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by

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C O N T E N T S

COURSE PAPERS

1. THE CONCEPT OF STRESS
2. SOURCES OF MANAGERIAL STRESS
3. PRINCIPALS UNDER PRESSURE
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THE CONCEPT OF STRESS

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1. INTRODUCTION

A study of the concept of stress in the literature immediately reveals a confusing lack of consistency in the use of the term.

The concept of stress is elusive because it is poorly defined. There is no single agreed definition in existence. It is a concept which is familiar to both layman and professional alike; it is understood by all when used in a general context but by very few when a more precise account is required, and this seems to be the central problem. (1)

According to C.B. Dobson (2) there are over 300 definitions of stress and words that are semantically akin to it. This is perhaps partly the result of the upsurge of general interest in stress in recent years and the popularisation of the concept in the media. A further factor is its use in a variety of disciplines such as physiology, psychology, sociology, management, psychiatry and pharmacology.

Derived from Latin (*stringere, strictus*, meaning 'to bind or draw tightly'), the word stress was used popularly in seventeenth century England to signify hardship and adversity. By the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it was being used to denote a force acting on and tending to distort or strain a person's body or mental powers, causing ill-health. (3) The word 'stress' was also introduced into physics to refer to the internal force generated within a solid body by the action on it of an external force or 'load', the resulting distortion of the body being termed 'strain'. This led to the use of the expression 'being under stress', with resulting physiological strains. L. Levi referred to stress as 'the rate of wear and tear in the organism.' (4)

Most references to stress in the literature are associated with negative and harmful consequences or symptoms. These fall into three categories, namely, psychological, behavioural and physiological manifestations.

The psychological ill-effects of stress are negatively-toned emotions such as anxiety, uneasiness, depression, frustration, tension, conflict, confusion, apathy, a feeling of not being able to cope, and a feeling of not being in control of oneself and the situation.

The behavioural responses to stress include poor performance, loss of motivation, absenteeism from work, and the abuse of alcohol, tobacco and drugs.

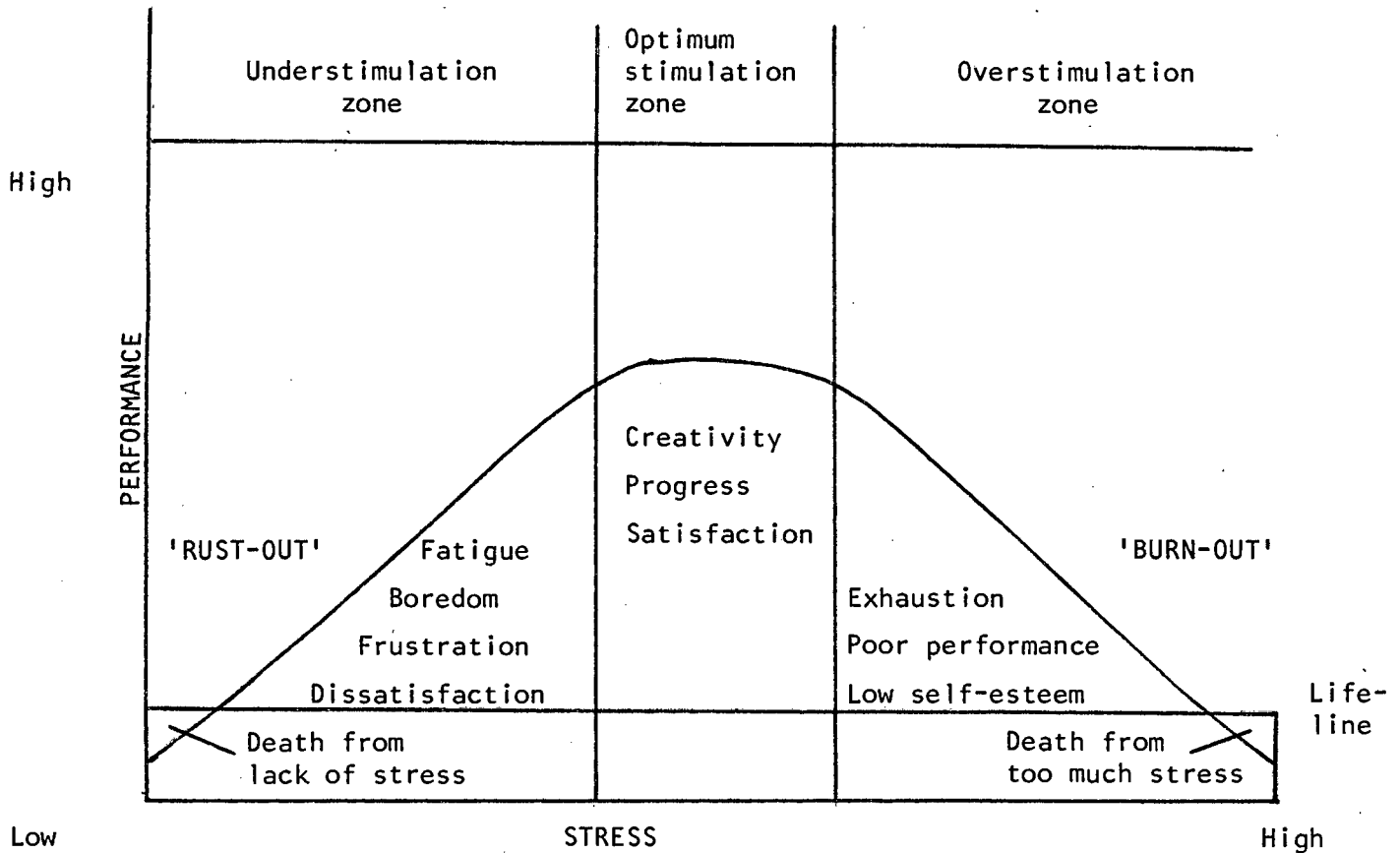
Physiological symptoms that are common are increased blood pressure and heart rate, headaches, muscular tension especially in the neck and back, fatigue, sweating, loss of appetite, dryness of the mouth and throat, skin rashes, over-secretion of hydrochloric acid in the stomach (possibly causing ulcers), and sexual dysfunctions.

Stress is an inevitable part of human experience because all people face demands, threatening situations, challenges and adjustments which call for coping behaviour. When the coping response is appropriate and successful, the disequilibrium (stress) caused by the perceived discrepancy between the demand and the individual's capability of responding successfully, is removed. Stress in this case may be a positive force rather than a negative one, a stimulus to achievement, motivation and satisfaction.

W. Gmelch asserted that a moderate amount of stimulation and stress is necessary for optimum performance in life. Excessive stimulation (and stress) and insufficient stimulation (and stress) both lead to a drop in performance levels.

Mild stress - or rather the desire to relieve it - is
an energising not a debilitating force. (5)

Gmelch illustrated the relationship between stress and performance diagrammatically, as follows:



STRESS AND PERFORMANCE (GMELCH) (6)

2. DIFFERENT DEFINITIONS OF STRESS

2.1 Three main approaches have been adopted in the definition of stress.

The first views stress as a person's response to a threatening or disturbing environment. It is treated as a dependent variable.

The second approach regards stress as a stimulus in the environment external to the person, causing extraordinary demands and threatening him

in some way. It is seen as an independent variable 'out there' in a noxious environment, impinging on a person and stimulating unhealthy reactions.

The third approach, the interactional one, regards stress as reflecting a lack of 'fit' in the interaction between a person and his environment. Stress is a state that occurs in the person when there is an imbalance between the environmental demand made upon him and his capacity for coping successfully. What is important in this interaction between the individual and his situation is his perception of the discrepancy between the demand and his ability to cope, and not the actual, objective levels of these two variables. The person's cognitive appraisal of the situational demand and his personal capability makes stress an individual phenomenon. According to this approach, stress is an intervening variable between stimulus and response.

Stress resides neither in the situation nor in the person, but depends on the transaction of the individual in the situation. (7)

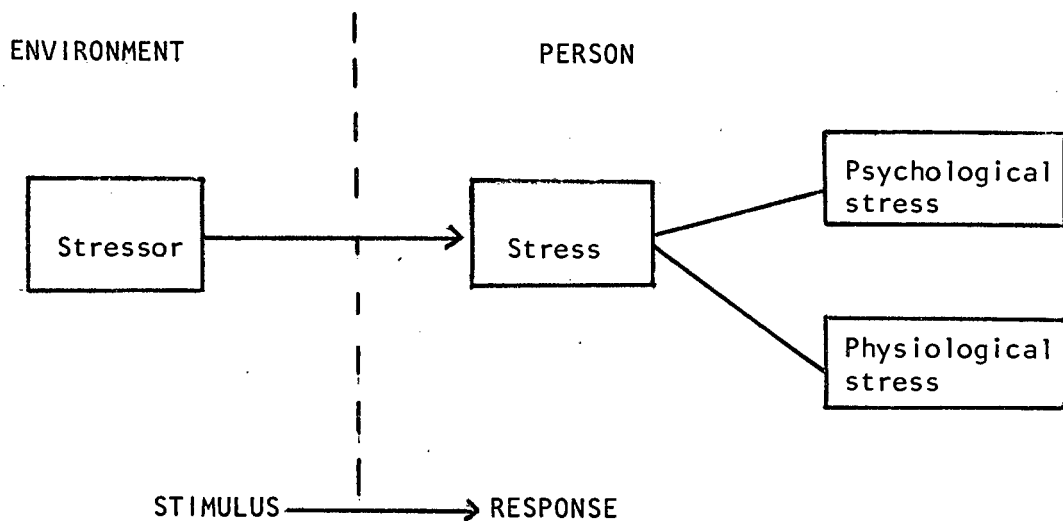
One outcome of the existence of three very different approaches to the definition of stress is confusion over terminology, particularly in the mushrooming popular literature on the subject and in everyday conversation. Thus, when using the word 'stress', it is possible to mean the events, forces and circumstances that tend to pressure and overwhelm one (a stimulus definition), or the physiological and psychological reactions and changes that result from being exposed to extreme pressure (a response definition). Alternatively, the word 'stress' may denote a psychological state resulting from the perception of threat and leading to successful or unsuccessful coping responses (an interactional definition).

A short account of the response-based and stimulus-based definitions of stress is provided, after which an attempt is made in this paper to

describe more fully the interactional models of stress favoured by the more recent writers in this field.

2.2 RESPONSE-BASED DEFINITIONS

This approach to stress focuses on the person's response pattern to disturbing elements in his environment. The response pattern is viewed as stress, and people are referred to as being 'under stress' or 'stressed'. The stress response manifests itself physiologically and psychologically. The disturbing demands or threats in the environment are termed 'stressors'. The simplest form of this stress model is a linear stimulus --- response one, but a response may act as a further stimulus to produce another stress response.



RESPONSE-BASED MODEL OF STRESS (8)

Probably the best-known response-based model of stress is Hans Selye's biological model. He reversed the traditional view of stress as a stimulus or force upon a person, and instead regarded stress as the result or response produced within the organism by the presence of a demand or stimulus.

He defined physiological stress as

the non-specific response of the body to
any demand made upon it. (9)

The response, or defence reaction, is non-specific because the body's initial pattern of adaptation is the same for healthy and pleasant demands or stressors as for unpleasant and noxious demands.

Selye named the stress response the General Adaptation Syndrome. Briefly, the first stage of the G.A.S. is the alarm reaction', during which adrenalin is released into the bloodstream causing racing of the heart and shallower breathing. Hormonal secretions mobilize other parts of the body for action. Additional red blood cells carry oxygen and nourishment to other cells in the body, and the ability of the blood to clot is increased. Muscular tension occurs, particularly in the lower back and neck. Hydrochloric acid is released in the stomach. Having been prepared to meet the stressor, assuming that the demand is still present, the person enters the 'resistance stage' during which the body actively combats the stressor. If the demand is particularly severe or prolonged, bodily resources may be so depleted that the third phase, the 'exhaustion stage', may be reached. At this point stress-related diseases begin to set in.

Selye's ideas have had great influence on and been transferred to the psychological field, but there is growing evidence that the notion of the 'non-specificity' of the stress response has been overstated. (10)

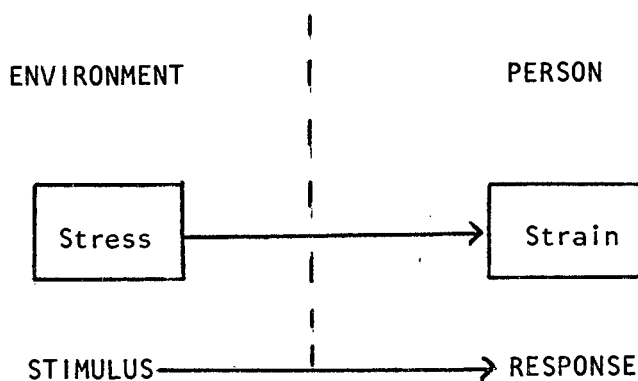
Kagan and Levi in Sweden developed Selye's response-based model by stating that psychosocial stimuli elicit physiological responses that prepare the person for the physical activity of coping. If these responses are intense and prolonged, they may produce 'wear and tear' and disease. (11)

2.3 STIMULUS-BASED DEFINITIONS OF STRESS

According to R.D. Allen et al.,

Stress may be defined as a force that creates physiological or psychological strain. (12)

This type of definition emphasizes the stimulus characteristics of the environment that give rise to strain within the person. Stress is seen as an independent variable, something external to the person, impinging on him and acting as a disruptive force. The following simple linear model represents this approach.



STIMULUS-BASED MODEL OF STRESS (13)

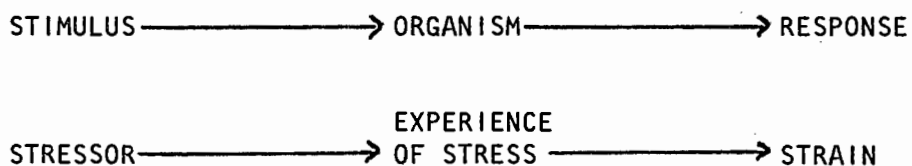
This use of the term 'stress' to represent an external force causing strain, originated in engineering. For instance, Hooke's Law of Elasticity describes how a load (stress) placed upon a metal produces internal strain and deformation. The metal returns to its original condition when the load is removed, providing the strain falls within the elastic limit of the material. Permanent damage is caused if the strain exceeds this limit.

In accordance with the engineering analogy, just as metals have different elastic limits and tolerances to stress, so individual people vary in their resistance to stress. As with metals subjected to stress, people are able to tolerate a certain amount of stress, but suffer harm when that level is exceeded.

In terms of the stimulus-based definition, stress is viewed in terms of demand and focuses attention on the conditions that can be accepted as stressful. In the literature there are references to many of these conditions, but this highlights one of the problems of this model. Some of the conditions or situations that are stressful to some people are by no means stressful to other people. It is sometimes said, 'One man's stress is another man's challenge.' The highly individual nature of people's responses to circumstances poses problems for this model. In addition the mechanistic approach in which people are passive recipients of stress, places further limits on its usefulness.

2.4 INTERACTIONAL DEFINITIONS OF STRESS

2.4.1 Interactional approaches to the definition of stress emphasise the importance of the individual person's perceptions of demands (stimuli) and his capability of coping successfully with those demands. Accordingly, stress is viewed as an internal perceptual state intervening between stimuli (stressors) and responses (psychological, physiological or behavioural strain). This differs from the response-based and stimulus-based definitions which are represented as stimulus-response models. Strümpfer represented the simple interactional model as follows:



S - O - R MODEL OF REACTION TO STRESSORS (14)

According to interactional definitions, stress is the result of a particular relationship between an individual and his environment.

There is no predictable pattern of reaction to demands (stressors) both environmental and internal. By means of the psychological processes of perception and cognitive appraisal, each person defines for himself those situations that he finds to be stressful. Unlike the stimulus and response approaches, the person has an active, and not a passive, role in the occurrence of stress. McGrath expressed this perceptual, interactional definition of stress as follows:

There is a potential for stress when an environmental situation is perceived as presenting a demand which threatens to exceed the person's capabilities and resources for meeting it, under conditions where he expects a substantial differential in the rewards and costs from meeting the demand versus not meeting it. (15)

In accordance with this formulation, environmental demands are neutral, but may become stressful for a particular person when they are perceived to constitute a threat. When the consequences of not coping are minimal, stress is insignificant, but when they are serious, stress is likely to be great.

When demands and resources are well balanced, there is minimal stress. When this balance is destroyed, stress develops, causing the person to take coping action to restore the balance and remedy the situation.

Usually this imbalance is in the form of an excess of demand in relation to resources, but Cherniss (16) pointed out that the reverse can also be the case when resources exceed demands (quantitatively or qualitatively). This also produces stress manifested by boredom, lack of stimulation, and frustration in one's job, for instance, and a suitable coping response to restore the balance is necessary in order to reduce the stress.

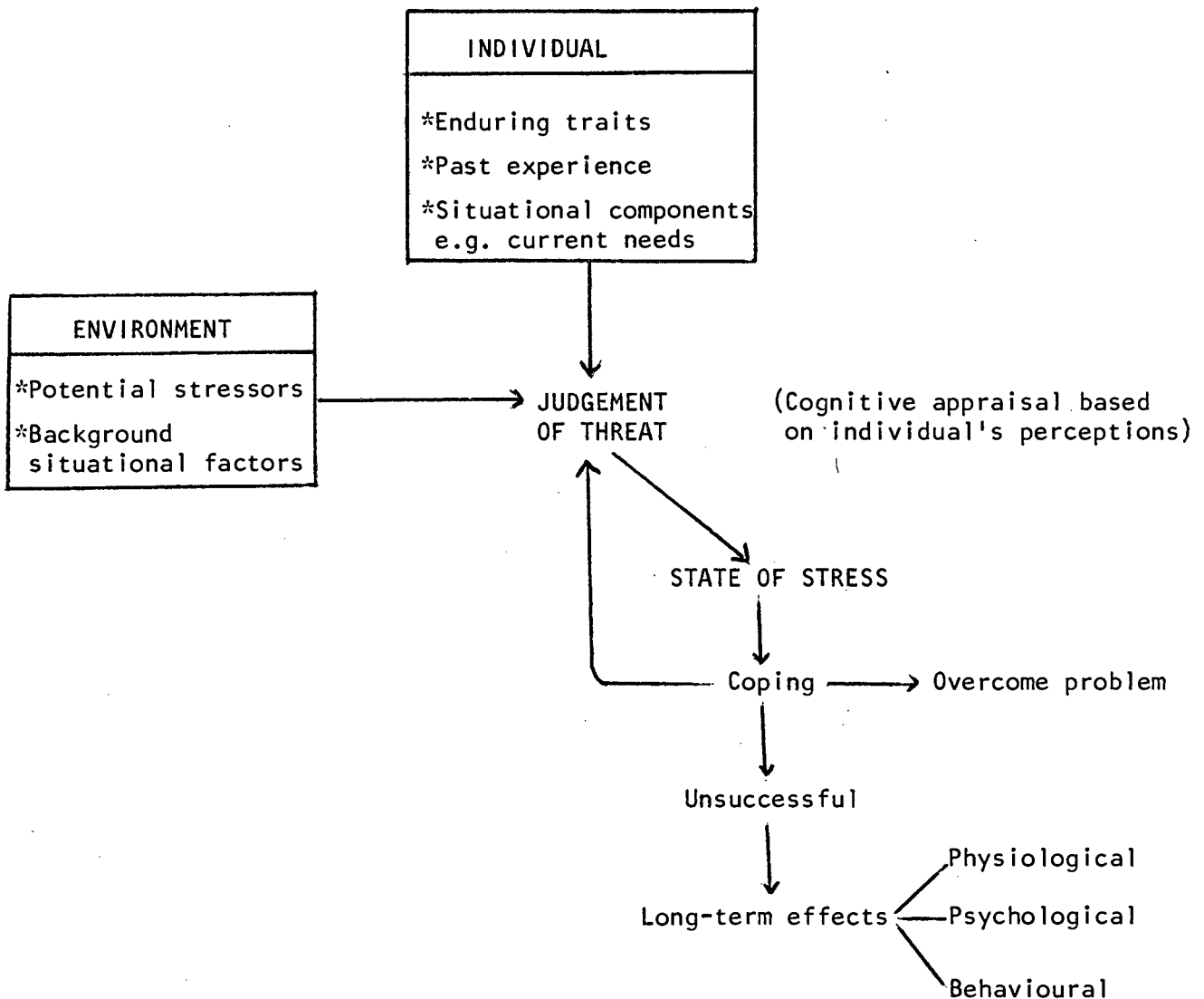
2.4.2 The concept of demand is an important one in the context of stress.

According to Cox (17) the term demand denotes a request or requirement for physical or mental action, usually with the implication of a perceived time constraint. If demands are not met by means of successful adjustment

or coping behaviour, they have harmful consequences for a person.

Lazarus (18) referred to external or environmental demands, which are largely social and interpersonal, and internal demands, which are biological or arise from personal moral values and needs.

- 2.4.3 Lazarus (19) defined threat, another key psychological element of stress, as anticipation of harm of some kind. The harm, or undesirable consequences, may be physiological or psychological. The greater the anticipated harm, the greater will be the threat and the more intense the accompanying emotion and the efforts to adjust. People experiencing threat try to eliminate the danger of harm to themselves, or at least lessen it. The anticipation of possible harm is based on the person's appraisal of the situation but may equally be distorted by a lack of information or objectivity on the part of the person feeling threatened. Thus, the anticipated danger or harm may be more imaginary than real. Perception of threat is the key psychological process referred to in the definitions of most recent writers on stress.
- The person - environment fit model outlined by Marshall and Cooper brings this out clearly:



A PERSON - ENVIRONMENT FIT MODEL (MARSHALL AND COOPER) (20)

2.4.4 Of prime importance in all interactional models of stress are the processes of perception and cognitive appraisal. The individual ultimately defines stress himself by his perceptions of the demands of the situation, his ability to cope, and the importance of coping.

Stressors are "there" only if they are psychologically there. (21)

For example, it is not only the ill-equipped examination candidate who experiences stress before the examination, but also those highly capable candidates who perceive their preparation to be inadequate to meet the demands of the examination. Furthermore, a person of limited ability placed in a very demanding work situation, may not experience stress

if his interpretation of the situation is based on faulty perceptions of his ability or of the degree of difficulty of the work, or of the importance of succeeding. Once he tackles the work and realises his limitations or the demanding nature of the work or the importance of success, he may well start feeling threatened and experience stress.

Cognitive appraisal goes beyond the perception of the individual elements of the situation, and involves a judgement or interpretation of the significance of a potentially threatening situation. The appraisal is cognitive, and not emotional, because it is a function of the person's accumulated knowledge, experience and understanding. It may be seen as an individual's evaluation of his interaction with his environment, including its perceived demands, limitations, resources and opportunities. Lazarus defined two kinds of appraisal, namely primary and secondary. (22) During primary appraisal of a situation or demand, a person judges whether it is potentially beneficial or harmful, important or unimportant, challenging or threatening. This initial appraisal is greatly influenced by the person's estimation of the adequacy of his coping resources, his values, goals, and personality. It is also affected by past experiences of success or failure in similar situations.

Once the person starts to deal with the situation or demand, successfully or unsuccessfully, secondary appraisals take place. In these he re-evaluates his initial perceptions of the demand and his resources for meeting the demand. The extent to which the coping action meets the demand may alter the person's cognitive appraisal of the situation.

Differences in people's perceptions of themselves and of environmental conditions, as well as in their cognitive appraisal of the situations in which they find themselves, help to explain the highly individual and personal nature of the stress phenomenon. With some truth it has been

said that stress is in the eye of the beholder. A person does not simply react to a situation, but to the situation as he perceives and evaluates it, especially with regard to his ability to cope.

2.5 SOME FACTORS INFLUENCING COGNITIVE APPRAISAL

A person's appraisal of a situation is influenced by a highly complex set of factors, both environmental and internal. In order to illustrate this, some examples of such factors, mentioned by writers in this field (23), are listed.

- 2.5.1 Personal values and goals. A person judges the importance of meeting demands upon him by reference to his value system which places constraints upon him. Situations that endanger the achievement of important personal goals are judged to be threatening. A problem inevitably arises, for example, when a person sets unrealistic goals for achievement, advancement, and status and is reluctant to modify them.
- 2.5.2 Importance of outcome. If the outcome of the event is perceived by the individual to be unimportant, it will influence his cognitive appraisal in the direction of evaluating the situation as safe and non-threatening.
- 2.5.3 Severity of the demand. The demand may pose performance requirements which exceed or severely tax the individual's capabilities. The severity of the demand may also be related to the conflict, frustration or anxiety inherent in the situation. By conflict, in this context, is meant the simultaneous presence of two or more incompatible goals or demands, where actions designed to satisfy one goal necessarily threaten the other. Frustration arises from the thwarting or delaying of the satisfaction of a need or desire. Anxiety is an emotional state which involves generalized feelings of fear or dread. The degree of difficulty of the demand may also be increased by its prolonged duration and its multiple nature.

Demands that are ambiguous, in that what is required is not clear, and those that are novel, having never been experienced before, tend to be perceived as being more threatening than others.

- 2.5.4 The imminence of harm. If the potential harm is distant in time, there will tend to be less threat to the individual than if it is near at hand. The prospect of death, for example, seems to be remote from a young person, who tends to give it relatively little thought until he is caught up in a highly dangerous situation.
- 2.5.5 Experience and information. Successful past experience increases a person's competence and confidence in handling situations, and encourages favourable cognitive appraisals. Likewise, the possession of sufficient information about a situation reduces unpredictability and enables the individual to make an accurate assessment of the demand and the coping possibilities.
- 2.5.6 Available resources. The individual's perceptions of the personal and environmental resources available to him clearly influence his evaluation of his adequacy in the face of a particular demand. Included among these resources are technical and interpersonal skills, specific training, time, authority and status, and supportive and trustworthy helpers.
- 2.5.7 Personality factors. Threat appraisal is affected by a wide range of personality characteristics. Some people have a cheerful and optimistic disposition, while others are excessively introspective and readily indulge in self-condemnation which magnifies perceived inadequacy and inhibits motivation. Some individuals are very competitive and experience anxiety as a result of comparing themselves with others. They may react badly in evaluation situations, such as speech-making, in which they feel they are being judged. Some people do not find it easy to relate to

others and worry about failing in their dealings with them. There are those who are 'perfectionists', setting unreasonably high standards and constantly facing the possibility of personal defeat and a consequent lowering of self-esteem.

Two cardiologists, Rosenman and Friedman(24), studied the personality types associated with coronary heart disease and arrived at a twofold classification, designated Type A and Type B.

According to their research, nearly all people fall into these two broad personality and behavioural categories. Type A people are competitive and achievement-oriented, have a marked sense of time-urgency, are extremely involved in their work, often feel under pressure, are self-critical and easily become annoyed and frustrated. They tend to over-extend themselves in terms of the relationship between demands and capabilities. Type B behaviour is characterised by the converse of these traits. Rosenman and Friedman's ten-year research programme, involving 35 000 men, showed that people exhibiting Type A behaviour were three times more prone to coronary heart disease than others. They estimated that 10 percent of urban employed men in the U.S.A. are Type A, while 76 percent of managers exhibit this type of behaviour.

While this classification may be felt to be rather simplistic, since Type A's and B's are probably at opposite ends of a continuum with many people falling in between, it does point to important personality differences which affect the way in which people react to demands and situations.

Kobasa et al. (25) studied the stress and general health of a sample of 670 managers in an attempt to identify a 'hardiness factor' that enabled some to be more resistant to stress and stress-related illnesses than others. It was found that those with high scores for three variables

were more likely to be able to cope with stress. The three components of the so-called 'hardiness factor' are: (1) challenge, the tendency to face up to problems in a positive way, to regard threatening situations as challenges to be met, and to view changes as opportunities; (2) commitment, the willingness to become fully involved and actively interested in those aspects of life identified as important; and (3) control, the belief that one can influence one's environment, that one can take control through various actions and not be a helpless victim of circumstances which threaten to overwhelm one. Some people have an internal locus of control, believing that they can exert control over their environment, while others, with an external locus of control, feel that they are unable to influence events and situations, largely being victims of circumstances. People who do not see themselves as effective copers are more likely to appraise demands as being personally threatening. In a study of 130 secondary school teachers, Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (26) obtained a significant correlation between self-reported teacher stress and externality on Rotter's Internal-External locus of control scale.

3. COPING

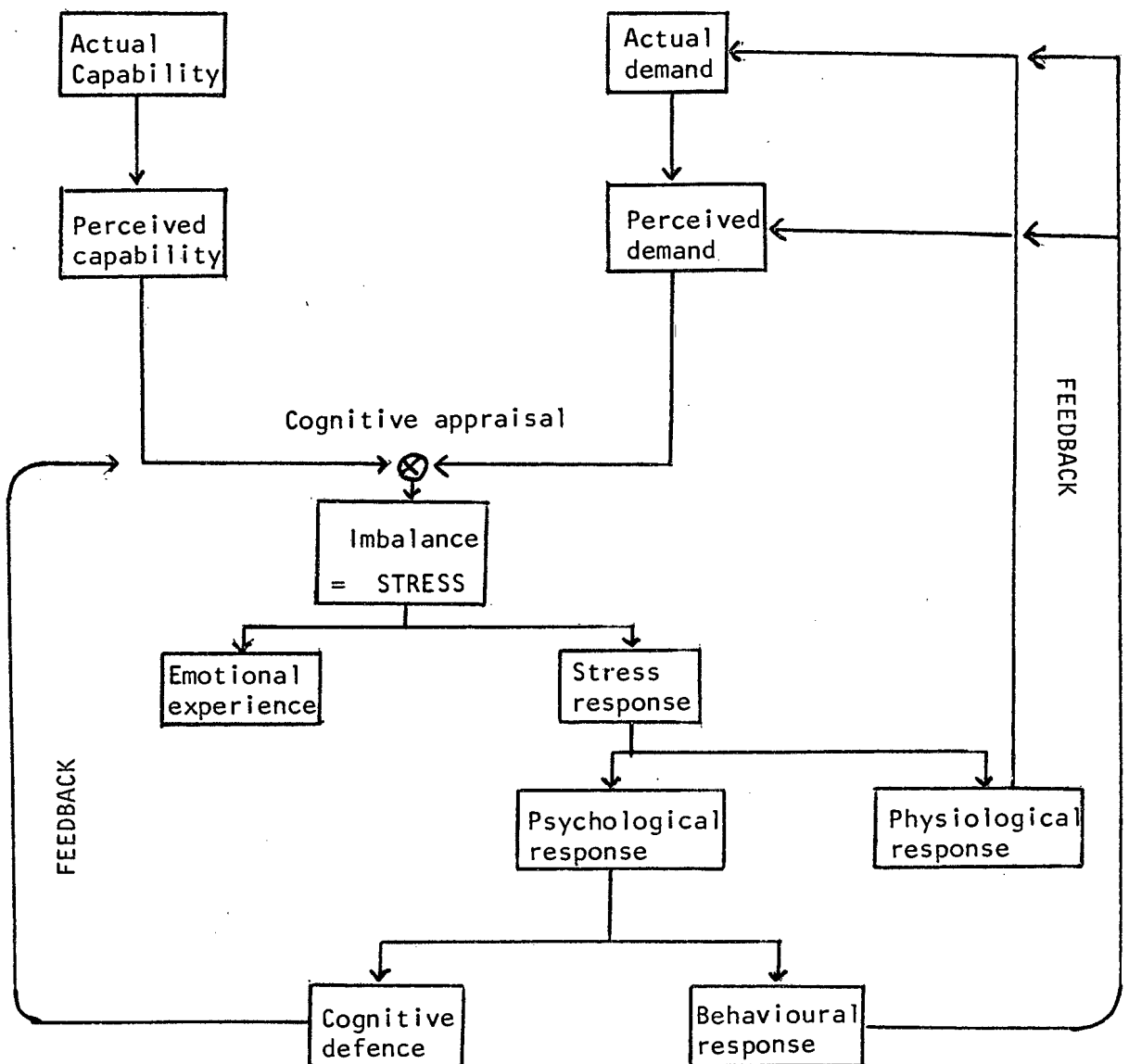
Coping is a key concept in stress theory. When a person perceives an imbalance between demand and resources, he experiences discomfort and stress, and he is motivated to take steps to remedy the situation. He employs problem-solving or adjustment responses, called coping, to remove or alleviate the anticipated harm. Effective coping removes the stress experienced by the person, because the person's cognitive appraisal of the situation changes to a favourable one. Ineffective coping serves to reinforce the stress, because the secondary cognitive appraisal confirms the person's inadequacy in meeting the demand or threat.

A detailed account of the coping processes is given in a separate paper on the management of stress.

The final section of this paper is devoted to a brief description of three recent stress models.

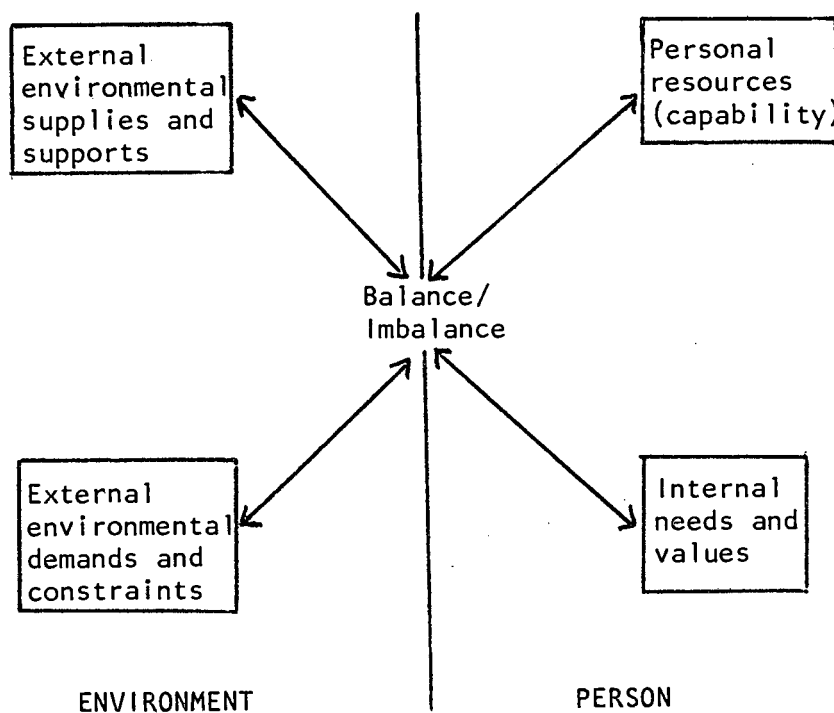
4. COX AND MACKAY'S TRANSACTIONAL MODEL OF STRESS (27)

Stress is defined as a perceptual phenomenon arising from an imbalance between a person's perception of the demand made upon him and his ability to cope, when coping is regarded as important. The experience of stress gives rise to responses which represent efforts to cope with the source of stress. If coping is ineffective, stress is prolonged, and abnormal responses and damage may occur.



An important aspect of this model is that it is not linear, but cyclical, with feedback components at various points among the five stages.

The first stage consists of the actual, objective internal and environmental demands and the person's actual capability of meeting the demands. During the second stage there is a cognitive appraisal of the perceived demand and the person's perceived capability of meeting that demand. If there is an imbalance, it gives rise to the emotional experience of stress. Cox and Mackay illustrated the main components of the transaction between a person and his environment, through the process of cognitive appraisal, diagrammatically as follows:



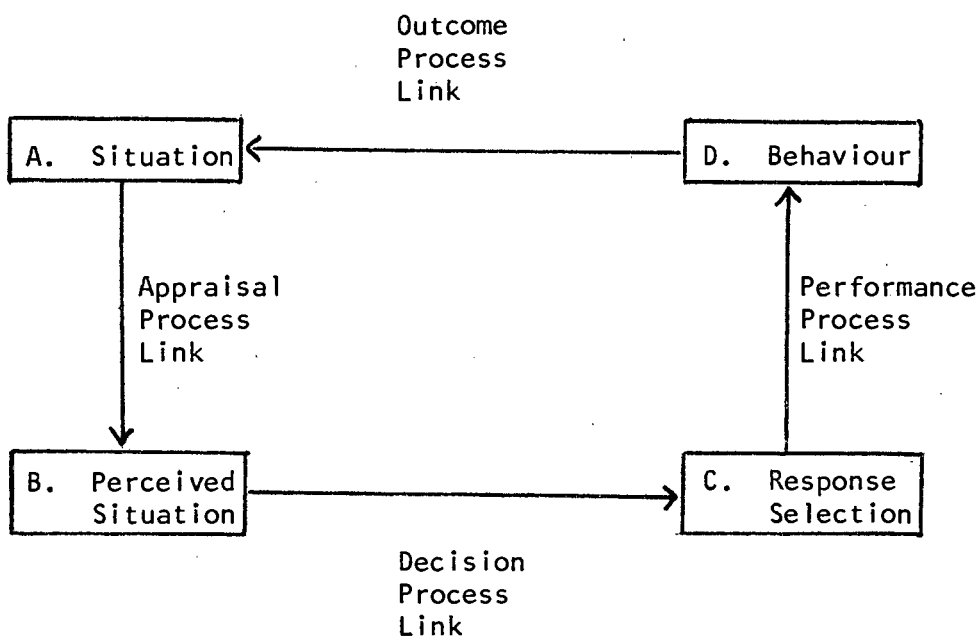
THE BASIC COMPONENTS OF THE TRANSACTIONAL MODEL (29)

The stress response is the third stage. This is both physiological, in the form of bodily changes, and psychological, in the form of behavioural and cognitive attempts to cope with the stress. The fourth stage represents the consequences, both perceived and actual, of the coping responses.

The fifth stage consists of feedback to the cognitive appraisal process of the successful or unsuccessful consequences of coping. Successful coping leads to a favourable secondary cognitive appraisal and the consequent reduction or elimination of stress. The reverse is the case with unsuccessful coping. Feedback also occurs when a physiological response, such as the release of adrenalin, affects the person's perception of the demand, or when a behavioural response changes the actual demand.

This model has the advantage of representing a dynamic, cyclical process of transaction between an individual and his environment, unlike those linear models that do not provide for feedback mechanisms.

5. McGRATH'S STRESS CYCLE (30)



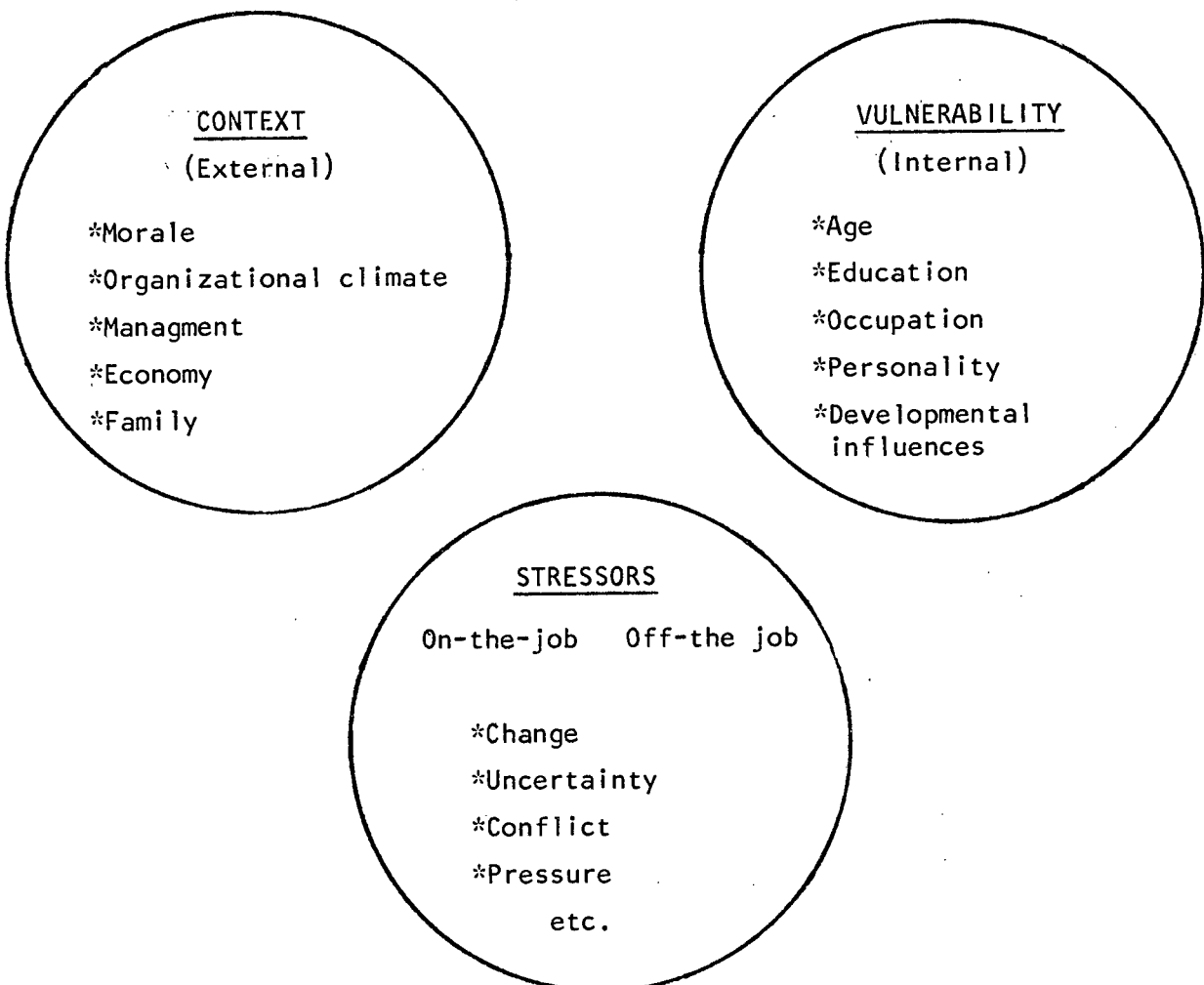
McGrath's four-stage, four-link stress cycle also represents an interactional approach.

This model is simpler than Cox and Mackay's, but is very similar except that it is represented as a closed loop. Emphasis is also placed on the importance of the cognitive appraisal process in subjectively interpreting

a situation as stressful. On the basis of his appraisal and past experience, the person decides on an appropriate coping response. This leads to particular coping behaviours, the outcomes of which may either have the desired effects in dealing with the stressor, or alternatively may be ineffective and even generate new stresses.

6. McLEAN'S MODEL OF STRESS (31)

This model was devised with work stress in mind, and focused particularly on the conditions under which certain stressors tend to produce a stress response. An unfavourable context and internal vulnerability of the person were identified as the two main factors influencing the stress response.



McLEAN'S WORK STRESS FACTORS (32)

The first factor that helps to determine whether a stressor will produce stress symptoms is the context in which the interaction takes place.

The social and work context covers a wide range of elements and norms, such as the nature of the social relations and expectations, the work ethic, and the economic conditions. For example, in times of mounting unemployment, the possibility of losing one's job is much more likely to produce stress than when there is full employment and it is easy to obtain another job. Strümpfer (33) in his interactional model of organizational stress, included a variable which he called 'cultural antecedents.', emphasizing that no individual can be viewed out of his cultural context.

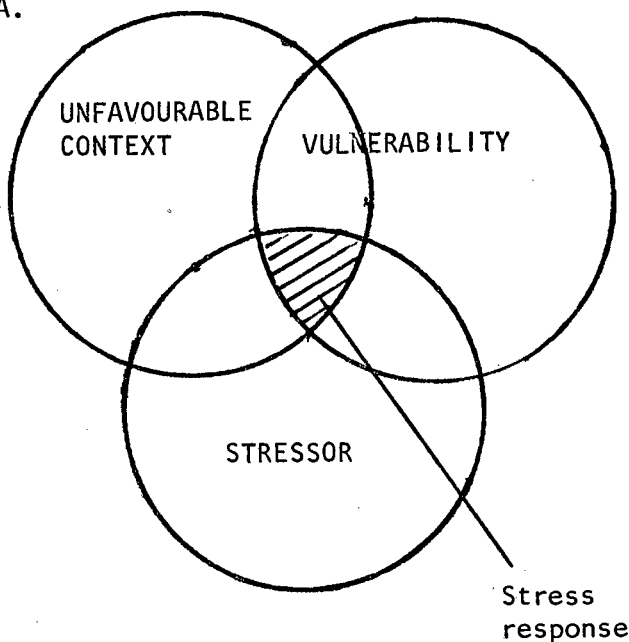
Individual vulnerability to stressors varies widely and is influenced by personality factors, moods, stage of development, self-concept, past experiences, and skills. McLean underlined the importance of the person's perceptions of his personality and capabilities in determining his vulnerability to stressors. He also drew attention to particular vulnerabilities of each life stage, drawing on Levinson et al.'s conceptualization of the seasons of a man's life, e.g. the 'mid-life crisis.' (34)

Stressors form the third set of variables in McLean's model. Literally anything can be a stressor if the individual is vulnerable and the context unsupportive or unfavourable in relation to the particular stressor. McLean maintained that the common denominator among stressors is that they involve some form of change. Individuals have a built-in resistance to change. Consequently, they find events that demand change stressful. This is consistent with Holmes and Rahe's (35) research on stressful life events. They produced a schedule of forty-three critical life events, necessitating personal and social adjustment, and gave a value (life change units) to each one on the basis of the amount of adjustment each required, e.g. death of spouse 100, son or daughter leaving home 29. A combination of events

produced a higher L.C.U. score, which indicated a danger to a person's health.

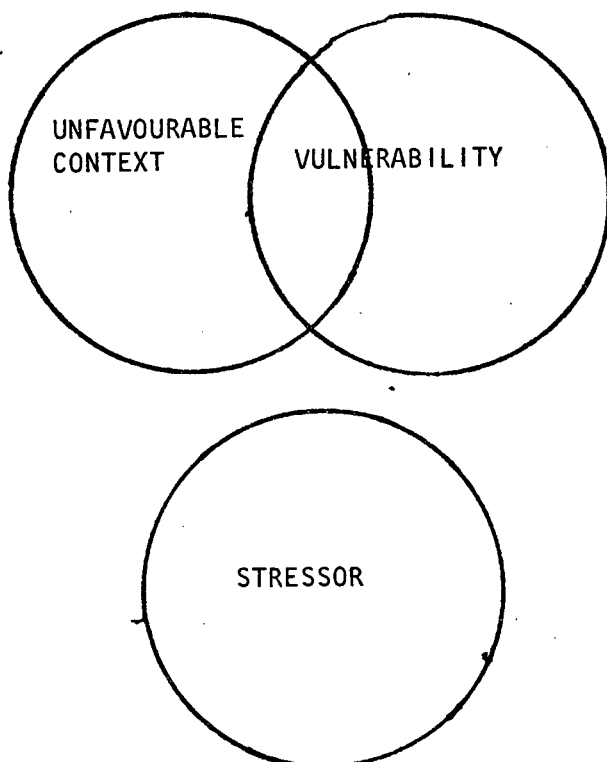
The final feature of McLean's model is that the three circles, representing the three sets of variables, move and sometimes overlap. A stress response is indicated when the three circles overlap.

A.



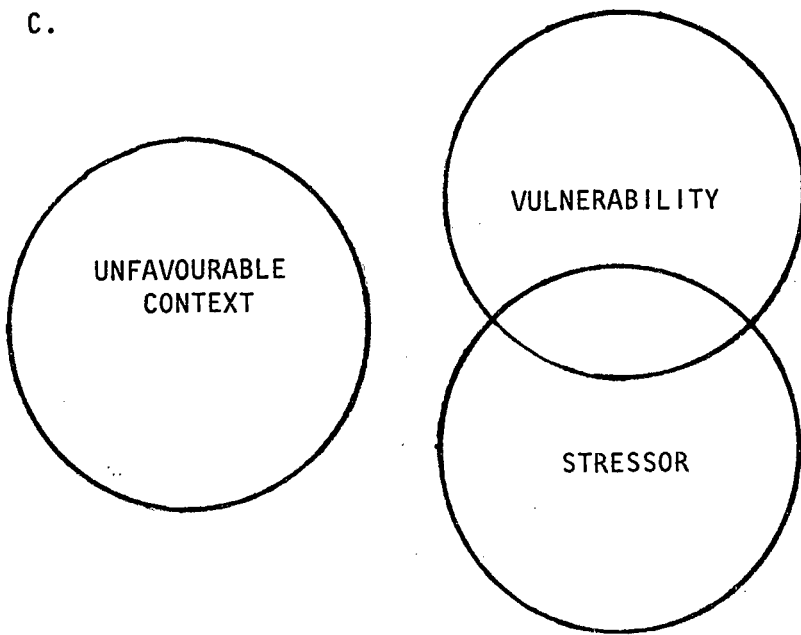
Here, there is the probability that the stressor will produce stress because the interaction between the stressor and the vulnerable person takes place in an unfavourable context.

B.



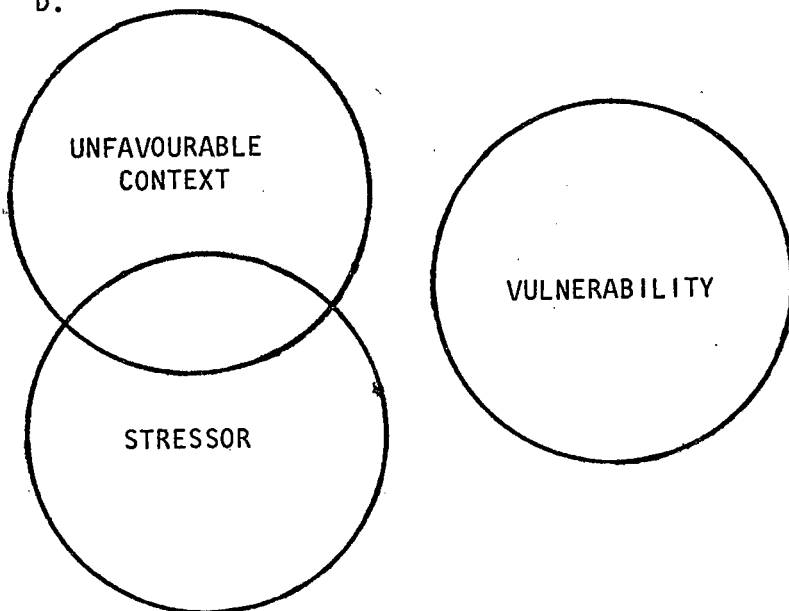
Although the person is vulnerable within an unfavourable context, there is no stress because no stressor is present.

C.



This stressor is less likely to produce a stress response because the interaction between the stressor and the vulnerable individual does not take place in an unfavourable context. The environment may be supportive and help the person to withstand the destructive effects of the stressor.

D.



The stressor operates within an unfavourable context, but this will not lead to stress because this particular person is not vulnerable in this situation.

McLEAN'S WORK STRESS SITUATIONS (ADAPTED) (36)

McLean's model can be developed further by varying the size of each circle to reflect symbolically the relative importance or magnitude of the three variables at a particular time.

7. CONCLUSION

Simple, linear stimulus-response models of stress, which give insufficient recognition to the part played by the individual's subjective perceptions intervening between stimulus and response, have given way to interactional models. In these, there is a dynamic interplay between the individual and his environment. During this interaction, the person's cognitive appraisal of his ability to cope, based on his perceptions of his personal resources, the demands made upon him, and the importance of the outcome, defines his stress. His coping responses either reduce or remove the stress or, if they are ineffective, reinforce it in terms of harmful physiological, emotional and behavioural responses. Since these are cyclical models, by feedback, the coping response re-defines other elements in the system, such as the demand (stimulus) or perceived resources.

The interactional models are more satisfactory representations of the stress phenomenon because they account more fully for individual differences in reacting to situations than the rather mechanistic earlier stimulus-response models. They direct attention to the importance of the person's thought processes and this has implications for stress management, as is explored more fully in a separate paper. The interactional models also represent a dynamic, rather than a static situation, and make greater allowance for the complexity of the human response to demand and the multidimensionality of stress.

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SOURCES OF MANAGERIAL STRESS

with particular reference to
the school principalship

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1. INTRODUCTION

The approach to stress on which this study is based is an interactional one such as that formulated by Joseph McGrath.

Stress involves an interaction of person and environment there is a potential for stress when an environmental situation is perceived as presenting a demand which threatens to exceed the person's capabilities and resources for meeting it, under conditions where he expects a substantial differential in the rewards and costs from meeting the demand versus not meeting it. (1)

This type of stress model emphasizes the key part played by the person's perceptions of demands placed upon him and his resources for coping, as well as his cognitive appraisal of the extent to which the situation poses a threat to him.

This conceptualization of stress underlines the highly individualistic nature of the stress phenomenon in terms of which a situation is not stressful unless it is perceived by a person to be stressful. People's perceptions are strongly influenced by personality factors, self-concept, and past experiences of coping or failing to cope with threatening demands. As a result, it cannot be assumed that particular dimensions of a job are intrinsically stressful. Almost every aspect of working life, in fact, is a source of stress to some person at some time. In some cases directly opposite conditions are both sources of stress for different people, for example, work overload and underload, overpromotion and underpromotion. (2)

Although it is inappropriate to categorize certain situations as stressful per se, some aspects of managerial work have been identified as common potential stressors on the basis of numerous research studies and observations. In this study brief reference is made to some of this research, after which one of the classifications of sources of managerial work stress, that of Cooper and Marshall, is described more fully and related to the school principalship.

2. SURVEY OF RESEARCH STUDIES

- 2.1 A survey of the literature on sources of stress yielded reference to only two research studies specifically concerned with school administrators. One was carried out by Tung and Koch (3) in America in 1978, and attempted to identify the different sources of work stress experienced by 1156 administrators of educational institutions. A 35-item Administrative Stress Index questionnaire was compiled using the Index of Job Related Strain of Indik et al. (4), with other items added from the occupational literature and suggested by 40 school administrators. Analysis of the responses (62,3% response rate) revealed that the median percentage of total life stress attributed to work was 75%. Over 60% of the administrators perceived that more than three-quarters of their life stress resulted from their work.

Tung and Koch found that the Administrative Stress Index clustered around four dimensions or factors. The first factor concerned the school administrator's role-based stress and had to do with his beliefs and attitudes about his role in the organization, e.g. lack of clarity about the scope and responsibilities of the job, insufficient authority to match the responsibilities, no knowledge of superiors' evaluation of administrator's performance, insufficient information to perform work satisfactorily. The second factor, task-based stress, arose from the day-to-day performance of administrative duties, e.g. supervising the work of a large number of people, frequent interruptions, excessive work load in the time available, time-consuming meetings, high self-expectations. The third factor represented conflict-mediating stress, e.g. student discipline, problems between students, solving parent-school issues. The fourth factor reflected boundary-spanning stress in those situations in which the external environment impinged on the school.

2.2 Swent and Gmelch (5) compiled a Managerial Stress Index which was applied to over 1200 school administrators in Oregon, U.S.A., in 1977. This revealed five main categories of managerial stressors. Managerial constraints included interruptions, abnormal work load, compliance with employer's policies and rules, and over-lengthy meetings. Managerial responsibility related to tasks characteristic of all managerial work, such as supervision, evaluation, planning, and speaking in front of groups. Interpersonal relations included resolving differences with superiors and between members of staff, and the feeling of the administrator that staff members did not understand his goals and expectations. Intrapersonal conflicts involved conflicts between performance and internal beliefs and expectations, e.g. not feeling qualified to cope with the job, having unrealistically high expectations, and feeling frustrated about lack of career progress. Role expectations concerned differences in expectations of the administrator and the various people serviced, for example, not being clear about the scope and responsibilities of the job.

Swent and Gmelch's survey, using the Managerial Stress Index outlined above, pointed to the following ten main managerial stressors in rank order :

1. Complying with state, federal, and organizational rules and policies.
2. Feeling that meetings take up too much time.
3. Trying to complete reports and other paperwork on time.
4. Trying to gain financial support for programmes.
5. Trying to resolve personnel conflicts.
6. Evaluating staff members' performance.
7. Having to make decisions that affect the lives of individuals that I know, e.g. colleagues.
8. Feeling that I have too heavy a work load, one that I cannot possibly finish during the normal work day.
9. Imposing excessively high expectations on myself.
10. Being interrupted frequently by telephone calls.

2.3 Gorton and McIntyre (6), while surveying characteristics of sixty 'effective' senior high school principals in the United States in the National Association of Secondary School Principals' National Survey in 1978, reported that only one-sixth of the principals felt that stress was not a problem in their work.

2.4 Although not specifically concerned with work stress, Cawood's analysis of the school principalship in the Cape Province, Orange Free State and South-West Africa in 1976 (7) included the 312 principals' perceptions of their biggest problems. These were as follows:

	<u>Quoted by</u>
1. Overloading with administrative matters	54%
2. Finding staff	35%
3. Control over teaching	31%
4. Problems with teachers	21%
5. Need to do too much teaching	19%
6. Problems that stem from Department and inspectors	13%
7. Problems with parents and other social problems	12%
8. Shortage of time for principals' tasks	9%
9. Problems with pupils	8%
10. Inadequate preparation for the principalship	7%
11. Problems to do with the curriculum	7%

Other problems reported by some of the principals included: the unmanageable scope of the principal's work; problems to do with rising or falling enrolment; the diminishing authority of the principals; the maintenance of healthy human relationships; co-operation and problems with the school committee; insufficient private time and time for family life; the loss of teachers from the profession; restrictions such as those on the married woman teacher; too much emphasis on examination results.

2.5 Numerous studies of sources of stress among teachers have been reported in the literature (8). These have confirmed

that occupational stress represents a serious and growing problem among teachers, for example in Western Europe and North America. Cox et al. (9) matched 100 teachers and 100 semi-professionals in England for age, sex and marital status, and asked them to comment on the main sources of stress in their lives. Seventy-nine percent of the teachers pointed to work compared with 38 percent of the non-teachers. The International Labour Organization estimated that almost 25 percent of the teachers in Britain, America and Sweden are experiencing sufficient stress to cause significant health problems. (10)

2.6 In a study of sources of stress by Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (11), 257 secondary school teachers in England were asked to rate 51 stressors on a five-point scale (from 'no stress' to 'extreme stress', scored 0 to 4). Although not directly concerned with the principalship, the findings are of interest. Four factors predominated, namely, pupil misbehaviour (e.g. difficult classes, difficult behaviour problems), poor working conditions (e.g. poor promotion opportunities, inadequate salary, shortage of equipment), time pressures (e.g. too much work in the available time, administrative work), and poor school ethos (e.g. inadequate disciplinary policy of school, lack of consensus on minimum standards, attitudes and behaviour of headmaster). The most highly rated single stressors were, in descending order of means, 'pupils' poor attitudes to work', 'trying to uphold values and standards', 'poorly motivated pupils', 'covering lessons for absent teachers', 'too much work to do', 'lack of time to spend with individual pupils', and 'individual pupils who continually misbehave.'

2.7 Much research has been carried out into the sources of occupational stress in general, and managerial stress in particular.

For example, Kiev and Kohn (12) undertook a survey of executive stress on behalf of the American Management Association in 1979 involving 1375 top management and 1197

middle management executives. The five major sources of stress (in rank order) were perceived as follows:

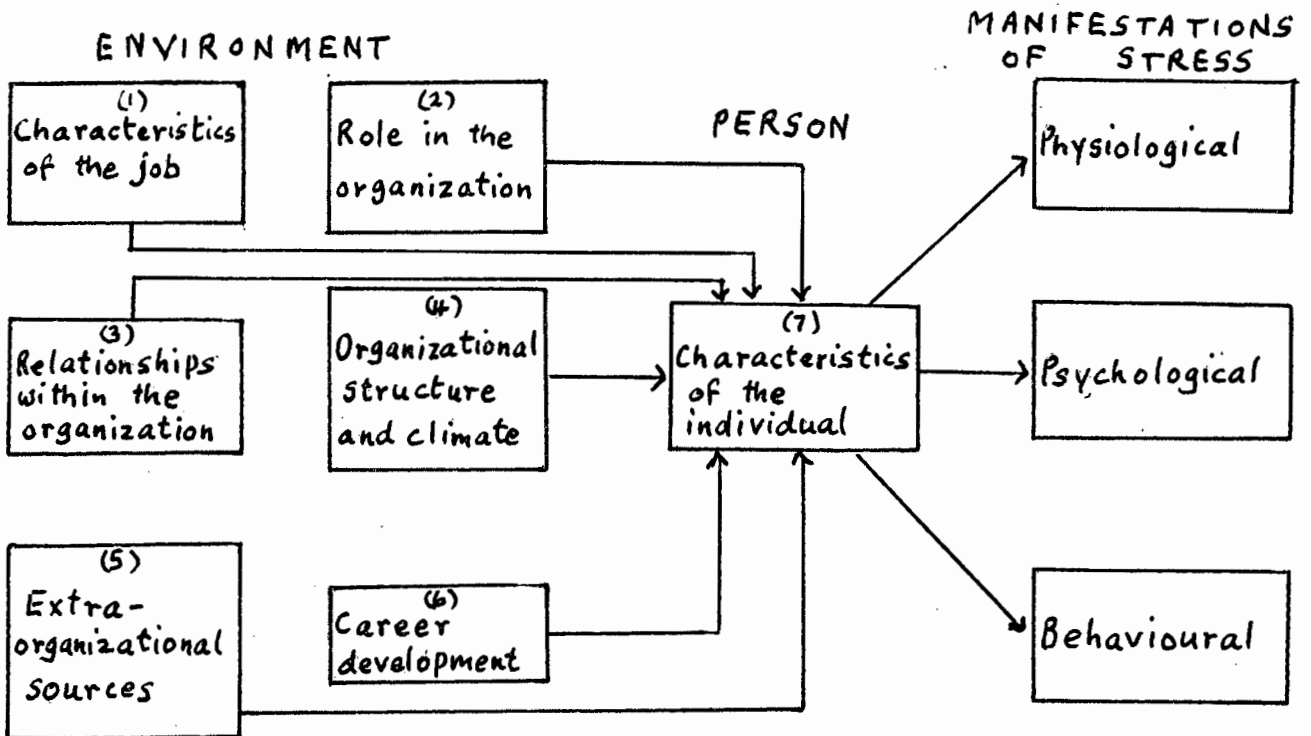
1. Heavy work load, time pressures, and unrealistic deadlines
2. Disparity between what I have to do on the job and what I would like to accomplish
3. The general 'political' climate of the organization
4. Lack of feedback on job performance
5. Long working hours

2.8 A useful overview of this research was compiled by Cooper and Marshall (13) and over forty interacting factors were identified. On the basis of this analysis, a conceptual model of sources of managerial stress was devised, and this was used in a survey research project involving 208 senior managers. Among the conclusions drawn, were the importance of work overload, lack of autonomy, and concern about career development as stressors, and of ambitiousness and anxiety-proneness as personality characteristics contributing to stress vulnerability.

3. COOPER AND MARSHALL'S CLASSIFICATION OF MANAGERIAL STRESSORS

Of more importance, in the context of this review, is Cooper and Marshall's sevenfold classification of sources of managerial stress, because this provides the framework for the discussion of sources of stress in the school principalship in the remainder of the study.

According to this model, work stress is individually defined by the interaction between environmental sources of stress (numbered 1 to 6 in the diagram) and the characteristics of the individual at a particular time. (number 7). Potential sources of stress evoke different reactions from different people, because a person's perception of threat is strongly influenced by personal characteristics such as emotional stability, tolerance of uncertainty, security, competitiveness, flexibility, interpersonal competence, and stability of self-concept.



SOURCES OF MANAGERIAL STRESS IN A PERSON-ENVIRONMENT FIT FRAMEWORK (after Cooper and Marshall) (14)

Some personality types appear to be psychologically predisposed to stress in that they are less able to cope with or adapt to stress-provoking situations. Examples of personal characteristics that tend to increase vulnerability to stress are neurotic tendencies, insecurity, rigidity, impatience, and perfectionism.

Sources of stress clearly cannot be analysed and classified by reference to environmental factors alone, and for this reason Cooper and Marshall included a seventh category, 'characteristics of the individual,' in their classification.

It should also be emphasized that each of the environmental demands in this model may be either a stimulus to development and achievement or a source of stress, depending on how it is

perceived and coped with. The person's perceptions are strongly influenced by his self-concept, past experiences and personality, that is, those factors that are intrinsic to the individual. There is thus a close association between stress and satisfaction. For example, demands such as work overload, time pressure, and change may bring satisfaction to one person and stress to another. To the same person, these environmental demands may cause stress in the short-term and satisfaction in the long-term, or vice versa. Cooper and Marshall allowed for this association in their research design by providing rating scales for both 'satisfaction' and 'pressure' opposite each environmental demand in their Job Characteristics Questionnaire.

3.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE JOB

3.1.1 According to the research conducted by Kiev and Kohn for the American Management Association (15), heavy work load, with associated time pressures and unrealistic deadlines, was the most commonly perceived source of stress among managers.

French and Caplan (16) distinguished between quantitative overload and qualitative overload, having too much to do as opposed to having work that is too difficult with regard to the skills, abilities and knowledge required. In research carried out at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center and NASA headquarters they produced strong evidence that work overload, both quantitative and qualitative, causes various symptoms of stress, such as job dissatisfaction, job tension, lower self-esteem, threat, embarrassment, high cholesterol levels, increased heart rate, skin resistance, and more smoking. McGrath (17) suggested that it is not work overload per se that causes stress, but rather overload that leads to a reduction in the quality of performance or to the inability to perform all the role demands. He also cautioned that apparent overload can readily be used to legitimize non-performance of especially difficult or unenjoyable other demands of the job on the grounds that there is no time for them.

Research studies of business executives by Caplan et al. (18) and Weiman (19) showed that under certain circumstances quantitative and qualitative work underload is a source of job dissatisfaction and stress as a result of boredom, stagnation, and the absence of challenge.

The surveys carried out by Swent and Gmelch in America and Cawood in South Africa (quoted earlier in this paper) both indicated that a significant proportion of school principals regarded work overload as one of their main problems and pressures. The 1131 high school principals, who took part in the NASSP's survey in America, reported an average working week of 56,5 hours. Cawood's sample of 151 high school principals in South Africa claimed to be working 10,8 hours per day in a six-day working week. It is suggested that the scope of the principalship is elastic and ill-defined and that, as in other human service organizations, there is a real sense in which 'the job is never done'. Personality factors, such as idealism, motivation, ambitiousness and conscientiousness influence the principal's workload, as does his leadership style as it affects such matters as the amount of consultation with colleagues, counselling and training staff, and the extent and manner of delegation. Clearly, too, the principal's workload is affected by his attitude towards the extent to which he should become involved with individual pupils and parents.

Qualitative overload refers to the complexity of the work. In this respect the principal is charged with an exceptionally wide variety of responsibilities, including the supervision of the teaching programme, staff development, pupil discipline, interaction with parents, community and Departmental officials, the management of facilities and finance, and public relations work. A correspondingly wide range of technical, human and conceptual skills is needed by a principal in the execution of these varied tasks. Teachers who do not have the opportunity to acquire these skills before assuming their first

principalship are faced with a serious skills deficit and a qualitative overload problem which leads to job strain.

- 3.1.2 Related to work overload, with its attendant time pressures, are the frequent interruptions (reported in Tung and Koch's survey), the fragmented nature of the work, and the immediacy of many of the tasks, e.g. disciplinary crises.
- 3.1.3 Another characteristic of the principal's work that is a potential source of stress is ambiguity concerning the outcomes of his work. Edelwich and Brodsky (20) in their analysis of 'burn-out' in the helping professions identified as a built-in source of frustration the lack of objective criteria for measuring accomplishment, in situations where there are so many influences at work and where many results are long term. Lortie (21) referred to this as the problem of 'authorship', of lacking objective feedback about the results of one's work so that one does not know what one is achieving. In Kiev and Kohn's survey of managerial stressors (22) 'lack of feedback on job performance' was ranked as one of the main sources of stress.
- 3.1.4 Staffing the school constituted a major problem for 35% of the principals in Cawood's survey in South Africa. Although not specifically stated, this probably referred mainly to the difficulty of finding teachers of 'scarce' subjects such as mathematics and the sciences, and also the problems and frustrations associated with the employment of married

women teachers and attempts to retain their services. Changes in service regulations would remove this latter pressure.

Another potential source of stress associated with staff is the difficulty experienced in terminating the services of an unsuitable teacher. The investigation carried out into 'the effective principal' by Blumberg and Greenfield (23) revealed this particular difficulty to be one of the three most frustrating and emotionally threatening problems in their work. It is probable that South African principals experience similar frustrations in this regard.

3.1.5 A further aspect of the principal's work, related to his staff, that is a potential stressor, is his responsibility for evaluating his teachers. In Swent and Gmelch's survey in America, 'evaluating staff members' performance' was quoted as one of the main sources of stress. In South Africa, evaluation is linked with the granting of achievement awards (leading to salary increases) and enhanced promotion prospects. Although similar functions are also carried out by managers in other organizations, it is suggested that the evaluation of teachers is more complex and demanding because of the subtleties of the teaching-learning interaction, the values-intensive nature of the situation, and the consequent problems inherent in agreeing on objective performance criteria. Formal evaluation procedures in the context of a tightly-knit group of fellow-professionals may well be more problematical than in the industrial and commercial context in their effect on relationships within the group. This is

particularly the case when evaluation is perceived as deciding on a person's worth in general rather than indicating their effectiveness in terms of the quality of their work.

3.1.6 The principal's responsibility for pupil discipline can weigh heavily, depending on the size of the school, the type of community, and the competence of the staff. In Tung and Koch's survey, 'handling student discipline problems' featured prominently among sources of stress perceived by principals. Similarly, discipline headed the list of stressors experienced by teachers in Phillips and Lee's survey of the research in America (24), while in Kyriacou and Sutcliffe's (25) research in England, problems with pupil discipline, negative attitudes, and lack of motivation were found to be prime causes of teacher strain. The evidence points to heavier demands being made upon principals in discharging their disciplinary function within an environment experiencing significant changes in social norms and attitudes towards authority. Serious disciplinary problems, including those involving the possibility of expulsion, tax a principal's resources to the full.

3.1.7 The final characteristic of the job selected for this analysis of stressors is change. Growth and development, and the accompanying changes, are inevitable and indispensable elements of life, calling for appropriate adjustment. What are referred to here are changes that are perceived as producing extraordinary pressure on the manager. Those

innovations that produce uncertainty, threaten the existing power structure, disrupt established role relationships and daily work patterns, and which are seen to be imposed from above on an unconvinced and uncommitted manager, were regarded by Moss (26) as extraordinary pressures.

In the Cape Province, a number of innovations have been introduced in the schools in the past decade. While these have been stimulating professionally, they have brought with them new demands, because in each case the principal has been responsible for introducing and sustaining the innovation at the level of the individual school. Inevitably this involves, in varying degrees, overcoming suspicion, apathy and resistance, apart from the technical and conceptual skills needed.

3.2 ROLE IN THE ORGANIZATION

Various research studies (27) have shown that a person's role at work is another major source of stress.

3.2.1 Role ambiguity exists when a person does not have sufficient information about his work role, including its scope, responsibilities, authority, success criteria, and the expectations of co-workers. Lack of feed-back about how performance is assessed by others may also generate ambiguity, uncertainty, self-doubt, a lowering of self-esteem, and a consequent perception of threat.

Kahn et al, found in their study in 1964 that 35 percent of all employees experienced role ambiguity resulting

in such symptoms as lower job satisfaction, high job-related tension, low self-confidence, and increased blood pressure. French and Caplan obtained similar results at the Goddard Space Flight Center, as did Margolis, Kroes and Quinn with a representative national sample. Role ambiguity has a more marked effect on people with a high need for structure and a low tolerance for ambiguity. It arises more frequently because of the greater size and complexity of organizations, as well as changes in technology, social structure, and personnel.

Tung and Koch's Administrative Stress Index contained several items referring to role ambiguity, notably 'Being unclear on just what the scope and responsibilities of my job are', 'Not knowing what my supervisor thinks of me, or how he/she evaluates my performance', 'Knowing I can't get information to carry out my job properly.'

School principals may also find themselves asking such questions as, 'To what extent should I be involved in fund-raising activities?', 'Where should I draw the line with social work-type activities in helping pupils and their families?', 'How far should I concern myself with my pupils' out-of-school misdemeanours in exercising discipline?' All of these relate to the ambiguities in the principal's role.

3.2.2 Role conflict exists when a person in a particular work role is torn by conflicting work demands or by doing things

he does not really want to do or does not think are part of the job. Forty-eight percent of the employees in the Kahn et al. study reported being caught in the middle between two groups of people demanding different kinds of job behaviour, while 67 percent in the Goddard survey reported some role conflict, resulting in physiological symptoms, lowered job satisfaction, and tension. Greater role conflict tends to be experienced in boundary roles, for example, between departments or between the organization and the outside world.

McGrath (28) referred to four different forms of role conflict. The first is the 'man-in-the-middle' situation, where superordinates and subordinates hold conflicting expectations for the focal person's role behaviour, so that satisfying the one automatically means dissatisfying the other. In the second form of role conflict, the role demands contain internally contradictory expectations, for example, love and discipline in the parent's role. In the third form, role expectations conflict with some attribute of the focal person, e.g. trait, preference, value, or moral principle. Finally, there is inter-role conflict, 'wearing many hats', when certain roles held simultaneously may conflict, e.g. the demands of job and family.

A principal is liable to experience all these forms of role conflict. He may find himself under pressure to assist certain subordinates in attaining their personal goals, which may conflict with his superordinates' requirements

for his role.

By virtue of being closest to the teachers, the principal may be placed in a situation of role conflict which can be dysfunctional as well as personally painful, if the teachers expect the principal to express their norms, sentiments, and needs, even when they are not congruent with organizational purposes. (29)

He will certainly experience some of the emotional 'pain' involved in taking strict disciplinary action for the sake of the pupil as well as in the long term interests of all the pupils. Conflict also arises when the principal's personal values are violated by certain policies or job requirements, ('having to do things against my better judgement'). Time pressure brings about conflicts over the allocation of time to job and family, working life and 'private' life.

3.2.3 Boundary roles are associated with high levels of stress, largely because it is the person at the interface between departments, or between the organization and 'head office' and the community, who is in the firing line when there are conflicts of interest. This is precisely the position in which the principal finds himself as he mediates between different departments of the school, between the school and the parents and community, and between the school and the education authorities.

3.2.4 One aspect of the managerial role that has been identified in the literature as a potential stressor is responsibility for people. French and Caplan (30), in their Goddard study, found that responsibility for other people's work and wellbeing constituted a significantly greater source of stress than responsibility for 'things', the impersonal aspects of the organization. McLean (31) referred to the significantly higher incidence of suicide, alcoholism and drug abuse among doctors in America, and felt that the burden of responsibility for other people's welfare was

the key variable accounting for this. Cherniss (32) considered anyone in a human service organization (including teachers, social workers, and medical service personnel) to be particularly vulnerable to stress because the sense of responsibility for the wellbeing of others makes the demand for effective performance particularly strong. Doubts, on the part of the worker, about possessing sufficient resources to meet this powerful performance demand would be especially threatening and conducive to stress. An analysis of the school principal's responsibilities and work activities makes it clear that he is exposed to this stressor.

3.3 RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION

Managerial positions, including the school principalship, are 'human-intensive' and involve numerous encounters with a variety of people. A number of behavioural scientists have identified good relationships between people at work as a central factor in individual and organizational health.

Morris (33) represented this aspect of managerial work in a model called the 'cross of relationships', in which the manager is the 'man-in-the-middle' of a set of relationships with, and between, seniors, colleagues, juniors and outsiders (users). There is much potential for stress in this focal position unless harmonious relationships are maintained and the interests of the various groups and individuals are balanced. Inevitably this involves mediating and resolving conflicts between individuals and groups.

In Cawood's (34) survey of the problems perceived by principals, 'problems with teachers' was quoted by 21% of the principals. Supervision of the work of others is not easy and calls for a high level of interpersonal skill.

Participatory leadership styles have good potential for developing strong team spirit and commitment, but require skilled and sensitive handling.

Relationships with parents sometimes produce difficult situations, as is the case with some misunderstandings and complaints. These may be complicated by fundamental differences in values between the people concerned. The principal who makes praiseworthy efforts to be readily accessible to parents, is likely to find himself involved in far more time-consuming counselling work as well as related follow-up actions resulting from interviews. Apart from the heavier work load, frequent involvement with parents is also likely to increase work strain as problems are shared and possibly agonized over.

In their survey of 'effective principals' in America, Blumberg and Greenfield (35) found that the principals perceived themselves to be isolated from their fellow-principals. Apart from relationships based on personal friendships, there was very little helping, supporting, collaborating, or sharing of expertise. The principals expressed the desire for interaction and opportunities to share problems and frustrations with fellow-principals, and saw this as a critical factor influencing their motivation and psychological health.

3.4 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND CLIMATE

Cooper and Marshall also referred to those aspects of an organization that can make a person's working life either satisfactory or stressful. They included such matters as little or no participation in decision making, no sense of belonging, lack of effective consultation, poor communications, restrictions on behaviour, and organizational politics.

- 3.4.1 Numerous studies have pointed to a link between greater participation and consultation and employee satisfaction, morale, and productivity. Margolis, Kroes and Quinn (36) found that non-participation at work was a significant

indicator or predictor of stress. Delegation, which is an important aspect of greater participation by subordinates in the management of an organization, is not without its problems. Delegated authority may be misused, and responsibilities may be neglected or mishandled, thus producing situations that pose a threat to the manager who delegated. In addition, by delegating many of the more routine, structured, predictable responsibilities, the manager may be left with a high proportion of complex functions and intractable problems, with a high potential for stress. On the other hand, Donaldson and Gowler (37) pointed out that a common cause of anxiety and stress among managers to whom responsibilities are delegated is that there is a mismatch between formal and actual powers. In Tung and Koch's Administrative Stress Index this was expressed as, 'Feeling that I have too little authority to carry out responsibilities assigned to me.' The principals in Blumberg and Greenfield's (38) survey stated that one of their three major problems was the powerlessness they felt relative to their prerogatives inside and outside the school. They considered themselves to be 'under-powered' for the role they had to assume.

This sense of powerlessness, in certain circumstances, is part of organizational life in a bureaucracy, such as a school system, particularly if the organization is of the 'tall' variety with many status levels. Giammatteo and Giammatteo (39) in their Stress Awareness questionnaire, had this in mind with the item, 'I am restricted in my use of my own ideas and professional behaviours due to numerous laws, rules, and policies.' According to Blumberg and Greenfield, a school system's emphasis in its organizational value system on smooth running and keeping the peace, places serious constraints on initiative and innovation, with consequent potential for stress manifested in frustration. Innovativeness carries with it a greater risk of mistakes occurring. If, in accordance with the

bureaucracy's value system, such mistakes count against the principal, he will tend to refrain from using his initiative, but will also experience frustration.

- 3.4.2 Professionals working in bureaucratic organizations face restrictions on their autonomy that may result in stress, since bureaucracies emphasize supervision, conformity to laid down procedures, particular success criteria, and a considerable amount of uniformity.
- 3.4.3 Another possible frustration of middle management in a bureaucracy is an inadequate flow of information from 'above', or the delay in this information reaching them. For the purpose of this argument, principals occupy middle management positions in a school system, while the head office personnel represent senior management. There may also be frustrations over inordinate delays in receiving decisions or responses to correspondence because of the procedures that are typical of a large bureaucracy. These particular weaknesses in bureaucratic organizations may weaken the sense of 'belonging' and commitment felt by middle managers, especially when they are also members of a profession.
- 3.4.4 The internal politics of the school as an organization may also be a source of stress to the principal. Within organizations the distribution of power and influence is not always as rational as the organization chart may seem to indicate. People lower in the hierarchy often develop informal power bases which principals have to take into account in decision making. Unfortunately, such groups may tend to further their own sectional interests with self-serving behaviour at the expense of other groups or the organization as a whole. Power struggles may take place between subject departments, different extra-mural societies, the 'young turks' and the 'old guard' etc. Such struggles may even spill over into the parent body.

Hoyle very aptly described this as the

dark side of organizational life which
provides the source of much staff
gossip. (40)

Handling it successfully calls for rare insight and human relations skills, and may be the cause of anxiety and stress.

3.5 EXTRA-ORGANIZATIONAL SOURCES OF STRESS

A person functions as a totality, and his behaviour at work and in other parts of his life are interdependent. There are a number of interfaces between working life inside the organization and life outside which may give rise to managerial stress.

- 3.5.1 An important extra-organizational source of stress is the home-work interface. Work overload, time pressures, and the overflowing of duties related to work into home life may conflict with family demands. Such conflicts may place a strain upon the manager's relationship with his wife unless they have reached a satisfactory accommodation. Gowler and Legge (41) called this 'the hidden contract' by which the wife consents to adopt a supportive role to her husband so that he can further his demanding managerial career. Such a career requires a level of commitment that leaves reduced time and energy for home life. In return for her supportive role the wife expects the sharing of certain leisure time, including weekends and holidays, as well as sharing in the material rewards and prestige of the husband's managerial career. Problems arise when the organization starts claiming additional time, or when the wife becomes dissatisfied with her role, perhaps because she wishes to pursue or re-commence her own career or because domestic help becomes too expensive and she becomes more disenchanted with household chores. Gowler and Legge made the point that the organization employing the executive tends to take the existence of the 'hidden contract' for granted, enabling it to lay claim freely to the executive's time and full commitment.

It is suggested that the school principalship, with its emphasis on service to the community and its 'elastic' hours of work, tends to make inroads into home life, requiring special understanding on the part of the wife. When the intrusion of the job into home life becomes excessive, or the wife becomes dissatisfied with the situation, stress will result.

- 3.5.2 Business transfers involving moves to other towns, as a result of promotion up the management ladder, also contain potential for family problems and stress. Wives, in particular, may find it difficult to adjust to the new environment, and the whole family may be affected by insecurity caused by a feeling of mobility and temporariness. School principals and their wives are as prone to stress from this source as any other type of manager.
- 3.5.3 The interface between the school and the community-at-large also brings its pressures in the form of expectations, which the principal may feel to be unrealistic, misunderstandings based on misinformation, and changing social and moral norms which conflict with the values propagated by the school. In some cases the pressures are valid and constructive, forcing the principal to re-evaluate situations and policies, and possibly bringing about development. In other instances, the pressures merely exert a negative influence.
- 3.5.4 An important aspect of the school-community interface is the school's reputation. It is suggested that principals are sensitive to this because of its effect on their professional pride and standing, their job satisfaction and self-esteem, and their career prospects. They may also be in a competitive area, in which the reputation of the school has a marked effect on its pupil enrolment and its ability to attract and retain a good teaching staff.

The public may adopt very superficial criteria when judging the relative merits of schools, and those principals who feel that their school suffer as a result of this superficiality are likely to experience frustration. Often a single damaging event or situation, given adverse press publicity, affects the reputation of an institution out of all proportion to its seriousness. In circumstances where the school's reputation in the community is a sensitive issue, anxiety about unfortunate situations and harmful publicity is likely to be a source of stress for the principal.

3.6 CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Fears that managers may have of demotion (perhaps as a result of their company being taken over by another company), redundancy or obsolescence (through changes in the economy or in technology), or losing their position on flimsy, personal grounds, hardly apply to school principals who enjoy exceptional security. What a principal may suffer from is status incongruity in the form of under-promotion or over-promotion.

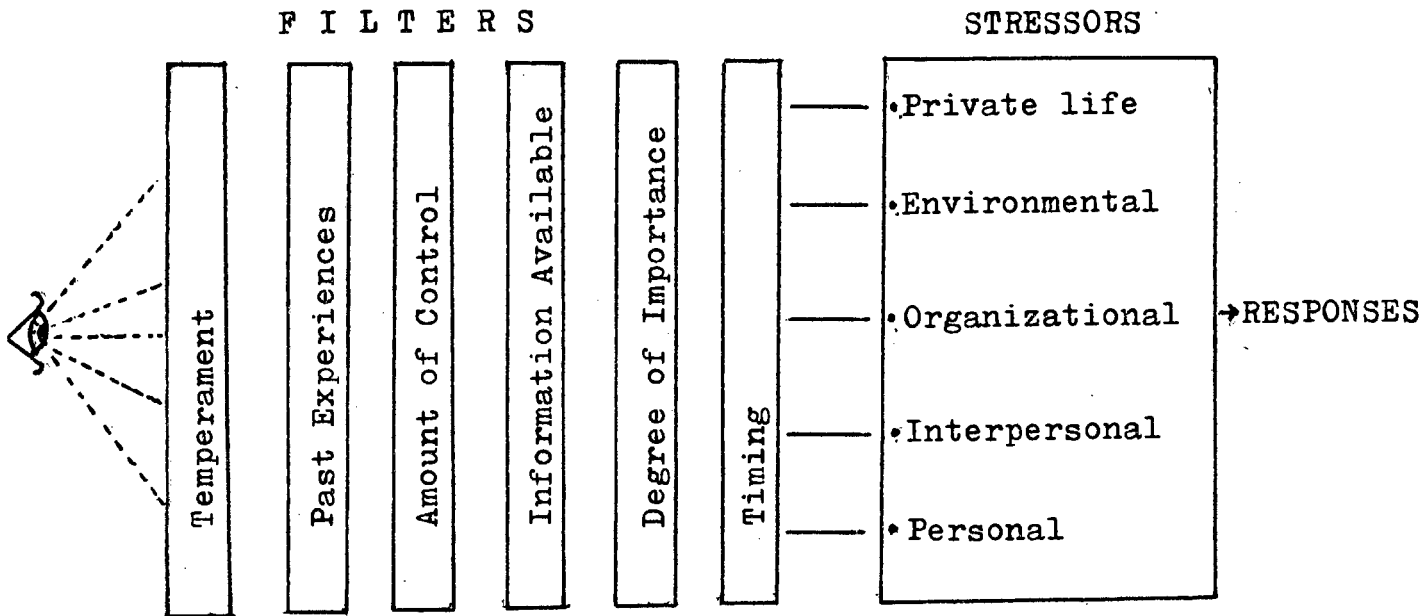
- 3.6.1 A blocked career, resulting in what the principal perceives as under-promotion, may be a powerful stressor particularly if the principal believes that less worthy candidates for promotion are being preferred to him. The blows to his pride and the negative effect on his self-concept, are likely to be more serious consequences of a blocked career than the prospect of continuing in a position that has become routine and predictable.
- 3.6.2 Over-promotion, resulting in inadequacy in meeting the demands of the position, is an obvious source of stress, unless the principal is unaware of his inadequacy or indifferent to its consequences. (42) It should be borne in mind, too, that a principal who is capable of meeting the demands of the position at the start of his career as

a principal, may become inadequate at a later stage. One of the reasons for this could be changes in the nature of the job, such as a larger school, the necessity of a participatory style of leadership involving greater use of interpersonal skills, more involvement with parents and the community, and changes in attitudes towards authority and discipline. Principals who fail to adjust and to develop the necessary skills, become progressively less suited to the position, and more threatened by the demands of the job.

3.6.3 Another reason for growing inadequacy is changes in the person himself. At the age of thirty-eight a principal may feel comfortable dealing with teenagers, whereas at the age of fifty-eight the same principal may feel out of touch with his pupils and also possibly many of his teachers. He may also grow weary of and dissatisfied with the disciplinary role that he has to play in the school. He may find it very hard to maintain the enthusiasm and vitality that teenagers and teachers respond to so well. At this stage in his career he may feel that he is stagnating and is not the right person for his school, but is trapped in the position until retirement. Such a situation is conducive to depression, anxiety and other symptoms of stress.

3.7 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INDIVIDUAL

3.7.1 Individual people vary greatly in their vulnerability to specific stressors, some being able to cope better than others. Gmelch suggested that we view stressors through personal filters which influence our response to stressors.



STRESS FILTER SYSTEM (GMELCH) (43)

- 3.7.2 Numerous personal characteristics affect threat appraisal, including one's pattern of motivation, one's perceptions of the expectations of others, one's perceived capacity for controlling or altering situations, inner conflicts, self-concept (concerning competence and problem solving ability, for example), state of health, past experience, and levels of competence. In this account, a limited number of personal characteristics have been selected for treatment.
- 3.7.3 Rosenman et al. (44) showed that people exhibiting certain behavioural characteristics were significantly more at risk to stress and coronary heart disease. Such behaviour was called Type A, as opposed to Type B (low risk of CHD). Type A behaviour is characterised by competitiveness, extreme achievement-orientation, aggressiveness, impatience, haste, feelings of being under pressure of time and the challenge of responsibility, hyper-alertness, explosiveness of speech, and tenseness of facial and other musculature.

3.7.4 A person's self-concept plays a major part in his evaluation of the demands made on him. According to Argyris

... the self influences what the individual is able to see in the environment, how he evaluates it, and how he deals with it. If what he is experiencing "out there" is consonant with his self-concept, then he will tend to "see" it in an undistorted manner. If what he is experiencing is antagonistic to his self, it is a threat. The greater the discrepancy between the self and what it is experiencing, the greater the threat. (45)

3.7.5 An important facet of a person's self-concept is his expectations of his performance. If his expectations are excessively high and there is a significant gap between his aspirations and his accomplishments, the resulting sense of failure has a negative effect on his self-concept. It is likely that school principals, because of the idealism and sense of calling that is associated with human service professions, are particularly vulnerable to excessive self-expectations. Cherniss (46) believed this to be a potential stressor because the threat of failure has more serious personal consequences for people who regard their work as a calling rather than a job. For those who view their work as a calling, their identity and self-esteem are related to a considerable extent to the successful accomplishment of their work. Dobson (47) pointed to the dangers of achievement anxiety, manifested as a pervasive fear of failure, for 'perfectionists' who set unreasonably high standards which are beyond their capabilities. Levinson (48) regarded intense self-criticism and internal dissatisfaction as part of the make-up of dynamic, motivated business executives, making them exceptionally vulnerable to feelings of failure.

3.7.6 Writing about the problem of burn-out in the helping professions, notably social work, Edelwich and Brodsky referred to over-identification with clients as a dangerous tendency, because it causes the helper's emotional wellbeing

to be too dependent on clients living up to what may be unrealistic expectations.

It is difficult, but necessary, to decide how much is too much.....
If a person is to succeed - or just survive - in the human services field, over-identification must give way to a degree of detachment. (49)

A particular form that over-identification may take in a principal, is for the principal to associate himself so closely with the school ('my' school) that any setbacks or defects are taken so personally that they hurt very deeply. Such a principal is vulnerable to stress because a very wide range of demands or situations are likely to be perceived as personally threatening.

3.7.7 Tolerance of uncertainty and ambiguity, which was found by Bray et al. (50) to be the fifth most effective trait predictor of managerial advancement, is an important personal characteristic having a direct bearing on threat perception and stress. Related to this is the person's locus of control, the amount of control which he perceives he has over his environment. People with an external locus of control believe that they have little control over events that affect them and are subject to greater uncertainty than people with an internal locus of control.

3.7.8 A person's values play an important part in determining the degree of importance he attaches to meeting or failing to meet a demand which has an important bearing on stress. In addition, situations or demands which conflict seriously with his values would cause stress.

4. CONCLUSION

The first step in this (stress) management is to become aware of the things that cause stress.....
Identified stressors allow us to choose how much or how little weight we will grant to each. (51)

This review has ranged very widely in identifying potential sources of stress, and this is in keeping with the multidimensionality of the concept. The causes of stress are highly individual because they are to be found not only in the environment and in the person, but in the interaction between the person and the environment. The key role of the person's perceptions of demand, personal resources, and the degree of importance attached to meeting the demand, further complicates the identification of stressors, because perception is a highly individual process. Cooper and Marshall's classification of managerial stressors provides a useful framework for attempting to analyse and isolate particular sources of stress. It must, however, be remembered that a person is subject to a number of stimuli at any one time, and it is often the cumulative effect of a number of stressors from various sources acting together than produces stress. Identifying the causes of a person's stress may, therefore, be a more complex matter than it first appears to be.

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PRINCIPALS UNDER PRESSURE

A study of the school principal's work and of
the increasing demands being made upon him.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Very few people would dispute the key position of the school principal within the education system. The opinion expressed by the Inspectorate in England in their publication, "Ten Good Schools", that the quality of the principal's leadership is the main single factor influencing the success of a school, is one with which anyone with a good insight into schools would readily agree. It is also common knowledge, certainly among experienced principals, that the scope and complexity of the principal's work have increased greatly in recent years, and that the demands of the position are indeed heavy.

The sum of all the responsibilities adds up to an enormous job for school principals. (1)

The pressures on principals should not be under-estimated, either by the principals themselves, or by their staffs and the education authorities. Being aware of the special demands of the position is a necessary first step towards coping successfully with those demands. In this paper an attempt is made to present certain characteristics of the principal's work that give greater insight into the demands made upon him. The last section of the paper examines various recent trends that have added to the complexity and pressures of the principal's work. Throughout the paper the writer has in mind the principalship of large urban high schools of the Cape Education Department.

2. TEN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL'S WORK

It must be acknowledged that principals, like any other leaders, vary in such matters as their perceptions of the scope of their work, their priorities, and the amount of time they are prepared to devote to their work as opposed to their leisure time and family lives. Some aim at efficiency and stability, a smooth-running school, while others are restlessly innovative.

Leadership styles also vary considerably according to the personality, philosophy, training and experience of the individual principals.

Circumstances at a particular time, such as an extensive building programme, the integration of an unusually large number of new teachers into the staff, or a major innovation or reorganization, may distort the principal's work temporarily in a particular direction. But, even allowing for these individual differences, it is possible to identify a number of characteristics common to the work of all principals.

2.1 The principal's work is exceptionally varied.

Viewed as an educationist, a school principal is a specialist, but when regarded as the leader and manager of an organization he is a generalist performing a variety of functions. It was with this in mind that Knezevich (2) referred to the school principalship as a constellation of positions. Schools are staffed for their primary function of teaching and other aspects of their educational work, such as extra-mural activities, yet there are numerous other functions that have to be attended to. Work that would be performed by a personnel manager, a public relations officer, a company secretary, an accountant, or a social worker in other organizations, has to be handled by the principal in the case of a school. Certain duties of this type may be delegated to teachers, but this does not alter the fact that the principal is involved in an exceptionally wide variety of work tasks.

Richard Gorton (3) drew up a classification of the principal's task areas which demonstrated the degree of variety present in his work. Although this classification referred to the work of principals in the United States, it corresponds closely with the concerns of a typical high school principal in the Cape Province. Gorton identified seven main task areas as follows:

- 2.1.1 Staff, e.g. selection, allocation of duties, briefing, observing, evaluating, helping, co-ordinating work, fostering team-work, stimulating development.
- 2.1.2 Pupils, e.g. enrolment, orientation, attendance, safety, guidance, discipline, extra-curricular programme, assessment, reporting on progress.
- 2.1.3 School-community interaction, e.g. arrangements for parental and community involvement, conferring with parents, handling complaints, P.T.A., co-operation with community organizations.
- 2.1.4 Instruction and curriculum development, e.g. planning curriculum, allocating resources of personnel/time/space/materials, providing for supervision of teaching, providing for in-service staff development.
- 2.1.5 School business management, e.g. budget, accounting, controlling expenditure, accounting for school property, smooth running of office.
- 2.1.6 School plant, e.g. planning for growth and improvement of school facilities, implementing plans for improvements, maintenance of facilities.
- 2.1.7 General tasks, e.g. public relations work, handling delicate interpersonal problems, evaluating the school's programme, attending school and other related functions, correspondence, reports, record-keeping, attending meetings and conferences.

Bearing in mind also that many principals try to continue with a limited amount of teaching, which requires preparation and keeping up to date with developments in the teaching of the subjects concerned, it will be

appreciated that a principal's work is exceptionally varied.

Another factor which contributes to the wide scope of the principal's activities and responsibilities is his involvement with the full range of school subjects, most of which were of little concern to him before his elevation to the principalship. This is particularly true of the high school principal. Some of the decisions he needs to take concerning the curriculum require a deep insight into school subjects outside of his own area of specialization. This type of problem is not unique to school principals and is experienced by leaders and managers in other fields, but it is suggested that the breadth of the principal's involvement goes far beyond that of most other organizational leaders. The need for an unusually wide range of knowledge poses many problems for a newly-appointed or inexperienced principal, unless he has been fortunate enough during his deputy-headship to have worked under a principal whose practice was to involve him in the whole spectrum of issues and problems. Such in-service training or coaching is of great value in the preparation of future principals, although clearly further training after assuming duties is also essential in order to cope successfully with the greatly increased variety of work.

2.2 The principal fulfils many roles.

Given the wide range of duties of a principal, it is understandable that he finds himself fulfilling a number of different roles. Some of these roles are implicit in the brief summary of the principal's functions contained in the Cape Education Department's Handbook for Principals.

Besides his primary duty as an educator, the principal is in the first place a professional leader He is responsible for determining policy, planning, organization, effective management, and supervision and control of all facets of school life (4)

The prime roles indicated in this short job description are those of educationist, professional leader, manager, supervisor, and politician (policy maker).

Richard Gorton (5) summarised the major roles of a school principal as follows.

- * Manager, the person who, by careful planning and organization ensures that the school is administered smoothly and efficiently.
- * Leader, particularly with regard to the school's educational programme, ensuring that objectives are set, and progress and development achieved.
- * Disciplinarian, maintaining order and dealing with misbehaviour, and fostering a positive attitude to self-discipline.
- * Facilitator of human relations, developing co-operative and harmonious relationships among the staff and in the school as a whole.
- * Change agent, assessing needs, developing and implementing solutions, orienting staff, and evaluating results.
- * Conflict mediator, a growing role in view of the conflicts associated with changed attitudes towards authority and less agreement among people over values.

Among the other important roles played by a principal are those of co-ordinator (harmonising the activities of the different groups and individuals), resource allocator (allocating time, space and money, among other resources, according to the priorities established for the school), monitor (seeking and receiving information about the actual functioning of the school for the purpose of future policy-making), censor, (the lonely, usually controversial, high-risk role of preventing or stopping what he is convinced are harmful or dysfunctional situations, according to his value system), disturbance handler (solving organizational problems, 'putting

out fires"), figurehead (the highly influential role of being, saying and doing the kind of things that inspire the confidence and pride of pupils, parents and teachers in the school; symbolising what the school stands for).

A particularly important role of any principal is that of maintaining a balance between elements within a school which sometimes come into conflict. This is not an easy role because the choices are often not at all clear-cut, being between two or more good things, rather than between good and bad. Examples of this are the balancing of innovation with stability; an examination-success orientation with broader personal development goals; the academic programme with extended extra-mural activities; sport with cultural activities; initiative (with the accompanying risk of mistakes) with efficiency. A principal's broader perspective of the school, and his tendency to think longer-term than the average teacher or school committee member, help him to exercise this balancing role.

Enough reference has been made to the principal's roles to show what a wide range of knowledge, insight and skills is needed to occupy these roles successfully. There are times when a principal finds himself in a role overload situation where he is called upon to perform a variety of roles simultaneously or in bewilderingly rapid succession.

With so many roles to fulfil, the principal is especially exposed to the pressures of role conflict. J. Lipham and J. Hoeh (6) identified four main types of role conflict.

"Wearing many hats." Some of the roles held simultaneously by the principal may conflict. Often the pressures of the administrative role interfere with the teaching role. Out-of-school roles, such as family man, church member, and Rotarian, may on occasion conflict with work roles.

There is always the problem of the conflicting claims on the principal's time of job and family.

"Man-in-the-middle." The principal holds an intermediate position between various reference groups, such as the Department of Education and the teaching staff, the teachers and the pupils, the parents and the teachers, the members of one subject department and another, the sports coaches and the producers of the annual play, etc. Being the "man-in-the-middle" holds much potential for conflict. An example of this is the uncomfortable position in which the principal finds himself when mediating between the parent, with a justifiable complaint, and the teacher concerned, who needs to be upheld in the eyes of his pupils.

"Caught in group crossfire." This involves different expectations held by teachers for the role of the principal, resulting in conflict. Some expect strong uniform disciplinary action from the top, while others expect discretion to be allowed to individual teachers. Some expect the maintenance of the smooth-running status quo, while others feel that the principal should be an innovator.

"The man versus the job." This type of role conflict arises from discrepancies between the demands of the job and the personality characteristics and needs of the principal. As a person, he may thoroughly dislike public speaking and disciplining others, for instance, whereas as a principal he is inevitably called upon regularly to do both of these things.

2.3 The principal uses many skills.



Apart from the wide range of tasks performed and roles occupied, another heavy demand placed upon a school principal is the acquisition and use of a formidable repertoire of skills required for the tasks and roles.

According to Katz's analysis (7) these skills fall into three main categories: technical, human, and conceptual.

- ✓ Technical skills are behavioural competences, specific techniques, knowledge of procedures, and the possession of information necessary for the work. Examples of some of the technical skills needed by principals are: public speaking, interviewing, letter writing, timetabling, conducting meetings, budgeting, analysing a colleague's teaching skills, planning, decision making, and co-ordinating.
- ✓ Human skills used by principals include counselling, motivating, negotiating, resolving conflict, team-building, encouraging, inspiring confidence and developing a climate that encourages initiative.
- ✓ Conceptual skills include comprehensive understanding, the ability to integrate all the elements involved in a situation, and the ability to perceive possibilities and to relate events to principles. These are manifested in such activities as setting goals, weighing alternative choices against priorities, evaluating effectiveness, assessing the needs of the community and the schools, and balanced judgement.

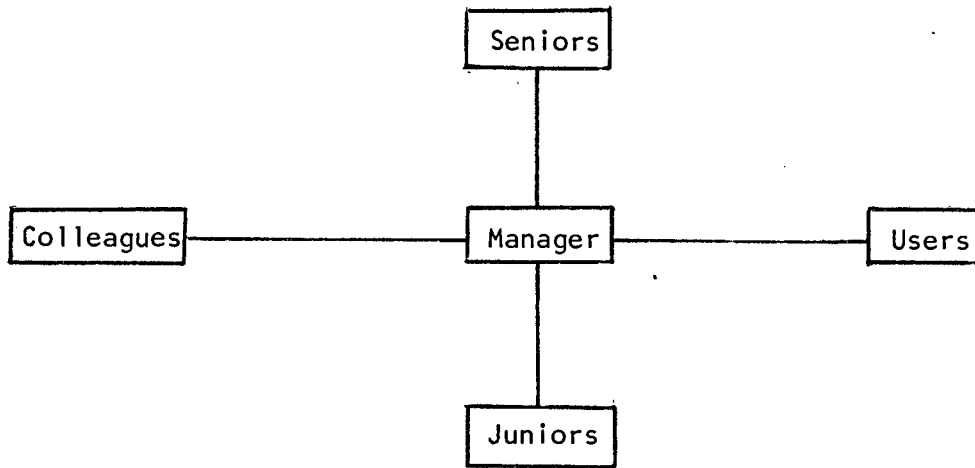
The array of skills required of the effective principal is indeed formidable.
The situation is complicated by the fact that a number of these skills are not exercised by teachers and that some of them, particularly in the conceptual and human categories, are not easily acquired. This points to the need for staff development policies within schools that provide scope for the acquisition of these skills by senior teachers, some of whom are likely to be promoted to principalships. Much of this professional growth should result from on-the-job coaching and experiential learning, but seminars, short courses, informal reading programmes, and formal studies can all make

valuable contributions towards preventing a demoralizing skills-deficit when a teacher commences his first principalship. Naturally, the acquisition and refining of skills should continue throughout a principal's career to meet his particular needs, for example, time management and stress management.

2.4 The principal's work is human-intensive. ~~X~~

The dominant mode of the principal's work is through personal contacts. He spends much of his time interacting with a wide variety of people in carrying out the whole range of tasks and occupying the multiplicity of roles mentioned earlier. In accordance with their differing personalities, priorities and leadership styles, principals vary in the extent to which they involve themselves with pupils, parents and teachers, respectively. Some seek to maximise contact with the teachers by limiting their involvement with pupils, while others feel strongly that they should keep in touch with the pupils at all costs. Some are prepared to have an open-door policy, with the risks of time-wasting and interaction overload. Others prefer a more formal system of scheduled interviews. The wise principal, of course, tries to maintain a balanced approach by ensuring that he remains in touch with all sections of the school community, for he cannot afford to drift away from any of them. It is this fact that makes his work human-intensive and very demanding as a consequence.

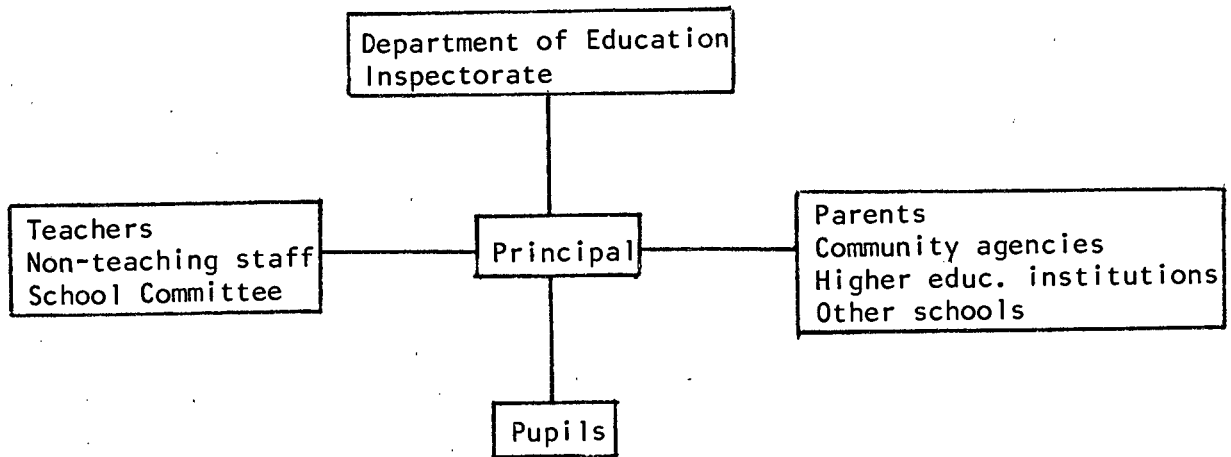
John Morris (8) of the Manchester Business School in England provided a simple human relationships model of any managerial situation, and this can also be applied to the school principalship.



MORRIS'S CROSS OF RELATIONSHIPS MODEL ✓

Morris viewed the work of a manager from the point of view of the relationships and influences that he has to deal with. These come in from four directions: from his seniors, his juniors, his working colleagues, and a variety of people outside the organization. Morris called this the "cross of relationships." It has a very different appearance from the usual organization chart, which takes the form of a pyramid divided into status levels. The advantage of the "cross of relationships" is that it can be applied to any management position, because every manager, whether senior or junior, sees himself as being at the centre of a cross. Influences, expectations, and activities reach the manager along all four arms, and he in turn affects others along the four arms by his expectations and actions. The manager is the "man-in-the-middle" and day by day he must find ways of balancing the respective claims of the four complex and changing sets of relationships.

This simple model fits the situation in which the principal finds himself and may be adapted as follows.



A RELATIONSHIPS OR INTERACTIONAL MODEL OF THE SCHOOL
PRINCIPALSHIP

In this model there is a constant flow of expectation, influence and activity in both directions along each arm representing the main working relationships. Being in the pivotal position, the principal finds himself interacting frequently with many reference groups. The trend towards participative management and leadership styles involving more consultation, the proliferation of people with specialist functions (e.g. teacher-psychologist, teacher-librarian, co-ordinator of programmes for the gifted), and the rapid increase in external links, have increased the principal's working relationships and the demanding human-intensive character of his work.

A further implication of his man-in-the-middle position in the cross of working relationships is that he is often faced with the exacting and sometimes stressful task of mediating between parents and teachers, teachers and pupils, one teacher and another, and the Department of Education and the teachers.

Frequent human interaction places a heavy premium on communication skills, particularly oral communication which predominates in a principal's work. The spoken word is, in fact, his main tool, and accurate and effective speech, accompanied by appropriate body language, is an important requirement. Written communication is also important; ambiguous statements in newsletters to parents or in correspondence may cause misunderstanding and problems.

Successful interaction with other people also calls for empathy, sensitivity, tact, and persuasiveness. Other requirements are a willingness to listen properly to others, flexibility and a willingness to abandon preconceived ideas in the face of convincing arguments, and sufficient self-confidence to interact with others on the basis of seeking what is right, and not who is right.

2.5 The principal's work is values-intensive.

Unlike industry and commerce, schools are not involved in producing and selling material objects, but with the intensely human activity of providing for the personal development of young people. While it is not suggested that the activities of industry and commerce are value-free, it is clear that a human service organization, like a school, is more intensely concerned with moral values. Consequently, many of the decisions made in schools need to be based on carefully considered values rather than on expediency. The basis on which decisions are made is, "What is right?" What is for the good of the child? What is best for the school?" rather than "What will work? What will be easiest? What do they want? What will make us more popular?"

Arriving at broad agreement on basic values that affect many aspects of school life is obviously essential, but is not easy because teachers,

with their extended academic training, are probably more accustomed to formulating their own personal philosophies than most other occupational groups. Examples of the issues that arise are: the aims of school education; the extent to which authority should be exercised and freedom curtailed; the extent of a teacher's responsibilities to and for his pupils; the notion of a balanced curriculum; the place of competition in the school; the meaning and importance of good school spirit; loyalty to the school as opposed to following one's own interests; conformity as opposed to individuality; the relative importance, in taking disciplinary action, of the interests of the individual and those of the group (the school); the role of the parents in the affairs of a school; the relative importance of sport and cultural activities in the school; the importance of success in sport; the extent to which teachers have a right to be consulted about matters that affect them; the importance of neat appearance (of teachers as well as pupils); the importance of developing the skills of learning relative to memorising a substantial body of useful knowledge.

These examples should be sufficient to demonstrate that those who work in schools are involved in value judgements at almost every turn. As professional leader and chief executive, the principal finds himself having to think through his own values more frequently than anyone else on the staff. There are also occasions when lack of consensus concerning certain values may undermine the effectiveness and unity of a staff. It cannot be taken for granted, by any means, that all teachers subscribe to the same set of basic values as the principal. The writer recalls an occasion when, as principal, he called upon all teachers to support a drive to eliminate the carving of graffiti on the pupils' desks, only to find a reluctance on the part of one teacher on the grounds that graffiti developed a sense of tradition.

It is suggested that the values-intensive nature of the principal's decision making and work contributes greatly to the complexity and demands of the position. The fact that he knows that he is dealing with people's most precious possession, their children for whom they want the best, adds to this particular pressure.

2.6 Much of the principal's work is fragmented and immediate.

A principal's work, because it is so varied and people-oriented, contains many brief encounters concerning the whole spectrum of the school's activities. Interruptions are caused by immediate, non-scheduled events, such as telephone calls, and important events are interspersed with routine and even trivial ones, calling for rapid shifts in moods. P. Webb and G. Lyons (9), who conducted empirical research into the managerial behaviour of senior staff in schools in England, found that the duration of individual activities fell mostly within the range of 5 - 25 minutes. The frequency and fragmented nature of the principal's interactions with others, apart from causing work pressure, creates the danger of a pre-occupation with relatively superficial activities. If he spends much of his time reacting to situations and people, the principal may find himself doing too little creative planning and reflective thinking. Many principals find that the only solution to this problem is to engage in this type of activity after everyone else has gone home!

2.7 The principal bears responsibility for all facets of school life.

According to the Cape Education Department's Handbook for Principals (10), the principal "is responsible for ... the supervision and control of all facets of school life." This is indeed a heavy responsibility, and one that is deeply felt by principals, because it includes the physical safety of the pupils and their moral well-being, as well as their educational progress. Bearing responsibility for people weighs far more heavily

than responsibility for things, such as money and equipment. The consequences of an error of judgement in permitting an inexperienced and rather immature teacher to lead an outdoor club mountain climbing expedition, or of allowing a film that is highly controversial on moral grounds to be shown to the whole school, are likely to be far more serious than an error of judgement that leads to damage to an item of equipment. The human element makes all the difference.

What adds to the burden of responsibility is the particularly broad span of control of the principal of a large school. To supervise the work of forty-five, or more, teachers is a demanding responsibility, even allowing for the authority and supervisory functions delegated to other members of staff.

2.8 The principal's mistakes and controversial decisions are subject to high visibility.

The public expects especially high standards of school principals, as is also the case with doctors and ministers of religion. Teachers and pupils, too, hold high expectations of their principals. When a principal makes a significant mistake or fails to deal effectively with a serious disciplinary situation, for example, he knows that news of his failure will spread rapidly throughout the school, thus undermining his credibility and authority. If this type of negative information spreads too often, the principal will steadily forfeit the respect, trust and confidence of pupils, teachers and parents, and he will be unable to exercise effective leadership.

A principal has to accept his high visibility as one of the challenges of his position, and do all in his power to avoid costly mistakes which would tarnish his reputation. Controversial decisions and actions that could easily be misunderstood need to be explained to the individuals or groups

concerned, as far as possible, in order to minimise the difficulties that tend to arise. Press publicity can cause problems and needs to be handled with care.

2.9 There is ambiguity over the outcomes of the principal's work.

It is impossible to obtain accurate objective measurements of the successfulness of the school in the way that other organizations can measure their effectiveness in terms of sales, profits, production output, and production costs. Many of the school's achievements are not measurable in such precise terms. Even a seemingly objective measure of success, such as the Senior Certificate examination results, needs to be interpreted with caution. In addition some of the most important effects of school education are long-term and consequently not known to the schools.

This ambiguity affects teachers as well as principals, but in the case of principals there is the additional factor that in many respects they exert their influence through others. This adds to the uncertainty experienced by principals as to how important and efficacious their contributions are towards the success of the school.

2.10 The principal works in relative isolation.

The principal works in relative isolation from principals in other schools and the Department of Education. He has an "inside focus"; overwhelmingly he interacts with subordinates (teachers and pupils) within his own school. There is a real danger of receiving virtually no feedback from others concerning his performance and effectiveness, and his own development needs. At times, when he needs the supportiveness and encouragement of other principals, he may remain isolated. Fortunately, there has been a tendency for this isolation to be broken down as principals interact more with other principals and the inspectorate.

The activities of the teachers' associations, and the in-service seminars organized by the Department of Education and the teachers' entres, have played an important part in this regard.

3. RECENT TRENDS CAUSING INCREASED PRESSURE ON PRINCIPALS

- 3.1 There has been a far greater emphasis on the need for the principal to be a leader, particularly an instructional leader, than in the past. It has been realised anew that high quality performance in the schools cannot be brought about by the actions of Head Office planners and administrators alone, but requires the good leadership of the principal at the individual school level.

Leadership involves more than the efficient administration of an organization.

Although it is critically important for organizations to be kept in motion, merely to do so is not to be equated with the exercise of leadership. The process of leading involves attempting to influence the behaviour of others to do things differently. (11)

Leadership involves a proactive approach rather than a reactive one; leaders shape ideas rather than respond to them. It has to do with determining future directions and obtaining the commitment of others to them. This is obviously more difficult than keeping a school running smoothly through sound administration, and for this reason the Department of Education (through its in-service courses), the faculties of education of several of the universities in the Cape, and the South African Teachers' Association (through its PROGRO programme), have emphasized leadership development.

The precise nature of the principal's instructional leadership role varies according to the circumstances and the principal's resources. The fact

that he is not a specialist in all subject areas obviously imposes certain limitations. W.L. Nell (12) argued that the principal's instructional leadership should be exercised largely through his subject heads, and should also include providing the necessary resources and motivation. J. Cawood (13) went further than this and stated that ideally a principal should devote 50% of his time to the supervision of teaching, including regular class visits and follow-up discussions.

Surveys and experience have consistently shown that principals of large schools struggle to do justice to their instructional leadership role. For instance, J. Cawood's survey of 151 principals of high schools in the Cape Province, Orange Free State and South-West Africa in 1976 revealed that as little as 14% of the principal's time was being devoted to instructional leadership, whereas 42% was being spent on administrative and routine clerical work. (14) Blumberg and Greenfield, commenting on the same problem in the United States, suggested that the main cause was that

most principals find themselves besieged on a daily basis with the nitty gritty administrative tasks involved in keeping the ship on an even keel.... (15)

- 3.2 Another noteworthy development has been the greater awareness of principals of the need for managerial competence in the administration of the school. This has arisen because the school has become a more complex organization which demands greater managerial expertise of its principal. Staffs are larger, authority is delegated more widely, subject teachers form departments of the school, numerous activities need co-ordinating, careful planning and organizing are essential, consultation is a necessary part of the decision-making process, there is more potential in a more complex organization for interpersonal or intergroup conflicts which need resolution, and communication is an essential and basic managerial function. The material and financial resources of the schools have increased greatly and

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require efficient management.

Teachers and parents expect schools to be well managed. Disorganization and amateurish administration are not readily tolerated, with the result that there is pressure on principals to learn and apply management techniques.

3.3 Much emphasis in recent years has been placed on the professional status of teachers. On the strength of their training and their membership of a profession with its own code of ethics, teachers expect greater autonomy and the right to use their own discretion and judgement in their work. Yet they work within a bureaucratic system which imposes controls and rules through superiors in the hierarchy. E. Litwak (16) suggested that the conflicts between these two orientations could best be solved by distinguishing clearly between administrative duties (subject to bureaucratic control) and professional tasks (allowing professional autonomy). This may work well in highly developed and well established professions such as medicine and law, but in teaching it has not been possible to separate administrative and professional functions in such a clear-cut way.

M.G. Hughes (17) viewed the principal as a professional-as-administrator with two major roles, namely that of chief executive of a sub-system of the larger bureaucratic system, and that of leading professional of a group of professional teachers. It is his responsibility to achieve an accommodation between the organization's emphasis on superordinate control and the professional's desire for accountability only to fellow professionals. Inevitably there are times of role strain for the principal when certain teachers claim professional autonomy in situations where bureaucratic control has to be imposed.

As part of their evolving professional status, teachers expect to be consulted, not only on the level of the profession as a whole, but also

within their individual schools. They also expect greater participation in the leadership of the school. Today's principal needs to be skilled in the techniques of participative management, and must also be sensitive to the kind of situations that call for consultation and those that do not.

A further consequence of the professionalization of teaching is the responsibility that this places on teachers themselves to develop their own expertise and keep up to date, as do doctors and other professionals, without this being imposed by the employer. A professional derives his authority from his acknowledged expertise, in contrast to authority in a bureaucracy which is based on the office or position held in the organization. It has, therefore, been pleasing to note the professional growth activities of a teachers' professional body such as the South African Teachers' Association. Within each school the principal, as leading professional, has an important staff development function, and many principals are currently trying to come to grips with this particular role.

- 3.4 Recent years have witnessed a number of innovations in the high schools of the Cape Education Department. These have included differentiated education, evaluation of teachers for promotability and achievement awards, teacher-psychologists, Youth Preparedness, media centres and media-oriented learning, the Gifted Child Project, Family Guidance, and the internal Senior Certificate examination project. Each of these innovations has been of the "top-down" type, being planned outside the schools and disseminated through in-service meetings and printed materials. The principal has in each case been given responsibility for implementing the innovation. This has been a major challenge because it has involved mastering the ideas behind the innovation so as to be able to communicate them accurately and effectively to the teachers concerned. Other problems have been motivating teachers who may be unenthusiastic because they do not share the vision of the

planners and are very conscious of the ever-increasing demands of their work, and mobilising the necessary resources of time, space, manpower and materials.

Apart from the change agent role described above, more principals are aware that the rapidly changing times demand that they be innovators in their own schools. This is not easy because as Crowson and Porter-Gehrie showed, the overwhelming pressure in the daily work of a principal is towards managing for stability and maintenance. (18)

- 3.5 Another mounting demand upon the schools and their principals is the expansion of the community's expectations of the schools. This may be interpreted partly as an expression of faith in the effectiveness of the school's work and influence, or as a tendency for the community to shift too many responsibilities on to the schools.

Numerous requests for the school to participate in projects are made by a wide variety of enthusiasts in the community, each one quite naturally feeling that his particular area of concern should enjoy the highest priority. These projects cover the whole range of social welfare activities as well as an increasing number emanating from the business community. At times the principal may gain the impression that the community is relying largely on the school to deal with most of society's ailments, such as the rising divorce rate, vandalism, delinquency, road accidents, and the unwise use of money. That the school has an important contribution to make is undeniable, but a problem arises when schools are expected to add too many special projects to their already exceptionally demanding educational programmes. In these circumstances, the principal sometimes has the unpleasant task of declining well intentioned requests for co-operation.

- 3.6 Social problems have proliferated as a result of rapidly changing values and the weakening of family life generally. This affects schools because

many of the problems that appear in schools are an expression of problems that lie beyond it, for example marital problems and parental alcohol abuse problems.

Keith Blackburn (19) distinguished between pupils with problems and problem pupils. There have always been problem pupils, such as those who are problems to the school because of their disruptive behaviour, and schools have always accepted responsibility for doing something about these problem pupils. Pupils with problems do not jeopardize the smooth running of the school in terms of unacceptable behaviour, and consequently they may be overlooked. Frequently social and personal problems, as well as academic underachievement, arise as a result of unresolved home problems.

Many principals have responded to the needs of pupils with problems, personally and through a pastoral care system in which the teacher-psychologist and heads of standards are key members, but they have found this aspect of their work to be both demanding and exceedingly time-consuming. The number of pupils in need of help in a typical large urban high school is often so great that the principal may feel swamped and agonise over where he should draw the line as far as the school's involvement is concerned. The principal tends to find this aspect of his work emotionally draining, for so often satisfactory solutions lie beyond his grasp. D. Hargreaves, writing about the situation in England, expressed these pressures as follows:

There has been a broadening of educational objectives in which teachers stand in for parents, policemen, priests and social workers Other professionals get tired, teachers become exhausted. (20)

3.7 In keeping with the trend in society, authority is questioned and challenged more frequently in schools. Parental authority has weakened in an increasing number of homes, with the result that it has become more difficult to maintain sound discipline at school. Under pressure and provocation,

teachers sometimes commit indiscretions which may cause acute problems for the principals concerned. Principals also grapple with the delicate problem of how far the school's jurisdiction extends off the school premises. Many within the school and in the community at large expect decisive disciplinary action from the principal in situations in which he has no legal authority, but must rely on the co-operation of the parents of the offending pupils. When this co-operation is not forthcoming, extremely difficult and stress-inducing circumstances arise for the principal.

3.8 Principals today realise that their schools are subjected to public scrutiny to a greater extent than before, and that they are held accountable. The publication of the Senior Certificate results, for instance, tends to be an anxious time for the principals of many schools! Parents and members of the public are more prone to voice their disapproval if they are dissatisfied, or at least to seek clarification. Unfortunate and embarrassing events in schools are more likely to be publicised in the press.

A different type of accountability is involved in the evaluation of teachers, which makes heavy demands on principals, particularly when the evaluation is linked with nomination for achievement awards or promotion. Depending on the relationships that exist within the staff, a principal may encounter pressures affecting his objectivity, or find himself in the midst of cross-currents and resentments among his staff.

3.9 Problems of staffing the school occupy much of the principal's time and attention, and produce strain. Finding teachers of "scarce subjects", such as mathematics and the sciences, causes anxiety. The absence of teachers on military service or at in-service courses, while being understandable and necessary, disrupts the school and poses problems. The high staff turnover, which is now common, militates against building a

team and necessitates measures designed to maintain continuity.

This is an age-old problem. As early as 66 A.D. Gaius Petronius, the Roman author, complained,

We trained hard but it seemed every time we were beginning to form up into teams we were re-organized. (21)

3.10 The political environment in which schools function is sensitive.

Divisions exist and these are reflected in the parent body and the pupils. In these circumstances there is scope for misunderstanding and friction over a variety of matters as diverse as racially-mixed sporting events, Youth Preparedness, the teaching of certain aspects of History, the choice of dramatic productions or debating topics or magazine items, the choice of prize-giving speakers and the attitudes of certain teachers. It is the principal who bears the brunt of complaints and is expected to deal suitably with the problem.

Another dimension to the pressure on the principal arising from political circumstances is the heavy responsibility for doing everything possible to ensure the safety of the pupils and security of the school.

4. COPING WITH THE PRESSURES OF THE PRINCIPALSHIP

4.1 Anyone in a leadership position must expect to have to contend with pressure and strain, and the principal is no exception. Indeed, many of the pressures described in this paper constitute the challenges in the work, and meeting these special demands results in job satisfaction, personal development, and a sense of fulfilment. When, however, a principal experiences what he perceives to be excessive demands upon himself, the pressure may have negative, rather than positive, effects on his performance. This is especially the case when he is subjected to prolonged, frequent, or excessive pressures, which he finds particularly difficult to cope with.

4.2 One of the implications of the specially demanding nature of the school principalship is the importance of an effective system of selecting suitable teachers as principals. Wise selection must be based on a thorough understanding of the nature of the principal's work and the pressures involved. The Cape Education Department's selection system, whereby the promotability evaluation of teachers is carried out periodically by the principals and inspectors, goes a long way towards meeting this need, providing both sets of evaluators constantly bear in mind the criteria against which they are evaluating the teacher concerned.

It is not within the scope of this paper to explore in any detail the coping strategies a principal may employ, but three broad categories are suggested.

4.3 Training and personal development give principals more skills and greater insight with which to tackle their work successfully. This increases principals' confidence and ability to cope with pressure. Ronald Rebore (22) identified six major areas as appropriate for development programmes for principals. These were 1) instructional skills, including the evaluation, supervision and improvement of teaching; 2) management skills; 3) human relations abilities; 4) political and cultural awareness; 5) leadership skills; and 6) self-understanding. Development in these areas should result in increased competence in handling the work, as well as greater self-assurance and resilience in contending with the emotional and moral demands of the principalship.

4.4 Some principals fail to utilize all the resources at their disposal, and this contributes towards pressure and frustration. This applies particularly to the human resources of the staff. Modern approaches to leadership emphasize team-work and the delegation of responsibilities, with commensurate

authority. When principals share their leadership with others, they not only share the burden of the work, but also harness the particular talents and energies of the members of their leadership team. This strengthens the leadership of the school and frees the principal from feeling that the school is totally dependent upon him for its leadership.

Other resources, such as the computerization of certain aspects of administration, may also be used fruitfully to reduce some of the pressure of work.

4.5 Social support is the third form of coping strategy that can help sustain a principal through difficult times. According to Leonard Moss (23), people are said to have social support if they have a relationship with one or more persons that is characterized by relatively frequent interactions, by strong positive feelings, and by an ability and a willingness to give and take emotional and practical assistance in times of need. Research has shown clearly that in the work setting, supportive social relationships reduce various occupational stresses. (24) Social support augments the individual's strengths and facilitates his adaptive coping behaviour.

Applied to the principalship, this underlines the importance to the principal of supportive relationships with his senior staff, particularly his deputy, and also with the school committee and the Inspector of Education. The principal under pressure may also draw support and encouragement from fellow-principals, with whom, under threat-free conditions, he may feel able to share his problems. The supporting role of the principal's spouse should also not be underestimated.

5. CONCLUSION

Any consideration of the administration of large urban high schools, and in particular of the role of the principals of these schools, must take into account the exceptionally demanding nature of the present-day principalship. The pressure on school principals is increasing, and harmful work stress must be recognised as a potential hazard confronting principals. A careful analysis of the sources of pressure and strain is a prerequisite for devising effective ways of coping with the pressure.

Note. For the sake of brevity and convenience, reference has been made to male principals throughout the paper.

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COPING WITH STRESS

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1. INTRODUCTION

Stress is an inevitable part of life. The success with which people cope with stress determines whether it is a stimulus to new levels of achievement, creativity and personal development, or whether it is the cause of anxiety, depression, self-destructive behaviour, and illness. People are characterised not so much by whether they experience stress as by how they cope with it.

A most significant characteristic of stress is the highly individual nature of the phenomenon. People vary greatly in what they perceive to be stressors, as well as in the nature of their stress reactions. This applies also to the coping processes that people employ and the strategies they find useful in managing, controlling, alleviating and preventing stress.

People use a wide variety of coping processes, depending on their personal characteristics, the nature of the environmental demands and contingencies, and how these are appraised. (1)

In this paper, an attempt is made to analyse the normal stress coping responses, to describe an approach to stress management based on a transactional model, to present the findings of several recent research surveys, and to summarise the strategies commonly advocated for stress management.

2. HOW PEOPLE RESPOND TO STRESS : THE CONCEPT OF COPING

2.1 When people are placed in demanding situations which they perceive to be stressful, they are motivated to do something about it by employing problem-solving behaviour to try to remove the source of the stress or alleviate the discomfort experienced. This psychological response to stress is called coping. Successful coping either eliminates the stress experienced by the person or, if this is not possible, reduces the discomfort and makes tolerance of the demanding situation easier. Unsuccessful coping leads to the continuation of the stress symptoms, and possibly to their intensification as a result of the anxiety produced by the failure to cope satisfactorily. Sometimes, the attempted coping response takes the form of dysfunctional types of behaviour such as alcohol or drug abuse, and further problems are created.

Coping takes two forms. A person may use direct action to deal with the actual problem, the source of the stress. Alternatively, particularly if little can be done about the source of the stress, he may use indirect action (palliation) to deal with the experience of stress by reducing emotional distress. These two forms of coping are examined in more detail.

2.2 DIRECT ACTION FORMS OF COPING

Direct action involves all types of behaviour designed to deal with the stressor. Drawing on the work of Lazarus, Cox (2) referred to four different forms that direct action

coping may take.

2.2.1 Fighting the stressor

This involves identifying the source of stress, confronting it and taking steps to deal with it. An appropriate coping response to a threatening, anxiety-inducing situation at work could well be to work harder to ensure success, to seek advice from others, or to call in the assistance of fellow workers to master the threatening situation successfully. Often a direct confrontation is the most appropriate and effective way of coping with a stressor.

In adversary situations, such as conflict between individuals or groups, the source of stress may be perceived as a particular person, a group of people, or an organization. In such circumstances, a display of aggression and anger towards the source of stress is a common coping response, and in the short term this may have the effect of reducing the stress. Circumstances may prevent the person from showing aggression towards the source of stress, and displaced aggression may be expressed towards an accessible innocent person. In this way a man may vent his hostility on his wife when the real source of his stress is his supervisor at work. Unless he perceives his wife to be part of his problem, such displaced aggression may give rise to feelings of guilt and add to his experience of stress.

2.2.2 Learning and preparing against future threats

This goes beyond responding to present sources of stress and is preventive rather than adaptive as a form of coping. As a person strengthens his resources for meeting future demands, he reduces the actual danger of not being able to meet those demands as well as the perceived threat to himself. A good example of this form of direct coping action is the thorough preparation put in by a student before an examination.

Learning, as a process of acquiring the ability to control the outcomes in anxiety-producing situations, is therefore clearly an effective and constructive way of coping with stress that leaves the person better able to cope with situations that confront him. (3)

2.2.3 Fleeing from the stressor

Instead of confronting or fighting the stressor, people sometimes respond to stressful situations by fleeing from or avoiding them. This may involve physical withdrawal, for example the soldier who runs from the battlefield or the person who resigns from a job which he finds too taxing to be able to tolerate any further. This type of response may also entail procrastination in tackling unpleasant aspects of the work, excessive sick leave and staff turnover, unfinished projects, and over-delegation of work.

Although these avoidance or escape tactics may be functional in certain circumstances when a person simply

cannot handle the situation or when temporary relief is essential, they are generally inappropriate because they do not solve the problem or strengthen the person's resistance in the future.

2.2.4 Ignoring the demand

This may be a long-term response to chronic stress. Complete inaction in the face of demands made upon a person may represent a learned helplessness or hopelessness in the face of circumstances over which he is convinced he has no control. In this case apathy may be viewed either as a lack of coping or as a form of coping with a situation which the person is incapable of changing.

The modes of coping described above are used by everyone to varying degrees. Some direct action responses are functional and deal with the problem on a long-term basis, some have short-term value, while others are dysfunctional and leave the problem unsolved. What is needed are coping responses which equip people to cope effectively on a long-term basis.

2.3 INDIRECT ACTION, OR PALLIATION, AS A FORM OF COPING

When a person feels that he cannot immediately change or avoid the situation causing stress, he may use palliative ways of coping which reduce the discomfort and moderate the distress.

Lazarus (4) referred to two modes of palliation, namely, symptom-directed palliation and intrapsychic palliation.

2.3.1 Symptom-directed palliation methods moderate the psychological symptoms of stress, for example anxiety and frustration, and the physiological effects, such as muscular tension, increased blood pressure and fatigue, without actually dealing with the sources of stress. Included among the palliatives are relaxation techniques, exercise and various forms of recreation, all of which are functional ways of reducing the effects of stress. They are particularly valuable when stress is inevitable.

Of more dubious value are the use of tranquillizers, sedatives and other drugs, and alcohol and smoking, as a means of obtaining relief from the symptoms of stress. When used in moderation, these palliatives may have the desired effect, but when used excessively they become dysfunctional and cause such serious problems as alcohol abuse, drug dependence and a break-down in health.

2.3.2 Intrapsychic palliation involves the use of cognitive defence mechanisms by which a person helps himself to cope with stress by distorting reality and deceiving himself about the dangers he faces. The actual threats persist but the ways they are perceived by the individual are modified in order to reduce discomfort.

According to Burgoyne (5) cognitive defence mechanisms operate to some degree in all people. They can result in

inappropriate behaviour which may increase stress. In addition they tend to leave people less able to cope with stress in the long term. They may, however, be functional if they buy time necessary for survival or for the learning of effective forms of coping.

Denial, intellectualisation and rationalization are three examples of defence mechanisms. In denial, anxiety is reduced for a while by the person simply denying that the problem or threat exists. Often denial is accompanied by the discrediting of other people involved in the situation (e.g. the doctor giving the bad news about an illness) or by the distortion of information. Denial is usually regarded as an ineffective coping response because it leaves the cause of the stress unattended to. Under certain circumstances, when a person needs time in which to be able to adjust to a stressor, denial may be a constructive coping response.

By means of intellectualisation an individual gains emotional detachment from a threatening situation by treating it in abstract, intellectual terms. This makes it more remote and less emotionally taxing. For example, a physician may treat his heart attack patient as emotionally neutral and avoid identifying too closely with the patient or his suffering. The danger of intellectualisation is that it may become so ingrained that it interferes with normal emotional attachments and experiences.

According to Dobson, rationalization involves

.....finding a suitable excuse for doing something which will be repudiated by the superego. It also means replacing a motive which would receive social disapprobation by one which is logically and socially acceptable. Rationalization gives the appearance of having acted rationally or sensibly..... (6)

Thus, by rationalization, a person may deceive himself that failure to succeed in a particular demanding situation does not really matter, when in fact it does matter. Such a rationalization would be an effective stress palliative if the person were not conscious of rationalizing. Once he became aware of the fact that he was deceiving himself, the defence mechanism would cease to be a palliative.

3. FACTORS INFLUENCING THE COPING PROCESS

Meichenbaum (7) identified three key factors that play a particularly important role in the coping process.

3.1 A sense of personal control

According to Meichenbaum, a number of studies have shown that people who do not perceive themselves to have the ability to influence a threatening situation significantly, are liable to experience much greater stress reactions than those who feel they have some control over the situation. The level of stress is reduced by the mere belief in one's ability to exercise some control. An example of this, quoted by Meichenbaum, is the person who says, 'If I could stop the roller-coaster, I wouldn't want to get off !'

For some, a sense of personal control in trying circumstances comes from their personal belief system or religious faith which provides a potential means of coping with stress.

People vary in their degree of perceived personal control. Some are pessimistic about their ability to exercise control over situations, believing themselves to have little influence over their circumstances. At the other end of the scale are confident, optimistic people, with an internal locus of control and the belief that they can generally exert control over their environment. In their study of 2300 people in Chicago, Pearlin and Schooler (8) identified 'good copers' and 'poor copers'. The good copers were generally able to meet threatening events successfully, while the poor copers were frequently thrown off balance even by minor demands made on them because of their lack of confidence in their control over the circumstances.

People with low expectations of their ability to cope or exercise control may develop what has been called learned helplessness, the belief that nothing they do will make any difference to the outcome of events or offset the stressful situation. (9)

3.2 The availability of information

Generally, the more information one has about the nature, duration, consequences and warning signs of a stressful event, the more likely one is to be able to find ways of preventing, reducing or coping with stress associated

with that event. Knowing what to expect usually aids the coping process. This was shown by Johnson and Leventhal (10) who compared the stress reactions and coping responses of patients undergoing uncomfortable and difficult medical procedures. Those who were prepared beforehand by being given information about what they would experience were able to cope better than those lacking preparatory information.

Likewise, information about possible crises that may occur, and contingency plans for meeting emergencies, assist a person to cope with stressful events when they occur. For example, astronauts who have trained to meet every conceivable emergency, are able to cope calmly with an emergency and treat it almost as a routine situation.

3.3 Social support ✓

The supportiveness of other people can help a person to cope with stress. Meichenbaum (11) quoted a study in which it was found that women who had a close relationship with a husband or friend were 90% less likely to suffer depression than women lacking such a relationship.

On the whole, we manifest less fear and stress and greater courage in the presence of others than alone. Somehow, the presence of others acts as a buffer to stress responses. (12)

The quality of these social contacts is an important factor influencing the coping process. According to Moss (13), people are said to have social support if they have a relationship with one or more persons that is characterised

by relatively frequent interactions, by strong positive feelings, and by an ability and a willingness to give and take emotional and practical assistance in time of need.

The extent of the social support available to the individual person is also a major factor affecting coping. People with a variety of support systems tend to be best off because they are able to draw from the appropriate support system, strength to cope with different types of stressors. Examples of these support systems are the immediate family, colleagues at work, the church group, long-standing personal friends, relatives, neighbours, the sports club, and the service club.

In times of crisis people who are able to share their feelings with others, gain a truer perspective of the demands made upon them and tend to augment their personal coping resources. In particular, identification with others in a group can play an important part in reducing or coping with stress.

4. A TRANSACTIONAL APPROACH TO MANAGING STRESS

According to Cox (14) the chain of events leading to stress may be broken in various ways. The key elements in the transactional model of stress are the person's cognitive appraisal of the demands made upon him, his resources for coping with those demands, and the consequences of not coping. When these can be altered from negative to positive appraisals, the stress is alleviated. Such

modifications may be brought about by the alteration of the actual demand; the alteration of the actual ability to cope; supporting the existing ability to cope; the alteration of the actual importance of coping; and the alteration of the perceptions of demand, capability, and the importance of coping.

4.1 Alteration of actual demand

If, for example, stress is caused by too much work or too little work, work that is too demanding or work that is too simple, an alteration in the nature of the person's duties and the demands made upon him could alleviate his stress. If the source of his stress is poor working conditions, the improvement of those conditions would tend to reduce the stress.

4.2 Alteration of the actual ability to cope

This may be brought about by training and the development of relevant skills. If, for instance, difficulties, and consequent stress, arise from weaknesses in decision making and resolving interpersonal conflicts, training in these skills would enable the person to cope better and reduce the stress. Innovation and change make new demands and may call for additional knowledge and new skills on the part of the worker, if he is to cope. Likewise, someone moving into a new type of work usually experiences a need for additional skills. A teacher making the transition to his first principalship needs to acquire a greater mastery

of such skills as planning, communicating, delegating, time management, and interviewing, if he is to meet the new demands made upon him. Ability to cope may also be enhanced by the deepening of spiritual resources and by improving one's physical resources through exercise, good nutrition, and relaxation.

4.3 Supporting existing ability to cope

This may involve deriving practical and emotional support from others who are close to one and can be trusted.

In this way, a hard-pressed principal may be strengthened by the encouragement and moral support obtained from his deputy, the school committee, the inspector, and his wife and family. It may help him to maximise and draw upon his existing resources in meeting the demands made upon him.

4.4 Alteration of the actual importance of coping

If the failure to cope satisfactorily with a particular demand becomes unimportant (or much less important), the situation will cease to be a source of stress. Thus, a change of priorities or standards of performance expected, may have this effect. Changing certain school rules which have proved exceptionally difficult to enforce and a source of conflict and friction, would alleviate stress emanating from the situation concerned.

4.5 Alteration of perceptions of demand, capability and importance of coping

- 4.5.1 The experience of stress is related to a perceived imbalance between demand and capability in a situation in which coping is perceived to be important. The alteration of perceptions, consequently, is an important stress management technique. It may be the case that one is overestimating the severity of the demand or underestimating the adequacy of one's capability of coping successfully with the demand. One's perception of the importance of coping may be exaggerated.

What is needed in these cases is an intervention which puts demand, capability and importance of coping in truer perspective and results in more realistic perceptions. What, at first sight, may appear to be a mountain, may turn out to be a molehill. What seemed to be far too difficult to handle, may prove to be well within one's capabilities. What appeared to be a weakness unique to one's own school, may in fact be an unsolved problem shared by all other schools in the area.

Discussion with others, informally or in a counselling situation, helps an individual to achieve more realistic appraisals and perceptions of situations. It may also help a person to establish goals and priorities in life, and to achieve greater self-understanding of his personal resources. This may have the effect of developing more positive attitudes and greater self-confidence.

There are other ways of altering perceptions, through the use of drugs such as nicotine, alcohol and tranquillizers, but these carry with them the dangers of psychological and physical dependence and are not to be recommended.

4.5.2 Burbach (15) referred to a number of cognitive distortions which affect people's appraisals of the situations in which they find themselves. People who manage to deal with these distortions and 'straighten out' their thinking, alter their perceptions, with the result that stress is either reduced or coped with more effectively.

The following are examples of cognitive distortions mentioned by Burbach.

- All-or-nothing thinking - seeing things in black-and-white; regarding yourself as a total failure if your performance is not perfect.
- Over-generalisation - seeing a single negative event as a pattern of failure.
- Mental filter - allowing a single negative detail to colour the thinking about all other reality.
- Disqualifying the positive - rejecting positive experiences that do not match up with a generally pessimistic outlook.
- Jumping to conclusions - making negative interpretations even though there is no definite supporting evidence.
- Magnification (catastrophizing) or minimization - exaggerating the importance of some things (such as your mistakes or the achievements of others), and inappropriately minimizing such things as your own good qualities or other people's imperfections.

- Emotional reasoning - assuming that negative feelings necessarily reflect reality. 'I feel it, therefore it must be true'.
- Personalization - seeing yourself as responsible for a negative event which you were in fact not primarily responsible for.

4.6 Cox emphasised the very individual and personal nature of stress and its causes. It is the result of a transaction between a person and his situation. (16) It follows that ways of preventing or alleviating stress need to be tailored to fit the individual. It is possible that certain measures designed to combat stress could actually increase it in some people. For example, taking away a particular element in the work may reduce stress for some workers who find the task concerned threatening. Other workers may react entirely differently to the removal of the task which they find challenging, stimulating and fulfilling, and perceive the change as a source of stress.

Cooper and Marshall (17) emphasised the desirability of the individual himself taking the initiative in the management of stress because only he has full information about his stress. Under these circumstances loss of self-esteem is also less likely than if other people initiate the intervention.

5. COPING WITH STRESS : RESEARCH SURVEYS

5.1 In their survey of 1207 school administrators in the United States, Tung and Koch (18) asked the administrators

to enumerate the ways they personally found useful in handling the tensions and pressures of the job. The responses were analysed in three categories and there was a significant preponderance of palliation over direct action methods of coping.

5.1.1 Physiological activities

More than 50% of the respondents used physiological techniques as palliatives for coping with stress. These techniques could be divided into three categories. Firstly, there were those activities involving physical work or exercise. Examples were jogging, sport, walking, gardening, and general exercise programmes. Secondly, there were activities in which the respondents purposely isolated themselves from their work environment, in their homes, at week-end retreats away from home, and by establishing social friendships outside of their working environment. Thirdly, there were relaxation mechanisms such as meditation and yoga.

5.1.2 Cognitive activities

These were used by approximately 40% of the respondents, and referred to the positive attitudes and philosophies of life which helped the individual to cope with the tensions of the job. These included cultivating an optimistic attitude; establishing realistic goals and recognizing one's limitations; sharing problems with colleagues, spouses and other members of the family;

maintaining a sense of humour; and applying one's religious faith and using prayer to overcome adversity.

5.1.3 Acquisition of interpersonal and management skills

Although less than 10% of the administrators quoted the acquisition of skills as useful in coping with stress, it is likely that the exercise of these skills could assist significantly in preventing certain forms of work stress. Time management skills, for instance, are of value in dealing with those stressors related to control over time (too heavy a work load, interruptions, many meetings). A principal's role involves many interpersonal contacts, which are potentially stressful, and the improvement of communication, conflict resolution and other interpersonal skills could contribute substantially to stress management.

5.2 The National Association of Secondary School Principals' survey of the Senior High School Principalship in 1978 (19) referred to the techniques used by a group of 'effective principals' in handling stress.

The most frequently used approach was to get away from the stressful environment, at school itself by leaving the office and walking around the buildings or grounds, and after school by becoming involved in some form of recreational activity. The second important approach used by principals was to develop a sense of perspective

about the problem of stress. This perspective included an acceptance of the inevitability of some stress, a realistic appraisal of what it was possible to accomplish on the job, and a sense of humour and optimism.

A third approach used by a minority of principals was to discuss the stress with others, including professional colleagues or their spouses. It was surmised that this method of relieving stress was not turned to by the principals more often because admitting to stress would possibly reflect poorly on them. It was noted in the Survey that this tendency not to share problems with others emphasised the isolation of the principal's position.

- 5.3 Kiev and Kohn's survey of executive stress on behalf of the American Management Association in 1979 (20) called for responses to 17 ways in which a manager could cope with work-related stress. These techniques were grouped into four categories - self-awareness, on-the-job techniques, away-from-the-job techniques, and programmes/books. 1338 respondents from top management were asked to indicate whether or not they used each technique in dealing with stress and to name the three methods they found to be most effective.

The results were as follows:

AMACOM EXECUTIVE STRESS SURVEYSTRESS COPING TECHNIQUES

<u>Extent Used</u>		<u>Effectiveness</u>	
Rank	%	Rank	%

SELF-AWARENESS

- | | | | | |
|--|---|------|---|------|
| • Develop sensitivity to my physical and emotional responses. Become aware of what are stress-producing situations for me. | 4 | 75,7 | 5 | 30,3 |
| • Analyse stress-producing situation and decide what is worth worrying about and what isn't. | 2 | 84,6 | 1 | 48,1 |

ON THE JOB

- | | | | | |
|---|----|------|----|------|
| • Establish daily goals and set priorities to accomplish the most important objectives. | 3 | 81,0 | 3 | 34,0 |
| • Delegate responsibility instead of carrying entire load myself. | 1 | 90,3 | 2 | 41,6 |
| • Withdraw physically from situation temporarily/take a break. | 10 | 50,4 | 10 | 11,3 |
| • Work harder. | 11 | 49,9 | 13 | 4,9 |
| • Talk with colleagues or others on the job. | 5 | 73,5 | 9 | 13,4 |

AWAY FROM THE JOB

- | | | | | |
|---|----|------|----|------|
| • Engage in engrossing non-work activities. Separate work from home life. | 8 | 64,8 | 6 | 24,4 |
| • Allot time for rest and relaxation each day. | 12 | 42,2 | 12 | 7,9 |
| • Engage in physical exercise. | 7 | 68,9 | 4 | 32,9 |
| • Build regular sleeping and eating habits. | 9 | 62,0 | 11 | 8,7 |
| • Take a number of short vacations. | 13 | 41,3 | 8 | 16,5 |
| • Talk with spouse or friend. | 6 | 71,4 | 7 | 18,4 |

PROGRAMME/BOOKS

- | | | | | |
|--|----|------|----|-----|
| • Transcendental meditation/relaxation exercises. | 15 | 7,7 | 15 | 2,6 |
| • Psychiatric treatment/psychotherapy. | 17 | 3,3 | 16 | 1,6 |
| • Seminars on "stress management". | 16 | 4,8 | 17 | 0,9 |
| • Books on "how to relax"/"how to take charge of your life". | 14 | 17,9 | 14 | 3,1 |

It is significant that the most extensively used and effective methods quoted by the managers were those that improved or supported their ability to cope and those that altered their cognitive appraisal of the demands made upon them.


Falling into the first category of improving the ability to cope with the work were such actions as delegating responsibility, instead of retaining the entire burden, and learning to establish daily goals and priorities in order to achieve the most important objectives.

A number of the other effective coping techniques involved actions which positively influence the cognitive appraisal of demands. Examples of these are analysing difficult situations realistically so as to keep the threat to one in its true perspective, talking with friends or spouse in order to obtain a more objective assessment of a situation, and using self-analysis to establish clearly what situations are potentially threatening.

6. PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR COPING WITH STRESS ✓

There is no single formula for managing stress. It is more effective to possess and use a variety of coping methods to suit the particular circumstances. Numerous writers have suggested general guidelines for managing stress, and some of the most commonly expressed ideas are presented here.

6.1 Gmelch emphasized the importance of identifying stressors and distinguishing those that are inherent in the job and must be tolerated, from those that can be controlled and resolved. He quoted the well known prayer to illustrate the point :


 Grant us the courage to change the things we can,
 The serenity to accept those we cannot,
 And the wisdom to know the difference. (21)

✓ 6.2 With regard to the stressors which can be controlled, what is needed is tackling the stressors with a view to preventing or eliminating the stress. The following are examples of steps that may be taken :

- Anticipate potentially stressful periods and plan for them.
- Engage in training and self-development in order to acquire or increase the skills necessary for success. Apart from the specifically educational skills and knowledge associated with the position, school principals need to develop the following types of skills, each of which has a bearing on stress management :
 - time management
 - planning
 - decision-making
 - communication
 - delegation
 - problem-solving
 - conflict management
 - interpersonal and group leadership skills

- Develop realistic expectations so as to avoid unnecessary feelings of failure and frustration.
- Prevent feelings of isolation. Communicate freely with others, sharing your feelings and talking out your problems. Develop and be involved with social support groups.
- Avoid procrastination which tends to intensify a problem and increase anxiety. Tackle the demanding situation without delay and gain encouragement and motivation from the progress made.
- Do not be too future-orientated. Focus on the present and achieve a balance between reasonable concern for the future and neglect of it.
- Develop your spiritual resources as a particularly meaningful source of inner strength.
- Learn to say no. The alternative may be to be swamped with work and responsibilities that may become unmanageable and a source of stress.
- Learn to tolerate and forgive others. Intolerance of others leads to frustration and stress. Develop understanding and acceptance of other people.
- Identify stress management techniques that work for you and use them.

6.3 When the actual causes of stress cannot be dealt with, steps can be taken to alleviate the symptoms of stress. In this regard people need to accept that a certain amount of stress is inevitable, normal, and even a stimulus to greater effort. Full recognition needs to be given to personal achievements in order to keep a sense of proportion concerning unsolved problems and failures. Some people find it helpful to take short

short breaks from work that they experience as stressful. Cultivating outside interests in order to avoid dwelling on work problems is another way of alleviating stress.

Most writers offering guidance on the management of stress give prominence to physical fitness, relaxation and proper nutrition as means of equipping body and mind to withstand the effects of stress.

6.3.1 Physical fitness

The holistic approach to health emphasizes the necessity of harmony between the body, mind and spirit, which should be regarded as a single unit rather than separate entities. The Ancient Greeks understood this well and referred to 'a healthy mind in a healthy body'. Illness or stress may result when these parts of the whole body are out of balance. There are implications for handling stress. For example, exercise can help to relieve tension and absorb some of the effects of stress.

6.3.2 Relaxation

Relaxation is another way of relieving tension and reducing the level of physiological arousal and stress. For this reason it is an important element in most stress control programmes. The objective is to be able to relax deeply and quickly in order to cope with stress as soon as it is perceived. Many people

use drugs, such as tranquillizers, to relieve the physiological and mental tensions of the stress reaction, but this carries with it the danger of side effects. Many self-activated relaxation techniques have been devised in order to help people to develop the skill of relaxing as a means of dealing effectively with muscular tension and other stress responses.

Mental relaxation is an important part of most relaxation techniques, and it is practised and achieved in a variety of ways, including pleasant mental imagery, meditation, and recreational activities away from the job.

6.3.3 Good nutrition

Proper nutrition is important for good health, which in turn gives the body the best possible chance of coping with stress.

Much has been written on the subject of healthy eating habits, but it appears that common threads running through this literature are :

- . Maintain your recommended weight
- . Eat a balanced, varied diet.
- . Limit the amount of caffeine, salt, sugar and saturated fats, and cholesterol taken in.
- . Use alcohol in moderation or not at all.

7. CONCLUSION

There is no simple recipe for coping with stress because of its very individual and personal nature. Stress is caused by many factors, and its management must therefore be approached simultaneously on various fronts. The strategies employed should include direct action forms of coping, which attempt to confront and deal with the sources of stress, and palliative coping actions which reduce the discomfort experienced during times of stress.

Recent perceptual models of stress lay emphasis on the alteration of perceptions as a powerful means of coping with stress. Any methods, such as social support or counselling, which help a person to alter his negative cognitive appraisal of his ability to cope with the demands made upon him, will have a significant effect on eliminating or reducing his stress.

Successful coping with stress has a positive influence on a person because it not only stimulates personal development but also increases resistance to future stress.

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