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# Embracing variety: how different perceptions of teacher wellbeing can contribute to enhanced work experiences

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**Introduction:** The field of teacher wellbeing research is marked by a wide array of conceptual frameworks. These range from unidimensional models focused on stress or burnout to multidimensional models that encompass both positive and negative aspects. Some frameworks are adapted from work psychology, health psychology, or positive psychology, while others are specifically designed for the teaching profession. This diversity has been criticized for making it difficult to reach a consensus and compare findings, which limits the development of a clear understanding of teacher wellbeing and slows progress in making improvements. As a result, there is a growing call for unified approaches, either by merging models or developing integrated ones.

**Methods:** This conceptual analysis challenges the idea that the variety of frameworks is a problem for the field. Instead, it argues that this diversity can help create practical, actionable recommendations for improving teacher wellbeing. To illustrate this, three widely recognized multidimensional approaches to teacher wellbeing are explored: the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, the PERMA model, and the concept of subjective wellbeing.

**Results:** The findings suggest that the diversity in teacher wellbeing frameworks, rather than being a hindrance, can be a valuable resource.

**Discussion:** This analysis highlights the potential of a pluralistic approach to teacher wellbeing, suggesting that diverse frameworks can complement rather than contradict one another. By drawing from multiple models, stakeholders can design flexible, context-sensitive interventions. Future research should focus on developing guidelines for selecting and combining frameworks based on specific educational settings and goals.

## KEYWORDS

teacher well-being, concept, framework, PERMA, subjective well-being, job demands-resources model

## 1 Introduction

The term “teacher wellbeing” is understood and used differently within the research literature, with some researchers even avoiding an explicit definition of the concept (Acton and Glasgow, 2015; Ozturk et al., 2024). In a first wave of research (see Figure 1), teacher wellbeing has frequently been defined and studied from a negative perspective, often focusing exclusively on emotional exhaustion, negative affect, stress, or burnout (Roffey, 2012). Often, teacher wellbeing is understood as a synonym for (the absence of) teacher stress and burnout. Thereby, the positive side of wellbeing was frequently disregarded (Kern et al., 2015). This has

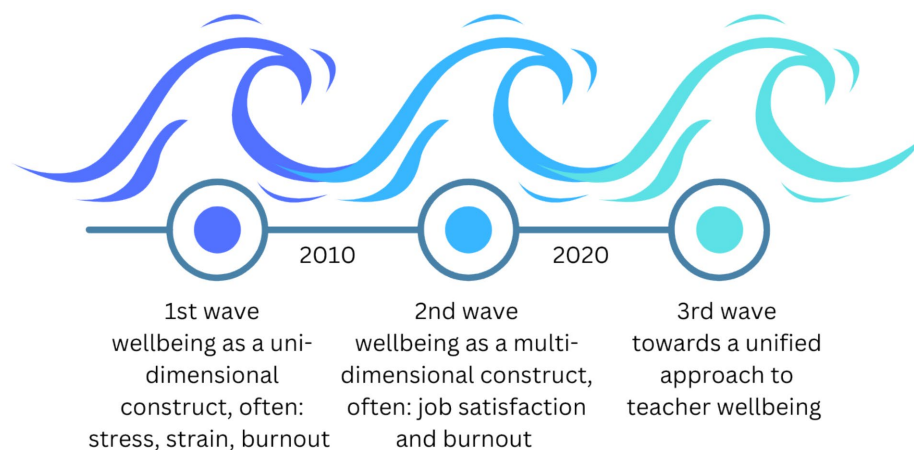


FIGURE 1

Three waves of teacher wellbeing research, created by author.

provoked criticism because wellbeing is increasingly perceived as more than the absence of wellbeing-impeding factors (Braun, 2021).

Driven by the research community's growing rejection of one-sided approaches to teacher wellbeing, the field has experienced a second wave of research that adopts more balanced and nuanced perspectives (see Figure 1). Within this second wave, researchers have developed or adopted multidimensional wellbeing frameworks, broadening the scope of concepts and theories to include psychological and occupational models (van Horn et al., 2004), emotion research (Frenzel, 2014), concepts from mental health (Glazzard and Rose, 2020) and ecological approaches (Price and McCallum, 2015), highlighting the broader contexts that influence and shape educational professionals' wellbeing. This shift from unidimensional to multidimensional concepts promotes a more balanced understanding of teacher wellbeing, moving beyond the traditional focus on burnout and its prevention. Moreover, this shift reframes the conversation to explore not only how burnout impacts teaching performance but also how positive aspects, such as positive emotions, job satisfaction, and engagement, can enhance teachers' effectiveness and how these factors can be fostered effectively (Dreer, 2021).

This second wave has introduced a proliferation of frameworks and concepts within the field of teacher wellbeing research (Hascher and Waber, 2021). While this variety allows for a richer understanding of teacher wellbeing by addressing it from multiple angles, the increasing diversity of approaches has drawn criticism for creating fragmentation. Critics argue that this conceptual variety can hinder the alignment of research efforts, as scholars may operate from different theoretical standpoints, making it difficult to establish consistent methodologies or shared metrics (e.g., Viac and Fraser, 2020; Hascher and Waber, 2021; Ozturk et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2024). As a result, comparing findings across studies becomes more challenging, which can slow the accumulation of cohesive, generalizable knowledge in the field (Dreer and Gouasé, 2021). It is feared that this fragmentation may ultimately limit the practical applicability of research, as policymakers and educators may struggle to implement strategies derived from inconsistent or incomparable

frameworks (Sandilos et al., 2023). Consequently, there have been increasing calls for establishing a shared understanding of what teacher wellbeing entails, marking the beginning of what can be considered a third wave in teacher wellbeing research (see Figure 1). In response to these calls, researchers have worked to develop integrated models to consolidate various approaches and sub-concepts into more comprehensive frameworks. For instance, Hascher et al. (2021) proposed a model for understanding the relationship between wellbeing and resilience in the context of the teaching profession. Similarly, Viac and Fraser (2020) introduced a broad framework for understanding teacher wellbeing, including the cognitive, subjective, physical, mental, and social facets of wellbeing. Recently, Ozturk et al. (2024) identified overlaps among three key themes in teacher wellbeing research: professionalism, positivity/flourishing, and negativity/deficiency. Based on these overlaps, the authors advocate for a unified approach to teacher wellbeing. Similarly, Haldimann et al. (2024) developed an integrated framework specifically focused on the wellbeing of pre-service teachers.

The efforts to establish a common ground are understandable and well-intentioned. However, in contrast to the unifying trend of this third wave, this conceptual analysis advocates for embracing the diversity of concepts, especially in the context of recommendations to enhance teachers' wellbeing. Teacher wellbeing models are not only important for understanding, measuring, and comparing outcomes; they also provide critical guidance on actionable steps to enhance and sustain wellbeing. Therefore, considering a range of wellbeing concepts can be advantageous for identifying and addressing core issues at different levels of the educational system. The strength of such an approach might be seen in the fact that while most frameworks are not particularly effective in comprehensively explaining teacher wellbeing, its antecedents, mechanisms, and outcomes (Zhang et al., 2024), they hold unique explanatory power in addressing some specific challenges given a certain level in the educational system. In the following section, this proposition is further explored through the examples of three of the most prominent wellbeing frameworks: the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, the PERMA model, and the concept of subjective wellbeing.

## 2 Concepts

According to recent reviews on teacher wellbeing research, there is an evident variety in the concepts used to understand and measure wellbeing across different studies (Acton and Glasgow, 2015; Viac and Fraser, 2020; Dreer and Gouasé, 2021; Hascher and Waber, 2021; Dreer, 2023; Ozturk et al., 2024). Viac and Fraser (2020) defined teacher wellbeing under an umbrella term as “teachers’ responses to the cognitive, emotional, health and social conditions pertaining to their work and their profession” (p. 19). Which dimensions teacher wellbeing includes and how it is measured are often dependent on the underlying general construct of wellbeing adapted for a particular study. Hascher and Waber (2021) showed that the conceptual basis of teacher wellbeing research might be narrowed down to six distinct approaches: wellbeing psychology, positive psychology, psychology of work and organization, teacher wellbeing, health science, and others. Among the most prominent multidimensional approaches are the job demands-resources (JD-R) model (Demerouti et al., 2001; Bakker and Demerouti, 2007), the PERMA model of wellbeing (Seligman, 2011), and the concept of subjective wellbeing (SWB; Diener, 1984). These three approaches are succinctly explained in the following subsections to later harness their explanatory strengths with regard to recommendations in addressing teacher wellbeing at different levels of the educational system.

### 2.1 The job demands-resources model

The JD-R model is a theoretical framework used in organizational psychology to understand the relationship between job characteristics and employee wellbeing. Since its inception, it has been used in various contexts, including the teaching profession (Bakker et al., 2023). The JD-R model posits that job motivation and job-related wellbeing result from an interplay of job demands and resources. Job demands refer to the physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of a job that require sustained physical or mental effort and are associated with certain physiological and/or psychological costs. Examples of job demands include high workload, time pressure, role ambiguity, and emotional labor. Job resources are the physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that help individuals achieve work goals, reduce job demands, and stimulate personal growth and development. Examples of job resources include social support, autonomy, feedback, and opportunities for skill development. The JD-R model posits that there are two underlying processes at work that explain how job demands and resources influence employee wellbeing and performance.

#### 2.1.1 Health impairment process

In the teaching profession, high job demands—such as managing large class sizes, meeting diverse student needs, and navigating administrative responsibilities—can lead to negative outcomes like burnout, stress-related health issues, and decreased job performance. When the demands of teaching exceed a teacher’s resources, it can drain their mental and physical energy, resulting in fatigue, disengagement, and lower overall effectiveness in the classroom.

#### 2.1.2 Motivational process

Conversely, when teachers have access to sufficient job resources—such as supportive colleagues, professional development opportunities,

and adequate classroom materials—they are more likely to experience positive outcomes. These resources can enhance work engagement, job satisfaction, and commitment to their school and students. When teachers feel supported and equipped, they tend to cultivate positive emotions, maintain motivation, and achieve higher performance levels, benefiting themselves and their students (Han and Yin, 2016).

In addition to these two processes, the JD-R model highlights that the relationship between job demands, resources, and outcomes is complex and not simply linear. Certain combinations of job demands and resources can produce stronger or weaker effects on teacher wellbeing and performance. For example, findings pertaining to the model illustrate that job resources buffer the impact of job demands on burnout (Bakker et al., 2005) and boost work engagement, especially in situations of high demands (Bakker et al., 2007). Moreover, studies with teachers repeatedly show that job demands and job resources are indeed strong predictors of teacher wellbeing (Tuxford and Bradley, 2014; Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2018; Björk et al., 2019; Maas et al., 2022; Collie, 2023). Consequently, and contrary to common misconceptions, job demands play a crucial role in driving motivation and wellbeing. However, these demands must be perceived as inherently tied to the core responsibilities of teaching (e.g., classroom management) rather than as unnecessary hindrances (e.g., excessive paperwork). Hence, supporting teacher wellbeing requires providing resources to effectively address the essential demands of the profession while minimizing extraneous, non-teaching-related burdens (Peral and Geldenhuys, 2016; Alonso et al., 2019; Dreer, 2022).

Subsequent developments of the JD-R theory have introduced additional layers to better capture the complexity of workplace dynamics. For instance, the Person  $\times$  Situation Approach extends the original model by combining the relative stability of personality with the variability of daily job demands, resources, and performance thereby enhancing the model’s explanatory power (Bakker, 2015). To better understand how demands and resources shape employee outcomes, a multi-level perspective has been proposed. This approach looks not just at individuals, but also at how team dynamics and organizational factors interact. Supportive team environments, such as strong collaboration and peer support, can ease individual strain, while leadership practices and staffing policies influence the overall availability of resources. Together, these levels help explain variations in employee wellbeing and performance (Bakker and Demerouti, 2018).

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model has proven highly influential in occupational health psychology and is widely applied in educational research. However, its use in the context of teacher wellbeing is not without limitations. First, the JD-R framework tends to conceptualize work environments in relatively static terms. In contrast, teaching is a deeply relational and context-sensitive profession, and the dynamic interplay between personal identity, pedagogical values, and broader institutional expectations can be difficult to fully capture within the JD-R’s categories of demands and resources (Granziera et al., 2020). Second, while the model is flexible in allowing researchers to define job demands and resources contextually, this strength can also be a weakness. Without clear conceptual boundaries, the framework can become overly inclusive or vague, risking tautological reasoning where elements are defined as demands or resources depending on whether they correlate with negative or positive outcomes (Bakker et al., 2023). Third, the JD-R framework often implies a mechanistic balance between demands and

resources, which can obscure the qualitative nature of specific demands faced by teachers, such as emotional labor, ethical tensions, or identity conflicts that may not be easily offset by additional resources.

These limitations suggest that while the JD-R model offers valuable insights, especially in identifying leverage points for organizational interventions, it may need to be complemented by other frameworks to attend to the socio-cultural, identity-related, and systemic nature of teaching in order to fully address the complexities of teacher wellbeing.

## 2.2 PERMA

The PERMA model, developed by Seligman (2011), outlines five essential building blocks for wellbeing and flourishing. These building blocks represent the areas of positive emotions (P), engagement (E), relationships (R), meaning (M), and achievement (A). Seligman proposed that each domain constitutes a distinct building block of wellbeing that can be assessed and addressed individually. However, the model also implies that wellbeing results from the optimal functioning of an individual across these five domains (Hollweck, 2019). These five domains have been adapted to the teaching profession in several studies (e.g., Kern et al., 2014; Crider, 2022; Sánchez Solarte, 2022) assessing them with quantitative and qualitative measures.

Cultivating positive emotions is essential for personal and professional wellbeing in the teaching profession, especially because they provide a counterpart to negative emotions that can be triggered by certain workplace characteristics (e.g., classroom disturbances, noise levels, and misbehavior; Rahm and Heise, 2019). Teachers might experience joy when speaking about their favorite lesson topic. They may experience gratitude for a lesson perceived to be successfully prepared and delivered, pride in students' progress, inspiration from colleagues, or progressive student teachers. Such positive emotions can significantly enhance job satisfaction (Dreer, 2021) and contribute to a nurturing and engaging learning environment for students (Frenzel, 2014; Burić and Moè, 2020).

Engagement is about being fully absorbed in teaching activities, where time seems to fly by, and teachers experience a "flow" state (Beard and Hoy, 2010). Teachers who align their work with their strengths and passions often find deeper fulfillment and enjoyment in their roles. This may involve designing lessons that resonate with personal interests, employing teaching methods that bring excitement, or collaborating on projects that spark enthusiasm (Moè, 2016; Burić and Moè, 2020).

Positive relationships are vital in the teaching profession, serving as essential pathways to achieving the core goals of education. Building and maintaining meaningful connections with students, colleagues, parents, and the broader school community fosters a sense of belonging and support (Roffey, 2013). These relationships provide emotional encouragement, a sense of camaraderie, and a shared commitment to student success (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2013). Strong connections can enhance collaboration and create a more positive school culture (Hargreaves, 2019).

Meaning in the teaching profession is found in making a difference in students' lives and contributing to their growth and development (Dreer, 2021). Teachers who engage in activities that

align with their core values, such as mentoring, fostering student creativity, or addressing social justice issues, often experience a greater sense of purpose (Chong and Low, 2008; Moulding et al., 2014). This sense of meaning enhances personal fulfillment and reinforces the importance of their role in shaping future generations.

Accomplishment refers to the satisfaction teachers feel when they achieve their professional goals, master new teaching strategies, and witness student success. Setting meaningful goals, whether related to personal growth, student outcomes, or school improvement, allows teachers to experience a sense of progress and achievement (Kern et al., 2014). Overcoming challenges and celebrating successes—big or small—can boost confidence and motivation in the teaching profession (Chan, 2010). Together, these elements create a foundation for a fulfilling and sustainable career in education, where teachers not only contribute to student success but also nurture their own wellbeing and professional growth (Day, 2007; Day and Gu, 2009).

Overall, the PERMA model provides a framework for understanding and cultivating teacher wellbeing by monitoring and developing five relevant areas (Hollweck, 2019). Research on PERMA in the context of the teaching profession has highlighted that all building blocks are indeed relevant for teacher wellbeing (Hollweck, 2019). However, they might not be equally important with regard to beneficial outcomes. For example, it was shown that positive emotions and the feeling of achievement might be especially relevant for teacher job satisfaction (Dreer, 2021).

The PERMA model offers a broad, multidimensional perspective on wellbeing by emphasizing distinct building blocks. While it has gained significant traction in education and positive psychology, its application to teacher wellbeing presents several notable limitations. First, the model is primarily individualistic and relational in orientation, focusing on internal states and subjective experiences of persons or within groups. The PERMA dimensions may therefore underrepresent the institutional and socio-political contexts relevant to teacher wellbeing. For example, systemic aspects such as policy pressures, administrative burdens, and societal expectations often shape teacher experiences in ways that are not easily captured by PERMA's intrapersonal lens. Second, the model offers limited guidance for addressing occupational stressors and structural challenges. Although aspects like relationships or meaning may be indirectly influenced by workplace factors, the model does not explicitly address work-specific variables such as workload, or emotional labor, factors that are particularly salient in the teaching profession.

Third, cultural and contextual variability poses challenges to the universal application of PERMA. What constitutes "meaning" or "accomplishment" may differ significantly across educational settings, teaching roles and cultures. The model risks promoting a normative view of wellbeing, emphasizing positivity and perceptions of achievement, which may not resonate with all teachers alike.

## 2.3 Subjective wellbeing

Subjective Wellbeing (SWB), as conceptualized by Diener (1984), refers to individuals' cognitive and affective evaluations of their lives, typically encompassing life satisfaction, the presence of positive affect, and the absence of negative affect. In the context of teaching, SWB reflects how educators interpret and emotionally respond to their



professional experiences. Rather than viewing wellbeing as a binary state of thriving or struggling, this model positions teacher wellbeing on a continuum that captures the dynamic interplay of positive and negative experiences.

Importantly, teacher SWB is not merely the result of momentary emotions but is also shaped by sustained patterns of meaning and satisfaction derived from one's professional role. Research by [Hascher et al. \(2021\)](#) and [Haldimann et al. \(2024\)](#) builds on this by introducing the idea of a "positive imbalance" wherein positive experiences (e.g., successful student engagement, collegial support, and personal accomplishment) outweigh negative ones (e.g., stress, conflict, or administrative burden), leading to a net sense of wellbeing.

This model integrates both hedonic (pleasure-related) and eudaimonic (meaning-oriented) dimensions, acknowledging that teachers derive wellbeing not only from enjoyable moments but also from purpose, contribution, and alignment with personal and professional values. For example, a teacher who navigates challenges but sees meaningful growth in students may report high wellbeing despite daily stressors. Thus, SWB offers a holistic lens through which to understand how teachers interpret the quality of their work lives over time and provides a valuable foundation for designing interventions that target both emotional support and professional fulfillment.

While SWB has been widely used across disciplines and provides a straightforward, measurable account of wellbeing, its application to the teacher profession is not without limitations. One major limitation is that the SWB model is highly individualistic and decontextualized, placing primary emphasis on personal evaluations and emotional states. While this makes it adaptable across populations, it tends to overlook the structural, relational, and professional dimensions of teaching that substantially influence how teachers experience their work. Factors such as classroom dynamics, collegial relationships, policy constraints and administrative demands may not be adequately reflected in global satisfaction scores or affective assessments. Second, SWB's inclusion of hedonic wellbeing, i.e., maximizing pleasure and minimizing discomfort can be problematic in the teaching profession, where emotional challenges, ambiguity, and stress are often integral part of the job. Teachers frequently experience emotional labor and moral dilemmas (e.g., [Wang et al., 2021](#)) that cannot be reduced to simple feelings of happiness or unhappiness. The model may therefore underestimate the role of purpose and professional identity, which are crucial to teacher wellbeing but fall outside the scope of traditional SWB metrics. Third, the SWB model provides limited guidance for intervention, as it tends to focus on individual perception rather than on the environmental or systemic conditions that support or undermine wellbeing. This restricts its practical value for informing school- or policy-level strategies aimed at improving teacher wellbeing.

### 3 Integrating theoretical approaches across ecological levels

Based on [Bronfenbrenner's \(1979\)](#) work, some researchers argue that teacher wellbeing is influenced by various ecological factors (e.g., [McCallum, 2020](#)). Specifically, it is proposed that teacher wellbeing is shaped by various factors across different levels of an ecological model. For example, at the microsystem level, it is influenced by individual working capacities and conditions, such as

teachers' competences and autonomy. The mesosystem includes work-related social networks, like relationships with colleagues, supervisors, and mentors, which significantly impact wellbeing. The exosystem refers to systemic factors like educational policies, administrative practices, and school settings. Such an ecological approach informs teacher wellbeing research in several aspects. It highlights that teacher wellbeing is not the responsibility of a single entity (i.e., the teacher) but is influenced and shaped by various systemic factors. These influences can be near the individual teacher (e.g., supportive school climate and school leadership) or more distant from the everyday school life (e.g., decisions on educational policy).

Ultimately, all these factors play a role in how teachers' working conditions are shaped. With regard to these levels, different concepts of teacher wellbeing will highlight specific areas of concern and fields of activity (see [Figure 2](#)).

At the exosystem level of educational policy, the JD-R model helps direct the focus to the demands and resources of the profession. It invites one to consider potential adjustments of demands and resources and their consequences. While reducing workloads will result in lower exhaustion rates, providing more resources will foster job-related motivation. Moreover, the framework sensitizes one to consider the interrelation of demands and resources more clearly: (1) Which demands are typical and deeply embedded in the profession? (e.g., dealing with student misbehavior and noise) (2) What are the adequate resources to conquer these typical demands of the profession? (e.g., classroom management skills, adequate class sizes) (3) How is it ensured that every teacher has access to and utilizes these resources effectively? (e.g., quality teacher education) (4) Which demands are not inherent to the teaching profession? (e.g., administrative workload) (5) Are there resources in place (e.g., more administrative staff) to relieve the teachers of these demands?

The JD-R model highlights that teacher wellbeing at the exosystem level is contingent on structural alignment between policy-defined demands and accessible resources. It encourages policymakers to differentiate between essential and non-essential demands, aiming to reduce unnecessary burdens while ensuring that adequate resources are in place to help teachers manage the inherent challenges of the profession. In ecological terms, this means creating conditions in the exosystem that enhance the teacher's microsystem conditions through policy design.

At the mesosystem level of the individual school, the PERMA framework proves to be fruitful for opening up important perspectives on ensuring and fostering teacher wellbeing. School leaders, school development teams, and other members of the school community could examine the six building blocks and develop measures and working environments fitting to their school. Pertaining questions are as follows: (1) How can a work environment evoke and prolong positive emotions and inspire teachers to relive positive experiences individually and collectively? (2) How can teachers be placed and their individual strengths be activated for teachers to feel engaged? (3) How can positive relationships be fostered among teachers, between teachers and students, and between teachers and leadership staff? (4) How can meaningful work be promoted, and how can teachers be enabled to see the meaningful work they do? (5) How can achievements be celebrated and acknowledged and counterbalance setbacks, doubts, and problems?

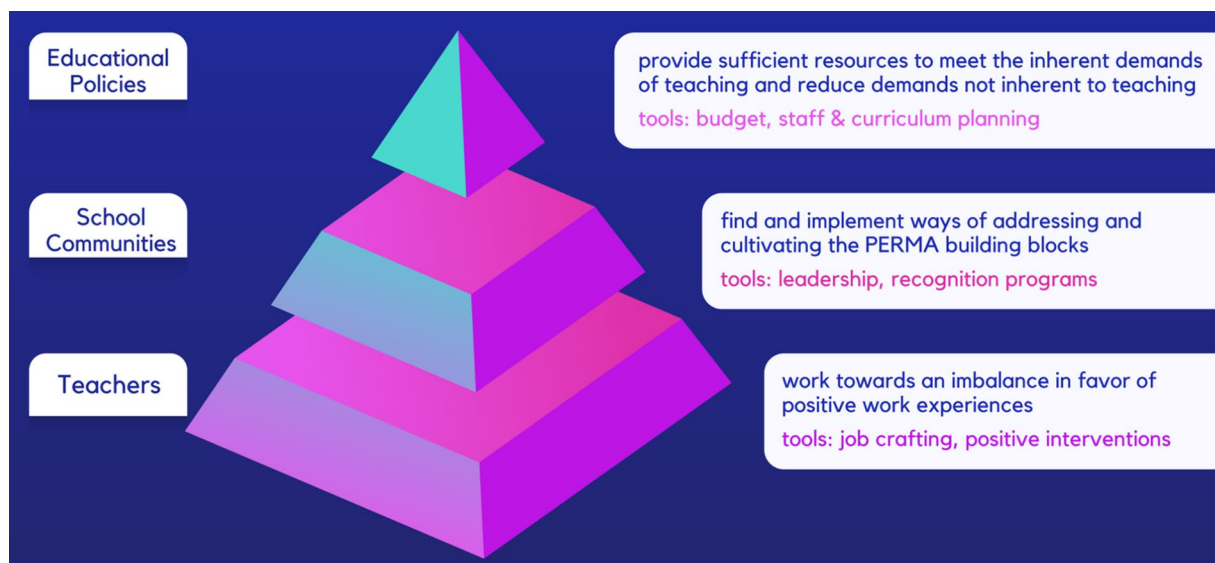


FIGURE 2  
Pyramid of teacher wellbeing recommendations, created by author.

PERMA invites school leaders and communities to see the school not just as an administrative site but as a social-psychological ecosystem. Its multidimensional approach makes it particularly useful at the mesosystem level, where complex interpersonal and organizational dynamics converge. By using PERMA to audit and enhance social climates and leadership practices, schools can actively shape the relational conditions that buffer stress and reinforce professional purpose. In addition to guiding whole-school development, the framework also supports more targeted and differentiated measures. For example, schools can focus on selected PERMA elements within particular teams, departments, or staff groups. This flexibility enables to tailor wellbeing initiatives to the unique needs and dynamics of an individual school, allowing for meaningful change even when comprehensive reform is not feasible.

At the microsystem level of the individual teacher, the SWB concept informs about the subjectiveness of wellbeing and indicates that teachers are not merely the object of support measures but have to be active in understanding and addressing their own wellbeing. They can reflect on their wellbeing—for example, (1) How does my wellbeing change over the course of a working day, a week, or a school term? (2) How can I craft my daily routine and organize my work to fit my wellbeing needs? (3) To what extent do the positive aspects of my work outweigh the negative ones? (4) How can I consciously cultivate a positive imbalance in my daily professional experience?

At the microsystem level, teachers' wellbeing is shaped by how they experience and interpret their daily work lives. SWB invites reflection on the individual's evaluations of job satisfaction, happiness, and the balance between positive and negative experiences. Rather than focusing solely on external conditions, SWB highlights the teacher's active role in shaping their own wellbeing through ongoing reflection, emotional regulation, and self-management. This focus aligns naturally with the microsystem's emphasis on immediate, day-to-day realities. By engaging with SWB, teachers can better understand and respond to their personal emotional and professional

needs, fostering a sense of purpose and wellbeing grounded in their personal experience.

In conclusion, the preceding considerations suggest that at the exosystem level (educational policy), the focus lies on creating a supportive structural framework by balancing job demands and resources. Recommendations emphasize equipping schools with adequate resources, reducing unnecessary administrative burdens, and designing policies to mitigate stress-inducing factors. The mesosystem level (school community) addresses teachers' immediate work environment. Guided by the PERMA model, the aim is to cultivate a school culture that promotes positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment through leadership initiatives, teamwork, and a focus on shared goals. Finally, the microsystem level (individual teachers) emphasizes personal strategies for managing SWB. Teachers are encouraged to monitor their mental health, engage in job crafting, foster positive relationships, and adopt habits that enhance their overall professional satisfaction and resilience.

## 4 Discussion

As the understanding of teacher wellbeing evolves beyond narrow views focused solely on stress and burnout, a growing number of multidimensional frameworks have been developed or adapted specifically for the teaching profession. These frameworks aim to capture the complex and varied factors contributing to teachers' occupational wellbeing. While this conceptual diversity enriches the field, it has also drawn criticism for potentially hindering research progress (Ozturk et al., 2024). This concern is particularly relevant when efforts are made to establish a shared theoretical foundation, develop common terminology, or create standardized measurement tools. In such contexts, the proliferation of differing frameworks can appear to fragment the field, complicating the task of drawing unified conclusions or designing consistent metrics (Hascher and Waber, 2021).

Yet, this same diversity of concepts holds distinct advantages particularly when it comes to practice and policy. Rather than striving for a singular, all-encompassing model, it can be fruitful to consider how different frameworks illuminate different facets of wellbeing at various levels of the educational system. For example, the JD-R model is particularly strong in identifying systemic and organizational influences, helping to pinpoint imbalances between job demands and available supports. Its structured focus on measurable demands and resources lends itself well to the language of policymakers, who often operate in terms of allocation, efficiency, and system-level intervention. However, its tendency toward static, decontextualized categorizations and a mechanistic view of balance limits its capacity to fully capture the relational, identity-driven, and systemic complexities of the teaching profession (Granziera et al., 2020). In contrast, the PERMA model, rooted in positive psychology, emphasizes flourishing through positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. It provides a rich language for shaping workplace culture and a research-informed template for schools seeking to align organizational practices with a more holistic vision of teacher wellbeing. At the same time, the approach faces various critiques in the literature (e.g., Wong and Roy, 2018), and it is important to consider that it may underplay the structural constraints that influence the posited PERMA building blocks. Meanwhile, the SWB concept offers insight into how individuals assess their own job satisfaction and emotional states, thereby foregrounding personal agency. However, this experience-centered approach might be limited in understanding and addressing the broader institutional influences.

By acknowledging these distinct strengths and boundaries, each framework can be applied where it fits most naturally within the ecological structure of education. System-level decisions, such as those made by policymakers, often hinge on the distribution of resources, an area where the JD-R framework provides relevant insight and terminology. At the school level, where the focus often shifts to community, belonging, and shared goals, the PERMA model offers a suitable lens for assessment and development. At the individual level, SWB becomes more pertinent, offering a scaffold for teachers to reflect on and enhance their personal job-related experiences.

These examples are not intended as fixed prescriptions but rather as illustrations of how the flexible application of these frameworks can extend across levels. Importantly, the relevance of JD-R and PERMA is not confined to institutional or policy contexts. They also offer practical value at the individual level. A teacher, for instance, might draw on the JD-R model to assess their personal balance of job demands and resources, using this insight to identify concrete strategies for coping or support-seeking within their unique professional setting. Similarly, the PERMA model can guide individual reflection and growth, helping teachers cultivate greater wellbeing by focusing on dimensions such as engagement, relationships, or meaning. This individualized use reinforces the teacher's agency and highlights how wellbeing is shaped not only by external structures but also by personal insight and intentional practice. Conversely, SWB and PERMA concepts can also inform policymaking by emphasizing the importance of positive psychological states and meaningful engagement in educational settings. At the policy level, these frameworks can encourage the creation of environments that support teachers' emotional and relational needs, promoting systemic approaches to well-being that go beyond mere workload management. For instance, policies might

prioritize professional development focused on fostering positive relationships, recognition, and a sense of accomplishment.

Instead of pushing for theoretical synthesis, this paper advocates for making strategic use of conceptual variety. While overlaps such as the emphasis on positive relationships or meaningful engagement do exist across models, the value lies not in homogenizing these into a unified framework, but in recognizing how each model offers distinct insights suited to particular purposes or system levels. Acknowledging shared elements can certainly facilitate dialog, but doing so should not come at the expense of flattening conceptual differences and corresponding explanatory strengths. Embracing variety enables researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to select and combine frameworks with intentionality, capitalizing on their unique strengths while remaining sensitive to the complexity and situated nature of teacher wellbeing.

In conclusion, the range of frameworks and concepts available in teacher wellbeing research presents both challenges and possibilities. Because the lack of standardization can make comparison and synthesis difficult, the impulse to create unified models is natural and understandable. At the same time, leaning too heavily on integration risks oversimplifying complex realities. A pluralistic approach offers a constructive alternative. As this conceptual analysis has shown, each framework sheds light on certain aspects of teacher wellbeing. When applied with sensitivity to context and ecological level, each framework can play to its strengths and complement the others. Embracing this diversity encourages a more flexible and layered understanding, one that might be better suited to the varied experiences of teachers and the specific demands of different educational systems. In this light, conceptual variety is not a problem to be solved but a resource to be used well.

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## Generative AI statement

The author(s) declare that Gen AI was used in the creation of this manuscript. As a non-native English speaker, I used AI (ChatGPT) to refine grammar, typography, and overall language clarity.



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