Independent school principals' wellbeing: Exploration of inhibitors and enablers

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy by

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

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I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources
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GLOSSARY

AACS	Australian Association of Christian Schools
ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
AHISA	Association of Heads of Independent Schools Australia
AICD	Australian Institute of Company Directors
AISNSW	Association of Independent Schools New South Wales
ASC	Anglican Schools Corporation
ATAR	Australian Tertiary Admission Rank
CAQDAS	Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
CECNSW	Catholic Education Commission New South Wales
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CSA	Christian Schools Australia
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
ICSEA	Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage
ISCA	Independent Schools Council of Australia
NESA	New South Wales Education Standards Authority
NSW	New South Wales, Australia
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
QCEC	Queensland Catholic Education Commission
SES	Socio-Economic Status
SRS	School Resource Standard

TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TEMAG	Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group
WHO	World Health Organisation

DIAGRAMS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the enabling and inhibiting factors that impact on the wellbeing of principals of independent schools in Australia. The wellbeing of the principal in an independent school directly influences their ability to operate an effective school. Principals in all schools have key management roles and take responsibility for successful educational outcomes (social, performance, sporting and academic) of students and the wellbeing of students, staff and parents.

The study contributes to the knowledge of factors affecting principals, of the ways they create and utilise strategies and provides insights to assist newly appointed principals. As little research exists in this area, this thesis contributes to a broader understanding of the issues.

A plethora of research exists regarding student or learner wellbeing, and even teacher wellbeing. The bulk of this work relates to programs which support and inform students, parents and teachers about resilience and mental health. This makes the exploration of wellbeing for principals timely and highly legitimate. The intention of this thesis is to inform those responsible for employing principals in these schools. The findings are aimed at providing insights and directions for employers of principals.

The overarching methodology of this study is phenomenological, working within a hermeneutic interpretive paradigm. It involves the participation of 39 Australian independent school principals with interviews employed as the primary research method. The project developed a theoretical model to assist current principals and newly appointed principals of independent schools to operationalize pathways that seek to create improved and increased professional wellbeing.

The research findings have implications regarding principals' self-imposed actions for improved wellbeing. The study concludes with an identification of related areas for further research.