood association why the upcoming construction project to repair your school's long-disintegrating playground won't inconvenience them as much as they fear.

In your free time (stop laughing), you've been able to focus on education, which is what originally brought you into this job.

Welcome to a day--and night--in the life of a ... school principal.'

- Jimmy Guterman "Where Have All the Principals Gone" 2007

Introduction

In recent years there have been a number of studies of stress and wellbeing as they relate to specific professions. The Whitehall Studies in the UK are perhaps most notable of these. Most of these studies have strong links with the positive psychology movement as developed by Martin Seligman, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and others and make use of the wellbeing indicators and assessment mechanisms that have arisen out of these studies, particularly Ed Diener's 'Satisfaction with Life Scale.' In the past decade the question of the wellbeing of school principals has also come under assessment both in Australia and overseas – though Australia seems to be leading the world in research into principal wellbeing at the present time. In this report we will review the major studies on principal wellbeing and summarise their findings and significance. We will also examine the situation of principals in Australian Lutheran Schools based upon data gained through the BSP surveys and data collected through a survey and focus groups conducted through ALITE in May and June 2013. Finally, in light of these studies, possible avenues for action aimed at promoting the wellbeing of principals in Lutheran Schools in Australia will be presented.

Part One: Review of Literature on Principal Wellbeing

Research in Australia

1. 2008. "The Best Job in the World with some of the Worst Days Imaginable: Report of Study on School Leader Welfare by the Joint Principals' Association.

This study, prepared by and for principals and other school leaders, is one of the most significant and useful for the Australian context. A wide survey base of 1,103 secondary school principals and other school leaders across all Australian states and territories conducted over a one month period in August 2007 provides a very good snapshot of principal wellbeing and specific areas and causes of stress. Interestingly, 68% of respondents were aged 51-60, which corresponds to other data available about the average age of Australian principals. The survey revealed that most principals like their job, are committed to making a difference, and feel they are accomplishing good things. Motivation among principals in general is high. Nevertheless, despite the fact that 80% felt they were performing well and 86% stated that they either 'loved' or 'liked' their job, 56% admitted that they were struggling to cope.

The study, which also had a qualitative component, indicated that those who had formed strong mentoring relationships, collegial support groups and maintained a good work/life balance were less stressed. These insights were supported by written comments and there was no statistical data provided to indicate what percentage of those who were coping well made use of some or all of these support mechanisms and lifestyle choices. The study did, however, report that one in six respondents reported that they struggled with depression and that two-thirds of respondents felt that their families suffered because of their job. Seventeen specific stressors were asked about in the survey. Some are closely related and/or overlap significantly. The top ten major stressors identified by principals in the survey, in descending of order, were:

1. quantity of work 82%
 2. lack of time for what is important 80%
 3. state government initiatives 75%
 4. employer expectations 70%
 5. student related issues 63%
 6. federal government initiatives 63%
 7. poorly performing staff 58%
 8. parent related issues 57%
 9. mental health issues of students 55%
 10. teacher shortages 54%
2. 2013. *The Australian Principal Health & Wellbeing Survey*. 2011 Data Final Report. Philip Riley. www.principalhealth.org.

This ongoing study is one of the most comprehensive of its type in the world and has generated some significant data. Specifically, the study of principals across state and private school sectors reveals some of the specific areas that are causes of stress and ranks them in order of priority

as stressors. The study provides a very broad picture of principals, including family, education, years in teaching, years as principal, personal health, hours worked per week, etc. The Monash study cites a Principals' Australia report that estimates 70% of Australia's 10,000 school principals will retire within the next five years, meaning a large new group of younger, less experienced principals who will need support to cope with the pressures of the job will be entering the field.¹ One purpose of the study is the identification of key stressors on principals so as to allow for better approaches to intervention. The nineteen stressors ranked in order of stress as experienced by principals in the 3 months preceding the survey were:

1. Sheer quantity of work²
2. Lack of time to focus on teaching and learning
3. Resourcing needs
4. Expectations of the employer
5. Student related issues
6. Government initiatives
7. Poorly performing staff
8. Parent related issues
9. Mental health issues of students
10. Teacher shortages
11. Mental health issues of staff
12. Lack of autonomy/authority
13. Financial management issues
14. Inability to get away from school/community
15. Critical incidents
16. Declining enrolment
17. Union/industrial disputes
18. Complaints management
19. Interpersonal conflicts (table 22, page 32)

The study also compares these stressors by school system and type of school. Principals in all categories track similarly with regard to stressors but there are some differences to be noted. Principals of independent schools are in general less stressed than their public and Catholic sector counterparts (figure 13, page 34) with independent school principals (which includes principals of Lutheran schools in this study) reporting less stress in all areas except parent related issues and inability to get away from the school, where they reported equal levels of stress as their public and

¹ There is no longitudinal data provided, however, that suggests whether this is a new situation. The Joint Principals' Association study, for instance, found 64% of principals were 51 or over with the largest group being 51-60. There are suggestions that existing systems work in such a way that many principals do not take on their first principal role until age 50 or above and few remain in the job past age 60 (6% of all principals). This would mean that we are probably always facing the likelihood of the majority of principals retiring within 5 – 10 years given the current systems. It also questions the Monash study assumption that those retiring will be replaced with 'much younger, less experienced individuals, potentially more at risk ...'

² 32% of principals rated this 10 on a scale of 1-10 with an additional 46.6% rating it a 7-9. Only number 2 on the list, lack of time to teach and learn, came close with 27.1% giving it a 10 and an additional 45.3% giving it a 7-9.

Catholic sector counterparts. Also, primary school principals were generally less stressed than secondary school principals (figure 12, page 33).

Threats and acts of bullying and physical violence against principals was also shown to be a serious problem affecting the wellbeing of principals with over 30% of principals indicating they had received violent threats from parents and over 25% from students. Seven out of every one hundred principals had experienced actual acts of physical violence from parents, and an equal number reported actual acts of physical violence from students (figure 20, page 60). While the incidents of bullying and actual physical violence come predominantly from the public school sector (figures 22-26, pp. 62ff.), the data is organised according to total number of reports and not according to percentage of principals from each sector and is therefore skewed somewhat by the greater number of public sector principals taking part in the survey. Female principals report somewhat higher counts of incidents of bullying and harassment, but are also the largest group of principals participating in the survey 56% versus 44% (pp. 20, 62-70). Intriguingly, while the study found significant incidents of bullying and even physical violence, the principals surveyed were not asked about this issue in their list of stressors.

As to wellbeing, the vast majority of principals disagree with the statement that they are frequently depressed about their job (76%) and a further 61% disagree that they are depressed about their job at certain times of each year (tables 53 and 54, page 45), while 10% are neutral on the question. The fact that this leaves 14% who report being frequently depressed about their job and 29% who feel depressed about their job at certain times of the year is a concern. The Australian Quality of Life Utility Scores, reported in table 83 (page 71) and figures 40-48 (pages 72-76) indicate principals are slightly happier and more satisfied than the average population. The study also divided principals into three clusters according to their wellbeing scores and compared this cluster data against other survey data (see note on pages 76f. on cluster analysis). As might be expected, the cluster with highest wellbeing scores were shown to be well suited to their working conditions, managed their time well, and reported strong supportive relationships at home and in the workplace. The lowest scoring cluster did not appear well suited to their working conditions and generally did not report strong support at home or in the workplace. The middle cluster seemed as well adjusted as the highest cluster, but reported levels of support from home and work between the other two groups. Also, as might be expected, the highest scoring cluster on wellbeing reported the least stress across all 19 stressors, the lowest group the most stress, and the middle group were in between on all 19 stressors. The study clearly demonstrates a link between wellbeing and work performance, levels of stress, and levels of support. What remains unclear is the precise links between these areas. That is to say, are principals with high wellbeing scores exhibiting high wellbeing because of their support networks and less stressful environments, or are they experiencing less stress and more support simply because they are by nature more positive in their outlook? Studies into this relationship from other sources indicate that both factors come into play.

The study touches on the question of religion and faith only briefly with a single question indicating that 31.4% of principals across all systems regularly participate in some spiritual practice or attendance of religious services outside the school setting. Because, however, this data is not matched against performance, stress, and job satisfaction indicators it gives us no information as to

whether such religious practice and commitment make any positive difference in the experience of the principals.

The final report from the 2011 survey (released July 2013) recommends in its executive summary three areas of action/intervention. It recommends that each state should establish a task force to investigate adult to adult bullying and violence across all school sectors. Reducing incidents of bullying and violence, it is suggested, will be less costly than the time lost due to ill health and OH&S claims against employers for not providing a safe workplace. The second recommendation of the study is that principals be trained (through in-service training and other means) to deal with the emotional aspects of their work, e.g., dealing with the high expectations of parents for their children, emotional labour, dealing with workplace conflicts, etc. Finally, the report recommends the establishment of professional support and support networks for all principals. The data indicated that principals with good professional support are emotionally and physically healthier and perform better. It is also an 'area of improvement that would be relatively easy for education systems to improve' (executive summary, p. 8).

3. 2004. "The Privilege and the Price: A Study of Principal Class Workload and its Impact on Health and Wellbeing." Melbourne. Department of Education and Training.

This report, commissioned by the Victorian Association of State Secondary School Principals (VASSP) invited 1,200 principals and assistant principals to respond to a survey in 2003 with a response rate of 56.6%. The study found that a majority of principals valued their job and were performing well. They reported that "principals and assistant principals almost universally love their job. They think of themselves as privileged to have such an important and rewarding vocation" (p. 21). In fact, just over 90% reported that their job gave them great satisfaction and 97% agreed that the best thing about their job was being able to make a difference in the lives of young people. Yet it also found that most experienced significant stress and reduction in quality of life, with just over 50% having experienced work-related illness and 79% considering their job high stress (p. 31). One interesting suggestion put forward for the reason this might be the case is that the type of person attracted to teaching is the same type as is attracted to the 'caring professions' such as nursing, counselling, church work, etc. This is essentially a different type of person with a different skill set to that required to administer and manage. Future principals are almost exclusively drawn from those who originally chose to be a teacher. The study pointed out that 'there seems to us there is an inherent tension between the type of person who is generally available for appointment to principal class positions and the demands of the job' (p. 22).

One of the unique features of the VASSP study is that because it is concerned with a single system, it gives significant concrete attention to ways in which the stress factors working on principals within this system might be addressed. Most of the study's suggestions involve the creation or restructuring of existing staff positions to spread the load of responsibility more evenly. The appointment of a PA (instead of an SSO) for each principal and the appointment of a facilities manager are two of the main recommendations, with the suggestion that retired principals could be head hunted for this later position. The suggestions for intervention in the study all fall within the category of primary intervention. The conclusion, suggested even more overtly than in the Monash

study, is that if concrete action is not taken to reduce stress, the cost to the schools in money, talent and general quality will be significant.

4. 2005. Principals Australia Institute, case studies.

In 2005 Principals Australia Institute conducted a qualitative study of principal wellbeing gathering case studies from 12 principals across a range of ages, school sizes, experience and with a balance between male and female participants. There was no quantitative component to the study. While the study does not therefore provide any statistics on levels and causes of stress it does provide a composite snapshot (from 2005) of principals and the types of stresses they experience. The accounts of the 12 principals studied correspond well to the data gathered in the quantitative studies, and supplements these by providing a number of real life examples of how actual principals were or were not coping with these stresses. Interestingly, one of the principals selected for the survey had recently made the decision to discontinue her career as a principal because of the stress of dealing with a group of parents at her second school, highlighting the very real nature and impact of principal stress.

5. 2007. P. Duignan and D. Gurr. "Leading Australia's Schools." The Australian Council for Educational Leaders.

This qualitative study of 18 principals is not specifically focused on principal stress and wellbeing but does provide significant insight into the views and experiences of a range of principals. While specific stressors are not a major focus, the positive experience of the job itself, identified in several of the quantitative studies as the key major positive work experience of principals, is highlighted with many of the principals explaining their vision and commitment to their job. This study presents some good general insights into what positively motivates principals.

6. 2007. "Maintaining, Sustaining and Refueling Leaders. A national overview of services and resources for principal wellbeing in the primary sector," compiled by Kathy Lacey for Australian Primary Principals Association.

This study is unique among Australian studies in that it does not survey principals themselves (apart from some focus group interviews about available programmes), but rather the resources available to support principal wellbeing. The report is now six years old and with the rapid expansion of services in this area (see for instance some of the offerings from Principals Australia Institute as well as other groups) this means that much of the data is already dated, yet it gives a very thorough overview of services (many of which are still available) by state and by sector. A very helpful section at the end of the paper includes the results from focus group interviews and summarises the views of principals about such programmes as mentoring and co-principalship. Among interesting findings the study reported (from its focus groups) that:

Mentor programs are seen as very useful and providing a positive support. Using current principals as the mentors raised some concerns. Concerns included increasing workloads, and the appropriateness of using colleagues in this role as there may be a conflict of interest.

The Sabbatical Leave offered across all states in the Catholic sector was viewed most positively. Principals commented that this provision provided necessary time-out to reflect, learn and recuperate. This time was not seen as a rest, but rather a time of professional growth.

International Studies

1. 2011. "The Status of the Teaching Profession," Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning at WestEd, Sacramento, CA.

This American study has been widely cited and discussed in the media and on education blog sites since its release and merits attention. It is a study of 600 school principals in California. Increasing budget constraints in the US state have meant an increasing management load on principals, and this study looks at the impact it is having. The report indicates increased stress, increasing numbers of retirements at early ages and increased frustration with the system. Lack of funds, impossible workloads, and the near impossibility of removing incompetent teachers all factor highly. Average weekly work hours of principals in the study was 60 (compared with 46 in one Australian study, and 56 in another!). Apart from issues specific to the California state school system it is interesting that 66% had no prior experience in school management or school budgets and 37% had not previously been involved with or had training in teacher evaluation. This lack of training featured as a significant stressor.

2. Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod School Leadership Development Project

As this is a large English-speaking Lutheran school system with many parallels to the Australian Lutheran school system, any data from this system would be of special interest. No specific studies on principal wellbeing from this system were located, but several action programmes do seem to exist, including the following: Of interest is a programme of the LCMS called SLED (School Leadership Development Project) that aims to develop school leaders in primary schools and has developed 200 such leaders since its inception in 1989. Contact Janice.schroeder@lcms.org for details. This programme appears to have much in common with the LEA Leadership Development Programme (LDP), which also should be taken into consideration when looking at what is currently being done to promote principal wellbeing and longevity.

3. 2008 “International Survey of Principal Concerning Emotional and Mental Health and Wellbeing,” conducted by the International Confederation of Principals.

This study, whose international team was led by Louise Rowley of the University of Sydney, actually focuses on principals’ views of mental health and wellbeing among students and staff and asked no questions of the principals about their own wellbeing. It is important, however, in that of 1200 principals surveyed from 27 countries (the vast majority from Australia, North America and the UK) respondents overwhelmingly recognised a strong link between positive mental health and wellbeing among their staff and performance and job satisfaction. They also listed, in order, stress, anxiety and depression as the main issues affecting staff adversely. One could surmise that this would hold true for the principals as well. Also of note in the survey was the strong sense from all countries and school systems that there was a dearth of resources available from their school systems or supporting bodies to assist in helping staff to deal with stress and for principals in dealing with both students and staff experiencing stress or mental health issues. The main suggestions coming from the surveyed principals concerning staff mental health was for a need to build up resilience to deal with the inevitable stress, the development of coping mechanisms, and the need for structured collegial support. The principals, in the only comments directly related to their own wellbeing, expressed concern about principal burnout through increasing pressures to deal with these and other issues.

Observations and conclusions from existing studies on principal wellbeing

While not every study asks the same questions or has been undertaken for the same reasons, there is enough overlap in the general area of principal wellbeing to identify some general trends and findings.

1. There is little doubt that the overwhelming majority of school principals are highly motivated and are in the job by choice because they believe they can make a difference.
2. The majority of principals are aged over 51 (though few remain past 60) and are therefore generally very well experienced as educators before taking on the role of principal.
3. Because of the later age start to a career as principal and the tendency to leave the role by age 61, few spend more than 10 years in the position.
4. The majority of principals find the job stressful and report difficulty coping with the pressures of the position.
5. Negative impact on personal physical and mental health and family are widely reported. Few report their job has having a positive impact in these areas.
6. The workload associated with the role is consistently identified as the single biggest stressor.
7. Anecdotal and qualitative research evidence suggests that those who have entered into mentoring arrangements (formally or informally, or collegial support groups) cope much better with the stressors to which they are exposed.

8. Anecdotal and qualitative research evidence also suggests an intentional implementation of work/life balance also plays a role in assisting principals to cope with stressors.³
9. A lack of intervention to reduce principal stress and increase wellbeing will have a range of negative consequences for individual schools and school systems.
10. Studies indicate that these factors generally hold true (and in very similar proportions) across all sectors (public and private systems) not just in Australia but in similar societies overseas as well.

³ It should be noted, however, that the studies which look at this area simply show a correlation. Because of the nature of the work/life balance relationship to work stress, it could be argued that those who cope better with stress will also have or be able to have a better work/life balance, and that the one is not necessarily a cause of the other so much as a consequence.

Part Two: Principal Wellbeing in Australian Lutheran Schools

The initial data available on the wellbeing of principals in Lutheran schools in Australia comes from the Better Schools Project data on principal wellbeing collected in 2004, 2009 and 2011 by Insight SRC, with Dr Peter Hart serving as chief researcher. The 2013 BSP survey did not include a section on Principal wellbeing.

2004. Principal Stress: Organisational Health in LEA: Understanding Principal Wellbeing: The Critical Role of LEA as a System.” Insight SRC and Lutheran Education Australia.

2009. Better Schools. Principal Wellbeing Survey: Overall Report 2009. Insight SRC and Lutheran Education Australia.

2011. Better Schools. Principal Wellbeing Survey: Overall Report 2009. Insight SRC and Lutheran Education Australia.

As these studies comprise a single longitudinal study and have made use of similar questionnaires in each round they will be considered as a group. By request, no executive summary was prepared for these studies, simply the data in the form of a series of charts for each of the three surveys.

The 2004 study showed that Lutheran school principals for the most part scored along a similar range to external benchmark comparisons with the general workforce in Australia with regard to most areas of positive and negative work experiences. There were, however, some significant variations. Because the benchmark comparisons were to the general workforce and not principals from other schools systems, it is a reasonable assumption that many of these variations are due to the nature of the job, and not necessarily unique to Lutheran school principals. Nonetheless, the data is significant in highlighting differences in key stressors as well as key positive work experiences that principals face. For instance, while approximately 70% of people find their work schedule to be positive, less than 40% of principals felt positively about their work schedule. Lutheran principals were also significantly lower in their positive experience of family with just over 50% finding this a positive compared to nearly 70% among all workers.

Lutheran principals, however, were mostly positive about the majority of aspects of their job. In a survey of 19 potential positive work experiences more than 50% of principals identified all but two as mostly positive. The two areas that failed to merit a positive ranking with more than 50% of principals were the work schedule and external support. The most positive experience of all 19 factors was ‘the job itself’ which was ranked favourably by 90% of principals. When asked about negative work experiences across a range of 20 categories there were again some significant variations against the general Australian benchmark. Lutheran school principals listed individual distress, workload and work-home life as significantly more negative for them than the benchmarks. Interestingly, this was counterbalanced by naming communication, administration, career opportunities and workplace management as significantly less stressful than those in the general benchmark survey. Looking at the question from both positive and negative aspects, workload and work-home life relationship stood out as the most stressful, while love of the job itself ranked among the highest positives.

While the nature of the questions and the structure of the study changed somewhat for the 2009 and 2011 studies these findings are generally confirmed. A longitudinal look at the data does, however, show some improvement in the view principals had of external support and pay and conditions occurring between 2004 and 2009 with no areas showing a significant decline. The “key messages” identified from the 2011 survey concludes that on average principals’ levels of wellbeing are positive, coming in about 10% above the general Australian workforce. It also found that principals in Lutheran Schools are overall notably younger than the national average, have a greater percentage remaining past 60, and have longer tenures as principals, which is suggestive of better overall wellbeing.

There was, however, a very considerable range of wellbeing indicated by the study among principals which suggests that while some were doing very well, others were reporting significantly unhealthy levels of wellbeing. The survey also shows a slight drop in levels of positive work experiences after the increase in the 2009 study. The two areas that stand out from the 2011 report as declining from 2009 are the work-family balance, and trust in regional support. A few other findings of the survey that the researchers found significant are that LEQ principals (who had a 10% better response rate than the LEA average) were significantly more positive; that principals who have been in the role for more than 5 years were the least positive about the job, and that younger principals and those new to the role experience more stress than those who are older and/or more experienced. The report also suggests that job security and regional support were the biggest cause of principal stress in 2011 (as summarised in the key findings summary by the researchers),⁴ and administration and the nature of the job itself were the biggest positive factors.

As the Better Schools study of principal wellbeing was very much influenced by the positive psychology approach, there was more focus on the general culture and health of the system and specific positive experiences of principals compared to other studies. Not only do the studies reveal the major negative work experiences of Lutheran principals, but also the major positive experiences. In descending order of importance, based on combined 2009 and 2011 data, these were:

negative work events	positive work events
1. workload (58%) ⁵	1. the job itself (85%)
2. work and home life (56%)	2. decision-making (84%)
3. resources (46%)	3. customer service (82%)
4. congregational relationships (45%)	4. co-workers (80%)
5. administration (36%)	5. workload (78%)
6. financial management (30%)	6. job satisfaction (75%)
7. regional support (26%)	7. individual morale (73%)
8. communication (25%)	8. amenities (72%)
9. individual distress (25%)	9. equipment and resources (70%)
10. co-workers (24%)	10. administration (68%)

⁴ The ‘key findings’ reported the relationship with districts as the biggest stressor in 2011, yet it is ranked 7th in the list of top ten stressors. The cause of the anomaly is uncertain but the two conclusions may have been drawn from separate question sets.

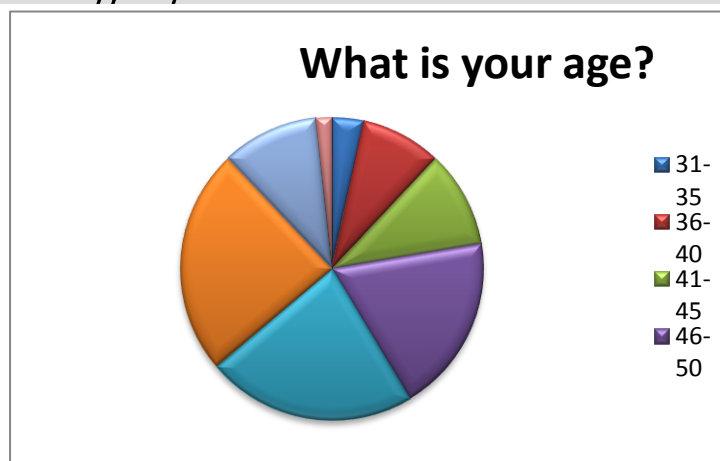
⁵ Percentages are not given in the report but are shown in the various graphs and charts, and therefore those given here are approximations based on the graphs and are given to enable comparisons with related data from other studies.

CAMP Australia-ALITE study 2013

In May and June of 2013 ALITE, working together with LPA gathered information on principal wellbeing from Australian Lutheran principals. The study used a mixed methods approach combining a comprehensive online survey in which all principals of Australian Lutheran schools were invited to participate, and focus groups of 5-8 principals conducted in each of the three regions with participants chosen randomly but within the parameters of maximal diversity (eg, a set amount of principals from primary, secondary, early career, mid-career, male and female were invited to participate from within their representative groups in order to maintain a balance reflective of the make-up of Australian Lutheran principals generally). Of 75 principals not on leave or away on business during the fortnight of the survey in May 2013, 58 responses were received, for a very high response rate of 77%. This very high response rate (30-40% for a study such as this is considered average and anything over 50% considered high) itself says something about the commitment and dedication of the current cohort of Lutheran principals.

We also found Lutheran principals represent a broader than average age range than the national norm, in which 64% of principals are 51 years of age or older and only 6% over 60, which means nearly 60% of all Australian principals are between the ages of 51 and 60. The situation is somewhat different among principals of Lutheran schools with the largest group being those 50 or under (45%), 42% are in the 51-60 age group, and 13% are 61 or over.

What is your age?			
Options	Answer	Response Percentage	Response Count
	31-35	3.4%	2
	36-40	8.6%	5
	41-45	10.3%	6
	46-50	19.0%	11
	51-55	22.4%	13
	56-60	24.1%	14
	61-65	10.3%	6
	over 65	1.7%	1
<i>answered question</i>			58
<i>skipped question</i>			0



Among the districts LSA has 52% of principals 50 or under and 49% of LESER principals are 50 or under. Only LEQ matches the national average with 55% of principals in the 51-60 age group and 33% being 50 or under (compared to 36% nationally). Overall, the data indicates that Lutheran schools tend to appoint principals at a younger age than the national average and they tend to remain longer. This means that any investment in principal wellbeing in the Lutheran system will have more far-reaching benefits, given the longevity of the average principal, than within other Australian systems.

Concerning those areas that cause stress as well as those things that motivate principals, the information gathered about stressors and positive work experiences of Lutheran principals for the most part confirm the data from the Better Schools surveys. We found that our principals to be highly motivated and the things that motivate them most are the job itself, helping teachers perform their best, helping students to achieve and other factors associated with the achievement and betterment of others.

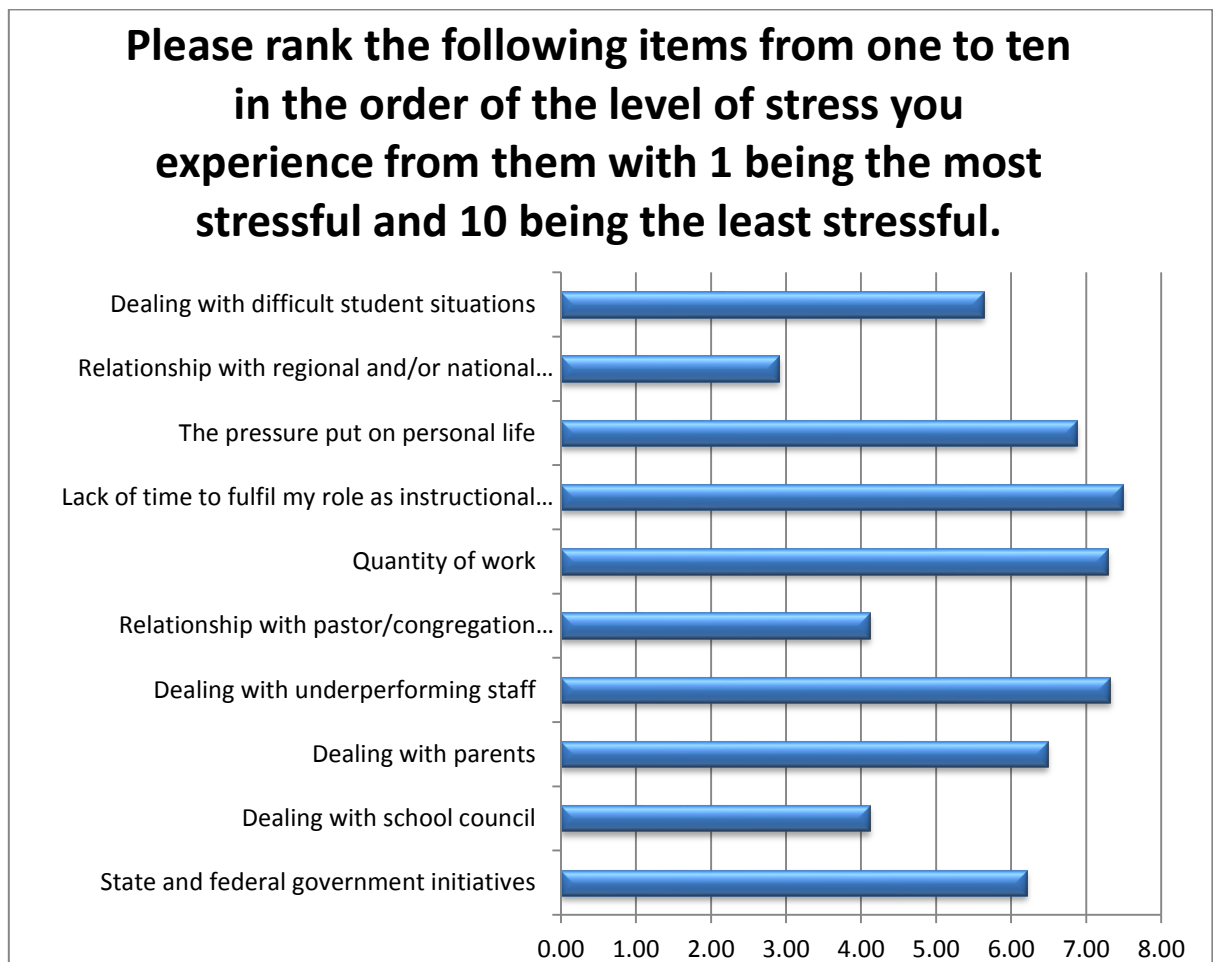
Importantly, Lutheran principals are most motivated by the success of others. As the following chart indicates, the top three positive motivators for Lutheran principals are (1) the ability to make a difference in the school, (2) the success of students, and (3) helping teachers achieve their best.

3. Section 4: Questions about positive motivations and work experiences. Please rank the following positive work events from 1 to 10 in order of their positive impact on your work life and your enjoyment of your role, with 1 being the most significant and 10 being the least significant.

	answered question										57	
	skipped question										1	
	1 Most signif									10 Least signif	rating ave	rating count
The job itself	24. 6% (14)	26. 3% (15)	24. 6% (14)	12. 3% (7)	5.3 % (3)	5.3 % (3)	0. 0% (0)	0. 0% (0)	0. 0% (0)	1.8 % (1)	2.7 5	57
My co-workers	14. 0% (8)	29. 8% (17)	22. 8% (13)	17. 5% (10)	5.3 % (3)	7.0 % (4)	1. 8% (1)	0. 0% (0)	1. 8% (1)	0.0 % (0)	3.0 9	57
The ability to make decisions	8.8 % (5)	29. 8% (17)	19. 3% (11)	17. 5% (10)	15. 8% (9)	1.8 % (1)	3. 5% (2)	1. 8% (1)	1. 8% (1)	0.0 % (0)	3.4	57
The ability to make a difference in the school	50. 9% (29)	24. 6% (14)	14. 0% (8)	5.3 % (3)	1.8 % (1)	1.8 % (1)	0. 0% (0)	1. 8% (1)	0. 0% (0)	0.0 % (0)	1.9 6	57
The success of students	36. 8% (21)	31. 6% (18)	17. 5% (10)	7.0 % (4)	3.5 % (2)	1.8 % (1)	1. 8% (1)	0. 0% (0)	0. 0% (0)	0.0 % (0)	2.2 1	57
Helping teachers achieve their best	24. 6% (14)	28. 1% (16)	24. 6% (14)	14. 0% (8)	3.5 % (2)	3.5 % (2)	0. 0% (0)	0. 0% (0)	1. 8% (1)	0.0 % (0)	2.6 5	57
Equipment and resources at my school	1.8 % (1)	17. 5% (10)	17. 5% (10)	8.8 % (5)	15. 8% (9)	7.0 % (4)	5. 3% (3)	8. 8% (5)	3. 5% (2)	14. 0% (8)	5.2 5	57
Support of local pastor and congregation	1.8 % (1)	12. 3% (7)	15. 8% (9)	12. 3% (7)	12. 3% (7)	10. 5% (6)	7. 0% (4)	8. 8% (5)	8. 8% (5)	10. 5% (6)	5.5 1	57
My own spiritual life	15. 8% (9)	28. 1% (16)	19. 3% (11)	12. 3% (7)	5.3 % (3)	3.5 % (2)	3. 5% (2)	8. 8% (5)	3. 5% (2)	0.0 % (0)	3.5 3	57
Getting to know parents	3.5 % (2)	31. 6% (18)	14. 0% (8)	17. 5% (10)	14. 0% (8)	3.5 % (2)	7. 0% (4)	5. 3% (3)	1. 8% (1)	1.8 % (1)	3.9 5	57

The things that stress principals also reflect a similar ordering to the previous data, with the notable difference that relationships with regional and /or national schools leadership, which Better Schools reported as the most stressful factor in 2011, now ranks bottom. Relationships with

congregations/pastors which ranked 4th in the BSP study also moved significantly to now rank 9th. The reasons for these very dramatic shifts may well be a combination of changed situation in LEA over the past two years, differences in the list of stressors given for principals to rank, or differences in the gathering and interpretation of data in the two surveys. Also, it is significant that the top five stressors fall into two basic category types 1) work-load and time issues and 2) conflict resolution issues. Of those completing the survey 18 respondents chose to add other areas of stress than those listed on the survey. Seven respondents mentioned finance management or dealing with financial shortfalls as being a significant cause of stress.



For Lutheran principals, then, the top 10 stressors ranked in order of significance were:

1. lack of time to fulfil role as an instructional leader
2. dealing with underperforming staff
3. quantity of work
4. pressure on personal life
5. dealing with parents
6. state and federal government initiatives
7. dealing with difficult student situations

8. dealing with school council
9. dealing with pastor/congregation
10. relationship with regional or national office

The results were very encouraging as far as the general wellbeing of Lutheran principals is concerned. A total of 58 principals responded to the online survey request, out of a total of 75 available, discounting out of office replies from those on leave or away on school business. The survey included the Diener, 'Satisfaction with Life Scale', and the 'Scale of Positive and Negative Experience' (SPANE). Of 58 respondents 52 (90%) had scores ranking them as satisfied with life, and most of these were either highly satisfied (22) or very highly satisfied (17). Five were slightly dissatisfied, one was dissatisfied, and none were extremely dissatisfied. Likewise on the SPANE scale, 51 respondents (89%) had a positive balance of positive emotional experiences, 3 were balanced between negative and positive emotional experiences or feelings, and only 3 (5%) had an affect balance of negative emotional feelings or experiences. Considering the levels of stress generally assumed and reported among principals this result was a surprise, with principals above the Australian average of 84% (the highest in the world) of life satisfaction. This is in keeping with the findings of the Better Schools data which found Lutheran principals scoring about 10% higher than the Australian workforce on average. The Monash University study has also found that principals across all sectors score slightly above the national average.

The wide range of satisfaction and positive and negative experiences, however, reported in the Better Schools summary, were not detected, with no principals scoring in the most dissatisfied or negative categories of either scale and only one principal scoring a dissatisfied with life score (and then only by one point). Only one principal scored below the line in both the satisfaction with life scale and the SPANE scale. Given that both scales can be significantly affected by recent traumatic events (e.g., death in the family, relationship breakdown, loss of job) it is to be expected that there would be a small number of low scores in a cohort of this size and that these scores would return to a more positive side in time. Indeed, the inconsistent responses of the individual respondents who scored low on either of the indicators (that is, they responded very positively or optimistically to some questions while very negatively or pessimistically to others) are indicative of someone undergoing or recovering from a stressful life event rather than of underlying negativity or dissatisfaction with life.

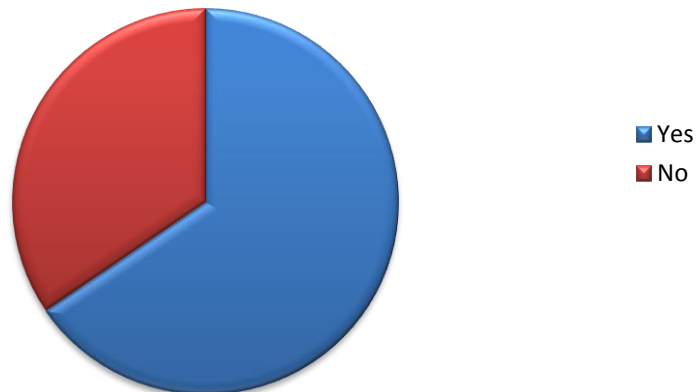
Regarding the spiritual health of our principals, the news is also very positive. Only one principal reported that he or she did not regularly attend worship apart from their role as principal.

Do you regularly attend worship services?



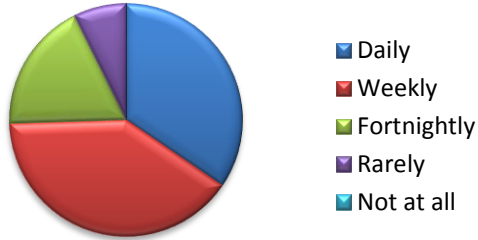
And 66% of respondents further reported that they were actively involved in congregational life apart from their role as principal.

Are you actively involved in a congregation apart from your role as school principal?

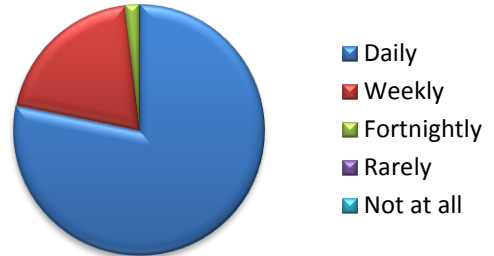


Levels of personal piety were also high with 75% of principals reading the Bible at least on a weekly basis, and none reporting that they did not read the Bible at all. Further, 78% pray privately daily (apart from mealtime and school prayers) and a further 20% have regular prayer times at least weekly. Only one principal reported praying privately only fortnightly and none prayed rarely or not at all.

How often do you read the Bible?

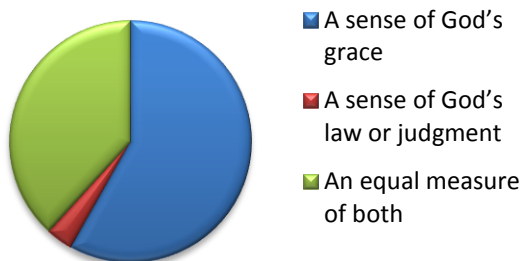


How often do you pray privately apart from mealtime and school prayers?

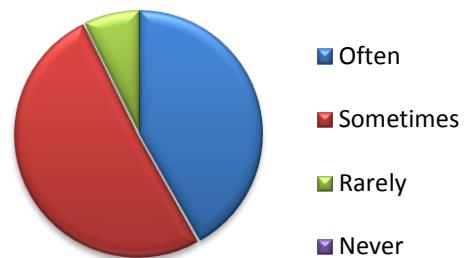


And when principals were asked how they felt after making a poor decision in their life or work, the overwhelming majority felt a sense of God’s grace (58%) or an equal measure of God’s grace and law (38%). Only 4% (or two respondents) felt primarily a sense of God’s law or judgment.

When you feel you have made a poor decision in your life or work do you feel more strongly



How often do you speak with family or friends outside the school context about spiritual things?

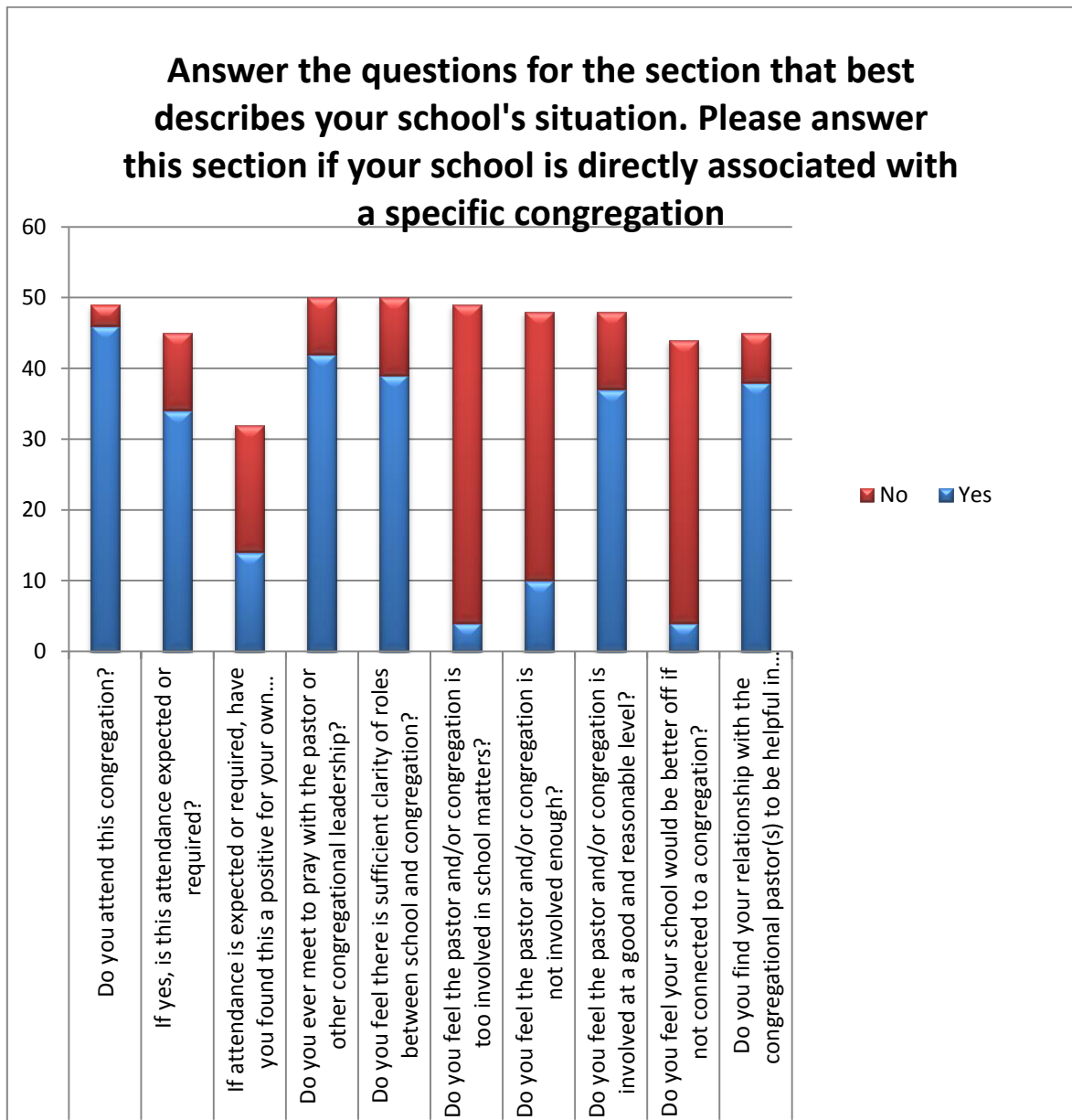


The majority also speak with family and friends outside the school context about spiritual matters either often (42%) or sometimes (51%).

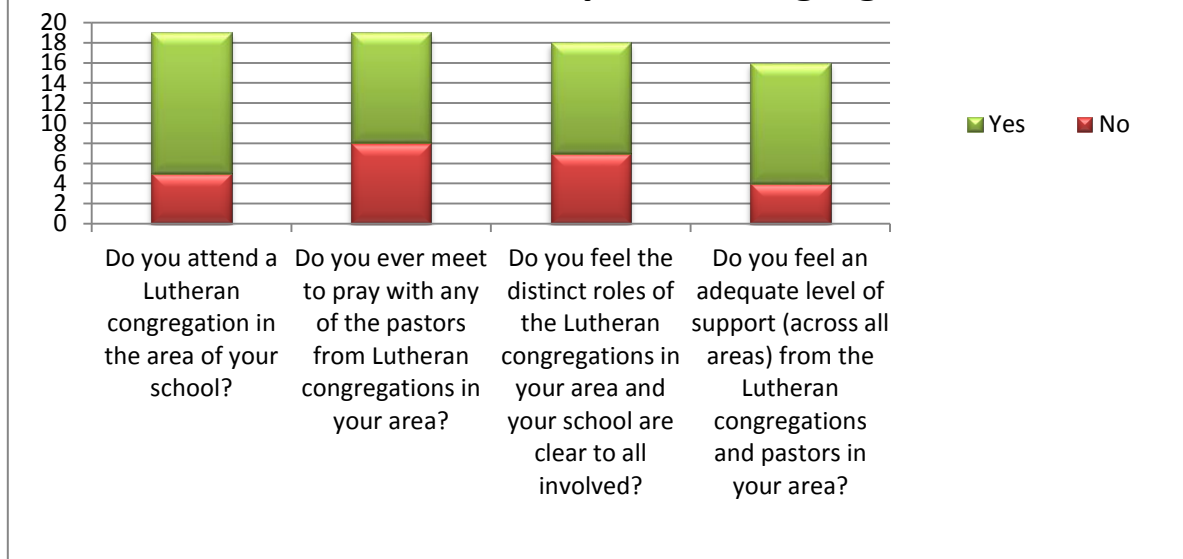
Not surprisingly, given the high level of worship involvement and personal spiritual commitment, all respondents felt at least adequately prepared to serve as spiritual head of their school. This would suggest that the responsibility of being spiritual head of the school is not in itself a significant source of stress, though the additional workload that may be associated with the role

(which principals in most other systems do not share), such as responsibility for Pathways delivery, may well contribute to workload stress.

Perhaps also surprising to many is that fact that most principals have a positive relationship with the pastor or pastors most closely associated with their school, and feel that the pastor and/or congregation is appropriately and sufficiently involved in the life of the school. This finding was contrary to the expectation of many principals, who in focus groups confessed that they felt there were a lot of problems in this area generally, but that they were fortunate in their own particular situation. One principal said, “I get along very well with our school pastor, but we are probably the exception.” Several other principals made similar comments. The reality is that only 8 of 58 principals expressed dissatisfaction with the relationship with either the pastor(s) and/or congregation(s) most closely associated with their school. The majority report being mostly satisfied with these relationships. Those sites where pastor and principal have difficulty in their relationship are the exception.



Please answer these questions if your school is not related to a specific congregation



This is not to say, however, that no stress arises out of the school/church and principal/pastor relationships. Indeed, when this issue was explored with focus groups the clarity of roles between pastor and/or chaplain and principal as spiritual head of the school was found to have often presented difficulties, as also the lack of clarity regarding the relationship between congregation and school, and the understanding of the concept of school as church. One principal reported, “it’s difficult being the spiritual head of the school when the pastor believes he is the spiritual head of the school.” Other principals in that focus group commented that they had not experienced similar sentiments from the pastors they had worked with most closely.

The other area of concern identified in the study was the situation in which principals are expected to be a member of the supporting congregation. In fact, just over half in this situation found this arrangement posed difficulties and was not helpful. One principal said “For the sake of the family I’d love to have the freedom to join a congregation with a more active children’s and youth ministry, but I don’t have that choice.” Others echoed similar sentiments. While there are obvious advantages to the principal worshipping at the supporting congregation, and it is clear why many congregations and/or school councils require this, it does pose difficulties. Discussions in focus groups revealed that the lack of a sense of choice in where to worship, having to worship somewhere that may not suit all family members (e.g., no youth group) and the sense of still being ‘the principal’ and ‘at work’ during worship were all seen as negative factors. Several principals suggested that more congregations and schools consider leaving the choice of congregations in which to worship, especially in those areas where there are alternatives, up to the principal.

Part Three: Possibilities for Future Action

As we have seen in the literature on principal wellbeing, the psychological health of the principal plays a very significant role in the wellbeing of staff, the performance of students, and the overall success of the school. Given that Lutheran system principals score very highly in satisfaction with life, positive feelings, and personal faith and spirituality, one might argue that little needs to be done by way of intervention with regard to principal stress and wellbeing. Certainly, Lutheran schools are fortunate to have the quality of principals they currently do. But having such a positive and well-motivated cohort of principals has certainly not occurred without reason, neither can we expect to continue or even increase this level without positive action. It should also be noted that while our principals are as a whole very well adjusted and motivated, they are also under a significant amount of stress that most feel is increasing. In our focus group interviews with 18 principals across all regions every participant reported that being a principal was the most stressful job they have had. About half, however, said they despite this they would not rather be doing anything else. The other half said that while they liked what they were doing now, they were not sure whether they could see themselves remaining a principal long-term due to stress.⁶ This data alone, we feel, constitutes sufficient reason to justify a programme of intervention to help alleviate principal stress and maintain or increase levels of wellbeing. It is to the great advantage of our school system to retain these highly committed and experienced individuals as principals. Other systems, as we have seen, have a much shorter tenure for principals than the Lutheran system. Our principals, on a whole, begin younger, and tend to remain longer in the role than those in other Australian systems. This is a huge benefit to the system as a whole that should be maintained or increased.

There are three possible types of intervention in workplace stress as identified by LaMontagne, Keegel, Louie, Ostry and Lansbergis 2007. These are: Primary (organisational approaches to stress targeted at preventing exposure to stressors), secondary (training aimed at helping people better cope with the stressors they encounter), and tertiary (in which the impact of stressors are sought to be lessened through post-event treatment and management such as counselling, rehabilitation, etc.). Any comprehensive approach to principal wellbeing should consider all three types of intervention to have the most effect, rather than focusing on one area only. The recommendation from the Monash University study 'The Australian Principal Health and Wellbeing Survey,' the largest of its kind in the world, suggests that interventions in the area of professional support are among the most effective and most easily achievable. Several of the interventions identified (e.g., mentoring, support groups and clinical supervision) fall into the category of professional support and merit special consideration. But there are other areas of intervention that also merit consideration. During the course of the study several possibilities for intervention among principals of Lutheran schools were identified that would seem likely to produce significant results. These are:

1. A mentoring programme for early career principals (secondary)
2. A programme of clinical supervision (secondary)
3. Support groups and networks (secondary)

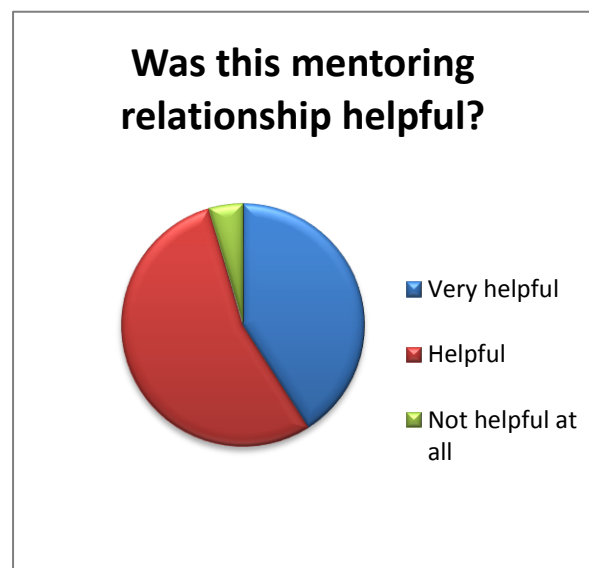
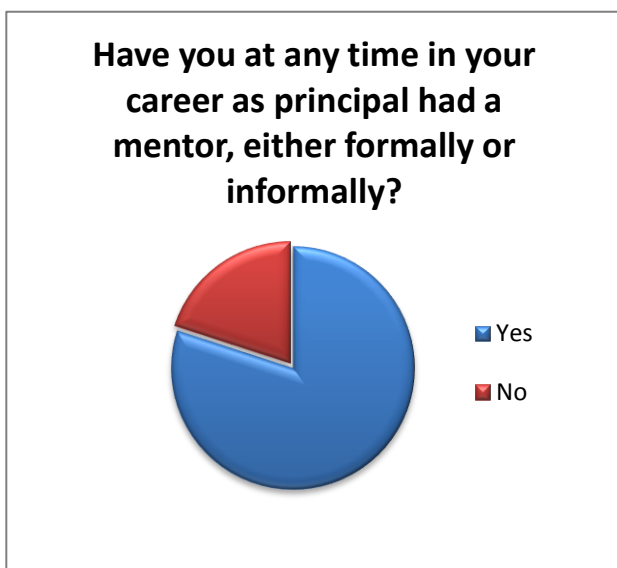
⁶ This data corresponds closely to that gathered from over 600 Victorian principals and assistant principals surveyed in 2003 which found 58% would not rather be doing anything else, while nearly a third felt that they were ready to do something else. "Privilege and the Price," p. 25.

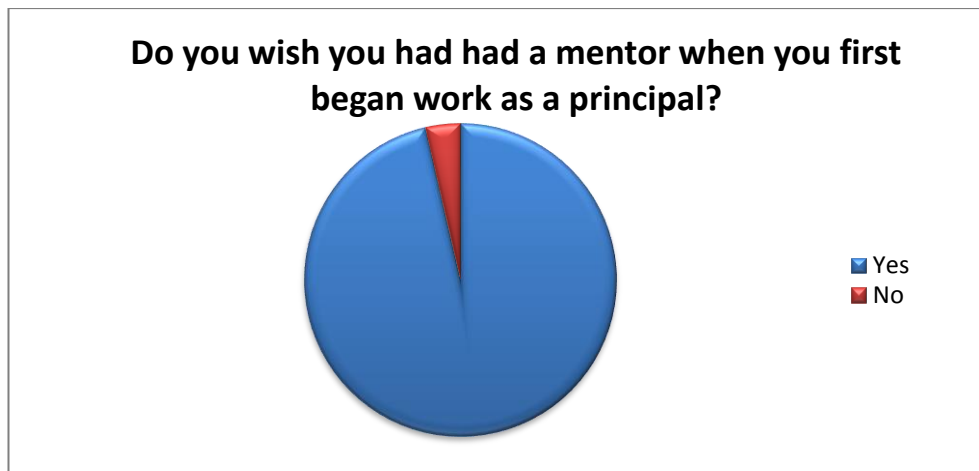
4. Provision of confidential counselling services (tertiary)
5. A rethink of roles within schools and within regions that may lead to restructuring and role realignments that would shift some responsibilities away from principals to allow them to concentrate their focus on other areas. (primary)
6. Provision of PD training in areas such as financial management, time management, and conflict resolution (primary and secondary)
7. A more comprehensive induction and orientation to the role and to each new position taken up as principal (primary and secondary)
8. Clarification of school/church roles (especially geared toward clergy and chaplains) (primary)
9. Provision of sabbaticals (primary, secondary and tertiary)
10. Training and support for role as spiritual head of school (primary and secondary)
11. Resource depository (primary)
12. Promotion of work/life balance (primary and secondary)

The data gathered from the CAMP Australia and ALITE study along with other studies suggests principals are likely to respond positively and/or benefit from the following initiatives.

1. Mentoring

The data strongly indicates that Lutheran principals would benefit from a mentoring programme in their early career and would be receptive to such a programme. Of those who have been involved in a mentoring relationship either formally or informally, the overwhelming majority found it very helpful. From both our review of literature and interviews with focus groups it would seem that retired principals or other schools leaders would be an ideal source for mentors. It was also noted that to be effective the mentoring relationship must be confidential, and that the mentors should receive basic training in mentoring.





Especially useful for principal mentoring programmes is the manual produced by Ontario Leadership Strategy in 2011 *Mentoring for Newly Appointed School Leaders*, Ontario: Queen’s Printer for Ontario. This is an up-to-date manual on how to organise, conduct, monitor and evaluate the process of the mentoring of new principal with many practical guidelines.

2. Clinical supervision

Clinical supervision is a professional supervisory relationship where a professional receives feedback and insight from a trained supervisor in his or her field or a trained clinical supervisor who is not their line manager or someone within their workplace or organisation. Information is gained through meetings, phone calls, observation at work, etc. and the feedback is confidential and aimed at helping the professional improve their performance through improving their skills, relationships, goals and outlook on their work. In the early years most supervision was done by experienced professionals within the same field. Increasingly, as supervision became a specialised field in its own right, psychologists have become most prominent in offering clinical supervisions to a range of professional clients.

Clinical supervision in education began in earnest in education in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The focus was almost entirely on teachers and their classroom performance and their principals were most often the supervisors. The relationship between principal and teacher often limited the extent of progress possible in these relationships. For instance Zepeda and Ponticell (1988) found that supervision was often seen by teachers as a weapon, an unwelcome intervention, a quick fix, or simply as a meaningless routine. One idea that began to emerge at this time was that principals themselves would benefit from clinical supervision. Smith and Andrews “Clinical Supervision for Principals” (1987) recommended using a cyclical evaluation model with three phases: design, data collection, and evaluation, then each year repeating the cycle. The stated goal was to make good principals better.

Some models for clinical supervision of principals include:

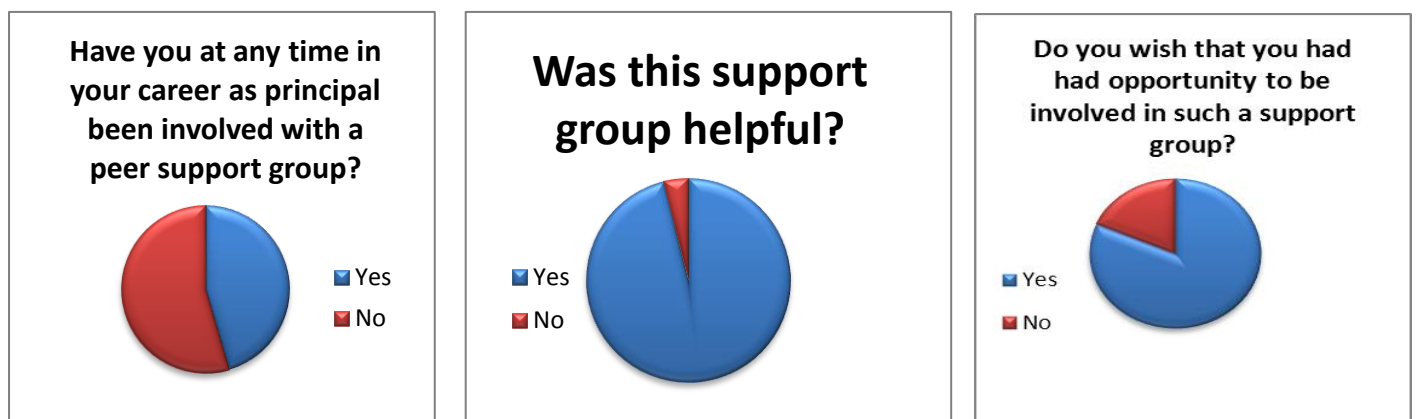
- Active supervision model
- Phase model
- Feedback model
- Counselling model

For further reading on clinical supervision of principals see Brandt, R. 1987. “On Principal Leadership and School Achievement: A Conversation with Richard Andrews,” in *Educational Leadership* 45 (Sept 1987): 9-16; Brennen, Annick, 2000. “Clinical Supervision” <http://www.soencouragement.org/clinical-supervision-case-study.htm>. Accessed 23.08.13; Hart, W.A. and V.P. Bredeson, 1996. *The Principalship- A theory of professional learning and practice*. New York: McGraw Hill.; Levine, A, 2005. *Educating school leaders*. http://www.edschools.org/reports_leaders.htm. (accessed 24.08.13); Sergiovanni, Thomas, 1991. *The Principalship: A reflective practice perspective*, 2nd ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon; and Smith, Wilma and Richard Andrews, 1987. “Clinical Supervision for Principals” in *Educational Leadership* (September 1987): 34-37.

3. Peer support groups

Especially to be considered are existing networks among independent schools principals that many have found very helpful, e.g. Headnet. The question merits serious consideration whether such a network should be established within the Lutheran system? If so, who would maintain them? How many would be likely to make use of them? What would be the advantages and disadvantages of a Lutheran network of this type to existing networks external to our system?

Our data shows that peer support groups have proven very effective for those who have been a part of them. Given the isolated nature of some of our schools, as well as the difficulties posed by proximity (e.g., competition) there was strong interest expressed in making use of various types of e-groups to provide peer support.



4. Shadowing

A rather intensive and structured form of peer support is to be found in the concept of shadowing. Shadowing is where an individual has the opportunity to work alongside and gain experience of the role through ‘shadowing’ another individual and gaining an insight into that particular work area. It can also be used to provide an individual within a school the opportunity to work alongside more experienced colleagues so they can learn and develop within their current role. Shadowing has many potential benefits for those involved:

- It is an excellent networking tool
- It is an opportunity for hosts to share best practice and to allow for self-development of the visitor/guest and, often, the host
- It allows individuals to view processes they are involved in from a different angle

Shadowing provides the individual with a unique opportunity to find out how other colleagues work and what their roles involve. It develops a deeper knowledge and understanding of other roles and functions within another educational institution. Shadowing provides for professional growth and support opportunities for both the ‘host’ and the ‘guest.’

By engaging in shadowing, individuals who come into a workplace as a guest will be able to:

- See how other staff and teams work
- Gain insight into the roles and responsibilities of other members of staff and other educational institutions
- Reflect and learn from others
- Can be used as a way of “testing out” possible career options

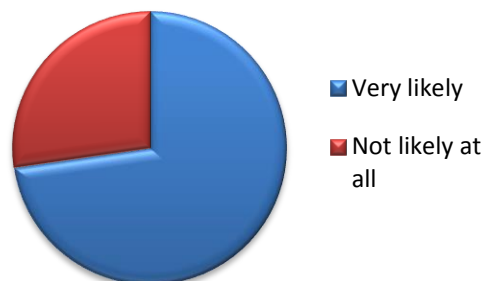
For the individual being shadowed (the host) there is the opportunity to:

- Share your experiences with a colleague from a different educational institution
- Review and reflect on your work through discussion with the person shadowing you which allows you the opportunity to see your role through “fresh eyes”

5. Counselling services

Despite all the efforts at primary and secondary intervention, from time to time in the careers of most principals highly stressful situations will arise that may require a supported process of recovery and rehabilitation. The concept of the provision of trained and confidential counsellors in each district was well received. Counsellors would be chosen and/or trained who understand the sorts of pressures principals come under and who could be called upon as needed (with an invoice sent to national or district office without the provision of the name of the individual being counselled).

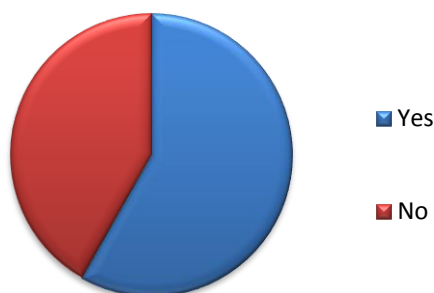
If a counselling service were provided to help you to deal with the aftermath or ramifications of stressful...



6. Rethinking staff roles

The Victorian study of principals included in our literature review focused primarily on this type of primary intervention. Key ideas included the hiring of retired principals to work part time to manage community relations and use of facilities, appointment of a PA, and greater use of assistant or deputy principals. The suggestion also arose out of one of the focus groups that clusters of schools, especially smaller ones, might share a finance officer or even work together to coordinate payrolls.

Do you feel that a rethink of staff roles or the creation of additional leadership roles in your school would significantly reduce your stress levels?



7. Provision of PD training

The areas identified from the surveys and focus groups as being of most significance for professional development opportunities are finance, conflict resolution, and time management.

8. A more comprehensive induction and orientation process

In the focus groups it was frequently mentioned that going into district office for a day at the start of one's career as principal was not enough. The process should be spread out and involve a range of people. Also, it should not be assumed that it is only in the first year or first principalship that principals need this support. Many reported that it was in their second year or even their second principalship that assistance was most needed.

9. Clarification of church/school roles

While the relationship of principals with pastors and congregations was shown, overall, to be very good, the problem of clarification of roles and relationships was raised as an area that often caused confusion and stress. The nature of the relationship between school and congregation and how they can appropriately support one another, the meaning of the concept of school as church, and the role of principal as spiritual head of the school vis-à-vis that of the local pastor are all areas that need clarification. Training (informing) of pastors and principals in these areas would prove particularly helpful for improving church/school relationships.

10. Provision of sabbaticals

This concept came up in two of the focus groups and was generally thought to be an idea worth exploring. The scheduled sabbatical to professionally refresh the principal that was built into their contract and did not have to be negotiated was well received. The Catholic sector model of Sabbaticals has received much attention in the literature and should be examined more closely should LEA or LPA choose to consider this concept further.

11. Provision of training and resources in support of the principal's role as spiritual head of school.

While principals reported feeling at least adequately prepared for this role, a suggestion that came out of the focus groups was that some formal training (including on-going training) and more intentional resourcing should be provided to support this role. As this role is relatively unique to Lutheran schools, it is important for Lutheran schools to provide training and support to ensure that it is done well and does not add unnecessarily to principal stress. It was also noted in the focus group interviews that those principals who felt most adequately prepared for this role had some formal theological training, either through the old LTC programme or via a Grad Dip or Masters degree through ALC. With younger principals increasingly not having had this same preparation, the question is how this training might be provided for future principals.

12. Resource sharing

In response to issues relating to time and workload it was noted by several in the focus groups that some sort of managed depository would be helpful in which principals could provide policies, retreat ideas, PD programmes and other material that would greatly assist other principals who find themselves needing to develop such material.

13. Work/Life balance

The whole question of work/life balance needs to be addressed in finding ways to promote healthier lifestyles, more time for rest and recreation, and more time with family. A part of the problem is addressing workload issues, but it was also felt that specific attention should be given to ways in which a healthier balance could be positively promoted.

Summary and Conclusions

Principals play a vital and often underestimated role in the health, wellbeing and success of schools, teachers and students. The role is seen to be stressful across all sectors but also rewarding. While the nature of the role suggests it will always be a high stress job, there are concrete interventions that can take place at primary, secondary and tertiary levels that will help to avoid or reduce some of this stress and well as help principals to recover from stressful experiences. Given the flow-on effect of the principal's health for the whole school, investment in programmes that support principal wellbeing are seen as a good investment in not only the principals, but in the schools, their staffs, and the students.

Principals of Australian Lutheran schools are found to share many things in common with other principals in areas of job motivation and stressors. They also were found to be more satisfied with life, more positive, and likely to serve for longer periods in the role than principals in other systems. They are a very active group in worship and spiritual practices and have generally positive relationships with supporting congregations and pastors. The success of Lutheran schools is no doubt due at least in part to the high quality of principals the system is blessed with.

Nevertheless, most experience significant stress and nearly half wonder if they will be able to continue long term their career as principal. Intervention would serve to strengthen an already positive cohort of principals, to ensure that this high level of wellbeing is maintained, and to encourage these principals to continue their rewarding and productive careers within the Lutheran system.