

Article

# “Teachers Are Rock Stars!” Rethinking Teaching and Teacher Education in a Post-Pandemic World: Innovative Disruption and Silver Linings

Donna Pendergast <sup>1,\*</sup>  and Mia O'Brien <sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup> School of Education and Professional Studies, Griffith University, Gold Coast, QLD 4122, Australia<sup>2</sup> School of Education, University of Southern Queensland, Springfield, QLD 4300, Australia; mia.o'brien@usq.edu.au

\* Correspondence: d.pendergast@griffith.edu.au

**Abstract:** The COVID-19 pandemic amplified a pre-existing global education crisis. As teachers and systems alike have pivoted to keep the education of the next generation underway, the liminal space between *normal* and *the new normal* has provided the opportunity for innovative disruption and transformation to confront the status quo in ways that were previously unimaginable. It is in this space of possibility, in mid-2022, that 466 education stakeholders including teachers, academics, system leaders, and university students explored the idea of rethinking teaching and teacher education in a post-pandemic world. The participants of the study responded to a series of five questions about impact, spaces for transformation, and possible legacies. Inductive qualitative coding was employed to generate themes from the responses, and polling used to determine the frequency of agreement followed. Among the findings were insights into their experiences and the spaces for innovative disruption, with three areas most notable: the opportunity for valuing teachers' expertise, noting their 'rock star' status during the lockdown phase of the pandemic; the need to focus on student and teacher wellbeing, equity and diversity; and the opportunity to innovate for enhanced flexibility for work structures, learning and connecting beyond the classroom.

**Keywords:** teaching; teacher self-efficacy; initial teacher education; pandemic; post-pandemic; innovative disruption; flexibility; challenging; opportunities



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## 1. Introduction

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on education are unprecedented, and the implications enormous [1], amplifying a pre-existing global education crisis characterised by embedded inequality [2]. At its peak, at least 91% of school students worldwide, comprising 1.6 billion children and young people, experienced school closure, with 131 million students missing three quarters of classroom instruction from March 2020 to September 2021 [3]. Emergency education with features such as learning from home with carers as supervisors; rapid digitisation, as staff modified learning to match the learning environment; staff professional learning at an accelerated rate estimated to be equivalent to 3–5 years, in order to cope with the changes; a rapid progression to digital pedagogical approaches; the stripping of the curriculum to the essential core; and reinvented learning programs were activated. As the world continues to shift from this unexpected disruption to recovery, the opportunity to learn from the experience must not be missed, especially given the challenges currently facing the teaching profession [4].

## 2. The Impact of COVID-19 on Learning

Learning losses for school-aged students globally are estimated to total 1.8 trillion hours of in-person learning [3], with the average student being eight months behind where they would have been without the impact of the pandemic. However, the impact

varies dramatically with three archetypes: high-performing systems, where students are 1–5 months behind, with an average of 4 months; low-income, low-performing systems are 3–8 months behind, with an average of 6 months; and middle-income moderate pre-COVID learning systems are 9–15 months behind, with an average of 12 months [5]. Within these archetypes, inequalities have exacerbated student learning losses, so those without access to technology, for instance, have been impacted more intensely.

Another way to consider impact on learning on a global scale is to reflect on the achievement of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) [6]. SDG 4 Quality Education seeks to “[E]nsure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” [6] (n.p.). Pre-pandemic the targets were lagging, and the pandemic has exacerbated their achievement, both for primary and secondary schooling, and especially for those with limited access to technology and equity-based education and learning [7]. The education setback has been monetized by the World Bank [8], estimating that economic losses from the baseline COVID scenario have resulted in a loss of gross domestic product (GDP) of USD 147 trillion through 2050 (relative to a ‘no COVID scenario’), which is categorised as a high level of damage. Hughes et al. [7] note that while economic loss can be estimated based on reduced educational opportunity, this is just one way of measuring impact, pointing out that the “[R]ichness of lives and opportunities for progress toward gender equality cannot easily be monetized” (p. 66).

In Queensland, Australia, the setting for this study, schools remained open for vulnerable children and those of essential workers during lockdown periods, and for all others, the learning from home with emergency education period was among the shortest globally [9], at just 5 weeks for most students; however, school closures following confirmation of positive COVID-19 cases extended some students’ loss of time in school. However, schooling was impacted across the period from March 2020 well into 2022, with requirements for social distancing, restrictions on movement and activities, controls on gatherings, high levels of absenteeism of both staff and students, and the challenges of school refusal affecting learning and pedagogy for the duration.

### 3. The Pandemic as Innovative Disruption and Transformation

In education, disruptions occur constantly; some are planned, such as events and school camps, and others are unplanned, such as natural disasters [10]. However, there are plans for these unplanned events. The effects of the pandemic exceeded the boundaries typically associated with unplanned disruptions, and while unexpected, has been “handled responsively by governments in a planned and very disruptive way” [10] (p. 17). When disruption leads to the abandonment of previous practices, it can be regarded as *innovative disruption*.

The origins of the concept of innovative disruption are attributed to Clay Christensen in the field of management [11]. For the purposes of this study, innovative disruption is taken as sudden change that displaces the existing status quo, providing a potential space for transformation and re-invention. The pandemic is an example of an event that has potential to lead to disruptive innovation in education. For example, disruptive innovation in the form of online learning has the potential to enable greater, more equitable access to education and learning [7]. Insightfully, in the early days of the pandemic, Phillips and Cain [12] (n.p.) speculated that “[I]n the longer term, this sudden change in education may lead us to think of innovation in the area. However, for now, teachers, schools and students are just trying to survive, and they need all the resources necessary to make it through this year—and beyond”.

In providing guidance for the unplanned disruption to education systems and leaders, the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) developed ten principles [2] in two categories: during the pandemic, and after, for effective and equitable recovery. The ten principles are provided in Box 1.

**Box 1.** OECD ten principles for schooling during and recovery from the pandemic<sup>1</sup>. <sup>1</sup> Source: OECD Education International [2] (p. 4).

<p><b>Principles for Schooling during the Pandemic:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Keep schools open as much and as safely as possible.</li> <li>2. Ensure equity and align resources with needs.</li> <li>3. Provide a remote learning infrastructure which is designed to reach all students.</li> <li>4. Support teachers in their professional lives.</li> <li>5. Enable teachers and parents to support learners.</li> </ol> <p><b>Principles for recovery towards effective and equitable education:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Provide targeted support to meet students' learning and social and emotional needs.</li> <li>7. Co-design a robust digital learning infrastructure with teachers and stakeholders.</li> <li>8. Empower teachers to exercise their professionalism and benefit from professional learning opportunities.</li> <li>9. Encourage a collaborative culture of innovation.</li> <li>10. Learn from national and international evidence.</li> </ol>
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The OECD [2] notes that “the pandemic is showing that countries' current learning infrastructures are highly vulnerable to external shocks” (p. 1). In shifting from the *during* to the *recovery* phase, there is no expectation for a return to pre-pandemic as *normal*, and it is in this in-between space that the opportunity for transformation is located. Bell [13] brought the concept of liminality to our attention during the pandemic, providing us with a means to articulate the transition space in a meaningful way. Liminality is the moment between moments, transition between what was *normal* and what the *new normal* might be. It is in this liminality that the opportunity for transformation of education and learning exists. Liminality provides a space for consideration of questions around temporality, embodiment, mobility, relationships, and identity [13]. The OECD ten principles are adopted as a lens for discussion in this study.

It is in this space, and with this hope, that the opportunity to bring together 466 educators to think about COVID and its disruptive effects was taken. In 2022, Griffith University, in collaboration with a series of sector partners, hosted a summit [14] on the topic *Rethinking teaching and teacher education in a post-pandemic world*. The authors of this paper are also the summit co-convenors. The purpose of the summit was to examine what effect the pandemic disruption had on teachers and teacher education, how this learning can contribute to the recovery phase that occurs after disruptive events [10], and where innovative disruption might lead to transformation and legacies. The findings of a series of questions posed during the summit are reported in this study.

## 4. The Study

### 4.1. Participants

A total of 466 delegates attended the one-day summit on the topic *Rethinking teaching and teacher education in a post-pandemic world*, delivered in hybrid format. Some 230 attended in person and 236 attended virtually. Delegates were self-selected in response to an open invitation disseminated widely across the education sector networks, through teacher education institutions, professional organisations, schools, and education systems. Snowballing, open invitations enabled a diverse range of attendees to participate in the free event, and there was no cap placed on attendance. Delegates agreed to participate in the polling process that generated the data that have been published as a summary of the event [14]. All data used in this paper are available for open access in the form of a summit communiqué [14]. The accessible data have been further analysed in this paper and considered from a unique perspective.

Delegates provided details of their affiliations at the time of registration via an online portal. Table 1 indicates that attendees were from a range of sectors; over a third were academic staff working in teacher education (n = 176), and almost a third were teachers

in the field (n = 140). Around 8% (n = 36) were tertiary education students. There were participants from every Australian jurisdiction and over 100 stakeholder organisations (such as government bodies and professional associations), and participants attended from ten countries. This breadth of participation highlights the broad interest in the topic.

**Table 1.** Participants' affiliations.

Organisation	Participants	%
Academic	176	37.7%
School	140	30.0%
Government	58	12.6%
Professional associations	34	7.3%
Post-graduate students	20	4.3%
Other	18	3.9%
Pre-service teacher	16	3.4%
University support	4	0.9%
Total	466	100%

#### 4.2. Summit Format

The summit was a one-day event with 17 challenging 5-min provocations from education leaders from around the globe, delivered in five blocks across the day. These speakers addressed topics such as disruption and innovation, pandemic experiences, reinventing schools, educator wellbeing, innovation and transformation, and SDGs, interspersed with examples from the field of how educators, schools, and systems have pivoted to keep learning happening. These provocateurs were joined by ten additional panellists to provide a series of discussion opportunities following each of the five provocation blocks across the day, wherein delegates could direct questions to speakers.

The event was fast-moving, with delegates engaged in a journey of generating ideas and voting to create a shared, future-oriented set of outcomes to address where innovative disruption has impacted the profession, and what we can optimistically, intentionally, and enthusiastically harness and amplify for the future.

Participants were invited to respond to the following questions at intervals across the day:

1. What was the most challenging aspect of your pandemic experience?
2. How has the pandemic changed what you do?
3. What are the innovations you would like to keep?
4. What legacy can we create for teachers and teacher education?
5. How can universities enhance initial teacher education programs to better prepare teachers in a post-pandemic world?

These questions serve as the research questions that collectively contribute to the aim of this study: to explore the impact, spaces for transformation, and possible legacies of the COVID-19 pandemic for teaching and teacher education.

#### 4.3. Data Gathering and Analysis

The responses to each of the research questions 1–5 were gathered through a polling process in four stages, with the research questions presented to summit delegates during intervals across the day. The first stage involved the generation of responses to each of the questions in turn. The responses from each of the participants were collected virtually, with delegates provided a prompt to which they entered a response in live data capture. The second stage involved an expert panel of five people familiar with the coding method aggregating responses into thematic statements that captured the essence of the responses. This thematic generation involved reading and interpreting the responses to develop the

themes, and hence it utilised inductive qualitative coding. The five panellists agreed to the themes generated from the response data, creating inter-rater reliability and confidence in the themes developed. Inductive qualitative coding is commonly used in qualitative studies to analyse data to create themes. It involves a process whereby researcher/s read and interpret textual data to develop themes based on that data [15]. This analytical method is typically aligned with interpretivist–constructivist approaches, as it enables coders to create themes or concepts without influence on the concepts [16]. This was the approach adopted by the summit to ensure the participants’ voices were heard and valued.

The third stage was a re-presentation of the top five themes to the delegates at a time interval of around thirty minutes. Finally, the fourth stage was the virtual polling of the delegates to determine the frequency of support for the themes, resulting in a percentage of respondents in majority agreement with the statement.

The data gathering process was entirely anonymous, and there were no identifiers for participant responses; hence, there are no demographic variables used to present and analyse the data.

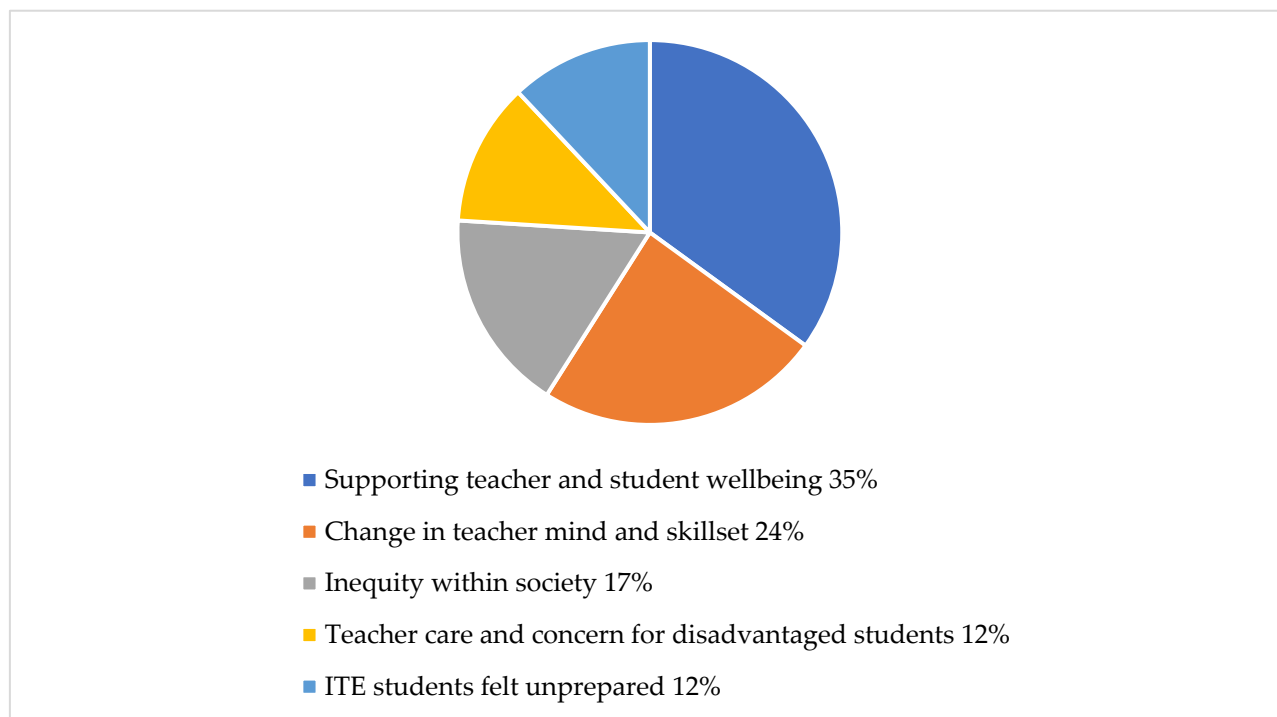
## 5. Findings and Discussion

Each of the questions are presented in turn, along with an analysis and commentary relevant to the findings.

### 5.1. Most Challenging

The participants responded to the following question: *What was the most challenging aspect of your pandemic experience?*

The themes generated from the participant responses through inductive qualitative coding are presented in Figure 1, and examples of participant comments for each theme are included in Table 2.



**Figure 1.** Percentage of responses to the prompt: Most challenging aspects of the pandemic.

The polling of summit delegates revealed a strong focus on the role of the teacher to be the most challenging aspect of the pandemic experience. This was the combined response of over a third citing *supporting teacher and student wellbeing* (35%), and another quarter

indicating *change in teacher mindset and skillset* (24%), together representing the views of 59% of the delegates' responses.

The ten principles developed by OECD feature the role of teachers, especially items 7 and 8. This is of particular interest to this study, as it places teachers at the centre of recovery efforts. A legacy that remains is the ongoing need for mental health programs designed to address burgeoning student and staff wellbeing and mental health issues [17], now commonly referred to as *the shadow pandemic* [18].

**Table 2.** Most challenging aspects of the pandemic experience for the participants.

Themes Respondent Vote (%)	Examples of Participant Comments
Supporting teacher and student wellbeing (35%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managing the mental health of myself, staff, and students</li> <li>• Student engagement and managing their emotional state so that they were able to interact in learning</li> <li>• Novelty turning to anxiety</li> <li>• The wellbeing of students during lockdown</li> <li>• Staff exhaustion</li> <li>• Staff workload and mental health.</li> <li>• Vastly increased workload (meetings more than doubled: problem solving meetings, planning meetings, student support meetings); there was also the increased workload of changing to fully online learning and supporting others to do the same</li> </ul>
Change in teacher mindset and skillset (24%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting colleagues in rapid pivot to fully online learning and teaching, and maintaining quality in terms of the overall experience for students</li> <li>• Being ill prepared technologically for the first <i>wave</i> of school closures and home schooling</li> <li>• Managing staff in an off-campus environment to achieve alignment and success and continuity for students</li> <li>• Increasing the influence of the school so that DPs and Principals were engaged in and responded to the needs of the whole school community; our school leaders are good operators in stable times, but lacked the agile leadership skills and behaviours to effectively help our school community; it was hard to get them out of their office</li> <li>• Dealing with the conservatism and reluctance of many to change and pivot, and desperate attempts to return to a broken 'normal'</li> </ul>
Inequity within society increasingly obvious (17%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inequities in access to education that already existed, but that the pandemic really highlighted them</li> <li>• The most challenging aspect was with parents who did not have internet, did not answer their phones and did not take my assistance; I posted work to their mailboxes, yet the Australia Post was heavily delayed. Some students received the work weeks later; that was frustrating</li> <li>• The broad inequity in our society was highlighted in students, staff, and members of the community. Rather than just devices (i.e., the number and type per family), connectivity to the Internet was an issue (1 h from Brisbane there is no service); this had a profound effect on learning</li> <li>• There was insight from students and families from diverse cultural backgrounds into the increased isolation—and, for some, discrimination—they experienced, and the marginalisation they continue to feel</li> <li>• The inequity encountered by students and families from diverse language backgrounds, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, in terms of access to technology, data, appropriate learning materials, and support</li> </ul>

Table 2. Cont.

Themes Respondent Vote (%)	Examples of Participant Comments
Teacher care and concern for disadvantaged/disconnected students (12%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The digital divide for our students was absolutely the most significant challenge to maintaining a quality educational experience. The digital divide was not just in terms of computer access; many homes used post-paid mobile phones as their only source of internet access, meaning students could not download materials. Other students had one very old laptop shared between three or more children, plus caregivers trying to work from home.</li> <li>There were disappearing students in ITE (initial teacher education), keeping track of all students and supporting them to stay engaged in course experiences, and then getting them back on campus once lock downs finished was a challenge.</li> <li>I (a teacher educator at university) found it most challenging to keep pre-service teacher students engaged in lectures and particularly tutorials; while we have all sorts of tools that we can use to replicate group work (such as breakout rooms, Padlets, etc.), students did not engage in these in the same way as they would sitting together in a room engaging in group work</li> </ul>
ITE students felt unprepared (12%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The most challenging aspect was making sure that ITE students were able to have an experience in schools that would prepare them for their future classrooms</li> </ul>

The importance of wellbeing in personal, social, economic, and community flourishing has been acknowledged by the World Health Organization [19]. Research shows strong links between wellbeing and productivity in the workplace, physical health and longevity, life satisfaction, and economic performance. Wellbeing matters because people (including teachers) with higher levels of wellbeing are generally more likely to show empathy, compassion, and prosocial behaviour; they are more socially engaged, make more ethical decisions, and engage positively with those around them [20]. Teacher wellbeing has an extensive and recent research base [21,22] which documents close links between teacher wellbeing and the quality of pedagogical practice, student learning and achievement, and more broadly with educational governance and school improvement [23,24].

Increasingly, an interdisciplinary reading of *wellbeing* [25] enables the foregrounding of internal states of mind (such as the presence of positive emotions, a sense of happiness, contentment or satisfaction, and the experience of purpose and meaning) [26,27] together with reflexive external or social dimensions that shape our experiences of being in the world [28,29]. These social views of wellbeing include components such as the quality of our relationships with those we live and work closely with, the social resources available in times of need or challenge, and perceptions of the broader social occurrences or political processes that characterise the *social worlds* people inhabit [30,31].

While there is much research to pinpoint the ways in which the pandemic challenged teachers' internal wellbeing and tested resilience [21,24], the inclusion of social dimensions of wellbeing provides additional ways of understanding the pandemic's impact on teachers. For example, Lambert et al. [20] suggest that individual wellbeing can be tightly bound to collective wellbeing in situations where there is a high interdependency of individuals on one another. Teachers and their students can, over time, develop a close sense of interdependency, emerging from the very specific sets of routines, repeated interactions, and sense of relational trust that make up classroom experiences. This explains the sense of responsibility and reflexivity that teachers (and many respondents) expressed about maintaining the wellbeing of their students and colleagues.

Similarly, Granziera, Collie and Martin [22] propose that an analysis of teacher work using job demands–resources theory reveals how teacher wellbeing is inextricably influenced by the iterative balance or potential imbalance of the resources available in the school, the quality and style of school leadership, changes in workload and work context, and

fluctuation in the engagement of students. This aspect of wellbeing is reflected in the many responses of participants that noted the challenges of *balancing* change, pivoting practice, increasing workload, the disengagement of students, and reflexivity to local contextual features (including leadership processes and activities).

Challenges related to catering for *increasingly obvious inequity within society* (17%) and *teacher care and concern for disadvantaged/disconnected students* (12%) were also prominent, with almost a third of delegates reporting this as their greatest challenge. This concern is shared by Sonnermann and Goss [32], who proposed a national tuition program alongside a literacy and numeracy program in the early years for disadvantaged students who were most impacted by the pandemic and disproportionately lost out on learning, noting “[T]he achievement gap for disadvantaged students is unfair, costly, and widening. Australia should now seize the opportunity to narrow it” (p. 3).

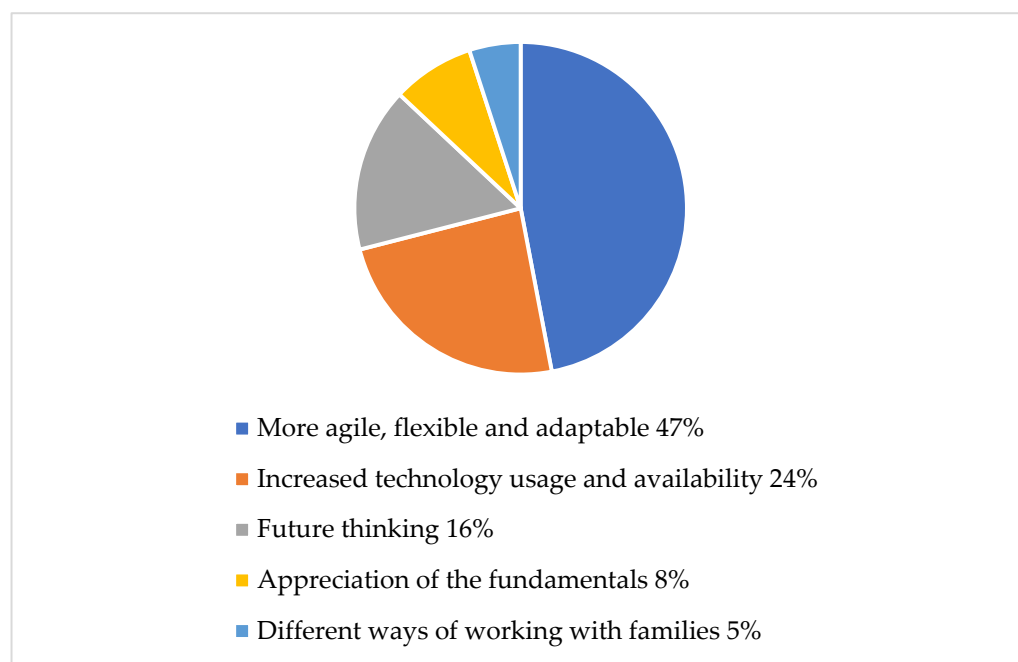
Reflecting on the OECD principles for recovery towards effective and equitable education, the responses to this question affirm particular strategies:

6. Provide targeted support to meet students’ learning, and social and emotional needs;
7. Co-design a robust digital learning infrastructure with teachers and stakeholders;
8. Empower teachers to exercise their professionalism and benefit from professional learning opportunities [2].

### 5.2. What Has Changed

The participants responded to the question *How has the pandemic changed what you do?*

The themes generated from the participant responses through inductive qualitative coding are presented in Figure 2, and examples of participant comments for each theme are included in Table 3.



**Figure 2.** Percentage of responses to the prompt: How has the pandemic changed what you do?



**Table 3.** How has the pandemic changed what you do?

Themes Respondent Vote (%)	Examples of Participant Comments
More agile, flexible and adaptable (47%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is much more online work; teacher meetings can be more efficient, and professional learning more accessible.</li> <li>• It has broken down geographical boundaries and exposed us to new ways of working</li> <li>• We have had to find an efficient strategy for getting things across</li> <li>• We have had to find different ways to connect with students</li> <li>• We have less fear when trying new and different ways of working</li> <li>• It has strengthened my ability to empathise professionally with colleagues</li> <li>• It has provided greater access to professional development opportunities</li> <li>• We have to think about different ways of running programmes</li> <li>• Our work is more flexible, but we are less able to disconnect</li> <li>• People are more comfortable participating in online meetings</li> <li>• There is a focus on quality over quantity</li> <li>• I have questioned the necessity of things I previously took as set in stone</li> </ul>
Increased technology usage and availability (24%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IT (information technology) skills have improved</li> <li>• Presentation style has changed, e.g., online vs. face-to-face</li> <li>• There are more interactive activities in synchronous online learning, and virtual office hours</li> <li>• It made me realise how much technology is already out there, which we are not using to personalise learning pathways; I changed my focus accordingly.</li> <li>• I have a lot more zoom meetings now, almost daily</li> <li>• Working from home means flexibility in care and travel time (3 h), which was gained back for family time</li> <li>• Some stronger student–teacher connections, as they are more willing to connect with teachers online</li> <li>• We now manage technology to ensure that staff and students can engage in online learning in a meaningful way</li> <li>• Innovation using ICT</li> <li>• We have had to create warm, inviting, and collegial spaces in the online environment</li> </ul>
Future thinking (16%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is sharpened focus and desire for change to meet future needs</li> <li>• We are thinking innovatively about what is possible in schools</li> <li>• It really opened my eyes to the world of wellbeing</li> </ul>
Appreciation of the fundamental elements (8%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We now make time to genuinely connect with others no matter how busy</li> <li>• There is more focus on my wellbeing and awareness of what works for me</li> <li>• I ask for help sooner and do not judge myself poorly for doing so</li> <li>• I am less frustrated when things do not go the way I would like them to go</li> </ul>
Different ways of working with families (5%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is more email communication instead of in-person communication</li> <li>• Any event we plan now has a dual offering of online and face-to-face, which is much more inclusive</li> <li>• There are much closer working relationships with parents</li> </ul>

The polling of summit delegates revealed that almost half reported the pandemic has changed what they do by making them *more agile, flexible and adaptable* (47%). Almost a quarter indicated *increased technology usage and availability* (24%). The remaining categories pointed to shifts about *future thinking* (16%), an *appreciation of fundamentals* (8%), and *different ways of working with families* (5%) as being the aspects that have changed the most for them as a response to the pandemic.

In a recent report, *Making time for great teaching and how better government policy can help*, the case was made for enabling greater agility in the way teachers work and the way teaching and learning occurs, aligning with the participants' views. In the report, Hunter and Sonnermann [33] argue that "Australia needs to fundamentally rethink how

teachers' work is organised. School organisational models have not kept pace with changes in schools over recent decades. We continue to ask teachers to do more, but we've not yet examined how realistic it is to achieve all that within a 38 h working week" (2022, p. 41).

Research mirrors the comments of many participants in relation to the use of technology, and the consequent flexibility and adaptability this has enabled. Stefanile [34] (2020) noted, for example, that following a short *grace* period in which teachers and students alike *adjusted* to the need to work online, the technology afforded opportunities for greater interactivity and student-led learning. Despite struggling with connectivity, the nuances of technology use, and student *disengagement*, teachers include flexibility, the capacity to differentiate, and access to a wider range of resources amongst the benefits [35,36]. However, as was also noted by the summit participants, access to appropriate technologies and *digital inclusion* remains an important consideration [37].

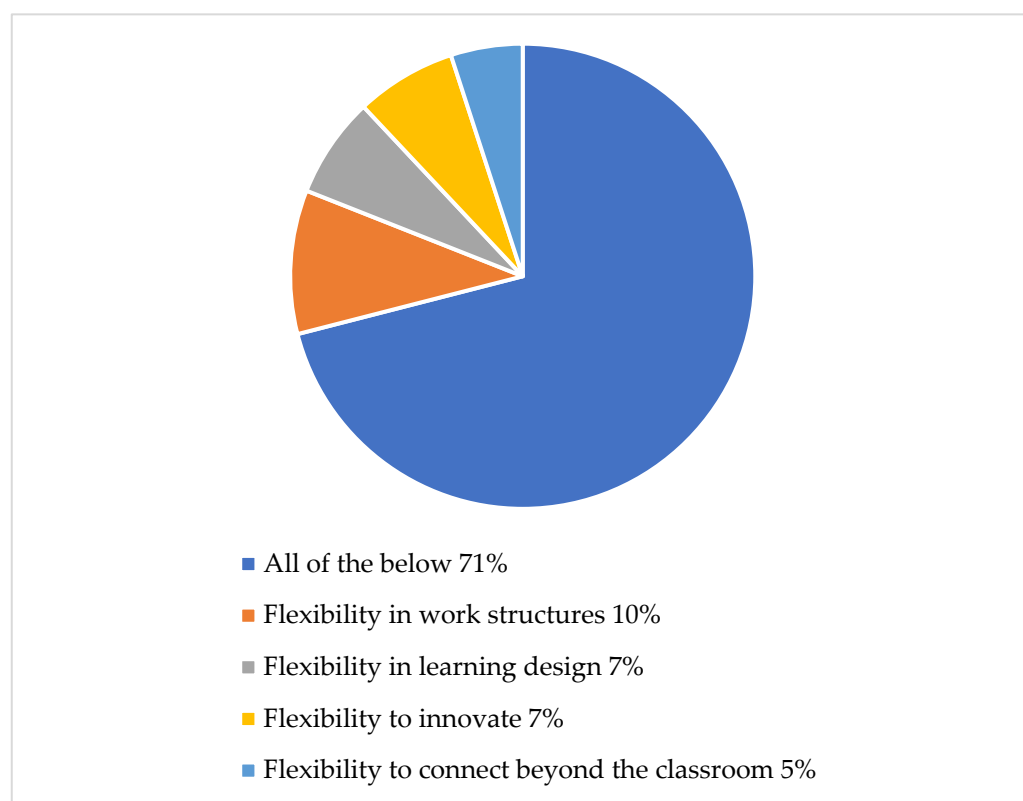
Reflecting on the OECD principles for recovery towards effective and equitable education, the responses to this question affirm, in particular, the following strategies:

7. Co-design a robust digital learning infrastructure with teachers and stakeholders;
8. Empower teachers to exercise their professionalism and benefit from professional learning opportunities [2].

### 5.3. Innovations Worth Keeping

The participants responded to the question *What are the innovations you would like to keep?*

The themes generated from the participant responses through inductive qualitative coding are presented in Figure 3, and examples of participant comments for each theme are included in Table 4.



**Figure 3.** Percentage of responses to the prompt: What are the innovations you would like to keep?

**Table 4.** What are the innovations you would like to keep?

Themes Respondent Vote (%)	Examples of Participant Comments
All of the below (71%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All of the below</li> </ul>
Flexibility in work structures (10%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flexibility and technology</li> <li>Flexible timetabling</li> <li>Flexibility of lesson delivery</li> <li>More time with my family and dog, and the flexibility to have that time and balance it with work</li> <li>New ways of working, i.e., a mixed mode with a blend of face-to-face and online</li> <li>Flexible school plans</li> <li>Flexible working arrangements for staff</li> <li>A hybrid model of working and teaching, allowing workers to create their own timetables while working towards their goals</li> <li>Flexible working</li> </ul>
Flexibility in learning design (7%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flexibility in work life and curriculum delivery</li> <li>Increased use of digital technologies to deliver blended lessons and flexibility for students</li> <li>Flexible learning, blending face-to-face, online, and paper-based learning</li> <li>The flipped classroom, with OneNote and Teams</li> <li>Learning any time</li> <li>New ways of working, i.e., a mixed mode with a blend of face-to-face and online</li> </ul>
Flexibility to innovate (7%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continued collaboration for problem-solving</li> <li>More focus on personalised learning pathways made possible through AI (artificial intelligence) applications</li> <li>More engagement with parents over different platforms</li> <li>Creativity</li> </ul>
Flexibility to connect beyond the classroom (5%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engagement with families</li> <li>Working from home, and flexible working arrangements</li> <li>Ways to keep human interactions</li> <li>A stronger awareness of global problems and how they should drive our educational focus</li> <li>The parent–teacher connection, which allows for parents to be involved in learning; the school provides online digital platforms for parents to connect quickly and see work samples (e.g., SeeSaw and Class Dojo)</li> <li>Greater focus on wellbeing and community connections and impact</li> <li>Consulting with all stakeholders</li> <li>Creative/innovative ways to support students and engage them in learning</li> <li>International connections and partnerships made possible by digital online platforms</li> </ul>

The findings revealed the statement that resonated most with respect to the innovations respondents would like to keep could be summarised by the word *flexibility*. The majority of respondents (71%) indicated they sought *flexibility* in the areas of *work structures* AND *learning design* AND *space to innovate* AND *connecting beyond the classroom*. The remaining 29% of delegates selected one of these areas as having the most resonance, with roughly equal responses across the four options.

As recovery from the pandemic continues, we are confronting *the great resignation*, a phrase coined by organisational psychologist Klotz in 2021 to describe the unexpected wave of people quitting their jobs as they consider where, why, and how they work [38]. Flexibility in work and workplaces is one of the most desirable aspects for retaining workers [38], so it is not surprising that educators too are looking for greater flexibility. New possibilities for working differently (no commute, online learning at times that suits

learners and educators best, no supervision duties, attending to home duties concomitantly with working) that arrived during the pandemic challenged the taken-for-granted rigidity and inflexible structures that characterise most teaching roles and place stress and pressure on the working lives of teachers [33]. Rodberg [39] agrees. In an opinion piece titled *Teaching must get more flexible before it falls apart*, a range of possibilities are explored, reflecting the comments presented in Table 4 that focus strongly on flexibility.

Alongside greater flexibility in work structures, flexibility for innovating, learning design, and connecting beyond the classroom align with the greater complexity of the lived world, where “increased complexity demands flexibility” [40] (p. 634).

Reflecting on the OECD principles for recovery towards effective and equitable education, the responses to this question particularly affirm the following strategies:

7. Co-design a robust digital learning infrastructure with teachers and stakeholders;
8. Empower teachers to exercise their professionalism and benefit from professional learning opportunities;
9. Encourage a collaborative culture of innovation [2].

#### 5.4. Pandemic Legacies

The participants responded to the question *What legacy can we create for teachers and teacher education?*

The themes generated from the participant responses through inductive qualitative coding are presented in Figure 4, and examples of participant comments for each theme are included in Table 5.

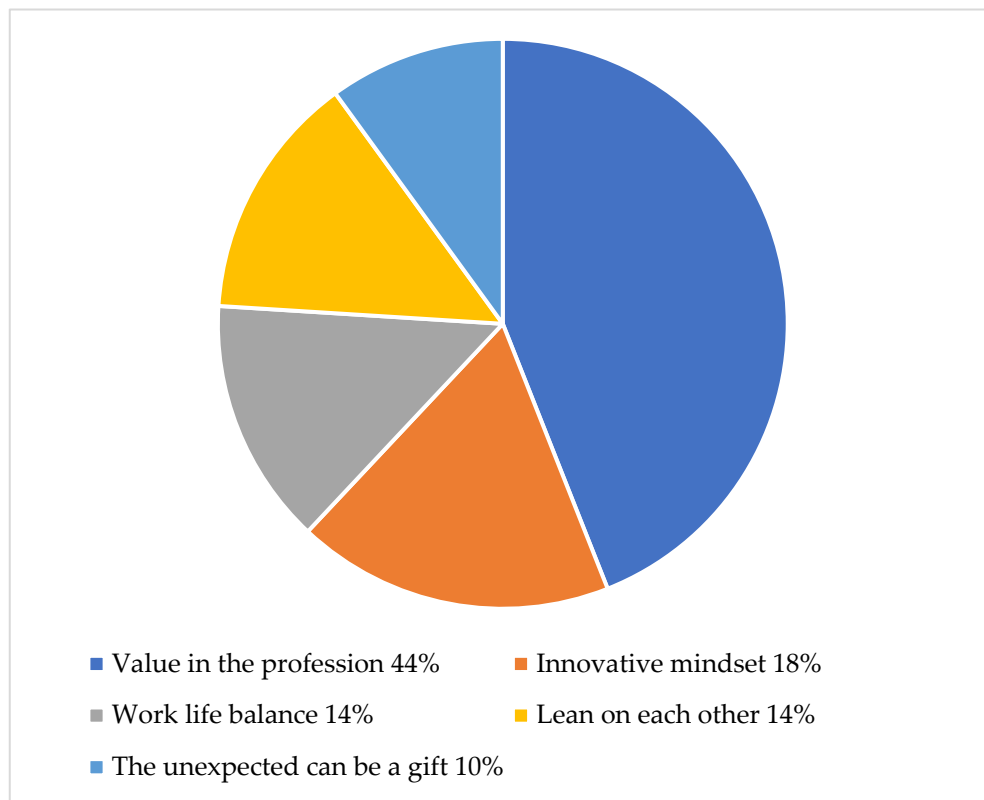


Figure 4. Percentage of responses to the prompt: What legacy can we create for teachers and teacher education?

**Table 5.** What legacy can we create for teachers and teacher education?

Themes Respondent Vote (%)	Examples of Participant Comments
Value in the profession (44%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers are rock stars!</li> <li>• Teaching is a profession that attracts people committed to creating equality of opportunity for all members of the community</li> <li>• Teachers should have increased job status; there should be a perception that teachers are not ‘sub-professionals’, but rather are essential workers with a varied, flexible, and valuable skill set and that contribute to society in a meaningful way</li> <li>• We should place value upon the face-to-face elements of teaching and learning</li> <li>• We should value teachers, their opinions, and their ideas by creating space, time, and incentives</li> <li>• We should continue the valuing of teachers through valuing their creativity and professional capacity to make decisions</li> <li>• We must remember that teachers have ably demonstrated the professional capacity to respond to and overcome huge teaching challenges, all without centralised control, oversight, and management</li> </ul>
Innovative mindset (18%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This pandemic has shown us that teachers are deeply creative and innovative professionals; I would like the legacy to be the sustained confidence of educators in their own abilities and in their professionalism</li> <li>• We must envisage innovative ways of teaching and carrying out teacher education; hybrid models can better support a range of PSTs (pre-service teachers)</li> </ul>
Work life balance (14%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A workplace that allows balance; work is not life, it is a part of it, and yet teachers are constantly pushing through longer hours and work intensification. We need to change our direction and make their job a value to be added to their lives, with work environments that people want to stay in</li> </ul>
Lean on each other (14%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration is key in planning, in working, and in learning and teaching; we must break down the silos</li> <li>• The importance of an interdisciplinary and holistic approach to teaching</li> <li>• The importance of connection: teacher–student and staff–staff</li> </ul>
The unexpected can be a gift (10%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disruption is an opportunity for redesign</li> <li>• There are more opportunities for innovation in ITE</li> <li>• The unexpected can be a ‘gift’</li> <li>• We must learn from our experiences and not go back to ‘business as usual’; COVID has provided an opportunity for change and new ways of thinking, educating and learning</li> </ul>

The polling of summit delegates revealed that almost one half selected *value in the profession* (44%) as the legacy we should create for teachers and teacher education as an outcome of the pandemic response. Qualities of teachers also featured in this think tank, with the legacy of *innovative mindset* (18%), *lean(ing) on each other* (14%), and *work–life balance* (14%) collectively reflecting the social and emotional aspects of teachers’ work as being a space for legacy-building. The remaining category, that *the unexpected can be a gift* (10%), points to the silver lining that may come from the disruptive innovation of the pandemic.

The results from this poll confirm trends in Australia related to perceptions of the value of teachers. There is a global trend—with clear exceptions—that teachers do not feel valued, despite being placed consistently highly in the rankings of occupational prestige scales for decades [41]. Likewise, in Australia, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) [42] confirms there is a discrepancy between how teachers perceive they are valued and how they are valued by the public; the public perception is one of respect and trust. AITSL reports that just 45% of secondary teachers believe their profession is valued by society. Heffernan et al. [43] provided even more startling data, with just 29% of teachers agreeing that the Australian public appreciates teachers, contrasting with 92% of the public reporting that they respect and trust teachers. This statistical gap is important because where teachers feel valued, it is more likely there is a successful

education system [44], which in turn leads to greater student achievement [45]. AITSL [42] argues that the recognition of teacher expertise is important for improving the status of teaching, both within the profession and externally, and is a strategy for addressing real and perceived gaps.

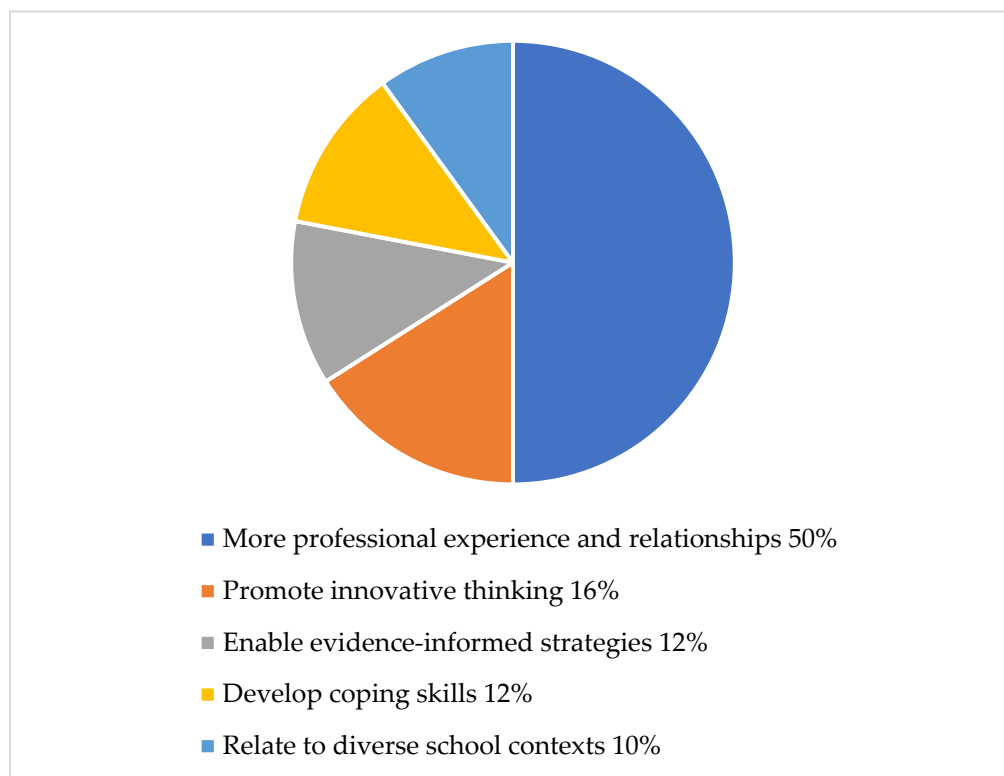
The selection of this response as the most frequent among the options is entirely consistent with teacher's beliefs about how they are valued, and the opportunity the pandemic presents to disrupt this negative perception and to emphasise the specialised expertise required by teachers. As one respondent noted, *Teachers are rock stars!* and the opportunity to shift teacher perceptions of community perceptions is an important disruptive moment. Reflecting on the OECD principles for recovery towards effective and equitable education, the responses to this question affirm the following strategies:

8. Empower teachers to exercise their professionalism and benefit from professional learning opportunities;
9. Encourage a collaborative culture of innovation [2].

#### 5.5. Enhancing Teacher Education

The participants responded to the question *How can universities enhance initial teacher education programs to better prepare teachers in a post-pandemic world?*

The themes generated from the participant responses through inductive qualitative coding are presented in Figure 5, and examples of participant comments for each theme are included in Table 6.



**Figure 5.** Percentage of responses to the prompt: How can universities enhance initial teacher education programs to better prepare teachers in a post-pandemic world?

**Table 6.** How can universities enhance initial teacher education programs to better prepare teachers in a post-pandemic world?

Themes Respondent Vote (%)	Examples of Participant Comments
More professional experience and relationships (50%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Researchers should work with practicing teachers and pre-service teachers in a learning partnership; they can learn together by researching what is happening in the school, and this will give each participant a better understanding of the roles of each</li> <li>• They should engage in a meaningful way with schools, although this requires both universities and schools to want to progress these partnerships</li> <li>• They should spend increased time in schools so that they can apply the theoretical learnings from their degree in a practical way; there should be structured and practical learning about supporting their wellbeing and that of their students (additionally, the TECEs (teacher education centres of excellence) or a similar-type program/approach (i.e., less elitist) should be brought back, as this could easily have benefits for all)</li> <li>• There should be more practical engagement so that the teaching students experience as much as they can</li> <li>• Teaching students should be in schools even more, and online with schools even more</li> <li>• There should be longer and more practical engagements</li> </ul>
Promote innovative thinking (16%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We should develop radical critical thinkers that challenge the status quo</li> <li>• We should provide more opportunities to be flexible, innovative, creative, and adaptive; these are all skills needed in the classroom.</li> <li>• We should model bold, interesting ways of teaching and learning, shake up traditional assessment and ways of measuring intelligence, embrace the individual intelligence of preservice teachers, and focus on wellbeing in all areas of learning so that our future teachers integrate wellbeing with all classroom activities</li> <li>• We should teach innovative thinking</li> </ul>
Enable evidence-informed strategies (12%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make profound research on the impact of the COVID pandemic is needed to create a wide-ranging program in teacher education courses</li> <li>• We should get the balance right by asking what teachers NEED to be able to do their jobs; they need to know and be able to implement evidence-based practices to connect with, engage and teach their students all areas of their curriculum responsibilities, and the elements of school life relevant to their students</li> </ul>
Develop coping skills (12%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We should spend time and energy promoting social and emotional teaching and learning</li> <li>• There should be a focus on building resilience</li> <li>• We should provide initial teachers with observation opportunities for real classes delivered with a hybrid approach, so that they can have a sense of the challenges that they might encounter during the class, and know how to cope with them</li> </ul>
Relate to diverse school contexts (10%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We should develop an understanding of students, via trauma-informed practice and knowledge about poverty, etc. There should be more focus on developing behaviour management and wellbeing.</li> <li>• Universities are still very much a place of equality rather than equity. Students undertaking B. Ed degrees ought to be able to access and experience differentiation based on their individual needs and interests in the same way they are expected to practice it in their classrooms; at university, this is seen as giving a student or tutorial group a “leg up” over their peers</li> </ul>

The findings in response to the prompt ‘How can universities enhance initial teacher education programs to better prepare teachers in a post-pandemic world?’ revealed that half selected the statement *more professional experience and relationships* (50%). Other categories

were selected with a similar frequency, with the *promotion of innovative thinking* (16%) slightly more frequently selected than other categories of *developing coping skills* (12%), *enabling evidence-informed strategies* (12%), and *capabilities to relate to diverse school contexts* (10%).

This feedback provides a roadmap for the consideration of initial teacher education providers and key stakeholders. Of particular note is the increasing appetite for rethinking the design and delivery of professional experience. In this context, professional experience refers to the requirement for preservice teachers to complete a supervised practicum in schools. Recent reviews of professional experience within Australia indicate an ongoing disconnect between policy and practice [46], and the need for stakeholders to work closely together on more *integrated* models. This need is reflected in the participant responses calling for *partnerships* and *more meaningful* approaches to professional experience design and delivery. These approaches could build on innovations developed during the pandemic, such as the cross-sectoral Learning@Home Work Integrated Learning initiative [47], in which preservice teachers worked closely with teacher mentors to develop and deliver learning resources to students and their parents/carers. More use could also be made of the potential for virtual professional experience designs to prepare preservice teachers for a range of classroom experiences [48,49].

Importantly, the nature of teacher identity and preservice teacher identity development is also expanding and changing [50], requiring a reconfiguration of the nature and potential of professional experience. As Mazzucato [40] proposes, “the teacher–student relationship has been shifting from pre-constituted roles to a framework of collaborative guidance and co-creation, where the roles unite in a spiralling process of a continuous quest . . . COVID-19 accelerated the trends shaping the role of teacher–student, thus triggering a systemic change” (p. 637).

Reflecting on the OECD principles for recovery towards effective and equitable education, the responses to this question particularly affirm the following strategies:

6. Provide targeted support to meet students’ learning and social and emotional needs;
8. Empower teachers to exercise their professionalism and benefit from professional learning opportunities;
9. Encourage a collaborative culture of innovation;
10. Learn from national and international evidence [2].

## 6. Summary and Conclusions—Teachers Are Rock Stars

This study aimed to provide insight into the challenges, innovations worth keeping, legacies, and ways of shaping the teacher education profession that were generated from a one-day summit designed to rethink teaching and teacher education in a post-pandemic world. The 466 education stakeholders were from a range of professions related to the education field, including teachers, academics, members of professional associations, initial teacher education students, and others.

This study provides insights into the collaborative outputs from the summit. The study employed the analytic method of inductive qualitative coding by a team of five experts to generate themes from participant responses to prompts, which were subsequently voted upon by the delegates to determine the frequency of agreement with each of the themes. The discussion presented is framed through the lens of the OECD principles for recovery towards effective and equitable education. This study revealed that all five of the principles are incorporated in the responses generated by the participants, providing a strong alignment with the policy recommendations from the OECD.

The respondents provided insights into their experiences and the spaces for innovative disruption, with three areas being the most prominent and frequently selected overall: the opportunity for valuing teachers’ expertise; the need to focus on student and teacher wellbeing, equity, and diversity; and the opportunity to innovate for enhanced flexibility of work structures, learning, and connecting beyond the classroom.

When considering future directions resulting from this study, it is noteworthy that delegates and their fields of influence typically align with one of more of these three



areas of action. The areas of action resonate with the agendas of many of the professional organisations who had delegates in attendance, and more generally with directions at a policy level in Australia. There is a teacher workforce shortage crisis in Australia, and the effect of it is so consuming that in December 2022, the Federal Department of Education released the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan (NTWAP) [51]. The five priority areas with 27 actions are:

1. Improving the teacher supply: the objective is to increase the number of people choosing teaching as a career;
2. Strengthening initial teacher education: the objective is to ensure teacher education supports teacher supply and delivers classroom-ready graduates;
3. Keeping the teachers we have: the objective is to improve retention by increasing support for teachers, enhancing career pathways, reducing unnecessary workload, and freeing up teachers to focus on core teaching tasks and collaboration;
4. Elevating the profession: the objective is to recognize the value teachers bring to students, communities and the economy;
5. Better understanding the future teacher workforce's needs: the objective is to improve the information available for teacher workforce planning.

The summit featured in this paper provided timely input during the consultation phase of this process, this being an example of a positive action resulting from the process. There will continue to be opportunities to harness the strength of the summit as the actions are implemented within the framing of the NTWAP. Activating these priorities, which clearly align with the OECD principles, for innovative disruption has the potential to contribute to the transformation already set in motion.

The summit concluded with a call to action, inviting participants to write a personal statement for themselves in response to this prompt: *'I will help reset education by ...'* As one participant noted in response to the prompt *What legacy can we create for teachers and teacher education*, this study reveals that "Teachers are rock stars". The comments selected as examples of the responses to the research questions provide insights into the complexities, commitment, and collaboration that featured during the pandemic and in the recovery phase, and point to the ongoing need to apply the five OECD [2] *Principles for recovery towards effective and equitable education*. The five principles have been considered for each of the research questions, and reveal coverage of each.

Our study sought to identify the possibilities that the pandemic has presented to enable innovative disruption as a catalyst for the transformation of the education system, revealing clear areas for improvement. The importance of this ongoing work must not be underestimated, as the OECD notes "[T]he recovery of education systems from the effects of the health crisis will be vital to the future social and economic health of societies, and to the recovery of societies as a whole [2] (p. 1).

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