

Foreword

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Publication date

2021

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

International perspectives on teacher well-being and diversity

[Link to publication](#)**Citation for published version (APA):**

Snoek, M. (2021). Foreword. In T. R. N. Murphy, & P. Mannix-McNamara (Eds.), *International perspectives on teacher well-being and diversity: portals into innovative classroom practice* (pp. vii-ix). Springer.

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International Perspectives on Teacher Well-Being and Diversity

Portals into Innovative Classroom Practice

 Springer

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ISSN 2522-0845

ISSN 2522-0853 (electronic)

Understanding Teaching-Learning Practice

ISBN 978-981-16-1698-3

ISBN 978-981-16-1699-0 (eBook)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-1699-0>

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The registered company address is: 152 Beach Road, #21-01/04 Gateway East, Singapore 189721, Singapore

This book is dedicated to the well-being of all teachers who are committed to their learners in ethnically and socially diverse classroom teaching contexts

Foreword

The European project is based on the idea that nations with diverse backgrounds, cultures, languages and histories share a common ambition for peace and prosperity and on the conviction that this diversity can help us to realise that ambition.

However, while on the one hand diversity can be seen as enriching, it can also create tensions. Diversity is often associated with inequality and social injustice, such as when certain groups have a higher status or income or are more valued than other groups. This makes diversity a promise, an aim, a challenge and a mission.

This multi-layered perspective on diversity is not only true for society as a whole but also for education. Diversity in schools can be considered as an asset and a source for learning by recognising the cognitive, social, creative or ethical capital of each and every pupil. Such an understanding of the school's mission, configured around equality of opportunity for all, is recognised as being pivotal for strengthening social justice in societies.

This challenge for schools—on the one hand to embrace diversity as a source for inspiration and learning and on the other hand to fight unequal opportunities and strengthen opportunities for all—is largely the responsibility of teachers. They are the ones who can embrace diversity within classrooms, supporting pupils and fostering their capabilities regardless of their background. The awareness of the importance of teachers in creating societies that embrace diversity should lead to education policies that put teachers at the centre. Increasingly, however, teaching as a profession, is being impacted by a focus on performativity and associated expectations. This often occurs without due regard for the necessary conditions that are essential for teachers to play their role and to meet the expectations and challenges that they are confronted with.

Teacher well-being is one of these essential conditions. Teacher-focused policies are not only about attracting enough teachers to the profession but also about creating the conditions that can invite teachers to stay passionate and inspired throughout their teaching career. Education policies should not only focus on the well-being and learning of pupils but also on the well-being and learning of teachers, as the latter is the precondition for the former.

From this perspective, this book *International Perspectives on Teacher Well-Being and Diversity: Portals into Innovative Classroom Practice* is a very welcome contribution to the understanding of teacher well-being. Based on inspiring cases from a

variety of schools, the authors elaborate the concept of teacher well-being and the elements that are important to it. They emphasise key sources for teacher well-being like ownership (e.g. through engagement of teachers in action research and action learning focused on their own classroom practice), meaningfulness (that the things they do are meaningful to themselves and their pupils), self-efficacy and agency (that they are able to have an impact on their pupils) and autonomy (that—together with their colleagues—they have the room to make decisions on what fits best their pupils).

The authors also identify inhibitors that can reduce the success and well-being of teachers: workload, stress, performativity pressures, lack of autonomy and isolation. Strengthening the key sources for teacher well-being, as well as ameliorating the impact of the inhibitors, can result in increased overall happiness and contentment for teachers, characterised by personal professional fulfilment, satisfaction and purposefulness, which in turn, will influence the well-being and learning outcomes of pupils.

The various contributions in this book offer a theoretical exposition on teacher well-being, together with a social agenda, alongside a practical application and exploration. Through the use of well-designed research activities within the everyday context of schools, these elements are combined and enriched, strengthening our understanding of teacher well-being, both in theory and practice. The insights that are presented in this book can help to support teachers, school leaders and policymakers at local and national levels, to strengthen their efforts regarding teacher well-being, not as a one-off effort to support novice teachers, but as a challenge that remains important throughout the lifespan of a teacher's career.

One of the strengths of this book is the way in which the authors put the messages they have for teachers, school heads and policymakers into practice themselves. This book developed from an international project funded by the European Commission. Through the diversity of project partners, the project itself was based on the value of diversity—not only within Europe but also including South Africa as a partner that is characterised—maybe even more than Europe- by diversity. This results in messages that transcend local contexts and can be inspirational for a variety of education systems.

The authors also recognise and embrace the understanding that teachers cannot solve inequality and deal with both the promises and tensions of diversity on their own. In writing this book, the authors actually rephrase the adage 'it takes a village to raise a child', to a new one:

it takes both a school, a social and an academic community to support a teacher.

The authors embodied this both within their local context by considering teacher well-being through collaborations between universities and schools, as well as through cross-national collaborations, bringing different elements of and perspectives on teacher well-being together in this book.

As such, *International Perspectives on Teacher Well-Being and Diversity: Portals into Innovative Classroom Practice* can be a valuable source for both teachers, school

heads, policymakers and researchers giving conceptual, practical and inspirational insights into how teacher well-being can be strengthened within schools across the world.

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Acknowledgements

International Perspectives on Teacher Well-Being and Diversity: Portals into Innovative Classroom Practice was inspired by the editors' participation in an EU Erasmus+Funded Project on *Teacher Well-Being and Diversity: Managing language and social diversity in classrooms* (TWBD) 2016–2019 (2016-1-NO01-KA201-022081). The project team included five HEIs: University College Copenhagen (UCC), Denmark; University of Limerick (UL), Ireland; Mary Immaculate College (MIC), Limerick, Ireland; Oslo Metropolitan University (OsloMet), Erasmus+ Lead Partner (formerly Oslo and Akershus University College), Norway; and, University of the Western Cape (UWC), South Africa. Each HEI was aligned with a partner project school. Together with their partner schools, each HEI contributed a chapter for *International Perspectives on Teacher Well-Being and Diversity: Portals into Innovative Classroom Practice*. Their contributions, together with the two specialist chapters (Chapters Two & Three) provided by contributors external to the Erasmus+project, greatly added to the learning and research evidence in this publication. Dr. Timothy R. N. Murphy and Professor Patricia Mannix-McNamara, School of Education, University of Limerick, as editors, also wish to acknowledge in particular the editorial assistance of Dr. Gerry Jeffers, Maynooth University, in the production and compilation of this book. Additionally, they are very grateful for the advice and support provided by Nick Melchior, Lay Peng, Jayanthi Krishnamoorthi and colleagues of the editorial team at Springer throughout the publication process.

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Abbreviations

CECDE	Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education
CPD	Continuing professional development
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in School
DES	Department of Education and Science (until 2011) and Department of Education and Skills from 2011–present
DH	Department of Health
EAL	English as an additional language
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
HOD	Head of department
HSE	Health Service Executive
IIAL	Incremental Introduction of African Languages
INTO	Irish National Teachers Organisation
LOLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
MIC	Mary Immaculate College
MIREC	Mary Immaculate College Research Ethics Committee
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NQT	Newly qualified teacher
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OMI	Office of the Minister for Integration (Norway)
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PE	Physical Education
PLC	Professional learning community
SESS	Special Education Support Service
SGB	School Governing Body (South Africa)
SMT	Senior management team
TC	Teaching Council
TPWB	Teacher pedagogical well-being
TWB	Teacher well-being
ULSoE	University of Limerick School of Education
UWC	University of Western Cape
WSD	Whole School Development