

“Bureaucratis strangulatum” and other tales from the chalkface:

New Zealand teachers’ perceptions of and insights into their wellbeing

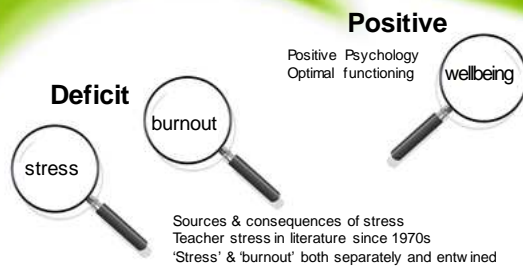
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INTRODUCTION

- Primary-trained late 1980s
- 30 years
- Secondary; primary; intermediate;
- Fiordland College 16 years
 - M.Couns(distinction)
- Counsellor, Careers, Music ...

- Three children and two grandchildren
- Te Anau for 20 years
- Anchorage Motel & Envy Experiences – Nigel mostly runs businesses

Literature: Lenses used



LITERATURE

Three research themes are evident in the literature:

1. Ascertaining the level of function or dysfunction
2. Investigating contributory or causal factors.
 - Personal factors *e.g., perfectionism, procrastination*
 - Environmental factors *e.g., pupil behaviour, workload*
3. Impact of an intervention on positive functioning *e.g., mindfulness*

International evidence that teaching is stressful

Evidence of link btwn teacher wellbeing and student outcomes

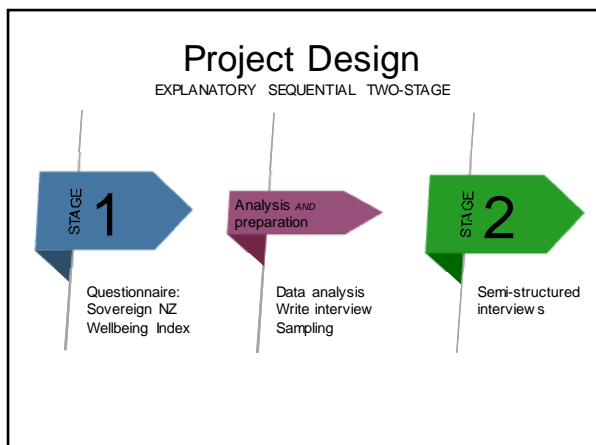
LITERATURE: New Zealand

- Teacher stress very high from 1980s to early 2000s (e.g., Manthei & Solman, 1988; Whitehead, Ryba, & O'Driscoll, 2000)
- High levels of burnout and wellbeing (Denny, 2011)
- Early career teachers (e.g., Grudnoff, 2011; Ward, 2011)
- Principals (e.g., Wylie, 2017; Wylie & MacDonald, 2020)
- Mid-career teachers resilience and wellbeing (Gallagher, 2017)
- Workplace Wellbeing (Dodunski, 2018)
- Mindfulness and teacher wellbeing (e.g., Bernay, 2012; Mazza-Davies, 2015; Whitehead & Daniell, 2016)

Current studies investigating teacher wellbeing are scarce.

RESEARCH QUESTION ONE

1. How do a sample of New Zealand primary and secondary teachers perceive their wellbeing?
 - What factors contribute positively?
 - What factors do teachers consider detract from their wellbeing?
 - What strategies do teachers employ to help maintain wellbeing?
2. How does the wellbeing of a sample of New Zealand primary and secondary teachers compare with the general New Zealand population?



Stage One: Quantitative

Sovereign Wellbeing Index

- Developed in NZ for use with general population
- Draws on European Social Survey
- 134 questions
- Examine prevalence of flourishing and non-flourishing
- Identify patterns and associations

Teacher-centric section

- Specific to teachers and NZ education system
- Some open-ended text questions

Stage One → Stage Two

n = 597
55% interested in being interviewed

Analysis included chi-square tests to identify demographics to consider when selecting interviewees.

Personal demographics:

- Gender
- Years teaching
- Marital status
- Children at home

School demographics:

- Sector
- Decile
- Area – urban/rural
- **Geographic region**

Stage Two: Sampling

Purposeful random sampling

		Participant Wellbeing	
		Awesome wb	Low wellb'g
Region Wellbeing	High wellbeing region		
	Low wellbeing region		3 invited

10 interviews - late 2019

What is wellbeing?

- Multi-faceted and complex
- Two participants - Te Whare Tapa Whā
- No other models of wellbeing were mentioned
- Almost all had difficulty nailing down a succinct answer

It's a feeling. Intuitive. Inner self-knowledge.

LOW WELLBEING

Recognize

- **Inner processes** - *worrying, overwhelmed, feeling stressed*
- **Physical** – *cold sores, skin problems, headaches, anxious tummies*

Impact of

- Appearance of the physical symptoms

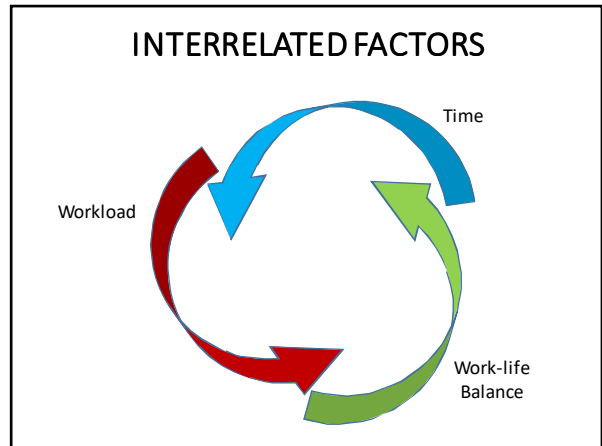
GREAT WELLBEING

Recognize
How the participants felt


"How do I know if I'm good? Cos I feel good."

Impact of
Played out in the work environment
Greater capacity for managing, feeling positive, increased tolerance

"I think if you've got wellbeing, everything just hums along quite nicely."



WORK-LIFE BALANCE



Time
"When my work-life balance is right...I've got time"

Non-work activities

Hours of work contained
"The firmer I can be with working hours, the better for my work-life balance."

Workload – volume of work

WORKLOAD


Volume of work
"It's definitely overwhelming."

Contributory factors:


- **Specific roles**
- **Secondary - curriculum areas**

Mostly:

- **Non-core teaching**
- **Administration**



BUREAUCRATIS STRANGULATUM




"Bureaucratis Strangulatum. ...you have these very small seeds that start off and before you know it, there's this massive big vine that's grown all up around you and it's strangling you."

TIME

"I think that time is always of the essence."

"I need another six hours on my day every day to get done what I need done."



How people treat each other in the workplace

All participants shared narratives involving colleagues



MANAGEMENT

- ve Personal integrity and behaviour
- ve Leadership skills and traits
- +ve Interpersonal
- +ve Supportive systems

STAFFROOM

COLLEAGUES

TAKEAWAYS

- Developing a sense of self in relation to wellbeing
 - Identify low wellbeing signs early
- Strategies re time and workload
- Interpersonal skill development
 - Supportive relationships at work
 - Deal with unhelpful others
 - Assertiveness training
 - Resilience building

Acknowledgements

- Human Potential Centre, AUT: Sovereign Wellbeing Index
- Supervisors: Dr. Keryn Pratt
Dr. Jacques van der Meer
- My family, especially my long-suffering husband, Nigel.

Any questions?

Sovereign Wellbeing Index

- Designed specifically to measure the wellbeing of New Zealanders
- Developed by Human Potential Centre at AUT in partnership with Sovereign Insurance
- Investigated multiple components of wellbeing
 - Contains measures of wellbeing, socio demographics, health, lifestyle
- Web-based survey; 134-items
- Longitudinal – 2012; 2014; 2016 was planned
- Sample size 10,000
- Core questions: European Social Survey (29 European countries)
- Findings provided a benchmark of the wellbeing of the general population of New Zealand

Teacher-centric Section

- Additional questions:
 - School-centric data (e.g., school type; size)
 - Teacher-centric data (e.g., years teaching, qualifications)
- May have revealed patterns that were demographically-centred
- The questions used Ministry of Education terminology
- Open-ended questions:
 - What does wellbeing mean to them?
 - What strategies do they use to support their wellbeing?
 - Is there anything else pertinent to this research you would like to say?

INTERVIEWEES

Gender: 2 male - 8 female

Ethnicity: 2 Māori - 8 non-Māori

Sector: 5 primary - 6 secondary (one teaching both)

Decile: 2 low - 6 middle - 2 high

Location: 4 South Island - 6 North Island