Developing novel approaches to support teaching wellbeing

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Recent surveys of teacher wellbeing in the UK context present a grim picture: teachers report high levels of stress (ESP, 2018) and data indicate unprecedented numbers of practitioners are leaving the profession (DfE, 2018). In response to this crisis of teacher wellbeing, well-intentioned schools have adopted a wellbeing agenda which seeks to support teachers by providing a range of interventions, such as yoga and Pilates classes (Stanley, 2019). We argue that such support can be problematic because it places the responsibility of fostering wellbeing on the individual when teachers’ wellbeing is often threatened by structural causes beyond teachers’ control. This year, we have introduced sessions to support the wellbeing of trainee teachers on an initial teacher education course. In order to develop these sessions, and to develop approaches to supporting teacher wellbeing more widely that acknowledge the structural causes of stress, we have received funding to carry out interviews with 18 teachers in secondary and primary school to understand the wellbeing support being offered to them and teachers’ views on the appropriateness of the support. The teachers were selected using a purposeful sampling strategy to maximise variation in the role, type of school and years of experience. The semi-structured interviews ask teachers to describe the wellbeing support they currently receive and how effective they feel it is in supporting their wellbeing. We intend to present data from the initial stages of data collection and report how practitioners’ views can be used to develop new approaches to support teacher wellbeing.