

Teacher Education, Well-Being and a Sense of Belonging

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Abstract

This article draws from a Canadian project examining the holistic dimensions of well-being in teacher education programs. In keeping with calls to action in research and in the practice of teacher education, conceptualizations offering a wider view of well-being—beyond physical, mental, and emotional health—guided the inquiry. This study presents findings from a questionnaire disseminated to students in three teacher education programs in Western Canada. The results indicated that the teacher education programs addressed the *vocational, social, intellectual, and cultural* dimensions of well-being. Dimensions relating to *emotional, physical, spiritual, and financial* well-being were not consistently addressed. Of note was the financial precarity impacting the well-being of a majority of respondents. Since a sense of belonging was identified as an important indicator of well-being, especially for students who identify as Black, Indigenous, and people of colour (BIPOC), these findings may guide teacher education programs in adopting productive ways to navigate the distinct realities of students in a post-pandemic society.

Keywords: well-being, sense of belonging, teacher education, culturally responsive pedagogy, BIPOC

Résumé

Cet article s'inspire d'une recherche canadienne faisant l'étude des multiples dimensions du bien-être dans la formation initiale des enseignants. Conformément aux *appels à l'action* dans le domaine de la recherche et de la pratique de la formation initiale en enseignement, des conceptualisations offrant une vision plus large du bien-être, au-delà de la santé physique, mentale et émotionnelle, ont guidé la recherche. Cette étude présente les résultats d'un questionnaire distribué aux étudiants de trois programmes de formation en enseignement dans l'Ouest canadien. Les résultats indiquent que ces programmes de formation abordent les dimensions *professionnelle, sociale, intellectuelle et culturelle* du bien-être. Cependant, les dimensions liées au bien-être *émotionnel, physique, spirituel et financier* nécessitent davantage d'attention. On remarque aussi que la précarité financière impacte le bien-être de la majorité des personnes interrogées. Enfin, puisque le sentiment d'appartenance est identifié comme un indicateur important du bien-être, en particulier pour les étudiants qui s'identifient comme Noirs, Autochtones

et personnes de couleur, ces résultats peuvent guider les programmes de formation en enseignement dans l'exploration de moyens efficaces pour naviguer entre les réalités distinctes des étudiants dans la société postpandémique.

Mots-clés : bien-être, sentiment d'appartenance, formation à l'enseignement, pédagogie culturellement adaptée, diversité culturelle, PANDC

Introduction

The impact of societal shifts over the last five years—including the spread of a virulent pandemic, the angst of a global climate crisis, the instability of geopolitical powers, and extant polarizing perspectives—are leading many Faculties of Education to consider how to address loneliness, anxiety, depression, and feelings of not belonging in teacher education programs (Shirley et al., 2020; Hill et al., 2020; Sokal & Eblie Trudel, 2023). Since previous literature estimated that up to 30% of teachers are leaving the profession within the first five years of service (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2013; Karsenti & Collin, 2013), teacher well-being has come to the forefront of much research (Choquette et al., 2024; Katz et al., 2020; Sokal et al., 2025). Factors like occupational stress, burnout, emotional exhaustion, heavy workloads, and lack of support continue to be cited as reasons for leaving the profession (Harmsen et al., 2018; Squires et al., 2022).

Knowing that the pandemic further complicated teacher recruitment and retention (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2021; Sokal et al., 2020, 2021; Williams et al., 2022), it is essential to address these challenges and the declining recruitment and retention rates in the profession. To gain a comprehensive understanding of this trend, we turned to the source, teacher education programs, to examine the ways in which the distinct realities of students, of context and of content, in a post-pandemic world are navigated.

A Sense of Belonging

Research points to revisiting educational practices, policies, and programs in teacher education to better respond to the changes incurred over the last five years (Corcoran & O'Flaherty, 2022; Hill et al., 2020; Reagan & Hambacher, 2021; Sokal & Eblie Trudel,

2023). Considering the dire attrition rate in the profession and the ensuing focus on sustainable well-being initiatives, our attention is drawn to the conceptualizations associated with a sense of belonging. This construct has been identified as a pathway to sustaining success, engagement, and well-being in college students, specifically racialized students (Gopalan & Brady, 2020; Strayhorn, 2012).

As Faculties of Education aim to diversify pre-service populations in their programs (Janzen & Cranston, 2016; Ryan et al., 2009; Sulz et al., 2023), approaches that build capacity, foster positive and effective relations, and cultivate a climate and culture that promotes human rights, dignity, equality, and belonging become important considerations (Cassidy et al., 2020; Liddicoat, 2022; Ragoonaden et al., 2015; Reagan & Hamba-cher, 2021; Walton & Brady, 2017).

Conceptualizations like Strayhorn's (2012, 2019, 2022) sense of belonging address the significance of creating conditions where positive relationships, social supports, connectedness, and feeling cared about, accepted, respected, and valued are associated with successful completion of post-secondary programs. In both experimental (Yeager et al., 2016) and correlational (Strayhorn, 2012) studies, researchers have found that students who feel they belong seek out and use campus resources, furthering their success. In addition, belonging may shield students from stress, thus improving mental health (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Shirley & MacDonald, 2016).

In keeping with the importance of creating a community anchored in a sense of belonging, Carales and Nora (2020) reiterated that building community and belonging was especially true for students identifying as Black, Indigenous, and people of colour (BIPOC). Students who have been historically, persistently, and systematically marginalized due to factors like race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and Indigenous identity have faced systemic barriers to their full participation in education (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Crenshaw, 1989). Literature indicates that BIPOC students, including first-generation post-secondary students, report lower belonging as well as greater uncertainty about their program completion (Strayhorn, 2022; Walton & Cohen, 2007).

Based on the existing body of work, we propose that one way to address and to support the well-being of students is to create a sense of belonging that respects the plurality of gender, sexual orientation, disability, and racial identities of students. Building on Strayhorn's (2022) premise that successful students are healthy students, we posit that

healthy students are successful students. We refer to Strayhorn's (2012) definition of a sense of belonging:

sense of belonging refers to students' perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, and the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the campus community or others on campus such as faculty, staff, and peers. (p. 24)

To support this premise, several Canadian educational provincial policy documents addressing reconciliation and decolonization identify a sense of belonging and a sense of worth as important considerations in Indigenous student success. Based on Kirkness and Barnhardt's (1991) 4Rs (respect, responsibility, relevance, and reciprocity), documents such as British Columbia's *First Peoples Principles of Learning* (First Nations Education Steering Committee [FNESC], 2006/2007) and Manitoba's *Mamàhtawisiwin: The Wonder We Are Born With — An Indigenous Education Policy Framework* (Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning, 2022) recognize and validate local and place-based Indigenous cultural and community engagement as indicators of well-being.

- Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.
- Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).

In particular, *Mamàhtawisiwin* (Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning, 2022) states that equitable, inclusive, and diverse education systems foster a sense of belonging in all learners so that they feel they can succeed, take responsibility, and find meaning and purpose in life (p. 8). As a pathway to an Indigenous-inclusive education system, this document also addresses the relationship between wellness and a sense of belonging.

Wellness is a balance of the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. This balance is enriched as individuals have a sense of belonging and connectedness within their families, to community, and to culture. (p. 16)

With the above in mind, we now turn to the discussion of conceptualizations of wellness and well-being as pertinent to teacher education.

Wellness and Well-Being

As noted in the above section, within the context of education, the terms “wellness” and “well-being” tend to be used interchangeably. We sought to differentiate these terms to facilitate a clearer vision of how to engage in this research. By clarifying these terms, we established theoretical and empirical foundations guiding our research (Carter & Andersen, 2023; Dodge et al., 2012). To begin with, we address the term “wellness.” Hettler (1984) defined wellness as “an active process through which people become aware of, and make choices toward, a more successful existence” (p. 14). Building on Hettler’s work, Myers et al. (1998) proposed that a model of wellness is a dynamic process of physical, mental, and spiritual optimization and integration. The Wheel of Wellness model is an integrative model based on cross-disciplinary research on the characteristics of healthy people who live longer and have a higher quality of life. Myers et al. (2000) presented the Wheel with 12 subtasks: sense of worth, sense of control, realistic beliefs, emotional awareness and management, problem solving and creativity, sense of humour, nutrition, exercise, selfcare, stress management, gender identity, and cultural identity.

In keeping with the concept of wellness as holistic and multidimensional, Swarbrick (2006) proposed physical, emotional, intellectual, social, environmental, and spiritual dimensions supporting a balanced, healthy approach to the challenges of life. Following the above conceptualization of wellness, well-being refers to the various areas of an individual’s life that intersect and combine to create connections, contentment, and a sense of purpose and of living well. While there are various definitions, this understanding of well-being has emerged predominantly from the discipline of positive psychology through models such as Seligman’s (2011) PERMA framework and is widely endorsed (Cherkowski & Walker, 2018; Corcoran & O’Flaherty, 2022; Kutsyuruba et al., 2021; Shirley et al., 2020). Conceptualizations of wellness and well-being reiterating the Indigenous concepts of the 4Rs (FNESC, 2006/2007; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning, 2022) and focusing on creating community and belonging through a sense of worth, positive relationships, positive engagements, and self-care align well with the holistic approaches in the literature (Myers et al., 2000; Squires et al., 2022; Swarbrick, 2006).

In keeping with a holistic approach to well-being, Price and McCallum (2015) adapted Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological model to educational contexts. For the

purpose of this study, we refer to McCallum and Price's (2016) definition of teacher well-being, which aligns with the main points of the above literature review:

Wellbeing is diverse and fluid respecting individual, family and community beliefs, values, experiences, culture, opportunities and contexts across time and change. It is something we all aim for, underpinned by positive notions, yet is unique to each of us and provides us with a sense of who we are which needs to be respected. (p. 17)

Holistic Dimensions of Well-Being

Nine dimensions of well-being were defined as relevant for teacher education, according to Strayhorn's (2012, 2019, 2022) sense of belonging, Myers et al.'s (2000) sense of worth, sense of control, emotional awareness and management, sense of humour, nutrition, exercise, selfcare, stress management, and cultural identity, and Swarbrick's (2006) holistic model involving *emotional, intellectual, physical, social, spiritual, and environmental* dimensions of well-being. Further considerations about *cultural, financial, and vocational* dimensions of well-being were taken from the literature (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Hettler, 1984; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; Myers et al., 1998, 2000).

In sum, we note that wellness and well-being have an extensive literature emphasizing interconnected dimensions and attributes relating to community-based beliefs, values, and traditions. This is similar to sociological cultural perspectives in teacher education, where the focus is on teaching and learning relating to local and place-based values and beliefs (Aitken & Radford, 2018; Cassidy et al., 2020; Cochran-Smith, 2003; Cochran-Smith et al., 2015; FNESC, 2006/2007; Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning, 2022). Importantly, holistic perspectives based on reciprocal respect and positive relations are important considerations in both wellness and well-being.

Methods

This article draws from a study examining programmatic considerations in Canadian teacher education programs to determine the support for and promotion of teacher well-being. Our research included both quantitative and qualitative data using a mixed-method

design (McMillan & Wergin, 2010). Prior to data collection, a general literature review, environmental scan, and systematic review were completed to help guide the creation and implementation of the data collection instruments. Based on the above conceptualizations, a survey was created built on the nine holistic dimensions of well-being: emotional, intellectual, physical, social, spiritual, cultural, financial, vocational, and environmental (Kutsyuruba et al., 2023). Definitions came from an extensive literature review, were determined prior to the survey, and were included in the student survey. In the questionnaire, pre-service teachers were asked about beliefs, values, experiences, culture, opportunities, and contexts unique to each of them to provide researchers with a better sense of who they are, and which dimensions of well-being needed to be addressed. For the purposes of this article, we use data from three teacher education programs in Western Canada.

Data Collection and Analysis

Requests to participate in the research were sent out via student newsletters in June and July of 2023 to three post-baccalaureate teacher education programs in Western Canada, ranging in duration between 11 months and 16 months. A QR code leading to a letter of consent and access to the survey was provided. The survey, sent to approximately 764 students, included questions to collect both quantitative (Likert scale) and qualitative (open-ended) responses. Qualitative data were analyzed inductively using the constant comparison method (Gay & Airasian, 2003; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and quantitative data is presented using descriptive statistics.

In the next section, we provide an overview of the quantitative and qualitative findings from the questionnaire that examined nine dimensions of well-being: emotional, intellectual, physical, social, spiritual, cultural, financial, vocational, and environmental. Results across the three programs are summarized to remove repetition and to provide clarity. Following the demographic questions, participants responded to a series of questions using a five-point Likert scale, followed by a series of open-ended questions relating to their experiences with the nine dimensions of well-being. Tables providing descriptive statistics of the collected data are presented in the Appendix.

Demographic Information

In total, 95 respondents completed the survey. This is representative of a 12% return rate. Of the respondents, 89% identified as female, 8% identified as male, and 2% identified as non-binary. Six percent of participants identified as Indigenous, and 51% identified as a member of a racialized group or visible minority, a person of colour, or an analogous term. Eighteen percent of respondents identified as an individual with significant and persistent or recurring mobility, sensory, learning, or other physical impairments, or with a mental health impairment. In sum, a majority of respondents identified as women belonging to BIPOC communities.

Results

Emotional Well-Being

Almost 67% of respondents indicated that their teacher education program did not address their emotional well-being. Comments from respondents included “nothing—surviving the course load is our preparation” and “no specific activities prepared besides personal experience in practicum.” Many respondents requested a mandatory course on stress management and resilience techniques to address the high levels of anxiety experienced during their programs.

Open-ended questions identified that access to program advisors and embedded counsellors and support from instructors, faculty advisors, school advisors, and staff were beneficial. Participants also identified the cohort model as a program structure that provided peer support when dealing with stressors. For example, one respondent noted that “overarchingly, being together in a cohort of people who have similar values and experiences helps us to build community and depend on this community when we are struggling.”

Intellectual Well-Being

Results indicated coursework, practicums, and professional development opportunities provided students with ample opportunities to exercise their intellectual well-being. One participant stated that “there were constantly some workshops offered to deepen our knowledge on various topics in education.” Opportunities to learn also included orga-

nized clubs, office hours, specific lessons with peer mentors, and inquiry projects. In most cases, professional development within the school district was readily available, with one participant recalling “I engaged in [professional development] days during practicum that were set up by my school advisor.”

Other comments focused on intellectual engagement, such as “courses in which we talk about the concept of social-emotional learning and how that factors into the dynamic of learning in the classroom.” Specific course curricula where “identity activities, recognizing cultural differences and learning about Indigenous ways of knowing and being, and learning about sexual orientation and gender identity [SOGI]” were also identified.

Physical Well-Being

Maintaining physical well-being was challenging for most respondents. As one participant stated, “we are expected to sit for very long periods of time with no alternative options. The program also leaves little time for students to be physically active outside of school.” Another suggested that:

Physical health courses should run through both winter and spring terms so that students can continue to partake in physical activity in class—as well as the benefit of creating space for a more comprehensive look at healthy living revolving around teaching topics such as sex, sexuality and gender identity, recognizing abusive behaviour in relationships, etc.

Another student requested “courses within the program that teach about healthy ways to cope with stress as a teacher.”

Social Well-Being

Social well-being was identified as a strength of the teacher education programs, which, as one respondent stated with regard to their program, put “lots of focus on taking care of its students and building that social and local network of understanding.” There were many opportunities to connect through the cohort model during coursework on campus and during practicum in the school districts. These opportunities provided spaces to share understandings about values and beliefs and their impact on professional practice.

Social opportunities to connect by building friendships, collaborating, sharing, and having a common purpose were prevalent. One respondent wrote,

I love the bond my cohort has. While we can be a competitive bunch, we have cultivated a space where we can chat about anything—school-related, life-related, anything. I feel like I have found another group of friends that I know can last a lifetime and I am extremely grateful.

Another participant shared that “we are often told about our shared goal as future teachers and how important the profession is. That has definitely cultivated a strong sense of belonging and purpose.”

Spiritual Well-Being

The spiritual dimension of well-being was more or less attended to in the programs. The respondents shared that course-based activities about identity, reflective exercises, and the learnings about Indigenous ways of knowing and being, especially for non-Indigenous students, supported this dimension. One respondent wrote that “working through projects that involve your own identity reminded me of where I am from.” Specifically, the reflective exercises provided the opportunity “to talk about your values, reflect on those values, [and do] activities to reflect on personal growth and develop your purpose as a teacher.” Other respondents felt that spiritual well-being was promoted in the curriculum via concepts related to Indigenous ways of knowing and being. For example, one respondent shared that “throughout the program, we were encouraged to consider the Medicine Wheel and the development of the ‘whole child,’ which includes spirituality/interconnectedness.” Another wrote, “they get us to cultivate our beliefs and values a lot through our documentation of learning, and we occasionally do nature walks or reflection on our connection to the earth.”

Cultural Well-Being

Results indicated that at least 50% of respondents believed that the students in their teacher education program were “very” and/or “slightly” encouraged to pay attention to their cultural well-being. Again, responses centred on coursework in the mandatory Indigenous education and/or inclusive education courses in their respective programs. For

some students, cultural well-being was only discussed within the diverse contexts of First Nations, Inuit, or Métis cultures. As one participant indicated, “the mandatory course on Indigenous education promotes culturally responsive teaching by enquiring into curriculum and professional practice.”

Exposure to cultural diversity was also present in courses like Inclusive Education. The inclusive education courses allowed pre-service teachers to explore their positionality, identity, and culture in the context of teaching and learning. One participant stated, “We are encouraged to bring our culture to the classroom and explore histories by changing curriculum.” By professors encouraging reflection and critical discussions, many students discussed the importance of being culturally aware, sensitive, and responsive to curricular representation.

In addition, instructors were commended for creating environments where students engaged in complicated conversations relating to race, gender, sexual orientation, and socio-economic privilege. Although many participants did not provide specific examples, most commentary focused on being provided the opportunity to discuss cultural identity and cultural awareness.

Financial Well-Being

Particularly concerning was that 85% of pre-service teachers indicated that their financial well-being was problematic. Not being able to earn money during the teacher education programs was challenging, as one participant described: “Most of us were unable to work part-time due to the demands of the program, thus pretty much everyone was negatively financially impacted.” Similar concerns were shared by another participant, who wrote, “I am now very poor because we are told the program should be our only focus.”

The lack of eligibility to access funding during the program was problematic for respondents. Financial aid, grants and bursaries, food bank and food security resources, as well as emergency funding were all identified as important resources on the campus. For example, “There is not enough financial support. The bursaries do not cover enough tuition and I did not qualify for one of the largest bursaries due to how I received my secondary schooling. The program was financially exhausting.”

Vocational Well-Being

In terms of vocational well-being addressing personal satisfaction and motivation, close to 60% of students were satisfied with their coursework and practicum experiences. Results indicated that 59% of respondents were very motivated to start their new career. In all, the courses and practicum in the teacher education programs support the career-related aspirations of pre-service teachers. The results for the dimension of vocational well-being indicated that a majority of respondents were satisfied and motivated to continue with their career choices.

Environmental Well-Being

Environmental well-being was well-addressed, and participants identified several ways in which they believed their educational program promoted a safe, supportive environment conducive to learning. This included opportunities available through program offerings, student-led initiatives, and individual faculty/staff supports. The results emphasized the relationality of teaching with a focus on respect of shared values. Along with this, transparency in communications and in the ability to respond to emergent issues were important.

Discussion

The above section described the results of self-reported responses from a questionnaire inquiring into holistic dimensions of well-being in three teacher education programs in Western Canada. Based on the literature, nine dimensions of well-being were addressed: emotional, intellectual, physical, social, spiritual, cultural, financial, vocational, and environmental. Two open-ended questions provided options to further define responses. Responses were ranked on a 5-point Likert scale.

Results indicated that the teacher education programs addressed the following dimensions of well-being: vocational, relating to career expectations; environmental, relating to program structure; social, relating to positive and respectful relationships; intellectual, relating to coursework and practicum; and cultural, relating to identity, values, and beliefs.

Areas of Growth

In contrast, the following dimensions of financial, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being were areas that required attention and growth on the part of teacher education programs surveyed for this research. The results replicated previous studies that point to the importance of attending to the increasing stress levels in the profession (Harmsen et al., 2018; Ragoonaden, 2017; Sokal et al., 2025; Squires et al., 2022). In particular, the need to address stress management by introducing mindfulness practices features in many recommendations from scholars and practitioners (Cherkowski et al., 2018; Shirley & MacDonald, 2016). Since most mindfulness practices include slow and intentional physical movements aligned with breath, this dimension of well-being can also be addressed concurrently with stress management techniques.

In terms of spiritual well-being, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom's article on religion (Section 2a) allows individuals to make a personal choice about how they interpret and practise their religion, including spiritual practices. Relating to spiritual well-being, teacher education programs navigate a complex pathway between ensuring an individual's right to practise their religion and the institution's responsibility to protect an individual from having beliefs imposed on them. Results from this study demonstrate the intricate balance needed to respect this fundamental right.

The financial precarity experienced by many of the respondents is representative of the high cost of living in metropolitan areas in Western Canada. Unprecedented increases in rent, groceries, utilities, and transportation make full-time attendance in post-secondary programs challenging. Recognizing that financial viability is an important dimension of well-being, it is imperative that teacher education programs take notice, especially in metropolitan areas with large urban population.

Sense of Belonging for Pre-Service Teachers

Despite the mixed results relating to the holistic dimensions of well-being, respondents were committed to finishing the BEd programs and beginning a career in teaching. Along with a firm commitment to the profession, social and cultural well-being opportunities created a sense of belonging, a feeling of being connected, accepted, respected, valued by, and deemed important to peers and the campus community. Connections made with peers supported a sense of purpose with a community engaged in shared visions (becoming a

teacher), beliefs (approaches to pedagogy), and values (understandings of societal mores) relating to education. Programmatic supports (counsellors and advisors), cohort-based courses, student-led initiatives, and instructor/staff engagement were identified as important conditions in creating respectful environments focused on relationship building. Providing options to connect, share, and support one another in respectful spaces were identified as seminal components of sustaining well-being in coursework and practicum.

In keeping with the literature, where a sense of worth is foundational to well-being (Myers et al., 2000; Strayhorn, 2012), respondents—a majority of whom identified as Indigenous and racialized women—disclosed that a sense of belonging cultivated by respectful social connections, responsible and relevant approaches, and cultural frameworks supporting professional practice were integral components of their teacher education programs. The collected responses point to how a sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2019, 2022), the experience of mattering, and the sense of being, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the campus community (including faculty, staff, and peers) are important considerations for pre-service teacher well-being, especially BIPOC students. Although many participants did not provide specific examples, most commentary focused on being provided the opportunity to discuss the intersections of identity and cultural frameworks in Indigenous education and inclusive education courses.

Indigenous Education and Inclusive Education

In particular, the results reflect how non-Indigenous students responded to Indigenous worldviews found in provincially mandated documents like *Mamàhtawisiwin* (Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning, 2022) and *First Peoples Principles of Learning* (FNESC, 2006/2007). Within the frameworks of Indigenous education, a sense of place tied to community traditions and beliefs is primary to successful learning and well-being, as are the respectful, reciprocal relationships with the self, family, and others. The content of courses in Indigenous education provided spaces in which to acknowledge identity, values, beliefs, and traditions, and to share these mores in respectful and responsible ways of being and ways of doing.

Along the same lines, the courses on inclusive education facilitated discussions surrounding the intersections of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status. These spaces provided opportunities to examine and interrogate assumptions

and bias about the self in relation to teaching and learning, as well as opportunities to explore the diversity of historical, political, economic, and cultural variables impacting the K–12 school populations. As one student noted, these courses promoted culturally responsive pedagogy acknowledging the diversity of values present in educational systems.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Many respondents made reference to the focus on learning about cultural diversity and learning about how to engage in Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) in Indigenous education and inclusive education courses. Reminiscent of the 4Rs (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991) and provincially mandated learning documents, such as *First Peoples Principles of Learning* (FNESC, 2006/2007) and *Mamàhtawisiwin* (Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning, 2022), CRP recognizes the diversity of students' identities and validates students' cultures (Gay 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (2015) *Calls to Action*, a progressive movement to adapt traditional curricula to reflect the histories and worldviews of the First Peoples of Canada using CRP has emerged. By engaging in a pedagogy that extends beyond traditional choices, curricula in Indigenous education and inclusive education courses recognized and provided space to reflect on the diverse demographics, experiences, and cultural values in contemporary society. In doing so, these courses provided foundational conduits in creating a sense of belonging for the respondents by acknowledging and validating the diversity of their lived and cultural experiences.

Along with alignment with CRP and Indigenous perspectives of community and well-being, the results are also in keeping with Seligman's (2011) concept of PERMA, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model, and McCallum and Price's (2016) definition of well-being. Seligman (2011) emphasized relationships, positive emotions, and engagement as elements leading to the successful accomplishments of goals. Bronfenbrenner (1979) proposed that interconnected systems, like families and communities, and wider societal structures such as culture are important considerations relating to well-being. McCallum and Price's (2016) definition of well-being supports the premise that a micro-system, where a sense of belonging is cultivated through respect, responsibility, and care, can support the multiple and diverse needs of pre-service teachers.

Limitations

Only 12% of the total student population surveyed across three teacher education programs responded to this questionnaire. This fairly small sample of students could be due to the fact that the survey was distributed during the summer term. After having completed coursework and practicum placements, participants were tired, working hard to finish courses, and focused on job interviews. Future research with a larger sample of students is recommended.

As previously noted, a majority of respondents identified as women and as members of racialized communities. Considering emergent methodological concerns regarding gender bias in research, the generalizability of research on the self-reported positive impacts of well-being is limited (Chin et al., 2019). Therefore, the extent to which results generalize to a broader and gendered population is unclear. Furthermore, these results pertain only to the specific teacher education programs involved in this research, and cannot be generalized across the breadth of instructional formats associated with this degree.

Future directions. Coming back to the demographics of this research, 51% of the respondents identified as racialized, 18% identified as a person with a disability, 6% as Indigenous, and 2% as non-binary. In keeping with the literature indicating that a sense of belonging is particularly relevant to communities that are under-represented in teacher education, future research could focus on the correlation of well-being with racial identity, identifying as a person with a disability, and gender orientation in students in Canadian teacher education programs.

Recognizing that positive psychology's culturally established approach is not representative of the intersections of gender, disability, race, and Indigenous identities, the potential to reconceptualize well-being in this area is possible (Rao et al., 2014). Noting that women are under-represented as first authors and racial and intersectional groups are under-represented as participants, renewed conceptualizations of this field may impact future research and ensuing results (Rao et al., 2015). Based on this, there are opportunities in this area to engage in more inclusive approaches related to gender, race, and ethnicity in research (Rao & Donaldson, 2015).

Other potential directions include longitudinal studies exploring the impact of contextual factors imposed by institutions on belonging, as well as exploring how belonging differs across additional dimensions of student identity. These efforts will allow

practitioners and scholars to better understand, and hopefully enhance, all students' belonging, success, and well-being in post-secondary contexts.

Conclusion

To summarize, the results of this study highlight the interconnected and holistic dimensions of well-being emerging from the complex pathways of teacher education. Findings relating to social well-being underscored the importance of positive and respectful peer relationships. Course content in the area of Indigenous education and inclusive education provided opportunities to explore cultural well-being via the lens and intersections of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status. In particular, the cohort structure addressed the dimension of social well-being by providing the necessary space where relationships flourished and opportunities to gather in respectful communities, where shared values and beliefs were validated and recognized, were available. These factors contributed to creating a sense of belonging in teacher education programs based on respect, responsibility, and a common purpose and commitment to the profession.

Noting calls to reimagine teacher education in this second decade of this new century (Corcoran & O'Flaherty, 2022; Hill et al., 2020; Reagan & Hambacher, 2021; Sokal & Eblie Trudel, 2023), this article proposes that attention to the holistic dimensions of well-being would counteract the elevated levels of stress and financial precarity experienced by students. By adopting a culturally responsive approach where the Indigenous perspectives of the 4Rs and a sense of belonging are prevalent, teacher education programs can engage in paradigms representative of the diversity of their student populations and address the high stressors associated with the academic and professional journeys of pre-service teachers.

In a post-pandemic era negotiating a dire teacher shortage, initiatives to support and sustain teachers' well-being lays the groundwork for successful careers. Recognizing the diversity and intersections of non-traditional teaching populations, ensuring that conceptualizations like a sense of belonging are included, and addressing individual, family, and community beliefs, experiences, values, and culture are primary considerations.

To conclude, we revisit McCallum and Price's (2016) holistic definition of well-being and the 4Rs prevalent in Indigenous teaching and learning frameworks. This inherent respect of individual, family, and community beliefs provides opportunities to

adapt, where positive spaces support a sense of belonging by recognizing and acknowledging the intersectionality and diversity of identities. We come full circle by referencing Strayhorn's (2022) premise that successful students are healthy students. Within this context, we re-emphasize the major findings of this study:

1. Cultivate a sense of belonging for pre-service teachers by validating the multiplicity and intersections of their identities.
2. Recognize that Indigenous education courses and inclusive education courses provide spaces to discuss culture and well-being by engaging in complicated conversations about race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and Indigenous identity.
3. Acknowledge the areas of needed growth in teacher education programs, which are the financial, emotional, physical, and spiritual dimensions of well-being.
4. Introduce a course on stress management and resiliency techniques to support emotional and physical well-being.
5. Address the financial well-being of pre-service teachers.

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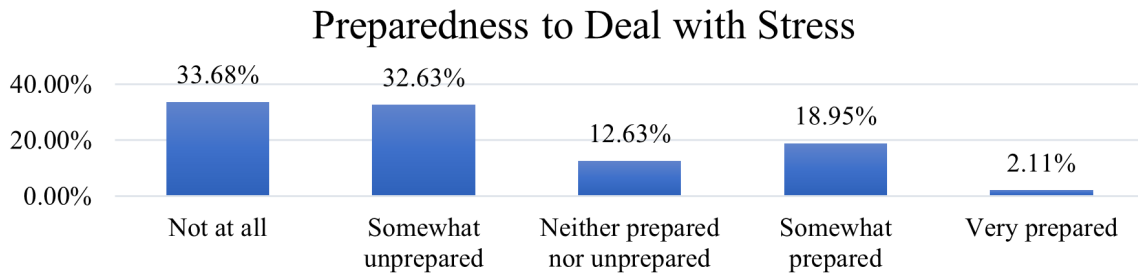
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Appendix

Figure 1

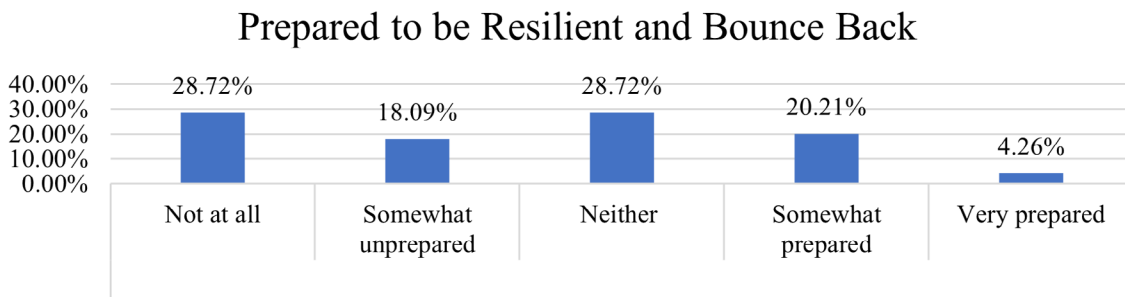
Emotional Well-Being: Stress



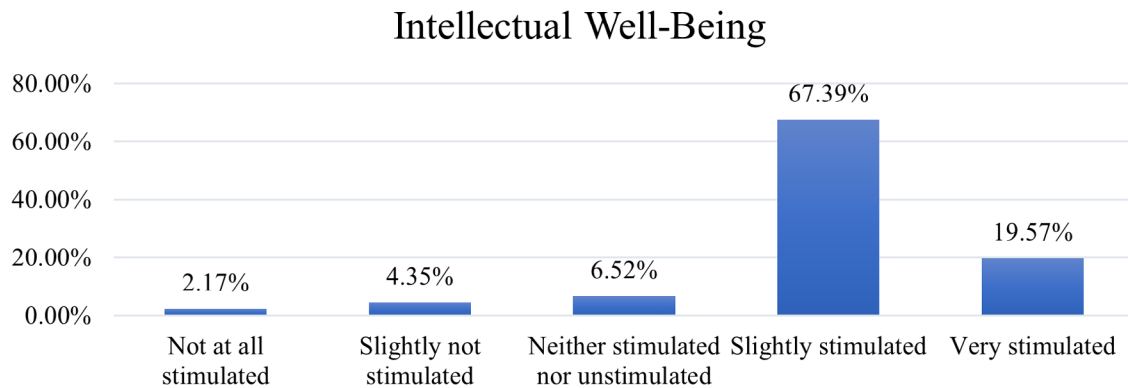
Note. 66% responded in the negative and 21% in the positive.

Figure 2

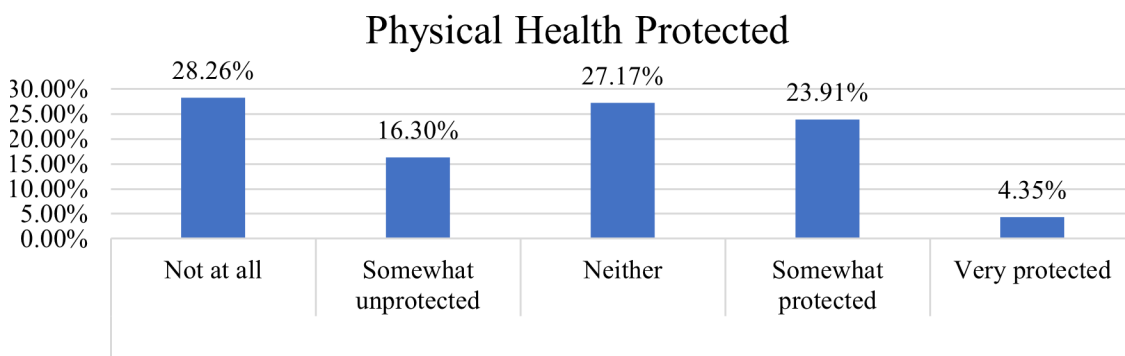
Emotional Well-Being: Resiliency



Note. 47% responded in the negative and 25% in the positive.

Figure 3*Intellectual Well-Being*

Note. 13% responded in the negative and 87% in the affirmative.

Figure 4*Physical Well-Being*

Note. 44.56% responded in the negative and 28.26% in the affirmative.

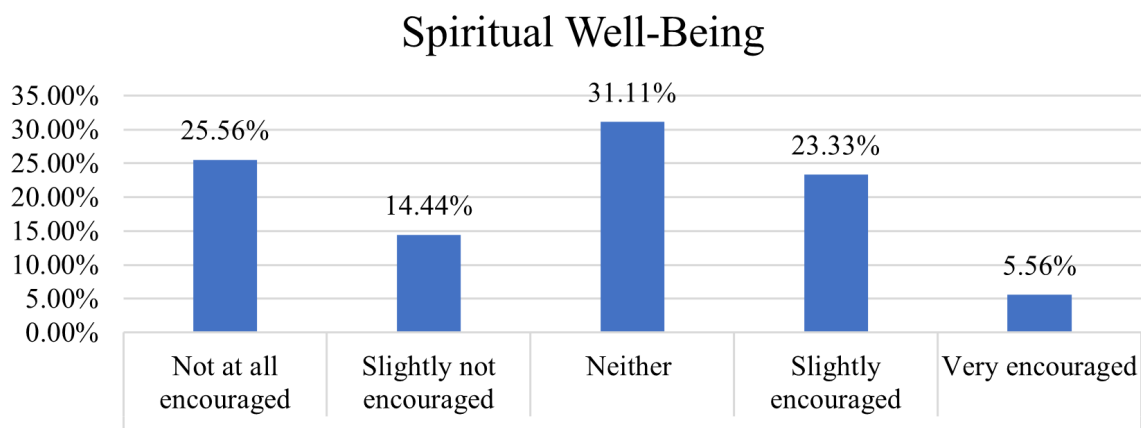
Social Well-Being

Participants were asked to choose, from a list, factors that addressed the social dimension of well-being. The literature review of this study provided a list of factors. The specific question was “What factors contribute to healthy social relationships among teacher candidates in your program? Select all that apply.”

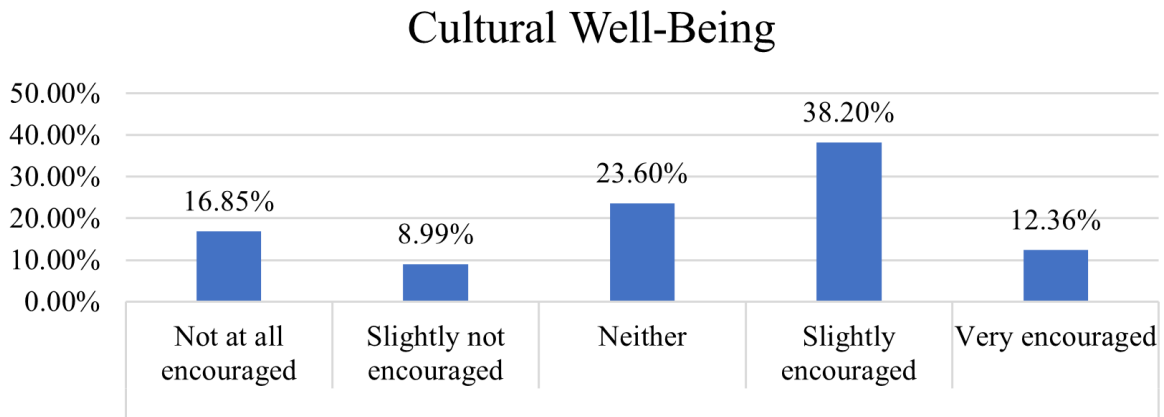
Table 1
Social Well-Being

Factors	Responses	Percentage
Opportunities to connect with each other	77	88%
Having a support system	64	67%
The ability to work in a team	64	67%
A sense of belonging	62	65%
Balance between social and personal time	54	57%
Shared values	54	57%
Social events	49	52%
Self-confidence	42	44%
Assertiveness	9	.09%

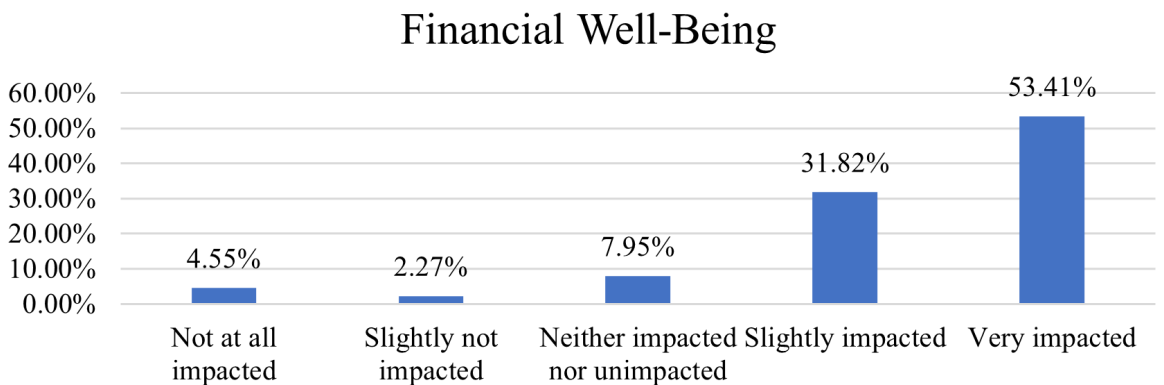
Figure 5
Spiritual Well-Being



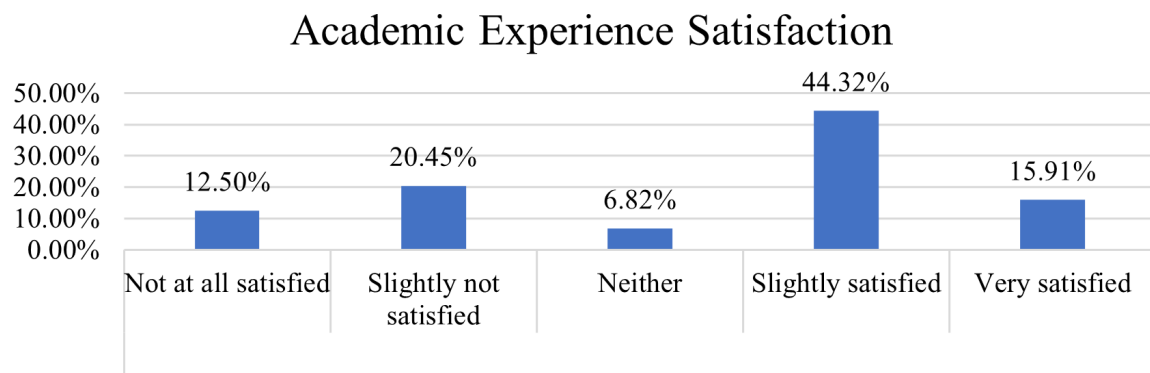
Note. 40% replied in the negative and 29% in the affirmative.

Figure 6*Cultural Well-Being*

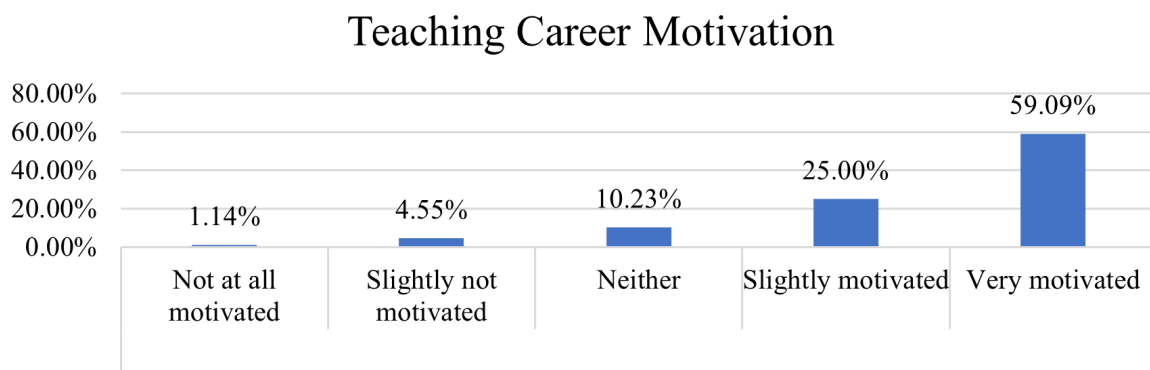
Note. 25% replied in the negative and 51% in the affirmative.

Figure 7*Financial Well-Being*

Note. 7% responded in the negative and 85% in the positive.

Figure 8*Vocational Well-Being*

Note. 33% responded in the negative and 60% in the positive.

Figure 9*Career Motivation*

Note. 6% responded in the negative and 84% in the positive.

Environmental Well-Being

Participants were asked to choose factors that addressed the social dimension of well-being. The literature review of this study provided a list of factors. The specific question was “Which of the following factors contribute toward making the learning environment a safer and healthier place for students? Select all that apply.”

Table 2

Environmental Well-Being

Factors	Responses	Percentages
Positive relationships	85	89%
Clear communication	83	87%
Culture of respect	76	80%
Flexible schedules	73	77%
A place to provide feedback	70	74%
Shared norms	68	72%
Opportunities for collaboration	67	71%
Trust	67	71%