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Exploring Primary School Teacher Perspectives on Adaptability and Its Links with Classroom Management and Psychological Wellbeing: A Qualitative Inquiry

Robyn Davis

University College London, robyn.davis.19@ucl.ac.uk

Andrew Holliman

University College London, a.holliman@ucl.ac.uk

Michael John Burrows

Coventry University, ad0567@coventry.ac.uk

Daniel Waldeck

Coventry University, ac8416@coventry.ac.uk

David Holliman

University of Buckingham, david.holliman@buckingham.ac.uk

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Abstract

Teacher shortage is a major concern for educational institutions. One key psychological resource for teachers that may reduce teacher shortage (e.g., prevent burnout, improve wellbeing) is teacher adaptability (i.e., the capacity to adjust to situations of novelty and change). Indeed, teacher adaptability is known to be associated with positive functioning and wellbeing. However, little qualitative research has been conducted exploring how adaptability may be experienced by teachers. The present study set out to explore the unique perspective of a sample of teachers on their adaptability and its links with classroom management and wellbeing. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with four primary school teachers and thematic analysis was adopted to interpret their experiences in greater depth. Four superordinate themes were identified: Experiences of adaptability: “teaching’s constantly adapting”; Learning to adapt: an active process; adaptability and organisational culture; and adaptability and teacher wellbeing: a cyclical relationship. The findings suggest that teachers may develop and improve their adaptability via engagement with reflective practices.

Keywords

adaptability, classroom management, wellbeing, primary school teachers, qualitative, thematic analysis

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Exploring Primary School Teacher Perspectives on Adaptability and Its Links with Classroom Management and Psychological Wellbeing: A Qualitative Inquiry

Robyn Davis¹, Andrew J. Holliman¹, Michael John Burrows², Daniel Waldeck²,
and David M. Holliman³

¹Department of Psychology and Human Development, Institute of Education, University College London, London, United Kingdom.

²School of Psychological, Social and Behavioural Sciences, Coventry University, Coventry, United Kingdom.

³School of Education, University of Buckingham, Buckingham, United Kingdom

Teacher shortage is a major concern for educational institutions. One key psychological resource for teachers that may reduce teacher shortage (e.g., prevent burnout, improve wellbeing) is teacher adaptability (i.e., the capacity to adjust to situations of novelty and change). Indeed, teacher adaptability is known to be associated with positive functioning and wellbeing. However, little qualitative research has been conducted exploring how adaptability may be experienced by teachers. The present study set out to explore the unique perspective of a sample of teachers on their adaptability and its links with classroom management and wellbeing. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with four primary school teachers and thematic analysis was adopted to interpret their experiences in greater depth. Four superordinate themes were identified: Experiences of adaptability: “teaching’s constantly adapting”; Learning to adapt: an active process; adaptability and organisational culture; and adaptability and teacher wellbeing: a cyclical relationship. The findings suggest that teachers may develop and improve their adaptability via engagement with reflective practices.

Keywords: adaptability, classroom management, wellbeing, primary school teachers, qualitative, thematic analysis

Introduction

Teacher shortage is a major concern for educational institutions. In the UK, the teacher retention rate is just over 2/3 in the first five years (Fullard & Zuccollo, 2021). Research suggests that classroom management (CM) and teacher wellbeing play an important role in organisational commitment (e.g., Kaur & Ranu, 2017); for example, CM efficacy is a significant predictor of teacher burnout and low rates of wellbeing have been cited as the main reason for leaving the profession (OFSTED, 2019). One factor known to be important in this context is adaptability, that is, the ability to effectively respond to change, uncertainty, and novelty (Martin et al., 2012). This is evident within CM, where teachers are expected to immediately identify and respond to disruptive students (Marzano et al., 2003). Furthermore, Collie and Martin (2016) propose that adaptability is a protective factor, much like resilience. If so, this may have important implications for teacher retention. Although a growing literature has found adaptability to be significantly associated with increased life-satisfaction and wellbeing (e.g., Holliman et al., 2021; Martin et al., 2013; Vincent et al., 2024), there is limited

research into the importance of adaptability for teachers and the methods adopted thus far have been largely quantitative. This is problematic, as quantitative designs are inadequate for developing in-depth understanding of the complexities, trends, and nuances for teachers regarding their experiences of adaptability. To address this, the current study employs a qualitative approach to explore teachers' experience of adaptability and its links with CM and wellbeing: this approach may help to provide further clarification of the phenomena in a more natural setting and adds comprehensiveness to existing understandings. Specifically, the findings will add some much-needed non-numerical (narrative) data to supplement present-day understanding; this may be of great value to teachers, senior school staff, and researchers, who are interested in optimizing teachers' CM and wellbeing.

Adaptability: Associations with Classroom Management and Wellbeing

Martin et al. (2012) consider adaptability to comprise regulation of one's cognitive (thinking), affective (emotional), and behavioural resources in situations of change, novelty, and uncertainty. Teaching would seem inherently novel and uncertain (Collie & Martin, 2016) not only within the classroom, but also in response to changing policy and expectations of continued professional development. It follows, that adaptability may help teachers respond to their dynamic environment, in terms of their organisational commitment, psychological functioning, and self-efficacy (Collie, Granziera, et al., 2020; Collie, Guay, et al., 2020; Collie & Martin, 2017), although this may also be connected with teachers' perceived autonomy support (PAS), that is, where an authority figure (e.g., head teacher) respects and acknowledges the perspective of their subordinate (e.g., in this case, teacher), and promotes choice and encourages decision making (Baard et al., 2004; see also Collie & Martin, 2017; Collie et al., 2018; Holliman et al., 2020).

Unlike the "resource" of adaptability, CM can be considered a "demand." Such demands are associated with physical and psychological costs, which ultimately lead to burnout (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Indeed, some studies have shown that effective CM may indirectly improve teacher wellbeing, due to increased levels of perceived self-efficacy (Mitchell, 2019). Relatedly, difficulty addressing disruptive behaviour has been found to be associated with negative psychological outcomes (Brouwers & Welko, 2022). Research highlights the need for teachers to identify and respond to disruption quickly and accurately (Marzano et al., 2003). Teachers must also constantly review and develop their approach in a world of constant change (Akman, 2020). This suggests an inherent need to adapt thinking and behaviour to effectively manage the classroom (Collie & Martin, 2016), and there is some empirical evidence of this (see Collie, Granziera, et al., 2020; Collie, Guay, et al., 2020; Vincent et al., 2024). Further, and despite reporting a love of their career, many teachers have expressed a desire to leave the profession due to stress (Education Policy Institute, 2021). Carson et al. (2000) defines this as the strain experienced when attempting to adjust to one's environment. This suggests a need to adapt to the environment to protect teacher's wellbeing. Indeed, Collie and Martin (2017) found increased adaptability to positively correlate with teachers' wellbeing, enhancing psychological functioning and allowing for them to meet work demands more effectively.

Summary, Rationale, and Research Question

The existing literature has suggested that adaptability may be an important mechanism in improving CM and wellbeing (Collie, Granziera, et al., 2020; Collie & Martin, 2017; Vincent et al., 2024). CM and wellbeing are known to relate to organisational commitment and retention rates, as well as coping with day-to-day demands of the teaching role; this suggests that further exploring how adaptability may be involved in such processes would be beneficial.

Given that most of the adaptability research has exclusively focused on quantitative designs, and the recent call for more in-depth exploration of experiences of adaptability to address the nuances and complexities involved (e.g., Holliman et al., 2020; Vincent et al., 2024), we adopted a qualitative, interpretivist approach for the current study.

The research question for this study is: “How do teachers describe their experiences of adaptability in relation to their classroom management and wellbeing, within a primary school context?”

Role of the Researchers

The research team consisted of five researchers from different academic institutions (Davis, A. Holliman, Burrows, Waldeck, & D. Holliman). The principal researcher was Davis who was involved in all aspects of the study. A. Holliman collaborated on the design of the study and contributed to the writing of the present manuscript. Burrows, Waldeck, and D. Holliman contributed to the writing of the present manuscript. However, Burrows also supported the data analysis. A. Holliman, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor of Educational Psychology at UCL Institute of Education. His research interests include the psychology of education, teaching and learning in higher education, and the development of children’s literacy. Burrows, Ph.D., is a lecturer in Psychology at Coventry University, with expertise in research within healthcare, gender and sexuality, and qualitative research methodology.

Waldeck, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor in Psychology at Coventry University, with expertise in the domains of Applied Psychology and Research Methods. D. Holliman, Ph.D., is Head of Collaborations and Business Development in the School of Education at the University of Buckingham, with expertise in education, international business, and strategy. Davis has a BSc degree in Psychology with Education and conducted this qualitative research during her studies. This research was inspired by a passion for optimising the educational experiences of children and their teachers as well as lived (yet anecdotal) experience of the importance of classroom management in relation to learning and psychological wellbeing. Davis was familiar with the participating school as she worked part-time as a Teaching Assistant within this school (albeit within a different classroom from those participating children). She had some knowledge of participating children as well as more general knowledge of the challenges currently faced within this school.

Methods

Design

The researchers were interested in the experiences of primary school teachers relating to perceptions of their adaptability and so a qualitative interpretative approach was adopted. We selected thematic analysis over alternative approaches, such as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith et al., 2022), as it is not wedded to any particular epistemological approach and afforded the researchers flexibility in selecting the appropriate analysis structure to reflect the reality of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Four teachers from an inner-city, UK Primary School, were interviewed.

Participants and Recruitment

Participants were purposively sampled based on age, race, and school. Four teachers (*Mage* = 27.5) were recruited from a UK Primary School including three females and one male, whose native homeland was from New Zealand (NZ) (*n*=1), Australia (*n*=1), and the UK (*n*=2)

respectively. Table 1 below outlines participants' demographic information. Pseudonyms are used to protect the anonymity of participants.

Table 1
Anonymised Participant Demographic Information

Participant	Age	Gender	Nationality	Race	Year's teaching
Jessica	26	Female	New Zealand	White	4.5
Hope	30	Female	Australian	White	8
Phil	28	Male	British	White	3
Harriet	25	Female	British	White	3

The participating school is a state-funded, inner-city primary school comprising of 346 pupils (GOV.UK, 2022). Of those, 71.5% do not have English as their first language (EAL). In addition, there is a high percentage of Special educational needs and disability (SEND), 4% of students have an Education Health and Care Plan (vs 1.6% national average). Furthermore, the school has recently been rated "good" by OFSTED (2022), after their previous inspection receiving a "requires improvement" in 2018. This is important to consider as it shows the extensive change within the environment, as well as the complicated needs of students, that may require teachers to be more adaptable.

Data Collection

The headteacher (i.e., the gatekeeper) provided consent to data collection occurring within school grounds. Following this, teachers were provided an information sheet outlining the study's aims and they were then asked to sign an informed consent form. This research was reviewed and approved by the researcher's University and adherence with the British Psychological Society's Code of Ethics and Conduct.

The semi-structured interviews took place after school (e.g., 3:30pm) in a classroom on a day convenient to the teacher. The interviews were recorded via Zoom and lasted approximately 20-30 minutes. Finally, participants were debriefed and were signposted to a wellbeing in education hotline¹. All participants were provided pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. Davis transcribed the data verbatim from the audio-recorded files. For the purposes of this study, data were constituted as any descriptive verbal information (e.g., single words, phrases) expressed by participants.

The Interview

Davis designed the interview schedule, in part, based on the findings of past literature (e.g., asking participants about their adaptability, links with CM, their wellbeing and factors affecting this within a schooling context). Davis used open-ended questions to allow for greater depth when exploring the participants' experience (Willig, 2013). The interview schedule initially comprised of 11 questions and was piloted with a teacher who did not fit the homogenous sample. This revealed some overlap and concerns over directness. As such, the

¹ Participants were directed to the following website: <https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/get-help/help-for-you/helpline/> which provides one-to-one counselling for education staff.

schedule was re-drafted to allow for more varied discussions and interpretation from participants. The interview schedule included questions such as “What are the barriers to being adaptive?” and “In your experience how important is adaptability in classroom management?” Responses were probed further as necessary for clarification or further understanding. At the end of the interview, the teachers were invited to ask any questions or provide any additional comments as necessary.

Thematic Analysis

The analysis closely followed the procedure described by Braun and Clarke (2006). Specifically, the first step of the analysis was to transcribe the interviews verbatim. The data were then analysed using thematic analysis, which included (a) familiarization with the data, (b) generating initial codes, (c) searching for themes, (d) reviewing themes, (e) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. First, the lead researcher (Davis) immersed herself in the data ensuring her understanding by reading and re-reading the transcripts several times. The lead researcher then noted any initial ideas and/or concepts that emerged relating to the experiences shared by participants. Second, when creating the first set of codes, the lead researcher examined the transcripts and then manually inserted different references (i.e., descriptive, linguistic, conceptual comments) which related to segments of text. For example, if a participant stated, “they don’t support the teacher’s needs” when referring to training on how to adapt, this may be labelled (coded) as “lack of support in training” or “unmet training needs.” Third, the codes were then honed into themes, and data were rechecked for evidence of these themes. Fourth, the themes were then reviewed by checking whether each theme related to the coded extracts and within the whole dataset. Fifth, the themes were named and organized. We observed no sub-themes in our dataset which may in part be due to having a small sample size. As such, all identified themes were overarching (i.e., superordinate) in the data.

Reliability of the Analysis

All the interviews and the initial analysis were conducted by Davis. Therefore, in accordance with best practice guidelines for qualitative research (Elliott et al., 1999), a second researcher (Burrows) was asked to perform credibility checks on the data analysis. Burrows performed the following: first, the initial coding and themes were reviewed, second, the group themes were reconceptualized. Burrows noted that “experiences of adaptability” were best represented as a single group theme (as opposed to across several themes initially), so a new theme was then synthesized by Burrows. Further, Burrows considered that the “process of learning to adapt and links to organisational culture and teacher wellbeing” were best presented as separate themes (when originally these were merged). These changes helped improve the clarity and logical structure of the findings, while also providing more explicit links to the research question. Burrows provided the restructured analysis to the team via email. All researchers agreed in turn to the restructure and the extracts used to support the themes. This process helped to ensure that themes constructed were reliable, clear, and consistent.

Results

This study aimed to explore primary school teacher’s experiences of adaptability in classroom management and their wellbeing. Four superordinate themes were identified: Experiences of adaptability: “teaching’s constantly adapting,” Learning to adapt: an active

process, Adaptability and Organisational Culture, and Adaptability and Teacher Wellbeing: a cyclical relationship.

Theme 1—Experiences of Adaptability: “Teaching’s Constantly Adapting”

Theme 1 reports on the participants’ experiences of adaptability, its key importance to teaching and the process of and factors affecting their adaptability.

All participants explained the central importance of adaptability to their experiences of teaching. According to Jessica, “[...] teaching’s constantly adapting. I think if you stick to one way of teaching and refuse to adapt [...] then you’re not even going to improve, just going to stay the same.” Jessica highlights adaptability as an essential part of teaching, for her teaching requires constant adaptation to improve in her job role. In addition, using the phrase “refuse to adapt” suggests that adaptation is an “active process,” one which requires effort, thought, and attention to succeed. As such, Jessica alludes to adaptability being crucial to reaching. If one does not provide sufficient psychological resources (e.g., effort, attention) to adapt to changing circumstances in the role, then one may not thrive in the role of a teacher.

Participants further discussed their experiences of adapting to the challenging demands of their jobs, the growth as a teacher that this inspires and ultimately, its rewarding nature. Harriet explains:

[...] It’s been a challenging journey, but a journey is what it is. You learn every day, you have to kind of face different situations, every day, like no day is the same. But overall, it’s very rewarding work [...] So, my experience would be like bittersweet in that way.

Again, Harriet conceptualises adaptation as a journey, in this way teachers need to adapt to the changing nature of teaching daily, “no day is the same,” face new challenges and situations and draw on their previous experiences. This underscores Jessica’s experience of teaching and being adaptable.

Harriet’s description of the rewarding nature of adaptability is further developed by Phil as he explores its motivating capacity:

I feel like I have a sense of achievement and a sense of doing good, [...], obviously, being a teacher is rewarding [...] I feel like I’m giving back to community. And [...] I’ve assisted with the lives of children who I’m working with.

For Phil the rewards stem from the impact that he has on the lives of the children he teaches, in giving back to the community, he is placing himself as an important part of that community, underscoring the importance of the teaching role and of the adaptability. The participants’ experience of adaptability reveals it to be an important and influential capacity, central to the role of teacher and the daily challenges that they face.

As seen, adaptability is central to teaching, important given their experiences of constant change in the expectations of the teacher, in relation to the needs of the role and demands placed upon them. Hope’s experiences of classroom management (CM) center it as essential to prevent the students from taking advantage, “[...] the children kind of take advantage [...]” Indeed, all participants found they adapted CM to each class or individual student based on their strengths and weaknesses; for this to occur, teachers needed to know students well. Hope explained: “[...] knowing the children as well, where they would need to... you know what they excel in, what they need more assistance in, things like that [...]”

Additionally, Phil discussed the importance of adapting his behaviour to each child: “I must change my behaviour and speak to them in a different way in order to make them feel comfortable [...].”

Clearly knowing one’s student is an important factor in adaptability; as Hope’s knowledge of the students grew and developed over the course of the year, she was better able to adapt her CM: “You know that, like, where to push certain children and where to, like yeah, like hang back on different ones, [...] you’ve got to get to know them.”

Here, both Phil and Hope describe the process of learning about their students and using this knowledge to inform their adaptation.

The participants also described the experiences of adaptation requiring more in-depth knowledge of the students’ personal or home lives. Jessica described how she used knowledge of her students’ experiences at home to inform her approach: “Now, when you, you know that child's going through something at home or you know that they will have autism, ADHD, or they have emotional [issues].”

Additionally, this points to the increasingly complex demands being placed on educators, demonstrating the growing role of teachers in the personal lives of their students, their experiences center them in supporting their student with potentially complex emotional or learning needs.

It is also clear from the participants that understanding changing cultural reference points is important. Hope said: “You know you got to kind of be up with things as well, like that they came back from the last, not this holiday, the holiday before talking about squid games.”

She explained the importance of keeping up to date with these changes, as this would help her to be more adaptable to her students and their frames of reference/cultural understanding, however incorrect she believed these references to be. Overall, the participants experience teaching as constantly evolving and changing. Shifting needs have required teachers to be adaptable through classroom management and the increasing pastoral expectations of the teacher.

Theme 2–Learning to Adapt: An Active Process

In terms of experience and reflection, participants revealed how reflective practices facilitated the development of adaptability through experience. In this study, all the participants suggested experience was perhaps the most important factor in developing adaptability. Harriet said, “I think, being more experienced, like, actually teaching for longer, I think the longer I’ve taught, the more situations I’ve been in, has helped me be more adaptable.”

For Harriet, adaptability is a function of experience, she has learned from her experiences and can adapt this knowledge to her needs. Phil goes further, emphasising the need to reflect in relation to experience: “You have... had different situations, you know how to... to handle a situation if you, I mean you should be, if you reflect on a situation, what's the adverse effects...”

This implies that the experience, within itself, is insufficient, to develop adaptability, reflection is crucial. Similarly, Harriet said:

Every single day I’ll reflect on my practice and be like well that that was good, or that was... you know... not so good. [...] I do that more in the moment, so I actually noticed, whether something is working in the moment and I’m proud of myself for helping achieve it.

Reflection is an essential and active process. Here Harriet explains that she can reflect in the moment and adapt to changing needs in the moment.

Obviously, experience within all possible situations is impossible. The teachers felt, though, that through empathy, reflection on their own schooling, observations, and the teacher community, they were also able to reflect and learn to respond effectively. Jessica saw her schooling as a source of reflection, stating, “I think you reflect back on your own teachers, so, you think like, if I was in the situation, how would I, if I was a child in this situation, how would I want it handled?”

Her own experiences as a student have helped her to empathise and try to put herself in her student place, seeing situations from another perspective is important and clearly aids her adaptability. Harriet, on the other hand, described how observing other teachers was instrumental in her practice:

[...] even for teachers that have taught for ages, and observing new teachers, observing teachers who've been teaching for life... it is good to just observe how practice is changing, yeah... and also, you're observing different classes of children [...]

This describes an active process, an opportunity to learn, reflect on the difference in practice, current knowledge, and perhaps find room for it to inform their own practice. Phil echoes these experiences, for him networking with teachers, sharing stories, and collaborating on how to approach situations would help improve his adaptability:

[...] maybe a network of teachers discussing what's worked for them, yeah and sharing things because I'm sure there'll be situations which I've encountered and if a teacher says that, yeah, this thing happened to me [...] how did you cope with it?

Reflection is an important skill in adaptability as we have seen; in contrast, however, Harriet and Phil felt a closed-mind or fixed mindset could impact its development. Phil said, “I think closed mindedness, is a barrier to adaptability because [...] you're not responding, you're not listening to the environment. You're not changing your behaviour because you've decided that there's one path [...].” Harriet attributed that a fixed mindset impacts how students feel they can progress:

I've got quite a fixed mindset, but I have to, obviously, teach a growth mindset which is really difficult. But I think that is a barrier to the way, I mean your childhood experiences, and you know experiences of schooling, I think, have a massive impact on whether you can actually adapt to different situations.

Phil and Harriet are describing the same concept here, fixed, or closed minds are a barrier preventing the teacher from listening and responding to the needs in the moment. For Harriet this is a barrier, but her reflection identifies that her own schooling may have led to the development of this mindset. She is making the link between schooling and later adaptability, again highlighting the importance of reflection but also the importance of modelling adaptability for her students.

Theme 3–Adaptability and Organisational Culture

In relation to organisational culture, the senior leadership team (SLT) was identified as an important factor. Jessica felt her ability to adapt was impacted by SLT: “[...] like for me to adapt, then SLT needs to adapt and realise that you need to adapt your expectations to suit the needs of my class.” Expectations from SLT were further discussed as Harriet explained how pressure to meet learning goals impacted her: “[...] it’s difficult to be adaptable when you’ve got a goal to achieve and statistics and data, and you know that’s what they’re looking for.”

SLT’s high expectations and lack of understanding clearly impacts the ability to adapt. They speak of a tension between the needs of the school leadership and the needs of the classroom, which ultimately impact on their adaptability and wellbeing. Another feature of the organisational culture, which was important for adaptability, is peer support. Phil stated, “They’re a teacher community, which shares experiences [...] and peer support. [...] yeah, maybe not senior management.”

Interestingly, Phil believed that SLT would not be who he would turn to for support, again highlighting the differencing expectations between teachers and management.

Theme 4–Adaptability and Teacher Wellbeing: A Cyclical Relationship.

This theme shows the relationship between adaptability and wellbeing. Firstly, it was felt by the participants that adaptability was an important factor for wellbeing. Harriet found she was increasingly able to adapt her emotional responses: “Now I’m more able to adapt as an individual I am having more positive wellbeing [...] so having more ability has meant that I’m having a more positive outlook [...].”

Harriet’s growing ability to adapt gave her a more positive outlook and so wellbeing. Phil connected wellbeing to his adaptability through his ability to teach:

If I couldn't adapt, then... I suppose there have been times early in my career where I felt like I, I couldn't control the class or I felt like I was I wasn't getting them to learn effectively, and I would come home after school and thinking what am I doing wrong? Erm, and then [...] go am I a bad teacher?

Phil saw his ability to adapt as crucial to his effectiveness and pride as a teacher, attaching his self-worth to his ability. As such, this ability was a significant factor in his wellbeing and positive sense of self as a teacher. Similarly, Hope found that as she developed her adaptability, she became more confident as a teacher. This led to less worries and anxieties surrounding her work.

Conversely, while well-being was impacted by adaptability, the reverse was also the case. Participants shared how their wellbeing impacted their ability to adapt: “[...] to be able to adapt, you need to be positive [...] and excited about what you do” (Jessica). And when describing adaptability: “[...] a day-by-day thing, which means how you feel about your school and wellbeing it’s just... Day. By. Day (Jessica).

Here the teachers describe the impact that wellbeing has on their ability to adapt. For them, it is cyclical, feeding into and being fed from each other, as such to talk of adaptability as a stable skill seems inappropriate as it clearly seems to be dependent on the teacher’s current situation. As such, wellbeing is an important moderator to this ability. Adaptability underpins the teachers’ psychological functioning and well-being (perhaps in how they cope with work pressures). In turn, adaptability is impacted by their wellbeing.

Discussion

Returning to the research question, participants described their experience of adaptability, revealing it as core to the profession. This confirms, and extends to, previous studies (Collie & Martin, 2016), by providing narrative, nuanced detail regarding teachers' experiences. For example, the development of adaptation was described as a journey and facilitator of growth as a teacher; and teacher testimony revealed that this could be supported more effectively through teacher commitment (to adapt) including increased empathy, reflection on their own schooling, observations, and engagement with the teacher community. Adaptability was also found to be central to the demands of CM and much like previous work (Akman, 2020), teachers found these demands to be evolving and changing. Regarding wellbeing, the participants felt that there was a cyclical nature between the concepts, thus providing important narrative data in support of existing quantitative findings; whilst they found adaptability improved their psychological functioning, echoing the studies of Collie and Martin (2017), wellbeing was also thought to impact their ability to adapt.

Much like Collie, Granziera et al.'s (2020) study into whole-school adaptability, organisational culture was found to impact adaptability. Teacher testimony revealed that expectations of SLT were felt to hinder ability as unrealistic goals were set for teachers, in accordance with studies exploring PAS (Collie & Martin, 2017; Collie et al., 2018; Holliman et al., 2020). The suggestion of a culture of peer support has important implications as it has been found to be an important factor in teachers' professional commitment, more so than principal leadership (Singh & Billingsley, 1998). Importantly though, it is thought that culture within the school is dependent on leadership (Morris et al., 2019). Therefore, the role of organisation culture in adaptability shows the need for leadership to be involved as part of interventions to improve adaptability.

Further, this study suggests a future intervention should employ reflective practices. Adaptability was found to be an "active process" and reflection integral to its development. This was consistent with other quantitative findings in this area (e.g., Collie, Granziera, et al., 2020); however, it extends on it with narrative, nuanced data, revealing that not only was this (reflection) considered an exercise in evaluating recent experiences but also looking back on personal schooling and collaboration with others. Indeed, participants clarified the need for a growth mindset to participate in adaptive development.

The main limitation of this study was the homogeneity of the sample. Indeed, participant experiences may be too similar to account for those from other primary school or schooling contexts. It is important to note that alongside individual characteristics, teachers were interviewed on different days. For example, Jessica's took place after her Christmas break, and she had not yet taught the students. Conversely, Harriet was interviewed halfway through the term. This may have impacted their discussions. A further study, with a more varied population in experience, gender, and ethnicity, may allow for more nuanced conversations. Further, our sample size for this investigation was relatively small for thematic analysis. As such, future investigations into this topic should aim to recruit much larger samples. Finally, it is important to acknowledge that the lead researcher (Davis) was familiar with the participating school: this was an advantage in terms of having previously established trust allowing for open and honest conversations to take place, however, there may be some risk of bias associated with these existing relationships.

To conclude, this study explored teachers' personal experiences of adaptability in relation to classroom management and wellbeing. Our findings suggest that adaptability appeared to be a beneficial psychological resource for teachers which helped teachers to protect their psychological wellbeing and feel more competent in their job role (e.g., by better managing the classroom). Future research is needed to explore whether teacher adaptability

may also be beneficial for improving retention rates and reducing burnout. Moreover, interventions that focus on reflective practices and relationship building with students may prove fruitful.

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Author Note

Robyn Davis has a degree in Psychology with Education and conducted this qualitative research during her studies. This research was inspired by a passion for optimising the educational experiences of children and their teachers as well as lived (yet anecdotal) experience of the importance of classroom management in relation to learning and psychological wellbeing. Please direct correspondence to robyn.davis.19@ucl.ac.uk

Andrew Holliman, Ph.D., is Associate Professor of Educational Psychology at UCL Institute of Education. His research interests include the psychology of education, teaching and learning in higher education, and the development of children's literacy. Please direct correspondence to a.holliman@ucl.ac.uk

Michael John Burrows, Ph.D., is a lecturer in Psychology at Coventry University, with expertise in research within healthcare, gender and sexuality and qualitative research methodology. Please direct correspondence to ad0567@coventry.ac.uk

Daniel Waldeck, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor in Psychology at Coventry University, with expertise in the domains of Applied Psychology and Research Methods. Please direct correspondence to ac8416@coventry.ac.uk

David Holliman, Ph.D., is Head of Collaborations and Business Development in the School of Education at the University of Buckingham, with expertise in education, international business, and strategy. Please direct correspondence to david.holliman@buckingham.ac.uk

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