



Acknowledgements

Our sincere gratitude goes to the educators who participated in this project and the facilitators of Mind with Heart who delivered a mindfulness-based intervention. We also thank the staff of Metropolitan Region, Organisational Health, Department of Education, Queensland and Business Engagement and Development, Department of education, NSW for their valuable support.

This project was supported by Teachers Health Foundation.

This summary report contains key information and findings of the Teacher Wellbeing: A Key to School and Community Success research project conducted in 2017-2018.

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To cite this report, please use:

Hwang, Y-S., Goldstein, H., Singh, N. N., Medvedev, O., Noh, J-E., & Hand, K. (2018). Teacher Wellbeing: A Key to School and Community Success. – Summary report. Brisbane, Qld: Institute for Learning Sciences and Teacher Education.

ISBN 978-1-922097-68-2 (Print)

ISBN 978-1-922097-69-9 (Electronic)

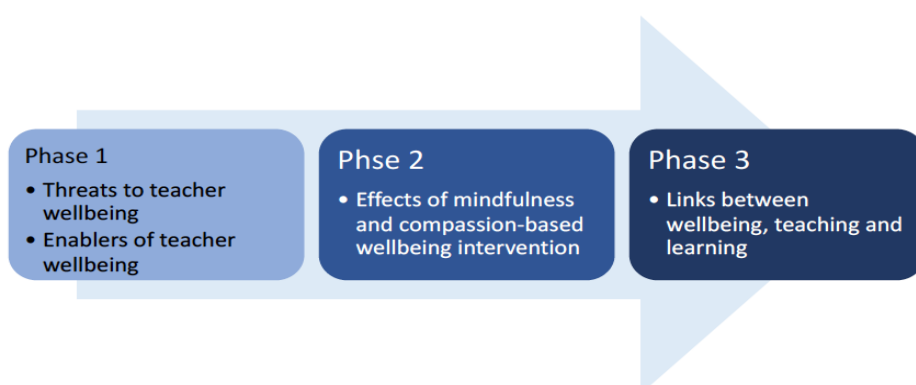
Background

Teacher wellbeing is a pressing issue for the education community. It is a key to student success, and its compromise negatively influences teaching practices. Despite its importance, our understanding of teacher wellbeing and its effects on teaching practices and student learning is limited. Recent mindfulness-based interventions have reported positive changes in teachers' mental and physical wellbeing. This mixed methods design study investigated threats to and enablers of teacher wellbeing and examined effects of a cluster-based randomised mindfulness-based intervention for Australian teachers on teacher wellbeing, teaching practices and students' classroom behaviour.



Research Methodology

- Phase 1: An online survey of educators and individual teacher interviews were conducted to identify threats to and enablers of teacher wellbeing.
- Phase 2: Delivery of an 8-week mindfulness and compassion-based intervention for educators to examine its effects on wellbeing and teaching practices.
- Phase 3: Investigation of the links between teacher wellbeing, teaching and learning via teacher and student surveys, interviews, classroom observations and collection of school data.



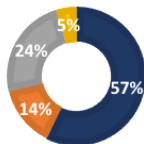
Threats to and enablers of Teacher wellbeing

Who answered the survey?

- Two-hundred and thirty-one educators from nine New South Wales and 12 Queensland Schools completed the online survey. They included 12 primary schools, five special schools and three secondary schools.

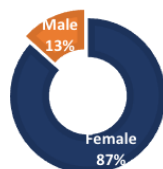
SCHOOL TYPE

■ Primary ■ Secondary ■ Special ■ Other



- Participants ranged in age between 18 and 70 years (mean age = 43.6 years) and had experience in a teaching role ranging from less than one year to 45 years.
- Over 80% of participants were female and 72% worked in a teaching role.

GENDER



- Roles occupied by the remaining participants included student learning support officers, or (deputy) principals, guidance officers and others.

Survey findings

- Survey results identified protective and risk factors of perceived stress.
- Being older and having higher job satisfaction were protective factors of perceived stress.



- Self-compassion and mindfulness were the strongest protective factors of perceived stress.
- The significant risk factors for perceived stress were poor sleep quality, conflict in student-teacher relationship and anxiety in close relationships.
- Survey results showed a combination of protective factors was almost five times stronger than a combination of risk factors in their capacity to predict perceived stress. This suggests the potential for an intervention that enhances protective factors (e.g., job satisfaction, self-compassion and mindfulness) to enhance teacher wellbeing.
- Survey results showed closer student-teacher relationships for teachers in primary schools than teachers in secondary or special education schools.
- Survey results demonstrated higher student-teacher conflict for teachers in special education schools than teachers in primary or secondary schools.
- Survey results showed higher self-compassion for teachers in special education schools than teachers in primary schools.

Intervention

Who participated in the Intervention?

- Over 80 % of the intervention group (n=85) were female and in a teaching role with 12.3 mean years of teaching. The intervention group reported above neutral and below satisfactory levels of work satisfaction.
- Of the 100 participants in the control group, close to 90 % were female and over 70 % were in a teaching role with 15.2 mean years of teaching.
- Preliminary analysis confirmed that there were no statistically significant differences between the two groups at baseline for age, gender, weekly working hours, work satisfaction, and wellbeing-related outcome variables.

Findings: Teacher Wellbeing

- The intervention group showed reduced levels of perceived stress and sleep problems, and higher levels of emotion regulation, mindfulness and self-compassion after the intervention and compared to the control group.
- Improvements in perceived stress, emotion regulation, mindfulness and self-compassion remained significant six weeks after the intervention.
- Improvements in perceived stress and emotion regulation remained significant five months after the intervention.



Findings: Teaching Practices

- Classroom observations demonstrated intervention effects for person-centred teaching behaviour, with participants in the intervention group demonstrating reduced teacher talk and increased student talk, as well as increased indirect teacher talk and positive affect.

Findings: Students' sense of connectedness to their teachers

- The intervention was a predictor for higher levels of students' sense of connectedness to their teachers.

Findings: Teacher sick leave and students' behaviour incident reports

- There were no intervention effects for teacher sick leave days and student behaviour incident reports.

Ingredients for

Success



Successful mindfulness training requires

Teachers

- Commitment to training and engagement
- Motivation for personal and professional development
- Seeing value and benefits of intervention

School environment

- Supportive leadership
- School culture (history of supporting wellbeing)
- Peer-support
- Safe space

Program

- Program length (not too long and not too short)
- Format (learning, doing and homework)
- Content (relevant)

Facilitator

- Non-threatening, skilful and engaging

Recommendations

- Mindfulness-based intervention requires participants' engagement with and commitment to ongoing practice. Therefore training should be needs-based.
- Positive intervention outcomes from mindfulness-based intervention require a combination of factors in order to ensure success.
- Teachers who are exposed to conflict with students might be more vulnerable to compromised teacher wellbeing. Given that no intervention effects were found for students' challenging behaviour, there is a need for intervention programs targeting both teacher wellbeing and students' challenging behaviour.
- Future research needs to investigate the role of individual teacher characteristics and organisational features for mindfulness-based intervention effects with larger samples.
- Future research needs to investigate the intervention effects of teaching practices for challenging behaviour on teacher wellbeing.

