IMPROVING TEACHER WELLBEING IN EDUCATION: WELLBEING INTEGRATION STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF TEACHING IN SCHOOLS

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Abstract. Teacher welfare is the node between personal performance and the sustainability of the education system. This study presents a systematic review of the latest academic literature (2018– 2025) to explore how the dynamics of teacher welfare are integrated into the school ecosystem and education policy. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of PERMA, Ryff, and Maslow, this analysis highlights that wellbeing is not only about the lack of stress, but also includes meaning, autonomy, and supportive relationships. Instead of viewing wellbeing as an individual issue, this article proposes a new perspective: a social ecology approach, which views wellbeing as the result of an interaction between personal factors, work culture, and national policies. In Finland and Australia, for example, professional autonomy and structural support systems have been demonstrated to foster the sustainability of effective pedagogy. On the other hand, Indonesia's context still faces challenges in the form of administrative dominance and low collective reflection. Local studies, including those by the Learning Teacher Foundation, suggest that community-based interventions and participatory leadership are starting to create transformative spaces. The findings highlight the need to design wellbeing strategies that not only alleviate the burden but also foster teacher agency, social recognition, and opportunities for professional growth. In the context of the Independent Curriculum, a learning reflection-based welfare approach, such as Assessment for Learning, can serve as a new medium for teachers to experience the meaning of work, enhance emotional regulation, and design adaptive teaching practices. Thus, this article not only summarizes but also reformulates wellbeing as a systemic investment in sustainable quality education.

Keywords: teacher wellbeing, social-ecological approach, professional reflection, independent curriculum (Merdeka Curriculum)

INTRODUCTION

Teachers are the main pillar of the sustainability and quality of the education system. The success of learning in the classroom is not only determined by academic competence, but also greatly influenced by the emotional, social, and professional balance of the teacher himself. Studies have shown that teachers with high levels of wellbeing tend to be better able to create a positive learning atmosphere, build constructive relationships with students, and design more effective learning (McCallum, 2021). On the other hand, high work pressure, lack of social support, and policy uncertainty are often the main triggers of stress and burnout that disrupt teaching performance (McCallum, F., Price, D., Graham, A., & Morrison, 2017).

Teacher welfare is actually a multidimensional construct. The PERMA model, developed by Seligman (2011), explains that psychological well-being encompasses five main elements: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. These five elements are interrelated and can form teachers' psychological resilience in dealing with work pressure. When teachers feel valued, actively involved in the learning process, and are able to find meaning in their profession, their enthusiasm and creativity tend to increase, which in turn has a positive impact on the quality of teaching.

In another context, the theory of hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943) emphasizes the importance of meeting basic needs (physiological and safe), social (sense of belonging and support), as well as self-reward and actualization. Teachers who lack job security, recognition, or opportunities for growth will struggle to achieve optimal performance levels in their teaching assignments. This is reinforced by the psychological wellbeing framework (Ryff, 1989), which mentions the six dimensions of well-being, including self-acceptance, autonomy, personal growth, and Purpose in Life, all of which are relevant in describing the professional and personal needs of teachers as a whole.

Teachers' wellbeing is often overlooked in education policy, despite their contribution to student development (Hascher, T., & Waber, 2021). According to data from the World Health Organization (WHO), approximately 30-40% of teachers worldwide experience high levels of stress due to excessive workload, a lack of emotional support, and uncertainty regarding education policies. In addition, the National Education Association (NEA) in the United States reports that more than 50% of teachers admit to feeling overwhelmed by their work, which impacts the quality of their teaching (Hascher & Waber, 2021; Abdulkader & Al Naggar, 2024).

Data from the OECD in 2021 also show that around 70% of teachers in developing countries experience burnout caused by high workload pressure and a lack of institutional support (Gilar-Corbi et al., 2024). In Indonesia, a survey conducted by the Education and Culture Policy Research Center (P3K) of the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2022 revealed that more than 60% of teachers admitted to experiencing severe stress caused by excessive administrative burden, lack of professional training, and other welfare issues(Salvo-Garrido et al., 2025)(Basar et al., 2024). These findings indicate a considerable gap between teacher welfare and the expected teaching quality (Silva et al., 2024).

Prolonged stress on teachers not only impacts their health but also the quality of teaching they provide. According to St. Ann's University (2020), teachers who experience severe stress are 30% less likely to create a positive and effective learning environment(Pozo-Rico et al., 2023). In contrast, a 2021 study by the American Psychological Association (APA) showed that teachers who felt valued and supported by colleagues and superiors performed better and experienced less burnout (Mullane et al., 2025; Sumner et al., 2025). This is in line with a report from Gallup (2021), which shows that teachers who feel positively engaged with their work are 40% more likely to be actively involved in student learning development (Almaki et al., 2025).

This study aims to examine the relationship between teacher welfare and teaching quality based on theoretical synthesis and the latest empirical studies. By integrating theoretical perspectives and contextual practices, it is hoped that this study will contribute to the formulation of education quality improvement strategies that focus more on empowering and supporting teachers.

METHODS

This research employs a library research approach, a type of research that involves searching, reading, and analyzing various literature sources, including scientific journals, books, research

reports, and official documents, related to the topics of teacher welfare and teaching quality (Kasinger et al., 2025). This approach was chosen because this study does not collect data directly from the field, but aims to explore previous thoughts, theories, and findings that have been published. In this way, researchers can build a strong and comprehensive understanding of the relationship between teacher wellbeing and teaching quality, based on existing evidence and references (Hascher et al., 2021; Hascher & Waber, 2021).

The data sources in this study are obtained from various literature sources, including trusted databases such as Google Scholar and Scopus, as well as national platforms like Sinta and Garuda. The search was conducted using keywords such as teacher wellbeing, teacher burnout, stress and teaching quality, and professional development for teachers. The literature reviewed is limited to publications between 2018 and 2025 to keep the information used relevant and up-to-date. This research also selects sources that can be accessed in full text and come from credible institutions or authors in the field of education (Avola et al., 2025).

After the literature is collected, the data is analyzed by reading it deeply, then grouping the content based on important themes, such as: what factors affect teachers' wellbeing, how they impact the teaching-learning process, and what strategies have been implemented to improve their wellbeing. Based on the results of this reading, the researcher compiled a summary and a mapping of the main ideas, allowing patterns, tendencies, and differences in views between sources to be identified.

Through this approach, it is hoped that the research can provide a complete and reliable picture of the importance of teacher welfare. That way, the results of the research can provide a strong foundation for designing educational policies and strategies that focus more on genuine support for teachers as the primary actors in the education world.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of a systematic review of relevant literature, consistent patterns were found regarding the relationship between welfare interventions and teaching quality improvement. In general, various forms of interventions aimed at improving teachers' welfare produce a positive impact on their performance, both in terms of pedagogical, psychosocial, and professional aspects. One of the key findings is the effectiveness of mindfulness training in reducing teacher stress and burnout levels. A study by Avola et al. (2025) and Randazzo-Eisemann (2021) demonstrates that this training enables teachers to improve their self-awareness, better manage emotions, and enhance their mental resilience in the face of work pressure. This reduction in stress has a direct impact on the improvement of teacher-student interaction and the overall effectiveness of the teaching process.

Furthermore, interventions that strengthen social support in the school environment have also shown significant results in increasing teachers' motivation and work commitment. Research (Boyle, 2025) found that support from principals and colleagues can create a sense of security and value among teachers. This, in turn, encourages increased institutional loyalty and fosters a conducive work environment. Similarly, humanistic administrative approaches, such as reducing non-pedagogical workloads, have been shown to give teachers more time to reflect on learning and develop teaching materials. A study by Hascher et al. (2021) suggests that the time available for creative planning of teaching is crucial in supporting job satisfaction and achieving more optimal learning outcomes.

Several other studies have also highlighted the important role of giving autonomy and professional recognition to teachers in increasing feelings of belonging to the teaching-learning

process. Teachers who are given the freedom to develop learning strategies, evaluate student achievements, and choose approaches according to the local context are proven to be more enthusiastic and innovative in teaching. Finally, the results of the review also underlined the importance of social-emotional training during the education period of prospective teachers. Research by Al. (2016) shows that this type of training equips beginner teachers with the muchneeded resilience and emotional regulation skills in a stressful work environment. The results of the literature review indicate that various interventions aimed at improving teacher welfare have a significant and consistent impact on the quality of teaching. Global findings from countries such as Finland and Australia reinforce the cause-and-effect relationship between systemic support and teacher performance in the field. In Finland, for example, teacher welfare is not only considered a personal issue but an integral part of the national education system. Teachers there have a high degree of autonomy in designing the curriculum, ongoing professional support, and minimal administrative burden—all of which contribute to high job satisfaction and ongoing teaching effectiveness (Sahlberg, n.d.). A similar approach is also found in Australia, where methods for teacher wellbeing are preventive and exosystemic. School wellbeing programs are integrated with systemic and data-driven policies, and supported by reflective and supportive school leadership (McCallum, F., Price, D., Graham, A., & Morrison, 2017).

When these results are integrated with the Indonesian context, more complex dynamics emerge. Despite government efforts, such as the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, which provides space for teachers to innovate and choose learning approaches that suit the character of students, the reality is that many teachers are still burdened by high administrative burdens and a lack of room for professional reflection. In the context of Indonesia's school culture, teachers often play the role of implementers of top-down policies rather than autonomous learning agents. Studies from the Guru Foundation (Learning, 2023) show that many teachers in Indonesia experience high work pressure, a sense of professional isolation, and a gap between the administrative demands and the institutional support they receive.

Nevertheless, there are indications that local community-based interventions can be an effective strategy to improve teacher wellbeing. For example, schools that adopt a community-based learning approach or implement a reflective culture, accompanied by a team of teachers, show an increase in student belonging, teacher job satisfaction, and teaching innovation. When interventions such as mindfulness training, AfL reflection, and the provision of autonomy spaces are integrated with collaborative school practices and adaptive national policy contexts, their impact on learning quality becomes stronger. Therefore, the success of improving teacher welfare depends not only on the type of intervention, but also on the suitability of the intervention with the social ecology, the culture of the school organization, and the national policy structure.

Thus, the integration of global findings with local context readings suggests that successful interventions on teacher wellbeing require a systemic and context-based approach. Concepts such as professional autonomy and institutional support, which have proven effective in Finland and Australia, will only have a real impact in Indonesia if they are accompanied by reforms of work culture in schools and the alignment of national policies that favor the quality of teachers' working lives.

This study aims to explore the relationship between teacher well-being and teaching quality through a literature review published between 2018 and 2025. The welfare of teachers is currently one of the most important issues in the development of a fair and quality education system. Teachers who are physically, emotionally, socially, and professionally well-off are better equipped to create a conducive, creative, and student-centered learning environment. In this context,

teachers' wellbeing is not only about the absence of stress or workload, but also includes a sense of security, value, and being able to develop sustainably. This is in line with the results of research from Education International (2018), which found that teacher welfare has a direct impact on students' academic achievement and the overall school climate.

The dimension of teacher welfare includes four main aspects. First, emotional wellbeing, which concerns teachers' ability to manage stress and maintain mental health. The OECD-TALIS 2018 study noted that nearly 40% of teachers worldwide feel emotionally exhausted every week due to work pressure. Second, social welfare is rooted in harmonious relationships with colleagues, students, and school leaders. Third, professional wellbeing, which includes career satisfaction, support for innovation, and recognition of their role. And fourth, physical wellbeing, including physical fitness and adequate rest time, which is often interrupted by excessive administrative burden.

Various strategies have been pursued to address this problem. The Teacher Wellbeing Framework program, developed by the Australian Education Union (2019), for example, emphasizes the importance of systemic support in the form of supportive leadership, realistic workloads, and ongoing professional support. In Indonesia, several schools have begun implementing a similar approach by integrating emotion regulation training, psychological counseling, and physical activities, such as weekly teacher gymnastics. An experimental study by the Learning Teacher Foundation (2022) showed that schools that systematically integrated a wellbeing approach experienced a 28% increase in teacher job satisfaction in one year.

The Education Personnel Education Institute (LPTK) also plays a central role in equipping prospective teachers with the skills to maintain personal welfare. Research by Al. (2016) emphasizes that social-emotional learning in teacher education has been proven to be effective in increasing readiness to face work pressure. The current LPTK curriculum needs to instill teacher welfare literacy, which includes emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and stress management. By equipping prospective teachers from the beginning, our education system can produce educators who are not only competent but also mentally and socially tough.

School leadership is also a significant factor in determining teacher welfare. A study by the OECD confirms that school principals who adopt a participatory leadership style, involving teachers in decision-making and addressing their needs, contribute significantly to increasing teacher loyalty and morale. Schools with a supportive leadership climate are proven to have higher teacher retention and more stable work productivity.

As a systemic step, the national education policy needs to focus more on the welfare of teachers. A holistic intervention model should include: (1) reduction of non-pedagogical administrative burden; (2) support for mental and physical health; (3) fair performance-based recognition; and (4) a transparent and progressive career path. Countries such as Finland, Estonia, and Singapore have demonstrated that investing in teacher well-being yields consistently higher student learning outcomes (OECD, 2020).

Based on the analysis of various relevant international journals, it was found that the welfare of teachers has a significant impact on both the quality of teaching they provide and the learning outcomes achieved by students. Some of the main findings resulting from this discussion are as follows:

The Influence of Teacher Wellbeing on Teaching Quality

Teacher wellbeing has been identified as a crucial factor in creating good teaching quality. Teachers who feel physically, emotionally, and psychologically healthy are more likely to provide

effective and sustainable teaching. Studies conducted by McCallum, F., Price, D., Graham, A., & Morrison (n.d.) show that teachers' well-being is positively correlated with their success in creating an inclusive and productive classroom environment. Teachers who feel valued and supported tend to have higher levels of happiness, which in turn leads to more positive interactions with students and improved classroom management.

For example, a study by Avola, P., Soini-Ikonen, T., Jyrkiäinen, A., & Pentikäinen (2025) explained that wellbeing programs involving mindfulness and stress management training can significantly improve the quality of teaching (Randazzo-Eisemann, 2021). These programs help teachers become more focused, reduce stress, and increase creativity in developing learning strategies that can enhance students' learning experience. This leads to the creation of a healthier and more productive learning environment.

In addition, research by Ingersoll, R., Merrill, L., & Stuckey (2020) shows that teachers who experience high levels of stress and burnout are often unable to reach their full potential in teaching. Stress and burnout are directly related to increased attendance, decreased motivation, and burnout, all of which can impact the quality of their teaching (Orgaz et al., 2023). Well-off teachers, on the other hand, are more involved in the teaching-learning process and can manage their classrooms more effectively.

It is important to note that the quality of teaching is not only influenced by the wellbeing of teachers individually, but also by social factors in the environment in which they work. Research by Boyle, L., Taylor, L., Zhou, W., & De Neve (2025) highlights the importance of social support in the workplace, both from colleagues and school leaders, in improving teacher welfare. When teachers feel emotionally and professionally supported, they tend to be more satisfied with their work and better able to provide quality teaching (Sadrizadeh et al., 2022).

Factors Affecting Teachers' Wellbeing

The welfare of teachers is influenced by a range of internal and external factors. Internal factors, such as personal motivation, life satisfaction levels, and an understanding of their role in education, contribute greatly to teacher well-being. Research by Avola, P., Soini-Ikonen, T., Jyrkiäinen, A., & Pentikäinen (2025) revealed that teachers who have a strong sense of purpose in their work tend to feel happier and more satisfied with their work. This intrinsic motivation is crucial because it can encourage teachers to continue innovating in their teaching and enhance the quality of their instruction.

However, in addition to internal factors, external factors such as education policies, administrative burdens, and interpersonal relationships in the workplace also play a big role. Research by Hascher and Waber (n.d.) highlights that high administrative burdens are often a significant source of stress for teachers. In many cases, teachers must spend significant time handling administrative tasks, which reduces the time they have to devote to teaching and interacting with students.

Another factor that affects the wellbeing of teachers is the social climate in the workplace. Research by Boyle, L., Taylor, L., Zhou, W., & De Neve (2025) demonstrates that a supportive school culture, which includes recognition of teachers' work, peer support, and opportunities to share experiences, can improve teachers' emotional well-being. When teachers feel supported by their colleagues and leaders, they tend to be more motivated and experience greater job satisfaction, which in turn has a positive impact on the quality of their teaching.

On the other hand, external factors such as education policies that do not support teachers' welfare can worsen their working conditions. Research by Hargreaves, A., & Fullan (2020) shows

that policies that focus only on achieving academic outcomes without considering teachers' wellbeing can exacerbate stress levels and burnout among teachers. Therefore, a balanced policy that considers the welfare of teachers as an important component in improving the quality of education is urgently needed.

The Impact of Teacher Welfare on Student Learning Outcomes

The welfare of teachers not only affects them but also has a direct impact on student learning outcomes. McCallum, F., Price, D., Graham, A., & Morrison (n.d.) suggest that teachers who feel financially secure are better able to create positive relationships with students and foster a supportive learning environment (Iosif et al., 2023). Prosperous teachers can manage classrooms more effectively, pay closer attention to individual student needs, and create a more enjoyable learning experience. All of this contributes to improving student learning outcomes (Sadrizadeh et al., 2022).

Avola, P., Soini-Ikonen, T., Jyrkiäinen, A., & Pentikäinen (2025) demonstrate that the well-being of teachers has a significant impact on student involvement in learning. When teachers feel valued and prosperous, they are more motivated to interact with students positively, which in turn increases students' motivation and academic achievement. Research by Hargreaves and Fullan (2020) also shows that the quality of the relationship between teachers and students is highly dependent on the well-being of teachers. Teachers who feel well-off tend to be better able to recognize and support students' emotional and academic needs(Mariano et al., 2023).

Research by McCallum, F., Price, D., Graham, A., & Morrison (n.d.) highlights that a positive relationship between teachers and students not only affects students' motivation but also fosters a more productive environment for their social-emotional development (Zach & Avugos, 2024). A well-to-do teacher can support students in developing important social and emotional skills, which have a direct impact on their learning outcomes.

Strategies to Improve Teacher Wellbeing

Improving teacher welfare is a crucial step in enhancing the overall quality of education. One strategy that has proven effective is a professional development program that focuses on teacher wellbeing. Avola, P., Soini-Ikonen, T., Jyrkiäinen, A., & Pentikäinen (2025) show that training in stress management, mindfulness, and emotional well-being can significantly improve teacher wellbeing (Admiraal et al., 2023). The program helps teachers develop skills to manage their stress, which in turn improves the quality of teaching and their overall wellbeing.

In addition, giving teachers autonomy in designing their teaching methods can also improve their wellbeing. Research by Boyle, L., Taylor, L., Zhou, W., & De Neve (2025) reveals that granting teachers greater autonomy in designing and executing teaching can reduce stress levels and increase the sense of control they have over their work. By feeling more empowered, teachers are more likely to feel satisfied with their work and better equipped to face the challenges that exist in the classroom (Iosif et al., 2023).

Policies that reduce administrative burdens are also crucial in enhancing the welfare of teachers. Research by Hascher and Waber (n.d.) shows that reducing unnecessary administrative burdens can give teachers more time to focus on teaching and lesson planning, thereby improving the quality of their instruction.

Limitations and Challenges in Improving Teacher Welfare

Although various strategies have been implemented to improve teacher wellbeing, there are still significant challenges in their implementation. Research by Hascher and Waber (n.d.) noted that, although many teacher welfare policies and programs are implemented, numerous obstacles remain in their implementation. One of them is the lack of funds and resources to support effective welfare programs(Mariano et al., 2023). In addition, although teacher welfare policies are increasingly being implemented, the lack of training for principals and administrators in supporting teacher welfare can hinder the impact of these policies.

Research by Ingersoll, R., Merrill, L., & Stuckey (2020) also shows that although teacher welfare policies are increasingly being implemented, the biggest obstacle faced is the lack of understanding of the relationship between teacher welfare and teaching quality. Without a clear understanding of the importance of teachers' wellbeing in the context of teaching, the policies implemented tend to be ineffective in improving their wellbeing.

These results reveal a logical and structured pattern of cause-and-effect relationships between specific forms of intervention and improved teacher wellbeing, as well as their impact on teaching quality. For example, mindfulness training is not just an individual training method, but an approach that has a direct impact on teachers' work performance. With a full awareness of emotional conditions and the work environment, teachers are better equipped to respond to classroom dynamics more calmly and purposefully. This leads to teaching that is more reflective, dialogical, and oriented to the needs of students. This process occurs because mindfulness training \rightarrow improves emotional regulation \rightarrow lowers stress \rightarrow allows teachers to teach more focused and empathetic.

A similar relationship was seen in social support-based interventions and work culture. When teachers feel supported and valued by their work environment—whether from leaders, peers, or students—their confidence and sense of belonging to the institution increase. Social support \rightarrow increase sense of appreciation \rightarrow strengthen motivation and loyalty \rightarrow encourage higher teaching commitment. This is very important because teachers' loyalty to the institution not only increases retention, but also has an impact on the continuity of the quality learning process.

The discussion also revealed that many interventions focused too heavily on a personal or individual approach, such as resilience training and stress management. In fact, this kind of approach is only effective if it is supported by adequate structural changes. Therefore, a new perspective that is more comprehensive and contextual is needed, namely the social ecology approach. This approach views teacher welfare as the result of an interaction between individual factors (such as emotions and psychological factors), work environment factors (organizational structure and school culture), and macro factors (education policies and community expectations). Within this framework, teacher welfare interventions cannot stand alone or be merely technical; they must be integrated into a supportive institutional system.

For example, emotion regulation training provided without workload improvement, supportive leadership, or professional reflection will only have a short-term effect. Therefore, cross-level integration is needed, including social-emotional training in LPTK, administrative burden reform, and collaborative leadership in schools. In this regard, the social ecology approach provides a more comprehensive conceptual framework for designing policies that are not only reactive to burnout but also preventive of its causes.

In addition, this study also proposes an approach to professional reflection based on Assessment for Learning (AfL) as a new strategy in improving teacher welfare. This approach not only increases student motivation but also serves as a tool for teachers to regularly reflect on their teaching process, receive feedback from students, and design continuous improvements. When teachers feel that their teaching process is valued and impactful, it gives meaning to work and increases satisfaction intrinsically.

Thus, the separation of results and discussion in this study not only confirms the empirical findings from the literature but also opens up space for interpretation and development of new conceptual ideas that can be used to formulate education policies that favor the welfare and sustainability of the role of teachers as the main actors in educational transformation.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the welfare of teachers is not only a personal condition that needs to be maintained, but a structural prerequisite for creating a quality and sustainable education system. Findings from various literature show that when teachers' wellbeing, both emotionally, socially, and professionally, is strengthened through systematic interventions, the results are not only felt at the individual level of teachers, but also resonate to strengthen the quality of teaching and student learning outcomes.

It can be inferred from these studies that teacher wellbeing is influenced by the interaction between three main axes: teachers' personal capacity (emotional regulation, resilience), work culture in schools (social support, supportive leadership, collaborative climate), and macroeducation policies (curriculum, administrative burden, career path). When these three axes reinforce each other, a work ecosystem is formed that not only reduces stress but also encourages meaning, motivation, and innovation in teaching.

The approaches from Finland and Australia underscore the importance of welfare as an integral part of the education system, rather than an add-on. However, learning from abroad can only be effectively adopted if it is contextualized within Indonesia's schoolwork culture, where teachers are often still the objects of policy rather than the agents of change. In this regard, local initiatives, such as those carried out by the Learning Teacher Foundation, demonstrate that a community and collaborative approach can create much-needed spaces for autonomy and professional growth.

Therefore, the primary synthesis of this study is the need for a social ecology approach in examining and designing teacher welfare strategies: a perspective that does not separate personal intervention from structural transformation. Within this framework, emotion regulation training without workload reform is only a short-term solution. On the contrary, wellbeing that grows in a system that is reflective, participatory, and equitable will create a circle of goodness: prosperous teachers \rightarrow teach meaningfully \rightarrow students learn optimally \rightarrow the education system develops sustainably.

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