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Insights into UK Teachers' Wellbeing and Workload during the COVID-19 Pandemic Lockdown: Testimonies from the Silent Voices and Lessons Learnt

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Abstract: This paper presents the findings of a national survey of over 3400 teachers across all phases of education in England, 10 weeks into school closure. In this paper we report on the teachers' experiences and their testimonies of the effects of the lockdown on their wellbeing as they navigate the situation, trying to cope with teaching and adjusting to the use of new technology to deliver lessons in the confines of their home. We present their voices as they related their experiences and emotions in real time as the event unfolded. Teachers reported an increased workload with a proportionately large amount of time spent on administrative duties and planning, but less on actual teaching. On average, these teachers spent 15 h a week marking during the lockdown. Under half of the respondents said they felt happy and cheerful often, while only 17% said they did not feel this way often. Almost all teachers said they felt that what they were doing was important and worthwhile. The most common emotions expressed by teachers were fear, isolation, neglect, anxiety, and confusion. The inconsistency and lack of clarity of government guidelines added to teachers' anxiety. The negative media portrayal of teachers did not help. The majority of teachers reported little previous experience in online teaching and only a quarter were confident in using edtech to deliver remote teaching. Only a third of teachers said they were adequately supported for online teaching. This has implications for future teacher development and initial teacher training. However, there were equally numerous positive experiences reported by teachers. Active support from parents and consistent school-home communication were seen as important in ensuring students' continued engagement with learning. These lessons are beneficial in supporting the long-term sick and school refusers post-lockdown.

Keywords: school closure; teacher wellbeing and workload; teachers' experiences and emotions

1. Introduction

In March 2020 when the UK government announced a national lockdown in response to the coronavirus pandemic, schools were left completely unprepared. Teachers were forced to adapt to remote teaching with little warning, preparation, and guidance. Many turned to the use of education technology. Although the use of digital technology is an intrinsic part of teaching and learning, delivering online lessons to children remotely is not.

Schools and teachers scrambled to find suitable software or applications to deliver lessons online. They not only had to deal with new technology for delivering lessons, but additionally had to find safe platforms to share work and communicate with children. Edtech companies have reported a soaring demand for online and home learning resources, and schools were simply taking whatever was on offer to them. The spring term of 2020 may have seen the most challenging test for the use of distance learning the education system has ever been faced with.

The socioeconomic digital divide quickly became apparent during the pandemic. Surveys by Teacher Tapp [1] and Sutton Trust [2] revealed that schools in the most deprived areas were less likely to have the necessary digital technology for remote teaching,

and their teachers were less likely to be trained to use online platforms. The Teacher Tapp survey reported that nearly half of teachers in the most deprived schools did not think they could broadcast a lesson. Only 3% of teachers in the poorest schools hosted an online class, and only 4% had audio/video calls with a student. The Sutton Trust study showed that while 60% of private schools in the richest areas already have an online platform in place, this was only true for 23% of most of the deprived schools. Children from working class families were also less likely to take part in online lessons. Children from the lowest socioeconomic backgrounds were least likely to have access to online learning as many of them do not have internet connection in their home or access to devices such as computers, iPads, or tablets.

There were fears that the prolonged closure of schools would further widen the attainment gap. The Office for National Statistics survey data published in 2019 tells us that around 60,000 children aged 11 to 18 in the UK do not have internet connectivity in their home, and around 700,000 do not have a computer, laptop, tablet, or iPad at home. These children have not been able to benefit from online lessons or resources. Schools were under pressure to improvise and develop imaginative and creative ways to ensure that learning continues for the majority of their pupils. There were huge logistical and emotional challenges to support the diverse needs of teachers and students, especially those from disadvantaged homes and those with special education needs.

These challenges are likely to have implications on teachers' workload, wellbeing, and mental health. Before the pandemic, 84% of school leaders and 73% of teachers reported feeling stressed [3] Of those who experienced a negative effect on their health and wellbeing, 71% (82% school leaders and 70% teachers) cited workload as the major reason why they were considering leaving teaching. In the last two years, there had also been an increase in the proportion of education professionals reporting symptoms related to their mental health and wellbeing. With the challenges that COVID-19 has imposed, looking after teachers' wellbeing and mental health has become even more crucial.

Teachers were completely caught off guard. Schools were not prepared for it. The increasing demands on teachers who were coping with a situation they have never encountered before and have not been trained to deal with had inevitable effects on their wellbeing and workload. Teachers were concerned about the health risks not only for themselves and their families, but also those of their colleagues and pupils [4–6].

We envisaged that the school closure amid the coronavirus pandemic, and the need to ensure that students continue to receive lessons (without the usual tools and resources available in school), would have implications for teachers' workload. Hilger et al. [7] identified changes in seven work characteristics during the pandemic relating to job demands and resources that are associated with teacher wellbeing.

With this in mind, we conducted a national survey of teachers to find out how they were feeling surrounding their profession during the pandemic and what challenges, if any, they faced. The aim of this survey was to collect the experiences of teachers during the lockdown and to gauge the general mood of the teaching profession at that moment in time. We asked teachers about their workload and wellbeing as well as their experiences in using education technology (edtech) tools. Insight gained from this experience will also be useful for practitioners after the lockdown in designing effective ways to connect with children such as during the summer holidays or when children have a long-term absence.

This paper presents the findings of a survey of over 3400 teachers across all phases of education in England, 10 weeks into the school closure. While there have been a number of studies conducted during the lockdown, these were of a very small scale and were opportunistic studies. For example, Kim and Asbury's [8] study in the first 6 weeks of the lockdown was based on 24 teachers who volunteered to be interviewed; Kundu and Bej [9] reported on a survey of 141 primary teachers across the world. Another study reported on the perceptions of 370 academics in higher education [10], while Phillips reported on the experiences of 20 undergraduates in one university [11]. Johnson and Coleman [12]

also collected in-depth data, but from only 16 teachers who taught GCSE and/or A-level (age 16 to 18).

Most of the studies also focused on the impact of the pandemic on student outcomes. Our study was the first national study of teachers in UK covering school teachers across phases of education and roles focusing on teacher outcomes. What is unique about our study is that we also collected hundreds of testimonies from individual teachers about the effects of the lockdown on their wellbeing as they navigated the situation, adjusting to online teaching and coping with life at home and the risk of the virus to them and their family. In this paper, we present the voices of teachers as they related their experiences and emotions in real time as the impact of the lockdown took hold. These were not based on teachers' recall, but their experiences as the event unfolded.

Teacher Wellbeing

Even before the pandemic there were already international concerns about teacher wellbeing [13]. In England, the Office for Standards in Education (a government body that inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people) reported that teaching staff and education professionals had the highest levels of work-related stress, depression, and anxiety in Britain [14]. The COVID-19 pandemic was expected to exacerbate this.

Wellbeing encompasses a broad range of concepts associated with mental health. It is a multidimensional and subjective concept. It is also dynamic and temporal in that a person's wellbeing can change over time and in different situations. Most previous studies on teacher wellbeing are based on self-reports that can be influenced by an individual's mood, memory, and biases, thus subject to measurement errors. What we capture in this study can only be teachers' emotions at the point of measurement. The OECD framework for measuring individual wellbeing included 11 dimensions, broadly classified as material conditions (this measures an individual's wealth, earnings, and housing) and quality of life (health, living conditions, work–life balance, and subjective wellbeing) [15]. Others included occupational wellbeing [16], defined as job satisfaction and self-efficacy. Van Horn et al. [17] identified five dimensions of teachers' wellbeing, these being affective well-being; social well-being; professional well-being; cognitive well-being; and psychosomatic well-being. Collie et al. [18] suggested including teachers' workload, organisational climate (teachers' perceptions of school leadership, school culture towards teachers and teaching), and student–teacher interaction in assessing teachers' work-related wellbeing. In this current study, we define teachers' wellbeing as the physical manifestation of their mental state (which includes psychosomatic symptoms such as insomnia, headaches, raised blood pressure and hyperventilation, loss of appetite and fatigue, concentration) as well as their emotions (e.g., feeling of joy, happiness, depression and contentment, and feelings of sadness, fear, anger, and anxiety).

Social wellbeing includes feelings of trust or feeling valued by colleagues and principals. Affective wellbeing includes positive affect, which includes positive emotions, such as feeling of joy, happiness, depression, and contentment, while negative affect refers to feelings of sadness, fear, anger, and anxiety.

The paper structured in three sections. The first two sections focus on teacher's reported workload, followed by their wellbeing, and the third section investigates teacher's experience in using edtech tools in distance teaching.

2. Methods

Data were collected from a national survey of teachers and academics across England from all educational settings, from early years to higher education. The survey was launched online 10 weeks into the lockdown with support from Schoolzone for about a week. A total of 3401 responses were received.

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was structured in four sections:

Section 1

Teacher's workload during the lockdown

We asked teachers to tell us approximately how many hours they spent on each of the following school-related activities in their most recent full working week:

- teaching/lecturing;
- planning and preparation of teaching or learning activities;
- participation in management activities;
- general administrative work (including paperwork, work emails, and other clerical duties);
- communication with parents/carers (including, emails, letters, or phone calls).

The question items were adapted from the Department for Education workload survey [19] and the OECD Teaching and Learning Survey of Teachers [20].

Section 2

Teachers' wellbeing.

This was measured using a 9-item instrument on an 11-point scale so responses could be treated as real numbers for measuring effect sizes in estimating differences between groups. These items were adapted from the validated Scales of General Well-Being (SGWB) [21]. For this survey, we selected one item that strongly measures each of the indicators of wellbeing: happiness, vitality, calmness, optimism, self-worth, competence, purpose, significance, and connection. Recent evidence suggests that just using one item, for example "how satisfied are you with your life?", had similar patterns with other related variables as using the rest of the scale, and this single item alone might be sufficient to capture a quick picture of life satisfaction [22,23]. These items are also similar to those in the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale.

We asked teachers how often they had the following feelings or thoughts on a scale of 0 (never) to 10 (all the time):

- I feel happy and cheerful.
- I feel calm and relaxed.
- I feel full of energy.
- I like myself a lot.
- I feel highly effective at what I do.
- I feel optimistic and hopeful.
- I feel that what I do is important and worthwhile.
- I feel close and connected with people around me.
- I feel completely engaged and involved in what I do.

Section 3

Teachers' experience with education technology.

There are 6 items in this section where teachers were asked to indicate whether they agree or disagree on a scale from 0 (completely disagree) to 10 (completely agree) with each of the following:

- I have no previous experience in online teaching.
- I am confident in using edtech to deliver lessons online.
- I have better interactions with my students online.
- Teaching online is stressful.
- I am well-supported with adequate resources for online teaching.
- I would not use online teaching if I can help it.

In an open-ended question, we asked teachers to tell us about their experiences with online teaching.

We did not ask for teachers' sensitive biographical data such as their age, gender, and ethnicity because of GDPR and the complexity of obtaining consent. All responses were anonymous, so no consent needed. However, we did ask them for their job role as we wanted to see if senior teachers may be impacted differently compared to classroom teachers and non-teaching staff due to the challenging situation of having to arrange

alternative modes of teaching and communication, providing additional teaching resources for teachers.

This was an anonymised survey, so it was not possible to obtain direct individual consent. Specific consent was asked in the survey relating to the follow-up work, but consent was implied by the fact that they chose to follow the link from the email in order to take part. They also agreed to terms and conditions when they signed up that say that they were agreeing to us sending them invitations to take part in research.

2.1. Consent

We said in the email invitation to take part:

All data will be anonymised and aggregated before passing them on to our client, Durham University, unless you volunteer to take part in the follow-up work, in which case, your data will be identifiable. Schoolzone follows the Market Research Society's code. The research was conducted in line with the British Education Research Association's code of ethics.

Specific consent was asked in the survey relating to the follow-up work, but consent is implied by the fact that they choose to follow the link from the email in order to take part. They also agree to terms and conditions when they sign up that say that they are agreeing to us sending them invitations to take part in research.

2.2. Participants

Close to half of the respondents were secondary school teachers, with tertiary teachers making up 30% and primary teachers around 19%. Tertiary teachers include those in further education (FE) and higher education (HE). A very small minority were early years teachers (3%). Of these, 36% were middle managers and another 36% were teaching staff. Middle managers include phase and subject leads and coordinators. Senior leaders made up 17% of the respondents.

Respondents came from all over England, and all school types were represented. These were largely representative of the national teacher population (see Appendix A).

2.3. Analysis

Simple frequency descriptive analyses were used to summarise the responses to the 11-point scale items presenting the means and standard deviations in tabulated format or in a bar graph where we think it clarifies the data better. Responses to open comments (there were thousands of such comments) were analysed by themes. No data analysis software was used. This was all completed in the old-fashioned way where we colour-coded similar themes (a very satisfying endeavour during the lockdown). Major themes and subthemes were then identified. These facilitated the synthesis and the presentation of the findings.

3. Findings

3.1. How Does the School Closure Affect Teachers' Workload?

Some teachers reported an increase in workload. Proportionately teachers were spending a lot of their time during the lockdown on administrative activities, an average of 13 h per week on this, 12 h on planning and 7 h on teaching (Table 1). Administrative work includes general paperwork, communication with staff (e.g., meetings and work emails), and other clerical duties.

Lesson planning (including preparation of teaching and learning activities) is another activity that occupies most teachers' time with a mean of 11.5 h per week (SD 10 h). This is likely because the preparation of lessons now includes sourcing for suitable teaching resources for remote teaching and setting up appropriate platforms for delivery, which consume time teachers would have spent actually delivering lessons.

Table 1. Average number of hours teachers spent on each of the activities in the last week during lockdown (*N* = 3404).

Phase of Education	Mean and Standard Deviation	Teaching	Planning	Management Activities	Administrative Duties	Communication with Parents	Others
Early years/primary	Mean	8.4	11.6	9.3	13.4	9.3	4.8
	SD	10.1	10.5	11.6	11.1	9.9	7.8
Secondary	Mean	7.3	12.6	6.8	11.9	5.8	4.3
	SD	8.7	10.2	8.1	9.2	7.2	6.6
Tertiary	Mean	7.0	9.7	8.4	14.5	2.8	9.1
	SD	8.0	9.5	8.9	10.5	5.9	10.8
Overall	Mean	7.4	11.5	7.8	13.0	5.7	5.9
	SD	8.8	10.2	9.2	10.1	7.8	8.6

Around 60% of teachers spent less than 5 h a week teaching online or otherwise during the school closure (Table 2). A total of 71% of teachers spent up to five hours a week communicating with parents (mean score 5.7). Only 9% of teachers reported spending over 20 h per week on teaching, while 41% said they spent over 20 h on planning, management, and administrative work.

Table 2. Proportion of time teachers spent on each of the activities (*N* = 3404).

	Teaching/Lecturing	Planning (*n* = 3404)	Participation in Management Activities	General Administrative Work	Communication with Parents or Guardians	Other(s)
Up to 5	60%	35%	58%	26%	71%	70%
6–10	17%	25%	19%	28%	15%	13%
11–15	8%	15%	8%	16%	6%	6%
16–20	7%	11%	5%	12%	3%	4%
21–25	4%	5%	3%	6%	2%	2%
26–30	2%	5%	3%	4%	1%	2%
31–35	1%	2%	1%	2%	0%	1%
36–40	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%
40+	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%
Over 20 h	9	16	9	16	5	7%

Of the teachers who responded to the "Other" activities, a number mentioned marking. On average, these teachers spent 15 h a week marking during the lockdown. Of the "other" activities that teachers spend time on, marking and assessment, CPD (Continuing Professional Development) and meetings were the most commonly mentioned across the phases, while in HE, many were spending their time engaged in research and writing reports.

Breaking down the other categories, focusing only on marking and assessment (feedback), teachers on average spent 15 h a week marking/giving feedback during the lockdown. There is quite a wide variation ranging from 1 h to 50 h a week. The average time spent on marking for primary teachers was 14 h and 16 h for tertiary teachers.

3.2. Workload by Phase of Education

There is a small variation between primary and secondary teachers, with secondary teachers spending a mean of one hour more in planning and one hour less on administrative activities than their primary counterparts (Figure 1).
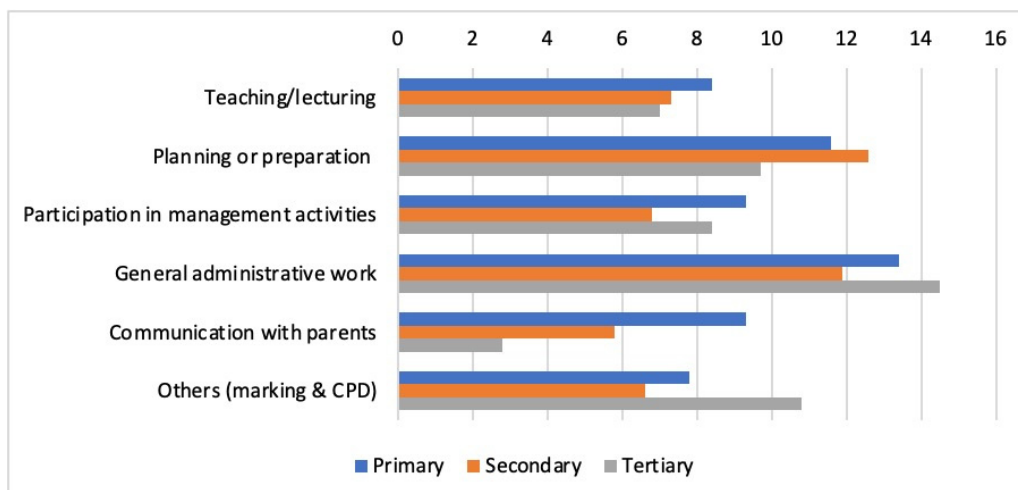

Figure 1. Average number of hours teachers spent on different activities by phase of education.

Among teachers in the different phases, secondary teachers spent the most time on planning and preparation, while tertiary teachers spent a large amount of time on general administrative work. Primary teachers, on the other hand, spent a lot more time communicating with parents than secondary teachers. This is not surprising as communication with primary school children is most effectively completed through their parents.

Secondary teachers reported spending an average of 31 h a week on planning, management, and administrative work. This was far more than the 20.1 h reported for secondary teachers in the OECD Teaching and Learning Survey [20] before the pandemic. However, in terms of teaching, secondary teachers reported that they spent only 7.3 h on teaching compared to the 20.5 h in the OECD survey conducted before the lockdown. It is possible that teachers in many schools were not allowed to complete live teaching and most lessons were pre-recorded. This could be an explanation for the much lower number of hours spent on actual teaching.

3.3. Workload by Job Role

The proportion of time spent on the different activities correlate with specific job roles (Figure 2). As expected, senior leaders spend more time on managerial activities, with an average of 17.7 h per week (SD 12 h) and an average of 16 h per week (SD 11 h) on administrative work. Teaching staff and middle leaders were more likely to report spending more time on teaching and preparation than senior leaders and other staff.

Looking at senior leaders at different phases, primary senior leaders' workload seems to be the highest (Table 3). They spend around two hours per week more than secondary leaders on management activities (ES = 0.3) and about four hours more on administrative work (ES = 0.35) (Table 3). Primary senior leaders also spent about three to four hours more than secondary teachers on communication with parents (ES = 0.45). Early years' school leaders appear to spend five hours more each week than secondary leaders on planning activities (ES = 0.57).
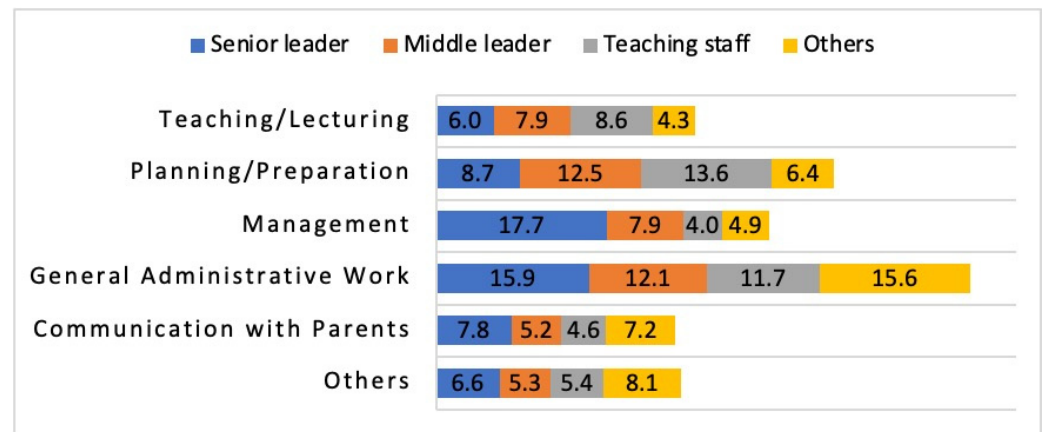
Figure 2. Workload by job roles (average number of hours spent on each of the activities).

Table 3. Average number of hours senior teachers spent on the different activities (N = 567).

Phase of Education	Mean and SD	Teaching/Lecturing	Planning (n = 3404)	Management Activities	General Administrative Work	Communication with Parents or Guardians	Other(s)
Early years (n = 32)	Mean	8.2	13.6	18.6	16.8	10.5	4.5
	SD	8.9	10.5	14.6	13.9	10.9	8.9
Primary (n = 195)	Mean	5.8	9.0	19.2	18.0	11.4	5.5
	SD	8.3	10.0	13.6	11.6	9.9	8.5
Secondary (n = 190)	Mean	4.9	8.3	17.4	14.4	7.2	4.8
	SD	5.5	8.1	10.7	8.5	6.3	6.3
Tertiary (n = 150)	Mean	6.9	7.7	15.8	14.8	3.1	10.5
	SD	7.9	8.0	11.7	10.7	6.8	12.2
Overall (n = 567)	Mean	5.9	8.7	17.7	15.9	7.7	6.5
	SD	7.4	8.9	12.3	10.7	8.7	9.3

Other than the senior leaders, "other staff" (which includes IT technicians and non-teaching staff) also spend a large amount of time on administrative work. This group reported spending 15.6 h each week on administrative work. Teaching staff and middle leaders, on the other hand, spent proportionately more time than senior leaders and other staff on the teaching, planning, and preparation of lessons.

Comments from teachers in the open-ended questions suggest that the new ways of teaching have increased teachers' workload. Here are some of the excerpts of teachers' comments.

Work-family balance with two young children very challenging. Trying to be full-time teacher and educator [...] is stressful at times and difficult balance to juggle, feel over connected with colleagues and pupils via video and impacts on home life, i.e., worrying children are occupied and looked after properly when attention is split between calls that go on for over an hour and their wellbeing.

My workload has increased 200%. There are no weekends or holidays just expected to keep working everyday. Blurry between work and home hours and no empathy or understanding from senior management. No thank you or positive comments from them, just demands with no consideration of personal circumstances."

I am exhausted though, working extra hours unpaid. Very steep learning curve & massive workload even compared to the usual massive workload!!

It is extremely stressful and takes more time to prepare/plan lessons as they have to be modified from what you would use in the classroom; students have had every kind of

IT/internet/technical issue to contend with; students are accessing work at times that suit them so completed work constantly needs chasing—this generates a huge amount of additional work in contacting them and parents.

3.4. Teachers' Reported Wellbeing during School Closure

There is an increasing concern globally about the mental health and wellbeing of teachers and school leaders. Teacher wellbeing is not only related to student wellbeing as suggested by the OECD [24], but it has important implications for the quality of education. The 2018 OECD edition of Teaching in Focus [25] has targeted teacher stress and burnout, as these are deemed as critical factors in the recruitment and retention of teachers. As OECD has acknowledged, there has been very little research in this area.

We expected that the school closure and the new ways of delivering lessons, as well as the need to maintain communication with students remotely, are likely to put added strain on teachers. The unfamiliarity with new technology and the lack of preparations for the event can be stressful. This research was one of the first that contacted teachers to find out how they were coping.

We focused on the two key dimensions of teachers' occupational wellbeing, their subjective wellbeing (particular feelings or emotional states, satisfaction and purpose with their work) and social wellbeing (quality and depth of working relationships). The questionnaire included nine items that measured these dimensions. We asked teachers to rate how often they had certain feelings and thoughts on a scale of 0 (never) to 10 (all the time), with scores from 7 to 10 as often and 0 to 3 as not often.

Overall, the mean scores for each of the feelings are middling but generally positive (Table 4). What stood out is that teachers were generally happy and cheerful (mean score of 7) in the week during the lockdown. A total of 46% said they felt happy and cheerful often (7 to 10), while only 17% said they did not feel this way often (scored 0 to 3).

Table 4. How teachers felt during the lockdown—percentage of responses for each of the indicators of wellbeing.

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Mean Rating	SD
I feel happy and cheerful (*n* = 3390)	1%	2%	5%	9%	8%	15%	15%	19%	18%	7%	2%	7.0	2.1
I feel calm and relaxed (*n* =3392)	2%	3%	9%	12%	11%	14%	14%	15%	13%	6%	2%	6.3	2.4
I feel full of energy (*n* = 3387)	2%	4%	9%	14%	12%	17%	14%	13%	10%	3%	2%	6.0	2.3
I like myself a lot (*n* = 3384)	2%	3%	7%	9%	10%	17%	13%	14%	13%	7%	4%	6.6	2.4
I feel highly effective at what I do (*n* = 3391)	2%	4%	8%	10%	11%	14%	14%	15%	12%	7%	3%	6.4	2.4
I feel optimistic and hopeful (*n* = 3390)	2%	5%	8%	11%	11%	16%	14%	13%	11%	6%	3%	6.3	2.4
I feel that what I do is important and worthwhile (*n* = 3391)	1%	2%	4%	6%	6%	10%	12%	15%	19%	14%	10%	7.6	2.4
I feel close and connected with people around me (*n* = 3381)	2%	6%	8%	8%	8%	13%	13%	12%	15%	10%	6%	6.6	2.7
I feel completely engaged and involved in what I do (*n* = 3394)	1%	4%	7%	10%	9%	14%	13%	14%	13%	9%	6%	6.7	2.5

Crucially, teachers felt that what they were doing was important and worthwhile (mean score of 7.6), with 58% saying that they felt this often (ratings of 7 to 10). The lowest indicator of teacher wellbeing was teachers' energy. Teachers generally do not feel very energetic (mean score of 6.0). Only slightly over a quarter (28%) of teachers said they felt energetic often.

Overall, the important finding is that teachers took pride in what they were doing and felt that what they were doing was worthwhile. They were generally happy and cheerful. This very much reflects the resilience of our teachers—maintaining a cheerful mindset in the face of adversity. This is something that should be celebrated.

3.5. Teachers' Wellbeing by Phase of Education

Generally, there is little difference in the level of wellbeing between teachers in different phases, although secondary teachers report a slightly higher level of wellbeing compared to their primary and tertiary counterparts (Table 5). Secondary teachers were also the most "optimistic and hopeful" and "happy and cheerful", while tertiary teachers were the least optimistic.

Table 5. Average teacher wellbeing scores by phase of education.

	Early Years and Primary (*n* = 722)		Secondary (*n* = 1653)		Tertiary (*n* = 1016)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
I feel happy and cheerful	6.8	2.1	7.2	1.9	6.7	2.3
I feel calm and relaxed	6	2.5	6.7	2.2	6.1	2.5
I feel full of energy	5.7	2.2	6.2	2.2	5.7	2.5
I like myself a lot	6.4	2.4	6.8	2.3	6.4	2.5
I feel highly effective at what I do	6.3	2.4	6.6	2.4	6.3	2.6
I feel optimistic and hopeful	6.1	2.4	6.5	2.3	5.9	2.6
I feel that what I do is important and worthwhile	7.8	2.4	7.8	2.3	7.3	2.6
I feel close and connected with people around me	6.8	2.7	6.8	2.6	6.4	2.8
I feel completely engaged and involved in what I do	6.8	2.5	6.8	2.4	6.5	2.7
Overall wellbeing	6.5	2.4	6.8	2.3	6.4	2.6

3.6. Teachers' Wellbeing by Job role

There is also little difference in the level of reported wellbeing by roles. The mean scores are 6.8 for senior leaders, 6.6 for middle managers, and 6.5 for teaching staff (Table 6). For most indicators, senior leaders appear to score higher than middle managers and classroom teachers.

Table 6. Average wellbeing scores by job roles.

Role	Senior Leader		Middle Manager		Classroom Teachers		Others	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Happy and cheerful	7	2.2	7	2	6.9	2.16	7.12	2.09
Calm and relaxed	6	2.6	6.4	2.3	6.3	2.4	6.71	2.3
Energetic	5.9	2.4	6	2.2	5.9	2.34	5.92	2.3
Like myself a lot	6.6	2.6	6.6	2.3	6.6	2.42	6.41	2.51
Highly effective	6.6	2.6	6.4	2.4	6.3	2.42	6.53	2.59
Optimistic and hopeful	6.4	2.6	6.2	2.3	6.2	2.44	6.41	2.51

Table 6. *Cont.*

Role	Senior Leader		Middle Manager		Classroom Teachers		Others	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
What I do is important and worthwhile	8.2	2.5	7.6	2.3	7.5	2.42	7.34	2.67
Close and connected with people around me	7	2.7	6.6	2.6	6.5	2.66	6.49	2.86
Engaged and involved in what I do	7.3	2.5	6.6	2.4	6.6	2.52	6.53	2.65

Overall, respondents to our survey gave quite varied answers on wellbeing, which perhaps highlights the complexity of the situation and the complexity of mental health itself. In the following section, we allow the voices of teachers to speak to express their emotions as they experienced the lockdown and the pandemic.

3.7. Testimonies from Teachers

As far as we know, this is the first study that documents teachers' emotions as they experienced the pandemic in real time. In other words, their emotions were fresh and not based on recall, which can be distorted by subsequent events. The outpouring of emotions in the open comments section is unusual in surveys. This perhaps highlights the desperate need for teachers to communicate their feelings. We have collected thousands of comments, but could only use some of them as examples here.

Teachers expressed a mix of emotions. A word often repeated was "rollercoaster". As expected, teachers' experiences were not consistent throughout. There were good days and bad days.

A lot of fluctuation. We have had a fairly intensive work experience as we are using iPads to deliver live lessons. Looking at a screen all day has made me feel almost travel sick. I have however felt less stressed and have a lot more time for hobbies, cooking, spending time with my husband."

There have been ups and downs but working consistently in school has negated these 'bumps in the road' somewhat.

I have felt lonely, anxious, angry, abandoned, resentful, undervalued, stressed—but also hopeful, optimistic and excited at times.

Emotions are like a yoyo, up & down. They range from fear, stress, anger, sadness and can be mixed with more positive emotions.

A number also expressed fear, confusion, anger, and being overwhelmed. The inconsistent, unclear, and constant changing government guidelines have added to teachers' anxiety.

Confused, bewildered, oppressed.

Overwhelmed with the sheer amount of guidance and help, hundreds of pages of it issued, reissued and updated on a daily basis on which we have to act, often without time to prepare, consider or consult and which is changed 24/48 h later with no warning.

Frustrated at lack of clarity of what is expected of me from the government, local authority and school leadership.

I have felt a great sense of confusion in regards to the guidelines in relationship to special educational needs school's and how they have been considered alongside mainstream.

Very uncertain about the 'safeguarding' of myself and students using face-to-face software. Conflicting advice from schools, government and unions.

There has also been a discernible anger directed at the government due to their apparent inability to set and follow a practical strategy, to tell the truth, their regular exhortations not to criticise at this time and the ideological nature of their communications."

A form of grief, with a mix of anger, sadness and confusion at times, powerless."

I am feeling depressed and am having frequent panic attacks.

Scared, guilty, tired, worried, frustrated.

I dread schools reopening, fearful of the viral danger, but mostly fearful of how I will continue to maintain decent home learning.

It's like I'm going through the stages of grief or something! (Although they do say that sudden change can bring around the same psychological effects so that's probably why.) I feel like I am being left behind and I feel increasingly overwhelmed by everything.

Overwhelmed, worried (about others), anxious (about others—mainly those I care for), disconnected but also connected, I feel in limbo, I feel not effective, i.e., like I am just surviving and doing the bare minimum at work.

I was totally paralysed with fear. I became anxious and tearful.

Hugely distracted in many ways leading to a loss of focus, concentration and attention— due to e.g., securing food and supplies, old parent (and neighbour) capacity to cope- literally losing her mind in her isolation, immediate family security, home schooling/health of teenage children, ideas about the future, blocks on current research plans, loss of liberty, plans for the summer lost.

I am extremely worried about possibly and almost certainly dying if I return to school. I am 66 yrs old and have had 5 3-day fevers since November and been seriously ill when at school but feeling I could be forced to go back. I had a talk with my Deputy Head and she was saying we will be likely expected to return with 10 per class. I am petrified as I thought I was so ill prior to leaving school I could die and even made my will. This is not something to be taken lightly with us older teachers but we could be threatened by school to return, she said.

Some teachers were depressed and angry at the negative opinion and scrutiny from the public.

I'm really angry that the general public seem to think we're sitting at home on full pay and doing nothing when most of us are working longer hours than normal.

Increasingly anxious due to government reflection on teaching and teachers. Undervalued due to media reflection.

I am working hard everyday but feel the press has labelled teachers as lazy. This is extremely demoralising. We do our best for the children.

Feel as if I am working really hard but that most people think that I am on holiday.

Depressed by our image with media and wider public.

I also felt very aware of the negativity towards teachers in the government, media and society.

It has been really hard—particularly with the speculation and attacks from the Media.

I feel very concerned about the anti-teacher rhetoric in the press and the apparent lack of care about our safety by our government. I feel that we are being told it's safe to go back simply to shame us back into the classroom. I don't feel safe to say out loud that I am a teacher.

There was also the feeling among teachers that they have been overlooked, abandoned, and neglected. Some were just grateful that we asked about how they were doing 10 weeks into the lockdown.

This is actually the first survey I have received asking me how I am, I wish it could have come from my own school/academy trust first. Sometimes I look at my school work and wonder if I am really making a difference.

I feel that I am alone on a raft, desperately paddling, and knowing that at some point, I won't have the strength anymore. But I know that others are sharing the load and supporting each other, and that makes me feel worse, that after 10 years of working in the same team, 10 years of giving and being excellent, taking on extra work to support others, I am just abandoned to carry on my work alone and no one even asks me if I am ok.

Sometimes there has been new expectations on us without anyone checking if we are happy/capable of doing so.

Abandoned by my Uni, that is not taking into account our feelings and needs.

I have kind of felt abandoned by my school if I'm honest, no welfare checks of any kind. There has been lots of communication via email but always tasks and jobs that need doing and that has ticked me off a little. It feels as though the leaders have forgotten we are humans too and need checking on occasionally at such a scary time and simply only see us as assets. Sad really.

I feel no-one understands fully. I feel there is no-one to talk to. I feel disconnected. I work in HE and have a full workload and constantly feel unable to cope. I have had to deal with a lot of mental health and wellbeing issues from pupils, staff and parents, and that has had a direct impact on my mood and wellbeing too.

The lack of interaction, both with staff and students, and remote teaching have been an extremely lonely experience for some. As one teacher put it:

It's like singing on a stage with a blindfold and ear muffs and not knowing how empty or full venue is.

"Loneliness" and "disconnected" are the two emotions constantly mentioned by teaching staff and academics.

Disconnect with other colleagues and students. Virtual is just not the same as physical engagement. You can't just talk to people anymore. You have to organise meetings, make sure everyone is available and online, it is frustrating and a little depressing at times.

I've also felt incredibly lonely at times, more than ever before. I have tons of friends and close family, we're always in touch but in the quieter weekend moments, I often get hit by a wave of grief that I'm alone. Going out by myself for a walk or cycle ride has become really hard because it reinforces I'm alone.

Lonely—wish I had more people to talk to about both work and everyday life.

One academic had this to say:

disconnected from people I work with—I don't think my employer or colleagues would notice if I was dead until I was late submitting some admin task (which is all they care about); I feel 100% unvalued. There is no academic community—I hook into some online academic discussions unrelated [the university] (from my own disparate academic community) but [the university] has done nothing since the lockdown and it is a lonely lonely life—at the best of times [the university] is demanding and judgemental but never positive or caring, so this is exacerbated by the lockdown.

Others felt utter despair and despondent.

Have felt regularly suicidal and no thought was given in policy making at any level to the immediate and huge damage the lockdown did to mental health.

Suicidal at times, but mostly bored and depressed.

Even little decisions seem to take forever—like whether to go food shopping. I delay and delay until I really have to go. I think it's because I'm really on edge because you sense all this unease. I know everyone is nervous and unsure but I don't think many people are managing it well. Instead of defaulting to being kind and understanding, I sense this power imbalance in over-officiousness and constant disapproval. So I just feel enormous

relief and gratitude when someone in a shop is polite or helpful. Once in a small village post office, I had such a miserable encounter I burst into tears, it wiped me for out the rest of the day.

Finding myself working harder than ever and more anxious as can't speak to anyone face-to-face in a professional manner.

The positive feelings alternate with anger and despair, but predominately anger at how badly we are being let down by leaders.

Full of dread before Monday because of uncertainty in the week and getting back onto the computer and feeling shut in. Spending too long on computer so missing out on family life and necessary rest.

However, experiences have not been negative for all teachers. Some had rather positive experiences and enjoyed the time with family.

I have enjoyed spending more time at home.

I am enjoying the peace. My skin and hair have healed and I am eating and sleeping better than in a usual term time- my brain is less chaotic and I am better at looking after myself and taking time to enjoy my own art. I have pangs of whether or not I want to go back but I do feel grateful, so very grateful, for this job and its security. I enjoy planning for the future and have had meaningful exchange with colleagues and students alike. I have managed not to feel overwhelmed or stressed.

I have felt calmer generally. I have also felt less pressure, and my work load is easier to manage. I feel that this time is a good time for children to learn various life skills other than what they can learn in school.

Relaxed, valued by parents, manageable workload for first time in years, thoroughly enjoying time with my family.

Much less stressed, fitter and happier. Life is a slower pace, calmer and I have more time to read, enjoy my pets, go for walks in nature and spend time with my partner.

Although the workload is tremendous, with online teaching and marking, I feel close to my students and feel that the majority of them are benefitting from this kind of teaching.

I think it has greatly improved independent learning in my students yrs 4 to 8. improved researching and analysis of found information. vastly improved IT skills.

It's been less stressful and fearful because I'm not teaching them physically wondering if a chair is going to be thrown today, or am I going to face verbal abuse or is there going to be another fight so that stress and feeling of fear has been removed temporarily. I feel less tired from commuting and being stuck in traffic as there have been major motorway delays the last year and also getting up later as I don't have to commute.

These findings are similar to those of other studies. For example, Hilger et al. [7] also found mixed effects. They compared the experiences of 207 German teachers before and during school closures. They found that teachers experienced higher job demands and lower job resources when schools closed during the pandemic. The reduced task variety had a positive effect on teacher fatigue and psychosomatic complaints, but decreases in job resources had a countereffect on job satisfaction.

Hilger et al.'s [7] study showed that teachers with caretaking responsibilities were the most adversely affected compared to their peers with no caretaking demands. While we did not specifically ask teachers about their caretaking responsibilities, we know that teachers feel responsible for their pupils, not only for their learning, but also for their health and general safety. We found that in the midst of the chaos, teachers' priorities were still focused on the welfare of their students. Many have expressed concerns about their students' learning.

Bit more concerned about GCSE students as they find exam questions difficult without a teacher present so we had to simplify the work so they are learning key terms but not how to apply them in answers.

Feel very worried about the number of students who are not engaging with the work I am setting them to do remotely. Very few low ability students doing any work.

Really missing student interactions and struggling to stay motivated, particularly as the gaps between students who are and aren't able to engage with school work continues to widen, I worry about how we will come back in a way that fully supports all of them.

Huge safeguarding concern. GDPR concern. Not reaching all children. All material has to be retaught.

Pastoral concerns over pupils' mental health and eye health.

Safeguarding, health and safety matters wellbeing for staff and students.

There hasn't been enough focus on supporting students' wellbeing and instead there has been a relentless drive for us to hard parents and students about educational progress at this extremely anxious time.

Some schools had taken the extra effort to track and monitor children who needed extra care and support.

We have an excellent safeguarding team so staff understood immediately which students could not engage e.g., no laptop; moving homes; in care etc. We are at the stage where these students are now being hunted down, tracked and monitored.

One positive outcome that has been made apparent during the lockdown is how schools went out of their way to minimise disruption to children's education. For example, teachers told us how they personally delivered work packages to homes.

Not all pupils have access to IT and internet so this causes problems, and we are asked for paperwork to be printed in school and delivered to pupils so they can continue to learn.

Delivery of work packs to households with no internet access.

Preparing paperwork packs and delivering them to students at home. Time includes the driving/walking between villages for delivery.

No online lessons are being taught. I am preparing work for children which they receive either by e mail or post every Monday with a range of different tasks for them to complete. The school has also sent workbooks to each child for them to complete and attempt at their own pace.

*3.8. Teachers' Experience with Using Edtech Tools*

One of the causes of anxiety and the additional workload is the need for teachers to use edtech to connect with students. We, therefore, want to find out how prepared teachers were for this kind of delivery. Of the 3404 teachers surveyed, 64% reported having very little or no previous experience in online teaching (Table 7). Only a quarter of respondents (26%) said they felt confident to any extent in using edtech to deliver lessons online. Under half (43%) of teachers found online teaching stressful and only a tiny proportion said they had better interactions with their students online. Only 33% of teachers felt that they were provided with adequate resources for online teaching, but a similar proportion said they would not use online teaching if it was not necessary.

Table 7. Teachers' experience with online teaching (% by frequency of responses), N = 3404.

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I have no previous experience in online teaching	15%	4%	5%	3%	2%	5%	2%	4%	8%	8%	44%
I am confident in using edtech to deliver lessons online	29%	6%	7%	7%	6%	12%	7%	9%	8%	4%	5%
I have better interactions with my students online	34%	12%	14%	9%	7%	14%	4%	3%	2%	1%	1%
Teaching online is stressful	13%	3%	5%	6%	4%	15%	9%	11%	12%	7%	13%
I am well-supported with adequate resources for online teaching	14%	4%	8%	8%	7%	15%	10%	11%	11%	5%	6%
I would not use online teaching if I can help it	18%	6%	8%	7%	6%	14%	5%	7%	8%	6%	16%

3.9. Teachers' Experience in Delivering Online Lessons by Phase of Education

Whilst there may be a large variation among teachers in their experience with online teaching, it seems that primary (69%) and secondary (71%) teachers were least likely to have previous experience in delivering online lessons, compared to only 50% of tertiary teachers (Figure 3). It is therefore not surprising that few teachers in primary and secondary schools were confident in using edtech to deliver lessons. Primary teachers were the least confident. On a scale of 0 to 10 (where 0 is completely disagree and 10 is completely agree), the mean score for primary teachers is 8.1, for secondary teachers it is 8.2, and for tertiary teachers the score is 6.6 (Table 8). The effect size between secondary and tertiary teachers is 0.43. For confidence, the difference between primary and secondary teachers is an effect size of 0.3. There are clear differences between teachers in different phases of education in terms of experience and confidence in using edtech.
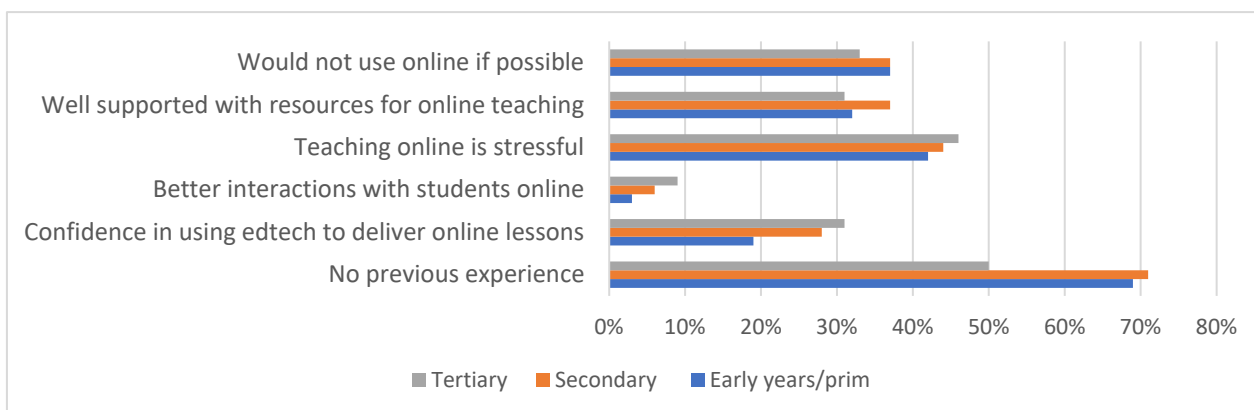
Proportion who agreed includes only those who rated 7 and above on a scale of 0 to 10

Figure 3. Teachers' experience of online teaching by school phase (proportion who agreed with statements).

Table 8. Teacher's experience in online teaching by phase of education.

Phase of Education	Mean and SD	No Previous Experience in Online Teaching	Confidence in Delivering Online Lessons	Better Interactions with Students Online	Teaching Online is Stressful	Well Supported with Resources for Online Teaching	Would Not Use Online if Possible
Early years/Primary (n = 724)	Mean	8.1	4.0	2.8	6.3	5.5	5.9
	SD	3.9	3.2	2.2	3.4	3.3	3.5
Secondary (1658)	Mean	8.2	5.0	3.3	6.6	6.2	6.0
	SD	3.7	3.3	2.4	3.1	3.0	3.5
Tertiary (n = 1021)	Mean	6.6	5.2	3.9	6.7	5.6	5.6
	SD	4.0	3.3	2.5	3.1	2.9	2.5

It is clear is that most teachers do not have confidence in delivering lessons online, and only a third of teachers (33%) said they were well supported with adequate resources for online teaching.

In the open comments, teachers provided a long list of challenges, but we could only show some examples here for reasons concerning the word limit. Many of the experiences here will resonate with most teachers. We do not attempt to quantify the comments, as our intention is to reflect the mood of the teaching staff, and not the prevalence of certain emotions.

3.10. Challenges in the Use of Edtech and Concerns about Its Use in Online Teaching

Learning how to use a completely unknown programme with minimal training. Making mistakes 'live' every time I try to do something new with the IT. Developing strategies to keep all students feeling engaged and part of the lesson.

A big challenge is knowing how much work to set, and how to present it so everyone is very clear about what they are doing. The biggest challenge is when you think you have found a great online resource and the students say they can't log into it and I'm stuck at home trying to explain via email how to access it, for example Active Learn and problems with pop ups.

Challenge of having to adapt to a whole new way of teaching and not having the time to train kids on how to use Google Classroom before the school closure.

I don't know how to use Teams properly, so miss out on what is happening. I feel I've been isolated and left at home with no support whatsoever. I'm ignored because I can't use the technology. It's depressing.

Getting pupils to respond, Year 12 unable to access google meet so all work done in chat.

Also a poor experience trying to juggle lesson creation on new platforms and therefore having to up-skill myself at speed with demands of 3 small children at home with nowhere to go.

A common problem faced by teachers is the lack of adequate infrastructure and resources.

I am dependent on the speed and capacity of my home equipment which is often inadequate.

Lack of resources, no one to help with new technology, glitchy internet connection.

My broadband has cut out and I'm accessing the internet via hotspotting my phone.

I have no webcam on the college computer I was issued with to work at home and my own home laptop doesn't have one either, so I can't see the learners. I'm the only one who doesn't have one in our department, so everyone else can see each other, but they can't see me. I feel very left out.

I have to do everything on my phone as caring for elderly vulnerable parent during lockdown and no PC facilities.

Staff do not have the required software etc to efficiently deliver on-line teaching.

Online teaching would be better if my school had the resources to teach online. However, like most other primary schools, we were not prepared for this type of learning for children.

School has set up systems which are too complicated, work is too complicated for students and too much online.

The internet is very poor and many videos have to be re-made as they don't upload.

I have not used thing like zoom as when I tried it was unsuccessful due to 'insufficient bandwidth ' whatever this means?? And I don't have a smartphone.

I live in a very rural area and cannot access internet from home this has meant that I come to school everyday to carryout tasks.

We have PCs at school, but at home we are forced to use our own devices which we did not purchase with remote learning in mind. My laptop is therefore old, not fit for purpose, and is being shared by my teenage daughter and myself.

Preparing videos is difficult if you do not have a quiet space at home and not all resources are available from home for demo purposes.

Lack of training is another major challenge often mentioned by teachers.

Lack of training—instructions sent are usually inadequate if you are not an IT wizard and I have had to call on the EDIT support team frequently for help when the technology goes wrong or I am not sure what to do. This has meant I have had to come into school to deliver these lessons when I am supposed to be shielding because of health issues.

We need more training on online teaching, tools, safe access to better platforms like zoom and to establish online teaching when we return back to schools.

The uni have given no training in the pedagogy of online teaching. I don't think they understand that putting a voice over PowerPoint is just not good enough and not worth the student fees. I'm writing interactive ebooks including links to audio video and academic papers. Then running interactive workshops in pbl for my students.

We've just been given a pile of 'read it yourself and get on with it' pdfs. This is not what we should be expected to do, this is all admin rubbish. BUT we fired admin recently so academics are now just highly paid administrators, which is crazy.

Support on how to deliver teaching differently is patchy. I feel that I know much more about that than the personal development courses offered.

Happy to plan/prepare online resources but am not supported in this by colleagues within the department (no sharing of resources) I have none and the whole thing is very daunting. I was not trained to do this.

We were thrown in at the deep end with little training, as were the students. There needs to be a more coordinated system for the next intake.

Teachers felt that not all students were receiving the same level of support, and remote teaching benefits some students more than others.

Students are not receiving the same level of support, many feel embarrassed or intrusive emailing or ringing for what they feel are small questions which would usually be answered in small one to one conversations. Quality and levels of online interaction has declined over time perhaps less student enthusiasm and drive.

For the engaged student, there are few problems, but for any student who is academically weak, has limited motivation or has domestic challenges, teaching online will only serve to widen and accelerate the attainment gap.

It is more appropriate for students at a higher academic level, as they are more self-directed by this point.

However, these challenges are compounded when dealing with very young children and those with special needs.

One of my Y8 KW students has Williams syndrome. She can sometimes access a laptop but mainly we communicate through emails which we've had to teach her how to do [it]. She has done work but then mostly doesn't save it properly so she can't send it back. She really resists Mum supporting her. Currently she is just borrowing Mum's mobile to say hello each day as they're changing internet provider. Therefore the challenges are huge.

It is ineffective for younger children who need kinaesthetic approaches.

Parental engagement in Early Years and KS1 Parental knowledge on IT.

Communication with younger students who are not yet good readers. I am communicating with parents more than my pupils. Using tech at home is stressful when it goes wrong and when family life is going on simultaneously.

One of the biggest challenges is student's lack of access to the internet and digital devices.

I have to print out learning resources for over half my class. They are not accessing any online teaching.

My students do not generally have access to technology to participate in lessons in zoom/teams etc. Also we have concerns about safeguarding for our students when using this whole class teaching technology. Many of my students are working from their mobile phone, with no access to a printer or larger screen. Some have poor internet connections or are sharing a computer with siblings.

And deprived pupils may have smart phones, but they may not have broadband or laptops. We've given out laptops. Connection is also a problem in rural areas. As a school we've had to start buying 4 g dongles.

We have found that in reality parents/households do not possess sufficient numbers of capable computers (desk, laptop or tablet) to enable effective delivery of on-line learning.

The variation in students' ability to use it, and in their home circumstances.

Not everyone can access it, so not inclusive. Can't differentiate sufficiently.

Some students from unsupportive families (for a variety of reasons—some parents are not interested, too busy with work, not intellectually capable, IT equipment lacking) are getting a very raw deal and are missing a lot of schooling. This is creating a 2 tier experience and is undoing all the good work schools do to support disadvantaged learners.

We found that positive engagement with parents may be the key to the successful delivery of remote lessons.

I've had wonderful calls with parents and students but it is exhausting.

I feel that clear planning and explanation for parents has been paramount.

Parents have been very appreciative of our efforts which has made the lengths that we are going to worthwhile.

Relaxed, valued by parents, manageable work-load for first time in years, thoroughly enjoying time with my family.

I feel the onus should be put on parents/guardians who can contact a teacher if there are reasons for students missing deadlines- this would save time.

Trying to ensure that students and parents are still engaged and learning the work set is making me feel less effective as we have no control over their home circumstances, environment or work ethic.

Our school have gone above and beyond in what they are giving parents to do.

3.11. Positive Experiences

Teachers' encounters with new technology have not always been negative. There were a number of teachers who reported a really positive learning experience.

New skills adopted for future teaching

It has shown me that an awful lot of what we do could be done remotely, and that there are different ways in which we could be delivering content and supporting learning.

Great potential which should be developed in conjunction with face to face teaching. A great opportunity!

I enjoy the experience, but it takes a lot longer to mark and feedback electronically than verbally in a class situation.

New ideas/skills/techniques are quickly shared and incorporated into online learning and this is giving food for thought for September planning when there may be more need for direct small group catch up sessions and the rest of the class could follow work on line.

It's been a steep learning curve but I am glad to be doing online lessons—the children's experience has vastly improved because of that. It does increase the preparation workload but I will be able to use those resources in the future and am finding some great stuff online.

I have learned a good many skills in the past two months which I hope will improve my teaching and planning once we are back to a more 'normal' routine.

We will learn a lot from it that we can use when we get back to normal teaching, we won't have the time to work on it when we teach full time again.

My technical abilities have increased tremendously as I have had to learn how to use loom, a visualiser, Microsoft Teams, etc. It is as good as it can be in the current situation and I am proud of my school for what they are doing.

It's actually been very enjoyable and opened up opportunities for a new and more efficient way of working in some aspects of teaching life.

Better engagement and class management

Some really enjoyable and highly intellectual discussions online and enjoyable moments when we are able to go off-piste, for example with Y11 and Y13 for Limitless Learning.

Students who engage with the online classes seem to be happy with the way it has gone and do seem to appreciate the effort of the lecturers.

It has made many of the pupils much more appreciative of the classroom environment. Many are almost desperate to return to face to face learning.

The overriding experience has been positive and that students enjoy a live session where they can either speak or ask questions in a chat window.

Some students have produced stunning work and seem to be focusing better upon quality within lockdown. I'm improving my IT skills and agile learning ability daily- made a Bitmoji today as this is now a craze to make exciting presentations with a bitmoji character (my avatar) to engage learners from home.

Those children who find distractions in the classroom have really flourished with online teaching. I have loved having most parents being involved and it has given them a better understanding of their children's education.

Yr 7 are absolute stars and 24/30 came online and were answering confidently better than in class! I think online could be the way forward to keep everyone safe for now. They are also able to work at their own pace.

Other students have commented on how much they are learning as a result of on-line learning, especially those who normally find themselves in very large classes of 33 students with a handful of challenging characters thrown into the mix. Remote learning is giving the quieter, well behaved students a direct line via email to the teacher. I feel that I will use online learning for homework, revision and consolidation a lot more in future, but am still eager to get back into the classroom to deliver the content initially. I think it proves that machines cannot replace teachers!

The online lessons are also much more focused than I thought they might be and using technology like Teams means that I can still see what they are doing as they do it and talk to them as though we were in class. There are definitely less distractions once you get past the initial novelty backgrounds and tech issues.

Encourage socialization among children and attendance

Love it—need to embrace new ways of working even after we return to school. In our rural area we have connected children who in ordinary times only socialise in school. These children are in touch with each other all the time and I am continually impressed with how they have embraced the changes and use tech to connect in meaningful way. We must continue to capitalise on this even when classrooms are fully open again.

It's a good way for school refusers/absent pupils to keep up. It has been a best fit option given the circumstances. It is good preparation for independent learning skills needed at higher key stages.

More students have been attending classes than usual. I must be doing something right.

I felt it made a difference to the students, many of them reported feeling like they were back to some sort of 'normality'. They said it was good to see each other online. They felt supported. I felt it went well, it was not stressful but it was, in some ways, more participatory than some of the face to face lectures.

Support teachers' feedback to students

I love being able to feedback on work pretty much within 48 h to students as you can cut and paste standard remarks but it's easy to personalise them.

Technology is good and allows me to give feedback.

Marking online is more effective than marking books. What is missing is my verbal 'filling in' or my interpretation of events coupled with class discussion and debates about things like interpretation and causation which is particularly a focus of history teaching. Second order concepts are missed.

For some students, particularly the quieter ones, I have been able to have more 1–1 interactions with them through online feedback. I have also worked very hard to make sure that every child that hands in work gets individual feedback, something that simply isn't possible in class. I'm not sure how sustainable this is, but it has been nice to spend more time doing this than crowd control.

The findings from our study are consistent with those of the Education Endowment review [3] highlighting the lack of access to technology as a major barrier to successful remote instruction. Our findings also suggest that teachers need proper support and appropriate resources and guidance. Some teachers appear to be more successful than others, suggesting that it is how technology is used that matters more than the technology itself.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent school closures were unprecedented events. None of the teachers and students would have had experienced anything similar. The aim of this study was to document the experiences of teachers during the lockdown to understand how they have coped with the situation, and if there was any impact on their wellbeing.

This study found that, despite the chaos and panic associated with the pandemic and school closures, teachers were coping remarkably well working under very challenging conditions. The vast number of positive responses from teachers was unexpected. Despite the outpour of emotions, teachers fared well on the wellbeing scale, scoring highly on happiness and cheerfulness. Teachers reported being more relaxed, learning new skills, and had better engagement with pupils and fewer class management issues. This is consistent with other studies that reported people feeling better during than before the pandemic [26]. However, we should not forget there were other teachers who reported a feeling of despair, and some even felt suicidal.

The most important finding, however, is that teachers held a great sense of responsibility and pride in their work. The highest score observed was the recognition that their job was worthwhile and important. Some travelled to school to look after the children of key workers while also home-schooling their own children and juggling household responsibilities. While some studies have indicated that teachers with caretaking responsibilities (e.g., those with young children and elderly parents) were most adversely affected [7]), our survey of over 3000 teachers suggests that teachers in the UK coped fairly well, although there were dark days, an emotion described by many as a "roller coaster". This is perhaps a tribute to the resilience and quality of our teachers, something we should be very proud of.

Being in lockdown has created a barrier to understanding how teachers are doing and what they are doing. Our study has given us a glimpse into the lives of teachers during those difficult months. Many also expressed concerns about the welfare of their pupils. Prior research has indicated the close connection between teacher and student wellbeing, with better teacher wellbeing associated with better student wellbeing (Harding et al. 2019). Sharp et al. [27] surmised that this may explain why teachers had prioritized supporting student wellbeing during the pandemic as students were reported to experience increased stress and depression [28,29].

There had also been a lot of discussion in the media about loss of learning. Studies conducted post-pandemic in many countries have shown the evidence of the impact on learning. Engzell, Frey, and Verhagen [30] compared primary school children's performance on two types of tests in the Netherlands using a difference-in-difference analysis. They found that children performed worse on tests designed to assess curricula content than the generic tests (where no curricular content was covered). The learning loss was greater for children from disadvantaged homes. This suggests that school closures had a negative impact on some learning. Evidence from international data (e.g., Eurostat, PISA, PIRLS, TALIS) shows that on average students suffer a learning loss although the effect is not equal for all children and for all subjects [31].

Our study has shown that teachers in the UK had continued to teach under very challenging conditions. Consistent with other studies [32], teachers' pedagogical decisions were very much influenced by the availability of digital tools, as well as the ability to use them effectively in the home settings. Internet access and Wi-Fi connectivity were found to be crucial in delivering lessons effectively.

This study has revealed serious weaknesses in government handling of the situation. The inconsistency and lack of clarity of government guidelines have caused confusion and added to teachers' anxiety. Post-lockdown, the government should think about how teachers can be supported and better prepared. The director of the OECD, using the Finnish and Estonian examples, said that "these systems succeeded in aligning resources with needs and reconciling equity with quality, an even more formidable challenge in this crisis, thus making the closest school always the best school" [13]. The lessons learnt are valuable for supporting children and young people who, for some reason, may have to miss school (e.g., the long-term sick and school refusers).

One important finding of this study is the need for future teacher development and initial teacher training to consider the move to a greater use of technology in delivering lessons. While there are ongoing efforts by governments to enhance the use of digital technology (DT) in schools, there has been no clear consensus on how technology can be effectively embedded within everyday teaching practice.

The review by the Education Endowment Foundation suggests that parental engagement is important in supporting children's learning [3] and the feedback from teachers in this study shows that there has been a lot of communication with parents, especially for younger children, and the open comments corroborate the findings of the review that support from parents is essential to ensure that children access online learning at home. It is not the technology, but how technology is used that matters.

5. Limitations

As with any cross-sectional research, there are limitations as it can only represent the views and experiences of respondents at that point in time. However, this is also the strength of this study, as it is one of very few studies that we know of that actually captures the emotions of individuals at the time of the event. In other words, it is not based on recall, which can be distorted.

The data on teachers' wellbeing are solely based on the teachers' own assessment of their mental health. No objective measures were used. Thus, there is the issue of validity as individuals may exaggerate symptoms or underreport the severity in order to minimize their problems. As the survey was anonymised (no names collected) and was

online, we avoided the tendency for people to provide responses that they think might gain sympathy. As shown in the extracts, the emotions expressed were raw and real (to the individuals concerned). The use of the survey item responses along with the provision of open comments allow us to check for validity.

We have not collected teachers' personal data, such as age, gender, and ethnicity based on past experiences that showed reluctance among some individuals to participate in surveys requesting such personal details. Our aim was to capture the overall view of teachers' experiences during the period, so we consciously chose not to gather biographical data. While such data were not essential in our study, looking back, it would have been interesting to explore any potential differences in experiences based on age and gender.

Appendix A

School type

The proportion of each school type in England represented by the data is (compared to gov.uk data):

	Sample %	National %
Academy 16-19 converter	0.3%	0.1%
Academy converter	46.3%	25.6%
Academy special converter	0.5%	1.2%
Community school	17.4%	29.7%
Foundation school	4.7%	3.4%
Free schools	2.2%	1.8%
Further education	2.0%	1.2%
Independent	13.3%	12.4%
Local authority nursery school	0.4%	1.8%
Non-maintained special school	1.9%	0.3%
Pupil referral unit	0.5%	1.0%
University technical college	0.7%	0.2%
Voluntary aided school	7.0%	13.5%
Voluntary controlled school	2.7%	8.1%

Geographical spread

The proportion of schools (inc academies) situated in each LA represented by the data is:

Barking and Dagenham	9%	Cheshire West and Chester	11%
Barnet	14%	City of London	20%
Barnsley	2%	Cornwall	10%
Bath and North East Somerset	14%	Coventry	10%
Bedford	15%	Croydon	19%
Bexley	20%	Cumbria	6%
Birmingham	13%	Darlington	13%
Blackburn with Darwen	5%	Derby	10%
Blackpool	4%	Derbyshire	6%
Bolton	9%	Devon	10%
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole	9%	Doncaster	2%
Bracknell Forest	22%	Dorset	12%
Bradford	5%	Dudley	4%
Brent	24%	Durham	2%
Brighton and Hove	46%	Ealing	5%
Bristol City of	28%	East Riding of Yorkshire	5%
Bromley	20%		
Buckinghamshire	20%		
Bury	8%		
Calderdale	10%		
Cambridgeshire	9%		
Camden	25%		
Central Bedfordshire	11%		
Cheshire East	10%		

Figure A1. *Cont.*

East Sussex	24%	Hillingdon	10%
Enfield	10%	Hounslow	11%
Essex	13%	Isle of Wight	9%
Gateshead	5%	Islington	9%
Gloucestershire	14%	Kensington and Chelsea	13%
Greenwich	9%	Kent	17%
Hackney	3%	Kingston upon Hull City of	29%
Halton	1%	Kingston upon Thames	17%
Hammersmith and Fulham	66%	Kirklees	7%
Hampshire	10%	Lambeth	15%
Haringey	12%	Lancashire	7%
Harrow	12%	Leeds	36%
Hartlepool	7%	Leicester	7%
Havering	5%	Leicestershire	12%
Herefordshire	11%	Lewisham	24%
Hertfordshire	16%	Lincolnshire	7%
Liverpool	41%	North Yorkshire	6%
Luton	16%	Northamptonshire	11%
Manchester	29%	Northumberland	6%
Medway	3%	Nottingham	11%
Merton	8%	Nottinghamshire	6%
Middlesbrough	8%	Oldham	8%
Milton Keynes	15%	Oxfordshire	25%
Monmouthshire	7%	Pembrokeshire	8%
Newcastle upon Tyne	43%	Peterborough	6%
Newham	15%	Plymouth	13%
Newport	5%	Portsmouth	27%
Norfolk	5%	Reading	17%
North East Lincolnshire	5%	Redbridge	5%
North Lincolnshire	5%	Redcar and Cleveland	43%
North Somerset	13%	Richmond upon Thames	27%
North Tyneside	6%	Rochdale	7%

Rutland	18%	Suffolk	11%
Sefton	4%	Sunderland	4%
Sheffield	28%	Surrey	26%
Shropshire	2%	Sutton	29%
Slough	28%	Swindon	21%
Solihull	10%	Tameside	6%
Somerset	3%	Telford and Wrekin	8%
South Gloucestershire	5%	Thurrock	15%
South Tyneside	6%	Torbay	26%
Southampton	26%	Tower Hamlets	7%
Southwark	18%	Trafford	6%
St. Helens	3%	Wakefield	5%
Staffordshire	8%	Walsall	6%
Stockport	11%	Waltham Forest	11%
Stockton-on-Tees	9%	Wandsworth	21%
Stoke-on-Trent	26%	Warrington	5%

Figure A1. Geographical spread cont'd.

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