

Work/Life Balance:

Personal and Organisational Strategies of School Leaders

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Master of Research Declaration

I, Marie Crozier-Durham, declare that the Master by Research thesis entitled Work/Life Balance: Personal and Organisational Strategies of School Leaders is no more than 60,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, figures, appendices and references. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

Signature: _____

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Acknowledgement

My thanks are extended to the school leaders who participated in interviews for this study. Their interest in the topic and their generosity and openness in providing insights into their work/life balance strategies made the data collection phase a pleasure.

My supervisor, Associate Professor Tony Kruger provided understanding, support and encouragement throughout the long process involved in completing the thesis, and for this I thank him.

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to identify strategies that school leaders might use to achieve better balance in their lives. This topic is examined in the context of the influences on, and outcomes of, the lack of balance between work and personal life, as well as the impact on school leaders' performance and well-being. The study examines problematic work/life balance of school leaders as one reason why people do not want to apply for school principal positions and notes that, while that issue has been identified and restated in a number of studies, little evidence exists of the development of responses. This observation prompted the adoption of an alternative paradigm—Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider, 1987)—to the more usual conflict/deficit models, which are common in work/life research, and problem methods often used in research on principalship.

This choice of methodology and stance was also influenced by a view that there were gaps in the literature. What is lacking is some affirmative view of the capacity of organisational leaders to achieve a positive work /life balance. The current work/life literature also often fails to examine what people actually do to ensure some harmony between work and other responsibilities. A major focus of this study was on contributing to the literature relating to work/life balance and principal well-being, supply and performance. The current study offers a contribution to the work/life literature by exploring the, to date under-explored, area of work/life enrichment. It is possibly the first study to examine thriving (Spreitzer, 2005a) as a lens for work/life balance. The study also contributes to filling some gaps in the literature in relation to the *action* of school leadership and the *process* of combining the leadership role and personal roles. It provides and analyses positive depictions of work/life balance and effective school leadership.

This exploratory case study involved locating and hearing the stories of those who were deemed to be successful in their professional lives and in balancing their work and personal lives. Data were gathered in semi-structured interviews with eight school principals and four assistant principals from eight Victorian state schools.

From a series of research questions, the main question and the essence of the inquiry can be summarised as follows:

How do some principals achieve work/life balance and how might this inform the content/design of a professional development program aimed at principal well-being and retention?

Selected generative, enrichment, expansionist work/life theories (Clark, 2000; Singh, 2002; Barnett, 2001; Greenhaus, 2006) inform the analysis of the work and non-work strategies employed by the school leaders interviewed as part of the project. A typology of school leaders is developed to distinguish levels of satisfaction and relative success in achieving work/life balance. The three groups in the typology are Balancers, Strivers and Acceptors. The strategies of the Balancers—those with high satisfaction with work/life balance and low work/life conflict—are found to accord with concepts such as thriving (Spreitzer, 2005 a) and personal mastery (Senge, 1999). A thriving lens is used as the foundational element of a work/life balance professional development program proposal.

The study found that the factors that contribute to principals' difficulties with balancing work and personal life are a complex interweaving of a range of individual, demographic, social, political, and organisational factors. What makes this group (in particular the Balancers) different from the majority of Victorian state school Principal Class Officers, as described in a workload and well-being study (Saulwick, 2004), is found to lie in their capacity in a range of areas. The study finds individual principals' agency, energy, mastery and efficacy is important to achieving work/life balance for these professionals, and that managing the workload is the fulcrum of that balance. It identifies a range of actions or strategies that appear to be important in effecting a satisfactory balance between work and personal life. The study points to the importance of ensuring that Victorian Department of Education (DoE) systems are improved so that structures and cultures are more supportive of principals. Also indicated is the need to provide positive examples of work/life balance amongst school principals and promote an affirmative projection to guide members of the Principal Class into the future.

Outcomes are presented in terms of a taxonomy of personal and organisational strategies that support the work/life balance of school leaders; a framework for a professional development program that emphasises ways to assist school leaders to thrive in the role; and a set of recommendations for the DoE to implement in order to assist school leaders to attain balance between work and their personal lives. This balance, supported by a culture changed through the implementation of the recommendations made, should contribute to greater role satisfaction, increased well-being, better performance of school leaders and improved principal supply.

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Chapter 1: Work and Life—from Clash to Balance

Bill: Listen Mum, I am not going to school today and you can't make me.

Bill's Mother: Bill, I am not ringing the school office to tell them you will not be at school today—that would be two days in a row.

Bill: Aw, Mum, please, please. I hate school. The assistant principal has it in for me, the teachers ignore me, and the kids hate me.

Bill's Mum: You know that is not true.

Bill: It is true and they pile work on me and I can't get it finished and I am never able to do anything I want to do, and I am stressed and I can't sleep and I ...

Bill's Mum: Stop! I am sure something can be done about all this. But, look, for today, I have packed you a lovely lunch and put in two Wagon Wheels so you'll have something to look forward to. You must go to school today – after all, you are the school principal!

1.1 Preamble

This thesis commences with this well-worn 'chalkie' joke for three reasons. First, it reflects a number of themes contained in the literature on contemporary principalship: the role is expanding; the workload is increasing; the expectations are growing; it is causing stress and impeding work/life balance. Second, it suggests that something can be done about the situation. Third, because humour, fun and joy seem to be themes largely missing in the literature and, as such, impact on the role and image of the principalship, it seemed appropriate to open this study with a joke. All these issues are linked to the context of this study.

Finding what strategies principals might adopt to achieve better balance in their lives is the focus of this study. This is examined in the context of the influences on, and outcomes of, the lack of balance between work and personal life, and the impact on principals' performance and well-being. The study examines the work/life balance of principals as one reason why people do not want to apply for principal positions.

This preliminary chapter introduces the study topic and explores some of its inherent dimensions and paradoxes. It describes the study, located in government schools in Victoria, Australia, sets its context and provides a definition for the term 'work/life balance'. It states

the purpose of the study and the research questions to be answered. Also provided is some background information about the issue in the Victorian Department of Education (DoE), which highlights recent research used to inform the study.¹ A preliminary overview of the methodology employed and a statement of the significance of the study are provided. The chapter concludes with an overview of the thesis content.

1.2 Introduction

This study seeks to shed some light on the paradoxical situation in which principals often find themselves. They generally love their jobs, yet in large numbers experience stress, anxiety and sleeplessness, to the extent that they may seek remedies from a doctor or from the drink or medicine cabinet (Fullan, 2000). Studies reveal that principals perceive that they pay the price for the privilege of the role by compromising physical and mental well-being, personal relationships and family life. They also perceive that the associated workload and work intensity results in being unable to pursue interests to the extent they would like (Saulwick Muller Social Research, 2004). School leaders in Victoria and elsewhere have indicated that an aspect of the role that causes dissatisfaction is the impact on work/life balance (Lacey, 2003a).

This study also comments on the different perceptions of work/life balance according to different stakeholders—employers, principal associations, principals and assistant principals, the families of school leaders, the school community, and the community at large. For example, the employer, DoE, is aware of the impact on performance, on the cost of stress leave and claims, and of the need to address the problem of principal supply—retaining and engaging existing principals and attracting sufficient quality and quantity of principals to fill vacant positions. It is estimated that a significant proportion of all existing positions will be vacated in the next few years (Preston, 2002). Principal associations often focus on workload and remuneration issues, but increasingly are paying attention to support strategies and leadership development (Victorian Principals' Association, 2005, Australian Principals Association Professional Development Council, 2005). Victorian principals' own views were captured in *The Privilege and the Price: a Study of Principal Class Workload and its Impact on Health and Wellbeing* report (Saulwick, 2004) and are given some voice in narratives in the present study.

¹ (The name of the Department of Education and Training (DET) was changed to the Victorian Department of Education (DoE) since the completion of this study. However, the term DoE is used throughout this document, except when referencing specific material, and recommendations in Chapter 7 are addressed to DoE)

What the study seeks to generate is some insight into how the job might be done better so that principals who love the job also derive joy from doing the job and fulfilment from engagement in non-work aspects of their lives. It also seeks to show aspiring principals that the job is “do-able” and that work/life balance is achievable.

Finding appropriate methodological and theoretical approaches to best illuminate this paradoxical topic was an early research task. So too was the task of finding the means of generating some positive recommendations. An appreciative approach combined with the voices of principals who are satisfied with the strategies they have employed to effect positive work/life balance are used to develop such recommendations. In some agreement with Blackmore (2002), this study is aimed at avoiding the reproduction of a bleak one-sided representation or a paradoxical picture of masochistic pleasure and pain, a representation which is demonstrated in the title and content of Saulwick’s (2004) *The Privilege and the Price* report. It seeks to provide a positive, yet authentic, representation of the principalship.

Paradoxes inherent in the study extend even to the concept of work/life balance, which, being a socially constructed concept will differ from school leader to school leader. To advance this, the study attempts to provide a research focus that subjects the narratives collected to a test. This will determine where each principal sits on a work/life balance continuum (stretching from high levels of work/life conflict and low levels of satisfaction with work/life balance to low levels of work/life conflict and high levels of satisfaction with work/life balance). The conceptual framework and the range of themes identified in the interviews allow for an analysis of school leaders’ strategies within the work and non-work domains in relation to balancing work and non-work activities.

Blackmore, Thomson, Sachs, & Tregenza, K. (2002) state that it is important for those who research principal supply (which is but one aspect of this study) to focus not only on the reasons why the job is unattractive, but also on the complex reasons why it is worth doing. The premise, however, of this study, is: how in this attractive job (to principals themselves) can we find ways of making the role more attractive and “do-able” for all those who hold or aspire to such positions? It also seeks to encourage principals to develop strategies for balancing work and other aspects of their lives (Earley, Evans, Collarbone, Gold, & Halpin, 2002) and for putting joy back into the role (Burford, 2004).

1.3 The Study

The study focusses on government schools in the state of Victoria, Australia. The research is an exploratory case study of eight principals and four assistant principals in eight Victorian state schools. The study design comprises a combination of appreciative approach (Cooperrider & Srivastva (1987), narrative mode of inquiry (Polkinghorne, 1988) and multiple case study methods. The choice of such a combination of methodologies represents an attempt to match method to topic, and seeks to create a synergy to help deepen the understanding of the topic.

1.4 Context

A growing body of national and international research suggests that the reasons why teachers are deterred from applying for principals' positions, and in some cases why principals leave positions or retire early, are that the job is perceived to be too onerous, too intrusive in family life and inappropriately geared to managerial, rather than educative, tasks (Cooley & Shen, 2000; Thompson & Blackmore, 2004).

Work/life balance has been particularly linked to principal supply, principals' performance and their health and well-being. Research establishes a negative link between work/life balance and principal supply. The effect on family and personal life, for example, is presented as a major disincentive for school leaders in becoming principals (Cranston, 2002; Holdaway, 1999; Neidhart, d'Arbon & Carlin, 2003).

1.5 The Term Work/Life Balance Defined and Explored

Work/life balance is defined in this study as the harmonious and holistic integration of work and non-work, so that men and women can achieve their potential across the domains—work, family, personal life and community—in which they play out their life roles (Bailyn, Drago & Koshan, 2001). This definition is echoed in DoE Victoria's *Flexible Work Options: achieving work-life balance* program documentation, which states that the Department is “committed to promoting effective human resource management practices that assist employees to balance their work, family, health, study and other life commitments” (DET, 1998).

Debates do exist about the term work/life balance in relation to the appropriateness of the underpinning metaphor—indicating an attainable goal of equalising or balancing commitments. There is support for favouring terms such as ‘*work/life integration*’ (Bailyn, 1993) or ‘*work/life facilitation*’ (Grzywacz, 2002). The term has even been described as an

oxymoron and a tautology (van Eijnatten & Vos, 2002). For this study, however, the balance concept is used and understood in the terms of the definition in the paragraph above, as part of the principal supply and performance debate and the broader discussion on contemporary human resource management, in particular talent management in organisations in Australia and internationally. In addition, the work/life balance theoretical discourse focuses on the interface between work and personal life (Kossek & Lambert, 2006) and includes changes in workplace practices, structures and culture supports (Rapoport, Bailyn, Fletcher & Pruitt, 2002), providing links between work/life issues and organisational capability, capacity building, sustainability and leadership. In this respect, work/life balance is part of the move to effect sustainable work systems at a time when the contemporary effort in organisations to improve competitive and sustainable growth has been seen, in many quarters, to have resulted in greater work intensity (but may still not have achieved the desired levels of productivity or competitive and sustainable growth) (van Eijnatten, 2002; Gambles, Lewis & Rapoport, 2006).

Perhaps because much of the work/life balance research is focused on deficits, studies concentrate on what is wrong, and do not often record examples of success in this area. A similar observation is made by Day (2005) in relation to specific principalship research that it comprises few examples of leaders who are recognised as effective. Much of the research makes the negative link between work/life balance and principal supply, principals' well-being and performance. The aim of this study, however, is to explore the positive dimension of the issue. As such, it seeks to respond to such observations as Lacey's (2002), that until the job satisfaction of principals become as explicit as their job dissatisfaction, few teachers will aspire to the role.

This study focuses on positive examples of principals' efforts to achieve work/life balance in order to provide some emancipatory leverage (Ludema, 2001), that is, to move from statements of problems and limiting beliefs to generate new understanding. With this in mind, an appreciative approach (Bushe, 1995) informed by Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider, 1987) is used as the central driver of the research. Appreciative Inquiry (AI), which is based on social constructionist theories, assumes that change happens best when we focus on what is right in organisations, rather than focusing on the problems that need to be solved or changes that need to be made. Using an appreciative process requires a change in problem orientation—from a deficit focus to an appreciative focus based on a belief in human potential coupled with critical thinking (Bushe, 1998).

1.6 Purpose

The project aim is to explore (from a positive/appreciative aspect) how a selected group of school principals support their work/life balance. In addition, the research sought to explore the perceptions held by colleague assistant principals as to the strategies used by each principal to achieve work/life balance. The intention of the research is that its findings will be applied to the identification of individual work/life balance strategies, and of desirable changes in the nature of school principalship, to support principals' work/life balance and principal supply and succession planning. It is intended that the study will inform the development of a professional development program, which initiates education managers into the potential of work/life balance.

1.7 Research Questions

The study set out to gain an understanding of the range of ways in which school leaders achieve work/life balance. This research focused on:

- exploring the views and experience of work/life balance of school leaders and strategies to manage commitments in their work and non-work domains, and
- finding how work/life balance can be managed and utilised to improve school capability and sustainability, especially the supply of school leaders.

The study set out to find answers to the following questions:

1. What are the practices employed by principals to achieve work/life balance?
2. How do colleague assistant principals perceive that their principals achieve work/life balance?
3. What features of school organisation and personal practice enable principals to achieve work/life balance?
4. What features of school organisation and personal practice get in the way of principals achieving work/life balance?
5. How might the principalship be changed to provide better opportunities for principals to achieve work/life balance?
6. What impact can attention to work/life balance issues have on supporting school leaders and on future principal supply?
7. What might be included in a research-based professional development program, which initiates education managers into the potential of work/life balance?

1.8 *Background*

The research took place during 2004 in eight government schools in the state of Victoria, Australia, the country's second most populous state. The study focused on school leaders—eight principals plus the assistant principals to four of the principals.

In that year, there were 1,631 schools within the Victorian government education system. Support to schools is provided through nine regional offices (5 country and 4 metropolitan) and a central office. There were 1,503 principals and 1,274 assistant principals occupying the Principal Class (Saulwick, 2004). Seventy per cent of DoE teachers were female and 31% of principals were female (Lacey, 2002). In June 2007, women comprised 50.9% of Principal Class positions (personal communication from the Department of Education and Early Child Development 19/10/2007). Most government schools are co-educational.

Significant responsibility, authority and accountability are located at the school level. Schools have major control of their financial resources on salaries, services, equipment, supplies and general maintenance.

Principal positions have clear delegations and accountabilities that distinguish their work from other members of the Principal Class. In Saulwick (2004), these responsibilities are described as:

- Management of staff
- Executive officer to the school council
- Financial management within DoE and school council requirement
- Acting as a representative of the Deputy Secretary, Office of School Education at the school level and contributing to the development and implementation of DoE policy
- Planning, including the development and implementation of the school charter.

The responsibilities of assistant principals may include the leadership and management of: school operations; teaching and learning programs; staffing, support and development programs; and a campus in a multi-campus school (Saulwick, 2004).

DoE was an early starter in Australia in the move to develop programs, policies and practices to support work/life/family balance. By 1998, DoE had in place the *Flexible Work Options: achieving work/life balance program*, developed through a process of consultation, documentation and incorporation of many existing leave provisions and other benefits.

The program framework sets out the linkage to DoE's Corporate Plan, its rationale, policy framework, and related benefits and entitlements. It also sets out a range of implementation principles, management competencies and a strategic approach to implementation. DoE documentation and much of the work/life literature identifies these management characteristics and actions as critical to program implementation: commitment to work/life balance, supportive management, manager as role model, communication on work/life issues and taking a strategic management approach (Palamara & Pascoe, 1999; Department of Education, 1998).

Of particular relevance to this research are two recent studies relating to the principalship in the Victorian state education system (Lacey, 2003a; Saulwick, 2004). Both have negatively linked work/life balance with principal supply, principals' performance and their health and well-being. Lacey's study found that teachers in Victorian state schools would not apply for principal positions that were too overwhelming and that such decisions are made on the basis of the role modelled by current leaders. These findings revealed the negative impact on work/family balance for both males and females and also indicated that personal factors, such as effect on the family, stress level of the job, and time required by the job were strong disincentives to promote to the Principal Class for all groups, but were significantly greater for women (Lacey, 2002b). Findings of high satisfaction with the job accompanied by high pressure in the role, work and role overload, and role conflict are themes reported in the recent Victorian principal workload study (Saulwick, 2004). This study found a high incidence of stress related to the role being felt equally by male and female principals.

1.9 Methodology

This study involves using an appreciative approach derived from Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider 1987). A conceptual framework, based on a model of causal pathways connecting work and personal life (Bond, Galinsky & Swanberg, 1998), reflects the research questions and provides a broad architecture for the literature review and a thematic framework for an aspect of the data analysis. The elements of the research design include such features as a measure of perceived work/life balance based on a concept in Tausig & Fenwick (2001) to underpin the analysis of managers' strategies, and a typology of principals' work/life balance strategies.

Data sources were taped, semi-structured interviews of the principals and assistant principals, and notes were taken using an appreciative approach, largely focussing on identifying positive experiences of work/life balance. Four assistant principals were interviewed to provide

another perspective to triangulate /crystallise the data in relation to the principal, and to provide data on the issue of the impact of work/life issues on career aspirations (to the principalship).

This appreciative approach is most evident in the selection of a purposive sample of eight school principals and the interview protocols used for the semi-structured interviews that form the main data gathering method. The focus of the approach is on the strategies employed by the principals to achieve what they perceive to be positive work/life balance, and the generative action embodied in the development of a work/life professional development proposal.

1.10 Conceptual Framework

The need to find a way of conceptualising the issues in the study and supporting the range of issues involved in the research questions led to the adoption of the following model developed by Bond (1998) (Figure 1). Incorporated in this model are the major issues that need to be addressed in an analysis of work/life balance. It allows a consideration of:

1. determinants
2. nature of balance, and
3. consequences of work/life balance.

Indeed, the choice of this model responds to the calls for work/life research to examine the pathways of influence between work and non-work and the mechanisms that influence the interface between work and non-work (Geurts, 2002). The chosen model also incorporates elements of a more recent theoretical model—*Work-family Enrichment Model* (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006), referred to in the literature review, particularly the issue of pathways on influence between work and non-work.

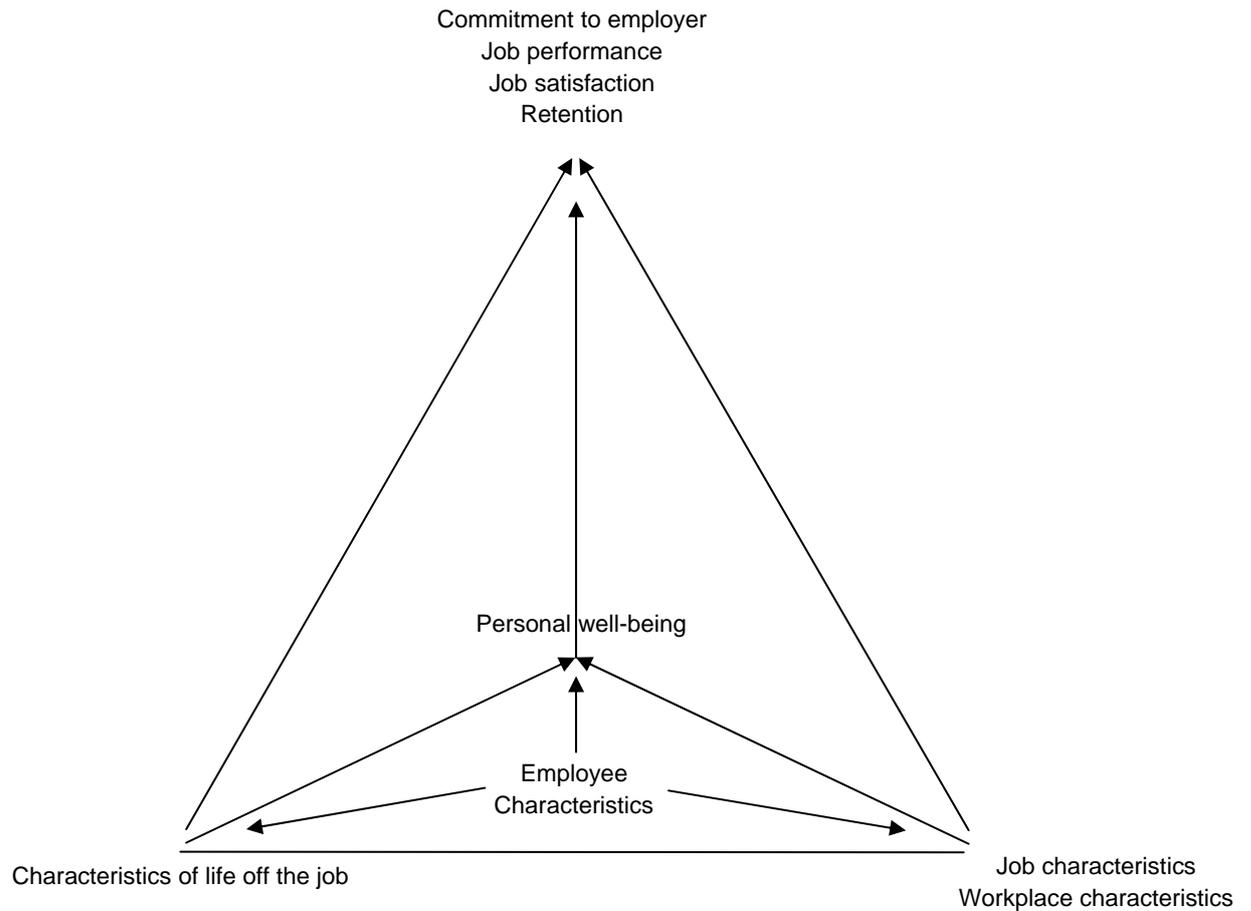


Figure 1. Model of Causal Pathways Connecting Work and Personal Life

(Source: Bond, Galinsky & Swanberg, 1998)

The conceptual framework for the study, as depicted in Figure 2 below, is a transposition of the model in Figure 1 with the addition of two features represented in the research questions, Redesign and Professional Development, acting as additional influences on work/life balance.

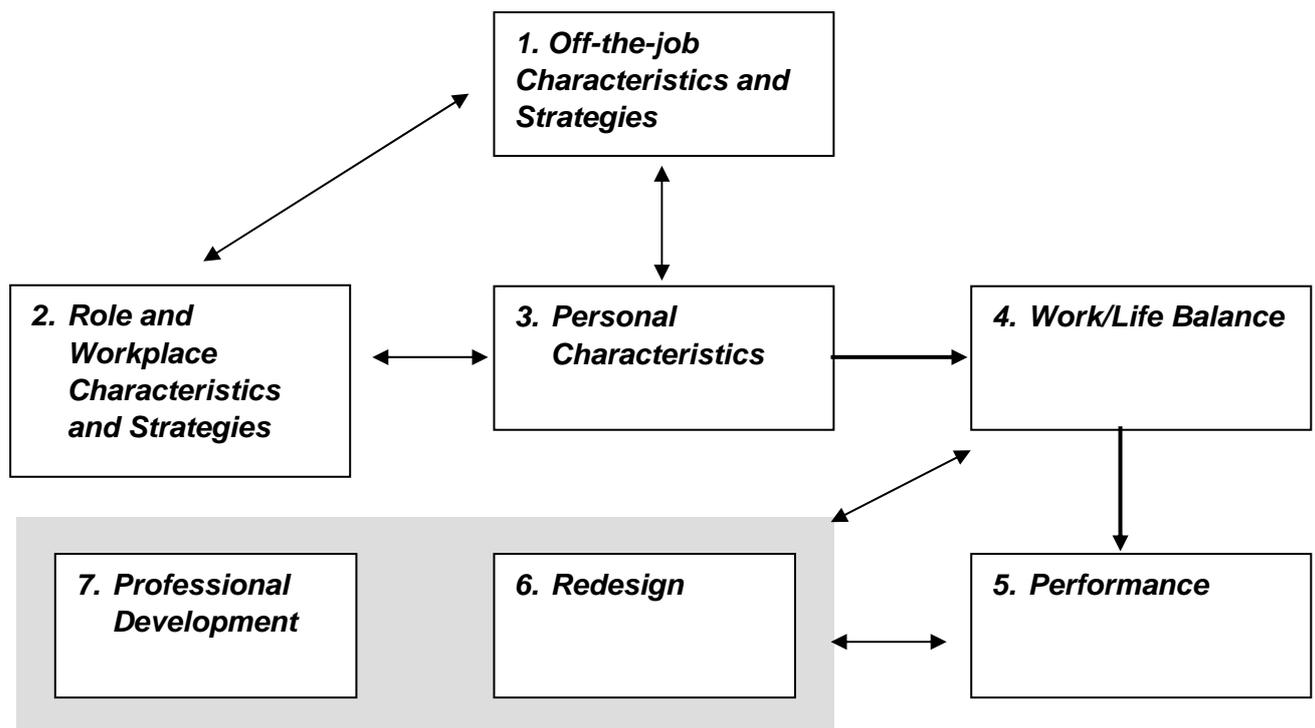


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

The framework focuses on the proximal issues (work characteristics, non-work characteristics and personal characteristics) relating to work/life balance, as the title of the study suggests. However, the context for the study also includes the organisational and political environment and culture issues, as indicated by those research questions relating to the features of school organisation and personal practice. The model allows for a consideration of work/life issues in a workplace and professional effectiveness paradigm (Swanberg, 2002), in relation to personal effectiveness and well-being. It permits an examination of the explanatory power of different job, performance and workplace factors affecting work/life balance, which enable/act as barriers/contributors to principals achieving work/life balance. It also assists an inquiry into how the principalship might be redesigned and supported to provide better opportunities for school leaders to achieve work/life balance and the impact work/life balance issues may have on supporting current school leaders and on future principal supply.

The framework includes provision for identifying from the study what might be included in a research-based professional development program, which could initiate education managers into the potential of work/life balance.

1.11 Significance of the Study

The study seeks to contribute to work/life literature in areas where some research gaps are noted. For example, the current work/life literature often fails to examine the personal lives of workers and what people actually do to manage conflict between work and other responsibilities. The paucity of this type of study extends to research into work/life strategies of leaders and managers generally, and into the work/life balance of principals. Importantly, the study seeks to construct an evidence-based taxonomy of school leaders' work/life balance strategies and a work life balance professional development program for school leaders, examples of which were not found in the literature. These gaps, coupled with increasing attention on the impact of work/life balance on the principalship, indicate that this study and the development of a professional development response, is timely.

Saulwick (2004) highlights the current increased emphasis on this issue in relation to DoE school principals. New challenges are reflected in the changes in Victorian legislation, which defines 'health' to include psychological health and holds employers responsible for avoiding work-related psychological hazards (*Occupational Health and Safety Act, 2004*) such as excessive stress. The article *Principal goes to court over onerous hours* (Milburn, 2006) reported the action being taken by a principal denied approval to work part-time, and also pointed to the need for new understandings of attitudes and strategies in this area. These instances further underscore the timeliness of this study, which aims to contribute to greater understanding of the dimension of the issue of work/life balance for government school leaders in Victoria and may be of relevance in other states and education systems. .

There is some debate about the nature and extent of the principal supply issue (Thompson, Blackmore, Barty & Sachs, 2005). However, the fact that seemingly fewer teachers are aspiring to become principals, combined with the very large numbers of principals approaching retirement age, places teacher and principal supply and succession planning high on the education agenda (Gronn, 2003a). The link between work/life balance and these issues, and to principals' performance and health and well-being, highlights the significance of investigating successful strategies for achieving a satisfactory balance between work and other aspects of principals' lives.

In order that education authorities and principals alike are able to make informed strategic, structural and staffing decisions regarding work/life policies and practices, this study may provide insight into what facilitates work/life balance for school principals and what may

avert the mooted catastrophe (Institute of Educational Leadership, 2000), in relation to quality and quantity of future school leaders.

The study may add a perspective to current Australian educational research themes, such as principal well-being, principal supply and successful school leadership. It may also add to knowledge on work/life balance issues in relation to Australian managers generally.

1.12 Overview of the Study

This first chapter has set out the description and context of the study. It has defined work/life balance and indicated that there is agreement between the definition used by many researchers and that used by DoE. The purpose of the study and the research questions, as well as the rationale for the methodology and conceptual framework used, has been outlined, and the significance of the study has been addressed.

A number of ideas have been introduced in this initial chapter. One such idea is the paradox inherent in the study—that principals love the job, but that they are often overwhelmed by the volume and intensity of the work and that this deters teachers from applying for the role, principals from staying in the role, and principals from thriving in the role. This section has also introduced a generative or “emancipatory” (Ludema, 2001) dimension to the study—a determination to move from problem identification to locating positive strategies for work/life balance.

Chapter 2 contains a review of literature relevant to the research questions. It explores principal enchantment (successful principalship and love of the job) and disenchantment (principal supply and well-being). It explores the link between work/life balance and principal supply. The literature of the principalship and of work/life balance is examined, and some convergence is noted in the areas of improving school leadership and improving work/life balance. The review also provides an interpretative framework for the themes and sub-themes identified in the data analysis.

The methods used in the study are detailed in Chapter 3. This chapter provides detail of the choice of approach and the research design. The origin and development of the conceptual model used in the study is explained. The notion of a synergistic relationship between the multiple methods - appreciative approach, narrative methods and case studies - and their match with the topic is outlined. Chapter 3 introduces a measure of perceived work/life balance (Tausig, 2001), which is used to underpin the analysis of managers’ work/life balance

strategies, and develop a typology of principals' strategies. The rationale for the presentation of data in an Appreciative Inquiry format—Discover, Understand and Amplify—is provided.

In Chapter 4, the work/life balance strategies used by the school leaders are **discovered**. The chapter is devoted to profiling the twelve school leaders and individual case studies are presented to validate the analysis in the previous chapter. The narrative analysis includes a test to establish levels of success and satisfaction in achieving work/life balance, the results of which are used to develop a work/life balance strategies typology. The typology identifies three types of school leaders in this study—Acceptors, Strivers and Balancers—and forms a heuristic tool to assist the examination of the work/life strategies of the group examined in Chapter 5, and the focus on those most satisfied with their work/life balance—Balancers—in Chapter 6.

Chapter 5 seeks to **understand** and analyse the on-the-job, off-the-job and personal characteristics in relation to work/life balance of the school leaders' discovered in the interviews with school leaders. The strategies of Acceptors, Strivers and Balancers are compared and contrasted.

Chapter 6 **amplifies** the strategies of the Balancers to determine what makes for successful work/life balance.

In Chapter 7, the generative dimension of the study is developed, through examination of the school leaders' views on possible futures. It provides insight into the issue of principal supply and options in relation to the nature of principals' work. A taxonomy of school leaders' work/life balance strategies and a range of professional development options to support better work/life balance amongst school leaders are presented.

Chapter 8 provides a summary of the research findings and outcomes, conclusions and recommendations of the study. The conclusions involve pursuing, as a priority for school leaders, an approach to work/life balance that has “thriving” as a central theme and goal. A *Work/Life Balance for School Leaders Model* is provided to guide further action in DoE and a number of recommendations are made to operationalise the approach.

Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature

Principals and Assistant Principals almost universally love their job. They think of themselves as privileged to have such an important and rewarding vocation. It is rewarding because of what it can allow them to offer to young people and their families. It is important because it allows them to make a contribution to society by preparing young people to take their place as decent and educated citizens. (Saulwick, 2004, p 21)

2.1 Introduction

The title of the workload and well-being study of Principal Class Officers in Victorian State Schools, *The Privilege and the Price* report (Saulwick, 2004), communicates some pervasive dilemmas and challenges in the contemporary debates in relation to both principalship and work/life balance. The title crystallises questions about the likelihood of achieving work/life balance in high performance organisations and captures the view expressed by many school leaders surveyed in that report, that the price for having the privilege of school leadership was paid in (amongst a range of dues) compromised work/life balance.

This chapter examines principalship and work/life balance literatures. It notes some convergence on improving school leadership and work/life balance around such themes as: the impact on the work of leaders in a competitive, accountability-driven environment created by neo-liberal reforms; work redesign; sustainability; talent management (attraction, retention, engagement); stress and well-being; and care. Issues such as gender, individual psychological factors and inter-domain issues are understandably more prominent in the work/life literature. The principalship literature offers little examination of the personal lives of school leaders and similarly in the work/life literature there is little examination of the particular work/life balance issues relating to leaders and managers generally (Poelmans, 2001).

What also seems to be missing in the literatures is an examination of the *action* of school leadership and the *process* of combining the leadership role and personal roles. What also seems to be in short supply are positive depictions of work/life balance and effective school leadership. There has been a greater focus on problems than on success. However, while a dominant perspective in the convergent issues in both literatures could be seen to be a “demand/diminish” perspective, there is a contrasting “enrichment/ expansionist” perspective emerging. The literature review examines these perspectives and other principalship and work/life themes and theories of relevance to the research questions.

2.2 Themes in Improving the Principalship Discourses

The literature on themes of changing context and changing roles, successful principalship, principal supply, care, role satisfaction, and stress and burnout are examined. The review then examines the future of the principalship in relation to work/life balance—the role of emotions in leadership, management approaches, redesign and professional development options.

2.2.1 Changing Context and Changing Role

What is noted in the principalship literature is that the role of the principal is expanding, workload is increasing, expectations are growing and the focus is moving from educational to managerial. Thompson (2002) identifies a range of themes relating to the changed nature of principals' work. These included: increased regulation and a focus on accountability; testing and paperwork; balancing budgetary and policy constraints with bureaucratic mandates; the multiple system demands and reforms; and the focus on administration, financing and personnel. Political and social changes that influence changes to the role in relation to entrepreneurship and marketing; additional responsibilities of care and personnel and not education; and difficult relations with communities are also identified. Hill (2001) indicated similar themes in pointing to an international consensus about the challenges faced by leaders in schools: leading and managing change; motivating and managing people; and designing and aligning systems, processes and resources. Indeed, this might be a description of managerial challenges in many fields, possibly highlighting the extent to which managerialism is now an entrenched feature of the school leader's role. However, one aspect of school leaders' roles that may have some particular place in the school leadership literature is the perceived dissonance between the role of caring as a principal and the role of manager attempting to enhance outcomes in a range of school performance areas (Blackmore, 1996; Saulwick, 2004; Mackay, 2006).

Themes of work intensification and extensification are often highlighted in these studies of the changing role of school leaders. Gronn (2003a) explores the theme of work intensification and raises the idea of school leadership as "greedy work". The concept of greedy work builds on Coser's (1974) early study of greedy institutions and is used to characterise the heightened demands and expectations placed on institutional-level leaders. Blackmore (1997) examines the notion of obsession and compulsiveness. This is an emerging theme also in the broader management literature. For example, Kira (2002) raises the related issue of "self-intensification", where employees face the problem of balancing inspiring work and the need for recuperation. Fox (2004) explores this further in the provocatively titled, *Better than Sex*:

how a whole generation got hooked on work. These themes might be described as “demand/diminish” themes—the notion of resource depletion is inherent in such discourse.

Alternatively, the “expansionist/enrichment” perspective within the principalship discourse is seen in studies of success in leadership, such as those explored by Gurr (2003) and Mulford (2004). Of particular interest is Gurr’s (2003) finding that inherent to successful school leadership is the principal’s focus on student outcomes and the development of staff, suggesting a leadership model that includes capacity building with personal, professional, organisational and community dimensions. Mulford (2003) found that the principals’ passion and values play a considerable part in success and Gurr (2005) notes that leadership which makes a difference is both position-based (principal) and distributive (administrative team and teachers).

In a similar vein, Woods (2002) looks at the notion of “enchanted head teachers”, defined as those who have successfully led their schools with commitment and enthusiasm. The author conducted a series of interviews with long-standing primary school principals and examined the characteristics that have made them successful. He identifies six of these as follows:

- Pride and generosity of spirit
- Closeness to the children
- Sensitivity to the needs of others
- Optimism about change
- Good at relationships and self-reflection
- Awareness of how much they do, and do not, know.

More importantly, in relation to the research questions in this study, Woods makes the point that these characteristics may be the foundations on which to build successful principalship, and poses the question: “Is the absence of these characteristics what makes sustainability difficult?” Woods highlights the need for the celebration of success and commitment in the principalship. Similarly, Caldwell (2006) reports on a project relating to exploring “exhilaration” as a driver of educational leadership reform and renewal.

2.2.2 Successful Principalship

Day’s (2001) findings, that successful school leaders promoted care and were characterised by hopefulness, provides a sharp contrast to the caution in Saulwick (2004) that DoE faces a

(negative) challenge in that principals' values are primarily those of carer rather than manager and that there is a carer/manager tension.

Of specific relevance here is Day's (2000) finding that care was a contributing element in the success of head teachers in a sample of 12 effective schools. He found that these school leaders were people-centred and able to manage these competing tensions:

- leadership v management
- development v management
- internal v external change
- autocracy v autonomy
- personal time v professional tasks
- personal values v institutional imperatives
- leadership in small v large schools.

The features of successful work/life balance as provided in Limoges' (2003) analysis, for example, depicted in Section 2.3.2, provide a parallel with the characteristics (above) of successful school leadership.

Deal's (1994) notion of bifocal leadership may assist principals to resolve conflicting demands or manage tensions by embracing paradox and integrating multiple roles. The particular concern is the split between the technical (planning and strategy) and symbolic dimensions of leadership (culture). Leveraging ordinary events to achieve higher order outcomes is a strategy that may well support work/life balance.

2.2.3 Principal Supply

The term principal supply is often used to describe the issue of future availability of suitable people to fill principal roles. Although it has already been noted that this is a contested issue, which perhaps requires qualification, certain principal positions are undeniably hard to fill and there are issues related to the diversity, quality and future supply of the talent pool (Thompson, 2005). The urgency of the issue comes from the fact that from now until early 2010, most of the teachers in Australia who were recruited around the 1970s and are still teaching will retire. This includes most current principals. The next cohort, who will generally be aged in their 40s towards the end of this decade, is very small (half the size of the 1970s cohort) (Preston, 2002). It is this statistic that provides the starting point for discussions about principal supply in Australia. The situation is similar in many other countries and there is

general agreement that the range of contributors to this issue of supply is broader than a convergence of demographic factors that the previous sentence may signify. Indeed, a review of the literature on principal supply in the introduction to Thompson (2002) cited a number of explanations, which included: compensation; poor training; changing role of the principal; and lack of respect and reputation in the media and society. On the issue of the reputation and low level of public esteem for principals, Spreitzer (2005c), in an empirical examination of thriving at work, notes that individuals thrive when they have agency (regardless of professional reputation) and also quotes Ashforth's (1999) suggestion that workgroup ideologies may play a role in developing satisfaction with roles regardless of occupational prestige.

From the literature on principal supply, Thompson (2002) distilled four themes: the changing nature of work; career; understandings of professionalism; and identity. According to Thompson (2002) the decline in the number of applicants has caused concern within education communities, mainly because it has resulted in a reduction in the choice of school leaders. There are applicants for principals' positions but the 'right' people are not applying. News reports have given the impression that the problem of declining interest in principalship is likely to get worse over the next decade and that appropriate action needs to be taken to avert a crisis in school leadership in the future.

In the Victorian context, a number of studies related to principal supply have been completed. On the specific link between principal supply and work/life balance, Lacey (2002) extrapolates from her study of Victorian school leaders:

The challenge of an ageing workforce coupled with a growing disenchantment with the traditional leadership culture and a demand for greater work/life balance faces many public and private sector organisations in Victoria, other Australian states and in the UK, the US, and Europe. If schools and education systems are going to ensure that there is an adequate supply of quality leaders in the future it is imperative that they develop and implement policies and practices for the recruitment, development and retention of high potential leaders. (Lacey, 2003b, pp. 21-22)

A number of researchers have suggested that teachers are deterred from applying for principal positions (Cooley, 2000; Cranston, 2002; Lacey, 2003a, Cranston, 2006) for workload and work type and work/life/family balance reasons. Research in NSW (d'Arbon, 2001) as to why more people are not applying for principal positions in Catholic schools has identified eight

factors that influence a person not to apply. The majority of these reasons included some aspect of work/life balance, such as:

- lifestyle issues, especially those related to balancing personal (e.g. family) and professional expectations
- increasing demands of society on the personal and professional life and time commitment of the principal
- gender concerns, especially those related to women's perceptions of their accessibility to the principalship
- disruption to family life by relocation to take up a new position
- income concerns
- increasing responsibilities of the position.

Neidhart (2003) reports, again on the Catholic system, that the complexities and intensification of schools as workplaces are causing increasing numbers of younger and older teachers and principals to reconsider how they manage their lives in order to achieve greater personal and family wellbeing, as well as meeting all their work tasks.

Principal supply has been the subject of a good deal of research, and has often been negatively linked with work/life balance. School leaders' workload and well-being research in different countries and systems has resulted in a consistency of findings (Earley, 2002; Saulwick, 2004). The study of the workload and well-being of Victorian school leaders (Saulwick, 2004) found that a high incidence of stress related to the role was felt equally by male and female principals. This constant restating of the issue, yet the development of few responses, suggests that a new paradigm such as Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider, 1987) should be considered, in this present study.

The concept of sustainability is central to the issue of principal supply (Fullan 2005; 2006 and Hargreaves 2006). Fullan (2005) draws the issues of sustainability of principalship and work/life balance together in observing that there are two simultaneous agendas at work: how individual superintendents can maintain resolve, energy and effectiveness over time and the second; and, how we can improve systems so that structures and cultures are more supportive of superintendents.

2.2.4 Care

The many dimensions of care encompass a central aspect of the work/life and principalship discussion. Saulwick (2004) contends that there is a major challenge for DoE in having the

Principal Class almost entirely fit the type of “carer”, which results in a “manager/carer tension” and is equated, in the study, with an inability to make tough managerial decisions. This negative view of care contrasts with the view of Deal (1998), who notes that care appears to be a fundamental aspect of the principal’s role, and Day (2000) who discusses the enriching contribution of care (for staff, for family, for themselves) and that successful school principals promoted care.

2.2.5 Role Satisfaction, Stress, Burnout

Satisfaction derived from the role was found by Thomson (2003) to be missing from a major review of US media representation of principalship. The title of the study of Victorian school leaders (Saulwick, 2004) *The Privilege and the Price* report illustrates the inherent paradox of finding satisfaction in the role but at the price of ill-health and stress. This paradox is highlighted by Duke (1998), who discovered that the principals in his study found satisfaction and dissatisfaction in the rich variety of challenges the role offered to the intellect. However, the issue of depletion of energy and of dissatisfaction with not completing activities was a source of frustration. The principals commented that the work was more challenging, more difficult, more routine, and more boring than expected. Yet they rarely considered delegating responsibilities—a strategy for making their work more manageable and less mundane. The principals in the study described positive feelings from contact with teachers, students and parents. They also admitted that their desire to care for others was taxing emotionally and placed demands on their time and emotional energy.

Victorian research indicates that stress levels amongst school principals are high and attributable to aspects of the role, such as workload management burdens (Saulwick, 2004). These findings are similar to those reported in New Zealand (Hogden, 2005).

A new imperative for looking at ways of managing stress has emerged in the wake of Victorian legislative changes, which holds employers responsible for avoiding work-related psychological hazards such as stress (*Occupational Health and Safety Act, 2004*).

The incidence and causes of stress and burnout amongst school principals are well documented, and work/life imbalance is strongly correlated with stress (Cooper, 2001, Walsh, 2006). Yet, there is little evidence of attention to work/life balance as a solution. However, in the Victorian Primary Principals Association’s response to DoE’s *The Privilege and the Price* report, there is acknowledgement of the potential of resilience in its call for research on:

- What are the essential qualities, skills and personal traits that enable certain people to thrive in an occupation that is highlighted by such high levels of stress and work demands?
- How do some principals rebound from adversity so often and so well?
- What can we identify in “surviving/thriving” practice and which of these elements are transferable to other Principal Class Officers? (VPA, 2005)

Of interest is Howard’s (2002) study of teacher stress and burnout which takes a positive approach by focusing on “what's going right” for teachers successfully coping with stress rather than on “what's going wrong” for those who are not coping well. Howard’s study involved conducting intensive interviews with individual teachers who were distinguished by their persistent ability to successfully handle teaching situations officially recognised as being very stressful. A consistent feature of participants' narratives in this study was a pervasive sense of agency and hopefulness and a strong belief in their ability to control what happens to them.

2.2.6 Emotions

Beatty’s (2000) observation that a paradox of leadership exists in the contradiction between the complex emotions it can invoke and the expectation that strong leaders should not show emotion is demonstrated in the findings in Saulwick (2004). Saulwick states that a managerial/carer tension exists for school principals (care and strong management seemingly cannot co-exist). It perhaps indicates that emotions are viewed as “pesky interlopers” and the paradox of emotional leadership remains (Beatty, 2000).

However, emphasis on emotions and hopefulness in school leadership is growing (Beatty, 2000; Beatty & Brew 2004; Beatty, 2006, Blackmore, 1996; Hargreaves & Fink 2006, Loader, 1997) and has also gained some generative attention in general management and educational discourses. Deal & Paterson (1994) urges principals to resolve conflicting demands by embracing paradox and integrating multiple roles to achieve the right balance of passion and order, faith and results, meaning and measurement. Beatty (2006) stresses the importance of principals’ active engagement with the internality of emotions in self and others. Along similar lines, Duignan & Bhindi (1997) focuses on authenticity and engaging intellectual, emotional and spiritual forces to promote the building of meaningful and significant relationships within organisational structures and processes that support significant core values.

2.2.7 Leadership/Management Approaches

The research questions direct attention to coping skills and personal and organisational strategies to support work/life balance in this literature review. Waters (2004) maintains that principals (and indeed those who develop principal standards) fail to distinguish the principal leadership responsibilities that are essential from those that are important. Essential practices relate to enhanced student achievement and require principals to frame initiatives to optimise this, to understand how to apply deep knowledge of pedagogy and relationships to calibrate essential change. The Covey (1994) Four Quadrants, characterised by two variables—*urgency* and *importance*—provides an accessible guide that uses the notion of roles, time and values as the lens for prioritising. Use of the Covey (1994) approach can also be seen to assist stress management by ensuring that principals are not constantly acting in an urgency mode. Covey (1994) identifies personal, interpersonal, managerial and organisational principles in which the importance of work/life balance is made quite explicit. This approach helps people focus on what is important and what to ‘let go of’, and how to balance time to achieve a meaningful life. Limoges (2003) and Drucker (1999) promote similar strategies for ensuring workload is manageable and off-setting new tasks by letting go of less important ones.

What appears to be an important contributor to principals’ work/life balance is this capacity to prioritise, to decide what to “do and not do”, and to find a management approach or philosophy that suits the school’s and the leadership’s needs. According to Maister (2005) leaders who get things done are guided by an ideology. Such leadership/management approaches as the adoption of Total Quality Methods and Covey (1994) principles offer insight into approaches which have currency in the DoE schools. In relation to quality methods, Bostingl (1992) outlines four quality principles that he believes are most relevant to school success:

1. synergistic relationships
2. continuous improvement and self-evaluation
3. a system of ongoing processes
4. leadership.

These four principles go some way to explaining how the adoption of quality approaches supports work/life balance. Again, Glasser (1992), in providing guidelines for using quality principles to guide school leadership and classroom practice, details ways of sharing and distributing leadership and aligning values and processes with student learning outcomes.

The work/life researcher Poelmans (2005) argues that a well-balanced person is capable of adapting, segmenting, focusing and multi-tasking, approaches which are fundamentals of situational leadership (Blanchard, 2001). Poelmans offers strategies to bring together multiple roles, which research indicates can be a contributor to work/life balance (Barnett, 2001; Greenhaus, 2006; Rothbard, 2001).

2.2.8 Redesign/Reconceptualisation of the Principalship

A number of educational researchers make the point that attracting teachers to the principalship may require a rethinking of the work of principals (Blackmore, 2002; Mulford, 2003). As part of research on principal supply, Thompson & Blackmore (2004) and Thompson (2005) explored how the principalship might be redesigned. Practical explorations of examples of “redesigned” school leadership are reported in Thomson (2004). These involve aspects of distributed, shared and co-leadership. The strategies address issues such as the hours of work, the range of tasks, maintaining work/family balance, and the emotional toll, as integral aspects of design. There are similarities in the alternative models of principalship that may enhance the reconciliation of principals’ work and personal life identified by principals in Boris-Schacter & Langer (2002). Boris-Schacter & Langer (2003) described desirable standards of practice that allow principals to:

- focus the majority of their time on educational leadership
- have a meaningful personal life
- enjoy appropriate support at the workplace
- promote flexible models of the principalship.

Some dimension of shared leadership, about which there is a growing body of research (Court, 2002; Gronn, 2000; Harris, 2005), is at the heart of a number of redesign propositions. This may be one way of making the principalship appeal to aspiring leaders, who see in the singular leadership model a barrier to balancing family, carer, and study and career commitment.

Work/life commentators (Gambles, 2006; Hyman, 2005; Pocock 2003) suggest the need for a detailed look at the organisation of work, work practices and flexibility, particularly in relation to the caring role of workers. They emphasise that flexibility for balancing work and personal or caring responsibilities cannot be superimposed on current ways of structuring work. They contend that what is needed is a deeper cultural change that would legitimise the needs of family care both in the design of work and in the assumptions about competence and

success that surround it. Also needed is a new definition of an ideal worker who, by integrating paid work with family care, better meets both productivity and caring needs. The broader debate therefore picks up similar themes to that of redesigning of the principalship.

2.2.9 Professional Development Options

Work/life balance is an issue examined in relation to performance, supply and sustainability in a number of organisations and industries. In Australia, for example, the Australian Medical Association (AMA) has undertaken a major work/life project. In the USA, the accounting profession embarked on a similar program (AICPA website). In the UK, where there is strong attention paid to work/life initiatives as part of reforms in the teaching profession, the issue of principals' work/life balance is specifically identified. Earley (2004) suggests that UK school leadership programs should include strategies for achieving an appropriate balance between working and other lives, as well as disseminating examples of good practice.

Although the term is more likely to be 'well-being' than 'work/life balance', some references and material relevant to work/life balance and school leaders' development options have been developed by the Victorian Principal Association in Australia (VPA, 2005) and the Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council. Beatty (2006) describes a course which positions emotional meaning making as foundational to leader well being and transformational success.

An examination of relevant DoE policy directions and resources reveals a range of material to support a work/life professional development program, and the DoE Flexible Work Handbook provides a case study of part-time/job-share principals (DET, 1998). Reference to principals' work/life balance is found in the Coaching to Enhance the Capabilities of Experienced Principals program (DET, 2005) documentation, which is described as contributing to DoE's commitment to improving principal work/life balance as outlined in *The Privilege and the Price*.

2.3 Work/life Discourses

This section of the review examines the changes in the work/life discourse to include positive themes. Strategies for effecting work/life balance, such as multiple roles, self-care, gender, self-efficacy, and concepts of resilience and thriving are explored and compared. A focus on sustainability, seen also in the principalship literature, is acknowledged as a contemporary theme in the work/life literature.

2.3.1 Changes in the Discourse

Research regarding the competing demands of work and non-work has focussed on constraints that organisations (or individuals themselves) impose. This line of research might be described as the “demand/diminish” themed literature, discussed in the introduction of the literature review. Work/life imbalance relates to demanding and intensified work practices, work encroaching increasingly on private lives, and the workplace being required to be more efficient, with less labour regulation and constant change (Gambles, 2006). Multiple roles, too, are seen to deplete energy and contribute to role overload and stress (Goode, 1960) and long working hours are seen to be deleterious to personal health and family well-being (Pocock, 2003). Such perspectives provide instances of the conflict/resources depletion concepts in certain, particularly early views, of work/life balance.

Developments in the work/life discourse have increasingly paid attention to workplace practices, structures and cultures (Fletcher, 1996, 2002; Rapoport, 1996, 2000) and to consideration of an “expansionist/enrichment” perspective with a focus on concepts of reciprocity and facilitation (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Greenhaus, 2006; Grzywacz, 2002). Barnett (2001) explores an expansionist model in which multiple roles are seen to be beneficial for men and women, in that performance in one role can facilitate performance in other roles. On this, Voydanoff & Donnelly (1999) suggests that there is an upper limit of roles beyond which overload or conflict may occur, but that importantly, it is the quality of the role that has significance in terms of stress and work/life balance. Barnett (2001) also questions some views on gender and contends that opportunity structures at work shape work behaviours and that role quality is associated with stress, which did not differ by gender.

Other related areas of research that have paid attention to expansion and enrichment dimensions have indicated that the number and range of work and non-work roles can enhance feelings of well-being in both work and non-work domains (Bailyn, 1993; Friedman, 2000; Rothbard, 1999). They also argue that contextual factors, such as emotional support (Epstein, 1987, 2000), work challenge, life/career priorities and gender equity (Rapoport, 2002), can play a positive role in supporting work/life balance. Related to this dimension of research is the literature on the effects of individual agency. This recognises that individuals, particularly those in managerial and professional roles, have an opportunity to exercise some control, discretion or capacity for negotiation in relation to work and non-work activities (Poelmans, 2004).

The concept of the dual agenda (Rapoport, 2002) is increasingly a feature of work/life commentary. The theoretical underpinnings in DoE's *Flexible Work Options: achieving work/life balance program* (DET, 1998, Palamara, 1999), indicate a commitment to a dual agenda—of meeting individuals' needs for work/life balance and improving organisational, work unit, and individual performance in a climate of devolved responsibility for human resource management in schools.

2.3.2 Work/Life Theories

In this appreciative study, four broad work/life theories, which all fall into the enrichment/expansionist category, were examined to assess their capacity to inform the study and the design of a professional development program:

1. Work/life border theory (Clark, 2000; Singh, 2002)
2. Work/life expansion theory (Barnett, 2001)
3. Theory of work-family enrichment (Greenhaus, 2006)
4. Balanced work/life: a matter of balance (Limoges, 2003).

The contribution of Border theory to understanding work/life issues is underlined by Hyman (2004), who places the issue of boundary management at the core of work/life balance, stating that it is a necessary element for securing balance between work and non-work. Clark's (2000) definition of borders encompasses psychological categories and tangible boundaries that divide the times, place and people associated with work versus family. Work/Life Border Theory distinguishes three types of boundaries between work and non-work domains:

1. physical
2. temporal
3. psychological.

Clark's (2000) theory offers a set of eight propositions relating to the strength and weakness of borders and the similarity and differences of domains. It contends that borders and domains must work in tandem for balance to take place and those changes to borders (e.g. flexibility) require analogous changes to the domain's culture and values (accountability, deadlines, support). Other propositions are that control and influence within a domain increase control over borders, and levels of in-domain support increase work/life balance. It draws on the work of Nippert-Eng (1996) which explores issues of control over *placement* and *transcendence* of work and non-work boundaries and Perlow (1998). Perlow (1998), in a study of a work unit

comprising seventeen professionals in a high-technology firm, explored the nature of the temporal boundary between work and life outside of work. Whilst the study focused on the imposition of temporal demands at work, it also considered the effects on the structuring of both work time and non-work time and made the observation that while all employees in the study faced boundary control, some were acceptors and others resisters. Spouses, also included in the study, had either acceptor or resistor reactions.

Singh (2002) uses Clark's (2000) Work/Family Border Theory, repositioned as Work/Life Border Theory, to underpin research into managers' strategies for work/life balance and maps these strategies according to levels of accommodation or negotiation with the organisation or with the family—an approach which draws on Perlow's (1998) categorisations (above). This line of research appears to offer insight into both the action of management and the process of effecting work/life balance, and, as such, offers useful insights into the research questions.

Barnett (2001) proposes a Work Family Expansionist Theory in which multiple roles are seen to be beneficial for men and women. Performance in one role, it is argued, can facilitate performance in other roles. Barnett also questions whether some gender and work/life balance theories may be outdated, contending that opportunity structures at work and role quality, which did not differ by gender, are associated with stress and work/life balance.

Work-Family (or Work-Life) Enrichment (Greenhaus, 2006) describes a theoretical model (Appendix 1) that identifies the types of work and family resources that have a capacity to promote work-family enrichment. It describes the pathways by which work and family resources can promote work-family enrichment and the moderator variables under which resources in one role are most likely to enrich the quality in another. In this theory, resources and experiences generated in one role (work or non-work domain) can improve the other, in relation to:

- skills and perspectives (such as interpersonal, coping, multi-tasking skills, trust)
- psychological and physical resources (such as self-efficacy, self-esteem, hardiness, optimism, hope and physical health)
- social-capital resources (such as influence and information)
- flexibility (meaning discretion and control over time and place where role requirements are met)
- material resources (for example, financial reward).

This theory also identifies the paths by which resources create an effect in work and non-work roles and identifies the factors that moderate the effect of the above resources—salience of the role (perceived importance of the role to an individual); perceived importance of resources to the role in question, and the match between the resources and the requirements and norms of the work or non-work role.

One example of a theory or approach which deals with the *process* of managing the work/life interface is presented by Limoges (2003). The theory describes the following actions as those determining the successful balancing of work and personal life:

- Drawing on a wide range of managerial and personal strategies and applying them in the work and non-work domains
- Ensuring workload is manageable and off-setting new tasks by letting go of less important ones
- Placing importance on nurturing relationships and involvement in non-work activities
- Engaging fully in work and non-work domains.

Limoges (2003) approaches the issue from a career planning perspective and includes taxonomy of work/life strategies.

2.3.3 Multiple Roles and Care

Role scarcity (Goode, 1960), work/life conflict and negative spill-over (Greenhaus, 1985 and commentary in Guest, 2002) lines of work/life research have focused on the negative outcomes associated with employees' attempts to manage dual roles. However, an emerging focus in the literature has been to examine the integrative or facilitative effects of managing multiple roles (Barnett, 2001; Wayne, Grzywacz, Carlson, & Kacmar, 2004) to establish how participation in multiple roles can actually expand, rather than diminish, resources and lead to increases in well-being and positive spill-over.

Greenhaus (2000) and Barnett (2001) both discuss the benefits and buffering effect of multiple roles and provide evidence that holding multiple roles improves mental, physical and relationship health and self-efficacy (Wayne, 2004) in workers. Research involving managerial women (Ruderman, Ohlott, Panzer, & King, 2002) also shows that the roles women play in their personal lives provide psychological benefits, emotional advice and support, practice at multi-tasking, opportunities to enrich interpersonal skills, and leadership

practice that enhance effectiveness in the management role. Indeed, theoretical work by Lobel (1991) suggests that by exploring overlaps between work and family roles, management researchers can shift their focus from an emphasis on role conflict to an emphasis on how an individual fares in implementing her or his self-concept.

While there are few references of the *process* of balancing work and non-work roles in the literature, one is seen in Medved's (2004) study of women's taken-for-granted micro-practices for balancing work and family life. This provides a glimpse of the practices and strategies that constitute work, and family balance, or alternatively conflict. Strategies such as routinising, improvising and restructuring are described. This examination shows the way in which the off-the-job strategies to some extent mirror the on-the-job strategies involved in effecting work/life balance. Off-the-job, however, the reality is that women play a major role in providing day-to-day family care and management of domestic tasks, which impacts on physical, mental and temporal boundary control. The sharing of domestic roles in families and between couples is an issue for examination (Pocock, 2003) and points to the broad social issues of gender responsibilities as a work/life balance issue.

2.3.4 Self-Care

The issues of self-care, care (involving balancing multiple roles) and hopefulness recur as having mediating effects in relation to work/life balance and relate to both on-the-job and off-the-job work/life balance strategies.

According to Edgar (2005), caring for oneself and having a high sense of well-being is probably the most significant building block of the work/life challenge. Self-care is examined as part of a New Zealand study (Trenberth, 2002) on the importance school leaders give to leisure as a means of coping with stress. Whilst high rates of burnout were found, school leaders also suggested that "being totally focused" was an important reason for engaging in active/challenging leisure (providing a total change from work) and passive leisure as a recuperative mechanism. Similarly, Burford (2004) emphasises the importance of nurturing personal interests as a way of providing a sense of purpose and bring joy to life. Trenberth (2002) makes the point that in part, leisure has a role to play in preventing and ameliorating stress and burnout. Fullan (2005) develops a concept called cyclical energising, which reflects similar notions and emphasises the importance of recuperation. Duke (1998) also contends that energetic, change-oriented leaders require "down time". They can better face the rigours of "turning a school around" if they know that a sabbatical or short-term job change awaits them.

2.3.5 Gender

Gender differences in work and family experiences have been a consistently important theme in work-family research (Lewis & Cooper, 1999) and in the principalship literature (Blackmore, 1996; Strahan, 1999). As discussed earlier, many scholars have hypothesized that women experience more work-family conflict than men because of their typically greater home responsibilities and their allocation of more importance (salience) to family roles (Greenhaus, 1985). Discussion of leadership as “greedy work” (Gronn, 2003a), the school as a “greedy institution” and a gendered institution (Blackmore, 1996) and the family as another “greedy institution” (Coser, 1974) supports the demand/ diminish theory perspective. It suggests gender equity or carer status distinctions, and portends a likely work/life collision (Pocock, 2003). Cinamon & Rich (2002), however, raises the possibility that researchers’ emphasis on between-gender differences may mask important within-gender variation in work-life conflict and suggests that within-gender variation may be as critical as between-gender differences in explaining work-life conflict. Rapoport (2002) offers another perspective on the gender and work/life balance relationship and suggests that gender equity (embracing both men and women) and establishing the link between current work practices and gendered assumptions about the organisation of work and work/life balance can be presented as a means of enhancing workplace performance and achieving positive personal and social outcomes. Barnett (2001) suggests that this change has actually commenced and contends that while the lives of women and men, the relationships that they establish, and their work have changed over the past decades, it is the dominant theories which have not. What is suggested is that these facts underlying the assumptions of multiple roles and gender have changed, therefore some of the gender, multiple role/task overload and care/manager tensions assumptions that are evident in much of the work/life and principalship literature should be questioned. Like Cinamon (2002), Barnett contends that individuals vary amongst themselves far more than genders do and suggests that it is the issue of power—not gender—that makes the difference.

Others suggest that the extent of the change may not be as great as Barnett (2001) suggests and that the findings around work/life balance, the principalship and gender, while mixed, do indicate gender differences. Lacey (2003a) finds higher rates of work/life conflict and stress and lower rates of intention to apply for the principalship among women school leaders than their male counterparts. Saulwick (2004) reports similar findings in relation to stress but the differences are not great. On the other hand, a recent work/life survey amongst UK school leaders reports higher rates of work/life conflict amongst male than females and greater

capacity to employ strategies to manage workload amongst the female respondents (NAHT, 2006). It is also acknowledged that the situation in the Victorian state education system is slowly changing—in one region there are now more females than males in principal positions (Barty, 2005) and women now occupy half the Principal Class positions across the state. However, the theory and research into the positive contribution of managing multiple roles (Greenhaus, 2000, Wayne, 2004, Ruderman, 2002, Barnett, 2001, and Cinamon, 2002) provides an expansionist perspective on the gender and work/life balance field. Still another perspective in this discussion is offered by Singh (2002), who argues that there are a number of stakeholders in the work/life balance issue, and that employers need to factor in the role of partners (and their employment situation) in the debate.

2.3.6 Resilience, Self-Efficacy and Thriving

Resilience is often referred to in relation to leadership development and inherent in this concept is the notion of rebounding from adverse conditions. Thriving (Spreitzer, Sutcliffe., Dutton, Sonenshein, & Grant 2005a), in contrast, refers to growing and developing further, regardless of the environment—adverse, neutral or nurturing. Thus, thriving accommodates concepts such as: the beneficial nature of multiple roles; the generative power of agentic behaviour, particularly in relation to task focus (in the case of school leaders having a guiding management philosophy, sharing leadership, delegation, and prioritisation); personal growth and learning and positive relationships; support and communication. As such, the concept appears to be a useful one in this study.

Spreitzer (2006) finds strong support for the idea that individuals thrive when they have agency or experience their work as self-determined, and that individuals thrive when they are embedded in contexts with high social resources (connections, bonds, support). A capacity for self-regulation of emotions, and self-efficacy is achieved, according to Bandura (1977), through mastery experience, seeing role models manage task demands successfully, social persuasion (enabling the experience of success), the reduction of stress and negative emotions and attention to strengths. He also suggests that perceptions and reactions to stress can be reduced or increased by an individual's self-efficacy. Similarly, Greenhaus (2006) identifies resources such as self-efficacy, resilience and hardiness gained in one life domain (work or non-work) as positively impacting on performance in the other domain. In a similar vein, Csikszentmihalyi (1997) investigated “flow” experiences—those times in life when things are going well and people are fully enjoying what they are doing. Through his research, Csikszentmihalyi discovered that flow is most likely to occur when one's level of skills matches the level of challenge. Neault (2005), in examining the relevance of the notion of

flow to work/life balance, makes the observation that it is not only skills but resources that are required to succeed with challenges and the experience of flow. This has some resonance with school leaders' experience of managing in a situation where resources are scarce and authority in relation to human resources is limited.

2.3.7 Sustainability

The broader work/life debate picks up themes of sustainable work systems (van Eijnatten, 2000) in response to trends, such as work intensification; the deployment of emotional labour; and the effect on individuals, families, workplace organisations and communities (Gambles, 2006), and seeks to reframe the issues around sustainability.

A useful adjunct to this, is the "expansionist/enrichment" (Barnett, 2001) perspective in the work/life literature, which focuses on concepts of reciprocity and facilitation, and the enrichment and energy creation qualities in "thriving" (Spreitzer, 2006). This suggests the possibilities of work and personal life "growing" rather than "consuming" human capital. Indeed, it may be that the part of the equation that has been missing in the sustainability debate is that the focus has been too much on the deficit side and not enough on the synergies between work and life.

The issues of sustainability and equity are explored and practical interventions in organisations are described in Rapoport (1998), who suggests that the conclusion (and challenge) is linking work and non-work issues as a strategic opportunity to redesign work to benefit organisational objectives and people's personal lives.

From the literature we see that both work/life and principal discourses have turned to changes in the nature of the work itself as a means of ensuring future sustainability. In the broader organisational literature, too, there are calls for the adoption of sustainable work systems in which the employees' needs are balanced with the organisation's needs when designing work systems and creating its psycho-social context (Kira, 2000).

What is often suggested in references identified in this area of the literature review is that development options need to be multi-pronged, with interventions at the individual, school, collegiate and system levels (VPA, 2005). Relevant reports often call for research into practices that will inform evidence-based programs (e.g. Earley, 2002). In the case of this study, the literature and evidence in relation to work/life strategies, self-efficacy and thriving are particularly influential.

2.4 Summary

The scope of this study determined the focus of the literature review, which has concentrated on parallels between the work/life and principal supply discourses. It finds that work/life imbalance relates to a range of cultural, institutional and systemic factors, and that there is a need for re-examination and reconceptualisation of the nature of work and the understanding of the relationship between work and other domains to support workers (including principals) in balancing the demands of contemporary life.

The review of relevant literature has covered the concept of work/life balance theories. It examined the literature relevant to principal enchantment (satisfaction, commitment, success, care) and disenchantment (principal supply, stress). It detailed aspects of the literature in relation to prevailing theories and guiding philosophies for school leadership and aspects of personal characteristics, such as role satisfaction, care and self-care, multiple roles, gender and self-efficacy, which may support work/life balance. The concepts of resilience and thriving as strategies for effecting work/life balance were explored and compared. Within the literature on the future of the principalship, there are strong themes on issues of sustainability, redesign and reconceptualisation, and the need for support and development efforts, which relate to capability building and succession planning. Such themes are also reflected in recent commentary on directions for work/life research (Gambles, 2006).

Chapter 3: Methods, Procedures, Research Design and Data Analysis

Each research method has a tradition of its own, separate from appreciative inquiry, but we argue that each can be taken up in an appreciative manner so to allow us to add even more coherence to our multi- modal approach and more power to the end result. (Ospina, Schall, Godsoe & Dodge, 2004, p. 4).

3.1 *Overview*

This chapter details the process used to reach methodological decisions and outlines the methods used in the study. The rationale for a qualitative approach is presented and a Research Design map depicts the relationship between elements of the methodology. It expands on, and applies, the concept of framework analysis (Pope, 2000), which connects the research questions and conceptual model (Bond, 1998) and makes explicit the data analysis process. The data is organised into three perspectives following the Appreciative Inquiry model—**Discover** (listen and find out what works), **Understand** (analyse and gain insight into how something works), and **Amplify** (view creatively and generate ideas that assist developmental change).

3.2 *Introduction*

This research focuses on exploring the views and experience of the work/life balance of school leaders and the strategies to manage commitments in their work and non-work domains. It examines how work/life balance can be managed and utilised to improve school capability, especially the supply of school leaders. The main research question and the essence of the inquiry can be summarised as follows:

How do some principals achieve work/life balance and how might this inform the content/design of a professional development program aimed at principal well-being and retention?

This chapter first explores the process of deciding on an appropriate stance and methodology to conduct such an exploratory case study and then explains the application of the methodology.

3.3 *Selection of the Topic and World View*

Clearly, selecting the topic is the first step in initiating research. According to Lundberg (1999) this is a relatively undiscussed or under investigated aspect of research methodology.

The researcher, an experienced work/life practitioner who has worked on projects involving DoE school principals' implementation of flexible work and work/life balance policies and programs in schools, observed that such initiatives were reaching school teachers but were not reaching school principals themselves, despite the issue of work/life balance being identified as important to principal well-being, performance and supply (Cranston, 2002; Holdaway, 1999; Lacey, 2002a, 2000b; Neidhart, 2003). The choice of topic was made in this context.

The role of experienced work/life practitioner is complemented by that of neophyte academic researcher, which has resulted in a long journey into the literature on methodology and constant reflection and inquiry about the relationship between practice, practitioner research and academic research. The role of a work/life practitioner is to seek to identify needs, analyse the individual and systemic barriers and opportunities to work/life balance, and discover and communicate measures client organisations might introduce to support such balance. What has been found to be useful is to gain the diverse perspectives and insights (including views of employees' and their partners and family members) into both the work and non-work domains of employees. A particularly useful approach is to hear about *what works* rather than *what causes problems*.

3.4 Practitioner Research

In early attempts to conceptualise this study, what occurred was a constant revisiting of ideas and questions relating to usefulness and practicality and to the difference between practice and academic research. Shaw (2002) made two points that were influential in helping to answer these questions:

1. Practitioner research is often marked by a limited methodological imagination where methodological choice is typically regarded as a necessary evil.
2. Practitioners have tended to adopt a deductive assumption about the relationship between theory and practice.

Experience (as a practitioner) suggested that there is a hunger for some balance between work and personal life. Furthermore, organisations and individuals are more likely to find solutions by building on successful approaches used in practice and hearing the stories of those who are satisfied with their ability to balance their work and personal lives, than by an examination of conflict and negatives. In examining this, aspects of the practitioner research/academic research debate were examined (Shaw, 2002; Macleod, 1999), and consideration was paid to issues of the relationship between practice and research.

Placing methodological choice as central to the study (not a necessary evil), viewing tacit knowledge (the insights of school leaders) about practical strategies as an important research element, and conducting the inquiry in a generative fashion, were seen to be approaches that might ensure that this research demonstrated an understanding of the need for critique, complexity as well as practicality. This view informed the search for a generative work/life theory and generative methodology, and a holistic conceptual framework to support the research approach. The decisions about which theoretical frameworks and methodology might be used reflected a desire to focus on successful models of work/life balance.

The methodological search was influenced by Doucet & Mauther's (2003) exploration of the issues facing practitioner researchers and dimensions of reflexivity, both in terms of the researcher's social location and emotional responses to the subjects, and the theoretical location and ideas in the data analysis process. The value placed by Strauss (1990) on theoretical sensitivity, which comes from a number of sources, including professional literature, professional experiences, and personal experiences also shaped decision-making in relation to methodology. So, too, did ideas about credibility of qualitative research relying heavily on the confidence readers have in the researcher's ability to be sensitive to the data and to make appropriate decisions in the field (Patton, 1990).

3.5 *Qualitative Research*

Because the aim of this research was to study the experiences and practices of school leaders in relation to school and personal environments, a qualitative approach was viewed to be a logical methodological choice. Qualitative methods are concerned with experience as participants feel it or live it (Sherman, 1988). Denzin & Lincoln (2000) identified certain characteristics of qualitative research: it is holistic; it looks at relationships within a system or culture; it refers to the personal, face-to-face and immediate situations; and it emphasises the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is being studied and the situational constraints that shape the research.

Furthermore, qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, by making sense of, or interpreting, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. On this issue of sense-making, Hoepfl (1997) comments that qualitative research has an interpretive character, aimed at discovering the meaning events have for the individuals who experience them, and the interpretations of those meanings by the researcher; that it has an emergent (as opposed to predetermined) design; and that researchers focus on this emerging process as well as the

outcomes or product of the research. A practitioner may also lend credibility to qualitative research by being sensitive to the data and making appropriate decisions in the field (Patton, 1990). In addition to adopting an approach grounded in a qualitative approach, a multi-modal research design was adopted.

3.6 Research Design

According to Ospina (2004), an internally coherent research design demands that methodological choices are made in accordance with the understanding of the research topic. If work/life balance can be seen as a social construction (Kirrane, 2003), then methods consistent with that were seen to be appropriate. This meant creating a design that is relational, captures the voices of the school leaders' who have tacit knowledge of the topic is to be examined, and which is generative in that new perspectives can be found. The Research Design Diagram (Figure 3) below encapsulates such approaches by including:

- Appreciative Approach
- Conceptual Framework
- Narrative Methods
- Sample
- Typology
- Principals and Work/Life Literature and Theories
- Framework Analysis
- Presentation of findings using elements of the Appreciative Approach.

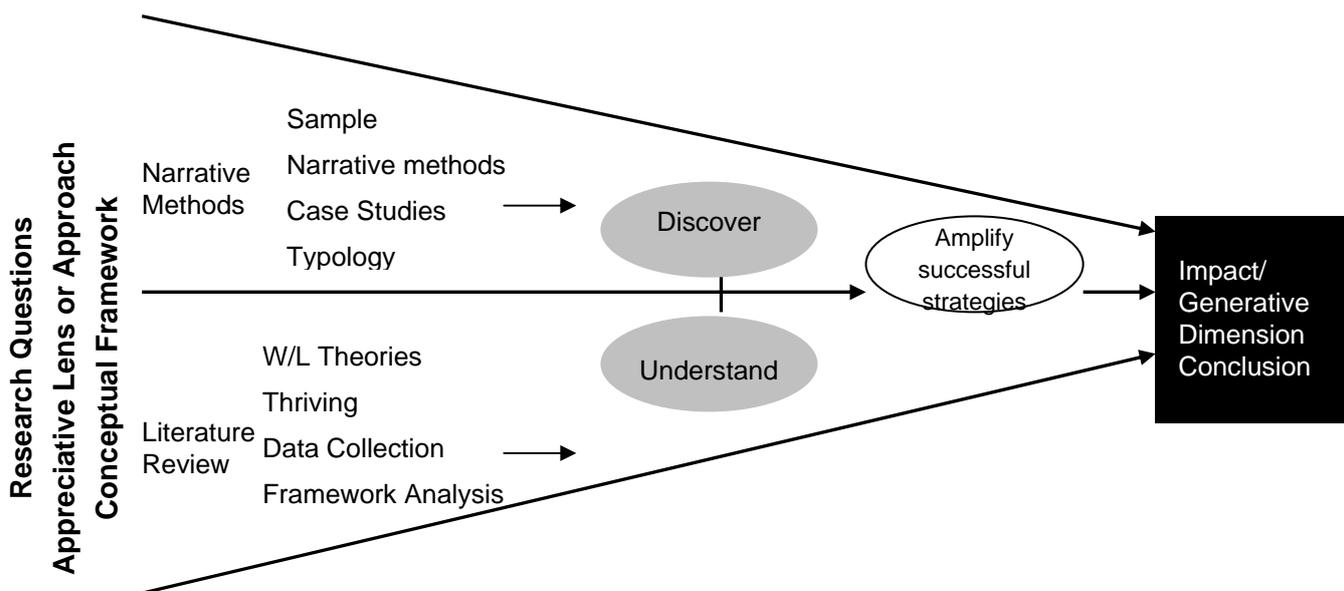


Figure 3. Research Design Diagram (adapted from Leadership for Change Research Design model) <http://leadershipforchange.org/insights/research/files/ResearchDesign.pdf>

What the approach depicted in Figure 3 indicates is that an appreciative lens is applied through the conceptual framework (incorporating the research questions) to examine the literature and the narratives (and the treatment of these narratives) to make the findings in relation to the research questions. The narrative method allowed the study participants to provide their insights, recount their experience and generate suggestions for improvements, which yielded a variety of perspectives. Through the literature and especially through a number of work/life theories, these insights are often clarified. Framework analysis also promotes the generation of a range of perspectives, as the data was examined and re-examined to identify themes and capture the voices of the participants. The three elements of an appreciative approach (Discovering, Understanding and Amplifying) provide the architecture for presentation of the research findings. The data were crystallised (Richardson, 2000) through use of such features as the inclusion of both principals and assistant principals in the sample group, and through the application of theory and stance to inform the study. The use of a typology also served to crystallise or triangulate the data. Each of these elements of the research design is now further explored.

3.6.1 Appreciative Lens or Approach

The methodological search led to the adoption of an appreciative research approach or lens. This is influenced by Positive Organisational Scholarship (POS) (Quinn, Cameron & Dutton 2003), Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider, 1987), Appreciative Approach (Bushe, 1995) and a Sensemaking /Affirmative Approach (Weick, 2002). In all these methodologies or theories, there are themes of positive outcomes and processes, a generative focus on positive dynamics, and emphasis on positive human potential. Identifying enablers and motivations for outcomes or effects such as vitality, resilience, energy and thriving is a feature of Positive Organisational Scholarship. POS provides a theoretical grounding for Appreciative Inquiry (Quinn, 2003), drawing from those influences that focus on building peak individual and organisational capability, the chosen approach provides a different focus from the current problem identification stage of analysis of principal supply (Blackmore, 2002) and the deficit focus of much work/life research.

3.6.2 Conceptual Framework

The process for selecting a conceptual framework for the study reflected similar issues to those considered in choosing a methodological approach. In Barnett (1998), the conclusions are that a barrier in work/family research is the almost exclusive focus on conflict models and that the existing work/family literature lacks a strong overarching framework that could

integrate concepts and findings across a range of perspectives and capture a broader conceptualisation of the whole work/family experiences. The search for such a framework is more complex with the expansion of the work/family concept to that of work/life. However, in relation to this study, the adaptation of the model set out in Figure 1 (Section 1.10) to form the conceptual framework depicted in Figure 2 (Section 1.10) appears to provide sufficient depth and scope to form a heuristic for research and analysis.

The framework and appreciative stance together respond to Barnett's (1998) implied call for research foci other than conflict to ensure an appreciative, enrichment-oriented, generative focus.

This rationale is further supported by the observation of Fullan (2005, p 18), in relation to sustainability of the principalship:

Two simultaneous agendas are at work. One is how individual superintendents can maintain resolve, energy and effectiveness over time. We need more fine grained examples of what strategies and habits enhance this possibility. The second and companion agenda is how we can improve systems so that structures and cultures are more supportive of superintendents.

Essentially the framework was designed to ensure that the relevant issues and the perceived relationship between the issues received adequate attention.

3.6.3 Narrative Approach

Appreciative Inquiry assumes that organisations are socially constructed through the language and stories members use, and as a result are best understood by exploring the narratives of their members. It also assumes that the inquiry should be into the organisation's generative forces by eliciting positive stories of organisational life (Hammond, 1998, Ludema, 2001). Narrative methodology, according to Burgess-Limerick (1998) assists the discovery of experiential truth. As the focus of this study is school leaders' *experiences and practices* in relation to work/life balance, there is justification for the choice of a narrative approach. While Taylor's (2006) observation that truth or accuracy in the narrative of interviewees conferred with a positive reputation may assume that identity which the situation and others assign them, that is, that the school leaders were assigned the positive work/life balance reputation by others and may have responded accordingly, may have some validity. Accordingly, these issues of identity are responded to, to some extent, in the use of the

work/life balance “test”, which establishes individual levels of work/life balance (see Section 6.3.3).

3.6.4 Sample Selection

Multiple case studies typically involve a sample of between eight and twenty participants. Samples of this magnitude make it possible to consider each individual in particular, while taking advantage of the capacity to compare cases (Burgess-Limerick, 1998; Rosendale, 1988). In this research a purposive sample of eight principals was chosen from a list of school principals. The basis for selection was the principal’s or school’s reputation in relation to leadership and in implementing DoE’s *Flexible Work Options: achieving work/life balance* program as indicated by:

- involvement in/recognition by the DoE Diversity Network
- participation in the Flexible Work in Schools project or DoE Flexible Work Working Party
- recommendation by the DoE Equity and Diversity Manager or Regional Diversity Officers
- recognition for success through publications or awards.

Using these criteria, the Manager, Diversity and Equity in DoE and Diversity Officers in three regional offices identified a sample group of principals. The resulting list was ordered into categories: male, female, primary, secondary, metropolitan, semi-rural and rural. Letters were sent to DoE Regional Directors in three regions to seek approval to approach the relevant principals in the region. Letters were then forwarded to nine principals, inviting them to be part of the study and asking permission to send a similar letter to the/an assistant principal. Eight principals accepted and four of these gave the name of one assistant principal. All four assistant principals accepted. The one principal who declined to be involved phoned the researcher to say he strongly supported the study but involvement in many research projects precluded involvement in another.

The contention is that choosing a research cohort of school leaders who have a reputation for having achieved positive work/life balance, and then exploring what contributes to that, could produce a rich insight into the work/life balance dimension of the issue.

3.6.5 Case Studies

One research strategy favoured by qualitative researchers is the case study, and in this study where it was not initially clear what phenomena were important (Yin, 2002), that is, it was exploratory rather than hypothesis testing, such an approach was deemed appropriate. The end product of the case study is a dense description of the phenomenon to be studied. It illustrates the complexities of the situation, and shows the influence of personalities on the issue. It includes vivid material, such as quotations and interviews, and presents information and insights from different perspectives and in different ways (Creswell, 1998).

Stake (1995) proposes a series of steps for completing the case study method: posing questions; gathering data; data analysis; and interpretation. Stake emphasises the need to act on the philosophical underpinnings of the research. Thus the combination of an appreciative approach (Bushe, 1998; Cooperrider, 1987) with the multiple case study approach appeared to meet the study requirements.

The collective, or multiple, case study approach (Stake, 1995), in which a group of cases are studied, allows the researcher to bring individual cases into conversation with each other. This also provides an understanding of the theoretical constructs that are relevant between individuals (Burgess-Limerick, 1998). These case studies have a biographical focus (Stake, 1995) and emphasise the proximal (Bromley, 1986) more than contextual issues.

3.6.6 Typology

The concept of validity underpins the research choice of developing a typology (which may appear to be incongruent with using a narrative approach) to identify those who it can be argued are successful in balancing work and non-work roles. In order to identify those school leaders in the group with high levels of work/life balance, and then examine how they achieve this, two issues were examined:

1. the self reports of levels of work/life satisfaction
2. the self reports of levels of work/life conflict.

Tausig (2001) has suggested that the extent to which workers feel successful in balancing work and personal life and the amount of conflict they face combine to provide a measure of perceived work/life balance. Self-reports of the principals about their level of vision and satisfaction with work/life balance, and an assessment of levels of conflict, were used to categorise school leaders. The results of this analysis distinguished three types of responses to

the challenge this group of school leaders faced in attempting to achieve work/life balance—Balancers, Strivers and Acceptors.

Balancers reported high levels of satisfaction with work/life balance and low levels of conflict between work and personal life and demonstrable work/life balance. **Strivers** reported some dissatisfaction with current levels of work/life balance, and some level of conflict between work and personal life, but demonstrated active strategy development to improve work/life balance. **Acceptors** reported some level of dissatisfaction with their level of work/life balance and little conflict between work and personal life, but accepted that work requirements would prevail and dominate and that there was little likelihood of change in their level of work/life balance. Acceptors appear to assume that there is a price to pay for the privilege of the role.

The findings in Saulwick (2004) suggest another category (notional/not included in the sample) – those paying the price (Payers). These do not have a vision of change but experience high levels of conflict and, as such, are at risk of such consequences as burnout. However, the purposive sampling process was likely not to include Payers. Figure 4 sets out the variables included in the development of the typology.

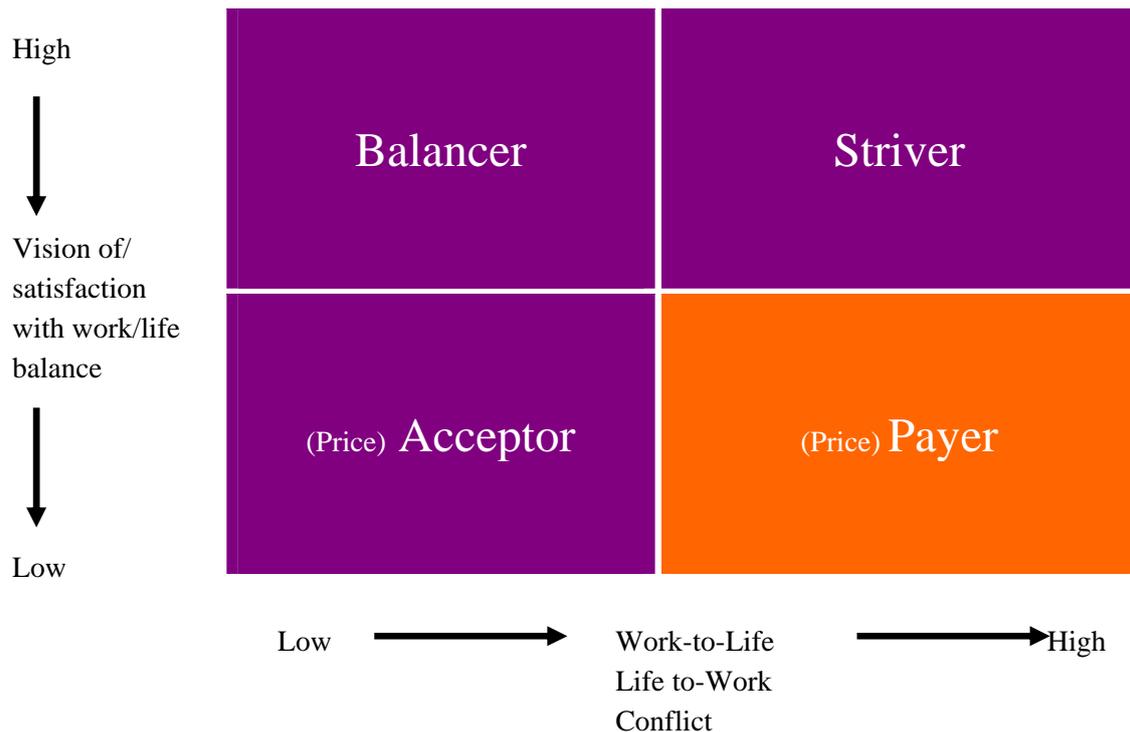


Figure 4. School Leaders' Work/Life Balance Typology (notional)

3.6.7 Principals' Work/Life Literature and Theories

Given the positive orientation of the research, consideration was given specifically to an “expansionist/enrichment” perspective in the work/life literature with a focus on concepts of reciprocity and facilitation and, in the principals' literature, on successful principals, well-being, emotions and hopefulness.

Three broad work/life theories were examined to assess their capacity to inform the study and the development of a professional development program:

1. Work/life border theory
2. Work/life expansion Theory
3. Theory of work-family enrichment.

Related to this dimension of research is the literature on the effects of individual agency (Senge, 1999), which recognises that individuals, particularly those in managerial and professional roles, have an opportunity to exercise some control, discretion or capacity for negotiation in relation to work and non-work activities. In a similar vein, attention is also paid to the literature on *thriving* (Spreitzer, 2005).

These theories contain elements similar to Appreciative Inquiry and Positive Organisational Scholarship, in that they are positive and generative. This further illustrates the attempt to develop an internally coherent research design (Ospina, 2004) which matches stance, methods, and theoretical perspectives.

3.6.8 Data Collection and Treatment

Most of the interviews took place in the principals' or assistant principals' own offices. Two interviews were conducted in the school grounds, with the opportunity to sit quietly outdoors in the sun and also to stroll around. Each interview commenced with a request to tape-record the interview (although this had already been stipulated in the contact letter).

The opening comments related to the provision of some details of the project, of the researcher's background and of the appreciative approach. The issues of confidentiality and anonymity were discussed. Each interview began with the comment that, as this was about work/life balance; the interviewee might like to start with a brief life history. Participants appeared to enjoy the experience of talking about their early life and journey to their current life stage. Prompts were given, if required, to elicit marital status, numbers and ages of children, and details of caring roles.

The interview then explored the participants' work history. The interview protocols (Appendix 6) guided the interviews, which did take some twists and turns. However, in all interviews the same topics were covered to ensure consistency. The last few minutes of the interviews were used to check that all questions had been posed, which is not to say that all questions were answered, as some questions of some participants elicited little or no response. In the belief that the best data-gathering tool is empathic listening, and that the principals had a range of techniques for balancing work and personal life, some of which were very simple, the intention was to set an atmosphere in which it could be perceived that what the school leaders take for granted may be novel to others. The revelation of practical strategies was also encouraged.

Interviews were tape-recorded and notes taken throughout. After each interview, notes were immediately checked and reflections were added. As soon as possible after each interview the audio tapes were listened to several times and transcribed and in order to test levels of work/life balance. Each transcript was interrogated using a simple test, as outlined in Section 3.6.6. The full process for application of this test is presented in more detail in Section 4.9.

3.6.9 Organising and Analysing the Data

The approach to data analysis can be described as a *framework approach* (Pope, 2000). This approach describes five stages of data analysis:

- Familiarisation
- Identifying the thematic framework
- Indexing
- Charting
- Mapping and interpretation

The process used in this study followed these steps:

Familiarisation - The interview transcripts were read and re-read. Transcripts were annotated to highlight their consistency with the literature. Data derived from these interviews were reviewed for recurring themes utilising the constant comparative method (Bogdan, 1982). Then, using a cut-and-paste approach, the transcripts were developed into individual case studies (Polkinghorne, 1988), which included quotations that suggested responses to the relevant section of the interview protocol (Appendix 5). The interview protocol acted as the organising device for the case studies.

Identifying the thematic framework - Using the conceptual framework as a thematic framework, the case studies and transcripts were again read repeatedly in search for quotations which suggested themes in relation to the framework. These category files were organised, reduced into the following range of sub-themes (Figure 5, Section 3.7) and further coalesced as part of the analysis in Chapters 5 and 6.

Indexing – The themes and sub-themes in Figure 5 (Section 3.7) were used again to capture the narrative response of each participant and to place the themes and related literature into categories.

Charting - Using selected research questions (Section 1.7) as headings, a number of topic charts, in which all responses to a question were amalgamated, were developed for reference,

Mapping and interpretation - The transcripts were subjected to a test of work/life balance satisfaction derived from Tausig (2001) and narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1988) involving application of theory; commentary addressing the similarities and differences among the school leaders in the case studies; and the location of the school leaders' voices and empirical discovery of "what works". In this way, the analysis of the data and the reporting of outcomes were tied together. This supported the presentation of the findings and produced major outcomes, such as:

- the *Work/Life Balance Typology of School Leaders (Study)* (Figure 4, Section 4.10)
- *Categorisation of School Leaders* (Table 3, Section 4.10),
- *Work/life Balance Typology Characteristics Profile* (Table 4, Section 4.11)
- *Key Successful Balancer Strategies and Acceptor and Striver Behaviour Comparisons* (Table 5, Section 5.6).

3.7 Themes and Sub- themes in the Data

Using the conceptual framework (Figure 2) as the thematic framework, Figure 5 below depicts the sub-themes identified in the data analysis.

1. Off- the- job Characteristics and Strengths
1.1 Multiple roles 1.2 Providing care 1.3 Giving and receiving 1.4 Support 1.5 Interests and community involvement 1.6 Personal organisation 1.7 Personal time 1.8 Family time 1.9 Relaxation and recovery
2. On-the-job Characteristics and Strategies
2.1 Taking work home 2.2 Evening commitments 2.3 Weekend work 2.4 Working hours 2.5 Work load 2.6 Guiding framework 2.7 Features which obstruct and enable work/life balance
3. Personal Characteristics
3.1 Resilience 3.2 Personal organisation 3.3 Gender 3.4 Energy 3.5 Optimism 3.6 Confidence 3.7 Agency 3.8 Stress 3.9 Boundaries
4. Work/Life Balance (Test, Typology, Taxonomy)
5. Performance
5.1 Job satisfaction 5.2 Succession Planning 5.3 Role models
6. Design
6.1 Improvements 6.2 Departmental action 6.3 Changes to the role 6.4 Leadership
7. Development
7.1 Professional development program

Figure 5. Study Themes and Sub-Themes

3.8 Validity

This research is an exploratory, qualitative study using narrative approaches. The validity of the research is related to such design features as: sample selection involving principals and assistant principals to provide alternative perspectives; the use of tape-recorded interviews; topic charts to document coding and analysis; and the identification of the researcher as a

situated actor (DeVault, 1990), whose presence is included in the thesis in visible ways in order for the reader to discern interpretations.

In this qualitative study a combination of methods was used. These methods provided different *perspectives* on the research questions. For example the appreciative approach provided a particular lens through which to view the issues. The involvement of both principals and assistant principals provided different perspectives on the range of work/life balance strategies employed and the issue of principal supply and the decision-making processes and influences on the assistant principals. This might be described as crystallisation, which recognises that an approach to research has many facets (Richardson, 2000). However, it must be stressed that the study is a small exploratory one and as such some caution is required in relation to providing evidence for policy and practice changes from such findings.

3.9 Summary

This chapter has outlined the study methods and procedures, and the way that these elements are integrated. Figure 3 (Section 3.6) maps the Research Design and signals the format of the study.

Doucet (2003) contends that the data analysis is a critical stage in the research process, as it carries the potential to decrease or amplify the interviewees' voices. Data analysis is also the critical stage for balancing the voices of the school leaders in the study, the perspective of the practitioner researcher, and the perspectives represented within the literature and the theories and frameworks used in the study. This balancing act of representing accurately the school leaders' accounts and locating them within the debates about school leadership, principal supply and work/life balance was central to the task of the data analysis phase. The analysis of the data involved organising the data in a number of ways (tapes, transcripts, theme displays, case studies, issues charts, a matrix, and typology) in order to tap into the different dimensions of the research context.

The appreciative lens assists this balancing act by providing a coherent focus and stance or approach (Ospina, 2004). It directs focus on the work and lives of school leaders in context, and makes transparent what is seen as important to discuss and analyse in the research. The appreciative lens applied to the data analysis phase yielded findings that are further explored in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 under the respective chapter headings Discover, Understand and Amplify, as indicated in Figure 3 (Section 3.6).

Chapter 4 profiles the participants, examines the individual case studies of the participating school leaders, locates the interviewees' voices, and develops a typology to identify the comparative experiences of principals' work/life balance.

Chapter 4: Discovery - Study Participants, Case Studies and Typology

The work-family literature has plateaued. Theoretical frameworks have focused on stressors in the environment and personal characteristics that produce chronic and on-going work-family conflict. We need to supplement this research with studies of specific situations and the factors that influence decisions in these situations. Research should be focussed more on individual situations and how people deal with them. (Jeffrey Greenhaus, 2004)

4.1 Overview

As the previous chapter outlined, the data analysis methodology employed in this study is approached in three interrelated ways:

1. Narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1988)
2. Typology
3. Framework analysis (Pope, 2000).

The first mentioned involves the development of multiple case studies and analysis guided by theory, empirical discovery, and commentary addressing the similarities and differences among the case studies. The data analysis steps include the use of a test to establish levels of success in effecting work/life balance and a school leaders' work/life balance typology to strengthen the appreciative approach taken in the study. This chapter focuses on the Discovery element of the study. The twelve school leaders are profiled in individual case studies, the rationale for the work/life balance test is presented and the analytical decision-making in relation to the typology is made explicit. The case studies serve to validate the themes that were identified in the coding in the previous chapter (Figure 5, Section 3.7). The typology identifies the best experience of work/life balance in the sample, and the commentary underpins the analysis of organisational and personal work/life balance strategies examined fully in Chapter 5.

4.2 Introduction

As the core of the field of work/life is the relationship between work and personal life, work/life research and practice focuses on issues that comprise the relationship, reside at the nexus of the relationship, and cross and reconstruct the boundaries between work and personal life. Kossek (2006) cautions that there needs to be a focus on both work and personal spheres and on the intersection and reciprocal relationship, between work and personal life.

Accordingly, these case studies have a biographical focus (Stake, 1995) and emphasise the proximal (Bromley, 1986), more than contextual, issues.

After providing a reminder of the elements of an appreciative approach that the research would follow (already outlined in the initial contact letter), interviewees were asked to provide a brief personal and employment history. The interview also included the following questions:

- How would you describe your work/life balance?
- What do you do to achieve work/life balance?
- What aspects of school organisation support your work/life balance?
- Are there DoE features which support or get in the way of achieving work/life balance?

The chapter sets out a profile of the participant school leaders comprising details of the types of schools and the family situations, in which they live, and individual case studies and analysis. It then documents the development of a typology of work/life balance strategies.

4.3 The Participants

Eight principals agreed to participate in this project, four of whom approved contact with an assistant principal. All assistant principals contacted accepted the invitation to participate. The sampling process ensured that the principal group comprised equal numbers of males and females, equal numbers of principals from primary and secondary schools and, by chance, the assistant principal group comprised one of each of these classifications.

The composition of the sample is outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Composition of the Sample of School Leaders

	Primary Metropolitan	Primary Rural	Primary Semi-Rural	Secondary Metropolitan	Secondary Rural	Secondary Semi-Rural
Female Principal	1		1	1	1	
Male Principal		1	1	1		1
Female Assistant Principal	1			1		
Male Assistant Principal		1		1		

So, participants were based in rural (n-3), semi-rural (n- 3) and metropolitan settings (n-6), located in three DoE regions.²

The study focuses on all twelve participants, called school leaders, but at certain points responses are attributed to principals or to assistant principals. The study largely refers to the group in gender-neutral terms, partly to ensure anonymity of participants in this small group, and partly to leave open a discussion of the gender aspect of the issue. However, on some issues, to illuminate the finding, the gender of respondents is identified.

4.4 Participants' Family Lives

Research into the link between life stage and the prevalence of work/life balance is discussed in Guest (2000). This selective profile of the sample group provides some insight into their family situations, personal lives and life stages.

Of the group of six males and six females, all but one was living with a partner. Of these eleven partners, six worked full-time, two part-time, and three were no longer in the workforce.

² The letter n denote number.

Of the four female school leaders who were mothers, three had taken substantial amounts of family leave (the longest was nine years). One had taken a smaller amount of leave and one had commenced a teaching career after having children.

Two of the females had become principals while their children were primary school aged, as had two of the male principals. School-aged children were part of the households of four of the group, while six households comprised school-aged and/or adult children. Three of the group indicated they had substantial care responsibilities for another adult relative for reasons of illness or age. All but one of the participants spoke about varying levels of carer responsibility in relation to school-aged children, adults, or for adult children living at home. The issue of ageing parents was part of the range of carer responsibilities for a number of participants. Three of the group had previous employment experience in occupations other than teaching.

Five of the six non-metropolitan participants indicated current, or recent, high degrees of formal involvement in a range of community organisations. This aspect of work/life balance rarely featured in the interviews with the metropolitan participants.

4.5 Profiles of Participants

These small case studies were developed using the broad structure of the research questions. Using cut and paste, the transcripts were rearranged and case studies developed to lay the foundation for narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1988) and paint a picture of each participant.

AL

AL self-reports a good work/life balance while providing a high level of care responsibility in the family. Home is shared with a partner who has retired from the workplace and with one of the couple's adult children. The good work/life balance is attributed to "mental frameworks"—optimism, coping, gaining energy from school and community involvement and from implementing strategies to manage the workload and improve school efficiency and effectiveness.

A passionate advocate of quality management, AL sees quality processes as ways of engaging staff, streamlining decision-making and improving student learning—"*Quality has been a way of organising, of capturing time.*"

Delegation is viewed as a way of developing staff, managing the workload, and as an essential aspect of management. Paying for extra work is also a way to manage the workload. AL feels DoE has some way to go in supporting principals effectively, but notes that automated data collection systems and other innovations are starting to help.

AL rates Covey training as *“one of the best things I have done in my life”*, and promotes it in the staff group. Another strategy AL uses to further professional development is to visit other schools. AL is also strongly involved in community activities, which provide immense satisfaction and fun. Time is made for shared activities and interests with AL’s partner on a daily basis and one day at the weekend is set aside for the partner to decide on an activity for them to enjoy together.

BC

BC says, *“I have a healthy work/life balance, but I work at that.”* An assistant principal, who has acted as principal, BC attributes work/life balance to self-regulation of emotions (*“I make myself happy”*) and being able to create energy (*“Energy creates energy”*), engaging in a range of non-work activities, involvement with the extended family, attention to personal fitness and health and prioritisation both at work and in private life (*“I diarise my life”*). BC has completed Covey training (*“it should be mandatory”*), which has assisted in improving prioritisation skills. BC sees personal temperament as a critical ingredient in affecting work/life balance and would include an assessment of capacity to balance work and personal life in principal selection. In BC’s view the DoE’s track record on supporting principals has been patchy. Devolution has meant that many issues that are dealt with at the school level waste time and resources, resulting in school leaders having to do *“monkey work”*, while still not having authority over critical issues, such as human resources.

BC sees the current leadership of the school as shared leadership, defined as a sharing of knowledge, strategies, tasks and, importantly, emotions and dreams. BC loved having the role of principal and even felt *“better at it than being an assistant principal”*. Despite this, BC would not accept a promotion to the principalship unless it was in a school BC felt drawn to: *“I’d have to be convinced I’d be as happy as I am doing the assistant principal job...The (type) of school would be the clincher for me.”*

CM

CM shares a home-life with a partner who has a demanding professional career. CM rates the workload as an assistant principal as very heavy and works often at the weekends, as does the principal and a number of staff. *“It is a huge increase in the volume and intensity of work. It*

is not inefficiency, there is just so much to be done.” The school is described as a happy place; staff members are very hard working and the principal innovative. The principal and the assistant principal share leadership to the extent that information and planning are shared and roles are quite separate. The principal is an educational leader and CM has specific management and systems responsibilities. Work dominates life, but CM has strategies in place to ensure recuperation and stress management. Attention to fitness and daily exercise at the end of the workday is one such strategy. CM is also heavily involved in community activities, often carrying out executive functions in organisations. CM attributes the heavy workload and obstacles to work/life balance to difficulty in delegating (*“I am not a good delegator”*). As an assistant principal, CM is keen to become a principal: *“For my own satisfaction, I’d like to run a school of my own.”*

DC

DC says, *“I believe I have good work/life balance, which is achieved by my relationship with my assistant principal. We share roles and have good communication, both of us are very visible in the school, we meet and greet parents each morning and are able to head off problems.”* DC describes being very organised, having a great deal of energy, and being committed to careful planning and making the staff happy. Strategic planning is seen to be a key to the smooth running of the school and the achievement of objectives is a source of immense satisfaction. Being principal also assists in balancing work and personal life, as it affords some flexibility and control over time, which is not the case for classroom teachers. This organisation and planning extends to the home. Being organised at work is also seen as a way of ensuring that hours at work are such that there is plenty of time for home-life and further study.

DC sees the issue of work/life balance as an issue for many principals: *“There is a lot of stress, ill-health, which seems to be related to overwork and not having time to look after health and well-being.”* DC is of the view that this issue forms a disincentive to people applying for principal positions. DC does not think job-sharing at the principal level is an option. What would be useful to support work/life balance is enhanced management development and opportunities for regular reflection with an outside person.

EL

EL shares a home with a partner and school-aged and tertiary-level children. EL and partner have, to some extent, paced career development to ensure that each has been able to achieve a senior position and both have been able to be involved in family life. EL rates work/life balance as good and attributable to dividing jobs and delegation, good systems for managing

workload and paperwork, and being organised. EL believes DoE's commitment to school leaders' work/life balance is more lip service than commitment and that decentralisation and devolution have resulted in principals having to spend a lot of time on compliance and accountability and issues that are a waste of time, while important functions are still centralised. According to EL, things that could improve school leaders' work/life balance would be far more regional responsibility for some compliance issues. Financial and time savings would enable greater focus on educational leadership. In terms of advice to assistant principals considering applying for principal positions, EL says: *"Go for it! But only if it is something you really want, and believe you can rise to, because it is something you will need to give 200% commitment to make it work."*

FD

For **FD**, work/life balance alters somewhat according to what is happening at work, but the balance is generally very good because of the structures that have been put in place in the school. There is trust and a belief that: *"You do not have to manage everything."*

Management structures (shared leadership, communication processes, and quality processes) are most important so that most things do not catch you by surprise.

Investment in technological support for data management and communication aids workload management. On the home front, while organised, it is not as easy to put structures in place (*"I am not the principal at home"*). However, activities and meals are planned in advance, diaries co-ordinated and FD's partner and adult children share tasks. FD sees that staff work/life balance as a priority and never refuses a request in that regard and has never felt that this has been taken for granted. FD's view is that the DoE's requirements of principals mean that the task of managing workload is a challenge for many. DoE is also seen as lacking flexibility in relation to school leaders and FD can see no reason why two principals cannot share the role. FD says that issues such as this are regularly discussed amongst principal peers and would consider presenting a personal case for this if this seemed like a desirable option at some stage in the future.

GP

GP reports good work/life balance and is at a stage of life where work as a principal has to be balanced with the needs of school-aged children. GP attributes this good balance to a capacity to apply a particular philosophy of school change. On commencing each new position as principal, GP immediately sets up systems to support change and puts learning and teaching at the centre of leadership and school organisation. GP believes that the workload is quite manageable if systems are in place, work is delegated, and support that is available from the

regional office is accessed. GP has made a conscious effort to scale back community involvement other than that required by the role of principal, so that family involvement (with children, partner and extended family) can be achieved. GP is energised by change and does not intend to stay for a long time in the role in the particular school, stating that:

I make the point that I am someone who needs to renew myself by actually changing my environment, actually changing schools is a way of keeping enthusiasm and energy up. There is at least one other school/principalship in me before I retire. (GP)

HC

HC describes the current level of work/life balance as better than it was in the past: “*Now I have better balance than I ever did, which is ironic now that the kids have grown up.*” When new to the principalship and with school-aged children, work was done at home late at night because there was a need to leave work in time to be at home for the children’s evening meal. “*Now I like to make a difference between work and the rest of my life. Some principal colleagues do all their emails at home. I don’t. Home is home. Work is work. I come in on Saturday mornings and work here for four hours, but I won’t take work home.*” HC finds the workload a challenge and the role lonely and, at times, stressful. HC loves the role, but acknowledges that there is a huge cost. HC sees the issue of work/life balance as significant for principals; divorce, drinking and weight problems are the price paid by many colleagues. HC has put in place a number of strategies to manage stress, including regular massage, taking time to recover after late meetings, strong attention to personal fitness and to pursuing artistic and other interests. HC considers that professional debriefing and regular health checks (such as those given to airline pilots) should be part of principal support. HC has personally considered professional counselling. HC is energised by professional extramural activities, which involve interacting with other people in education.

IW

IW is passionate about the role of assistant principal and was viewed by the principal as a certain aspirant for the principalship. IW, however, has some doubts about making the move, partly because of issues relating to balancing the role of principal and being a parent to school-aged children. The hours that the principal seems to need to commit are seen as a disincentive to IW for considering the move at this stage. IW finds the assistant principal workload high and the job, at times, overwhelming. IW has some difficulty unwinding after the day’s work. In terms of improving work/life balance, IW has a number of ideas and strategies regarding training, particularly in relation to the leadership team. IW also considers that there needs to be time for professional reflection; IW wants to learn to prioritise better

and to say “no”. IW considers that there are lessons to be learned from the principal in relation to managing the school and the interface with the bureaucracy, as well as mentally separating work and personal life.

JD

When questioned about good work/life balance, **JD** responded that it is a “*hard call—you are always going through that conflict, looking at demands of the job and other things: family demands, having some balance in a personal way.*” JD has a partner whose professional career carries major responsibilities and is demanding of time. However, JD notes that DoE is less respectful of personal time than is the organisation for which the partner works. JD reports that there are also a number of DoE commitments at the weekend. JD works long hours and usually works at the school at the weekends. JD finds the workload high and also finds it hard to leave at the end of the day if there is still work to be done. JD finds delegation difficult, as doing so puts extra work onto already busy teachers. JD would like a system of external professional supervision. JD has cut back on external commitments as they were too time consuming. However, one community commitment has been maintained, as it provides immense satisfaction—“*But that’s the balance: if I didn’t have it I’d go mad.*” This involvement provided the opportunity to learn valuable skills applicable to the job and is a contrast to the work as principal.

KN

KN says, “*I feel I do have good work/life balance and that is due mainly to an ability to prioritise.*” KN also reports having lots of friendships that are not to do with work and a social and personal life quite removed from school life. “*I have developed a capacity to keep things in perspective and not worry about work.*” KN says that this skill comes from “*wanting to have more in life, not wanting to see myself as someone who only works*”. KN also ensures that energy levels are boosted: “*I need downtime and I need my holidays.*” KN is goal-oriented and very determined to achieve personal and professional goals once set. As an assistant principal, KN is keen to apply for a principal’s position. The principal of the school is seen to be a positive role model as a manager and as someone with good work/life balance. KN is prepared to relinquish some work/life balance initially in order to master the new role. However, KN says a number of assistant principal peers are not attracted to the role because of what they observe in their own principals. In addition to having a good role model, KN sees the variety, autonomy and control of the role as attractive. KN also sees that the Department needs to do more to streamline processes and to display trust in principals, which would make the role more attractive.

LB

For **LB**, work/life balance “*is quite hard. You have to work at it. It (the principalship) is an all-encompassing job*”. LB describes the workload as high but not hard, just time consuming. LB works very long hours, is often out four nights a week, which is hard on the family, and works long hours at the weekend. LB does not see that the job can be done differently if progress is to be made. LB acts as a manager in communication with staff, “*they get communication like they have never seen before.*” LB believes that the job is a great one but pathetically paid, and that it does require a certain temperament and a capacity to prioritise. “*Some principals hate the job, and can’t wait for 54/11, when they can retire.*” LB sees that the role requires tenacity to deal with the breadth of the job and feels that there is a constant battle with the Department on issues of funding and staffing. LB fits in a range of non-work activities and interests, especially activities associated with fitness.

4.6 Commentary on the Case Studies

A backdrop for reflecting on the school leaders’ perspectives is provided by some discussion of the nature of the interviews that produced these perspectives. There was initial discussion that the interviewees were seen (by the person who nominated them) to have good work/life balance. In that context, their responses can be described as a situated construction (Taylor, 2006). Both the personal experience of the school leaders, as well as their wider experience of the contemporary discussion of the role and workload of principals and the relationship of principals with DoE, has some bearing on the narratives. To some extent the principals involved (and probably the assistant principals, as they were nominated by their principals) have been positioned by others as having a certain identity (and in agreeing to be part of the study claimed that identity). This may have affected their narratives, in that they generally positioned perspectives in line with the “good work/life balance” identity. So, even if some interviewees later contested or qualified the notion that they had good work/life balance, they spoke as part of a “good work/life balance” cohort.

The acceptance on the part of those participating in the study of the value of an appreciative approach was unanimous. The point was made that studies of principals’ workload and well-being seemed often to restate the problem rather than address the solution. School leaders in this study indicated that, in their view, this issue was an important one and that it was frequently cited as a problem for school leaders. However, they believed that neither DoE, nor the literature, provided many positive ideas for tackling the issue. Indeed, as one principal

explained: “[Such discussion] *inevitably gets back to black holes—time, money, etc. There seems to be a negative flavour to those discussions.*”

There is an arresting picture in this study of a group of school leaders who see work/life balance as an important issue and who are able to describe personal and organisational strategies to achieve work/life balance. This contrasts sharply with the image presented in recent studies (Lacey, 2003a; Saulwick, 2004) of the principalship in DoE, which shows negative links between: work/life balance and principal supply, principals’ performance, and their health and well-being. Lacey’s (2003a) study found that teachers in Victorian state schools would not apply for principal positions that were too overwhelming and that such decisions were made on the basis of the role modelled by current leaders. The findings revealed the negative impact on work/family balance for both males and females. The findings also indicated that personal factors such as effect on the family, stress level of the job, and time required by the job were strong disincentives to promote to the Principal Class for all groups, and that it was significantly greater for women (Lacey, 2002b).

Where school leaders in this study reported high satisfaction with work/life balance, there was usually unprompted follow up detailing the action that had been taken to achieve this. These school leaders reflected an agentic view of work/life balance (Singh, 2002), in which they described strategies, values, mental processes, insights and influence, which they exerted to achieve this balance. They had a vision of work/life balance; it was a value to which they aspired. A core enabler was the active management of workload. Also evident were references to energy, optimism, strategies in both the work and non-work domain and the existence of guiding management frameworks. In line with Medved’s (2004) findings, there was consistency between the strategies used in both the work and non-work domains. These school leaders, in both their work and non-work lives, placed importance on personal organisation and planning that was usually shared. They made clear allocations of time to priorities, and they focussed on energisers. For a number of the school leaders, there was evidence of learning/ resolving to improve. For example, EL had an “epiphany” and sought advice from others and implemented comprehensive systems to manage the workload.

In some contrast, there were five school leaders who assessed their satisfaction with work/life balance as less than “good” or “healthy” and indicated that the high workload was a major contributor to this state. Given the sampling process, this suggests differences between external perception and self assessment, and also that practice of supporting flexibility and work/life balance for staff members (reputation) may not be incorporated in the school

leaders' own behaviours. These and other issues are explored in the study.

HC indicated that work/life balance was now "better than in the past" as a result of implementing strategies in both the work and non-work domain.

It was evident in the cases of IW, JD, and HC that the development of strategies was high on their agendas, and some improvements were occurring. For JD, two strategies were to pursue an outside interest that provided energy and diversion, and to change attitudes to perfectionism in the workplace. IW was in the process of developing management systems and acting on awareness that a capacity to switch off mentally when not at work was necessary. HC had in place a range of strategies to support a more enjoyable personal life. A range of interpersonal, intrapersonal and system changes had also been identified. These three emphasised that there was a need for some external support (mentor, professional development or professional review) to guide this change.

In contrast, for CM and LB the perspective was determinist or indicative of accommodating the organisation (Singh, 2000). Their lives were dominated by work but they were of the view that high workload and long hours were an inevitable part of the life of a school leader and they were willing to sacrifice weekends. These school leaders were largely satisfied with life as it was, or saw no way of changing their situations. Indeed, after returning from leave LB resolved to improve work/life balance but found that this was not possible.

It was clear that workload was central to the work/life balance experience and responses to this varied. However, what was consistent among all respondents was a view that DoE needed to pay greater attention to opportunities for rationalizing requirements, reducing bureaucratic excesses, improving planning and scheduling, and being mindful of the impact of central requirements on principals' workload.

Another observation, however, is that the issue is not just workload but also efficiency. For those who found workload heavy, overwhelming or too high, strategies to deal with this were not evident.. There were instances where shared leadership appeared to consume time rather than enhance efficiency. Delegation was viewed solely in deficit terms (an impost on busy people) and therefore not used, and the role of the business manager was not developed sufficiently to assist with workload reduction. Again, for some who found the workload onerous, their work/life balance strategies appeared to focus on non-work activities, as diversions or salves, rather than solutions. It appears to be important to identify the factors

contributing to, and impeding, work/life balance and to arrive at more complex solutions rather than simply attending to individual elements of imbalance.

According to Carlson (2006) only by action in both directions—work and non-work—can work/life enrichment be effected. This suggests that work/life balance requires attention to strategies in both domains to effect change, regardless of the domain in which major constraints reside.

The exploration of this group provides insight into factors that contribute to principals' work/life balance. However, it must be conceded that the study is exploratory and proximal and comments little on contextual features of the principals' situations (school size and composition, specific challenges and staff issues). The study seeks to find what principals actually do to facilitate work/life balance and to examine the process of combining work and non-work domains. The interview transcripts evidenced views and descriptions of experiences on a broad range of work/life balance issues.

The case studies expose to debate and questioning such work/life stereotypes as the likelihood of multiple roles and care responsibilities contributing to work/life conflict (Goode, 1960). Within the sample group, the sub-group which reported a good work/life balance comprised people with major care responsibilities and those with few care responsibilities; however, those with major care responsibilities see this dimension in their lives as contributing to, rather than depleting, their work/life balance. Indeed, this work/life enrichment perspective (Greenhaus, 2006) is also demonstrated in the narratives of those who are satisfied with their levels of work/life balance.

The narratives appear to place workload as the fulcrum of work/life balance and the relationship between managing workload and satisfaction with work/life balance is evident. The role of varying degrees of personal mastery, self-regulation of emotions and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) is highlighted. Maister (2005) commented that leaders who get things done are guided by an ideology. The existence, or absence, of guiding management/ideology or school leadership philosophy in the narratives points to what appears to be an important contributor to principals' work/life balance—a capacity to prioritise, to decide what to “do and not do”, and to find a management approach or leadership philosophy that suits the school's needs.

The relevance of Work/Life Border Theory (Clark, 2002), which deals with managing temporal, physical and psychological boundaries, is supported by the revelation that many of

the successful strategies to manage work/life balance involve decision-making in relation to boundaries. There is a strong focus on boundaries between work and personal life in the attention paid to the number of working hours, whether or not work is done at home or at the school, the ability to focus or switch-off, and consciously separating work and personal life.

4.7 Towards the Creation of a Positive Work/Life Balance Image

In these case studies, the group of school leaders saw work/life balance as an important issue and were able to describe personal and organisational strategies to achieve work/life balance, to varying levels of personal satisfaction. This contrasts with the image presented in recent studies (Lacey, 2003a; Saulwick, 2004) of the principalship in DoE, which show a wide-scale inability to achieve work/life balance and draw negative links between work/life balance and principal supply, principals' performance and their health and well-being. The case studies also reveal a largely positive image of school leaders' work/life balance. In line with assumptions in Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider, 1987), that change happens best when there is a focus on what is right in organisations and that actions begin to align with a positive image, the case studies offer an opportunity to examine what contributes to success in achieving work/life balance. To assist this, some differentiation between levels of personal satisfaction with success in achieving work/life balance is identified and the strategies of those who confirm their ability to achieve work/life balance are examined in detail.

4.8 Identifying the School Leaders with High Satisfaction with Work/Life

Balance: Choosing a test

What the profile of the participants in this study reveals is that work/life balance, a social construct, is experienced differently from person to person. The analysis of the narratives revealed that work/life balance was experienced differently even amongst this purposive sample. The research choice to use a test to identify those most successful in balancing work and non-work roles, and to develop a typology to deepen an understanding of these successful work/life strategies, was judged to be an important element of an appreciative study.

The work/life balance construct can be measured in a variety of ways. Fisher-Macauley, Stanton, Jolton & Gavin (2003) proposed that work/life balance be assessed on three dimensions:

1. Work interference with personal life
2. Personal life interference with work

3. Work/personal life enhancement.

Recently, a measure of work/life enrichment (Carlson, Kacmar, Wayne & Grzywacz, 2006) has been developed that measures work to family and family to work potential resource gains through which enrichment might occur. These include perceptions by others, behavior, skills, knowledge, perspectives, time, energy, resources, support, self-fulfillment, self-esteem/self-efficacy, moods, and attitudes.

Clark (2001) used five different scales to represent work-life balance:

1. Role conflict
2. Work satisfaction
3. Home satisfaction
4. Family functioning
5. Employee citizenship.

Tausig (2001) measured perceived work-life balance using two items:

1. The extent to which workers feel successful in balancing work and personal life
2. The amount of conflict they face in balancing work and personal life.

The simple measure in Tausig (2001) was adopted because it reflects the definition of work/life balance adopted for this study. The two items (above) - feelings of success, and work/life conflict or harmony are features of much work/life commentary and this combination of items allows for the inclusion of a range of variables and moderators. These variables and moderators include such factors as contribution to: satisfaction/lack of satisfaction; conflict/lack of conflict/ harmony; and, experience of work/life enhancement or enrichment. It allows for an assessment of the tri-directional nature of work/life conflict or enrichment, as suggested in Fisher-Macauley (2003) above.

Following the ideas of Polkinghorne (1988), the case studies and transcripts were analysed and subjected to this test (described above) of work/life satisfaction. Similarities and differences in strategies and characteristics were identified. This process served to identify those school leaders in the group with high levels of satisfaction with work/life balance and to allow an examination of how they achieve work/life balance. The development of a typology provides insight into the range of factors that impact on school leaders' work/life balance and

the strategies employed to achieve a balance between personal and professional life. The typology provides an additional dimension to the analysis of the data.

4.9 Levels of Work/Life Balance

The narratives were examined in relation to self-reports of levels of satisfaction and levels of work/life conflict/harmony, in line with Tausig's (2001) contention that the extent to which workers feel successful in balancing work and personal life and the amount of conflict they face combine to provide a measure of perceived work/life balance.

The results of this analysis distinguished three types of responses to the challenge this group of school leaders faced in attempting to achieve work/life balance. The first group, termed Balancers, reported high levels of satisfaction with work/life balance and low levels of conflict between work and personal life. The second group, termed Strivers, reported some dissatisfaction with current levels of work/life balance, and some level of conflict between work and personal life, but were working on strategies to improve work/life balance. The third group, termed Acceptors, reported some level of dissatisfaction with their level of work/life balance and little conflict between work and personal life, but accepted that work requirements would prevail and dominate. They saw little likelihood of change in their level of work/life balance.

Terminology plays an important role in the formulation and use of a typology. The terms chosen for this typology all indicate a level of success (indeed other categories would presumably be required if the study contained broader representation). The scope of the study and the commitment to preserving the anonymity of the sample group do not provide sufficient opportunity or licence to assess the contextual factors (school challenges, life-cycle stages) in which the behaviour is displayed.

The following selected paraphrasing and direct quotes from the transcripts of the school leaders' responses makes explicit the decision-making in developing the categorisation of each school leader.

4.9.1 Balancers

Balancers are those who report high levels of satisfaction with work/life balance and low levels of conflict between work and personal life.

AL is a principal who self-reported a high level of satisfaction with work/life balance and a fairly high level of care responsibility in the family. The good work/life balance was

attributed to “mental frameworks”—optimism, coping, gaining energy from school and community involvement and from implementing strategies to manage the workload and improve school efficiency and effectiveness. AL reported a low level of conflict in work and non-work roles with partner, family individual and community interests. The planning of time for all such involvements was evident:

Yes, I would say I have good work/life balance. I enjoy coming to school, I have plenty of interests, lots of peer support and connections in the community. My weekends are usually my own. I am involved in sport and Sunday is the time for my partner and me to do things together.

BC reported having a healthy work/life balance and a capacity to self regulate emotion. BC reported being happy, with energy for engaging in a range of non-work activities, involvement with the extended family, attention to personal fitness and health, and prioritisation both at work and in private life. BC stated:

I have a very healthy work/life balance but I work at it. I love my job, but when I go home at night I sleep, I can relax, I do not worry. I diarise my life because I have so many things on and work is but one of them.

BC reported a high level of satisfaction in work and non-work roles. Exhilarated by work and being able to make time for family involvement and a range of social interests, BC reported a low level of conflict between work and life roles. The planning of time for all such involvements is evident, especially attention to fitness.

DC reported having good work/life balance that was achieved through a capacity to switch roles from work to home and segregate the two domains, resulting in low levels of conflict between work and personal life. DC stated:

I believe I have good work/life balance which is achieved by my relationship with my AP – sharing roles and having good communication, by my ability to switch roles from work to home. I try to keep work at work and home as a refuge. I am very organised and spend a great deal of time planning and making staff happy.

DC assesses the level of satisfaction with work/life balance as high. Support at home and at work, strategic planning and personal organisation ensure a low level of conflict between work and life roles.

EL rated satisfaction with work/life balance as high and attributable to dividing jobs and delegation, good systems for managing workload and paperwork, and being organised both at home and at work. EL experienced low level of conflict between work and personal life because of good communication, good organisation, enjoyment of a busy life, and support at work and home:

I do have a balance between work and personal life but you do have to work at it. I guess I made the decision and keep reminding myself that it is not the hours you put in but the quality of the hours. You need to do positive stuff and need to know what is important.

For **FD** reported that satisfaction with work/life balance was very high because of the structures that have been put in place in the school and at home. There was a low level of conflict between work and personal life. Confidence in staff and good systems at work meant not worrying about work after hours. Good communication, planning and support at home and at work ensure this harmony:

I do have a reasonable balance between work and personal life. I mean there are times when I am busier than others, but as far as balancing the whole thing, so much concerns the structures you put in place at work and at home.

GP expressed a high level of satisfaction with work/life balance and had put in place strategies to minimise conflict and support harmony. Conflict between work and life roles was reported as low as a result of strategies used both at work and in GP's personal life. Such strategies involved being clear about school leadership, reducing certain involvements to ensure sufficient time for priorities, and proactively ensuring professional, social and family support systems. GP stated:

Yes, I believe I have good work/life balance. Things are very settled. I have strong family ties and social networks. As a leader, I am an enabler of others; I put good systems in place, which means the workload is quite manageable.

KN reported having a high level of satisfaction with work/life balance and indicated harmony between work and personal life. The work and personal domains were reported as being quite separate. This separation was seen as important in maintaining balance and ensuring a low level of work/life conflict. **KN** is very committed to achieving challenging work and personal goals, stating:

I do feel I have a good work/life balance and that is mainly due to an ability to prioritise. Personality has a lot to do with it. I am less tolerant when I am tired; I know that consequently I need a break from it (school) and to separate things. I wasn't always able to forget things or keep things in perspective.

4.9.2 Strivers

Strivers are those who reported some dissatisfaction with current levels of work/life balance, and some level of conflict between work and personal life, but were working on strategies to improve work/life balance.

While **HC** reported recent improvements in levels of work/life balance, some dissatisfaction with the current level of work/life balance and stress was also reported. **HC** is putting in place strategies (in particular ways of managing workload and stress levels) to continue that improvement. There was still, however, some conflict between work and personal life due to long hours, weekend work and anxiety:

While I often worry and have sleepless nights I now have better balance than ever. I wish I knew 10 years ago what I know now (about strategies to support work/life balance). I sometimes feel torn. I carry a lot of worry and would like to get it off my chest.

IW reported dissatisfaction with the current level of work/life balance at that moment and some conflict between work and personal life, particularly in relation to balancing hours at work and home responsibilities, and preoccupation with work issues while at home. Work requires more time than is available. However, **IW** believed that work/life balance was a desirable and attainable goal and was developing work and self-care strategies to achieve this goal:

Work/life balance is not fantastic at the moment. I am out a lot and “mentally out” when I am at home, but am putting things in place. It is not a job you can walk away from.

JD reported some dissatisfaction with the level of work/life balance and some conflict between work and personal life. While JD had an outside interest that provided a release from the stress of the job, there was still a concern about stress and JD was examining ways to manage workload and time for self-care:

[Whether or not I have work/life balance] is a hard call—you are always going through that conflict—looking at the demands of other things, family time, demands of having some balance in a personal way.

4.9.3 Acceptors

Acceptors are those who reported some level of dissatisfaction with their level of work/life balance but experienced little conflict between work and personal life, accepted that work requirements would prevail and dominate, and saw little likelihood of change in their level of work/life balance.

CM was non-committal as to the level of satisfaction with work/life balance but reported being a workaholic and rated the workload as very heavy, both in terms of volume and intensity. CM was personally unable to alleviate this through delegation. While work was described as dominating life, it was enjoyable. CM had strategies in place to ensure recuperation and stress management. In a dual career household with no carer responsibilities, there was little work/life conflict (or pressure to change) involved when work occupied long hours and a proportion of the weekend:

There is just so much to be done. I am not a good delegator; staff members are all so hard working it's very difficult. I am a workaholic but have ways of unwinding and I spend lots of time with my partner.

(As CM would not make a personal assessment of level of satisfaction with work/life balance, an assessment that CM had some level of dissatisfaction with work/life balance was arrived at through noting the use of the term “workaholic,” and the emphasis on the need to unwind as the workday was stressful).

LB reported that achieving work/life balance was hard as the job was all-encompassing and recounted comments of staff and parents on LB's very long working hours and presence at the school at least 6 days a week. Work was regularly taken home. LB said that a resolution to

improve work/life balance was abandoned because the role required long hours. This appeared to indicate a level of dissatisfaction with work/life balance. Whilst LB described the workload as high, but not hard, what was seen by LB as hard was the impact on the family, however, it was clear that the work involvement was accommodated by them; therefore the work pattern did not involve conflict between work and personal life. There was no vision that things would (or needed to) change. LB stated:

The balance could be better—the key things that support a positive balance are attitude to the job, priorities and an ability to have a laugh. The work itself is not hard—what is hard is the amount of time. I am out 4 nights a week which is hard on the family but I make sure the family things are not neglected. The reality is the job cannot be done differently, if you work less the place does not move forward. It is a trade-off.

4.10 Categorisation of School Leaders

The application of the work/life test to the narratives, as described in Section 4.9, are summarised in Table 2, below. This illustrates the fact that of the sample case studies, there were seven Balancers, three Strivers and two Acceptors.

Table 2. Categorisation of School Leaders

School Leader	WLB satisfaction	WLB Conflict	Type
AL	High	Low	Balancer
BC	High	Low	Balancer
CM	Med	Low	Acceptor
DC	High	Low	Balancer
EL	High	Low	Balancer
FD	High	Low	Balancer
GP	High	Low	Balancer
HC	Improving	Med	Striver
IW	Not so great	High	Striver
JD	Hard call	Med	Striver
KN	High	Low	Balancer
LB	Med	Low	Acceptor

The characteristics of each type are described in detail in Section 3.6.6 and summarised in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Work/Life Balance Typology Characteristics Profile

Acceptors (n-2)	Strivers (n-3)	Balancers (n-7)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicate that their work/life balance is not a desirable one • Experience little non-work/ work conflict • Accept that organisational demands will dominate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not currently experience high levels of work/life balance and are working on strategies to achieve this • Experience a degree of work/life conflict • Believe that work/life balance is an achievable goal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience a high level of work/life balance • Have developed strategies and actively work to minimise work/non-work conflict • Understand that work/life balance is an achievable goal but that it needs to be worked on

4.11 Work/Life Balance Typology of School Leaders

Minichiello (1995) describes typologising as a method that researchers commonly use to understand phenomena more completely, by grouping ideas and then forming ideal types. Given the small sample, a typology is useful in this instance in that it allows for some segmentation and an examination of points of difference among, and between, groups of school leaders. In particular, Chapter 5 seeks to understand and compare the strategies of the three types and Chapter 6 focusses on the Balancers and **amplifies** their strategies. The rationale for the categorisation is provided visually in Figure 6 below.

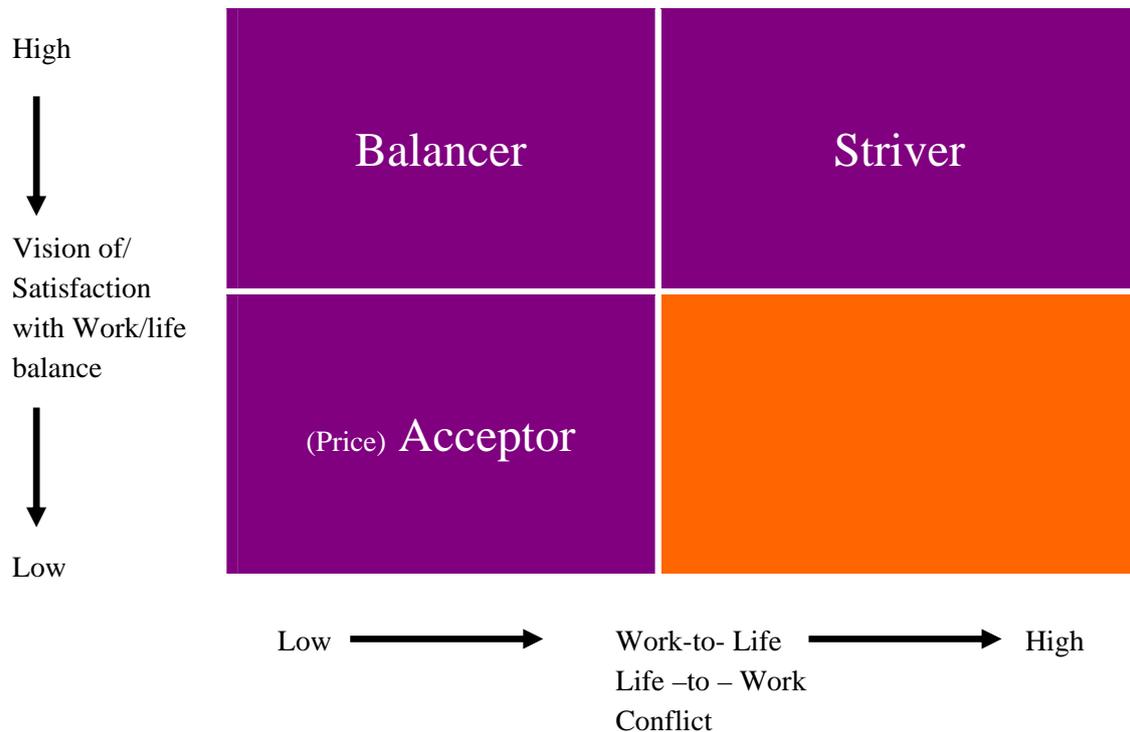


Figure 6. School Leaders' Work/Life Balance Typology (Study)

The typology provides a lens or heuristic tool for examining the work/life strategies of the school leaders; to examine the “Balancer” school leaders’ strategies in depth and to examine how these differ from those of the Strivers and Acceptors. It allows for an exploration of what those school leaders actually do to achieve this balance (Chapter 5) and to focus on the strategies of the Balancers (Chapter 6).

4.12 Summary

This chapter has delivered the Discovery element of the study, documenting the search for the best examples of work/life balance within the research group. The case studies provide an insight into the micro-strategies of this group of school leaders, indicating both idiosyncratic approaches and similarities. The generative /appreciative approach in the study is emphasised in the initial *Commentary on the Case Studies* (Section 4.6) and *Towards the Creation of a Positive Work/Life Balance Image* (Section 4.7), which provides the context and reference for the development of a Work/Life Balance typology. The case studies, typology and framework analysis inform the exploration of work/life strategies used by all members of the group in Chapter 5 and also presage the findings from the analysis of the group in relation to Balancer strategies presented in Chapter 6.

Chapter 5: Understand the Strategies

We need leaders who in their own lives try to find work-life balance and make work-life balance a reality in the lives of their people. (Hesselbein, 2005)

5.1 Overview

In this chapter, following the identification of sub-themes in the data (Figure 5, Section 3.7) and the identification of a work/life balance typology featuring three types: Acceptors, Strivers, Balancers, (Table 3, Section 4.10), the work/life balance strategies of the group are analysed.

The findings of this part of the study are applied to the following research questions:

- What are the practices employed by principals to achieve work/life balance?
- What features of school organisation and personal practice get in the way of principals achieving work/life balance?
- What features of school organisation and personal practice enable principals to achieve work/life balance?

In some contrast to the depiction of the school leaders' strategies in the previous chapter, which provides a focus on proximal work/life balance issues (work characteristics, non-work characteristics and personal characteristics), the focus in this chapter expands to contextual matters. These include organisational features that obstruct and enable work/life balance.

5.2 Introduction

This conceptual model (Section 3.6.2) and the themes and sub-themes identified in the data analysis (Section 3.7) allow for a focus on the *process* of combining work and non-work domains. Dimensions of the conceptual framework are employed as the heuristic for the analysis of the strategies identified. These dimensions are:

1. Off-the-job factors
2. On-the-job factors
3. Personal Characteristics

A summary of the themes identified in Section 3.7 are featured in the following analysis.

5.3 *Off-the-Job Factors*

The data analysis revealed the following themes in relation to the school leaders' off-the-job characteristics and strategies:

- Giving and receiving support, multiple roles, providing care
- Interests and community involvement
- Personal organisation
- Ensuring personal and family time
- Relaxation and recovery.

Support, particularly partner support, but also support of family, extended family, friends, colleagues and (for three female principals) some form of domestic help, were all discussed as being important in achieving work/life balance. However, the issue of support appears paradoxical, in that those who are largely support providers (carers) reported highest levels of work/life satisfaction. On the other hand, there were two school leaders who reported high levels of support at home, who also indicated that work dominated their lives. Support and equitable responsibility for domestic tasks was raised by the females with children, with a strong view that this was an important aspect of work/life balance:

I have a really supportive husband who has the structures in place and who can pick up in an instant – that's where my support base is...he will get home quite late but is quite happy to just walk in and do whatever...he is that kind of person.

In the broader work/life debate, the issue of this *second shift* (Hoschild, 1989) carried out by women presents as a defining issue. However, in this study what these mother/school leaders appear to do is to use common strategies at work and at home (for example delegation, planning, organisation) in much the same ways identified in Medved's (2004) study (Section 2.3.3), and in doing so buffer work/life conflict. Indeed, the relationship between multiple roles, reciprocity and enrichment is supported by Greenhaus (2006).

In relation to interests, this entire group was significantly different from the Saulwick (2004) sample, in which 61% of principals and 59% of assistant principals found that the job took up so much of their spare time that they did not have time for interests such as hobbies, sport and

keeping fit. From the same survey, we learn that 80% of principals and 78% of assistant principals frequently went home too tired to do some of the things they would like to do. In the present study, every participant cited having a range of interests that were significant diversions from work. Generally, there was some attention to physical fitness in the mix of interests. Some indicated that they would like more time just to relax, and at least three in the group spoke of concerns about health, tension and exhaustion. Another participant, however, reported:

I prioritise. I segregate—work at work, home at home. I have lots of interests, quiet time, and socialise with people outside teaching. I unwind with physical activities after work and have lots of outside activities. This school is a happy place.

The non-metropolitan group spoke a great deal of community involvement, with some in the process of rationalising commitments because of time constraints. However, the energising aspects of community involvement were appreciated by those with experience of it. One went so far as to say: “*But that’s the balance; if I didn’t have (certain community involvement) I’d go mad.*” The metropolitan principals’ references to community involvement concerned activities that were related to the role of school principal, such as attendance at functions.

Strong attention was paid in the narratives to the issue of personal organisation, particularly planning, co-ordinating diaries, prioritising and managing multiple roles. The different needs at different life-cycle stages were referred to:

My requirement to be well organised was greater when children were young, now it is an issue of my own well-being and happiness.

A leader from a non-metropolitan school stated:

I have ratcheted back some involvements to make sure there is time for involvement in the children’s activities.

Another school leader indicated the range of issues that need to be balanced:

I am well organised—home is a well oiled machine—to accommodate two careers and timetables of older children – part-time jobs, study and transport to sport.

The strategies of segregating work and personal life featured in the interviews. A range of strategies were described to allocate “*me time*” (as one principal described it) or personal time for self-care. The main examples were reading, regular outdoor physical training and going to the gym. The need for some personal time was emphasised by a number of the school leaders and the point was made that this required planning and resolve to ensure it happened. One principal, in making the distinction between family time and personal time (*me time*) described the quarantining of personal time in these terms:

On Saturday it's sport, and involvement in the community. I do not work at the weekends.

Most participants emphasised that they made special efforts to have some family time, with some designating a time for just that. Comments included:

I try to keep home as a refuge.

I make time for friends and family, including extended family.

On Sundays it's my partner's time—we work it out together, and I walk with my partner each morning.

On the weekend I do home things on one day and we (partner and I) aim to do one activity or outing together each week.

The capacity to switch off from work and become fully engaged in out of work activities was a clear contributor to work/life balance. One mother/principal identified the strategy of actually switching roles as a significant support to her work/life balance—“*My ability to switch to role of mother and wife. I like to get home and prepare dinner at night.*” CM scheduled physical activity sessions and activities to aid mental relaxation (crossword puzzles) after work to assist the switching off process. Difficulty in switching off thoughts of work was apparent in the narratives of a number of the Strivers.

Whilst a number of those interviewed indicated that they would love to have more time to simply relax, some instances of relaxation and recovery were part of all responses. Taking holidays and having time to relax and re-energise were considered to be important elements of work/life balance. Reading and socialising were nominated as major means of relaxation.

5.3.1 Commentary: Off-the-Job Factors

Strivers

The **Strivers** indicated that they had some difficulty maintaining mental borders between work and home, as thoughts of work intruded while at home. In each case there was some indication of pressure and clear messages at home that work was too demanding of time and energy. Each had some form of care responsibility. The **Strivers** favoured a high degree of physical and temporal separation between work and off-the-job activities. They resolved to quarantine the home, in that, if weekend work needed to be done, they went to work to do it and tried to limit how much work they brought home. This resolve was difficult to execute. They were commencing to alter commitments to ensure personal and family time and to make time for a range of interests and some regular exercise as work/life balance strategies.

Acceptors

The **Acceptors** worked long hours and acknowledged that work often intruded on family time. However, they were able to unwind after work. They appeared to prioritise work over personal life, yet enjoyed strong partner support and made time for a range of interests and regular exercise as work/life balance strategies.

Balancers

The **Balancers** reported high levels of satisfaction with their current level of work/life balance and low levels of work/life conflict. Most, however, qualified this response by saying it was something “*you had to keep working on*”. School leaders in this group had a strong vision of work/life balance, and saw it as a goal to be achieved. They indicated that their current situation was an improvement on past experience. They reported gains in relation to control, balance and confidence. Balancers favoured a high degree of physical and temporal separation between work and off-the-job activities. They actively managed work and personal boundaries. If after hours work had to be done, it was usually done at school. This group was mixed in terms of support at home. The group was also mixed in terms of care responsibilities. The school leaders who had major care responsibilities, however, described those responsibilities in positive terms. All described some attempts at “self-care”, especially in relation to relaxation, health or fitness. Most described themselves as “organised” and indicated a sense of control, using proactive strategies. They “made time” for family, had routines to ensure this happened and tried to achieve a work-free weekend. They reported having outside interests and functioning best with variety in their lives. What was evident in

the majority of the interviews was that the Balancers were actively involved in the family domain and consciously applied strategies to maintain that involvement. They were able to mentally switch off when not at work.

In general, the majority of the group experienced some support or pressure directed at work/life balance. All the Strivers and Balancers, regardless of whether they are supporters or supported, had people in their lives acting as border keepers (Clark, 2000), maintaining separation between work and non-work domains. What the Acceptors had, it would appear, was support to act as “ideal workers” (Williams, 2000, Pocock, 2003), defined as workers who do not have care responsibilities and can devote any amount of time to work. Clark’s (2000) propositions (Section 2.3.2) that control and influence within a domain increase control over borders, may be supported. Another of Clark’s assertions—that the levels of in-domain support increase work/life balance, seems to require some qualification as the example of the Acceptors suggests that support at home can encourage/acquiesce to working long hours.

5.4 *On-the-Job Factors*

As work/life balance relates to the intersection between work and non-work (Kossek, 2006), there is an interplay between strategies used in three dimensions of the conceptual framework—On-the-Job, Off-the-Job and Personal Characteristics. The analysis of On-the-job strategies to achieve work/life balance (Section 3.7) was coalesced to reveal the following themes: *work location and temporal strategies*, such as decisions about taking work home, managing evening commitments and weekend work; and *management strategies*, such as limiting working hours, working practices, management structure, managing the work load, and the use of some guiding management framework. The data analysis also identified the school leaders’ perceptions of features of school organisation that either obstruct or enable work/life balance.

5.4.1 *Work Location and Temporal Strategies*

Within the group, there was not a wide range of difference in the length of the working day, which generally commenced between 7.30am and 8am and finished at about 6pm or 6.30pm. There was, however, a variation in terms of taking work home, and an even greater variation in terms of working at weekends.

For the majority of school leaders there was an attempt to locate work at the workplace, and not at home. Most school leaders (8) said they tried not to take work home. The remaining

four indicated that the type of work taken home was work that needed to be finished, or to catch up on reading, and in one case, a regular Sunday night session devoted to writing the weekly newsletter to staff.

The number of evening commitments for school leaders varied. One school leader said that they had commitments four nights per week. This was far in excess of others' commitments, which were one or two nights per week on average. Evening work was reported as being tiring. Some school leaders indicated that they went home earlier than usual on the afternoon after a late night meeting to recuperate.

Eight participants attempted to have a work-free weekend, and for some this was achievable most of the time. If weekend work needed to be done, it was more likely to be done at the school than at home. Four of the group regularly worked at the weekend at the school for four or more hours. One principal worked at the school at the weekends and also regularly worked at home on the weekend. One principal who regularly worked each weekend said it was impossible to get a work-free weekend, as increasingly there were work-related activities scheduled (including some Departmental activities) on the weekend, as well as the need to complete school work. One interviewee stated:

My partner says: Why on earth does the Department expect Principals to do this (Professional Development at weekends) in your time? In my organisation, they would not contemplate it.

Four issues stand out—Balancers set strong boundaries around work and non-work and protected the home from the intrusion of work. Balancers were also largely successful in achieving a work-free weekend. Significantly, Saulwick (2004) noted that regular working at weekends was a characteristic shared by all principals who reported that they experienced high levels of stress. Balancers also used recovery strategies; for example, some went home earlier the day after working late the previous night. Most of the group considered discretionary extra involvement such as mentoring, contributing to regional activities and departmental committees as enjoyable, energising, and a contributor to work/life balance. The Balancers, reminiscent of the 'letting go' and 'holding on' paradigm expounded by Limoges (2003), reviewed all involvement and relinquished some roles to assume new ones in order to keep some balance.

5.4.2 Management Strategies

Despite an acknowledgement that the workload had increased both in breadth and intensity, and that it was a difficulty for many principals, all the school leaders in the study indicated that managing workload was integral to achieving work/life balance. The majority (seven) of this group of school leaders described the workload as “manageable” and three judged the volume of work to be extremely high. Of the remaining two, one made a clear differentiation between difficulty and volume of work:

The work itself is not hard, what is hard is the amount of time—issues such as staff relations, dealing with parents and kids are all time consuming. In addition, there are regional responsibilities—I do not find any aspect of the work hard.

The twelfth school leader indicated that the workload was difficult but that, with time and experience, it was becoming more manageable.

This point was reiterated by one Balancer who stated that, while the workload was now manageable, new strategies had to be learned along the way to achieve this:

I had an epiphany—started to understand I was drowning and doing busy work and negative stuff. I needed to do positive stuff. Experience helps. Sometimes you need to know what’s important to listen to. You can waste time if ground rules change. With a little bit of time in the job you’re able to assess what are (sic) important.

This principal entered into a major work redesign project. The respective roles of the principal and the assistant principal were negotiated. Systems for dealing with emails and paperwork were developed, with greater responsibility for decision-making going to the administrative staff. Meeting times and processes were substantially changed. These changes were coupled with greater attention to personal well-being and fitness on the part of the principal and the assistant principal.

The sample group’s assessment of workload is somewhat different from Saulwick’s workload study (2004) findings, in which 75% of principals and assistant principals reported that there was so much work they never seemed to get on top of it. Failure to achieve work/life balance amongst managers is repeatedly linked with a feeling of a lack of control over workload and deliverables; it is not simply a dearth of personal time, but also a lack of energy to fulfil personal goals and commitments (Glynn, 2002).

The study presented here provides some insights into how certain school leaders exert control over workload and deliverables and actively develop strategies to enhance energy and “make time” to achieve fulfilment in work and personal roles. Managing the workload appears to be the fulcrum of work/life balance and all the school leaders who indicated that the workload was manageable were able to be quite explicit about the range of strategies they employed to achieve this. For example, FD readily pointed to the following strategies to manage workload: priority setting; delegation; procedures; structures; investment in a computerised information storage and retrieval system; communication chains involving verbal, text messages and email; quality processes documentation; and techniques to improve decision-making. For DC the bundle of approaches included shared leadership, leveraging routine tasks to reduce workload and enhance culture, strategy and shared leadership, corporate strategies such as strategic planning and goal setting and alignment, and proactive attention to human resource management.

In contrast to the Balancers’ reliance on a broad range of strategies to manage workload, four of the five school leaders who said that their workload was high could point to only one or two strategies being used to manage it. The fifth principal in this category had a specific goal of managing workload better and was in the early stages of implementing the plan. The interviews reflected the view expressed by Thompson (2000) that the work of principals is holistic, unpredictable, consuming and contradictory, pulling in all directions at once, and the strategies (above) may not necessarily represent the full (or even dominant) strategy repertoire used by the school leaders in their work. They are the strategies employed to support work/life balance. An examination of these strategies indicates reliance on a variety of approaches, and it illustrates what different principals see as the issues to control in order to achieve work/life balance. It suggests that corporate and administrative strategies prevail, while the adoption of the “new management” frameworks, such as Quality Management and Covey principles (Covey, 1994), are also favoured, often in conjunction with other managerial strategies.

Four school leaders nominated prioritising as a key strategy. The issue of delegation produced mixed results, with some principals seeing it as a vital strategy for work/life balance. Others found it a difficult task, because it takes a teacher away from the core business of teaching, or that delegation adds to teachers’ already busy workloads. Four principals indicated that the smooth running of the school (often seen to be a key component of work/life balance) was achieved through attention to human resource management, largely improving staff well-being and staff performance.

A notable feature of the narratives of the school leaders concerned the issues of management frameworks and shared leadership. The Balancers were unique in that they could all describe and define a guiding framework. Having a management framework based on systems was important to a number of the school leaders. For two principals, the adoption of Quality Management principles provided the framework which supported the process of education. Quality Management was seen to contribute to the smooth running of the school, through improved documentation, shared decision-making and streamlined communication.

The view of one principal of the value of a Covey framework was as follows:

One of the best things I've done in my life is the Covey training. All my leadership people do Covey training.

Adopting the management system based on Covey (1994) principles was one principal's passionately declared strategy for improved the running of the school and a major contributor to the principal's own work/life balance. This declaration of the value of the approach was echoed by a number of school leaders, who said it provided a shared framework for dialogue within the school, was consistent with other approaches and gave a continuous improvement momentum. One school leader emphasised a focus on educational strategies as the chosen work strategy to achieve work/life balance:

I put good systems in place, put teaching and learning in the centre of leadership and school organisation.

Another school leader nominated strategic planning as the means of ensuring school effectiveness and work/life balance. This principal cited the relationship with the assistant principal as a vital component of school effectiveness and work/life balance. The key was seen to be a sharing of roles, good communication and common-sense strategies such as, maximum leveraging of routine tasks to achieve strategic goals and to pre-empt problems:

Both of us are very visible in the school. We meet and greet the children and parents each morning and in this way are able to head off many problems. This also frees more staff to catch up with each other and prepare for the day. I am very organised and devote a great deal of time to planning. I like to see strategies set out and achieved. This has the benefit of the smooth running of the school. I like to ensure staff are happy. I also set goals for growth and improvement, which give satisfaction.

Gaining a higher degree was marvellous. It was never a burden, it energised me and it has really assisted me as a manager.

Shared leadership was a strategy discussed by most school leaders. The Balancers interpreted the term as sharing leadership throughout the staff, so that the leadership team as a whole rationalised the work while staff, through delegation, both benefited and assisted with the reduction of the school leaders' workload. For the Strivers and Acceptors, delegation was a difficulty and evidence of shared leadership was not apparent. Indeed, in one case, attempts at sharing leadership (interpreted by the school leader as sharing information) appeared to consume time and energy with few benefits.

5.4.3 Features of School Organisation that Get in the Way of Achieving Work/Life Balance

The school leaders were asked about features of school organisation that obstruct and enable work/life balance. The discussions about the features of school organisation and personal practice that support, or get in the way of, principals achieving work/life balance revealed a view that, among a range of factors, DoE's requirements added to the burden of the role. Whilst the school leaders' viewed many of their peers as having relatively greater work/life balance problems than did they, they did nominate a range of structural and organisational issues that posed a challenge in attempting to balance their work and personal lives. The particular workload issues cited were issues of "extensification and intensification" (Webster, 2004) of the workload, including decentralisation, accountability and system demands, delegation, and human resource management. The reasons for the increases in workload focused on administration, financing, facilities, entrepreneurship and marketing—not education. Budgetary and policy constraints with bureaucratic mandates and unrealistic deadlines were also cited.

In the DoE survey (Saulwick, 2004), 75% of Victorian principals and the same percentage of assistant principals agreed with the statement that: "*There is so much work, I never seem to get on top of it.*" The work/life impact of this relates to such issues as never achieving a sense of satisfaction from completion of work, as well as the time constraints. One of the school leaders interviewed expressed a similar experience to that reflected in the survey results:

My frustration is that I can't check off... at the end of the day, saying 'What did I do today? I have probably done this, this, and this, but what have I done today that has driven the organisation the next step?' And I would say that on three to four days of the week I can't point to this.

An exploration of this experience uncovered difficulties in prioritising, an orientation towards perfectionism, and reluctance to delegate. Other study participants, however, said that they were able to close the laptop and not worry about work at the end of the day, and that great satisfaction was achieved through achieving goals.

The implications of decentralisation were seen to be double-edged, as the autonomy also brought responsibility for a range of compliance issues which were tedious and time-consuming - “*monkey work*” as one school leader opined. There was a view that certain savings could be made by greater regional or sub-regional co-ordination of compliance matters.

Accountability measures were often described in terms of a one-way street, with accountability measures and surveys consuming time and yielding little school-level dividend:

If you talk to most school principals, time goes in accountability. In most cases you are collating data—sending it back to the Department when often it came from them in the first place.

Certainly Gronn’s (2003a) exploration of the idea of leadership as “greedy work” resonates with these school leaders, who agreed that it can consume as much time and energy as one allows it to do. While one of the school leaders saw the need to spend a vast amount of time on site (sometimes seven days a week), others saw the need to limit the amount of time and viewed excessive attendance on-site as a failure in relation to self-management or delegation, even though delegation was referred to as a difficulty.

The label “workaholic” was used in relation to the work habits of three of the principals (two Acceptors and a Striver). Workaholism, defined as excessive working, like the term work/life imbalance is sometimes described as a relational construct (Breen, 2003), in that both would be a problem if perceived as such for the individual, family, or work colleagues. Indeed, in each case the so-called workaholic did mention the deleterious effect on health associated with long hours. However, in the case of the Acceptors their work hours and habits were not perceived as a problem for their families. A (Principal) Striver’s partner was quoted as having expressed the view that work hours were too long and weekend work interfered with family activities, and the relevant assistant principal used the term workaholic to describe the principal (but conceded that strategies were being put in place to improve work/life balance).

In relation to principal supply, Earley (2004), reported on the importance of the role being seen to be “do-able” and of the existence of role models of principals who are able to achieve work/life balance. As such, excessive hours and the image of the always working principal may have some negative consequences in relation to Principal Supply. As HC opined, (the image of the principal) “*does not have to be the workaholic, overweight Principal who doesn’t have a life.*”

One principal described delegation as a skill that had been developed over time: “*Delegation is something I would have done differently. I probably take on too many things myself. I don’t trust people enough to do it.*” Another pointed to the dilemma that delegation meant adding additional work to already overworked teachers:

“What do you delegate to people who are already fully committed? That is a real challenge. And you probably say of teaching staff that their core business is teaching. They’re great people, they take on lots of stuff, but I am conscious every time I ask for something I am taking from their core business.”

A range of human resource management issues were discussed in relation to sapping energy and time. Constraints in relation to staffing were also seen to be a frustration, such as the time required to work with under-performing staff (for reasons of professional incompetence, health or personal problems). The impact of the life stages of an ageing staff group was brought home to a principal in a school where four staff experienced the deaths of parents in one year.

These school leaders also viewed DoE’s approach to principals’ work/life balance to be paradoxical. While espousing the importance of work/life balance, DoE’s approaches to accountability have led to greater workloads and its performance measurement system has seemingly resulted in increased endeavour and long hours as the norm.

5.4.4 Features of School Organisation and Personal Practice which Enable Principals to Achieve Work/Life Balance

The nature of the principalship was also seen, however, to hold elements that did, or could, support work/life balance. There was strong support for increased levels of autonomy (even perhaps if part of the cost was some wasteful work) and a sense that the participants did not regard themselves as victims of political change. Other features that could support work/life balance were: leadership structures, control of workload and deliverables, and the nature of

the work of the principal. School autonomy, whilst requiring accountability, still contributed to high levels of satisfaction. Being principal also allowed freedom and flexibility. If there was a need to attend to family business or attend family events it was often easier for a principal to do so, than for other staff members. The relationship with the assistant principal was described as potentially an important contributor to work/life balance, as was shared leadership throughout the school. The opportunity to exercise control over workload and deliverables was seen to be possible and certainly a critical element of work/life balance. Most important was the view that the work was energising, intrinsically important and never boring, with something always happening.

5.4.5 Commentary: On-the-Job Factors

Strivers

The Strivers all found the job demanding and the workload high and had initiated strategies to better manage workload. None discussed the use of formal management frameworks, nor was there evidence of effective sharing of leadership or delegation. They felt experience was teaching them how to handle the job better now than had been the case in the past. They resolved to keep work and home separate and attempted to achieve a work-free weekend. In reality they all worked over the weekend, with two regularly going to the school to work.

Acceptors

The Acceptors described informal management processes and practices and good levels of staff support. They found the job manageable, but the intensity and volume of work very high. One of the Acceptors discussed the negative impact on aspirant principals of observing the high workload and time commitment. The Acceptors indicated that they needed to take on a great deal of responsibility themselves, with one reporting the difficulty of delegation to already hard-working staff and the other that the full load of responsibility rested on the shoulders of the principal. Acceptors used fewer strategies than Balancers or Strivers and, significantly, did not see any other way of doing things. There was no “letting go” of tasks and the amount of time to do them simply expanded. Despite working longer hours than others, these two school leaders were free to work the long hours, as there was no pressure from family to reduce time commitment at work. They commented that if a family commitment arose they would attend to that but, as a rule, the job required long hours of commitment. They had a view that work/life balance was important and were supportive of this in terms of staff, but accepted that their role required long hours, so a level of imbalance was inevitable.

Balancers

Themes of organisation, structure, control and balance featured in Balancers' responses. Balancers were likely to have a defined management framework to ensure the smooth running of the school and as much as possible, have systems in place to ensure that problems were averted or identified early. In the case of one Balancer, who was an assistant principal, a key learning experience was that of becoming familiar with the Principal's management structures and processes. These enabled smooth running of the school and work/life balance for the principal. Balancers saw the role as "do-able" and were able to manage the workload and share leadership. They were generally able to have a work-free weekend.

The strategies developed by a number of the Balancers accorded closely with those inherent in the concept of "thriving" (Spreitzer, Sutcliffe, Dutton, Sonenshein & Grant, 2005a,) and personal mastery (Senge, 1990). This seems to be an important discovery in this phase of the study. While many work/life balance initiatives emphasise time allocation, what the Balancers emphasise is agency, happiness, satisfaction and energy. Indeed, the DoE definition "*committed to promoting effective human resource management practices that assist employees to balance their work, family, health, study and other life commitments*" (Department of Education, 1999) implies an appreciation of a range of approaches, not simply those that relate to time flexibility.

Also significant is the Balancers' adoption and use of a guiding management framework or mental model (Senge, 1990). Regardless of framework chosen, these embraced a holistic concept of shared leadership and information sharing; shared understanding of vision, goals and processes; delegation; and, what was described a number of times as, the smooth running of the school. The capacity to manage the workload as a significant moderator of work/life balance is underscored, as are strategies similar to the art of organised abandonment (Drucker, 1999), taking on/letting go (Limoges, 2003) and prioritising (Covey, 1994).

5.5 *Personal Characteristics*

A range of personal characteristics were identified as having an impact on work/life balance. The following themes outline the issues identified:

- Resilience
- Personal organisation
- Energy
- Stress
- Boundaries.

5.5.1 Resilience

The term resilience was one commonly used during interviews. A number of school leaders indicated that they had had challenging experiences that they had overcome and learned from. This capacity to “bounce back” was often described as a capacity that needed to be acquired as a prerequisite for work/life balance. One school leader expressed it as “a skin” – something protective. The topic of positive relationships was a feature of many of the interviews, as was the desirability of having someone with whom to debrief, which two of the females referred to as opportunities to “cleanse” or “wipe things away”. This capacity to learn resilience was expressed thus:

At first I found things a bit problematic but with experience I find every crisis a learning experience.

In addition to evidence of resilience, the concept of *thriving* (Spreitzer, 2006) may more adequately describe the Balancers’ capacity for proactive coping than *resilience*, which suggests recovery from adversity.

5.5.2 Personal Organisation

Most emphasised the importance of being personally organised, especially in dual career households, and viewed the home as some refuge from the workplace. It was in this area of the study where differences associated with gender and care responsibilities featured. It was the mothers in the study who emphasised proactive/task-focused strategies to ensure home life was organised. Two mothers in the study noted:

I am well organised and plan ahead. I plan menus, share tasks with my husband. I am well planned at home, but not as well planned as at school. I am not the principal at home!” These processes for dealing with issues mean you are not playing catch up or surprised by events. I am organised at home and have support. My partner and I are both positive people. You have to work at it. It is a role which absorbs one.

With both of us in demanding jobs, I am well organised—our home is a well-oiled machine. We need to accommodate two careers and time tables of older children, things like part-time jobs, study and transport to sport and so on.

Conversely, the males with significant care responsibilities tended to emphasise time-allocation strategies. For example, the father of primary school children said:

I trim responsibilities to make sure there is time for work and family.

Another discussed “*ratchetting back involvement*” to make time for family responsibilities, or “*taking time off*” to attend family functions.

Despite the mothers experiencing the ‘second shift’, as described by Hoschild (1989), carrying major responsibilities for domestic and care activities in conjunction with the leadership role, it is evident that this balancing of multiple roles was largely viewed in expansionist rather than depletion terms. They framed the balancing of multiple roles or second shift as a way of *switching off from work*, rather than a burden or a drain on energy. This suggests that the salience or importance attached to roles in each domain (work and family) (Greenhaus, 2006) may be a moderator of work/life conflict. Also evident were similar strategies to those which Medved (2004) observed: there are common skills and psychological resources used by these women in both domains—they are organised, proactive, delegators of tasks, responsibility sharers, and mentally positive at work and at home.

5.5.3 Energy

One prominent strategy successfully used by many of the school leaders was that of actively enhancing energy as a means of ensuring good work/life balance. Contributors to energy were study, the school children, attention to health and fitness, outside interests and extra-departmental involvement. In addition to actively using these “energisers,” a positive outlook was a characteristic of most of the school leaders. The two strategies appear to be linked. According to Beatty (2004) denying emotions saps energy. These school leaders enjoy the work and see the importance of maintaining a positive attitude, as described in the following comments:

I have a positive mental framework—I am an optimist. The (school) children energise me.

The key things that support a positive balance are: attitude to the job, priorities, and ability to have a laugh.

What is also evident in the Balancers' responses is the ability to regulate emotions, for example:

I make sure I have a good home life. I make myself happy. I have the right sort of personality. I am decisive, wind things up then do not worry.

I make myself happy.

There were also references to having learnt or acquired such qualities:

I enjoy a challenge, exercise control over work and life. I have learnt to do it (separate work and non-work). I wasn't always able to forget things and move on and to keep things in perspective.

I don't try to over commit, although some extra departmental involvement actually energises me- I gain ideas from different people.

5.5.4 Stress

Work /life balance is often correlated very strongly with stress (Cooper, 2001, Grant, 2006), a fact which these school leaders appeared to appreciate. All the Balancers indicated that stress was not a problem they experienced personally. However, a number referred to taking proactive measures to prevent stress. *EL* recalled the catalyst to embarking on a comprehensive change strategy: *I started to understand I was drowning.*"

As well as providing examples of being proactive in relation to stress, these Balancers also displayed evidence of the efficacy of positive thinking and belief in their ability to control what happens to them; of not *catasrophising* things and exerting control over emotions. They paid attention to self-care as a moderator of stress.

Four school leaders (all the Strivers and one Acceptor) indicated that they had experienced stress of some significance as a consequence of pressure relating to the role. For the Strivers this was a wake-up call to attend to work/life balance, and a major catalyst to effect change at work and in non-work domains. It was a realisation that fuelled the resolve to achieve work/life balance. The Strivers indicated that they had some difficulty keeping a focus on the family domain, "*of not being there mentally*", as one of them expressed it, as thoughts of work intruded while at home. Ezzedeen & Swiercz (2002) describe this as cognitive intrusion and found that the cognitive intrusion of work results in lower job satisfaction, less happiness, a greater incidence of work/life conflict, more frequent burnout, and was a factor which correlates with stress.

The Acceptor, who admitted that experience of stress and time to reflect while on leave, had motivated a resolve to attend to work/life balance (particularly managing long hours), found the resolve had dissipated and time spent at work had gradually crept up. The second Acceptor acknowledged a low level of stress, which was managed through attention to after work physical activity and a capacity to unwind.

5.5.5 Boundaries

Various commentators (Nippert-Eng, 1996, Clark, 2000, Singh, 2002, Ashforth, 2000, Hyman, 2004) place the issue of boundary work at the core of work/life balance. Managing work/life boundaries was a part of the off-the-job and on-the-job strategies. It was also evident in the personal characteristics and strategies. Separating work and personal life was part of self-care, recovery and ensuring time for a range of activities such as health and fitness. These strategies are evidenced by such representative statements as:

You need a skin— and the resolve to achieve work/life balance, time to wipe everything away and be yourself.

I make time for looking after myself. Put “me” time into my diary.

I have lots of interests outside of work, but there is one major involvement - it is a complete contrast and without it I would go mad.

Home is home, work is work.

This also speaks to the issue of mental boundaries (Clark, 2000) around work and personal lives and ways of recuperating from pressure at work.

5.5.6 Commentary: Personal Characteristics

Strivers

Strivers shared a vision of the possibility of work/life balance. While optimistic about eventually achieving positive work/life balance, they currently experienced some feelings of strain and tiredness. However, they were implementing strategies to achieve work/life balance, particularly in terms of personal organisation and self-care. Attention to self-care strategies was, to some extent, a response to the experience of stress and negative publicity about principals' health and well-being.

Acceptors

The Acceptors did not see work/life balance as an achievable goal in the role of school leader. They reported a level of stress but also a capacity to unwind, to enhance energy through interests, and to be personally organised. They made time for personal fitness and interests. They had a view that it was not possible to shed tasks, reduce workload and hours, and share leadership. Their acceptance of the inevitability of work/life imbalance and difficulty in making changes is markedly different from the agentic approach of the Balancers.

Balancers

The Balancers achieved high levels of energy from a variety of sources on and off the job. They reported very high levels of job satisfaction and made reference to being temperamentally suited to the role and to being happy. They stressed the importance of personal organisation, optimism and capacity to create energy. They saw and responded to a need to "unwind" through having a varied range of outside interests that could fit in with the demands of the job. All indicated some attempts at self-care, especially in relation to relaxation, health or fitness. The Balancers had a vision and goal that work/life balance was achievable (reminiscent of Senge's (1990) discipline of personal mastery) and acted decisively to achieve this.

5.6 Comparison of the Strategies Employed by the Acceptors, Strivers and

Balancers

Table 4 highlights successful Balancer strategies and contrasts these strategies with observations on the relevant behaviour of the Acceptors and Strivers. Certain strategies (blue font) are used both on and off the job.

Table 4. Key Successful Balancer Strategies and Acceptor and Striver Behaviour Comparisons

	Strivers	Acceptors	Balancers
Off-the-job strategies and characteristics	<p>Tried to switch off but found difficulty “being there” mentally at home.</p> <p>Some instances of changing commitments to ensure personal and family time.</p> <p>Involvement with family/partner activities desired but sometimes compromised by work activities or concerns.</p> <p>Developing strategies to segregate work and personal life.</p>	<p>Able to unwind.</p> <p>Work commitments usually took precedence over personal and family time.</p> <p>Involvement with family/partner activities often compromised by work activities or concerns.</p> <p>Work and personal boundaries blurred.</p>	<p>Able to switch off from work.</p> <p>Strategy of assessing commitments to ensure personal and family time.</p> <p>Active involvement with family/ partner activities.</p> <p>Managed work and personal boundaries through segregation.</p>
On-the-job strategies	<p>Resolved to keep work and home separate.</p> <p>Tried for a work-free weekend, but usually worked at the school at the weekend.</p> <p>Viewed extra professional activities as energising – mixed view of their impact on workload and personal time.</p> <p>Viewed work load as excessive in terms of volume and complexity – commencing strategies to better manage workload.</p> <p>Oblique references to adopting a new approach or making the approach more explicit.</p> <p>Little evidence of effective shared leadership and not comfortable with delegation.</p>	<p>Conducted work at home.</p> <p>Regularly worked at weekends.</p> <p>Viewed extra professional activities as energising and as a contributor to balance, as well as an inevitable part of the role.</p> <p>Viewed work load as excessive in terms of volume rather than difficulty.</p> <p>Did not refer to a management philosophy.</p> <p>Little evidence of effective shared leadership and delegation.</p>	<p>Largely kept work and home separate.</p> <p>Usually had a work-free weekend.</p> <p>Viewed extra professional activities as energising but checked their impact on workload and personal time.</p> <p>Viewed workload as manageable as a result of putting strategies and systems in place.</p> <p>Referred to a guiding management philosophy.</p> <p>Evidence of effective shared leadership and giving and receiving support from colleagues. Practised and comfortable with delegation.</p>
Personal strategies and characteristics	<p>Vision of work/life balance.</p> <p>Developing personal organisation skills.</p> <p>Putting self- care strategies in place.</p> <p>Often overwhelmed but skills in relation to overcoming stress improving.</p>	<p>No vision of work/life balance.</p> <p>Evidence of personal organisation.</p> <p>Self- care, particularly exercise, strategies in place.</p> <p>Some level of stress but capacity to enhance energy.</p>	<p>Vision of work/life balance.</p> <p>High level of personal organisation.</p> <p>Self- care, particularly exercise and personal time strategies in place.</p> <p>Capacity for regulating positive emotions and enhancing energy levels.</p>

Limoges (2003) describes the following actions as those determining the successful balancing of work and personal life:

- Drawing on a wide range of managerial and personal strategies and applying them in the work and non-work domains
- Ensuring workload is manageable and off-setting new tasks by letting go of less important ones
- Placing importance on nurturing relationships and involvement in non-work activities
- Engaging fully in work and non-work domains.

The Balancers' key strategies are consistent with this list of actions and are further examined in Chapter 6. The incorporation of these strategies with other strategies described by the school leaders in a comprehensive taxonomy of school leaders' work/life balance strategies is presented in Section 7.5.3.

5.7 Discovering the Strategies, Discoveries about the Strategies

5.7.1 Overview

The fact that the first eight principals contacted for this project readily agreed to be involved, despite all stating that they were “researched out” and had become very selective about involvement in research projects, is perhaps testament to the view that work/life balance is a pertinent issue. This group of school leaders certainly offered a view that the issue of principals' work/life balance was an important, or urgent, issue for the DoE. One principal summed it up as follows:

Yes [work/life balance is an issue for principals]. It's mainly the constant demands, the many hats you have to wear. It's many issues one after the other—it's that role between manager and leader.

The twelve school leaders all saw the issue of work/life balance as an issue needing to be both examined and tackled. The costs of imbalance—stress, cardiac problems, sleeping disorders, weight problems, alcohol reliance and even suicide—were mentioned in relation to some principals in the school leaders' circles of acquaintance. One school leader said:

Principals talk about the issues of weight; drinking too much, sleep problems, and exhaustion at the end of the working day.

This school leader was one of four who indicated having experienced a level of stress, which was attributed to workload and role overload. Three of the four were working on, or had developed, personal strategies to make changes to remedy the situation.

The school leaders emphasised that for the principalship as a whole, the factors that posed barriers to achieving work/life balance were the volume of work, the layering of accountability requirements, and lack of professional support to address practice and psychological issues, as well as the view that DoE's approach to work/life balance was more rhetoric than reality. Some systemic issues such as the inherent worth of the work of the school leader, autonomy, job satisfaction, and capacity to share leadership were seen to mediate this or to act as enablers to work/life balance.

Clearly, each person had a different concept of the degree to which work/life balance is possible. This is a dimension of work/life balance that requires acknowledgement. Work/life balance is a social construct and varies from individual to individual. What was agreed, however, was that it was important to listen to school leaders, to move beyond surveys and restating the problem, and to try to tackle the issue positively.

This chapter has provided a view of the everyday lives of these school leaders as they attempt to balance their professional and personal lives. As a group this purposive sample of school leaders presented as confident, optimistic, organised individuals for whom home-life was important. Individual school leaders indicated varying levels of satisfaction with their work/life balance, and the levels of conflict felt between work and personal life. However, in comparison with the picture painted in the two recent DoE studies of Principal Class Officers (Saulwick, 2004; Lacey, 2003a), most of this group could act as positive work/life role models. Revealed in that study, was a disturbing work/life balance perspective. Possibly the most alarming of Saulwick's (2004) findings was that 47% of principals in the sample reported that they had received a medical diagnosis that connected health problems with the work as a principal. Other findings were that 67% of principal respondents agreed that the job prevented them from doing proper exercise, 80% were too tired after work to do the things they wanted to do, and 75% agreed that the workload was so great that they never got on top of it. On the issues of stress, 78% rated the job as highly stressful and a major source of stress was volume of work.

5.7.2 Off-the-Job Strategies

Off-the-job strategies employed were those of actively engaging with the family, and the pursuit of a range of interests and personal organisation. The latter appeared to take different forms in relation to carer roles. The low incidence of community involvement is noteworthy. Friedman (2002), in a study of professionals, found that to handle work/life balance, working

adults learn to build networks of support at home, at work, and in the community. However, it might be argued that the work itself is a community involvement and school leaders' attempts to separate work and non-work involvement present challenges in this regard, which are different from those facing many other professionals. Nippert-Eng's (1996) suggestion that people in certain occupations, such as a priest or on-call doctor, have little control over the placement or transcendence of work and non-work boundaries may hold true of principals as well.

5.7.3 On-the-Job Strategies

The successful on-the-job strategies used by the school leaders related to:

- managing and controlling workload
- developing and deploying certain management approaches and work practices that assisted the smooth running of the school
- prioritising
- strategies particularly targeted at managing work/life boundaries (Singh, 2002).

The strategies echo similar features to those which are identified as contributing to effective school leadership (Day, 2001), sustainable school leadership (Hargreaves, 2006; Fullan, 2006) and values-based and contingency management (Covey, 1989).

5.7.4 Personal Characteristics

This study suggests that psychological factors and personal characteristics, which include a capacity for resilience, self-efficacy, self-management, self-esteem, optimism, and energy, play a significant role in effecting work/life balance. On these issues, Haar (2005), and Greenhaus (2006) express the view that positive thinking acts as a buffer to work/life conflict. Support for this view comes in Saulwick's (2004) finding that highly stressed members of the Principal Class are less optimistic about their effectiveness. There is also evidence that for the Balancers there is some reciprocity in relation to these psychological and personal characteristics between the work and non-work domains (Greenhaus, 2006), as emotions generated in one domain effect the other. It is noteworthy that displaying positive emotions is missing from the list of DoE school leadership capacities (DET, 2001). Self-management is one of the capabilities listed, but its description contains references to the need to restrain inappropriate emotions, with no references to displaying positive emotions. As previously noted, according to Beatty (2004), denying emotions saps energy.

5.8 *Summary*

Work-Family Enrichment Theory (Greenhaus, 2006) appears to be supported in this study, especially in relation to skills and perspectives (such as interpersonal, coping, multi-tasking skills, trust); psychological and physical resources (such as self-efficacy, self-esteem, hardiness, optimism, hope and physical health); and flexibility (discretion and control over time and place where roles requirements are met).

The contentions in work/life expansionist theory (Barnett, 2001), that multiple roles—combining work and non-work responsibilities—can be beneficial rather than deleterious to health and well-being and that gender differences in relation to work/life balance are minor are two views reflected in these findings. The finding suggests that the role of caring (whether carried out by males or females) can have a beneficial effect on work/life balance. In this study, the six males are evenly distributed in each category. The two males and three females with major care responsibilities are Balancers. Greenhaus (2000) finds that there are no consistent gender differences in work-to-family conflict, and some evidence to suggest that women are more likely than men to leverage their work experiences to improve their family life. Cinamon (2002) suggests that within-gender variation may be as critical as between-gender differences in explaining work-family conflict.

This may be a significant finding in relation to school leaders and work/life balance, as little was found in the literature about gender and work/life enrichment as opposed to work/family enrichment. As such, the non-family strategies used by the school leaders, particularly the Balancers, are of interest.

In the case of the Balancer/mothers in this study, personal characteristics of self-efficacy and personal organisation appear to play a strong role in balancing work and personal life. They shared tasks (with spouse and older children, if at home) and bought in services. Energy was largely enhanced rather than depleted by the switch from professional to domestic tasks. The male Balancers, like their female counterparts, appeared to benefit from their multiple roles, gaining energy from the variety in their lives. Indeed, having carer responsibilities on the part of both males and females in the study appeared to have some mediating role in terms of managing time and engagement in non-work domain activities and interests (Barnett, 2001; Clark, 2000). The male Balancers were also those with caring responsibilities (although unlike the women they did not appear to have responsibilities for day-to-day domestic tasks). Only the mothers in the sample reported specific strategies to manage domestic tasks, however, this was framed in a positive light by all mothers (Balancers and a Striver).

The study confirms the analysis of Guest (2002) that work/life balance is achieved through attention to a complex interrelationship of factors. In this chapter, the themes identified in the framework analysis (Section 3.7) were explored, and the strategies of the Acceptors, Strivers and Balancers were compared (Section 5.6). The key strategies of the Balancers have been identified and in Chapter 6, these key strategies are amplified.

Chapter 6: Amplifying Successful Work/Life Balance

Two simultaneous agendas are at work. One is how individual superintendents can maintain resolve, energy and effectiveness over time. We need more fine-grained examples of what strategies and habits enhance this possibility. The second and companion agenda is we can improve systems so that structures and cultures are more supportive of superintendents.

(Fullan, 2005, p. 18).

6.1 Overview

A major principle in Appreciative Inquiry is the heliotropic hypothesis that suggests that social systems evolve toward the most positive images they hold of themselves (Cooperrider, 2001). In line with this principle, this chapter seeks to develop a positive image of work/life balance in the principalship. To this end, the focus in this chapter is on the Balancers.

In addition to exploring the themes generated in the data analysis, a comparison of the strategies of the three types in the typology was presented in Chapter 5 (Section 5.6). Chapter 6 amplifies the particular strategies (the fine-grained examples, to which Fullan (2005) refers) of those amongst this purposive sample of school leaders seen to have achieved a high level of success in balancing work and personal life – the Balancers. The examination is aided by reference to the literature, in particular, to selected work/life balance theories (Barnett, 2001; Clark, 2000; Greenhaus, 2006; Limoges, 2003; Singh, 2002.), which were examined in Chapter 2 (Section 2.3.2).

6.2 Focus on the Balancers—Actions to Support Work/Life Balance

This section of the study explores what those school leaders (deemed to be Balancers in the typology) actually do to effect work/life balance. While some consequences of work/life imbalance in relation to principal supply is documented in the literature (Cranston, 2006; D'Arbon, 2001; Lacey, 2002), as is the level of dissatisfaction with the work/life balance of school leaders (Earley, 2002; Saulwick, 2004), there does appear to be a gap in the literature around what strategies principals use to effect work/life balance and the conditions that support this. Focusing on the narratives of the Balancers offers insight into how these school leaders explain their capacity to effect work/life balance. Sonenshein (2005) makes the point that narratives provide a window into what Bruner (1990) calls the *autobiographical self*, giving an account of what, why, and in what settings actions took place. In light of the research into workload and well-being (Saulwick, 2004) these school leaders', particularly the

Balancers' experience, seems to be substantially different from the majority. These findings may provide important insights and a positive guiding image of the principalship to contribute to this under-researched aspect of the debate.

The school leaders' narratives provide an understanding of the differences between Balancers, Strivers and Acceptors. The most noticeable feature (and difference) of the Balancers is that all report the workload to be manageable. All mentioned "energy" or being "energetic" or "energised" and none made reference to personal stress. Indeed, in relation to this last point, Balancers are proactive in preventing stress. They "energise" rather than unwind or manage stress.

What the study also shows is that there are a number of variables that contribute to school leaders' work/life balance, and the group of school leaders who are Balancers achieve satisfactory levels of work/life balance through a range of means. The common strategies reported by all Balancers were those outlined below. While some of the strategies may exist in some of the Strivers and Acceptors' repertoires, all Balancers reported all the following strategies categorised according to the dimensions used in the conceptual framework.

Off-the-Job

- develop a capacity to switch off from work and actively engage in activities in the non-work domain
- assess commitments to ensure personal and family time
- manage work and personal life borders through segregation of work and personal life, including planning for work-free weekends.

Personal

- pay attention to physical and mental health and well-being
- identify and concentrate on activities which are sources of energy
- have a vision of work/life balance and proactively work to achieve work/life balance
- demonstrate their satisfaction and enjoyment with work and life
- work on being optimistic and happy.

On-the-Job

- ensure workload is manageable through establishing systems
- operate by some guiding management philosophy or framework
- share leadership
- support and are supported by colleagues - showing care
- practice and are comfortable with delegation
- focus on tasks.

6.3 Key Off-the-Job Strategies of the Balancers

The following section provides further amplification of each of the strategies (above) that Balancers employ.

6.3.1 Capacity to switch off from work and actively engage in activities in the non-work domain

Balancers reported that they had developed a capacity to switch off thoughts and concerns about work when in the non-work domain. While they experienced a range of levels and type of support from the non-work domain and had varying care responsibilities, what appears to be important is that they were actively interacting with family and other non-work domain members—they knew what was going on, and identified responsibilities. They worked on “being there” (as opposed to one school leader (Striver)—“*being at home but not really being there*”), rather than being mentally absent. One commented:

I have to make choices. Last week there was something I wanted to go to, but there was a parent-teacher night at my child's school. As my partner also had something of greater importance than my work commitment I went to the P-T night. (EL)

6.3.2 Assess commitments to ensure personal and family time

Balancers regularly assessed commitments according to a range of changing needs, and displayed skills in prioritisation, personal organisation and confidence in relinquishing commitments- described as art of organised abandonment (Drucker, 1990), or letting go of tasks (Limoges, 2003).

I have ratcheted back some involvements to make sure there is time for involvement in the children's activities. (GP)

When the children were young, I had to be very organised, but it still was not hard. I did employ someone in the house then, but being principal gave a bit of flexibility which teachers do not have. (DC)

6.3.3 Manage work and personal life borders through segregation of work and personal life including planning for work-free weekends

Balancers placed importance on segregating work and personal life and developed rules and rituals to support this segregation and management of temporal borders. They “try for a work-free weekend” and often succeeded. If they needed to work at the weekends they went to work rather than work at home and they “make time for family” and adjusted commitments to ensure time with family. One commented:

A strategy for achieving work/life balance relates to my ability to switch to role of mother and wife. I like to get home and prepare dinner at night. I try to keep work at work and home as a refuge. (DC)

Achieving a work-free weekend most weeks is an important strategy, but requires planning, organising and resolve. It is seen as a time for energising, recovering, involvement with family, friends, interests and community. One stated:

I plan for a work-free weekend. As a teacher I worked at the weekends, but as AP and Principal, no. Now the weekends are my own. I manage a sporting team on Saturday, which I love and Sundays are my partner's time- we work it out together. (AL)

6.4 Key Personal Strategies

6.4.1 Pay attention to physical and mental health and well-being

Balancers practised a degree of self-care through attention to health and fitness, social interaction and debriefing, and having a little bit of “me” time (time devoted to personal enjoyment) —playing sport, reading. Generally, it was reported, this does not occur as often as they would like, but it is still part of their range of activities.

Indeed, all but two school leaders in the study (both Balancers) mentioned actively working on health and fitness. It was the Balancers who succeeded in having more time for interests, activities or whatever it was that was important for enjoyment and well-being. Comments included:

We know that at 5 o'clock we want to go to the gym. We make sure we get to the gym class. It is in the diary and we go. (BC)

My line is that I am a better mother when I am an engaged person and I am a more interesting person when I am challenged. When I am not I can get grumpy. (EL)

6.4.2 Identify and concentrate on activities which are sources of energy

There is empirical evidence that those who are energisers in organisations have higher job performance (Cross, Baker, & Parker 2003). In this present study, more Balancers reported on identifying and pursuing strategies which energised them. Balancers indicated a capacity to judiciously choose involvement according to differing calls on time and energy. They could take on, or let go, activities according to life cycle demands or their judgement as to whether experiences were energisers or depleters. Interestingly, extra departmental activities such as serving on committees, mentoring, or regional commitments were seen to be a source of energy for Balancers, Acceptors, and Strivers:

Studying for a higher degree energised me. It was never a burden. I did it for me as much as for the school. (DC)

Covey training was the best thing I ever did. (AF)

I separate work and personal roles, and relinquish non-work things when they encroach on family time. At this stage of my life cycle priorities are family, so some

things have to go. Community activities are confined to those required by the job. We purposely live closer to the extended family to make sure we have a good family life, even if that means a fair bit of travel to work. (GP)

6.4.3 Have a vision of work/life balance and proactively work to achieve work/life balance

While all participants had a view that work/life balance is important, Balancers demonstrated clarity of vision as to what the term meant and employed sustained efforts to achieve work/life balance.

This vision of work/ life balance was expressed by BC in these terms: *“There is no reason why we shouldn’t enjoy a good lifestyle and make sure we do. At the same time we love our jobs.”*

Balancers were proactive and strategic both in their off-the-job and on-the-job domains, actively negotiating and shaping their work and personal lives. They actively made time for family life, were personally organised, took action to keep fit, and had a range of outside interests. They communicated and sought agreement about work/life issues with family members. Some comments included:

Yes, definitely, the principal has really good work/life balance. So while there are still really long working hours there is still a very active social life, not just at a personal level but also actively socialising with peers. The principal also has a good time and enjoys work. The principal makes sure time is spent in a pleasurable way and is quite mindful of spending time with family and not spending too much time at school. The principal is a very good manager and what is really positive is being a big picture person. The principal is able to manage many projects and committees and staff members and not get too hooked into the detail of running the school. The principal is able to effectively know what is going on in different meetings without having input into everything, and has very good processes, the communication processes work really well and that allows more time. (KN)

Yes, but you have to work at it. I guess I made the decision and I guess you have to keep reminding yourself that it’s not the hours you put in but it is the quality of the hours that are important, so I try not to take too many things home, although last night I had to take things home. (EL)

6.4.4 Demonstrate their satisfaction and enjoyment with work and life

Balancers openly showed their satisfaction and enjoyment with the role, exuded an energetic demeanour and believed it is important to demonstrate this:

It is important for principals to demonstrate that they love the job - to talk it up.

An aspect of the job I enjoy is the interaction with lots of different people, particularly the kids. They energise me, give me purpose in life. The satisfaction is doing a good job. There is a hell of a lot of pluses in the job. (AL)

6.4.5 Work on being Optimistic and Happy

Balancers' personal attributes included being optimistic and having positive emotional responses. They could identify what makes them optimistic and happy and ensured they engaged with those factors. Indeed they could self-regulate emotions in a positive way. One stated:

I make the point that I am someone who needs to renew myself by actually changing my environment; actually changing schools is a way of keeping enthusiasm and energy up. There is at least one other school/principalship in me before I retire. (KN)

6.5 Key On-the-Job Strategies

6.5.1 Ensure workload is manageable through establishing systems

Balancers developed strategies to ensure the workload was manageable. These included shared leadership, effective communication strategies, design of the suite of jobs relating to executive roles—principal, assistant principal(s) and administrative staff—and protocols for dealing with tasks, such as delegation, decision-making, and leveraging ordinary tasks to achieve a number of goals. Experience and advice seemed to count. These school leaders described learning from experience and from others, on how to judge the importance of tasks and to understand that if something was important it would be asked for again, so the task could be put on the backburner until that time.

One Balancer outlined an important strategy, as follows:

1. *Dividing jobs and delegating – I do delegate and share jobs with my AP – certain things go straight to the AP immediately.*
2. *Ask the office to print off the first page of each email so I can see what is coming in. I check emails and can then leave Departmental emails to the (secretary). And I then confidently delete most of the Department’s emails. I try to keep the paper work to a minimum and I don’t keep things I will not need.*
3. *I had an epiphany, started to understand I was drowning and doing busy work and negative stuff. I needed to do positive stuff. Experience helps. Sometimes you need to know what’s important to listen to. Waste time if ground rules change. The Department will give you a few ways of doing things. Know which to look at and listen to. Probably little bit of time in the job, able to assess the requests.*
4. *I need a degree of order. I try to get some simple things out of the way in order to focus on the bigger things.*
5. *I try to sort out some things so I can focus on the big ones. If I’ve got a submission or a report I can have it sitting on the machine for a number of days, I’ll start and then when I have another idea I’ll go and then close it up again. I’ll juggle a number of balls and “mull”—I think about things a lot. If someone asks me something I say I will give it some thought.*

6.5.2 Adopt a management philosophy or framework

Balancers embraced some guiding management philosophy or framework which streamlined decision-making and planning, gave confidence in exercising authority, and guided school activities:

I’m involved in Quality processes. I have a process-orientation approach to management. I believe in providing opportunities for people in the workplace to be involved in the decision-making process. I use lots of different sorts of tools to facilitate that. Our meeting structures are based on the same principles and guidelines, for example, we have a “parking lot” in the staff room so they can put up issues, problems, ideas, questions, and if there is nothing on the parking lot there is no staff meeting and I respect that. Quality is a way of organising and capturing time.
(AL)

6.5.3 Share Leadership

Balancers shared leadership. This is manifested in different ways by different leaders. However, there was a common thread of sharing knowledge and trust in the capacity of

others. Tasks were prioritised and completed (or ignored if found not to be important). One stated that:

[Work/life balance is achieved] firstly by my relationship with the assistant principal, good communication ...and the whole school staff working as a team... Because the school is well run I do not bring many worries home. (DC)

6.5.4 Support and are supported by colleagues- showing care

In the work domain, Balancers had support from, and provided support to, colleagues, and were mindful of their positions as role models. They informed staff of their approach to work/life balance and supported the work/life balance of staff members. Comments included:

My relationship with the AP—sharing roles and having good communication. Both of us being very visible in the school, we meet and greet parents each morning and are able to head off many problems. This also gives staff time to catch up with each other and prepare for the day. I cannot stress this enough—we do have a particular philosophy of shared leadership. Her support is vital to my achieving goals set, professionally and personally. Mainly because we are relaxed and run a very happy, well-organised school. I am very clear about my priorities. I am keen on helping staff to manage. They are busy and I look for ways of easing their workloads, and giving them some time out, and time together. (DC)

I just never refuse a request – unconditionally - never refuse when people ask for leave the next day leave early or come late- give them that flexibility and they don't take advantage of it. They come and let me know if they need to go somewhere and they do not have any leave, I just say tell me what I need to know don't tell me what I don't need to know. (FD)

6.5.5 Practice and comfortable with delegation

Balancers were different from Strivers and Acceptors in that they were comfortable with delegation and saw it as part of a process or management system. In some cases it was described as part of the management/leadership development strategy—“*I give them jobs they are good at, so that they can have a success.*” (AL)

Beatty (2004) maintains that energy conserved through expressing positive emotions can be used for greater collaboration with staff, presumably increasing trust and positive relationships.

6.5.6 Task Focused

Balancers prioritised and completed work (or ignored it if they found it not to be important). They developed systems and applied learning (e.g. Covey training) to ensure that the right tasks were managed. They were able to walk away from work and not worry or feel they needed to be working extremely long hours to get on top of the work. One Balancer stated what they believed that the best support for work/life balance: *“It has to be management structures.”* Another believed that it was *“having a good business manager with excellent skills and qualities is important.”*

6.6 What Works?

In this section, findings about successful strategies in the data provided in the school leaders’ narratives are further investigated and amplified to inform the generative outcomes in Chapter 7.

6.6.1 A mix of strategies

In these successful strategies there is a mix of organisational, professional, managerial and interpersonal techniques and personal characteristics (psychological processes). Balancers employ a variety of strategies. Limoges (2003) also makes reference to the employment of a range of organisational and personal strategies across individual, interpersonal and intrapersonal spheres. There is also some evidence of the Balancers using a dynamic process that oscillates between taking on certain tasks and abandoning others, a balance that requires individual-environment interaction (relationship with the DoE and other stakeholders). One Balancer described *“an epiphany”*—the realization that the overwhelming workload could be streamlined. This deeper examination of strategies is informed by reference to Limoges (2003), Drucker (1999) and Caldwell (2000) – who all describe some variation of the ‘taking up/letting go’ paradigm.

6.6.2 Proactive Border Management

The strategy found to be effective by Balancers was that of segregating the work and non-work domains and protecting the home border from penetration by work. The strength of outside border-keepers (Clark, 2000) (e.g. the school leaders’ own mental border-keeping and

partners and family) may be significant here. Clark's attention to the importance of in-domain behaviour—*"being there"*—and active involvement in work or life domains is supported in this study. Balancers maintain borders through a range of temporal, location and psychological means. They tend to manage work hours, work at the school rather than taking work home and clear their minds of concerns about work. Some use rituals to define the borders: *"I like to cook dinner"* or *"I close the laptop and do not think about work again."*

Some contemporary research points to integrating work and non-work and blurring the boundaries (e.g. working from home, using technology such as email and mobile phones), as a way of minimising conflict. However, in this finding there may be some learning as to the types of roles in which segregation is a better strategy than integration. In this respect the findings support what Wilson (2004) found in a study of professionals, that each individual created idiosyncratic boundaries (relating to time, space, values and symbols or artefacts) to separate work and non-work as a major strategy to achieve work/life balance.

What is evident is that the Balancers, in particular, are very proactive in ensuring a balance between work and non-work involvement. Balancers indicated that they *"worked on having balance"* and consciously planned, organised and prioritised to ensure this happened. They *"make time"* for non-work domain activities (although this may assume that the work domain *"owns the time"*). Greenhaus (2006) argued that the proactive personality may be an important prerequisite for work/life enrichment. Individuals who are proactive in relationships may be particularly likely to develop skills and apply resources from one role to another. Presumably this relates to home-life, managing workload, and developing other work practices and being receptive to different ways of managing, organising and seeking support.

6.6.3 Agency and self-efficacy

What was evident in this group of Balancers was a strong sense of agency, and belief in their ability to exert a high degree of influence and control within the work and personal domains. They could bring to their work and personal lives a sense of control and a capacity to understand and transform their environment, rather than being in a system that is beyond understanding or is impervious to their intervention. A range of agentic behaviours were displayed by the Balancers, notably: self-care, family involvement, nurturing relationships, task focus and supportive management. Personal characteristics appear to have an impact on work/life balance, and these characteristics are to some extent self-regulated (rather than being totally attributable to nature or good fortune). Balancers acknowledged that while there were deficits in the system in relation to decentralisation, levels of autonomy and devolution,

there was much that was within their control, which they could orchestrate to ensure the smooth running of the school and their own work/life balance.

The capacity for self-regulation of emotions indicates that this was a group with high levels of self-efficacy. According to Bandura (1977) self-efficacy is achieved through mastery experience, seeing role models manage task demands successfully, social persuasion (enabling the experience of success) and the reduction of stress, negative emotions and attention to strengths. As an illustration, one Balancer said, “*I make myself happy*” and another said, “*It [achieving work/life balance] is a lot to do with the mental framework of the people involved, how much they catastrophise things, and later there is a great deal of satisfaction when things go well. They don’t always go well, but generally they do.*” Spreitzer (2006) finds strong support for the idea that individuals thrive when they have agency or experience their work as self-determined, and that individuals thrive when they are embedded in contexts with high social resources (connections, bonds, and support). The concept of thriving accommodates concepts such as the beneficial nature of multiple roles and the generative power of agentic behaviour. The usefulness of the concept of thriving appears to be supported in the strategies of the Balancers in this study.

6.6.4 Capacity to create energy

Energy is identified as a key issue in work/life balance and may provide support for the contention in Brighthouse (1999) of the importance of school leaders being “energy creators” (as opposed to being “energy neutrals” or “energy consumers”). Harvey (2003) found principals who were capable of increasing vitality and this capacity was often linked to the level of support around them.

This present study found that certain strategies actually create, rather than deplete energy and time resources. CJ stated that “*further study energises me*” and LF found that the Total Quality approach was way of organising that captures time. The Balancers were able to identify energisers and situations which depleted energy.

Time is often the currency in contention in work/life balance literature. However, this study places emphasis on the importance of energy.

6.6.5 Workload management

The experience of the Balancers points to the importance of organisational structures and workload management. These Balancers developed ways of “*making the workload*

manageable". They implemented processes, redesigned roles, shared leadership and were comfortable with delegation. AL, for example, viewed delegation as a way of developing staff, managing the workload, and as an essential aspect of management. This is in contrast, for example, to the principals who eventually quit the job in Duke's (1998) study. They rarely considered delegating responsibilities—a strategy for making their work more manageable and less mundane. Duke found that the perfectionism (a trait which Saulwick asserts is held by most DoE Principal Class Officers (2004, p. 23)) of the principals in his study doomed them to sacrificing their personal lives and families. All recognised that they were incapable of continuing to perform their work at current levels of intensity, yet they admitted ignorance when asked how they could modify their jobs so that the responsibilities matched their energy levels. EL (and others) described learning how to assess the importance and urgency of tasks, and consciously or intuitively applied techniques similar to those in Covey (1989).

6.6.6 Organisational responses

How an organisation creates a work/life/family-friendly environment is seen to involve a number of inter-related components. It must design policies and practices that support work and non-work lives, create a culture that reflects a concern for employees' lives outside of work. It must be respectful of employees' non-work responsibilities and it must revisit current work processes, systems, structures and practices, to determine which lead to inefficiencies and which, in turn, create stress and overwork (Thompson, 2005). Balancers, in this study, have been able to organise their workplaces (the school) in such a way as to create a work/life/family friendly environment and thus support their own work/life balance, possibly in spite of the demands of the organisation in which they work. However, clearly, policies such as family leave and even some of the innovations in terms of reporting are seen to be beneficial in supporting work/life balance by some of these Balancers. Nonetheless, respect for school leaders' non-work lives remains an issue with school leaders, as DoE requires them to spend time out of hours on a range of activities.

Work/life balance is clearly influenced by a range of factors, not the least of which are the prevailing political agenda, organisational structures, managerial styles and job design. Of course, principals are affected by contextual factors and structural issues at work and in their personal lives, and the issue of organisational context will be examined to some extent in the following chapter. However, the scope of this study is focused more on the immediate contexts in which the school leaders work and enact their personal lives. The reason for this relates to the decision to explore the micro work/life strategies of the purposive sample of school leaders as discussed previously. This rationale also relates to examining the conundrum that while all DoE principals operate within the same system, the principals in this

study do experience the role differently from the cohort as a whole (as portrayed by Saulwick (2004)).

6.6.7 A New Lens for Work/Life Balance – Thriving

The Balancers' capacity for leverage, adaptation and self-efficacy points to the consideration of a new lens for work/life balance. This study suggests that "thriving" (Spreitzer, 2005a; 2006) might offer such a lens. While resilience and renewal often frame some effective school leader professional development approaches, these concepts do suggest remediation and stress management or rebounding from adverse positions. The findings in this study point to something beyond resilience. Possibly recognising this in their response (VPA, 2005) to the *Privilege and the Price Report*, the Victorian Principals Association suggested the need for research to identify "surviving/thriving" practice and to determine which elements are transferable to other school leaders. One of the particular research questions suggested was: what are the essential qualities, skills, and personal traits that enable certain people to thrive in an occupation that is highlighted by such high levels of stress and work demands?

The concept of striving appears to offer a more positive/ expansionist lens than resilience. While there are clear system causes for the lack of work/life balance, and the removal of these will support school leaders, they may still lack work/life balance. That is, the removal of the causes is not a guarantee of work/life balance, just as the existence of the causes does not preclude achieving work/life balance, as this study (and the existence of the Balancers) suggests. A thriving lens works with some of the findings of the study—the beneficial nature of multiple roles; the generative power of agentic behaviour, particularly in relation to task focus (in the case of school leaders, having a guiding management philosophy, sharing leadership, delegation and prioritisation); personal growth; learning; positive relationships; support; and communication.

6.7 Summary

By amplifying the strategies of those school leaders who are particularly satisfied with their capacity to balance work and personal life, an understanding of what works in relation to school leaders' work/life balance is tentatively suggested. In these successful strategies there is a mix of interpersonal and operational on-the- job and off-the- job techniques and personal characteristics (psychological processes). This study supports Limoges (2003) contention that the following actions determine the successful balancing of work and personal life:

- drawing on a wide range of managerial and personal strategies and applying them in the work and non-work domains
- ensuring workload is manageable and off-setting new tasks by letting go of less important ones
- placing importance on nurturing relationships and involvement in non-work activities
- engaging fully in work and non-work domains.

The strategies developed by the Balancers accord closely with those inherent in the concept of “thriving”. Spreitzer (2005a) defines the state of thriving as when people feel progress and momentum marked both by a sense of learning (greater understanding and knowledge) and a sense of vitality (aliveness). Theories of emotion (Beatty, 2000), self awareness, trust and shared leadership all contribute to Balancers’ perception of the role being manageable, that they have control and can share the load. These seem to be important discoveries in this phase of the study. While many work/life balance initiatives emphasise time allocation, what these school leaders (Balancer) emphasise is agency, happiness, satisfaction and energy.

The findings and understandings reported in this section of the thesis inform a guiding image of school leaders who have work/life balance and assist in the development of the generative dimension of the study outlined in Chapter 7. Such dimensions include: recommendations for DoE; the development of a *Work/Life Balance Taxonomy Highlighting Common Strategies used by Balancers*, a framework for a Professional Development program directed at initiating school leaders into the potential of work/life balance; and a guiding model to support a holistic approach to school leaders work/life balance in DoE. Other generative aspects are also provided in Chapter 7, where a search into the data gleans insights into additional research questions. In particular, the issues of agentic behaviour and institutional reform will be examined as impacting on school leaders’ work/life balance and principal supply.

Chapter 7: Vision for Change

“Much contemporary theory appears to lack generative potency, that is, the capacity to offer fresh alternatives to contemporary patterns of conduct (Gergen, 1973, p 1344).

7.1 Overview

The positive/appreciative approach of this study extends to exploring a vision for change, ideas for redesigning the principalship, and professional development options to support work/life balance.

In relation to the issue of principal supply, the factors identified by Lacey (2002b) as affecting the decision-making of aspirant principals are echoed by the principals in the study. However, decision-making about applying for a principal position (by the assistant principals in this study) is revealed as a complex one; with issues of work/life balance as only one variable. This chapter explores the relationship between work/life balance and principal supply.

The generative dimension of the study is developed through the examination of the school leaders' views on possible futures, taxonomy of school leaders' work/life balance strategies, options in relation to the nature of principals' work and the design of a professional development program to support better work/life balance amongst school leaders.

7.2 Introduction

This chapter seeks to examine the following research questions:

- What impact can attention to work/life balance issues have on supporting school leaders and on future principal supply?
- How might the principalship be changed to provide better opportunities for principals to achieve work/life balance?
- What might be included in a research-based professional development program that initiates education managers into the potential of work/life balance?

7.3 *Principal Supply*

7.3.1 *Attraction and Selection*

The criteria involved in a teacher deciding to apply for a principal position (generally, and by the assistant principals in the study) are complex (Gronn, 2003a). Principal supply (the attraction of teachers to the principalship and retention and engagement of existing principals) and succession planning are issues high on the education agenda in Australia. Demographics play a major role in contributing to this talent shortage and talent management. Projections reveal that at least half of Australia's current teachers are due for retirement by 2010. This includes most current principals. The next cohort, who mostly will be aged in their 40s towards the end of this decade, is very small, indeed half the size of the 1970s (those retiring) cohort (Preston, 2002). This highlights the importance of attraction and retention of principals.

Reports of research into the issue of principal supply (Thompson, 2005) suggest that the picture is complicated and that shortages of principal candidates are seen in particular schools rather than across the board generally. The same report also makes the point that assistant principals' decisions about applying for principal posts are varied.

The four assistant principals interviewed in this study revealed that the decision to apply for the principalship was a complicated one—work/life balance was an important consideration, but a number of factors were influential. In relation to the broader principal supply issue, lack of work/life balance as a current contributor to the problem and ways of improving work/life balance as part of future solutions, are highlighted in a range of contemporary research reports (Cranston, 2002; 2003; Lacey, 2002; Neidhart, 2002).

Research conducted in NSW (d'Arbon, 2001) as to why more people are not applying for principal positions in Catholic schools has identified eight factors that would influence a person not to apply. The reasons included work/life factors such as:

- Lifestyle issues, especially those related to balancing personal (e.g. family) and professional expectations
- Increasing demands of society on the personal and professional life and time commitment of the principal
- Gender concerns, especially those related to women's perceptions of their accessibility to the principalship;
- Disruption to family life by relocating to take up a new position;

- Income concerns; and
- Increasing responsibilities of the position.

The factors identified by Lacey (2002b) as affecting the decision-making of aspirant principals are echoed by the principals in the study. However, the views of the assistant principals themselves highlight some complex and, perhaps, paradoxical issues. All the participants expressed the view that the issue of work/life balance was an important one in relation to the principalship, because it impacted on health, well-being, stress, performance, job satisfaction and influenced principal supply. They believed it affected principals' decisions to continue working beyond the age when they could retire, and influenced teachers', particularly assistant principals', decisions to aspire to apply for principal positions.

In this study there is a small sample of four assistant principals. One of these had dependent children. Two assistant principals were very sure that they would apply for a principal position; one was of the view that taking a principalship could be deleterious to work/family balance at this stage of the life cycle, and therefore had made a decision to be delayed, and one was ambivalent. Both assistant principals who indicated that they aspired to principal positions expected that work/life balance would be compromised, especially in the initial stages. They stated:

In the near future, I am interested (in the role of principal) mainly because I am like the principal here, in that I need new challenges and new interests. The idea of doing the same job as an assistant principal for an extended period is not attractive to me. But by the same token, I know that if I was to take on the principalship it is a big workload and a big part of my life initially. (KN)

I'd like to get a principal's job for my own satisfaction and for the money, although I'm at the point where I don't need the money. We've managed to get enough into super. I'd just like to run my own school...it's a huge increase in volume and intensity of work. (CM)

The third assistant principal actually expressed reluctance or ambivalence about applying for a principal position at this stage because of family commitments and the expected increased work demands. This was in spite of indicating that the current assistant principal role held some inherent frustrations and the principalship held attractions. According to this assistant principal workload and pressure meant the role “overwhelming”:

“At home I am there, but not there... At school, there is no time to stand back and reflect on what did happen, what worked, what can be built on.” However, the principalship was aspired, to at some stage—*“The basic reason why I want to be a principal is that schools are important places and I can influence some outcomes.”*(IW)

The fourth assistant principal, who indicated satisfaction with present work/life balance, noted that the principal was a very good role model in this area, but still articulated some ambivalence about moving to a principal position. The view conveyed was that care would be taken in making a decision about promotion to the principalship, with the type of school being a major factor in decision-making, followed by consideration of the impact on lifestyle. It was expressed thus:

For me, I'm the sort of person who, if I can't have what I want, I won't take second best, so if someone said there's a fabulous job going over here, it's not really the school you want, but it would be great experience, I wouldn't take it.” and *“I'd have to be convinced that I would be as happy doing that as I am doing the AP job, because I like what I am doing. The school would be the clincher for me. I would love to be principal in a school like this, for example. If the principal moved on, I would apply here, but I will not just apply anywhere.”* (BC)

The examples confirm the point made in Barty (2004) that contemporary assistant principals tend to be more strategic in their decision-making about making application for the principalship than assistant principals have been in the past. In varying ways, all the school leaders made reference to a capacity to make a difference as a strong aspect of job satisfaction. Pounder (2001) emphasises this idealistic orientation, finding that when assistant principals were asked to consider the desirability of a principalship, they gave the most weight to the psychological benefits, particularly the opportunity to influence education.

7.3.2 Role models

The comments of school leaders in relation to work/life role models and their impact on aspirant principals showed an appreciation that role models are critical to skill and identity development and the development of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1987). However, a paradoxical element is seen in this study in relation to decisions to apply for the principalship. Certainly, one issue identified in the analysis of the assistant principals' narratives is that of role models. Within the group of four assistant principals, there were two Balancers, one Striver and one Acceptor. The two Balancers described their principals as good work/life balance role models. The Striver assistant principal acknowledged that the Acceptor principal worked

exceptionally long hours, but was not in any conflict regarding family responsibilities or expectations and was also able to have a varied social life despite the long hours. Discussions did, however, highlight the fact that role models can be positive or negative, inspirational and/or instrumental in modelling skills and behaviours (Gibson, 2004). The Acceptor assistant principal working with the Striver principal was keen to become a principal to be able to have authority and control, which was still elusive in the assistant principal role. These different dimensions of role modelling were discussed by the interviewees:

I have some friends who are also assistant principals and when I hear what their principals take on I think I could never be that kind of principal. But if you work with a principal who has a good work/life balance and manages things really efficiently I think that is why it is attractive to me. A friend of mine in a similar role finds it less attractive because her principal has a different leadership style. (KN)

I am a bad model because I work so many hours and people look at that and say do I want to do as many hours as that? The answer is invariably no. (LB)

The principal here would be a good role model if you had to talk about balance—it is well known that family is important and staff see that, and that the school is managed well. (BC)

One school leader also pointed to modelling balance as a means of encouraging staff to achieve work/life balance—“*Openly taking time to attend important events and appointments, I now know that gives your staff permission to do the same.*” (HC)

One assistant principal suggested that the issue of work/life balance should be part of the principal selection criteria:

I'd be asking aspirant principals, how do you spend your weekends? Someone who tells me – what weekend? I'm reading all weekend. I don't want that person. I want someone who has a healthy balance. (BC)

Indeed, these views are in evidence in the guidelines for selection of school principals in the Australian Capital Territory, in which one indicator of good practices is that principals model a healthy work/life balance and encourage this practice for all school staff (Department of Education, Youth and Family Services, Australian Capital Territory, 2003).

7.3.3 Image of the principalship

Blackmore (2004) argues that for those who research principal supply it is important to focus not only on the reasons why the job is unattractive but also on the complex reasons why it is worth doing. Germaine to the issue of principal supply is the image of the principalship. Bart (2004) argues that the impact of principals' negative feedback to their colleagues has resulted in the reluctance of others to become school leaders. Spreitzer's (2005c., 2006) assertion that agency, workgroup ideologies and the perceived social worth of the work (regardless of occupational prestige) contributes to role satisfaction and thriving, provides some generative insight into the importance of creating a positive, yet authentic, image of the principalship. This is necessary in order to attract teachers to the role.

7.3.4 A positive guiding image

The change dimension of the study is to some extent addressed by the development of a positive guiding image of the principalship (the Balancers). Blackmore (2002), Lacey (2003) and Burford (2004) discuss the need for positive depictions of the principalship, a view echoed by one school leader in this study: "*it is important for principals to demonstrate that they love the job - to talk it up.*" Cooperrider (2001) stresses the importance of affirmation and affirmative projections of the group and suggests that no matter what its previous history, virtually any pattern of organisational action can be changed. Organisations, according to Cooperrider (2001), are free to seek transformations in conventional practice by replacing conventional images with images of a new and better future. The current pattern of continuing to identify similar workload and work/life balance problems in studies of the principalship (Cranston, 2002; Holdaway, 1999; Lacey, 2003; Neihardt, 2004; Saulwick, 2004) presumably becomes the belief the group holds of itself. In this light an appreciative approach is aimed at developing an affirmative image of the principalship in relation to work/life balance. Cooperrider (2001) also suggests that change requires more than turning rhetoric into reality, it also requires a guiding image. A contention in this study is that the Balancers form part of the imagery.

7.3.5 Engagement and retention

Leadership disengagement is cited by Gronn (2003c) as a contributing factor in the supply of school leaders, suggesting that intensified, expanded and restructured work roles and changing concepts of professional identity and career commitment are important aspects of the issue. Of relevance is research on managers' commitment (Singh, 2002), which links the organisational recognition of managers' needs for work and life balance with enhanced

commitment and engagement. Enabling employees to maintain such a balance has also been shown to be a key to employee well-being (Duxbury & Higgins, 2004).

7.4 *Design of the Principalship*

Changes in the past few decades can be seen to have contributed to the problems of principal health and well-being, stress and the attractiveness of the role to senior teachers (Gronn, 2003c, Barty, 2004). A number of educational researchers also suggest that the principalship may require a rethinking of the work of principals for reasons of attracting teachers to the principalship and because of the impact of social and educational changes and sustainability (Dinham, 1998, Elmore, 2000; Hargreaves, 2006; Mulford, 2003; Thompson, 2002, 2004; Waters, 2004). Indeed, acknowledging the complexity of today's educational environment, rethinking the principalship in light of the essentials is another relevant line of research advocated by Waters (2004) and Elmore (2000). A similar view in relation to the principalship is outlined by Boris-Schacter (2002), detailing alternative models of principalship that may assist the better reconciliation of principals' work and personal life. In addition to developing a vision of the principalship as a role that is one of vitality and enjoyment, rethinking the principalship calls for action in relation to such areas as: work design, leadership, capabilities and standards

7.4.1 *Work design*

According to Rapoport (1998), linking work and non-work issues is a strategic opportunity to redesign work in a fundamentally creative, innovative and equitable way that benefits organisational objectives and people's personal lives. So the broader work/life debate picks up similar themes to that of redesigning of the principalship, in that there is a strong thread in both discourses of the nature of the work itself being a means of ensuring future sustainability.

Work/life (Hyman, 2004; Pocock, 2003) and principalship (Boris-Schacter, 2002) commentators suggest the need for a detailed look at the organisation of work, work practices and flexibility, particularly in relation to the caring role of workers. Furthermore, they contend that flexibility for balancing work and personal or caring responsibilities cannot be superimposed on current ways of structuring work—it requires deeper cultural change in the design of work and in the assumptions about competence and success that surround it. There is also evidence for the need for a new definition of an ideal worker who, by integrating paid work with family care, better meets both productivity and caring needs. In other quarters, too, there are calls for the adoption of sustainable work systems where the employees' needs are

balanced with the organisation's needs when designing work systems and creating its psychosocial context (Kira, 2000).

The UK Government's response to work/life balance provides an example (and lessons) of attempting to effect this deep change. It has pursued a national work/life balance agenda for the workforce as a whole. In relation to schools, there is a national industrial agreement and a national remodelling initiative aimed at improving school capability, reducing workloads and reforming work practices of teaching and non-teaching staff. In relation to head teachers, this has encouraged the development of a range of initiatives, resources and services to support their work/life balance. As perhaps might be expected, a recent head teachers' work/life balance survey report (NAHT, 2006) suggests that despite the changes, there is a long way to go in relation to effecting work/life balance of head teachers. A lack of awareness of the legal imperatives, and reluctance on the part of authorities to devote money to introducing staff changes and increases, which would underpin workload management strategies, were impeding progress. However, head teachers did acknowledge the usefulness of the support provided.

Blackmore (2004) reports that serving principals who were asked: "what if you could redesign the job of the principal, what would you do?" found difficulty in extricating their thinking from the constraints of the existing systems, cultures and practices that constituted their experience of the principalship. When the school leaders in this study were asked about their ideas on changes to the principalship to address the issue of work/life balance and about their suggestions for relevant professional development options, they suggested a range of ways the principalship could be "done differently". These included shared principalship, achieved by working on a job-share basis, as well as selection processes that include assessment of coping skills and having a life outside of work.

Most acknowledged that certain DoE innovations were having a positive impact on workload, such as the automation of data collection and simplified processes, but that there was a long way to go. Central to most redesign suggestions were suggestions involving getting rid of the "monkey work" (bureaucratic requirements, wasted time on activities that could benefit from economies of scale) by developing opportunities to share resources and tasks at sub-regional levels. EL made changes to the roles of the entire executive team- to the roles of principal, assistant principal and administrative staff- in order to stream line work flow and rationalise the workload. AF and DC introduced Quality processes as a major redesign effort. The role of the Business Manager was recognised as a pivotal one in terms of rationalising work (or not,

in one instance) and allowing a focus on educational leadership. Bhindi & Dinham (2005) also points to examples of appointing a range of management and ancillary staff to take on administrative loads thus freeing principals to exercise educational leadership.

7.4.2 Leadership

Principals interviewed in Boris-Schacter (2002) made suggestions for redesigning the principalship. These included districts spreading the burden by reconfiguring the job description, either through a co-principalship, a rotating principalship, or some other form of distributed leadership.

What was agreed by all was that that the principalship needed to allow for greater focus on educational leadership. One principal (JD) suggested the image of the conductor: *“You don’t see a conductor of an orchestra holding a violin; principals should be educational leaders.”* Another said it was important actually to design the principalship around a focus on student learning. Dinham & Scott (1998) also makes this point- the need to allow educational leaders to exercise leadership through rationalising the role. Shared leadership—as opposed to shared principalship—was seen as a way of reconceptualising the principalship. Indeed, a principal who claimed to practice shared leadership was adamant that job sharing of the principal position was not viable. Hallinger and Heck (1999), citing Harris (2002), suggest it is foolish to think that only principals provide leadership for school improvement, thus presenting a compelling argument for re-defining leadership away from role-based conceptions and towards distributive views.

Elmore (2000) contends categorically that there is no way to perform the complex tasks of school leadership without widely distributing the responsibility for leadership among roles in the organisation. This is a view held by many, and there is a growing body of research in relation to aspects of sharing leadership. Distinctions are made by some commentators, and at least six areas emerge:

- shared leadership
- co-leadership
- distributed leadership
- alternative models of principalship
- new frameworks for leadership capabilities
- alternative work practices such as flexible working hours, part-time work and job-sharing.

Certainly some form of shared leadership may be one way of making the principalship appeal to aspiring leaders who reject the singular heroic leadership model and need a viable way to juggle family, carer and study career commitment (National College of School Leadership, 2000). This rethinking and redesign certainly accommodates the concept of sharing or distributing leadership, developing new models of leadership and of matching the type of leadership to the needs of the school. Importantly, it relates to reconceptualising the principalship to achieve student learning.

7.4.3 Capabilities and standards

Rethinking the principalship then calls for action in relation to such areas as: standards and principles, work practices, work structures and leadership design and, importantly, a vision of the principalship as a role that is one of vitality and enjoyment. It also embraces the need for rethinking capability statements, for example, the inclusion of a much more positive approach to self-management. Currently there is reference to restraining emotions, but no mention of self-efficacy or of ensuring positive emotions, which emerged from this study as important in effecting work/life balance (DET, 2001).

Boris-Schacter (2002) described a desirable standard of practice that allows principals to:

- focus the majority of their time on educational leadership
- have a meaningful personal life
- enjoy appropriate support at the workplace
- promote flexible models of the principalship.

DoE advocates, in its *Flexible Work for Work/Life/Family Balance* handbook (DET, 2005), such principles as organisational commitment to work/life balance; mutual agreement to meet individual and organisational balance needs; written documentation; supportive management; and regular review. With such principles put into practice, the design of the principalship should be supportive of work/life balance. This might also lead to the adoption of work structures and flexible work arrangements that acknowledge work/life balance issues.

7.4.4 Changes to the principalship

What this study suggests is that the principalship might be changed to provide better opportunities for principals to achieve work/life balance through:

- Leadership programs that introduce school leaders to guiding management philosophies and frameworks (workload management, priority setting, decision-making, work organisation and shared leadership) and work/life balance.
- Capability statements that articulate values and competencies relating to work/life balance, self-regulation of positive emotions, and caring, which are duly appraised in the Performance Management systems.
- Greater “professionalism” of the role as typified by specialised entry with specialised preparatory training, ongoing professional supervision and reflection on practice, and requirements for ongoing professional development (aligned with this was the idea of meeting health requirements, similar to the health standards set for pilots).

Spillane (2004) makes the point that discussions on school leadership focus largely on structure and design and notes an inattention to how people work, how tasks are performed, work practices and the activity of leadership. This study highlights managing workload as a basic antecedent of work/life balance. Balancer school leaders manage the workload through the redesign of the roles of the executive team (principal, assistant principal, administrative staff and senior staff), the introduction of a range of systems, work practices and methods of prioritising, and the leveraging tasks to maximise efficiency.

7.5 Taxonomy of School Leaders’ Work/Life Balance Strategies

7.5.1 From identification of strategies to supporting interventions

One way to achieve some generative outcome from the identification of strategies associated with success in balancing work and life roles is to develop a resource that might support individual change and Professional Development responses. A taxonomy or categorisation of the strategies identified in the study may assist this process.

7.5.2 Steps in developing taxonomies

Fleishman (1984) outlines three essential steps required of any taxonomic effort: first, define the behavioural domains; next, determine the outcomes; and, third assess validity. In this taxonomy or classification system, the behavioral domain is defined specifically as functions or behaviors that school leaders perform in the context of managing the work/life interface. The outcome of interest is the effectiveness of school performance and personal well-being of the school leader. It might be argued that the findings in Chapter 5 and more importantly those in Chapter 6 provide some evidence for the strategies described. Beyond that, however, there has been no internal and external validation of the taxonomy, as such validation steps as

consultations with principals were beyond the scope of this thesis. In reality, apart from the findings of the study, the major influences in the development and the taxonomy are outlined in Limoges (2003). According to Limoges (2003) strategies take place in either the professional/work sphere or the personal sphere and in each of these spheres people interact in three ways—extrapersonal, interpersonal or intrapersonal. Aspects stressed by Limoges (2003), which were evident in this study, are the ‘holding on/letting go’ paradigm—balancing workload by abandoning old tasks when adopting new ones—employing a mix of strategies, and the practice of offsetting the intensity of work with personal pursuits.

7.5.3 Work/life taxonomies

A small number of taxonomies of work-family coping strategies exist in the literature (see for example Hall, 1990; Middleton, 2004; Wiersma, 1994). These focus on individual strategies to manage work family conflict (Hall, 1990), or on dual-career couples’ strategies (Wiersma, 1994). The focus in these early taxonomies is the family. However, Middleton (2004) develops a more contemporary taxonomy that focuses on the interface between work and personal life (Kossek, 2006) and includes changes in workplace practices, structures and culture supports (Rapoport, 2002). Limoge’s (2003) taxonomy reflects attention to all work/life balance domains—individual, family, work and community—and integrates professional, interpersonal, intra-personal and personal dimensions. This latter refinement (which may involve categorising the same strategy under different strategy types) is a feature that would assist the planning of professional development and interventions.

7.6 School Leaders’ Work/Life Taxonomy

The taxonomy is presented in terms of **Factors**, **Strategy Types** and **Description of Strategies**. The **Factors** are the Off-the-job, Personal, and On-the-job categories from the conceptual framework. Extant work/life taxonomies (Hall, 1990; Limoges, 2003; Middleton 2004; Wiersma, 1994) inform the selection of **Strategy Types** in the taxonomy. The **Description of Strategies** highlights (underlined in blue font) all the common strategies of Balancers and, in addition, displays those strategies employed by the majority of the Balancers. Within the limits of such a small exploratory study, the taxonomy illustrates the inter-relationship of strategies and provides a comprehensive check-list of strategies to support behaviour change and inform the development of a professional development program.

Table 5. Work/Life Balance Taxonomy Highlighting Common Strategies Used by the Balancers

Factors	Strategy Type	Description of Strategies
On-the-Job Characteristics and Strategies	External involvement associated with professional role	Voluntary involvement in broader Departmental programs & committees Involvement in professional development activities Identify and increase energisers Limit involvement in line with life cycle needs Ratchetting back scale of activities
	Interpersonal school/professional relationships	Communication & sharing experiences Provide support/feedback for and receive support from colleagues-show care Have fun Making contacts, networking Become selective about communication Have quiet times
	Workload management & leadership	Ensure workload is manageable through establishing systems Operate by some guiding philosophy or framework Practice delegation with comfort Reflect-taking time to consider, assess , improve Avoid time wasters Focus on tasks Complete work Share leadership Eliminate unnecessary tasks Leverage everyday tasks Manage length of work day Determine location for out of work time work Plan for family time
Personal Characteristics	Personal & psychological well-being	Concentrate attention, thoughts, emotions on “being there” Identify and concentrate on activities that are sources of energy” Have a vision of work/life balance and proactively work to achieve it Work on being optimistic & happy Demonstrate satisfaction & enjoyment with work and life Change /reframe ways of thinking Control negative emotion and thoughts and stress Ask for help Pay attention to physical and mental health & well-being
Off-the-Job Characteristics and Strategies	Family & social relationships family/life involvement	Develop a capacity to switch off from work and actively engage in non-work domain Assess commitments to ensure personal and family time Manage work and personal life borders through segregation of work and personal life Aim for a work-free weekend Communicate & share experiences Giving & receive feedback & support Identify and use “energizers” Cultivate optimism Change /reframe ways of thinking Focus on tasks - enjoy and complete projects Share tasks and decision-making Delegate tasks, buy in resources, e.g. house cleaning
	Personal care	Pay attention to physical and mental health & well-being Self-care and ‘me time’ Cultivate & pursue interests, Socialise Pursue physical interests & fitness Make time for pleasurable activities Make time for relaxation, get enough sleep Suspending activities because of life cycle stage

7.7 Professional Development Options

The *Privilege and the Price* report (Saulwick, 2004) points to a major problem in relation to work/life balance affecting school leaders in Victoria. Similar situations clearly exist in other

education systems in other countries, including the United Kingdom (Earley, 2002). This United Kingdom report points to both the need for a well-resourced holistic strategy, including attention to work/life balance, and time to implement the various aspects of what is a cultural change strategy. School leaders' work/life balance, it is suggested, is best supported by a range of interventions, some of which are set out in this section and further developed as recommendations in Chapter 8.

7.8 Rationale for Approach to Professional Development

In relation to professional development interventions, school leaders' narratives offered a number of ideas to guide a professional development and support program. Ideas on the format of the program ranged from a focus on the use of mentors, time for reflection, and the availability of someone to debrief. In terms of content, participants expressed the view that such a program should focus on ways of balancing competing demands on time, of ensuring a balance between educational leadership and administration, and of balancing planning and execution. Reflection on perceived contributors to work/life imbalance informed suggestions about knowledge and skills transfer in relation to choosing appropriate leadership and management frameworks, workload management, and human resource management. Self-management, personal development, emotional intelligence, and a focus on self-esteem and confidence were also identified. Techniques for striking a balance between personal and professional responsibilities, improving health and well-being, and coping skills were also discussed.

Boris-Schacter (2003) reports that the principals interviewed in one major study spoke of the need for sharing, reflection, and in-depth professional development that could be built into the working week. Examples included school visitations, meetings with community-based groups, and attendance at support groups. Such suggestions were also made by school leaders in this study. One of the Balancers said:

They can be blinkered. I think principals find it difficult to see past the four fences around the school. The thing I like to do is to visit other principals, walk around, and talk about what they do. (AL)

A professional development program would therefore form part of such a culture change strategy, recommendations for which are set out in Chapter 8.

Work/life balance can be approached in a variety of ways in an organisation. Regardless of the approach, however, unless the various school improvement, professional issues and social imperatives are considered collectively, optimal outcomes will not be reached. Attempts to make changes that have let either efficiency or equity issues slip from view have been largely unsuccessful (Rapoport, 2002).

The findings of this study point to an approach that addresses organisational and personal spheres, as well as to the value of using a “thriving lens” (Spreitzer, 2006) for work/life balance. Such an orientation captures key concepts found important by the Balancers in this study—learning, agency, optimism, satisfaction and energy. It also accommodates other elements important to successful work/life program implementation. Such key success factors relate to meeting the strategic needs of the organisation and compatibility with aspects of the principalship, particularly its values and the drivers of sustainability (engagement and retention of incumbents and future supply). As *thriving* takes a constructionist approach, it appears to be a more useful lens than, for example, resilience, which is beginning to feature in work/life balance and renewal programs. Resilience is viewed as a means of bouncing back after adversity, whereas thriving refers to growing and developing further, regardless of the environment, whether the environment is adverse, neutral or nurturing.

Sparkes (2002) explicitly calls for a school leaders’ professional development approach which focusses on the positive side of organisational processes and performance. This is consistent with Positive Organisational Scholarship which explores ways individuals and organisations can become exceptional (Quinn, 2000) and with the concept of *thriving* (Spreitzer, 2005a, 2005 b), which emphasises change at organisational and personal levels and notes that creating positive changes in individuals requires a context characterised by caring relationships, mutual respect and active participation.

Moving to a thriving approach for work/life balance requires a personal transformation of vision and it may require a range of approaches over time. Some of the Balancers in the study indicated that their journey had taken time and comprised a series of learnings or, as suggested by one school leader, an “*epiphany*”. The research in this study suggests that while there are no “*quick fixes*”, work/life balance for school leaders is dependant on a range of factors, and important dimensions involve managing the emotional dimensions of the role (Beatty, 2004, James & Vince, 2001) enhanced agency, optimism, satisfaction and energy.

From the literature reviewed in the course of this study, through an examination of the taxonomy summary of strategies and a discussion of the strategies of the Balancers, the following broad framework for a development strategy emerges.

7.9 Program Elements, Principles and Format and Content

7.9.1 Foundation elements

An approach to work/life professional development that captures thriving as a key element calls for attention to three components (Spreitzer, 2006):

- leveraging strengths
- providing challenges and learning through positive experiences
- co-creation of support through the development of supportive communities.

This approach differs from traditional leadership development and work/life training which usually identifies gaps in relation to capabilities, leading to the development of strategies involving set challenges and/or provision of ongoing support processes such as coaching. This approach, however, begins with an identification of strengths and sets out to amplify these, and uses positive experiences (including feedback), which develop positive emotions and self-efficacy. It also involves the leader creating a support community to assist the development of the strengths and attributes through sharing knowledge, positive meaning, positive emotions and positive connections. In these ways attitudes, strategies, practices and connections are made that will lead to work/life balance. This component also recognises that school leaders are a varied group, who will require tailored types of support to ensure effectiveness and authenticity.

An approach to reduce teachers' work/life conflict proposed by Cinamon (2005), suggests the use of two-tiered intervention aimed at management (to support culture change) and individuals (to enhance self-efficacy for managing work-life conflict). The intervention program described below aims to achieve the following goals:

- raise awareness of the causes and consequences of work-life conflict
- boost understanding of work and life role identities
- improve skills, attitudes and personal characteristics enabling successful blending of roles
- increased self-efficacy and agency.

7.9.2 Principles

The content of a professional development program would align with principles of “thriving” (Speitzer, 2005a; 2005b; 2006), work/life balance and personal mastery (Senge, 1990). These principles are:

Performance: involving a focus on tasks, workload management, the use of a range of personal and professional work/life balance strategies, and the art of organised abandonment (Drucker, 1990), letting go of tasks and using tools to prioritise (Covey, 1994, Limoges, 2003).

Positive mental states: involving the development of skills in relation to exercising authority and competence and realising personal worth; developing a capacity for producing positive emotional states: acknowledging the role of emotional meaning in leader well being and transformational success (Beatty, 2006).

Learning: involving the use of learning, increasing energy levels, innovation and leveraging of tasks.

Heedful relating: involving improved communication within work and non-work domains; “being there”—actively engaging in both work and non-work domains.

Developing social resources: systematically combining involvement in work and personal domains to develop synergies, sharing knowledge about leadership, emotion, connection, and engagement in the role, and realising the generative power of joy and humour.

Working with organisational characteristics: managing the workload, prioritising, decision-making, leadership and information sharing, and trust.

Based on the belief that individuals can discover what contexts best suit their development, and are best able to leverage their strengths, the program would involve participants in the development of micro-communities of support, drawing from sources meaningful to individuals—partners, families, community, school, networks, regional office staff—and the development of “thriving through work/life balance” action plans.

In this respect particularly, the program would also draw on the experience of some prevailing development programs in DoE that rely on the establishment of peer-support networks and critical friendships (Day, 1999).

7.9.3 Format and content

The program would comprise the following components:

Focus on self and strengths

- The work/life balance model
- Best reflected self—seeking feedback, analysing feelings and experience and identifying strengths
- Leveraging strengths.

Focus on work/life balance and thriving

- Concepts of *work/life balance* and *thriving*
- Taking the work/life balance test
- Understanding self-efficacy
- Becoming a thriving principal
- The thriving principal—envisioning and developing a repertoire of strategies; developing skills in relation to the principles of performance; positive mental states; learning; heedful relating; developing renewal social resources; working with organisational characteristics; and family/relationships.

Personal and organisational strategies for work/life balance

- Achieving work/life balance
- Adapting the work/life balance taxonomy, highlighting common strategies used by the Balancers, to individual situations
- Using the tailored taxonomy—leaving off and putting on
- Managing the workload
- Prioritising
- Sharing leadership
- Self-efficacy.

The action plan and supportive community

- Creating an action plan
- Authenticity

- Creating a micro-community of support and enacting a plan to identify ways of capturing ideas, assessing individual progress, helping others, and ensuring authenticity.

7.10 Program delivery

The program would be designed so that multiple forms of delivery are possible and focused on individuals or groups. Delivery could be online, or as network activities, at DoE regional or state level, through the auspices of the Victorian Principals Association, and through the Australian Principals Association for Professional Development Committee. It could also be delivered as a school-level activity, either as a whole-of-school approach, or as a leadership team activity. It could form part of a coaching repertoire, or the action plan could encompass a coaching component.

7.11 Discussion

A dominant theme in the contemporary literature on the principalship describes the changing nature of school leaders' work, and the contexts in which it is performed, as having deleterious effects on role satisfaction, health and well-being. However, this study points to the possibility that the nature of school leaders' work, the way it is executed, the agency exercised and a positive school culture can ensure the opposite. These features can enable school leaders to thrive and contribute positively to their health and well-being.

An examination of the literature and the school leaders' views on current influences and possible future options in relation to principal supply, informed the design of the professional development program to support better work/life balance amongst school leaders.

In the next chapter, a model (Section 8.8) is developed to guide an approach to work/life balance for school leaders. This is designed to support improvements in principal supply and create new perspectives on the principalship. This model has been developed to support a “*thriving*” approach to work/life balance. It will be useful to guide policy development and support the task of the detailed crafting of a dynamic professional development program from the framework contained in this study.

Chapter 8: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

8.1 *Overview*

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a summary of the research and findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study. The conclusions involve pursuing, as a priority for school leaders, an approach to work/life balance which has “thriving” as a central theme and goal. A number of recommendations are made to operationalise the approach.

8.2 *Summary of the Research Process*

The aim of this study was to explore how some school leaders achieve work/life balance, and how this understanding might inform a professional development program designed to improve school leader well-being and principal supply.

The research process involved the development of an appreciative approach to research design and a conceptual framework that guided the literature review and the data analysis. After conducting interviews with a purposive sample of twelve school leaders, the subsequent data analysis was informed by work/life border theory and a self-developed test, which assisted the identification of “degrees of success” of work/life balance to develop a work/life balance typology. Three categories of school leaders were found: Balancers, Strivers and Acceptors. The three categories provided some focus for the examination of the work and non-work strategies and personal characteristics of the school leaders. An in-depth examination of significant strategies for effective work/life balance resulted in an aggregation of strategies into a taxonomy of work/life balance strategies (Section 7.6).

In the context of principal supply and sustainability, the evidence was also used to inform the development of a professional development strategy outline aimed at enhancing the work/life balance of school leaders, and to make some recommendations as to systemic changes (including rethinking the principalship) that DoE might make to support school leaders’ work/life balance.

Appreciative interviews and data analysis processes aimed at understanding the insights of the school leaders provided a unique lens on the individual lives, work practices and micro-strategies for affecting the work/life balance of the school leaders involved. It has provided the opportunity to locate these experiences within the academic and theoretical debates in relation to the work/life, management, school leadership and Positive Organisational

Scholarship fields of study. It has done this by espousing an appreciative bias, thus trying to emphasise positive processes and outcomes, as well as the enablers of change.

8.3 *Revisiting the Research Questions*

Attempting to gain an understanding of the range of ways by which school leaders achieved positive work/life balance led to research focused on:

- exploring the views and experience of work/life balance of school leaders and strategies to manage commitments in their work and non-work domains; and,
- finding how work/life balance can be managed and utilised to improve school capability and sustainability, especially the supply of school leaders.

The study set out to find answers to the following questions:

- What are the practices employed by principals to achieve work/life balance?
- How do colleague assistant principals perceive that their principals achieve work/life balance?
- What features of school organisation and personal practice enable principals to achieve work/life balance?
- What features of school organisation and personal practice get in the way of principals achieving work/life balance?
- How might the principalship be changed to provide better opportunities for principals to achieve work/life balance?
- What impact can attention to work/life balance issues have on supporting school leaders and on future principal supply?
- What might be included in a research-based professional development program that initiates education managers into the potential of work/life balance?

8.4 *The Findings and Outcomes of the Study*

Finding what strategies principals might adopt to achieve better balance in their lives was the focus of this study. This was examined in the context of the influences on, and impact of, lack of balance between work and personal life. In light of this, the study also focussed on producing generative outcomes. The research questions (above) reflect these aims. The major findings and outcomes are listed below:

1. Saulwick (2004) found a disturbing number of school principals reportedly feeling stressed, overwhelmed by the workload, never able to get on top of the work, and often lacking the time or energy to satisfactorily engage in family and leisure activities. The main findings of this study, however, are quite different. What it revealed is that there are, in fact, school leaders in the DoE system who are effective and have a life. They find the job “do-able” and indeed enjoyable, and are able to have satisfying lives outside of work. They experience work/life balance.

2. The study identified a range of strategies that contributed to this state of work/life balance (Section 6.2), the most important being to:

Off-the-Job

- develop a capacity to switch off from work and actively engage in activities in the non-work domain
- assess commitments to ensure personal and family time
- manage work and personal life borders through segregation of work and personal life including planning for work-free weekends.

Personal

- pay attention to physical and mental health and well-being
- identify and concentrate on activities that are sources of energy
- have a vision of work/life balance and proactively work to achieve work/life balance
- demonstrate their satisfaction and enjoyment with work and life
- work on being optimistic and happy.

On-the-Job

- ensure workload is manageable through establishing systems
- operate by some guiding management philosophy or framework
- share leadership
- support and are supported by colleagues - showing care
- practice delegation with comfort
- focus on tasks.

3. What was significant about these strategies and other methods used to attain work/life balance was the use of:

- a mix of organisational, professional, managerial, and interpersonal techniques and personal characteristics (psychological processes)
 - proactive border management, especially the segregation of the work and non-work domains
 - individual agency and self-efficacy, positive emotions, and energy creation techniques
 - a range of means to ensure a manageable workload.
4. The strategies employed accord closely with those inherent in the concept of “thriving” (Spreitzer, 2005a,2006) and to Senge’s (1990) “disciplines of self mastery”. The characteristics displayed echo similar features to those that are identified as contributing to effective school leadership and sustainable school leadership
 5. Workload management was central to work/life balance. To assist this, the study identified the relevant changes to the principalship (especially placing educational leadership and work/life balance at the centre of redesign efforts), to Departmental practices and a range of individual strategies that principals could employ.
 6. A leadership characteristic linked to work/life balance is some dimension of shared or distributed leadership and a capacity to define and adopt a guiding management approach or philosophy.
 7. Support is also found for the contentions in work/life expansionist theory (Barnett, 2001), that multiple roles—combining work and non-work responsibilities—can be beneficial rather than deleterious to health and well-being and have a positive effect on the school leaders’ work/life balance. Providing care and being actively engaged in the personal or off-the-job domain, by both males and females, appears to support work/life balance. Those satisfied with their capacity to achieve work/life balance use similar strategies in both the work and non-work spheres to achieve this aim. These findings suggest that some of the gender, multiple role/task overload, care/manager tension assumptions that are evident in much of the work/life and principalship literature might be questioned.
 8. Colleague assistant principals place importance on principals as work/life role models. They view role models as critical to skill, identity development and self-

efficacy and understand that work/life role models can be positive or negative. The existence of negative and lack of positive role models were identified as disincentives to applying for the principalship. Good work/life role models acted as a positive influence in teachers deciding to apply for the principalship.

9. The features of school organisation that enable principals to achieve work/life balance were increased levels of autonomy, leadership structures, control of workload, efficiency and deliverables, the balance and flexibility possibilities within the role, and shared leadership. The nature of the principals' work itself was seen to be the most important factor. The view expressed was that the work was energising, intrinsically important and never boring. In contrast, features of school organisation that get in the way of principals achieving work/life balance were identified as the extensive workload and long hours, which was largely attributable to DoE's approaches to accountability and performance measurement. What was consistent between all respondents was a view that there needed to be greater attention within DoE to opportunities for rationalising requirements, reducing bureaucratic excesses, and improved planning and scheduling, as well as mindfulness of the impact of central requirements on principals' workload.
10. The possibility exists that the nature of school leaders' work, the way it is executed, the agency exercised and the school culture can be developed to enable school leaders to thrive and contribute positively to their health and well-being. This also requires changes in work design and professional development aimed at developing work/life balance skills.
11. There is support for the contention that work/life balance had the potential to improve principal supply—in retaining and engaging existing principals and attracting teachers to the role. Much research suggests that dissatisfaction with work/life balance is the reason for not applying for the principalship. This study and others point to a diverse range of factors in this regard, with work/life balance being but one. School leaders in this study raised the issue of role models and the image of the principalship, which appear important factors in the issue of principal supply.
12. The study found connections between work/life balance and school leader performance. Links between work/life balance and engagement and well-being were noted. Principals who were successful in effecting work/life balance did not

experience stress and not only loved the job, but found it “do-able” and a source of energy and satisfaction.

13. Findings suggest that there is a need for an affirmative guiding image (a role which is worth doing, is a source of satisfaction and compatible with “having a life”) for the principalship, to improve the group identity of existing school leaders and to support the attraction of applicants to the role.
14. There is strong evidence that the skills and strategies that support work/life balance can be developed through an evidence-based professional development program. This would initiate education managers into the potential of work/life balance in schools and would contribute to school leaders’ work/life balance. The findings of this study point to an approach that addresses organisational and personal spheres, and also to the value of using a “thriving lens” (Spreitzer, 2006) for work/life balance. The latter orientation captures key concepts found important by the Balancers in this study, such as learning, agency, optimism, satisfaction and energy. The work/life accommodation/negotiation (Singh, 2002) and personal mastery (Senge, 1990) frameworks would offer consistent and valuable dimensions to this approach.
15. Solutions to the issue of school leaders’ work/life balance require a multi-pronged approach which includes organisational and individual change, a comprehensive Professional Development program, and recognition of the role of a range of stakeholders affected by and contributing school leaders’ work/life balance. Figure 5 (Section 8.8) depicts a model which links stakeholders, strategies and outcomes and places work/life balance in an organisational, professional and personal effectiveness framework.
16. The Work/life expansionist/enrichment theoretical perspective is supported in this study. Work-family enrichment theory (Greenhaus, 2006) appears to have particular relevance to school leaders’ work/life balance, in relation to skills and perspectives (such as interpersonal, coping, multi-tasking skills and trust), psychological and physical resources (such as self-efficacy, self- esteem, hardiness, optimism, hope and physical health); and flexibility (discretion and control over time and place where roles requirements are met). These elements were identified as contributors to school leaders’ work/life balance.

17. Support for Limoges' (2003) work/life maintenance theory exists. Among the Balancers' strategy repertoires were examples of the 'holding on/letting go' paradigm—balancing workload by abandoning old tasks when adopting new ones—the employment of a mix of strategies, and the practice of offsetting the intensity of work with personal pursuits.
18. Work/family border theories (Clark, 2000, Singh, 2002) offers valuable insight into the efficacy of work/life balance strategies of school leaders. However, the impact of in-domain support may have some unintended consequences. In this study, there was evidence that the Acceptors had support to act as “ideal workers” (Williams, 2000), which meant they had little incentive to achieve work/life balance or to be positive work/life balance role models.

In addition to these findings, a number of generative outcomes were developed. These include; a taxonomy of work/life balance strategies (Section 7.5); a framework for a professional development program (Section 7.8); a work/life balance model (Figure 5.); and recommendations to DoE for system-level actions (Section 8.7).

The recommendations advise (with due caution because of the sample size and exploratory nature of the research) to actions to assist the achievement of the benefits of work/life balance at individual and organisational levels and include:

- making work/life balance a priority
- adopting a thriving lens for work/life balance
- providing professional and personal support
- actively promoting strategies to ensure workload is manageable
- building on strengths
- focussing on care and self-care
- examining deep redesign of the principalship
- Adopting a comprehensive framework for professional development.

8.5 Strengths and Limitations of the Study

This study is important in that it addresses the issue of principals' work/life balance, which has previously been flagged as important in a number of studies but not acted upon. The research provides some assistance in filling a gap in school leadership and work/life research, in that it provides an insight into the *action* of school leadership and the *process* of combining

leadership and personal roles. It provides an original framework for achieving work/life balance and practical recommendations to operationalise the framework. Importantly, it offers a guide to developing a professional development strategy to assist the sustainability of the principalship. The term sustainability refers to moving the picture from one of a languishing principalship (as depicted in Saulwick, 2004), to one of a thriving principalship, and to redesigning the principalship in such a way as to re-engage, retain, attract and sustain principals into the future.

The study is significant in that, as a study of the micro-strategies of school leaders, it throws some light on border management as a means of effecting work/life balance. The Balancers in this study actively managed the physical, mental and temporal borders between work and personal life. They were actively engaged in both work and non-work domains. The study also identified self-efficacy as a mediator of work/life balance, which again is a relatively undeveloped area of work/life research. It may also be the first time thriving is analysed as a lens for achieving work/life balance as it identified the concept of *thriving* (Spreitzer, 2006) in the school leaders' approaches.

Having discussed the strengths and significance of the study, it is, however, recognised that the study is limited in a number of ways. Firstly, it is based on a very small sample. However, comfort might be drawn from the fact that the often-quoted study of factors influencing principals to resign (Duke, 1998) involved a sample of only four principals. Secondly, the interviews were limited in time and scope, as principals are busy people, and nearly all made the point that they are virtually "researched out", so there was a perhaps excessive concern about not taking up too much of their time.

Traditionally, the Appreciative Inquiry method comprises an element of co-operative inquiry. While the approach taken in this study did involve the school leaders as the source of data, other techniques of co-operative inquiry were not employed. Such techniques as sending case studies for comment may have improved the process. However, this may have taken away from the spontaneity and usefulness of the immediate responses that form the study.

A possibly unfounded concern about gaining DoE or University approval for the project deterred the inclusion in the methodology of the perspectives of the partners or family members of the school leaders, perspectives that would have enhanced the study. Perlow (1998), who examined the nature of temporal boundaries between work and life outside of work, included in her in-depth study of 17 employees in a high-tech firm, interviews with spouses. Her development of a typology of Acceptors and Resistors was enhanced by the

cross-referencing of employees' and spouses' categorisations. In reality, some aspects of these issues are examined but largely through the eyes of the principals' narratives.

As gender has, until recently, rightly dominated work/life research, and there is evidence that work/life balance issues have been significant contributors to the lower take-up of principal positions by women (Lacey, 2003a) and is a contributor to both men and women eschewing applying for the principalship (Cranston, 2006). The treatment of gender issues in this study may also be seen as a deficiency. Guided by Thompson (2005), who states that open and honest discussions are needed about the changing behaviour and identity of women and men, the similarities and differences in thinking, and the difficulties faced in putting values and ideals into practice, there was a conscious decision to portray the case studies as gender neutral. There was also a research design decision to "work around the gender issue" to support sample anonymity and to focus on gender equity, rather than on women in the data analysis, and examine other aspects of the gender issue in the Literature Review. The domestic relations between men and women and the significance of life stages on work/life balance were not examined in detail and may have yielded useful insights.

Some critique of the demands made on principals to acquiesce to an accountability-driven definition of educational effectiveness (Fleetwood, 2006, Strahan, 1999) is implicit and explicit in this study. However, it is perhaps done differently from a number of extant approaches. The world view advanced in this study is that such approaches appear to produce few positive outcomes. Drawing on the field of Appreciative Inquiry and Positive Organisational Scholarship, this study focuses on dynamics such as success, resilience and thriving. It seeks to frame positive outcomes.

One of the aspects of the impact of accountability requirements and managerialism, which does receive scrutiny, is that of the issue of care. This issue is a central aspect of the work/life discussion. Saulwick (2004) contends that there is a major challenge for DoE in having the Principal Class almost entirely fit the type of "carer", which results in a "manager/carer tension" and is equated with an inability to make tough managerial decisions. This contrasts with the view of Deal (2000), who notes that care appears to be a fundamental aspect of the principals' role. The enriching contribution of care (for staff, for family, for themselves) is also discussed by Day (2000), who observes that successful school principals promoted care and were characterised by hopefulness.

As the research found that emotions were critical to work/life balance, greater attention to the theories of emotions would have strengthened the research.

Finally, distal factors such as the context and culture of an organisation (and indeed family characteristics) have major influences on the capacity of staff members to balance work and personal life as assumed in this study. However, given that this study is defined in terms of an exploration of personal and organisational strategies, the focus of the research here has been on how immediate contexts and behaviour affect school leaders' development of such strategies. That said, the study does make recommendations in relation to systemic issues, structures and policies.

8.6 *Recommendations for System-Level Actions*

The alarming problems identified in the recent study of Victorian DoE principals' well-being and workload (Saulwick, 2004) may be ameliorated by specific attention to a holistic approach to supporting and promoting positive work/life balance amongst school leaders.

The findings in this study give rise to a number of recommendations that DoE may need to implement to ensure the development of conditions conducive to school leaders' work/life balance. These recommendations, particularly in relation to professional development actions, refer also to the role of other stakeholders (Principals' Association, networks, schools, and individual principals) in effecting work/life balance amongst school leaders.

Some lessons may be learned from the United Kingdom response to a similar workload study, which calls on the National Centre for Educational Leadership (NCEL) and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to address the issue through a range of policy initiatives and by focusing attention on strategies to achieve work/life balance as part of leadership development programs.

The impact of work/life conflict is circular, in that demanding work situations, high stress, poor coping skills, and insufficient time with family and friends undermine work performance. Consequently, the best way to improve employee attitudes, performance and retention is to create better quality jobs and more supportive workplaces, while keeping job demands at reasonable levels (Bond, 1997). There is also a need to be aware that the causes of work/life imbalance are complex. The issue is experienced in a range of other industries and levels of work. It involves deep identity issues and the current high level of attachment to paid work in our society. It also related to political and organisational changes. It relates to such issues as values, gender, risk and legal liability. It is, however, a pressing issue to be tackled in regard to school leaders.

The research findings and literature review suggest that the following areas warrant a policy or practical response by DoE. The recommendations from an educational leadership study in the United Kingdom (Earley, 2002) play an influential role in the formulation of these recommendations. So, too does the simple “mandate” set out in Boris-Schacter (2002) that, as professionals, principals must insist on standards of practice that allow them to:

- focus the majority of their time on instructional leadership
- have a meaningful personal life
- enjoy appropriate support at the workplace
- promote flexible models of the principalship.

In this small exploratory case study of school leaders, there have been findings in relation to individual and organisational strategies that may support school leaders’ work/life balance. The scope of this study is such that the following recommendations for organisational changes are made with a view to improving the work/life balance of school leaders.

8.6.1 Make work/life balance a priority

The observation that principals should “get a life” (Livingstone, 1999) has been made so often that it needs to be addressed seriously and made a top priority if the principalship is to survive so that competent and willing people will want to take up the role in the future (d’Arbon, 2003). Also, work/life balance needs to be a priority so that existing principals can function optimally and so that schools are led by thriving individuals. If work/life balance is a priority, it will need to be addressed proactively and not as a minor by-product of professional development strategies such as mentoring schemes.

DoE needs to promote work/life balance as a value and adopt and implement principles that declare that DoE respects the school leaders’ non-work lives and assists school leaders to devote time and energy to that domain, if that is their wish. School leadership programs need to pay more attention to encouraging participants to develop strategies for balancing work and other aspects of their lives. This needs to extend to the training of school council members and selection panels.

8.6.2 Adopt a thriving lens for work/life balance

Work/life balance can be approached from many viewpoints. However, unless we consider the various school improvement, and professional issues and social imperatives collectively,

optimal outcomes will not be reached. Attempts to make changes, that have let either efficiency or equity issues slip from view, have been largely unsuccessful (Rapoport, 2002). The findings of this study point to the value of using a “thriving” lens for work/life balance, capturing key work and personal concepts found important by the Balancers in this study, such as agency, mastery, learning, energy, task focus and care. Appendix 7 provides a model of thriving which illustrates alignment with these concepts.

8.6.3 Provide professional and personal support

Access to support from DoE and other professionals needs to be made available to principals. School leaders in this study indicated that professional counselling support would be of assistance at various stages in school leaders’ lives, and that when some school leaders were in need of help none was offered. Opportunities should be taken to develop a micro-community (Spreitzer, 2006, Lave, 1991) of support and care, comprising school colleagues, principal peers and family members. The importance of the support of spouses should be acknowledged and supported, through voluntary access to development opportunities.

8.6.4 Actively promote strategies to ensure workload is manageable

Greater control over workload is seen to mediate work/life/family conflict (Bond, 1997; Voydanoff, 1988). More effort is required in making school leadership an attractive and “do-able” task for all those who hold or aspire to such positions, including looking at the workload implications. The Blueprint for Government Schools (DET, 2003) should include a strategy for identifying work that can be eliminated (Mackay, 2006), drawing on the concepts of organised abandonment (Drucker, 1999) and getting rid of tasks, processes and practices and services to make way for the introduction of new ones (Limoges, 2003). It should also draw on the UK Department for Education and Skills Remodelling Process, aimed at enhancing the status, workload and work/life balance of all adults who work in schools.

This study has provided examples of ways of managing the workload. The *Work/Life Balance Taxonomy Highlighting Common Strategies used by Balancers* provides a guide to developing personal strategies to manage work load and work/life balance. DoE needs to look for additional examples of good practice in managing workload and models of school structures, processes and work design that make effective use of administrative and other staff, using appropriate task delegation. It also needs to examine further the use of technology to assist principals to “get on top of the workload” and indeed thrive in the workplace.

8.6.5 Build on strengths

Consistent with the understanding that the principalship needs an affirmative guiding image, it is recommended that DoE recognises school leaders' wealth of expertise and builds on this strength. The professional development options are based on building on strength as a foundation element. This may extend to employing the strengths of school leaders, who, for example, are approaching retirement, to share good practices learnt over the years. Flexible or part-time work arrangements may support this.

8.6.6 Focus on care and self-care

Care appears to be a fundamental aspect of the principal's role (Peterson, 2000; Day, 2000) and should be nurtured rather than problematised. This is not to suggest that care is the only aspect of leadership that is important, or that it resides only in the "soft" aspects of leadership (an assumption made in Saulwick, 2004, in stating that the fact that principals found difficulty in applying managerial ruthlessness which they attributed to having a caring or pastoral approach to managing). Indeed, asserting that "*having the Principal Class almost entirely fit the type—carer*" is a negative situation, "*a challenge*" characterised as "*manager/carertension*" (Saulwick, 2004), appears to be an extraordinary comment. Care may, in fact, be framed as strength. Attitude is something that is intrinsic and very hard to develop. The enriching contribution of "care" (for staff, for family, for themselves) is discussed by Day (2000), who also observes that successful school principals promoted care and were characterised by hopefulness. Mackay (2000) suggests that, in fact, care should be a capability and its exercise be appraised as a part of the performance management system.

A range of skills, such as enabling the blending of technical/managerial with symbolic/artistic leadership skills (suggested by Deal (1994)), will be called upon. Care may have a role in all aspects of leadership, from tough decision-making to self-care. It appears to contribute to positive staff relationships which these school leaders, particularly the Balancers enjoy.

8.6.7 Examine deep redesign of the principalship

Rethinking and redesigning the principalship certainly accommodates the concept of sharing leadership, and of matching the type of leadership to the needs of the school. This extends to applying the principles and practice (the rhetoric and the reality) of the DoE *Flexible Work Option* policy to the Principal Class. Where the case can be made that the needs of the school and the individual are best met through some form of flexible work arrangement (e.g. job sharing), it should be instituted.

Rethinking and redesigning also embraces the need for rethinking capability statements, such as the inclusion of a much more positive approach to self-management. Currently, there is reference to restraining emotions, but no mention of self-efficacy or of ensuring positive emotions. A finding in this study is that self-efficacy and the creation of positive emotions are important in effecting work/life balance.

A number of commentators point to the need to reconceptualise the principalship in a way that emphasises educational leadership. Balancers in this study were clear that student learning was the driver of decision-making.

DoE needs to ensure that leadership programs introduce school leaders to guiding management philosophies and frameworks that support school effectiveness. A core management philosophy or set of leadership practices is a key contributor to work/life balance—this includes an approach to priority setting, decision-making, work organisation, and shared leadership. In addition they need to articulate values and competencies relating to work/life balance, self-regulation of positive emotions and caring, as well as how to develop learning strategies around them. Performance appraisal systems need to acknowledge such competencies.

A number of commentators on principalship allude to the negative representation of the role (Blackmore, 2002; Lacey, 2002). Cooperrider (1987) helps us to see that the greatest obstacle to the well-being of an ailing group is the projection that currently guides the group. When groups find that attempts to fix problems create more problems, or the same problems never go away (as the school leaders in this study reported), it is a clear signal of the inadequacy of the group's current affirmative projection. It also highlights the need for the redesign of the principalship to project a positive projection to guide principals' own views of the group, and ultimately the views of potential applicants for the role.

8.6.8 Adopt a comprehensive framework for professional development

A major recommendation is that support be given to the development and implementation of a work/life balance professional development initiative, as outlined in Chapter 7. In particular, support for an approach based on the concept of thriving is required. This support would extend to the provision of resources such as support material and the collection and dissemination of good practices. A dedicated website, similar to the UK Teacher Support Network website (www.teachersupport.info), which would include links to such sites as The

Thriving Self section of the Staff Matters website

<http://cms.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters/staff/index.htm> is suggested.

8.7 Summary of Recommendations for DoE action

These recommendations include:

- Making work/life balance a priority
- Adopting a thriving lens for work/life balance
- Providing professional and personal support
- Actively promoting strategies to ensure workload is manageable
- Building on strengths
- Focusing on care and self-care
- Examining deep redesign of the principalship
- Adopting a comprehensive framework for professional development

8.8 Work/Life Balance for Principals Model

The findings of the study and the recommendations emanating from the analysis inform the following *Work/Life Balance for Principals Model* (Figure 7), which offers a holistic approach to supporting work/life balance of school principals. The model may serve as a guide for individual school leaders, for those involved in framing professional development programs and supporting the co-creation of individual support communities; and for DoE policy responses.

Work/Life Balance Model

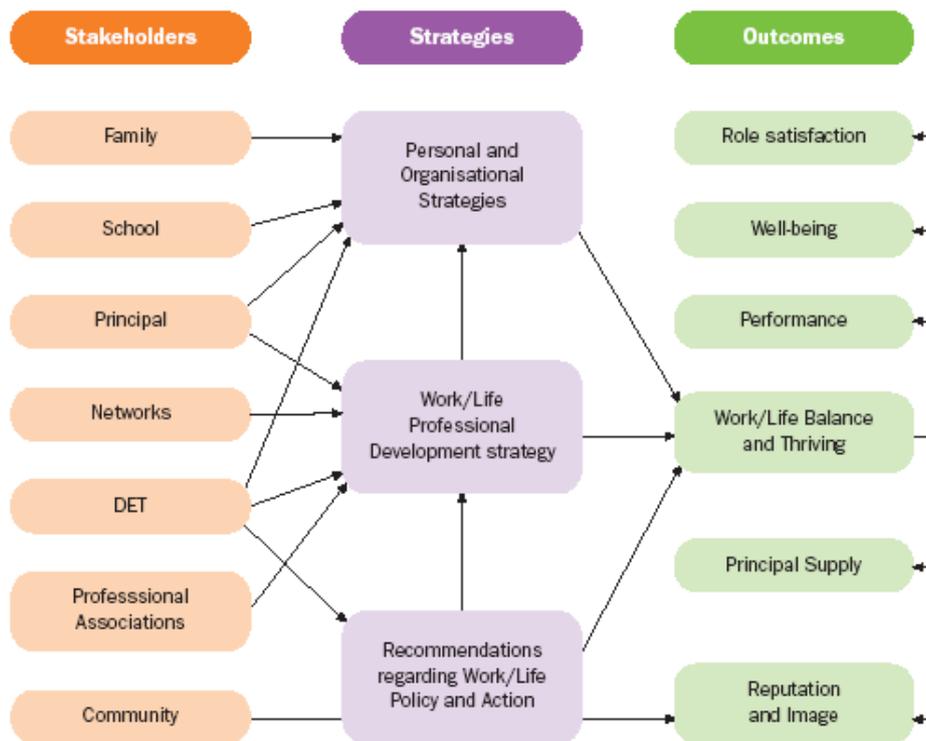


Figure 7. Work/Life Balance for Principals Model

8.9 Conclusion

The study demonstrates that linking work/life balance and changes to the principalship is a strategic opportunity to design the principalship in ways that benefit school objectives and school leaders' personal lives. Furthermore, it suggests that failure to make this link has some negative consequences for individual principal's competence, well-being and for system supply and succession planning. It suggests that the beliefs that currently define the principalship may need to be questioned. At the moment, principals find high satisfaction in the job—"the privilege"—but are concerned about the deleterious aspects—"the price". However, if work intensifies and extensifies (Webster, 2004), and erodes quality of life, it may well be that fewer teachers will be attracted to the principalship.

The findings of this study point to the importance of supporting individual principal's agency, confidence, efficacy, mastery, energy and effectiveness, and utilising/adapting and adding to strategies and habits that have been found to support work/life balance. It recommends ensuring that systems are improved so that structures and cultures are more supportive of principals. The importance of providing positive examples of work/life balance amongst school principals and promoting an affirmative projection to guide members of the Principal Class into the future is indicated.

Just as there can be no quick fixes, there will be *no one single best practice* for dealing with the challenge of work-personal life integration, but rather in a context of multiple agendas, and multiple practices. DoE and school leaders themselves must work out solutions that account for individual, collective, social and school needs within the various systems such as families, communities and workplaces, where work-personal life issues arise. The availability of appropriate professional development is recommended as a positive contribution.

The study has highlighted the need to consider such issues as the role of care and multiple roles as a source of energy, and that work/life balance as attainable—not at the expense of high performance, but as a contributor to it.

The study called for ensuring that joy and fun are part of the role of school leaders, not only because school leaders are role models for students and teachers, but also to ensure that principals and their families thrive. The role of the school leader requires energy and vitality. While for some it may require a personal transformation of vision and authentic responses, achieving work/life balance and thriving seems to be both attainable and essential for school

leaders to achieve the energy to carry out this important role. This study concludes with a poignant statement from Burford (2004):

There must be a Yin to this Yang, and it's care for yourself and those around you! If there weren't joy in the principalship why would one subject themselves to these pressures? The difficulties being experienced by many systems with succession planning for the supply of new educational leaders speak to the importance of putting joy back into the role.

But our gardening, fishing, painting, music, golf, family, and friends are probably the things that make us the people we are and give us the visions we have of what's important and as such we need to nourish and protect them if we are to bring a sense of purpose and joy to our lives and to the lives of the ones we touch, which leads me to the issue of humour and joy in our lives.

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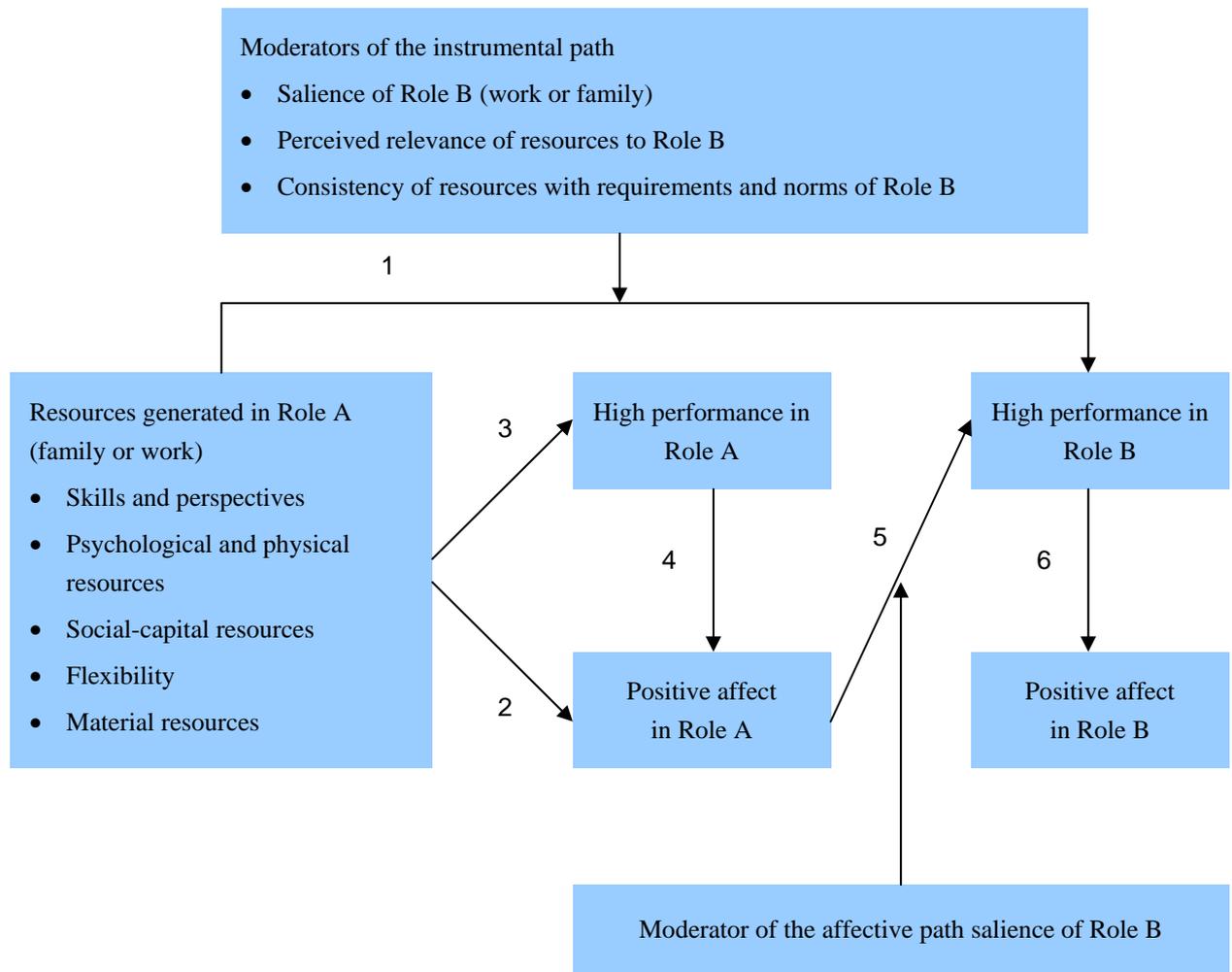
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Work-Life Enrichment Model



The model illustrates how experiences in Role A (work or family) can improve the quality of life in Role B (family or work).

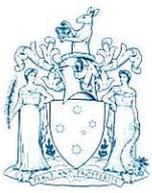
It proposes that the resources generated in Role A can promote high performance and positive affect in Role B depending on the salience of Role, the perceived relevance of the resource to Role B and the consistency of the resource with the requirements and norms of Role B.

The model identifies five types of resources that can be generated in a role:

- Skills and perspectives
- Psychological and physical resources
- Social-capital resources
- Flexibility
- Material resources.

It identifies two types of mechanisms or paths by which resources are generated – instrumental (direct effect) and affective (positive affect).

Source: Greenhaus, J.H. & Powell, G. (2006). When Work and Family are allies: A Theory of Work and Family Enrichment, *Academy of Management Review*, 31(1) p. 79.



Office of Learning and Teaching

SOS002635

Ms Marie Crozier-Durham
27 Claremont Avenue
MALVERN 3144

Dear Ms Crozier-Durham

I refer to your application of 25 March 2004 in which you request permission to conduct a research study in Victorian government schools titled: *Work/Life Balance: Personal and Organisational Strategies of School Leaders*.

I am pleased to advise that on the basis of the information you have provided your research proposal is approved in principle subject to the conditions detailed below.

1. Should your institution's ethics committee require changes or you decide to make changes, these changes must be submitted to the Department of Education & Training for its consideration before you proceed.
2. You obtain approval for the research to be conducted in each school directly from the principal. Details of your research, copies of this letter of approval and the letter of approval from the relevant ethics committee are to be provided to the principal. The final decision as to whether or not your research can proceed in a school rests with the principal.
3. No student is to participate in this research study unless they are willing to do so and parental permission is received. Sufficient information must be provided to enable parents to make an informed decision and their consent must be obtained in writing.
4. As a matter of courtesy, you should advise the relevant Regional Director of the schools you intend to approach. An outline of your research and a copy of this letter should be provided to the Regional Director.
5. Any extensions or variations to the research proposal, additional research involving use of the data collected, or publication of the data beyond that normally associated with academic studies will require a further research approval submission.

6. At the conclusion of your study, a copy or summary of the research findings should be forwarded to the Research Branch, Department of Education & Training, Level 2, 33 St Andrews Place GPO Box 4367 Melbourne 3001.

I wish you well with your research study. Should you have further enquiries on this matter, please contact Louise Dressing, Senior Policy Officer, Research on 9637 2349.

Yours sincerely

John McCarthy

John McCarthy
Assistant General Manager
Research and Innovation Division

1 / 6 / 2004

enc

INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS (Principals)

My name is Marie Crozier-Durham. I am a Master of Education by research student in the School of Education at Victoria University.

My research is entitled: Work/life Balance: Personal and Organisational Strategies of School Leaders

Invitation to participate

I would like to invite you to be part of a study focussed on School Principals- exploring their views and experience of work/life balance and their strategies to manage commitments in their work and non-work domains, and finding how work/life balance can be managed and utilised to improve school capability, especially the supply of school leaders.

Details of the research

The context for the research includes the link between work/life balance and principal supply, the acknowledged pressure experienced by principals, roles modelled by current school leaders and impact on teachers' decisions to apply for principal positions, and that little known about successful models of work/life balance, especially of managers.

The study has been approved by the Department of Education and Training, Research and Innovation Division

The aim of the study is to explore how a selected group of school Principals supports their work/life balance. In addition, the research seeks to explore the perceptions held by colleague Assistant Principals as to the strategies used by each Principal to achieve work/life balance. The intention of the research is that its findings be applied to the identification of individual work/life balance strategies, and of desirable changes in the nature of school principalship, to support principals' work/life balance and principal supply and succession planning. It is intended that the study will provide a framework for a professional development program, designed to initiate education managers into the potential of work/life balance.

The proposed study will be a qualitative, exploratory study of approximately sixteen school leaders (principals and assistant principals) in eight Victorian State schools. Because little information is available, my view is that this research may be best served by using approaches, which allow successful school leaders to tell their stories.

Sample Selection

The selection criteria for Principals' involvement in the study are:

- the Principal's or School's reputation in relation to implementing DE&T's *Flexible Work Options: achieving work-life balance* program (indicated by: involvement in/ recognition by the DE&T Diversity Network;
- participation in the Flexible Work in Schools project or DE&T Flexible Work Working Party;
- recommendation by the DE&T Equity and Diversity Manager

This will provide a sample of male and female, secondary and primary schools leaders through a stratified random procedure. You are therefore being asked to be involved in the study.

Details of the data collection process

I wish to conduct a tape-recorded (audio taped) forty minute interview with you in Term 3, 2004. The contents of the interview will be confidential and the final thesis will include a collective case study, using pseudonyms, which will be non-identifying of individual participants. Data will be stored in a secure place and remain confidential. The interviews will be framed in a positive fashion (rather than problem centred), seeking to find and build on positive experience and examples. So interviews will be semi-structured and focus on identifying the best/peak experience of work/life balance, seeking to understand what contributed to peak experiences, and exploring ideas for new possibilities for the principalship in the future

Involvement of the Assistant Principal

I am seeking to also conduct interviews with Assistant Principals to triangulate the data, and seek additional perspectives on future Principal supply. It is hoped that Principals approached will take part in the study, and agree to the involvement of their Assistant Principal. Involvement of Principals is not contingent, however, on agreeing to the involvement of the school's Assistant Principal.

Risks

Given the positive (as opposed to problem-centred) approach to be employed in this study, there appear to be few social or psychological risks associated with this study. However, it must be recognised that in any study where managerial and personal strategies are explored some risks do exist. Counselling services provided by Victoria University would be available. The services of a trained psychologist, Professor Maureen Ryan, Faculty of Education, is available, if required. However, my experience as an interviewer, and the fact that information is confidential and non-identifying, should ensure minimum likelihood of anything adverse occurring- indeed it is my hope that this is an enjoyable, enlightening and positive experience for all involved.

You may at any time withdraw from the process. throughout the project. My supervisor and I would be pleased to discuss aspects of the research with you.

I look forward to receiving the enclosed reply form.

Marie Crozier-Durham

Associate Professor Tony Kruger

INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS (Assistant Principals)

My name is Marie Crozier-Durham. I am a Master of Education by research student in the School of Education at Victoria University.

My research is entitled: Work/life Balance: Personal and Organisational Strategies of School Leaders

Invitation to participate

I would like to invite you if to be part of a study focussed on School Principals- exploring their views and experience of work/life balance and their strategies to manage commitments in their work and non-work domains, and finding how work/life balance can be managed and utilised to improve school capability, especially the supply of school leaders.

Please note: I have asked and received permission of the School Principal to make this invitation. You are free to either accept or reject the invitation. Your answer will not be made known to the Principal.

The context for the research includes the link between work/life balance and principal supply, the acknowledged pressure experienced by principals, roles modelled by current school leaders identified and impact on teachers' principal positions, and hat little known about successful models of work/life balance, especially of managers.

The study has been approved by the Department of Education and Training, Research and Innovation Division

Details of the Study

The aim of the study is to explore how a selected group of school Principals supports their work/life balance. In addition, the research seeks to explore the perceptions held by colleague Assistant Principals as to the strategies used by each Principal to achieve work/life balance. The intention of the research is that its findings be applied to the identification of individual work/life balance strategies, and of desirable changes in the nature of school principalship, to support principals' work/life balance and principal supply and succession planning. It is intended that the study will provide a framework for a professional development program, designed to initiate education managers into the potential of work/life balance.

The proposed study will be a qualitative, exploratory study of approximately sixteen school leaders (Principals and Assistant Principals) in eight Victorian State schools. Because little information is available, my view is that this research may be best served by using approaches, which allow successful school leaders to tell their stories.

The selection criteria for Principals' involvement in the study are:

- the Principal's or School's reputation in relation to implementing DE&T's *Flexible Work Options: achieving work-life balance* program (indicated by: involvement in/ recognition by the DE&T Diversity Network;

- participation in the Flexible Work in Schools project or DE&T Flexible Work Working Party;
- recommendation by the DE&T Equity and Diversity Manager

This will provide a sample of male and female, secondary and primary schools leaders through a stratified random procedure.

Involvement of the Assistant Principal

You are being asked to be involved in the study, following the agreement of the Principal to personally participate and for me to approach you, to seek your involvement.

I wish to conduct interviews with Assistant Principals to triangulate the data gained from the Principals, and to seek additional perspectives on future Principal supply. It is hoped most Principals approached will take part in the study, and also agree to the involvement of their Assistant Principal. Involvement of Principals is not contingent on agreeing to the involvement of the school's Assistant Principal, or on the agreement of the Assistant Principal being involved.

I am seeking to explore Assistant Principals' perspectives on:

- the practices employed by Principals to achieve work/life balance
- how you perceive the work/life balance of the Principal
- what features of school organisation and personal practice enable the Principal to achieve work/life balance
- what features of school organization and personal practice get in the way of Principals achieving work/life balance
- your ideas on how the principalship might be changed to provide better opportunities for principals to achieve work/life balance.
- the impact attention to work/life balance issues might have on supporting school leaders and on future principal supply.
- what might be included in a research based professional development program, which initiates education managers into the potential of work/life balance.

Data collection process

I wish to conduct a tape- recorded (audio-taped) forty minute interview with you in Term 2 or 3, 2004. The contents of the interview will be confidential and the final thesis will include a collective case study, using pseudonyms, which will be non-identifying of individual participants. Data will be stored in a secure place and remain confidential. I wish to conduct a tape- recorded (audio taped) forty minute interview with you in Term 2, 2004. The contents of the interview will be confidential and the final thesis will include a collective case study, using pseudonyms, which will be non-identifying of individual participants. Data will be stored in a secure place and remain confidential.

The interview will be framed in a positive fashion (rather than being problem centred) , seeking to find and build on positive experience and examples. So interviews will be semi-structured and focus on

identifying the best/peak experience of work/life balance, seeking to understand what contributed to peak experiences, and exploring ideas for new possibilities for the principalship in the future

Risks

Given the positive (as opposed to problem-centred) approach to be employed in this study, there appear to be few social or psychological risks associated with this study. However, it must be recognised that in any study where managerial and personal strategies are explored some risks do exist. My experience as an interviewer, and the fact that information is confidential and non-identifying, should ensure minimum likelihood of anything adverse occurring- indeed it is my hope that this is an enjoyable, enlightening and positive experience for all involved.

If you agree to participate, the interview will be carried out privately, in the Principal's absence. I am prepared to conduct the interview with you at a time and place of your choosing, if necessary away from the school.

You may at any time withdraw from the process. Counselling services are available to participants through Victoria University at any time throughout the project. The services of a trained psychologist, Professor Maureen Ryan, Faculty of Education, is available, if required. My supervisor and I would be pleased to discuss aspects of the research with you.

Reply

I hope you will agree to be part of this study and please note that involvement of the Principals is not contingent on agreement to the involvement by the school's Assistant Principal. I look forward to receiving the enclosed form, and hope it indicates your willingness to be interviewed.

I look forward to receiving the enclosed reply form.

Marie Crozier-Durham

Associate Professor Tony Kruger

Research Project Involving Human Subjects

Revocation of Consent Form for Subjects Involved in Research

Used for participants who wish to withdraw from the project

I,

of (address),

.....

hereby wish to WITHDRAW my consent to participate in the research proposal described in the Plain Language Statement for the Masters of Education (Research) called:

Work/Life Balance: Personal and Organisational Strategies

and understand that such withdrawal WILL NOT jeopardise any treatment or my relationship with Victoria University.

Any data already collected may/may not be included in the research project.

Signature: Date:

**Victoria University of Technology
Consent Form for participants Involved in Research**

CERTIFICATION BY PARTICIPANT (Principal)

I,

of

certify that I am at least 18 years old* and that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate to be approached in the research entitled:

Work/Life Balance: Personal and Organisational Strategies of School Leaders

being conducted at Victoria University of Technology by:

Marie Crozier-Durham
Master of Education Candidate
Victoria University of Technology

I certify that the objectives of the research, together with any risks to me associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me by:

Marie Crozier-Durham

and that I freely consent to participation (and that of the Assistant Principal [Name]) (*strike out if not approving an approach to the Assistant Principal*)

Procedures:

One-to- one , tape recorded , semi- structured interviews, covering

- their work and life histories.
- ways of managing work and non-work domains- work/life perspectives and experience
- organisational work/ life perspective and experience – views and track record in relation to implementing such strategies as: integrating work/life issues into school HRM strategy, flexible work options, work redesign, culture change, emotions, and gender equity.
- the role of school leader regarding work/life balance- decisionmaking, role-model
- future options for principalship, shared leadership, flexible work options

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that I can withdraw from this research at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way.

I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

Signed: }

Witness other than the experimenter: }

Date:

.....}

CERTIFICATION BY PARTICIPANT (Assistant Principal)

I,

of

certify that I am at least 18 years old and that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the research entitled:

Work/Life Balance: Personal and Organisational Strategies of School Leaders

being conducted at Victoria University of Technology by:

Marie Crozier-Durham
Master of Education Candidate

Victoria University of Technology

I certify that the objectives of the research, together with any risks to me associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me by:

Marie Crozier-Durham

and that I freely consent to participation involving the use on me of these procedures.

Procedures:

One-to- one , tape recorded , semi- structured interviews, covering

- their work and life histories.
- ways of managing work and non-work domains- work/life perspectives and experience
- organisational work/ life perspective and experience – views and track record in relation to implementing such strategies as: integrating work/life issues into school HRM strategy, flexible work options, work redesign, culture change, emotions, and gender equity.
- the role of school leader regarding work/life balance- decisionmaking, role-model
- future options for principalship, shared leadership, flexible work options

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that I can withdraw from this research at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way.

I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

Signed: }

Witness other than the researcher : }

Date:

.....}

Interview Protocol – Principal

Discovery

1. Could you give me a brief life history
2. Could you give me a brief work history
3. How satisfied are you with your work/life balance?

Understanding

4. What are the factors that made balancing your job and your personal life possible?
5. What strategies do you use to try to balance work and personal life?
6. Who are the people who help with your work/life balance, both at work and outside of work?
7. What were the most important factors in the school/role that support work/life balance? (E.g., policies, procedures, leadership style, organization, staff support, and workload.)
8. What is your daily or weekly schedule like?
9. What aspects of the role support work/life balance?
10. What aspects of the role get in the way of work/life balance?

Amplification

11. What you would like to see done differently or better in order to help you get your work done and to balance your job and life outside of work.
12. Tell me about how you address of flexibility and work/life balance with staff this issue with staff.
13. What work/life issues are relevant to principalship? Are there any innovations, new models of principal ship you can think of which would assist principals achieve a satisfactory balance between work and personal life?
14. What would you include in a professional development program aimed at supporting work/life balance?

Interview Protocol – Assistant Principal

Discovery

1. Could you give me a brief life history
2. Could you give me a brief work history
3. How satisfied are you with your work/life balance?

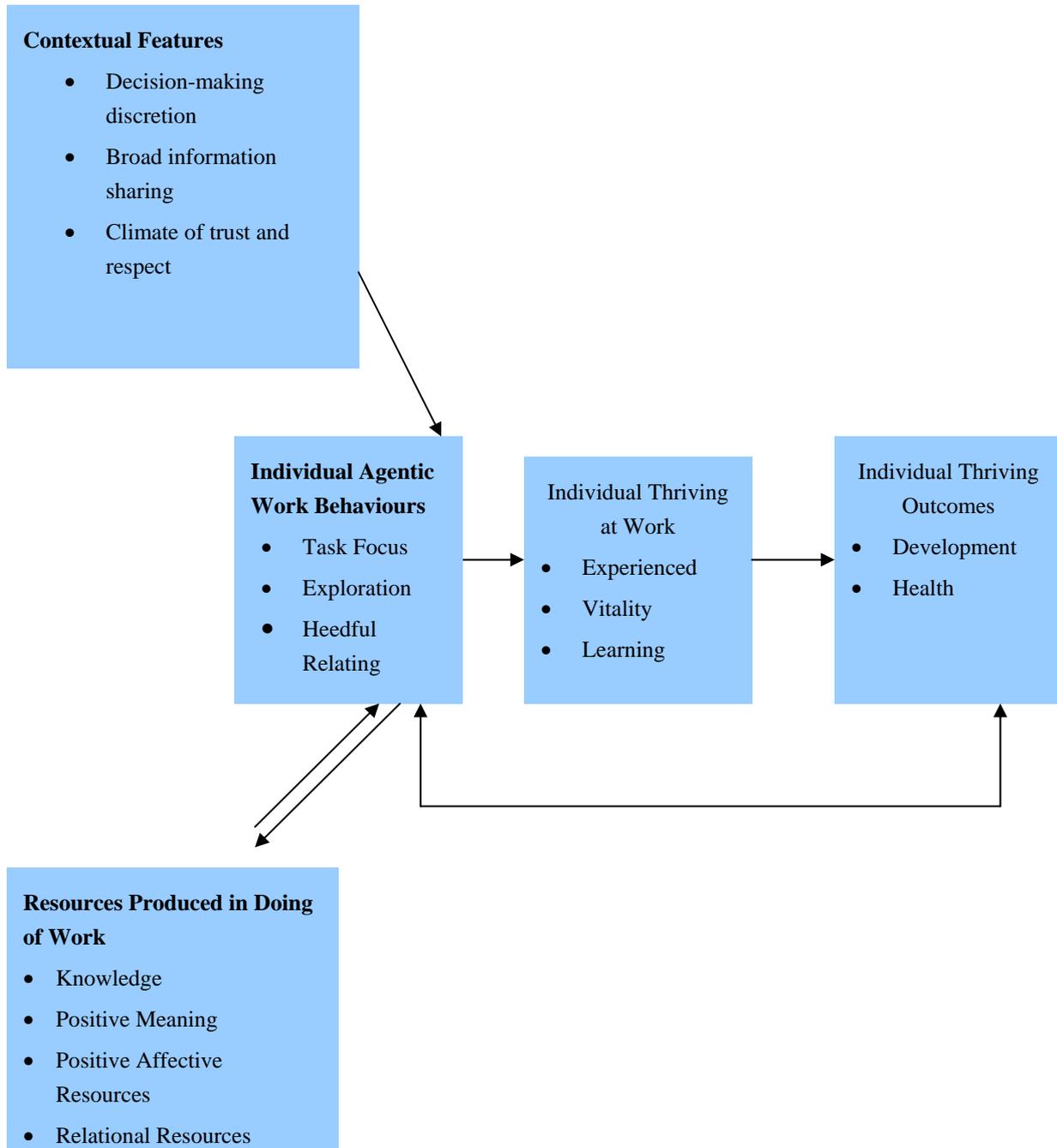
Understanding

4. What are the factors that made balancing your job and your personal life possible?
5. What strategies do you use to try to balance work and personal life?
6. Who are the people who help with your work/life balance, both at work and outside of work?
7. What were the most important factors in the school/role that support work/life balance? (E.g., policies, procedures, leadership style, organization, staff support, and workload.)
8. What is your daily or weekly schedule like?
9. What aspects of the role support work/life balance?
10. What aspects of the role get in the way of work/life balance?

Amplification

11. What is your impression of the Principals' work/life balance?
12. What you would like to see done differently or better in order to help you get your work done and to balance your job and life outside of work?
13. What are your career aspirations in relation to the Principalship? How relevant are work/life balance issues in your decision-making regarding the principalship?
14. What work/life issues are relevant to principalship? Are there any innovations, new models of principal ship you can think of which would assist principals achieve a satisfactory balance between work and personal life?
15. What would you include in a professional development program aimed at supporting work/life balance?

The Social Embeddedness of Thriving at Work Framework



Source: Spreitzer, G., Sutcliffe, K., Dutton, J. & Grant, A.(2005) *A socially embedded model of thriving at work*, *Organisational Science*, (16(5) , 2005 537- 549