

School Principals' Stressors and Coping Strategies: A Comparative Study Between Finland and Canada
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ABSTRACT

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The aim of this study was to investigate the stressors and coping strategies of school principals in Finland and Canada with the help of three research questions: what are the causes of the job stressors?, what strategies do school principals use to try to cope with these stressors?, and what specific support do school principals need, or what changes should occur to support them? Using the results of this qualitative study, the main job stressors, coping strategies, and support mechanisms were identified. The research data included both the diaries (N=8) and individual interviews (N=8) of principals. Regarding the analysis, after the theory-guided phase focusing on the diaries, the data-based phase focused on both diaries and interviews.

The research findings showed that the main stressors in both Finland and Canada were workload and insufficient time to complete tasks, and constant interruptions. Canadian principals worked significantly more than their Finnish counterparts. School violence and disagreements also caused job stress for principals. In Finland, only verbal disagreements were reported, not physical violence, except for one case of bullying. With regards to coping strategies, the data showed that principals took care of their physical and mental health through a variety of activities. They also knew how to prioritize and were proactive in many cases. Finnish principals frequently delegated work, an uncommon practice in Canada. Regarding support, the lack or non-replacement of human resources seemed to be a major issue in both countries. Nevertheless, the data showed that in both countries, principals were well supported by the network of people around them.

Keywords: School principal, stressor, coping strategy, support, comparative study

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1 INTRODUCTION

International studies show that school principals around the world are experiencing many job stressors in day-to-day work. This situation has grown worse in recent years. Workload has grown, and changes such as the advent of digital technology and the increasing level of accountability are contributing factors. Unsurprisingly, it has become more difficult to retain and recruit school principals (Pollock & Wang, 2019; Wang et al., 2018; Pollock et al., 2017; Hauseman et al., 2017; Riley, 2017a; Riley, 2017b; Riley, 2015; Pollock et al., 2014).

The present study examines the work experience of school principals in the twenty-first century. Its purpose is to identify the main stressors, coping strategies currently used to manage stress caused by these stressors, and the different kinds of support that principals currently receive, and would like to receive. This study also identifies changes that principals would like to see in their work environment. The present findings will help educational institutions, employers, and the principals themselves understand how and why job stressors cause stress. This study also identifies coping strategies and support that can help to alleviate stress among school principals.

The qualitative data collection consisted of diaries written by four Canadian school principals in Ontario, and by four counterparts in Finland over a period of 20 working days. In addition, all the participants were interviewed individually. The main strengths of the present study were the rich data collected, and comparisons between eight principals in two countries.

Divided into 10 chapters, this thesis investigated how some of the job stress experienced by school principals could be alleviated, how principals could be better supported, and what coping strategies might be helpful. The thesis opens with an introduction giving the background and rationale of the study: the context and problem. Then, the school systems in Canada (Ontario) and Finland are described.

Chapter 4 presents key concepts and a review of the literature. Chapter 5 lays out the study's goals and research questions. Chapter 6 presents the methodology, and chapter 7 compares principals with regards to each research question. Chapter 8 presents the results. Chapter 9 discusses the conclusions, limitations, and practical implications of the present research, and offers ideas for the future research¹².

2 THE WORK LIFE OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

The aim of this chapter is to describe the work life of school principals. According to Felstead, et al. (2012, p. 1): "Working hard can be challenging, stressful and costly, but it can also be stimulating, rewarding and financially beneficial". It is well-known that school principals have many responsibilities and that their job is very demanding. As a qualified Canadian teacher with work experience in Canada and abroad in Education for about 15 years, I have closely observed school principals in the school environment. I have a good idea of what the job of a principal entails. For example, most of the time, principals do not take a lunch break. Instead, they eat on the go, or at their desks, and often come to school ill. Duke (1988) and Bauer and Brazer (2013) observe:

On the one hand, participants in his study appreciated the diversity of tasks, the numerous opportunities to solve complex problems, and the chance to learn more about their own abilities and beliefs (p. 309); on the other, the sheer variety of tasks was perceived as challenging and fatiguing, and participants expressed considerable confusion about their role (Duke, 1988 as cited in Bauer & Brazer, 2013, p. 157).

A school principal's job can include tasks that are exciting and inspiring, and also tasks that are tough and difficult. Wang et al. (2018) confirm that school principals are experiencing job stress because of their growing workload and changes influencing their work. Work performance can deteriorate, and it has been more

¹ All acronyms and abbreviations in this thesis are defined in Appendix 1.

² In this thesis, the sample of principals included non-native English speakers writing journals/being interviewed in English. For this reason, I have added a few light corrections in square brackets to these journal entries/excerpts where the meaning would otherwise be unclear.

difficult to recruit and retain people in leadership roles in education. Allen and Weaver (2014) describe the work of assistant principals below:

The assistant principal lives with the knowledge that daily work will include problems that are never solved, work that is never complete, joys that are never noticed, and needs that are seldom acknowledged. Everyone needs to share the joys and grouse about the problems with others who understand (Marshall, 1992, p. 99).

Principals face many stressors which vary from one person to another. What is considered as a stressor by one, may not be considered a stressor by another. In fact, it can even be seen as a challenge stimulating and motivating instead of stressing. Furthermore, for the same person, a stressor can be considered a stressor at certain times but not always, depending on context. Fenlason and Beehr (1994, p. 173) conclude that "people in the workplace, and especially the supervisor" are best placed to "offer helpful social support to those in one's workplace experiencing job stress".

"Positive job-related communications" are the most helpful result, followed by "non-work related communications". Not surprisingly, negative job-related communications are less likely to help an employee who is stressed-out. Also, the findings of Beausaert et al. (2016) show that social support is more likely to alleviate the effects of stress. However, other factors play a role on the effects of stress as well, such as context and personal circumstances:

While stress is significantly negatively related to burnout at all times (for both primary and secondary principals), this is not the case for the paths going from social support to stress. Also this finding might suggest that stress cannot be buffered by social support alone, but also depends on other contextual and individual factors. It might be the case that some years were more stressful than others because of innovation, policy changes, personal circumstances, etc. (Beausaert et al., 2016, p. 360).

In the same vein, Chaplain (2001) concludes that the quality of relationships with colleagues affects the stress levels of school principals. The findings of Chaplain (2001) are in line with those of Cooper and Kelly (1993), Hill (1994), and Chaplain (1995) concerning the main stressors for school principals, (i.e., work overload and managing relationships), but job satisfaction was examined as well. Chaplain (2001) concludes that the quality of the working relationships and school culture do play a role in the level of stress.

The findings of Friedman (2002) are in line with those of previous studies. Principals are definitely affected by work overload, but even more by pressures exerted by parents and teachers:

Findings show that burnout was affected mostly by pressure stemming from teachers and parents, and to a lesser extent, from overload (qualitative and quantitative). [...] The findings imply that principals who feel that their leadership is challenged or rejected feel strongly stressed and eventually burned-out (Friedman, 2002, p. 229).

Darmody and Smyth (2016), quoted in Wang et al. (2018), conclude that in the UK, the biggest stressor for principals is work overload.

Darmody and Smyth (2016) identified a number of stressors after investigating factors that increase, decrease, or had no incidence on job satisfaction among school principals. Among those factors that decreased job satisfaction were teaching duties, facilities described as “poor” or “fair”, and a school with discipline problems. Job satisfaction also decreased in a school where teachers were seen as less open to new developments and provided less help and support to their colleagues, or in a school with inadequate administrative support, or in a principal over 40, or in the early stages of career, or in the post for over 10 years. Schools in very old buildings, where more than a quarter of the pupils suffered from emotional/behavioural difficulties, where discipline problems were prevalent, and where teachers were less open to new developments and challenges were also sites of low job satisfaction. While stress levels did not vary by gender, location, or school size, job satisfaction among principals increased significantly with better administrative support and if the principal had previous experience as a principal in another school.

Ferguson et al. (2017) studied stress among teachers. Participants were asked to complete a survey in which they rated teaching-related stress factors. Five components using a Principal Components Analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation were constructed. The stressors were: workload, student behaviour, professional relationships with other teachers and administration, societal attitudes towards teachers, and employment conditions.

Several recent studies listed in Wang et al. (2018) that were conducted in Canada and internationally identify changes influencing school principals' work

and workload that might eventually increase their stress. These changes include “school regulation and policy changes, pedagogical, social, and demographic changes, budgetary cuts, the marketization of education, technological advancement, and changes in parental expectations” (p. 73). The school principal’s workload has been increasing and has become more complex. A phenomenon called “principal work intensification” explains why principals are exercising their roles as instructional leaders less frequently (Ontario Principal’s Council, 2017). Also, according to Chicago Public Education Fund (CPEF) CEO Heather Anichini in her preface to the 2015 report, “the systems that surround, support and retain principals are broken” (CPEF, 2015 as cited in Ontario Principals’ Council, 2017, p. 5). Principals mentioned that even if they are experiencing high levels of satisfaction at work, “their jobs are simply not sustainable” (Ontario Principals’ Council, 2017, p. 5).

In Finland as well, research has shown that many principals face stress related to their heavy workload and the level of responsibility (Boyland 2011; Friedman 2002; Mustonen 2003; Tucker 2010; Van der Merwe & Parsotam 2012; Vuohijoki 2006). The flexible accountability structures (Aho et al. 2006) in the Finnish education system could be a factor of this stress.

According to Terävä (2020), 10% of Finnish principals are exhausted, and one third risk burnout. The issues principals are now facing are growing school units, indoor air, and financial problems. According to Antti Ikonen, the chair of the Finnish Association of Principals, principals’ responsibilities (administrative work, implementation of the curriculum through the current school reform project, and workload) have increased over the years.

This is the context in which Canadian and Finnish principals are working. This thesis explored how job stress experienced by school principals could be alleviated, how principals could be supported more efficiently by their institutions, and what coping strategies might be helpful. Differences and similarities between participants and between Canada and Finland were examined. Stressful situations and job stressors faced by principals in Finland and Canada (Ontario) in their day-to-day work were examined and potential tools and solutions

suggested. The well-being of principals is crucial in delivering quality education, and in fostering the well-being and development of the whole school community.

3 THE DIFFERENT SCHOOL SYSTEMS

This chapter introduces the school systems in Canada and Finland. The chapter opens with a description of the school system in Ontario, Canada. Then, the school system of Finland is described.

3.1 The School System in Ontario, Canada

Canada is divided into 10 provinces and three territories. Each province and territory has its own school system, a total of 13 in all. The province of Ontario has four types of publicly-funded (i.e., free of charge for families) school boards: French Catholic, French Public, English Catholic, and English Public. All other schools are private, funded entirely by tuition fees paid by parents of students enrolled there. Children can attend French schools if they are “French-language right-holders” or if they are approved by the school board. Motivated by their religious and linguistic background, or by freedom of choice, students can attend any of these schools (People for Education, 2019).

The school system includes elementary and secondary school levels. Elementary school runs from kindergarten to grade 8, while secondary school runs from grades 9 to 12. The academic year starts in September. Students may enter an optional full-time junior kindergarten at age four, and senior kindergarten at age five, if they turn four and five years old respectively by December 31 of that year. They begin grade 1 at age six. Students finish grade 8 at age 14, and grade 12 at age 17 (People for Education, 2019). In 2017, the five-year secondary school graduation rate was 86.3 per cent, while the four-year secondary graduation rate was 79.9 per cent.

To become a teacher in Ontario, one needs a full-time three-year postsecondary degree from a college or university, a full-time four semester Teacher

Education program degree leading to a Bachelor of Education degree, and membership in the Ontario College of Teachers (Ontario College of Teachers, 2019).

The Ontario Ministry of Education is responsible for curriculum development:

The Ministry of Education is responsible for the development of curriculum. [...] Curriculum policy documents identify what students must know and be able to do at the end of every grade or course in every subject in Ontario publicly funded schools (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2018).

To become a school principal in a publicly funded school in Ontario, one needs five years of teaching experience in the field, as well as a certificate in three consecutive of the four school levels, called *divisions* (i.e., primary (kindergarten to grade 3), junior (grades 4 to 6), intermediate (grades 7 and 8), and senior (grades 9 to 12)). In addition, one needs either two specialist or honours specialist professional development courses, called *additional qualifications*, or a master's degree. Finally, one must complete the Principal's Qualification Program (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2019).

In Canada, administrative work in Education is carried out by school boards, where both terms *school board* and *school district* are synonyms (OASDI, 2021). The local authority (i.e., the school board) determines tasks and responsibilities. Education is separate from the rest of municipal or provincial decision-making.

Canada has vice-principals (in North America, *assistant principal* and *vice-principal* are synonyms) as well as principals, but no leading principals. Vice-principals occupy a formal leadership position and co-lead with principals. Their supervisors (i.e. school superintendents) work at the school board, not on school premises. Also the school boards are separate from other local/municipal-decision making.

In the present study, one Canadian participant was a vice-principal; all the others were principals.

3.2 The School System in Finland

In contrast to Canada, Finland has only one school system for the whole country. All schools are publicly funded and free of charge, even the independent ones. Students can attend schools of different faiths or language of instruction in either of the country's two official languages, Finnish or Swedish, but also in English or in a few other languages, as well as in the Sami languages in northern Finland, where they have official status.

The Finnish system consists of one year of obligatory preschool or kindergarten for six-year-olds. Compulsory comprehensive school lasts nine years for students between the ages of seven and 16. The graduation rate is 99.7 per cent. Upper secondary education is optional and lasts three years, whether students choose the academic or the vocational track.

Teachers need a master's degree in Teacher Education from a university. Studies are a full five years. Teacher Education is a limited-enrollment program, with approximately eight percent of applicants selected. Within the framework of the national core curriculum drawn up by the Finnish National Agency for Education, each education provider (often also the school) may create its own curriculum tailored to the needs of the students it serves, although this is not mandatory.

To become a Finnish principal, one must be a qualified and experienced teacher at the same school level and hold a master's degree. Principals must have the educational administration certificate meeting National Board of Education standards, or a minimum of 25 university credits in educational administration, or the equivalent knowledge obtained alternatively, such as studies at the Institute of Educational Leadership (Johansson, 2011, p. 169).

Administrative work in Education is carried out by municipal school boards in Finland. The local authority (i.e., the municipal council) determines the staff's tasks and responsibilities. The municipal government provides education among other public services like social and health care services. School districts, which can be divided into sub-districts, are part of the municipality.

Finland has assistant principals, vice-principals, principals, and leading principals. According to Tian (2015), assistant principals occupy a formal leadership position and co-lead with principals. However, the vice-principal's role is a temporary leadership position that allows a teacher to replace a principal who is away for long periods. Therefore, in Finland, the terms *assistant principal* and *vice-principal* are not synonyms. The terms *assistant principal* in Finland and *vice-principal* in Canada correspond to the same concept. A Finnish *vice-principal* has the function of a Canadian *interim principal*. Leading principals supervise the other principals. In the present study, all the Finnish participants were principals.

4 EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND WELL-BEING

This chapter opens with a sub-chapter on the roles and well-being of principals. After this, stressors and coping strategies of principals are described.

4.1 The Roles and Wellbeing of Principals

Although the tasks of school principals are similar in Canada and Finland, they also vary. In contrast to Canada, principals in Finland do not observe teachers while assessing them (National Center on Education and the Economy, 2020). In Canada, experienced teachers are evaluated by their school principal at least once every five years (Benjamin et al. 2013, p. 120). Even if a local curriculum is imposed in Finland, teachers and principals are usually responsible for the non-mandatory, school-specific curriculum, which is based on the Finnish national curriculum (Paronen & Lappi, 2018). In Ontario, the Minister of Education develops the curriculum that will be taught by teachers (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2020).

Over the years, the role of principals has become a lot more complex world-wide. Canada and Finland are no exceptions. In Finland, the work of school principals from grades one to nine includes:

[V]arious administrative tasks and meetings, responsibilities related to the organization of education at school level, curriculum work, and support for the development of the whole work community (FNBE, 2013; as cited in Ahtiainen et al., 2018).

Finnish principals have more autonomy in determining budget allocations and curriculum than in hiring teachers (European Commission, 2014). Most Finnish principals also have teaching duties on top of their leadership responsibilities (Taajamo et al., 2014). Canadian principals in Ontario are responsible for organizing and managing their school. This includes the budget, instruction, learning materials, and student discipline (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2020). Several factors have caused the role of Canadian school principals to become more complex:

The new curriculum, parent and community demands, government policy, changing technology, and staff morale issues have all contributed to a complex school environment (Roher, 2019).

Recent educational reforms have led to increased responsibilities for principals and a redefinition of their role (Roher, 2019).

For the purposes of this thesis, the terms school principal (or principal) means an educator in charge of a school (i.e., the school leader who has the responsibility to make decisions for running the school). The term vice-principal means a school principal who assists the principal. The more generic term principal includes both principal and vice-principal. The term teaching principal is a principal or a vice-principal who also has teaching tasks. As noted above, all Finnish principals have teaching tasks.

Every day, school principals must cope with many job stressors. A job stressor consists of "a stimulus external to an employee and a result of an employee's work conditions" (Glazer & Liu, 2017). These stimuli may be varied. Examples could include a growing workload, changes, complaints, disagreements, and budget constraints.

Work intensification comprises both an accelerating speed of work and the pressures of working to tight deadlines. Work intensification is correlated with technological development. Felstead et al. (2012, as cited in Wang et al., 2018) discuss this intensification below:

The increased expectations for Canadian school principals involve the number of short- and long-term tasks they are expected to complete, the amount of time they are given to those tasks, and the growing workload that prevents them from keeping up with their daily routine. Scholars have also observed the increasing intensity and complexity of the principalship in the United Kingdom (UK), the United States (US), and other countries (p. 74).

Tikkanen et al. (2017) used a profile-based approach to research the “interrelations between work stress, burnout, and proactive self-regulation strategies among principals and teachers with leadership duties” (p. 260). Work stress is “the process of job stressors, or stimuli in the workplace, leading to strains, or negative responses or reactions” (Glazer & Liu, 2017). Tikkanen et al. (2017) gave examples of work stress: “negative, inconvenient emotions such as anger, anxiety, tension, frustration, or depression caused by some aspect of work” (p. 261). According to Tikkanen et al. (2017), Finnish principals “experienced quite low levels of stress and burnout symptoms” and “there were more principals in the low risk of burnout profile than in the other profiles” (p. 269). These results were unexpected since previous studies had shown the opposite results. Tikkanen et al. (2017) collected these previous research studies, so that future researchers could investigate further. Significant numbers of Finnish principals report a lot of stress due to several stressors, such as a heavy workload and the level of responsibility (Boyland 2011; Friedman 2002; Mustonen 2003; Tucker 2010; Van der Merwe & Parsotam 2012; Vuohijoki 2006). One of the causes of this stress could be that the Finnish education system has flexible accountability structures (Aho et al. 2006). Accountability has certainly been recognized as a major cause of stress for principals in other circumstances (Boyland 2011; Combs et al. 2009). Tikkanen et al. (2017) suggested that the low levels of job stress and burnout symptoms in Finnish principals could be explained by the use of proactive self-regulation strategies, which is consistent with previous findings (Allison, 1997; Dicke et al., 2015; Pietarinen et al., 2013a; Verešová & Malá, 2012).

Nevertheless, the data of Terävä (2020) showed that the well-being of Finnish principals is at-risk. The Principal Barometer 2019 research study, initiated by the Finnish Association of Principals as part of the International Principal Health and Wellbeing research project, conducted jointly with Philip Riley of Australia, revealed that slightly more than one principal in 10 is exhausted, and one in three risks burnout. The situation in Finland could jeopardize the working conditions of the school staff, including professionals and teachers, as well as learning conditions for the students. Fatigue is easily transmitted, according to Minna Huutilainen, one of the main researchers of the study along with Katariina Salmela-Aro. In other words, school principals play a fundamental role in schools and influence many people (Cheng, 1994).

In the Principal Barometer 2019, 564 school principals participated in the survey, and of these, 80 also agreed to undergo physiological measurements to investigate the symptoms of fatigue. Symptoms can include increased heart rate, decreased physical activity, bad quality of sleep, and illness. Some of the difficulties that principals currently face include growing school units, poor quality indoor air, and financial problems. According to Huutilainen, in Terävä (2020), when principals are overwhelmed due to fatigue or at risk of fatigue, they spend less time on the tasks they consider most rewarding, like communicating with teachers, students, and their families. Their motivation can decline. Antti Ikonen, chair of the Finnish Association of Principals, observed that principals have recently taken on more responsibilities, such as administrative work, and the implementation of the curriculum through the current school reform project. Their workload has increased. The training and professional development of principals needs refining to respond to the 21st century school needs.

The Principal Barometer 2019 revealed that more than half of participants were enthusiastic about their work. These principals viewed their work as valuable, challenging, and enabling them to develop skills. According to Minna Huutilainen, the study shows that principals enjoy autonomy in their work:

Even if there are a lot of stressors, being able to influence your own doing is protecting. The work of these principals is certainly not easy, but self-determination helps to control stress (Terävä, 2020).

This excerpt suggests that while principals face a lot of stressors in their day-to-day work, they can also exercise choice, and this protects them from stress.

4.2 The Stressors and Coping Strategies of Principals

This section describes the stressors and coping strategies of principals validated in previous research. In order to cope with daily stress, Ontario principals use different strategies, such as “spending time with friends/family, watching television or movies, reading” (Pollock et al., 2014, p. 38). According to the same study, self-medicating was used in almost one third of the cases (Pollock et al., 2014).

In Finland, a recent study showed that school principals experience low levels of work stress and burnout. Tikkanen et al. (2017) suggest that proactive self-regulation strategies, consisting of “better planning, searching for new information, learning new skills, and reducing work tasks that feel burdensome” (p. 165) explain these findings (Kyriacou, 2011; Poirel et al., 2012; Salkovsky et al., 2015).

Research has been conducted on the health and wellness of principals (Chaplain, 2001; Darmody & Smyth, 2016; Federici & Skaalvik, 2012). One study focussed on factors affecting job satisfaction (Wang et al., 2018), and another, Tikkanen et al. (2017), examined the proactive self-regulation strategies of principals in coping with stressors.

In addition, Bedi and Kukemelk (2018) studied literature on the origins of job stress in school principals (e.g., Kendi (2012), Wadesango et al. (2015), Cooper and Kelly (1993), Juma and Simatwa (2016), and Göker (2012)). They tried to define both stress and job stress. Stress is a state of agitation, nervousness, tension or anxiety felt by an individual who is destabilized (Friedman, 2000). The person’s body reacts by trying to adapt to the situation (Sánchez-Rinza & Peralta, 2013). Job stress occurs when people feel that they will not be able to manage in the workplace (World Health Organization, 2004).

Bedi and Kukemelk (2018) listed several stressors experienced by school principals. Kendi (2012) identified the following as job stressors: the budget, responsibility for those with whom principals deal on a regular basis, school buildings and premises, and families. Wadesango et al. (2015), identified the leadership role regarding teachers as a stressor, along with visitors, health records, and funds. Cooper and Kelly (1993) identified the principals' social network, workload, and lack of resources as additional stressors. Juma and Simatwa (2016) identified the lack of possibility for professional development as a stressor, along with tight deadlines, late or delayed payment of funds, social network, and lack of specialist support. Göker (2012) identified personal circumstances as a stressor, as well as limited ability to modify tasks, a lack of professional development and growth, bureaucracy, a lack of support and resources, and all the paperwork principals must do. In their findings, Bedi and Kukemelk (2018) conclude that workload, lack of resources, and lack of support are the main stressors. They suggest decreasing the workload of school principals, as well as the "part shared among deputies and delegated staff in the school" (p. 357).

In order to reduce job stress, Bedi and Kukemelk (2018) suggest that principals' role be narrowed to tasks related to materials and individual resources, teaching and instruction, and leadership. Tasks related to budget, teaching, discipline, to name just a few areas, could be divided among teachers or other people in charge, to whom power would be delegated. This way, principals would be able to enjoy work-family conciliation and get the support they need from their family (Kendi, 2012).

5 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of the present study was to investigate how some of the job stress experienced by school principals could be alleviated, how principals could be supported more efficiently, and what coping strategies might be helpful. Changes

could be introduced that would produce a positive impact not only on the principals themselves, but also on staff and students. Based on its results, this study identified the main stressors for principals, coping strategies, and the support that could be offered. Three research questions have been elaborated:

1. What are the causes of the job stressors?
2. What strategies do school principals use to try to cope with these stressors?
3. What specific support do school principals need, or what changes should occur to support them?

6 DATA AND METHODOLOGY

6.1 Participants

The participants who volunteered to be part of this study were all school principals working in public schools in Ontario (Canada) or Finland at the time of the data collection. Given that this research study includes both diaries and individual interviews, four volunteer participants were selected in each country, for a total of eight. In Finland, they were recruited with the snowball sampling technique from members of the Finnish Association of Principals. In Canada, participants were recruited through the Ontario Principals' Council and the Catholic Principals' Council. These councils regroup all school principals from publicly funded schools in the province of Ontario. These participants were diverse in terms of gender, experience as school principals, and the levels and locations of their schools. Pseudonyms were used to respect confidentiality. Table 1 shows the background of participants (i.e., participant pseudonym, country, duties, gender, position, number of years of experience as a school principal and as a teacher, and number of work hours per week).

Table 1 *Background of School Principals Participating in the Study*

	Amber	Amy	Vicky	Brook	Mikko	Suvi	Matias	Hannu
Country	Canada	Canada	Canada	Canada	Finland	Finland	Finland	Finland
Gender	F	F	F	F	M	F	M	M
Position	FT P	FT P	FT P	PT TVP	FT P	FT P	FT P	FT P
Number of years of experience as a school principal	15-19	5-9	10-14	0-4	15-19	15-19	5-9	15-19
Number of years of experience as a teacher	10-14	10-14	5-9	15-19	0-4	10-14	15-19	0-4
Number of hours of work per week (on-site & off-site)	60-70	At least 66 some-times 72 or more	50-60	Usually 68	About 36:45	43-45	About 38	About 45

Legend:

Gender: F= female, M=male

Position: FT = full-time, PT = part-time, P = principal, TVP = teaching vice-principal

The sample of Finnish participants was composed of three males and one female, while in the Canadian sample, all four participants were female. At the time of the study, all Finnish and Canadian participants worked as principals, except one Canadian participant, who worked as a teaching vice-principal (50%-50%). All Finnish participants had teaching duties, the norm in Finland. All participants were experienced educators, with a minimum of fifteen years in the field, in mid or end career.

The Finnish participants said they worked on average around 40 hours per week. Some worked 45 hours per week; others, between 35 and 40 hours. Canadian principals said they worked on average approximately 64 hours a week.

Most of them reported working approximately 65 to 70 hours a week, and one, 55 hours on average. My data regarding number of weekly work hours for Canadian principals (i.e., 64 hours per week) are in line with previous research studies (i.e., 59 hours per week) (Pollock et al., 2014). My data showed that the number of weekly working hours of the Finnish principals is 40 hours per week, but previous research has shown that this number could be as high as 50 hours (called 'absurd' by some respondents) recorded in the study conducted by Alava et al. (2012).

In comparison, in Ireland, 43% of principals work over 46 hours a week, while 15% work over 56 hours. During school holidays, over half Irish principals work more than 25 hours (Riley, 2015). Australian principals reported working 56 hours per week or more in 53% of cases, and at least 61 to 65 hours in 27% of cases. Furthermore, almost one third of them said they worked 25 hours or more during school holidays (Riley, 2017b). Seventy-five percent of New Zealand principals work over 50 hours per week, while 25% work 60 hours per week. The number of weekly hours worked is a good indication that principalship is demanding and puts principals at risk, physically and mentally (Riley, 2017a).

The number of years of experience as a principal could have an incidence on weekly working hours. Principals might have to compensate for their lack of experience with additional working hours to complete new tasks and duties. Previous studies show that more experienced principals spend less time on their work (Pollock et al., 2014).

It is surprising, however, that the more teaching experience principals had prior to becoming a principal, the more likely they were to work longer hours (Pollock et al., 2014).

Gender influences work hours. Female principals spend more time on their work than male counterparts:

The results showed that male principals scored 1.8 units lower on the scale for the average time principals spent working per week, indicating that overall male principals (M=57) tend to spend less time working compared to their female colleagues (M=59). However, less than one percent of the variance of the average time principals spent per week in the sample can be accounted for by gender (Pollock et al., 2014, p. 15).

According to Darmody and Smyth (2016), “Stress levels were higher for those in the early stages of principalship, then dip after five years but tend to increase again after ten years in the post”. Darmody and Smyth (2016) also note that “job satisfaction var[ies] by work experience, not age” (as cited in Wang et al., 2018, p. 75).

6.2 Data Collection

The data collection for this study was rich since the diaries covered 20 working days and were combined with semi-structured individual interviews of almost an hour, on average.

6.2.1 Diary Methodology

Data collection for this study started with gathering diaries from school principals. When participants in a research study are asked to write diaries, they follow certain guidelines. For instance, they might be asked to describe their behaviours, feelings, or ideas over a certain time period (Bartlett & Milligan, 2015).

Diaries allow researchers to access participants’ reports almost in the heat of the moment, when participants are more likely to report what was really felt. Answering surveys long after the fact can result in involuntary memory distortion (Iida et al., 2012).

However, writing diaries can be time consuming for participants and they can become overwhelmed since it increases their workload. Researchers are more likely to get trustworthy data with diligent participants: “It is important that the participants are committed and dedicated to the participation to obtain reliable and valid data” (Iida et al., 2012, p. 282).

In this study, the principals were instructed to take some time at the end of each school day to write their diaries over four weeks. Google forms (Appendix 2) is a user-friendly electronic application in Google Drive Office, which allows for the creation of personalized questionnaires. The Google diary form that I created included fields for the principal’s name, email address, and the date. Each

participant answered four questions: “1. Describe stressful situations that you experienced today (What happened?, Where?, Who was involved?). 2. Describe the job stressors that caused these situations. 3. What strategies did you use to cope with these stressful situations and stressors? and 4. What specific support did you get, or would you like to get for these stressful situations and stressors?”

Participants were free to write as much or as little as they wanted, about none, one, or many stressors and stressful situations that had occurred each day. The answer fields of the four questions had an unlimited number of characters. The diary method was selected because it is well suited to report on realities in day-to-day work. Indeed, since principals wrote their diaries at the end of each working day, their feelings and ideas about their stress, the stressful situations, their coping strategies, and the support received or needed were fresh in memory. They could describe the situations in greater detail if they wished, since the memory was strong. Open questions were used to facilitate confiding. These conditions encouraged more detailed descriptions.

Most participants wrote their diaries on a Google form. They submitted the diaries at the end of each week by clicking the “Submit form” button. For four consecutive weeks, a new form was emailed to them at the beginning of each week. I got a head start on analyzing the data and checked that the dates of the data collection were respected. Some participants experienced technical difficulties or did not find these forms user-friendly. They were offered other means to answer questions, such as email. Data collection took four weeks (i.e., 20 working days), from mid-September to mid-October 2019, the beginning of the 2019-2020 academic year, when students were back in school in both countries. Due to unforeseen circumstances, however, two Canadian participants finished writing their diaries in November 2019 and January 2020, respectively.

6.2.2 Interview Methodology

After most of the diaries were gathered, data collection continued with the interview method. These same principals were interviewed based on the information of their diaries. The interview method complemented the diary method. With

these two combined methods, it was possible to answer the research questions with rich and deep data.

The online individual interviews were all held in November 2019, with the exception of one, which was held during the second half of January 2020 for a participant who had finished writing her diaries during the first half of January, as was mutually agreed.

These individual interviews were all held online by video call, save for one that was held by telephone at the request of the participant. General questions were asked as well as personalized ones based on the 20 days of diary entries by each participant. This allowed for a deeper understanding of context.

The shortest interview lasted approximately half an hour, while the longest lasted almost two hours. All the others lasted approximately 45-50 minutes. The interviews were recorded and transcribed.

6.2.3 Interview Planning and Design

The interviews were planned using a method and terminology developed by Tracy (2012). The interview was semi-structured, and all participants were asked the same general questions. In addition, they had a short list of personalized questions based on their diaries. The interviews were respondent type, since participants were all qualified and experienced school principals. My approach was one of deliberate naïveté and openness to anything said.

The questions asked and the information that participants received are available in the General Interview Guidelines (Appendix 3). The interview began with opening questions to build rapport, followed by open-ended questions about prior experience and about factual issues. For instance, participants were asked about their educational background and career path, and how previous studies and/or work experience equipped them to work as principals. Furthermore, they were asked what they spent most of their workday doing, what their priorities as leaders were, and what they liked most in their job. They were asked to predict the future: Do you think that stressful situations will worsen or

improve for school principals in the next 10 years in Ontario/Finland? What kind of leaders will be needed to fill the principals' role in the next 10 years? A speculative question about changes needed was asked (i.e., If you had a magic wand, what kind of stressors would you like to see change, and/or get support for)?

After this, participants were asked to answer personalized questions about their diaries. Directive questions (typology) followed, such as: What kind of support is the most important for a principal in a school nowadays? Then, came the closing questions (catch-all): Is there anything you wish people knew about your job that you have not told me already? Before concluding, I gave them their temporary personal profiles prepared on the basis on their diaries. We concluded with an identity – enhancing question: What did they feel was the most important thing we had talked about during the interview, and why?

6.3 Theory Guided-Phase of the Data Analysis

Phase One of the data analysis was a theory guided-phase. To classify stressors for principals into categories, I examined the three categories listed in Mahfouz's model (2018) – stressors, emotions, and coping strategies – as a guide in this phase of data analysis, and colour-coded the data with their help. Mahfouz (2018) stressors, emotions, and coping strategies studied the stressors that affect the job performance and well-being of principals. She also presented examples from her data. Mahfouz's model shows the frequency in percentages of each Theme (Stressors, Emotions, and Coping strategies) subdivided into Categories (Work-related, Relationship-related, Time-related, Unpleasant feelings, Spending time with loved ones, and Having an outlet outside work) and Sub-categories (Constant change, Age-/gender-related power dynamics, Bureaucracy, Unknown, School culture, Accountability, Parents, Compassion fatigue, Superintendent, Union, Teachers, Students, Family – work balance, Too many tasks and duties, Not enough time at work, No self-care, Guilt, Loneliness, Unfairness, No appreciation, Regret, Not being understood). Mahfouz's model was selected because the research objectives and main concepts were similar to those of the present

study. Appendix 1: Acronyms and Abbreviations contains acronyms of the categories and sub-categories from the original Mahfouz model (Mahfouz, 2018), as well as those from my Expanded Typology, based on Mahfouz's Model.

The Mahfouz model was chosen over the model used by Wang et al. (2018). This latter study was conducted with approximately 2,700 principals working in elementary and secondary public schools in Ontario, Canada. The data analysis covered approximately 1,400 valid cases. Research showed that work intensification affects the job satisfaction of school principals. Mahfouz's research objective (2018) is closer to the aim of our research. Mahfouz (2018) studied stressors experienced by principals, and coping strategies used, while Wang et al. (2018) investigated job satisfaction in relation to work intensification. Wang et al. designated several categories of significant factors as "motivating factors": challenges in relation to teachers, external challenges, recognition, how principals spend their time, and demands at work. They designated other categories of significant factors as "maintenance factors": impact of policies, respect, and relationship with district school board. Wang et al. (2018) suggest that certain factors significantly affect the job satisfaction of principals. However, I was interested in stressors and coping strategies.

Mahfouz's model was also chosen over that of Bauer and Brazer (2013) because the goal of their study also differs from that of the present study. They explored the role of isolation in predicting job satisfaction of new principals. Their findings showed that lower social support and higher role ambiguity lead to greater isolation. Decreased job satisfaction is a likely result. The conceptual framework used by Bauer and Brazer (2013) identified three new challenges for school principals: ambiguity, conflict, and overload. These factors, as well as social support and coaching are predictors of job satisfaction quality in new principals. The greater the sense of professional isolation reported by new principals, the lower the sense of job satisfaction. The labels used by Bauer and Brazer (2013) correlate only partially with research questions in the present study. Bauer and Brazer (2013) explored the effect of isolation on job satisfaction reported by school principals. In the present study, my interest was in how stress experienced by

school principals could be alleviated, how principals could be supported more effectively, and what coping strategies could be helpful.

In classifying coping strategies, I also sought inspiration from two categories listed in Mahfouz (2018): Spending time with loved ones and Having an outlet outside work. Table 2 shows the original Mahfouz's model (Mahfouz, 2018, p. 6), where themes, categories, and sub-categories are presented:

Table 2 *Original Mahfouz's Model (Mahfouz, 2018)*

Theme	Category	Sub-category
Stressor	Work-Related (WR)	Constant change Age-/gender-related power dynamics Bureaucracy Unknown School culture Accountability
	Relationship-Related (RR)	Parents Compassion Fatigue Superintendent Union Teachers Students
	Time-Related (TR)	Family-work balance Too many tasks and duties Not enough time at work No self-care
Emotions	Unpleasant feelings	Guilt Loneliness Unfairness No appreciation Regret Not being understood
Coping strategies	Spending time with loved ones Having an outlet outside work	

While Mahfouz's model was a good inspiration for the first phase of this research study, helping me find the initial results, there were many findings I could not locate in the model. During the analysis, I expanded Mahfouz's (2018) model to adapt it to data in my own research study. Gradually, I developed a new version of Mahfouz's typology. First, I checked if the data fit in the existing model. If it

did, I used the existing model. If it did not, I expanded it. Categories and sub-categories were reviewed several times during the analysis. Indeed, some were insufficiently broad, in which case I renamed the sub-category. After this, I reviewed the analysis of the previous data again, and pursued the analysis until it was satisfactory (i.e., my data were saturated).

One sub-category in the work-related (WR) category of the Mahfouz (2018) model was not represented in my data: B) age-/gender-related power dynamics.

In addition, in my model for categorization, every main category has sub-categories, except *Spending time with loved ones (TLO)*. In the data analysis, a category occasionally has no sub-category since the diary was not detailed enough to add one. Below is my model for categorization, loosely based on Mahfouz's (2018) model. The additions that I made to Mahfouz's model appear in italics and deletions are underlined. Themes, Categories and Sub-categories that are eliminated are crossed-out. The theme Emotions (including its category and sub-categories) was excluded from this study despite its relevance to the topic. I wanted to narrow my study to make it more manageable for participants. My thesis focused on stressors, coping strategies, and support. The sub-category B age-/gender-related power dynamics was also excluded since my data analysis did not reveal any relevant examples.

Table 3 *New Typology, Based on Mahfouz's Model (Mahfouz, 2018)*

Theme	Category	Sub-category
Stressful Situations/Stressors/Coping Strategies/Support	Work-Related (WR)	<i>A change/constant change</i> <i>B age/gender related power dynamics</i> <i>C bureaucracy/paperwork</i> <i>D unknown</i> <i>E school work culture</i> <i>F accountability/responsibility/know-how</i> <i>G technology</i> <i>H schedule/reschedule</i> <i>I training/PD</i> <i>J meetings</i> <i>K safety/emergency</i> <i>L resources/information</i> <i>M poor results</i>
	Relationship-Related (RR)	<i>A parents</i> <i>B compassion fatigue/empathy</i> <i>C secretaries</i> <i>D superintendent</i> <i>E union/work to rule action</i> <i>F teachers</i> <i>G students</i> <i>H staff</i> <i>I delegation/collaborative work</i> <i>J principals</i> <i>K specialists/people in charge</i> <i>L unprofessional or behavioural issues/fight/conflict/disagreement</i>

Table 3 *New Typology, Based on Mahfouz's Model (Mahfouz, 2018)*

Theme	Category	Sub-category
	Time-Related (TR)	A family-work balance B too many tasks and duties C not enough time at work D self-care E hurry up/meet deadlines F long days G easy/normal days H prioritization I Constant interruptions/multitasking
Emotions	Unpleasant feeling	Guilt Loneliness Unfairness No appreciation Regret Not being understood
Coping strategies/support	Spending time with loved ones (TLO)	
Coping strategies	Having an outlet outside work (OOW)	A physical activity, B other relaxing activity

I first identified all of the documented stressful situations, stressors, coping strategies, and support in my data (journals). Then, I classified them using the work-related, relationship-related, and time-related categories labels. The work-related label was used for tasks principals had to perform or issues they had to face. The relationship-related label was used for activities and situations that involved people. The time-related label was used for activities and situations related to time and workload.

The Spending time with loved ones label was used under coping strategies and support. "Loved ones" refers to any relatives, like a spouse or children, friends or even pets. There was no sub-category.

The Having an outlet outside work label was used under coping strategies only. There were two sub-categories: A. physical activity, and B. other relaxing activity.

Here is an example from the Work-related (WR) category, where E means work culture and Q1 means Question 1 – Stressful Situations:

WR-H: Schedule/Reschedule –

EQAO math assessment in now cancelled but will run for all semester I and II students in June – that will be an interesting puzzle to work on... (Amber). (Q1 – Stressful Situations).

The Work-Related-Schedule/Reschedule [WR-H] label was chosen for this stressful situation. It is an example of a scheduling issue that Amber will have to solve.

In the present study, labels used for stressors were also used for coping strategies, and for support received and/or needed. I did this even if Mahfouz's model offered no labels for the last two of these three categories. Moreover, my data showed connections between stressful situations/stressors, coping strategies, and support. My model established these connections. Here are some examples:

Stressful situation (Q1):

Nothing really. I had to attend a mandatory training session (which I must go to once per year) in which I "sit and get" many legislative updates... that I already know as I work to ensure that I stay current/up-to-date. Frustrating in that much of the information has been previously shared...but I respect that this is necessarily requirement. (Vicky). [WR-E].

Stressor (Q2):

Lost opportunity to do other work at my school site....that the work awaits for me afterwards and I will need to do more work over the weekend in order to stay current. (Vicky). [TR-A].

Coping strategy(Q3):

Take a breath and make the most of the situation. Today also gives me the opportunity to socially connect with colleagues that I do not get to see too often. (Vicky). [RR-J].

Support needed (Q4):

Coffee and food is supplied during this day...which is appreciated! (Vicky). [TR-D].

In these connections, school principals have compulsory duties and responsibilities, such as attending this annual training session. The Work-related -work culture [WR-E] label was chosen for this stressful situation because it is an example of the high-bar norms and expectations that must be followed by these professionals. Regarding the stressor, the label Time-related-family-work balance [TR-A] was chosen, since Vicky will have to work on the weekend, and will be less likely to enjoy family time. The Relationship-Related – principals label [RR-J] was chosen for the coping strategy. Vicky mentioned that it felt good to connect with her peers, since she does not have this opportunity very often. For support, Vicky mentioned coffee and food, compliments of the employer. The Time-related-self-care [TR-D] label was chosen for this situation since participants can take the time to enjoy meals and refreshments.

The participants used “stressful situation” and “stressor” as synonyms. Therefore, in the study, these terms were used synonymously, unless otherwise specified.

Participants did not specify in their diaries if they were referring to support they actually received or support they needed to get. Contextually, it was obvious most of the time, but not always. In the present thesis, *support* refers to received and needed support without distinction, unless specified. A sample of the diary data analysis is presented in Appendix 4.

6.4 Data-Based Phase of the Data Analysis

After the theory-guided phase, which focused on the diaries, the data-based phase focused on both diaries and interviews. Written diaries were used again for this second phase, as well as oral interviews that were later transcribed. The two collection methods were complementary. With a narrative approach or method, participants create meaning about their experiences through told or written stories (Moen, 2006, Polkinghorne, 1995, according to Hanhimäki, 2008). A narrative approach was used in the data-based phase to learn who these

principals were. General and personal interview questions helped me discover more about the participants and understand their diaries in greater depth.

Interviews were held after I had read the diaries. I wrote tentative profiles for each principal, and then sent personalized questionnaires to each of them. In this way, they could prepare their answers in advance and give detailed answers if they wished. In both diaries and interviews, principals told their stories.

For the data analysis, I sought answers to the three research questions: 1) What are the causes of the job stressors? 2. What strategies do school principals use to cope with these stressors? and 3. What specific support do school principals need, or what changes should occur to support them? In addition, I completed the principals' profiles, and then identified similarities and differences across participants and countries. I was sensitive to the information disclosed in the data and watched for possible contradictions they might reveal.

Since the data of this study was narratively constructed, a narrative-approach methodology was well suited for analyzing and reporting on it. Because the format for my data collection was quite open, chances were maximized for receiving a variety of reasons for job stressors. Mahfouz's model was applied in the theory-guided phase of the data analysis.

However, since the data were very rich, and theoretical models did not enable a holistic data description, phase two of the analysis was data-based. In this phase, I performed an in-depth analysis of the interviews, but I also used the diaries in constructing principal profiles.

7 THE STRESS AND COPING PROFILES OF EACH PRINCIPAL

7.1 Introduction to the Profiles of each Principal

In this chapter, principals will be compared to each other and across countries. The main differences and similarities will be presented. For each school principal/country, a stressor, coping strategy, or support mentioned at least once is

used as a label. The correlation of these labels with labels used by Mahfouz (2018) can be found in Appendix 5, which summarizes the data analysis of the diaries using a new typology, an elaborated version of Mahfouz's model (Mahfouz, 2018).

Appendix 5 was developed using Mahfouz's original typology (Mahfouz, 2018) and my diary data. During the analysis process, extensions were progressively added to the original model. These were reviewed and tested again.

For Matias, who wrote in his journal that he experienced no job stress during the data collection, Appendix 5 shows only [TR-G] in the Stressful Situations/Stressors column, where [TR] stands for Time-Related, and [G] for easy/normal days. The Coping Strategies and Support columns are empty since Matias did not mention any. For all the other participants, the three columns contain data most of the time, i.e. the Stressful Situations/Stressors column, the Coping Strategies column, and the Support Column. For instance, for Brook, the Support column contains [WR-L] and [RR-JK]. [WR-L] stands for Work-Related-resources/information, while [RR-J] stands for Relations-Related-principals and [RR-K] stands for Relations-Related specialists/people in charge.

In Appendix 5, main categories standing alone without sub-categories indicate that details were either insufficient, too general, or simply unknown in the context described by the participant. Then, no sub-category was assigned to the category, as is the case for the following [RR] category:

"Interpersonal relationships - the hardest part of the job!!! A sense of control - I don't need to know everything about everybody all the time as long as I have a well-trained and trustworthy team, which I do". (Q2 - job stressor)

The main category RR (Relationships-related) stands alone. It is too general to be used also as a sub-category.

The sub-category-school culture in Mahfouz's typology was changed to work culture (WR-E) in my model. In my study, work culture includes not only schools, but also school boards, municipality (in Finland), and educational leadership. A culture issue might not be limited to the school, but be generalized throughout the provincial education system (in Canada):

“The scope, range and complexity of the work that we do”. (Q2 - stressor).

For similar reasons, the bureaucracy sub-category in the work-related category (WR-C) became bureaucracy/**paperwork**. Abundant paperwork is common in the education system.

“The amount of paperwork and checking required to complete required tasks is ridiculous”.

The profiles of the eight participating principals can be found in sections 7.2 to 7.9 of this thesis. Note that these stories are told in the same order as they are presented on Table 4. For each one, a general description is followed by stressors, coping strategies, and support desired or received.

7.2 Hannu, Finland – “A Principal is a Principal’s Best Friend”

Hannu was calm and always tried to be fair and flexible. He was a hard worker. Teachers at his school had to remind him to go home and rest. He felt he had a heavy workload, but happily, he was well organized and knew how to prioritize. He made himself available and supported both adults and students. He relied on staff support and support from principal-peers. He was able to take time to rest, which for him meant listening to good music and enjoying cake with the staff. He was physically active. He ran and skied four or five times a week. He was sensitive to people’s feelings: he showed he understood them, and in return he received their support, so they became his allies. Hannu said writing was the easiest task for him, and he was quick at it. His most challenging responsibilities were special education and student care. He prepared himself well in advance for difficult situations. He wished social services and student welfare were more efficient. Improving these services would help teachers a lot.

Main stressors: Work overload was a common cause of stress for principals, and Hannu was no exception: “Okay, ‘stressful situation’, I think it means that there is too much work scheduled”.

For Hannu, the most challenging responsibilities concerned “special education and student care (...) and special education teachers of course and curators”. Hannu’s diary showed that some special needs cases were more complex than others:

Pupil welfare meeting. A pupil with special needs moved to another home with his father. The parents are divorced. The mother has used drugs. The dad doesn’t have a job nor a driver’s license. And the child should go to school... A conversation with a father who wanted to take care of his son. Informing the administration. The school curator attended the meeting and was in contact with child welfare. The pupil got a special class place at the new school. Accepting it, I can’t do more about this. The social worker is now taking care of this case. (Hannu)

For Hannu, stressors were not internal factors but external, arising from conditions outside the school. “A stressor is an external factor that makes school management more difficult. For example, inadequate resources and money”, Hannu claimed.

Coping strategies: For Hannu, a coping strategy was the ability to organize one’s work and one’s life. Hannu prioritized tasks and duties; otherwise, he would not have been able to survive. “So, I think I’m pretty good at prioritizing. (...) You had to learn quickly how to prioritize”. Like many principals, he relieved stress through exercise: “The method of relaxation is sport four or five times a week. And yes, it helps running and skiing, and the two of them is (sic) a very good combination”.

Support: In his diary, Hannu wrote about a meeting that he had with the parents of a student to inform them their son would be removed from his regular peer group for a few days. The student was being placed in a homework room under the supervision of a guidance counselor and in the company of other students who were too disorganized to be in a regular classroom. The meeting was not very stressful for Hannu. The parents did not disagree with the decision, although they were disappointed by their child’s disruptive behavior in the classroom. “Because parents trust the school... teachers have authority and are respected”. Hence, Hannu did not fear the parents’ reactions towards the school’s decision. But meetings like this were time consuming for both the teacher and the principal though (e.g., memos, phone calls, meetings). Hannu said that he

enjoyed parent support because they trusted the school. Trust was identified here as a facilitating factor.

The data showed that a principal's professional entourage was always considered important. When Hannu needed support, he relied on his peers, whom he called a "Good network of experts". He added that "because we have a very good combination of principals, so I think that networking with principals is very important. Like we say, "a principal is a principal's best friend". Hannu also sought advice from professionals outside the education field. In one difficult situation involving air quality, he had to consult the city's lawyer when parents threatened the school with a lawsuit.

Hannu reported that staff support can be a buffer in difficult situations. Hannu had the good fortune of being able to rely on support from the school staff. Nevertheless, he wanted schools to be better supported by the Social Services, which he perceived as inefficient. He wanted to see teachers focus more on teaching and education in schools. At the time of the study, they had to fill roles that went beyond their mandate as educators. Social Services often did not make decisions quickly enough to help students: "I think that is one of the reasons that nowadays a teachers' job is not a very high level. And the students do not choose so much teaching jobs and studies in education".

7.3 Mikko, Finland - "The Guy who Tried to Make Wishes Come True"

Mikko made the most of his resources, especially human resources, for which he was thankful. What he liked the most was being with people, adults and students alike, and discussing issues, even if he had too little time. Mikko was trying hard to be accessible. He was also willing to listen to people's requests and to try to find solutions. His door was always open even if his desk was full of to-do piles. His staff were his central concern. Contrary to conventional wisdom, he believed that he should always be there for teachers, not for students. It was the teacher's

job to be there for students. In his opinion, if school leaders take care of teachers, teachers will be happy, and will, in turn, do a good job with students:

Well, in many places, they say, oh, you know, you should be saying you're for the students but no, I think I am for the teachers because when teachers are feeling great and have everything they want, then they are happy. And if a teacher is happy in his/her classroom, he or she is going to have a really good lesson for the students and then the students will also be happy. So, I think that my job for the teachers is to make their wishes happen, if I can. I think that's what I see [my role is] as a principal: the guy who is trying to make wishes happen. (Mikko)

Mikko was gifted in math, so for him the easiest tasks were related to the budget: "It's easy to have Excel, add a couple of numbers to it. (...) It takes me about two or three hours to make the budget for the following year. (...) For me, it's not rocket science. For me, that's easy".

Mikko was able to prioritize the most important things and let the least important ones go when necessary. He did the work he had time to do in the time he had, and when he ran overtime, he made sure he made up the time off at a later date.

He also made time for relaxing. Mikko admitted that he found it difficult to complete the diary entries because he did not "stress so easily".

Main stressors:

Mikko found the matriculation exam period stressful because it was not easy to manage staff schedules, rooms, and computers. He needed to check that all computer programs were working on each computer and this was time-consuming: "[A]nd it takes time - about two to three hours (...) and that's why those examination days, I start my day at six o'clock. And with my vice-principal (...) and it's only two times, and three weeks in a year, so it's not that much". Mikko needed to be flexible to handle all kinds of eventualities during the exams. Disagreements between staff members were another challenge for Mikko. He strategized to prevent discord.

Coping strategies: Mikko was a proactive principal. To build good relationships among staff members, Mikko invited the whole staff to his place for dinner. Before he started working at the school, staff did not plan any activities together outside work. During my study, they were planning an outing together: "Now, one group is planning a bowling night for everybody here. And that's something

I have started to work with. (...) I have good relationships with the staff and the staff have good relationships with each other. That helps (...) that little grumbling coming here". These gatherings brought the team together. People were more inclined to help with different tasks at work without complaining.

Also, before joining his current school, Mikko was principal at another school for two decades. There, his work gradually became routine:

I noticed that when there was somebody coming to my door, I could recognize the steps of the person who was coming, and I knew what the questions would be. And I was quite often correct and I knew what to respond even before the questions were asked. I knew my place well, and I wanted something else, because it was a little bit too easy. (Mikko)

At the time of the present study, Mikko could not yet predict what teachers or students would ask him. He found this challenging in a good way, since it kept him busy.

Mikko worked a weekly average of 36 hours and 45 minutes, not more, not less: "I do not do unpaid [work]". When he did work more hours, he allowed himself to take a Friday afternoon off once in a while to compensate. He worked longer hours when school was open, but in June, when students were on vacation, he shortened his day.

In addition, Mikko really liked his old house, with a big garden, in which he had accumulated many memories over the years. There was always something to do. It was a place where he could relax.

Support: For Mikko, time was the most important support. "If I have enough time for me, I can manage myself quite easily here". Another important support was trust: "And of course, the second thing that comes (after) time is trust. I think my supervisor, my boss, has to trust what I'm doing. (...) [P]rincipals have to trust their teachers or coworkers, (...) and the staff also have to trust me, and know that I'm trying to do everything for them".

Mikko felt that the kind of leaders needed in the next 10 years were those able to delegate and trust: "[If] you are trying to do everything by yourself, then you're not going to make it as a principal. You have to trust and I'll give this job to somebody and it's going to be done (...) even if it's not going to be done [my] way". In his diary, Mikko mentioned that the support of the people he worked

with helped him a lot in his day-to-day work. He could then support the teachers: “[W]hen we have such a good team here at the office level it's quite easy to be with teachers [across] the hallway”.

7.4 Matias, Finland – The Proactive Principal

The proactive principal did not answer “No” to every single question in his diary because he was ignorant of what stress was, or too overwhelmed to elaborate further. In interview, Matias explained that, in general, autumn was not a busy time for him at school. He believed he was fortunate to enjoy close relationships with all of the principals of his school and with the leading principal, and that he enjoyed working with the whole staff. He had good relationships with all of them. His boss supported him and Matias could support his staff, whom he trusted. When faced with something difficult, he talked about it to colleagues, or with his wife. In addition, he listened to the staff closely before making decisions; that was his job. He tried to be flexible and open-minded. He had good leadership skills and really liked his job.

Not surprisingly, what he liked the most was working with people. He was more experienced now, so he knew what the priorities were. There were no new processes for him anymore, or very rarely. Principalship is a demanding job but Matias was very active and he was able to decompress on his free time.

Main stressors: In his diaries, Matias recorded feeling no stress during the 20 days of data collection. In interview, he explained that the season in which data was collected influenced his answers. The busiest and most stressful time of the year for him was always the end of the spring semester, i.e., May and June. At that time, he prepared the fall semester, and was busy and stressed-out: “I did a lot of work in June. I prepared this new school year in the summer before the summer holiday. So, it was quite easy for me to come to work after the summer holiday when everything was prepared. I don't leave any hard work to autumn. So, it's the easiest time of the year for me, this late autumn”. Matias explained that had he written the diary in the springtime, he would have felt so stressed-

out and overwhelmed that writing a diary might have been impossible: “If I would have made this diary in May, maybe I wouldn't have done it at all, but there would have been a lot of stressful days”.

Matias said he was familiar with stress but assured me he felt no stress during my data collection: “I know what stress is. Yes, believe me. I have lost my sleep many times, but this autumn has been very well, very good; the best in my career, maybe”. This excerpt confirmed Matias’ statements that all his stressful preparation work was done in spring.

Coping strategies: To cope with stress, Matias completed his work in a timely manner and did not postpone tasks. He avoided procrastinating because it made him feel pressured. Matias never took work home, except for reading emails on weekday evenings, but never read emails on weekends. He also discussed hard and stressful situations with his vice principal, supervisor, teachers, and wife. If he could not remedy the situation, he tried his best. He made sure to exercise and sleep adequately. Each day, he bicycled a great distance to and from school. He also had great relationships with extended family. Finally, Matias reported that he prayed a lot, and asked God for help.

Support: Matias felt very fortunate to have easy access to his boss, the leading principal, since his office was on the same campus. The leading principal knew what was going on and therefore could really help Matias. Moreover, Matias was one of four principals in his school. They supported each other as peers. Matias was satisfied; he did not feel he needed anything else, as he stated below:

...it's easier, he [leading principal] can understand what the difficulties or the challenges are”. [...] I think the most important thing is that my boss is near. I have somebody to talk to, and with whom I can do some things, and he can also take care of some things as well, so I don't have to do everything by myself. I think that principals are quite lonely in town schools, since there is no other principal because he/she is in another school. But here, in our school, there are four principals, so we are a good team of principals. And that's a very good support for me. I really don't need any other support. (Matias)

7.5 Suvi, Finland - The Principal who Knew how to Surround herself in Facing Adversity

Suvi was proactive and focused on one thing at a time. She was experienced, so she knew what to prioritize and what needed to be done in advance. She valued

teamwork and divided responsibility. She was never alone in difficult situations. She sought support from the second principal and secretary, teachers, assistants, and even students. She was empathetic and regarded teachers and staff as allies. Her priorities were the people, and she managed to allocate time for them. In addition, she enjoyed working with people and the routine work of paying bills and processing payroll. She enjoyed responsibility. She always made sure to treat people with respect even when she was busy and stressed out. It was easy to talk to her. Every week, she made a plan and prepared herself. She also made sure to leave early on Fridays. Suvi liked walking during the work day as well as outside school hours.

Main stressors: Suvi's most challenging responsibilities were demanding meetings, and the negative and inappropriate feedback that could follow. She did not like resolving quarrels, nor working long hours. However, working with people was what Suvi liked the most. The easiest task for her was routine work, "like paying the salaries and bills". Suvi believed that stressful situations/stressors at work increased due to demands outside of school and the school's responsibility. These demands went beyond teaching and education: "It's something else".

Coping strategies: Suvi planned her work in order to be able to leave early on Friday, which she made "a very easy day". This way, her weekends were longer and she could take her mind off work. Her new goal was to walk her dog twice a day. Suvi coped with stressors mainly when she was off campus, in her free time. On campus during working hours, she held walking meetings outdoors to discuss budget cuts. As she stated in her diary, she relied on "short walks outdoors for fresh air and conversations with 2nd principal".

Support: Suvi mentioned that the support of the ICT programs was very important in her day-to-day work. She saw technology as an important support because the various programs helped her accomplish her tasks. "Best help is good and updated work tools. E.g. Data processing programs, etc.".

Furthermore, Suvi relied on shared responsibility. Stressful situations are not as stressful when "you can divide the responsibility" among staff. Then, the stress does not rest solely on the shoulders of the principal. Suvi gave many

examples in the diary of responsibility sharing within her institution for events, assemblies or activities: “The parent meeting was planned by more than just one person so that the responsibility was shared”. Suvi has learned to surround herself with allies to face challenging meetings: “I’m never alone in a stressful or difficult meeting; I always have a partner with me and we work as a team”.

Moreover, in order to be able to make the most of this type of leadership, Suvi liked “to have a skilled staff, that’s important”. Her staff were then more likely to be an asset in the school, especially if their skills were varied. In addition, Suvi did not call upon her staff alone for help. She also asked students: “There was an international guest visiting the school. English is not my strength. I used students as translators. They showed around the school and made presentations for the guests in English. English language courses for teachers would be great. Again, teamwork was the keyword for surviving today”. For Suvi, this kind of leadership had many advantages: “And when somebody is doing these things with someone, some people are going to get an advantage out of the work that they've done. So, usually it's good for all”. These benefits explain why she could find volunteers for different tasks. However, even if Suvi considered shared responsibility a support, she wished the sharing could be even more efficient: “we should also be able to divide the work more clearly: who is going to do what”? Suvi felt that this leadership model could be improved.

Not surprisingly, Suvi believed that in the next 10 years, principals would have to be “empathic and good in interactions”.

7.6 Brook, Canada - The Principal whose Favourite Task was Teaching

Brook was a hard-working, proactive teaching principal, who led with ease. She did not hesitate to consult and discuss with her mentor and principal, and acquainted herself with the details of any task to make sure she was making the right decision. What she found most stressful was when something was out of her control and when she could not anticipate what would happen, despite her

best efforts. The only way to relax was to turn her phone off. She liked to relax with her husband. Although the task she liked most was teaching, she recognized that being a teaching principal increased stress. Indeed, she was sometimes called to deal with a behaviour situation during class time. Communications with her principal partner were difficult. In addition, Brook could not tend to herself during the day because she was always on call. All in all, however, Brook found being an administrator very fulfilling. It was hard and it took considerable time, but she strongly believed that the rewards trumped the challenges she faced on a daily basis: "I'm passionate about what I do, then I strive to help others to find their passion in their job. And for my students to also find their passion in the work that they're doing at school".

Main stressors: What stressed Brook were things outside her control: "I think for me what is stressful are things that are out of my control and difficult for me to anticipate despite my best efforts". In most cases, she knew that with time and effort, she had a chance to succeed. She could then focus on what she had to do in order to achieve her goals.

Another major source of stress for Brook was technology, more specifically notifications on her cell phone. Diary data showed that technology glitches with no backup became a stressor for Brook when they occurred during a presentation before staff members: "Technology crashing while doing the presentation, a whole staff activity. Unfamiliar with presentation and so did not have the next steps to ensure the information could be communicated using another means". Diary data also showed that students with severe behavioural issues were stressful for Brook. Indeed, she described similar kinds of incidents several times:

Monday: We were short staffed, then a dysregulated student having difficulty settling and resetting into the classroom. The classroom teacher quite upset and not certain she can continue in the classroom. Tuesday: Same dysregulated student destroyed the class when he was refused access to recess by his teacher. I was called to support the child. Staff not in agreement with my decision to keep the child at school but outside of the class. She felt it should have been an out of school sanction. As a result she informed me by email that she was going to contact the union for advice. Consulted with my principal, talked to my mentor. (Brook)

According to Pollock et al. (2017), mental health issues are too complex to be handled efficiently by vice-principals nowadays. These events were even more

stressful because of a lack of human resources as well as their direct and indirect repercussions (i.e., the teacher's distress and her disagreement over consequences given to the child).

Finally, Brook did not feel supported by her leading principal. She felt that he did not fully recognize her skills, and she found this stressful. She wished he would acknowledge her qualifications and level of expertise, and treat her fairly and equally: "I would appreciate that he supports my position publicly and not undermine my authority because he's friends with that person and he doesn't want to harm the friendship". Brook found it very frustrating that her principal sometimes bypassed her and assigned work to a staff member, while she was fully qualified to do the tasks as a teacher and principal. She reported that this undermined her credibility.

Brook also felt little communication existed with the principal with whom she has partnered:

I need to know that when there's a challenge as a partner decision, or we're doing it together, or I'm taking the lead and often it was quite a big one, I wasn't sure who's taking on that role. Just recently I did ask for clarification on division of labour and we needed to do that so that business can be a little clearer regarding who is doing what. The support that I'm looking forward to is having open communication and know what's happening. (Brook)

Brook liked to know what was going to happen because otherwise, she was on the alert. She needed to plan ahead. For instance, she needed to find a supply teacher for her teaching assignments if her principal was going to be out of the building.

Coping strategies: Brook took the lead, as opposed to her principal, who told her that "not everything has to be addressed". Her management style conflicted with his. They coped with stressors very differently, since she was proactive. For her, being proactive was a stress-reduction strategy. Brook's supervisor, however, responded to stressors more passively regarding tasks he did not consider priorities:

And it's just a very different style than my own. He's organized but in a different way than I am; I like a little bit more structure. And that is challenging, but at the same time, I do have to say his approach does force me to kind of take a breath, and let bygones be bygones. (...) just let some things slide as he said, not everything has to be addressed. Whereas, I like to be very proactive and so [if] there's a situation I want to get ahead of it. He doesn't necessarily have the same philosophy (...) so it's just a difference in approaches. (Brook)

For Brook, technology could be a source of stress. Her way of coping with it was to turn off her phone: “So, the only way for me to relax? I turn my phone off (...) at eight o'clock, my phone automatically goes to sleep”. Brook said that turning her phone off was “the only way for her to relax”. She also coped with a technology glitch by just waiting and breathing, since nothing else could be done at that moment. Exercise and watching television were also good stress relievers for her.

Brook mentioned that at work, she wore different hats. The best thing about her teaching principal job was teaching. This was not connected to her role as a principal. Teaching was truly a breath of fresh air for Brook in her day. It helped her in her role as a principal because she deeply enjoyed this particular grade level.

Support: Brook was supported by her husband:

But my husband is also very good when I come home. There's a nice meal that's cooked and then we just kind of talk what his day, or what my day [was like]. Okay, so occasionally we'll throw the football around the house if I need to get a stressor off my chest so I can decompress watching TV on the weekend. Sometimes we go for walks, but it's basically trying to move away from the actual job and shutting it off. (Brook)

As the extract shows, having someone who listens, but also with whom one can discuss and take the time to exchange was also very precious. Brook tossed the ball and took walks with her spouse.

To further reduce pressure in her workday, Brook would have liked to have lunch, or to have two short breaks during the day allowing her to take a walk:

This is not very deep at all. This is not very deep. What I would like to be able to do and would help me with my stress is just to be able to have lunch, like to have an uninterrupted lunch, once a day, or the option to go for a walk for even a combined 40 minutes, 20 minutes in the morning, 20 minutes in the afternoon, because from the time that I wake up to the time that I come home, there is no break, there's always [the] revolving door of students, [and] staff are always needing you. (Brook)

7.7 Amber, Canada - “Some Days, it Feels as if Every 30 Seconds Someone Says: Do you Have a Minute”?

The interview with Amber was the longest, lasting almost two hours. Amber gave very detailed answers and examples for every single question. She felt very much at ease and relaxed. Amber was a good mentor with a strong sense of humour, able to compartmentalize and prioritize. She had excellent support from

her superintendent. She spent most of her time solving operational issues which were, of course, intimately connected with student success since they affected student well-being and achievement. Data analysis was another huge part of the work. Amber had a big family and many friends. She was physically very active, playing several sports on a regular basis. She knew how to relax and maximized her time. She sometimes took medication to help her sleep. What she liked most in her work was mentoring and helping people. What she found the most challenging was changing teaching practice and dealing with parents. She found delegation a challenge. The most important support a principal could have, in her opinion, was trust and empowerment from the senior administrative team, because everybody makes mistakes. Amber believed that in the next 10 years, we would need leaders who are optimistic and resilient. For her, the highest stress situations concerned violence between students and/or against staff.

Main stressors: Amber's busy schedule was a major stressor: the tasks and duties that followed one another nonstop. It was not rare for her to work during lunch. Another example of a stressor for Amber was in the following excerpt, where she felt torn between protecting the student body and staff, and deciding in the best interest of a special-needs student: "A student with multiple special needs is attempting to or managing to strike educational assistants. He is also spitting on people. (Stressors?) Student behaviour. The need to protect other students and workers". Relationship-related stressors were significant for Amber, who mentioned a student who regularly cursed at her because he disagreed with his suspensions: "But every time he left my office with some frequency he called me a fucking bitch and he slammed the door".

In addition, Amber also reported an incident with a parent who disagreed with her decision concerning consequences for a student who had badly injured her son. The parent wanted more severe punishment:

I made a decision on discipline and the parent of the one student feels her son was the victim and attacked and that's not accurate. He was an active participant; he just lost, but he was very seriously injured and that parent is furious with my decision not to expel the assailant. The parent said: You made a mistake. I will go over your head. I am not going to let this go. (Amber)

Coping strategies: Amber could only function in her job by learning how to prioritize: “Compartmentalization and prioritization. Do the most urgent now, don't think about other things yet. Get through the day (...) Stay focused. Only do what is most urgent at that time”. In her diary, we could see that Amber did not give up. She wrote the following about coping strategies for stressful situations and stressors: “Keep going. Read until you fall asleep at the table” (...) “It is what it is, philosophy, and do the best you can”. Amber could be very demanding on herself. She was very tenacious.

Amber was the only principal in our sample who admitted taking prescription sleep aids when she was too stressed out to fall asleep:

Sometimes it's impossible and I take a quarter of a sleeping pill there's the honest answer, like if I'm not wound about something and I'm not going to be able to sleep and I have to work the next day, I'm going to use pharmaceuticals to help (...). But otherwise, yeah you do get better over time at setting it aside there just are some situations that wind around in your head, and keep you up all night. (Amber)

Amber delegated tasks, and more importantly, power: “So, that's how you delegate: you build capacity and trust, and you back people up”.

Support: Amber felt very fortunate for the support she received from her vice-principal when she left campus. She was also grateful to the board psychologist and mental health worker professional in helping her determine next steps for students at-risk of repeating violence. She was grateful to teachers during evening events. Moreover, she benefitted from group-insurance to support her financially while she was off for medical reasons.

Amber offered many suggestions for supporting principals in their day-to-day work. The data showed that being short-staffed created a lot of stress for principals. Amber wanted principals to be replaced when they were absent from campus, just like teachers, teachers' aids and support staff are. She made that suggestion after a particularly difficult day, during which students acted out and the vice-principal was absent, attending another meeting:

In the afternoon, all h... broke loose at school. It was a "Friday" for students as the next day was a PD day. There were two fights. A student with a behaviour plan escalated and left the building and then re-entered the building and re-escalated. A student received threats from two other students and called the police. A student was very rude to a teacher and uncooperative in the office. (Amber)

Among other things, Amber would like help with hiring cafeteria staff, one-on-one support for new technology, and support for student behaviour and mental health concerns. In addition, she wanted access to coaching about racism, and more listening from senior managers to allow principals to share their strategies with their peers. She also wanted financial support for specialized programs.

7.8 Amy, Canada - "Becoming a more Decisive Principal"

Amy was attracted to administration because she liked to problem-solve, and she loved working with people, and considered it very satisfying at the end of the day to try to figure things out. She believed students should be a principal's top priority. Principals, she claimed, are "[p]eople who can manage and cope with all these different kinds of stressors. People who can negotiate in all different kinds of environments. (...) and understand that they need to continue to put the students first". She was a hard worker and saw herself learning and growing and becoming more decisive in her job. She exercised agency by trying to adjust her identity to the situation. She felt she had improved her ability to make decisions more rapidly and effectively. Not surprisingly, she was among the participants who worked the greatest number of hours. During the school day, she spent most of her time working with teachers and less with students, even though her greatest pleasure was working with students. She loved "[w]orking with people and working with students (...) and help[ing] them find solutions and that's very satisfying when I see that they're able to make a connection or see something different". On weekends, she tried to get all the paperwork done and caught up on emails. The most challenging part of her work was allocating time and priorities. She gave up both physical activity and an art class, but she knew that she needed to find a way to take care of herself. The most challenging task for her was managing the budget. She also found it hard to accept that she could not actually do everything because she liked to be on top of everything. She wished that supervisors could provide more support, and that principals could be helped to prioritize the tasks they were asked to do. The most important

support were colleagues, like her superintendent. Her heavy workload caused her a lot of stress. She believed she would benefit from professional support.

Main stressors: Amy found performing new tasks time-consuming and stressful. She confronted this often since she was at the start of her career:

I'm hoping that [soon], I will feel a little bit more successful in terms of finding some balance because everything is new. Even things that are regular to this job. I receive a heads up that something's coming and I have to learn it from beginning to end in order to make sure that I'm doing it correctly. So everything takes a lot of time. I'm hoping that next year, I will be able to anticipate better some things. (...). There's a lot of preparation, you just have to start and you learn by doing the job. (Amy)

She had to familiarize herself with many specialized fields to do her job, such as engineering and law. She still relied on specialists:

We're expected to look after the physical plant of the building. So, becoming an administrator, I've learned a lot about mold. And, (...) I know a little bit certainly not a lot but more than I ever expected to know about how to wrap a building, to prevent water infiltration and these are not things that I expected to know about. And I don't mind knowing about them but I feel like I've learned most of what I needed to know (...) but I really have to rely on other people within the board. (Amy)

Even though Amy enjoyed many aspects of her work, she found it stressful to figure things out by herself with limited resources available:

I like to problem solve, I love working with people and it's very satisfying at the end of the day to try and figure these things out. But, as you're sort of investigating this is very stressful and the number of things that I don't know how to do and there doesn't really seem to be any system in place to sort of provide support can be frustrating so there's a lot that we're just expected to figure out on our own, that have to do with health and safety or finance in today's society of transparency and accountability. I feel really sort of thrown out in the middle of the ocean by myself without a lot of resources to, you know, I have to figure out where they are and maybe I get lucky and I find them or maybe not. (Amy)

In Ontario in the fall of 2019, a work-to-rule campaign by teachers, caretakers, educational assistants, office staff, and childhood educators added to the stressful jobs of school principals, because they were in the middle of contract negotiations. Principals faced protesting teachers and staff. Amy was so overwhelmed at one point that she decided to do only what was immediately necessary. She described how stressed-out she felt the weekend caretaking staff was to go out on full strike forcing her to do extra work on top of her job.

Amy also questioned the cuts in education in Ontario and the consequences on her workload. With fewer people to do the work at the school board, superintendents delegated duties and tasks to school principals.

Another stressor for Amy was the constant interruptions to her work. Amy wrote about too little time and interrupted time in her diary: "Lack of time to complete all required tasks – constant interruptions".

Finally, Amy realized that principals' responsibilities and accountability were always growing and their role went beyond education:

School has been pushed more and more to the centre of society. In the last few years, here, we had an increase, for example, to support the public immunization programs. So we're now chasing students who haven't been immunized. That has nothing to do with education, it has to do with health and everything, but that's not why I became a vice principal to chase students and then suspend them when their parents don't help them get their immunizations, and I understand why public health comes in here. But, you know, I think, more and more, school will be seen as a place where we can reach young people and there'll be more pressure to include more things, with a narrower focus on education. And so that will require people who are flexible enough to negotiate all of that. (Amy)

Coping Strategies: Because of her heavy workload, Amy did not take sufficient care of herself. At the beginning of the school year, she had planned to exercise and attend an art class. In the end, she gave up:

My intention was to maintain my exercise regimen which was mostly going to yoga and maybe going for walks and things like that. By the end of the first week, I couldn't really do that. I then signed up for some art classes, (...) I ended actually not even going to all of the art – it was like learning to draw – my intention was to not think about school, but I found one of the days I was not well. Another day, I was just so tired (...), so I'm not doing a good job of that at all. (Amy)

In fact, Amy had no time for coping strategies.

Support: Amy was surrounded by colleagues, who could support each other: "What I found most helpful this year is to have colleagues that I can call. And I mean, that I guess I helped to create that support system for myself and for my colleagues. (...) [W]hen I'm really stuck and I don't know what to do I think: Who can I call? And I have a group of people". Amy also felt fortunate that her own superintendent was very collaborative and approachable, and could help her in an unfamiliar field:

I'm very lucky that my own superintendent who is new to this area, has a background in special education, which I don't have. And that's an area that I feel is a little bit challenging. And my superintendent also has been incredibly supportive and incredibly present and responsive to anything that I brought to her, and I think I would feel very different in this job if I had not had her and her support in that job. (Amy)

Amy relied heavily on her professional entourage since her colleagues could assist her, notably with the school budget.

Amy wished superintendents were able to provide more support. She had so many requests from her supervisors that she did not know where to start because they seemed to be working in silos. Amy reported that the superintendents “don't know what each other is asking of the principals. So, we get multiple demands in a very short period of time and regularly every day. And there is nobody coordinating that. (...) I don't know but I'm pretty sure they don't really understand what they're asking us to do”.

Because of the number of tasks, she knew it was impossible to do everything, but since all of them seemed important, she felt confused: “By default, each principal is being asked to prioritize what to do and what to let slide. I cannot keep on top of my deadlines. One of the biggest challenges for me has been to let go of the fact that I can't actually do everything, because I like to be on top of everything”.

Since the requests came from different supervisors, it was difficult for Amy to order tasks in terms of importance. Instead, she felt that every single request was the most important one. She needed support to help her prioritize: “I would like someone at the board to sort of be saying, Oh, this is a higher priority. This is a lesser priority and let this go right now”. Amy was overwhelmed by the number of tasks and did not think she would be able to continue work at this pace until she retired: “It's so crazy. I do enjoy it. I do ask myself, do I want to do this for 10 years? I don't think it's sustainable, because I'm sort of going on adrenaline”. To lighten the workload, more people could be added to the leadership team in schools: “I think the ratio of administrators to students is not correct in the board. (...) I think a third vice principal for this number of students would be good”.

For Amy, budget and finance were very challenging tasks. She would appreciate more support from her superintendents, especially in this area. Amy was challenged by things that were out of her control. The example she gave involved union contracts that protected staff even when they were not doing their job properly: “Okay. How am I supposed to manage, you know, (...) where my hands are tied, or the board's hands are tied, or they don't seem to have the will

to (...) take responsibilities for doing what they're supposed to be doing"? Amy would have liked to have some input over who was hired to work for her. Had she been able to choose her team, it would have helped.

Finally, Amy noted the lack of trust and autonomy from her employer. In her diary, she wrote: "I am happy to be accountable but the amount of paperwork and checking required to complete required tasks is ridiculous. If I am hired because I am trusted to do the work, then I should be allowed the independence to make decision[s]". Amy would have liked to have more autonomy granted by her supervisors at the school board for her day-to-day work. Since she was qualified to do the job, she believed she should have decision-making autonomy. In interview, when asked if there was enough trust among principals, Amy answered that she had the trust of her community because people approached her for help:

I feel that I'm lucky. I have people who approach me when they have problems and concerns, and I feel that is a good sign that those relationships are working, because if I didn't have the trust of my community, then they wouldn't be approaching me to say how do we solve this? They're not coming to me in anger or frustration or in [an] accusatory manner. (Amy)

7.9 Vicky, Canada - The Principal who Took Good Care of her Physical and Mental Health

Vicky saw herself as positive, engaging, and reassuring to students and staff. She also felt she looked professional, knowledgeable, and approachable. What she liked most in her job was interaction and social connection with the students and the teachers. She had an understanding husband and family. Taking care of herself physically and psychologically was a priority, and she did not let situations at school affect her personally. She enjoyed connecting with colleagues during professional development events, and took the time to enjoy coffee and food with them. She consulted peer principals and had contacts in HR.

However, the workload was too heavy. She wished more time was allotted and more principals were available in the schools to share this burden. She criticized the lack of communication and support. Furthermore, with changing technology, she believed too much was demanded of principals. Indeed, she

wondered if it was “the role of a principal to be a crisis caretaker 24/7”, concerning distress emails she received from staff, students, and/or parents. She had to work evenings and weekends. The behavioural issues in the school were a source of stress for her, but the most stressful situations were fatal incidents/fatalities and the potential of injury or violence. School facilities and the constant infrastructure maintenance tasks were her biggest challenge. Having to wear different hats, even if she was not qualified, was challenging: “I'm not an engineer. I'm not a specialist in heating systems”.

The easiest thing to do in her job was to become overwhelmed and to complain about the job.

Her focus was learning and people. In her view, the most important support for a principal was time. She strongly believed that stressful situations would increase over the next years relating to mental health issues currently being reported by both students and staff.

Main stressors: For Vicky, the most stressful situations were when “there's an immediate health and safety risk to a student or to an adult (...) or the potential of injury or violence”. In addition, she mentioned, “conflicting demands placed, or conflicting interests in terms of handling a situation”. However, she noted, “that's a different kind of stress. (...) - we're not dealing with a fatal incidence or a fatality”. These “stressors are more long term, more insidious”. While Vicky said that the most stressful situations were when someone's health or life was threatened, she added: “To me, the most difficult ones are when a situation affects me personally”. Her professional background with high-risk children and teenagers might influence her way of managing situations that involve the well-being, health, and safety of people. She believed that stress “will only increase especially with the trajectory of mental health issues”.

High work intensity was also a cause of stress for Vicky. She explained that people were coming at her all the time, all day long, and that she could not even take the time to have lunch quietly:

From my entry onsite at 7 am, I have been going non-stop dealing with student behavioural issues; management issues; arranging for last minute coverage for teachers; answering board emails; trying to tend to management functions within the school...you name it, I am

doing it. It is 2 pm and I am just getting the opportunity to eat (since breakfast at 6:30 am) at my desk (and writing this note as I do so). My hope was to focus on student data and try to spend time working on school improvement planning all week...that will have to wait for the weekend. (...) Knowing I was the sole administrator, I bring my lunch and make sure it is food I can eat, literally, on the run and on my feet. As I write this, I was called to address a behavioural concern in a classroom. (Vicky)

Vicky's school board had an unwritten rule that principals must respond to emotionally distressed students, staff, and parents at any time of the day and night:

Email/electronic communication placed administrators as 24 hour/7 day a week responders, often to crisis situations related to mental health or school safety. I have been notified at all hours of the day/weekend about issues from staff/parents/our central board staff. There is an implicit and cultural expectation to respond... though we are told to take care of ourselves. (Vicky)

Technology was especially stressful when it cut into private time. Vicky did not feel she could unplug technology in order to cope with this stressor. During her free time (i.e., evenings, nights and weekends), she was in fact on duty and wished that her employer had a no after-hours policy on electronic communication.

Diary data also showed that Vicky was kept uninformed by her boss about guidelines for duties until the last minute. Below is a sample entry:

For the past 5 weeks, I had been hoping to receive clarity from my Superintendent and HR regarding (...) some staffing supports for Administration at our site. Feeling frustrated by the inability for two silos within our Education Center to connect and for me to get follow-up, I took the opportunity of seeing my SO at an off-site meeting to get some clarity/answers/next steps, only to be advised to continue to follow-up. At this time, I was then requested to do a mini-presentation for a meeting at the board office for the next morning (no notice). At 6 pm, I received some background information to aid me with my mini-presentation (for 8:30 the next morning). (Vicky)

Coping strategies: Vicky distinguished between internalizing a stress (when it has a personal impact) and choosing to keep challenging issues to herself: "How do you choose to internalize or not internalize that stress? It could be a very stressful situation but that does not necessarily impact me personally". In stressful situations or when trying to resolve an issue, Vicky "parked" her stressful thoughts. She referred to the concept of equanimity: "It's important to be able to park it, and not internalize it because I have a job to do (...) when I lose that ability to park my thoughts, I know I need to reach out for support". Vicky was trying hard not to internalize situations (let them throw her off balance). When

she was personally impacted and lost balance, she knew she needed to seek help. Vicky recounted an incident with the family of a student that disagreed with her decision concerning discipline of a student who had assaulted a staff member. Vicky became the victim of personal verbal attacks. She reached out for help and met with a support counselor.

To protect herself against stress, Vicky took care of her mental and physical health. Health enabled her to perform her duties. Vicky usually got up at 4:30 in the morning to go to the gym. She ate a healthy diet.

Support: Vicky felt fortunate to have a very supportive husband. It was a priority for both of them to get back home by 7:30 pm at the latest in order to relax together. Every year, during the Christmas holidays, they took a week's vacation abroad. She consulted a homeopath on a regular basis and took a lot of preventative natural homeopathic medicine and vitamins.

Vicky was proactive in finding ways to support herself to perform well as a principal. Not only did she use the support offered by her school board, but she played a part as well: "I believe organizations can only be supportive to a certain extent, but I think people can be offered different types of support. So, it ranges from institutional to interpersonal. I do believe I have an individual responsibility for seeking the support that I need because I believe it's all available there". In response to a question concerning the support she was receiving or would have liked to receive, she answered: "Support? The dream of more administrator(s) in our schools". Vicky knew that she could not count solely on her employer or the Ministry for support.

It is always wise to surround yourself with the right people. Many principals seek out allies to support their work:

If you don't have a very solid working relationship and trust with individuals in HR and in our Federation and in senior administration, you will be lost whenever an issue comes up. (...) I can't make a decision unilaterally sometimes without input from [those whom] I would refer to as the brain trust. Am I missing something? I need their advice, I need their counsel, because more eyes on some situations are critical in terms of moving forward, there might be something that I'm missing or don't know about. (Vicky)

Without personal and professional support from those around them, principals would find it very difficult to do their jobs.

According to Vicky, the most important support for a principal nowadays was time.

8 SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN STRESSORS, COPING STRATEGIES, AND SUPPORT FOR PRINCIPALS

8.1 Summary of the Results

Based on diaries and interviews, Table 4 presents a summary of the results of the Data-Based Phase (i.e., the answers to the research questions, where Q1-Q3 means research questions 1-3: What are the causes of the job stressors?; What strategies do school principals use to try to cope with these stressors?; and What specific support do school principals need, or what changes should occur to support them?). The country appears after the participant's pseudonym. In the following sub-chapters 8.2-8.4, I will present different thematic issues drawn from the data. Participants were compared regardless of country. Countries were compared and patterns discerned.

Table 4 *Summary of the Data-Based Phase - Answers to the Research Questions*

Participants and Countries	Q1 – Main stressors	Q2 – Coping Strategies	Q3 – Support Needed	Q3 – Support Received
Hannu, Finland	Workload Safety/emergency situations Violence/disagreements Changing social values and modes of behaviour Finance and budget	Physical or relaxing activity Prioritization Delegation	Professional entourage	Professional entourage Personal entourage Technology Trust
Mikko, Finland	Workload Violence/disagreements Technology Failure to replace principals/teachers	Physical or relaxing activity Delegation Proactivity Trust Short days	Time Human resources	Personal entourage Professional entourage Trust
Matias, Finland	Workload	Physical or relaxing activity Proactivity Delegation Trust		Professional entourage Personal entourage
Suvi, Finland	Workload Violence/disagreements Changing social values and modes of behaviour Finance and budget	Physical or relaxing activity Delegation Short days		Personal entourage Professional entourage Technology
Brook, Canada	Workload Lack of human resources	Physical or relaxing activity Proactivity	Time Professional entourage	Personal entourage Trust

Table 4 *Summary of the Data-Based Phase - Answers to the Research Questions*

Participants and Countries	Q1 – Main stressors	Q2 – Coping Strategies	Q3 – Support Needed	Q3 – Support Received
	Unionized work environments Safety/emergency situations Violence/disagreements Technology Frictions with the boss Situations that were out of one's control Failure to replace principals/teachers	Teaching duties No after-hours communication policy		
Amber, Canada	Workload Unionized work environments Safety/emergency situations Violence/disagreements Changing social values and modes of behaviour Failure to replace principals/teachers	Physical or relaxing activity Prioritization Delegation (of power) Pharmaceuticals Trust	Professional entourage Time Support with finance Human resources	Personal support Professional entourage
Amy, Canada	Workload Finance Safety/emergency situations Violence/disagreements Unionized work environments Changing social values and modes of behaviour	Physical or relaxing activity (gave up quickly) Prioritization	Professional entourage Prioritization Support with finance Human resources More power over unions	Professional entourage Trust

Table 4 *Summary of the Data-Based Phase - Answers to the Research Questions*

Participants and Countries	Q1 – Main stressors	Q2 – Coping Strategies	Q3 – Support Needed	Q3 – Support Received
	Failure to replace principals/teachers Situations out of one's control			
Vicky, Canada	Time Unionized work environments Safety/emergency situations Violence/disagreements Technology Frictions with the boss Changing social values and modes of behaviour Failure to replace principals/teachers	Physical or relaxing activity Trust	Professional entourage Time Human resources More power over unions No after-hours communication policy	Professional entourage Personal entourage

8.2 Main Stressors for Principals

The main stressors for the principals in this study were workload, violence/disagreements, finance and budget, failure to replace principals and teachers, unionized work environments, safety or emergency situations, situations out of one's control, technology, frictions with the boss, and changing social values and modes of behaviour. Below, I will describe these stressors in greater detail.

Workload. One of the most common stressors among the participants of this study was workload. Every participant mentioned it. Therefore, workload was a similarity for all principals and countries. Hannu, Amber, and Amy talked about their heavy workload as a stressor in their day-to-day work. Mattias and Vicky mentioned it as a stressor in some circumstances. For Mattias, workload was only a stressor in the late springtime (i.e., in May and June), when he had to prepare for the following academic year. Indeed, principals seem to have more work at certain times of the year. According to Mäkelä's (2007) and Lonkila's (1990) studies, principals have more work to do in the spring semester than in the autumn.

During the spring semester, administrative and economic management activities consume considerably more time than network leadership. During the fall semester, the relationship between the above-mentioned profile areas is the opposite. This data proves that in the fall, a principal's work is in large part network and pedagogical leading, and that during the spring there is a lot of administrative and economic management activity. However, when it comes to staff leadership, there are no substantial differences in a principle's (sic) profiles between the two semesters [...] both the results of my own as well as Lonkila's (1990) [study] support that common sentiment among principals that the spring semester is a busier time in their work than the fall semester (Mäkelä's, 2007, pp. 221-222).

For Vicky, workload was a stressor when the vice-principal left the building and she had more responsibilities. Both Mikko and Amy said that new tasks were stressors because they were time-consuming. This contradicted Mikko's story since he voluntarily transferred to another school for the challenge of being in a new environment. Even if Mikko found it stressful to do something for the first time because it was time-consuming, he liked the challenge and the stressor had a positive effect on him. Both Mikko and Vicky mentioned time as a support they would like to access more often. Mikko, Vicky, Amber, and Brook often did not

have enough time to eat lunch or go for a walk. This stated need is in line with previous studies. For example, the Ontario Principals' Council (2017) recommends that school principals coping strategies include taking the time to eat. These data showed that principals are frequently not given a moment's rest. Workload was the cause of stress here, regardless of the nature of the task or duty for participants from both Canada and Finland.

My data showed that for Amber, Brook, and Vicky, a busy schedule was one of the causes for stressful situations and stressors. Amber and Amy reported that they did not have time to complete all required tasks because of constant interruptions. Mahfouz (2018) found that constant interruptions were a source of stress for principals. Indeed, all the participants in her study claimed that it was a stressor.

Both Mikko and Amy devoted most of their time to working with teachers and less time to students, because as leaders, their role was to support teachers. As the data showed, however, lack of time and numerous tasks was common among school principals. The data showed that principals learned to prioritize quickly, otherwise, they do not last.

Violence/Disagreements. All Canadian principals raised the theme of violence or disagreements as a stressor. Almost all of the Finnish principals did too (i.e., Suvi, Hannu, and Mikko). The main difference between the two countries was that in Finland, disagreements were generally limited to staff members who did not get along, and staff members disagreeing with the administration's decisions. In Canada, all participants mentioned disagreements between staff members and the administration, including issues caused by the unionized work environment (see this theme below), and disagreements between principals. However, they also all mentioned bullying and/or violence between students, physical assaults by students against other students and/or staff members, and some participants reported verbal attacks against them by students and/or parents. In his diary, Hannu mentioned a bullying case between students, and a parent who took legal action over air quality.

According to Pollock and Wang (2019), most participating principals in their survey often or always faced emotionally exhausting situations, usually caused by interactions with students, parents, and teachers. In addition, 60% of participants revealed that they had been harassed by a parent during the past two years.

Mahfouz (2018) mentioned relationship-related stressors (i.e., relationships with people principals must deal with in their day-to-day work – students’ parents, upper levels of administration, teachers’ unions, teachers, and students). Of course, these people may have a range of impulsive reactions.

In schools today, students get mad at principals and swear at them. More surprising, so do parents. Relationships that cause the most stress involve angry parents (Mahfouz’s, 2018).

Finance and budget. The theme of finance and budget was discussed by some of the participants of this study. Mäkelä (2007) noted that the “economic responsibility of principals has increased” (p. 222). Principals are more accountable for finance and budgets as well. Among Canadian principals, this theme was a stressor for Amy, and a support that Amy and Amber wished to have. It was a stressor for Suvi and Hannu, because the City had them cut expenses, including salaries. However, the budget was an easy task for Mikko, the mathematician.

Failure to replace principals or teachers. All Canadian participants and one Finnish participant mentioned failure to replace principals/teachers. Brook considered it a stressor. For Vicky, it was a support she would like. Amy and Amber viewed it as both a stressor and a support they wished they had.

The Canadian principals were not replaced when they left school premises, so this situation was a stressor that seemed to occur frequently:

I was to attend a full-day Principal meeting but I was not able to attend for the morning, missing key information for upcoming reports that need to be submitted. My VP was mandated to attend another session (also planned by our Board) for the same time. We have no back-up system in place at our site (which is a stressor and one I am trying to resolve - which is also a source of frustration/stress). (Vicky)

Similarly, in Finland, not being able to hire substitute teachers was a stressor and a support Mikko wished he had. He was having a hard time getting work

applications, so he had to replace teachers. This sometimes forced him to cancel important meetings.

Unionized work environments. All of the Canadian participants mentioned unionized work environment as a stressor, in contrast with none of the Finnish participants. At the time of the data collection, work-to-rule actions were taking place in Ontario schools because staff were on legal strike. Vicky, Amy, Amber, and Brook reported the unionized work environment as a stressor. Both Vicky and Amy mentioned that the support they would have liked to have was more power over unions. Diary data showed that some principals found dealing with unionized work environments stressful:

"Another stressor are the confines/processes of a unionized environment in dealing with HR issues (slows the process down; limits my ability to manage; etc.)". (Vicky)

Amy also found it challenging to be responsible for things out of her control. In a unionized work environment, her hands were often tied because of union contracts. Amy felt the higher administration did not "seem to have the will to do anything to make people take responsibilities for doing what they're supposed to be doing". There seems to be a link between union issues and job satisfaction. As Wang et al. (2018) pointed out, the greater the union involvement in schools, the more likely relations will be hostile between principals and teachers.

Safety or emergency situations. Several participants mentioned safety/emergency situations as stressors. Indeed, all Canadian participants mentioned this issue as a stressor, in contrast with one Finnish participant (Hannu). Vicky questioned the fact that principals were held responsible for safety/emergency situations at all times, and would have liked to see a change (see the theme of Technology below).

Situations out of one's control. Two Canadian principals, Brook and Amy, mentioned that situations out of their control were stressful, in contrast with no Finnish participants. "I think for me what is stressful are things that are out of my control and are difficult for me to anticipate what's going to happen, despite my best efforts and then it becomes stressful" (Brook). Amy also did not like

being "responsible for things that are out of my control, so where my hands are tied." (Amy).

Technology. The data showed that technology could also be a source of stress in both countries. In Canada, in Vicky's and Brook's cases, technology was considered very stressful. Indeed, emails and messages were an intrusion into their free time.

These findings are in line with previous research studies (Becker et al., 2019) which show that employees expected to keep a check on work-related electronic communication during off-hours feel the strain of anxiety because they are not making the most of their free time and are preoccupied with job activities (Leroy, 2009; Leroy & Schmidt, 2016; Marulanda-Carter & Jackson, 2012).

Technology was also a source of stress for Mikko during the Finnish Matriculation Examination periods. Indeed, these exams were taken online and the technology had to function properly.

Frictions with the boss. Frictions with the boss was a similarity between two Canadian participants but was a difference between countries. Brook reported frictions with her boss as a stressor. Indeed, she felt undermined and thought she was not given needed information. Vicky experienced friction with her supervisors as well. Like Brook, Vicky found it irritating to be left in the dark by managers. She noted a "[l]ack of consideration for timelines; lack of forward thinking/planning".

The concepts of identity and agency play a role here. It may be helpful at this point to define these two concepts. Identity is:

a self-referential description that provides contextually appropriate answers to the question 'who am I?' (Ashforth et al., 2008, p. 327).

Agency is the influence individuals exercise over their environments. More specifically:

...professional agency refers to professional actors (employees and leaders) who can exercise control over, or have an effect on, their work and work environment (Eteläpelto et al., 2013 and Goller & Paloniemi, 2017, as cited in Hökkä et al., 2018, p. 2).

Brook stated she was proactive, conscious of her strengths, and wished to participate fully in her role as a vice principal. The principal with whom she was partnered prevented this. He was more passive in his work style, and undermined her authority by assigning tasks and duties that should be hers to another teacher. He imposed his personal work style on Brook. His actions prevailed at the moment of the study, but over time this power dynamic could change. Eventually, Brook could exercise her agency differently. She could adjust her identity to fit the context. For instance, she could learn to let things go and focus on what is going well in her professional life. Or, she could choose to have an open discussion with her principal, to find common ground on irritants as they arise. According to Darmody and Smyth (2016, p. 124): “Principals who had teaching duties had somewhat higher stress levels and stress levels were much higher among those who reported inadequate administrative support”. The findings concerning identity and agency in the present study are in line with previous research studies. With these two factors alone, Brook was more likely to experience higher levels of stress.

Changing social values and modes of behaviour. Another similarity between countries is that changing social values and modes of behaviour put pressure on principals. For instance, the responsibilities and accountability of principals have increased over the years. Suvi and Amy, respectively from Finland and Canada, noted that school was not just about teaching and education, since it was seen as a place to reach children and families for all kinds of non-educational issues.

When Vicky and Amber faced furious parents who strongly disagreed with a disciplinary decision, they felt stressed. My findings are in line with previous studies:

Leadership – and school management especially – are affected by all changes in the society and its respective context. (...) Due to these changes, the principal’s tasks have increased. (...) Different legal cases have also been on display, dealing with the actions of either a student or a teacher (Mäkelä, 2007, p. 222).

Changes in the role of school principals have occurred because of changes in society. These changes happened not only in Canada, but in Finland as well,

where the role of school principals has been transforming since 1990. Today, principals must wear many hats. They are the educational leaders of their schools as well as managers in charge of budgets, staff, and student grades. The selection process of new school principals was developed to confirm applicants' capacities (Johansson, 2011).

Data showed that principals had to be capable in fields unrelated to education, such as managing of building maintenance, air quality, and psychosocial support. Vicky mentioned engineering. Hannu talked about the law, and consulting the City's lawyer about a lawsuit launched by parents about air quality. Vicky, Amy, Hannu, and Suvi referred to managing psychosocial support. In conclusion, changing social values and modes of behaviour was a similarity between some principals and between both countries.

In the same vein, Suvi believed that, in the next ten years, principals would need skills to be leaders in education. Hannu mentioned that these leaders would have to be "professional managers, multi-talented and interactive". Taking this logic further, skilled leaders and staff would be an antidote to stressful situations/stressors because they would be more resourceful.

For Hannu, the most challenging responsibilities concerned special education, curators, and student care. Mäkelä (2007, 222) suggests that student needs are on the rise:

The students' need for special education has increased considerably, adding to the networking supporting the student.

The excerpt suggests that the principals' workload is growing at least in part due to growing needs in special education.

Mäkelä (2007) notes how principals' duties have increased due to societal changes:

Communication with family advising centers, school nurses, foster homes, hospitals, other schools, municipal authorities and the like have added to the principal's relations duties (p. 222).

8.3 The Coping Strategies of Principals

The coping strategies of principals in this study were physical or relaxing activity, trust, prioritization, proactivity, short days, delegation, pharmaceuticals, teaching duties, and a no after-hours communication policy. In this section, I will describe these coping strategies in more detail.

Physical or relaxing activity. The coping strategy of physical or relaxing activity was mentioned by all participants. They were all conscious of the benefits of taking time for themselves to stay healthy physically and mentally. All participants engaged in physical activity and/or a relaxing activity to counter stress, except for Amy, who tried, but finally gave up. Therefore, physical or relaxing activity was a similarity between principals and countries.

Trust. The theme of trust was discussed by two Finnish principals and two Canadian principals as a coping strategy. Matias, Mikko, Vicky, and Amber all mentioned having trust in people and/or being trusted by people (oneself, professional entourage, and/or staff) as a way to cope.

Unlike in Finland, where educators, including principals, have autonomy and enjoy working in an environment of trust, in Canada, autonomy and trust are issues. Indeed, Pollock et al. (2014, p. 3) have found that: “[T]he lack of any major variations in principals’ work across personal and contextual variables implies that the principalship has become so structured and rooted in compliance that there is little room for principals to demonstrate professional judgement or autonomy in their daily work”.

As a consequence, many principals suffer from stress, and some even suffer from burnout when the stress persists for too long. As the quotation above suggests, principals benefit from trust. Excessive pressures to demonstrate accountability increase stress levels.

Prioritization. Hannu, Amber, and Amy mentioned prioritization. Prioritization was a similarity between a few principals and between countries. Prioritization was a strategy that these three principals used for coping with stressful situations. For Amy, it was also a support needed because she was still learning how to prioritize. Indeed, she wanted her supervisors to let her know what

the real priorities were because all their requests seemed to be of high importance. Her supervisors did not seem to talk to each other.

Proactivity. Proactivity was a similarity for two participants, Brook and Matias, and for two countries. Procrastination was a stressor, so putting off tasks was not an option for these two principals. Brook was very proactive, like Matias, who attended to tasks right away, in order to avoid stress. If they waited or postponed things, they felt stressed. Procrastination was therefore a stressor, and proactivity a similarity in both countries. Brook and Matias developed successful strategies to maintain low levels of stress. These strategies are in line with previous studies, which show that people who procrastinate have higher levels of stress than those who do not (Beleaua & Cocoradă, 2016).

Short days. Two Finnish principals, Suvi and Mikko, were able to work short days. They planned their time well in advance and could leave early on, or take Friday afternoon off once in a while.

Delegation. All Finnish participants talked about delegation as a coping strategy for a variety of stressors, but in Canada, only Amber mentioned delegation. Thus, delegation was a similarity in Finland only. Amber observed that in order to delegate, a principal had to “build capacity and trust and back people up”.

Pharmaceuticals. Pharmaceuticals was a difference between both participants and countries. Amber was the only participant who admitted taking pharmaceuticals to help her sleep when she was stressed out.

Other researchers have found evidence that principals in Ontario public schools take medication to cope with pressure. Indeed, a study suggests that 29% of principals self-medicate (Pollock et al., 2014).

Teaching duties. For Brook, teaching was a breath of fresh air in her day. Brook was not the only one with teaching duties. Pollock et al. (2017) noted that in their study one third of respondent vice-principals have teaching duties. However, not everyone regards these duties as a blessing. Teaching vice-principal positions appear unsustainable in the long-term, and the authors recommended full-time vice-principalship positions only. Teaching duties constitute a

difference between principals and countries. It is noteworthy that in Canada, Brook was the only participant with teaching duties.

No-after-hours communication policy. Brook's phone went silent after 8 pm. This coping strategy helped her relax. Vicky would have liked to be able to turn off her phone during her free time as well, but she felt obliged to respond to emotionally distressed callers.

8.4 Support for Principals

The support for principals in this study were personal and professional relationships, trust, and technology. In this section, I will describe these themes of support in more detail.

Personal and professional relationships. According to my research data, the personal and professional relationships theme was the support most universally cited, whether the relationship was professional and/or personal. Indeed, all participants in both countries mentioned this issue as a received support. Consequently, personal and professional relationships was a similarity for all principals in both countries.

Professional relationships include principal peers, staff members, and experts such as lawyers and social and/or mental health workers, HR, superintendents, leading principals, and mentors. All the Canadians and one Finn (Hannu) mentioned professional relationships as a support they would also like to receive.

The data showed that in order to run their schools, these principals were forced to learn about many specialty fields, such as engineering or law. However, they still needed support from specialists. Amy's narrative about learning to maintain the school building was in line with previous research studies. Indeed, the Ontario Principals' Councils (2017) recommends creating a Building Management position to alleviate principals' workload. This would let principals focus on their leadership tasks and duties.

These data revealed that principals like Amy relied heavily on their professional entourage for support. Others, like Suvi, discussed the concept of shared responsibility.

For Mikko, good professional relations became a strategy to prevent issues that could cause him stress on campus. He invited school staff to his home to foster good relationships.

The concept of personal relationships with relatives, friends, and pets was raised by almost all participants from both countries as a support. Amy was the exception.

Trust. Trust was the second most universal support received cited. Indeed, two principals in each country mentioned it. Amy, Brook, Mikko, and Hannu indicated that they possessed and valued the trust of other people, including the community at large, their supervisor, staff, and school parents.

Technology. Technology was another type of support for principals. It was a similarity between two Finnish participants, and a difference between countries. Like Suvi, Hannu felt that technology save time, which counted as support:

“I got help from Information Management and they gave me a timeline to fix the program. They sent me a briefing message and I forwarded the message to the teachers. So, I saved time from writing my message”. (Hannu)

Based on diaries and interviews, this chapter presented the results of the Data-based Phase (i.e., the answers to the research questions: what are the causes of the job stressors?, what strategies do school principals use to try to cope with these stressors?, and what specific support do school principals need, or what changes should occur to support them?). It showed the different thematic issues drawn from the data. Participants were compared regardless of country, countries were compared, and patterns were discerned.

9 DISCUSSION

9.1 Conclusions

The present study identified stressors affecting school principals, their coping strategies, and the kind of support they either received, or wished to receive.

The main stressors were workload and insufficient time to accomplish their work, and/or constant interruptions. In addition, new tasks were a stressor because the learning process was time-consuming. My findings are in line with Dardomy and Smyth (2016), Wang et al. (2018), Cooper and Kelly (1993), Hill (1994), and Chaplain (1995) who found that school principals experienced job stress due to increasing workload or work overload. My results are also in line with Mahfouz's (2018). Indeed, all participants in her study reported that there were too many tasks and duties for the time available, and that the never-ending stream of interruptions induced stress. They also regarded time management, family time, and taking care of themselves as challenging. My results diverge from Mahfouz's (2018) in that findings regarding the work-related stressors of age- and gender-related power dynamics, constant change, and the unknown were absent or infrequent in the present research.

Moreover, disagreement, rudeness, disorganization, violence, and safety risk were identified as common stressors. While principals in both Finland and Canada identified the theme of violence/disagreement as a stressor, in Finland, disagreements were generally limited to staff members who did not get along and to staff members critical of the administration's decisions.

In Canada, disagreements between staff members and administration were also mentioned, including issues caused by the unionized environment, and disputes between principals. In addition, however, all Canadian principals mentioned bullying and/or violence between students, and physical assaults by students against other students and staff members as a stressor. Some participants reported verbal attacks by students and/or parents directed at them. Hannu was the only Finnish principal who reported a bullying case between students. My

results are in line with previous studies. The findings of Cooper and Kelly (1993), Hill (1994), and Chaplain (1995) show that managing relationships is one of the main stressors for principals. My results also agree with Mahfouz's (2018). Most participants in her study identified "relationships with students' parents, upper administration, teachers' unions, teachers and students" (p.8) as a source of stress. Mahfouz's (2018) findings show that relationships with the parents of students are the most stressful. Findings in the present research showed that several Canadian participants experienced challenging interactions with parents. Canadian principals also mentioned work-to-rule actions as a stressor because collective agreements in the education sector were being renewed during data collection for the present study. Safety/emergency situations and failure to replace principals/teachers when they had to absent themselves were sources of stress mainly for Canadian participants. Technology also caused stress for some participants. Finally, my research data revealed that all Canadian principals worked a much greater number of hours each week than their Finnish counterparts.

The main coping strategies principals used were taking care of their bodies and minds through a range of activities. These results accord with Mahfouz's (2018). Most participants in her study relied on outlets outside of work, such as physical activity, as a coping strategy. The participants in her study also engaged in other relaxing activities, such as reading for pleasure, crafting, and jewelry making. My data showed that prioritizing, being proactive, and delegating were popular. Only Finnish participants talked about delegation of tasks as a coping mechanism for certain stressors, Amber was the sole Canadian to mention delegation of tasks. To delegate, she reported, a principal had to "build capacity and trust. And (...) back people up".

With regards to support, principals wished for more human resources (supply teachers), more principals hired, and replacements when they were absent from campus. Principals also wished for better support for students by relevant authorities in contexts of disruptive behaviour, mental health concerns, and abuse.

As for support for principals, all participants in this study reported that they relied on a whole network of people (their peer principal, HR administrators, specialized professionals, staff, the school community, and loved ones). The results of Mahfouz (2018) also showed that taking part in activities with relatives and friends (spending time with loved ones), and peer principals helped principals cope with stress and feel supported. However, unlike the findings in the present study, Mahfouz (2018) found that none of her participants had time to plan activities or attend gatherings. Mahfouz's findings suggest that principals need to learn to take care of themselves through stress-management techniques. Her findings also suggest the need to build a cooperation network in which principals can seek collegial support.

Differences between Finland and Canada regarding support were unclear. It was not possible to draw any firm conclusion regarding differences in approach to support between the two countries.

Labelling and profiling for the present research study identified the profiles discussed below, which make for interesting discussion. Time constraints were mentioned frequently in this study. They could be linked to work culture, which, in certain schools causes stress for principals, who feel constantly pressured to do more (Chaplain, 2001; Pollock et al. 2017; Pollock et al. 2014). The more principals accomplished, the more work they were asked to do, because they were dependable. To cope with this stressor (i.e., time), participants in the present study used prioritizing and delegating strategies. They also worked in the evenings and/or on the weekends. One participant took sleeping pills to cope with job stress when necessary. Another was so overwhelmed that she quit art classes even though she had resolved to take care of herself. Fortunately, participants could count on what Vicky called the "brain trust" around them, such as their peer principals, Human Resources, superintendents, and lawyers. Most participants had supportive life partners and an outlet outside work to help them stay physically and mentally healthy.

Regarding the role of principals as educational leaders, a certain number of participants wanted to exercise more leadership within their schools. Several

expressed a desire to work more with teachers and students. In Canada, bureaucracy and lack of trust were exerting a toll. It can be frustrating and time-consuming when a principal has to prove to an employer that every single procedural step has been followed. This type of work culture in a school can be overwhelming and annoying. If principals were not prisoners of the bureaucratic machine and were better trusted, they could devote more time to leadership.

Principals can provide leadership by supporting the teachers in their schools. In turn, students reap rewards. Institutional work culture greatly affects the time management of principals and can sap their leadership, which is their *raison d'être*. My findings that school culture influence stress levels concur with those of Chaplain (2001).

The research findings of this study showed that in both Finland and Canada, the main stressors were workload and insufficient time for tasks, and/or constant interruptions. Violence and disagreements were also stressors, but in Finland, these were limited to disagreements between adult school staff and administrators, except for one case of inter-student bullying. Canadian principals worked a substantially greater number of hours per week than Finnish principals. With regards to coping strategies, the data from this study showed that principals took care of their physical and mental health through a variety of activities. They also knew how to prioritize and were mostly proactive. All of the Finnish principals delegated tasks, although delegation was uncommon in Canada. As for support, lack of and/or non-replacement of human resources seemed to be a major issue in both countries. On a positive note, the data showed that all principals were being well supported by the whole network of people around them. Previous studies have shown that social support is more likely to alleviate the effects of stress (Beausaert et al., 2016), and the quality of relationships with colleagues affects a principal's stress levels (Chaplain, 2001).

9.2 Limitations, Validity, and Ethical Issues

Some limitations must be taken into account when considering the results of this study. The major limitation is its small sample size. As Deziel (2018) has observed, a small sample size is less likely to lead researchers to conclusive results. There were only four participants in each country in this study, for a total of eight.

In addition, the study was conducted in English only. For Canadian participants, English was the working language, and all were native speakers of English, or could be considered as such. For Finnish participants, the working language was Finnish. English was a foreign tongue. Some Finnish participants used an online translator during the interview, while one invited a colleague to be her interpreter because she did not feel at ease in English. The Finnish principals might have been more expressive had they written their diaries in Finnish and been interviewed in their native tongue. In conclusion, the Finnish participants in this study were more likely to struggle in retrieving full stories and experiences (Koulouriotis, 2011).

In addition, cultural differences, including the Finnish habit of not talking much in general, regardless of language skills, could have influenced the length and depth of diaries and interview answers (Passport to trade 2.0: a bridge to success, 2019). Gender differences might also have been a limitation. A review of research studies showed that overall, men talk more than women. Some studies showed the opposite, while others showed no clear pattern. Even if the results seemed to be mixed, context and circumstances influence the gender differences observed. For instance, women are more likely than men to talk in order to establish and maintain interpersonal relationship, and men tend to talk less about certain topics (James & Drakich, 1993).

Since Canadian participants confided more copiously than Finnish principals, these data are richer for the Canadians than for the Finns.

The day-to-day tasks, duties, responsibilities, and workload of principals might have varied between Finland and Canada. A principal's working conditions, authority and powers might have been slightly different in Finland and

Canada, and these differences could have affected the stressful situations and stressors they encountered. For instance, Finnish principals could delegate work easily to teachers, unlike Canadian principals. Training and professional development also might have varied between countries. It might be interesting to expand research on these topics.

In general, the data collected from both the Finnish and the Canadian participants were expected. Nevertheless, a closer look at the results of the survey published by the Finnish Principal's Association on January 14, 2020 (i.e., Terävä, 2020), precisely when I was writing this thesis, reveals that data collected for the present study do not line up with the Finnish survey. It is of note that no regular surveys of principals are conducted in Finland like the ones conducted regularly in Ontario, Canada (i.e., Pollock et al., 2014; 2017) investigating factors like the average number of work hours, whether on-site and/or off-site, how principals spend their time, what their coping strategies are, their perceptions about their work, or balancing work and private life, to name but a few issues. In Finland, the working life of principals has not yet been investigated because scientific studies are at their earliest stages of development on this subject.

The personality and life history of each participant might have played a role in reporting stress. Perceptions and reactions can differ from one individual to the next. Indeed, the same stressors can elicit diametrically opposed reactions.

Furthermore, the types of relations principals might have with staff, families, students, or managers can have a positive or negative impact on their stress levels. Expectations might also influence how they feel.

The period when the data was collected (i.e., from mid-September to mid-October 2019 for the diaries, and November 2019 for most interviews) affects results. Had these data been collected in a different season, the overview might have been quite different. Some studies suggest that principals were busier in the spring semester than in the autumn (Lonkila, 1990; Mäkelä's, 2007).

Furthermore, the diary data collection lasted 20 working days, while most of the interviews lasted approximately 50 minutes.

Finally, during the period of data collection for this study, Canadian principals faced job action and threats to strike by several unions representing different staff members.

Since the results of this study could be biased by these limitations, it is important to take them into account.

Concerning validity, I used both diaries and interviews as data collection methods. They were complementary. The diaries were written at the end of each day, so the information recorded was freshly remembered and a good report of what participants actually experienced. The interviews helped me understand the diaries and provided a deeper understanding of who the participants were. Data analysis was performed diligently and reviewed several times. I did not hesitate to ask participants for missing information. Many of my results were in line with previous research.

Regarding ethical issues, participants were asked to sign a consent form prior to the study. They were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

Respect for confidentiality and privacy was paramount in the present study. I minimized the risk of confidentiality breaches by using pseudonyms for participants, and by mentioning countries only, not the cities or regions where participants lived and worked. In conclusion, I avoided any mention of unnecessary or detailed information that could allow identification of the participants.

9.3 Practical Implications and Ideas for Future Research

Despite the above limitations, the present study sheds insight on principals and work-related stress. Its primary contribution is to identify some of the job stressors affecting principals. Another important contribution is to elucidate strategies used by principals to cope with day-to-day stressors. The study also describes specific support that school principals need, and changes that should be made.

In contrast to their Canadian counterparts, Finnish participants did not discuss sensitive matters. Perhaps they were able to approach challenging situations

more objectively than the Canadian principals, or perhaps their perspective was different.

The present study did not validate whether the diaries matched actual events reported. Future studies could focus on observing principals at school, making them write their diaries at the end of the day, and then comparing and analyzing both on-site observations and diaries to see if they correspond.

These data showed that in Finland, it is easy to find teachers to participate in activities. Finnish principals reported that teachers volunteer without grumbling because they know that they will benefit from collaboration. Distributed leadership, a leadership model widely used in the Finnish educational system, delegates leadership according to people's skills, expertise, and preferences, and relies on mutual trust.

In Canada, this type of collaboration is not popular. Principals have trouble finding teachers to volunteer for one project or another. Teachers resist accepting tasks on a voluntary basis, so principals shoulder this responsibility (Hauseman et al. 2017).

Ideally, distributed leadership occurs in interactions between teachers and principals, and offers teachers autonomy and freedom. Power is delegated, although sometimes this is misunderstood and tasks are delegated instead of power. Sometimes teachers are not necessarily supported in this process: "[T]he principals described their views by using expressions that defined distribution as delegation" (Ahtiainen et al., 2018). When the distributed leadership model is used correctly, both principals and teachers win; otherwise, it benefits only principals, who use it to reduce their workload without necessarily giving power and support to teachers.

In future, distributed leadership could be studied in relation to its actual application in the field in Finland. It would be interesting to understand the reasons why this leadership model may or may not be implemented according to its rules of art. In Canada, a study could be conducted to understand the reasons why teachers might be reluctant to accept responsibilities voluntarily. The viewpoint of teachers must be explored in addition to that of principals.

The number of hours school principals work may be higher for school principals in Canada. Tasks and responsibilities, and the work culture of principals in both countries could be also studied and compared.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Acronyms and Abbreviations

F Female

HR Human Resources

M Male

OOW Having an outlet outside work

OOW-A Having an outlet outside work-physical activity

OOW-B Having an outlet outside work-other relaxing activity

P Principal

PD Pedagogical development

PT Part-time

RR	Relation-related
RR-A	Relation-related-parents
RR-B	Relation-related-compassion fatigue/empathy
RR-C	Relation-related-secretaries
RR-D	Relation-related-superintendent
RR-E	Relation-related-union/work to rule action
RR-F	Relation-related-teachers
RR-G	Relation-related-students
RR-H	Relation-related-staff
RR-I	Relation-related-delegation/collaborative work
RR-J	Relation-related-principals
RR-K	Relation-related-specialists/people in charge

RR-L	Relation-related-unprofessional or behavioural issues/fight/conflict/disagreement
TLO	Spending time with loved ones
TR	Time-related
TR-A	Time-related-family-work balance
TR-B	Time-related-too many tasks and duties
TR-C	Time-related-not enough time at work
TR-D	Time-related-self-care
TR-E	Time-related-hurry up/meet deadlines
TR-F	Time-related-long days
TR-G	Time-related-easy/normal days
TR-H	Time-related-prioritization
TR-I	Constant interruptions/multitasking

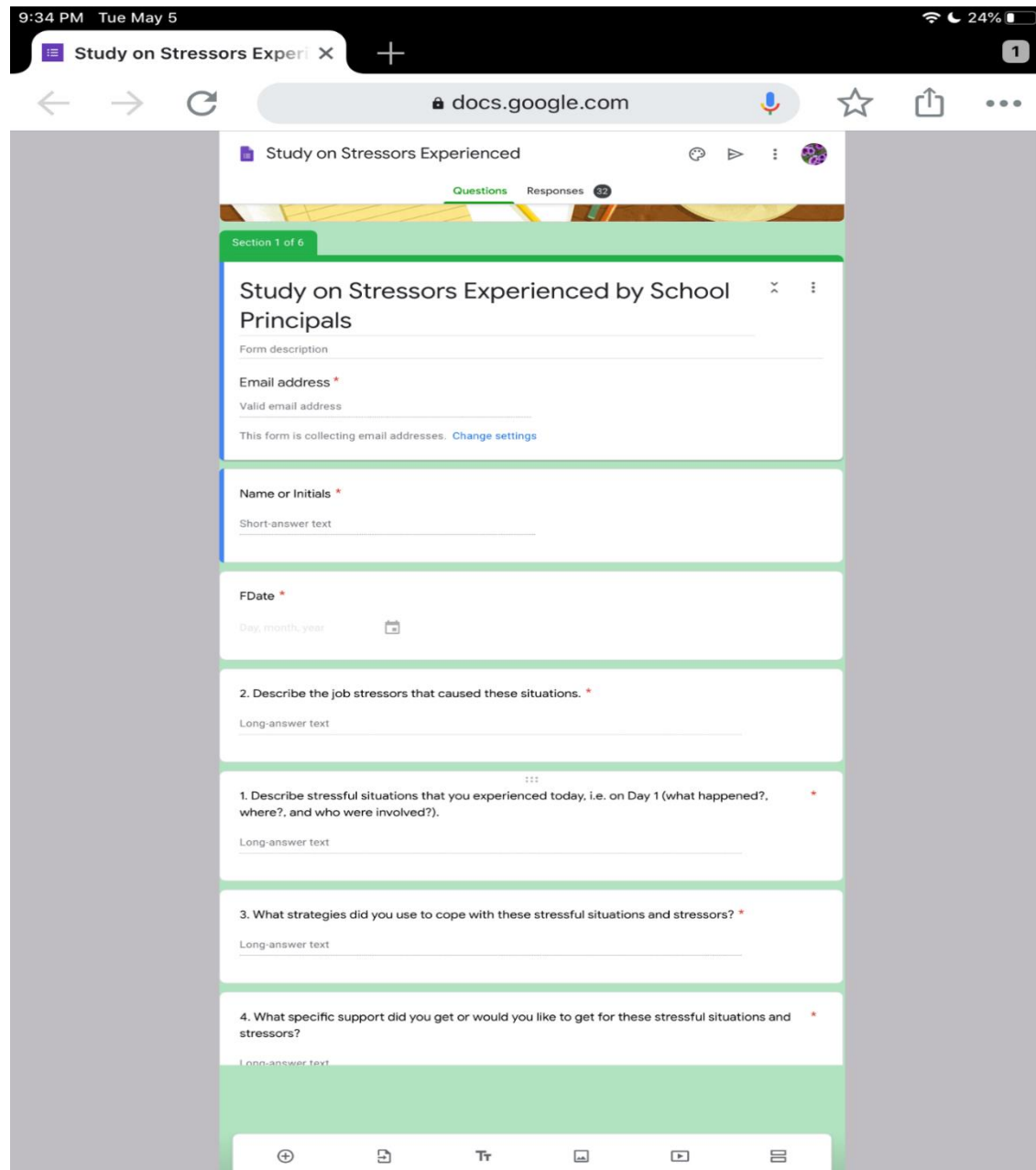
TVP	Teaching vice-principal
WR	Work-related
WR-A	Work-related-change/constant change
WR-B	Work-related-age/gender-related power dynamics
WR-C	Work-related-bureaucracy/paperwork
WR-D	Work-related-unknown
WR-E	Work-related-school work culture
WR-F	Work-related-accountability/responsibility/know-how
WR-G	Work-related-technology
WR-H	Work-related-schedule/reschedule
WR-I	Work-related-training/PD
WR-J	Work-related-meetings

WR-K Work-related-safety/emergency

WR-L Work-related-resources/information

WR-M Work-related-poor results

Appendix 2: Google Form for the Diaries Data Collection



9:34 PM Tue May 5

Study on Stressors Experienced

docs.google.com

Study on Stressors Experienced

Questions Responses 32

Section 2 of 6

Day 2

Description (optional)

Date *

Day, month, year

1. Describe stressful situations that you experienced today (what happened?, where?, and who were involved?). *

Long-answer text

2. Describe the job stressors that caused these situations. *

Long-answer text

3. What strategies did you use to cope with these stressful situations and stressors? *

Long-answer text

4. What specific support did you get or would you like to get for these stressful situations and stressors? *

Long-answer text

After section 2 Continue to next section

Section 3 of 6

Study on Stressors Experienced

Questions Responses 32

Section 3 of 6

Day 3

Description (optional)

Date *

Day, month, year 📅

1. Describe stressful situations that you experienced today, i.e. on Day 1 (what happened?, where?, and who were involved?). *

Long-answer text

2. Describe the job stressors that caused these situations. *

Long-answer text

3. What strategies did you use to cope with these stressful situations and stressors? *

Long-answer text

4. What specific support did you get or would you like to get for these stressful situations and stressors? *

Long-answer text

After section 3 Continue to next section ▾

Section 4 of 6

Study on Stressors Experienced

Questions Responses 3/2

Section 4 of 6

Day 4

Description (optional)

Date *

Day, month, year



1. Describe stressful situations that you experienced today, i.e. on Day 1 (what happened?, where?, and who were involved?). *

Long-answer text

2. Describe the job stressors that caused these situations. *

Long-answer text

3. What strategies did you use to cope with these stressful situations and stressors? *

Long-answer text

4. What specific support did you get or would you like to get for these stressful situations and stressors? *

Long-answer text

After section 4 Continue to next section

Section 5 of 6

Study on Stressors Experienced Questions Responses 32

Section 5 of 6

Day 5 Description (optional)

Date * Day, month, year [calendar icon]

1. Describe stressful situations that you experienced today (what happened?, where?, and who were involved?) * Long-answer text

2. Describe the job stressors that caused these situations. * Long-answer text

3. What strategies did you use to cope with these stressful situations and stressors? * Long-answer text

4. What specific support did you get or would you like to get for these stressful situations and stressors? * Long-answer text

After section 5 Submit form

Section 6 of 6

Please, make sure to submit the form at the end of Day 5 (click "Submit form" at the end of Section 5), just above this box. Description (optional)

Appendix 3: General Interview Guidelines

Interview

Your interview will be recorded.

I have done the first analysis round for my data and based on that, my supervisors and I decided to give you the individual feedback concerning the similarities and differences in relation to the whole group when the analysis of both the diaries and the interviews are over (i.e., in a few months). This way, I can give you more many-sided feedback since I can also use these interview data. So, there will be one more meeting just for this after I have done my second analysis round. However, I will describe the first summary of your profile in the end of this interview and we can discuss it together.

Do you have any questions/concerns before we start?

General Questions

What kind of educational background do you have?

What kind of working experience do you have?

How many years have you worked as a principal?

How did and, maybe, did not your previous studies and/or experience equip you to work as a principal?

Describe your school, e.g. a school level, size, staff and a leading group? What kind of school is it (e.g. programs, pupils, families, socio-economic environment, etc.)?

For this study, how do you understand these concepts: *Stressful situation? Job stressor? Coping strategy? Support?*

As a leader, what do you spend most of your time doing? What are your priorities as a leader and do you manage to allocate time for them?

On average, how many hours per week do you work during the school term? How do you relax or get away from it all? How often? Does this help? In what ways?

What do you like the most and what is the easiest to do in your job?

Which of your responsibilities as a principal do you find the most challenging to your abilities as a leader?

What kind of support is the most important for a principal in a school nowadays?

Do you think that stressful situations/stressors will increase, decrease, or stay the same in your work and why?

What kind of leaders will be needed as principals in the next 10 years?

If you could have a magic wand, for what kind of stressful situations/stressors would you like to see a change and/or get some sort of support for, and what would you propose?

Is there anything you wish people knew about your job that you have not told me already?

Individual Questions and Tentative Profile for Each Participant:

Amy

- 1) How did the work-to-rule action influence your level of stress this fall?
- 2) Concerning your heavy workload, let's dream! What solutions would you suggest?
- 3) How do you see yourself as a principal?
- 4) Do you feel that there is enough trust in principals?

Tentative profile: Knows how to prioritize tasks – She works through one problem at a time – She would benefit from receiving professional support – Her heavy workload causes her a lot of stress - Does this look like you? What do you think?

Brook

1) How do you think that working as a teaching principal influences your level of stress?

2) Would you feel comfortable giving me more information concerning the stress caused by your professional relationship with your work partner/principal? If not, may I use the information you have already given me concerning this (i.e., "I have chosen to leave out some information regarding working with my partner/principal because of concerns with straining my work environment").

3) Many times in your diaries, concerning question 4 (i.e., concerning specific support you got or you would like to get), you answered "nothing". Today, let's dream! If you could get all the support you wish to have and/or make some changes, what would you ask for?

4) How do you see yourself as a principal?

Tentative profile: Part-time vice-principal and part-time teacher - Uses her family to vent stress, and does not hesitate to consult and discuss with mentor and principal, and acquaint herself with the details to make sure she is making the right decision. Does this look like you? What do you think?

Hannu

1) Would you please describe the homework room in your school?

2) Why do parents usually not like their child going to the homework room?

3) How did you prepare for that difficult discussion/situation, or how do you prepare for this kind of discussion, in general?

How does that serve you?

4) How do you see yourself as a principal?

Tentative profile: Organized – Knows how to prioritize – Counts on staff support – Is able to take time to rest, like listening to good music, enjoying cake with the staff – Sensitive to people’s feelings: shows he understands them and in return he gets their support (allies) – Prepares himself in advance for difficult situations. Does this look like you? What do you think?

Mikko

1) Would you please explain why it would be better to have one big exam room, and why it is stressful not knowing if someone has been there before you?

2) When you delegate some of your work to the teachers, do they do it without grumbling?! How do you go about it? What kind of relationship do you have with your staff?

3) How do you see yourself as a principal?

Tentative profile: Mikko makes the most of his resources (especially human resources for which he is thankful). He likes to work with people (staff, students). He is able to make room for the most important things and let go of the least important ones when necessary. He is able to take time to relax. Does this look like you? What do you think?

Matias

1) I noticed that you answered “No” to all the questions, in all your diaries. How would you explain that?

2) What kind of support are you getting?

3) What strategies do you use to cope with your work?

4) How do you cope with the stress?

5) How do you see yourself as a principal?

Tentative profile: Matias may not be stressed at all. However, I am wondering if it's not because he was feeling very overwhelmed that he just answered "No" to every single question, or could it be because we don't share the same definition of "stressful situation" and "stressor"? Does this look like you? What do you think?

Suvi

- 1) How do people's support and sharing responsibilities with them help you handle stressful situations (and do they do it without grumbling)?
- 2) How do you manage to focus on one thing at a time?
- 3) In general, how are you able to plan your work to get things done well in advance?
- 5) How do you see yourself as a principal?

Tentative profile: Focuses on one thing at a time - support, teamwork, and shared responsibility/never alone in difficult situations (staff and students) - Does not leave anything for the last minute - Support from 2nd principal and secretary, teachers, and assistants, and even students during an event (cooperation) - Can go for a short walk to take some fresh air - Is understanding and considers teachers and staff as allies - Does this look like you? What do you think?

Vicky

- 1) If you were given the mandate to review the size, range and scope of a principal, how would you proceed?
- 2) How important is the support that you are getting from principals, peers, and contacts in HR?
- 3) How important are behavioural issues in the school?
- 4) How do you intend to learn to "park" stressful thoughts?
- 5) How do you see yourself as a principal?

Tentative profile: Vicky has an understanding family – Husband has an empathetic ear and helps her not internalize issues – She takes care of herself physically (it is a priority): runs, does workout to get rid of sadness and stress – Likes connecting with colleagues when attending PD and takes the time to enjoy coffee and food with them - Consults principals, peers and has contacts in HR - The workload is too heavy, so she wishes there were more time and more principals in the schools -- She criticizes the lack of communication and support. Also, with advancing communications technology, she believes we may be asking too much of principals. Indeed, she is asking herself if it is “the role of a principal to be a crisis caretaker 24/7”. She receives many distress emails from staff, students, and/or parents -- She has to work in the evening and on the weekends as well – Behavioural issues in the school are a source of stress for her – As one of her colleagues suggested, she believes she needs to learn to “park” stressful thoughts, to be less affected. Does this look like you? What do you think?

Amber

Tentative profile: Practises mindfulness and listens to *Pride and Prejudice* in the car (maximizes her time well!), and goes for massages, and walks outside, near her home - Uses humour – Is able to compartmentalize and prioritize – Does this look like you? What do you think?

Identity enhancing: What did you feel was the most important thing we talked about today, and why?

Do you have any questions?

Appendix 4: Diaries Data Analysis

Mikko Week 1		Q1 - DESCRIBE STRESSFUL SITUATIONS THAT YOU EXPERIENCED TODAY (WHAT HAPPENED?, WHERE?, AND WHO WAS INVOLVED?).	Q2 - DESCRIBE THE JOB STRESSORS THAT CAUSED THESE SITUATIONS.	Q3 - WHAT STRATEGIES DID YOU USE TO COPE WITH THESE STRESSFUL SITUATIONS AND STRESSORS?	Q4 - WHAT SPECIFIC SUPPORT DID YOU GET OR WOULD YOU LIKE TO GET FOR THESE STRESSFUL SITUATIONS AND STRESSORS?
Monday		Nothing stressful happen[ed]. TR-G	-	-	-
Tuesday		Long day, started 7.00 and I was home 23.00. In work from 7.00 - 15.30 and after that to [hometown] (trip 100km) and there meeting [for leisure]. TR-F	Long day always has its toll. Trying to have everything ready to leave a little bit early, but often no such luck. TR-F	Evening is something I enjoy, so that helps me cope these long days. OOW-B	A little shorter day would be fine. TR-F
Wednesday		Baccalaureate, 30 students and exams with computers. starting main computers and hoping everything works. And it did. Morning start[ed]. 6.00. There is me and vice principal at school that time. WR-G	2.Baccalaureate are two times a year, three weeks [at] a time. It is always a stressful time, because everything has to work. WR-F	I have good vice principal and working with her helps. We both know how system works and we can manage alone in morning, but we are there both to be sure. RR-I/RR-J	It would be helpful to have own big place where to have exams, but at this moment we don't have [our] own place. It is more stressful because you can't be sure that nobody has been there. WR-L

Thursday		I had meeting in Helsinki, but I had to cancel it. Three of my teachers were sick that day and I didn't manage to employ substitute teachers. So during that day I [taught] 9 lessons during school day (9.00 - 15.00).	Something that happens and can't be avoided.	I had to cancel least important thing and focus on the most meaningful thing in school- students and their wellbeing.	Bigger city so there would be substitute teachers available ☺
		WR-L	WR-F	TR-H	WR-L
Friday		nothing stressful happen.	-	-	-
		TR-G			

Mikko Week 2		Q1 - DESCRIBE STRESSFUL SITUATIONS THAT YOU EXPERIENCED TODAY (WHAT HAPPENED?, WHERE?, AND WHO WAS INVOLVED?).	Q2 - DESCRIBE THE JOB STRESSORS THAT CAUSED THESE SITUATIONS.	Q3 - WHAT STRATEGIES DID YOU USE TO COPE WITH THESE STRESSFUL SITUATIONS AND STRESSORS?	Q4 - WHAT SPECIFIC SUPPORT DID YOU GET OR WOULD YOU LIKE TO GET FOR THESE STRESSFUL SITUATIONS AND STRESSORS?
Monday		nothing stressful happened.	-	-	-
		TR-G			
Tuesday		Exam computer didn't work as it should have. Vice principal called me after exams and I had to drive to my other campus to solve this [problem].	I'm accountable for everything operating nicely.	I rely on my knowledge to handle these situations.	There [were] two of us in [this] situation and we called helpline and everything worked nicely in the end.
		WR-G	WR-F	WR-F	RR-I/RR-J
Wednesday		Nothing stressful happened.	-	-	-
		TR-G			
Thursday		Nothing stressful happened.	-	-	-

		TR-G			
Friday		Normal day, had 5 minutes time to eat. [A little] stress about own time during day, but I'm here to work, not doing anything else.	I would like to have a little bit more time to eat in peace and communicate with teachers during day.	Well time is something you don't get more [of], so I'm delegating some my work to teachers and so I get more time for them.	More money from city 😊
		TR-D	TR-C	RR-I/RR-F	WR-L

Appendix 5: Summary of the Data Analysis of the Diaries with my Expanded Typology, Based on Mahfouz's Model (Mahfouz, 2018)

Summary of the Data Analysis of the Diaries with my Expanded Typology, Based on Mahfouz's Model (Mahfouz, 2018)

Participants	Country	Stressful Situations/Stressors	Coping Strategies	Support
Hannu	Finland	WR-ACFGIJKLM RR-ABFGKL TR-BCDEG	WR-F RR-K TR-HE OOW-B	WR-CF RR-AFHIJK
Mikko	Finland	WR-FGJLM WR-DFGJLM RR-A TR-CDEFG	WR-FHIL WR-DF RR-FHIJ TR-AH OOW-B	WR-HL WR-FL RR-HIJ TR-F
Matias	Finland	TR-G		
Suvi	Finland	WR-CFGIJL RR-LH TR-BEFG	WR-FC RR RR-CFGHIJ TR-H OOW-A	WR-GIL RR-CFGHIJ

Summary of the Data Analysis of the Diaries with my Expanded Typology, Based on
Mahfouz's Model (Mahfouz, 2018)

Participants	Country	Stressful Situations/Stressors	Coping Strategies	Support
Brook	Canada	WR-FGJKL RR-AFGHJL TR-BCDGI	WR-EFGH RR-JK TR-DH TLO	WR-L RR-JK
Amber	Canada	WR-ACDFGHJKLM RR RR-ABDEFGHIJKL TR-BCDEF	WR-AF RR RR-BIKJ TR-DEH TLO OOW-AB	WR-FIL RR-BFIJK TR-ACE
Amy	Canada	WR-CEFKL RR-ABEFGIL TR-BCEFHI	WR-F RR-DHIJK TR-BDEH	WR-CEFIL RR-DHIJL TR-BCHI
Vicky	Canada	WR-AEFKL RR-ABDEFGHIKL TR-ABCDEFI	WR-F RR-DIJK TR-ADH TLO OOW-A	WR-EL RR-ADGIK TR-ABCDI TLO

Appendix 5 presents the summary of the first phase of the data analysis of the diaries with my expanded typology, based on the Mahfouz's model (Mahfouz, 2018). It introduces each participant of the study, the country where he/she worked, stressful situations/stressors experienced, coping strategies used, support received or wished for. For each participant, the labels shown in Appendix 5 were present at least once in each category, i.e. Stressful Situations/Stressors, Coping Strategies, and Support received or wished for. For instance, for Vicky, the label TLO appears in the Coping Strategy and Support columns because she spent time with loved ones (TLO) both as a coping strategy and support, at least once in each of these categories.

Caption: [OOW: Having an outlet outside work]; [OOW-A]: Having an outlet outside work-physical activity; [OOW-B]: Having an outlet outside work-other relaxing activity; [RR]: Relation-related; [RR-A]: Relation-related-parents; [RR-B]: Relation-related-compassion fatigue/empathy; [RR-C]: Relation-related-secretaries; [RR-D]: Relation-related-superintendent; [RR-E]: Relation-related-union/work to rule action; [RR-F]: Relation-related-teachers; [RR-G]: Relation-related-students; [RR-H]: Relation-related-staff; [RR-I]: Relation-related-delegation/collaborative work; [RR-J]: Relation-related-principals; [RR-K]: Relation-related-specialists/people in charge; [RR-L]: Relation-related-unprofessional or behavioural issues/fight/conflict/disagreement; [TLO]: Spending time with loved ones; [TR]: Time-related; [TR-A]: Time-related-family-work balance; [TR-B]: Time-related-too many tasks and duties; [TR-C]: Time-related-not enough time at work; [TR-D]: Time-related-self-care; [TR-E]: Time-related-hurry up/meet deadlines; [TR-F]: Time-related-long days; [TR-G]: Time-related-easy/normal days; [TR-H]: Time-related-prioritization; [TR-H]: Time-related-constant interruptions/multitasking; [WR]: Work-related; [WR-A]: Work-related-change/constant change; [WR-B]: Work-related-age-gender-related power dynamics; [WR-C]: Work-related-bureaucracy/paperwork; [WR-D]: Work-related-unknown; [WR-E]: Work-related-school work culture; [WR-F]: Work-related-accountability/responsibility/know-how; [WR-G]: Work-related-technology;

[WR-H]: Work-related-schedule/reschedule; [WR-I]: Work-related-training/PD; [WR-J]: Work-related-meetings; [WR-K]: Work-related-safety/emergency; [WR-L]: Work-related-resources/information; [WR-M]: Work-related-poor results.