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Martinsone, Baiba [Hrsg.]; Jensen, Maria Therese [Hrsg.]; Wiesner, Christian [Hrsg.]; Zechner, Kerstin Angelika [Hrsg.]: Teachers' professional wellbeing. A digital game based social-emotional learning intervention. Bad Heilbrunn : Verlag Julius Klinkhardt 2024, S. 9-31

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Wellbeing in the teachers' profession: Theoretical Considerations and Multi-Cultural Research in Europe

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Abstract
The article commences by introducing the "Teaching to Be" project, an initiative under the European Policy Experimentation, which focuses on supporting teachers' professional growth and wellbeing in the realm of social and emotional learning. Subsequently, it delves into a presentation of various well-being models and approaches to professional wellbeing. This highlights the diversity of theoretical perspectives within this domain, some of which harmonize with each other while others diverge. Simultaneously, it conscientiously acknowledges blind spots and proposes potential novel, alternative pathways for the future. The article serves as a prelude to fundamental deliberations that have notably influenced the "Teaching to Be" project as well as our future-oriented considerations. In this project, there is a dedicated focus on the well-being of teachers in their profession.

1 Introduction – The Project Teaching to be

An Overview
Teachers' stress and burnout are significant concerns throughout Europe and globally, posing severe challenges to teachers' health and school systems. Additionally, the increased awareness of the key role of social and emotional abilities in successful teaching and learning presents new challenges for teachers in maintaining their wellbeing and delivering effective teaching. To foster teachers' *professional wellbeing*

doi.org/10.35468/6091-01

and promote supportive practices, the European Policy Experimentation project "*Teaching to Be: Supporting teachers' professional growth and wellbeing in the field of social and emotional learning*" (T2B) was simultaneously implemented in eight European countries, namely, Lithuania, Latvia, Slovenia, Portugal, Italy, Spain, Austria, and Norway.

The project T2B (2021-2024) aimed to support school teachers' wellbeing by exploring and implementing innovative professional development practices. The project developed professional wellbeing materials for teachers:

- an Online Course on Teachers' Professional Wellbeing (OWC), aimed at developing teachers' practical skills for maintaining their wellbeing through self-regulated and game-based learning;
- a Teacher's handbook to provide practical opportunities to increase awareness, knowledge and skills to facilitate teachers' wellbeing through introspection, reflection, applying new practices, and collaboration within the school community.

For school leaders and educational policymakers, a Participatory Action Research (PAR) Guide was developed to assist school communities in collaboratively addressing wellbeing at schools through developing new professional abilities for teachers and school leaders.

The key innovation of the T2B project was the development and implementation of the digital game addressing different dimensions related to teachers' professional wellbeing. This interactive course offered space for the development of teachers' social and emotional skills including self-awareness and management, social awareness and relationship skills, as well as problem solving and responsible decision-making. Moreover, the factors related to organisational factors at work were addressed including work engagement, support from colleagues and leaders, self-efficacy etc. The OWC consisted of 12 modules which could be conducted individually or with colleagues. When playing the game, teachers were asked to reflect on questions related to the different themes relevant to teachers' professional wellbeing.

The aim of the project was to investigate the effect of the digital intervention on teachers' professional wellbeing using a mixed-methods research design. In the first year of the project, the content of OWC and Teacher's handbook was developed and tested through a qualitative Participatory Action Research (PAR). Thus, the T2Be materials were co-created by teachers involved in the project. In the following year, the video game was created and in the second year of the project, the OWC and teacher's handbook was implemented. The effect of the intervention was measured quasi-experimentally, involving teachers of experimental and control groups and applying pre- and post-test surveys before and after the implementation of the intervention. Validated instruments on dimension

doi.org/10.35468/6091-01

of teachers' professional wellbeing including self-efficacy, job satisfaction, stress, burnout, resilience, turnover intentions etc. were measured before and after the implementation of the intervention. Finally, based on the results, policy recommendations for each country were developed.

2 Intention of the Anthology and conceptual approach to wellbeing

This anthology includes six selected papers from six of the countries participating in the project. The focus of this anthology is primarily on conveying the insights, impressions, thoughts and reflections that have arisen both *from* and *within* the project over time. This anthology offers several additional insights. The concept of the anthology is based on the idea that *during* and *after* a project (or, *near* the end) – depending on the country and the experiences – very different insights and knowledge emerge from the project. The intention is to provide these individual perspectives with the necessary space to illuminate specific and distinct aspects and areas.

Considering the multitude of contemporary studies as well as reflecting on numerous research conducted over decades, it can be concluded that, to date, there is no comprehensive and universally accepted definition of *wellbeing* or *well-being*. Indeed, the historical connotations of fundamental terms like *mental health*, *wellness* or *well-being* have been negatively biassed. Traditional usage tends to define health in terms of the absence of illness, rather than acknowledging the presence of wellness, health, and 'well-being' (as spelled out by Ryff & Singer, 1996, p. 14). *Health* and *well-being research* has predominantly focused on dysfunction or on mere positive functioning.

As these opening lines and reflections reveal, in our project *Teaching to Be*, we articulate the idea and concept of *wellbeing* as a unified term (without a hyphen). However, its representation varies, manifested as either 'Wellbeing,' or 'Well-Being' with uppercase 'W' and 'B,' or 'wellbeing,' 'well-being' with lowercase 'w.' Occasionally, a hyphen *bridges* the words, underscoring their *interconnectedness*, or they are combined to accentuate the concept's *cohesion*. The precise implications of these differing spellings – whether they represent unique *theoretical* constructs or are simply stylistic choices without deeper meaning – remain uncertain. In this anthology, we will predominantly use *wellbeing* or *well-being* or other forms as 'wb' in relation to the project. So 'wb' represents various spellings, which theoretically do not highlight a specific distinction. However, alternate spellings may sometimes convey a nuanced or specific meaning. In this manner, we are currently avoiding a theoretically clear (and hopefully clarifying) use of the concept. However, we hope to provide determinations of phenomena that elucidate the

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construct of wb and introduce the associated idea. In the context of the models and theories, we will strive to maintain the respective spelling of the word to distinguish the theoretical approaches.
These viewpoints either precede a project, reflecting the clarity of theoretical frameworks from its inception, or emerge post-project, *shedding light* on the evolution of new and diverse insights. Let's attempt to gain a brief overview of different approaches and thoughts about the topics before highlighting the papers from the countries in the following chapters.

3 What is Wellbeing?

Born from the *Teaching to Be* project, this anthology seeks to encompass a broad array of perspectives, providing an initial exploration into the myriad of nuances. This endeavor is particularly relevant given the current absence of a universally accepted definition of wellbeing in its various spellings. The subject is deeply intertwined with health, mental health, occupational health psychology and other related fields. The challenge lies in *linking* wellbeing with these abstract constructs, which adds complexity to the task of articulating a clear and comprehensive description of the phenomenon, transcending beyond just a simple definition.
The definition of *Wellbeing* in *The European Framework for Personal, Social and Learning to Learn Key Competence*, or simply *LifeComp* by Sala et al. (2020, p. 36), encompasses the "pursuit of life satisfaction, the care of physical, mental, and social health, and the adoption of a sustainable lifestyle." Well-being is one of the nine essential factors in the framework, and the introduced concepts demonstrate a close relationship with all the other factors in Figure 1, making the definition of well-being not any easier. It is widely acknowledged, as reflected in the *LifeComp framework*, that humans possess three inherent needs that must be fulfilled for their health and wellbeing. To emphasise, the needs were established *within* and *for* the *LifeComp framework*. The framework outlines these needs as follows:

Autonomy: The need to have control over one's actions and decisions.
Competence: The need to achieve desired results and gain a sense of mastery.
Relatedness: The need to establish connections and relationships with others.

Sala et al. (2020) use the spelling *wellbeing* in their conceptualization of the *LifeComp framework*. The extent to which these needs are fulfilled is determined not just by individual competence but also by the requirements, barriers, and opportunities presented by the social, cultural, and economic environment. It also encompasses *physical wellbeing* and the cultivation of healthy habits. *Cognitive wellbeing* is crucial, as it involves stimulating and fostering mental flexibility, curiosity, and the enjoyment of lifelong learning. Additionally, *emotional wellbeing* is – as Sala et al. (2020) explicitly mentions – vital, focusing on developing

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autonomy, self-awareness, empathy, and the ability to comprehend, feel, manage, and regulate personal emotions, thoughts, behaviours, and actions. It also involves nurturing a sense of meaning and worth. Moreover, *social wellbeing* is enhanced by fostering sympathy, understanding, and perspective-taking to comprehend the needs of others.

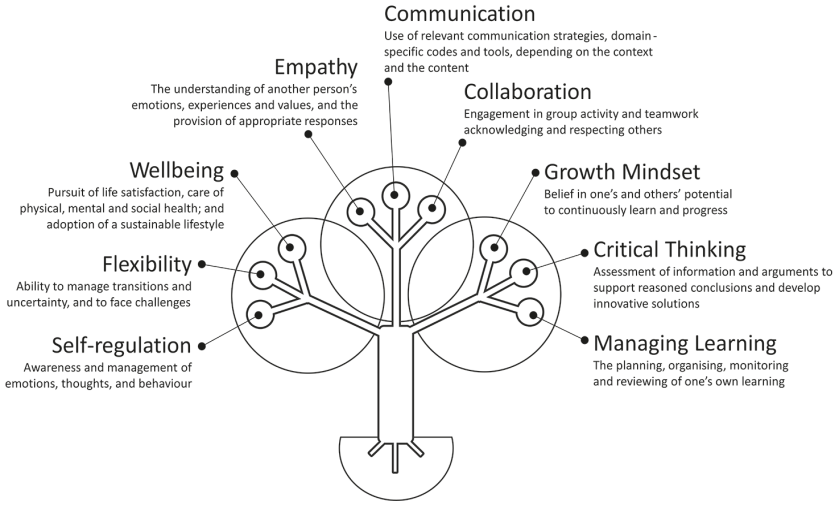

Figure 1: LifeComp by Sala et al., 2020 (self-drawn illustration)

Aspects focusing on *awareness* can also extend to personal health, wellbeing, and life satisfaction. Those aspects that aid in *understanding potential wellbeing risks* emphasise the capacity to access, comprehend, assess, and apply reliable health information for making decisions related to disease prevention, healthcare, and health promotion. This involves a more cognitive dimension of wellbeing. Thirdly, there is the *adoption of a sustainable lifestyle* that respects the environment, as well as the physical and mental well-being of oneself and others. This aspect underscores the significance and advantages of engaging in prosocial behaviours for health and wellbeing. Consequently, it enables us to provide assistance to others and seek help when needed. Certainly, there are *hedonic motives* in wellbeing, which seek pleasure, enjoyment, comfort, and satisfaction. Conversely, *eudaimonic motives* in wellbeing aim for excellence, personal growth, meaning, and authenticity, contributing to wellbeing in different ways (Sala et al., 2020). The *LifeComp framework* holds significant importance for the project as it establishes "an official agenda for social and emotional development across Europe" (T2B, 2020, p. 77).

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On the other hand, Conceição and Bandura (2008, p. 2) fundamentally state: "Wellbeing is difficult to define but it is even harder to measure." They categorize the measurement of wellbeing into "objective and subjective measures," a view shared by other researchers like Axford et al. (2014), Veenhoven (2007) and Fritz-Schubert (2017). Veronese et al. (2017, p. 1161) specifically address this distinction, noting that in terms of operationalizing the construct, "a range of quantitative indicators have been used to evaluate levels of individual well-being." In this context, Veronese et al. (2017) developed a *Conceptual Model of Individual Well-Being* (see Figure 2), wherein *well-being* (written as such) is defined in terms of good mental functioning. This encompasses all assessments (both positive and negative) that individuals make of their lives, as well as their emotional reactions to life experiences. This concept aligns with the ideas proposed by Diener et al. (2006). Fundamentally, based on this approach, well-being is divided into three primary components: Life satisfaction, affect, and eudaimonic well-being. This methodology integrates a collection of relatively measurable variables (termed "determiners") alongside more qualitative dimensions, or "sub-components." To effectively operationalize the construct in this context, a variety of quantitative indicators are essential for accurately assessing individual well-being. As a result, these elements are categorised into both objective and subjective measures, as delineated in Conceição & Bandura (2008). Such a categorization calls for an *analytical* approach that considers both one-dimensional and multidimensional perspectives. To briefly summarize, Veronese et al. (2017) uses the spelling *well-being* in their conceptualization.

Objective Measures can be effectively conceptualised and *quantified* as both *One-dimensional Wellbeing* (OOW) and *Multidimensional Wellbeing* (OMW and the term Wellbeing is written in this manner here). The OMW-approach suggests that wellbeing is multifaceted, embracing every aspect of human life. In the realm of OOW, objective indicators often point to income and growth, which typically and eventually results in increased consumption of goods and services, alongside other objective indicators of life quality. McGillivray and Clarke (2006, p. 4) describe Subjective Wellbeing Measures (SWB) as synonymous with "happiness." Subjective well-being involves a multidimensional evaluation of life, including cognitive judgements of life satisfaction and affective evaluations of emotions and moods" – this is similar to what is found in the works of Argyle (2013). Regarding *objective* indicators, measurements typically include economic, environmental, and monetary variables. On the other hand, subjective measures have primarily been developed within the realm of social sciences. This, in turn, frequently results in the neglect of prosocial aspects, which as ideas and constructs, stem from the humanities – a point we will need to revisit in further detail a little later.

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Figure 2: Conceptual Model of Well-Being from Veronese et al., 2017 (self-drawn illustration)

Within the context of *schools*, it is essential to ensure that emotions, social and prosocial abilities, and well-being are central to teaching and learning. Research indicates that work-life imbalance adversely impacts teachers' ability to educate effectively (Moeller et al., 2018). Teachers who experience emotional exhaustion are vulnerable to developing cynicism and callousness, and they may eventually reach a point where they feel they have little to contribute or gain from continuing in the profession, leading them to exit the teaching workforce (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). In many instances, teachers' stress and burnout are linked to factors such as work overload, a sense of meaninglessness, heightened accountability demands, loss of self-responsibility, lack of autonomy and decision-making authority, authoritative management and leadership styles, and a negative school climate (Brackett et al., 2010; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Elbertson et al., 2010). Thus, the study of well-being has often surged alongside the positive psychology movement, which has placed a widespread emphasis on human strengths and the pursuit of a high-quality life. In positive psychology, well-being is often understood as a guide to living a *better* life (Auhagen, 2008), similar to the educational goal of *well-being*, which involves the concept of a *happiness subject* in schools (Fritz-Schubert, 2017).

Subjective well-being (SWB), as described by Diener, Lucas, & Oishi (2018), closely aligns with the overarching term *happiness* and consists of – as evident in Veronese' work – of three components: Life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect. In such a context, the potential for applying the approach of objective measures is relatively quickly exceeded. Furthermore, emotions are often oversimplified in quantitative measurement, categorised solely into negative and positive orientations, without acknowledging their *both and* nature. The quantitative exploration of well-being is certainly necessary but also not sufficient. From

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this perspective, a different model has to be introduced to understand the concept of wellbeing from an (more or less) alternative and/or complementary standpoint. Or in other words, at this point and with reference to Ryff & Keyes (1995, p. 725), the "provisional conclusion" can be drawn that "there is more to being well than feeling happy and satisfied with life." Likewise, well-being cannot be solely assessed through objective indicators, as indicated by *eudaimonic well-being* – and the way of understanding elements of subjective well-being (SWB). Gardner & O'Driscoll (2007) emphasise that *subjective well-being* extends beyond the mere absence of ill-health (and transcends any so-called objective assessment).

Subjective well-being encompasses generally *one's personal feelings* and *cognitive evaluations*, categorising the comprehension of well-being into *cognitive* and *affective* components within this framework (Fritz-Schubert, 2017). Research suggests also that persons learn more efficiently in safe, supportive environments – settings where one experiences *care*. The understanding of subjective well-being highlights how teachers' socio-emotional competencies and prosocial literacies[1] can influence the learning environment and shape learners' emotions, actions, and behaviour, as noted in *The Prosocial Classroom Model* by Jennings (2015; Jennings et al., 2013). As depicted in Figure 3, which has been further developed by the authors of this paper, teachers' competencies, abilities, literacies, and *well-being* directly *affect* the learning environment (teacher-student relationships, classroom management and leadership, and the enactment of prosocial and social-emotional learning). This, in turn, leads to a *healthy classroom* and *healthy school climate* and ultimately successful socio-emotional, prosocial, and academic outcomes for students. For instance, in a recent study of 300 classrooms with 6014 students and 300 teachers it was found that teacher burnout was associated with poorer student-reported classroom climate (Jensen & Solheim, 2020).

Moreover, poor classroom climate has also been found to be associated with higher teacher turnover (Jensen, 2021), indicating that teachers are also affected by students' wellbeing, indicating as the *Prosocial Model* suggests, that there are also reciprocal associations between teacher wellbeing and students wellbeing. *Social emotional learning* (SEL) as concept means "the process by which each student develops their capacity to integrate thought, emotion and behaviour to achieve and accomplish important social tasks" (Ferreira et al., 2020, p. 22; Martinsone, 2016; Martinsone & Vilcina, 2018). *Prosocial learning* (PSL), which are rooted in basic emotions (Wiesner, 2020), are distinct from social learning and give rise to acts of kindness, compassion, providing solace to those in distress (empathising with others), offering assistance, sharing, cooperation, and collaborating with others (Carter & Ellis, 2016).

1 The concept of literacies is elaborated upon in Chapter 6.

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These actions are typically directed towards others without the expectation of rewards or being influenced by punishment or rewards. Person's "prosocial tendencies are associated with their well-being" (Morelli et al., 2019, p. 86). Prosocial learning aims to enhance emotional regulatory abilities, which in turn play a crucial role in fostering empathy. Study results suggest that integrated emotion regulation predicts prosocial actions and behaviour in the classroom, both directly and by influencing empathy (Benita et al., 2017; Dentoni et al., 2018). *Prosociality*, as described by Eisenberg (2010), signifies a profound concern for others and an affective response that arises from understanding or grasping another person's emotional state or condition. On the other hand, *social* orientation often pertains to individuality and involves adopting the perspective of others, which is primarily a cognitive process – similar to the emphasis on 'mental' in 'mental health,' which also encompasses (primarily) *cognitive* processes and judgements.

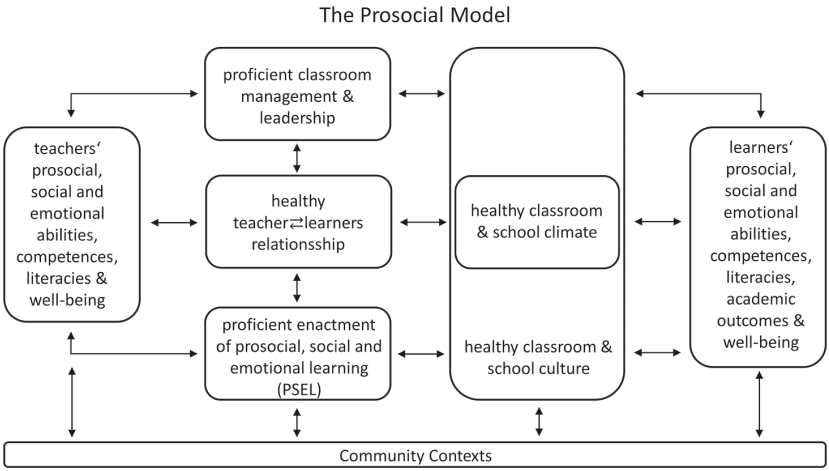

Figure 3: The Prosocial Model, based on Jennings & Greenberg, 2009 and adapted by the authors (self-drawn illustration)

Teachers and students' well-being is closely related to a positive school climate, as Martinsone et al. (2023) noted. Firstly, within the *Prosocial Model*, we consider similar to Jennings & Greenberg (2009) that teachers' competencies, abilities, and literacies as vital contributors to the cultivation of nurturing teacher ⇄ learner relationships. A teacher who acknowledges a student's well-being is better equipped to respond effectively and proficiently to the learner's needs. But generally speaking, social-emotional competencies and literacies are not usually taught

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and developed in teacher pre-service courses and continuous professional development courses. Secondly, as Jennings & Greenberg (2009) points out, teachers with a deeper comprehension of well-being and personal growth are likely to exhibit more proficient classroom management and leadership. Such teachers are inclined to be proactive, utilising their emotional expressions and verbal support to foster enthusiasm and love and enjoyment for learning, as well as to guide student behaviours and actions.

Additionally, emphasising the positive influence that school management and leadership can exert by cultivating a supportive school environment and implementing stress management techniques has been proposed (Gray et al., 2017), and research has found that when teachers perceive support from school management, they report lower degree of burnout (Jensen & Solheim, 2019). Moreover, in the same study support from management was found to have an indirect association with student reported classroom climate through teacher burnout (Jensen & Solheim, 2019). There is also evidence suggesting that organisational factors, such as inadequate communication among colleagues, overall job dissatisfaction, or presenteeism, are linked to reduced teacher well-being (Kidger et al., 2016).

Thirdly, Jennings & Greenberg (2009) suggest that teachers with a deeper grasp of well-being are better positioned to proficiently integrate social, prosocial, and emotional curricula. This is because they serve as exemplary role models for the desired social, prosocial and emotional behaviors and actions. Finally, the diverse community contexts both within and outside the classroom and school can potentially impact teachers' competencies, abilities, and literacies. An important characteristic of socially and emotionally competent teachers is that they possess a high level of self-awareness. They are aware of how their emotional expressions impact their interactions with others, as noted by Jennings & Greenberg (2009) and they know how to manage their own wellbeing. At this point in this article, it becomes evident how differently the idea and concept of wb can be understood, as the model of well-being by Jennings & Greenberg (2009), adapted by the authors, is compared to Veronese et al.'s conceptual model of well-being (2017). Although the two concepts differ significantly, both are denoted by the same term, (here) *well-being*.

It is worth noting that Jennings & Greenberg (2009) and Jennings (2015) use the spelling *well-being* in the conceptualization. So, in the sense of Schlick (1933), the unique nature of well-being creates a *distinct scientific unrest and ambiguity* because, fundamentally, it gives rise to worldviews and world orientations from the conceptualization of wb and because it incites a pursuit, namely, the pursuit of understanding the phenomenon.

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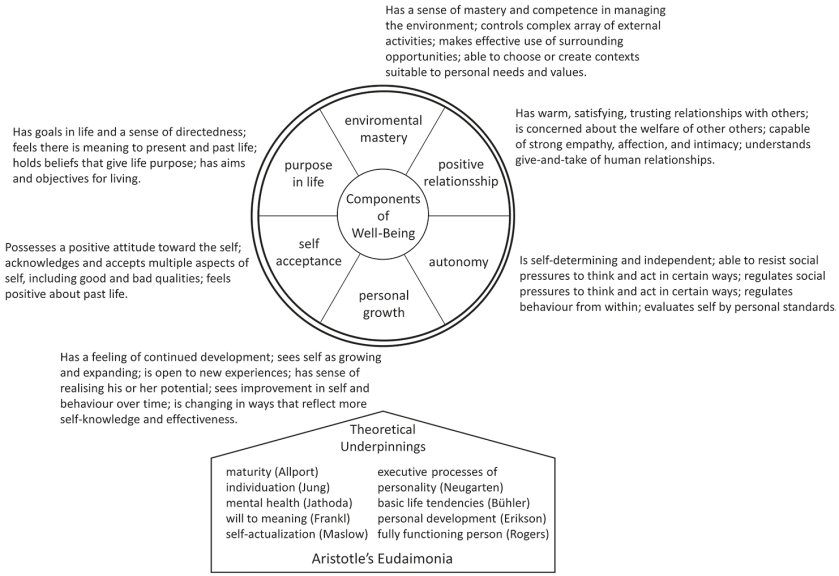

Figure 4: Core dimensions of psychological wellbeing and their theoretical foundations, based on Ryff (2023) and adapted by the authors (self-drawn illustration)

The *Eudaimonic Well-Being Model* of *core dimensions* proposed by Ryff (2023) is constructed by integrating theories from clinical, developmental, existential, and humanistic perspectives, while also being influenced by Aristotle's concept of eudaimonia as the ultimate human good. This comprehensive model encompasses six core dimensions of well-being, each rooted in a rich theoretical foundation, making it a model suitable for integrative scientific exploration (see Figure 4). Eudaimonic well-being, therefore, aims at the conditions for a successful life and the associated human strengths. The Aristotelian concept of Eudaimonia translates to a good *life* or realising one's potential. Eudaimonic well-being represents a content and fulfilling life, where well-being is not a final state but rather a *process* of leading a good life (Fritz-Schubert, 2017).

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4 Professional Wellbeing

Another facet of wellbeing, commonly known as *professional well-being* (written as *wellbeing* by Gardner & O'Driscoll, 2007, p. 15, as *well-being* by Flynn & Messias, 2020, p. 59), is closely linked to the fact that a substantial portion of adults' lives is devoted to work, rendering it a central component within this dimension of wb. *Professional well-being*, as described by Pakhol (2020, p. 3), is "an integral indicator of optimal functioning of the individual in the professional sphere, associated with the subjective assessment of various psychological and/or socio-psychological aspects of professional life" – very similarly to this definition, Ryff & Singer (1996, p. 14) describe the concept of *positive psychological functioning*. However, what is truly *innovative* about *well-being* is not the positive psychological functioning – it is the shift *away* from a treatment-centric approach towards nurturing a captivating human experience, igniting its biochemistry without the need for "pharmacological agents" aimed at altering brain chemistry: "Quality ties to others, feelings of purpose and self- realization engender unique mind/body spirals, but unlike those in the realm of stress, these move toward protection and enhancement of the organism." Hence, Ryff & Singer (1996) also reference Bühler's *basic life tendencies* that strive towards life fulfilment (Bühler, 1959, 1971; Bühler & Massarik, 1968) and Erikson's *stage model* (Erikson, 1959, 1966; Erikson & Erikson, 1997) to gain a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of *well-being*.

The new concept of *professional well-being*, as noted by Pakhol (2018), represents an optimal state of performance within one's *professional role*, and this is relatively recent in the field of well-being science. Nonetheless, as early as 1992, Ryff and Essex defined well-being as "contingent on the congruence between personal needs and preferences and environmental characteristics," (p. 507) drawing upon the work of Carp & Carp (1984) and Lawton (1980). Specifically, the approach of Carp & Carp (1984) is based on Murray's notion (1938, p. 26) that "the 'feel' of being" as "well-being" (p. 40) and as "health of mind and body" (p. 93) depends on the appropriate satisfaction of needs by the environment, and these needs are organized according to the model through Maslow's hierarchy (1954). So, conceptually, *well-being* initially referred to a form of *being well-balanced*.

For Ryff & Keyes (1995), the concept of *psychological well-being* traces back to Bradburn's work in 1969. However, it resulted in the development of a concept more aligned with *positive functioning*. This represents an early operationalization of well-being, primarily by positing the independence of positive and negative effects, which creates the illusion that these components are independent. Conversely, what gained prominence among researchers was the emphasis on life satisfaction as a fundamental indicator of well-being. The concept of life satisfaction was viewed as a cognitive component, resulting in a reduced understanding of *what* it truly signifies and *how* it feels to *be well*. Consequently, after some initial

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misunderstandings, it is ideal for every structural analysis to commence with a well-articulated theoretical framework. However, *professional wellbeing* – what is important for the T2B project – is and cannot be a singular theoretical concept; it encompasses various elements related to the work environment. It goes beyond mere *job satisfaction* or a specific set of *personal qualities* and encompasses not only *organizational and individual factors* but also *personal-professional elements*, such as experiencing *flow at work*, *motivation at work*, and *work satisfaction* with one's everyday professional choice, as demonstrated by Pakhol (2018).

When developing the teacher wellbeing intervention in the T2B project, we also drew upon the *Job Demands Resources Model* (JD-R model) by Bakker & Demerouti (2007), as the model emphasises how factors related to the psychosocial work environment are associated with workers' wb (see Figure 5). According to the JD-R model, aspects of work can be divided into two main categories referred to as *job demand*s and *job resources* (Demeorouti et al., 2001). "Job demands refer to physical, psychological, or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or psychological effort and are thus associated with certain physiological and/or psychological costs" (Demerouti et al., 2001, p. 501). Job resources refer to "Those physical, social, or organizational aspects of the job that may do any of the following: (a) be functional in achieving work goals; (b) reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs (c) stimulate personal growth, learning, and development" (Demerouti et al., 2001, p. 501). When *job demands* are high, employees may experience stress, burnout and ill-health referred to as the health impairment process.

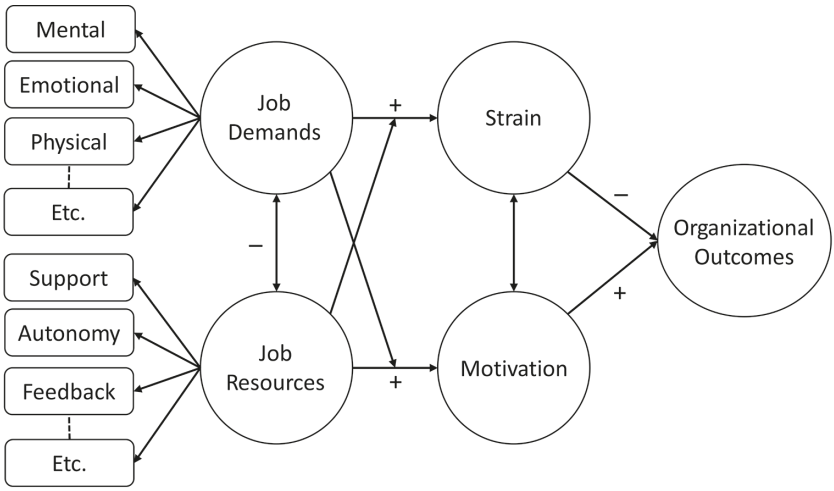

Figure 5: The Job Demands Resources Model (JD-R model) by Bakker & Demerouti, 2007 (self-drawn illustration)

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On the contrary, when the individual has high levels of job resources, these resources may contribute to motivation and engagement, referred to as the motivational process, and *job resources* may also buffer the negative effects of *job demands* (Bakker & Demoerouti, 2007). Thus, the intervention was aimed at reducing teachers job demands, and increasing their job resources, hypothesizing that their well-being would increase. Personal resources are also an important aspect of the JD-R model and were included as part of the JD-R framework by Xanthopoulou et al. (2007). Examples of personal resources are for instance, *curiosity* and *optimism* (and/or humour) are *vital* elements during different phases of one's professional growth and transition, serving as essential components of *well-being* that address the process of *professionalization*, as noted by Flynn & Messias (2020, p. 61): "In fact, meta-analyses show curiosity accounts for 10% of the variance of learning and performance with greater curiosity associated with greater learning, engagement, and performance" (Harackiewicz et al., 2002). So, in the T2B project, research was conducted to gain a deeper understanding of *professional wellbeing*. The Job Demands-Resources model, as proposed by Bakker and Demorouti (2007, 2014), serves as a partial theoretical framework for the T2B project, offering insightful perspectives on workplace dynamics.

In the revised *Job Demands–Resources theory* (JD-R theory), Bakker and Demerouti (2018) eloquently elucidate the bidirectional influence between working conditions and employees, highlighting how each impacts and shapes the other. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory integrates concepts from both work *motivation* and *job stress* frameworks. At the same time, as posited by this theory, workplace environments or job characteristics can be adeptly divided into two distinct categories: *job demands* and *job resources*. This theory, as expounded by Bakker and Demerouti in 2007 and 2014, still asserts that these categories are characterized by unique attributes and predictive capacities. *Job demands*, which include factors such as workload and conflicts, are – as Bakker and Demerouti (2018) note – typically energy-depleting elements. Within this, workload and task complexity are identified as challenge demands that enhance *performance*, whereas conflicts are seen as hindrance demands that impede performance. Conversely, *job resources* function to assist employees in managing job demands and achieving their objectives. These job demands and resources are not only distinct in their impact on employee well-being but also illustrate the capacity of *job resources* to buffer the adverse effects of *job demands* on negative *strain* (see Figure 6).

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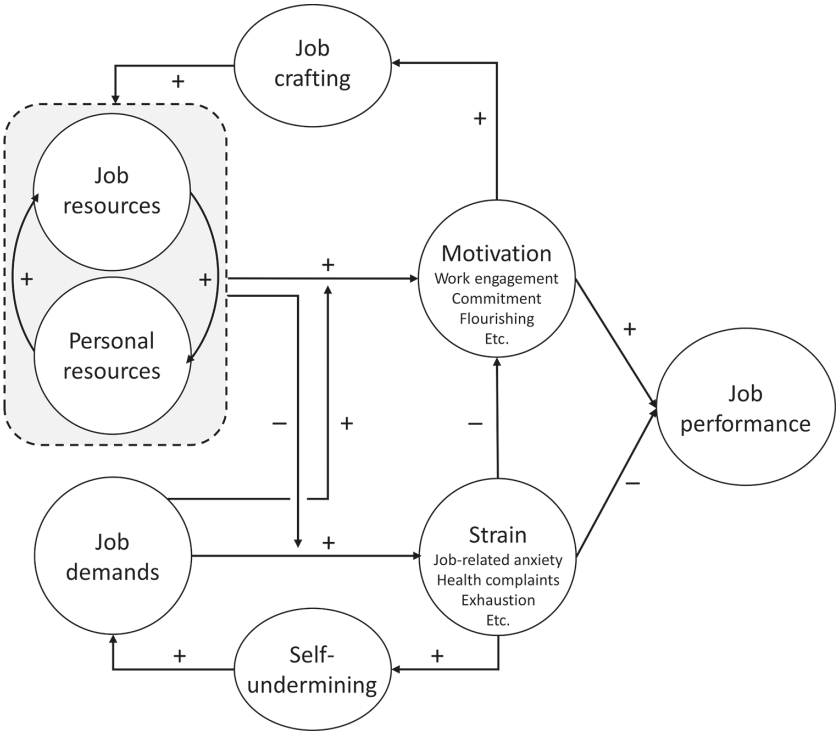

Figure 6: The Job Demands Resources Theory (JD-R theory) by Bakker & Demerouti, 2018 (self-drawn illustration)

According to the *JD-R theory*, *job resources* play a vital role in enhancing *motivation* and work engagement, particularly when faced with *high* job demands. As a result, elements like autonomy, a variety of skills, performance feedback, and a clear sense of task identity gain heightened importance in scenarios characterized by particularly demanding job conditions (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014, 2018). *Personal resources*, such as optimism and self-efficacy, serve a role similar to that of *job resources* and are related to the beliefs that individuals have about their level of control within their (work) environment: "Individuals who are high in optimism and self-efficacy believe that good things will happen to them, and that they are capable of handling unforeseen events. Such beliefs help employees to actively approach their job demands and deal with them in an effective way" (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018, p. 556). The JD-R theory posits that while *motivation positively* influences *job performance*, *job strain negatively* affects it. Motivation aids employees in directing their goals and concentrating their energy and cognitive resources

doi.org/10.35468/6091-01

on current tasks, whereas job strain hinders performance by diminishing the ability to maintain focus: Employees who feel anxious at work and "who experience high levels of job strain (e. g., chronic exhaustion) communicate poorly, make mistakes, and create conflicts, which add up to the already high job demands" (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018, p. 556). This adversely affects *job performance*.

The Job Demands-Resources theory (JD-R theory) establishes the current perspective of framing challenges and issues between the *individual* and the *environment*, often focused (only) on *social* aspects. What the JD-R theory tends to overlook, according to the main author, are specific aspects that are referred to as positive relationships in the eudaimonic well-being model proposed by Ryff (2023), and particularly highlighted in the *Prosocial Model* as a *supportive* classroom and school (work) *climate* (within teams, departments, and institutions), as well as a *conducive* healthy classroom and school *culture* (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). These models emphasize the *communities, colleagues,*and *friendships* that not only represent personal resources but extend well beyond them. Adler (1927, p. 39) already stated very clearly for this very reason: "So long as people are interested not only in themselves but in others, they will solve the problems of life satisfactorily. But if they develop an inferiority complex, they find themselves living, as it were, in enemy territory - always looking out for their own interests rather than for those of others, and thus not having any sense of community." It is crucial to underscore at this juncture that both *social* and *prosocial* dimensions have their foundations *and* are rooted in *emotional learning* and can be easily discerned (Wiesner, 2020; 2023a), thereby embodying unique viewpoints on "ways of seeing the world" (Adler, 1927, p. 5). Highlighting the emphasis on *motivation* concerning work (purely) as a *performance* aspect (Sprenger, 1999), as well as *job stress*, can result in a negatively biased system, potentially fostering a mindset focused on the absence of illness and stress rather than acknowledging the presence of wb. And to understand *motivation*, we should consider the more diverse and deeper theory of motivation, action, *and* self-regulated learning activities by Rheinberg et al. (1999, 2000) and his *Expanded Motivation Model*.

Lifelong learners are characterized by their *cognitive engagement* and a *passion for learning*, which can be defined as how someone approaches new information and abilities broadly, or the strong *personal* interest with which they pursue specific areas of interest: "Love of learning is described as a character strength with strong intrinsic motivation" (Flynn & Messias, 2020, p. 62). We know from various studies that early career professionals initially focus on establishing their *professional identities*. However, once this identity is found and firmly established, they become essential contributors. The *vitality* that develops through such a process is a key factor in professional well-being. It is characterised by enthusiasm and empowers team members to passionately participate in committees or projects (Irby, 1993). Furthermore, a *sense of autonomy* enhances this vitality (Kasser & Ryan, 1999).

doi.org/10.35468/6091-01

The most effective strategies for enhancing professional well-being and mitigating ill-health and stress focus on addressing their root causes. To achieve this, it is crucial to *cultivate awareness* and gain an understanding of the levels of stress and well-being, as well as the factors associated with these outcomes. In addition to recognizing challenges, it is crucial to pinpoint elements of work that persons find *fulfilling*, satisfying, rewarding, and gratifying (Gardner & O'Driscoll, 2007). The quest is to find *meaning* in both one's work and life activities, and it is crucial that *meaning* is genuinely discovered. In contexts where one's work focuses on *social* aspects, it pertains more to one's life activities and the integration into communal connectedness, emphasising the *prosocial* elements.

Persons with a strong sense of *professional well-being* appreciate beauty and often *experience self-transcendent emotions* such as awe and admiration when encountering perceived beauty and excellence in their surroundings. Aesthetic sensitivity and responsiveness enable them to fully appreciate the world around them, temporarily setting aside their worries and attachments (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 21): "The more people surrounding us who are kind, or curious, or full of hope, the greater our likelihood of acting in these ways." *Appreciation* entails the capacity to discover, acknowledge, and derive pleasure from the presence of goodness. According to Peterson & Seligman (2004, p. 538), we posit that persons who remain receptive to beauty and excellence in both mind and heart tend to experience greater joy in their everyday lives, discover more avenues to imbue *meaning* into their existence, and "connect deeply with other people." Similarly, wb can be viewed as a *holistic* concept in which individuals are considered as *biopsychosocial beings* whose well-being depends on the functioning of their *body*, *mind*, and *spirit* (Bowling, 2003). However, even the most detailed measurement is not a *holistic* approach – from the perspective of subjective wb – but rather an aggregation of several concepts, constructs, or potential measurable factors.

Hence, Gasper (2004) asserts: "Considering the multitude of pertinent facets of well-being, it appears more advantageous to employ 'wellbeing' or 'well-being' as a comprehensive term rather than attempting to identify a singular, key aspect or theme." Well-being encompasses a wide array of diverse elements. "Instead of establishing a tightly defined, narrow concept of well-being," as articulated by Gasper (2004, p. 4), and subsequently attempting to dictate its 'correct' usage, it would be more beneficial to regard *wb* as an overarching concept. In this sense, the T2B project engages with wb and endeavors to incorporate and weigh *various* models and theories in order to approach the scientific construct of well-being or wellbeing, as conceived by Einstein (1952), and facilitate *an examination based on experience* (Wiesner, 2023b). This path also leads to an Online Course on Teachers' Professional Wellbeing (OWC), designed to enhance teachers' practical abilities in sustaining their wb through self-regulated and game-based learning, which has been jointly developed *in close collaboration* with educators.

doi.org/10.35468/6091-01

5 Conclusion

This paper introduced the *T2B project*, which was carried out from 2021 to 2024 by the following countries (in alphabetical order): Austria, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, and Spain. The project delved into many unresolved or seemingly clarified aspects related to the theme and construct of wellbeing. Throughout the project, the term *wellbeing* was consistently used as the spelling, even though other variations (including the hyphenated form) were later introduced to emphasize specific theoretical nuances and accents. A more detailed exploration and clarification of these spelling variations, in conjunction with nuanced theoretical considerations, would undoubtedly be valuable and a recommendation for (all) future projects.

The primary objective of the project was the development of an *Online Course on Teachers' Professional Wellbeing* (OWC), aimed at enhancing teachers' practical skills for maintaining their well-being through self-regulated and game-based learning. This endeavor was successfully accomplished through collaborative efforts with educators. Furthermore, this article, serving as an introduction to this anthology (collective volume), initially explores possible perspectives on wellbeing or well-being and in short form wb (without favoring a specific theoretical approach), which can generally be categorized into more *objective* (measurable) or *subjective* approaches. A unique approach is offered by the *LifeComp framework*, as it was created with reference to the Council of the European Union and the revised recommendation on *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning*. In this sense, LifeComp provides a conceptual framework for the *Personal, Social, and Learning to Learn* key competence for education systems, students, and learners as a whole. Wellbeing is an integral and distinctive part of this framework. Moreover four additional models were introduced, which are closely related to the T2B project and each provide certain independent insights into the topic. These include the *Prosocial Model* by Jennings & Greenberg (2009), the *Eudaimonic Well-Being Model* by Ryff (2023), the *Job-Demands Resources Model* by Bakker & Demerouti, 2007 and the *Conceptual Model of Well-Being* by Veronese et al. (2017).

In this paper, we attempted to highlight the differences between *objectifying* and *subjectifying* considerations of wb before delving into the topic of *professional well-being*. Considering all the models and theories of wb presented here, various perspectives lead to different ways of understanding and seeing the world and, consequently, the construct of wb. In this regard, Adler's (1927) perspective can be helpful in *bridging* various viewpoints by establishing a close connection between wb and his three fundamental tasks of life. This connection offers numerous, previously overlooked possibilities for comprehending wb within a broader context and a more holistic approach. When examining the models and theories, it becomes evident that both intriguing approaches and significant blind spots

doi.org/10.35468/6091-01

have emerged across the theoretical landscape. In this process, the theoretical perspective on the landscape even forgot to consider the *hinterland*. The T2B project seeks to contribute to addressing these gaps and has initiated a discussion on ideas, models, and theories while taking the important step of *involving* stakeholders to *integrate* them into the research community.

In conclusion, the project has been directed towards the *school* and *teaching*, with a central focus on *educators*. Only persons can be professionals in terms of wb, and the project's primary goal has been to prioritize this *professionalization*. We hope to have provided a new and distinct contribution to the exploration of wb. Each chapter in the anthology represents insights and perspectives from the project *„Teaching to be"* in some participant country – in alphabetical order: Austria, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Portugal, and Spain. The highly readable contributions are the result of years of work, and we wish you much enjoyment in the spirit of a *passion for learning* with the following articles.

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doi.org/10.35468/6091-01