

Chapter 11

Practical Applications for Building Teacher WellBeing in Education



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Abstract UNESCO states the world must recruit 69 million new teachers to reach the 2030 educational goals, but unfortunately, 80% of the current teachers are considering leaving the profession. Teachers are the greatest resource in education and therefore, must be given opportunities to learn skills in resilience to ensure the profession's sustainability. This chapter will highlight the threats to teacher wellbeing and resilience and suggest skills, strategies and practices to support the wellbeing of teachers in schools. Given the increasing burnout and attrition rates of teachers, it seems reasonable to suggest that the same careful planning that goes into developing student wellbeing programmes should be applied in the development of teacher wellbeing programmes. Through the research of Positive Psychology, this chapter explores evidence-based interventions teachers can learn to develop protective factors to buffer against excessive stress. We explore the application of positive psychology in the workplace and the need for professional learning to focus on the development of the Psychological Capital of our teachers. This includes building their inner HERO with hope, efficacy, resilience and optimism.

Keywords Teacher wellbeing · Positive education · Psychological capital · Professional development

11.1 Introduction

Globally, teachers have the highest levels of work-related stress and burnout compared to other professions (Stoeber and Rennert, 2008). Teacher stress has shown to impair health, decrease self-confidence and self-esteem and fragment personal

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relationships. As well as feeling burned out and exhausted, teachers can experience a sense of powerlessness and isolation, perceiving their work as meaningless (Howard and Johnson 2004). High-stress levels have been linked with feelings of reduced confidence, emotional exhaustion, low motivation and poor job satisfaction and is a prominent factor in teacher attrition (McCarthy et al. 2014). Exhaustion and the social and emotional stresses from the daily pressures of teaching affect teachers' abilities to cope, their wellbeing and their potential to flourish (Parker and Martin 2009). This has been strongly correlated with a poor work–life balance due to the expectations of working long hours and the inability to switch off after work (Education Support Partnership 2019). If teachers' emotional, physical and mental exhaustion from excessive and prolonged stress is not managed, teachers can become burned out. Student achievement suffers when teachers become burned out because their focus is on their survival (Hattie and Yates 2014). Teacher wellbeing can affect both student wellbeing and achievement, because “well teachers promote well students” (McCallum and Price 2010, p. 20). Teachers positively impact students' learning, engagement, achievement, sense of belonging and flourishing (Hattie and Yates 2014). When experiencing stress or burnout, teachers may request support from colleagues, blame others for their inability to cope effectively or take time off (Howard and Johnson 2004). While it is widely acknowledged the wellbeing of teachers is in crisis, teacher wellbeing research has focused more on the individual teacher's deficit and their ability to cope with stress and burnout, rather than how to better develop wellbeing (Roffey 2012). Teacher wellbeing is not just an individual's responsibility, but it is a shared organisational, community and worldwide concern.

Defining wellbeing for teachers can be complicated and a range of theoretical perspectives have addressed the issue (see also Chap. 14). The glaring imbalance in psychological research on teacher wellbeing has resulted in a few evidence-based frameworks describing “what works” to develop the wellbeing of teachers in education. Positive and negative influences on teachers' wellbeing are resilience, self-efficacy, social-emotional capabilities and teachers' reactions to their work (McCallum et al. 2017). Positive wellbeing is a stable emotional state and balances between the teacher and the school context and its demands. Given student learning is the core business of schools, for students to be well, teachers themselves must be well (McCallum and Price 2010). Teachers need better ways to manage the increasing stressors of the role. This includes regular opportunities to develop hope, build efficacy, learn resilience and practice optimism as protective factors to the impacts of stress on their wellbeing.

11.2 Positive Psychology and Teacher Wellbeing

Most research into teacher wellbeing has concentrated on the deficit model and the “unwell” teacher, rather than how to foster a teacher's wellness. This is changing due to the rise of evidence-based interventions from Positive Psychology, a field of

inquiry concerned with what makes communities and individuals thrive (Waters and White 2015).

Maslow (1954) created the phrase “positive psychology” to mean increasing research into areas of what made a good, happy, compassionate individual and understanding one’s innate tendency to strive towards excellence, peak experience and self-actualisation. Critics had argued that Maslow’s explicit focus on the self and self-improvement was narcissistic, seeking individual gratification ignoring any meaningful, wellness-enhancing collective or institutional dynamics (Seligman 2002). This has also been a criticism of positive psychology despite Seligman (2002) advocating for development of not only individual but collective wellbeing, extending into society.

A challenge for the positive psychology movement was defining what positive meant, by differentiating “between describing something as ‘good’ and prescribing it as ‘good’” (Gable et al. 2004, p. 107), as well as differentiating a pleasurable experience, which fostered personal growth, from an enjoyable experience. Channelling attention on only what was good and positive may lead to a loss of overall perspective. If previous psychology focused more on the negative, which Seligman had censured, perhaps likewise may be said for positive psychology’s focus on only the positive. In essence, Positive Psychology aims to be the study of virtue, human flourishing, resilience and wellbeing, endeavouring to understand and nurture the lives of individuals and institutions through evidence-based practice and sound inquiry (Pawelski 2016).

Seligman’s goal for positive psychology was to develop a science of positive, subjective experience and to change how one prevented mental illness, by what he termed as ‘buffering’ by developing hope, courage, perseverance, interpersonal skill, honesty, capacity for insight and pleasure, future-mindedness, (Seligman 2002). However, little is known about the long-term costs and benefits of positive psychology.

Positive Psychology interventions that increase wellbeing and reduce depressive symptoms include developing gratitude, identifying character strengths, exploring explanatory style, setting goals, savouring positive emotions, forming positive relationships and celebrating achievements (Seligman 2002). These are typically expressed in a popular model known as the PERMA pillars. These pillars identify the importance of developing:

- *Positive emotion*—Plan and participate in healthy positive experiences.
- *Engagement*—Become immersed in worthwhile pursuits, including the application of strengths.
- *Relationships*—Develop social and emotional skills to better connect and share with others.
- *Meaning*—Reflect and plan for ways to act with purpose, to think beyond themselves and contribute to higher pursuits.
- *Accomplishment*—Set and strive for meaningful goals, manage setbacks, maintain mental toughness and embody a growth mindset (Falecki et al. 2018).

These pillars can also act as ways to develop hope, efficacy, resilience and optimism to buffer the impact of excessive stress due to work demands. One challenge is that prior research into Positive Psychology has focused on short interventions with post-treatment follow-ups meaning immediate benefits seem apparent, yet long-term effects of positive psychology traits and processes still need to be established.

Geelong Grammar, Australia, is globally recognised as a leader in the application for Positive Psychology in education. For 2 years, Seligman and his team worked with all levels of the school community to help teachers 'Learn' and 'Live' wellbeing before they began to 'Teach' and 'Embed' wellbeing into the curriculum (Seligman et al. 2009). The fundamental goal was to promote flourishing, which is "the presence of emotional wellbeing or the presence of positive feelings about one's self and life; social wellbeing or feeling connected to others and valued by the community, and physical wellbeing that focuses on functioning well" (Norris et al. 2013, p. 149). Comprehensive programmes were implemented for both teaching and non-teaching staff with opportunities to reflect, discuss and plan for ways to support wellbeing (Norris et al. 2013). However, the validity of Positive Psychology's interventions is a concern as often intervention success had been determined by self-report measurements, cross-sectional studies and correlation studies; conclusions cannot be drawn about the effectiveness of the intervention as these measures do not imply causality (Diener 2009).

One branch of Positive Psychology that has recently emerged specifically in the workplace is Positive Organisational Behaviour (POB), with the core concept of developing Psychological Capital (PsyCap) of employees. Positive organisational behaviour is the study and application of positive human resource strengths and psychological resource capacities, which are measured, developed and effectively managed for improved workplace performance. Luthans et al. (2015) argues that a focus on the positives is necessary because a focus on negativity moves organisations into fight-or-flight mode. When organisations focus on what needs 'fixing', people move to a narrow mindset of wanting to limit the negative impact on their energy and resources, instead of growing what was already working. This perspective also highlights the scarcity of time, resulting in more pressure on employees to solve problems in short time frames. He argues this deficit lens does not promote positive growth within organisations, but only aims to reduce negative impact.

However, it is essential to note that "POB does not discount the value of negativity and negative constructs. Similar to positive psychology and other positive perspectives, POB acknowledges that positivity and negativity serve unique and different functions" (Luthans and Youssef-Morgan 2017, p. 17). Luthans has researched POB by drawing on existing empirical research within the field of Positive Psychology to identify valid measures of positive psychological states that are open to development, have an impact on desired employee attitudes, behaviours and improve performance (Luthans and Youssef-Morgan 2017). The four psychological constructs that meet the POB scientific inclusion criteria are Hope, Efficacy, Resilience and Optimism (HERO).

11.3 Developing the Psychological Capital of Teachers

The fundamental role of schools is the education of students. Teachers are what make this happen. The quality of a school system rests on the quality of its teachers, yet if the wellbeing of teachers is languishing, what does this mean about the quality of our organisations? High level of wellbeing in organisations is associated with high engagement, productivity, citizenship and presenteeism (Keyes 2005). Psychological Capital (PsyCap) has been empirically linked to workplace improvements in psychological wellbeing (Avey et al. 2011); organisational commitment and employee performance, presenteeism and job satisfaction (Abbas et al. 2014). High levels of PsyCap also positively influence wellbeing, health outcomes such as lower BMI and cholesterol levels and satisfaction with one's relationships (Abbas et al. 2014). Strong significant positive relationships were found between PsyCap and desirable outcomes such as satisfaction and commitment; increased performance and a reduction in undesirable attitudes such as cynicism, stress, anxiety and staff turnover (Avey et al. 2011).

While there is limited research regarding the relationships between PsyCap and teacher wellbeing, PsyCap has been shown to have benefits for teacher motivation, which influences the quality of teaching and student motivation, as well as reducing illness factors and turnover rates in schools (Viseu et al. 2016). What we do know is that individually the four elements of PsyCap, Hope, Efficacy, Resilience, Optimism, have been extensively researched when it comes to education and the relationship to wellbeing. In this next section, we will unpack the four constructs of PsyCap and the implications for teachers.

Resilience in education has a strong focus on student wellbeing programmes. Developing psychological, cognitive, emotional and social resources can impact one's ability to not only rebound from adversity but also bounce forward towards growth and development (Masten 2001). However, schools are also looking for teachers to thrive in chaos and to learn and grow in tough times. PsyCap resilience is more than just bouncing back; it involves proactively bouncing forward. Teachers can benefit from learning how to better manage their thoughts, emotions, interactions, everyday changes and the setbacks they may experience on an average school day.

One programme that is effective in supporting teachers to be resilient is the Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE) professional development programme. Three areas of this programme include teacher training in 'emotion skills instruction', teaching 'mindfulness-based interventions' and promoting empathy and compassion through 'listening and caring practices'. Results showed increases in wellbeing, reductions in time-related stress, but little change in motivation and efficacy. Jennings et al. (2011) recognised the significance time plays in teacher professional and personal development and how prioritising time is crucial for teacher self-development. If schools were to improve the academic, social and emotional outcomes of students, then teachers must be given time and choices for their development. The recently released CASEL (Collaborative Academic Social Emotional

Learning) Guide to Schoolwide Social Emotional Learning (2019) highlights that when teachers learn, collaborate and model social and emotional competencies, they are more effective at teaching this to students. Research shows that teachers trained to implement a Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum at their school reported greater efficacy for managing student behaviour, higher levels of personal accomplishment, lower job-related anxiety and depression, higher quality classroom interactions with students, greater teacher engagement and greater perceived job control (Greenberg et al. 2016). This means training teachers to deliver student SEL programmes may serve as a dual approach, building resilience not only in students but also in teachers.

Seligman's (2002) work on optimism highlights how an explanatory style can alter how individual's interpret experiences and change their thinking patterns, resulting in greater resilience. Optimists exhibit fundamentally different coping mechanisms from pessimists, especially in turbulent times in organisations (Luthans et al. 2015). In an education context, pessimistic teachers may view events at work as personal (where they blame themselves), permanent (they don't see anything changing) or pervasive (where they use previous experiences to assume outcomes of future experiences). When optimists are faced with adversity, they keep trying and become flexible in their thinking as they move towards goals. Pessimists, on the other hand, are quick to blame either themselves or the system which can breed negativity when shared in peer groups. Duckworth et al. (2009) surveyed teachers in terms of their optimistic explanatory style, grit and life satisfaction, against student's academic gains; results showed teachers could learn positive interventions that make a difference to student outcomes. Given that explanatory style is subjective, when teachers learn to reflect on their explanatory style, they learn to reframe perspectives that can help them move from a position of perceived helplessness to optimism. Learning to be optimistic can also help people receive positive feedback as they can take credit for their excellent work, building efficacy.

Snyder et al.'s (2002) Hope Theory explains hope as a positive motivational state that involves successful agency (will power) and pathways (way power) towards goal attainment, associated with positive emotions. Hope involves encouraging teachers to set their own meaningful goals and multiple pathways for actioning goals that include scaffolding and flexibility. When examining the drivers of behaviour, teachers who operate from a goal-mastery perspective tend to experience greater work satisfaction, whereas those who function from a failure-avoidance perspective tend to become withdrawn, less engaged and at risk of burnout (Parker and Martin 2009). An Australian study of 430 teachers across the Catholic and Independent sectors found that goal orientation was a significant predictor in coping strategies of teacher stress (Parker and Martin 2009). When teachers have the cognitive resources to set clear and practical goals of what they want, as opposed to what they do not want, they regain a sense of autonomy which builds self-efficacy (Skaalvik and Skaalvik 2014). Sometimes, the endless demands of the job can result in teachers feeling a sense of hopelessness, which can result in disengagement. As hope is a developmental state (Snyder et al. 2002), using strategies such as visualising goal attainment, scaffolding learning and celebrating success, teachers can learn to become hopeful about the

future. Hopeful employees are more creative in their thinking and operate from an internal locus of control (Luthans et al. 2015).

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory highlights efficacy as a significant predictor of achieving mastery. A strong correlation has occurred between efficacy and work-related performance at the individual level as well as the collective level (Luthans et al. 2015). Efficacy can be developed through modelling, vicarious learning, social persuasion, positive feedback and experiencing mastery. When teachers gain positive feedback or reflect on mastery experiences, they believe in their ability and grow in confidence. Creating a positive sense of connectedness, where teachers' achievements are celebrated, has been highlighted as an opportunity for them to engage their protective factors and strengthen wellbeing (Howard and Johnson 2004). However, given the nature of schools as a performance arena, teachers can feel vulnerable, having to measure and rate their performance (Parker and Martin 2009). The external pressures of accountability can directly impact self-efficacy and self-worth, known as determinants of resilience and wellbeing (Parker and Martin 2009). What we do know is that when teachers are given opportunities to observe and positively reflect on their actions, they build their confidence and collective teacher efficacy (Hattie and Yates 2014). Mentoring has been highlighted as one avenue to support this process.

Although the individual components of PsyCap have been individually researched, collectively PsyCap as HERO becomes more significant than the sum of their parts (Luthans et al. 2015). Despite initial studies showing the development of PsyCap having a positive impact on organisational behaviour, the field of POB is still in its infancy. Further research is needed, especially concerning teachers and educational organisations.

11.4 Interventions for Developing Teacher Wellbeing

Positive Psychology interventions are not just efficacious but of significant value in an individual's real lives and have been shown to support one's wellbeing both in the workplace and in education (Parks and Schueller 2014). Many models exist to explain how Positive Psychology interventions work best with individuals. One of the most used models is PERMA described by Seligman. While Psychological Capital (PsyCap) focuses on positive organisational behaviour and is more related to workplace engagement and performance, PERMA offers a simple model to identify key interventions for developing wellbeing. In this chapter, we suggest using interventions within PERMA with a lens of developing PsyCap of teachers. Table 11.1 gives an overview of the strategies discussed here. This section will explore each of the PERMA pillars with strategies for teachers through individual pursuits, whole staff initiatives or other avenues of professional learning.

Table 11.1 Interventions to develop teacher well-being

PERMA pillar	Intervention
Positive emotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Count your blessings • Keep a gratitude journal • Identify ‘three good things’ and why they happened • Identify what works well • Establish a gratitude wall • Encourage emotional literacy • Mindfulness exercises
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take the VIA Character Profile to identify Signature strengths • Have character strengths conversations with colleagues • Identify strengths overplayed and underplayed • Reflect on Explanatory style • Practice Optimistic Thinking (ABCDE) • Set meaningful goals
Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice Active Constructive Responding • Issue Thank you Cards or Gratitude cards • Establish “Caught you doing well” moments • Establish a Random Acts of Kindness week • Participate in Mentoring programmes • Learn Coaching Psychology skills • Encourage positive social events • Provide access to who and how to seek support
Meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on core values and how we live them • Write about our best self at work • Visualise success and positive impact • Job Crafting • Track your progress • Scaffold milestones
Accomplishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use an “Achievement List” instead of a “To-Do” list each day • Peer Observations to track what is working well • Goal setting with multiple pathways • Engage in solution-focused conversations • Celebrate moments of positive impact

11.4.1 Positive Emotions

Teaching can be tough and stressful, but it is also a highly rewarding vocation where they can experience a myriad of emotions daily (Hargreaves 2000). Teachers must be given opportunities to track positive emotions, especially as negative emotions can overpower positivity because of one's negativity bias (Fredrickson 2006). Positive emotions include feelings of joy, love, gratitude, hope, pride, inspiration, curiosity, amusement, serenity and awe. Characteristics of people who experience frequent positive emotions are confidence, optimism and self-efficacious; these are three critical elements of building Psychological Capital and the hallmark of effective teachers.

Positive emotions have been shown to positively impact workplaces, leading to increased creativity, innovation, transformational cooperation and organisational capacity (Fredrickson 2006). Positive emotions increase levels of hope (Snyder et al. 2002), increasing positive emotions significantly impacts employee wellbeing and work-related outcomes, as opposed to decreasing levels of employee negative emotions. Mindfulness has been highlighted as a key strategy for regulating emotions. Mindfulness is needed in order to reflect on explanatory style, to practice optimistic thinking, and is a key strategy for regulating emotions, a necessary skill for resilience. An eight-week mindfulness professional development programme showed it reduced stress and increased self-compassion (Flook et al. 2013). Mindfulness can reduce teacher burnout, negative affect, sleep-related impairment and daily physical symptoms of stress (Abenavoli et al. 2013).

11.4.2 Engagement

Engagement is being fully immersed in an activity that is both intrinsically motivating and a balance of challenge and skill, resulting in an experience of 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi et al. 1990). When engaged, individuals tend to be more curious, passionate and persevere in attaining goals (Csikszentmihalyi et al. 1990). Reflecting on engagement helps identify, use and develop strengths in ourselves and others. These strengths can be identified using the Values in Action Character Strengths Survey (www.viacharacter.org), a self-report measure which "describes and classifies strengths and virtues that enable human thriving" (Park et al. 2004, p. 411).

Identifying and applying character strengths at work can increase job satisfaction, productivity and organisational relationships as well as reduce work-related stress (Lavy and Littman-Ovadia 2017). Character strength literacy can help share positive feedback with colleagues as a means for reflecting, which can contribute to efficacy. A discourse in character strengths gives staff opportunities to reflect on their strengths and recognise strengths in others. This is an affirming activity for staff who desire opportunities to be acknowledged and valued for their work. Through a shared

language of understanding similarities and differences, teachers can form more positive relationships with a greater appreciation of themselves and others, one of the enabling factors of collective efficacy (Donohoo 2017). Strength-based interventions can also increase engagement through setting meaningful goals with multiple pathways to achieving these goals, a key component of hope theory. Strengths can be used when reflecting on explanatory style (optimism) and planning for ways to rebound from adversity (resilience).

11.4.3 Relationships

Relationships are a psychological need and an essential factor for life satisfaction, mental health and wellbeing. Positive psychology's focus is not solely on improving personal wellbeing but on how we can better connect, give and contribute to the lives of others. Positive relationships help develop our core internal resources and social and emotional skills (Roffey 2012). "Other people are the best antidote to the downs in life and the single most reliable up" (Seligman 2011, p. 20); schools and teachers are no exception. Teaching is a collaboration that requires open, honest and trustworthy relationships, free of judgment yet stable enough to manage challenging conversations. Positive relationships are also needed to encourage us to seek support, making way for opportunities to be resilient.

A collaborative relationship for teachers involves a positive connection and effective communication skills, such as active listening, reflecting, clarifying, empathy, questioning techniques and rapport building strategies (Van Nieuwerburgh 2012). One such emerging methodology to foster these skills is Coaching Psychology. Coaching in education is a relatively new field, offering an action research model to learning, and can be closely linked with mentoring; however, experts are clear in differentiating the two. Coaching is defined as

"a solution-focused, results-orientated systematic process in which the coach facilitates the enhancement of the coachee's life experience and performance in various domains, and fosters the self-directed learning and personal growth of the coachee" (Grant 2001, p. 148).

In an educational setting, coached groups, when compared to non-coached groups, "reported reduced stress, increased resilience, and improved workplace wellbeing" (Grant et al. 2010, p. 165). Teachers who have participated in a coaching programme reported increases in goal attainment and better relationships with others, both of which are protective factors for building resilience (Grant et al. 2010).

Gable et al. (2004) suggested a strategy for building positive relationships called Active Constructive Responding (ACR), where she identified that how you celebrate is more predictive of strong relationships than how you fight. ACR elicits sincere enthusiasm, genuine interest and excitement for the other person's event, which is vital in building relationships and psychological capital and increasing positive emotions and wellbeing (Gable et al. 2004).

11.4.4 Meaning

People with purposeful lives have greater longevity, life satisfaction and greater overall wellbeing (Bonebright et al. 2000). In PERMA, meaning refers to the intrinsic value and joy a person feels towards contributing to society and is strongly linked to one's sense of purpose, efficacy and self-worth (Baumeister and Vohs 2005). Having meaning at work can increase wellbeing but also decrease feelings of hostility, stress and depression (Steger et al. 2006). Engagement in meaningful work can increase commitment, connection, happiness, satisfaction and fulfilment (Wrzesniewski et al. 2013).

The 'Best Self Exercise' is one strategy to reconnect to one's meaning and purpose. When individuals imagine working hard and accomplishing their goals, then write about their future self who has achieved desired goals, they show a significant increase in a positive mood (Sheldon and Lyubomirsky 2006). The act of writing helps to organise an individual's thoughts in a systematic analytical manner and builds meaning (Lyubomirsky 2008). Giving teachers opportunities to reflect on their impact, whether individually or in teams, can contribute to self-efficacy as confidence grows through seeing improvements.

Goal setting is another useful strategy for building meaning and is closely linked to Hope Theory. Authentic goals aligned with a teacher's core life values can assist in creating intrinsic and meaningful goals. This is also linked to Job Crafting (Wrzesniewski et al. 2013); the actions employees take to redesign their work to foster engagement, satisfaction, resilience and thriving. Job Crafting in education can involve task crafting (changing the what and how of teachers' work, e.g. work-related commitments), relational crafting (e.g. formal or informal mentoring) and cognitive crafting (reframing perceptions of the how and why of teachers' work). Employees who connect their work to the school's vision and mission are more likely to generate more meaning at work (Berg et al. 2007). Job crafting allows teachers to take an instant action to invest in oneself, to become active crafters of their work and to increase their work effectiveness and happiness (Berg et al. 2007).

11.4.5 Accomplishment

Accomplishment refers to the application of personal skills and effort as an individual moves towards the desired goal (Seligman 2011). For teachers to thrive in the profession, they would benefit from recognising and affirming their achievements on a regular basis. Unfortunately, teachers are not in the habit of stopping to celebrate their achievements. This is evidenced by one of the authors (Falecki) when asking teachers to complete a 'teacher wellbeing audit' to identify which of the PERMA pillars they do best and least. Having conducted this with over 500 schools across Australia (over 25,000 teachers) during professional development workshops, the pillar of accomplishment was always the lowest score. Given the busyness of any

given day, teachers would benefit greatly from stopping to notice the positive impact they have on the students and their learning. Turning a “To-Do” list into an “Accomplishment” list is a simple way to do this. This list becomes a set of goals in which teachers call upon their will, agency and efficacy to complete the items on the list. Resilience is required to overcome possible challenges and to remain flexible along the path to achievement.

Sheldon and Lyubomirsky (2006) believe that specific positive psychology interventions play a role in enhancing and maintaining positive wellbeing, primarily if they are delivered with consistent effort and commitment. A summary of the interventions discussed is listed in Table 11.1.

When teachers have opportunities to learn and live evidence-based wellbeing interventions, they are better able to build Psychological Capital. By doing so, teachers can cope better, are more productive and can make positive contributions to the growth and development of others. For this reason, Falecki and Mann, define teacher wellbeing as

The psychological capacity for teachers to manage normal stressors within the profession, including awareness of positive emotional states. This includes setting authentic goals, celebrating accomplishments, maintaining positive connections with others, and reflecting on meaning and impact.

11.5 Professional Development Considerations for Teacher Wellbeing

Schools are learning institutions for students and teachers, yet how children and adults learn are very different. Pedagogy is known as the art and science of teaching children. Andragogy principles are used to teach adults, which includes acknowledging adult learners as autonomous and self-directed (Knowles 1978). Having accumulated life experience, work-related and personal responsibilities, adult learners want relevance and a focus on what is most useful to them in their context (Knowles 1978). These learning factors must be considered when facilitating professional development for adult learners, such as teachers.

AITSL (2017) highlighted the most common forms of professional learning by teachers as specific courses, professional reading, online learning and professional conversations. These professional development opportunities are typically focussed on students, curriculum or processes with little time given to the development of PsyCap. An AITSL survey (2017) indicated that 33% of professional learning activities focused on student learning and teaching, 34% on content and subject knowledge 15% on assessment (15%). Professional learning that concentrates on developing intellectual capital and social capital alone is not enough to help employees navigate the rapid pace of change in organisations (Luthans et al. 2015). PsyCap offers “a higher-order conceptual framework for understanding and capitalising upon human positive psychological resources in today’s organisations and those being formed for tomorrow” (Luthans et al. 2015, p. 6). The reality in education is that any professional

learning that focuses on developing the psychological capacity of teachers is considered a luxury or an add-on instead of part of a strategic whole-school wellbeing plan (Street 2018).

For teachers to develop the psychological resources of hope, efficacy, resilience and optimism as protective factors for their wellbeing, they must have opportunities to reflect on positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment. One principal challenge teachers face is the one-off staff development day, when new initiatives, resources and updated requirements are concentrated into a full day of training, leaving teachers to absorb and implement change on their own (Knight 2007). With the daily demands of their job, these new initiatives are delivered in lecture-style presentations and tend to fall by the wayside, with only a minimal impact on learning. This is due to the 'pressing immediacy' teachers feel with tackling their immediate tasks rather than prioritising the implementation of new ideas (Fullan and Hargreaves 1996). Ironically, teachers who feel overwhelmed may pursue new strategies to support their wellbeing (Roffey 2012) yet lack the capacity or skills to change current habits (Knight 2007). Any change of behaviour requires insight into the automatic processes of thoughts and action supported with ongoing reflection. Effective professional learning needs to engage with the day-to-day work of teachers, supported by the school leaders and involve peer collaboration (Street 2018).

One of the main challenges of developing teacher wellbeing is supporting the psychological capital of teachers within a complex system. School systems can be full of contradictions by teaching individual wellbeing strategies yet overcrowding the curriculum and placing excessive demands on people that numb any possibility of impact (Street 2018). Teacher workload, demanding students and parents and excessive administration requirements that create high-stress situations for teachers must be reviewed. Wellbeing needs to be contextual not only by developing its people but also reviewing the physical space, policy and practice and social norms within schools (Street 2018). The interventions discussed in this chapter are merely the beginning of a bigger conversation about more strategic and whole-school wellbeing initiatives.

11.6 Conclusion

Teacher stress is higher and their wellbeing is lower than that of general populations (Education Support Partnership 2019). Teachers make learning happen and, therefore, are the greatest asset that exists within schools. If we want well students, we must have well teachers (Roffey 2012). Teachers learning practical strategies to enhance wellbeing can have a positive effect on one's self-confidence, the sense of personal agency and resilience (Le Cornu 2013). Providing high-quality learning opportunities that develop wellbeing and address teacher stress and attrition is essential. One challenge is the competitive demand for professional learning time. The research of Positive Psychology offers a collection of interventions that people can experience the elements of PERMA in many ways. PsyCap goes further to provide

a higher order framework for building on the positive psychological resources of employees. While there is still much to learn and measure about effective development of teacher wellbeing in schools, what we do know is that the same strategic and evidence-based lens used to develop student wellbeing programmes must be used in the development of teacher wellbeing programmes. Whether this is one-off professional learning opportunities or more holistic action-research models of continuous learning, teachers need regular opportunities to learn, discuss and reflect on protective factors that develop their inner HERO, hope, efficacy, resilience and optimism.

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