

# **Université du Luxembourg**

Faculté des Sciences Humaines, des Sciences de l'Éducation et des Sciences Sociales

Bachelor en Sciences de l'Éducation (Bachelor professionnel)

## **Well-being of primary school teachers in Luxembourg**

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Bachelor Thesis

2023/2024

## **Declaration of honour**

Title of the thesis: Psychological well-being of primary school teachers in Luxembourg

Submission semester: Summer semester 2023/2024

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"I hereby declare that I am the author of this work and did not use any sources other than those indicated. All references to other sources and literal quotations from other sources have been identified as such in accordance with the APA standard customary in the Bachelor en Sciences de l'Education program."

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## Summary

This study explores the psychological well-being of primary school teachers in the Luxembourg public school system through semi-structured qualitative interviews. It aims to identify stress factors and coping strategies among these teachers. The findings indicate that although the interviewed teachers generally have a positive self-assessment of their well-being, they have all experienced difficult situations that have impacted their well-being, whether temporarily or in a still manageable manner. Common strategies to manage stress include seeking peer support, engaging in professional development, and maintaining personal well-being practices such as regular exercise and hobbies. These insights will help develop targeted support strategies for teachers.

**Keywords:** Well-being, Psychological well-being, Primary school teachers, Coping strategies, Teacher stress factors, Qualitative interviews

## Résumé

Cette étude explore le bien-être psychologique des enseignants du primaire dans le système scolaire public luxembourgeois par le biais d'entretiens qualitatifs semi-structurés. Elle vise à identifier les facteurs de stress et les stratégies d'adaptation chez ces enseignants. Les résultats indiquent que, bien que les enseignants interrogés aient généralement une auto-évaluation positive de leur bien-être, ils ont tous vécu des situations difficiles qui ont eu un impact sur leur bien-être, que ce soit temporairement ou d'une manière encore gérable. Les stratégies communes pour gérer le stress comprennent la recherche du soutien des pairs, l'engagement dans le développement professionnel et le maintien de pratiques de bien-être personnel telles que l'exercice physique régulier et les loisirs. Ces informations permettront d'élaborer des stratégies de soutien ciblées pour les enseignants.

**Mots-clefs** : Bien-être, Bien-être psychologique, Enseignants du primaire, Stratégies d'adaptation, Facteurs de stress des enseignants, Interviews qualitatives

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank all those who have supported me throughout this thesis.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my tutor Dr. Sara Wilmes, who accompanied me throughout this work and was a helpful support with her suggestions and advice.

I would also like to thank the teachers who took the time for an interview and gave me a rich insight into their perception on well-being in relation to the teaching profession.

Finally, I would like to thank my friends and family who have always been encouraging and supportive.



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# 1 Introduction

The teaching profession is often seen as noble and inspiring, but behind the scenes there is a reality that points to psychological stress and crucial support systems to manage it. Research conducted in English secondary schools by Kidger et al. (2016) emphasizes that teachers are at an increased risk of mental disorders and work-related stress compared to other occupational groups. This finding is supported by the results of a 2015 study conducted in Germany by Scheuch et al. (2015), which indicate that mental and psychosomatic illnesses occur more frequently among teachers than in other occupational fields.

Despite the attractiveness of teaching as a popular career choice, as highlighted by Schonfeld et al. (2017), data shows that teachers are disproportionately more likely to experience mental health problems compared to other occupational groups, in occupations where a college degree is required. In the US, teachers make up just over 3% of workers, but the prevalence of mental health problems among teachers is significantly higher (Schonfeld et al., 2017).

These studies emphasize the urgent need to support the psychological health of teachers and implement appropriate measures to manage stressors in the workplace. It is essential to provide teachers with the necessary resources and support to maintain their mental health and improve their professional effectiveness. So, they can ensure that they can deliver quality education to their students.

Like any other country, Luxembourg is no exception when it comes to psychological health issues in the workforce and among teachers.

According to an article published by the Luxembourg Times in 2017, a study conducted by the University of Luxembourg and the Chamber of Employers

revealed that approximately 30% of workers in the Grand Duchy reported experiencing work-related exhaustion, significantly impacting their mental well-being (Luxembourg Times, 2017). Given the persistent trends in workplace stress and the evolving nature of work, it would not be surprising if this percentage has increased since the study was conducted.

In my Bachelor Thesis, I will focus on investigating the well-being of primary school teachers, specifically those in public schools in Luxembourg. While existing studies have touched upon burnout in the education sector broadly, (Jennings and Greenberg 2009; Kidger et al. 2016; Scheuch et al. 2015) my research will delve into the unique circumstances and stressors faced by Luxembourgish primary school teachers in public education. I aim to discuss specific factors teacher's report contribute to psychological strain in primary school teachers in Luxembourg and hope to identify some ways through which these teachers might be coping with these factors.

Drawing from current research and theoretical foundations, this work underscores that the teaching profession is fraught with numerous challenges that significantly impact educators.

To examine the situation in Luxembourg a fitting research question was formulated:

What is the self-reported assessment of personal well-being among primary school teachers in Luxembourg within the context of their profession? and What are the primary stress factors they identify?

To address this question, four primary school teachers from Luxembourg were interviewed to explore their experiences regarding well-being in the context of their profession. They were prompted to discuss the primary challenges they encounter in their work and elaborate on the strategies they employ to effectively navigate these challenges.

Through qualitative thematic analysis, the collected data was systematically structured and analyzed to offer insights into addressing the research question. In the theoretical section of the thesis, terms are explained and defined to establish a robust foundation for data analysis and interpretation. Relevant studies and research findings are presented to provide an overview of the subject matter.

In the empirical segment of the thesis, the methodology for data collection is presented, which was conducted through semi-structured interviews. Through the qualitative research method, the perspectives and experiences of the educators have been captured to enable a comprehensive analysis and interpretation of the data. Finally, I share concluding thoughts and discuss the implications for my teaching practice and well-being.



## **2 Theoretical framework**

### **2.1 Health and psychological health**

#### **2.1.1 Definition**

Defining health is a complex task as it involves a dynamic interplay of multiple factors, and individuals often have diverse perspectives on what constitutes a healthy person.

When contemplating health, our tendency can often be to focus solely on the physical aspect, however health goes beyond the mere absence of illness. The World Health Organization (World Health Organization: WHO, 1946) defines Health as “[...] a state of complete physical, psychological and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (p.1) in their Constitution.

This is the concept of the biopsychosocial model of health that has become established at international level in recent decades. The Biopsychosocial Model (Engel, 1977) was established in the late 1970s by the American psychiatrist George Libman Engel. This model evolved as an expansion beyond the biomedical approach, acknowledging that explaining illness requires a comprehensive understanding beyond biological factors alone.

Engel's (1977) innovation incorporated psychological and social elements into the model, seeking to integrate the individual's experience of illness. It recognizes that a person's life circumstances play a role in the onset of illness. Unlike the biomedical approach reliant on medical tests, the biopsychosocial model considers patients' self-reports, delving into behavioral and psychosocial aspects.

Physical health refers to the proper functioning of the body and its organs. Social health involves the quality of an individual's relationships,

participation in the community, and overall ability to function socially (Engel, 1977). Psychological health involves cognitive and emotional well-being. These three dimensions are intricately interconnected, influencing each other in various ways (Engel, 1977).

Psychological health refers to a person's state of mental and emotional well-being. It includes the ability to deal effectively with stress, work productively, maintain positive relationships, show emotional resilience and experience an adequate quality of life (Engel, 1977).

Good psychological health and well-being enable people to develop their abilities, build relationships, work productively and enjoy life to the full. It is important to emphasize that psychological or mental health is a continuous process and is influenced by various factors, including genetic predisposition, environmental conditions, life experiences and individual coping strategies (WHO, 2022).

Promoting mental health involves being aware of personal needs, developing effective coping strategies, maintaining social relationships and seeking professional help when necessary. It is important that people look after their mental health and take care of it, just as they would their physical health. "In the absence of effective treatment and care, mental illness can have serious repercussions on a person's life and, in the worst cases, lead to suicide." (Direction de la santé, 2023, p.5).

### **2.1.2 Overall psychological health and well-being situation in Luxembourg**

It is extremely challenging to find precise information on the psychological and mental health of Luxembourg's inhabitants. There are no currently published statistical analyses or studies that provide information on the average number of people suffering from a mental illness in Luxembourg. These difficulties become even more apparent when it comes to obtaining



specific data on certain occupational groups, in this case primary school teachers. For example, in 2024, a search on STATEC yielded no information on teacher well-being. This gap highlights the niche my study aims to fill, as it explores an area that has not been fully examined yet.

According to the Centre d'Information et de Prévention de la Ligue, every year, around one in four people in Luxembourg reports experiencing mental distress (Portail d'information sur la santé mentale, 2024). Luxembourg is no exception in facing the prevalence of mental illnesses among its residents.

According to burnout statistics published by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions in 2011, employees in Luxembourg are prone to stress and work-related burnout. The survey, which involved 1,537 employees in Luxembourg, found that around 30% of respondents reported suffering from work-related burnout. Interestingly, 38% of these survey participants belonged to the education sector.

In June 2023, the Luxembourg government declared mental health a national priority and unveiled a corresponding national plan (Direction de la santé, 2023). This decision-making guide integrates coalition agreement goals and aligns with the World Health Organization's priorities (Direction de la santé, 2023). These priorities, as stated by the WHO, aim "to improve mental health by strengthening governance, providing community-based care, implementing promotion and prevention strategies, and strengthening information systems, evidence, and research" (WHO, *Mental health*, 2019). Luxembourg's national mental health plan aligns with these priorities by promoting mental health and well-being, ensuring quality care access, embedding health promotion, and guaranteeing effective governance based on evidence. This alignment ensures the development of an effective national mental health plan, in accordance with the objectives laid out in the Plan National Santé Mental of 2023 (Direction de la santé, 2023). The

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plan aims to promote mental health, ensure lifelong access to quality care, embed prevention across societal domains, and ensure effective governance based on evidence and research (Direction de la santé, 2023).

## **2.2 Psychological health in the teaching profession**

Examining psychological health reveals its multifaceted nature, encompassing emotional stability, resilience, and the capacity to cope with stressors (see section 2.1.1). However, it is equally important to consider what this entails for teachers specifically. As highlighted by various studies, including those by Scheuch et al. (2015) and Jennings and Greenberg (2009), teachers frequently struggle with issues such as emotional exhaustion, which can lead to feelings of cynicism and a sense of diminished efficacy. Jennings and Greenberg (2009), underscore this point by noting that emotionally exhausted teachers may ultimately feel disengaged and opt to leave the profession altogether. Thus, understanding the implications of psychological health for teachers is crucial for promoting their well-being and ensuring the effectiveness of the education system.

In their literature analysis, Scheuch et al. (2015) found that in both Germany and Austria, the percentage of teachers who consider their health to be good is very low and that on average between 20% and 28% of teachers have an illness that limits their performance. The figures relate to both the physical and psychological health of teachers, but these figures are still quite worrying.

As Kidger et al. (2015) mention, research shows that poor mental health in teachers is associated with detrimental work-related outcomes such as absenteeism, sickness absence and presenteeism, work despite being ill or otherwise unwell, resulting in reduced productivity and potential negative impacts on their health and well-being (Bartlett, 2013). Studies also show that mental and psychosomatic illnesses are more common in teachers than

in other professions and often lead to early retirement (Scheuch et al. 2015).

### **2.2.1 Why psychological well-being in teachers matters**

Good teaching is often related to positive emotions when teachers can show their passion and inspire their students. A teacher can go through several positive emotions in everyday teaching, such as joy, excitement, and affection, as well as various negative emotions, such as anger, frustration, and fear. These positive emotions are often associated with flexible and creative teaching methods that increase student motivation (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). In contrast, repeated negative emotions in teachers can affect the quality of teaching and have a negative impact on student learning (Jiang et al. 2016).

#### **2.2.1.1 Teacher-student relationships and classroom outcomes**

The psychological well-being of teachers is of great importance as it not only affects their individual quality of life, but also has a direct impact on students and student outcomes. Teachers play a crucial role in shaping the social and emotional development of their students, as highlighted by Jennings and Greenberg in their paper from 2009 *The Prosocial Classroom: Teacher Social and Emotional Competence in Relation to Student and Classroom Outcomes*. They emphasize, among other critical factors, how positive teacher-student relationships contribute to a healthy classroom climate and promote desired outcomes, both academically and socially. Teachers, as role models, significantly influence student motivation and self-perception through their supportive actions, nurturing student well-being and fostering "a sense of connectedness with the school environment" (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009, p.500). As Jennings and Greenberg (2009) articulate, "[...] when teachers are warm and supportive, they provide students with a sense of connectedness with the school environment and the sense of security to

explore new ideas and take risks—both fundamental to learning” (p.500, 2009). In a study by Phelan, Davidson and Cao (1992) (cited in Jiang et al., 2016), a similar phenomenon was observed. High school students indicated that teachers who are perceived as caring are more likely to motivate their students to participate in class. In contrast, teachers who are perceived as not caring may have difficulty motivating their lower-performing students to participate.

However, challenges arise when teachers struggle to regulate their emotions, particularly in disruptive situations, which can adversely affect their relationships with students and consequently impact student outcomes (Jiang et al. 2016). Research has shown that teachers commonly experience negative emotions such as anger and frustration, which not only diminish their intrinsic motivation but also contribute to heightened negative emotional responses in students (Jiang et al. 2016). When teachers feel overwhelmed by negative emotions, they're less excited about building good relationships with students and report becoming “less involved, less tolerant, and less caring” (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009, p.51). Teachers' psychological well-being can influence their effectiveness in the classroom, which, in turn, may affect student outcomes. Moreover, as highlighted in numerous studies (Carson & Templin, 2007; Sutton, 2004; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003) referenced by Jennings and Greenberg (2009), even when teachers try to conceal their true emotions from students, their efforts often fall short of success. According to Sutton (2004, cited after Jiang et al., 2016) teachers use a variety of strategies to regulate emotions, including preventative measures such as distraction and self-talk, as well as reactive strategies such as deep breathing and controlling facial expressions but still, students tend to notice when a teacher is not feeling well or is overwhelmed in various situations (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Jiang et al.,2016).

It is therefore imperative for teachers to prioritize their mental and psychological health and develop effective emotion regulation strategies, especially in challenging situations. By maintaining good emotional regulation, teachers can sustain positive relationships with students, ultimately enhancing student performance.

### **2.2.2 Reasons for psychological health issues and risk factors**

While it's recognized that teachers everywhere often experience elevated levels of stress and are susceptible to overall common mental health struggles (Scheuch et. al., 2015; Kidger et al. 2016), there are few studies on Luxembourg focusing on identifying specific factors within the school environment that contribute to poor mental health among teachers. However, it's important to acknowledge that there are a multitude of factors, operating on different levels, some of which can be changed through intervention, while others are inherent aspects of the educational system.

In their review on work-related psychological ill-health, Michie and Williams (2003) (as cited in Kidger et al., 2016) found that some of the primary factors associated with mental health issues among teachers, include "long working hours, work overload and pressure" (Kidger et al., 2016, p. 77), and their impact on personal life. Additionally, lack of control over work, limited participation in decision-making, inadequate social support, and unclear leadership and job tasks play significant roles (Kidger et al., 2016).

Other stress factors in the teaching profession, as identified by Scheuch et al. (2015), include time pressure, disruptive school noises, overcrowded classes, disputes with school authorities and a lack of professional autonomy. In addition, challenges such as poor student performance, behavioral problems, and lack of motivation among students, difficult parental relationships and low social standing also play a role (Friend, 2008;

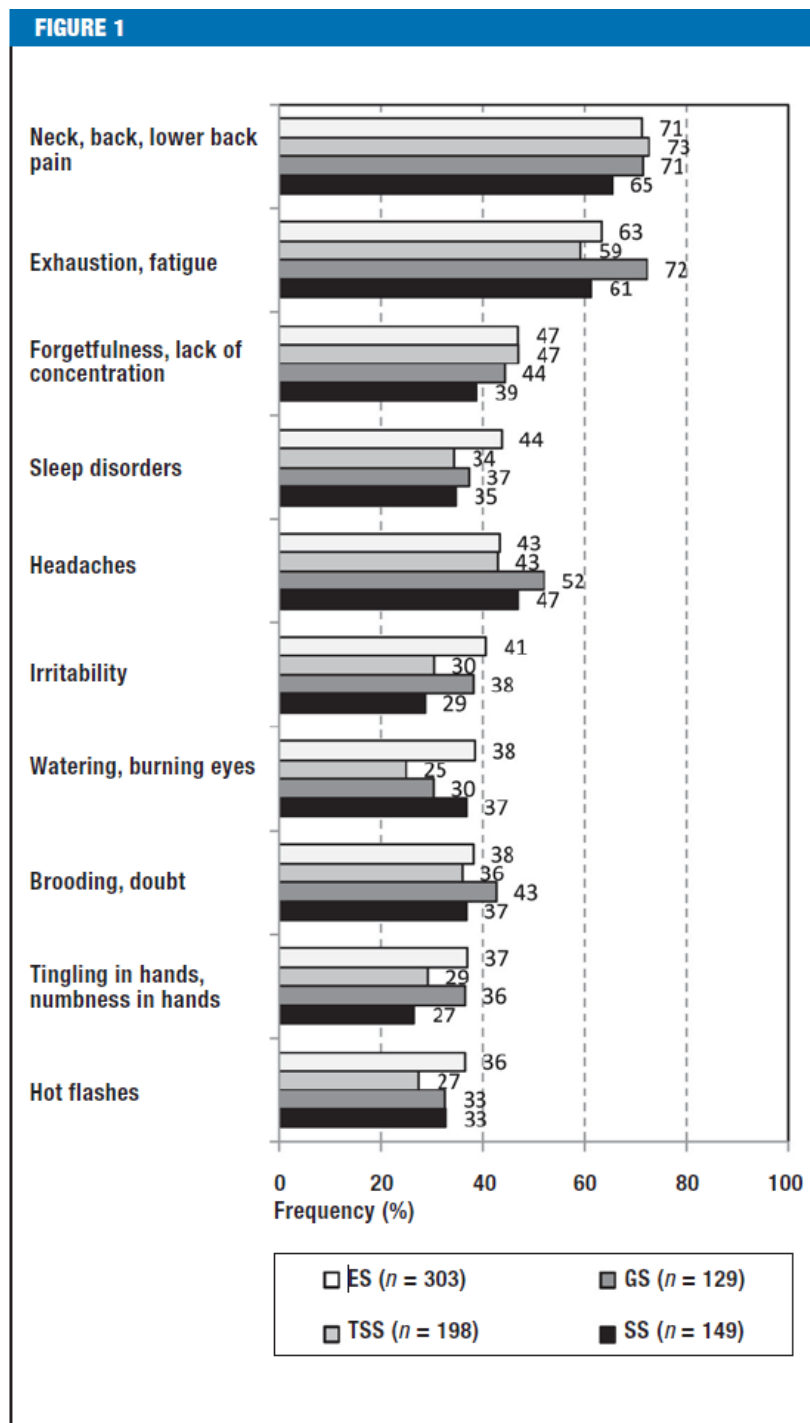
Scheuch et al., 2015). Understanding these additional challenges is crucial for comprehensively examining the psychological well-being of primary school teachers in Luxembourg, as they provide context-specific insights into the factors influencing teacher mental and psychological health in the local educational environment.

As highlighted by Kidger et al. (2016) in their paper on teachers' well-being and depressive symptoms, a common factor in teaching is the considerable demand for emotional labor. This involves regulating one's emotions in line with organizational standards, especially during interactions with students and parents. This constant emotional regulation, particularly when dealing with difficult situations, can lead to stress and burnout. In addition, teachers report inadequate training in dealing with socio-emotional and behavioral difficulties, which they cite as a common cause of stress and burnout (Kidger et al., 2016). Psycho-emotional stress in particular, is at the center of these stress factors. It can thus be stated that psycho-emotional stress is at the center of these stress factors, and it is not surprising that teachers in surveys categorize the stress caused by school as high to very high (Scheuch et al., 2015).

In their questionnaire-based study on well-being and depressive symptoms among English secondary school teachers, Kidger et al. (2016) found that poorer well-being and increased depressive symptoms were primarily related to perceived workload and dissatisfaction with work. In addition, the results showed that the desire to talk to a colleague about stress or depression, but the lack of this opportunity, also correlated significantly with well-being.

The predominant psychosomatic complaints related to well-being among teachers are exhaustion and fatigue, headaches, tension, a lack of motivation, sleep disorders, concentration problems, inner restlessness and increased irritability (Scheuch et al., 2015) (Figure 1). These complaints are

more common among teachers in Germany than among employees in other professions (Scheuch et al., 2015).



**Most common complaints (e28) among teachers by type of school**

(research performed in 2009; as stated by employees [14])

ES: elementary school; TSS: technical secondary school; GS: grammar school;

SS: special school

**Figure 1:** Most common complaints among teachers (Scheuch et al.,2015)

The many stresses and strains and the associated physical and psychological effects on teachers have led to teachers being severely affected by burnout. In Germany, burnout is diagnosed in over 4% of the population per year, particularly frequently in the education sector. However, as there is no standardized diagnostic method for burnout, the numbers and data on how many people suffer from burnout or show symptoms of burnout can vary drastically depending on which study you look at and which diagnostic method they use. However, the three most common diagnostic methods for burnout are standardized survey instruments such as the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Maslach et al. 1997), the Work-related Behavior and Experience Measure (AVEM) (Schaarschmidt et al., 1997) and the Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire (COPSOQ) (Kristensen et al., 2005). However, there are also deviations here (Scheuch et al. 2015).

Now that I've defined and described how the research field examines teacher well-being and psychological health, we can delve into the some more specific factors that may influence a teacher's working environment.

#### **2.2.2.1 Student behavior as a precursor to teacher emotions**

Among the various factors influencing teacher stress and mental health, interactions with students play a particularly significant role. As mentioned by Li et al. (2022) several studies have found that teachers' emotions are significantly influenced by their interactions with their students in the classroom. Positive emotions such as happiness can arise when teachers perceive a high level of student engagement that aligns with their teaching goals. In contrast, negative emotions such as anger can arise when teachers experience low levels of student engagement or disruptive student behavior (Kidger et al., 2016; Li et al., 2002).

Li et al. (2022) mention, that research shows that disruptive student behavior has a significant impact on teachers' negative emotions, such as



anger or anxiety. This behavior can further increase teacher exhaustion over time. In contrast, there is limited research on how positive student behavior affects teachers' emotions.

Studies also suggest that student engagement in the classroom is a positive predictor of teachers' positive emotions. However, it remains an open question whether disruptive student behavior reduces teachers' positive emotions and whether student engagement reduces teachers' negative emotions (Li et al., 2022).

### **2.2.3 Teachers' emotional regulation strategies during teaching**

From a psychological perspective emotion regulation refers to the process by which people control which emotions they experience, when they occur and how they express them (Gross, 1998). According to Gross (1998, cited in Jiang et al., 2016), there are two main types of emotion regulation: antecedent-orientated and response-orientated regulation. Antecedent-focused regulation includes strategies such as avoiding certain situations, situation modification and attention control, while response-focused regulation aims to change reactions after an emotion has occurred.

Jiang et al. (2016) found that Gross' emotion model has strongly influenced research and teacher emotional responses can easily be categorized into the above categories. These include preventative measures such as maintaining a calm environment and reactive measures such as deep breathing and controlling facial expressions. Teachers also have the ability to reinforce positive emotions such as joy or enthusiasm to encourage positive interaction with their students. They can also reinforce negative emotions such as anger to encourage students to follow the rules. On the other hand, "down-regulation" (Jiang et al., 2016, p.24) is an attempt to reduce the intensity of emotions experienced. Teachers often tend to reduce their negative emotions such as anger in order to maintain classroom

management and maintain a supportive relationship with their students (Jiang et al., 2016).

Understanding how teachers regulate their emotions during teaching is crucial for grasping the essence of my study on primary school teachers' psychological well-being in Luxembourg. This aspect reveals the intricate ways educators manage their emotions in the classroom, from creating a calm atmosphere to handling reactions like deep breathing. Exploring these strategies provides valuable insights into the daily experiences and coping mechanisms of teachers, contributing to a deeper understanding of factors impacting their overall well-being and effectiveness in the educational setting.

## **2.3 Promoting teacher well-being**

This section explores various strategies and interventions aimed at enhancing the mental health and overall well-being of primary school teachers in Luxembourg. By addressing factors such as mindfulness practices, social support networks, and institutional support programs offered by organizations like the Institut de formation de l'Éducation nationale (IFEN), this research seeks to not only identify the challenges faced by teachers but also provide actionable insights into how these challenges can be effectively addressed. Understanding and promoting teacher well-being is crucial not only for supporting the health and happiness of educators but also for improving job satisfaction and ultimately, the quality of education provided to students.

### **2.3.1 Mindfulness**

The role of mindfulness in education is particularly prominent, especially for teachers. Mindfulness training has been shown to be effective in reducing symptoms of stress and promoting a supportive classroom environment

(Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Siegel et al., 2009). By fostering mindfulness in teachers, it can also impact students by creating a calmer, more compassionate and supportive learning environment (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Mindfulness has its roots in Buddhist psychology and describes a practice of full awareness and conscious perception of present experience (Siegel et al., 2009). This practice offers a transformative way to alleviate suffering and promote personal growth by cultivating awareness, attention and acceptance (Siegel et al., 2009).

Contrast this with the state of mindlessness that often characterizes our daily lives. We can be immersed in past memories or future worries, running on autopilot and often missing the present moment. Mindfulness invites us to confront this state by consciously attending to the sensations, thoughts and feelings that are present in this moment (Siegel et al., 2009).

The effectiveness of mindfulness practices is well documented and can be seen in various areas of life. Studies suggest that consistent engagement in mindfulness practice can bring significant benefits to mental health and well-being (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Siegel et al., 2009).

A pilot study by Hue and Lau (2015) on a mindfulness-based program for pre-service teachers in Hong Kong found significant benefits. They implemented a six-week mindfulness program that led to increased mindfulness and overall well-being, as well as reduced stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms among participants. Mindfulness was identified as a significant predictor of these improvements. Qualitative feedback from the participants indicated that they found the program beneficial and feasible to integrate into their routines, suggesting its potential for wider implementation in teacher education to promote well-being and prevent

burnout. This study clearly shows that mindfulness can be a valuable practice for teachers to enhance their overall well-being.

Overall, mindfulness remains a powerful tool for promoting psychological and emotional well-being, emotional stability and inner strength. Its application ranges from personal practices to clinical interventions and has the potential to bring about profound change on both an individual and social level.

Given the importance of mindfulness in promoting well-being and stability, it would be valuable to ask interviewees if they have practiced mindfulness or related techniques. Furthermore, understanding the meaning and significance of mindfulness is essential in grasping why the Institut de formation de l'Éducation nationale (IFEN) offers mindfulness-related courses, as will be explored in the subsequent section 2.3.3.

### **2.3.2 Social support and supportive collegial relationships**

Studies, such as that by Siedlecki et al. (2014), show that social support and a good relationship of trust with work colleagues are of great importance not only for teachers, but for the mental well-being of all people, regardless of their field of work or age. In addition, studies such as that by Diener et al. (2002) have shown that people who are strongly involved in social relationships and rate these as positive - be it with family, friends or work colleagues - are generally happy people.

Although many working conditions are important for teachers, studies show that social conditions in particular - such as school culture and relationships with colleagues - are crucial in predicting teachers' job satisfaction and career plans. The teaching profession is strongly characterized by social relationships, and Johnson et al. (2012) found that teachers' work with students is significantly influenced by the relationships they develop with other adults - their colleagues - in the school. Moreover, in their study,

Kidger et al. (2016) found a clear link between social conditions, including supportive peer relationships and a school culture of trust, respect and openness, as well as low depressive symptoms and high levels of well-being.

In summary, the significance of social support and positive collegial relationships cannot be overstated, not only for teachers but for individuals across diverse professions and age groups. Research consistently underscores the correlation between these supportive networks and overall happiness. Within the teaching profession specifically, the quality of relationships among colleagues significantly impacts job satisfaction. By fostering a culture of trust, respect, and openness, schools can not only enhance the well-being of their staff but also create a conducive environment for effective teaching and learning.

### **2.3.3 IFEN - Institut de formation de l'Éducation nationale**

Building on the understanding of the crucial role of social support and positive collegial relationships in promoting teacher well-being, the subsequent section delves into the initiatives undertaken by the Institut de formation de l'Éducation nationale (IFEN) to further enhance the psychological well-being of educators. Understanding the initiatives undertaken by IFEN is paramount for my study on the mental well-being of primary school teachers in Luxembourg, as it represents one of the most significant resources for their professional development.

In alignment with the recognized importance of mindfulness and psychological health in education, IFEN offers a diverse array of training programs tailored to meet the varied needs of teachers. In 2024, Institut de formation de l'Éducation nationale (IFEN) offers a diverse selection of mindfulness courses. Two of these courses, "Introduction to Mindfulness" and "Stress Reduction through Mindfulness", serve as basic entry points for

people who wish to deepen their understanding of this practice. Their aim is to provide participants with basic insights and techniques to increase their awareness of the present moment and develop a deeper understanding of themselves. Through guided exercises and theoretical foundations, participants are given practical tools to integrate mindfulness into their everyday lives and strengthen their general well-being and resilience (IFEN, 2024).

In addition to these courses, IFEN offers a wide range of other training programs aimed at promoting well-being in the workplace. These range from courses on coping with specific situations such as behavioral problems to seminars on promoting good cooperation with parents. In addition, meditation and yoga courses as well as seminars on optimizing sleep are offered to provide employees with various tools for stress management and relaxation.

The fact that there is a wide range of different courses and seminars demonstrates IFEN's commitment to the well-being of its teachers and the recognition of the importance of mindfulness and psychological well-being in education. The specific targeting of the courses to different groups of teachers, such as primary school teachers or "Coordinatrices de Cycle" for secondary school teachers, emphasizes IFEN's understanding that different positions can bring different demands and challenges. This is particularly relevant for my study on the mental well-being of primary school teachers in Luxembourg, as it highlights the targeted support available to this group.

Through this tailored approach to course design, IFEN demonstrates its appreciation for diversity within the teaching workforce and its commitment to providing customized resources that meet individual needs. This approach creates a supportive environment in which teachers can advance their personal and professional development.

(For more resources nonspecific to teachers, see Appendix A.)

Investigating the well-being of primary school teachers in Luxembourg within the context of their profession is crucial for several reasons. As highlighted by various studies, including those by Kidger et al. (2016) and Scheuch et al. (2015), teachers face unique challenges and are at an increased risk of mental health issues compared to other occupational groups. Understanding the specific stressors and coping mechanisms of Luxembourgish primary school teachers can inform targeted interventions and support systems to promote their well-being and professional effectiveness.

To explore the well-being of primary school teachers in Luxembourg, I am employing a theoretical lens that encompasses the biopsychosocial model of health (Engel, 1977), emphasizing the interconnectedness of physical, psychological, and social well-being. This theoretical framework acknowledges the complex interplay of factors influencing teacher well-being, including workload, social support, and emotional regulation strategies.

Drawing from this theoretical foundation, my research focuses on exploring individual perceptions of well-being among primary school teachers in Luxembourg, considering their self-reported assessments of personal well-being within the context of their profession. Additionally, I investigate the primary stress factors identified by teachers and examine the coping mechanisms they employ to navigate these challenges and preserve their well-being.

Through qualitative content analysis of semi-structured interviews with four primary school teachers in Luxembourg, I aim to provide insights into the nuanced experiences of educators in the local educational environment. By understanding the factors contributing to teacher well-being and the

strategies used to manage stress, this research can inform the development of targeted interventions and support initiatives to promote the mental health and professional effectiveness of primary school teachers in Luxembourg.

My research question addresses the self-reported assessment of personal well-being among primary school teachers in Luxembourg within the context of their profession, while also exploring the primary stress factors they identify. By delving into these issues, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of teacher well-being and inform evidence-based interventions to support educators in Luxembourg.



### **3 Methodology**

To address the research questions regarding the self-reported assessment of personal well-being among primary school teachers in Luxembourg within the context of their profession, and to identify primary stress factors, a qualitative data collection approach was employed.

The following chapter explains the methodological aspect of the work in more detail.

The methodology I used involved conducting four semi-guided interviews to explore teachers' perspectives on their work and their perspectives on its impact on their well-being and analyze them using thematic analysis. These interviews and their qualitative content analyses were structured to provide insights into how teachers perceive their profession in relation to their overall well-being.

#### **3.1 Qualitative semi-structured interviews**

This research examines self-reported well-being associated risk factors among a small sample of primary school teachers through semi-structured qualitative interviews (Patton, 2002) analyzed using thematic analyses (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The semi-structured qualitative interview method enables a dynamic back and forth between interviewer and participant. Follow-up questions can be asked based on the participant's answers, creating space for the participant to express themselves in their own words (Kallio et al., 2016). A general approach to designing the interview guide, as described by Patton (2002), involves establishing a set of topics to be explored with each participant before the interview begins.

Based on the theoretical framework established earlier, I determined several key themes to explore during the interviews: understanding of well-being, psychological well-being and teaching challenges, coping strategies and self-care and advice for others.

By structuring the interview guide around these thematic areas, I conducted a comprehensive exploration of teachers' perceptions, experiences, and strategies related to mental well-being in their profession. Based on these themes, foundational interview questions were developed to construct the interview guide utilized during the interviews (Appendix B).

The guide acts as a basic checklist during the interview to ensure that all relevant topics are addressed. The aim is to keep the interaction focused while leaving room for individual perspectives and experiences to emerge (Patton, 2002, p. 344).

Using this qualitative semi-structured interview research method can create a more relaxed environment for participants, which can lead to them giving more honest and open answers compared to just yes or no answers (Patton, 2002). This method makes participants feel less pressurized to conform to pre-defined categories or answers. This in turn can favor more honest answers, which are crucial for obtaining reliable data. As the aim of this study is to capture authentic experiences and insights from participants, the use of this method is beneficial as they are free to express themselves freely and tell their own stories. It allows the interviewer to explore unexpected responses and follow up on interesting discussion points.

### **3.2 Teacher participants**

The data was collected through semi-structured qualitative interviews with 4 Luxembourgish primary school teachers from 3 different educational districts.

In the participant selection process for my study, the primary sampling method utilized was purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002), with the objective of securing a representative sample of primary school teachers in Luxembourg. To accomplish this, several key considerations were taken into account.

Firstly, attention was dedicated to interviewing both male and female teachers, ensuring a balanced gender representation, alongside considering a diverse range of age groups. Secondly, efforts were made to include participants with varying levels of work experience and ages, thereby encompassing different career and life stages. Additionally, demographic factors such as geographic location within the country were considered to capture the breadth of teaching contexts.

Furthermore, in identifying potential participants, individuals were selected based on prior knowledge of the teaching community. This selection process took into consideration their anticipated contributions stemming from unique experiences and characteristics. Through this deliberate approach, the aim was to achieve a comprehensive representation of perspectives within the participant pool. By carefully considering these factors and employing a combination of sampling methods, the final participant cohort comprised four individuals, each offering valuable insights into the research topic.

The final teacher participants comprised individuals with different professional experiences, ranging from 7 years of professional experience to almost 30 years of professional experience as a primary school teacher in Luxembourg (Table 1). The participants represent all 4 learning cycles of the Luxembourgish primary school system, so that experiences and insights from the different cycles could be collected.

This approach to participant selection allowed to gather a range of experiences from different perspectives on the situation in Luxembourg and better take into account the diverse living conditions and experiences of the teachers.

	AGE	GENDER	CLASS LEVEL	WORK EXPERIENCE	WORK LOCATION	Additional
T1	early 30s	female	C1	7 years	City	Quereinsteiger (5 years chargé de cours)
T2	early 50s	female	C2 & C3 currently C3	28 years	East	depressive episode a few years back
T3	late 50s	female	C2 - C4 currently C3	22 years	East	ADHD
T4	late 40s	male	C2 - C4	25 years	South	

**Table 1:** Background information on the participating teachers

### **3.3 Ethical considerations**

Prior to the interviews, participants were briefed on the study's objectives and were requested to provide informed consent. Given that well-being and mental health are inherently personal topics, participants were carefully briefed on the study's objectives to ensure their comfort in sharing their experiences. It was emphasized that discussions might involve personal and emotional situations, and participants were encouraged to engage only to the extent with which they felt comfortable. This measure aimed to create a supportive environment wherein participants could freely express themselves while respecting their boundaries.

It was emphasized that all personal information would be anonymized, and participants retained the right to halt or withdraw from the interview at any point without repercussion. Additionally, participants were assured that they had control over the depth of personal details shared disclosed and could designate certain details as confidential even after the interviews had been conducted. Subsequently, each participant expressed their understanding of these aspects and provided explicit consent for their involvement by signing a consent form (Appendix B).

### **3.4 Semi-structured interview questions**

The guiding questions for the semi-structured qualitative interviews were carefully developed based on scientific texts and studies on the topic. Drawing from Engel's (1977) definition of health and psychological health, I first aimed to understand how teachers perceived the terms "well-being" and "psychological health." This initial inquiry provided a preliminary assessment of the teachers' well-being in both personal and professional contexts.

In the next step, informed by the findings of Scheuch et al. (2015), Jennings and Greenberg (2009), and Jiang et al. (2016), I explored the signs and symptoms teachers may experience during stressful periods and how these impact their work and overall well-being. Additionally, identifying the main stressors that teachers face, as highlighted by Scheuch et al. (2015) and Kidger et al. (2016), was crucial. Teachers' specific stories and details about their experiences are invaluable in understanding the nature and impact of these stressors.

Lastly, based on the review in section 2.3 on promoting teacher well-being, I examined how teachers cope with the everyday stress of the job. This included looking at their coping mechanisms and any additional steps they take during high-pressure situations. In this context, I investigated whether they incorporate mindfulness or meditation practices into their lives (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Siegel et al., 2009), how supported they feel by those around them (Diener et al., 2002; Siedlecki et al., 2014), and the extent to which they utilize resources provided by the Institut de formation de l'Éducation nationale (IFEN), specifically courses on mindfulness and stress management.

I ended up with the following key themes to explore during the interviews:

1. **Understanding of Well-being:** I begin by asking teachers to share their understanding of well-being, both generally and in the context of their profession. This helps establish a shared understanding and identify the aspects of well-being that are important to them.
2. **Psychological Well-being and Teaching Challenges:** I explore how teachers perceive the relationship between their well-being and their teaching roles. I ask about the main challenges they face in their profession that may affect their well-being. I encourage them to share specific instances where these challenges have had an impact,

considering both positive and negative influences from their work environment.

3. **Coping Strategies and Self-care:** I inquire about the strategies teachers use to manage stress and maintain their mental well-being. I discuss their approaches to achieving a healthy work-life balance and any support systems they have in place, including organizational support from management or the "Direktioun." I also explore their perceptions of, and potential utilization of support services provided by IFEN.
4. **Advice for Others:** To conclude, I ask teachers to offer advice to fellow struggling teachers or newcomers on promoting mental well-being in the workplace. This question aims to identify the most important aspects of well-being from their perspective and provide insights for supporting others in similar situations.

These questions serve to steer the conversation in the desired direction and enable an in-depth examination of the primary school teachers' experiences around stress and mental health. These questions aim to uncover the challenges affecting the well-being of primary school teachers, explore their coping mechanisms, and assess their overall state of well-being within the context of their profession.

The interview guide was crafted in accordance with Patton's (2002) qualitative research principles. Beginning with a clear articulation of the research objectives and questions, each step was executed to ensure alignment with the overarching goals of the study and translating them into open-ended questions that fostered comprehensive exploration. Then the main questions were arranged in a logical sequence within the interview guide. It was ensured that the sequence flow smoothly, starting with broader topics and gradually moving towards more specific areas. This



organization helps in maintaining coherence during the interview and ensures that all relevant areas are adequately covered (Patton, 2022).

The first interview provided feedback which was then used to make minor adjustments to the guide for the next interviews, to make it clearer and more effective. Minor adjustments were made, including the rephrasing and restructuring of questions to ensure a smoother conversational flow. Additionally, potential follow-up questions were added to address specific points raised during the first interview. One notable addition was the question: "*Considering the challenging experiences and stressful situations you've encountered, have you ever considered changing careers due to feeling overwhelmed?*" This question stemmed from anecdotes shared by the teacher in the initial interview, underscoring instances where colleagues had chosen to transition to different professions or take unpaid leave as a result of workplace pressures and stress.

Overall, the written questions serve as a guide for the interview, helping to capture key information related to teachers' perspectives on "well-being" (Appendix C). They aim to gather diverse perspectives from teachers, identifying challenges they face and how they manage them in relation to well-being.

### **3.5 Data collection and data sources**

The interviews were conducted in a carefully selected environment, to ensure both comfort and confidentiality.

The audio recording took place in a quiet environment, quiet cafés, and was captured using a mobile phone with the voice memo function for accurate transcription. Each session was securely voice recorded and saved onto an external hard drive until the transcription phase. The duration of these interviews ranged from 20 minutes to an hour and 15 minutes, totaling

approximately 3 hours of recorded material. The recordings were replayed multiple times to ensure precision.

Following the interviews, the recordings were transcribed, converting the spoken content into written text for further analysis. To streamline the transcription and coding processes, MAXQDA24 (VERBI Software, 2021) software was utilized. MAXQDA24 is a robust tool known for its advanced features in organizing, analyzing, and interpreting qualitative data (VERBI Software, 2021). Importantly, it prioritizes confidentiality and data security throughout these processes, aligning with the strict standards required for sensitive research data.

MAXQDA24 places a strong emphasis on confidentiality and data security, adhering to the strict standards required for sensitive research data. The software complies with international data protection regulations, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). For secure transcription, files are stored on GDPR-compliant servers. "Media files are deleted directly once the transcription is completed and they are only used for the transcription, nothing else" (VERBI Software, 2023). Transcription servers are based in the Netherlands, with transcripts saved on Germany-based servers and automatically deleted seven days after downloading. Data protection is a core value at MAXQDA, with rigorous security measures, compliance with relevant laws, and ongoing updates to maintain high standards of data protection.

For this research, adherence to Mayring's (2014) "clean read" or "smooth verbatim" transcription method was paramount, with MAXQDA serving as the facilitating software. Initially, I ensured all necessary equipment, such as a high-quality audio recorder and the MAXQDA software, was prepared and functioning correctly. I established a clear and organized file system to store both the audio recordings and resulting transcriptions, ensuring easy access and identification for each interview.

Upon importing the audio files into MAXQDA, I created a dedicated project to centralize all transcriptions and subsequent analyses. Utilizing MAXQDA's integrated audio player, I listened to the recordings, transcribing them in real-time according to the "clean read" or "smooth verbatim" method (Mayring, 2014). This process involved capturing the essence of the dialogue while omitting extraneous fillers and false starts. To aid in referencing specific parts of the interview, I utilized MAXQDA's time-stamping feature.

Given that the interview audio was in Luxembourgish, I translated it directly into English during transcription to facilitate analysis. To ensure accuracy in both transcription and translation, I relied on online dictionaries such as LOD.lu (Zenter fir d'Lëtzebuurger Sprooch [ZLS], 2024) and Leo.de (LEO GmbH, 2006), alongside my proficiency in five languages. This multilingual ability facilitated precise translations, ensuring fidelity to the original dialogue.

To guarantee readability and coherence, I meticulously edited the text, removing verbal clutter, such as filler words ("like", "uh", "um") and repetitions, and repeated words while preserving the core meaning and context. This involved repeatedly listening to segments and parts of sentences to ensure accuracy in both transcription and translation. Following the initial transcription, I conducted a thorough review while re-listening to the audio, correcting any errors or omissions with the assistance of MAXQDA's synchronization feature.

Consistent formatting was maintained across all transcriptions, incorporating standardized headings, timestamps, and speaker labels. To safeguard participant privacy, all identifying information was anonymized. Throughout the transcription process, I leveraged various features of MAXQDA, including its coding functionality. Before coding, I revisited

previously collected information on the topic and reviewed my interview guide to ensure comprehensive coverage of relevant information.

This meticulous approach to transcription, translation, and coding within MAXQDA facilitated a robust foundation for subsequent analysis and comparison with existing theoretical frameworks. It ensured that the resulting insights were meaningful and accurately reflected the research questions at hand.

Once transcribed and coded, the data underwent thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2007), where it was examined in relation to the research question. This analysis involved comparing the collected information from the interviews with existing theoretical frameworks to draw meaningful insights.

### **3.6 Data protection – treatment - storage**

Confidentiality is essential in research for building trust with participants, protecting their privacy, and ensuring compliance with ethical and legal standards. It can also promote honest responses and upholding research integrity (Hecker & Kalpokas, 2024).

Prior to starting the interviews, all participants were extensively briefed on the study's objectives and the protocols for handling their data. Each participant provided informed consent by signing a consent form (Appendix C), indicating their understanding of the process and granting permission for their involvement. To safeguard the anonymity of participants, pseudonyms were assigned, and any other names mentioned during the interviews were likewise anonymized.

During the interview sessions, recordings were made using a private phone. To mitigate any potential security risks, precautions were taken to ensure that these recordings were not automatically uploaded to a cloud.

Immediately following each interview, the recording was transferred to an external hard drive (USB flash drive) and deleted from the phone. This meticulous process was implemented to securely store any personal or sensitive data that may have emerged during the discussions, especially information pertinent to the research.

Confidentiality protocols and data storage mechanisms were also thoroughly reviewed when selecting software for transcription and coding tasks. MAXQDA24 software emerged as the preferred choice due to its robust features for data organization, analysis and interpretation, as well as its strong commitment to confidentiality and data security (See point 3.5 above). To ensure extra security, given that I am using a computer software, we took additional precautions by ensuring that no highly personal information (such as full names, phone numbers, or addresses) was mentioned in the audio or written transcripts.

These comprehensive data protection measures underscored my commitment to upholding the privacy and confidentiality of participants throughout every stage of the research endeavor, from data collection to analysis.



## 4 Data analyses

In a first step of analysis, recorded interviews were transcribed following specific transcription rules. These rules dictated how spoken words are converted into written form. Since the interviews were conducted in Luxembourgish but are being transcribed/analyzed in English, they were translated during transcription to facilitate analysis. Interviews were transcribed using the principle of Mayrings (2014) "clean read" or "smooth verbatim" transcription Method (Mayring, 2014).

According to Mayring (2014), transcription rules for a "clean read" or "smooth verbatim" transcript involve converting spoken words into a written form that balances accuracy and readability. Spoken words are transcribed verbatim, capturing all phrases and sentences while omitting unnecessary filler words such as "um" and "uh". Minor grammatical errors and incomplete sentences are corrected to enhance readability, and appropriate punctuation is added to clarify meaning. Non-verbal cues like laughter or pauses are noted in brackets if they contribute to understanding the context. Dialects and slang are standardized into standard written English unless their specific usage is relevant to the analysis. This approach ensures the transcript remains faithful to the original data while being accessible for analysis. Additionally, collected data is anonymized to ensure confidentiality.

The data was analyzed according to the thematic analyses approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) describe thematic analysis as a "flexible and useful research tool" that can "provide a rich and detailed, yet complex," representation of data. Thematic analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006), offers several compelling reasons for its use compared to other qualitative research methods. Its flexibility and adaptability make it particularly valuable in various research contexts. Unlike more structured

approaches like content analysis, thematic analysis allows for a nuanced exploration of data, enabling researchers to capture the complexity and richness of participants' experiences and perspectives. This method does not impose preconceived categories or theoretical frameworks, but rather allows themes to emerge organically from the data, ensuring that findings are grounded in participants' own words and experiences. Additionally, thematic analysis can be applied to both small and large datasets, making it suitable for a wide range of research questions and data types. Its iterative nature also encourages a reflective and systematic approach to data analysis, enhancing the rigor and trustworthiness of the research findings. Overall, thematic analysis offers researchers a versatile and powerful tool for uncovering meaningful insights and generating new knowledge within qualitative research.

Braun and Clarke (2006) have divided the thematic analyses approach into 6 phases. Malham (2021) drawing on Braun and Clark (2006) has provided a simplified breakdown of these phases as seen in Figure 2:



<i>Six Phases of Thematic Analysis</i>	
<i>1. Familiarizing yourself with data</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>If required transcribe the data.</i></li> <li>• <i>Reading and rereading the data.</i></li> <li>• <i>Noting down any initial ideas.</i></li> </ul>
<i>2. Generating Initial Codes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Coding interesting features of the data in a methodical fashion across the data sets.</i></li> <li>• <i>Collating data relevant to each code.</i></li> </ul>
<i>3. Searching for themes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Organising data into potential themes.</i></li> <li>• <i>Proceeding to gather all data into relevant themes.</i></li> </ul>
<i>4. Reviewing the themes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Checking that themes work in relation to the coded extract.</i></li> <li>• <i>Generate a thematic 'map' of the analysis.</i></li> </ul>
<i>5. Defining and naming themes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and overall patterns the content shows.</i></li> <li>• <i>Generating clear definitions for each theme.</i></li> </ul>
<i>6. Producing the report</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The final opportunity for analysis</i></li> <li>• <i>Selecting vivid and compelling extract examples</i></li> </ul>

**Table 2** The Six Phases of Thematic Analysis (Malham, 2021)

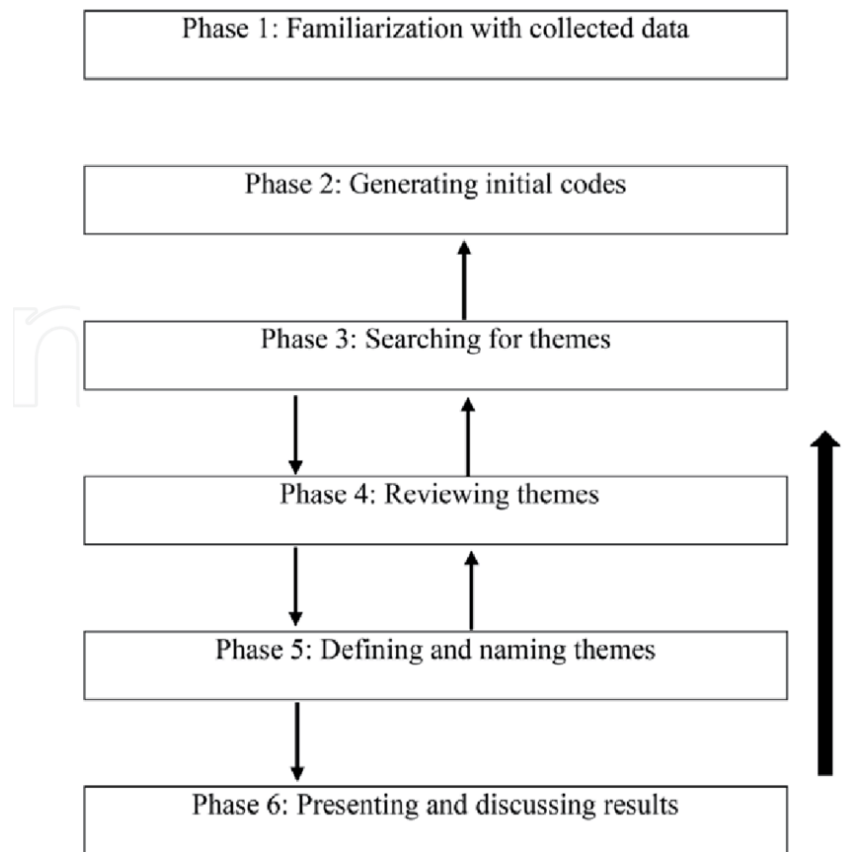
Their six-stage approach involves active researcher involvement, iterative processes, and systematic data interpretation (Figure 3). It starts with data collection and progresses through coding, categorization, and theme generation. The method emphasizes researcher reflexivity and careful consideration of philosophical assumptions guiding the study (Peel, 2020). This means that when you're trying to understand a complex topic by talking to people or examining documents, you follow a detailed process. First, you gather all the relevant information you can find, in the case of this study, conducting interviews. Then, you familiarize yourself with the data you collected by listening to it multiple times, while transcribing the audio data. Next, you carefully organize this information by labeling and grouping similar pieces together. For example, if many people mention the same issue, you give that issue a label or code.

After organizing the data, you look for larger themes or patterns that emerge from these groups. These themes help you see the main ideas that keep coming up. As Braun and Clark (2006) emphasize, throughout this process, it's crucial to maintain awareness of one's own thoughts and biases, a concept referred to as reflexivity. This involves actively considering how personal beliefs might shape the interpretation of information gathered, ensuring a more nuanced and objective analysis.

This process is not strictly linear; you don't go through each step only once. Instead, you move back and forth between different stages. For instance, while coding and searching for themes, I revisited phases 2 (familiarizing myself with the data) to 5 (identifying themes) multiple times (Figure 3).

Initially, my codes were very general. As I identified larger themes, I refined these general codes into more specific subcodes. This meant I went back to phase 2 to recode and add more detailed codes. Similarly, the themes I developed changed multiple times during this process. I grouped several codes under one theme, but later realized that the theme didn't quite fit. Or a code might have been more appropriately placed under a different theme.

This entire process took time and involved repeatedly going through my data, refining codes and themes until I was satisfied with the final themes. Only then did I present and discuss my findings, ensuring they were well-founded and accurately represented the data.



**Figure 2** Thematic analysis: Six interactive phases (Labra et al.2020)

Building upon the guidance provided by Braun and Clark (2006), this analysis involved comparing the collected information from the interviews with the existing theoretical frameworks identified during the first part of this study, to draw meaningful insights. By aligning the interview data with established theoretical perspectives on well-being and stress, the aim was to deepen our understanding of the experiences and perspectives of primary school teachers in Luxembourg within the context of their profession.

The process of inductive categorization allowed for the emergence of key themes directly from the interview data, without imposing preconceived categories. This approach ensured that the analysis remained grounded in the experiences and perspectives of the teachers themselves, enhancing the validity and richness of the findings.

The resulting main categories—definition of well-being, self-proclaimed state of well-being, signs of stress, challenges, and support & coping strategies—provided a structured framework for organizing and interpreting the interview data. Each category shed light on different aspects of the teachers' well-being, including their perceptions, experiences of challenges, and strategies for managing stress.

To ensure clarity and coherence in presenting the findings, each teacher was assigned a unique code (T1, T2, T3, and T4) throughout the analysis. This coding system facilitated the identification of individual perspectives while also allowing for comparisons and patterns to emerge across different participants.

## **5 Findings**

In this section, I present the findings of my study, which aimed to address the research questions regarding the self-reported assessment of personal well-being among primary school teachers in Luxembourg.

The findings are structured into 5 major sections. Firstly, I explore the individual perceptions of well-being among our four teachers, shedding light on what well-being means to each of them. Following this, I provide an overview of the self-perceived well-being of the teachers. Having established their definitions and perceptions of well-being, the subsequent section delves into the challenges encountered by the teachers. Here, I examine the various obstacles they face in maintaining their well-being. Finally, I investigate the coping mechanisms employed by the teachers to navigate these challenges and preserve their well-being. Through this detailed analysis, I aim to address the research objectives and contribute to the existing body of knowledge in the field.

### **5.1 Understanding of well-being**

To begin the interview, the participants were asked to describe what well-being means to them, how they would define it. This allowed me to understand what well-being means for each of them, facilitating a deeper comprehension of their individual interpretations and thought processes regarding the concept of well-being. In what follows I rephrase what the teachers shared in the interviews.

- T1's definition of well-being encompasses both mental and physical health aspects, particularly in the context of their work life. They prioritize mental health, considering it crucial for overall well-being in their professional setting. They view well-being as closely tied to one's mood, emotional state, and ability to process daily experiences.

Additionally, they emphasize the impact of mental well-being on physical health, highlighting the interconnectedness of the two. Overall, their definition suggests that well-being is reflected in one's emotional state, daily experiences, and the integration of mental and physical health in both work and personal life.

- T2's definition of well-being revolves around a sense of balance and emotional stability. They associate well-being with being able to maintain composure and control over their reactions, especially in challenging situations like at school or when balancing work with personal life. This person sees well-being as tightly intertwined with both personal and professional aspects of life. They understand that challenges outside of work can affect their overall well-being and behavior. They've experienced firsthand how stress and personal issues can disrupt this balance, leading to periods of unwellness, therefore they stress the significance of self-awareness and actively monitoring their emotional state.
- T3's definition of well-being centers on a delicate balance between freedom and structure in their professional life as a teacher. They emphasize the importance of having some autonomy within the confines of their school environment. T1 also acknowledges the increasing significance of physical well-being with age. As they are getting closer to the age of 60, managing exhaustion, stress, and sensory stimuli emerges as pivotal for their overall sense of well-being. Feeling in control of their classroom and being able to lead effectively are essential components of their well-being. Moreover, they highlight the necessity of finding moments to recharge and recover amidst the demands of their role, recognizing the connection between balance and sustainable well-being. Ultimately, their well-

being is deeply tied to their ability to make a meaningful impact on their students, fostering their growth and sense of worth.

- T4 defines well-being as a state of personal wellness, happiness, and satisfaction. They associate it with being free from overload, stress, and mental strain, both in their professional and personal life. For them, well-being entails feeling good without needing extensive time to recuperate after work or during leisure time.

These descriptions of well-being share common ground in recognizing the holistic nature of well-being. For example, all four teachers emphasize the importance of balanced mental health and its impact on overall well-being, both in professional and personal life. They all emphasize the intertwining of mental and physical health, stressing the importance of emotional stability, balance, and self-awareness. Ultimately, they converge on the idea that well-being encompasses satisfaction, fulfillment, and a sense of harmony across various facets of life. They also emphasize the need for autonomy, coping skills and recovery strategies to achieve sustainable well-being.

## **5.2 Self-proclaimed state of well-being**

Based on the definitions provided by the teachers, their estimations of their current mental well-being vary:

- T1: During the holiday, the moment the interview was conducted, T1 feels happy and well-rested, indicating a positive mental state. However, outside of holidays, they acknowledge feeling extremely stressed and pressured, suggesting fluctuations in their mental well-being based on work demands.

- T2: Reports feeling happy with a good balance at the moment, indicating a positive mental state and effective management of work-life balance.
- T3: Expresses feelings of nervousness and stress about returning to school after vacation, highlighting challenges in managing work-related stress. They also mention struggling to find time for personal tasks and feeling overwhelmed by workload, suggesting a lower level of mental well-being.
- T4: Describes feeling good, particularly after returning from vacation. However, they also mention periods of increased stress, such as the end of the semester or uncertainty about future work assignments, indicating fluctuations in mental well-being based on external factors.

Overall, while some teachers report positive mental well-being at certain times, others express concerns about stress and workload, highlighting the complex and dynamic nature of mental well-being in the teaching profession.

### **5.3 Signs of stress**

Stress among teachers can present itself in various forms, as described by educators in their own words.

One teacher (T3) highlighted the impact of stressful days at school on their sleep patterns, stating, "When I have bad days at school, I can't sleep at night" (T3, Pos. 33). This lack of sleep cascades into further challenges, as they explained, "When I can't sleep, the next day I am even worse and then the entire week becomes even more of a battle" (T3, Pos. 33).

Another teacher (T4) emphasized their resilience to stress but noted moments of strain, indicating, "I'd say I am quite stress-resistant [but] there are moments where I'm like 'okay now you're going on a long bike



ride, with music for a few hours, where you can shut off for a moment" (T4, Pos. 16). They also acknowledged the need for emotional release, expressing, "During the vacations, you're happy when you can get away for a little. You notice when you have a lot of work at school or when the students are a little more turned up than usual, that you have more issues to keep the calm in the classroom" (T4, Pos. 16).

Similarly, another teacher (T2) identified stress indicators after several weeks of school, stating, "I notice very well that I'm more stressed when we had 6 or 7 weeks of school, that I'm kind of stuck. Everyone is getting more nervous, and we all notice that things aren't really moving forward" (T2, Pos. 16). They also pointed to sleep disturbances as a significant marker of stress, explaining, "Another sign is sleep. Sleep is often a problem. That's one of the signs that I'm struggling" (T2, Pos. 23).

These firsthand accounts underscore the multifaceted nature of stress among educators, encompassing physical, emotional, and cognitive dimensions.

## **5.4 Challenges**

### **5.4.1 Parents and families**

When asked about the main challenges these teacher face that tend to affect their well-being the one thing that every teacher mentioned are the relationships parents and families.

#### **5.4.1.1 Parents not acknowledging their child's problems**

Teachers consistently face challenges related to parental involvement, especially when parents fail to acknowledge or address their child's difficulties. This lack of acknowledgment can significantly impact a student's academic progress and behavior, ultimately burdening teachers with the responsibility of managing these issues alone.

In one teacher's experience (T3), they had a student exhibiting a range of behavioral problems, including restlessness, disruptive talking, and inappropriate comments. The teacher shared several instances where they informed the parents about the child's struggles and behavior problems, hoping to find solutions together. However, they did not receive the support from the parents that they had hoped for.

This lack of parental action not only increases the workload on teachers, who must manage both the child's needs and those of other students, but also hampers effective classroom management. The absence of a formal diagnosis or support further compounds the challenge, leaving teachers without the necessary resources to adequately address the student's needs.

#### **5.4.1.2 Threatening and uncomfortable interactions**

All four teachers, particularly T1, have expressed concern over a growing trend of declining mutual respect among parents and families, sometimes escalating to threatening behavior. This lack of respect manifests itself in various ways, often impacting teacher-parent and family interactions and creating uncomfortable situations.

During parent-teacher meetings, T1 has encountered instances where parents exhibit aggression or hostility towards them. These confrontations can have a significant emotional toll on teachers, their well-being.

Furthermore, T1 emphasizes that these incidents are not isolated occurrences but rather part of a broader trend of diminishing respect for educators. T1 highlighted experiencing two particularly shocking incidents involving parents this year, with colleagues reporting similar, and sometimes even more severe, situations. In one instance, a teacher lost their job due to parent-related issues.

“I have already been in two situations in which I felt extremely threatened, [...] after which the day very difficult. [...] There were two

really difficult situations in which one lost her job, and another had a very tragic story happen to her” (T1, Pos. 35).

These incidents underscore the challenges teachers face in navigating interactions with parents and emphasize the importance of addressing and mitigating such situations effectively.

#### **5.4.2 Teamwork and co-teaching**

Two teachers, T2 and T3, mention that co-teaching or working in a team can bring them a significant amount of stress.

Both recognize that co-teaching can have a variety of benefits, but they also share insights into the complexities of co-teaching and the dynamics of teamwork when the teaching team is not 100% matched. “[Co-teaching] might sound very nice, but it doesn't always fit a 100%. [...] It's nice when it works, but you can also be unlucky” (T2, Pos. 29).

T2 expresses the difficulty of reconciling different teaching styles with co-teaching partners and emphasizes the potential disruption to lesson delivery and the effectiveness of the partnership. The lack of autonomy in selecting co-teaching partners exacerbates these challenges and can lead to feelings of dissatisfaction and disempowerment.

At the same time, T3 struggles with the pressure resulting from team dynamics where individual success is dependent on meeting team norms and expectations. “[...] we tend to work a lot in teams and there it depends a lot on in what team you are, and how that team works and to what point you need to comply to the rules from outside and from that team” (T3, Pos. 17).

This pressure, combined with the fragmentation of time needed to coordinate appointments and meetings with colleagues, results in a significant drain on energy and resources. While T3 recognizes the benefits

of organizational collaboration, such as support and synergy, it also recognizes the stress and energy expenditure involved.

“Organization between classes can be a sin and a blessing. On one side I can bring more stress because you have to adapt to your colleagues, you have to make agreements and plans together, have meetings etc., which takes a lot of energy.” (T3, Pos. 55).

### **5.4.3 Lesson preparations**

All four teachers reported that preparing lessons was a certain burden at the beginning of their teaching career. T2 explains that it was particularly challenging when, at the beginning and during the time she had young children, she often spent nights and all-day Sunday preparing lessons. “As a young teacher I did a lot. The first 10 years I took home a lot and worked until late in the evenings” (T2, Pos. 8). In the early years of their career many things were still new and, as they emphasize, as a new teacher you always try to follow the guidelines and recommendations exactly.

T2 found it difficult to concretize their ideas and be satisfied with her preparations, as new ideas kept popping up. (“I had so many ideas and it took a lot of time” (T2, Pos. 8).) Looking back, she realizes that she worked too much in those early years, which meant that she had little time for other things.

Although preparing lessons takes up a lot of time and continues to do so, the teachers themselves do not find it a pain as they enjoy planning. Rather, it is the amount of preparation that can lead to stress.

### **5.4.4 “Nebenfächer” – minor subjects**

When listening to the teachers, it becomes apparent that the minor subjects are the most stressful for them compared to the main subjects.

One reason for this is that, unlike the main subjects, there is no strict curriculum program in the minor subjects, which means that teachers often have more freedom to decide what they want to teach in these subjects. However, this also means that more preparation of lessons is required, which was one of the main problems for T2 in these subjects.

Another challenge in these subjects is that lessons are usually less structured than in the main subjects. As T3 explains, teachers in the main subjects can often simply tell the students to open their books, give a few explanations and the students work on the tasks. This is more difficult in the minor subjects. There are usually more interactive activities, students have more freedom to do their own projects, and group work is a commonly used method. The activities are less structured, and students have to be self-regulated, which is not always easy, especially in the lower grades.

“The constant chaos prevention [...] is extremely exhausting, and to make sure that the students are not mean to each other and that they don't get too loud. [...] Especially during "Nebenfächer" because they work together more often and they still have to learn, what an expectable noise level is. [...] The "Nebenfächer" are usually in the afternoon, which is also when you're alone, which is difficult” (T3, Pos. 28).

Another thing that makes minor subjects challenging is that they are often scheduled at the end of the school day, often during the last two hours of the afternoon. At this time, both students and teachers are often stressed, students are hyper, and concentration is low. All these factors make classroom management more challenging.

#### **5.4.5 Program/Curriculum**

The expanding curriculum presents a formidable challenge in modern education. As noted by T4 (“Another challenge is that when you have a  
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class, the entire program is too much. [...] The program is getting bigger and bigger [...] yet you have less and less time" (T4, Pos. 22).) despite the continual integration of new subjects and content, the time available for teaching remains largely unchanged. This discrepancy creates a range of issues for both students and educators. Today's students face a barrage of distractions that impede their ability to engage deeply with the material. As highlighted by T4 ("[...] they are capable of less. They are not more stupid, but they have more distractions that you didn't have 25 years ago" (T4, Pos. 22).), even diligent students find it challenging to keep pace with the curriculum's demands.

Moreover, the pressure to cover an extensive curriculum also affects classroom dynamics, contributing to heightened stress and anxiety among students. This tension mounts throughout the academic year, impacting not only students' academic performance but also their overall well-being.

"Then in September, beginning of C4.2, the stress slowly climbs and around the Christmas holidays you notice that the students really change. They are now under a lot of pressure. Not just from themselves but also pressure from at home and between the students" (T4, Pos. 23).

#### **5.4.6 Class size**

As I've gathered from the interviews, the size of a class presents its own set of challenges for educators. Two of our interviewees, T3 and T4, highlighted contrasting experiences based on class size. T3, managing a class of 22 students, finds themselves grappling with a myriad of needs, including those of students with learning disabilities like ADHD and behavioral issues. Despite their best efforts, providing individualized attention and maintaining order in such a diverse classroom proves to be an ongoing struggle.

“It makes a difference if you have 22 students with a few ADHD students or an average class of 15 or less that are rather easy. It's a difference because you need less strengths to organize it all. You have less differentiation to do and it's easier to keep an overview of everyone.” (T3, Pos. 24)

On the other hand, T4 faced a different set of hurdles with a smaller class of around 10 students. While the intimate setting allows for personalized interactions, T4 finds themselves navigating the pressure for participation and limited dynamics within the group. Despite having fewer students to manage, T4 finds it increasingly difficult to foster active participation during lessons. The limited number of students who actively engage can create a noticeable imbalance in class dynamics, making it harder to facilitate discussions and maintain a lively learning environment. “In a small class it is more difficult to make the students engage during the lessons, as you have less students that like to participate” (T4, Pos. 61). While class management remains consistent with larger classes, T4 recognizes the distinct shift in dynamic and the heightened importance of encouraging student involvement to ensure effective learning outcomes. “Class management wise, it's not much different but you do notice that there is a different dynamic” (T4, Pos. 61).

Furthermore, T1 also mentioned that they struggle with the challenge of providing individualized attention for each student. As class sizes increase, T1 finds it increasingly difficult to be fully present and supportive for each individual student. This sentiment underscores the universal struggle faced by educators like T1, T3, and T4 in meeting the diverse needs of their students within the constraints of class size.

Thus, whether contending with the complexities of a larger class like T3 or the nuances of a smaller one like T4, it's evident that class size significantly

influences the teaching experience, requiring educators to adapt their approaches to best meet the needs of their students.

#### **5.4.7 Classroom management and difficult students**

As can be seen from the above points, classroom management, especially in larger classes and with students facing significant challenges such as learning disabilities or behavioral issues, is one of the most significant challenges that teachers share. The insights shared by our interviewees shed light on the complexities involved in maintaining a structured learning environment amidst disruptions and extreme behaviors.

For instance, one teacher, T3, recounted the difficulties of managing disruptions caused by students with behavioral issues, emphasizing the struggle to maintain a good structure in the classroom amid these challenges. “The most difficult thing is, when you have students that have difficulties and become disruptive and you have to keep a good structure in the classroom with these disruptions” (T3, Pos. 24). Another teacher, T2, shared a particularly distressing incident where a student exhibited extreme behavior, climbing on high structures, and endangering themselves. In such situations, teachers often feel overwhelmed and isolated, with limited support available to address the complex needs of these students.

“I had one student that ran over the desks and through the classroom and ran away. [...] That student climbed up high walls and, on the roof, and on the windowsill and acted like he would fall down. In those situations, you are left quite alone” (T2, Pos. 33).

Moreover, instances where students require intervention from social services or law enforcement due to neglect or difficult home circumstances further highlight the multifaceted nature of classroom management. These experiences not only impact the teacher's ability to maintain order but also have profound emotional implications for them and the entire class.



Overall, the accounts provided by our interviewees underscore the critical importance of providing teachers with adequate resources and support to effectively manage classrooms, especially when dealing with students facing significant challenges.

#### **5.4.8 Stress from personal and private life**

The stress experienced by teachers isn't confined solely to their professional obligations; it's significantly shaped by factors from their personal lives as well. Balancing the demands of work with responsibilities like caring for young children or aging parents adds an extra layer of strain. This became especially challenging for individuals like T2, who found themselves simultaneously caring for both parents and children, leading to a taxing juggling act. "[...] you also have other responsibilities. [...] When you have school (work) your children and your parents, it gets a lot. You notice that you're struggling a bit" (T2, Pos. 20).

T3 explicitly cited their age as a primary challenge, while T2 is beginning to notice how age impacts their sensitivity to stimuli, and shared examples such as noises from children, the cracking floorboards or the overhead projector fan. Both teachers emphasize, that as individuals age, they often become more susceptible to stressors, necessitating greater energy to manage daily tasks and potentially heightening sensitivities to stimuli.

Moreover, T3 highlighted how their ADHD complicates matters, influencing stress perception and coping mechanisms. These personal stressors inevitably spill into the workplace, affecting concentration, emotional well-being, and overall job performance.

Therefore, addressing teachers' holistic well-being necessitates recognizing and accommodating these external stressors alongside professional ones, fostering a supportive environment conducive to navigating the complexities of both personal and professional life.

## **5.5 Support & coping strategies**

As we have examined the various challenges encountered by the teachers, it is imperative to shift our focus towards understanding the support systems and coping strategies they employ in response to these challenges. By exploring these support mechanisms and coping strategies, we gain valuable insights into the resilience and resourcefulness of the four teachers, shedding light on effective approaches for managing and mitigating the impact of challenges on their well-being. This exploration not only enriches our understanding of individual responses to adversity but also offers practical implications for fostering well-being in similar contexts.

### **5.5.1 Support**

In every interview conducted, a consistent theme surfaced: the critical significance of a robust support system. This system acts as a lifeline, providing avenues for discussing and navigating the inevitable challenges encountered in everyday professional life. It's not just about having individuals to lean on during tough times; it's about fostering a network of support that offers encouragement, guidance, and practical assistance whenever needed.

This support network extends across various spheres of life, encompassing colleagues in the workplace, family members, friends, and even superiors, such as the "Direktioun" or management team. Each component plays a unique role in bolstering resilience.

#### **5.5.1.1 Work colleagues**

The first place our four teachers usually go to look for support when dealing with difficult situations is their work colleagues. "[...] since we are always together during the breaks, we have a constant exchange. If you notice

something is not going so well, or you are not doing well, you have the support” (T4, Pos. 29).

Support from colleagues, particularly within the context of teaching, holds immense importance as it often serves as the frontline resource for teachers facing challenging situations in school. Colleagues, entrenched in the same educational environment, possess a deep understanding of the intricacies of the challenges encountered firsthand. This familiarity enables them to provide invaluable insights, feedback, and practical strategies tailored to the specific circumstances.

One of the primary advantages of seeking support from colleagues is their intimate knowledge of the students. They understand the nuances of individual student behaviors, strengths, and areas of struggle. This allows them to offer targeted advice and suggestions on how to effectively manage difficult situations in the classroom. Whether it's dealing with behavioral issues, academic struggles, or interpersonal conflicts, colleagues can provide nuanced perspectives and actionable solutions based on their interactions and experiences with the same students.

The importance of colleague support is further underscored during parent-teacher meetings, particularly when dealing with challenging or confrontational parents. As T1 and T4 explain, having another teacher present who is familiar with the student and the situation can be immensely reassuring and beneficial. Their presence lends credibility and additional perspective to discussions, easing tensions and facilitating more productive dialogue. Additionally, having a colleague by one's side provides emotional support and validation, reducing the sense of isolation and vulnerability that can accompany difficult interactions with parents.

“When you have a parent-teacher meeting, that is more difficult, we also assure that we go there together [...] You are definitely more

relaxed, when you go into such a meeting with support, than if you were all alone.” (T4, Pos. 29)

#### **5.5.1.2 Family**

Family members offer a unique form of support that transcends the boundaries of professional life, providing a wellspring of emotional sustenance and grounding in personal values. When family members share a similar professional background, such as in the case of T2 and T3's daughters, discussions about work-related challenges flow seamlessly, enriched by a shared understanding of the profession's nuances. (“My daughter also works in education [...] you automatically talk about school and work” (T4, Pos. 25).) These familial bonds create a supportive environment where informed feedback and advice can be exchanged, fostering personal and professional growth.

In such cases, family members not only offer practical insights but also provide a deeper level of emotional support, stemming from their intimate understanding of both the professional and personal aspects of the individual's life. This dual perspective allows for more holistic guidance, addressing both the professional implications and the emotional toll of the challenges faced.

Conversely, when family members are not directly involved in the same line of work, their support takes on a different but equally vital role. In these instances, the most meaningful support often comes in the form of attentive listening and empathetic validation. Rather than offering specific advice based on professional expertise, their role is to provide a compassionate ear, allowing the individual to vent their frustrations and share their experiences without fear of judgment.

T2's personal experience underscores the potential pitfalls of receiving advice from well-meaning but uninformed family members. When

individuals outside the profession attempt to offer solutions or suggestions based on incomplete understanding, it can inadvertently exacerbate feelings of frustration. Instead, what T2 sought from her spouse was validation of her feelings and a compassionate presence to help alleviate the burden of overthinking.

“I would have loved to be able to come home, let everything spill out and him just saying "ok" and then we do something else. He was someone who then said things like: "but I would do this, and I would do that..." and that from people that are not in teaching. That is annoying.” (T2, Pos. 35)

Ultimately, the role of family members in providing support extends beyond offering solutions to problems; it encompasses validation, empathy, and companionship. By creating a space where individuals feel heard, understood, and supported, family members play a crucial role in maintaining emotional well-being and resilience in the face of professional challenges. “You just need someone to listen” (T2, Pos. 37).

Family support extends beyond emotional understanding to practical assistance in daily responsibilities. It's crucial for family members to recognize that teachers often have demanding workloads beyond their time in the classroom.

T2's experience highlights the importance of this understanding within familial relationships. While her husband may not always provide the exact support she seeks when discussing work-related issues, he compensates by taking on household chores and caring for their children. This tangible support allows T2 to focus on her professional responsibilities without the added pressure of managing household tasks simultaneously.

Similarly, T3 emphasizes the understanding from their partner and children regarding the exhaustion resulting from work commitments. Instead of

expecting extensive contributions from T3 outside of work hours, their family supports them by minimizing demands and recognizing the need for rest and recuperation. “[...] nobody expects anything from me. Yes, there is always something to do [laundry/ garden], but we are used to it [the chaos]” (T3, Pos. 38).

This mutual understanding and division of responsibilities within the family unit alleviate the strain on teachers, enabling them to devote their energy and attention to their professional duties without sacrificing their well-being. By shouldering household chores and providing a supportive environment, family members play a vital role in nurturing the resilience and effectiveness of teachers in managing their workload and maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

#### **5.5.1.3 Friends**

T4 emphasizes the importance of spending time with friends as a grounding force and stress-reliever. Whether it's sharing a meal or enjoying a night out, these moments of camaraderie provide much-needed respite from the pressures of work.

When friends share a similar professional background, discussions about work-related challenges become even more valuable. Their understanding of the profession's intricacies enriches conversations, allowing for meaningful exchanges of ideas and support. “When you go out or have drink with friends that are also in education, you do talk about those things” (T4, Pos. 25).

#### **5.5.1.4 “Direktioun”**

Feelings toward the support provided by the “Direktioun” vary among teachers. T1 and T4 express a positive view, acknowledging the assistance and resources offered. In contrast, T2 and T3 voice discontent with the

support provided, indicating a perception of insufficient resources or assistance from the "Direktioun".

T1's viewpoint exhibits a sense of understanding and appreciation for the challenges faced by the administration. They acknowledge resource constraints and recognize the efforts made by the "Direktioun" to assist teachers in need. T1's personal experiences suggest a positive relationship with the administration, where they feel supported and valued. Prompt assistance and a willingness to address issues as they arise contribute to T1's overall satisfaction with the support structure in place.

Similarly, T4 expresses contentment with the support received from the "Direktioun." They highlight the administration's involvement in difficult situations and emphasize the importance of maintaining open communication channels.

"[...] whenever there was a difficult situation, I inform the "Direktioun", so they are also informed in case things develop. That way you immediately have a different support then if you were alone" (T4, Pos. 31).

T4's narrative paints a picture of collaboration and mutual respect between teachers and the administration, where support is readily available and responsive to teachers' needs.

In contrast, T2 and T3 present more critical perspectives, revealing areas of dissatisfaction and suggesting room for improvement within the support framework.

T2's narrative reflects a sense of frustration and disappointment with the support provided by the "Direktioun." They recall instances where they felt abandoned or unsupported in challenging situations, contrasting this with a past encounter with a supportive inspector. T2 longs for more personalized

assistance and tangible support from the administration, expressing a desire for proactive intervention rather than reactive mediation.

“It all takes way too long. As soon you have difficulties with a student and you report it, until something actually happens, it takes way too long [...] I wish that they would support us more, but also in person, by also being on site occasionally,[...] But also, for us at the beginning, there was the director or an inspector that also occasionally came on site to have a look. [...] Today, they take a little look and that's it. They don't say much, don't talk to the students, don't introduce themselves. It's a very swift visit, in and out, in the hopes no one talks to them. It's not great.” (T2, Pos. 43)

Similarly, T3 advocates for additional support structures within the school environment. They highlight the need for emotional outlets and activities for struggling students, suggesting that the "Direktioun" could play a more active role in enforcing collaboration among teachers.

“I wish there was a place or a person you could go to talk, where you don't have to enroll in some course and wait and drive all the way to the city. Because when you are struggling you need someone sooner [...]” (T3, Pos. 34).

T3's perspective underscores the complexities of implementing such initiatives, recognizing resource constraints and competing interests within the school community.

In summary, while T1 and T4 express satisfaction with the support provided by the "Direktioun," T2 and T3 offer more critical viewpoints, pointing to areas of improvement within the administrative support system. These diverse perspectives highlight the nuanced nature of support structures within the school environment, shaped by individual experiences and institutional dynamics.



### **5.5.2 Physical activity**

When it comes to managing work-related stress, many individuals find solace and relief through engaging in physical activities or sports. Among the teachers, this coping strategy emerges as a common thread, each with their unique approach tailored to their preferences and needs.

T1 finds solace in physical activities like running or biking. They are so committed to this form of stress relief that they have set up an indoor bike and workout room for days when the weather is unfavorable. For T1, engaging in sports isn't just about staying fit; it's essential for their overall well-being.

Similarly, T4 turns to biking when feeling overwhelmed or stressed. They have a deep passion for biking and find that it allows them to release tension and clear their mind effectively. “[...] a long bike ride, with music for a few hours, where you can shut off for a moment” (T4, Pos. 16). “[...] where I can get my energy out” (T4, Pos. 48).

After experiencing a depressive episode, T2 adopted two big dogs that require regular walks. These walks have become a cornerstone of their well-being routine. Living in an area abundant with nature, T2 enjoys long walks with their dogs, relishing the opportunity to clear their mind amidst the beauty of nature and the companionship of their beloved pets.

Managing both rising age and an ADHD diagnosis, T3 has incorporated structured physical activities into their weekly schedule. They have dedicated time for workouts and yoga, which they view as essential therapy and meditation. These activities not only help T3 maintain balanced energy levels but also provide a means to release daily stress and worries, allowing them to achieve mental clarity and relaxation.

Each teacher's approach reflects a personalized understanding of the importance of physical activity in managing work-related stress. From running and biking to walking dogs and structured workouts, these activities serve as vital outlets for releasing tension, clearing the mind, and fostering overall well-being.

### **5.5.3 Turning email notifications off**

In today's digital age, the omnipresence of smartphones and constant connectivity has revolutionized the way we interact with work, as T4 astutely observes. With emails and applications like the "Dimmi-app" - a communication tool designed by Edudesign s.a. (2018) in Luxembourg to facilitate interaction between teachers and parents - accessible at our fingertips, the boundaries between work and personal life have become increasingly blurred.

T4 articulates this phenomenon as both a blessing and a curse. On one hand, the immediacy of communication allows for swift responses and enhanced productivity. However, this perpetual accessibility comes with its drawbacks. T4 explains, that there's the expectation of prompt replies from colleagues and supervisors, placing additional pressure on individuals to be constantly available. Secondly, the intrusion of work-related messages during school hours can disrupt focus and impact mood. Lastly, the inability to fully disconnect from work, even during leisure time, because "the borders between work and personal life are a bit blurred and fluid" (T4, Pos. 20), can lead to heightened stress and diminished work-life balance.

T1 shares their experience of grappling with this digital dilemma by taking proactive measures to regain control over their work-life integration. By disabling email notifications, they've reclaimed autonomy over their schedule, allowing for designated periods of focused work and uninterrupted personal time. This simple adjustment has yielded significant

improvements in their overall well-being, underscoring the importance of setting boundaries.

Similarly, T4 acknowledges the need for periodic disconnection to prioritize self-care and family time. While they haven't completely disabled notifications, they've adopted the practice of temporarily silencing them during moments of heightened stress or when seeking respite from work-related demands, particularly during vacations.

#### **5.5.4 Vacation and Breaks**

Despite not being classified as a traditional coping strategy, the importance of regular breaks and vacations resonates deeply with all four teachers.

All four teachers underscore the significance of incorporating regular breaks and vacations into their lives as essential components of their coping strategies for managing work-related stress.

For each of them, the prospect of upcoming vacations serves as a beacon of hope during particularly demanding periods. The anticipation of a respite, even if brief, injects a sense of optimism and resilience into their daily routines.

Vacations are cherished moments of reprieve, providing our teachers with the opportunity to unwind, recharge, and recalibrate away from the demands of the classroom. ("During the vacations, your happy when you can get away for a little" (T4, Pos. 16).) It's a time to catch up on much-needed rest, allowing them to replenish their energy reserves and rejuvenate their spirits.

While vacations offer a chance to step back from the pressures of work, T3 and T2 highlight that they're not merely about idleness. Rather, they view vacations as a window to attend to neglected tasks and responsibilities, ensuring that they return to work with a sense of organization and

preparedness. For T3, this may involve catching up on chores and household duties, while for T2, it's an opportunity to devote time to school-related preparations.

Despite the necessity of attending to work-related matters during their vacations, our teachers view these moments as invaluable for maintaining their overall well-being. By striking a balance between relaxation and productivity, they optimize their time off to cultivate a positive mindset and set the stage for a successful return to work. "[...] that's why we have those vacations, so we can calm our nerves down again and we can approach them again in a positive way" (T3, Pos. 21).

### **5.5.5 Continuing professional education**

T1 advocates for the continuous pursuit of knowledge as a means to bolster mental well-being. One method educators can pursue for further education is through the Luxembourg Ministry of Education's Institut de formation de l'Éducation nationale (IFEN). During interviews, the four teachers were asked whether they had participated in any of the numerous courses on mindfulness or general well-being offered by the IFEN.

T3 and T4 have engaged in mindfulness courses offered by IFEN, albeit with differing experiences. T3 found the introductory nature of the course aligning with their existing knowledge of mindfulness practices. Although it didn't offer new insights, they appreciated the communal aspect of the class and view it as a beneficial first step for educators interested in mindfulness.

On the other hand, T4 participated in a course titled "Achtsamkeit - Stress regulieren und vermeiden" ("Mindfulness - Regulating and Avoiding Stress"), finding it intriguing despite initial skepticism. Despite their own reservations about meditation, they acknowledge the value of such courses and encourage others to explore them, even if mindfulness isn't their preferred practice.

All four teachers have actively engaged in a variety of courses provided by the IFEN, with topics ranging from parent-teacher interactions to managing challenging student behaviors. These courses have proven instrumental in equipping them with the skills and strategies necessary to navigate stressful work situations more effectively, consequently enhancing their overall well-being.

While acknowledging that not every course may pique their interest, the teachers unanimously agree on the inherent value of exploration and continuous learning. Each course offers unique insights and perspectives that contribute to their professional growth and resilience in the face of adversity.

T4 particularly emphasizes the accessibility and affordability of IFEN courses, highlighting the fact that they are offered free of charge to teachers. This accessibility ensures that all educators have the opportunity to access valuable resources and professional development opportunities that may otherwise be financially prohibitive if pursued independently.

Furthermore, T4 underscores the potential cost savings associated with IFEN courses, which cover topics and skills that could incur significant expenses if sought through private training or workshops. By leveraging the resources provided by the IFEN, teachers can access high-quality education and training without financial burden, thereby promoting equitable access to professional development opportunities.

#### **5.5.6 Other**

While our four teachers share common strategies to support their mental well-being, such as prioritizing self-care and maintaining a healthy work-life balance, each also incorporates unique practices into their lives.

T1 engages in creative projects like drawing as a means of self-expression and relaxation. They emphasize the importance of protecting oneself during interactions with parents, advocating for clear documentation of communication and setting boundaries.

T3, struggling with their energy levels, strategically arranges their schedule to include three consecutive afternoons off and two free hours on Friday morning. This deliberate scheduling allows them ample time to recharge during the workweek and distribute their energy effectively. Additionally, T3 and T2 both incorporate regular naps into their day to maintain balanced energy levels. In managing overwhelming classroom situations, T3 employs the tactic of temporarily removing disruptive students from the classroom to regain control. They also utilize outdoor time in the late afternoon to allow students to release energy through movement when concentration wanes.

### **5.5.7 Tips and advice**

As each interview drew to a close, the teachers were invited to share their insights and recommendations for fellow educators facing challenges with their well-being or for new student teachers embarking on their journey. Here are their thoughtful suggestions:

Firstly, T3 emphasizes the importance of courage and individual purpose. They urge new teachers to set their own criteria and priorities, steering clear of comparisons with others. Instead, they advocate for exploration and adaptation within the educational system, prioritizing student needs and fostering collaboration with parents. Moreover, maintaining personal well-being is paramount, with T3 stressing the significance of balance and self-care through engaging activities and open communication.

Echoing similar sentiments, T4 underscores the necessity of achieving a healthy work-life balance. They emphasize the importance of seeking

support from friends and family and advocating for oneself in the workplace. T4 encourages new teachers to adopt a flexible mindset, balancing dedication to their profession with opportunities for relaxation and stress management.

T2 offers practical advice on establishing boundaries between personal and professional life. They highlight the importance of prioritizing self-care and finding a method that works best for individual needs, whether it's working from home or at school.

Finally, T1 sheds light on the multifaceted nature of teaching, encompassing not only classroom responsibilities but also parental engagement and administrative tasks. They stress the significance of finding motivation and passion for the job, as well as seeking a supportive environment to navigate challenges effectively.





## 6 Interpretation and Discussion

The aim of this study was to determine how primary school teachers in Luxembourg assess their personal well-being within the context of their profession and to identify the primary stress factors they experience. Using a qualitative research method, it was possible to analyze and interpret interview discussions in detail in order to answer the research question:

“What is the self-reported assessment of personal well-being among primary school teachers in Luxembourg within the context of their profession?” and “What are the primary stress factors they identify?”

The study provides valuable insights into the well-being of primary school teachers in Luxembourg. It reveals that Luxembourgish teachers, like their counterparts in other countries, face significant challenges that affect their work and personal well-being.

When analyzing the data, it became evident that Luxembourgish teachers are no strangers to the topic of psychological well-being, demonstrating significant knowledge and experience in this area.

The definitions of well-being provided by the four teachers resonate with theoretical perspectives, showcasing a coherent understanding of the concept and its relationship to mental health. Each teacher emphasizes different aspects of well-being, such as the integration of mental and physical health (T1), maintaining balance and emotional stability (T2), autonomy and self-care (T3), and personal wellness and satisfaction (T4). These perspectives align with theoretical frameworks that recognize well-being as a multidimensional construct encompassing physical, psychological, and social dimensions. Furthermore, the teachers' acknowledgment of the importance of mental health, coping strategies, and

resilience reflects an understanding of well-being as a dynamic interplay of factors that contribute to overall quality of life (Engel, 1977).

Overall, when asked about their mental well-being in relation to their profession, teachers tended to have a positive outlook. Some reported feeling happy and well-rested during holidays but acknowledged experiencing extreme stress and pressure outside of holiday periods. Others expressed contentment with a balanced life and effective management of work-life harmony. However, some teachers revealed feelings of nervousness and stress about returning to school after vacation, struggling with workload and personal tasks. While some generally felt good, they also experienced heightened stress during specific periods, such as the end of the semester or uncertainties about future work assignments. These varied responses underscore the dynamic nature of mental well-being in the teaching profession, with individuals experiencing fluctuations in their well-being based on various factors.

This closely resonates with the theoretical framework of psychological health in the teaching profession, as discussed in Section 2.2. Engel's biopsychosocial model of health (Engel, 1977) provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing individuals' well-being, emphasizing the interplay between biological, psychological, and social factors. Teachers' mental well-being is shaped by various stressors, workload, and emotional labor, aligning with Engel's notion that life circumstances significantly impact one's health.

During analyses it became clear that Luxemburgish primary school teachers face a multitude of challenges that significantly impact their work and well-being. The challenges and stress symptoms described by the four teachers align closely with the findings and theoretical perspectives outlined in the scholarly literature on teacher well-being and mental health. Each teacher's

experience reflects the multifaceted nature of stress in the teaching profession, encompassing physical, emotional, and cognitive dimensions.

For example, T3 and T4 both highlight the impact of stress on sleep patterns, which is consistent with research indicating that sleep disturbances are a significant marker of stress among educators (Scheuch et al. 2015). T2's account of feeling "stuck" after several weeks of school resonates with studies indicating that prolonged periods of work can lead to heightened stress levels and feelings of burnout (Scheuch et al. 2015).

Similarly, the challenges identified by the teachers, such as parental involvement, co-teaching dynamics, lesson preparations, and classroom management, mirror the stressors identified in the literature on teacher well-being. For instance, Kidger et al. (2016) discuss the complexities of parent-teacher interactions and their impact on teacher stress. Friend (2008) delves into the intricacies of co-teaching, highlighting its multifaceted challenges. Meanwhile, Rieg et al. (2007) explore various stressors experienced by novice teachers, such as lesson planning and classroom management, which resonate with the experiences of the four Luxembourgish teachers. These studies collectively underscore the multifaceted nature of teacher stress and the common challenges encountered in educational settings.

Additionally, teachers identified several factors impacting their mental health, such as prolonged working hours, excessive workloads, limited control over tasks, disruptive student behavior, and challenges in achieving a healthy work-life balance. These align with Michie and Williams's (2003) findings, which highlight extended work hours and overwhelming job demands as key contributors to mental health issues among teachers.

Furthermore, the teachers' experiences with threatening interactions from parents and challenging student behaviors align with research like that from

Kidger et al. (2016) and Rieg, Paquette, and Chen (2007), indicating that negative interactions with students and parents can significantly impact teacher emotions and well-being. The emotional labor involved in managing these interactions can lead to heightened stress levels and feelings of burnout among educators. Kidger et al. (2016) found that poorer well-being and increased depressive symptoms among teachers were primarily related to perceived workload and dissatisfaction with work. In addition, the desire to talk to a colleague about stress or depression, but the lack of this opportunity as experienced by T3, also correlated significantly with well-being.

Overall, the challenges and stress symptoms described by the teachers provide valuable insights into the complex interplay between teacher well-being and the school environment. Their narratives reveal a multifaceted portrait of stress, encompassing physical, emotional, and cognitive dimensions, echoing established research on the subject. From disrupted sleep patterns to feelings of "stuckness" and burnout, their accounts mirror the pervasive challenges faced by educators globally. Moreover, the identified stressors, such as long working hours, disruptive student behavior, and lack of control over workload, align closely with literature on teacher well-being, emphasizing the systemic nature of these issues. Importantly, the impact of negative interactions with parents and students underscores the emotional labor inherent in teaching and the need for robust support structures within educational institutions. By aligning their experiences with findings from the literature, we gain a deeper understanding of the factors contributing to stress and burnout among Luxemburgish educators and the importance of addressing these issues to support teacher well-being and ultimately improve student outcomes.

Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive support systems, encompassing colleagues, family, friends, and school administration. These

systems should offer a network of encouragement, guidance, and practical assistance to help educators navigate their profession's challenges. Additionally, resources must be provided to ensure the well-being and effectiveness of educators, enabling them to fulfill their vital roles within the education system.

The resources and coping strategies our four primary school teachers mention during the interviews, align closely with the established literature on promoting teacher well-being, particularly regarding social support (Siedlecki et al., 2014), mindfulness (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Siegel et al., 2009), and professional development opportunities like those offered by the IFEN.

The experiences shared by four teachers shed light on the nuanced approaches educators employ to manage stress and foster resilience. Their coping strategies resonate with established concepts in emotion regulation and well-being promotion literature, offering valuable insights into effective self-care practices. Throughout their interviews, these teachers underscored the importance of 4 main strategies for navigating professional challenges and fostering well-being:

- 1. Social Support and Supportive Collegial Relationships:** In their interviews, the teachers highlighted the critical role of social support networks in navigating professional challenges. Colleagues, family, friends, and superiors emerged as pillars of support, providing encouragement, guidance, and practical assistance. These findings align with research by Siedlecki et al. (2014) and Diener et al. (2002), underscoring the significance of social relationships in promoting job satisfaction and overall well-being. Colleagues offer insights and feedback, akin to antecedent-focused regulation, while supportive relationships aid in down-regulating negative emotions, crucial for maintaining positive interactions with students (Jiang et al., 2016).

- 2. Physical Activity:** Engaging in physical activities such as biking, walking dogs, structured workouts, and yoga serves as a coping strategy for managing work-related stress. Physical activity can be viewed as an antecedent-focused regulation strategy, where individuals modify their environment (engaging in physical activity) to regulate emotions and alleviate stress (Jiang et al., 2016).
- 3. Digital boundaries:** Disabling email notifications is a response-focused regulation strategy employed by the teachers to regain control over their work-life integration and reduce stress. This aligns with the literature's emphasis on response-focused regulation, where individuals aim to change their reactions after experiencing emotions, such as by setting boundaries to manage work-related stress (Gross, 1998, cited in Jiang et al., 2016).
- 4. Breaks:** Taking regular breaks and vacations is essential for rejuvenating and replenishing energy, aligning with the literature's emphasis on the importance of downtime for well-being. Taking breaks and vacations is essential for promoting psychological well-being and preventing burnout (Siegel et al., 2009). Vacations can be seen as both antecedent-focused (modifying the environment by taking breaks) and response-focused (changing reactions to stress by taking time off) regulation strategies (Jiang et al., 2016).

The coping strategies employed by teachers, as revealed through the interviews and supported by relevant literature, play a crucial role in managing work-related stress and promoting overall well-being.

Each teacher faces unique challenges in the classroom, but they all recognize common triggers that can cause stress. Similarly, while coping mechanisms may vary slightly among teachers, there are overarching similarities. As highlighted by teachers in their interviews, despite facing similar situations, individuals exhibit a wide range of reactions and

experiences. Some may become visibly angry, others deeply saddened, while some remain unaffected by what might upset their colleagues.

From our discussions, I could conclude, that these educators exhibit considerable resilience and dedication towards their profession, driven by a profound love for teaching and a commitment to their students' well-being and education. Research supports that resilient teachers use problem-solving skills, a supportive network, and a positive attitude to manage the challenges they face (Bobek, 2002). Additionally, Jennings and Greenberg (2009) highlight that teachers' social and emotional competence significantly impacts their ability to handle classroom challenges effectively. Their willingness to confront challenges and difficult moments alongside their students and parents underscores the depth of their passion for their vocation. This intrinsic motivation appears pivotal, as it likely serves as a buffer against the stress and pressures inherent in teaching. As corroborated by several teachers, a genuine affinity for teaching is essential, as those lacking such passion may succumb to the stressors of the profession, potentially leading to burnout or health issues.

While the teachers were eager participants in my research, openly sharing the trials they face and recounting insightful experiences, I sensed that some details may have been withheld, perhaps to spare me, as a prospective teacher, from feeling overwhelmed. This phenomenon could be interpreted as a form of professional discretion, aimed at maintaining a positive perception of the teaching profession while acknowledging its complexities. This phenomenon of professional discretion can be seen as a form of emotional labor, where teachers manage their emotions to maintain a positive perception of the profession (Jiang et al., 2016).

Furthermore, it is clear that they are acutely aware of the demanding nature of the profession, despite outsiders often perceiving it as an easy, well-compensated job with ample vacation time. As noted by T2 and T4, and

validated by T2's spouse, true comprehension of the challenges inherent in teaching appears elusive to those not directly immersed in the field, even if they have close personal relationships with educators.

Overall, the study underscores the importance of addressing the well-being of Luxembourgish educators through comprehensive support systems and resources. By acknowledging and addressing the challenges they face and promoting effective coping strategies, educators can be better supported in fulfilling their roles in the education system, ultimately contributing to improved student outcomes.

While the insights gained in this study are valuable, there are several limitations to consider. Firstly, the small sample size of just four teachers means the findings might not be fully representative of the broader population of primary school teachers in Luxembourg. While the in-depth perspectives of these four teachers are valuable, they might not capture the full diversity of experiences across different schools and regions (Patton, 2001, p. 14).

Another consideration is the subjective nature of qualitative research. The richness of the data depends on personal interpretations from both the participants and the researcher. This can provide deep insights but may also introduce variability based on individual perspectives (Patton, 2001, p. 64).

Qualitative interviews offer an in-depth understanding but cover a limited breadth. While this approach allows for detailed exploration of individual experiences, it might miss some variations in challenges and coping strategies across different contexts (Patton, 2001, p. 14).



Finally, while qualitative research does not provide quantitative measurements, it can suggest important trends and highlight areas for further investigation. This study thus presents a great starting point for further studies. Combining qualitative findings with additional methods, such as larger-scale surveys or focus groups, can enhance the overall understanding and applicability of the results.

In summary, while my qualitative interview-based study with four teachers provides valuable, in-depth insights into the well-being of Luxembourgish primary school teachers, acknowledging these limitations helps in interpreting the findings within their appropriate context.



## **7 Conclusion**

This study on well-being of Luxembourgish primary school teacher has shown, that even though, while the interviewed teachers have an overall positive self-assessment of their well-being, it is apparent that they have all experienced some difficult situations that have affected their well-being, may it just be temporary or still manageable.

Each teacher faces unique challenges in their classrooms, but common stress triggers are recognized across the board. These include work overload, managing diverse student behaviors, navigating high expectations from parents and varying levels of administrative support. Despite these common stressors, the study highlights that teachers' reactions vary widely. Some may show visible frustration and anger in response to stress, others may feel deeply saddened, while some remain relatively unaffected, demonstrating resilience and strong coping skills.

Coping mechanisms also vary slightly among teachers, but there are overarching similarities. Common strategies include seeking peer support, engaging in professional development, and maintaining personal well-being practices such as regular exercise and hobbies. These differences underscore the importance of personalized support strategies.

Regardless of their specific experiences, age, grade level taught, location, or other characteristics, all teachers agree on the need for change. In practice, this means that schools and educational institutions should introduce targeted programs and measures to promote teacher well-being.

In practice, this means that schools and educational institutions should introduce targeted programs and measures to promote the well-being of their teachers. This includes measures to reduce work overload, strengthen peer networks and promote a healthy lifestyle. At the same time, it is

important that education policy and decision makers recognize the importance of teacher well-being and allocate resources to implement effective support measures.

For future research, this study provides an important starting point to further deepen the understanding of teacher well-being in Luxembourg and to investigate the effectiveness of interventions to improve well-being.

By integrating teacher well-being into educational research and policy, we can improve working conditions for teachers in the long term, thereby enhancing the quality of education and positively impacting student outcomes. This comprehensive approach not only supports teachers but also creates a healthier, more effective educational environment for all.

The findings from my qualitative interview-based study on the well-being of primary school teachers in Luxembourg offer valuable insights for a range of stakeholders. Teachers can utilize the findings to reflect on their experiences and explore effective coping strategies. School administrators and policymakers, including those in the Ministry of Education, can leverage this understanding to develop targeted support systems and professional development initiatives that address the specific challenges faced by teachers. Moreover, mental health professionals and educational researchers can utilize the data to design tailored interventions and further studies aimed at enhancing teacher well-being across different contexts. These examples and resources can inform a comprehensive approach to improving the educational environment and enhancing teacher retention.

In light of these findings, it is imperative for policymakers, school administrators, and educators to consider implementing measures such as professional development workshops, mental health support services, policy adjustments to alleviate administrative burdens, initiatives promoting work-life balance, enhancements to the school environment, routine well-

being assessments, establishment of peer support networks, implementation of recognition and rewards programs, collaboration with health professionals, and ongoing research to drive continuous improvement. By addressing these specific areas, a supportive and sustainable environment for teachers can be created, ultimately benefiting both educators and students.

This study significantly contributed to my professional development by providing a deep insight into the realities of the teaching profession. Although I had encountered discussions about various challenges and stressors during my internships and substitute teaching experiences, hearing directly from seasoned teachers added valuable context and depth to my understanding. These interviews revealed how familiar stressors manifest differently in various educational environments, highlighting the complexity of the teaching role.

A particularly beneficial outcome of this study was the opportunity to compile a repertoire of effective coping strategies. These strategies, shared by experienced educators, are practical tools I can employ when facing difficulties in my teaching career. Additionally, the study facilitated the beginning of a robust support network of fellow teachers. By establishing connections with these educators, I now have a reliable resource for advice and guidance, especially when confronted with situations similar to those discussed during the interviews. This network not only offers immediate support but also fosters a sense of community, essential for navigating the challenges of the teaching profession.



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## **9 Appendices**

### **A. Other national psychological health resources not specific to teachers**

Numerous organizations and information resources are available to provide assistance and answers to questions related to mental and psychological health.

In Luxembourg, there are two associations where you can seek information and support for psychological health-related concerns, especially when you or someone you know is experiencing mental health challenges. These associations can provide resources, guidance, and assistance in navigating mental health issues.

#### **1. La Ligue Luxembourgeoise d'Hygiène Mentale (L'Ligue)**

The Luxembourg League for Mental Hygiene established in 1956, focuses on providing quality outpatient psychiatric care (La Ligue Luxembourgeoise d'Hygiène Mentale ASBL, n.d). It aims to support individuals facing psychological difficulties or psychiatric disorders through listening, guidance, and social integration efforts. The organization offers services in information and prevention, integration, and treatment, with a commitment to accessibility and user-centric care (Portail d'information sur la santé mentale, 2024).

#### **2. Société Luxembourgeoise De Psychologie**

The Luxembourg Society for Psychologists (SLP) (Société Luxembourgeoise De Psychologie, n.d.), founded in 1985, stands as the leading association for qualified psychologists and psychotherapists in Luxembourg. With over 500 active members, including around 180 unrecognized psychotherapists, SLP has held official membership in the Federation of European

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Psychologists' Associations (EFPA) since 2001. Their website provides valuable information for individuals seeking professional help. Through their user-friendly search engine, you can easily find a psychiatrist or psychologist that suits your needs and preferences.

## B. Consent form



UNIVERSITE DU LUXEMBOURG  
*Faculté des Sciences Humaines,  
des Sciences de l'Éducation  
et des Sciences Sociales*

### INFORMATIONSBLATT FÜR LEHRER\*INNEN

#### BACHELORARBEIT VON VAN DER MOLEN ANNABEL

#### PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN LUXEMBURG

Belval, den 07.04.2024

Sehr geehrter\*geehrte Lehrer\*in,

Im Rahmen des „Bachelor en Sciences de l'Éducation“ verfassen die Studierenden eine erziehungswissenschaftliche Forschungsarbeit, für welche sie **Lehrer\*innen über ihre berufsbezogenen Erfahrungen, Vorstellungen und Kenntnisse befragen**, um daraus Erkenntnisse für ihre eigene akademische und professionelle Entwicklung als angehende Lehrer\*innen zu ziehen. Dies passiert unter der Begleitung eines\*einer akademischen Tutors\*Tutorin der Universität Luxemburg.

Um entsprechende **Aufzeichnungen** durchzuführen, benötige ich, gemäß den gesetzlichen Datenschutzbestimmungen, Ihre schriftliche Erlaubnis<sup>1</sup>. Diese können Sie mir durch Unterzeichnen der angefügten Einwilligungsbestätigung erteilen.

**Ziel:** Im Rahmen dieser Arbeit soll das psychologische Wohlbefinden von Grundschullehrern im luxemburgischen öffentlichen Schulwesen erforscht werden. Das Hauptziel besteht darin, spezifische Umstände und Stressfaktoren zu identifizieren, denen luxemburgische Grundschullehrer ausgesetzt sind. Durch die Untersuchung dieser Faktoren sollen Erkenntnisse darüber gewonnen werden, welche Elemente zur psychischen Belastung und Erschöpfung dieser Bevölkerungsgruppe beitragen. Gleichzeitig wird erkundet, ob bereits vorhandene Maßnahmen von Lehrern ergriffen werden, um ihre psychische Gesundheit zu schützen. Das Ziel besteht darin, Erkenntnisse zu gewinnen, die zur Entwicklung gezielter Unterstützungsstrategien für diese Lehrerguppe beitragen können.

**Methoden:** Während dieser Arbeit werden luxemburgische Grundschullehrer mit vielfältigen Hintergründen in halbstrukturierten qualitativen Interviews befragt. Der Fokus der Gespräche liegt auf den persönlichen Erfahrungen der Lehrer im Umgang mit Stress und ihrer psychischen Gesundheit im Beruf. Die Interviews dauern etwa 30 Minuten bis maximal 1 Stunde und finden in einem privaten, angenehmen Rahmen statt. Zur Dokumentation werden die Gespräche per Sprachaufzeichnung festgehalten.

<sup>1</sup>EU-Verordnung 2016/679 des Europäischen Parlaments und des Rates vom 27. April 2016 zum Schutz natürlicher Personen bei der Verarbeitung personenbezogener Daten, zum freien Datenverkehr und zur Aufhebung der Richtlinie 95/46/EG



Die Leitfragen für die Interviews wurden sorgfältig unter Berücksichtigung wissenschaftlicher Texte und Studien entwickelt, um eine gezielte Exploration der individuellen Perspektiven der Lehrer auf die erlebten Belastungen zu ermöglichen.

**Freiwilligkeit:** Ihre Teilnahme an dieser Arbeit ist freiwillig und Sie können Ihre Einwilligung jederzeit zurückziehen, ohne dass Sie dafür Gründe nennen müssen. Sie können entscheiden, nur an bestimmten Teilen der Datenerhebung teilzunehmen (siehe Einwilligungsbestätigung).

**Anonymität:** Alle erhobenen Informationen werden anonymisiert (Gesichter werden verschwommen dargestellt, Stimmen verfremdet, Namen durch Pseudonyme ersetzt). Sie werden demnach niemals namentlich genannt. Damit wird gewährleistet, dass Ihre Identität geschützt wird.

**Vertraulichkeit:** Alle in dieser Arbeit gesammelten Informationen werden vertraulich behandelt. Der\*die Studierende bewahrt alle Informationen sicher auf. Nur der\*die Studierende und der\*die Tutor\*in haben Zugriff darauf. Nach erfolgreichem Abschluss der Arbeit wird ein Bericht verfasst, der eventuell von der Universität Luxemburg (online) veröffentlicht wird, wobei die Anonymität der Teilnehmer bewahrt bleibt. Alle gesammelten Informationen werden danach von dem\*der Studierenden gelöscht.

**Zusammenfassung:** Sollten Sie zu irgendeiner Zeit Fragen oder Bedenken zu einem der Aspekte der Arbeit haben oder Ihre Teilnahme an der Arbeit abbrechen wollen, können Sie den\*die Tutor\*in unter den angegebenen Adressen kontaktieren.

Der\*die Studierende gewährleistet darüber hinaus die strikte Einhaltung forschungsethischer Prinzipien, welche an der Universität Luxemburg gelten<sup>2</sup>.

In der Hoffnung, dass Sie durch Ihr Einverständnis zu meiner Ausbildung beitragen, verbleibe ich hochachtungsvoll.

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<sup>2</sup>[https://www.uni.lu/content/download/55604/657605/file/University%20of%20Luxembourg%20Policy%20on%20Ethics%20in%20Research\\_102012.pdf](https://www.uni.lu/content/download/55604/657605/file/University%20of%20Luxembourg%20Policy%20on%20Ethics%20in%20Research_102012.pdf)





## EINWILLIGUNGSBESTÄTIGUNG DER LEHRER\*INNEN

### BACHELORARBEIT VON VAN DER MOLEN ANNABEL

#### PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN LUXEMBURG

Ich bestätige hiermit, dass ich von VAN DER MOLEN ANNABEL schriftlich (siehe Informationsblatt für Lehrer\*innen) über die erziehungswissenschaftliche Forschungsarbeit, an der ich teilnehme, informiert wurde und alle meine Fragen diesbezüglich beantwortet wurden.

Ich wurde informiert, dass ich meine Einwilligung jederzeit und ohne Angabe von Gründen zurückziehen kann, ohne dass mir daraus negative Konsequenzen entstehen. Des Weiteren kann ich der Verwendung der über mich gesammelten Daten und Dokumente widersprechen, sowie anfordern, dass diese gelöscht werden.

Ich stimme zu, dass (Zutreffendes bitte auswählen):

- mündliche oder schriftliche Befragungen mit mir durchgeführt werden und schriftliche Notizen gemacht werden
- Audioaufnahmen dieser Befragung durchgeführt werden
- die zu meiner Person in der Arbeit gesammelten Daten und Dokumente für diese Bachelorarbeit genutzt werden dürfen
- die zu meiner Person in der Arbeit gesammelten Daten und Dokumente auch für darüberhinausgehende Forschungspräsentationen und wissenschaftliche Publikationen genutzt werden dürfen

**Bei allen Optionen werden die Daten gemäß den gesetzlichen Datenschutzbestimmungen streng vertraulich und anonym behandelt.**

Ich bestätige, dass ich von meinem\*meiner Vorgesetzten die Erlaubnis erteilt bekommen habe an dieser Forschungsarbeit teilzunehmen.

#### TEILNEHMER\*IN

Vorname: \_\_\_\_\_

Nachname: \_\_\_\_\_

Ort & Datum: \_\_\_\_\_

Unterschrift: \_\_\_\_\_

## **C. Interview guide**

### Definition

- How do you personally define well-being?
- How would you rate your current level of well-being?

### Mental well-being and teaching

Which aspects of your work as a teacher do you enjoy?

-

What challenges do you see in everyday school life that could have a negative impact on your mental well-being?

To what extent does your mental well-being affect your teaching practice and your interaction with students?

Do you feel that your working environment (buildings, premises, etc.) and working conditions (working hours, co-teaching, colleagues, pay, etc.) have a positive or negative impact on your mental health? Can you give examples of supports or conditions that have a positive impact?

- Do you have any personal experiences or stories that show how important the mental well-being of teachers is for the success of the school and the well-being of the students?
- Have you ever considered changing profession, because the stress and/or pressure of the teaching job was too much? / "Considering the challenging experiences and stressful situations you've encountered,

have you ever considered changing careers due to feeling overwhelmed?"

### Stress management and self-care strategies

How do you deal with stressful situations in the school environment? Are there specific coping strategies that you use? Can they offer a suggestion or tell the story of a time they faced a challenge and felt supported / could access support?

- How important is a work-life balance for you and how do you manage to achieve this?
- What support from the school management or other institutions do you find helpful for your mental well-being? What support could you think of that could be added, or offered by school management?
- Are you aware that IFEN offers courses on mental well-being and mindfulness? Have you ever taken part in one of these courses, or have you thought about doing so?
  - o If you have taken part:
    - What was your experience of the course, do you think it was a useful course? What did it offer you in terms of well-being?
    - Would you recommend it to others?

### Finally:

- What tips would you give to other teachers or new teachers to promote their mental well-being at work?

## D. Transcripts

### Teacher 1 (T1)

1	<b>I: How long have you been working? Work experience?</b>
2	<b>R:</b> 7 to 8 years. Everything in C1 (Spillschoul). Except for the one year I was a substitute- teacher for one year, but mostly C1.
3	<b>I: Do you like C1 the most ?</b>
4	<b>R:</b> Yes, I always consciously choose a C1 position. I could also work in the other cycles, but I always go in the C1.
5	<b>I: Is there a special reason for this?</b>
6	<b>R:</b> It's the most fun and the most creative.
7	<b>I: As already mentioned, my subject is psychological wellbeing. What do you understand by the term "physical well-being"?</b>
8	<b>R:</b> I find mental health, overall and in in the job, extremely important. Hence why I was immediatly willing to take part in your study. Mental health is also something very relevant these days and ver important in our profession.
9	<b>I: How would you describe your mental health? What is part of it?</b>
10	<b>R:</b> Well-being is linked to how you are doing, your mood, how you digest the things that happen during your everyday life and how you digest those impressions. Wellbeing is with what mood you start your day and how you come back home after work. And the mental part has effects on the physical part of wellbeing.
11	<b>I: How would you estimate your current state of mental wellbeing?</b>
12	<b>R:</b> Happy and well, I'm currently on holiday too and I notice that I'm actually feeling much better at the moment. But generally quite good, but the holidays were necessary.
13	<b>I: So as a whole you are in a good mood at work?</b>
14	<b>R:</b> I am in a good mood, but I have to admit, I am extremely stressed. You get close to reaching your limits. The stress is extreme and the pressure too.
15	<b>I: How does that show for for you?</b>
16	<b>R:</b> To switch off after work, to meet all the demands of work, to deal with unpleasant situations, confrontations. I think if you're not mentally strong enough, it can be quite difficult. That's why it's extra important. It's difficult to process everything after work and to switch off after work.
17	<b>I: What do you do to switch off after work?</b>
18	<b>R:</b> Talking to work colleagues is also extremely helpful, because I think we all often go through the same or similar situations and the exchange really helps.
19	Apart from that, everyone has to look at how they can relieve stress, for me it's creative things like painting and sport. And you really need that.

20	<b>I: So the exchange with work colleagues works?</b>
21	<b>R:</b> Yes, so everything that happens at work, I really discuss with my colleagues, because they are the ones who know what it's like on site and how it works and also experience it, because it's difficult with people who are outside, who aren't on the site themselves, that they can understand it all.
22	<b>I: You've already been to different schools, do you think there's a difference between the exchanges between the work colleagues?</b>
23	<b>R:</b> It always depends on the group. so far I've always been lucky to have a good working group and I think that's important. Of course, there are always individuals with whom you don't get on so well, but so far, wherever I've been, they've all been open and I haven't had any negative experiences.
24	<b>I: What are the main challenges in everyday school life for you that may also affect your well-being?</b>
25	<b>R:</b> Parental conversations, extremely. Because they are becoming more and more demanding. Unpleasant confrontations, critical statements, and in some cases, even dangers that you are sometimes confronted with. Meeting all the children's needs, because all children have more and more special needs and you always want to fulfil them all. It's also extremely difficult to protect yourself, because you always want to be there for everyone and then you also have to stand up to the parents.
26	It's sometimes really exhausting to cope with all this in everyday life
27	<b>I: Do you do things to make everything easier somehow? For example, with the parent-teacher meetings?</b>
28	<b>R: Yes over time you learn how you can protect yourself better. It is extremely important that you learn that.</b> For example, I don't go to unpleasant parents alone any more. You should keep a written record of everything and create reports to protect yourself. You have to set clear limits and not always be available for everyone. If someone becomes aggressive, you should stop the conversation immediately and preferably always have a second person present during difficult conversations with parents.
29	In the case of children with special needs, you should do the administration as quickly as possible and ask for help. You should also always educate yourself. You should also say when it's too much for you.
30	You always learn over time, but protecting yourself is extremely important.
31	<b>I: How does you being stressed or in a bad mood effect your teaching or how you treat your students?</b>
32	<b>R:</b> Yes, it's not that when I'm in a bad mood, the children feel it, but it's stressful. If you're already receiving unpleasant emails from parents before 8 o'clock in the morning or something, then of course it's hard to switch off. Or if you have a couple of children who are making a scene. The children also sense when the teacher is stressed or in an unpleasant situation. That's why it's also important to say sometimes: "The teacher needs a minute" or to talk about feelings. Not about everything, of course, but children also have a lot of understanding and I think that's extremely important.
33	<b>I: So it's not that you notice, that you treat the students differently or e.g. more strict?</b>
34	<b>R:</b> No, no. Of course there are moments where you feel like the stress is too much, but at the end it all mostly just in your head.
35	<b>I: Work environment :</b> How does it affect your mental health?

36	<b>R: My classroom is positive. It's very open and there's lots of material.</b> My work colleagues are also positive. I work in the city so there are a lot of nationalities which I find very positive. There are a lot of resources for further development, like the IFEN, and a lot of pedagogical materials. The students in my class are of course also very positive. What is negative are the confrontations I have with parents, but that you have everywhere. But in general, I think the school itself is very positive.
37	<b>I: Can you tell me about the difficult situation you found yourself in, the one where you had a lot of mental problems?</b>
38	<b>R:</b> In general, I can say that there have been a lot of situations in my work environment this year where I now know people who are in burnout or people who have been on long-term sick leave because of issues with parents. I myself have already been in two situations in which I felt extremely threatened, [...] after which the day very difficult. Where, of course, I immediately had help from my work colleagues. This year has not been a good year as far as that is concerned. There were two really difficult situations in which one lost her job and another had a very tragic story happen to her. All this weighs on you personally, and you realise even more how important limits are.
39	<b>I: So the situations of the other people, do mark you too?</b>
40	<b>R:</b> Yes, my parent confrontations weren't that bad, but what happened in my environment... It really makes you think. You can also see that in our whole work group, it has affected us all and it still does.
41	I also talk to people from other schools a lot, and there are stories everywhere at the moment that make you realise it's a good thing that these things don't come out in the open. That's why I think it's so important that mental health is valued more.
42	<b>I: Stress management strategies: :</b>
43	<b>R:</b> Sport sport sport and an healthy Work-life balance
44	<b>I: Can you manage that, the work-life balance?</b>
45	<b>R:</b> Yes, better and better and already much better. I've now learnt to set my emails so that they don't "pop up" straight away, especially at the weekend. The emails are finished at a certain time. Also to realise that you don't always have to reply to everything and to insist on certain forms of disrespect and manners.
46	Being more self-confident comes with time and work experience. But asking for help is also very important, even at work.
47	<b>I: The work of a teacher also involves a lot of preparation at home. Did you balance it out so that you don't take too much work home with you?</b>
48	<b>R:</b> I take work home with me, but also because I want to
49	<b>I: OK, so you still like doing it.</b>
50	<b>R:</b> I deliberately do it a lot because I like doing it, but if I have to, I can scale it down. But that's not such a problem for me now. I still enjoy doing it. I also think that you have enough time to do it. It's not an issue where I say that my mental health has to suffer. You have enough time alongside your job and also during lunch breaks. If it doesn't work out, then you just have to make sure you organise yourself differently.
51	<b>I: Do you take your lunch breaks to have a proper break or do you often have to continue working?</b>

52	<b>R:</b> If I can, then yes. But you often have more meetings with parents during lunchtime or you have meetings. But I also like to prepare things during my lunch break so that I can switch off after work. But it's also important to wind down a little during the breaks. But I always try to do something to calm down.
53	<b>I: Do you feel supported by the "Direktiount" or do you think that they just put you under pressure?</b>
54	<b>R:</b> I think their hands are also very tied. I think it's easier to say "I don't feel supported" I think they do their best too, (I also have some insight into the "Directioun") they also do their best, they also have people above them. They are already aware I think, I think the resources are lacking a lot. There are also a lot of people who don't always take the right steps straight away. Because there are also a lot of people who complain about situations. But a lot of help is offered and there are also resources, but you have to take these steps. I think many people often don't do that. So far, however, whenever I've had an unpleasant situation, if I've got in touch, I've always got help straight away. So, in that sense, I don't feel let down. I know that most "Direktioun"s are also doing their best, and they only have four hours a day at their disposal.
55	<b>I: Have done any special courses at the IFEN?</b>
56	<b>R:</b> Yes, during the internship anyway, you learn a lot. At IFEN, I've already done a lot of courses on parenting and how to look after difficult children. There are also lots of courses on mindfulness and the like, and more and more of them are being offered. Of course they're not all super cool, but if you don't try them you don't know. In the end, the only thing that would really help is to have more staff on site, but that's difficult.
57	<b>I: Do you think these courses really help? Do you think that you really learnt things and that it was interesting?</b>
58	<b>R:</b> 50/50 ou never get dumber from it.
59	<b>I: Is there a particular course you would recommend?</b>
60	<b>R:</b> Anything related to the management of students with behavioural problems. So far they have been quite good. These are also the cases that cause a lot of stress because you don't always have the resources and you are often at the mercy of the situation alone. I think these courses really help you to be efficient and self-confident in such situations and to control and look after the children in the best possible way. This helps you to cope with the stress yourself.
61	<b>I: Finally, what can you recommend to other teachers?</b>
62	<b>R:</b> To be aware of everything that is included in the profession. It's not just looking after children, but also a lot of parental work. And then there's the whole administrative part that most people forget. Then you have to have a balance, have something to support you. If you don't have an understanding environment, especially at the beginning, or if you have so many private problems, the whole thing can be difficult. You really have to have motivation and love for the job, because if you don't have that, there's no point in doing it.
63	<b>I: Is there anything else you would like to share?</b>

64 **R:** I think mental well-being is very important. Many of my friends and work colleagues are already saying that they won't be able to do this job until they retire. I know a lot of people who take "congé sans pay" and only because of these unpleasant situations. I think that's a shame.

65 **I: Do you also think that you won't be able to make it at some point?**

66 **R:** No. Maybe one day I'll say: "Ok, instead of the class teacher, I'll take the minor subjects for once. But not right away, but we'll have to see. There are still a lot of reforms, so maybe there will be two of us in the class at some point, that would also help a lot. I still have a positive view of the profession.



## Teacher 2 (T2)

1	<b>I: How many years of work experience do you have?</b>
2	<b>R:</b> 28 years, of wich 20 years Cycle 2 and now Cycle 3. Cycle 2 was fun but after my own children had gone through that age I've had enough and I changed to a Cycle 3. And am happy with it.
3	<b>I: May I ask your age?</b>
4	<b>R:</b> 51
5	<b>I: How may hours do you work? Full-time? Part-time?</b>
6	<b>R:</b> I work full-time. Even after my first child, after 4 months, I was back to work. I did not take my "congé parental". After my second child I took the 6 months "congé parental". Otherwise I have always worked full-time. I had a nanny so I could work full-time with no problem. For the children that didn't make much of a difference They didn't really notice that their mother worked, as work hours and school hours for them were the same, for them mom was always there. The nanny took care of them before the school and during lunch breaks so I could finish my work hours before I had to go get my children. We chose a nanny, because daycares and "maison relais" were quite expensive during those times. It wasn't free yet, so a nanny was ideal as it cost less for 2 children. We are still in contact to this day. (Children are now 18 & 20)
7	<b>I: Did you / do you take a lot of work home with you?</b>
8	<b>R:</b> As a young teacher I did a lot. The first 10 years I took home a lot and worked until late in the evenings. Especially prepping the "Nebenfächer". I had so many ideas and it took a lot of time. What is good, is that as you get older you have more other responsibilities (charges) you can take, like I now have "library" and "coordinatrice", so I no longer have those "Nebenfächer" where I lost way too much time on prepping. Then with my children, I tried to keep it more at school and I no longer have the office at home. (i didn't have room for an office anymore anyway) I kept everything at school. However I'm also someone who starts working very early in the morning (6 am). Then and today still. I need that time in the morning, before school, to look over everything one last time, and make sure everything is ready, even if I know before what we're doing that day. I stay after lessons to finish up everything and do the corrections. I do occasionally take some stuff home with me, usually just some worksheets to correct. That's doable while drinking a cup of coffee. I do try to avoid taking home heavy books and stuff. Those I'll correct in the classroom after hours. So I do regularly go home only at 13:00 or 14:00 depending on what there is to do. And in the mornings I'm often already there at 6:00. → So, I'd say I work about 3 hours on average per day outside workhours.
9	<b>I: Was it very stressful having to prepare the lessons, especially at the beginning?</b>
10	<b>R:</b> The first few years it was extremely stressful. Often this was also because new things were introduced. At that time "Mila" was newly introduced. You had work with it for the first years and then things got changed again. During your first years you also look at the "livre des maitres" in more detail and spend a lot of time think about all the different way you can do something. It is sometimes difficult to say, "It's good, I'm going to do it this way". I believe, that if you yourself are convinced of your system, than it will work. However if someone imposes a system on you, then it can be very difficult. I know a work colleague of mine has a completely different system and a different way of working and teaching. Yet he is happy with that system. There was always extreme chaos in his classroom, but his students also learned really well. I could not work that way. He was convinced of his system so it worked very well.

11	<b>I: Was lesson prepping still fun?</b>
12	<b>R:</b> Yes it was still fun, but it just took a lot of time. There wasn't always a lot of time left for other things.
13	<b>I: What do you understand under "well-being"?</b>
14	<b>R:</b> Wellbeing is when I am balanced and don't start screaming at every inconvenience. At school you notice it immediately, when it's a bit much, that you tend to have a shorter fuse. I mainly noticed it when I worked full-time and had the kids, then it did occasionally happen that the kids got yelled at at home. That is when I noticed : " Hmm, yes, it might be a bit much". I also notice it on myself, how I'm doing. I had a period where I was not well because of personal issues. But at the moment I'm doing very well again. I did manage to get it back under control, even though I did have to stay home for 6 months while I was sick.
15	<b>I: What might be some signs that you notice on yourself, that show you, you might not be doing so well or I'm doing very well?</b>
16	<b>R:</b> I notice very well that I'm more stressed when we had 6 or 7 weeks of school, that I'm kinda stuck. Everyone is getting more nervous and we all notice that things aren't really moving forward.
17	<b>I: So it's a bit like a wave, sometimes things are better and sometimes worse.</b>
18	<b>R: Yes,</b> exactly. There are a lot of people that might not quite understand it, but those vacations in between, where you still have to do some work for the following weeks, you do need them to calm down.
19	<b>I: And stress at home and private life, that also has an impact on the school aspects?</b>
20	<b>R:</b> Absolutely, you also have other responsibilities. Like parents, my parents had me quite late and when my children were still small I also had to start looking after my parents; Retirement home, driving them, organizing everything and do administrative tasks that they couldn't do anymore. For most people you only have to do those things when you're in your 50s. When you have school (work) your children and your parents, it gets a lot. You notice that your struggling a bit.
21	<b>I: Did you have support from the people around you?</b>
22	<b>R:</b> Not always, no.
23	<b>R:</b> An other sign is sleep. Sleep is often a problem. That one of the signs that I'm struggling. I don't have good sleep. That's also why I am at work so early. I don't need an alarm, I'm awake at 5:00. By now I got the habit, that because I don't sleep 8 hours at once, I have a little nap in the afternoon. That way 5 or 6 hours at night can be enough. Sleep deprivation is not good. I wake up quickly and often.
24	<b>I: During that difficult time, did you get support from your school and work colleagues, or did you keep it all to yourself?</b>
25	<b>R:</b> They knew what was going on with me. End august I had a deep depression. I spend 3 weeks in my bed, I did not get out of my bed anymore, I didn't look after my children, I did nothing. I didn't even eat; I lost a lot of weight. And then I just gave notice of absence. They did know that I wasn't well. My unwell being was a lot due to private things and school was not the absolute trigger. There were a few people that came to visit me and tried getting me to do things. Those 6 months were really a long way to get back from. However during that time I had a few things. At the beginning I had that complete depression, and after not doing anything for 3 weeks you can't do anything anymore. Going

for a walk seemed impossible, nothing more than a few meters and than you're done. I had a friend, who came every day and looked after me and got me outside. They forced me to do things. Than after 2 months, I had extreme problems with a nervous stomach, where for a moment they thought I had an illness. Then with the help of that friend I should have gone back tp work after the christmas holidays, but then the Corona virus came shortly after. This was probably a big chance for me, because I didn't have to go back to work fulltime from one day to another, not from 0 to 100. I was able to, when schools opened up again, start with small groups of students. The September after I started working full-time again. That was a little over a year after my "breakdown", that I was really ready. Because when the other things don't work, you can not be a teacher. I'm really happy that everything is okay again.

**26 I: How do negative experiences at school affect your mental health?**

**27 R:** A lot. I worked in a small school for a few years, where we were two teachers and that was ideal. We could work a bit like we wanted and we took breaks when we wanted and that was fantastic. Then the change in a big school was quite tragic. There were a lot of issues with the building architecture. Sound issues, light issues, everything was grey and those things did bother me quite a bit. Also the children, all the noise in the hallways due to the acoustics. As well as the acoustics in the classrooms, because it was all glass and concrete. Only after years of complaining, things started to be changed to fix it. Also the parquet flooring that creek at every movement. I am now getting ear-pieces that filters out background noises, because I thought at one moment, that I couldn't hear well. I can actually hear quite good. So I'm hopping these earpieces help, because I do notice, that after a morning in the classroom, it make you extremely tired, especially when the students are a bit more turned up. I hope it helps, also so I can better focus on the students. You have to keep in mind that I also have 21 students, for which the classroom is really not ideal. That bothers me a lot at the moment, not always, but 4 hours of constant noise is not easy. I try to keep the children quiet but there is always that background noise from the floors creaking but also from the projector. I now try to turn it off at any occasion when it's not needed, so the ventilator doesn't run. When it's on you might not be aware of the noise, but you definitely notice when it's off. The students notice it as well and enjoy the quiet consequently they also get more quiet. I also think it is because when you're getting older you get more nervous and you notice the little things and noises more. The building was terrible, they did try to fix things over the years, some things got a little better but it is still not good at all. When the weather is bad the atmosphere in the building is terrible. If you have black furniture in a classroom with children,... it might have been good in the 70s but still I'm not convinced. We were never allowed to paint them sadly. The building is very sad and it makes us sad as well. Since I started working there, whenever I have a free period, I leave the building, get out. It is quite shocking that even at those times, a building like that got build as a school. Even then it was surely known how a building can impact people and teaching. We are now building a new scratchbuilding and I did tell them that they should get some inspiration from the "Logo"-building in Strassen. They have an amazing building, interior and acoustic wise. They even consult communes on how they should do things when designing their scratchbuildings. They say that even they themselves have things that they could have done better to make their building even better, even though it's already amazing. Of course, there are a lot of things you are not allowed to do anymore, like putting up curtains. If I did that they would kill me.

**28** Sometimes you also have work colleagues that are not always easy. We have one colleague that has been making things difficult for us for years. She took others to court and was always calling in sick. Now it got to the point, where she's leaving on her own. She will now only work as substitute teacher. She really brought us a lot of misery. That was not easy.

29 Co-teaching as well. It might sound very nice, but it doesn't always fit a 100%. If you have a colleague that then holds their lessons and you have "Appui" and they have a "total flip" or is nervous and as soon as you try to tell them something, they "freak out", then you also like "okay sorry sorry"... It's nice when it works, but you can also be unlucky. You can't choose your partner. I take a class and the lessons that stay open, someone else can take. They know that they will be coming to me, in my class but I don't get asked if I want them or not.

30 **I: You surely also have some positive experiences. Could you tell me some of them?**

31 **R:** Yes. First of all, of course, after two years you can see what and how much your students have learned and how they developed. It's amazing. I always do activities that are a bit more special out of the classroom, for example, once a year they come for a meal at my home where we get to know each other in a different way. We also go outside for a walk once a week, if the weather is nice. That is when you see the children in a different light. I don't want a friendship with my students, but you can see your students differently and you can adapt your working methods accordingly and you understand them better. As I have stayed in the same school all these years, I have found some great friends that will stay friends even outside of work. Of course, that is not the case with all the work colleagues but there are a lot of them that become really good friends.

32 **I: Could you tell me of some difficult situation that might have affected your personal wellbeing?**

33 **R:** I had one student that ran over the desks and through the classroom and ran away. The help you get is limited and at the end you are still quite left alone with him. That student climbed up high walls and on the roof and on the window sill and acted like he would fall down. In those situations you are left quite alone. An other really difficult situation where I had a boy that had a lot of troubles. He wasn't always clean and well groomed. One day he got picked up by the police at school and placed in a home. The parents brought their child to school in the morning and the police came to get him from the class room - well from the school building. Then they drove to the parents and explained to them, "Your boy won't come home, you have to do this and this to get him back." They got informed on the conditions and some point the boy went back home, but the entire class and me as well were shocked. Another difficult situation I now had twice was that a boy's mother died. That was also difficult. The first time was a boy I had in the first school year (C.2.1). He was very innocent and after his mother's death he often started crying and saying "I miss my mom". It is a difficult situation and you do treat them a little differently. I now had another boy whose mother passed in January. However he is completely different. He is very difficult and restless and it's not getting any better. The dad now recognizes it as well. Apparently, as I only found out recently, he has been that way since preschool. It's not easy and even though it's not right, I treat him differently than the other students, (He is allowed more than others), because he lost his mother in January. Sometimes you do notice that he is missing something. e.g., my colleague is a bit "heavier" than me and he likes to go to her. You can see that he clings to her and gets closer to her than he should, because he misses that "mothering". It really isn't not an easy situation. Even while the parent is sick, it is not easy. That also affects you on a personal level, you take that home with you.

34 **I: How do you cope with such difficult situations?**

35 **R:** I was not so lucky in my marriage that my husband had understanding for that, that I could take it home with me. I would have loved to be able to come home, let everything spill out and him just saying "ok" and then we do something else. He was someone who then said things like: "but I would do this and I would do that..." and that from people that are not in teaching. That is annoying. I did however have a lot of good friends that partly were also in the teaching profession, with whom I talked on the phone a lot or met for a drink. In those moments you can mainly only talk with other people who

are also in the teaching profession. Other people rarely understand. Also because there is always that big cliché of "you don't have much to do, you have so much vacation and such a high salary,..." and people are stuck on that idea. Sometimes I would love to take some of them to school and leave them there and let them see what it really is, especially those that say: " but I would this... and I would that..."

36 **I: So talking about it really helps?**

37 **R:** Yes, at the beginning, I also talked to my mother about all those things, when I lived with them. She was more like: "okay yes, that is not easy. Now do somethings else, now to get your mind of it." She did not try to give advice. You just need someone to listen. At the end of the day, I do what I want to do, and I don't need anyone to tell me what to do. At the end of the day you're going to react the way you react and do what you do. You don't need anyone who tells you what to do.

38 **I: Do you meditate or do mindfulness or such things?**

39 **R:** I tried it a lot but it never worked. I do however now have two big dogs and that is my meditation. When I go walk them for an hour or so, that helps me, that is really good. That's why I have to BIG dogs and a lot of room in my garden. Otherwise I don't do anything specific. By now I can also talk a lot to my daughter, as she seems to be going in the same kind of direction, work wise, and with her I can talk a lot about such things. My son definitely not however.

40 **I: How would you describe your Work-life balance?**

41 **R:** By now it works, because with experience you need less time for preparing and many things come back again and again. At the beginning I worked way to much. Now I'm satisfied with the balance. Also with the children it worked, even though it was not always easy. I had a "screaming child", my son didn't sleep at night until the age of 3,5. So I was up every night up for milk and everything. With home life my partner was very supportive, that was good.

42 **I: Do you feel supported from the "Directioun"?**

43 **R: No,** very little. I did have one situation, at the beginning of my career, still in the little school, where I had someone very supportive. I did something wrong, something I wasn't allowed to do (not sure what it was exactly) and I had an inspector that was very supportive. I did something I shouldn't have and the parents came for me. The inspector sat down with me during that meeting and towards the parents he defended me 100%. It was only after the meeting, that he came to me and told me: "That was not really okay, your actions, next time you don't do that anymore". And that was amazing, in front of the parents he was 100% on my side, he stood 100% behind me, no matter what I had done, and after he gave me feedback, admitting that my actions were not actually ok. Today I can't really say I am really happy, because the "Directioun" seems to only really try to mediate everything in a way that everybody just shuts up and continues working. That is not so great. Then I rather not reach out to them with my difficulties and just try to handle it myself, instead of them sending a bunch of people, that want to look at a 1000 things and than they leave and you don't hear back from them for ages. It all takes way to long. As soon you have difficulties with a student and you report it, until something actually happens, it takes way to long, it's impossible. Other than that I wish that they would support us more, but also in person, by also being on site occasionally, e.g., when you have difficult parents they could be there and even just support you by their presence. But also, for us at the beginning, there was the director or an inspector that also occasionally came on site to have a look. At that time, that was an important person. Today, they take a little look and that's it. They don't say much, don't talk to the students, don't introduce themselves. It's a very swift visit, in and out, in the hopes no one talks to them. It's not great.

- 44 **R:** I also have issue with the fact, that when we get students for the internships to become substitute teachers, the vice principle comes and she takes those students apart with so much criticism, as if they at that point already have some kind of pedagogical knowledge. They get scolded on in the hallways, to the point that they end up just crying. It's really really bad. As a result we are not supported in having people to substitute us. This way nobody is gonna want to come to do the internships. (always in the same "Direction" only the people have changed) (there was never much support except for that one inspector)
- 45 **I: FEN: Did you know about the mindfulness and wellbeing courses and have you done any?**
- 46 **R:** Yes, I know they exist, but I have not done any specifically for stress management. When it got to that point (depression) I had my phycologist with who I talked. At the moment I don't have the need for those courses. Maybe when I feel a need for such courses I would do one but maybe also look for something privately, if it ever gets that bad again.
- 47 **R:** Other courses, like parents and difficult teachers I have done, and they are always interesting and are quite helpful. You can have an exchange with other teachers. That is also the most fun part of those courses, that you can talk to people that may have experienced that same or similar difficulties as you. And you can see that you are not alone.
- 48 **I: Do you have any tips for other or new teachers?**
- 49 **R: Yes.** Manly look after yourself when you start. Be able to differentiate between private and school life. Find a way to sperate it. The exact way how you do it, everyone has to find for themselves. Some prefer working at home others prefer doing it at the school, but it's extremely important.
- 50 **I: Ever had a moment where you thought: " I'm under so much stress with this job, I'm quitting and doing something else.**
- 51 **R: No.** The love for the job is always there. I do have a colleague, a good friend, that stoped teaching and went to work for the "Directioun" and she is very happy there. I could never make that change, teaching children I would miss too much.



## Teacher 3 (T3)

1	<b>I: Work experience?</b>
2	<b>R:</b> 22 years.
3	<b>I: Age?</b>
4	<b>R:</b> 56
5	<b>I: Have you always been at the same school?</b>
6	<b>R:</b> No, I started in Ettelbreck - 4 years-, then Bettembourg - 4 years-, and now Remerchen for 14 years. In all cycles. I started in a C4, then C2 and a lot of C3. I tried IEBS. IEBS was difficult cause the weren't any clear guide lines, as the IEBS was new at that time, plus I had 3 Schools, so I stoped after 3 months and substituted the rest of the school year. Then I was in Contern and also in the C1 were I was for 3 months. At the beginning I was "Titulaire de classe" but I also only did "Nebenfächer" for a while in all cycles so there aren't any subjects I haven't taught in.
7	<b>I: Do you have a favourite subject to teach?</b>
8	<b>R:</b> I love teaching Art classes because that's something I'm good at and because it's something creative.
9	<b>R:</b> I have been teaching German for a while. That's something I got more unvoluntarily. As I changed School a few times, I did not have any "ancienneté" so I was just given it. However, by now I'm very comfortable teaching German, so it's difficult to say if it really is something I like or if I just like it because it's easy now. Art is something I just love so teaching it is also fun, but German is just easy.
10	<b>I: Do you have a preference of cycle?</b>
11	<b>R:</b> C4. I'm not really a "mom" person and in C4 the students are big and you can really talk to them and make deals. Trust is build and you can work different with them.
12	<b>I: How long do you work a day?</b>
13	<b>R:</b> Depends. Monday is the longest day, I work the 6 hours. It's difficult to say, because I'm not always sure when my free hours are as I usually spend them at school/in class doing corrections and prepping and some of my free lessons are between other lessons so don't have a real overview, when my official hours off are. I'm free on Wednesday afternoon, so I have 3 free afternoons after each other, which I really need. and is important for my mental health. I work friday afternoon but I consciously put 2 free hours on friday morning, so I have a longer break, and so friday is not my longest day, cause I know on friday I am more tired and the students are more tired and excited. I try to do all my work and prepping at school because when I'm home I have a different life. I try to do all the prepping and organizing at school during my free lessons, after hours and during lunch breaks so I can keep it all at the school. I often stay at school until 6 on long days. Only thing I do at home is lesson prepping but by now also much less than at the beginning of my career. Now it's such, okay what subjects do you wanna do? What do you need for that? Do you have all the materials for art projects? etc. But those are often also things I do far in advance. - hence the chaos on my desk. At the beginning of my career, when the children where younger, I send late evenings correcting and spend all Sunday prepping. It depends a lot of experience on how much you need to prep. But making sure you have all the supplies and getting all the worksheet coppies will always be something that stays. I try to keep school stuff at home, but also because I am a rather chaotic person and if I take everything home with me the chances that I then forget that stuff there or lose it is rather big. (ADHD)

I also think psychologically it can be very good if you can separate those things and keep school at school.

14 **R:** Keeping school at school doesn't mean that I completely separate it. The parents have my phone number so if there are problems I of course am available to do, I am still open and I suggest meetings or say let's talk on the phone tonight. There is still openness. I did also learn that work has to have an end at some point and that tomorrow is a new day and you can do things the next day.

15 **I/R → how to balance work depends on many factors like who you are as a person, perfectionism, confidence,...**

16 **R:** If one of the parents would ask me, I would explain to them that with me, test will not be handed back to the students within one day. It takes time, I want to look at them closely. I think that is way of working, of setting my boundaries is an evolution; At the beginning you tend to go into the direction of how others work. Therefore, there is a lot of risk for comparing yourself to others and that can be very dangerous, especially if you function differently.

17 In Luxemburg we tend to work a lot in teams and there it depends a lot of in what team you are, and how that team works and to what point you need to comply to the rules from outside and from that team. This can bring a lot of pressure. That was one reason I had to leave the C4 team, because that was the only realistic solution for me, to say "you guys are at a level and in a direction that I am not, I respect that, but that is not me, for me that is too much so I have to change cycle". But there are a lot of factors, and there are a lot of things to consider, like "will I even get a spot here? Do I want to stay here? In what Cycle would I want to go?..." At the end you have to ask yourself: "What makes me the least unhappy?" It's not always easy to be honest with yourself. I was extremely happy in a C4, so it was extremely difficult for me, when I had to leave. But I realized that I can never keep up with that team and the pressure. You really have to be honest with yourself and be realistic.

18 **I: What is well-being for you?**

19 **R:** For me it's a lot about freedom. Yes, a structure of course, but also that I have some freedom inside that structure that is put in place by the school and by my coworkers and the team. To be able to express myself in my way and go the route that I feel like is the right way. Wellbeing is a state, where I can feel comfortable. But there is also the wellbeing that younger teachers might not quite understand, because they have a lot of energy, and that is the physical wellbeing. The physical is starting to play a much bigger role for me at my age. Fact is, that exhaustion is getting more of a subject. The susceptibility to stress is bigger and sounds are having more impact on me. I'm currently in a phase where I'm split in two: I'm happy and relieved that there are only 5 years left until my pension. On the other hand, I am so happy when I am at school and that I am able to work with the students and I'm loving it. But then, the last hours of the day come and I'm extremely exhausted and am fighting to get through it. To do that every day is exhausting. Getting through it is really a question of having strength and hoping that there are enough moments where I can recharge. This is linked with my wellbeing. When you are in your class, you are supposed to have control over the class and you have to lead it all. You can only feel well, when you can put that in place, when you feel like you can do that and have that needed structure in your class. That's how you yourself can successfully survive it, and then it's not even said that it was an amazing lesson. I don't need to feel that it was a perfect lesson. For me wellbeing is having the feeling it's all running well/ok, there hasn't been a situation that I could not control. AND the price, that I had to pay for it was not too high. And then there are those days or weeks where I have to "crawl" home and I struggle to come to me again. Those are the days where I'm like "Wow, the price was really high! Yes, nobody was killed, but I am "dead"". Therefore "wellbeing" is difficult to explain. But it's the feeling to be able to give something to the students, to interact with them and to feel like that what I am doing makes sense. That doesn't



mean that all my students have perfect grades. It's feeling like your giving them something useful, something that they can use and that you give them the feeling that they can evolve and have worth and are capable of doing things. That is the most important part for me.

**20 I: How would you rate your current well-being?**

**21 R:** I'm already nervous for school that starts again in 3 days, after 2 weeks of vacation. And I haven't even unpacked my bag from before and I feel like I need another week of vacation to start prepping for school. In this job, that is extremely stressfully, to have that feeling, "On Monday you have to function again". Actually, it's even worse when you had a vacation because then you let loos a little because you had other things you did. At school you have to be in a "corset" where you play a role, sometimes that is easy and sometimes it can be very exhausting. It's that memory of it being exhausting, that tells you "Oh no, now the stress starts again" even though it actually isn't all stress. But it does happen and I know I'm not alone with that. Maybe it is also linked to my age. It's a shame that you kind of forget about all the good things, but it's a reality. I often have the feeling, that I don't have a life during school weeks. That feeling I have a lot more then before. I'm just missing that strengths. It's also getting better now it's starting to stay light longer outside and there is more sun. That also has an effect. However as you get older you just need more strengths, to do anything. I am really actively doing something for it. I have set appointments. I do yoga, I sing in a choir, ect. Some may think " Well, then you have even less time..." but it's the opposit. Those are the things that make it possible for me to function well. Gatting your energy out with sport or finding your peace with yoga or during singing you have to focus extremely and that is also a relaxation technique. Those things help you be able to build up that stability and that motivation. In education you always have to have a positive approach, no matter how much you may be stressed. If you can't have a positif approach with children, it is very difficult. The children can feel when a teacher is tired or stressed, that's why we have those vacations, so we can calm our nerves down again and we can approach them again in a positif way. That is very very important. Otherwise there is more suffering and you won't make it.

**22 R:** I feel like it would be great if I had some more time now, where I could take out the school things. I feel like that is linked to my age. Because I need a lot of time to regenerate, I'm able to do less and less at home. And during the weekend there is also not enough times to do all those things, so I feel like I'm running from vacation to vacation. And then that vacation also to short. It is the feeling that I can never get it done. Over a long time, that becomes a very difficult feeling, felling like you can never get it done. That's when that feeling of " yay, in 5 years pension" comes and is good, because you think "Maybe then you can get it done.", because you can rearrange your priorities. While you work, your priorities are quite fixed by your work. ( as of next year, I want to work only 90%)

**23 R:** I am always stressed, but that is also because of my ADHD, which also drives me on. Therefor, the sport and yoga are also a way of helping my ADHD, in addition to Ritalin. Ritalin is also not a miracle cure. I do have a feeling, that I do have to take a bunch of steps to be capable to function. I am aware of that and of the fact, that before, 5ish years ago, I didn't have that feeling. So again, that is also linked to age and the increased sensitivity.

**24 R:** It makes a difference if you have 22 students with a few ADHD students or a average class of 15 or less that are rather easy. It's a difference because you need less strengths to organise it all. You have less differentiation to do and it's easier to keep an overview of everyone. The most difficult thing is, when you have students that have difficulties and become disruptive and you have to keep a good structure in the classroom with these disruptions. I'm now trying to focus more on the other students, in the sens of you tell them "now it's enough, so you can go in the other room so you don't bother the others." You take them out of the equation so you and the other students can find peace again.

- 25 **R:** It's also important how good you can separate yourself, psychologically, from the students and how empathetic are you. I am very empathetic and then the borders on both sides are blurred. Then you feel what the students feel, you feel their struggles and their mood and you feel with them. The effectiveness of my Ritalin also declines over the day at the same time the Ritalin from the student also declines. So we're all a bit more nervous and you feel everything more intense.
- 26 **R:** I also try to take a nap during the day, especially when I have school in the afternoon. Those 3 free afternoons are good for a breather, but my dream would be to not work afternoons at all. Then it would be much easier to get through the week. The afternoons are the most difficult for everyone especially for ADHD people and students.
- 27 **R:** "Hauptfächer" are easier to handle, because there is a clear structure. You can just write something down and the students do their work. Of course, an art lesson could also be very structured but that is no fun. I think the students also need to learn somewhere, how to regulate themselves. The most students can do that, but there are always some, that can't do that, that don't know what to do with themselves, when there are no clear instructions.
- 28 **R:** The difficult part is the interaction with the students, especially those that don't function. That is the hardest part, not the work itself. The constant chaos prevention as well, is extremely exhausting, and to make sure that the students are not mean to each other and that they don't get too loud. That they don't tear down the classroom. Especially during "Nebenfächer" because they work together more often and they still have to learn, what an expectable noise level is. The subjects themselves are not really the problem, you will always have subjects you like and other you like less, but "Hauptfächer" are easier to teach. That's why you do them in the mornings. That is also when we were usually the two of us in the classroom. The "Nebenfächer" are usually in the afternoon, which is also when you're alone, which is difficult.
- 29 **I:** What are some positive things about your work?
- 30 **R:** When I feel that I am helping certain children and I'm helping them to develop and evolve. That is why I wanted to do IEBS. In C4 we worked in groups and I had the weaker group. I worked with them all year and that was amazing to show them that they are capable of things, so they come out of their own negative self-perception, and work on their level. That's when you are like: "Wow, you got it, wow you did that!". That success doesn't always come from the typical reading, calculating and writing exercises, but can also come through other things. That is one of the reasons I love C4. In a C3 you have that a little less, I find that quite sad.
- 31 **R:** You have to non-stop take decisions. There are no clear boundaries. When you're home you just want quiet.
- 32 **R:** I feel like I can't do it any more at home. I barely cook anymore at home. There is no real balance between work and homelife, in the sense, that I do everything to survive. That means we order food. My husband knows that and he supports me and we do talk about it that in a few years we both take pension. I can honestly say that my life is organized in a way just to survive, to manage to get the school stuff done. I used to cook in the afternoons but I just can't do it anymore. I stay at the school till 13:00 and then I get my daughter from school. I used to cook at 12:00, but now I don't have the energy for it anymore. I also never do anything spontaneous during the week. My week is already quite structured with work and sport and yoga and then grocery shopping, but basically my entire life is organized around the question of "How do I use and manage my energy?" And that is exhausting. Therefore, during vacation it's like a breather when I finally I can sleep in and recharge.
- 33 **R:** When I have bad days at school, I can't sleep at night. I might not at all be thinking about school but I'm so frustrated or agitated that I can't sleep. Yes, I made it through the day but the price was to

high, than I'm innerly not good, and I can't really say why. When I can't sleep, the next day i am even worse and then the entier week becomes even more of a battle. Also knowing that ,makes me nervous; Knowing, that that search of balance starts again on monday. When I was younger that wasn't that bad, I had enough energy.

34 **R:** I try not to get frustrated, which isn't easy. I can't talk to anyone about it all. My work colleague works completely differently and she also has a completely differently life and work life. She is only there in the mornings, when the students are calm. In the school as well, there is no space to have such conversations. I did have a conversation once with an IEBS that was really helpful, where I let my emotions out. I wish there was a place or a person you could go to to talk, where you don't have to enrol in some cours and wait and drive all the way to the city. Because when you are struggling you need someone sooner, even if it were over teams (online). I wish that was something that was available; A place where you can go, outside of school to let out your emotions, cry and just let it all out. That helps.

35 **R:** That is also that bothers me in society. There are so many things that are not functioning, and then we get the children and it's like " good luck, you are on your own". I understand that it is not one persons fault. However, that's also where that longing for my pension comes from. To get rid of that feeling of " You have to make it, no matter what comes your way". It is something very deep. It is not just a job, where you go to the office, and you get mad at a colleague, because they didn't bring you coffee. There is so much more to it. It's also not that there is so much pressure to do everything perfect. I just want to survive.

36 **R:** I need a person or a place, where I can go to let everything out without judgment. Let my emotions out. Because you don't have that, I feel like I need those vacations even more, because that's the time that helps you ground yourself again and let go of some stuff. That's way I don't understand those who work and prep all vacation long. That is not what is import to me for teaching. For me it's more the personal things that happen, the interpersonal things.However, that is also what is exhausting.

37 **I: Do you have support from family?**

38 **R:** Yes, support in a sens that nobody expects anything from me. Yes there is always something to do (laundry/ garden) but we are used to it (the chaos). That is the price and it's not that important. We have other priorities, (especially with a sick daughter).

39 **R:** I'm frustrated that (Name)'s parents don't really see or recognise the needs of their child or don't do anything about it. You get the feeling that, if only the parents did something, it would all be easier for the child and school. The entier load falls on the school and the teachers.

40 **R:** The feeling that socially, here you have to make it work. At the end you are all alone and that is a bad feeling, like you have to do it alone. Yes, you can go to the "Direktioun" but they only send you a link to a course, where I have to enrol, if I want to improve myself and my life. But I already did everything to optimize myself and my life, school and private, all for school. The fact that it is the way it is, is something I try not to think about. Additionally, knowing that it's not going to get better, that I won't have more energy next year, that the exact opposit will happen, I will have less and less energy, worries me.

41 **R:** You have a completely different perspective for you than when you start your career. At the beginning you still have so much to learn, it's new, and you have to find yourself. My daughter is now grown, so there is nobody at home depending on me.

42 **I: "Direktioun"- what is missing?**

- 43 **R:** I wish there was a person at the school, who is there at a certain time, e.g. 11:00, so that when you have children that really don't function in the classroom anymore, you can send them to them and they can e.g. go to the gym, do something active with them. That could be a super solution. Ok, you have to look what happens to the other children. They of course also want to go to the gym instead of sitting in a classroom. So there are other problems that arise. I wish there would also be more focus on the "Nebenfächer" and they realise that those lessons are also extremely difficult. During those lessons you are alone, they are usually at the end of the day and these lessons have much less structure. Those lessons are difficult for the children and teachers. You should have some kind of support during these lessons, e.g. Being two teachers or put in place a different structure where children can "choose" what kind of activity, sport, art,... they want to do that day (school basis). This way you can take some of the load of those situations. What I do, is go outside with the children during the last 30 minutes of the afternoon, let them play outside.
- 44 **R:** The other "Hauptfächer", I find those normal and doable; You prep lessons, you do them and you correct them e.g. Certainly, you make mistakes, but that's part of it all. Then you just try it again the next day or year and you do it a little different. That is not the difficult part of the job. Mistakes are nothing dramatic, you can't do anything wrong. Only in mathematics you can "f`k something up" if you explain something completely wrong. But even then, students have a understanding for it. If you explain that you made a mistake, you can also fix that.
- 45 **R:** It is also the thousand other things and people that come from outside into the classroom, that make it different and difficult. Years ago, you had your class and you were with them all day. If you had a good day in french you could do french all morning and everyone was in a flow. Nowadays, there is a fragmentation of the time and everyone has to work according to a schedule and according to each other. It's not all bad, I understand the need, but it also clearly has some difficulties. It is also the same thing in the Maison Relais and at home; Everything is segmented in small time segments without quiet.
- 46 **R:** I think one of the goals of schools should be trying to get rid of that "quick quick" feeling.
- 47 **R:** Would I do the job again in my next life? Honestly, I don't know. I had a office job and I was bored out of my mind, I didn't see meaning in my work, it didn't matter if I did it or someone else did it. I would not recommend teaching to my children. I think the people that get into education, need to stand on both feet and they way I am (ADHD) is not really ideal for the job. But you never know. Still, a social job is very fulfilling job. I would definitely do a social job again, something where I can make a real change, where it matters if it's me doing the job or someone else. It's just beautiful, when you see how children recognise their worth, when you can help them see their worth. That you can really see that in a C4. (story: → fit vir de Lycee → the "weak" students where the stars.) You get that feeling of "Yes, I did everything right." Usually you have the "strong" confident students that excel but in this case it was the other way around. That is also something I tend to do: I try to slow down/ brake the "strong" students. In a different life, I might also like to be a psychologist, but I think teaching is more satisfying. Probably a psychologist in a school.
- 48 **I: In difficult moments, when the students are turned up, do have specific techniques you put in place to calm yourself down?**
- 49 **R:** Yoga, breathing techniques, and try not to get louder. I notice it on myself, that tension is building up and that I need to take a deep breath and calm myself down. However, I also need to be in a good mental state myself, to be able to catch them, the students, in their chaos and calm them all down again. When I am not well, that is almost impossible. Then I feel like the chaos is just getting worse and worse. Usually it's enough to take one student out of the room to quiet everything down. However, I need to be strong to do that. Sometimes surviving is all you can do. You just have to expect that

there is a little chaos as long as they are not tearing anything down, we'll get through it. And that's when I say: "Let's just go outside for the last 30 minutes". Blackmail is also something that works very well! The most important thing is that I don't start yelling and calm myself down and that I don't expect that everything has to be perfect. Sometimes the only solution is to unload yourself by taking someone out of the classroom. I can imagine that some people might get frustrated, because you never see the success of your work. If the students learned something, you see it later but not in the moment. That is not so important to me, I am not a knowledge transmitter, I am a development assistant and a companion /tutor.

**50 I: Have taken part in any courses on mental well being or mindfulness?**

**51 R:** Yes I take part in one on mindfulness. It is a bit like yoga and it's a little connected with art. It's very fun. However, I can't say it's a "perfect" help. If you are entirely new to mindfulness and all, the course is a great beginning, but most of the people that take part in those classes are already on the mindfulness route, otherwise you wouldn't sign up. I find it great that they offer those classes. I would recommend those classes, I think that you should at least try the aids that are offered. You shouldn't have the mindset of "nothing can help me anyway", you should at least be able to listen to advice others can give you and try them to see if it works for you. You should stay open to it, but also know there is no magical solution. Especially since it's free, there is no reason not to try them. I'm someone who gets emotional very quickly, when talking about certain things and after a little cry I'm better. I am someone who actively participates in the courses and talks, but I have difficulties sharing everything with people I don't know. Yes, you talk about problems and difficulties during those courses, but you don't talk about personal weaknesses. I have also done classes on difficult students and parents etc. I find that the classes have become much better over the years. I can only advise others to try them and to have an open mind for them. You can share experiences hear about how others are coping with situations, but at the end of the day you have to find your own way, and find what works for you. Especially at the beginning of your career, all those things are still new, and it (the classes) can open your eyes to certain things. They can be very helpful at that point. I think at the end of the day, most teachers are also just trying to survive in their own way.

**52** In Luxemburg, teaching is a job that is very well paid, which is a curse and a blessing at the same time. You think twice about if you stop working, especially if you have debt or you have children that study or bought a house etc. The financial security you have in the job and the vacations and everything is great. It makes you wonder about how entitled I am to complain or how justifiable is it for me to complain about my job. At the end of the day, everyone has the right to complain and to have emotions.

**53** Teaching is a job that gives you a lot of room to put your own priorities in place, which is something that you don't have in a lot of other jobs. You have time for you at home because of all the free time, which is also great. Of course, at the beginning you still have to prep a lot, but after a few years everything is on a roll, because of experience and you have less prepping to do. Hence, you have much more free time even during school weeks.

**54 I: How does your work environment affect your mental health?**

**55 R:** At the end of the day there is not much time to really notice your work environment, because I'm always with the students. I do believe that the school building can have an important impact on wellbeing. A concrete box as building, like what we have, might not be the best thing. It is not a place, where you feel homey. As well as a building where you hear a lot of noises - also not great. Organisation between classes can be a sin and a blessing. On one side I can bring more stress because you have to adapt to your colleagues, you have to make agreements and plans together, have meetings etc., which takes a lot of energy. But the interest for this is currently not there in my

school building, maybe also because one might think it can be more exhausting, as you also then have students that you might not know very well. We did it when I was in C4 and it worked very well and was fun. There was variation and you meet new students and also for the students it was more enriching. There are a lot of possibilities but it depends on the people you work with and the guidelines. Maybe the "Direktioun" could tell you, you have to work together, in teams, but also then it depends on the people you work with.

56 **I: Do you have any tips for other teachers or new teachers?**

57 **R:** Have courage. Take the freedom you can get, put your own criteria and find your purpose and don't compare yourself with others! Not everyone has the same priorities. There are so many different things and ways of working that can be great. Take advantage to learn new things, to try out new things, but also leave things on the side. Find your own way, as far as possible, in the system you are in. Because the system is also a protection. However, within that structure, you have freedoms and you need to find your own way. Your students are your priority. You should take the parents as a team and not as your enemy. You are a team with the parents to help the child, so don't be afraid of parent-work. Look after yourself and ask yourself what you need to stay happy. Work out, have a hobby, do something that you need to stay balanced. Don't just work all the time at home. Don't expect a reward. And very important: Communication with others.

58 **I: Are there any other things you would like to share with me?**

59 **R:** My ADHD is very important and has an impact on my life, so I have a special story. So I might have told a lot of negative things, but at the end of the day the students give you so much, and it's so beautiful. The students see you more than their own parents, so they need you as a reference person as "caregiver". "Knowledge transmitter" is only a very small part of the job. Be aware that you have a very big impact on them with everything you do. Every child, no matter who they are, deserves to be validated and appreciated.

60 **I: Would you recommend new students who are studying to become teachers, and who are neurodivergent or very emotional, to think twice about their job choice or not?**

61 **R:** I'd say just try it. It really depends on the person. It's important that you have a realistic picture of the job. I think that's why they send the students in internships so much, so have a realistic image and can see for themselves if it works for them or not.

62 What is also fun, is that you get a new class with new students every two years, there is change and you can include your own values. There is a lot of freedom to bring different things in to your classroom. You'll know: In two years I have a new chance to try new things or do things new.

63 **INFORMATION ADDED AFTER INTERVIEW:** The administrative duties, be it Scolaria, EBS or organising a field trip, is also very stressful.



## Teacher 4 (T4)

1	<b>I: How much work experience do you have?</b>
2	<b>R:</b> 28 years
3	<b>I: Age?</b>
4	<b>R:</b> 53
5	<b>I: In what cycles have you worked?</b>
6	<b>R:</b> I have never worked in a C1 except during the internship to substitute. Otherwise have I have worked in C2, C3 and C4. The last few years, I worked in C4 and the last 2 years I've been a "Appui" & "Surnummeraire" for the "Nebenfächer" in C2, C3 and C4
7	<b>I: Do you have a favourite cycle?</b>
8	<b>R:</b> Lately is has been C4, because you can do more with them and do other subjects and talk differently with them. In a C2 you are more like parent, it's very cute but different. I did have a C2 for 6 years, but that's a few more years a go now.
9	<b>I: How many work hours do you have in a week?</b>
10	<b>R:</b> At the moment I have 19 hours a week. However I do a lot of overtime, because I'm currently also president of the school committee. So technically I should have even less hours, about 12 or 13, which is very little so I do some overtime.
11	<b>I: Do you work a lot at home?</b>
12	<b>R:</b> That depends. Now as "Surnummerair" I prep my lessons in sequences of 3 or 4 Weeks. I have 9 hours "surnummmeraire", - Vieso in C 2.1, C3.1 and C4.1 and music, Art and lux in C4.2. For "Appui" I have a group in C4.1, in german, who are at a very low level. There I have to prepare my lessons myself, but it also regularly happens, that their teacher tells me a few things we I should repeat with them. Then there is barely any preparation. The amount really depends on the week, but you can't compare it to if you are "Titulaire", where you have to prepare all the subjects. In addition in my current position, there are barely and corrections to do or "Bilans".
13	<b>I: What is well-being for you?</b>
14	<b>R:</b> Wellbeing is when you you as a person are well. That you are happy and satisfied. That you are not overloaded or stressed, have no mental stress or work stress. It's that you feel good and not that, after your work or in your free time, you need a lot of time to recuperate.
15	<b>I: What are some signs or indicators by which you can determine your current state of wellbeing?</b>
16	<b>R:</b> I'd say I am quite stress-resistant, I'm not the person that is immediatly at 100, but I do notice, there are moments where I'm like " okay now your going on a long bike ride, with music for a few hours, where you can shut off for a moment". During the vacations, your happy when you can get away for a little. You notice when you have a lot of work at school or when the students are a little more turned up than usual, that you have more issues to keep the calm in the classroom. That's when I am happy, when I get do something to turn off, or just go out for a nice meal or a spend a night with friends. To let go emotionally.

17 **I: Do you notice a difference in how you teach, when you are a bit more stressed?**

18 **R:** Yes, you notice yourself that you are more nervous, that you reach your limits quicker. You have less tolerance vis-a-vis your students or also colleagues. That's when you do notice that it is time to calm down a little and do something for yourself again.

19 **I: Is it mainly school stress or also home stress that gets you worked up?**

20 **R:** Both. I know people that can separate it completely and say: "When I am at school I'm here and home is home. At home there is no more school stuff." But I can't separate it like that. When I come home, I talk about things or I talk with my daughter or with friends that are also in education. I find it impressive if you can separate work and your private life like that, no matter the job. I think that it has become more difficult to separate those two with the smartphones. I know people who turn their emails off on Friday for the entire weekend. That's not me. If someone sends me an email on Saturday, they will receive a response. I think that is part of my job, and respectful towards the other, but you can never fully turn off like that. There are moments where my wife says, "Put the phone away!" I find it weird that when you say "As of Friday at 16:00 you can't reach me anymore until Monday 8:00", especially with the "dimmi"- app. Of course, there are parents that send messages late at night. Then you risk getting an unpleasant message in the evening by which you get a little wound up for the rest of the night. If you looked at your messages or emails the next day, you could avoid a little more stress. Therefore, by being constantly available we are creating more stress for ourselves, than what we had years earlier when you still had to turn on the entire computer just to look at your emails. Now, you have your phone with you at all times that goes off for every email. That is a big difference to how it was before. That does bring some extra stress. You even notice it during the breaks at school. Since we don't have a real break-room in our school, everyone is usually outside. When someone then gets a message or an email that is not so positive, that person is immediately more annoyed. Before, this was not something that would happen. You would check your emails at home, and then you'd be annoyed at home but you didn't have that during work. It does still have its advantages that you have that technology. During the vacation I am also pretty much always contactable. It is a bit of a give and take, because I'm also happy, when I want to contact a colleague or a parent and they answer me quickly and I don't have to wait a week or so. At the other side you also put more stress on yourself because the borders between work and personal life are a bit blurred and fluid.

21 **I: What are some of the biggest challenges during work?**

22 **R:** Discipline in the class (when you are Titulaire). Trying to get everyone engaged and making sure that they all feel comfortable in your classes. I find it very important, that they feel comfortable at school, and that you are not like the devil at school with their rules. The students shouldn't come and be scared. Also, that they do respect you as a teacher. Of course the whole parent work can also be challenging. You always have those students and teachers where everything goes well. However it's always the difficult ones, be it because school problems or behaviour problems or something, that complain and ask for meetings, which cost some nerves. Another challenge is that when you have a class, the entire programme is too much. I think they (MEN) should shorten it and restructure it. The programme is getting bigger and bigger and more subjects are being added, yet you have less and less time. You notice this, because the students today, if you compare them to how it was 25 years ago, they are capable of less. They are not more stupid, but they have more distractions that you didn't have 25 years ago. As the programme is more filled, you don't actually have much time to keep repeating things. You notice, that for the good students, that still works and you notice who receives help at home. However, for those who have difficulties or who don't have anyone who can help them at home, they struggle and are hanging behind, because you don't have time to revise and repeat difficulties with them. That is something that burdens me the most. You know you have students, that



need that extra repetition, but you simply don't have the time for it, because you have that pressure of the programme.

23 That is something that has really been bothering me the last few years. You notice in a C4.2 with the "épreuves". You also noticed it with the students; In C4.1 they were still quite relaxed, we still have a lot of time. Then in september, beginning of C4.2, the stress slowly climbs and around the christmas holidays you notice that the students really change. They are now under a lot of pressure. Not just from themselves but also pressure from at home and between the students. They to start talking about where they might be going and start speculating and judging oneanother, event hough there has not been any orientation yet. As teacher, you also know that you need to get through the program you have to do certain things and because of the big changes, you notice that they are more wound up. You end up slowing down at some moment, because the students are not concentrated. They are nervous and wound up and you need more time to get the calm back in the room.

24 **I: Do you take those worries home with you?**

25 **R:** Yes, but that might also be because my daughter also works in education. During the time when she was still living at home, you automatically talk about school and work. Now with my wife, less. However she now also works in a similar area - children with handicaps - which is still different, but I can still talk to her. You do take school worries home with you. When you go out or have drink with friends that are also in education, you do talk about those things. So in that way as well, you do take those things with you.

26 **I: Do you have support, from the people at home, if you need to talk about things?**

27 **R:** Yes. You take worries with you, in a way that you also try to think about how you can make the situations better, so the children are feeling better and that I am doing better. You are also not happy, when you leave work after 4 hours, and know you actually only got the work of 1,5 hours done. You are not happy, and you think about how you could have done things better or where the problem that it all took so long was. You ask yourself what you did wrong and how you could do things better the next time so things go more smoothly.

28 **I: Do you have support at the school, from colleagues?**

29 **R:** Yes. We are in a small school. We have those "Cycle-Versammlungen" but since we are always together during the breaks, we have a constant exchange. If you notice something is not going so well, or you are not doing well, you have the support. When you have a parent-teacher meeting, that is more difficult, we also assure that we go there together - take one of the "Surnummerairen" or "Appui- person" with you. I, as President, also regularly join meetings, to support my colleagues. I too am happy when I have that support, e.g., this year we had a more delicat meeting and we ended up going there as 5 teachers. You are definitely more relaxed, when you go into such a meeting with support, than if you were all alone

30 **I: Do you feel supported by the "Direktioun"?**

31 **R:** Yes, our "Direktioun" supports us. ("*Story*") I am happy that they supported me and weren't like: "look that you figure it out". Until now I always made sure, that whenever there was a difficult situation, I inform the "Direktioun" ("*story*") so they are also informed in case things develope. That way you immediatly have a different support then if you were alone. As a teacher, you do need to make sure you always stay respectful, no matter how bad the parents are or how insulting they are, you have to stay respectful. There are some parents that get very extreme.

32 **I: What are some good moments of the job?**

- 33 **R:** When you notice that in a class you have good climate; When the students respect each other and support each other. Those are the human values you also try to implement and teach the students, therefore it's always nice when you notice that these values are present. Also, when you have weaker students and you notice that they are developing and are making progress, and get better grades and are happier, those are the moments where you as teacher are also happy. When you see that even after their school career they still make progress, that shows you that you were able to give them something they could take with them on their way, to help them in their lives. The little ones, C2, these students are still more open, they tend to share a lot, that they come tell you things and have a lot of trust in you. I had one situation, where a child told me about a difficult situation at home, even before telling their mother. That shows you that that relationship of trust between you and the students isn't that bad and that you have given the children a sign that they can trust you and come to you with their problems and that you will help them. I think that is very important. By now, I think that the teaching part is almost more at the second place and that the more social and human aspects of the job are much more important. There are a lot of children that don't spend much time at home; Parents work the entire day, and they spend their days in the Maison Relais. These students have much more stress and wound up themselves and then they have to come to your class and concentrate but also feel comfortable there. For these children also at home, except for on weekends, there isn't much human contact. They come home in the evening, they eat something, often watch a little tv or play on the iPad and then they go to bed. So they actually spend more time with you, than at home.
- 34 **I: Are you okay with that change, that the interpersonal part has moved to the foreground and teaching plays a less important role?**
- 35 **R:** Yes. I have always found that the social part of the job is very important. This mindset probably also has something to do with my upbringing and I spend a lot of time in the scouts, where those values are already a very important part of you. → everyone has their value and everyone has their own strengths and weaknesses. Those are the same values you should also teach at school and should be present in your classroom. I find it terrible, when you hear other teachers say, "The best student, they are great. The rest..., well it is what it is. They are too slow, they just can't do it, ect. " I think your job is mainly that you support the weak, that they make progress. A super good student, they will also succeed, without so much of your support, but the weak students really need you.
- 36 **I: Does your work environment effect your wellbeing?**
- 37 **R:** Yes, it has an effect. Work-colleagues: When there are things that you don't agree on or you have disagreements. There are always those moments, where you have those bad interactions, and then you don't feel so well either. You do try that everyone gets along with each other, but that is not always the case. In everyday work-life or also during meetings, where you discuss certain things, depending on the character of the people and their way of discussing, it can be more intense. Therefore yes, to stress from other people.
- 38 The building and resources are good. For everyday life, the resources are enough. The only thing that can sometimes bring a little "stress" is if the question of "Does the wifi work or not?". We have some colour in our building. The building is now 25 years old, so it's not like the very modern buildings. Those buildings can be very fun, because they have more technical possibilities. Our building is quite okay, no reason to complain. We are allowed to put things on the walls and everything; There are buildings where that is not allowed and then the room looks like a hospital.
- 39 **I: Do you think your salary has an influence on your wellbeing?**

40 **R:** I think, when you do the job just for the salary and the vacations, you reach your limits very quickly. The image, that other people have of teachers, is often that they have a lot of vacations, a lot of free time and they get payed a lot. That isn't wrong. However, you do notice, that since you have the "Quereinsteiger", that you have people who come from a different work environment, and then say, "Wow, it's different than what I imagined." Primary school always looks quite easy like. You often hear people say: "I got my primary and high school education, than teaching the little children can't be that difficult." Often people can't imagine, that you can also have children in a C1 or C2 that can drive you crazy. They say " Surely you can teach these little kids a few calculations and some German?" In that sens, all in all, there should be something done about the image of the job.

41 **I: Does it make you mad, when you hear what wrong ideas others have of your job?**

42 **R:** No. I often tell people that, if it's so easy they could have done it too and that they are welcome to come by and watch. It's clear that from the outside it looks all great, with all the free afternoons and vacations and the good money. Especially during the pangamic. We never had money worries or had to be scared to loose our job. That also brings more envy from other. It's not like I loose my temper when people call us lazy. It is the way it is. It has no effect on me.

43 **I: How would you evaluate your current state of wellbeing?**

44 **R:** Today my wellbeing is good. I just came back from vacation. You do notice, at the end of the semester, more during the winter, around christmas, that you are always happy to have a vacation. It's been a long semester and it's dark outside, it makes you tired. Now it's already getting better. Around Easter as well, this year I was happy to have a vacation, because I notice that this year, mainly in C4 "Surnummeraire"class, things are not going as I had imagined. The students really don't want to do what I want to do, but also don't have realistic alternatives to what they might like to do. Otherwise, I'm quite okay. "Postenwahl" is always a bit of a stress moment, because you have to see what you get next year, especially if you don't have a high "anncienité", wich is my case as I changed there only 9 years ago. That is a time, when you are always a little nervous of what is left for you. As a teacher, you always get a position and work and you get your salary. You have job security, something others don't have. However, you always would like a position that you also like, so you have fun at your job.

45 **I: Do you think if you didn't have all the vacations, would you still be able to handle the job?**

46 **R:** I think, yes, probably. I think you might have to organise yourself differently. At the moment you know that in so many weeks you have a vacation again. You can look forward to be able to recuperate. I think if you didn't have the fix vacations, and you had to organize our vacations like in different work areas, that you probably should try to reorganize your days in a way that at the end of the week you are not snuggling so much. You have to do more to keep the semina and wellbeing up. Vacations are clearly something that you need.

47 **I: Do you have any strategies to keep your wellbeing up?**

48 **R:** Not much. I workout. I bike and go to the gym, where I can get my energy out. I occasionally go have a drink or go out for dinner with friends. I don't do yoga or meditate, that isn't my thing. I don't have that inner peace. I notice that when sometimes on holidays you take part in some of those courses, that are offered at the hotel. Yoga and meditation doesn't work for me as I dont find that peace. You do notice that in the last few years there are a lot more of such things, courses, that are being offered by the ministry, but also overall. Everywhere you look you can find yoga or wellness things.

49	I have one work colleague that, a few years ago, took leave without pay and they now live in Costa Rica. They now only do such things with wellbeing and yoga etc. This after 10-12 years of teachers.
50	<b>I: Would you say you have a good work-life balance?</b>
51	<b>R:</b> Yes, I think I can't complain. I do try to superate it more or turn my phone of more, when I notice that I am more stressed and am closer to my limits. I do try to do something when I need it. What I belive is that you need to talk, that when you things aren't going well, you need to interact with your colleagues. When things aren't going so well or you have problems, you need to talk to someone or get help and don't wait until it's to late or you are can't do it anymore.
52	<b>I: Have you taken part in lfen courses on wellbeing or mindfulness?</b>
53	<b>R:</b> I did. 3 or 2 years I did a course named "Achtsamkeit - Stress regulieren und vermeiden". It was very interesting, but there were things like meditation, where you need to be able to really calm down. That course was at the end of the semester and at that time that worked quite well, but usually that isn't my thing. But I know there have been a lot of these in the last few years. I would recommand doing such a course. The expectations and requirements have become higher in the entier educational sector: What happens at school, with the children, as well as the school program and the parents and the administrative part. Those are also all things that are part of the job. Therefor, it's good that you have these possibilities, that there is that offer. Plus,it's free and there are a lot of fun things that, if you did it privately, could cost quite a bit, so I find it good you can take advantage of that offer. I have done courses on difficult students or parents as well. Those were informative. (story)
54	There are a lot of things that you can try in your class. That you can also try with your students, e.g., to build trust.
55	<b>I: Do you have a story you would be comfortable to share with me?</b>
56	<b>R: Yes.</b> I had a student in a C4.1., who's mother died of cancer and I didn't know how to handle the situation vis-a-vis the child. I did go get help from someone from "Trauer asbl.", to ask how you should handle that situation, specifcly with children. It was a very emotional situation. I had good contact with the dad so we could organise somethings. I told the students that i would go to the memorial services and told the students they were welcome to join. The entier class ended up going. That was very moving and beautiful, for the boy as well. The dad thanked me multiple times afterwards, because the boy had his friends there and the students asked to be with him. For him that was an achor. Of course, he has his family, cousins and grandparents there, but he was an only child. These were his friends. You also noticed in class that, whenever something was wrong, e.g., the mother was back in the hospital, there were always students that then spend their break with him talking. Or students asked to leave the classroom with him for a little so they could talk, when they noticed their friend was emotional. Those actions were very moving and it all left a mark. It was really a beautiful gesture that they all come to the service and from the parents as well. Nobody said anything against it. ... I did treat the student a little different, then the others at some moments. It is human to show a little empathy. You understand that students are going through somethings and you need to give them room to feel their feelings and talk about those feelings.
57	<b>I: Have you ever thought of changing profession?</b>
58	<b>R:</b> No. There are moments in wich you might think to yourself, that if I were 22/23/24 years old again I would maybe chose a different profession, based of of life experiences, even though I still love my job. The job now is not comparable to what it was 30 years ago. I think in 20 years you will also say that the job has changed a lot. That is just our society that is always changing. If I would do something else I might do a manual profession, even though I really like working with people and I also need it.

I noticed that when 2 years ago I didn't get a "Titulaire" position anymore. At the beginning I was not happy and a bit like "shit" because it's different. As "Surnummeraire" you don't have that feeling that it's your class and the social contact with your students is very different. I work in a small school so it's still okay. I can imagine, that if you work in a big school you have even less closeness with the students and can't get to know them on a deeper level at all. I also have the position of school president. I like that job because you also get more in contact with adults, but again in a big school I probably wouldn't do it. In a big school you work with so many people you again can't build real relationships and you'd end up with so many "décharges" that you can't stand in front of a class at all. Also changing to the "Direcktioun" where you don't have that daily interaction with students anymore, is not for me.

59 **R:** Small schools have their advantages and disadvantages. If you have a small school where each class level is only present once and you have students that don't get along, you can't sperate them. Students are together in the same group for 6, sometimes 9 years during their entier primary school career. In a big school, you can mix the students and create new class constations. "story" We have that issue at the moment. We currently have classes of between 16 and 22 students.

60 **I: Do you notice a difference between big classes and small classes?**

61 **R:** Yes, mainly on the corrections. I once had a class with 11 students. In terms of corrections that was really easy. However, in terms of dynamic, the class was quite lazy in comparison with a class of 22 students. "story" In a small class it is more difficult to make the students engage during the lessons, as you have less students that like to participate. Class management wise, it's not much different but you do notice that there is a different dynamic.

62 **I: Do you have any tips for other or new teachers?**

63 **R:** Make sure that the work-life balance is right. That at home you have support also from your friends and entourage. Make sure, that in your profession, you are not afraid to speak up, in the beginning, during the internship with your CP as well as later with your work-colleagues. Make sure to get help when needed and don't see it as a failure when you need support. And also try to have balance in your personal life and have a way to unwind and release some of the stress. Try not to take everything to serious and work so much that you don't have a life because you think have to live up to all the expectations and end up working yourself sick. Of course, you need to do somethings for work, but at the end of the day, what you prep on paper isn't the most important part of the job. It is what you do during your lesson, which often has do be adapted in the moment because you have to react to your students and their answers etc. It is important to stay flexible. You need understand and accept, that sometimes work can be left undone, so you can spend some time doing something for you or spend time with family and loved ones. Do not prep for work all weekend.

64 **Direktioun and CP "story"**

65 **R:** I still love the job. You have a fun interaction with the children and you get a lot back from the students, the little ones as well as the big ones. The little ones hug you and the big ones tend to come visit you again once they left for high school. You stay in contact with the students and even parents, even after they have left your class. "story"

## E. Informationsbestätigung



UNIVERSITE DU LUXEMBOURG  
Faculté des Sciences Humaines,  
des Sciences de l'Éducation  
et des Sciences Sociales

### INFORMATIONSBESTÄTIGUNG DES\*DER STUDIERENDEN

#### BACHELORARBEIT VON VAN DER MOLEN ANNABEL

#### PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN LUXEMBURG

##### STUDIERENDE\*R

Ich habe die Lehrer\*innen, welche an der erziehungswissenschaftlichen Studie meiner Bachelorarbeit teilgenommen haben, schriftlich über diese Studie und ihre Ziele informiert und ihnen Möglichkeiten gegeben, alle Fragen diesbezüglich beantwortet zu bekommen.

Alle erhobenen Informationen wurden anonymisiert (Gesichter werden verschwommen dargestellt, Stimmen verfremdet, Namen durch Pseudonyme ersetzt) und vertraulich behandelt. Alle gesammelten Informationen wurden von mir sicher aufbewahrt. Niemand außer mir und meinem\*meiner Tutor\*in hatte Zugriff auf diese Informationen. Sie wurden ausschliesslich im Rahmen meiner Bachelorarbeit benutzt. Nach dem Abschluss der Bachelorarbeit werde ich alle gesammelten Informationen löschen.

Vorname und Nachname des\*der Studierenden: Annabel Van der molen

Ort & Datum: Trintange 20. Mai 2024

Unterschrift: 