Teacher and Education Support Personnel Well-being - Vital for Education

POLICY BRIEF

Education International is the Global Union Federation that brings together teacher unions from across the world representing more than 32 million teachers, researchers and education support personnel.

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INTRODUCTION

This Briefing outlines the importance of teacher and education support personnel (ESP) wellbeing to high quality education. It sets out a road map for education unions and their members on how to ensure that educational jurisdictions put in place practical strategies for enhancing the wellbeing of all teachers and ESP. All the evidence shows that student achievement is dependent on teachers and ESP who are positive about themselves and their ability to teach.

Within schools, teachers and ESP are central to student success, satisfaction, wellbeing, and achievement; for all children regardless of their circumstances, location, or social status (Hattie, 2009). Yet, evidence indicates that stressful working conditions, excessive workload, work intensification and declining wellbeing are widespread (Schleicher, 2018; Thompson, 2021). This is fuelling a global teacher shortage, where teachers are leaving the profession in droves, and recruitment is waning.

Despite the recognition that teachers are key actors in their students' learning and that teaching is one of the most stressful professions, there has been a lack of attention paid to teacher wellbeing and few government policies address wellbeing directly (Falk, Varni, Finder Johna, & Frisoli, 2019). The alarming deterioration of the conditions which foster wellbeing during the pandemic amplified this need (Thompson, 2021; ESN/MGEN Foundation, 2021).

Nevertheless, meaningful government action remains limited. An EI analysis of 131 National Statements of Commitment submitted by the participating countries from the 2022 Transforming Education Summit found that only 6 of the 131 countries reviewed made commitments towards teacher wellbeing (Education International, 2023).

In addition to a lack of policies is a glaring lack of research. There is a striking absence of teachers' and ESPs' own perspectives in the literature on teacher and ESP wellbeing. International research on ESP wellbeing specifically is limited further.

Education International (EI) has worked with its member organisations on the importance of teacher and ESP wellbeing, commissioning groundbreaking research on teacher wellbeing and has been working consistently to advance teacher and ESP wellbeing as a vital policy issue. It has sought to persuade global organisations such as the UN and OECD that they should be promoting teacher and ESP wellbeing as a key policy issue with governments and educational jurisdictions. This has included interventions at the UN's Transforming Education Summit, which resulted in the launch of the UN High-Level Panel on the

Teaching Profession. Tasked with identifying solutions to the global shortage of teachers, the Panel has identified teacher wellbeing as a central issue. Moreover, the last three International Summits on the Teaching Profession (ISTP) included teacher wellbeing in the discussions (e.g. EI/OECD, 2022).

EI's World Congress in 2019 agreed on a *resolution* on Teachers' and Education Support Personnels' Mental Health. Asserting the centrality of health and wellbeing of educators, the resolution argues that it is being negatively impacted by several factors, including increasingly precarious terms of employment, poor working conditions, excessive workload demands and other adverse management practices, cuts in funding and the introduction of austerity policies, making it highly relevant in the current context.

In 2023, EI commissioned Education Support to undertake an *internal research study* to explore global understandings of teacher wellbeing. The work included highlighting global definitions of wellbeing, an examination of existing research and the identification of gaps in research/data, and a brief exploration amongst EI members[1] of their conceptualisations of teacher wellbeing and its levers.

The aim of this briefing is to provide an updated overview on teacher and ESP wellbeing in its current conceptions, outline some of the challenges in defining wellbeing and offer recommendations to advance teacher and ESP wellbeing in this crucial time.

WHAT IS TEACHER AND ESP WELLBEING?

Teacher and ESP wellbeing is a complex, qualitative and subjective issue, for which the definition is context dependent. It is imperative to recognise that teachers and ESP face differing sets of challenges and conditions which shape their wellbeing. Several factors shape understandings and experiences of wellbeing (McCallum, 2021).

Wellbeing can also be influenced by systemic discrimination impacting individual characteristics such as, ethnicity, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, Indigeneity, or level of schooling. Displacement status is a critical consideration for teacher wellbeing as it influences most other individual-level factors, including teachers' employment status, level of education, teaching experience, and content knowledge. Teachers and ESP in crisis and conflict-affected contexts face varying professional and personal challenges, which influence their wellbeing (Burns & Lawrie, 2015; Falk et al., 2019). Beginning and novice teachers are particularly vulnerable to poor wellbeing with nearly half of teachers leaving the profession within their first

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1   EI approached 26 affiliates to take part in the focus groups, and 17 accepted (65%). The following organisations participated: Germany (GEW), Portugal (FNE), Sweden (the Swedish Teachers' Union), the United Kingdom (NASUWT), Benin (SYNAEM), Burkina Faso (SNESS), South Africa (SADTU), Uganda (UNATU), Paraguay (OTEP-A), Colombia (FECODE), Canada (CTF/FCE), Australia (AEU), India (AIPTF), Japan (JTU), the Philippines (SMP NATOW), South Korea (KTU), New Zealand (NZEI), and Morocco (SNE/FDT). Direct quotations have been anonymised in this briefing.

five years (Falk et al., 2019; Schleicher, 2021).

Teacher wellbeing encompasses how teachers feel and function in their jobs and includes teachers' emotional and mental state, attitudes, and evaluations of their work (Schleicher, 2018; Collie et al., 2015). Teacher wellbeing can include components such as job satisfaction, financial stability, emotional and physical health, and autonomy. Enhancing teacher wellbeing involves attention to working conditions, workload, emotional exhaustion, and feelings of safety, including addressing violence, discrimination, and harassment. It is also inter-related with teachers' professional identities, and beliefs, including self-efficacy and motivation (OECD, 2021). Teachers' self-efficacy is particularly important factor in teacher wellbeing. Knowing that they can confidently make a positive difference to students' learning and social and emotional wellbeing contributes/adds to teachers' sense of wellbeing (Education International with Cambridge University 2012; OECD, 2014).

Stress and burnout also negatively affect teacher wellbeing. Research has indicated that teaching is one of the most stressful professions (Greenberg, Brown, & Abenavoli, 2016). Stress and/or burnout refers to negative emotional and/or physical responses because of one's work and is often the result of an imbalance or discrepancy between a worker's ability, resources, or needs and the requirements of the job. Teacher burnout can be thought of as a product of stress that is comprised of feeling exhausted, ineffective, powerless, and isolated.

Commonly, the core definition defines teachers' wellbeing as having four main dimensions: mental and physical wellbeing, cognitive wellbeing, subjective wellbeing and social wellbeing (Gibson & Caroll, 2021). Several frameworks have been developed which conceptualise wellbeing, including those by the OECD, the AWaRE model and the PERMA model.

Importantly, teacher and ESP wellbeing definitions can vary across contexts and for the experiences of different groups of teachers and ESP. Wellbeing is diverse and fluid, showing consideration for individual, family, and community beliefs and for values, experiences, culture, opportunities, and contexts across time. Wellbeing is something we all aim for, yet the specificities of what it looks like is unique to each person and culture, which must be respected (McCallum., Price, Graham, & Morrison, 2017).

Given the differences in how wellbeing is conceptualised by people across cultures, various markers of wellbeing may function differently in different global regions. This insight has crucial implications for how we analyse teacher and ESP wellbeing across contexts, as to not rank them based on positionality (Joshanloo, M., Van de Vliert, E., & Jose, P.E., 2021).

WHAT LEVERS IMPROVE OR HINDER TEACHER AND ESP WELLBEING?

While recognising that definitions and understandings of wellbeing vary across contexts, the reality and impact of deteriorating teacher wellbeing is currently being experienced as a global phenomenon (Joshanloo et al., 2021; Viac & Fraser, 2020).

Teacher and ESP wellbeing can be enhanced or degraded by a variety of levers. These levers are interconnected; they overlap, influence, and interact with one another. Their level of influence is context dependent, as not every issue was relevant in every country; however, research from Education Support found there was still striking harmony in the main issues perceived as most significant for teacher wellbeing.

This section will introduce some of these levers, based on input from EI member organisations, which illustrate powerfully the range of causes of poor wellbeing. Member quotes have been anonymised. This list is not exhaustive and aims to provide a starting place for understanding the importance of individual factors when designing programmes and policies.

Workload

Teacher wellbeing is not only affected by the quantity of work and work intensification; it is also affected by the nature of teachers' work and working conditions.

Excessive administrative demands, variable and inadequate professional development, being held responsible for student achievement, an expansion of the role, and keeping up with changing requirements are key triggers for poor teacher wellbeing.

A very recent systematic review by Creagh et al (2023) concluded that the effects of workload and work intensification negatively impact teachers in relation to health, wellbeing, and attrition. Teachers' capacity to deliver educational priorities which support the learning of all students is undermined by the experience of a heavy workload and heightened work intensification.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in increased workload for teachers and ESP (Thompson, 2021). The switch to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic challenged work-life balance for many, as their homes suddenly became their classrooms, and students and families had unprecedented access to their teachers and ESP.

The school closures have also contributed to blurring the line between professional and private life, which may make it difficult to identify and isolate

job-related stress. The increased role of technology has negatively impacted the working conditions of teachers (Bacova & Turner, 2023). The role of technology in education is increasing, yet the understanding of the impact it is having on the wellbeing of teachers is limited (UNESCO, 2023).

An appropriate work-life balance is a major issue for the teaching profession globally. This requires urgent attention, including addressing inequities for different groups of teachers. For example, gender inequities in caring duties affect women's life and work, discussed below.

> *"Teachers work long hours including weekends and the holidays, [with] large class sizes, so workload is Number 1" (Country 12).*

> *"Workload intensification, so you are having to cram in all sorts of administrative and compliance tasks, assessments, monitoring, paperwork, it's really having a detrimental effect on teachers' wellbeing generally, and also a detrimental effect on their desire to remain as teachers" (Country 1).*

> *"Schools are responsible for everything, and teachers are obliged to constantly increase their knowledge in areas this was not usual before. For example, in addition to teaching, teachers have to be family counsellors, pedagogues, psychologists, social workers, sometimes marriage counsellors and so on…So all of this is too much for one profession" (Country 13).*

Safety and Discrimination

The ability to fulfil one's basic needs is foundational to being able to meet psychological needs, especially in the workplace. Research indicates that violence directed at students, teachers, ESP, schools, and universities have increased globally since 2013 (Falk et al., 2019).

Physical security is a basic need that is pertinent for teachers and ESP working in areas of ongoing conflict or in communities where education institutions and teachers are the targets of violence and attacks. Stress is amplified in crisis and conflict-affected contexts where teachers and ESP often work without professional development support, certification, or compensation. According to recent research, the proportion of staff who have been the victim of violence at work in the last 12 months is alarming in many countries (ESN, 2023).

It is also important to understand that teacher wellbeing affects individuals and groups of teachers differently. Teachers from marginalised groups such as women, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI+) people, Indigenous Peoples, language minorities, people with disabilities, and those living in marginalised contexts are often most impacted by structures of inequity and discrimination that impact wellbeing. For instance, research confirms that LGBTI+ teachers continue to suffer discrimination in the educational environment; the effects of which seriously impact teacher wellbeing (Guijarro-Ojeda, Ruiz-Cecilia, & Cardoso-Pulido, 2021; Ullman, & Smith, 2018).

Gender is also a significant factor for teacher and ESP wellbeing when

considering responsibilities outside of the home as women often are tasked with unpaid care duties, discussed below in more detail (Falk et al., 2019). Female teachers also face heightened risk to sexual and gender-based violence, particularly in crisis and conflict-affected contexts, and sexual harassment and abuse are critical barriers for female teachers to enter and stay in the profession (Burns & Lawrie, 2015; Mendenhall, Gomez, & Varni, 2018).

> *"There is sometimes sexual harassment for the female teachers mostly" (Country 17).*

> *"We have attacks that are very common. And this has damaged and deteriorated the working climate, the working environment, so we are really hit by the safety issue. Normally speaking we have more than 6,000 schools from primary and secondary levels that were closed. We have 30,000 teachers that are at a loss considering the situation. And the schools that were closed, were burned down, they were told to leave and/or some were killed, those they were saved are psychologically impacted, they need some psychological support to survive" (Country 3).*

Resources

A lack of resources or infrastructure is related to teacher stress and burnout, as well as a low sense of self-efficacy. Insufficient resources and infrastructure have also been linked to lower teacher motivation. The physical conditions of a learning environment have a direct impact on the quality of education, and on the wellbeing and health of students, teachers, and ESP. The buildings and facilities must also provide a secure environment within which staff and students feel that they are protected and safe from physical harm.

Wellbeing is important for all teachers and ESP, but perhaps especially for those working in low resource, crisis, and conflict-affected contexts. Teachers and ESP in these typically low-resource settings, whether refugee, internally displaced, or from the host community, face numerous challenges that compound and amplify the myriad difficulties. The challenges related to school resources serve as a stressor for teachers, adding a layer of difficulty to delivering their daily lessons. Despite these challenges, it is worth highlighting that teachers and ESP in these settings are extremely resourceful and creative, often using local materials and resources in their lessons (Falk et al., 2019).

> *"The level of staffing and resourcing going into schools that plays the largest contribution to having a safe working environment for teachers" (Country 10).*

> *"The impact of Government austerity measures ... links into what's being said about resources, and certainly the lack of resources and the cuts to services has had a huge impact on teachers" (Country 18).*

Teacher Self-Efficacy

Teacher wellbeing is associated with professional identity and self-efficacy – supporting teachers to be capable, competent, and experienced professionals is vital and includes strong curricular, pedagogical and assessment knowledge. The concept of self-efficacy is an essential part of the theory of human development. One of the most prominent proponents of the concept, Albert Bandura, describes a powerful sense of individual agency as a vital part of human development and argues that human attainments and positive wellbeing require an optimistic sense of personal efficacy (Bandura, 1989). Research suggests that teachers with low levels of self-efficacy report higher levels of job stress (Klassen & Chiu, 2010). Irrespective of pre- or in-service context, grade level, and country, and potentially over time, self-efficacious teachers may suffer less from stress, emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and overall burnout, and experience higher levels of personal accomplishment, commitment, and job satisfaction (Zee & Koomen, 2016). Research has suggested that there are positive associations between both self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and student achievement and that high levels of teacher self-efficacy are associated with student motivation and other positive teacher behaviours (Schleicher, 2015).

Teacher Leadership

The sense of having professional opinions respected and knowing that they can lead in their areas of expertise is integral to teachers' sense of self-efficacy. This has become known as teacher leadership. It is largely dependent on the way in which leadership is perceived in schools. There are those who believe that strong top-down leadership is the only way that schools can deliver high quality education. This belief has become increasingly discredited. Distributed leadership, which provides the conditions for all teachers to show leadership in practice and policy, has become increasingly linked to sustained improvements in student outcomes and wellbeing. Education International's and Cambridge University's study on teacher leadership (EI/Cambridge University, 2012) reviewed the evidence on the links between teacher wellbeing, motivation and student achievement and set out the conditions for creating teacher leadership to flourish.

This work has been followed through by a study on teacher leadership by Berry, Darling-Hammond, and Mackay which draws on research about teacher effectiveness, school leadership, and innovation focusing particularly on evidence from the pandemic. Its argument that top-down leadership is out of sync with the new normal of collective social capital which educators had to develop during the pandemic matches EI's evidence from the pandemic and the evidence of other global organisations (Berry, Darling-Hammond & Mackay, 2021).

> *"I guess actually that our surveys tend to pick up on the negative. But where people are positive, they have some sort of agency ... so control, agency and teacher professionalism are elements which we would be flagging up as really important" (Country 18).*

Peer Relationships

Research from stable, crisis, and conflict affected contexts highlight the potential for and benefit of peer collaboration (Darling-Hammond, Hyler & Gardner, 2017; Burns & Lawrie, 2015). Peer collaboration has been shown to positively impact teacher job satisfaction and self-efficacy (Schleicher, 2018), two of the most important teacher wellbeing constructs identified in the literature. Teaching can be an isolating profession and building in opportunities for productive, positive peer collaboration can lead to increased feelings of self-efficacy and job satisfaction (Education Support, 2023b; Falk et al., 2019). Education is intrinsically relational, involving people and relationships. Intelligent professionalism includes valuing and practicing an ethic of relationships and care between educational stakeholders with the potential to enhance teacher wellbeing (Thompson, 2021).

Respect and Recognition

When teachers and ESP feel respected and recognised for their work, this can serve as a positive influence on dignity, professional identity, and motivation (Falk et al., 2019). This can include respect from their students, their school leadership, the community, and larger society. However, feelings of being valued and respected appear to have worsened over time, including teachers and ESP perceptions about their status, salary, working conditions, and career prospects (Singh, 2021).

> *"Society is considering our sector as underpaid, under-supported and suffering from stress ... that is why we are asking the Government to be involved in the social dialogue and bargaining to help teachers and we want the reputation of our sector to be improved so that the profession [can] be better supported and better paid" (Country 2).*

> *"There is a very strong correlation between negative messages about teachers and schools in media discourse and the mental health and wellbeing of those people who work in schools. We have seen for many years a very strong negative message, often fuelled by politicians who have nothing of substance to say about education, but instead resort to ... teacher bashing, school bashing, filling in for their own policy failings. They look for a scapegoat in the school system and those who work within our school system" (Country 1).*

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is the sense of fulfilment and gratification an individual receives from an occupation and is profoundly linked with a sense of self-efficacy (Klassen & Chiu, 2010). Research suggests that teachers' job satisfaction is associated with their wellbeing, motivation, and commitment to teaching (Collie et al., 2012). Job satisfaction is also associated with the degree of autonomy teachers feel, which constitutes a fundamental psychological need that contributes to dignity and wellbeing. Job satisfaction is closely linked to both stress and burnout, and self-efficacy; teachers with higher levels of stress typically experience lower levels of job satisfaction,

while teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy tend to experience higher levels of job satisfaction (Greenberg et al., 2016). Job dissatisfaction is one of the primary drivers of leaving the profession and sustained levels of dissatisfaction can lead to attrition. Job satisfaction is also associated with the quality of instruction and job performance, which has significant implications for student learning outcomes (Klassen & Chiu, 2010).

> *"Teachers have a very high sense of feeling what they are doing is useful. They are very committed to their jobs. And that also gives them a high satisfaction of their job compared to other jobs when other people think the job they are doing is quite useless for society" (Country 6).*

Salaries

Issues of adequate funding and current experiences of budget cuts and austerity impacting lower salaries, unpaid work including overtime, and staffing shortages, have a substantial negative impact for individual teacher and ESP wellbeing, the collective wellbeing of the profession, and the quality of education systems. While there are many factors affecting the status of the teaching profession and teacher wellbeing, the adequacy or not of pay is frequently identified as having major importance and impact (UNESCO & International Task Force on Teachers for Education, 2023). While many countries are experiencing economic shifts, austerity and financial crises, investment in teachers and ESP, including professional levels of pay, is imperative to ensure the continued development and betterment of society. Research indicates that the higher teachers' salaries are, the fewer people choose to leave the profession (EI/OECD, 2022).

Low teacher salary also has direct implications on equitable work experiences for teachers. To meet basic needs and provide enough for their families, many teachers end up taking on a second job to subsidize their income. According to teachers, challenges related to payment were also linked to other factors that impact wellbeing, such as a lack of respect and recognition from community members who look down on teachers because of their low salaries. These factors compound to increase teacher stress, which results in high attrition (Greenberg et al., 2016).

> *"Teachers are not entitled to overtime pay. There is a minimum overtime that has a cap that is leading to more overtime. So naturally there is more tendency therefore that teachers should be victims of mental health working due to working for longer compared to other professions. This is not only just to get overtime pay, we would like to save the time allocated for our private life" (Country 8).*

> *"Graduate teachers, in terms of wages, start on a reasonable wage, on par with other professions, the issue is that as teachers progress in their career, they stall, and they hit a ceiling. By the time a teacher is generally in their mid-30s they have hit the top of their salary scale and there is nowhere for them to go if they want to remain in the classroom. Whereas people who are accountants, engineers, or lawyers keep progressing throughout their career" (Country 1).*

> *"The salary is meagre. Then it is delayed, sometimes you find someone*

spending 6 months to one year without being paid a salary, trying to get money to send for their families, and in so doing they are highly indebted, and once you are highly indebted, this even affects your performance. This affects your wellbeing because you live in fear" (Country 17).

"Because we have a hike in food prices, and fuel prices, and teachers' salary has been stagnant for the last three years so to speak. As teachers we want to believe that we are middle class, and we want to maintain that kind of life. So you find you're under-budget most of the time, and it catches up with you, and you will still hold a 'face' as if things are together, when they are not together, and you have got many cases of teachers who find they just can't cope because they have been going on as if things are normal and yet they are not" (Country 14).

Social Protection

Teachers and ESP do not exist in a vacuum, and the social protection systems of their governments also impact their wellbeing. This means for instance, their healthcare policies, retirement and pension packages, and maternity and paternity leave policies.

This is best exemplified by the lack of programmes and policies for maternity leave, childcare, and care. The introduction of teleworking and the combination of work and care responsibilities have had an impact on women teachers and ESP in terms of stress, health related issues, and overall wellbeing (Vadkerti, 2019). Research has indicated that the reliance on women more than men for fulfilling the global care economy is a key reason for this. According to the UN, a significant portion of the Global National Product, ranging from 20 to 40 percent, is attributed to unpaid work and it is primarily devoted to caregiving. The pervasive gender structural inequalities and social norms are closely linked to women's overrepresentation in these responsibilities. While varying by context, global statistics from the ILO have indicated that 606 million women of working age perform unpaid work versus 41 million men, dedicating on average, 4 hours and 25 minutes a day to unpaid care work, while men spend 1 hour and 23 minutes. This scenario is even more aggravated in low-income countries or where there is insufficient provision of free public early childhood education (ILO, 2018).

A 2022 report from EI's regional office in Latin America has shown that during COVID-19, there was a substantial disparity between the hours that female and male educators allocated to unpaid work activities. On average, in Colombia, female teachers spent 7 hours and 22 minutes per day on such tasks, whereas men dedicated only 3 hours and 1 minute daily. Similarly, in Peru during May 2020, women increased their daily time spent on housework by an average of 4.1 hours, while men's increment in time spent on the same tasks was slightly lower, at 3.6 hours per day (CEFEMINIA & IEAL, 2022).

As a largely feminised profession in many contexts, inadequate policies surrounding maternity leave, childcare, and care have large impacts on teacher and ESP wellbeing.

"Unions are fighting for the wellbeing of teachers, and they are asking for

support for issues related to wellbeing and the health of teachers to be a reality. They are now negotiating with the Government, for the ... health of teachers to be taken more account of, with medical visits, unions are trying to ensure that teachers are entitled to medical tests, medical visits and controls, and medical insurance is another aspect that we are fighting for, for teachers" (Country 2).

"The teaching profession, it is guaranteeing the maternity leave or other benefits, it is guaranteed by the government, by the law, so that's why many university students want to be a teacher, because the salaries are equal, and all the benefits are the things they can enjoy" (Country 15).

WHY DOES TEACHER AND ESP WELLBEING MATTER?

In summary, teacher and ESP wellbeing enables the delivery of equitable, quality education for all, for two main reasons.

Firstly, poor wellbeing impacts a teacher or EPS's ability to do their job. Research indicates a significant negative association between higher rates of stress or burnout and teachers reduced mental wellbeing across different countries. This can be seen in other elements of teacher health as poor teacher wellbeing can result in reduced teachers' physical health with sleep, headaches, exhaustion, fatigue and tension being the main symptoms reported. When teachers are physically unwell, they cannot provide quality education. Furthermore, this impaired performance can further reduce teacher self-efficacy at work, creating a vicious cycle. The impact this has on students is discussed below.

Secondly, teacher wellbeing is critical as emotional exhaustion, stress, and/or burnout is associated with the intention to leave the teaching profession. A scoping review of 70 papers on teacher stress, burnout, anxiety and depression found that burnout had a significant positive predictive effect and correlation with turnover intention, which suggests that the more severe the job burnout is, the higher the intention to leave. Teachers with higher wellbeing report greater commitment and satisfaction (McCallum, 2021).

Teacher and ESP wellbeing impacts the long-term sustainability of the profession and quality education systems. In the context of a global teacher shortage, teacher and ESP wellbeing is a stone which must not be left unturned.

TEACHER AND ESP WELLBEING AND THE STUDENT

Simply put, there is no student wellbeing without teacher and ESP wellbeing (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2022).

Research is increasingly demonstrating a positive correlation between teacher wellbeing and student academic achievement. At the same time, evidence also indicates a significant relationship between teacher wellbeing and students' social, emotional, and cognitive development (Hattie, 2009; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; McCallum et al., 2017). Teachers who are well can better contribute to the wellbeing of their students (Darling-Hammond, 2012; McCallum, 2021).

Evidence has demonstrated this relationship based on several elements which comprise teacher wellbeing. Teacher stress is linked to lower levels of teacher performance and ultimately lower student achievement (Falk et al., 2019). Job satisfaction is also associated with the quality of instruction and job performance, which has significant implications for student learning outcomes (Klassen & Chiu, 2010).

Schleicher (2021) highlighted research which pointed to positive associations between teacher self-efficacy, job satisfaction and student self-efficacy, motivation, and achievement. The evidence from TALIS, PISA, and other studies is that teacher wellbeing matters. Teacher leadership and collaboration, supportive working conditions, compensation which matches that of comparable professions, and relevant professional development contribute to high levels of teacher wellbeing and job satisfaction and crucially contribute to the quality of student learning.

This is particularly important for marginalised and vulnerable students and teachers, as attrition disproportionally affects marginalised and/or vulnerable communities and counteracts increased efforts to strengthen diverse teacher recruitment strategies (Falk et al., 2019).

Towards Teacher and ESP Wellbeing

In a context of global recruitment and retention challenges, increased attention to teacher and ESP wellbeing is urgently needed. Teacher and ESP wellbeing is an individual, collective, and community responsibility, which suggests that the issue is best addressed holistically based upon the following recommendations:

- While education systems and schools are increasingly aware of concerns about teacher wellbeing, too often the supports that are available rely on the individual teacher seeking out guidance and being encouraged to proactively take care of their own wellbeing. Interventions such as these place responsibility on teachers for systemic conditions

over which they have little or no control. There is an urgent need to bring broader systemic issues, such as status and workload, into conversations about teacher and ESP wellbeing (Thompson, 2021).

- There is little evidence on and attention paid to the wellbeing of teachers or ESP across contexts. Given the paucity of research on teacher and ESP wellbeing, it is imperative to gather more empirical, longitudinal evidence to better understand teacher and ESP wellbeing and how best to support and sustain it. Without hearing from teachers nor ESP directly, the research will never be able to provide a comprehensive understanding of teacher and ESP wellbeing. There are research gaps on teacher wellbeing in marginalised and vulnerable populations which must be urgently addressed.

- Governments must make teacher and ESP wellbeing a priority. Few education systems have national-level policies or support structures to promote and support wellbeing in the profession, leaving it to unions and/or individual educators to address. The wellbeing of teachers and ESP must be prioritised for the global education community to uphold commitments outlined in Sustainable Development Goal 4 and other global frameworks that ensure quality, equitable education for all (Burns & Lawrie, 2015; Falk et al., 2019). In making teacher and ESP wellbeing a policy priority, governments should:

  - o Fully fund their education systems to ensure salaries are competitive and all infrastructure and basic education needs are met as any policy change without substantial government financial investment is unsustainable;
  - o Develop mentorship programmes for beginning and novice teachers and integrate support for teacher wellbeing into teacher training programmes working as partners with teachers and their unions and organisations;
  - o Provide opportunities and support for teachers to exercise leadership in the development and improvement of professional practice;
  - o Agree guidance with teachers and their organisations on distributed leadership at system level;
  - o Establish the right to be heard and to be influential at all levels of policy making including the content and structure of the curriculum and decisions around the use of technology;
  - o Protect and enhance teachers' professional learning with their colleagues and enable teachers to participate in activities which lead to the creation and transfer of professional knowledge;
  - o Develop gender-sensitive and culture-sensitive equitable recruitment, deployment, and career progression policies for teachers and ESP;
  - o Develop policies which engage and sensitise school leaders to the importance of teacher and ESP wellbeing.

- Unions should include issues of wellbeing and mental health as an integral part of their demands, alongside other professional issues such as working conditions and wages. Additionally, unions should advocate for the inclusion of teacher and ESP wellbeing in national

education policies and for improved partnerships between schools, governments, and teacher organisations to create systemic change in supporting teachers and ESP career development and wellbeing.

- Education unions should explore the existing range of wellbeing measures and indices used internationally, and determine which are most relevant and/or accessible for their context. Developing a mechanism to collect feedback on the value of this measurement with members at a local level would provide useful insight to guide subsequent action and/or research.

Importantly, as teachers and ESP live in culturally specific ways, they also exist, act, and engage in strategies to enhance wellbeing in culture-specific ways (Kitayama, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997). Wellbeing researchers and policymakers must be mindful of the consequences of the cultural differences in how wellbeing is construed. As teacher and ESP wellbeing moves onto political agendas, it is critical these cross-cultural differences are considered, as enacting culturally irrelevant policies may be ineffective (Shin & Lyubomirsky, 2017; McCallum 2021). It is also important that wellbeing does not become another ranked indicator across systems, as it may lead to an incomplete assessment (Joshanloo et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

While the definitions and measurements of teacher and ESP wellbeing are diverse (even in-country), there is a striking consistency in the reported causes of poor wellbeing. Wellbeing presents a significant, long-term risk to the quality of education across most countries, as it is linked to ill-health, reduced satisfaction, exhaustion, burnout and, ultimately, attrition. This, in turn, compromises a teacher or ESP's ability to do their best work and has a negative impact on students. Should these pressures remain at current levels or intensify further, the attractiveness of the profession will decline relative to the other options available in any given setting.

When global, national, and local education stakeholders implement policies and practices that support teacher and ESP wellbeing, especially in low resource, crisis, or conflict-affected contexts, there is an opportunity to increase retention, make the profession more attractive, and create inclusive learning environments that support greater equity opportunities.

The opportunity for governments and teacher unions to work together in putting teacher and ESP wellbeing at the centre of education policy, practice, and research is now. Recruiting and retaining high quality teachers and ESP depends on it.

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