

Chapter 5

A Case Study: Teachers at the Front Line of School Communities During Times of Crisis



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Abstract It has long been understood that teachers are the most important in-school factor influencing learner achievement, satisfaction, and happiness and are also pivotal members of the school community. Like schools, they have a key role to play when the community at large experiences stress, environmental degradation, natural disasters, economic hardship, rapid digitalisation, or breakdown. Yet, during the pandemic and other world events throughout history, teachers find themselves at the front line having to navigate all the responsibilities they were trained for in addition to maintaining calm and a sense of normalcy. This chapter will draw on international data collected during the 2020 pandemic and focus on the intertwining learning and wellbeing issues at the individual and societal levels that enable or hinder the education, learning, and wellbeing of individuals and communities. Drawing on my extensive research in teacher wellbeing, I argue that as the most critical in-school factor, teachers have a positive and productive role in maintaining and sustaining individuals and communities. This chapter will demonstrate that the links between learning and wellbeing are increasingly challenging in modern complex societies, which often juxtapose the demands for efficiency and the priorities set for educational sustainability.

Keywords Community · Education policy · Schooling disruption · Student wellbeing · Teacher education · Teacher wellbeing

5.1 Introduction

At the height of the 2020 pandemic, UNESCO (2020) claimed that over 1.6 billion school leavers were affected across 148 countries. Believed to come to an end as 2020 drew to a close, we find that in 2021 COVID-19 is not eliminated, and new strains like the Delta variant are now affecting younger people. Across the world, there are mass vaccination rollouts, protest riots against lockdowns and continued restrictions,

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and disruption to ‘normal’ ways of living. In the summer immediately prior to the COVID-19 outbreak in Australia, an estimated 1400 schools were impacted by the 2019–2020 bushfires. In 2021 we are also experiencing other traumatic events across the globe: the Taliban (a militant group that ran Afghanistan in the 1990s) has seized power two weeks before the United States was set to complete its troop withdrawal on 31 August 2021, after a two-decade war (<https://edition.cnn.com/2021/08/16/middle-east/taliban-control-afghanistan-explained-intl-hnk/index.html>, accessed 26 August 2021); nine large wildfires are out-of-control in California, United States; there is flooding in Italy and New Jersey, United States, and cyclones in New Orleans, United States; and the mass abduction of school children continues to disrupt schooling in Nigeria. In other parts of the world, poverty continues to impact many individuals and societies (the latest global data tells us that 85% of the world population—some 6.5 billion people—live on less than \$30 per day [Roser, 2021]). These traumatic events highlight how devastation can affect school communities; it also identifies school leaders and teachers’ important role in fostering wellbeing during and in the aftermath of catastrophic events. Schools can provide regeneration and hope. For many parents, school leaders and teachers can be the lighthouse in calamitous times. Yet, despite steady growth and awareness of positive education in schools (White & Kern, 2018), trauma-aware approaches are absent. As Brunzell (2021) asserts, this has resulted in confusion for teachers, many of whom are already overburdened with their own secondary trauma responses when working in communities experiencing disruption (p. 206).

5.1.1 Education as Community

McCallum (2020) outlines the importance of the teacher’s role in preparing young people for innovative, productive, and socially just futures and claims that despite technological advances and other global impacts on their work, a ‘well’ teacher can make a significant contribution to a nation’s prosperity, peace, and human flourishing (p. 17). Teachers are at the centre of teaching and education for students and wider communities (Day, 2017; White & McCallum, 2020). A review of the literature identifies five areas of influence that provide good reasons to consider how important it is for teachers to be part of a community:

1. A well teacher contributes to fulfilling positive educational outcomes for students and school communities (Albrecht, 2018; McCallum, 2021; Viac & Fraser, 2020; White, 2021; White & McCallum, 2020).
2. Teachers are responsible for ensuring students’ academic learning outcomes are met (Dix et al., 2012; Duckworth et al., 2009; Durlak et al., 2011; Howell, 2009; Seligman, 2011; Suldo et al., 2011; White & Kern, 2018).
3. Teachers teach social–emotional learning and assist students in developing positive relationships with teachers, fellow students and others (Chodkiewicz & Boyle, 2017; Klassen et al., 2012; Milatz et al., 2015; Nielsen et al., 2015; Price & McCallum, 2016; White & Kern, 2018; White & Waters, 2015).

4. Teachers prepare students for the future, to act as global citizens who can respond to pressing social, economic, and political issues (Friedman, 2005; Lambert, 2017; McCallum, 2020).
5. Teachers contribute to the holistic wellbeing of students; that is, social, emotional, spiritual, cognitive, and physical wellbeing (Allen & Kern, 2018; Allen et al., 2018; Council of Australian Governments Council, 2019; McCallum & Price, 2016; White & Kern, 2018; White & McCallum, 2020).

Additionally, it is acknowledged that students spend considerable hours in schools where learning takes place, so there are many benefits to learning and wellbeing when teachers are valued as part of the community. Specifically:

1. Learning is situated in a variety of community contexts and mediated by local practices and perspectives.
2. Learning takes place not only in school but also in multiple contexts and practices of everyday lives across the lifespan.
3. Learners need multiple sources of support from a variety of institutions to promote their personal and intellectual development.
4. Learning is facilitated when students are encouraged to use home and community resources.

Teachers can increase the academic achievement gaps and social–emotional learning needs by identifying, drawing upon and creatively using the cultural capital students bring to school from their communities. While it may be much more challenging to achieve this at times of crisis, teachers are embedded in local contexts and have a sense of place that represents the students in their classrooms. As articulated by Price and McCallum (2016), ‘wellbeing is everyone’s business to ensure children and young people ... and the whole-school community remain well’ (p. 139).

5.1.2 Teachers’ Role During Times of Crisis

So, during times of crisis, teachers are well placed to maintain continuity of learning and whole of school responses as they support local communities. The maintenance of school routines, community connections, and the purpose of schooling can assist students and their families as they try to cope during the crisis, and also as they rebuild their lives and address growing concerns about youth mental health—mooted as the next wave of the pandemic (White & McCallum, 2021). The 2020/2021 pandemic is used as the main example of a crisis in this chapter. The disruption to education and teachers’ work that took place during this time is summarised in Table 5.1.

These changes to teaching and learning directly and immediately affect the children, their families, and the wider community. UNESCO (2020), OECD (2020) and Pereira et al. (2021) argue that vulnerable societies are more seriously impacted. As Villet et al. (2020) explain:

Table 5.1 Teachers' responses to teaching during the pandemic

Changes to teaching and learning	Impact on teachers
Some schools remained open, some closed, and some offered hybrid teaching models	Changes to modes of teaching: online teaching with face-to-face (synchronous) and/or pre-recorded (asynchronous) and/or fully online
Changes to teaching modes created a rethink of content, which needed to be tailored	Modify the curriculum
Children absent from classrooms, increased levels of school drop-out	Missed learning or rapid catch-up lessons required
Examinations were cancelled	Alternative modes of assessment required
School events cancelled	Missed opportunities for celebrations
Children with no or limited access to technology	Re-adjust lessons according to levels of technology and access
Modes of communication were changed	Online modes of communication required to keep students and families informed
Home schooling	Support provided to parents and carers
Increased levels of stress, anxiety, and mental health	Social-emotional support strategies increased
Increased focus on hygiene and classroom routines	Mandate and monitor handwashing, masks, and social distancing
School sport cancelled	Physical activity and social interactions declined
Increased expectations from school leaders to maintain student results	Created stress and feelings of not coping
Increased use of technology	Little or no professional development
Increased stress on families who were isolated, loss of employment, family breakdown, sick, or deceased	Increased pressure on maintaining wellbeing and relationships with students under stress

You cannot do anything with your smartphone if you do not have electricity. You cannot do anything with your smartphone if you do not have internet connectivity if you do not have network coverage. That is somehow beyond the power of the teacher or the power of the school. (p. 13)

Teachers are at the front line supporting, guiding, caring, and advising, and many find they have to put aside their own struggles to stay connected with children and families in the communities where they work. It is challenging for teachers to maintain calm and a sense of normalcy, and many find their own needs are a secondary priority. Despite the increased focus on teachers' wellbeing over the last decade (Mansfield, 2021; McCallum, 2021; McCallum et al., 2017), issues of school belonging and engagement are priorities for teachers, although McCallum and Price (2010) argue for the importance of well teachers. More recently, McCallum (2020) stresses the importance of positive relationships with students, parents, colleagues, leadership, and the school community as an affirmative influence on employees' sense of wellbeing.

Teachers already manage change and issues related to diversity and hardness, but the pandemic is an unprecedented challenge. The OECD (2020) notes that ‘educators took immediate steps to develop and implement strategies to mitigate the impact of the pandemic’ (p. 4). In pandemic-affected communities, it is even more important that teachers and school leaders are leading and contributing to rebuilding community wellbeing (McCallum, 2021, p. 185). Despite the social, economic, and political ebb and flow associated with disasters, schools continue to offer instruction and learning, and teachers continue to teach. This highlights the complexity of teaching, learning, engagement, and wellbeing.

5.1.3 Wellbeing in Education

Extensive Australian and international research (Darling-Hammond, 2012; Hattie, 2019; McCallum et al., 2017) identifies that teachers are the most critical in-school factor in student achievement and satisfaction. McCallum and Price (2010) believe that for children and young people to be well, teachers must also be well. Teacher quality, retention, and satisfaction are crucial elements that will sustain the profession, maintain motivation, and prepare teachers to fulfil aspirational outcomes as leaders.

Wellbeing as a general term has manifested in many forms: character education, learning, and teaching for twenty-first-century skills, social and emotional learning, wellbeing education, and positive education. While only beginning to gain the attention of governments, teacher wellbeing identifies the significance of well teachers and a healthy profession. For example, the 2018 PISA Test Report argues that in schools across 43 education systems in OECD countries, students who perceive they have greater support from their teachers score higher in reading. However, a 2021 NEiTA-ACE Teachers Report Card of 571 Australian teachers reports that 84% of teachers have considered leaving the profession, and 37% report taking little or no satisfaction from their job. Of those who plan to leave the profession, 62% cite excessive workload, 21% cite exhaustion and burnout, and 20% cite the increasing challenge of meeting students’ diverse needs. Thomson (2020) reports on data collected pre-pandemic that showed 58% of teachers feel ‘quite a bit’ or ‘a lot of stress’ in their jobs, which was higher than participating OECD countries. Of those teachers reporting ‘a lot of stress’, perceived levels of stress are higher in Australia among female teachers (26%), those working in publicly managed schools (28%), and teachers under 30 years of age (30%). Heffernan et al. (2019) report that teachers are concerned about their health, safety, and wellbeing, which affects the length of time the respondents see themselves remaining in the profession. Workload and wellbeing factors concern teachers, and the public have the greatest impact on teacher retention and attracting future teachers to the profession. With many graduates leaving within the first five years and 26% of Australian teachers declaring their intention to leave the profession within five years of graduation (Heffernan et al., 2019; Mansfield & Beltman, 2018; McCallum & Price, 2016; OECD, 2020; Wosnitza et al., 2018), teacher quality is being challenged by factors such as the

failure to shift patterns of poor educational outcomes; wellbeing issues; emotional burnout and stress; and mental health problems. In unprecedented times, high-quality school leaders and teachers are essential to foster wellbeing in schools and assist in rebuilding phases.

Widespread attempts to define ‘wellbeing’ in education exist in psychology, sociology, and philosophy. It is a term commonly used in education and researched for over 40 years, resulting in various projects, initiatives, models, and strategies to improve one’s wellbeing with the goal of helping other humans to flourish (see McCallum et al., 2017). Some wellbeing theories focus on emotion (hedonic wellbeing); some on eudemonic elements. Dodge et al. (2012), Huppert and So (2013), Price and McCallum (2016), and Waters and Loton (2019) recognise that while wellbeing is significant, it is challenging to define. For example, Ryff (1989) and Reyes et al. (2012) assert that psychological wellbeing consists of six domains (self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth). Reyes et al. (2012) extend their earlier work and claim that wellbeing includes high emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing. Conversely, Seligman’s (2011) PERMA theory advocates that wellbeing comes from five pillars (positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment). Huppert and So’s (2013) model defines 10 components of flourishing that oppose the main symptoms of depression and anxiety (competence, emotional stability, engagement, meaning, optimism, positive emotion, positive relationships, resilience, self-esteem, and vitality). Rusk and Waters (2013), Waters and Loton (2019), and Waters et al. (2017) derive an empirical model of a five-domain model of positive functioning (comprehension and coping, attention and awareness, emotions, goal and habits, and virtues and relationships). While this chapter acknowledges the relevance of Huppert and So’s (2013) definition—‘feeling good and functioning effectively’—it is McCallum and Price’s (2016) definition that guides this chapter because it accounts for many interrelated variables specifically related to disruption in schooling:

Wellbeing is diverse and fluid respecting individual, family and community beliefs, values, experiences, culture, opportunities and contexts across time and change. It encompasses intertwined individual, collective and environmental elements which continually interact across the lifespan Our role with wellbeing education is to provide the opportunity, access, choices, resources and capacities for individuals and communities, to aspire to their unique sense of wellbeing whilst contributing to a sense of community wellbeing. (p. 17)

5.2 The Present Study

During the 2020 global pandemic, McCallum, White, and Bentley (all from the University of Adelaide) gained ethics approval to undertake a study to explore teachers’ wellbeing and their thoughts, feelings, and understandings of the skills, knowledge, values, and capabilities to plan for and implement effective teaching and learning during the crisis. Some of the findings will be presented here based on teacher reflections in three areas using the following research questions:

1. *Impact on teaching and learning:* What has been unexpected about your school's response to the pandemic? What's been the most memorable learning and teaching? What strengths were you and your colleagues showing? What have you been telling yourself about teaching and learning, and wellbeing?
2. *Changes to teachers' work:* What might teaching look like? What matters most in schools? What is great about the way you work together with your team? What structures/systems might support this? How might teachers and students be interacting with each other?
3. *Education transformation:* What should be the ideal learning environment? Describe any possibilities in learning, teaching, education, and wellbeing we haven't imagined? What smallest change will make the biggest impact on learning and teaching? Who is affected?

5.3 Theoretical Framework

In this study, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological framework is used as a theoretical framework to situate teachers' wellbeing during the pandemic. This is a highly relevant model for analysing teachers' wellbeing (McCallum, 2020; McCallum et al., 2017; Price & McCallum, 2015). Figure 5.1 shows that the individuals (students and teachers) are central to their immediate classroom environment (microsystem), which includes their relationships with other students. Connections with family, friends, and the wider community are situated in the mesosystem, and the influences of the environment—like organisations, systems, societal, environmental, and cultural contexts (the exosystem)—affect their individual and community learning and wellbeing. The macrosystem considers the influences of beliefs, values, and social factors. These levels can have both positive and challenging influences. The chronosystem, which refers to the timing of events, decisions, actions, and changes over time, makes this theoretical framework highly relevant to this study as individuals and communities struggle with challenges to their learning and wellbeing as a result of school disruption caused by the global pandemic (see Table 5.1).

5.4 Methodology

This study hypothesised that in times of unprecedented disruption, teachers and school leaders adapted and reimagined the future of education and wellbeing for learning and communities. The study adopted an appreciative inquiry (AI), a systematic, holistic, and collaborative methodology developed by Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) focusing on participants' strengths. Recent work by Cooperrider and Fry (2020) argued for the relevance of this strengths-based approach during disasters. AI investigates the positive core of an individual, group, or system. It leaves behind deficit-oriented methodologies and concentrates on what is working well (strengths)

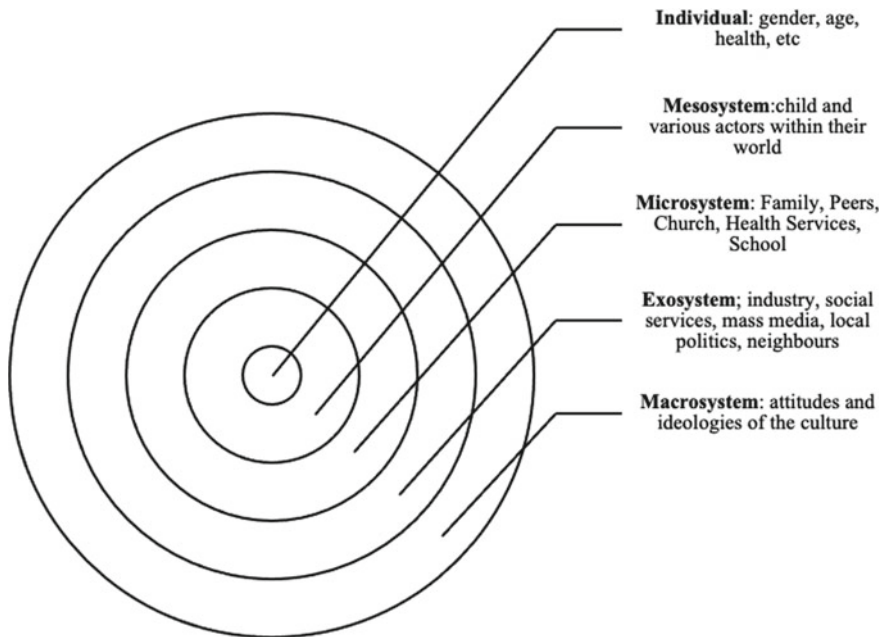


Fig. 5.1 Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological framework for human development

at an institutional, group, and personal level. AI has been applied to other educational settings to investigate wellbeing for positive change (Waters & White, 2015).

Data were collected from teachers across the world via online platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. Names and places were de-identified. Raw data was only available to the researchers, stored in password-protected folders accessible only by the researchers. The researchers undertook quantitative and qualitative analyses. Ethics was approved by the University of Adelaide's Office of Research Ethics, Compliance, and Integrity (Approval No: H-2020-065).

The survey was administered on 11 May 2020 and closed on 13 August 2020, with 322 respondents after filtering, represented by 49% teachers, 48% school leaders, and 3% in a non-teaching role. Of these, 81% were employed full-time, 75% were permanently employed with 21% on contract, and 4% employed casually. Gender was represented by 71% female, 24% male, and 5% undisclosed; 48% held a Masters or equivalent qualification, 39% Bachelors, 3% Diploma, and 9% had 'other' qualifications. Total years of teaching experience included 18% (0–5 years), 28% (6–15 years), and 54% (greater than 15 years), indicating that the sample in this study were very experienced teachers; 44% worked in the senior years (Years 10–12), 34% in middle levels of schooling (Years 6–9), and 22% in the primary years (early learning to Year 5). Participants were from Australia (71%), South Africa (11%), and Canada (10%), with small samples from the UK (3%), United States (2%), and Hong Kong,

Singapore, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Vietnam, and Turkmenistan (0.3%). Of these, 67% of respondents identified that the school they worked in prioritised wellbeing.

On a six-point Likert scale, mean responses were recorded for perceptions of respondents' current wellbeing. It was highest in the 'all of the time' category for 'I am good at recognising the things I can influence and the things I can't' (4.57) and 'I play to and make the most of my strengths' (4.6). These responses indicated that teachers were individually self-managing and self-regulating their wellbeing during this crisis. It was lowest for 'I wake up feeling fresh and rested' (3.20). Respondents had the most influence over their wellbeing when 'the school leadership team values my work at school' (23.59%).

5.5 Results and Discussion

5.5.1 *Impact on Teaching and Learning*

Participants shared several aspects they found unexpected during the pandemic. Surprisingly, these were predominantly positive, commenting that schools and teachers were able to quickly respond to adaptations to their teaching, like online delivery. Participants commented on increased levels of collegiality, supporting each other to adjust their teaching and learn new skills quickly. Adversity was seen as an opportunity to innovate and learn:

My colleagues and I have been very supportive of one another, there has been a lot of sharing of ideas and we've found ways to be more efficient at some aspects of our work.

The resilience of the children was mentioned, and the greatest strength was:

Working together, to support our work, emotionally as well, and working as a team for the betterment of the students. To keep a focus on the students and be flexible in adapting to whatever situation was required.

The speed shown by teachers to respond and adapt in a crisis was unexpected:

Our teachers have been nothing short of inspirational in moving to an online platform then back to face-to-face lessons.

The most memorable moment was:

Seeing our students return to school and the appreciation they have developed for schooling—recently I observed they seem calmer.

Coming back into the classroom and seeing my students and their smiles. Flexibility to adapt and change on the fly and mostly take it in our stride.

Wellbeing and safety is the priority—as it always has been but now even more so. Not only for the students but families and staff as well.

The whole-school community experienced a strong sense of belonging as a community and cared for one another's wellbeing, with students at the core.

Teachers showed 'strengths' during the crisis that included perseverance, resilience, adaptability, hope, humour, courage, persistence, agility, unity, kindness, teamwork, understanding, appreciation, dedication, commitment, patience, empathy, and flexibility. When participants were asked to comment on teaching and learning and wellbeing, they identified that a sense of community had developed, which was seen as a positive outcome for managing through the pandemic. Teachers felt there was *'united and compassionate support from all in our community'*, and during the ebbs and flows of the continuing pandemic's impact, there was some *'humour, and ability to connect to a community. Everyone is learning together'*:

The entire community is supportive of one another and has handled the new learning with aplomb. We are exhausted but energised by the efforts and tenacity of all.

The actions of members of the school community and close society helped and was seen when others were *'making wellbeing check-ins to see how families were going during this tough time and showing genuine care'*. There was an acknowledgement of the tough times, but the resilience of many individuals and communities was evident. For example:

Our students embraced being back at school and while there have been pronounced instances of heightened stress, on balance our students have really responded to the efforts made by the school to foster community and belonging.

Efforts by the school leaders were recognised, especially when the *'principal's communication with stakeholders was clear, regular and open for feedback which buoyed community confidence'*.

5.5.2 Changes to Teachers' Work

Although many of the participants in this study reported that schools returned to 'normal' once the height of the crisis was over, they also acknowledged that *'normal classrooms actually work better than remote classrooms'*. There were optimistic suggestions related to changed teaching practices and what mattered most in schools because of living and working through the pandemic. The community was seen as happening alongside learning. There was a greater focus on the use of technology and workplace flexibility in meetings and locations:

Greater flexibility in our work, greater use of technology to collaborate and support teachers to work from home when needed, ... have parents connect with the schools flexibly through technology.

Technology did not work well in all situations with quality, access, and equity issues and a view that *'what matters most is the staff and student relationships, not the IT'*. Where it did work well, teachers reported that some online teaching would be possible

despite a view that *'face-to-face engagement cannot ever be replaced. Teaching will have more digital components and be more flexible in the future'*.

Changes to learning with a stronger focus on wellbeing were identified:

I think there will be a big focus on connection and mental health, we're really starting to see the impact this has had on the opening up and relaxing of regulations, it seems to be showing more anxiety and uncertainty in students—its where the resilience has wobbled the most.

There was an acknowledgement of the increased need for wellness in the community and connection:

Wellbeing and relationships matter most, everyone has contributed, has offered support, everyone has kept the students at the heart of every decision, and we've found new ways to connect.

Relationships and connection are more important than ever, but there are ways in which we can connect that we've never used before. What matters most in schools is interpersonal connections between students, teachers and parents and the larger community.

Teachers also experienced an increased sense of collegiality and sharing during the pandemic, as all were seen to be 'pulling their weight' and hoped this would continue to ensure greater productivity and positivity:

We'll continue to work as a team since we've been cohesive and this experience has strengthened that further. We will have a greater appreciation of each other and the power that comes from collective action—the shared humanity of our vulnerability could translate into a stronger appreciation for each other.

One experienced teacher of 40 years commented that:

We worked really well together, the faculty leader pretty much deferred all tech training to me and people were willing to give up their own time to work with me 1:1 to master the programs and tech we needed to work with the students, I couldn't have asked to be a part of a better team.

An outcome from one teacher was a plea that:

Teams would become more compassionate for each other and value, encourage and support each other more. Teams need to work together to try and even out the workload and do what is best for the students.

Some teachers felt the technology would help streamline some aspects of their work in the future, especially related to individualised support for students and their families, and that this *'hopefully will give more respect for the profession'*. The systems appeared to be in place to:

Remain adaptive, which is a privilege accompanied by great responsibility to serve the community as a steward not only to honour the fine traditions of the school community but also to promote its ongoing success into the future as a place where each student can strive for personal excellence.

It was hoped that *'schools might let go of activities that are not core business'* with *'less pressure on performance, more on the bigger picture about what matters in life ... wellbeing'*. Clearly, as White and McCallum (2021) argue, COVID-19 must be a catalyst for change in the teaching profession, or at least:

The new normal will implement some of the redefined ways introduced throughout the COVID time. In all honesty I don't want things to just return to how they were. I think what matters most in schools are the areas of wellbeing, relationships and learning.

5.5.3 *Education Transformation*

Continuing the theme of change from a life event like the pandemic enabled participants to imagine what might be possible and what true learnings had occurred. The ideal learning environment for individuals and communities was now described as:

Safe, clean, hygienic, formal structures for all children to be in. Not all children across the world have access to these structures where they can have access to hygiene and small groups with social distancing. Everyone, from staff, to students and family are affected. The community is whole.

Themes of 'community' and 'changing structures' that contributed to an increased sense of community belonging were well represented:

Greater use of online learning to enable flexible options for students, staff and families. Can the school day be shortened to optimise more and longer breaks and opportunity for all of the school community to focus on wellbeing. A priority on time for families to spend more time together, through more time without overscheduling and a re-think of homework approaches. All members of the school community, students, staff and families would benefit.

There were examples of resilient individuals and communities:

Where staff and students always feel safe, welcome, that they belong, happy, engaged, valued, care for. I think families and children have realised that learning does not solely take place at school—the home is full of learning opportunities and possibilities. I think the biggest impact on staff, students and families is continually knowing they are welcome, supported and part of a learning community. That no matter what happens, we won't give up, we will keep going. We are all affected by change—it is important to work out what is worth keeping (due to the changes) and what is worth embracing.

As Harris (2020), White and McCallum (2021), and Lotz-Sisitka et al. (2021) argued, education was ready for reconsideration because of the pandemic. Specifically:

The COVID-19 pandemic requires us to think in radically new ways about existing systems and how they have been operating. It requires us to 'build forward better', giving attention to social justice and sustainability in recovering from the pandemic, and it requires us to act more collectively, systemically, and inter- and multi-sectoral in response to the heightened sustainable development challenges revealed by the pandemic. (Lotz-Sisitka et al., 2021, p. 2)

Poysa et al. (2021) similarly found that although teachers were impacted severely at the beginning of the pandemic, many individuals managed to cope as the pandemic continued.

The three areas discussed above from the data generated through the online survey of teachers and leaders in 2020/2021 at the time of the pandemic supports the view that teachers are the most critical in-school factor and thus have a positive and productive role in maintaining and sustaining individuals and communities. Additionally, during times of crisis, the links between learning and wellbeing are increasingly challenging, which juxtaposes the demands for efficiency and the priorities education systems set for educational sustainability. Yet, the participants in this study acknowledge that the challenges create resilience for and in education communities. They demonstrate hope and optimism as the world slowly recovers.

5.6 Conclusion

Schools around the world face challenges and opportunities when trying to respond to the problems brought by trauma and disruption to everyday classrooms. Teachers are at the front line of these challenges and opportunities. Price and McCallum (2016) acknowledge that globalisation, the digital world, adversity, environmental degradation, and global disasters make it imperative that teachers are well for a sustained career and to ensure positive outcomes for children and young people as they travel through schooling and transition to further study, work, or other purposeful contributions in the community. As frontline workers during the pandemic, teachers have experienced one of the most challenging jobs by not only putting themselves and their families at risk of contracting the virus but also in adapting their professional practice and keeping calm and focused. For some this was too much, as they have left the profession, but many others have experienced renewed respect from their communities and are more highly valued than ever. Teachers, as individuals, have varied levels of coping, which impacts their wellbeing (Aulen et al., 2021).

The pandemic has provided governments, policymakers, and educators with the impetus to consider different and more efficient ways of doing things. These are worthy of consideration to address some of the factors that impact teacher's ill-being. Gouédard et al. (2020) suggest a framework that can help governments structure the implementation strategy of their evolving education responses to COVID-19. However, Poysa et al. (2021) warn that teachers as individuals coped differently during the pandemic. Some were not severely affected, and as such, should not be taken into account when reform is being considered. McCallum (2021) concludes that by its very description, a recovery should never return to the same state of affairs, so it is timely to acknowledge the value and contribution of teachers across the globe who have been at the forefront of this pandemic.

Table 5.2 Summary:
Implications for teachers and
communities

Implications for wellbeing and professional practice
1. Teachers are strong and positive contributors to the school community, and their role should be accepted, rewarded, and valued
2. Change is inevitable after a crisis but what matters most is everyone's wellbeing and a sense of belonging to a community
3. School leaders continue to work with community to ensure children's educational outcomes are met for that specific context

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