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A review of the literature on stress and the school administrator

Judy Green
University of Northern Iowa

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A review of the literature on stress and the school administrator

Abstract

One of the most common maladies facing American society today is that of stress and its concomitant physiological and psychological effects. Too often it is actually the work environment that fosters a great deal of this tension and anxiety. Researchers estimate that half of all working people are unhappy with their careers, and that as many as 90 percent may be spending much of their time and energy at jobs that do not help them get any closer to their 'goals in life' (Hunt, 1983, p. 38).

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE
ON STRESS AND THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR

A Research Paper
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Master of Arts in Education

by
Sister Judy Green, O.S.F.

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Norman L. McCumsey

4/4/83

Date Approved

Director of Research Paper /

Robert Krajewski

4/5/83

Date Approved

Second Reader of Research Paper

Norman L. McCumsey

4/4/83

Date Received

Graduate Faculty Adviser /

Robert Krajewski

4/5/83

Date Received

Head, Department of Educational Administration and Counseling

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CHAPTER ONE

The Problem

Introduction

One of the most common maladies facing American society today is that of stress and its concomitant physiological and psychological effects. Too often it is actually the work environment that fosters a great deal of this tension and anxiety.

Researchers estimate that half of all working people are unhappy with their careers, and that as many as 90 percent may be spending much of their time and energy at jobs that do not help them get any closer to their 'goals in life' (Hunt, 1983, p. 38).

According to Cedoline (1982), educational administrators of the 1980s are beset by more change, conflict, and stress than in any single decade since schools came into being. More responsibilities and duties are crammed into the administrator's day than ever before. School superintendents have often been identified as highly susceptible to stress, but recent data suggest that "middle managers are much more likely candidates for 'management disease' than any other group. It is the manager caught between upper levels of management and subordinates who experience the most distress" (p. 72). He also states that with the new demands of today and the older traditional demands, what you have is two full-time jobs rolled into one. But he says, there's still only one person - the principal - to handle it all.

School principalship has been recognized as the key position with a high impact on the organizational climate of the school on the implementation of change and on teacher's role performance (Erez and Goldstein, 1981, p. 33).

School administrators, says Vanderpol (1981), whether they are superintendents of large districts or principals of small schools, face stress at one time or another in their jobs.

Bean and Clemes (1978), refer to the job of school administrator as one of the most stressful positions. Administrators must deal with demands and complaints from widely divergent types of people. Parents, teachers, children, and other administrators all try to influence the administrator to act in certain ways.

There are times when it seems that everyone in the school district wants the principal somehow miraculously to cure all the ills of the student society (Sheering, 1980). Weldy (1978), believes that the school principal's role at times calls for the physical strength and agility of 'Super Principal.'

Stress can motivate or debilitate us. It is important that administrators understand the positive and negative consequences of stress in their lives. It is more important for those in positions of responsibility to learn how to cope with the inevitable pressures (Swent and Gmelch, 1977). Stress, says O'Donnell (1981), is a factor in today's society and teachers and principals must learn how to reduce the intensity of the stress in their work and personal lives to the point to where it does not affect them significantly. In particular, principals must learn to cope with the everyday sensory bombardment to which they are subjected

by reading sensationalized newspapers, watching violence on television, and breathing polluted air (Gmelch, 1978). Gorton (1981), points out that administrator stress is a phenomenon more complex than most discussions reflect, and conventional wisdom on the subject needs to be reexamined. Today's principalship is a demanding position.

Statement of the Problem

When so many principals are finding their jobs less satisfying than they used to, when so many feel burned out and have thought seriously about quitting, something appears to be wrong. Job-related pressure is causing many school administrators to choose either a career change or early retirement, according to Cedoline (1981). Research shows that school administrators are concerned with uncovering the causes of stress and finding ways to cope with it. This paper will examine and discuss stress factors that have an effect on the school administrator in daily interactions with staff, students, parents, and others who influence the school system. The paper will also attempt to examine the results of stress, and effective ways to cope with it.

Definition of Terms

Administrator: The professionally prepared individual serving as educational leader of the school, and acting as coordinator and efficient manager of a particular school building.

Administrative Duties: The administrative and supervisory responsibilities of the school principal which include leadership in: the educational program, supervision and improvement of instruction, fostering community relations, management and maintenance of plant

facilities, and budgeting and managing operational finances.

Burnout: The syndrome of physical, emotional, attitudinal exhaustion, and cynicism that occurs frequently among individuals who do 'people work' of some kind.

Conflict: The difference of opinion that may exist between administrator and faculty concerning actions that have been taken or need to be taken.

Coping Strategy: A decision process by which individuals select the most effective technique or series of techniques to reduce stress.

Coping Technique: A planned or learned response to resolve a stressful situation.

Job Satisfaction: Those aspects of a job which workers feel meet their needs.

Stress: Any action or situation placing physical and psychological demands upon a person that can unbalance an individual's equilibrium; the body's physical, mental, and chemical reactions to circumstances that frighten, excite, confuse, endanger, or irritate.

Stressor: A source of stress.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

General Discussion of Stress

Based on current writings and research, evidence shows, according to a survey conducted by Swent and Gmelch (1977), that stress exists in the lives of all people and to a greater degree, in persons who are in people-related positions.

Good or bad, stress is here to stay; brought to new heights by the twentieth century psyche. Historically, every era can be traced by its characteristic ailments: the Middle Ages, for example, was characterized by the Great Plague and leprosy, the Renaissance by syphilis, the Baroque Era by deficiency diseases such as scurvy and luxury diseases such as gout, the Romantic Period by tuberculosis and similar ailments, and the nineteenth century (with its rapid industrialization and the development of cities) by general nervousness and neuroses (Gmelch, 1978). And now the twentieth century is connected with tension headaches, high blood pressure, and peptic ulcers that keep pace with the Dow-Jones average (Gasner, 1976).

One of the major factors contributing to the twentieth century stress disease (Toffler, 1970), is our future-shocked society in which people experience too much change in too short a time, the home is a place to leave or a place to keep up with the Joneses, and technology feeds upon knowledge and knowledge expands at a phenomenal rate, and where friends don't last.

Stress is part of all of our lives, but it is not necessarily

bad for us. Too little stress results in boredom and stagnation. Too much stress eventually affects our mental and physical health and lowers the satisfaction we get from our work (Selye, 1974). According to Sparks (1979), it can also impair our ability to think clearly, solve problems, and deal effectively with the demands of life.

Following this same idea, Hunt (1983), says that a stressless life is neither possible nor desirable. It would be a vegetable's life, and it is likely that in attempting to avoid external stress one would only create a form of internal stress.

Evidence also shows that the same positions may create different amounts of stress in different people (Swent and Gmelch, 1977). Cedoline (1982), points out that if a person grows up in a stressful environment, there is usually one of two major outcomes, either the individual learns effective means of dealing with stress or he or she succumbs to the pressure.

Psychologists have long recognized to some extent, and for some individuals to a large degree, that people generate their own stress over and above that which the external environment itself may be contributing (Gorton, 1982). Giamatteo and Giamatteo (1980), reinforce this idea by saying that "I have created my own stress. In order to cut off stress at the awareness level, you need to understand the 'must' environment in which you operate" (p. 3).

Gmelch (1978), states that both pleasant and unpleasant life events tend to cause harmful stress. No one is able to escape, nor does anyone necessarily want to escape these crises, since to some degree stress is

life. Again, the idea is repeated, that due to differing abilities to cope, the same event does not have the same impact on all individuals. He continues by saying that those with less ability to cope with stress are cognizant that they may not be able to control all events.

Current writings and research also show that an individual's health may be affected negatively due to an excessive amount of stress or the inability to cope with it. According to Wangberg (1982), the body reacts to stress as a whole. We cannot separate mental from physical stress or personal from professional stress. The goal, she continues, is for each of us to find our most desirable or satisfactory stress level.

Swent and Gmelch (1977), discussed a four-stage stress cycle.

Stage 1: A meeting is a demand - whether it produces stress depends on the individual's perception.

Stage 2: Individual's perception - does she/he have the mental or physical resources to adequately meet the demands? If not, and a discrepancy exists, the demand is perceived as a stressor. This can be perceived differently from one to another.

Stage 3: The stress created by a discrepancy results in a stress response. Here the coping process begins. Individuals go through biochemical changes (adrenal secretion, increased heart rate) which prepare them either to ignore, flee, combat or alleviate the stressor.

Stage 4: Consequence. This differs from responses because it takes into account the long-range effects of stress (p. 2).

Role and Nature of the School Administrator

Stress is a normal condition of living in today's complex society, it escapes nobody, especially the school administrator. Gmelch (1978), says that "principals today are faced with more pressure, more aggression, more change, and more conflict than ever before. It is now possible to cram much more into an administrator's day, thanks to computers, inter-coms, dictaphones, and other 'timesaving' devices which have measurably increased the stress of life" (p. 5).

Current research shows that only about ten to twenty percent of the population could be considered to be stress free. That implies that there are a large number of administrators experiencing stress in their jobs (Piatt, 1981).

Most administrators, according to Gorton (1979), recognize that providing effective leadership is a major aspect of their role, one that is emphasized in the educational literature read at the various professional meetings attended. Hughes and Robertson (1980), state that the principal functions as a designated leader are staff arbiter and intermediary between teaching staff and higher level administration. There are probably few other occupations that have more extensive responsibility than a school administrator (Cedoline, 1982).

The traditional role of school administrators before 1970 included working with parents, supervising staff, overseeing student discipline and progress, managing the building, ordering supplies, and providing general support to the school district central office. Most administrators found the role

manageable and rewarding. Since 1970, schools have become a hotbed of change and demands. Within the past decade a host of new program adjustments have been mandated. New demands involving time, resources, paper work, and community participation have besieged administrators. The need for more help in managing stress could not be greater. The school administrator's job is not only highly responsible, but difficult and lonely. School administrators have acquired so many new responsibilities in the past ten years that they are now overextended (Cedoline, 1982, p. 74).

In discussing stress and its affect on the administrator, Giamatteo and Giamatteo (1980), have developed a model in dealing with stress. Their model includes awareness, tolerance, reduction, and management. Reduction and management will be referred to later in the discussion on coping strategies and techniques.

Most administrators, by applying a few sound principles, can avoid stress more effectively (Giamatteo and Giamatteo, 1980). In their discussion of stress awareness, they point out that;

1. Awareness comes from human observations and deductions.
2. Awareness does require that facts, imaginations and logic are available in readily understandable form.
3. Awareness is based on personal expertness, not on the advice of some outside expert that is contrary to one's intuition (Giamatteo and Giamatteo, 1980, p. 9).

An important aspect of awareness stated by Giamatteo and Giamatteo

(1980), is knowing the stressors and recognizing one's perceptions of those things that cause stress.

Another aspect of the stress model is tolerance. Tolerance is determined in part by the stressors, but to a greater degree, it is determined by one's style of reacting. Tolerance allows us to acknowledge differences without attributing hostility to those expressing different views. It is better to believe in people (Giamatteo and Giamatteo, 1980).

An administrator assumes many roles as the school principal. Assuming many roles can be viewed as a major source of pressure or stress. Role pressures, as discussed by Vetter (1976), give rise to psychological stress which can result in lowered job satisfaction and dysfunctional behavior. He continues by stating that an important source of increased role pressure is the attitudes and expectations of individuals. Gorton (1979), discusses this further as it applies to the limited expectations of others.

A successful leader can lead others only if they are willing to follow. If the individuals and groups with whom an administrator works do not really want him/her to function as a leader or, more importantly, resist his/her attempts to lead them in a particular direction, their limited expectations can represent a significant constraint on the leadership (p. 50).

Vetter (1976), says that the school principal is not assumed by students, teachers, parents, and other administrators to be automatically

qualified because he/she holds office. The administrator must demonstrate competency and keep demonstrating it.

Sources of Stress

Stress has been defined by Graham and Bonnalie (1972), as an external, noxious force that exerts undesirable and unpleasant effects on an individual. This paper will now attempt to look at general and specific sources or causes of stress. Sources of stress are multitudinous and vary from the least important to that of great importance.

One of the unseen dangers of administrative stress is its cumulative nature (Cedoline, 1982). The causes of stress cited by school administrators in a 1979 survey by Cedoline were unmistakably related to the same causes of job burnout. He presents the following stressors in rank order as identified by school administrators.

1. Lack of sufficient resources.
2. Lack of support from superiors and the public.
3. Quantity of work.
4. Paper work.
5. Collective bargaining.
6. Lack of clear direction of role from school board and superintendent.
7. Federal and state laws.
8. Lacking control of students, teachers, and schools.
9. Responsibility for child's total needs and assumption of many parental roles.
10. Parent and community relationships and pressures (p. 75).

All of these stressors have been discussed by various authors in many different ways. Swent and Gmelch (1977), organized factors and stressors into five areas: (1) administrative constraints that deal with stressors related to time, meetings, work load and compliance with federal and state and organizational policies, (2) administrative responsibility which relates to task characteristics of nearly all administrative positions, (3) interpersonal relations which implies resolving differences between parents, school, staff members and dealing with student discipline, (4) intrapersonal conflicts which center around conflicts between performance and one's internal beliefs and expectations, and (5) role expectation that deals with stress caused by a difference in the expectations of self and the various publics.

Having considered the five areas, the following discussion will elaborate in more detail, each of the areas.

1. Administrative Constraints

An area that has been discussed by several authors is that of federal and state control. Federal involvement in public education programs, particularly categorical programs, has increased by over five times in the past 15 years. Local autonomy and decision making have also become restricted by the increases of state and federal laws. Many new laws have created a wider scope of responsibility for administrators (Cedoline, 1982).

"More time on paperwork means less time for people" (NEP, 1979, p. 57).

According to Moracco and McFadden (1981), it has been shown that individuals experience the most stress when they feel they do not control their circumstances.

School administrators are in one respect like obstetricians-- always 'on call'. Being a school administrator means being on call, with all the demands and resultant distress that the term implies (Cedoline, 1982).

2. Administrative Responsibility

Cedoline (1982), says that there are few other occupations that require more contact with different types of people than school administration. A typical work day involves direct interaction with teachers, other staff members, students, parents, and people representing interests outside the school community. It is not surprising that school administrators are subject to excessive stress when over eighty percent of their time must be spent in direct contact with people. Manera and Wright (1981), discuss the responsibilities of gaining public approval or financial support, generating public endorsement of school programs so they might be carried out and financially underwritten as a definite source of stress. They also include evaluating staff members' performance in order to increase effectiveness and speaking in front of groups as sources of stress.

3. Interpersonal Relations

The most frequently cited example is the school administrator's professed impotence in the face of an incompetent teacher

(Hughes and Robertson, 1980).

According to Swent and Gmelch (1977), stress from interpersonal relations primarily results from conflict with other people both inside and outside the organization.

The nature of education and the type of relationships that result represent other sources of stress in the school administrator's life. Other sources of stress in interpersonal relations result from a variety of barriers that may exist between two or more people. Thus the strong feelings that parents, staff members, and students have increases the likelihood that inter-relationships between the groups will be sources of pressure and stress (Swent and Gmelch, 1977, p. 12).

4. Intrapersonal Conflict

How you regard yourself has a direct affect on the way you bear up under pressure. In other words, low self-esteem increases stress. The paradox of power is one of the problems that can make a school administrator's job difficult. Finding the balance of power as pointed out by Bean and Clemes (1978), is made more difficult by the number of people who want to share the power. Gorton (1979), emphasizes that the administrator's own personality, vision, human relations' skills, etc., can be a definite constraint on the possibility of effective leadership being exercised. If the administrator does not possess the appropriate personal qualities needed, the absence of these

characteristics can be self-constraining. Swent and Gmelch (1977), emphasize that "the administrator who wishes to be liked by everyone, but must dismiss an employee, is a perfect example of an individual with two incompatible goals that can create significant amounts of stress" (p. 13).

5. Role Expectation

The school administrator, says Cedoline (1982), is charged with being responsive to the values, philosophies, and priorities of the entire school community. The administrator is also charged in responding to values, philosophies and expectations that are part of their own person. How to bring these two sides together in some semblance of harmony can be a very stressful situation. Some of the stressors of role expectation as stated by Swent and Gmelch (1977), are as follows:

1. Being unclear on just what the scope and responsibilities of the job are,
2. Feeling of too much responsibility,
3. A feeling of having to participate in school activities outside of normal working hours,
4. A feeling of pressure for a better job performance,
5. A feeling of not being able to satisfy the conflicting demands of those in authority (p. 8).

Cedoline (1982), says that a principal today is a person caught in the middle and having to 'wear too many hats' in an attempt to satisfy everyone's needs is an impossible task, yet one expected

of any school administrator.

Results of Stress

Often stress reactions, says Hunt (1983), are simply the results of habitual responses to certain circumstances, and can be broken by consciously making different choices. The negative side effects of stress, sometimes called distress, have become a major problem for today's principal. Washington (1982), says we need to discover the cost of job-related stress, especially in terms of bad decisions, low staff morale, absenteeism, and poor health.

When the signs of stress are experienced over a long period of time, whether the cause is identified or not, they need to be taken seriously (Vanderpol, 1981). He goes on to say that the primary symptoms of stress are feelings of tension, anxiety, frustration, and isolation. Herlihy and Herlihy (1980), state that a crucial factor which causes principals to leave the principalship is loneliness, a pervasive sense of isolation which is inherent in their roles.

Vanderpol (1981), continues his discussion of the symptoms by adding feelings of depression that may take the form of restlessness, boredom, or burnout, and doubts about one's adequacy and ability to perform. He says that other results are a noticeably shorter temper when dealing with difficult problems; overeating and overweight; and insomnia. Physical symptoms may also show up. Sometimes these symptoms are psychosomatic, but other times they require extensive medical care. Back problems, coronary artery disease, heart attacks, and even cancer, often begin in

times of severe and protracted stress.

These symptoms of stress may be short-circuited by maladaptive attempts to deny or divert the stress through alcoholism or drug abuse; workaholism; marital discord resulting in extra-marital affairs; excessive blaming of others, such as school communities, staff, or community; hiding all feelings; and taking on increasingly larger battles or burdens that may precipitate a crisis (Vanderpol, 1981, p. 40).

Coping Strategies and Techniques

One might say that basically coping strategies and techniques are choices. An individual makes the choice to let positive or negative forces control his/her life.

Research from Swent and Gmelch (1977), explain how "coping skills or devices are complex and need to be flexible. It would be a gross oversimplification if one were to suggest that any one technique would be successful in all situations. In fact, one needs to insure that the coping technique itself does not needlessly create additional stress" (pp. 26, 27). Techniques must be sensitive to individual differences, both culturally and environmentally.

In being able to cope with stress, as a person first, an administrator second, one first needs to realize that there is a problem and there is a need to do something about it. In light of the administrator, he/she "must perceive that a problem exists before the solution can be approached. Half of the strategy is admitting that a potential problem

exists and then identify the stress agents" (Swent and Gmelch, 1977, p. 31).

The entire concept of stress management is based on the premise that the human body and mind have a great natural ability for self-adjustment and self-repair. Giamatteo and Giamatteo (1980), believe that the administrator must have a positive attitude toward handling stress situations, be able to assert himself when confronted with external pressures and have appropriate and selective adaptability. In short, the administrator must be capable of facing life.

After personal and professional stressors are identified, one needs to develop some strategies for coping with them. As individuals, we will have different stressors as well as different coping solutions. While we may not be able to control stress completely, we must realize that we are responsible for our reactions to stressors. Again the point is emphasized. We make the choice to choose positive or negative forces in our lives. No one can control our reactions and responses (Wangberg, 1982).

It cannot be emphasized enough that the individual makes the difference in coping with stress. This concept is discussed by several authors. Gorton (1982), points out also that coping with stress is a very individual matter and that coping methods which work for one individual may not be effective for another. Brown and Carlton (1980) reiterate the same ideas.

Since we all have our own optimal stress levels, an appropriate approach to coping with stress involves determining the right amount and right kind of stress for us, in an appropriate time frame, and then seeking circumstances that are congruent with the personal parameters we have established. True, school

'executives' can always tailor their 'stress environments' so it's all the more important that they learn techniques for coping with the problem (p. 38).

Herlihy and Herlihy (1980), point out that when principals look to the mechanisms available for coping with stress - "fight" or "flight" - they are caught in a double bind. While they might prefer to "fight," if they find no way to cope with their job-related stress or personal stress, the majority choose "flight" and eventually leave the principalship.

Hunt (1983), provides an excellent discussion on coping strategies and techniques.

Since stress is part of every individual's life, the first step in dealing intelligently with this aspect of daily living is to determine whether you are experiencing useful or destructive stress. Ask yourself questions such as these: Do little things irritate me? Do I worry a lot? Do I have trouble sleeping and wake up tired and grouchy? Do I feel trapped? Complain? Frequently snap at those I care about? Do I suffer physical symptoms? If the answer is 'yes' to even one of the above questions, you may be experiencing harmful stress. The literature available on stress indicates that it is as much a part of lives as eating, sleeping, and breathing. It appears that the key to determining whether stress is the 'spice of life or the kiss of death' is dependent on how one handles it. This would seem to suggest that it is very

important for people to develop skills that will allow them to successfully manage the stress in their lives (p. 39).

According to Gmelch (1978), there are "no simple solutions to the problems created by undue stress. What one reads, experiences, and tries, all provide helpful insights. The real ability to cope is a very personal matter. What works best for many may not be the answer for all" (p. 9).

To say there are no recognized coping techniques applicable to almost all would be misleading and unfair. An examination of the coping strategies and techniques indicates that there are many and various ways to cope. These can be divided into three general categories as suggested by Swent and Gmelch (1977). The first is physiological activity. This is an activity whereby the individual engages in some sort of physical work or exercise. The individual "purposely attempts to be separated from the work environment" (p. 21). These activities would also include some kind of relaxation activities.

Gmelch (1978), suggests that "while taking time off for physical sickness is considered appropriate, people never seem to find the time or reason to rest from mental fatigue or stress attacks. The need for relief may not always coincide with the 10:00 a.m. coffee break or the TGIF parties" (p. 9).

Marnum (1982), in his discussion says that administrative stress seems to take its toll of good people. In order to cope, we need emotional and physical releases and safety valves. He goes on to say, "The gurus of stress management tell us that jogging, hiking, tennis, golf - any physical exercise - is a good release for symptoms of stress

(p. 8). Brown and Carlton (1980), discuss in terms of the physiological, that good nutrition is a key to stress reduction. They say that many people who are under stress eat compulsively, causing dietary imbalance that in turn produces more stress. Reed (1979), talks about "keeping yourself tuned up". She says, "know your own limits. Get plenty of exercise and rest. Maintain a sound diet. Get a regular check-up" (p. 70).

Most authors seem to agree that a key concept in coping with stress is relaxation. Harrangue (1980), says that leisure and relaxation are absolutely necessary to any person's survival. "Frequent and consistent physical exercise is another important way to keep life in perspective and the stress level low" (p. 33). One practical way of relaxing and coping more effectively according to Harrangue is walking. She contends that walking is rejuvenating, it exercises the whole body, the mind, the emotions, the whole spirit. She further states that walks should be taken in all kinds of weather, at any time of day. Walking alone is good and walks taken with others should be only with those who are "affable and know how to be quiet" (p. 133).

If principals are better equipped to deal with the pressures of the job, both their own health and that of their staff members and even students will benefit.

Another general area in reference to coping techniques is that of cognitive activities. These are activities that relate to positive attitudes and supportive philosophies of life. Gmelch (1978), points out that one needs to establish and update life goals. He says

"whether business, industry, government, or education, almost all organizations emphasize the importance of management by objectives (MBO). But how many 'live by objectives' (LBO)?" (p. 11). Brown and Carlton (1980), emphasize using the "relaxation response." This activity involves exercises in mind and body control. These exercises are an important part of many psychological and religious regimens such as zen, yoga, transcendental meditation and hypnosis. The core of these exercises is "Concentration on a sound or tone to block out extraneous thoughts and sounds and to permit total immersion in the exercise" (p. 39). People from all walks of life have found these techniques useful in reducing stressful activities.

Taking time off during the day for quiet reflection, approaching all problems with an optimistic attitude and maintaining a sense of humor are several cognitive activities pointed out by Swent and Gmelch (1977). Harrangue discusses these same areas further. She says that learning to laugh, making time to relax, and creating times of solitude and silence are important ingredients in coping with stress.

Researchers of stress problems suggest learning to control one's environment. They suggest this by doing several things. "(1) Rationalize stress. If you can convince yourself that a source of stress is useful or necessary, the aftereffects will be fewer. (2) Schedule stress. If you can arrange it so that the source of stress occurs predictably, the results will be less damaging. (3) Manage stress. You can moderate stress by being in a position to stop it. (4) Try to relax. In the long run you will probably adapt to most causes of stress, so nothing is gained

by getting all worked up" (Hunt, 1983, p. 40). It is important to regulate stress and one way of doing this is by taking control of one's attitude. Dr. Robert S. Eliot, chairperson of the Preventive and Stress Medicine Department, offers this advice: "(1) Change the way you react to troublesome things, but not too much. Pick out a few and deal with those. (2) Reduce the number of events in your life and you'll reduce the circuit overload. (3) The bottom line of stress management is, 'I upset myself.' Develop a thick skin. (4) Why hate when a little dislike will do? Why foment anxiety when you can be nervous? Why rage when anger will do the job? Why be depressed when you can just be sad? (5) Set realistic goals for yourself. Learn how to do nothing. (6) Do not sweat the small stuff. Remember it is all small stuff" (Hunt, 1983, p. 40).

One of the first steps in relieving stress as discussed by Vanderpol (1981), is to set aside some time for reflection to consider what is going on and how long it can be allowed to continue. It helps, he says, to share these thoughts either with mental health professionals or with trusted associates. Individuals who are coping with stress need to avoid what "Harry Levinson, author of Executive Stress, calls the 'sandpit syndrome.' The sandpit is deep; trying to get out of it by scratching the walls only pulls more sand off the walls, leading one no closer to escape" (p. 40). Reflection to relieve stress, says Vanderpol (1981), should distinguish between unavoidable issues and those we create or aggravate unnecessarily ourselves.

Times of real solitude and silence are helpful beyond all else

for it is in this time and space that the psyche is healed, the heart replenished, and the body truly rested. Whether one refers to this silence and solitude as reflective centering, meditation, prayer, or communion with nature, it is necessary for the rejuvenation of the life forces that make a person fully themselves and better able to open their being, talent, mind and heart to the excellence and fullness of life" (Harrangue, 1980, p. 133).

The third area of coping strategies is referred to as the acquisition of interpersonal and management skills. This area will include the development of skills needed to increase one's effectiveness in the job. It is absolutely vital to obtain the best job preparation as possible. Under the title job preparation might be included the following, as suggested by Swent and Gmelch (1977): Skills of time management, conflict management, good personnel practices, team management, and developing good human relations. These areas will be treated in more depth, with a special emphasis on practical suggestions and application.

Generally speaking, few principals, says Gmelch (1978), know their own limitations, which is why so few people live long enough to "happily reminisce about past accomplishments" (p. 10). Principals need to learn to accept the fact that administration has its limitations. Changes can't be made overnight, and some changes cannot be made at all. There are many circumstances beyond their control. He refers to the age-old saying which suggests that one should seek:

The courage to change the things we can,

The serenity to accept those we cannot,

And the wisdom to know the difference (p. 10).

Gmelch (1978), views time management as a very definite way of coping with stress and that concept of time management includes a wide area of concentration. Mackenzie, 1975, says knowing what can be done in a set amount of time reduces the uncertainty of tasks and the stressfulness of the job. Instead of recognizing Murphy's Second Law which says that everything takes longer than you think, managers generally attempt too much for too many people with unrealistic time estimates. Gmelch (1978), continues this idea saying that any one of a number of reasons may contribute to this: Lack of planning, over sense of responsibility, inability to set priorities, high need for achievement, and misunderstanding of job responsibilities. What probably needs to be done is to promise a little less than one believes can be achieved.

The principal in many instances, tries to be all things to all people. One might say that the principal should be re-educated in the discipline of "humanology: the art of measuring the physical and psychological limitations and capabilities of people" (Gmelch, 1978, p. 11).

It is only through planned self-analysis, continues Gmelch (1978), that one can have any hope of reducing stress. Looking back at past experiences, the administrator needs to get in touch with what was done well, what not so well, what was frustrating, what was fun, what was challenging, what was boring, what created tension, and what provided fulfillment. In retrospect, many hidden talents may be rediscovered

as well as limitations revealed. This new awareness will allow the individual to concentrate more on capabilities and delegate the limitations to those more qualified (Gmelch, 1978).

Cedoline (1982), noted that on the job, administrators do not and can not control all of the variables that affect use of their time. For example, emergencies become common place, and deadlines are imposed by local, state, and federal regulations. Parents, teachers, board members, and superiors have perhaps more opportunity to determine an administrator's time than the person, him or herself. If a typical day is preordained by outside determinants, control over one's time might well be restricted to the point that distress sets in.

The goal of time management is increased control. Time management should cover both attitudinal and behavioral dimensions. In reference to a specific individual's use of time, obstacles like perfectionism, procrastination, interruptions, fear of mistakes, overscheduling, and overaccessibility, one can practically solve these obstacles by implementing such tactics as goal setting, establishing priorities, planned unavailability, delegation, and contingency planning (Wiggers, Forney, Schutzman, 1982).

Koff, Laffey, Olson, and Cichon (1981), believe that the degree of organization is an important factor in overcoming stress. Some examples of comments of people queried in a questionnaire are as follows: "The amount of stress depends upon the effectiveness of one's planning and the adequacy of staff." "Good organization prevents unnecessary stress." Brown and Carlton (1980), suggest that techniques of good time management

can be learned rather easily, both for use on a day-to-day basis and for long-range planning. They also discuss the importance of trying to regularize one's environment. Stress is less harmful when it is predictable. When possible, they say, try to arrange your schedule to fit predictable stress occurrences, thus avoiding surprises and adding to your feeling of being in control. A sense of 'being in charge' of your own life and activities is extremely important in stress reduction. Hunt (1983), also speaks of regulating or managing the environment. She says, "schedule your appointments with students or parents realistically; allow enough time on your calendar so that you're not rushing from one meeting to another. Each day, set your priorities in the morning and try to stay with that order. Take up a new task only when you finish your priority items. Learn how to manage demands from teachers and other administrators. Let them know how much time and effort you're willing to give them and let them know when you cannot accept their requests" (p. 40).

"In order to experience less stress in their jobs, administrators need to be able to deal effectively with administrator-faculty conflict situations, one which comes up expectedly or unexpectedly and perhaps needs immediate solution" (Koff, Laffey, Olson, and Cichon, 1981, pp. 8.9).

Being a principal is essentially the art of working with people according to Gmelch and Swent (1981). They discuss three top stressors that fit into this area of working with people: evaluating staff members' performance, resolving parent/school conflict and gaining approval for programs. "Interpersonal influence is not a new skill"

they say, "but one that continues to be important in a people-oriented profession. Resolving conflict, improving communication skills, building trust, and being able to supportively confront parents and staff are important skills to reduce the stress from interpersonal conflict" (p. 18).

In a study of elementary and secondary principals, conducted by Hughes and Robertson (1980), they found that conflict management strategy plays a major role in determining whether or not the conflict results in constructive or destructive outcomes. A major conclusion of their study suggests that conflict management has been seriously overlooked both as a research topic and as a role component for the school administrator. These results show a definite need for more study and inservice in the area of conflict management.

Candidates for school principalship, as well as those who actually perform this role should be exposed to well-planned programs in educational leadership. Elements which will enable the principal to carefully examine the expectations of their role, should be included in addition to the development of skills in the areas of curriculum development, teaching methods, human relations and administrative competencies. They should enable the principal to better influence the school environment, especially by increasing self-confidence and assisting in better predicting the outcomes of the work (Erez and Goldstein, 1981, p. 42).

Our society is faced with a very critical paradox; we have created a nation of unparalleled material wealth and at the

same time have produced a nation of unparalleled waste. We have built a technological empire that has led to a life of comfort and ease that is the envy of the world, yet we now have more insomnia, higher suicide rates, and more tension-packed lives than at any other time in the history of our country. What we have in short, is a human crisis in the United States today. And administrators have not escaped this paradoxical crisis that affects all Americans regardless of age, sex, occupation, or socio-economic status. The nature and severity of the emotional stresses and strains of modern life are so complex that no one solution will cure all of our ills. However, there is substantial evidence to suggest that successful management of the stress that occurs as a part of daily living can provide an opportunity for each of us to move forward in our pursuit of a quality life (Hunt, 1983, p. 40).

CHAPTER THREE

Summary and Conclusions

Summary

Education is always in need of positive leadership. But most administrators will not find it easy to exercise such leadership. Typically, there will be other things to do and it is easy to feel that there is not enough time or that there are too many risks. And while the image of leadership is generally a glamorous one, the reality usually reflects a great deal of hard work and frustration. However, no one promised the administrator "a rose garden." The position carries with it in many situations an expectation that the administrator will do more than maintain the status quo. In essence, an administrator can become someone who watches things happen, someone who wonders what happened, or someone who makes things happen. It is up to the leader to choose one of these options (Gorton, 1979).

Perhaps no area of education imposes more stress than the area of principalship. Confrontation, conflict, and compromise are constants which principals face on a daily basis. The principal must seek, as creatively as possible, constructive avenues of escape from stress and burnout. The consequences of failure to formulate and implement an active strategy are not pleasant to contemplate (Fallon, 1981, p. 28).

School administrators have particularly stressful jobs, even without compounding that stress. To keep stress at a minimum, they need strategies for dealing with pressure, as well as mechanisms within their jobs for working out problems so that pressures don't multiply. Not to

do that takes a toll on both the administrators themselves and on those they oversee (Vanderpol, 1981).

Growing pressures from every quarter - school boards, employee organizations, parents, courts, federal and state bureaucracies and legislative bodies - dramatically affect the job efficiency and effectiveness of school administrators. At a time of crisis within our schools, highly trained and experienced administrators cannot be lost. There is an urgent need for the public to gain awareness of causes and of current conditions. Public support and assistance are necessary to remediate existing conditions and prevent further disruption among troubled educational leaders. If sincere efforts by the educational community can be sustained and nourished, the level of administrative burnout may be able to be controlled. Enlightened school administrators, recognizing the scope and nature of the problem, can serve to educate others, provide internal support to troubled colleagues, and cooperate in the search for effective means to prevent and cure occupational stress (Cedoline, 1982).

The professional life of a principal is becoming less satisfying for so many. The roles, demands, and pressures are part of the job. Wishing will not make them disappear. Some individuals are much better equipped by temperament to handle the role stress associated with the office of the principal than others (Vetter, 1976).

The foremost authority on stress, Hans Selye, points out that despite everything that has been written and said about stress and coping behaviors, there is no ready-made stress formula that will suit

everyone (Swent and Gmelch, 1977).

No one can better deal with stress than the person who is experiencing it. Stress is too subjective to be resolved by the big solution, by someone else's absolute remedy. One can reduce the stress in their life and consequently the negative effects. But one has to do something positive, something willful, and something constructive (Lemley, 1981).

In the final analysis, school principals must take charge of their own stress-control programs. They must continue to serve the educational needs of young people, effectively, while at the same time avoiding the self-fulfilling prophecy of excessive worry. After all, "the ultimate Catch 22 is how to approach each new day with vigor and enthusiasm, after lying awake all night worrying about how to approach each new day with vigor and enthusiasm" (Brown and Carlton, 1980, p. 39).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this review of literature attempted to point out a definite relationship between the role of the school administrator and stress. The sources of stress are many, ranging from what may appear to be very insignificant to that which can cause serious physical and psychological problems. In order for the school administrator to deal effectively with stress, he/she must come to know and be able to implement the strategies and techniques of coping. Hopefully, this review has provided an informative discussion of stress and the school administrator and will give insight into dealing with this problem.

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