Fostering future teacher well-being

A participatory investigation in South Africa

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Teachers are under pressure. Alarming global teacher attrition rates highlight the numerous stresses that teachers face at present, and new ideas and images of the future of education are emerging and being advocated for. The space that teachers hold between the past, present and future of education, combined with their daily responsibilities warrants a concern for their present, and future, well-being. Considering teacher well-being (TWB) from a futures perspective adds to the novel nature of this multi-disciplinary research and contributes to the fields of education and futures studies. Two research questions investigate teachers' perceptions of their own well-being and how future teacher well-being (TWB) could be fostered.

A questionnaire and a Futures Workshop (FW) were used to address the research questions. The recently proposed OECD conceptual framework for TWB, which focuses specifically on teachers' occupational well-being in their situated/school environment, guided the directed content analysis to determine how well teachers' perceptions on their own well-being aligns with the research to date.

Results indicated that teachers' perceptions on their own well-being are well-aligned with the research to date. The future fostering of TWB, however, is a complex matter. Due to various factors, teachers seem to struggle envisioning different, preferred futures. The status quo, a probable future, becomes the default projection for the future. The development of imagination is confirmed to be vitally important in thinking about the future.

TWB is highly context-sensitive, and varying results should be expected in different contexts. Whilst numerous frameworks and interventions assist in the fostering of TWB, the future fostering of TWB requires imagination, a skill that needs to be developed to assist in futures thinking. Despite contextual limitations on the results of the participatory workshop held in South Africa, the research findings do allow the results and impressions gathered to be interrogated on a global scale.

Key words: Teacher well-being, Participatory research, Futures triangle, Futures workshop, Future images, South Africa

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1 Introduction

1.1 A complex educational landscape

Teachers are faced with numerous challenges to fulfil the requirements of their profession. Conversations and workshops with teachers highlight the demands placed on them by their working environments, often through the interactions with role players within those environments. In the classrooms alone these demands abound, with new duties, frequently administrative in nature, handed down (Viac & Fraser 2020, 7). This often happens on the top of a backlog of work. Regulations change and need to be reacted to, at times with limited resources. Classrooms become larger and more diverse, and with it, disciplinary challenges. Inclusivity and individual tailoring of academic content are continuously demanded within these changing environments (UNESCO 2020). New educational visions appear and are advocated for, requiring changes in curriculum planning (UNESCO 2021; OECD 2020).

Outside the classroom, parents become more involved, and demanding. Teachers and schools are looked to for guidance on politicised topics (Woo et al. 2022) and, in this age of individualism and personal truths, are criticised for any stance they might take. As a result, the perceived lack of recognition, and the low value of the profession that teachers endure, is very prevalent (Viac & Fraser 2020, 8). They are required to do so many things and fulfil so many roles, that it either takes up a significant time to fulfil all those responsibilities, or they are criticized for falling short. Teachers feel the pressure, and many vote with their feet, with scores of teachers leaving the profession within the first five years of entering (Viac & Fraser 2020, 9).

Recognising the impact of these challenges on teachers, the focus on teacher well-being (TWB) is becoming more important and prominent in research.

1.2 Mapping the landscape

To address teacher well-being (TWB) in the future, the Futures Triangle is a useful and adaptable approach to help understand, and map, competing dimensions that would determine the amount of change possible. The three dimensions used are the weight of the past, the push of the present, and the pull of the future (Inayatullah 2023). The adaptability of the Futures Triangle allows its three dimensions to be used in different

ways, and for different purposes (Fergnani 2020). Accordingly, and for the purposes of this study, the pull of the future refers to the images and visions of future education whilst the weight of the past refers to the barriers to that vision. These barriers, for this study, are considered to be the forces in the past that resulted in the development of a precariously positioned global education system, one in which "education is fragile" (UNESCO 2021, v). The impact of these forces can be seen in the present but originated in the past. The push of the present then refers to supportive drivers of the future images and visions.

If the pull of the future, combined with the push of the present, is stronger or more pronounced than the weight of the past, significant change can take place, which will likely lead to overall adaptive, or even radical change. If, however, the weight of the past, along with the push of the present, is more pronounced, marginal or no change can be expected. Figure 1 visually represents these possibilities.
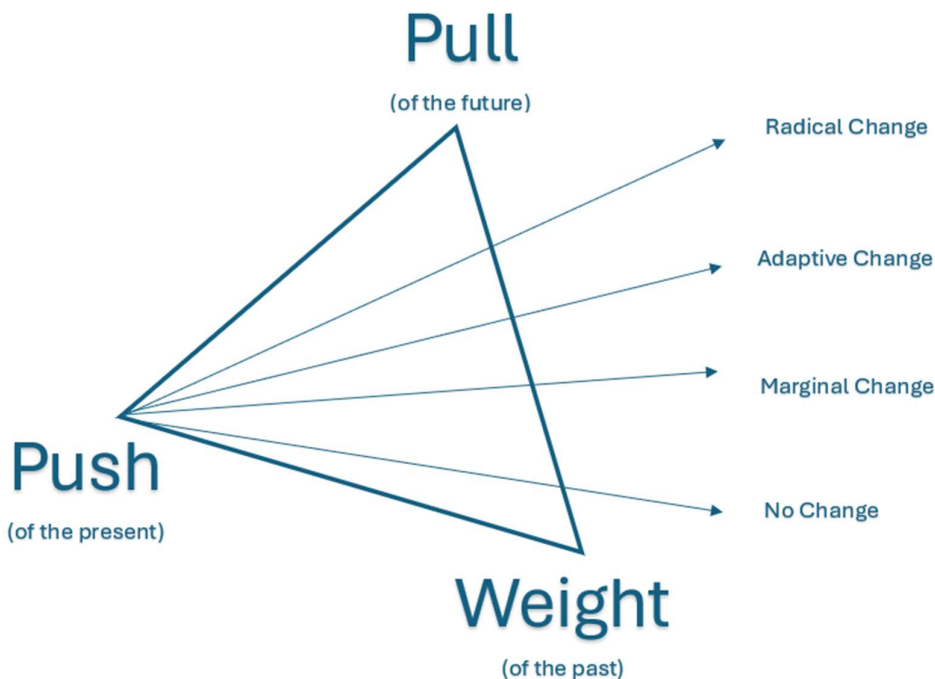
Figure 1. The Futures Triangle as adapted from Milojević (ref. Inayatullah 2003)

Whilst the weight of the past is very much embedded within the global education system, visions of different education futures are more prominently advocated for (see, for

example, UNESCO 2021; OECD 2020). The push of the present, namely the supportive drivers of those future images or visions, are essential towards its achievement. The push of the present can either realise the achievement of ideals or maintain the status quo. It can either assist towards the pull of the future or succumb to the weight of the past. The degree to which it is harnessed will likely determine the amount of change possible, ranging between no change (and maintaining the status quo) and radical change.

Humanity faces global challenges that might require new ways of thinking and doing, and subsequent education systems that could assist in building that capacity. Teachers are well-positioned to play a key role in the potential transformation of education systems. Whilst their future involvement beckons, teachers face their own challenges at present. Changes in the diversity of learners in their classrooms, increasing demands from society, and a low perceived value of the profession are only some of the challenges teachers need to work with, and endure (Viac & Fraser 2020). It takes a lot to be a teacher these days, as any family member of a teacher can attest to. The well-being of teachers is important, not just in the present, but also in the future.

Irrespective of the degree of change in the future, this paper proposes the fostering of teacher well-being (TWB), and the future fostering thereof, as an essential driver towards change, whether that change is marginal, adaptive, or radical. The fostering of teacher well-being (TWB) will be equally important in achieving a marginal, adaptive, or radically different future. Teacher well-being (TWB) is an important driver to foster, whichever future may hold.

1.3   Research questions and working hypothesis

For reasons discussed in the next chapter, teachers are rapidly leaving the teaching profession, and it is especially true for early-career teachers. The need for teachers, at present and in the future, cannot be understated. Teachers are not only essential to the development of the individual, but also integral in the development of community (Nebor 1984). In addition to the present role(s) of teachers, various images and visions of the future of education emphasise the value of teachers and advocates the importance of the profession (UNESCO 2021; OECD 2020). Despite the anticipated and depicted change evident in these images and visions, there is no certainty or guarantee that the global education system will evolve into something significantly different in the future. Whether it does, or not, teachers will very likely remain a key ingredient to education. Fostering

teacher well-being (TWB) might become essential in developing and holding on to quality teachers, whichever future may hold.

A significant amount of research has been conducted on TWB, which will also be delved into in the next chapter. As a result, numerous frameworks exist in academia that aims to define and model TWB. The bridge between academia and practice, however, is not always evident. This was highlighted when, as a teacher, the author of this thesis was subject to environments which had an impact on his TWB, but he never had a moment's thought to consult academia to acquaint himself with TWB. Neither had his colleagues, despite experiencing similar situations.

These reflected experiences prompted numerous questions, such as whether teachers are aware of any research on teacher well-being (TWB), which factors they perceive as influencing their well-being, how well these factors align with theoretical frameworks in academia, and whether TWB can be fostered both in the present and proactively for the future. These questions became the driving force for the subsequent investigation into TWB, the factors that contribute to it, and a consideration on how TWB could be fostered in the future. The desire and aim were to hear from teachers themselves and make use of research to help guide and help bridge the gap between academia and practice, and therefore a participatory approach was deemed appropriate and effective. A participatory approach is effective in enhancing both the social learning and the futures consciousness of those who participate (Nygrén 2019).

This participatory study, by way of a questionnaire and a Futures Workshop, aims to investigate and answer the following two research questions (RQ):

  RQ1: What are teachers' perceptions on what constitutes TWB?

  RQ2: How could future TWB be fostered in a South African context?

The working hypothesis of this research paper is that teacher well-being (TWB) is a multi-faceted concept, which numerous factors contribute to. These factors are inherently known to teachers, but they might not word it the same as in the theoretical frameworks for TWB. Assuming the layered nature of TWB, and all the factors involved therein, the expectation is that the fostering of TWB is already a complex process in the present. With the expectation of future global uncertainties, the fostering of TWB in the future will most likely be more complex, and an even greater challenge.

Due to the universal nature of education, and the similarity of challenges experienced by teachers internationally (see Chapter 2) the literature review for this thesis considers the global educational landscape, including the experiences of teachers therein. The subsequent Futures Workshop was held with the participation of South African teachers, who were mostly from the same educational institution, and the results are therefore limited to a South African perspective. The expectation is that it the results, despite limited to a South African perspective, would also reflect in the global landscape.

The South African perspective on TWB is very limited to date (Fourie & De Klerk 2024, 102), and this study aims to contribute to the field of TWB, especially within a South African context.

2   Literature Review

The global education system finds itself in a precarious position, and as a result, teachers are feeling the pressure. The pressure experienced by teachers is not only a consequence of present circumstances, brought on by past developments, but also a result of the allure and promise of the future images and visions of education. If these pressures continue without abate, or cannot be mitigated effectively, teachers and the teaching profession might be in trouble.

2.1   The pull of the future – new images and visions

Education is by its nature a future-focused industry and teaching a future-focused profession. Students are educated to step into their own respective futures, and equipped to provide for themselves, their loved ones, and make contributions to a future, collective society (Kraft & Lyon 2022, 2).

The future, however, and the skills required to negotiate it, remains unknown. Considering the current state of the world, with numerous challenges facing humanity, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, inequalities, as well as the unprecedented implementation and accessibility of Artificial Intelligence (AI), the future seems potentially volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous, as aptly denoted by the acronym VUCA. VUCA futures, potentially very different from the past and the present, would require different skills to navigate through (see, for example, Panthalookaran 2022).

2.1.1   Skills for the future

There are currently a multitude of approaches and frameworks present in education that explicitly focus on the development of future skills. Questions around the approaches and frameworks, and concerns about their validity and value, have also been posed. Many of the prominent approaches and frameworks result from extensive research into education by two international organisations – the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Some of the approaches and frameworks for the development of future skills include the following:

21st century skills

Already in 1993, UNESCO established a Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century and subsequent discussions around an "Education for the 21st century" resulted through the efforts of UNESCO (specifically the Delors Report) and the OECD (by way of the Millennium Learning Project) (Bell 2016, 54). These skills were identified as creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, learning, communication, collaboration, information and communication technology (ICT) and information literacy (Bell 2016, 54) and were promoted for the purpose of life-long learning, starting in the formal sector, and continuing well into adulthood.

Since its conception, the term '21st century skills' have been used in extensively various formats and different contexts (Chen 2023). There is evident disagreement on the clear definition of 21st century skills, as existing frameworks for these skills vary significantly from one another (Chen 2023, 275). As a result, a multitude of interpretations as to what exactly comprises 21st century skills exist. Four of these skills, categorised as learning skills, often referred to as the 4 C's of learning, do appear in many of the mentioned frameworks. These are the skills of creativity, critical thinking, collaboration and communication. Teaching these skills purposefully would require skill and effort from teachers, especially when curriculums do not explicitly allow the time and structure for it.

Many discussions around 21st century skills also made no mention of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), which was developed on back of the now famous Brundtland sustainability report of 1987 (Kopnina 2020, 281). The discourse around 21st century skills paid "insufficient attention to the sustainability challenges" (Bell 2016, 49) and resulted in "servicing, rather than transforming, the current global economy" (Bell 2016, 51).

Sustainable development vs. sustainability in education

Inspired by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) "to create a more sustainable world" (UNESCO 2023), Education for Sustainable Development Goals (ESDG) was developed by UNESCO as a guide for teaching sustainability. It was effectively an improvement on the initial ESD (Kopnina 2020, 281). Despite its promise, not everyone agrees on the effectiveness of ESDG. The sustainability promoted in ESDG

inherently encourages sustainable economic growth, not the sustainability of the planet. Sustainability, and teaching for sustainability, would require a decoupling from resource consumption, and therefore degrowth (Kopnina 2020, 288). The debate is still on-going around the distinction between sustainable development and sustainability in education. If sustainability in education is favoured above sustainable development, it would require the renewal of all subjects' curricula, and with it the skills of teachers.

Collaborative problem-solving

Assessments in the USA suggest that collaborative problem-solving is an essential skill to help solve difficult and complex problems, often highlighted by the social and environmental challenges humanity faces (Fiore, Graesser & Greiff 2018). It is an ideal skill to develop at present, for the future. Unfortunately, the teaching thereof is severely lacking in education (Fiore et al. 2018, 367). There is certainly no shortage of projects that students do together (collaborate on) but there is a "misperception of what they have learned about teamwork" (Fiore et al. 2018, 368). This is largely related to rarely receiving "meaningful instruction, modelling and feedback" on their collaboration efforts (Fiore et al. 2018, 368).

Recommendations for the teaching of true collaborative problem-solving include cooperation between teachers and researchers to study effective instruction, practice and feedback for collaborative projects, and the cultivation of collaborative skills that lead to successful team outcomes (Fiore et al. 2018, 369). The effective implementation of these recommendations require time above and beyond the time spent by teachers in classrooms, and potentially the acquisition of new skills.

Futures of Work

McKinsey & Company's well-established annual Futures of Work report (Whiting 2020) highlights the changing landscape of skills needed in the future, with an emphasised focus on four key categories of generic skills – problem-solving, self-management, working with people, and technology use and development. With the future challenges humanity faces, these categories of skills should probably be developed pro-actively, deliberately, and on a much larger scale. To do so effectively, teachers would need to become digital natives, or diginatives, who are comfortable with the everyday use of, and

experimentation with, technology. If they are not yet, it would take time and effort beyond what is already required of them.

2.1.2 Varying images and visions of the future of education

Not only are many of the approaches and frameworks mentioned above echoed in the extensive research done to date by UNESCO and the OECD, but both these organisations have over the years taken to task creating images and visions of the future of education. Both UNESCO and the OECD share a belief in the transformative potential of education, noting that education "must be transformed" (UNESCO 2021, 1) and "must evolve" (OECD 2020, 8). These organisations, however, have different views on the future of education (Duoblienė, Kaire & Vaitekaitis 2023, 213).

Respective images and visions of an education for the future are dependent on the perceived aim and purpose of the envisioned education. UNESCO holds a humanistic, utopian view of education, in which education functions within just and equal societies and for "peaceful, just, and sustainable futures" (UNESCO 2021, 1). The OECD, on the other hand, values economic competitiveness and growth, which is evident in the focus they place on measuring student learning outcomes (Sorensen, Ydesen & Robertson 2021, 101). UNESCO's view on the future of education is "at odds with today's utilitarian view of education" (Elfert 2015, 88), which the OECD supports.

Images and visions of a future education are essential, exciting, and adventurous. For that transformation to take place, the input of those central to the cause is needed, those who possess the required knowledge, skills, and the desire to bring forth that transformation. Teachers are needed, more so now than ever before, to play a unique and transformative role in "shaping the future of education" (UNESCO 2023b, 4). Society needs to "champion the role played by teachers" (UNESCO 2021, 2), and invite teachers to be integrally involved in reimagining education and their role in it (UNESCO 2021, 80). As with all the other changes mentioned before, it would require additional time and effort from teachers to play this role.

With promises of future education, a lot of uncertainty exists. There are many forces at play, often economic and political in nature, which will determine which image or vision of the future of education might become dominant, whether from UNESCO or the OECD, or any other influential organisation. Most likely, it will resemble something in-between.

Maintaining the present education system, and simultaneously being involved with shaping any of these futures of education, will require a lot from teachers. This tension will almost certainly impact their well-being.

2.2 The weight of the past – pressures on teachers and the profession

While a possible transformation in education is anticipated, we must also acknowledge that teachers are already under pressure. Evidence from recent studies, which included countries like Finland and the USA, revealed that work-related stress amongst teachers is high (Taajamo & Puhakka 2019; Herman, Prewett, Eddy, Savala & Reinke 2020). The teaching profession is generally, and globally, considered to be a "highly challenging profession" (Agyapong, Brett-MacLean, Burback, Agyapong & Wei 2023, 1), with frequent references alluding to its nature, such as a "high-risk profession" (Zhang, Chen, Li & Zhan 2023, 1), a "complex, intricate and challenging vocation" (UNESCO 80, 2021) and "one of the most stressful positions in the world" (Viac & Fraser 2020, 40).

As the author of this thesis has experienced personally, teachers are routinely required to fulfil numerous roles inside and outside of the classroom and can spend hours on activities beyond the scope of teaching. The demands from employers, parents and learners can often be overwhelming, and the responsibility of being the teacher, coach, administrator, supporter, disciplinarian, often all in one day, can very rapidly and easily become a burden and reach a personal tipping point of concern.

As a result, teachers experience psychosomatic disorders more frequently than individuals in other professions (Scheuch, Haufe & Seibt 2015). These observations are neither surprising nor novel, with research from the 1950s already alluding to the unique nature of the profession, and the stresses it may create: "[a]ll persons who are concerned with better teaching need to be concerned with the anxieties and irritations which thwart the best efforts of teachers" (Scates 1951, 303).

Whilst the unique pressure on teachers is certainly not a new phenomenon, it has gradually and consistently been building towards a tipping point of notable concern. In the United States alone, recent reports have indicated that teachers and principals experience stress at double the rate of the general population (Steiner et al. 2022). In Australia, results from an 18-month study highlighted that more than 50% of the almost 800 participants experienced stress so severe that they were considering leaving the

teaching profession (Carroll et al. 2022, 441). The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant effect on teachers, where nearly 25% of USA teachers indicated that they were likely to leave their jobs by the end of 2021, as compared to nearly 17% before (Steiner & Woo 2021, 2). In the UK, the statistics are comparably similar, with 21% of teachers considering leaving the profession by the end of the 2021 school year (Fullard 2021). In Australia, teacher attrition has "created an untenable situation for many schools, teachers and the profession" (Brandenburg, Larsen, Simpson, Sallis & Trần 2024).

The pressures that teachers experience today appear to be two-fold. There are the pressures of before, which still linger, and then there are the new and added pressures, which have not been seen before. Teaching pressures related to, for example, long hours and excessive workloads, are well-known (Easthope and Easthope 2000; Ingvarson, Kleinhenz, Beavis, Barwick, Carthy & Wilkinson 2005; Sugden 2010) and are still present in the teaching profession.

Then there are the newly developing pressures on teachers and the profession, which are varied, diverse and more complex (Fouché 2015, vi). These pressures range from increasingly diverse classroom environments and the new demands that society places on teachers, to the changing perception of the profession in society, and the significant disruption of the profession by AI-driven technology, as seen with large language models like ChatGPT.

It is worthwhile in the following section to briefly look at these mentioned demands and pressures, and the impact they have on teachers and the teaching profession.

2.2.1 Increasingly diverse classroom environments

Teachers are continuously expected to manage increasingly diverse classroom environments. This usually shows with students who have different levels of ability, come from various different socio-economic backgrounds, and contribute to a broader cultural diversity than what has been seen before (Viac & Fraser 2020, 7). Adding the driving force of individualism compounds the responsibility experienced by teachers even more. Teachers are not only required to deliver content, but they have to tailor that content (individualism) to an ever-expanding diversity of learners (inclusion), with the expectation that all learners will not just only cope but thrive (UNESCO 2020). In addition to developing students' academic abilities, teachers are also expected to facilitate

the development of students' social and emotional skills, and ethical behaviour, in accordance with the focus on holistic development of students (Viac & Fraser 2020, 7, 41). This requires, but is not limited to, creating and managing the process of unlearning of bias, prejudice, and divisiveness (UNESCO 2021, 4). The increasing diversity in classrooms, with its advantages, is part of the reality experienced by teachers.

Whilst class size in most European countries average approximately 13 learners, the class size in developing countries can often be double the size (OECD 2018). Extensive research over years suggests that smaller classes can be significantly more productive, especially where teaching is considered to be more than the mere passing on information to learners, and the teaching of 21st century skills come to mind (Blatchford 2021). Smaller class sizes also assist teacher with maintaining better discipline (Antoniou, Alghamdi & Kawai 2024). The effectiveness of teaching in smaller class sizes is, however, dependent on a different approach to teaching by the teacher in those environments (Blatchford 2021). It is often what the teacher does in those smaller class sizes that matters, not the class sizes themselves (Blatchford 2021).

Increased budgetary constraints leaves teachers with the responsibility to manage their diverse and burdening environments, with fewer avenues of help or assistance available (Viac & Fraser 2020, 7).

2.2.2 Disruption of the profession by technology

The disruption of the profession by technology, especially the development of machine learning technologies, risks the de-professionalization of teachers (UNESCO 2021, 88). Technology advances at an increasingly rapid rate, and EdTech, the use of technology to support teaching as well as the effective day-to-day management of teaching environments (Department for Education 2019), further demands teachers' attention. The COVID-19 pandemic has catapulted technology into the everyday realm of teachers, and many of these technological advances have become everyday use technology. The disruption by technology is not limited to Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered language models like ChatGPT. Augmented reality, virtual reality, multi-touch surfaces, and biometric signals are more areas of EdTech development that are expected to impact learning in the future (Qureshi 2022).

The nature of literacy is also expanding from reading and writing to the digital world, where learners are required to make sense of abundant and conflicting information and assess the reliability of sources (OECD 2020, 25). The changing nature of school environments tends to stifle autonomy and creativity, qualities desperately needed by teachers to investigate, interrogate, and incorporate technological developments. In the aftermath of the pandemic, policies have been continuously developed around the needed use of these technologies, which has necessitated the growing need for professional development to integrate these technologies into classrooms (Yurtseven Avci, O'Dwyer & Lawson 2020).

2.2.3 Increasingly challenging societal demands

In the classroom, the expectation on teachers is already high. But teaching is not limited to the professional space, it extends into the public space and social life (UNESCO 2021, 89). Outside the classroom, and outside of their working environment, society expects teachers to perform numerous social roles and functions, such as public servants, intellectuals and community leaders (UNESCO 2021, 81). These additional roles vary widely and include the expectations to help "shape the democratic ideals, social cohesion, and economic competitiveness" (Kraft & Lyon 2022, 2). Emerging politicized topics, like that of sexuality and violence, requires teachers to be involved, have an opinion, and give guidance to conversations within society, and help shape the discourse around it (Woo et al. 2022), acting as "moral agents of change in society" (Mullai 2017, 1). The role of the teacher has, over time, shifted from being the source of information in a classroom, to encompassing significantly more than that (Fouché 2015, vi).

Teachers are expected to be the role models and moral agents in society, both in and outside the classroom. The expectations that society places on schools and teachers just keep growing (OECD 2020, 22).

2.2.4 Perceived low value of the profession

Despite the expectation that society places on teachers, and the teaching profession, a present "perceived low value of the profession" exists (Viac & Fraser 2020, 8), which has already been noted decades ago (Kraft & Lyon 2022, 2). Acknowledging that the perceived value of the teaching profession is very context-dependent, with some countries like Singapore, South Korea and Finland showing a consistent high value of the

profession, global tendencies tend to show the opposite (Spruyt, Van Droogenbroeck, Van Den Borre, Emery, Keppens & Siongers 2021). Teachers tend to feel "under-recognised, underappreciated, underpaid, and inadequately supported" (UNESCO 2021, 87). In the USA, teacher prestige, referring to reputation and social standing of teaching in society (Kraft & Lyon 2022, 7), has been the lowest in the past five years (Kraft & Lyon 2022, 5).

Whilst certain professions and industries, like engineering, medicine, and law, are generally valued, appreciated, and well-rewarded by society, teaching remains an enigma. Despite the importance placed on the teaching profession, teachers themselves often experience it as less valued, appreciated, and rewarded than other professions. The general saying, 'those who can, do, and those who can't, teach' has often been heard, and endured, by teachers. Teachers can easily, simultaneously, feel like "heroes and villains, saints and scapegoats" (Kraft & Lyon 2022, 2). These perceived points of tension can create turbulence, where the perception of the profession can quickly alternate between opposite ends of the scale. This, for example, has been evident in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, where research recorded a sudden increased value of the profession by society, when parents were required to keep their children at home, and teach them, with or without assistance from their respective schools (Kraft & Lyon 2022, 3). The public acknowledgment of teachers' hard work and adaptability in some countries helped elevate the teaching profession (Thompson 2021 ref. UNESCO 2023b) but did not last (Nerlino 2023).

The "symbolic conditions of teaching", which includes the status of the profession, is as crucial to keep teachers in the profession than the material conditions (UNESCO 2023b, 17).

2.2.5 Increased bureaucracy

Along with the above-mentioned challenges, schools are becoming more bureaucratic. Bureaucracy within schools, or school systems, are often seen through actions like centralised decision-making, compliance to regulatory bodies, and policies that are introduced. Teachers are required to plan more and report more, and an increase in bureaucracy often places an increased administration load on teachers (Bakker, Hakanen, Demerouti & Xanthopoulou 2007; Collie, Shapka & Perry 2012; Hakanen, Bakker & Schaufeli 2006; Klassen & Chiu 2010, ref. Viac & Fraser 2020, 7). The increased

bureaucracy in schools, as described above, often leads to the stifling of creativity, and teachers losing the autonomy – the ability and the authority to pursue best practice – they have, and need, for their daily activities.

2.2.6 Change and the teaching profession

The theme of 'change' is very prevalent in the pressures mentioned – a *change* in diversity of classroom environments, a *change* in societal demands, a *change* in technology, and a *change* in the perception of the profession. This prevalence is confirmed by reports that emphasise the shift in focus from traditional learning to "learning for a world in change" (OECD 2020, 25). It is also aptly worded in the chapter heading of a recent publication, namely 'The changing nature of teachers' work and its impact on wellbeing' (McCallum 2020).

The significant impact of continuous and compounded change in education, especially how it affects the teaching profession, must be acknowledged. The COVID-19 pandemic, for example, played a significant role in both adding significant pressure and exacerbating prevalent pressures (Steiner & Woo 2021, 2; Silva, Cobucci, Lima & De Andradre 2021, 7; Fullard 2021). Students have struggled through the pandemic, with numerous studies highlighting the challenges, setbacks, as well as the interventions that was, and might still be needed, to mitigate the significant effects of the pandemic (see, for example, Reimers 2022; Hungerford-Kresser, Cummins & Amaro-Jiménez 2024). Teachers were there to help brave the storm. It evidently impacted them significantly and, as a result, the pandemic had an enduring negative impact on the supply of teachers (UNESCO 2023b, 4). At a time where "education is fragile" (UNESCO 2021, v), "the essence of what it means to be a teacher is changing" (Paju 2021).

The pressures on teachers, if not negated, can have detrimental effects. Relentless pressure can lead to stressed or burnt-out teachers, who are unable to work effectively (Albulescu & Tuşer 2018; Betoret 2009; Skaalvik & Skaalvik 2018 ref. Viac & Fraser 2020, 7). Stressful working environments affect teachers' motivation, self-efficacy and job commitment (Viac & Fraser 2020, 14), which in turn could lead to "frequent turnover, low performance, absenteeism and efficiency costs" (Albulescu & Tuşer 2018; Boe & Cook 2006; Borman & Dowling 2008; Ingersoll 2001; Ingersoll 2003; Ronfeldt, Loeb & Wyckoff 2013; Weiss 1999 ref. Viac & Fraser 2020, 7). Of the many reasons why teachers leave the teaching profession, it is generally acknowledged that working

conditions, and experiences in the school, play a crucial role (Day 2008). The education system as a whole is affected by the stress experienced by teachers (Viac & Fraser 2020, 14).

As a result of the pressures on teachers, the teaching profession is in a looming crisis. The teaching profession shows "growing teacher shortages, high attrition rates and difficulties in recruiting new candidates in some countries" (OECD 2014 ref. Viac & Fraser 2020, 8). Teacher attrition, the rate at which teachers leave the profession, is alarmingly high and a problem that is internationally acknowledged (Viac & Fraser 2020, 9). Negating for the exceptions, specifically countries like Singapore and Finland, whose attrition rates are 3-4%, it is of major concern that at least 30% of teachers globally leave the teaching profession withing the first five years of entering it (Viac & Fraser 2020, 9).

Not only do new teachers leave the profession at a high rate, but the number of teachers reaching the retirement age in the next decade is so significant that it will likely contribute to teacher shortages (OECD 2018). Developing countries, with a growing student population, are expected to feel the effect thereof significantly by 2030 (Viac & Fraser 2020, 10). The exodus of the early-career teachers is compounded by teachers over 50 who take early retirement (Viac & Fraser 2020, 9).

Unfortunately, the traditional way of responding to, and handling teacher shortages, is to either increase class sizes and/or the number of classes to teach, to lower the requirements to teach, or to assign teachers to subjects areas for which they have little experience or expertise. This short-term solution has two detrimental effects – it places even more pressure on teachers, and it minimises the value of the profession. (Viac & Fraser 2020, 12). Notwithstanding the added pressure on teachers, the second detrimental effect – the minimising the value of the profession – stands in stark contrast to research that concluded that "the most successful education systems were those where society values teachers the most" (Viac & Fraser 2020, 11).

What drives teachers to depart their schools and/or jobs in such hordes? In summary, it often boils down to an excessive workload, lack of support, lack of opportunities for growth and advancement, as well as dissatisfactions with testing and accountability pressures, as well as the teaching career (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond 2017). All of these factors, which for the most part points to the everyday working conditions

that teachers are expected to function in, has an impact on teachers' well-being, and contribute to teachers making their exodus from the profession.

2.3   The push of the present – the importance of teacher well-being

The role that quality teachers play cannot be underestimated. Considering the time students spend at school, and the time they interact with teachers, it is to be expected that teachers will play a significant role in students' lives. Not only are teachers crucial to the academic success of students, but they are also essential in the social and emotional development of students (OECD 2021). In fact, teachers "are the most important in-school factor contributing to student success, satisfaction and achievement" (McCallum, Price, Graham & Morrison 2017, 1). Students' academic success and well-being are certainly not mutually exclusive, they are part and parcel of the same package, and teachers are essential in developing that package.

In light of the expected shortage of new and novice teachers entering (and staying in) the profession, and the number of experienced teachers leaving the profession for various reasons, the standard reaction to the shortage – by placing more pressure on teachers and/or minimising the value of the profession – will unfortunately not suffice anymore. It will merely continue compounding the existing problem. Quality teachers should be motivated and encouraged to enter and stay in the profession. Neglecting to consider *quality* (emphasis by the author of the thesis) teachers to either enter or stay would also be an oversight that should not be tolerated, as it would impact on an important aspect of the teaching profession, namely the value that society places on the profession. Considering quality teachers will increase the value that society places on the profession, and neglecting to do so will decrease that societal value. It is more than only a numbers game; it is a game of numbers *and quality*.

Acknowledging then the importance of the teacher's role in a student's academic and social development, and the need to attract and keep quality teachers in the profession, the question arises: What would make quality teachers enter, and/or stay? Put simply, "high-quality teachers must be attracted and retained, and the extent to which this is achieved is highly dependent on their wellbeing" (White, McCallum & Seldon 2020, 17).

2.3.1 Teacher well-being (TWB)

Teacher well-being (TWB) is an "important, interesting and growing research field" (Hascher & Waber 2021, 20). Despite its sound development hampered by diverse and divergent approaches (Hascher & Waber 2021, 20), and a lingering question on the extent to which TWB protects teachers against stress and burnout (Hascher & Waber 2021), it has gained momentum over the past 15 years (Zhang et al. 2023). Whilst the (single) definition of teacher well-being is still interrogated within research, and will be discussed in the next section, teacher well-being can, for current purposes, be seen as a subset of well-being, for which various definitions in online dictionaries include the terms 'health', 'happiness', 'contentment', and 'quality of life'. (APA Dictionary of Psychology 2024; Cambridge Dictionary 2024, Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2024). These definitions will be sufficient, at first, to introduce the concept of TWB in this section.

Most individuals will be more likely to stay in their respective professions when they experience a general sense of well-being, namely the before-mentioned definitions of health, happiness, contentment, and a quality of life. Teachers are no different. Research has shown that TWB is important, if not crucial, to retain quality teachers and promote the profession to attain quality teachers. High levels of TWB constitutes a "stronger motivation at work and increased commitment to stay in the profession" (Viac & Fraser 2020). Where TWB has been promoted, it preserved quality education and helped to sustainably develop schools, and all relevant role players in the process (OECD 2019; Viac & Fraser 2020 ref. Zhang et al. 2023, 1). TWB remains important from both individual and societal perspectives (Hascher & Waber 2021, 2) and is "a crucial issue for schools and society" (Hascher & Waber 2021, 1).

Considering the expected shortage of future teachers in schools on a global scale, everything needs to be done to ensure that future generations would be drawn to the profession, and that the current generation of quality teachers stay. It appears that a significant factor could be the fostering of TWB.

2.3.2 Defining teacher well-being

Despite the imminent importance and value of teacher well-being (TWB), defining TWB has been, and continues to be, a challenge (McCallum et al. 2017). At this stage, it is not possible "to report a scientific consensus on the definition of well-being and TWB

specifically" (Hascher & Waber 2021, 17). The highly context-sensitive nature of TWB (Viac & Fraser 2020, 47) complicates defining and measuring TWB. Neither academia nor practice agrees on "a singular, comprehensive definition of teacher well-being" (Fox, Walter & Ball 2023, 4178). There is also no agreement on how to measure it (Fox et al. 2023, 4178).

Various reasons for this challenge exist, which include, but are not limited to, the following:

General well-being vs teacher well-being

There is a distinction to be made between general well-being and teacher well-being. Whilst the general concept of well-being informs teacher well-being, its concepts cannot be used to address a specific profession, like teaching, with accuracy. This has often been the case in early research on TWB, where the concepts and dimensions of general well-being have been used to define or measure TWB, and the subsequent results ascribed to TWB (Hascher & Waber 2021, 17). In many of these studies, "the specific challenges, demands, and tasks of the teaching profession" has been neglected (Hascher & Waber 2021, 7). Parallel to this, "minimal theoretical work related to TWB … explicitly considers the characteristics of the teaching profession" (Hascher & Waber 2021, 2). A clear(er) definition and/or the dimensions that constitute TWB need to be agreed on, and research needs to investigate these dimensions specifically for longitudinal research to be considered (Zhang et al. 2023, 12).

The multi-disciplined nature of teacher well-being

TWB is a truly multi-disciplined field of research. It comprises of no less than five different research fields, namely well-being psychology, positive psychology, psychology of work and organisation, teacher well-being and health research (Hascher & Waber 2021, 7). The mere fact that TWB is so well-informed, makes it a rich research field to explore, but along with the richness comes significant challenges. The problem in TWB research has less to do with the various disciplines interested in TWB, and more with the unsystematic use in those disciplines (Hascher & Waber 2021, 5).

Multi-dimensional nature of TWB

Not only is TWB complex and multi-disciplined in nature, but it also consists of multiple dimensions, made up of numerous positive as well as negative components (Hascher & Waber 2021, 17). These dimensions are often grouped and structured to form different proposed frameworks that have been developed to measure and, at times, define TWB. Some of these frameworks distinguish various dimensions of teachers' occupational well-being, whilst others identify groups of factors shaping teachers' well-being (Viac & Fraser 2020, 18). There are, of course, overlaps between frameworks, and although there might be differences in the components assessed, "[s]tudies agreed on TWB as a multi-component construct" (Hascher & Waber 2021, 5). The differentiation in components in past research complicates the effort to define and measure TWB consistently. Interestingly, and also probably not surprisingly, most research to date focused on the dimensions of teachers' well-being, rather than on defining it (McCallum 2017 ref. Viac & Fraser 2020, 18).

In the effort to define TWB, some studies on TWB acknowledges the complexity in deciding which dimensions to include and exclude. and considers that TWB might in fact be too complex to provide a single definition for (Hascher & Waber 2021, 17). There are advantages to both clarifying and defining TWB as a single definition, but that there are equally as many disadvantages (Hascher & Waber 2021, 17). One of the simplest definitions of TWB states that TWB is a "multidimensional construct that includes at least one positive component among a set of two or more dimensions" (Hascher & Waber 2021, 3). Another similar simple definition suggests that TWB is a "positive imbalance" (Hascher & Waber 2021, 17) where positive dimensions outweigh negative dimensions.

Researchers have been able to decide for themselves which, and how many dimensions, to include in their research, which have resulted in significant limitations. Studies focusing on only one (or selected) dimensions run the risk of only informing, but not representing, teacher well-being, as well-being is "more than the sole absence of negative emotional experiences, complaints or illness" (Hascher & Waber 2021, 4). Unfortunately, many studies to date show "a common pattern" (Hascher & Waber 2021, 17), namely "to investigate one or more subdimensions and to generalise the findings into overall TWB" (Hascher & Waber 2021, 17). The diversity of results this approach has provided, although valuable for the research within the various dimensions, has not assisted in a

common understanding of TWB (Hascher & Waber 2021, 9). It has, in fact, increased the ambiguity surrounding TWB (Hascher & Waber 2021, 3).

2.3.3 OECD conceptual framework

The need for a more definite framework has been addressed by the OECD, an intergovernmental association that provides data and analysis on economic, social, and environmental issues. The OECD has conducted in-depth research into well-being and, considering the specific challenges of a non-uniform teacher well-being (TWB) definition, as well as the various and diverse dimensions that have been identified and proposed by previous research, the OECD has provided a more comprehensive model on TWB (Viac & Fraser 2020, 8). An effort was made to "define the different components necessary for a comprehensive understanding of teachers' well-being" (Viac & Fraser 2020, 8) and build or provide a framework for that purpose. A visual overview can be seen in Figure 2.
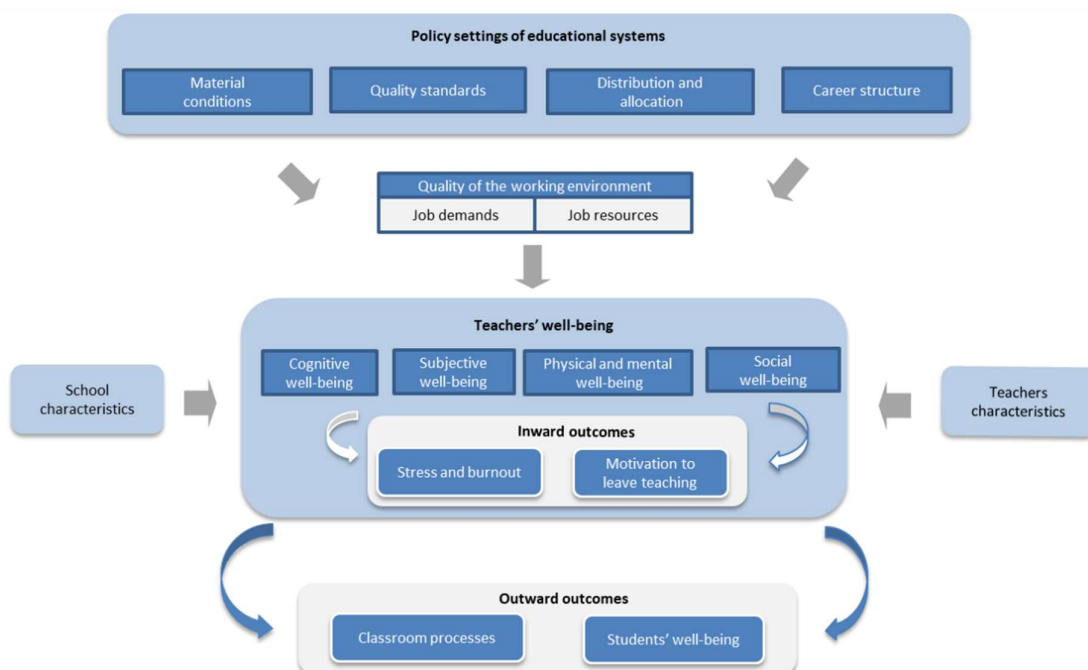
Figure 2. The OECD conceptual framework for teachers' occupational well-being (Viac & Fraser, 2020, 3)

A focal point, and important distinguishing factor, of the OECD effort was the focus on teachers' *occupational* well-being, not their personal well-being, and specifically how teachers' working conditions shape their well-being (Viac & Fraser 2020, 8). The

conceptual framework, in brief, proposes that teachers' working conditions are effectively shaped by two environments, namely the professional and situated environments, which can be broadly, and respectively, defined as the larger (professional) and immediate school (situated) environments. Different factors in both these environments influence teachers' working conditions. Whilst the OECD conceptual framework acknowledges and considers the factors in the professional environment, namely the factors on which targeted policy intervention can have an effect, its focus is almost exclusively on factors in the immediate school (situated) environment that influences and affects teachers' occupational well-being on a daily basis.

The factors in the situated environment typically define work-related well-being, and therefore makes a clear connection to the general concept of occupational well-being (Viac & Fraser 2020, 18). Borrowing from definitions of occupational well-being, teachers' occupational well-being, according to the OECD conceptual framework, refers to "teachers' responses to the cognitive, emotional, health and social conditions pertaining to their work and their profession" (Viac & Fraser 2020, 18) or, more simply, the meaning and satisfaction that individuals derive from their work (Doble & Santha, 2008).

Considering the various dimensions of general occupational well-being, the OECD conceptual framework frames and defines teachers' occupational well-being around four key dimensions (Viac & Fraser 2020, 23-26):

- *Cognitive well-being*: the skills and abilities to work effectively, as well as self-efficacy (a belief in the abilities to perform)

- *Subjective well-being*: teachers' life evaluation (reflective assessment on a person's life, or aspect thereof), affect (particular feelings or emotional states) and eudemonia (a sense of meaning and purpose in life, or good psychological functioning)

- *Physical and mental well-being*: good physical and mental health

- *Social well-being*: the quality and depth of the social interactions / relationships with various stakeholders, also considered social capital

These dimensions are related and not isolated from each other and can be considered as both outcomes and enabling conditions to the other respective dimensions (Viac & Fraser 2020, 23).

Working conditions in the teaching profession have an impact on these four dimensions, and the impact on these dimensions shape teachers' occupational well-being, both on the professional/system (national policies and institutional arrangements) and situated/school (school factors and school policies) levels (Viac & Fraser 2020, 19, 28):

On the *professional/system* level, the following have an impact, and shape TWB:

- material conditions,

- distribution and allocation of teachers and

- career structure.

On the *situated/school* level, the following shape TWB (Figure 3):

- job demands indicators, which refer to the "physical, psychological, social, or organisational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or psychological effort or skills" (Bakker & Demerouti 2007, 312). In short, it relates to the strain experienced in the work place. Job demands indicators are the physical learning environment, workload, multiple roles, classroom composition, disciplinary climate, performance evaluation (Viac & Fraser 2020, 34-36)

- job resources indicators, which refer to the "physical, psychological, social, or organisational aspects of the job that are either/or functional in achieving work goals, reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs, stimulate personal growth, learning and development" (Bakker & Demerouti 2007, 312). In short, it relates to developing motivation in the work place. Job resources indicators are work autonomy, training and professional opportunities, appraisal and feedback, and social support (Viac & Fraser 2020, 36-38)

Figure 3. Job demands and resources that shape teachers' occupational well-being on the situated/school level (Viac & Fraser 2020, 29)

All things considered, the effect that these factors have on the dimensions of TWB, ultimately influence the degree of teachers' occupational well-being, which exhibits several outcomes. For simplicity, the OECD conceptual framework categorises these outcomes in the following manner:

- inward outcomes, which relates to teachers' levels of stress, their work engagement, and their willingness to stay in the profession, and

- outward outcomes, which relates to the quality of learning environments created (Viac & Fraser 2020, 20), and have an effect on both classroom processes and on students' well-being (Viac & Fraser 2020, 39)

The OECD framework will be used in this study to focus on the situated/school level of TWB and help identify the factors that teachers believe influence their TWB.

3 Methodology

The individualisation of teacher well-being (TWB), on various levels, is strongly argued for by researchers. TWB research should connect "more closely to the specific demands of the teaching profession and teachers' individual needs, and tailoring TWB interventions [should be done] to individual- and school-related needs" (Hascher & Waber 2021, 18).

This research aims to do exactly that, by approaching individual teachers, who taught at the same school at the time of the study but had diverse prior backgrounds in teaching. It considers individual- and school-related needs explicitly and aims to develop practical approaches. This research is an explorative study into teacher well-being, the factors that influences teacher well-being, and considers how TWB can be fostered in the future. The research is comprised of a questionnaire and a Futures Workshop. The questionnaire was used as data for Research Question (RQ) 1 and the Futures Workshop was designed to investigate Research Question (RQ) 2.

The methodology for the questionnaire will be introduced first, thereafter the methodology for the Futures Workshop.

3.1 The Questionnaire

Questionnaires form part of a research method called surveys, which are administered to a group of people, with the purpose to gather data (Patra 2019), and are "one of the most widely used means of collecting data" (Rowley 2014, 308). Questionnaires are effectively documents consisting of a series of questions, which is sent, or given to respondents, as a hardcopy or electronic copy, to gather data from the answers given to the questions (Rowley 2014). They typically consist of open and closed questions, structured and arranged in a specific order, to gather the most accurate data possible. Questionnaires can be useful as a quantitative method, when used solely with closed questions, or a qualitative method, when used with predominately open-ended questions. When used with a combination of closed and open-ended questions, it is effective as a mixed method. Although questionnaires are often used in quantitative research (Rowley 2014, 309), it is effectively a tool to be used in both quantitative and qualitative studies.

The simple premise, that questionnaires are basically questions asked to which recipients respond to, can lead to questionnaires being easily brushed off as a quick and easy-to-assemble method, which is far from the truth (Rowley 2014). The challenge with questionnaires is to put in the necessary effort in the design and distribution of the questionnaires, so that the data will be reliable and valid and that inferences can be made with more rather than less certainty and confidence. Guidelines for designing reliable and effective questionnaires are numerous and include, among other things, the use of language, the consideration of different types of questions and their order within the questionnaire, and the types of responses from which respondents can select their answers. Feedback in the form of a pilot questionnaire is strongly advised before distributing any given questionnaire (Rowley 2014).

The questionnaire used in Phase 1 of the Futures Workshop was designed for a qualitative research study and consisted of five open-ended questions, as well as two questions that required participants to use a slider and choose a numerical value along a 7-point scale. The questions asked, in order, were the following:

1. What, in your mind, is included in Teacher Well-being? Write freely.

2. Which factors, in your opinion and experience, in your immediate (school) and broader (society, government, etc.) environment, influence Teacher Well-being? Try to list as many as 10 (or more) factors. Then order and number them according to how you view their importance.

3. Whose responsibility is Teacher Well-being?

4. How much agency (control, directive, etc.) do you believe you have over your own Teacher Well-being? Consider the sliding scale and move the red circle to the appropriate number.

5. Have you ever considered leaving the teaching profession, even if briefly or temporarily? What were the reasons (if you feel at liberty to mention)? Was it perhaps within the first 5 years of your teaching career, or thereafter?

6. Anything else you would like to mention about Teacher Well-being?

7. And finally, how important do you believe the fostering of Teacher Well-being to be? Please indicate on the slider below.

Through a few iterations of the questionnaire, questions were carefully constructed to consider the participants, who are teachers. The first question in the questionnaire was used to stimulate participants' thinking around teacher well-being in the Futures Workshop, without placing too much emphasis on supplying, in their opinion, worthwhile answers. The second question was used to investigate RQ1.

Due to the nature of the teaching profession, which often relies on supplying information to students, and then assessing them on that information, teachers are very aware of right/wrong questions, and could easily fall into the trap of not wanting to be 'wrong' when answering the questions. With this in mind, and to limit the respondents' desire to give the 'right' answer, questions that implied that there is a so-called 'right' answer, were either avoided or reworded to become more open-ended. Asking for the participants perspective, or opinion, became the question-narrative for the questionnaire.

Time did, unfortunately, not allow the feedback from a pilot questionnaire, but the reiterations of the questionnaire was deemed effective and sufficient for the purpose of investigating RQ1. Participants were encouraged to write what came to mind, and not to try and answer any question, or prompt, with an answer that they think the author of this thesis would be looking for. Participants were asked to bring their electronic devices to the workshops, and the questionnaire was distributed electronically to their email inboxes, at the workshop, then collected again at the end of the workshop by return email. Participants were asked not to write their names on their respective questionnaires, and questionnaires were saved electronically before they were opened for the purpose of research. This was done to ensure responses remained anonymous but that answers could be clarified, if need be, by contacting the individuals at a later stage.

3.2   The Futures Workshop

The Futures Workshop (FW), a well-established futures method created by Robert Jungk, is a participatory futures method belonging to the category of research approaches that, firstly, criticise a given current situation, thereafter, imagines an alternative to the current situation, and lastly find ways to practically move from the current to the imagined situation. The current situation is often referred to as the status quo, and when the status quo is projected into the future, only slight deviations and changes in detail occur. In Futures Studies, this is then referred to as the probable future. A different type of future also exists, which looks significantly different to the probable future. It is tailored to a

collective group's ideals and allows imagination to help construct such a future. In Futures Studies, this is often referred to as the preferred future. (Vidal 2005, 2). In a FW, the current situation is criticised to identify factors that would allow it to develop into a probable future, and these factors are then considered and negated (turned upside-down) to help create an imagined situation. Creating and identifying practical interventions from the current situation to the imagined situation creates a pathway, or roadmap, to the preferred future.

Phase 1 - Preparation
Phase 2 - Critique
Central part of workshop
Phase 3 - Fantasy
Phase 4 - Implementation
Phase 5 - Follow-up
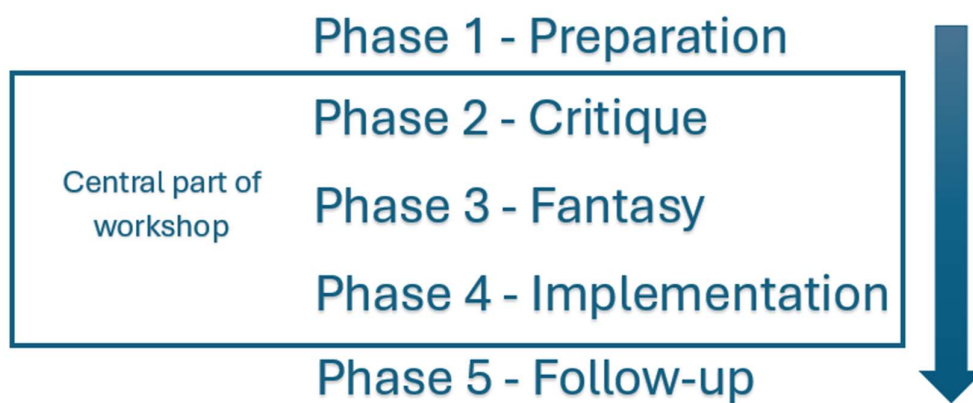
Figure 4. The phases of a Futures Workshop (FW)

A Futures Workshop (FW) emphasises "critique, learning, teamwork, democracy, and empowerment" (Vidal 2005, 2), which also, coincidentally, adequately describes some key characteristics of the teaching profession – the topic of research for this study. A Futures Workshop (FW) "seeks to support group creativity and to create group synergy for individuals that are in the same oppressed situation" (Vidal 2005, 2), which also, coincidentally, describes the notion of teacher well-being (TWB) accurately (and specifically, the lack thereof, which could lead to perceived feelings of oppression). The FW has "developed in the practical world and not in academia" (Vidal 2005, 3) and was, therefore, deemed as a suited method for research into TWB, which aims to have outcomes that could be used by schools in an effort to foster future TWB.

3.2.1 Preparation for participation

The preparation phase constitutes the general "organisation, planning, and management of the workshop" (Vidal 2005, 5). This happens before the actual workshop takes place. Part of the preparation phase, however, also constitutes the first part of the workshop itself, where participants are introduced to the workshop theme, the purpose of the workshop, and guided to settle into the task(s) at hand, often with the assistance of a warm-up exercise (Vidal 2005, 6). A distinction will be made between the two parts of Phase 1 and will be addressed separately.

Preparation started with a consideration of the potential participants for the workshop, and who should be invited (Vidal 2005, 5). After careful consideration (and reconsideration), invitations were sent to the prospective participants, who were teachers the researcher have come to know in a professional capacity. Despite falling roughly into the same age bracket (late twenties to mid-thirties – a deliberate decision made by the researcher to include teachers who might have considered leaving teaching in their first five years), the participants were carefully selected to support the ideal of a diverse group with diverse experience, thereby supporting and encouraging a variety of opinions and, ideally, a richer experience for the participants, as well as richer results for the researcher to draw from.

Ten teachers were contacted, who responded positively to the invitation. Unfortunately, due to school commitments that had to be honoured before the start of the academic term, two participants withdrew their participation. The workshop would continue with eight participants.

The group remained a very diverse group, accounting for cultural, religious, and gender variety, which is a truer reflection of society in general. The group also exhibited diversity in their professional capacity, by way of their extra-curricular involvement at their school, as well as subjects they taught. Interestingly, most participants were female teachers, which allowed the unique opportunity for their voices to be heard, especially in a group format, where the male voice, and perspective, can often dominate.

The workshop was arranged to take place on a Saturday in January 2024, the weekend before the schools started for the first academic term. Generally, it is notoriously difficult to get a group of teachers together at the same time, for a purpose that falls outside of

their professional requirements. This is often due to their workload and the many roles they fulfil, which rarely keeps regular office hours.

At the time of the workshop, six of the participants taught at the same private school, one at a different private school, and one participant recently taught at a well-established public-school. All these schools are respected, financially strong schools, and situated in Cape Town, South Africa. Careful consideration was made to ensure that the participants had taught at a previous school, ideally a public school, to also allow universal and shared, yet clearly different, experiences to be carried into the workshop by the participants.

The workshop was held at a café (coffee house) in one of Cape Town's suburbs, as there was no access to an academic or corporate venue, at least not within the researcher's financial budget. The café had co-working spaces, of which one included a conference room, and they were happy to be host to the workshop. The specific café was also chosen due to its location, which was a central meeting point for the participants to travel to, especially considering that they were sacrificing their free time over a weekend, prior to the start of a busy first term that lay ahead of them.

On the day of the workshop, participants were first given time to catch up socially, as they have not seen each other for a few weeks, and new introductions to some of the participants needed to be made. Once the participants had a cup of coffee, they settled into the conference room, were welcomed, and the official workshop introduction was given. The introduction consisted of an overview of the workshop, an explanation of its different phases, as well as what participants could expect of the workshop. Consent forms were handed out, signed, and returned (see Appendix 1). Preparing the participants for the workshop ahead then started in earnest. First a warm-up exercise and thereafter a questionnaire were used for this purpose.

The warm-up exercise required the participants to close their eyes and take a few deep breaths to settle themselves in and become present in the moment. With their eyes closed, two questions were asked out loud. This was done to assist the participants in thinking about teacher well-being (TWB), as they were purposefully not given any information about TWB prior to the start of the workshop. The two questions were constructed to allow the memories of their previous teaching experiences to surface – an effort by the facilitator to allow for a broader, more holistic perspective, and for the participants not to get stuck and fixated only on their present teaching reality during the workshop. The aim

was for the participants to continuously consider both their private, as well as their previous public teaching environments, to create richer contexts, and a richer workshop. The two questions asked, as prompts, were the following:

1. Think of an instance in your previous working experience that enhanced your TWB. Dwell on it for a few moments.

2. Think of an instance in your current working experience that challenged or inhibited your TWB. Dwell on it for a few moments.

Following the warm-up exercise, which aimed to elicit emotional responses without the need to cognitively 'figure out' what was meant exactly with TWB, the participants were each handed an (electronic) questionnaire to complete. The aim of this questionnaire was two-fold: firstly, to move away from the emotional responses elicited in the warm-up exercise, and activate the participants' cognitive thinking around TWB, assisting them to delve into the topic, without being given a lecture on it. Secondly, questions were designed to help answer RQ1, namely 'What are teachers' perceptions on what constitutes TWB?'. The methodology of the questionnaire is discussed at the start of this chapter. Phase 1 was concluded by a very short introduction on why the topic of TWB is relevant and has been gaining significant research to date, a quick overview on the working conditions of TWB, as well as the various dimensions of TWB, as incorporated by the OECD conceptual framework (see Chapter 2).

Participants were randomly allocated to one of two groups according to their birth months. Group 1 consisted of participants born in the months of January through to July, and Group 2 consisted of participants born in the months of August through to December. The diversity the researcher was hoping for was still maintained by the random allocation to groups. Participants would work in their respective groups for the remainder of the workshop.

3.2.2 Criticism of the system

The Critique phase "exposes, reveals, and unmasks the actual situation" (Vidal 2005, 3) as it is designed to "draw out specific issues and problems" of the topic (Vidal 2005, 6). First, a divergent process in the form of brainstorming was carried out, followed by a convergent process by way of mind mapping the experienced problems. These processes

together aim at imagination to flourish and creating order for the effective flow of the generated ideas through to the next phase, and throughout the workshop.

Participants were asked to imagine how future TWB could be fostered in a South African context. To make the process simpler and more tangible, they were asked to consider how TWB is fostered or neglected in their respective schools. They were encouraged to think divergently and broadly, to brainstorm on quick impulses, and not to be concerned with reaching any consensus. Participants were handed sticky notes to record their ideas and place it on a large, white sheet of paper in front of them, without the need to cluster any points together at this point. After enough time was given, which was determined by the author of this thesis when conversations started to flow away from the topic of the workshop, participants were asked to group and cluster thoughts that carried the same idea. These clusters then had to be named as problem statements, not kept as clusters. (Victor & Vidal 2005, 6).

It was already evident that time would run out and that there would not be sufficient time for all problem statements to be addressed. Although disappointing from a research perspective, it is generally accepted that there will never be enough time during a FW, and problem statements should always be prioritised, as is in line with Futures Workshop expectations (Vidal 2005, 7).

To limit wasting time during the next phase, participants were asked to vote in their groups on the order in which they would like to address the problem statements. This would allow them to work systematically through the problem statements, as time would allow. A coffee break followed.

3.2.3 Imagining preferred futures

The Fantasy phase was introduced with an exercise to stimulate the participants' imagination. Critical skills, as was required and made use of by the previous phase, "go hand in hand with creative ones" (Crane 1983 ref. Baker, Rudd & Pomeroy 2001) and can often be seen as different sides of the same coin (Beyer 1989 ref. Baker, Rudd & Pomeroy 2001). Whereas critique depends on the left part of the brain, the analytical part, and has already been activated throughout the previous phase, imagination requires letting go of what is present and visible and requires thinking beyond the present. To shift from the left to the right part of the brain, to be creative and imaginative, participants were

asked to imagine designing a product that would enhance the quality and enjoyment of something they were already doing, such as a hobby (see Appendix 2). Alternatively, it could be a product that would help eliminate something they did not enjoy at home, like cleaning or cooking. Participants were given five minutes to brainstorm, then design and draw this product, that could theoretically be patented for development. At first, participants were very wary to draw their designs, but with sufficient encouragement, they made good progress. The decision to focus on something that was beyond the topic of the workshop was done to help the participants in letting go of, and not get stuck in, the criticism that was delved into during the previous phase.

The Fantasy phase is essential to allow participants to be free and creative. It also consists of a divergent and convergent creative process. Participants are required and encouraged to attempt creating "a utopia, to draw an exaggerated picture of future possibilities" (Vidal 2005, 7).

The Fantasy phase can be approached in numerous creative and imaginative ways. One way, especially if the participants are hesitant to start or feel at a loss, is to consider the opposite images of the critique points, also known as "negation of the negation" (Vidal 2005, 7). The aim is to take the problem statements of the previous phase, negate them and turn them into goal statements. The ideal is to consider the central theme in each category or cluster of problems, then imagine and idealise what that would look like in the year stipulated, the year 2033. Participants in both groups tended towards this approach, by following the problem statement order agreed on in the previous phase.

3.2.4 Making ideas a reality

The Implementation phase is integrally tied to the Fantasy phase and demands the practical implementation of the ideas from the previous phase. Ideas are to be considered in terms of their probability of implementation, and modified, if need be, to make them more feasible for implementation. (Vidal 2005, 8). An implementation strategy then follows, with an Action Plan that considers "who does what, where, when and how" (Vidal 2005, 8).

The respective groups considered their ideas based on the probability implementation. The chosen ideas, ideally worded as goal statements, were placed on the provided sheets, in the year 2033. The worksheet prepared by the facilitator considered the situated

environment, also referred to as the school level more than the professional environment, also referred to as the system level. This was done in accordance with the emphasis that the OECD conceptual framework also places on the situated environment, more so than the professional environment. It was also considered that teachers would have a firmer grasp in understanding of what needs to happen on the ground level, in their own respective environments, at least more so than on the systems level. For this reason, the professional environment was visually shown on the worksheet as a lesser priority for the workshop than the situated environment.

Groups were required to do a back casting exercise, working backwards in time, from the goal statement in 2033 as the preferred future, to the current situation in 2024, conjuring a timeline of what needs to happen / occur for that goal statement to be realised. It was also of importance to allocate responsibility to the tasks identified on the timeline towards 2033.

3.2.5 Follow-up

The Follow-up phase, the last phase of the workshop, requires the "agreement of a report that collects all the achieved results and presents the action plan" (Vidal 2005, 9). Considering that the workshop informs this master's thesis, the report would be the thesis itself, which have been sent to the participants after publication. The workshop was not conducted for a specific organisation, and it was more explorative in nature, which the participants understood. A questionnaire, for the purposes of evaluation of the workshop was created and distributed to the participants at the end of the workshop. Time was given to the participants to complete and submit the questionnaire before they left the workshop.

4 Analysis of results

4.1 What are teachers' perceptions on what constitutes TWB?

The questionnaires distributed to the participants during the preparation phase of the workshop were purposefully used to activate the participants' thinking around occupational teacher well-being (TWB) and to collect information around their understanding of the factors that contribute to, or influences, TWB. The first two questions of the questionnaire (see Chapter 3) were instrumental to both the participants and the researcher, allowing the participants to deliberately start thinking about the factors that constitute TWB, and how important they are to TWB, and giving the researcher the freedom to determine how broad or narrow the participants' personal ideas or definitions of, and perspectives on, TWB is.

4.1.1 Thematisation according to the OECD conceptual framework

In this qualitative study, a directed (theory-driven) deductive content analysis approach was used to analyse the results of the questionnaire. Directed content analysis is useful when existing theory or research about a phenomenon is incomplete or could be described more (Hsieh and Shannon 2005). This is the case with TWB, with comprehensive literature reviews highlighting the fragmented and incomplete knowledge base of TWB (Hascher & Waber 2021; Zhang et al. 2023).

The open-ended answers to the questionnaire questions were collected and categorised according to the OECD's conceptual framework (see Chapter 2). The framework is very comprehensive, as it considers a significant amount of literature and research and is still a work-in-progress. It was necessary to expect the participants' answers to be distributed broadly across the framework, and numerous categories and subcategories would likely be needed for a thorough thematisation. It was equally important to expect that some answers to the questions, or parts thereof, might be difficult to thematise according to the framework.

Lastly, and again due to the comprehensive nature of the framework, a risk existed that participants might refer to elements of personal well-being, such as self-efficacy, and not occupational well-being around which most of the framework is constructed. Whilst personal well-being is undoubtedly an equally important aspect of well-being for

teachers, teacher well-being according to the OECD conceptual framework focuses explicitly on occupational well-being. The reference to 'TWB' in this thesis, unless otherwise stated, refers to teacher occupational well-being. To limit confusion, teachers' personal well-being is explicitly mentioned.

4.1.2   Prioritising the situated/school environment

Considering the OECD conceptual framework, it was deemed important to distinguish between the two predominant types of environments that influence TWB, namely 'the policy settings of the educational systems', and 'the quality of the working environment' (Viac & Fraser 2020, 29). These two types of environments resemble, respectively, the professional or system level as well as the situated or school level of the teaching profession. Interactions in, and between, these environments take place to shape the working conditions experienced by teachers, which in turn influence TWB. For the purpose of data analysis, the professional/system level environment and the situated/school level environments were identified as the two main overarching categories, and, subsequently, the factors within these overarching categories, discussed below, were used to create subcategories to which the data would be identified and allocated.

Within the professional/system level, subcategories included four factors that shape the working conditions of teachers, namely material conditions, quality standards, distribution and allocation, and career structure. The jobs demands and resources model (Bakker & Demerouti 2007), or JD-R model, has been incorporated in the framework, and the situated/school working environment was subcategorised by the indicators of Job Demands and Job Resources. These indicators refer, respectively, to the demands that employees in an organisation are exposed to, as well as the resources they have at their disposal to deal with the demands (Bakker & Demerouti 2007).

Job demands are categorised as the physical learning environment, workload, multiple roles, classroom composition, disciplinary climate, and performance evaluation. Job resources are categorised as work autonomy, training and professional opportunities, appraisal and feedback, and social support (Viac & Fraser 2020, 29). These job demands and resources served as the main subcategories for thematization, and additional subcategories were created, where needed, and allocated during the thematisation of the questionnaire. The JD-R model was useful in the pursuit of allocating factors that

influences the situated/school environments, as it "allows for an analysis of the characteristics of a school system that are associated with teachers' occupational well-being" (Viac & Fraser 2020, 33).

Although the core components that make up TWB (cognitive, subjective, physical and mental, as well as social well-being) are important in their own right, this study does not focus on these core components, neither the distinction made between them. It focuses on the factors that influence these core dimensions, and consequently overall TWB. However, to ensure that important data is not neglected, overseen, and remain uncategorised, a category was created for the core components, and answers or parts of answers, were allocated to this category, where applicable. This was mostly done to consider questionnaire answers that mentioned or alluded to any of the core components of TWB but did not explicitly mention one or more factors that influence them.

Once all the categories, and subcategories, were created, a free online platform for qualitative research (Taguette 2024) was used to highlight and thematise all statements mentioned.

4.1.3 Careful consideration of repeated and detailed factors

Qualitative data, in an explorative and/or deductive research study, can often be hard to work with. Different approaches and criteria can be used to thematise the data, which could lead to alternative conclusions. To account for different approaches, the data retrieved from the questionnaires were thematised and analysed twice, each time with slightly different criteria. This decision was made because of the comprehensive nature of the OECD conceptual framework, which allows broad interpretations of data, and to determine whether the analysis of data through different criteria would produce different results.

The first effort of thematisation did not distinctly consider distinguishing between statements that were related but could have been interpreted as repetitions or elaborations. For instance, the statements "to be able to freely share your thoughts and ideas" and "to know that you matter and that you are valued" are both indicative of the Job Resource of Social Support. They can be thematised separately, if one views them as two distinct aspects, or consider them as a joint statement, with one supporting the other, e.g. "to be able to freely share your thoughts and ideas" could be the result of "to know that you

matter and that you are valued". The first effort thematised these statements separately, and statements that explicitly mentioned a general category (e.g. "Social Support") were also thematised. Statements that did not thematise easily were labelled 'uncategorised'.

The second effort of thematization was approached more meticulously. Statements that distinguished themselves as different detail to the same factor, e.g. 'unnecessary meetings' and 'the number of classes to teach', which represents the same factor, namely 'Work Load', were still treated and categorised separately. The mention of a general category, e.g. 'Work Load', was not considered if one of its detailed factors were already mentioned. Factors that were clearly repeated were not considered and were categorised as repetitions. This time around, statements that were difficult to thematise were not left as 'uncategorised' but were revisited and allocated to categories by using the questions used in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) questionnaire as a guideline, which are published in the addendum(s) of numerous OECD PISA reports (Viac & Fraser 2020, 23).

Despite a more rigorous approach to thematization in the second effort, a few uncertain statements remained, which is to be expected when following the directed content analysis approach (Hsieh and Shannon 2005). One factor that remained elusive to categorisation was the "(public) perception of teaching/teachers/the teaching profession". It was kept separate, as a kind of enigma, which did not fit the OECD conceptual framework easily. Interestingly, Group 1 chose this topic in pursuit of their preferred future in the workshop.

The results of the first effort in categorisation of the participants' questionnaires can be seen in Table 1, and the second effort of categorisation can be seen in Table 2. The factors have been ordered according to frequency mentioned, and the most frequently mentioned Job Demand and Job Resource have been highlighted.

Table 1. Factors contributing to TWB (Round 1)

Factor	Example phrases	Highlights
Job Resource – Social Support	*"to know that you matter and that you are valued"*	33
Job Demand – Work Load	*"the amount of work that we do complete"*	23
Job Demand – Uncategorised	*"increasing class sizes"*	14
Job Resource – Uncategorised	*"understanding that people are committed and are passionate about their roles as teachers"*	12
Professional/System Level – Uncategorised	*"public perception"*	10
Job Resource – Training and Professional Opportunities	*"access a teacher has to professional development in their field"*	9
Job Resource – Work Autonomy	*"space to create and start new initiatives"*	8
Job Demand – Physical Learning Environments	*"teaching environment (classroom, space, or lack thereof)"*	6
Job Demand – Classroom Composition	*"the type of student you teach"*	4
Professional/System Level – Material Conditions	*"salary"*	4
Job Demand – Multiple Roles	*"extra murals that play to their strengths and creativity"*	3
Job Demand – Disciplinary Climate	*"dissipating discipline"*	3
Professional/System Level – Quality Standards	*"admin forced on a school by the government"*	3
Professional/System Level – Career Structure	*"promotion opportunities"*	2
Professional/System Level – Distribution and Allocation	*"geographical location"*	1
Personal Well-being	*"teacher nutrition and physical health"*	1
Job Demand – Performance Evaluation	Not mentioned by participants	0
Job Resource – Feedback and Appraisal	Not mentioned by participants	0

Table 2. Factors contributing to TWB (Round 2)

Factor	Example phrases	Highlights
* Factors – Doubled Up *	Already identified in the Questionnaire	40
Job Resource – Social Support	*"respect and seeing people's value no matter what their background"*	16
Job Demand – Work Load	*"constant feeling of pressure to perform"*	10
Job Resource – Work Autonomy	*"confidently work in your professional environment with the knowledge that you are trusted and*	7
Job Demand – Physical Learning Environment	*"teaching environment (classroom, space, or lack thereof)"*	6
Job Demand – Disciplinary Climate	*"handle poor behavior"*	6
Inward Outcomes	*"people are committed and are passionate about their roles as teachers"*	6
Factors - Uncertain	*"protection"*	5
TWB Core Dimension	*"mental health is included in TWB"*	4
Uncategorised – Public Perception of/Respect for	*"attitudes around teachers (from society and the learners"*	4
Professional/System Level – Material Conditions	*"remuneration"*	3
Job Demand – Multiple Roles	*"extra mural commitments"*	3
Job Resource – Training and Professional Opportunities	*"personal and professional development"*	3
Personal Well-being	*"personal well-being outside of school"*	3
Professional/System Level – Quality Standards	*"level of education"*	2
School Characteristics	*"the school's ethos / vision (with regards to academics as well as the general culture and*	2
Professional/System Level – Career Structure	*"promotion opportunities"*	1
Job Demand – Classroom Composition	*"the type of student you teach"*	1
Professional/System Level – Distribution & Allocation	Not mentioned by participants	0
Job Demand – Performance Evaluation	Not mentioned by participants	0
Job Resource – Feedback and Appraisal	Not mentioned by participants	0

4.1.4 The comprehensive nature of TWB

Due to the nature of the open-ended questions, a possibility existed that responses could be equally scattered across all components of the conceptual framework, which would have made analysis more difficult. Responses were scattered but did concentrate on some components more than others. Similarly, if most of the participant responses alluded to, and were categorised as the different dimensions of teacher well-being (cognitive, subjective, physical and mental, and social well-being), the outcome would have emphasised the weight of each of these dimensions in overall teacher well-being, instead of considering the factors that influence teacher well-being (TWB). Due to the careful wording and emphasis placed on identifying factors that influence TWB in the questionnaire, only a few answers were categorised as defining TWB. The majority of answers highlighted factors that influences TWB.

The analysis of the questionnaire data confirmed again the comprehensive nature of the OECD conceptual framework.

4.1.5 The context-sensitive nature of TWB

Analysis of the questionnaire data also showed that most of the responses fitted into the situated/school level, rather than the professional/system level of the working environment. Whilst the OECD conceptual framework acknowledges the influence that the professional/system level has on TWB, the focus of the OECD framework is on the situated/school level. Factors on the situated/school level is more likely to be recognised by teachers as affecting their TWB and are factors that could be addressed more easily by teachers, and their respective schools.

Factors that influence TWB on a situated/school level environment are also very context-sensitive. Dominant factors in one context can be significantly different in another context. These contexts can vary between schools, regions, countries, or even continents. (Viac & Fraser 2020, 47). From the categorisation of results of the questionnaire, not once but twice, it is seemingly evident that, for *this* particular group of participants (emphasis by the researcher of this thesis), TWB is intricately and predominantly tied to, and affected, by the Job Resource indicator of Social Support, as well as the Job Demand indicator of Work Load.

4.1.6 Work Load and Social Support as key factors

The Job Demand indicator of Work Load considers, for the most part, the academic tasks beyond teaching, like lesson preparation, marking, and meetings (Viac & Fraser 2020, 34), which, like the other job demands, develops job strain (Bakker & Demerouti 2007, 313). The Job Resource indicator of Social Support, again, refers to the support from the principal and management teams, from the school administration, as well as from colleagues (Viac & Fraser 2020, 38), which, like with other job resources, develops job motivation (Bakker & Demerouti 2007, 313). This relationship can be seen in Figure 5.
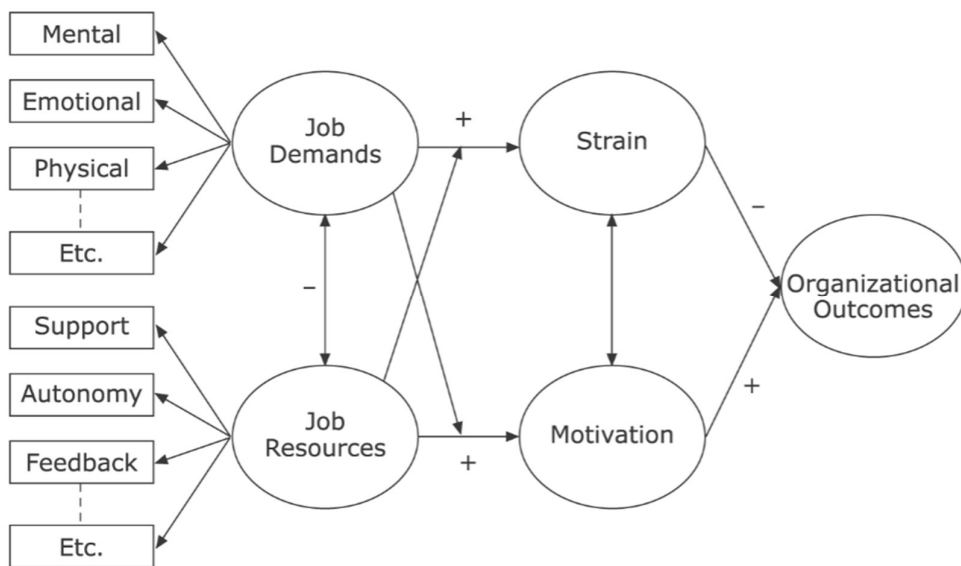
Figure 5. The relationship between Job Demands and Job Resources (Bakker & Demerouti 2007, 313)

Social Support is "probably the most well-known situational variable that has been proposed as a potential buffer against job strain" (Bakker & Demerouti 2007, 314). It is very functional in achieving work goals, as "support from colleagues can help to get the work done in time and may therefore alleviate the impact of work overload on strain" (Bakker, Demerouti & Euwema 2005, 171).

Looking at the results in both tables, it would appear at first sight that the Job Resource of Social Support is prominently present in the working environment of these participants. Job Resources are effective at buffering the relationship between demands (and the subsequent strain experienced) or boost the impact of other job resources (Granziera,

Collie & Martin 2020, 232), thereby impacting TWB positively. Work Load, the most prominent Job Demand for this group of participants, impacts TWB negatively in their working environment, and adds strain. It follows then that, for this group, Social Support buffers to some extent the effect of the Work Load.

At a second glance, however, the answers from respondents to the questionnaire reveal that they do not consider Social Support as a Job Resource. Rather, there appears to be a perceived lack of Social Support. This contradiction is not all surprising, as "[n]ot all job demands may be negative in nature, nor are all resources motivational" (Granziera et al. 2020, 240). Although not surprising then, it could be problematic when the prominent job resource (Social Support) does not buffer, but compounds the negative effect of the prominent job demand (Work Load). The job resource now demands more from the teachers, rather than alleviating the strain experienced from the job demand.

The importance of job resources

The importance of job resources can neither be understated, nor underestimated. When job resources are present, it leads to engagement, but in its absence, cynicism develops (Bakker & Demerouti 2007, 314). Job resources not only help buffer job demands, but they "are important in their own right" (Bakker & Demerouti 2007, 312). Job resources "help achieve work goals, foster employees' growth, learning and development" (Bakker & Demerouti 2007, 313). They, essentially, help to achieve the other resources, and protect those resources too (Bakker & Demerouti 2007, 313).

Considering the relationship between Job Demands and Job Resources, a simplification can be made to assist in the fostering of TWB: if Job Demands can be made fewer, and/or Job Resources more, TWB will be fostered more effectively (Jackson, Rothmann & Van der Vyver 2006, 272). Alternatively, if the impact of Job Resources can outweigh the impact of Job Demands, TWB will be fostered more effectively. In the likelihood that job demands increase, "job resources become particularly important" (Bakker & Demerouti 2007, 315). It therefore becomes imperative to increase job resources, also in the teaching profession. Increasing and allowing teachers access to a wealth of job resources will allow them to be "more capable of managing challenges and adversity in their work, thus enabling them to experience greater wellbeing" (Granziera et al. 2020, 238).

Broad generalisations on the results of this section of the study would be difficult and unwise to make with such a small group of participants. Most of the participants, at the time of the workshop, taught at the same organisation, and it can, at least, be safely assumed that a small portion of the organisation felt the same. A generalisation for the whole organisation would only be fair if the same, or a similar workshop is held, and more participants from that organisation is present, and given a similar questionnaire.

It would also be of interest to see whether the same, or different, factors would be highlighted if the same, or similar, exercise was repeated with a different cohort of participants, all who worked at a different organisation. With the context-sensitivity of TWB, the expectation is that the outcome would indeed look different.

4.1.7 Observations on the professional/system level

Factors that influence TWB on the professional/system level did not feature significantly high in participants' answers in the questionnaires. This tends to highlight how the participants look at and experience TWB, or the lack thereof. For these participants, factors that influence TWB are predominantly situated in the situated/ school level, namely their immediate working environment.

Numerous factors in the professional/system level can significantly influence TWB on the situated/school level and improve TWB on a much larger scale. Improving salaries that teachers get paid, and minimising the amount of administration required by teachers, are two factors that could greatly improve TWB. It appears, however, as if the participants have a major need for their immediate working environments to address TWB. This could be because they believe there is more agency to change factors influencing TWB on the situated/school level, rather than on the professional/system level, which is a reasonable expectation.

Policy changes on the system level are important to bring about widespread change, which could also improve TWB on a much larger scale. That there is evidence of a feeling of higher level of agency existing on the situated/school level to address TWB should urge leadership in schools to make a more concerted effort to foster TWB in their organisations. In doing so, they would also be contributing to the Job Resource of Social Support.

4.2 How could future TWB be fostered in a South African context?

4.2.1 A diversity of factors influences TWB

During Critique phase, participants were asked to critique the current education system in which they find themselves, and how it fails to foster TWB. A timeline of 9 years was given, which allowed significant enough time to pass but would still feel within reach – 9 years are slightly less than a decade, and two South African national elections would have taken place within this time period, which would very likely impact the profession of teaching significantly. The outcome of the national elections in 2024, at the time of writing, was already unprecedented, and showed that the assumption of a status quo as a probable future is not reliable.

With sufficient time given to the two groups during this phase of the workshop, the results and categories of critique that were developed were as follow:

Group 1 identified numerous factors to critique the current system with (Figure 6). They grouped the factors into different categories, and formulated the following problem statements:

- The challenges at government / legal / state policy level

- The challenges related to physical space in the school

- Challenges related to the community of educators

- The impact of negative attitude

- The challenge of insufficient school leadership

- Challenges related to technology

Phase 2 – Critique... (Problem Statements/Inventory)

The challenges related to physical space in the school

- Construction of school
  * Presence of trees
  * Windows / ventilation
  * Adequate space for student numbers
- Educational Divide (Resources / Money / Environment)
- No classroom / dedicated space.
  Having to ask colleagues for venues to achieve extra-mural goals.
- The lack of a safe physical space
  * Classroom
  * Staffroom

The impact of negative attitude

- The attitude and behaviour of the students
  * Apathy
  * Disrespect
- Unsupportive parents
- Parent expectations
- Subject value
- Lack of appreciation and trust from learners (in a "privileged school").
  Lack of respect for teachers' academic experience and discipline.
- Feelings of guilt...
  (Holidays / pulling my weight?? / Give myself time to do my own things)
  Responsible for young lives...
- Global salary scales for teachers influenced by an attitude the teaching isn't a high level / specialist occupation
- Responsibility to community vs. Personal gain
- Societal attitudes
  * Teaching is a half-day job
  * Teachers get school holidays
- Attitudes towards teachers in society (looked down, half-day job, holidays).
  Attitudes of kids in class (touched on already)

Management: The challenge of insufficient school leadership. Unsupportive, indecisive.

- Unsupportive school management
- Safe person / mentor / middle ground (or lack thereof)
- Lack of respect. Management.
- Leadership does not seem to be for teachers, but rather for themselves (not all).
- Lack of trust Management and colleagues.
- 'Divide and conquer' tricks Management
- Decisive and understanding school leadership is lacking.
- Making something a teacher's responsibility that should be fixed / implemented, supported by management (systemic discipline problems, uniform problems)
- (Overwhelming) criticism vs. Constructive critique (sometimes self-imposed)
- Lack of transparency (Management to staff)
- Micro-management
- Inauthentic work environment. Colleagues and management.
- Scare tactics Management
- Lack of training and preparation of staff in roles of responsibility

The challenges at gov / legal / state policy level

- Teachers often considered last in situation / protection / argument, etc.
- The problem of not having a clear & cohesive vision within the school's ethos and policies
- Education policy
  * child protection
  * School's code
  * Staff policies
  all focus on the child's wellbeing, no the educator's well-being
- Difficult marking conditions (for external marking) and unfair expectations of mere mortals (long days, etc.)
- (at government level): People sitting in offices (who haven't taught in years) making decisions for teachers without an understanding of what teachers deal with daily.
- Public schools
  * Unrealistic class sizes
  * Insufficient space and comfort
- Marks:
  * Bloated
  * Unethical
- Ethos / Vision of school in current political / global context
- Marks / Performance vs. Bigger picture / general care
- Protection of the educator in policies and legal systems
- School discipline policy
  * Structures
  * Implementation
- School ethos / vision
  * Stance on academics

Challenges related to the community of educators

- Attitudes of educators
  * Those that are apathetic
  * Those that are not passionate
- Lack support from colleagues
  No help, no response to email
- Feeling / Sense of community

Challenges related to technology

- Chat GPT – AI
  * Learners are not learning if they rely on ChatGPT and therefore teaching become more
- Chat GPT – AI
  * Increases teacher's workload when they have to check everything
- Impact of tech (AI) and expectations / challenges

Figure 6. Results of Critique phase (Group 1)

Phase 2 – Critique... (Problem Statements/Inventory)

Social – a lack of social mindfulness creates animosity / resentment

- Insufficient support for teaches in helping neuro-divergent boys: actual training and interventions.
- No ASD research / pret. dev. / training despite the spotlight on mental well being. A lazy and somewhat unprofessional BSU.
- Student disrespect towards teachers, school policies, accountability for own education
- Lack of colleague support - unwillingness to share resources / Responsibility taken by one person in department

Culture – culture is artificially cultivated to pay lip service to serious issues

- Prejudice and bias and insufficient efforts to tackle these problems for students as well as staff.
- No tracking / recording the values created / sustained by the old guard.
- We are at a crossroads wrt bullying / fighting / predation, as it also diminishes TWB.

Environment

- Having limited physical resources. (Not enough classes for teachers, having to travel between classes in an environment that is not set-up for it).
- Having too many classes (full schedule) with too many students to manage
- Both schools don't have adequate private change rooms or showers for staff, so changing for sport or after sport for functions, so you feel miff & unprofessional.
- Inadequate "spaces" for teachers (staffroom, resting facilities being last priority)

Resources – lack of strategic thought when allocating resources

- Subject stagnation - it's one of the most privileged schools, certain subjects are lacking in adv / changes / new content. Diminishing TWB
- Lack of support to develop teachers professionally if "ill" appointment are made. Responsibility falls on the rest of the department
- Unfair salary and insufficient benefits – cause financial stress, personal dread.
- Unfair remuneration for the extra you do. If you do a heavy sports load, you need to be acknowledged for this.

Management – Management disillusioned and removed from the realities of teacher needs

- Poor support when discipline in terms of management involvement and parents too!
- Previous school wouldn't give leave for personal reasons, which made me feel undervalued.
- Very poor succession planning in terms of promoting diverse individuals, makes staff feel there is no point in applying for promotions.
- Management being unable to deal with colleagues who don't pull their weight, so you end up working harder in the department to make up for their inadequateness and you don't get thanked for that.
- Management dismissing concerns raised issues with discipline, colleagues, subject-specific issues
- Management: They do not know what I do here ... seriously ask ANY of the xxx what SCP does at Bish.
- Management not acknowledging appropriate address, good manners. The 'gap' stifles TWB. How do we speak to each other?
- Lack of strategic planning from management: constantly managing crises rather than innovating
- Management: How do I phrase this? Why do I feel like I was valued at my last school? The disparity that exists between staff and that building
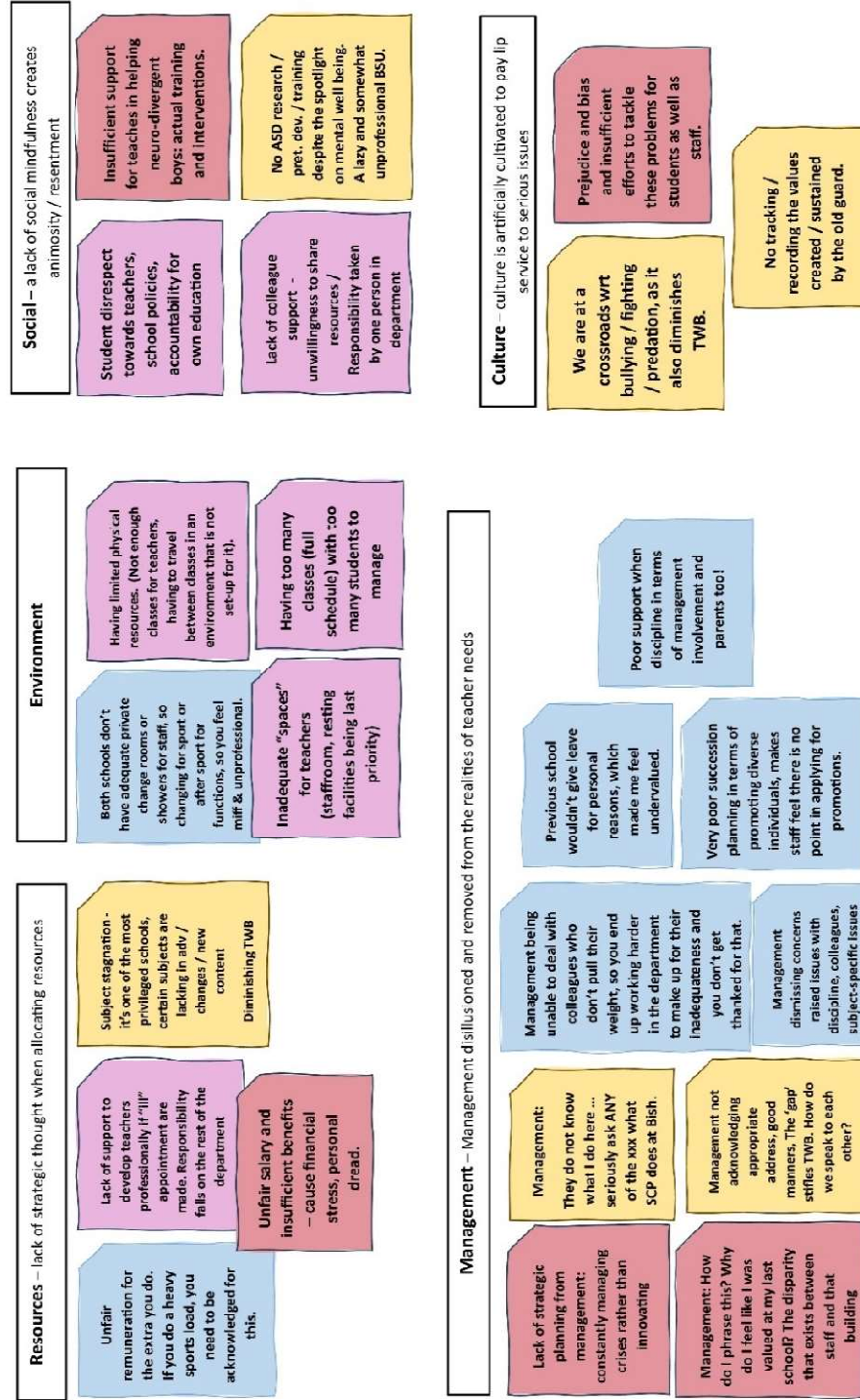
Figure 7. Results of Critique phase (Group 2)

Group 2 followed the same process, identified and grouped their factors (Figure 7) and formulated the following problem statements:

- Lack of strategic thought when allocating resources

- Environmental challenges

- Management disillusioned and removed from the realities of teacher needs

- A lack of social mindfulness creates animosity / resentment

- Culture is artificially cultivated to pay lip service to serious issues

4.2.2 Overlapping factors identified by both groups

A significant diversity in topics and problem statements were shared between both groups. Overlapping topics included concerns related to senior management, which linked directly and strongly with the Job Resource of Social Support identified in the analysis of the questionnaire, and physical learning environments, a Job Demand. A perceived problematic culture also seemed to be present in the problem statements of both groups, a culture that does not foster good relations between teachers, teachers and senior management, and teachers and parents.

Of key importance then, for the organisation represented by most of the participants, and highlighted by both groups, are the shared concerns with senior management, physical learning environments, and a perceived problematic organisational culture. There could be a strong connection between the concerns with senior management and a perceived problematic organisational culture. Culture can very often stem from the top, and the tone of how the organisation functions, and what it values, are often reinforced by senior management. It would do the senior management well to look into the organisational culture, as it appears to affect the TWB of at least a number of individuals within the organisation.

4.2.3 In search of preferred futures

The Fantasy phase started with an exercise to stimulate participants' right brains, allowing them the required creativity to imagine preferred futures. Drawing is often a challenge that is not necessarily embraced by those who are not visual artists, so at first, they were

hesitant to get started. Gradually the participants gained momentum and, when they shared their drawings, it was evident that they enjoyed the process. The drawings of the imagined gadgets can be seen in Appendix 1.

Part of the purpose of the Fantasy phase is to "create a utopia, to draw an exaggerated picture of future possibilities" (Vidal 2005, 7). Despite the exercise in creativity, participants found the Fantasy phase challenging, which were confirmed by the feedback from the participants after the workshop

> *"it felt a bit unsurmountable and impossible" (Participant 7)*

It was easy to criticise the current system, but considerably harder to imagine different alternatives to the current system, especially 9 years from now

> *"it was difficult to move out of the 'complaining' phase into actively 'solving' problems" (Participant 5)*

Group 1 considered the problem statements they created in the previous phase, and negated the problem statements, changing the wording of some problem statements to goal statements. Group 2 took a broader perspective and did not limit themselves only to the problem statements of the previous phase. They formulated goal statements based around both the problem statements and the discussions they had during the previous phase. According to the guidelines of the Futures Workshop, both these processes are accepted. When groups consider previous discussions along with their problem statements, generating more ideas than the previous phase, they the Fantasy phase from a broader perspective and their results could end up richer (Vidal 2005, 7).

Group 1 considered their critique phase and decided on the following for the Fantasy phase (Figure 8):

- Structures to support the mental well-being of teachers

- The challenges related to physical space in the school

- The impact of negative attitude

- The challenge of insufficient school leadership

- The problem of not having a clear, cohesive vision within the school's ethos and policies

Rewording problem statements to goal statements are required to assist in shifting participants' thinking from critique to fantasy. Unfortunately, only the first statement, namely "structures to support the mental well-being of teachers", came closer to resembling a goal statement.
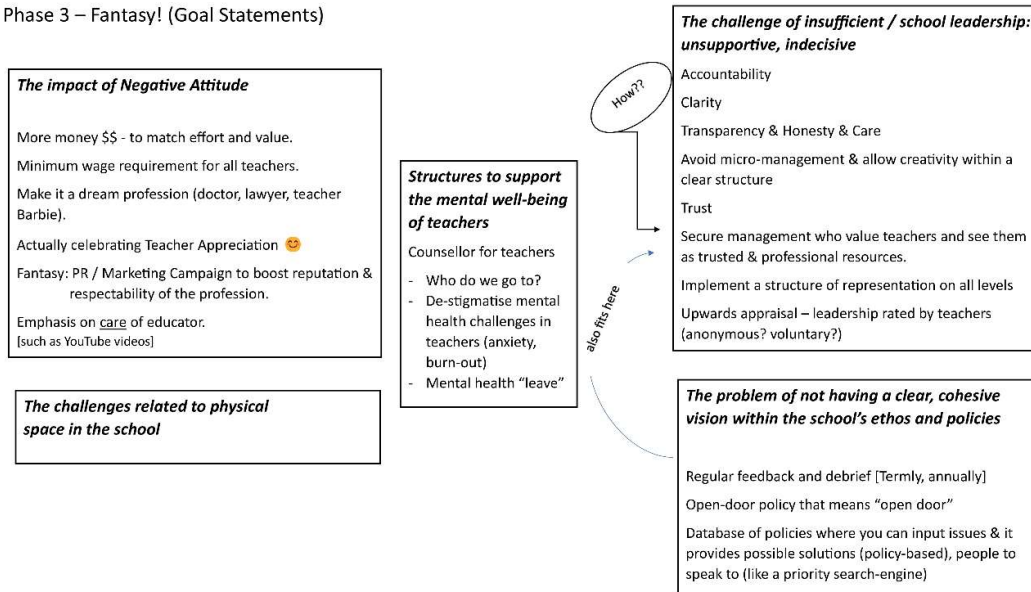

Phase 3 – Fantasy! (Goal Statements)

The impact of Negative Attitude

More money $$ - to match effort and value.
Minimum wage requirement for all teachers.
Make it a dream profession (doctor, lawyer, teacher Barbie).
Actually celebrating Teacher Appreciation 😊
Fantasy: PR / Marketing Campaign to boost reputation & respectability of the profession.
Emphasis on care of educator.
[such as YouTube videos]

The challenges related to physical space in the school

Structures to support the mental well-being of teachers

Counsellor for teachers
- Who do we go to?
- De-stigmatise mental health challenges in teachers (anxiety, burn-out)
- Mental health "leave"

How??

also fits here

The challenge of insufficient / school leadership: unsupportive, indecisive

Accountability
Clarity
Transparency & Honesty & Care
Avoid micro-management & allow creativity within a clear structure
Trust
Secure management who value teachers and see them as trusted & professional resources.
Implement a structure of representation on all levels
Upwards appraisal – leadership rated by teachers (anonymous? voluntary?)

The problem of not having a clear, cohesive vision within the school's ethos and policies

Regular feedback and debrief [Termly, annually]
Open-door policy that means "open door"
Database of policies where you can input issues & it provides possible solutions (policy-based), people to speak to (like a priority search-engine)

Figure 8. Results of Fantasy phase (Group 1)

Group 2 considered the discussions they had during Critique phase, and decided to prioritise the following goal statements for Fantasy phase (Figure 9):

- Management inspired and connected with teacher needs

- Excellent and fair allocation of resources

- Collective, mindful cultivation of an authentic culture of belonging

These were more consistent with goal statements than the other group, which proved to be helpful in the back casting exercise during the last phase of the workshop.

It is noteworthy that two of the three goal statements are in support of the Job Resource of Social Support, which emerged as the key Job Resource from the results of the directed

content analysis of the questionnaires. As individuals, and as a smaller group, it is clear that Social Support is very important to the participants of the workshop. As discussed in a previous section, this might not be because it is so evident in the working environment of the participants, it could also lack so severely.
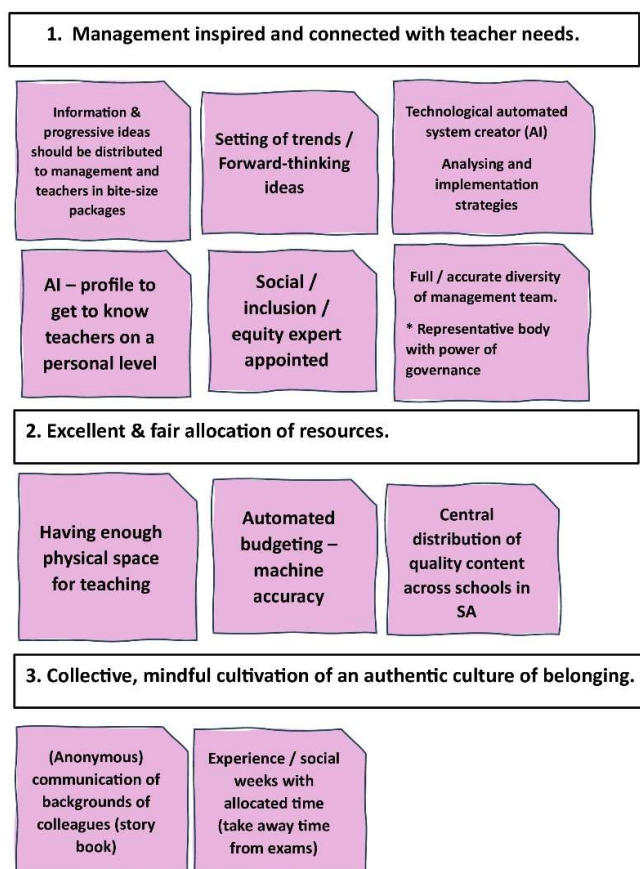
Phase 3 – Fantasy! (Goal Statements)

Figure 9. Results of Fantasy phase (Group 2)

4.2.4 Leadership challenges and a low value of the teaching profession

In line with the OECD conceptual framework, the groups were asked to consider mainly the situated/school level but challenge themselves with some aspects of the professional/system level. The focus of both groups resulted almost exclusively on the situated/school level.

During this phase, Group 1 focused on the perceived value / perception of the teaching profession from the outside (Figure 10), whilst Group 2 focused on school management (Figure 11). Representatives from both groups gave feedback on this phase, and summaries of the feedback follows.

Phase 4 – Implementation.

Important Q:
Who is responsible?

Management inspired and connected with teacher needs

Goal statement

Goal statement

2024 2025 2026 2027 2028 2029 2030 2031 2032 2033

Immediate environment (schools level)

Succession planning which promotes diversity
* SMTs & HODs

Identifying staff that are willing to represent and challenge teacher needs
* Staff

Current management needs proper professional development / training
* Private school union
* Principal

Need spaces for dialogue without fear for retribution
* Staff (All)
* SMT

Management should have enough time to perform duties, but should still be teaching at least one class to stay in touch with pressures
* SGB

Current management should be scrapped if previous step is not implemented properly
* SGB / Gov

Organisational structure that collects concerns
Acts on concerns, assesses efficacy of implementation
* Staff

Non-debatable policies around inclusion / all needs around TWB
* SMT

Broader environment (systems level)

Figure 10. Results of Implementation phase (Group 1)
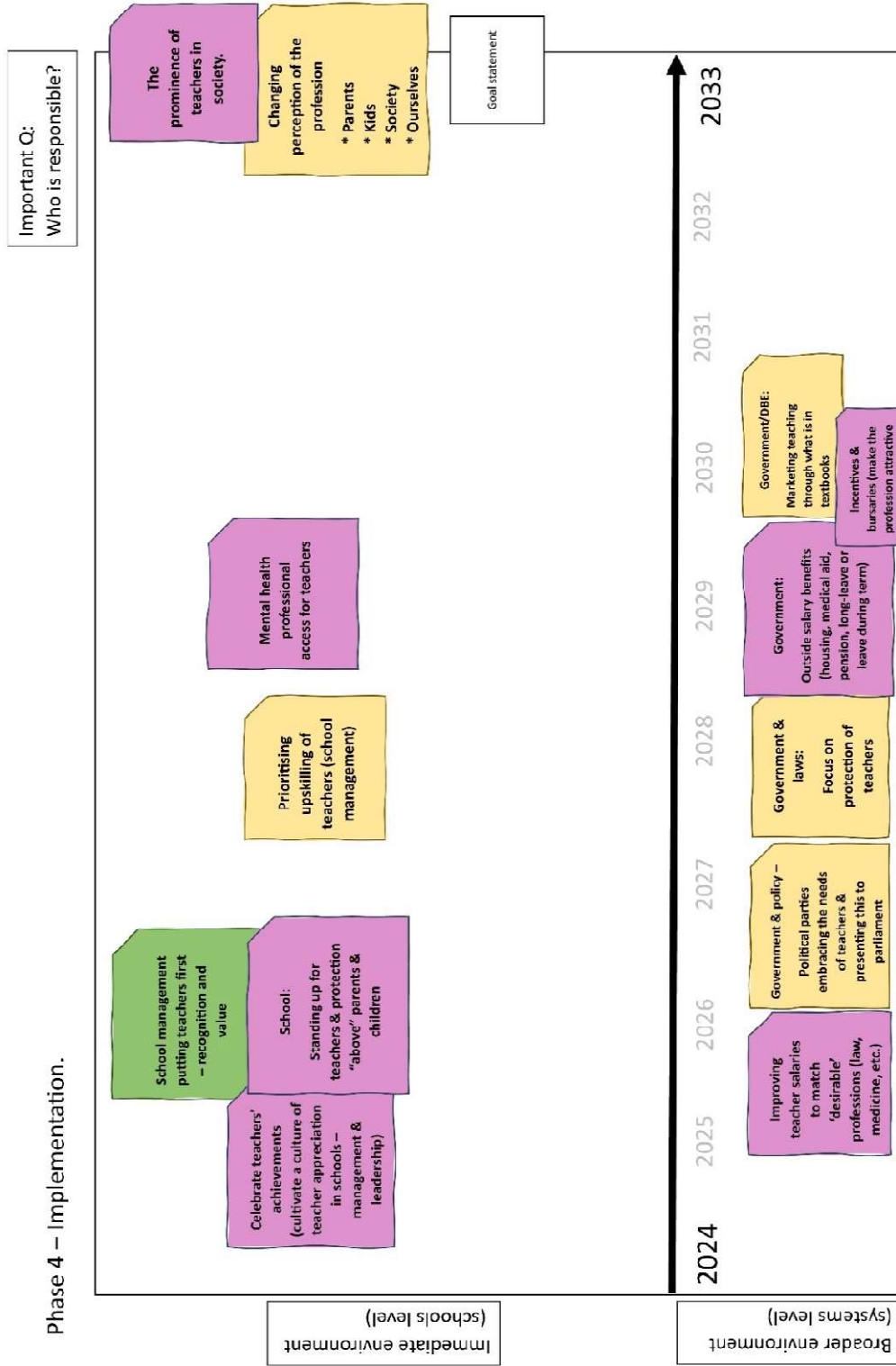
Figure 11. Results of Implementation phase (Group 2)

Leadership challenges – summary of Implementation phase (Group 1)

The workshop participants identified management issues as central to teacher well-being, leading to feelings of disillusionment and disconnect. They emphasized the need for diverse management to understand staff concerns and advocated for succession planning and mentorship programs. Creating spaces for dialogue without fear of retribution and rewarding staff for challenging the status quo were highlighted. Participants suggested reducing the number of classes taught by management to allow for strategic thinking and proposed regular feedback mechanisms to address staff concerns effectively. Additionally, they called for accountability measures, including scrapping ineffective management if necessary, and instituting non-debatable policies to ensure staff needs are met. The complexity of navigating management positions while maintaining ideals was acknowledged, emphasizing the importance of ongoing support and training for effective leadership.

Low value of the teaching profession – summary of Implementation phase (Group 2)

Participants focused on changing societal perceptions of teaching, aiming to elevate the profession's status and value. Suggestions included celebrating Teacher Day more globally, prioritizing teacher appreciation within schools, and advocating for teachers' rights and support systems. Ideas also encompassed prioritizing professional development, destigmatizing mental health, and improving teacher benefits and safety measures. Broader strategies involved incentivizing teaching through better salaries and benefits, influencing political agendas, and reshaping educational materials to highlight teachers positively. The discussion also touched on creative, unconventional approaches, such as introducing a 'Teacher Barbie' and redefining the portrayal of teachers in literature. Overall, the feedback emphasized the need for multifaceted efforts to enhance the public perception and support of teaching. The role of media, especially how media portrays teachers, may "greatly influence public perceptions and affect their social status" (UNESCO 2023b, 21).

The low value of the teaching profession, as investigated by Group 2, is a fascinating topic to be explored further, and a suggestion for further research on this topic is made in Chapter 5.

4.2.5 Probable rather than preferred futures

Despite the creative exercise introduced between at the start of Fantasy phase, both Fantasy and Implementation phases did not yield unusual or surprising results. Results were focused on an extrapolation of the status quo, resulting in a vision that resembles the probable future more than the preferred future. Some elements of preferred futures were present in both groups, but it did not dominate the respective timelines and narratives.

Phase 4 (Implementation) also did not result in implementable actionable plans, with clear goals in mind. The goals identified remained broad and vague, and assigning measurable actions were difficult to do. According to the expected outcomes of a Futures Workshop, Phase 4 was less successful than anticipated.

4.2.6 Present and future fostering of TWB

The results from the workshop confirmed that teachers' perceptions on what constitutes TWB fall well within the range of the OECD conceptual framework. Teachers inherently understand what constitutes to their well-being, and it is important that these factors are addressed on the situated/school level, as is intended by the scope of the OECD conceptual framework. Different environments will likely deliver different factors that impacts TWB, and the context-sensitive nature of TWB should be respected in this regard.

The workshop also confirmed that thinking about the future, and thereby considering the future fostering of TWB, was a difficult task to do. This was also evident in the responses from participants to the workshop, whose responses to what they found most difficult in the workshop, included the following:

"the most difficult part was refining fantasy ideas into workable solutions – it is difficult to move out of the 'complaining' phase into actively 'solving' problems" (Participant 5)

"Trying to find solutions to the issues related to TWB … felt a bit unsurmountable and impossible - the fantasy part was very hard" (Participant 7)

To consider the future, one needs to be able to imagine it, and the development of imagination, and skills relating to thinking about the future, would become essential in the quest of fostering future TWB. The development of these skills is essential not only

for teachers but also other role-players, especially for those who are integral in the policy-making processes of education.

5 Discussion

5.1 Summary of results

This participatory study, by way of a questionnaire and a Futures Workshop, aimed to investigate and answer two research questions (RQ):

RQ1: What are teachers' perceptions on what constitutes TWB?

The group of teachers who formed part of this research study showed a very good perception on what constitutes teacher well-being (TWB). As individuals they were able to mention and cover a wide spectrum of factors that either contributes to, or diminishes, TWB. Not only this, but they were able to perceive factors that influences TWB on both professional/system and situated/school levels.

Identifying factors that influence TWB on the situated/school level was more prominent with the group of participants. This is not surprising, as the factors on the situated/school level, which constitutes their immediate working environment, are factors that they encounter on a daily basis. These factors are more pressing, and are perceived to be more easily addressed, than factors on the professional/system level. This implies that there is also a belief that there is a higher level of agency for teachers to influence TWB on a situated/school level, rather than on a professional/system level.

RQ2: How could future TWB be fostered in a South African context?

Both the fostering of present and future TWB appears to be complex matters for the group of participants. The data from the questionnaires highlighted that TWB is not prioritised in their working environment, even to the extent that the main Job Resource of Social Support does not function as a resource, but rather a demand. The resultant effect could help understand why it was difficult to imagine how future TWB could be fostered, because the present reality regarding TWB was so prevalent in their thoughts.

The participants perceived the future fostering of TWB to look the same today as it would in the next 9 years. It was difficult to imagine a different preferred future and, instead, the future fostering of TWB was reliant on an extrapolation of the status quo. This extrapolation of the status quo could be ascribed to numerous factors, including the immediate urgency of fostering a present TWB.

A perceived lack of imagination could also play a role in the difficulty to envision the future fostering of TWB. For the participants, and potentially groups of teachers elsewhere, the everyday duty of teaching takes up so much time and effort, that the capacity to imagine different futures are not developed. To have their heads figuratively down in the so-called trenches to such an extent that they do not have time to look up to the sky and dream, should be a concern.

5.2   The use of the OECD conceptual framework

The OECD conceptual framework is a very comprehensive and useful framework for future research studies on teacher well-being. Its comprehensive nature allows research studies to be as broad, or as narrow, as required, with various points of departure for research within the framework, whilst still building a better understanding of TWB in the broader and comprehensive sense. Future research studies on TWB are encouraged to make use of the framework, and to critique it where necessary. In this way, TWB as research field can be developed towards more uniformity, which would assist in implementing sustainable interventions and likely contribute to its credibility in the long run.

5.3   The multi-faceted and context-sensitive nature of TWB

The use of the OECD conceptual framework in this research study has confirmed that TWB is a multi-faceted concept, with numerous dimensions and factors that contribute to its fuller understanding. The perceptions that the group of participants had about the factors contributing to TWB fell confidently within the OECD conceptual framework, except for the mention of 'perceived low value of the profession', which is not identified as a factor on the OECD conceptual framework. This perception is likely prevalent due to the interactions of factors within the OECD conceptual framework and has an impact on TWB.

The context-sensitive nature of TWB has been established in this research project and should be emphasised. For example, while the Job Demand of Work Load was mentioned the most by the participants, the Job Demand of Classroom Composition was mentioned briefly. Smaller class sizes, streamed according to ability, with an understanding of diverse learners, are characteristics of classroom compositions at well-financed private schools in South Africa, similar to where most of the participants teach. The Job Demand

of Classroom Composition would very likely show itself more prominently in data from most of the public schools in South Africa, where the same sensitivity for classroom composition is absent. The context-sensitive nature of TWB allows the use of the OECD conceptual framework in different settings, with different groups, to bring to light the specific factors that contribute to, or diminishes, TWB.

Overlap or similarities in different contexts should be expected, for example the Job Resource of Social Support might be evident in many contexts, as it is "probably the most well-known situational variable that has been proposed as a potential buffer against job strain" (Bakker & Demerouti 2007, 314). When the framework is used as part of a participatory approach, it encourages diversity by broad participation, which lends credibility to the process, and the results.

One possible shortcoming, in my opinion, should be mentioned. The JD-R model, as incorporated into the OECD conceptual framework, has been updated since 2007 to include personal resources (adaptability, self-efficacy, mental and emotional competencies). Personal resources are defined as "individuals' sense of their ability to successfully control and impact their environment" (Hobfoll, Johnson, Ennis & Jackson 2003, 632). They can "directly predict or indirectly influence how job demands, and job resources affect employee outcomes" (Granziera et al., 2020, 231). The link between personal resources and job demands and resources have been established through various research studies in education (Collie, Shapka & Perry 2011; Klassen & Tze 2014; Lorente Prieto, Salanova Soria, Martinéz Martinéz & Schaufeli 2008; Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti & Schaufeli 2007 ref. Granziera et al. 2021, 231).

5.4 The fostering of future TWB

5.4.1 The difficulty in fostering (future) TWB

TWB is "a crucial component for teachers' development" (Viac & Fraser 2020, 8) and, given its vital role, "it is important to investigate how it can be fostered." (Hascher & Waber, 15). Despite this importance, fostering TWB is neither a simple nor easy task. Just considering the varying definitions, as well as whether and how TWB should be defined, "it remains an open question of how TWB can be sustainably fostered" (Hascher & Waber 2021, 16).

TWB on a situated/school level is very context-sensitive and varies greatly. Different schools would have different approaches to TWB, if any, based on the demands and the unique pressures they experience. Research abounds on the many potential interventions that aim to improve TWB. Some of the most recent and useful situated/school level interventions aim to empower teachers and give them more agency. These include job crafting and the use of the JD-R monitor (Granziera et al. 2020, 238-239), interventions which make effective use of the JD-R model to "make proactive changes to optimise their workplace experiences" and "design their own individual plan of well-being" (Granziera et al. 2020, 238-239). Whole-school well-being programmes, which includes all role players in the school, have also been strongly advocated for (Granziera et al. 2020, 240).

These interventions consider the here-and-now, and the challenges that teachers face *at the moment* (emphasis by the author of the thesis). Interventions to improve TWB in the future, and to actively foster it, requires a focus on the future. Fostering TWB in the future would require the consideration of changes that might occur in both the professional/system level and the situated/school level and imagine different responses to foster TWB. Different types of futures might require different approaches.

Research shows that fostering TWB in the present is already a challenge, and adding a futures-focus, an uncertainty, will likely complicate it even more.

5.4.2 Methodological considerations

When tasked to imagine preferred futures for TWB, workshop participants extrapolated perceived probable futures for TWB. Imagining how future TWB would be fostered in 2033 proved the difficulty in imagining something that is very vulnerable and sensitive to, and shaped by, context and alternative futures.

To consider the future effectively, one needs to be comfortable to think about it first, which can often more difficult than it appears to be. It requires an imagination and understanding of the different types of futures that could unfold, the complexity that supports it, and the practicality of those futures in the present (Poli 2021)

The importance of imagination was also emphasised with the second research question. Whist multi-disciplined research studies on education and futures studies focused on imagining preferred futures and how they would look like (see for example Nikula, Pihlaja & Tapio 2021; Paju 2021), imagining the fostering of future TWB seems to be

more complicated. It appears to require a process of imagination in not only one, but two – perhaps even three – parts: to firstly imagine a future state of education and then to imagine the response to the future state, in which TWB would be fostered. Failing, or not being given the opportunity to imagine different images of education in 2033 predisposes the second part of imagination, how to foster future TWB, not to occur. This predetermines the fostering of future TWB to be based on the pressures of the present. These pressures would then be extrapolated, the status quo projected, and the probable future envisioned. Preferable futures of fostering TWB seems to fall by the wayside when imagination is constricted, limited, or absent.

Several explanations are ventured to account for the limitation in imagination:

Firstly, teacher well-being appears to emerge strongly as a response to the environment in which it is required. Without an opportunity for the participants to, at the start, envision a future 9 years from now, in which TWB would need to be fostered, a probable future was likely assumed, which would be a reasonable expectation. It is, therefore, understandable that, in the workshop, fostering TWB in the future ended up looking very similar to the fostering of TWB in the present.

Secondly, the expectations and everyday demand of workload placed on teachers allow very little time to imagine anything different to what is present today. For most teachers, it is head-down in the so-called trenches, either teaching or performing administrative tasks every day. As a result, a status quo and probable futures mindset might be very strong in education. Visionary work done the past decade in the USA to introduce strategic foresight into public education, assists in understanding the perceived lack of imagined futures within the group of participants in the FW workshop. "One of the ironies of education … is that although it is a field that significantly creates the future, the concerns of the present are so intense and so varied, that people working within [education] find themselves almost entirely in reactive mode." (Hovenden 2024, 1). The "pressures of current issues" (Hovenden 2024, 2) is very prominent and creating a space to think about the future, and to effectively inhabit it by way of imagination, "still feels too abstract" for many (Hovenden 2024, 2). When things run smoothly for teachers, it takes the pressure off, so small improvements to facilitate the effective running of any process, in its current state, and not necessarily change the process, could very well be

'good enough' for the pressure and circumstances that teachers are under. It could be a case of settling for 'better', with less effort, rather than 'the best', with more.

Thirdly, the possibility still exists that the described probable future could, in fact, be a preferred future within this group. Preferred futures do not universally look the same, they differ from group to group, and relies on the imaginations and visions of any particular group. The probable future of one person or group could, in fact, be the preferred future for another person or group.

One way to consider this tension point would be to look at the social nature of teaching, which includes the day-to-day interactions between teachers, teachers and students, and teachers and parents. The social nature of teaching is a key characteristic of the profession. In fact, despite a significant amount of ambiguity present in TWB research, the significant role of social relations in the profession has been established (Hascher & Waber 2021, 18). The "social character of the teaching profession … points to the vital role of the fulfilment of teachers' basic need for social relatedness" (Hascher & Waber 2021, 18). "[S]ocial interactions seem to be at the heart of TWB and are crucial in fostering it" (Hascher & Waber 2021, 18). It is possible that, in teaching, the re-imagination of anything not social at its core, for example one where technology replaces what teachers do, or influences the day-to-day significantly, could potentially resemble a future that is not preferred by the participants, the teachers in the workshop.

Lastly, the reality of practical considerations has been briefly mentioned and should be acknowledged. Workshop participants, although diverse in some ways (culture, gender, religion), were not diverse in others (age, seniority, diversity of roles, etc.) and further diversity might have created stimuli for imagining alternative and creative futures. Most of the group participants also knew each other not just on a professional, but also on a social level. This created a potential dynamic of falling into socialising every now and then, during each phase of the workshop, rather than a focus on the workshop itself. Additional facilitators, especially not familiar to the participants, could have been helpful. Time also always remains too short in workshops. Creativity requires time, in its preparation and execution, and more time could likely lead to more creativity.

5.5   Limitations

Some limitations to the research exist. Although practical workshop limitations were already mentioned in the previous section, other limitations beyond the workshop could also have had an impact on the results.

These limitations include:

- The OECD conceptual framework is still that – conceptual. In categorising factors from a vast amount of previous research, it risks either missing something or allocating it incorrectly, e.g. some aspects of student relationships could fall under Disciplinary Climate, Classroom Composition, School Characteristics, or none of those. Another example is the factor of student relationships – how should it be categorised? Similarly, disciplinary culture could either refer to discipline (as a means of correction from less-than-ideal behaviour) or, alternatively, diligence in pursuing work. When looking at the PISA Qs, this ambiguity is evident

- Research into TWB is very much dependent on the school level (and the quality of the working environment) and the thesis results should therefore be considered as 'truer' for a specific school in a specific setting, and not generalised to all schools. School and teacher characteristics, according to OECD framework, is acknowledged to play significant roles in TWB, which emphasises again the context-sensitivity of TWB

- One workshop, limited to a small number of participants, in a specific country, does not allow generalisations to be made. The South African context is also more complex and nuanced than various other international contexts – more research would be required to substantiate and generalise the results from this study

5.6   Recommendations for further research

From the literature reviewed, and the analysis of results of this research study, four potential avenues for further multi-disciplined research in the future fostering of TWB are suggested. These suggestions consider the broader environments in which TWB functions and could, therefore, assist in the development of the future fostering of TWB. These avenues would add to the overall research into the fostering of TWB, from both education and futures studies disciplines:

The inclusion of personal resources in the OECD conceptual framework

Future research might investigate whether personal resources could be explicitly considered for, and included in, the OECD conceptual framework, or not. Although they seem to be considered the responsibility of individuals and might be more difficult to evaluate and develop than the other factors involved in TWB, personal resources have a definite place in TWB. Researchers could investigate ways to develop personal resources as part of the professional development of teachers, and TWB, in the future.

The perception of the teaching profession

The perception of teaching/teachers/the teaching profession was an interesting factor that came out of the data analysis from the questionnaire. It appeared to be a kind of enigma, which did not fit the OECD conceptual framework easily, despite the prevalence of the topic in literature. It is an intriguing and fascinating topic for further exploration.

The development of imagination through Futures Literacy

The development of imagination through the research domain of Futures Literacy (FL) could play a considerable role in helping teachers to become more futures-oriented (Paju 2021, 28). Futures Literacy a skill set that, like traditional forms of literacy, needs to be developed to be effective. Although still early in its development, is has the potential to "greatly increase the social ability to act in the present" (Poli 2021).

Numerous studies already focus on the necessity to develop and promote FL for students (Häggström & Schmidt 2021; Vidergor 2023). The development of FL for teachers could be essential in the effort to foster future TWB, potentially helping teachers embrace, and not merely manage, uncertainty regarding the changing world (Paju 2021, 84). This would be for the benefit of their students and their own. The development of imagination, through FL, could become an important avenue to pursue in the quest to foster future TWB.

Fostering TWB from a systems perspective

The concept of whole-school well-being, prevalent and mentioned in research (see for example Quinlan & Hone 2020), and further research into how it could tie in with TWB, could be beneficial in fostering future TWB from a systems approach. Considering a whole-school well-being approach would allow not only TWB, but all other approaches

to well-being, to be more fully implementable, and responsive to future changes, as it would consider more explicitly the system in which TWB functions.

6 Conclusion

There are, historically, many challenges that education has faced, and continues to face. Although the nature of these challenges differs, and exceptions exist, education deficits plague not only many developing countries, but also developed countries (Bakhtiari & Shajar 2006, 95). This is often highlighted through illiteracy and inadequate levels of skill, which is exacerbated by the unequal access to education (Bakhtiari & Shajar 2006) Quality education, accessible to all, that considers the changing needs of individuals and societies, does not appear to be true on a global scale. Along with the historical challenges of the past, new and varied images and visions for future education are researched and promoted, highlighting that education will, in the future, look and operate differently than it does today, and significant change might lie on the horison.

Change is now the only constant (Lukacs & Galluzzo 2014, 100) and organisations, like individuals, need to continuously adapt to it, or risk being left behind. Due to the bureaucratic nature of schools, schools find it difficult to adapt, and many tension points are created in the process, which need to be managed and navigated through. These are often done by teachers, in and outside of the classroom.

As a result, education finds itself in a precarious position, stretched between the consequences of the past, the relevance of the present, and the promise of the future. The amount of change required to effectively overcome the past, remain relevant in the present, and strive towards any of the promoted images and visions of the future, seems considerable.

Teachers are under pressure. The historical demands that accompany the profession has created a problematic present, with teachers leaving the profession in alarming rates. The weight of the past weighs heavily at present. At the same time, teachers are catapulted into the midst of efforts to re-imagine the future of education. Their participation is welcomed, and the importance of their participation is emphasised, but the reality is that the pull of the future would require even more of them. No matter the future ahead, teachers will be required to hold the space between the past and the future. They will be going about their business today, managing the pressures of yesterday, and working towards tomorrow.

For teachers to be instrumental, and effective, in all that is required of them, teacher well-being is of utmost importance. There are numerous ways in which teacher well-being (TWB) can be evaluated, and research has suggested countless ways in which TWB can be fostered in the present (see for example Vo & Allen 2022). This research study has shown that the OECD conceptual framework is an effective framework to assist in the evaluation and fostering of TWB on the situated/school level. Due to the conceptual nature of the framework, its use in future research can also have an impact on its development (Hascher and Waber 2021).

Acknowledging, and confirming, through the process of this research study,

- the multi-faceted nature of TWB,

- the context-sensitive nature of the TWB,

- the numerous and varied factors that play a role in fostering TWB,

- and results that continue to show that TWB is a response to an environment,

the challenge then remains on how to foster TWB in the future, ideally on both the situated/school and professional/system levels. Within specific contexts, TWB could be evaluated in future moments, for example every few years, using the results gained from workshops with participants, and a strategy developed for a set time period. There is merit to the approach, especially in the interim, but it would most likely be time- and resource-consuming. It is also reminiscent of present approaches to foster TWB.

Approaches that consider the future more prominently could help anticipate changing environments, and how to respond to them, without the need to re-evaluate and re-calibrate extensively every time. These approaches are suggested as recommendations for further research and involve multi-disciplinary research in the fields of education and futures studies.

While these avenues for further research into the future fostering of TWB is suggested, the most pressing concern highlighted through this study is the development of imagination. This appears to be a crucial component for the future fostering of TWB. Developing imagination would especially be useful for, but not limited to, teachers. All possible role players in education would gain through the development of these skills,

and the development thereof would most likely have a significant impact in education, not only TWB.

Without imagination, and the ability to think constructively about the future, the future fostering of TWB will remain the continuous response to a situation or an event of change, rendering it unsustainable in the long term.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Futures Workshop – Consent Form

The following consent form was filled in by all participants.

Turun yliopisto
University of Turku

CONSENT FORM

Research Project for master's studies
Fostering Teacher Well-being in South African schools – A Futures Workshop

Conducted by
Burgert Maree
Master student in *Futures Studies*
Finland Futures Research Centre, University of Turku, Finland

Contact: bdmare@utu.fi

please mark box

1. I confirm that I understand what the research is about and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

3. I agree to take part in this research.

please mark box
yes   *no*

4. I agree to my discussions and presentations being audio and/or video recorded (only for analysis purposes; no audio or video will be published).

5. I agree to the use of anonymized quotations in publications.

6. I agree to be contacted in case more information is needed for this study.

Name of participant: …………………………………………..

Signature: …………………………………………..
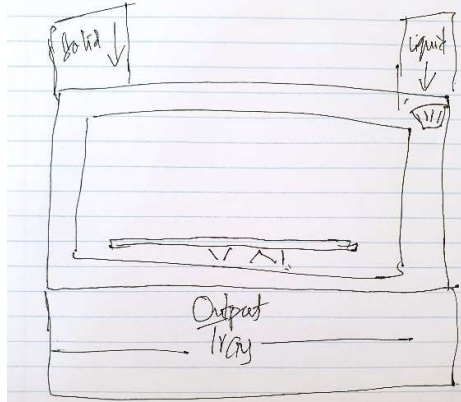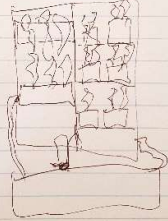
Date: ………………………

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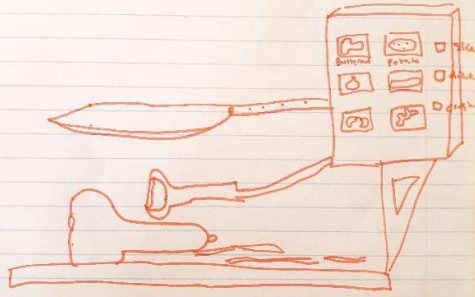## Appendix 2 Futures Workshop – Creative Exercise

The gadgets the participants drew between Critique and Fantasy phases of the Futures Workshop are shown below. They were instructed to draw gadgets that could, theoretically, be patented to make every-day life easier, or more pleasant.
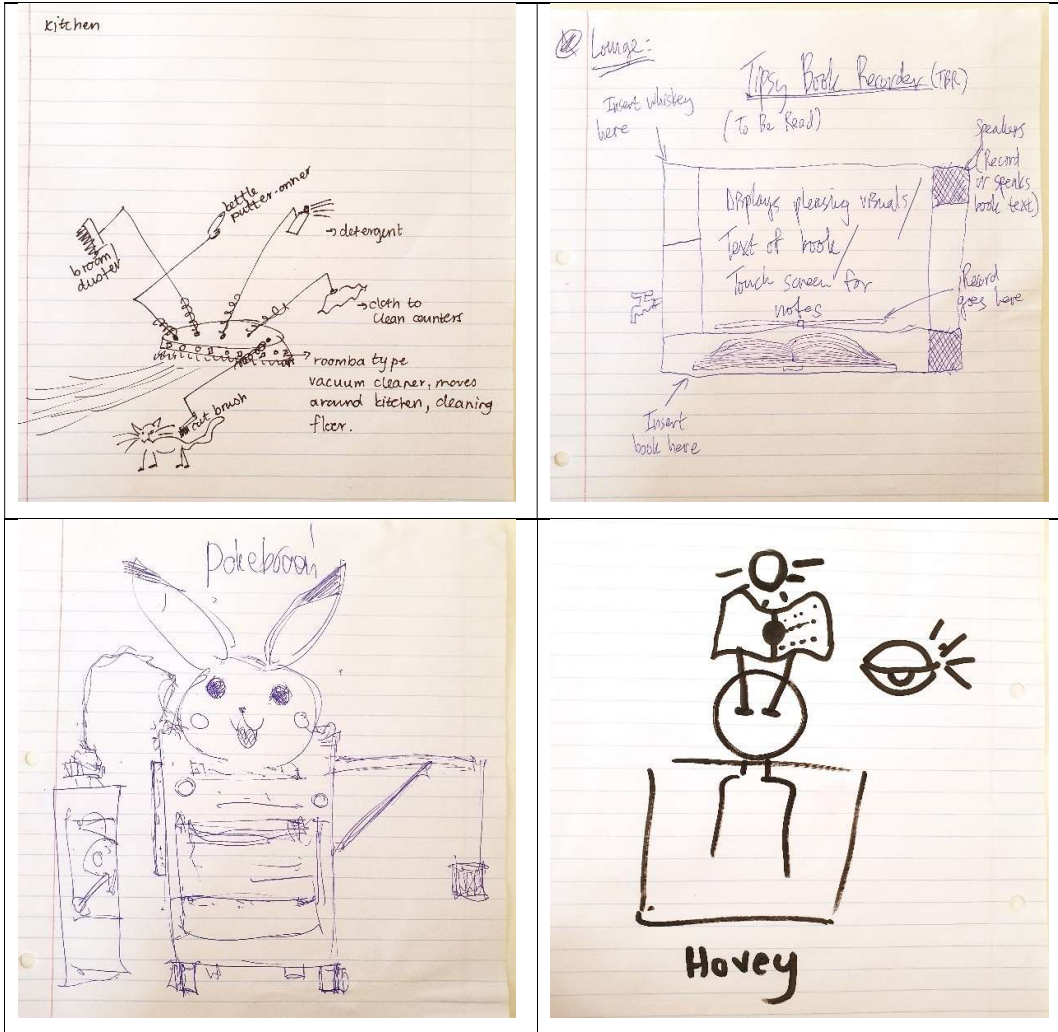
Coffee machine - bean grinding? Tea → brewing? Plants? Meat? An irrigated garden → herbs & vegetables → hooked up to water from drains. hooked onto windows - natural light & privacy →

Solid ↓   liquid ↓

Output Tray

Foodie's Friend

Pepper the Prepper

Bed

Lounge.   The Cream Track!!

Kitchen   Ice - Cream