

Article

Teacher Well-Being as a System of Professional Viability: A Comparative Ecological Analysis of Primary and Secondary CLIL Teachers in Andalusia, Spain

Juan Ramón Guijarro-Ojeda , Raúl Ruiz-Cecilia * , Leopoldo Medina-Sánchez  and Cristina Pérez-Valverde

Department of Language and Literature Education, Universidad de Granada, 18071 Granada, Spain; jrgo@ugr.es (J.R.G.-O.); leoms@ugr.es (L.M.-S.); mcperez@ugr.es (C.P.-V.)

* Correspondence: raulruiz@ugr.es

Highlights

Please indicate how your work links to systems science via your contributions to systems practice, theory, and/or methodology.

- This study conceptualises CLIL teacher well-being as an ecological system of professional viability across teacher-level, classroom, relational, institutional, sociocultural, and temporal subsystems.
- It applies a comparative qualitative systems methodology to reconstruct feedback dynamics, distinguish programme robustness from frontline sustainability, and identify regulatory leverage points.

What are the main findings and/or the implications of the main findings?

- Participants described CLIL teacher well-being in relation to the perceived alignment or misalignment of agency, classroom feasibility, relational support, institutional organisation, social expectations, and programme history.
- Primary teachers work within proximity-based ecologies, whereas secondary teachers work within disciplinary-departmental ecologies; protected coordination, training, assessment guidance, and transition structures emerged in participants' accounts as potential leverage points.

Abstract

This study identifies two stage-specific configurations of CLIL teacher well-being in Andalusia: an ecology of proximity in Primary Education and a disciplinary-departmental ecology in Secondary Education. Drawing on 14 semi-structured interviews with seven Primary and seven Secondary teachers, the study used a deductive–inductive ecological analysis combining within-case, cross-case, cross-stage, and subsystem-coupling procedures in QDA Miner. Participants described professional well-being not merely as a subjective psychological state but in terms of professional viability: the perceived ecological enactability of pedagogically legitimate and sustainable practice. Primary teachers' accounts foregrounded sustained pupil contact, tutorial responsibility, family expectations, classroom routines, and adaptation for younger learners. Secondary teachers' accounts foregrounded subject specialisation, departmental organisation, heterogeneous language proficiency, assessment ambiguity, and the Primary–Secondary transition. Across both stages, participants described compensatory overfunctioning—additional care, coordination, material redesign, translation, and assessment work undertaken to keep CLIL operational when implementation conditions were perceived as insufficient. Protected coordination time, stage-specific training, shared assessment frameworks, appropriate materials, and transition structures



Academic Editor: Timothy Ferris

Received: 24 June 2026

Revised: 10 August 2026

Accepted: 12 August 2026

Published: 14 August 2026

Copyright: © 2026 by the authors.

Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland.

This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the [Creative Commons Attribution \(CC BY\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) license.

emerged as potential regulatory leverage points. The study advances a phase-sensitive systems interpretation of teacher well-being by identifying a fast balancing loop of frontline adaptation and a slower reinforcing stabilisation trap through which restored continuity may conceal persistent underprovision.

Keywords: CLIL/bilingual education; teacher well-being; professional viability; ecological systems; primary education; secondary education

1. Introduction

Teacher well-being has become a central concern in educational research and policy because of its links with teacher retention, instructional quality, classroom climate, student well-being, and school sustainability. It is not, however, a uniform individual condition reducible to resilience or psychological adjustment. It is shaped by teachers' working contexts, professional roles, and available resources. This is especially relevant in bilingual and content and language integrated learning (CLIL) settings, where teachers must teach curricular content while supporting students' foreign-language development. Contemporary multidimensional accounts of flourishing and teacher well-being also emphasise that teachers' occupational well-being must be interpreted through the interaction of personal, relational, and organisational resources rather than through a single affective indicator [1–3].

CLIL has expanded across Europe within broader multilingual education policies. In Spain, and particularly in Andalusia, bilingual education has become a visible and institutionally valued model in primary and secondary schools. Yet the prestige attached to bilingual programmes has not always been matched by attention to the working conditions, emotional demands, and professional experiences of the teachers who implement them. CLIL research has largely foregrounded learner outcomes, language competence, methodological innovation, and programme effectiveness; teacher well-being has received less sustained attention. This expansion is consistent with the broader consolidation of CLIL as a European research and policy field [4] and with the growing linguistic internationalisation of Spanish education [5].

This gap matters because CLIL can intensify existing pressures in teaching. Bilingual-programme teachers often combine subject expertise, foreign-language competence, methodological flexibility, material adaptation, language scaffolding, coordination with colleagues, and responsiveness to institutional expectations. These demands affect identity, self-efficacy, workload, emotional balance, and job satisfaction. At the same time, CLIL can generate professional meaning, creativity, and motivation when teachers experience it as coherent, supported, and pedagogically worthwhile. These combined demands have been documented in CLIL research on teacher beliefs, language-mediated instruction, professional identity, and well-being [6–11].

A second limitation is the tendency to treat teachers as a homogeneous professional group. Primary and secondary teachers work in different pedagogical, relational, and organisational ecologies. Primary education typically involves generalist teaching, sustained contact with the same pupils, strong care-oriented involvement, daily routines, and close family communication. Secondary education is more strongly structured by subject specialisation, departments, multiple groups, assessment pressure, and more fragmented teacher-student relationships. These differences suggest that CLIL may affect teacher well-being differently across educational stages. This distinction is supported by phase-sensitive

research showing that primary and secondary teaching differ in role structure, relational intensity, professional status, workload patterns, and subject organisation [12–15].

This study therefore brings together three areas often examined separately: teacher well-being, CLIL implementation, and educational-stage comparison. Prior research shows that well-being is shaped by institutional, relational, and personal conditions; CLIL research identifies additional linguistic and pedagogical demands; and phase-sensitive research shows that primary and secondary teachers experience professional life differently. How these dimensions interact in a specific bilingual education context such as Andalusia remains underexplored.

The study examines the well-being of primary and secondary teachers working in bilingual education programmes in Andalusia. It adopts an ecological perspective informed by Bronfenbrenner’s model, analysing teacher well-being across personal, classroom, relational, institutional, social, and temporal systems. This approach avoids reducing well-being to individual coping capacity and instead examines how teachers and their professional environments interact.

Within this ecological framing, professional viability denotes a teacher’s situated judgement about whether the surrounding ecology permits sustainable professional enactment. It is not treated as a psychological trait, a competence measure, a binary outcome, or a proxy for attrition. Section 2.4 clarifies the functional point at which agency shifts from supported enactment to compensatory labour that substitutes for missing or ambiguous provision.

The study contributes to teacher well-being research, CLIL studies, and comparative educational research by arguing that well-being in bilingual education cannot be adequately understood through generic models that ignore educational stage or through CLIL models centred mainly on learners and methodology.

While CLIL research has extensively documented learner outcomes, language development, programme effectiveness, and methodological challenges, the systemic misalignment between bilingual-policy aspirations and teachers’ everyday conditions of enactment remains critically underexplored. This limitation is particularly consequential across educational stages, since a common bilingual-policy framework may be translated into markedly different pedagogical, relational, and organisational ecologies in Primary and Secondary Education. The present study addresses this research gap by examining not only which conditions are associated with CLIL teacher well-being, but how those conditions interact, how their functions differ by educational stage, and how teachers compensate when the conditions required for sustainable CLIL implementation are absent.

From a systems perspective, the cross-stage comparison is therefore framed as a question of emergence. Under a common regional policy, the analysis reconstructs two stage-contingent implementation configurations not specified by policy design and differentiated in participants’ accounts by role structures, relational densities, curricular demands, and organisational constraints. Given the cross-sectional interview design, emergence is treated as a theory-building interpretation of patterned divergence, not as an independently observed dynamical property.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Teacher Well-Being as an Ecological and Processual Phenomenon

Teacher well-being has frequently been examined through constructs such as stress, burnout, dissatisfaction, and attrition [16]. Research with older teachers has also linked burnout to workload and interpersonal relationships at work [17]. Although this deficit-oriented tradition remains valuable for identifying occupational risk factors, it provides only a partial account of teachers’ professional experience. More recent scholarship has reconceptualised well-being as a dynamic, multidimensional, and contextually embed-

ded construct, shaped by identity, professional role, institutional conditions, relational networks, and wider social structures [18,19]. This conceptual shift is significant because it avoids reducing well-being to individual resilience or psychological endurance, while foregrounding its systemic implications for learner well-being, classroom climate, academic achievement, professional relationships, job satisfaction, and teacher retention [20–22]. This broader perspective is consistent with work on multidimensional flourishing [1], teacher resilience and reflective resources [23], emotional intelligence training [24], and systematic evidence that occupational well-being is shaped by interacting personal, institutional, and relational factors [3].

Bronfenbrenner's framework evolved substantially after the publication of *The Ecology of Human Development* [25]. The mature bioecological model moved beyond a predominantly context-centred representation of nested environments and conceptualised human development through the interdependence of Process, Person, Context, and Time (PPCT) [26,27]. Proximal processes—recurring and progressively complex reciprocal interactions between an active person and the persons, objects, symbols, and activities in the immediate environment—were assigned a central explanatory role. Person characteristics influence both how individuals participate in these processes and how their environments respond to them, while the effects of proximal processes vary according to contextual conditions and their regularity over time.

Applied to teachers, this processual emphasis directs attention to recurrent interactions with pupils, disciplinary content, classroom materials, colleagues, families, assessment practices, and institutional expectations. Such interactions are not merely situated within ecological levels; they constitute the processes through which contextual conditions become professionally and emotionally consequential. In this study, teacher identity, linguistic confidence, self-efficacy, motivation, and vulnerability represent person-related characteristics; classroom and professional interactions represent proximal professional processes; school organisation, policy, social expectations, and family linguistic capital constitute contextual conditions; and professional trajectories, annual cycles, and programme evolution provide the temporal dimension.

The term *ontosystem* is retained as the analytic label used in ecological language-teacher well-being research to group teacher-level resources, identities, and vulnerabilities [28]. It should not be interpreted as an additional system equivalent to Bronfenbrenner's micro-, meso-, exo-, or macrosystems. Conceptually, it operationalises aspects of the Person component of the mature bioecological model.

The present qualitative design does not constitute a complete empirical test of PPCT, since it does not longitudinally observe the frequency, duration, and increasing complexity of proximal processes. The bioecological model is instead used as a sensitising and organising framework through which teachers' retrospective accounts of person–process–context–time relations can be reconstructed. This qualification avoids reducing Bronfenbrenner's theory to a static taxonomy of contextual levels, a recurrent concern in assessments of its use, while preserving its value for the systemic analysis of teacher well-being [29,30].

2.2. CLIL as a Specific Professional Ecology

The well-being of foreign-language and CLIL teachers requires specific scholarly attention because language education has often privileged student achievement, communicative competence, and methodological innovation over teachers' professional lives. Broader accounts foreground contextual and relational dimensions of teacher well-being [18,19]. In extending this perspective to language education, we infer that such an imbalance may marginalise teachers when their emotional, linguistic, and professional needs are subordinated to learner outcomes; this inference is also consistent with language-teacher syntheses

linking emotional labour, professional identity, classroom agency, institutional cultures, and policy expectations [2,31]. CLIL intensifies these tensions because teachers are required to integrate content and language instruction while simultaneously responding to curricular, institutional, and linguistic expectations.

Cardoso-Pulido et al. [32] also show that language-teacher well-being is shaped by the convergence of general occupational pressures, including workload, leadership, collegiality, and accountability, and language-specific pressures, including target-language use, communicative pedagogy, intercultural work, language anxiety, and the perceived status of languages within school systems. This distinction is important for CLIL research because these teachers operate within a related but intensified professional configuration. They must teach curricular content through an additional language while preserving disciplinary learning, supporting language development, and responding to institutional expectations associated with bilingual education.

CLIL teachers are therefore positioned within a particularly demanding professional configuration. Bovellan [6] argues that they are expected to master their subject area, teach through a foreign language, and support students' communicative development. Formal language accreditation may certify instrumental linguistic competence, but it does not necessarily guarantee the pedagogical, sociolinguistic, or pragmatic expertise required to teach disciplinary content through an additional language. Moreover, participation in bilingual programmes may be shaped not only by pedagogical commitment to multilingual education, but also by institutional pressure, employment opportunities, or the symbolic prestige attached to such programmes.

Empirical research on CLIL teacher well-being remains limited, although the existing evidence is instructive. Moate [33] found that CLIL teachers experienced their work as both rewarding and demanding when teaching through a foreign language challenged their sense of professional integrity. Pappa et al. [34] showed that well-being was shaped by the balance between stressors, such as language demands and insufficient resources, and protective factors, including autonomy, adaptability, and collegiality. In Spanish tertiary education, Aguilar [35] found that lecturers identified benefits for students and for themselves while also reporting additional workload, English-proficiency challenges, and a need for institutional support. Hessel et al. [9] associated secondary CLIL teacher well-being with collegial relationships, preparation time, school type, training, student enjoyment, and work–life balance. More recently, Ruiz Cecilia et al. [36] identified factors that promote well-being among Andalusian secondary CLIL teachers. Despite these contributions, the field remains comparatively underdeveloped. This constitutes a first gap in the literature: qualitative studies focused specifically on CLIL teacher well-being remain scarce, particularly studies that provide in-depth accounts of how CLIL teachers themselves experience, interpret, and negotiate well-being in situated professional contexts. Hofstadler et al. [10] further conceptualise CLIL as an emotionally ambivalent professional space, while Hofstadler et al. [11] offer a directly relevant ecological account of Austrian CLIL teachers' well-being, showing that CLIL teacher well-being emerges through interactions among teacher agency, classroom practice, institutional organisation, and wider programme conditions. This Austrian ecological evidence is especially important for the present study because it provides an independent point of comparison for analysing CLIL well-being as a multilevel system rather than as an individual trait.

Cross-occupational evidence situates teacher stress and psychological well-being within the broader organisation of work [37]. Evidence on teacher status and social recognition [13], arts-based reflective resilience [23], flourishing in language-teacher education [38], emotional well-being regulation across English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts [31],

and emotional intelligence training [24] broadens the evidential base and avoids over-reliance on the author team's previous work.

2.3. Stage-Specific Ecologies in Primary and Secondary Education

A phase-sensitive approach is consequently required. Childs [15] demonstrates that primary and secondary teachers experience well-being through different role structures, relational demands, and institutional pressures. Primary teaching is typically associated with generalist practice, relational continuity, close care-oriented engagement, and sustained interaction with the same pupils [12,15]. Secondary teaching, by contrast, is more frequently characterised by subject specialisation, multiple teaching groups, departmental organisation, and heightened pressure around attainment and assessment [15,39].

In primary education, teacher well-being is closely related to teachers' capacity to remain connected to the relational and pedagogical purposes of their work. Administrative demands, safeguarding responsibilities, behaviour management, communication with parents, and policy requirements may displace the meaningful dimensions of teaching [15,40,41]. These insights are particularly relevant to Primary CLIL, where teachers may be expected to integrate English across classroom routines and curriculum areas without sufficient recognition of the pedagogical, linguistic, and organisational complexity involved.

In secondary education, well-being is configured through subject specialisation, departmental structures, and more fragmented professional relationships. Collegial support and positive student relationships may sustain well-being, whereas departmental isolation, invisible labour, and assessment pressure may undermine it [14,15,42]. Such fragmentation is especially consequential in CLIL settings, where collaboration among content departments, language departments, coordinators, and language assistants is central to programme coherence. Nevertheless, CLIL teacher well-being has rarely been examined through a comparative lens that considers primary and secondary stages within the same bilingual-policy context. This constitutes a second gap in the literature: limited comparative attention has been paid to how a shared policy framework may generate distinct well-being experiences according to educational stage, role configuration, and institutional organisation.

2.4. Well-Being, Professional Viability, and Compensatory Overfunctioning

In this study, teacher well-being refers to teachers' lived affective, evaluative, relational, and professional experience of their work. It encompasses satisfaction, stress, professional meaning, self-efficacy, emotional balance, and perceived capacity to enact pedagogical values. Well-being is therefore the experienced professional condition examined in the interviews; it is not reduced to either positive affect or the absence of burnout.

Professional viability, by contrast, refers to perceived ecological enactability: whether teachers understand the surrounding ecology as permitting them to translate competence, agency, and professional purposes into pedagogically legitimate and sustainable practice. It is not treated as a synonym or an additional affective component of well-being. The construct specifies the enactment-oriented criterion through which participants evaluated contextual conditions.

Analytically, the construct captures a situated teacher judgement rather than a psychological trait, competence measure, binary state, or predictor of attrition. Its threshold is functional rather than psychometric, with agency interpreted as creative or adaptive enactment when it extends practice within a supportive ecology and as substitutive labour when it repeatedly replaces missing or ambiguous provision to keep CLIL workable. 'Threshold' thus denotes a change in agency's function reconstructed from participants' accounts, not a measured cut-off between viable and non-viable teachers.

Compensatory overfunctioning denotes additional work through which teachers attempt to absorb perceived gaps between programme expectations and implementation conditions. It is not equivalent to all preparation, care, creativity, adaptation, or resilience; it applies when pedagogical, linguistic, relational, organisational, material, assessment-related, or emotional work performs a substitutive systemic function.

Both constructs are presented as interpretive propositions developed from recurrent patterns in participants' accounts, not as causal laws. The interviews suggest that participants associated perceived ecological alignment with stronger professional viability and perceived misalignment with additional compensatory effort; they do not establish that conditions objectively produce well-being or ill-being.

2.4.1. Professional Viability and Teacher Well-Being

Professional viability extends ecological teacher-well-being research by specifying the criterion through which contextual conditions become professionally meaningful. A timetable, material, training course, family expectation, or coordination structure is not inherently protective or harmful. Its significance is interpreted through whether it expands or constrains the teacher's perceived capacity to enact legitimate and sustainable practice. Professional viability thus connects ecological conditions with teachers' evaluative sense of what they can do as professionals.

2.4.2. Professional Viability and Agency

Professional viability also extends ecological accounts of teacher agency, which conceptualise agency as an achievement emerging from the interaction of individual capacities, professional purposes, and ecological conditions [43]. Agency is not treated here as a fixed personal attribute or as unrestricted autonomy. Teachers may possess motivation, linguistic competence, disciplinary knowledge, and pedagogical commitment while still perceiving limited capacity to enact them under organisational conditions. Professional viability therefore concerns the conditions under which agency becomes enactable, legitimate, and sustainable.

This distinction is important because the presence of agentic action does not necessarily demonstrate a supportive professional ecology. Teachers may exercise considerable agency precisely because formal structures are insufficient. Material redesign, informal coordination, assessment negotiation, and intensified family communication may be highly agentic responses while simultaneously indicating weakened professional viability. Agency must consequently be interpreted according to its function, as it may express supported professional creativity or operate as compensatory substitution.

2.4.3. Compensatory Overfunctioning and Resilience

The relationship between compensatory overfunctioning and resilience requires clarification. Resilience may involve adaptive capacity, professional learning, relational support, recovery, and the preservation of purpose under demanding conditions. It is not inherently individualising or detrimental. The present construct does not replace resilience; it identifies a specific limit condition.

Adaptation becomes compensatory overfunctioning when teachers repeatedly mobilise personal resources to substitute for organisational provision and when programme continuity becomes dependent on that substitution. The difference is therefore functional rather than merely quantitative. A teacher who creatively redesigns a lesson within a supported, adequately resourced environment may be demonstrating agency and adaptive expertise. A teacher who must continuously redesign an entire curriculum because viable materials and protected preparation time are absent is performing a substitutive systemic function. This distinction advances resilience research by separating resilience that pre-

serves both professional purpose and personal sustainability from adaptation that preserves programme operation while potentially weakening the teacher's own professional viability.

2.4.4. Compensatory Overfunctioning and Emotional Labour

Compensatory overfunctioning intersects with emotional labour but is conceptually broader. Emotional labour concerns the management, mobilisation, suppression, or display of emotion as part of occupational interaction [44,45]. In the present corpus, this included reassuring pupils, responding to family anxiety, maintaining enthusiasm, containing frustration, and protecting the legitimacy of the bilingual programme in interpersonal encounters.

Compensatory overfunctioning may incorporate such emotional labour, but it also includes material, linguistic, curricular, organisational, and assessment-related work. Its defining property is not emotional regulation itself but the absorption of an implementation gap. Emotional labour becomes compensatory overfunctioning when it is intensified because teachers must personally maintain confidence, legitimacy, or relational coherence that is not adequately supported by programme structures.

The concept therefore connects emotional labour to system organisation. It directs attention not only to how teachers manage emotion but also to why additional emotional management becomes necessary, what organisational absence it substitutes for, and how it contributes to the apparent continuity of the programme.

Taken together, this literature indicates that CLIL teacher well-being cannot be understood solely as an affective state or an individual capacity for resilience. It must also be examined in relation to the ecological conditions under which teachers can enact pedagogically credible and professionally meaningful practice. We use professional viability to refer to this perceived capacity for sustainable professional enactment. Compensatory overfunctioning refers to the additional pedagogical, relational, organisational, linguistic, and emotional work through which teachers attempt to maintain programme coherence when corresponding conditions are perceived as insufficient. These constructs provide the analytic bridge between teachers' lived experience, cross-system interaction, and educational-stage comparison.

The four questions are analytically nested rather than parallel, as they move from teachers' lived understanding of well-being to its perceived systemic configuration, stage-contingent form, and potential regulatory leverage points. This structure preserves methodological coherence and transparency between the study purpose, analytical procedures, findings, and implications, as recommended in qualitative reporting standards [46,47]. The purposively balanced corpus is justified by information power—the specificity of the sample, theoretical grounding, interview quality, and comparative strategy—rather than by the number of research questions considered in isolation [48].

To foreground teacher well-being as a system of professional viability, the study is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1. How do primary and secondary CLIL teachers experience and make sense of professional well-being as a system of professional viability?

RQ2. How do teacher-level, classroom, relational, institutional, sociocultural, and temporal subsystems interact to sustain or undermine CLIL teacher well-being?

RQ3. How do the systemic configurations of CLIL teacher well-being converge and diverge between primary and secondary education?

RQ4. Which subsystemic conditions emerge as regulatory leverage points for strengthening CLIL teacher well-being across educational stages?

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Research Design and Context

This study used a qualitative, interpretive, and comparative design to examine how teachers working in CLIL programmes in Andalusia construct, negotiate, and experience professional well-being as a system of professional viability. This design was appropriate because the purpose was not to quantify well-being as a fixed psychological variable, but to interpret how teachers make sense of their professional experience across personal, classroom, relational, institutional, sociocultural, and temporal conditions.

The study was conducted in Andalusia, southern Spain, where bilingual education has been institutionally promoted in public Primary and Secondary schools since the Plan for the Promotion of Plurilingualism, approved in 2005 and implemented from the 2005/2006 academic year onwards. In this context, CLIL teachers are expected to integrate curricular content and English-language learning in non-linguistic areas. Andalusia is therefore a relevant setting for examining CLIL teacher well-being because bilingual education operates both as a marker of innovation and prestige and as a practice shaped by school organisation, coordination, resources, training, assessment rules, family expectations, student linguistic competence, and educational stage.

3.2. Participants and Sampling

The sample comprised fourteen teachers working in Andalusian bilingual public schools: seven Primary Education teachers (PT1–PT7) and seven Secondary Education teachers (ST1–ST7). The balanced composition enabled comparison across educational stages while preserving a common regional and institutional framework. All participants worked in public schools, which provided institutional consistency. Participation was voluntary; all participants received information about the study's purpose and procedures and provided written informed consent before participation. Participant characteristics are presented in Table 1.

A purposive sampling strategy was used to select information-rich cases with direct experience of CLIL. Variation was sought in gender, age, teaching experience, English accreditation, subject area, year group, provincial trajectory, motivation, and perceived institutional support. Participants included nine women and five men, aged 30–53, with 5–28 years of teaching experience and English accreditation from B2 to C2. Primary teachers taught areas such as Science, Art, Physical Education, and Mathematics, whereas Secondary teachers taught Mathematics, History, Geography and History, and Biology and Geology. This combination of balance and variation supported analytical depth, contextual sensitivity, and systematic comparison between primary and secondary CLIL ecologies. See Table 1.

Sampling was guided by information richness, maximum variation, and comparative balance rather than by statistical representativeness or a prospective mechanical stopping rule. The 7 + 7 design was retained to provide equivalent stage representation under a shared regional and institutional framework.

After completion of coding, a retrospective code-accumulation audit was conducted using the analytic case order in the QDA Miner 2024 (Provalis Research, Montreal, QC, Canada) project. In the Primary corpus, 24 of the 25 final subcodes were represented in PT1; PT2 added no new code, and PT3 added the remaining language-assistant code. PT4–PT7 introduced no additional final-codebook category. In the Secondary corpus, all 25 final subcodes were represented in ST1, and ST2–ST7 added no new category. These results indicate full final-codebook coverage by PT3 and ST1, respectively.

We distinguish this form of code saturation from meaning saturation [49]. The remaining interviews continued to elaborate code properties, cross-system relationships, divergent experiences, and stage-specific functions. The sample is therefore justified through informa-

tion richness, comparative balance, final-codebook coverage, and sufficient elaboration of the central ecological configurations rather than through a claim that all possible meanings had been exhausted [48].

Table 1. Participants.

ID	Gender	Age	CEFR Level	Years of Teaching	Provinces	Subject/Year	School Type
PT1	Woman	52	B2	25	Cádiz, Sevilla	Science, 3rd year	Public
PT2	Woman	53	B2	24	Cádiz	Science, Art, 2nd year	Public
PT3	Woman	41	B2	19	Cádiz, Granada, Málaga	Sports, 6th year	Public
PT4	Man	36	B2	5	Sevilla, Granada, Málaga	Maths, Science, 6th year	Public
PT5	Woman	52	B2	28	Granada	Science, 4th year	Public
PT6	Woman	46	B2	21	Granada	Science, 3rd, 4th years	Public
PT7	Woman	46	B2	20	Jaén, Granada, Almería	Maths, 2nd year	Public
ST1	Man	40	B2	12	Málaga	Maths, 1st, 2nd years	Public
ST2	Man	48	B2	21	Sevilla, Cádiz	Maths, 3rd year	Public
ST3	Woman	42	B2	17	Granada	History, English/1st, 2nd year	Public
ST4	Man	47	C1	21	Córdoba	Geography, History/3rd, 4th years	Public
ST5	Woman	30	C1	5	Jaén, Almería	Geography and History/4th year, Bachillerato	Public
ST6	Woman	45	C1	15	Cádiz, Sevilla	Biology and Geology/3rd year	Public
ST7	Woman	51	C2	18	Cádiz, Granada	Geography and History/1st, 2nd year	Public

Source: Authors' own work. Note: PT: Primary teacher; ST: Secondary teacher. CEFR: Common European Framework of Reference.

The sampling frame was restricted to current CLIL teachers who volunteered for the study. It therefore did not include eligible teachers who declined participation, teachers who had moved from bilingual to non-bilingual posts, or teachers who had left teaching; the recruitment process did not generate a denominator or reasons for non-participation from which a participation or attrition rate could be calculated.

3.3. Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which ensured thematic comparability across participants while allowing teachers to develop their own narratives, priorities, and interpretations. The protocol explored professional trajectory and entry into CLIL; perceptions of bilingual education in Andalusia; teaching content through English; workload, stress, satisfaction, and well-being; student language level and content comprehension; coordination with colleagues, departments, language teachers, leadership, and language assistants; family expectations; training, resources, materials, assessment, and institutional support; programme evolution; and perceived gaps between policy discourse and classroom implementation.

Before data collection, the interview guide was reviewed by three experts in CLIL, teacher education, and qualitative methodology. Their comments led to clearer wording of questions on well-being, the addition of prompts on assessment, family expectations,

primary-secondary transition, and language assistants, and a reordering of the protocol from biographical entry questions to more analytically sensitive topics.

Interviews were conducted in Spanish via the University of Granada's institutional Google Meet platform between June 2024 and June 2025. They lasted approximately one hour and were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim after written informed consent had been obtained for both participation in the study and audio recording. The interviews were conducted by the second and third authors, and there was no prior relationship between the interviewers and the participants. Themes such as loss of coordination time, symbolic prestige, family expectations, assessment ambiguity, unequal family linguistic capital, and perceived programme change were subsequently developed inductively during analysis.

The researchers' professional involvement in language education, CLIL, and teacher-well-being research provided contextual sensitivity but also created a risk of confirmation bias, particularly the prior expectation that bilingual education might be associated with overload or institutional insufficiency. Before formal coding, the research team documented its principal assumptions in reflexive memos. These memos were revisited during codebook refinement, cross-case comparison, and ecological synthesis.

To test rather than reproduce these assumptions, QDA Miner retrievals were used to identify disconfirming evidence, including accounts of professional satisfaction, meaningful pupil engagement, effective coordination, successful projects, supportive leadership, and sustainable CLIL practice. Negative or deviant cases were recorded in the analytic matrices and examined alongside the dominant patterns. Interpretations that could not accommodate these cases were revised.

This procedure was consequential for the final model. The study does not interpret CLIL as intrinsically detrimental to teacher well-being. Rather, it distinguishes between pedagogically viable CLIL, which can generate meaning and satisfaction, and systemically misaligned CLIL, which requires teachers to absorb implementation gaps. Structured peer debriefing further required team members to distinguish transcript-grounded interpretation from theoretically anticipated explanation and to document the evidential basis of higher-order constructs such as professional viability and compensatory overfunctioning.

Deviant-case analysis was used to challenge rather than merely confirm the emerging interpretation. The research team actively retrieved accounts that did not fit a simple deficit explanation of CLIL, including reports of professional enjoyment, successful projects, effective coordination, meaningful pupil language use, and satisfaction with pedagogically realistic outcomes. For example, ST1 described his experience in the local bilingual team as highly positive while criticising the programme's broader administrative design; PT2 combined strong enjoyment of CLIL planning with the need to establish personal limits on preparation time; and PT3 expressed satisfaction when CLIL was understood through realistic communicative rather than maximalist bilingual outcomes.

These cases led the team to reject the interpretation that CLIL intrinsically produces ill-being. The revised interpretation instead reflects participants' associations between professional strain and perceived misalignment among CLIL demands, classroom feasibility, relational support, and institutional provision.

3.4. Data Preparation, Coding, and Analysis

All transcripts were checked against the recordings, anonymised, and imported into QDA Miner. Each transcript was treated as a case, with case-level variables including educational stage, participant code, gender, age, English accreditation level, years of teaching experience, province or provinces of professional experience, subject area, year group, and school type.

Translation followed a bilingual team-adjudication procedure. One bilingual researcher prepared the English version of each selected excerpt, a second bilingual researcher compared it with the Spanish transcript, and unresolved pragmatic or affective nuances were discussed until a consensus rendering was reached. Quotations presented in the Results were selected for analytical relevance, prioritising meaning over literal reproduction of oral features. In the Results, ellipses indicate authorial elisions made for readability and do not alter substantive meaning.

The unit of analysis was the complete meaning-bearing discourse segment. A segment could be a sentence, a short exchange, or a longer passage when the participant developed a coherent idea relevant to CLIL teacher well-being. Multiple coding was allowed because many fragments referred simultaneously to more than one ecological level. For example, a passage on adapting Science materials in English for students with limited language proficiency could be coded as classroom practice, insufficient resources, and teacher insecurity or self-efficacy. This procedure was consistent with the ecological premise that teacher well-being was analysed through participants' accounts of interactions among systems rather than as an isolated factor.

The coding combined deductive and inductive procedures. Six parent codes were derived from the ecological framework and aligned with the research questions: teacher-level (ontosystem), classroom (microsystem), relational (mesosystem), institutional (exosystem), sociocultural (macrosystem), and temporal (chronosystem). Inductive subcodes were then generated through close reading when a theme recurred across interviews or was analytically significant. These included, among others, professional identity, linguistic confidence, emotional exhaustion, student resistance, student motivation, family expectations, coordination, lack of time, workload, bureaucracy, language assistants, assessment ambiguity, social recognition, policy change, programme decline, material adaptation, and Primary-Secondary transition (see Table 2).

Table 2. Deductive procedure for coding.

Ecological System	Analytical Focus in This Study
Ontosystem	Teacher identity, motivation, self-efficacy, emotional experience, coping, vulnerability, professional biography
Microsystem	Classroom practice, student interaction, CLIL methodology, materials, language-content balance, student response
Mesosystem	Relations among teachers, departments, families, leadership, language assistants, coordination structures
Exosystem	Institutional organisation, timetables, training, resources, regulations, assessment frameworks, staffing
Macrosystem	Social prestige of bilingual education, cultural beliefs about English, inequality, recognition, policy discourse
Chronosystem	Professional trajectory, programme evolution, accumulated wear, temporal cycles, historical change

Source: Authors' own work.

Two researchers independently coded an initial subset of interviews from both Primary and Secondary Education. This phase was used for interpretive calibration and codebook development: code definitions, inclusion and exclusion criteria, boundary cases, and multiple-code applications were compared and refined through documented discussion. An inter-coder reliability coefficient was not part of the original analytical protocol. Because the codebook was still evolving, the meaning-bearing units varied in length, and multiple coding was permitted, the initial exercise did not constitute the independent

application of a fixed classification instrument to predefined equivalent units. Moreover, the pre-consensus coding decisions were not retained in a form permitting valid retrospective calculation; calculating agreement from the reconciled dataset would violate coder independence [50,51]. Rigour was instead supported through independent initial coding, systematic examination of disagreements, an explicit codebook, structured peer debriefing, reflexive memoing, deviant-case analysis, and an audit trail linking interpretations to coded excerpts and participant quotations [52,53]. The analytical rationale and procedures are reported transparently in accordance with qualitative reporting standards [46,47].

The codebook was refined iteratively by merging, splitting, or renaming codes when necessary. Each code included an operational definition, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and illustrative examples. QDA Miner was used to organise the corpus, retrieve coded segments, compare coding patterns across educational stages, examine code frequencies, and explore co-occurrences. The software supported transparency and retrieval, but interpretation remained researcher-led. The complete codebook is provided as Supplementary Table S1.

Analysis proceeded in four complementary stages aligned with the research questions: within-case analysis of each interview as a professional narrative; cross-case analysis within Primary and Secondary Education; cross-stage comparison between Primary and Secondary teachers; and ecological synthesis of systemic configurations and regulatory leverage points. Code frequencies and co-occurrences were used as descriptive indicators of coding density, not as statistical measures of prevalence, causality, or psychological intensity. Cross-stage comparison focused not only on whether codes appeared in both groups, but also on whether they performed different functions. For instance, coordination was linked in Primary Education to cycles, tutoring, families, and English teachers, whereas in Secondary Education it was associated with departments, language assistants, assessment, subject specialisation, and Primary-Secondary transition. Participants regulatory leverage points were identified through the software-assisted interpretive procedure described below, combining co-occurrence retrieval with qualitative adjudications of recurrent subsystemic conditions that they associated with teachers' room for action.

Because this study is interpretive and interview-based, the analysis identifies the relationship that participants attributed among professional conditions, experiences, and perceived well-being. Cross-case recurrence and ecological co-occurrence support the development of interpretive mechanism propositions, but they do not establish temporal precedence, eliminate alternative explanations, or estimate causal effects. Accordingly, causal formulations are reserved for participants' own attributed explanations and are reported as such; authorial interpretations are expressed in terms of perceived association, enabling or constraining conditions, and theoretically proposed processes.

Regulatory leverage points were identified through a software-assisted interpretive procedure. QDA Miner was first used to retrieve all multi-coded meaning units and to generate co-occurrence matrices at both ecological-system and subcode levels. The corpus contained 867 distinct meaning-bearing segments, of which 176 were assigned codes from more than one ecological system. These queries located candidate cross-system mechanisms but did not automatically establish their theoretical importance.

Retrieved segments were subsequently entered into a cross-case and cross-stage matrix documenting the participants involved, the systems connected, the effect on teachers' room for action, relevant counterexamples, and the possible locus of intervention. Drawing on Meadows' leverage-point concept [54], we developed four study-specific criteria:

- Recurrence across several cases or high interpretive force in a discrepant case;
- evidence that the condition expanded or constrained teachers' room for pedagogical action;

- connection between at least two ecological subsystems; and
- potential actionability through school organisation, policy design, training, assessment guidance, staffing, or resource allocation.

Only conditions meeting all four criteria were retained as regulatory leverage points. The procedure was therefore software-assisted but theoretically and interpretively adjudicated.

3.5. Trustworthiness and Rigour

Trustworthiness was supported through independent initial coding, iterative codebook refinement, systematic discussion of disagreements and boundary cases, peer debriefing, reflexive memoing, deviant-case analysis, within-case and cross-stage matrices, and an audit trail linking interpretations to coded excerpts and participant quotations. These procedures were used to strengthen credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability [52] and are reported in accordance with SRQR and JARS–Qual guidance [46,47].

3.6. Methodological Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the sample was balanced and analytically rich but small, purposive, volunteer-based, and restricted to current practitioners; findings are analytically transferable rather than statistically generalisable. This design creates possible self-selection and survivor bias. The direction of volunteer self-selection is indeterminate, because teachers under greater strain may have lacked time or willingness to participate, whereas dissatisfied teachers may also have been especially motivated to narrate their concerns. Excluding teachers who had left CLIL posts or teaching is more likely to truncate the least viable trajectories. The corpus may therefore underestimate the severity or duration of compensatory overfunctioning and overrepresent the conditions under which professional viability remained sufficient for teachers to continue. Evidence linking burnout and job dissatisfaction with teachers' intentions to leave makes this limitation substantively important [55]. We therefore interpret the findings as an account of professional viability among current Andalusian public-school CLIL teachers, not as an estimate of the full distribution of CLIL career outcomes or of an attrition rate.

Second, all substantive evidence derives from teacher self-report. This source is appropriate for the research questions concerning lived experience and sense-making, but statements about family linguistic capital, institutional support, staffing, coordination, and classroom consequences represent participants' perceptions and were not corroborated administrative records, classroom observation, student outcomes, or leader, family, and student accounts. The study therefore cannot determine whether these conditions existed at the reported magnitude or independently caused the outcomes participants associated with them.

Third, although QDA Miner supported systematic coding, retrieval, and comparison, interpretation remained researcher-led. Fourth, the study focused on Andalusia, so the ecological configuration of CLIL teacher well-being may differ in other bilingual policy contexts. Fifth, code frequencies and co-occurrences should be interpreted as descriptive supports for qualitative interpretation, not as inferential evidence of prevalence, causal strength, or psychological intensity. Sixth, because all participants worked in public schools in a single autonomous community, transferability to semi-private schools, private schools, or bilingual programmes in other Spanish regions should be assessed cautiously. Finally, formal participant validation or member checking was not undertaken.

4. Results

The results are organised to answer the four research questions: teachers' sense-making of well-being as professional viability, subsystem interaction, cross-stage convergence and divergence, and regulatory leverage points.

4.1. General Ecological Architecture of CLIL Teacher Well-Being

Overall, 1104 coded references were identified: 567 in primary education and 537 in secondary education. The distribution is consistent with an interpretation of CLIL teacher well-being as spanning ecological systems. The microsystem had the highest density of references, followed by the ontosystem, mesosystem, and exosystem. The macrosystem appeared less frequently but retained high interpretive value because it framed social expectations, prestige, inequality, and recognition. The counts are retained as an audit trail of coding density and corpus coverage only; they are not used as inferential evidence, effect sizes, or a basis for ranking the causal importance of systems. Interpretive weight is assigned according to subsystemic function, cross-case meaning, and leverage over teachers' room for action. Table 3 presents this descriptive distribution by ecological system and educational stage.

Table 3. Distribution of references by ecological system and educational stage.

System	Total Refs.	Total %	PT Refs.	PT %	ST Refs.	ST %
Microsystem	256	23	127	22	129	24
Ontosystem	228	21	115	20	113	21
Mesosystem	197	18	98	17	99	18
Exosystem	191	17	100	18	91	17
Chronosystem	160	14	84	15	76	14
Macrosystem	72	6	43	8	29	5

Note. PT = Primary teachers; ST = Secondary teachers. Percentages are rounded and calculated within their own denominator: total percentages over 1104 coded references, PT percentages over 567 coded references, and ST percentages over 537 coded references. Counts and rounded percentages are included for auditability only and should not be interpreted as effect sizes, inferential comparisons, or measures of psychological intensity.

This pattern suggests structural convergence between educational stages. In both primary and secondary education, the microsystem is the densest level, followed by the ontosystem. Teacher well-being is therefore interpreted as configured primarily through immediate interaction among teachers, students, materials, language-content practice, and professional climate, while being mediated by self-efficacy, motivation, stress, and coping. This provides an initial response to RQ2 by showing that classroom and teacher-level subsystems are strongly coupled, while stage differences lie less in reference volume than in subsystem function. Primary well-being is organised as a tutorial and proximity-based ecology, whereas secondary well-being is organised as a disciplinary, departmental, and transitional ecology. Accordingly, the macrosystem can be interpretively consequential even when less frequently coded, because social prestige, family linguistic capital, and policy discourse may frame teachers' classroom options without appearing in every discourse segment.

4.2. Core Mechanism: Ecological Viability and Alignment Among Subsystems

The integrative interpretation, corresponding especially to RQ1, is that teachers made sense of well-being as professional viability. Accounts of stronger professional well-being were associated with situations participants perceived as more coherent across ecological subsystems: teachers felt competent, students could access the content, materials were

viable, coordination was in place, the administration provided resources, and families understood the programme's scope. Accounts of ill-being were especially prominent when teachers described having to compensate individually for gaps between the institutional promise of bilingual education and the concrete conditions of implementation.

In Primary education, this logic appears in PT5's account of progressive disenchantment, which condenses the fracture between institutional ideal and classroom practice:

"You start with enthusiasm and progressively you begin to see the disenchantment. If we start building the house from the roof, things do not turn out well"—PT5, Primary.

The same teacher identifies the pedagogical consequence of misalignment:

"If I teach my children 50% of the Science lesson in English, they do not learn English. I mean, they do not learn science. But the worst thing is that they are not learning English either"—PT5, Primary.

In Secondary education, ST1 describes a comparable dynamic in mathematics, where English is layered onto content already perceived as difficult:

"I used to start in the first year of ESO and teach the lessons directly in English. And the children would go pale because they said, 'Oh, mathematics in English. This is going to be death'"—ST1, Secondary.

These accounts suggest that participants attributed their well-being less to positive dispositions towards English alone than to the perceived viability of programme implementation, including students' linguistic level, curricular load, time, materials, coordination, assessment criteria, and institutional recognition. This is the core interpretive systemic mechanism underlying the four research questions.

4.3. Primary Education: Well-Being as Proximity, Adaptation, and Tutorial Overload

In Primary education, CLIL well-being is constructed within an ecology of high proximity. Teachers maintain sustained contact with the same group, accompany broad maturational processes, and interact intensively with families. This proximity is associated with pedagogical satisfaction, but it also amplifies the emotional, organisational, and justificatory workload of the programme.

4.3.1. Ontosystem: Linguistic Motivation, Situated Self-Efficacy, and Adaptive Wear

The ontosystem combines vocation and an interest in languages with self-imposed professional demands and feelings of being overwhelmed. Participants described self-efficacy as depending not only on accredited language proficiency but on teachers' capacity to translate CLIL requirements into situated pedagogical decisions, selecting content, grading vocabulary, alternating languages, and justifying these decisions didactically. PT6 expresses the recurrent perception that linguistic accreditation and the institutional label are not equivalent to methodological preparation.

"We have obtained the bilingual qualification, we have put it on the schools, but in reality the administration has not been concerned with training those teachers"—PT6, Primary.

Self-efficacy therefore appears as situated competence. PT1 formulates it as reasoned selection, distant from both mechanical translation and the accumulation of decontextualised vocabulary:

"I do not give vocabulary lists or require children to learn all the muscles in English, or all the bones in English. What I propose are classroom activities in which we use the English language"—PT1, Primary.

Participants reported stronger well-being when they can construct a credible pedagogical rationale. Ill-being appears when this mediation feels insufficient, improvised, or invisible to other agents in the system.

4.3.2. Microsystem: Satisfaction and Pedagogical Conflict in the CLIL Classroom

The microsystem was central to Primary teachers' accounts of well-being. Participants associated CLIL practice with satisfaction when it enabled projects, orality, hands-on activities, play, visual resources, and communicative experiences. PT5 illustrates this positive dimension by describing learning that, in the teacher's view, pupils did not experience as burdensome:

"I really like doing projects with them and, moreover, they love them. . . I feel that they learn without realizing that they are learning"—PT5, Primary.

Participants described the same microsystem as stressful when limited linguistic autonomy, differing learning paces, extensive curricula, and formal requirements for L2 use converged. PT1 summarises this tension:

"The children do not have a sufficiently broad level of English to cover the whole syllabus. . . I have to combine Spanish and English"—PT1, Primary.

Actual practice is therefore not linear immersion in English, but a pedagogy of alternation. Teachers continuously regulate how much English the group can sustain without sacrificing content comprehension.

4.3.3. Mesosystem: Families and Coordination as Regulators of Well-Being

In Primary education, the mesosystem is especially intense because families are highly present and coordination is needed among tutoring, non-linguistic areas, English, and leadership. Families may legitimise the project, but they may also intensify pressure when bilingual education is perceived as a threat, excessive demand, or unfulfilled promise. PT1 describes heterogeneous family expectations:

"There is a small group of families that has chosen the school because it is a bilingual school. . . Then there is a small group of families that has arrived at the school and either did not know it was bilingual or does not agree with it being bilingual"—PT1, Primary.

Teachers perceived this plurality as shaping their well-being:

"What stresses me are the families. . . the diversity of pedagogical models that families have at home and the diversity of expectations they have towards the school"—PT1, Primary.

Coordination was commonly described as a major mesosystemic regulator that distributed responsibility and reduced perceived individual workload and uncertainty. When it was absent, participants described having to carry the burden of making the programme coherent. PT2 states this categorically:

"Coordination is essential. . . You cannot have one person going this way, another going that way, and everyone for themselves"—PT2, Primary.

PT3 adds that regulatory openness may become professional insecurity if it is not accompanied by shared criteria:

"You have to have impeccable coordination with the rest of your colleagues so that everyone does the same thing and in the same way"—PT3, Primary.

Thus, Primary teachers associated well-being not only with the teacher–student relationship but also with the school's perceived capacity to create coherence among tutoring, language, non-linguistic areas, families, and organisation.

4.3.4. Exosystem: Insufficient Training, Time, and Resources

The exosystem operates as an indirect but persistent layer of conditioning. Training, timetables, regulations, language assistants, resources, and coordination time are not classroom interactions in themselves, but they materialise in the classroom as preparation load, scope for adaptation, or methodological insecurity. PT3 calls for clearer pedagogical guidelines:

“I would require a minimum amount of training. . . I would clearly develop the guidelines for what is done at the pedagogical level, how to carry out bilingual teaching, and what methodology can be used”—PT3, Primary.

PT7 recalls that coordination used to exist as a scheduled structure and that its disappearance had organisational effects:

“At the beginning we had one hour of coordination in our teaching timetable. So it was wonderful because you coincided with the other person in your cycle”—PT7, Primary.

Teachers’ critique is therefore not directed at CLIL as a pedagogical ideal, but at an implementation model that participants perceived as transferring responsibility for programme viability to teachers under insufficient institutional conditions.

4.3.5. Macrosystem and Chronosystem: Prestige, Inequality, and Temporal Wear

The macrosystem is more salient in Primary education than in Secondary education. The interviews show that bilingual education functions both as institutional prestige and as a source of inequality because family linguistic capital is unevenly distributed. PT4 describes this social ambivalence:

“There are two points of view: one is that it is useless and that it is nonsense. . . and the other point of view is that parents say they would like to take their children to a bilingual school”—PT4, Primary.

PT5 links this ambivalence to unequal access to external support:

“It is very noticeable in class. . . those who go to [English] lessons in the afternoon are the ones who respond. . . the others fall a little further behind”—PT5, Primary.

The chronosystem appears as progressive wear and as the annual accumulation of workload peaks such as end-of-year assessment, tutoring, competitive examinations, coordination, and material preparation. Primary teachers associated their well-being with the tension between pedagogical proximity and sustained adaptive overload.

4.4. Secondary Education: Well-Being as a Disciplinary, Departmental, and Transitional Ecology

In Secondary education, CLIL well-being is organised around a different ecology. Teachers identify primarily with a discipline -Mathematics, Geography and History, Biology- or another subject, and experience bilingual education as an additional layer to be integrated into more abstract content, more heterogeneous groups, and departmental structures.

4.4.1. Ontosystem: Pragmatic Entry and Tensions in Disciplinary Self-Efficacy

Several Secondary teachers describe entry into bilingual education as partly pragmatic, linked to access, mobility, placement, or available posts. ST1 expresses this directly:

“It is not that I have a specific preference for bilingual teaching; rather, it is circumstantial. . . I was in a bilingual post, just as I had been in a non-bilingual post”—ST1, Secondary.

ST5 also frames access to employment as an initial motive, although she later links CLIL to maintaining the language and developing international projects:

“The employment lists of the Regional Ministry of Education moved faster for the bilingual English profile than for the ordinary profile”—ST5, Secondary.

The critical point is that disciplinary self-efficacy does not automatically produce CLIL self-efficacy. ST5 formulates this fracture precisely:

“I know how to teach my subject, and I know how to address the educational needs of Geography and History, but when I have to introduce content in English, I do not have the tools for that”—ST5, Secondary.

Participants generally did not attribute ill-being to the use of English per se; they more often associated it with the need to reconcile content, language, and diversity without sufficient support or training in integrated didactics.

4.4.2. Microsystem: Disciplinary Content, Linguistic Level, and Material Adaptation

The Secondary microsystem is structured by a constant question: how much English can be introduced without reducing disciplinary learning? ST4 formulates the tension between lexical gain and loss of conceptual depth:

“My students know more vocabulary in English. . . Of course. . . It also has other negative aspects. I teach less history or less geography than when I taught it without bilingual education”—ST4, Secondary.

Materials are a central source of overload. ST3 criticises resources that do not solve didactic mediation but merely translate or summarise:

“The level is not adapted to the students because it is a summarized translation. . . in the end I can do the translation myself with the Internet”—ST3, Secondary.

The same teacher adds that the real work lies in transforming material into a meaningful and functional experience:

“That is what takes me the most time: preparing the session in English so that it is interesting and useful for them”—ST3, Secondary.

Secondary well-being is therefore tied to viable disciplinary mediation: translation alone is insufficient; conceptual rigour, linguistic accessibility, and pedagogical meaning must be maintained.

4.4.3. Mesosystem: Departments, Language Assistants, and the Primary-Secondary Transition

Coordination in Secondary education is more departmental and interdepartmental. When it existed, participants commonly described it as a protective factor. ST4 describes a relatively positive case:

“We do usually hold some [meetings], although I will not tell you that we meet every week. . . at least two per term”—ST4, Secondary.

However, other teachers highlight the loss of stable coordination structures:

“There used to be one hour of meeting time per week; that hour has now disappeared. . . it affects whether things are organised and joint projects are carried out”—ST2, Secondary.

The language assistant appears as an ambivalent resource. Assistants can enrich lessons, but they may also generate logistical workload if they are not integrated into planning or if too many groups and teachers depend on too few assistants:

“Organizing with the assistant is very complicated. . . there are many teachers and two assistants. . . it is very difficult to make sure that everyone has that content on that day”—ST7, Secondary.

The transition from Primary to Secondary education is another critical node. ST7 interprets the universalisation of bilingual education as a turning point:

“The moment they made bilingual education... universal... it started to stall”—ST7, Secondary.

The same teacher relates this to basic linguistic gaps in the first year of ESO:

“There are students in the first year of ESO who say ‘AVE’ instead of ‘have’... with a student who does not understand the verb ‘to have,’ the possibilities are reduced to a much more basic pedagogy”—ST7, Secondary.

Here, participants interpreted well-being through a long ecological chain involving Primary education, family expectations, group organisation, inter-stage coordination, and students’ prior linguistic culture. Teachers perceived these conditions as shaping their experience in Secondary Education.

4.4.4. Exosystem: Regulations, Assessment, Bilingual Posts, and Departmental Careers

In Secondary education, the exosystem is especially visible in assessment, regulatory ambiguity, and staffing. ST6 points to the difficulty of ensuring fair assessment when language must not become an illegitimate barrier:

“It is very complicated because they also have rights... it cannot be that I fail because I do not know English”—ST6, Secondary.

The same teacher summarises the problem as a lack of shared criteria:

“It was left somewhat almost to the teacher’s discretion... how to arrive at a more or less fair assessment”—ST6, Secondary.

ST1 also shows how bilingual posts may affect professional trajectories within departments and access to particular courses or levels:

“Previously, being bilingual in the department was like being second-class... you are bilingual, you get the students in first and second year, and you will never teach Bachillerato in your life”—ST1, Secondary.

Participants linked exosystemic conditions to additional tasks as well as to perceived career trajectories, prestige within the institution, and professional development opportunities.

4.4.5. Macrosystem and Chronosystem: Linguistic Culture, Social Promise, and Programme Universalisation

In Secondary education, the macrosystem appears above all as a tension between the social promise of bilingual education and the linguistic culture of the environment. ST7 formulates the problem as a matter of the social culture of English:

“Spain is a country with, in general terms, a limited knowledge of the English language... in some homes there is no interest in studying the language”—ST7, Secondary.

ST5 questioned the label “bilingual”, linking it to what he perceived as inflated family expectations:

“The children are going to leave school; they are not going to become bilingual people. So perhaps the name should also be changed”—ST5, Secondary.

The chronosystem is linked to programme evolution and the loss of bilingual education’s exceptional status. Secondary teachers describe a shift from an initial phase with more selected groups, greater voluntariness, or stronger project identity to a phase of universalisation, greater heterogeneity, and reduced capacity to sustain coherent CLIL experiences.

4.5. PT/ST Convergences and Divergences by Subsystem

In response to RQ3, Primary and Secondary Education shared the same ecological architecture but not the same perceived mechanism through which well-being was configured. The most cross-cutting codes, present in all 14 cases, were language motivation, students, CLIL practice, materials, colleagues, coordination, families, transition, projects, administration, regulations, working conditions, training, trajectory, programme evolution, and temporal cycles. This breadth supports an interpretation of CLIL well-being as a multiscale network rather than an isolated individual variable.

Tables 4 and 5 play complementary roles in this comparison. Table 4 provides a descriptive audit map indicating where qualitative comparison should be concentrated, whereas Table 5 supplies the qualitative matrix that constitutes the primary basis for interpreting cross-stage convergence and divergence.

Table 4. Main descriptive divergences between PT and ST.

System	Code	Category	N	Cases	PT	ST	PT %	ST %
Chronosystem	CHR_CICLOS	Annual temporality: end of school year, competitive examinations, assessment, and workload peaks	48	14	28	20	5	4
Macrosystem	MAC_RECONOC	Social/professional teacher recognition and school culture	25	12	16	9	3	2
Macrosystem	MAC_DESIGUALDAD	Sociocultural inequality and family linguistic capital	24	12	15	9	3	2
Exosystem	EXO_FORM	Insufficient institutional teacher training	47	14	26	21	5	4
Ontosystem	ONT_MOT_PRAG	Pragmatic motivation related to access, placement, or proximity	36	12	17	19	3	4
Microsystem	MIC_AUXILIAR	Language assistant: use, coordination, and limits	32	11	15	17	3	3
Ontosystem	ONT_AUTOEF	Linguistic and methodological self-efficacy/security	52	13	28	24	5	4
Mesosystem	MES_FAMILIA	School-family relationship and family expectations	51	14	25	26	4	5
Mesosystem	MES_PROYECTOS	Inter-school projects/internationalisation/CEP/EOI	39	14	19	20	3	4
Ontosystem	ONT_AFRONTA	Coping strategies and teacher self-regulation	35	12	17	18	3	3

Note. The table preserves the original codes and counts, while percentages are rounded within stage (PT denominator = 567 coded references; ST denominator = 537 coded references). The figures are descriptive audit indicators only; cross-stage interpretation rests on the qualitative function of each code within its ecological context. English key for code labels: CHR_CICLOS = annual workload cycles; MAC_RECONOC = social/professional recognition; MAC_DESIGUALDAD = sociocultural inequality and family linguistic capital; EXO_FORM = insufficient institutional training; ONT_MOT_PRAG = pragmatic motivation; MIC_AUXILIAR = language assistant; ONT_AUTOEF = linguistic/methodological self-efficacy; MES_FAMILIA = school-family relationship; MES_PROYECTOS = projects/internationalisation; ONT_AFRONTA = coping and self-regulation.

The descriptive code profile does not justify frequency-based claims of substantive difference between stages. Instead, it functions as an audit map that identifies where qualitative comparison should examine how similar codes operate differently across primary and secondary ecologies. The interpretation therefore prioritises subsystemic function, cross-case meaning, and regulatory leverage over small differences in coded-reference density.

The qualitative matrix specifies the functional nature of these differences. In Primary education, participants' accounts associated well-being mainly with tutorial proximity, families, and adaptation for younger pupils. In Secondary education, it is regulated by the articulation among discipline, linguistic level, departments, language assistants,

assessment, and stage transition. In both stages, coordination operates as a condition of sustainability and a buffer against individual workload.

Table 5. Qualitative matrix of PT/ST convergences and divergences by subsystem.

Subsystem	PT-ST Convergence	Main Divergence
Ontosystem	In both stages, motivation, self-demand, stress, and coping strategies are present.	In Primary education, tutorial and emotional concern predominates; in Secondary education, disciplinary-methodological insecurity predominates when teaching specialised content through the L2.
Microsystem	The classroom is the empirical centre of both well-being and ill-being.	In Primary education, the focus is on basic comprehension, manipulation, and adaptation for younger pupils; in Secondary education, on the balance among disciplinary rigour, conceptual abstraction, and linguistic level.
Mesosystem	Coordination was described a condition of sustainability.	In Primary education, families, cycles, and coordination with English-language teachers carry greater weight; in Secondary education, departments, language assistants, projects, and inter-stage transition carry greater weight.
Exosystem	In both stages, insufficient training, lack of time, and regulatory ambiguity are reported.	In Primary education, timetables, resources, and tutorial load are emphasised; in Secondary education, assessment, bilingual posts, group distribution, and departmental careers are emphasised.
Macrosystem	In both stages, there is tension between the social prestige of bilingual education and actual practice.	In Primary education, family inequality is more prominent; in Secondary education, social linguistic culture and the excessive promise of the “bilingual” label are more prominent.
Chronosystem	Participants described well-being as changings with professional trajectory and programme evolution.	In Primary education, the passage from enthusiasm to disenchantment appears; in Secondary education, the passage from selected groups to universalization and greater heterogeneity appears.

Source: Authors’ own work. Note: This matrix synthesises the interpretive comparison between stages and complements the quantitative reading of the codes. The matrix is the primary basis for cross-stage interpretation; numerical tables are secondary audit supports.

4.6. Ecological Couplings Among Systems

In response to RQ2, multi-coded segments indicated how participants connected ecological subsystems in their accounts. The most frequent pair was microsystem–ontosystem, which participants commonly associated with links among classroom practice, emotion, self-efficacy, and stress. The mesosystem–microsystem pair appeared second, especially in Primary Education, reflecting accounts in which coordination, families, and relationships among agents were perceived as shaping immediate classroom experience. Table 6 presents these coded-discourse co-occurrences as descriptive evidence of ecological coupling, not as statistical associations.

Direction was not inferred from co-occurrence frequency. For each recurrent pair, the multi-coded excerpts and cross-case matrices were re-examined for reported ordering (for example, when, because, then), enabling or constraining conditions, and counterexamples. The pathways shown in Table 6 are therefore reconstructed logical sequences within participants’ accounts, not causal estimates.

The microsystem–ontosystem coupling was therefore interpreted as condition-dependent rather than inherently harmful or protective. Participants linked viable classroom interaction to efficacy and pedagogical confidence, describing this alignment as a buffer against strain. Conversely, when access difficulties, curricular demands, or ambiguity required repeated individual repair without a corresponding organisational response, their

accounts suggested that classroom difficulty and teacher strain could become mutually reinforcing through compensatory overfunctioning.

Table 6. Main couplings, reconstructed pathways, and conditional system dynamics.

Coupling Among Systems	PT	ST	TOTAL	Reconstructed Pathway and Conditional Systemic Function
Microsystem–Ontosystem	27	25	52	Classroom feasibility and pupil response → professional efficacy/affect → subsequent classroom action. Buffering when workable practice supports efficacy; strain-amplifying when difficulty triggers repeated individual compensation and wear.
Mesosystem–Microsystem	21	12	33	Coordination/family alignment → shared expectations and resources → classroom feasibility (buffering); fragmentation or conflicting expectations → individual negotiation → uncertainty and workload (strain-amplifying).
Exosystem–Mesosystem	10	10	20	Timetables, staffing, and rules → opportunity for coordination → distribution of responsibility; underprovision fragments collaboration and shifts coherence work to individual teachers.
Chronosystem–Microsystem	11	7	18	Repeated classroom adaptation → accumulated experience and routines (potential buffer) or, when gaps persist, repeated effort → temporal wear and disenchantment (amplifying).
Exosystem–Microsystem	12	5	17	Training, materials, and assessment guidance → classroom feasibility; gaps → redesign, translation, and assessment negotiation → additional load.
Exosystem–Ontosystem	10	7	17	Institutional provision and recognition → perceived competence and viable agency; underprovision or ambiguity → insecurity, stress, and compensatory effort.
Mesosystem–Ontosystem	13	4	17	Collegial/family support → distributed responsibility and confidence; relational conflict or pressure → emotional and justificatory burden.
Chronosystem–Exosystem	9	7	16	Programme evolution and recurrent organisational decisions → preservation or removal of support structures → later workload and room for action.
Chronosystem–Mesosystem	6	5	11	Stable teams and repeated coordination → trust and shared routines; turnover or coordination loss → fragmentation and renewed individual repair.
Macrosystem–Mesosystem	6	2	8	Policy prestige and unequal family linguistic capital → expectations and relational demands → programme legitimacy or pressure and perceived inequity.

Source: Own elaboration. Note: Couplings show co-occurrences among systems within multi-coded discourse segments. Arrows express ordering reconstructed from participants' reported sequences and contrasts. Neither the co-occurrence counts nor the reconstructed pathways constitute statistical associations, causal identification, or estimates of loop strength.

Across the pairwise pathways, the analysis reconstructed two nested process propositions. At the faster classroom timescale, additional teacher action could balance a perceived implementation gap by restoring access, continuity, fairness, or relational coherence. At the slower organisational timescale, participants' reported sequences were consistent with a reinforcing stabilisation trap: successful individual compensation could obscure the original gap, weaken pressure for corrective provision, and thereby sustain the underprovision that prompted further compensatory work. By contrast, when classroom difficulties were fed back through protected coordination, shared criteria, and responsive leadership, participants described collective adjustment as distributing responsibility and buffering individual strain. Because these propositions derive from reported sequences

and contrasts, the cross-sectional interviews cannot establish temporal precedence, causal direction, or effect size.

4.7. Cross-Stage Mechanisms of Compensatory Overfunctioning

Cross-stage comparison identified compensatory overfunctioning as a shared interpretive mechanism with stage-specific manifestations. It was applied where participants described performing additional work to preserve content learning, language exposure, relational coherence, assessment fairness, or programme legitimacy under conditions they perceived as insufficiently coordinated, resourced, or regulated. Not every form of adaptation constituted compensatory overfunctioning; the construct was used only when adaptation was interpreted as responding to a perceived systemic deficiency and shifting responsibility for programme operation towards the individual teacher.

In Primary Education, compensatory overfunctioning was predominantly relational, tutorial, and proximity-based. Teachers absorbed pupils' comprehension difficulties through intensified scaffolding, visual and experiential adaptation, repeated routines, emotional availability, and communication with families. Their continuous contact with the same pupils allowed them to monitor and repair difficulties, but it also concentrated responsibility for the social, emotional, and pedagogical acceptability of the bilingual programme.

In Secondary Education, compensatory overfunctioning was more strongly disciplinary, material, departmental, and assessment-related. Teachers redesigned or simplified disciplinary materials, calibrated the amount of English used, translated key concepts, negotiated the relationship between subject knowledge and language performance, coordinated informally across departments, and resolved ambiguities concerning assessment, language assistants, and the transition from Primary to Secondary Education.

These forms differed in content but were interpreted as performing the same systemic function. They could temporarily stabilise classroom and programme operation by absorbing perceived misalignments among institutional expectations, student readiness, curricular demands, available resources, and assessment rules. Their short-term effectiveness could therefore make the conditions that participants regarded as insufficient less visible. Table 7 summarises these cross-stage mechanisms.

Table 7. Cross-stage mechanisms of compensatory overfunctioning.

Mechanism	Primary Education	Secondary Education	Cross-System Pathway	Potential Well-Being Cost
Pedagogical-access compensation	Visual support, oral routines, repetition, manipulation, projects, age-appropriate simplification	Material redesign, conceptual simplification, selective L2 use, translation of disciplinary content	Exosystem → Microsystem → Ontosystem	Preparation load, methodological insecurity
Relational compensation	Emotional availability, tutorial monitoring, repeated family explanation and reassurance	Informal negotiation with departments, language teachers, assistants, and coordinators	Mesosystem → Microsystem/Ontosystem	Emotional labour, relational burden
Organisational substitution	Individual construction of cross-curricular coherence when formal coordination is absent	Departmental improvisation and informal resolution of staffing or assistant-role ambiguities	Exosystem → Mesosystem → Microsystem	Invisible work, dependence on goodwill

Table 7. *Cont.*

Mechanism	Primary Education	Secondary Education	Cross-System Pathway	Potential Well-Being Cost
Legitimacy and assessment work	Justification of bilingual practice to families; calibration of expectations	Negotiation of fair content–language assessment and protection of disciplinary rigour	Macrosystem/Exosystem → Microsystem	Moral strain, uncertainty, accountability pressure
Temporal absorption	Recurrent material preparation, family communication, tutoring, and annual workload peaks	Assessment cycles, preparation, projects, departmental demands, and transition work	Chronosystem → Exosystem/Microsystem	Accumulated wear and disenchantment

Source: Authors' own work.

The comparison therefore indicates structural convergence but functional divergence. Primary teachers predominantly described compensation through intensified proximity and relational continuity, whereas Secondary teachers predominantly described compensation through disciplinary mediation and organisational negotiation. In both stages, compensatory overfunctioning was interpreted as converting perceived contextual insufficiency into teacher-level effort and as making systemic misalignment temporarily manageable.

4.8. Synthesis of the Resulting Model

The results support an interpretation of CLIL teacher well-being in Andalusia as an ecological system of professional viability. Participants attributed their well-being not solely to motivation, vocation, or linguistic level, but to whether they perceived the environment as enabling them to translate these dispositions into sustainable pedagogical practice. The interpretive model further proposes compensatory overfunctioning as a process through which teachers may temporarily preserve programme viability by absorbing perceived misalignments that would otherwise require institutional regulation.

Four findings structure the interpretive model. First, teachers described well-being through the viability of their professional action rather than as an isolated psychological state. Second, their accounts situated well-being within a perceived and unstable equilibrium among teacher-level, classroom, relational, institutional, sociocultural, and temporal subsystems. Third, the cross-stage analysis indicated structural convergence with functional divergence: Primary accounts were organised around an ecology of proximity, whereas Secondary accounts were organised around a disciplinary-departmental ecology. Fourth, potential leverage points were located mainly in conditions participants associated with regulating their room for action: training, coordination, materials, family expectations, institutional support, assessment clarity, staffing, and transition arrangements.

5. Discussion

5.1. Professional Viability as Perceived Professional Enactability

The first theoretical contribution concerns the basis on which participants evaluated their professional well-being. Their accounts did not reduce well-being to emotional comfort, job satisfaction, low stress, or individual psychological adjustment. Teachers repeatedly evaluated whether they could enact pedagogically credible CLIL practice: preserve disciplinary learning, use English meaningfully, respond to pupil diversity, sustain fair assessment, maintain productive relationships, and do so without relying on continuously expanding personal effort.

We conceptualise this evaluative pattern as professional viability, understood as the perceived ecological enactability of professionally valued action. Professional viability is not an additional affective component of well-being and should not be treated as its synonym. Well-being refers to teachers' lived affective, evaluative, relational, and professional condition; professional viability refers to whether the surrounding ecology is perceived to permit teachers to translate competence, agency, and professional purposes into sustainable practice. The construct therefore adds an enactment-oriented dimension to ecological accounts of teacher well-being.

Accordingly, professional viability is a situated evaluative relation between teacher and ecology, not an individual capacity or a predictor of professional persistence. Analytically, it concerns when agency shifts from supported innovation to compensation for missing provision, not whether a teacher crosses a psychometric cut-off.

This interpretation extends multidimensional and ecological approaches that understand teacher well-being as situated within interacting personal, relational, and institutional conditions [1–3,18,19,28,32]. Such approaches identify the resources and pressures associated with well-being, but they do not always specify the professional criterion through which teachers evaluate those conditions. The present analysis suggests that participants interpreted conditions as enabling or constraining according to whether they allowed them to enact work they regarded as pedagogically legitimate, relationally responsible, and professionally sustainable.

This proposition remains interpretive rather than causal. The interviews do not demonstrate that a specific configuration objectively produces well-being. They indicate that perceived enactability was a recurrent frame through which participants made sense of stronger or more fragile professional well-being.

5.2. *Compensatory Overfunctioning as a Mechanism of Programme Stabilisation*

The second contribution concerns what teachers described doing when professional viability was weakened. Across the two stages, participants reported forms of additional work through which they attempted to reconcile policy expectations with classroom feasibility: repeated material redesign, selective language use, translation, scaffolding, informal coordination, intensified family communication, emotional availability, and individual negotiation of assessment ambiguity. We conceptualise this pattern as compensatory overfunctioning.

Compensatory overfunctioning is not equivalent to all additional effort, professional commitment, adaptation, creativity, or care. It refers specifically to work that fulfils a substitutive systemic function: the teacher absorbs an implementation gap that participants perceive as insufficiently resolved through timetables, training, staffing, materials, coordination, assessment guidance, or institutional communication. Its defining feature is therefore not simply the quantity of effort but the relationship between the effort and the missing or ambiguous provision for which it compensates.

The process is paradoxical. In the short term, compensatory overfunctioning may preserve pupil access, curricular continuity, assessment fairness, relationships with families, and the public coherence of the bilingual programme. In the longer term, however, successful compensation may reduce the visibility of the conditions that made it necessary. Programme continuity can consequently coexist with fragile professional viability. What appears organisationally as successful implementation may partly reflect the unrecognised transfer of implementation work to individual teachers.

This interpretation extends research describing CLIL as simultaneously rewarding and demanding [8–11,33,34]. Previous studies have identified preparation time, insufficient materials, language-related insecurity, collegial relationships, autonomy, and professional-

integrity negotiation as important conditions. The present construct specifies how these conditions may become connected: when programme demands exceed perceived provision, teacher agency is mobilised not only to innovate but also to substitute for missing organisational capacity.

5.3. International CLIL Research: Convergence and Theoretical Extension

The findings converge with Finnish CLIL research in showing that teaching through an additional language can be experienced as both professionally meaningful and demanding. Moate's work foregrounded the challenge of maintaining professional integrity, while Pappa et al. demonstrated that CLIL teachers negotiate pedagogical and relational identities under linguistic and institutional demands [8,33]. The present study supports this ambivalence but further suggests that professional integrity is evaluated through perceived enactability: teachers did not question CLIL simply because it was demanding; they questioned configurations in which they felt unable to preserve content learning, communicative purpose, fairness, or professional legitimacy without disproportionate compensatory effort.

The findings also converge with Austrian research. Hessel et al. associated CLIL and EMI teacher well-being with preparation time, collegiality, training, student engagement, school context, and work–life balance, while Hofstadler et al. conceptualised CLIL teacher well-being as an ecological product of interactions among agency, classroom practice, organisational conditions, and broader programme structures [9,11]. The present analysis extends that ecological account in two respects. First, it compares Primary and Secondary teachers operating within the same regional policy framework, thereby showing that similar system categories perform different functions across educational stages. Second, it identifies compensatory overfunctioning as a cross-system process through which organisational insufficiency is translated, in participants' accounts, into additional teacher labour.

Aguilar's study of Spanish university lecturers similarly identified benefits for both students and lecturers while lecturers also reported additional workload, English-proficiency challenges, and a need for institutional support [35]. The present findings extend this coexistence of benefits and costs beyond tertiary EMI. In compulsory education, it was narrated through age-specific and institutionally differentiated forms: family communication, tutorial care, routines, and adaptation in Primary Education; disciplinary mediation, materials, assessment, departments, and transition in Secondary Education.

The findings are also consistent with wider language-teacher research showing that emotional well-being and regulation are embedded in institutional cultures rather than residing solely within individual teachers [2,31,32,56,57]. However, the present study shifts attention from emotional regulation alone to the professional work through which teachers attempt to preserve pedagogical coherence. This does not diminish the importance of emotion; it situates emotional experience within the broader ecology of enactment, substitution, and institutional recognition.

5.4. Educational Stage as an Ecological Boundary Condition

The Primary–Secondary comparison suggests that educational stage may function as an ecological boundary condition. It does not determine whether professional viability is present or absent, but it may shape the practices through which teachers interpret viability and the forms through which compensatory overfunctioning is enacted.

In Primary Education, the ecology of proximity concentrates responsibility around relational continuity, tutorial care, family communication, young learners' comprehension, and broad curricular adaptation. Its distinctive risk is not simply "more emotional labour,"

but the fusion of pedagogical, tutorial, relational, and justificatory responsibility in the same professional role.

In Secondary Education, the disciplinary-departmental ecology concentrates responsibility around the preservation of subject legitimacy, heterogeneous readiness, materials, departmental structures, assessment, and transition. Its distinctive risk is not simply “more material preparation,” but the need to reconcile disciplinary standards and bilingual expectations in the absence of sufficiently shared criteria.

The comparison therefore advances international CLIL research by showing that the same policy framework is not implemented through a uniform teacher ecology. Educational stage reorganises the location, content, and meaning of additional professional labour.

Accordingly, cross-stage divergence is interpreted as an emergent implementation pattern: under the same regional policy, participants described two configurations characterised by different role structures, relational densities, curricular demands, and organisational constraints. Educational stage is therefore treated as a boundary condition on policy enactment, not as a deterministic cause. Given the cross-sectional interview data, this is a bounded interpretation of patterned emergence rather than evidence of dynamical self-organisation.

5.5. Cross-Level Translation, Performativity, and Institutional Cost Externalisation

The findings refine the application of ecological theory to professional settings by suggesting that ecological levels are analytically distinguishable but experientially permeable. Participants described timetables, staffing, regulations, training provision, and assessment guidance not as distant background conditions, but as being translated into classroom feasibility, preparation demands, pedagogical confidence, and emotional strain. Teachers simultaneously occupy classroom, collegial, organisational, and policy-enactment roles; their accounts therefore suggest that cross-level translation may be rapid and recurrent.

This does not mean that Bronfenbrenner’s systems collapse into one another or that their boundaries are objectively more porous for teachers than for children, since the study did not compare these populations. Rather, the classification of a condition is relational and actor-dependent. A timetable or staffing decision is exosystemic insofar as it is made in an organisational setting in which the teacher does not participate directly; participants may nevertheless experience its perceived consequences in classroom interaction and in their professional confidence, stress, or motivation. The proposed implication is therefore cross-level translation, not boundarylessness.

The findings also deepen the connection between bilingual education and performativity. Following Ball [40], the bilingual label may function as a performative technology because it renders innovation, multilingual aspiration, institutional distinction, and policy compliance publicly visible. The label carries symbolic value for schools and families and creates an expectation that curricular content, additional-language development, and educational advantage will be delivered simultaneously. The practical costs of maintaining this promise, however, are considerably less visible.

In the participants’ accounts, the credibility of the label was frequently sustained through compensatory overfunctioning. Teachers redesigned materials, calibrated language use, translated or simplified content, negotiated assessment, communicated with families, coordinated informally, and absorbed uncertainty that had not been resolved institutionally. The programme could therefore retain its public identity and symbolic prestige without equivalent recognition of the labour, time, and resources required for implementation. Compensatory overfunctioning is proposed, in this sense, as a mechanism through which performative policy aspirations are converted into individual professional effort.

This interpretation does not imply deliberate exploitation by leaders or administrations. Rather, it identifies an externalisation of implementation costs whereby responsibility for policy coherence is displaced downwards and normalised as teacher commitment, flexibility, or resilience. The risk is that successful individual compensation conceals the organisational conditions that made it necessary, allowing systemic under-provision to persist while gradually weakening professional viability.

Systemically, compensatory overfunctioning can be understood as a distributed regulatory function: dispersed teacher adjustments may absorb locally perceived implementation discrepancies before they become salient at organisational or policy levels. In participants' accounts, this pattern may preserve the programme's visible and symbolic coherence while transferring the costs of apparent stability to frontline professional sustainability. This interpretation aligns with the robustness-versus-resilience distinction discussed in Section 5.6 [58]: continuity sustained through recurrent local absorption does not necessarily indicate system recovery or adaptive reconfiguration.

5.6. Implications for Public Policy Implementation in Complex Social Systems

Although the empirical setting is bilingual education, the findings support a bounded proposition about policy implementation in complex social systems. Complexity-informed public administration conceptualises implementation as a multilevel accomplishment among interdependent actors, resources, routines, and local interpretations, rather than as the linear transmission of a centrally specified intervention [59,60]. Frontline discretion is often necessary to translate general rules into workable services [61]. In this analysis, participants described common policy requirements as interacting with stage-specific role structures, relationships, curricular demands, and organisational arrangements; these accounts were reconstructed as two implementation configurations: an ecology of proximity and a disciplinary-departmental ecology. These configurations are interpreted as emergent because they were not specified by policy design; the term does not imply spontaneous order or independently demonstrated dynamical emergence.

The findings further support two nested feedback propositions. At the faster classroom timescale, teachers' compensatory actions were described as restoring short-term instructional continuity, consistent with a balancing loop. At the slower organisational timescale, reported sequences were consistent with a reinforcing stabilisation trap in which successful compensation may make implementation gaps less visible and weaken pressure for corrective provision. Conversely, participants described collective adjustment through protected coordination, shared criteria, and responsive leadership as distributing responsibility and supporting professional viability. These process propositions are reconstructed from reported sequences and contrasts; neither co-occurrence counts nor cross-sectional interviews establish loop direction, temporal precedence, causal magnitude, or system-dynamic behaviour.

This distinction qualifies claims of system resilience. Continuity of programme outputs may indicate robustness at the policy level while concealing declining sustainability at the frontline [58]. A system that maintains visible performance by transferring adaptation costs to teachers is operationally stable but potentially brittle, as professional viability is eroded while policy performance appears intact. The accounts further suggest cross-level spillovers from policy design into classroom feasibility, workload, family relations, and perceived equity, and feedback from local implementation to the information available to organisations about policy functioning [62]. We do not claim measured effects on families, students, or equity; these are perceived spillover pathways requiring independent testing.

Within the limits of analytical rather than statistical transferability, the same regulatory mechanism may be relevant to other policy settings in which frontline discretion

absorbs under-provision before it becomes visible at higher organisational levels; this remains a hypothesis for comparative testing, not an empirical generalisation from the Andalusian sample.

No discrete exogenous policy shock was sampled, and the cross-sectional interview design cannot demonstrate dynamic adaptation over time. Accordingly, the study contributes a bounded mechanism-based account of stability, emergence, spillover, and feedback under recurrent implementation misalignment rather than an empirical test of shock response. Longitudinal, multi-source comparative designs should examine whether the proposed fast balancing and slow reinforcing loops operate prospectively, whether policy or organisational changes perturb them, and whether reducing compensatory overfunctioning improves both service continuity and frontline well-being.

5.7. Practical Implications and Future Testing

The interventions proposed below follow directly from the ecology of proximity identified in Primary Education and the disciplinary-departmental ecology identified in Secondary Education. Table 8 summarises the resulting stage-differentiated implementation priorities and indicators.

Table 8 should therefore be read against the two proposed feedback dynamics, not as a list of generic supports. Protected coordination reallocates translational work from individual substitution to formal mesosystemic routines. Shared progression and assessment frameworks, material provision, role protocols, and transition structures reduce the ambiguity associated with invisible repair and legitimacy work; together, these levers are hypothesised to reduce reliance on the fast compensatory balancing loop. Recognising additional labour makes absorbed costs organisationally visible, while programme evaluation that includes professional viability strengthens upward feedback, targeting the slower reinforcing stabilisation trap in which local repair may mask under-provision. These loop-lever mappings are propositions derived from the qualitative model, not demonstrated intervention effects, and require longitudinal evaluation.

The findings suggest that intervention should target the regulatory conditions participants associated with compensatory labour rather than relying primarily on generic resilience or emotional-management provision. In Primary Education, the priority is to protect the coordination, cross-curricular planning, family communication, and material-development structures required by an ecology of proximity. In Secondary Education, the priority is to support disciplinary legitimacy through subject-specific development, common assessment frameworks, interdepartmental coordination, explicit language-assistant protocols, and a structured Primary–Secondary transition. Across both stages, additional CLIL labour should be recognised within workload and timetable allocation. The effectiveness of these interventions should be assessed through observable organisational indicators rather than through the existence of policy statements alone.

Future testing should use a longitudinal, multi-perspective design that follows entrants, current CLIL teachers, teachers who move out of bilingual posts, and leavers; combines interviews with classroom observation and repeated well-being and workload measures; links school timetables, coordination allocations, training participation, staffing, assessment frameworks, and material provision; and samples leaders, bilingual coordinators, language assistants, students, and families. Student engagement and attainment should be analysed as distinct outcomes, not as proxies for teacher well-being. Convergence and divergence across sources should be treated as complementary evidence rather than assuming any single source as ground truth [63]. Such a design would test whether perceived support gaps correspond to documented provision, whether and how family

linguistic capital shapes access and participation, and whether the proposed loops precede changes in professional viability, compensatory overfunctioning, and programme exit.

Table 8. Stage-differentiated implementation priorities and indicators.

Stage	Leverage Point	Responsible Actor	Action	Implementation Indicator
Primary	Protected coordination	School leadership and administration	Allocate a protected weekly period for tutors, English specialists, and CLIL-area teachers; it should not be absorbed by substitutions or general meetings	Coordination period appears in official timetables and produces documented planning agreements
Primary	Cross-curricular language progression	Cycle teams and bilingual coordinator	Map communicative functions, vocabulary load, scaffolding, and expected L2 use across subjects and year groups	Shared progression document reviewed each term
Primary	Materials	Bilingual coordinator and cycle teams	Establish a shared repository of age-appropriate visual, oral, experiential, and project-based resources, with allocated development time	Repository is maintained annually and duplicated individual preparation decreases
Primary	Family expectations	Leadership, tutors, and coordinator	Introduce a common communication protocol explaining realistic outcomes, assessment, content priorities, and appropriate family support	Annual information session and standard written guidance
Secondary	Discipline-specific CLIL development	Teacher-training centres and departments	Replace generic language courses with subject-specific development in disciplinary discourse, explanation, scaffolding, and material design	Discipline-specific sessions and resulting subject units
Secondary	Assessment	Content and language departments	Produce common frameworks distinguishing subject mastery, language-supported performance, and optional linguistic enrichment	Shared rubrics, exemplars, and moderation meetings
Secondary	Interdepartmental coordination	Leadership and bilingual coordinator	Schedule protected meetings between content and language departments	Meetings included in the annual school plan with recorded agreements
Secondary	Language assistants	Leadership and coordinator	Establish a written role protocol covering planning, classroom responsibilities, preparation, and limits of autonomous instruction	Role agreement reviewed at the beginning of each term
Secondary	Primary–Secondary transition	Feeder and receiving schools	Hold an annual transition meeting and share profiles of pupil readiness, practices, and scaffolding expectations	Formal transition protocol and annual meeting
Both	Recognition of additional labour	Administration and leadership	Include CLIL preparation, coordination, assessment negotiation, and family communication in workload allocation	Coordination credits, timetable allocation, or reduced teaching load
Both	Programme evaluation	Administration and leadership	Evaluate teachers' professional viability alongside enrolment, certification, and pupil outcomes	Annual teacher consultation linked to a documented improvement plan

Source: Authors' own work.

6. Conclusions

This study proposes that CLIL teacher well-being can be interpreted through the relationship between lived professional experience and professional viability, understood as the perceived ecological enactability of pedagogically legitimate and sustainable practice. The analysis further identifies compensatory overfunctioning as a theoretically relevant process through which teachers may absorb perceived gaps between programme expectations and implementation conditions.

These constructs extend existing research in distinct ways. Professional viability connects teacher well-being with situated agency by asking not simply whether teachers possess motivation, competence, or resilience, but whether their professional ecology permits those resources to be enacted sustainably. Compensatory overfunctioning distinguishes supported professional adaptation from work that substitutes for missing or ambiguous provision and broadens emotional-labour analysis to include pedagogical, linguistic, organisational, material, and assessment-related substitution.

The comparison suggests that educational stage conditions the form of these processes. Primary teachers' accounts were organised around an ecology of proximity, whereas Secondary teachers' accounts were organised around a disciplinary-departmental ecology. These are not interpreted as deterministic structures but as stage-specific configurations through which participants understood professional opportunity, constraint, and additional labour.

The proposed model should be treated as an analytically transferable and empirically testable interpretation, not as a causal law. Longitudinal, observational, multi-site, and multi-perspective research is required to examine whether recurrent compensatory overfunctioning predicts changes in professional well-being, whether protected organisational provision reduces it, and whether the stage-specific configurations identified in Andalusia are reproduced in other CLIL policy contexts.

Supplementary Materials: The following supporting information can be downloaded at: <https://www.mdpi.com/article/10.3390/systems14080993/s1>, Table S1: Complete codebook, including operational definitions, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and examples for all subcodes and for compensatory overfunctioning.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, J.R.G.-O., R.R.-C. and L.M.-S.; methodology, J.R.G.-O., R.R.-C., L.M.-S. and C.P.-V.; software, R.R.-C. and L.M.-S.; validation, J.R.G.-O., R.R.-C., L.M.-S. and C.P.-V.; formal analysis, J.R.G.-O., R.R.-C., L.M.-S. and C.P.-V.; investigation, R.R.-C. and L.M.-S.; resources, J.R.G.-O. and R.R.-C.; data curation, J.R.G.-O. and R.R.-C.; writing—original draft preparation, J.R.G.-O.; writing—review and editing, R.R.-C., L.M.-S. and C.P.-V.; translation, R.R.-C., L.M.-S. and C.P.-V.; supervision, J.R.G.-O.; project administration, J.R.G.-O. and R.R.-C.; funding acquisition, J.R.G.-O. and R.R.-C. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research was funded by project PID2021-128341OB-I00, “Ecological study of teacher wellbeing among CLIL programme teachers (primary and secondary education) and CLIL/EMI (universities) in the context of Andalusia” (2022–2026), financed by MICIU/AEI/10.13039/501100011033 and by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), “A way of making Europe”, whose principal investigators are Juan Ramón Guijarro-Ojeda and Raúl Ruiz-Cecilia.

Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was conducted in compliance with the fundamental ethical principles governing research with human participants in social sciences and educational research. Specifically, the Declaration of Helsinki in the versions applicable during data collection (the 2013 version until October 2024 and the 2024 revision thereafter) [64,65]; Regulation (EU) 2016/679, General Data Protection Regulation [66]; the corresponding Spanish framework under Ley Orgánica 3/2018, on the protection of personal data and the guarantee of digital rights [67]; and the deonto-

logical guidelines of the British Educational Research Association on educational research [68] were observed. The research conformed to the institutional ethical protocols applicable at the Universidad de Granada, ensuring the principles of voluntariness, informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, the right to withdraw, and data minimisation. All participants provided written informed consent prior to the interviews after receiving complete information on the study's objectives, recording conditions, data treatment, and their rights as participants. Recordings and transcripts are stored on encrypted repositories with restricted access in accordance with the requirements of the regulations cited above.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The qualitative data generated and analysed in this study (interview transcripts) are not publicly available to preserve participants' confidentiality and anonymity, in accordance with the terms of the informed consent granted. Representative excerpts are reproduced in the Section 4. Reasoned requests for access to additional information may be addressed to the corresponding author, subject to compliance with the ethical principles governing the study.

Acknowledgments: The authors sincerely thank the participating teachers for the generosity with which they shared their professional experience in a context of demanding working conditions. We also thank the three experts who validated the interview guide for their constructive observations, as well as the coordinating team of project PID2021-128341OB-I00 for the institutional framework provided.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest in relation to the research, analysis, or publication of this article. The funders had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript; or in the decision to publish the results.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

BERA	British Educational Research Association
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
EMI	English Medium of Instruction
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESO	Compulsory Secondary Education (<i>Educación Secundaria Obligatoria</i>)
JARS-Qual	Journal Article Reporting Standards
SRQR	Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research

References

1. Butler, J.; Kern, M.L. The PERMA-Profil: A brief multidimensional measure of flourishing. *Int. J. Wellbeing* **2016**, *6*, 1–48. [CrossRef]
2. Mercer, S.; Gregersen, T. *Teacher Wellbeing*; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 2020.
3. Nwoko, J.C.; Emeto, T.I.; Malau-Aduli, A.E.O.; Malau-Aduli, B.S. A systematic review of the factors that influence teachers' occupational wellbeing. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* **2023**, *20*, 6070. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
4. Dalton-Puffer, C.; Nikula, T. Introduction. Current Research on CLIL [Special Issue]. *Vienna Engl. Work. Pap.* **2006**, *15*, 2. Available online: https://anglistik.univie.ac.at/fileadmin/user_upload/i_anglistik/Department/Views/Uploads/views15_3_clil_special.pdf (accessed on 11 August 2026).
5. Otto, A.; Rascón-Moreno, D.; Alcalde-Peñalver, E.; García-Laborda, J. Bilingual education in Spain: A critical look at current trends. *Rev. Educ.* **2024**, *403*, 1–8.
6. Bovellan, E. *Teachers' Beliefs About Learning and Language as Reflected in Their Views of Teaching Materials for Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)*; Jyväskylä Studies in Humanities 231; University of Jyväskylä: Jyväskylä, Finland, 2014.
7. Moate, J. Reconceptualising the role of talk in CLIL. *Apples J. Appl. Lang. Stud.* **2011**, *5*, 17–35.
8. Pappa, S.; Moate, J.; Ruohotie-Lyhty, M.; Eteläpelto, A. Teachers' pedagogical and relational identity negotiation in the Finnish CLIL context. *Teach. Teach. Educ.* **2017**, *65*, 61–70. [CrossRef]

9. Hessel, G.; Talbot, K.R.; Gruber, M.-T.; Mercer, S. The well-being and job satisfaction of secondary CLIL and tertiary EMI teachers in Austria. *J. Psychol. Lang. Learn.* **2020**, *2*, 73–91. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
10. Hofstadler, N.; Talbot, K.R.; Mercer, S.; Lämmerer, A. The thrills and ills of content and language integrated learning. In *The Emotional Rollercoaster of Language Teaching*; Gkonou, C., Dewaele, J.-M., King, J., Eds.; Multilingual Matters: Bristol, UK, 2020; pp. 13–30. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
11. Hofstadler, N.; Babic, S.; Lämmerer, A.; Mercer, S.; Oberdorfer, P. The ecology of CLIL teachers in Austria: An ecological perspective on CLIL teachers' wellbeing. *Innov. Lang. Learn. Teach.* **2021**, *15*, 218–232. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
12. Day, C.; Gu, Q. *Resilient Teachers, Resilient Schools: Building and Sustaining Quality in Testing Times*; Routledge: London, UK, 2014. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
13. Hargreaves, L.; Cunningham, M.; Hansen, A.; McIntyre, D.; Oliver, C.; Pell, T. *The Status of Teachers and the Teaching Profession in England: Views from Inside and Outside the Profession*; Research Report 831; Department for Education and Skills: London, UK, 2007.
14. Hargreaves, A. Four ages of professionalism and professional learning. *Teach. Teach.* **2000**, *6*, 151–182. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
15. Childs, E. Teacher Wellbeing in Context: A Comparative Exploration of Factors Shaping Teacher Wellbeing Across Primary and Secondary Schools. Ph.D. Thesis, University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK, 2025.
16. Maslach, C.; Jackson, S.E.; Leiter, M.P. *Maslach Burnout Inventory Manual*, 3rd ed.; Consulting Psychologists Press: Palo Alto, CA, USA, 1996.
17. Van Droogenbroeck, F.; Spruyt, B.; Vanroelen, C. Burnout among senior teachers: Investigating the role of workload and interpersonal relationships at work. *Teach. Teach. Educ.* **2014**, *43*, 99–109. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
18. McCallum, F.; Price, D. Teacher wellbeing. In *Nurturing Wellbeing Development in Education: From Little Things, Big Things Grow*; McCallum, F., Price, D., Eds.; Routledge: London, UK, 2015; pp. 112–132. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
19. Roffey, S. Inclusive and exclusive belonging: The impact on individual and community wellbeing. *Educ. Child Psychol.* **2013**, *30*, 38–49. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
20. McNerney, D.M.; Korpershoek, H.; Wang, H.; Morin, A.J.S. Teachers' occupational attributes and their psychological wellbeing, job satisfaction, occupational self-concept and quitting intentions. *Teach. Teach. Educ.* **2018**, *71*, 145–158. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
21. Piechurska-Kuciel, E. Foreign language teacher burnout: A research proposal. In *Extending the Boundaries of Research on Second Language Learning and Teaching*; Pawlak, M., Ed.; Springer: Berlin/Heidelberg, Germany, 2011; pp. 211–223. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
22. Roffey, S. Pupil wellbeing—Teacher wellbeing: Two sides of the same coin? *Educ. Child Psychol.* **2012**, *29*, 8–17. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
23. McKay, L.; Barton, G. Exploring how arts-based reflection can support teachers' resilience and well-being. *Teach. Teach. Educ.* **2018**, *75*, 356–365. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
24. Vesely, A.K.; Saklofske, D.H.; Nordstokke, D.W. EI training and pre-service teacher wellbeing. *Pers. Individ. Differ.* **2014**, *65*, 81–85. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
25. Bronfenbrenner, U. *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*; Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, USA, 1979. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
26. Bronfenbrenner, U.; Morris, P.A. The bioecological model of human development. In *Handbook of Child Psychology: Theoretical Models of Human Development*, 6th ed.; Damon, W., Lerner, R.M., Eds.; Wiley: Hoboken, NJ, USA, 2006; Volume 1, pp. 793–828. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
27. Rosa, E.M.; Tudge, J. Urie Bronfenbrenner's theory of human development: Its evolution from ecology to bioecology. *J. Fam. Theory Rev.* **2013**, *5*, 243–258. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
28. Jin, J.; Mercer, S.; Babic, S.; Mairitsch, A. Understanding the ecology of foreign language teacher wellbeing. In *Positive Psychology in Second and Foreign Language Education*; Budzińska, K., Majchrzak, O., Eds.; Springer: Cham, Switzerland, 2021; pp. 19–38. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
29. Tudge, J.R.H.; Mokrova, I.; Hatfield, B.E.; Karnik, R.B. Uses and misuses of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory of human development. *J. Fam. Theory Rev.* **2009**, *1*, 198–210. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
30. Tudge, J.R.H.; Payir, A.; Merçon-Vargas, E.; Cao, H.; Liang, Y.; Li, J.; O'Brien, L. Still misused after all these years? A reevaluation of the uses of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory of human development. *J. Fam. Theory Rev.* **2016**, *8*, 427–445. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
31. Talbot, K.R.; Mercer, S. Exploring university ESL/EFL teachers' emotional well-being and emotional regulation in the United States, Japan and Austria. *Chin. J. Appl. Linguist.* **2018**, *41*, 410–432. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
32. Cardoso-Pulido, M.J.; Valdera-Gil, F.; Ruiz-Cecilia, R.; Crichton, H. Language teachers' wellbeing in Scotland: Challenges and coping pathways. *Front. Psychol.* **2026**, *17*, 1816586. [\[CrossRef\]](#) [\[PubMed\]](#)
33. Moate, J. The impact of foreign language mediated teaching on teachers' sense of professional integrity in the CLIL classroom. *Eur. J. Teach. Educ.* **2011**, *34*, 333–346. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
34. Pappa, S.; Moate, J.; Ruohotie-Lyhty, M.; Eteläpelto, A. Teacher agency within the Finnish CLIL context: Tensions and resources. *Int. J. Biling. Educ. Biling.* **2019**, *22*, 593–613. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
35. Aguilar, M. Engineering lecturers' views on CLIL and EMI. *Int. J. Biling. Educ. Biling.* **2017**, *20*, 722–735. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

36. Ruiz Cecilia, R.; Medina Sánchez, L.; López Rodríguez, S. Factors that promote teacher well-being: A qualitative study among Andalusian secondary CLIL teachers. *Onomázein* **2025**, NE XVI, 68–87. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
37. Johnson, S.; Cooper, C.; Cartwright, S.; Donald, I.; Taylor, P.J.; Millet, C. The experience of work-related stress across occupations. *J. Manag. Psychol.* **2005**, *20*, 178–187. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
38. Cardoso Pulido, M.J.; Guijarro Ojeda, J.R. Estudio comparativo-causal sobre el éxito en la vida escolar en profesorado de lengua extranjera en formación. *Onomázein* **2020**, NE VI, 229–253. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
39. Stobart, G. *Testing Times: The Uses and Abuses of Assessment*; Routledge: London, UK, 2008. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
40. Ball, S.J. The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity. *J. Educ. Policy* **2003**, *18*, 215–228. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
41. Day, C.; Gu, Q. *The New Lives of Teachers*; Routledge: London, UK, 2010. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
42. Buonomo, I.; Fatigante, M.; Fiorilli, C. Teachers' burnout profile: Risk and protective factors. *Open Psychol. J.* **2017**, *10*, 190–201. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
43. Priestley, M.; Biesta, G.; Robinson, S. *Teacher Agency: An Ecological Approach*; Bloomsbury: London, UK, 2015. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
44. Hargreaves, A. The emotional practice of teaching. *Teach. Teach. Educ.* **1998**, *14*, 835–854. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
45. Isenbarger, L.; Zembylas, M. The emotional labour of caring in teaching. *Teach. Teach. Educ.* **2006**, *22*, 120–134. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
46. O'Brien, B.C.; Harris, I.B.; Beckman, T.J.; Reed, D.A.; Cook, D.A. Standards for reporting qualitative research: A synthesis of recommendations. *Acad. Med.* **2014**, *89*, 1245–1251. [\[CrossRef\]](#) [\[PubMed\]](#)
47. Levitt, H.M.; Bamberg, M.; Creswell, J.W.; Frost, D.M.; Josselson, R.; Suárez-Orozco, C. Journal article reporting standards for qualitative primary, qualitative meta-analytic, and mixed methods research in psychology: The APA Publications and Communications Board Task Force report. *Am. Psychol.* **2018**, *73*, 26–46. [\[CrossRef\]](#) [\[PubMed\]](#)
48. Malterud, K.; Siersma, V.D.; Guassora, A.D. Sample size in qualitative interview studies: Guided by information power. *Qual. Health Res.* **2016**, *26*, 1753–1760. [\[CrossRef\]](#) [\[PubMed\]](#)
49. Hennink, M.M.; Kaiser, B.N.; Marconi, V.C. Code saturation versus meaning saturation: How many interviews are enough? *Qual. Health Res.* **2017**, *27*, 591–608. [\[CrossRef\]](#) [\[PubMed\]](#)
50. O'Connor, C.; Joffe, H. Intercode reliability in qualitative research: Debates and practical guidelines. *Int. J. Qual. Methods* **2020**, *19*, 1609406919899220. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
51. Campbell, J.L.; Quincy, C.; Osserman, J.; Pedersen, O.K. Coding in-depth semistructured interviews: Problems of unitization and intercode reliability and agreement. *Sociol. Methods Res.* **2013**, *42*, 294–320. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
52. Lincoln, Y.S.; Guba, E.G. *Naturalistic Inquiry*; Sage: Beverly Hills, CA, USA, 1985.
53. Barbour, R.S. Checklists for improving rigour in qualitative research: A case of the tail wagging the dog? *BMJ* **2001**, *322*, 1115–1117. [\[CrossRef\]](#) [\[PubMed\]](#)
54. Meadows, D.H. *Leverage Points: Places to Intervene in a System*; Sustainability Institute: Hartland, VT, USA, 1999. Available online: https://donellameadows.org/wp-content/userfiles/Leverage_Points.pdf (accessed on 1 August 2026).
55. Madigan, D.J.; Kim, L.E. Towards an understanding of teacher attrition: A meta-analysis of burnout, job satisfaction, and teachers' intentions to quit. *Teach. Teach. Educ.* **2021**, *105*, 103425. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
56. Aelterman, A.; Engels, N.; Van Petegem, K.; Verhaeghe, J.P. The wellbeing of teachers in Flanders: The importance of a supportive school culture. *Educ. Stud.* **2007**, *33*, 285–297. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
57. Yin, H.; Huang, S.; Wang, W. Work environment characteristics and teacher wellbeing: The mediation of emotion regulation strategies. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* **2016**, *13*, 907. [\[CrossRef\]](#) [\[PubMed\]](#)
58. Capano, G.; Woo, J.J. Resilience and robustness in policy design: A critical appraisal. *Policy Sci.* **2017**, *50*, 399–426. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
59. Eppel, E.A.; Rhodes, M.L. Complexity theory and public management: A 'becoming' field. *Public Manag. Rev.* **2018**, *20*, 949–959. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
60. Moulton, S.; Sandfort, J.R. The strategic action field framework for policy implementation research. *Policy Stud. J.* **2017**, *45*, 144–169. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
61. Thomann, E.; van Engen, N.; Tummers, L. The necessity of discretion: A behavioral evaluation of bottom-up implementation theory. *J. Public Adm. Res. Theory* **2018**, *28*, 583–601. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
62. Béland, D.; Schlager, E. Varieties of policy feedback research: Looking backward, moving forward. *Policy Stud. J.* **2019**, *47*, 184–205. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
63. Noble, H.; Heale, R. Triangulation in research, with examples. *Evid. Based Nurs.* **2019**, *22*, 67–68. [\[CrossRef\]](#) [\[PubMed\]](#)
64. World Medical Association. *Declaration of Helsinki: Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects*; 64th WMA General Assembly: Fortaleza, Brazil, 2013. Available online: <https://www.wma.net/policies-post/wma-declaration-of-helsinki/doh-oct2013/> (accessed on 20 July 2026).
65. World Medical Association. *Declaration of Helsinki: Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Participants*; 75th WMA General Assembly: Helsinki, Finland, 2024. Available online: <https://www.wma.net/policies-post/wma-declaration-of-helsinki/> (accessed on 20 July 2026).

66. European Parliament; Council of the European Union. Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data. *Off. J. Eur. Union* **2016**, L 119, 1–88. Available online: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2016/679/oj/eng> (accessed on 20 July 2026).
67. Spain. Ley Orgánica 3/2018, de 5 de diciembre, de Protección de Datos Personales y garantía de los derechos digitales. *Bol. Of. Estado* **2018**, 294, 1–68. Available online: <https://www.boe.es/eli/es/lo/2018/12/05/3/con> (accessed on 20 July 2026).
68. British Educational Research Association. *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research*, 4th ed.; British Educational Research Association: London, UK, 2018.

Disclaimer/Publisher’s Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.