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## Teacher and Staff Wellbeing: Understanding the Experiences of School Staff

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Around the world, schools have the mandate to prepare children and young people for the future, in a global context that is challenging and ever-changing (Global Happiness Council, 2018). Even as teachers attempt to prepare students for academic success, instil core academic skills, and prepare them for an unknown future, they also must navigate the many mental health challenges that students present. Across the world, the prevalence of mental illness—including anxiety, depression, self-harm, eating disorders, and externalising disorders—has increased at alarming rates, with first occurrences increasingly occurring at younger ages (Birmaher et al., 1996; Kessler & Bromer, 2013). These pressures not only impact young people, but also can have deleterious effects on teachers, leaders, and non-teaching staff. If students are to be well, then positive education must be inclusive of the staff that engage with children and young people on a daily basis.

This chapter highlights the importance of teacher and staff wellbeing as a critical determinant in the achievement of positive social and academic learning outcomes. I begin by situating the extent of staff wellbeing within existing literature, considering influences on teachers' work and wellbeing. Next, I consider what wellbeing means in the context of education. I then offer two case studies from Australia and Canada, which point to the importance of teacher wellbeing. I conclude by drawing together the key findings

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from both studies with a view to advance the wellbeing of teachers, leaders, and non-teaching staff for employers, policymakers, and government.

## Teacher Quality and Wellbeing

It is well acknowledged that teachers are the most important in-school factor contributing to student success, satisfaction, and achievement; for all children regardless of their circumstances, location, or social status (Hattie, 2009). In Australia, for instance, the 2015 Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG) report declared that enhancing the capability of teachers is vital to raising the overall quality of Australia's school system and lifting student outcomes. Teacher quality, retention, satisfaction, and wellbeing are key elements for a sustained profession, to maintain motivation, and prepare teachers to fulfil aspirational outcomes as leaders (McCallum & Price, 2016). Yet for a number of reasons, quality, retention, and satisfaction are all being challenged, with consequences for both teachers and students.

### Teacher Quality

Teacher quality is an important contributor to quality student learning outcomes (Hattie, 2009) and a main driver affecting variations in student learning (Harding et al., 2019). Teachers are a precious asset to schools and the communities in which they work (Flores, 2019; Mingren & Shiquan, 2018). Hattie (2015) found that teachers with high expectations of their students had the greatest influence on student learning. Research on teacher quality points to the importance of teacher selection, performance, and accountability (Darling-Hammond, 2012).

It is an important time to recruit, develop, and retain great teachers (Edge et al., 2017). Increased global accountability and scrutiny and surveys such as the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study have created greater transparency for policymakers, education leaders, and teachers to critique as well as reflect on educational outcomes and performance (Fullan & Pinchot, 2018; Hitt & Meyers, 2018). There is a growing body of evidence regarding the roles that teachers play in enhancing educational outcomes. For example, teacher quality, attitude, effectiveness, and motivation are found to be essential in high-performing systems, and teacher wellbeing is closely related to teacher quality (Mingren & Shinquan, 2018).

## Teacher Recruitment and Retention

Worryingly, there are global concerns about teacher supply for maintaining a stable and effective workforce. A survey of 25 countries across the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) found that about half of the countries are struggling to maintain an adequate supply of good quality teachers (OECD, 2005, 2018). A shortage of teachers exists in England (House of Commons, Education Committee, 2017) and similar issues have been reported in the United States (Aragon, 2016; Sutchter, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016), with shortages in some sectors within Australia (Mason & Matas, 2015). Fewer people are attracted to teaching as a career option (Heidmets & Liik, 2014; OECD, 2014; Schleicher, 2018), and for those that do enter the profession, retention is a major issue. Many graduates are leaving the profession within the first five years (Hugo, 2007; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Parker, Martin, Colmar, & Liem, 2012; Tang et al., 2018). In the United States, a decade ago, 33% of teachers left their schools in the first three years, and 46% after five years (Brill & McCartney, 2008), with this trend continuing across the last decade. While there are localised variations in attrition rates, in general the rate of loss to the profession in many countries is around 40–50% over the five years post entry (den Brok, Wubbels, & van Tartwijk, 2017; Gallant & Riley, 2014).

These trends and statistics revealing concerns in maintaining a quality workforce are at a time where forecasts of an increase in student numbers is expected. The projected demands for schoolteachers between 2016 and 2030 show an estimated 100% growth in demand in China and India, 50–99% in Germany, and 25–49% in Mexico (Manyika et al., 2017). In Australia, student numbers are projected to increase to 255,756 students by 2031 (McCrinkle, 2017). If the average classroom caters 24 students, schools will need to find space and resources for approximately 710 additional classes per year over this period. Thus, the demand for teachers is likely to increase in the foreseeable future.

Clearly, high-quality teachers and staff must be attracted to and retained within the profession. The extent to which this is achieved is highly dependent on their wellbeing. Teacher stress, whether perceived or actual, is a key factor that impacts the recruitment of new teachers and their intention to stay or leave. Reports on teacher safety by students, and in some cases parents, have been increasingly published since Day and Qing's (2009) finding that "many teachers work in environments that are hostile to their wellbeing" (p. 16). In a study on teacher wellbeing in Australia (McCallum, Price, Graham, & Morrison, 2017), it was found that teacher wellbeing was

not considered a concern in the then-current sociopolitical climate. Teachers in that study commented that the focus was on student results, and teachers were struggling to manage the competing interests and demands placed upon them. Teachers experienced burnout and early career teachers considered leaving the profession.

Teacher quality is being challenged in part due to a failure to shift patterns of poor educational outcomes and extensive emphasis on standardised testing and academic achievement, at the expense of the holistic development of young people. These challenges are resulting in the large numbers of teachers leaving the profession early (e.g., Craig, 2017; den Brok et al., 2017), and high rates of emotional burnout, stress, and physical and mental health issues for those within the profession (e.g., Burns & Machin, 2013; Cook et al., 2017; Mattern & Bauer, 2014; Scheuch, Haufe, & Seibt, 2015; Vazi et al., 2013; Vesely, Saklofske, & Nordstokke, 2014; Yang, Ge, Hu, Chi, & Wang, 2009). It is critically important that policymakers, employers, and other stakeholders take seriously the wellbeing of staff.

## Teacher Wellbeing

McCallum and Price (2010, 2016) advocate that for children and young people to be well, teachers must also be well. The education of children and young people is at the core of teachers' work, and their success underpins their daily effort, enthusiasm, and commitment. Well teachers are able to contribute to the social, emotional, cognitive, spiritual, and physical wellbeing of their students (Darling-Hammond, 2012; Hattie, 2009, 2015; Rubie-Davies, 2014; Wyn, 2009). They also contribute to the academic development of their students. And research is now beginning to acknowledge the important role that non-teaching staff have in this goal, and increasingly recognising the role of school leadership. The whole school ecosystem is important for our children and young people to complete their schooling years in a well and happy state, ready to contribute as productive and positive citizens.

Well teachers also contribute to the school as a whole. In organisations, numerous studies find that employee wellbeing and effectiveness are connected, with greater productivity and performance by the employee, and better outcomes for the organisation (Roffey, 2012; Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011). While less work has been done in the education space, the studies that do exist find that teachers with higher wellbeing report greater commitment and satisfaction (e.g., Kern, Waters, Adler, & White, 2014), and high teacher wellbeing correlates with better student academic outcomes (e.g.,

Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steca, & Malone, 2006; Ostroff, 1992; PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007). For example, Briner and Dewberry (2007) found that 8% of the variation of Standard Assessment Test scores in the U.K. were accounted for by teacher wellbeing. Teacher motivation has also been linked to student achievement, for “when teachers become burned out, or worn out, their students’ achievement outcomes are likely to suffer because they are more concerned with their personal survival” (Watt & Richardson, 2013, p. 272).

Coleman (2009) aptly noted that “schools are communities containing not just children and young people, but adults as well”. As such, he suggested that:

It might even be argued that the quickest way to promote student wellbeing in schools would be to promote high staff morale, enhance staff awareness of emotions, and provide high quality training and support for all the adults working in the school. (p. 290)

McCallum and Price (2010) purported a similar argument, suggesting that teachers need a wellbeing strategy in place for their wellbeing and effectiveness in the classroom. Sisask et al. (2014) found that teachers with high wellbeing are more likely to assist children with mental health challenges. Similarly, other studies conclude that the preconditions for teachers to improve the mental health of their students include providing them with a good school environment, valuing the subjective psychological wellbeing of the teachers, and providing adequate training to fulfil their gatekeeper role (Opfer, 2016; Roffey, 2012; Salter-Jones, 2012; Sisask et al., 2014; Tyson, Roberts, & Kane, 2009).

Unfortunately, despite the potential benefits of focusing on teacher and staff wellbeing, it is not seen as a central priority in most schools. In their interviews with teachers on wellbeing, McCallum and Price (2016), illustrated the reality faced by many teachers, with some stating that wellbeing is overall probably not very good due to the demanding nature of work, face-to-face hours, etc. Wellbeing is of general concern to many professionals in varied contexts. However, the work of teachers faces several unique challenges compared to many other professions. For example, their work is subjected to many government legislative requirements and reforms. Indeed, in the U.K., Grenville-Cleave and Boniwell (2012) found that teachers rated their wellbeing significantly lower than other professional occupations such as health, social work, finance, and human resources.

Factors that support and enhance teachers’ wellbeing are important in encouraging greater sustainability within the profession (Acton & Glasgow,

2015). In a study of teachers in Flanders, Aelterman, Engels, Van Petegem, and Verhaeghe (2007) found that support by others is needed, including support by the principal, support for professional learning, and support from colleagues specifically related to school culture. In turn, this influences relationships with parents and attitudes towards innovation. In Italy, Gozzoli, Frascaroli, and D'Angelo (2015) examined the complex and challenging school world of rapid reforms, reorganisations, resource reallocations, general social and productive change, as well as internal and external demands on teachers' work. They found three situations that influenced teacher wellbeing: (1) "manifested malaise" situations, where the professional role of teachers feels devalued or where there is a perception of a lack of organisational support; (2) "defensive or in-retreat" situations, where there is weak motivation despite feeling valued in the role but there is perceived loneliness in the organisation; and (3) "generative" situations, where teachers express feeling renewed motivation, of value to the professional role, and have good interpersonal bonds. This allows teachers to feel support and the ability to make plans individually or collectively.

While these studies provide some hints of ways to support teachers, further studies are needed to better understand how to best support teacher wellbeing. An important starting point is to better understand what wellbeing means in the context of education, and key contextual aspects that impact upon one's opportunity for and understandings of wellbeing.

## Defining Wellbeing in Education

An extensive literature review by McCallum et al. (2017) investigated teachers wellbeing by using thematic analysis by searching terms in the Google Scholar, Trove, and Scopus databases, searching for terms related to wellbeing (e.g., self-efficacy, job satisfaction, job climate, and stress). The review analysed 191 studies from 2001 to 2017. A range of issues was identified including: the complexity of defining wellbeing; the importance of teacher wellbeing, resilience, and self-efficacy; social-emotional competence; personal responses to teachers' work; specific topics such as burnout, fatigue, exhaustion, stress, and relationships with others; interventions like mindfulness, positive psychology, whole school initiatives, work-life support, professional learning communities, and positive school ecology; leadership; professional development; induction; and mentoring. Clearly, wellbeing touches a lot of areas of teachers' lives.

Indeed, wellbeing is a term commonly used in education, with over forty years of research resulting in various projects, initiatives, models, and strategies to improve wellbeing. However, Fraillon (2014) emphasised that there remains a lack of specificity around notions of wellbeing; while it is essential to consider, monitor, and respond to wellbeing, there is little sector-wide consensus on what it actually is. There has been a steep increase in scholarly discussions of wellbeing since the 1960s and since the World Health Organization (1946) defined health as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (p. 1), but little consensus of what it means, with differences within and across fields, scholars, practitioners, laypeople, and more, or even whether it should be “well-being” or “wellbeing” (Kern et al., 2020).

Forgeard, Jayawickreme, Kern, and Seligman (2011) suggested that across fields, wellbeing can be considered within two broad categories: (1) objective wellbeing, reflecting what can be objectively measured and observed by others, such as economic resources, political circumstances, physical health conditions, number of social relationships, and literacy; and (2) subjective wellbeing, reflecting the subjective experience of individuals, such as happiness, emotion, engagement, purpose, life satisfaction, quality of social relationships, competence, and accomplishment. Teacher wellbeing generally is considered from the subjective perspective.

Yet the focus on subjective wellbeing brings further complexity. Forgeard et al. further noted that “the multiplicity of approaches in the study of wellbeing has given rise to blurred and overly broad definitions of wellbeing, with researchers using the construct of ‘wellbeing’ synonymously with ‘happiness’, ‘quality of life’, or ‘life satisfaction’” (p. 81). Various attempts have been made to define and clarify terms (e.g., Bricheno, Brown, & Lubansky, 2009; Day & Qing, 2009; Deci & Ryan, 2008; Gillett-Swan & Sargeant, 2015; Ragnarsdottir & Asgeir Johannesson, 2014). McCallum et al’s (2017) analysis of the literature revealed that few definitions of wellbeing are specific to teachers, school leaders, or employees. Dodge, Daly, Huyton, and Sanders (2012) conceptualised wellbeing as a scale in which there is balance “between an individual’s resource pool and the challenges faced”, such that wellbeing occurs when:

individuals have the psychological, social and physical resources they need to meet a particular psychological, social and/or physical challenge. When individuals have more challenges than resources, the see-saw dips, along with their wellbeing, and vice versa. (p. 230)

Acton and Glasgow (2015) defined teacher wellbeing as “an individual sense of personal professional fulfilment, satisfaction, purposefulness and happiness, constructed in a collaborative process with colleagues and students” (p. 101).

Wellbeing is not purely about having fixed individual traits; it is fluid and dynamic in nature, and is influenced by relationships, situatedness, productivity, and engagement in life experiences (McCallum & Price, 2010). Wellbeing is different for each individual and their communities (McCallum & Price, 2012). As captured by McCallum and Price (2016), wellbeing is

diverse and fluid respecting individual, family and community beliefs, values, experiences, culture, opportunities and contexts across time and change. It is something we all aim for, underpinned by positive notions, yet is unique to each of us and provides us with a sense of who we are which needs to be respected. (p. 17)

There are also cultural aspects of wellbeing (White, Gaines, & Jha, 2014; Zhu, Devos, & Li, 2011). For instance, Uchida, Ogihara, and Fukushima (2015) distinguished between an East Asian view of wellbeing, which tends to be derived from social harmony, seen in adapting to social norms and fulfilling relational obligations, as opposed to European-American views, where wellbeing is more focused on individual achievement and self-esteem. Other impacts upon teacher and employee wellbeing include:

1. Staff gendered experiences (e.g., Cui & Richardson, 2016; Salimirad & Srimathi, 2016; Tang et al., 2018);
2. School structures and types (e.g., Cook et al., 2017; Hobson & Maxwell, 2016; Kidger et al., 2016; Paterson & Grantham, 2016; Yin, Huang, & Wang, 2016; Zinsser, Christensen, & Torres, 2016);
3. Stages of the teaching career (Carter, 2016; Hobson & Maxwell, 2016; Mansfield, Beltman, Broadley, & Weatherby-Fell, 2016; McCallum & Price, 2015, 2016); and,
4. Subject specializations (De Pablos-Pons, Colás-Bravo, González-Ramírez, & Camacho Martínez-Vara del Rey, 2013; Mattern & Bauer, 2014; Turner, Zanker, & Braine, 2012).

In summary, there is no single agreed-upon definition of wellbeing for teachers and staff. Numerous factors impact upon understandings of and experiences of wellbeing. But regardless of these inconsistencies and lack of coherence, it is clear that teacher and staff wellbeing is vitally important to the educational community. To provide greater insights on teacher wellbeing, I



turn to two case studies, one focused on teachers in Australia, and the second focused on teachers in Canada.

## Insights into Teacher Wellbeing: Two Case Studies

Both cases involved a mixed-methods consideration of the wellbeing within the respective contexts. The first case was undertaken in one state in Australia with 806 teachers using an appreciative focus to explore the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between the nature of teachers' control over their work and how does this impact their wellbeing?
2. What styles of leadership and management promote teacher wellbeing?

Findings suggested that teacher wellbeing was most highly associated with: schools that prioritised teacher wellbeing, teacher's perception of their degree of autonomy over their work, and the influence of school leadership/management.

The second case study focused on understanding the state of wellbeing of 183 staff from an all-boys Canadian school. Staff wellbeing was most highly associated with prioritising employee wellbeing in the workplace, employee's perception of their degree of autonomy over their work, and the impact of school leadership.

## Wellbeing in Australia: An Exploration of Teachers' Perceptions

The first case focused on Australian teachers. Participants completed an online survey, which included a number of existing wellbeing measures, along with open text comments. As summarised in Table 28.1, participants came from varied backgrounds, representing a broad range of experiences across Australia.

Participants completed an online survey through SurveyMonkey during a three-week period in term four of 2017. A random sample of 3,000 educators were selected and invited to participate via email; additional respondents were recruited through social media including Twitter, Facebook, and my research website's landing page. The 47-item survey included three parts, which

**Table 28.1** Australian participants characteristics ( $N = 806$ )

Location	Metropolitan	62%
	Regional	30%
	Remote/Rural	8%
Level	K-12	60%
	Early Learning Centre	1%
	Primary	17%
	Secondary	22%
Religious affiliation	With affiliation	71%
	Non-denominational setting	21%
	Not identified	8%
Gender mix	Co-educational	70%
	Single sex	30%
School size	Less than 200 students	10%
	200–600 students	19%
	601–1000 students	27%
	1001–2000 students	39%
	More than 2000 students	5%
Gender	Male	24%
	Female	75%
	Not identified	1%
Role	Teaching role	66%
	Specialist teacher	15%
	Leadership role	17%
	Principal	2%
Teaching experience	0–5 years	16%
	6–10 years	25%
	11–15 years	19%
	16+ years	40%
Employment status	Full time	83%
	Part time	16%
	On leave	.5%
	Permanent position	89%
	On contract	10%
Highest education qualification	Casual employment	1%
	Diploma	3%
	Bachelor	38%
	Post-graduate certificate	22%
	Masters or equivalent	35%
	PhD or equivalent	2%

asked about the respondent and their school, perceptions about current wellbeing, and perceptions about the wellbeing of the school. 600 respondents completed all of the quantitative questions, which are included here. The survey included 16 open-ended questions, completed by 806 respondents. The responses were analysed using a thematic approach. Here I consider what arose from the analysis across the qualitative and quantitative responses.

**Definitions of wellbeing.** An open-ended question asked participants to define wellbeing, which were categorised into four themes: *health*; *life/work balance*; *feelings of happiness*; and, *being free of stress*. Table 28.2 provides examples of responses representing the four themes. Responses showed heightened awareness of personal and professional factors that impacted their wellbeing.

Some teachers also made reference to professional development and the theoretical works of researchers in the field. For example, one teacher explicitly referenced Seligman's PERMA theory, Duckworth's concept of grit, and the resilient yet pessimistic attempts by self and colleagues to be sustainable in their work:

One of the constituents of wellbeing is resilience - that is - are teachers afforded the time and resourcing to accommodate and accomplish the tasks that they have to complete on a day to day basis. While teachers are continuously demonstrating 'grit' in the face of ever-increasing demands - the reality is

**Table 28.2** Example teacher definitions of wellbeing categorised across four themes

Theme	Example quotes
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ability of teachers to juggle the demands of school with family</li> <li>• Balancing health (mental, emotional, physical); support (inside and outside of school); time, resources, networks</li> </ul>
Life/work balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having balance and autonomy, time, and freedom to do the work</li> <li>• Teacher which has time to finish work within school hours</li> </ul>
Feelings of happiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring that teachers are happy at work</li> <li>• Being happy in your role</li> <li>• The degree of collegiality within the staff body, respect for one's professional expertise</li> <li>• Teachers being comfortable, happy, satisfied, with their work</li> </ul>
Free of stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being aware of how you are feeling</li> <li>• Being aware of your stressors and have strategies to deal with them</li> <li>• Have support when needed to overcomes issues</li> <li>• NOT impacting me socially, emotionally, and physically</li> </ul>

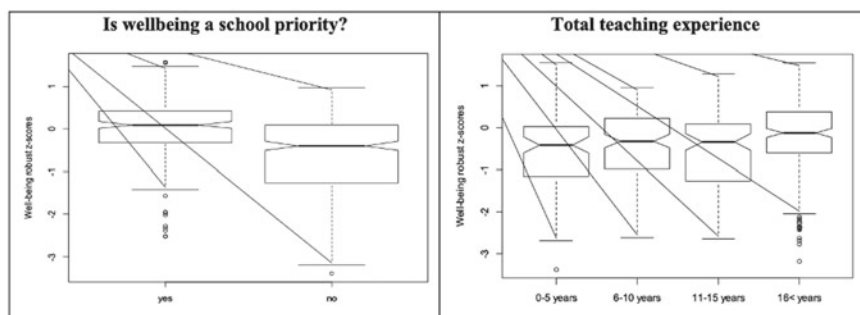
that even the most resilient teachers are breaking down or allowing aspects of their personal lives to suffer under this burden (that is in no way reflected by the remuneration). If we were to use Seligman's PERMA model it is clear that being a teacher causes damage to Personal Relationships through the increasing demands upon educators non-teaching time and the sheer tokenistic preparation times that are afforded to teachers.

Another participant highlighted being cognizant of the need to prioritise teacher wellbeing:

Wellbeing is something that does not get a lot of time dedicated to its active maintenance. I would imagine that teacher wellbeing is overall probably not very good due to the demanding nature of work, face to face hours etc. A teachers wellbeing would directly impact students' wellbeing and is thus worth investing in.

**Factors influencing wellbeing.** The survey questions asked teachers to consider their own wellbeing across a range of wellbeing dimensions, i.e., social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and spiritual. As a whole, participants perceived their wellbeing as relatively high, with a mean response of 75 on a 0–100 scale. However, wellbeing scores significantly differed across all demographic variables, including school location, type, religion, gender, approximate enrolment; gender, role at school, current year level of teaching, total teaching experience, current employment status, and attendance at professional learning about wellbeing. Specifically, teachers were more likely to report higher levels of wellbeing when wellbeing was a priority at the school, when they had greater experience, when they attended professional development focused on wellbeing, and when they were in a single-sex school. As a whole, the factors that most influential differences in teacher wellbeing scores were whether or not the school prioritised teacher wellbeing ( $F(1,584) = 72.31, p < .001$ ), and teachers' years of experience in the role ( $F(3,584) = 4.40, p = .004$ ). As illustrated in Fig. 28.1, teachers reported significantly greater wellbeing when wellbeing was a school priority, and teachers with 16+ years of experience reported greater wellbeing.

The results point to the possibility that less experienced teachers might benefit from opportunities for mentorship from teachers with more years of experience. Indeed, teachers that attended formal professional development valued interaction and learning from more experienced teachers. For instance, one participant reflected: "*It was good to spend time with teachers in a similar situation and to learn some tools that can be used to make my*



**Fig. 28.1** Comparing teacher wellbeing based upon whether the school prioritised teacher wellbeing ( $n = 384$ ) and number of years of teaching experience ( $n = 241$ )

*teaching experience more bearable. Always good to hear tips from more experienced teachers*". Another participant recognised the role that they could play in assisting others: *"I picked up some very useful strategies on how to assist colleagues through discussion about wellbeing and mentor teachers progressing to Proficient Teacher status"*. Still, even experienced teachers continue to need the support of leaders and the sector. For example, one participant noted:

I never used to think I was going to be one of 'those' teachers who burned out or who reached a point where I needed a career change. But it turns out I am. ... I can see here so many mid-career teachers who need care. Those with young families, people who are carers or who just need some flexibility in how they spend their time. The young ones will sort themselves (although we need to not burn them out) but it's us in this age (20-25 years) who need the care to keep going lest they end up like those snarky teachers who hide in the back and do the minimum. (we all know who they are)

**Strategies for supporting wellbeing.** Teachers also suggested strategies and initiatives that can help support different aspects of wellbeing. Table 28.3 provides some examples. Teachers pointed to the need for support from leadership and management in prioritising wellbeing. Notably, teachers with 11–15 years of teaching experience reported greater support from leadership/management, whereas teachers with 0–10 years' experience reflected reduced support from leadership and school management, which further undermined feelings of wellbeing. Teachers also insightfully reflected that schools that had wellbeing initiatives in place needed to maintain these and others should consider adopting strategies specific to their school needs and context.

**Table 28.3** Teacher wellbeing strategies, as suggested by the teachers

Dimension	Suggested Strategy
Physical	Wellbeing week—a range of activities to improve staff mindfulness, taking time out of a busy schedule to make time for ourselves. Activities included, book club, badminton, colouring, walking, and Yoga. Staffroom has fruit, biscuits to allow Teachers to meet in one space and take some time out of the classroom, which is nice, they have also started doing staff lunches to allow groups of teachers to get together on a fortnightly basis
Social	The staff choir was established in 2016 and is slowly growing in number. We meet weekly at a lunchtime and sing together. It is a big laugh, wonderful to make music together, and encourages mindfulness. It is also a wonderful break from the inevitable student onslaught that happens at lunchtime
Cognitive	The school has started a teacher-learner community that runs twice a term and looks at formative assessments and pedagogy. These community sessions are generally pulled down to a discussion on how to juggle the work-life balances and operate at best practice
Spiritual	Spirituality Day is a day the whole staff get together and take time to reflect on three previous terms. There is a lot of effort put into this day, so teachers have permission to reflect, meditate and reconnect with ourselves and each other in an authentic way
Emotional	“Honourable mentions” box at morning tea where colleagues can anonymously put praise/thanks for each other for doing something special. There is also some sort of counselling that we can access if we need to, but I can’t remember the details—was publicised a number of years ago

**Summary.** Through a survey of Australian teachers, insights arise about how teachers perceive wellbeing and factors that influence wellbeing. Definitions included health, balance, happiness, and freedom of stress dimensions. A number of strategies, suggestions, and policies related to maintaining, sustaining, and improving the wellbeing of the teaching workforce in this state in Australia can be derived from this research. It was identified that when teacher wellbeing is prioritised at school, teachers show higher levels of wellbeing. Professional learning on wellbeing was useful, but it needs to be sustained, contextual, and authentic both at the school and system level. Teachers across all levels need support from leadership. Making teacher wellbeing a priority contributes to sustained best practice and needs to be specific, contextual, and part of whole school culture. As a whole, teachers reported relatively being levels of wellbeing, but it was clear that ongoing action is needed to support teacher’s wellbeing, due to the demands felt across the profession.

## Wellbeing in Canada: A Whole School Case Study

The second case focused on Canadian teachers. The collection was part of a broader whole-school study at an all-boys school, which included both students and employees. Here I focus on the responses from 183 staff, collected in December 2018 (see White, 2019 for the student data). Out of the 183 employee responses (99% completion rate), nine responses were incomplete (4.9%), thus, only complete responses are included here. Table 28.4 summarises demographic information. In addition, professional learning on wellbeing had been undertaken by 68% of respondents, with an overall 84.5% rating the learning as being of value.

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, involving an online survey that included quantitative and qualitative questions, consisting of three sections: (1) basic demographic information (2) employees' current wellbeing, and (3) open-ended questions aimed at further exploring employee's perceptions of wellbeing. broken into three sections. Qualitative data recorded increased awareness about wellbeing issues, pointed to practical strategies and tips for direct application to the classroom, and factors were identified to enable employees to work in a positive and productive manner with colleagues to assist students' wellness.

**Definitions of wellbeing.** An open-ended question asked participants how they define wellbeing. Figure 28.2 visualises words that were mentioned, with

**Table 28.4** Canadian participants characteristics ( $N = 174$ )

Gender	Female	53%
	Male	39%
	Not disclosed	8%
Role	Teaching staff	48%
	Leadership role	21%
	Non-teaching staff	31%
Teaching experience	0–5 years	44%
	6–15 years	31%
	16+ years	25%
Employment status	Full time	94%
	Permanent employment	82%
	On contract	18%
Highest education qualification	Diploma	7%
	Bachelor	37%
	Masters or equivalent	51%
	PhD or equivalent	3%
	Other	3%



**Fig. 28.2** Words mentioned by teachers in defining wellbeing

size indicating the frequency that words were mentioned (range = 3–42 mentions).

Responses pointed to multiple dimensions of wellbeing, including physical, emotional, social, cognitive, and spiritual aspects. For example, participants noted:

- *“Feeling good, functioning well and caring for others”.*
- *“State of being in which physically, emotionally, mentally functioning at the optimal level with deep rooted satisfaction in all aspects of life”.*
- *“Having the energy to do day to day activities with mostly positive feelings and being able to manage the ups and downs of life in constructive ways”.*
- *“Wellbeing means balance, resilience, the ability to manage stress and recover from setbacks”.*
- *“Fulfillment with the relationships I have with others. Pride in the work that I do. A sense that I am respected and treated with dignity”.*
- *“Feeling healthy and connected to community and having resources for comfort, choices, self-development”.*

**Factors impacting on employee wellbeing.** On a 1–5 scale, average wellbeing was 3.5, indicating a moderate level of wellbeing. Notably, when wellbeing was perceived to be prioritised, staff responded with a higher rate on the wellbeing scale. Of staff, 62% agreed that wellbeing was a priority at the College, but it was also challenging to turn that priority into action. For instance, one respondent noted:

I think it is a priority because our leader (Principal) cares about it genuinely. I worry it is hard to actually execute with success because some people take advantage or think it means they don't have to work hard or somehow their



personal issues become more important than work - there is a balance and it's hard to achieve.

Employees pointed to numerous factors that positively impact on their well-being, which would be categorised into four areas: social, physical, emotional, and cognitive.

Social wellbeing was illustrated by a strong sense of belonging, feeling valued for the work that they do, and having a collegial workplace. For instance, one participant noted:

Collaborating with colleagues on developing curriculum, connection to best practices, working with the boys and having them feel a sense of agency for their work, working with different faculty members to create rich meaningful learning experiences for students. Working as part of a team, having a home from class and being around young people, being part of a vibrant community, being inspired by my colleagues.

Physical wellbeing included fitness, healthy eating, and getting rest. For instance, one participant mentioned "*Permission to work out during spare time, leave campus on breaks, socialize with co-workers*". Another noted "*Having time to exercise during the workday. Having reasonable hours that allow you to leave work on time and not work on the weekends*".

Emotional wellbeing was closely aligned to the nature of teachers work and reflects employees having the ability to be motivated and do a good job. For instance, one participant pointed to the value of positive feedback, being included in activities, and "*the sense of feeling that my role really makes a difference in the lives of the employees at the College*". Similarly, another participant noted:

Informed and prepared guidance by leadership team as relates to my work, being heard without prejudice, proactive oversight of my professional needs. Meaningful interactions with students and colleagues when it is clear that I have had an impact.

Cognitive wellbeing related to having autonomy over one's work, being prepared for the classroom, attending conferences, having adequate time to attend to all the work, and to learn new aspects. For instance, one participant pointed to: "*the autonomy provided by the job, my colleagues in the department, lots of the small details that get missed - salary, lunches, snacks, resources, students, etc*".



Fig. 28.3 Factors that challenge employee wellbeing

Professional learning on wellbeing had been undertaken by 68% of employees with 57% of employees finding it “valuable”. Those employees that attended professional learning felt a greater sense of autonomy in their work and this was reflected in their overall sense of wellbeing. Employees with 15+ years’ experience appeared happier at work and reported better relationships with leadership and being able to solve daily problems.

Figure 28.3 illustrates factors that challenge employee wellbeing. Clearly, the biggest challenges are workload and time. Workload encompassed many elements: marking, email communication, administrative responsibilities, unrealistic deadlines, adherence to data and measurement, unnecessary work expectations, serving too many initiatives, unjustified criticism, uncooperative colleagues, indecisiveness of leadership, being stretched, inconsistent documentation, curriculum changes, meetings, balancing core tasks, trivia, learning new systems, co-curricular, negative colleagues, lack of control over work, miscommunication, time restraints, parents, out-of-hours work, and box-ticking. Some employees also indicated personal stressors that impacted their sense of wellbeing at work which included family, childcare, finances, weather, and lack of time for optimum fitness.

Several quotes specifically sum up the overwhelming sense of challenges incorporating both personal and professional features:

- “Feeling unappreciated or undervalued at work. Feeling pressure to constantly exceed expectations in order to keep up with colleagues. Job insecurity. Having to be away from home for work (e.g. late hours, weekend work commitments, evening work commitments.)”.
- “Massive increase in workload after returning from parental leave; feeling that there literally is not enough prep time to accomplish all necessary meeting, planning, clean-up and other administrative work. Feeling like the only option for getting caught up is to use weekend time to do work, which also impact wellbeing, as it takes limited time away from family”.

- “Lack of oversight and planning or understanding by leadership at work, too much to do in too short a timeline, cultural issues around student behavior and professional practices. Coping with being effective at work while dealing with challenges in other aspects of my life. Rate and pace of change at work and in society”.

**Summary.** A survey of staff at an all-boys Canadian school provides further insight into teachers’ understanding of wellbeing, as well as points to factors that support and prevent wellbeing. The sense of wellbeing at this College was moderate as a whole, although 43% of respondents rated their current wellbeing at 4 on a 5-point scale. But it is clear that employees experienced numerous stressors in the workplace, which challenge wellbeing. The barriers point more to the role and the work, rather than a reflection of this particular setting.

## Conclusion

The quality of teaching is a crucial global issue in determining the quality of our education systems. As such, it is critical that issues that undermine quality teaching are recognised and urgently dealt with (House of Commons, 2017). Evidence shows that individuals and schools play a significant role in improving and sustaining positive teacher and employee wellbeing. Teachers have a certain degree of responsibility for their own wellbeing (McCallum & Price, 2016; Price & McCallum, 2015; Spilt et al., 2011). However, a myriad of factors on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis can have a deleterious impact on one’s wellbeing, some within one’s control and some not. As Berryhill, Linney, and Fromewick (2009) caution:

making changes in individuals when the system is part of the problem leaves basic structures intact and is unlikely to affect the problem ... therefore, policymakers should consider making changes for teachers rather than in teachers. (p. 9)

McCallum and Price (2016) further observe that “educator and learner wellbeing is an individual, collective and community responsibility” (p. 128).

This suggests that the issue of employee wellbeing is complex and best addressed holistically. The case studies provided here illustrate the complexities of supporting wellbeing within schools, as well as point to possible areas that can be targeted to support teachers better. Approaching wellbeing not

only as an individual responsibility but also as a shared one creates opportunities for schools and sectors to work in partnership with relevant authorities and professional associations to keep wellbeing a key feature of teacher preparation, induction, mentoring, and professional learning (McCallum & Price, 2012).

As a whole, this chapter supports the views presented by Seligman and Adler (2019), who stress that a case can be made for an education that raises wellbeing in its own right. A positive approach to wellbeing offers a new educational model, in addition to academic learning, emphasising wellbeing as a buildable lifelong resource.

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