

EDUCATION WORKFORCE
WELL-BEING

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EDUCATION WORKFORCE WELL-BEING

Policy, Change and Leadership

BY

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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FOREWORD ONE

In the pursuit of better student outcomes and increased productivity, whilst keeping ahead of technological change and weathering the storm of constant policy reform, the pressures on an educator to ensure career advancement appear immense. The vocational inspiration of the individual that dedicates their energies to the transfer of knowledge to others can be easily overlooked.

As the leader of an organisation that strives to improve the professional standing of technical vocational education teachers and trainers, our whole focus is on empowering vocational trainers to become better teachers. My experience in workforce development, independent evaluation of professional learning and ensuring ongoing engagement in professional development always points to the importance of organisational support and healthy workplace culture for individuals.

Getting this right has an immense impact on our society, as a happy teacher means a happy class, a happy student or a contented employee means an engaged and energised partner, family or community member outside of their work environment. It's crucial to support the vocational inspiration of the teacher.

When meeting Dr Stephen Corbett you are struck by his intellect and drive and passion for the well-being of others, as well as his focus on making a difference through the proposition of sensible and practical solutions to achieving individual and organisational well-being. Thankfully, Stephen's expertise and focus is now succinctly captured in this book.

The hedonistic pursuit of happiness where pain should be avoided was defined long ago by the Ancient Greeks and is an approach to well-being that has been sought by most for millennia. Stephen wisely explores the notion that individuals and society should seek psychological (or eudaimonic) well-being through the fulfilment of life, for the longer lasting effects of happiness. Psychological well-being ensures we can achieve a fulfilling life through acceptance of our abilities, connection with others and the resilience to navigate challenges and the cunning to seize opportunities. It seems organisational and policy approaches have evolved to risk manage and mitigate unhappiness, rather than focus on how they can further improve our happiness.

‘Picture where you want to be and it will happen’, a wise career coach once told me. A wise coach that related this not only to career goals but also personal and well-being goals. For me this has become a mantra for *life* balance, not work–life balance, as *work* should only be part of the many facets of our existence.

Onboarding and providing ongoing support for teachers and education employees, and robust professional learning opportunities that are a mix of formal, in-formal or non-formal education go a long way to develop teachers to ‘be where they want to be’. As an educational leader it’s important to remember your role is to develop your employees’ unique abilities and potential and shepherd them towards or to this destination. It’s not about getting the best out of people; they need to get the best out of themselves to achieve fulfilment.

Stephen’s research deeply resonates with me as it considers the four sub-sets of welling, resilience, emotional labour, work–life balance, and work–life conflict. It shines a light on how educational leadership and government policy can create organisational cultures that nurture and enshrine well-being through the fulfilment of life. I’m excited to see the impact of this research, as it has the potential to reimagine workforce well-being within the education sector. Within these pages lies the unique opportunity for us to engage in findings that will start this transformation.

Martin Powell
Chief Executive Officer
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Melbourne, Australia
October 2023

FOREWORD TWO

Professor Corbett is a well-known and highly acclaimed practitioner and research leader in England. His work, nationally, on supporting the continued development of professionals working in education has had significant and lasting impact. We, at ETF, have benefitted from his contribution to education for many years. Examples of his work includes being the strategic lead for delivery of the Department for Education funded Further Forces programme which ran for 5 years and retrained military personnel to become qualified teachers in England's further education sector. In 2022, Corbett's research in the development needs of managers in the further education sector resulted in authoring the Professional Standards for Leaders in Further Education which were published nationally by the ETF and now inform all leadership training programmes we deliver.

Following Corbett's research into FE workforce well-being in 2021, the ETF have further enhanced our offer to further education institutions around the country. Well-being and sector professionalism are at the heart of ETF's strategic objectives to support the FES workforce and we welcome Steve's incisive analysis on what the sector needs to prioritise. This book provides a new and much needed critical commentary of how our global education structures and leadership decisions directly impact on workforce well-being. We learn that the dial is shifting for organisations that are increasingly expected to improve the quality of jobs and support systems available to employees. On this, the ETF works closely with comparable support bodies in England and overseas to identify and disseminate effective practice, so that we can learn from the best examples and expertise. We are seeing an increasing trend of well-being issues emerging for staff. This is a concerning situation that has both immediate and long-term impact on individuals and the sectors they work in. Therefore, the unique approach by Corbett to consider the factors which unite rather than divide us is an important call to arms for education-ists and policymakers.

The balance between prior theory, contemporary research and practical solutions provided within this book provides readers with an excellent grounding in how to initiate and implement a positive culture of well-being in

the education workforce. I would strongly encourage both those who work in education and those whose work impacts on education to read this book and consider its suggestions on how we might facilitate cultural change to create a happy, healthy and productive workforce for the benefit of those in the sector, their students and society more broadly.

PREFACE

Those who have worked in education for a period of time will likely agree a key constant is change. Whilst being in a dynamic work environment can be highly engaging, it is not without its challenge. The speed of change in recent years has led to unintended consequences not least in some instances a diminishing of work conditions.

This book seeks to consider what I believe is a key challenge that spans across all contemporary education sectors globally; workforce well-being. In 2021, I conducted a research study with colleagues into the impact of Covid-19 on workforce well-being in the vocational education sector in England. When presenting the results of this research, I became struck as to how the findings resonated with those working in different education sectors across the world. This led me to dive deeper and undertake further research. In doing so it became clear to me that whilst each education sector has its own context in terms of the students it supports and geographical location the narrative of well-being and factors which impact it have significant similarities.

It is my belief that positive well-being in the global education workforce is a key factor that we need to take seriously if we wish to have learning environments that thrive and inspire future generations. My hope is that this book provides both provocation and resource for policymakers, leaders and their teams that can positively impact on our approach to education workforce well-being.