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Intergenerational Cooperation Among Teachers of Practical Vocational Subjects as a Factor in School Climate

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Abstract

This research focuses on the issue of intergenerational support and cooperation among teachers of practical vocational subjects working at secondary vocational schools in selected regions of the Czech Republic. The aim of the research was to examine how teachers of different generations perceive the areas of mutual assistance, professional learning and experience sharing, how they identify barriers to intergenerational cooperation, and how they assess the influence of school leadership and school climate on the quality of intergenerational relationships within the teaching staff. The research was conducted using a qualitative research design, using semi-structured interviews with teachers of practical vocational subjects as the main method of data collection. The data obtained were analysed using thematic coding, which made it possible to identify key categories of meaning related to intergenerational dynamics in the school environment. The results of the research show that intergenerational cooperation is an important source of professional support, informal learning and the preservation of professional know-how, but its quality and intensity are strongly shaped, in participants' accounts, by the institutional framework of the school, the management style and the overall school climate. The study provides an empirically based insight into the specifics of intergenerational relationships in the vocational education environment and creates a starting point for further research and application-oriented approaches aimed at supporting professional cooperation among teachers.

Keywords: Intergenerational cooperation; Teachers of practical vocational subjects; School climate; Secondary vocational schools.

1. INTRODUCTION

Schools are increasingly recognised as workplaces in which the quality of interpersonal relationships influences not only teachers' professional performance but also their health, wellbeing, and the overall functioning of the educational environment. Contemporary research emphasises that healthy school climates are built not only through organisational structures and leadership practices but also through supportive professional relationships among teachers, which contribute to occupational wellbeing, psychological safety, job satisfaction, and staff retention. As educational systems face demographic change, increasing workforce diversity, and teacher shortages in many countries, strengthening collaborative professional cultures has become an important priority for sustainable school development. One of the most visible manifestations of these changes is the growing generational diversity within teaching staff. Schools increasingly bring together teachers with different professional trajectories, teaching experience, educational backgrounds, and value orientations. While this diversity creates opportunities for reciprocal learning, innovation, and professional development, it may also generate misunderstandings, communication barriers, and conflicting expectations regarding teaching practice and professional roles. Consequently, intergenerational collaboration has become an important organisational factor influencing both school climate and teachers' professional wellbeing. Research on teacher wellbeing situates these relationships within the wider demands and resources of educational work [1]. School-climate research likewise identifies relationships and institutional conditions as important dimensions of the educational environment [2].

These issues are particularly relevant in secondary vocational education, especially among teachers of practical vocational subjects. Unlike teachers of general academic subjects, teachers of practical vocational subjects frequently enter education after careers in industry or other professional sectors, bringing substantial occupational expertise into schools. Their professional identity therefore reflects the intersection of pedagogical competence and vocational experience, creating distinctive patterns of collaboration, authority, and professional learning. In this context, intergenerational cooperation extends beyond chronological age and encompasses differences in occupational culture, professional identity, pedagogical beliefs, and approaches to practical instruction. Fejes and Köpsén [3] examine vocational teachers' identity formation through movement between occupational practice, teacher education and school teaching, providing a directly relevant basis for understanding these overlapping professional commitments.

Existing literature has primarily conceptualised intergenerational cooperation within schools through the perspectives of professional learning, mentoring, knowledge sharing and school climate. Batista et al. [4] review research on intergenerational learning in teachers' professional development. Kyndt et al. [5] examine everyday informal learning activities and their antecedents and outcomes. Lemrová and colleagues [6] provide a broader educational-psychology context for learning, motivation and communication, while Rabušicová et al. [7] consider intergenerational learning across social settings. Studies further suggest that relationships between experienced and early-career teachers can facilitate professional adaptation and support collaborative school cultures. Ingersoll and Strong [8] review evidence on beginning-teacher induction and mentoring. Geeraerts et al. [9] examine age-related patterns in teachers' professional networks, finding that generational membership can shape the formation of relationships. Kump and Jelenc Krašovec [10] discuss intergenerational learning in different contexts, whereas Kutsyuruba [11] investigates mentoring and collaboration in Ukrainian schools. From a psychosocial perspective, collegial relationships can provide emotional support, practical guidance and professional confidence. Hascher and Waber [1] review teacher wellbeing, and Collie et al. [12] examine relationships among perceived school climate, stress, job satisfaction and teaching efficacy. These sources support examining professional support without assuming that particular competencies belong uniformly to an age group. Despite growing international interest in intergenerational learning, evidence remains limited regarding teachers of practical vocational subjects in secondary vocational schools. Existing research has predominantly examined novice teacher induction, mentoring programmes or teacher collaboration in general educational settings, whereas considerably less attention has been devoted to vocational education, where teachers' dual professional identities and diverse career pathways may influence intergenerational relationships. Furthermore, relatively little is known about how these relationships contribute to healthy school climates, teachers' professional wellbeing and supportive organisational environments within vocational schools.

Therefore, the present study aims to deepen understanding of intergenerational cooperation among teachers of practical vocational subjects in secondary vocational schools by exploring teachers' experiences of mutual support, professional learning, and experience sharing, while identifying organisational and interpersonal factors that facilitate or hinder collaboration. Particular attention is devoted to understanding how school climate and school leadership shape intergenerational relationships and how these relationships may contribute to creating supportive and healthy educational workplaces.

The contemporary concept of healthy schools extends beyond the physical health of students to encompass the psychosocial conditions that influence the wellbeing of the entire school community, including teachers, school leaders, and other educational professionals. Within this framework, teacher wellbeing is increasingly recognised as a fundamental determinant of educational quality, organisational effectiveness, and sustainable school development. Research on teacher

wellbeing and school climate indicates that supportive professional relationships, psychological safety, collaborative organisational cultures, and positive school climates contribute not only to teachers' occupational wellbeing but also indirectly to students' educational experiences and overall school functioning [1, 2]. From this perspective, intergenerational collaboration represents more than a mechanism for exchanging professional knowledge. It constitutes an important psychosocial resource through which teachers develop professional confidence, emotional support, resilience, and a shared sense of responsibility for educational practice. Intergenerational relationships facilitate reciprocal learning processes in which experienced teachers transmit professional judgement, classroom management strategies, and pedagogical wisdom, while younger colleagues contribute innovative instructional approaches, digital competencies, and openness to educational change. Rather than representing a unidirectional transfer of knowledge, contemporary research conceptualises intergenerational collaboration as a reciprocal learning process that benefits all participants and strengthens collective professional capacity. Social science literature understands intergenerational cooperation as a process of mutual influence, knowledge exchange, and shared learning among individuals belonging to different generations who interact within common organisational environments. Rabušicová et al. [7] emphasise that intergenerational relationships should not be interpreted solely through chronological age but as socially constructed phenomena shaped by organisational culture, institutional norms, professional values, and interpersonal interactions. Within schools, these relationships acquire additional complexity because they develop in highly structured organisations characterised by formal responsibilities, professional hierarchies, and shared educational goals. The quality of relationships among teachers has repeatedly been identified as one of the central dimensions of school climate. Lemrová and colleagues [6] address learning, motivation, emotions and communication within educational settings. More directly, Vangrieken et al. [13] review teacher collaboration and its potential benefits for teachers, students and schools. Taken together, this literature provides grounds for examining whether positive intergenerational relationships support professional trust, psychological safety, organisational commitment and collective efficacy, all of which are relevant to healthy educational workplaces. Conversely, environments characterised by limited collaboration, poor communication, or unresolved generational tensions may increase occupational stress, reduce job satisfaction, and weaken teachers' willingness to engage in collective professional learning.

Intergenerational professional learning occurs through both formal and informal mechanisms. Although mentoring programmes and structured professional development initiatives represent important institutional strategies, evidence suggests that teachers most frequently acquire professional knowledge through everyday interactions, collaborative problem-solving, and spontaneous sharing of experiences [5]. These informal learning opportunities create conditions for continuous professional growth while simultaneously strengthening interpersonal trust and professional cohesion within teaching teams. An important area of reciprocal learning concerns digital competence and educational innovation. Contemporary educational systems increasingly require teachers to integrate digital technologies into teaching practice, participate in online professional learning, and adopt new instructional approaches. Within this context, younger teachers frequently support their more experienced colleagues in implementing digital tools, whereas experienced teachers provide pedagogical guidance and contextual judgement that enable effective educational use of these technologies. Such reciprocal exchange can illustrate that intergenerational collaboration is not characterised by dependence but by complementary professional expertise [14, 15]. Brücknerová and Novotný [14] identify overt and less visible forms of intergenerational learning among Czech teachers. Portela Pruaño et al. [15] set out a mixed-methods design for examining generational diversity and professional learning; their methodological article should not be read as evidence that every proposed relationship has already been demonstrated.

These issues are particularly significant in secondary vocational education, where teachers of practical vocational subjects represent a distinctive professional group. Unlike many teachers of general education subjects, teachers of practical vocational subjects commonly enter schools after careers in industry or other professional sectors, combining pedagogical preparation with extensive occupational experience. Consequently, their professional identity reflects both educational and vocational expertise, creating unique patterns of authority, communication, and professional collaboration. Fejes and Köpsén [3] directly address vocational identity formation across occupational and educational settings. Waight and Waight [16] review intergenerational mentoring and learning more broadly, while Li [17] discusses consistency and authenticity in teacher identity and professional roles. These contributions offer complementary perspectives on professional relationships, although the latter two do not establish specific effects of dual vocational identities. Differences in professional backgrounds, expectations and approaches to teaching remain relevant questions for the present interviews.

Taken together, existing evidence suggests that successful intergenerational collaboration emerges through the interaction of individual willingness to cooperate, supportive organisational cultures, effective school leadership, and healthy school climates. Although previous studies have documented the importance of mentoring, professional learning, and collaborative school cultures, considerably less attention has been devoted to teachers of practical vocational subjects working in vocational education. Moreover, relatively little empirical evidence has examined how intergenerational collaboration contributes to teacher wellbeing and healthy school environments within vocational schools. Addressing this gap represents an important step towards understanding how schools can strengthen both professional collaboration and

the psychosocial conditions that support sustainable educational practice. In the Czech context, Studená's bachelor's thesis [18] also addresses intergenerational support among teachers of practical vocational subjects, demonstrating the topic's relevance to local vocational-teacher education.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study adopted an exploratory qualitative research design grounded in an interpretivist paradigm. This approach assumes that social reality is constructed through individuals' experiences, meanings, and interactions and is therefore particularly suitable for exploring complex organisational and interpersonal phenomena within educational settings [19]. Given the context-dependent and socially constructed nature of intergenerational collaboration, a qualitative methodology was considered the most appropriate approach for understanding how teachers of practical vocational subjects interpret their professional relationships, cooperation, and everyday experiences within vocational schools. Unlike quantitative approaches that seek to measure the frequency or strength of predefined variables, qualitative research enables an in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives, allowing researchers to understand how social processes develop and are experienced in specific organisational contexts [20, 21]. Since intergenerational collaboration develops through everyday professional interactions influenced by school culture, leadership, and individual experiences, its complexity cannot be adequately captured using quantitative indicators alone.

The aim of this qualitative study was to explore and describe the significance of intergenerational support and collaboration among teachers of practical vocational subjects working in secondary vocational schools in selected regions of the Czech Republic. Particular attention was devoted to understanding how teachers from different generations perceive their professional relationships, identify functional forms of collaboration, experience barriers to cooperation, and evaluate the influence of school climate and school leadership on intergenerational interactions.

To achieve this objective, the study addressed the following research questions:

1. How do teachers of practical vocational subjects perceive intergenerational collaboration within vocational schools?
2. Which forms of intergenerational support and reciprocal learning are considered most valuable by teachers?
3. What organisational and interpersonal factors facilitate or hinder intergenerational collaboration?
4. How do school leadership and school climate influence intergenerational relationships among teachers of practical vocational subjects?

The study did not seek to test hypotheses or generalise findings to the wider population of vocational teachers. Instead, it aimed to generate a nuanced understanding of participants' experiences and the meanings they attribute to intergenerational cooperation within their professional environment.

The study involved fourteen teachers of practical vocational subjects employed at secondary vocational schools located in selected regions of the Czech Republic. Participants represented different career stages, age groups, teaching experience, and professional backgrounds. The sample included both teachers who had entered education immediately after completing teacher education programmes and those who had transitioned into teaching following previous vocational careers. Participants were employed in secondary vocational schools of varying sizes, enabling the exploration of intergenerational collaboration across diverse organisational contexts. The heterogeneous composition of the sample enhanced the richness of the qualitative data and facilitated comparison of experiences across different professional trajectories. Participants were recruited using purposeful sampling, a strategy commonly employed in qualitative research to identify information-rich cases with direct experience of the phenomenon under investigation [19]. The sampling strategy sought to achieve maximum variation with respect to age, teaching experience, professional background, school size, and institutional context, thereby capturing diverse perspectives on intergenerational collaboration. Participants represented different stages of their professional careers and differed in terms of their educational qualifications, vocational experience, and institutional settings. This variability enabled exploration of intergenerational collaboration across multiple professional contexts while facilitating comparison between teachers with differing professional trajectories. Data collection continued until sufficient depth and thematic richness had been achieved across the identified research areas. Table 1 summarises the participant characteristics reported for this study; the categories describe the sample without supplying a numerical breakdown within each category.

For reporting purposes, participants were anonymised and identified using the labels P1–P14 throughout the Results section.

Purposeful variation in participant characteristics enabled the identification of both shared experiences and context-specific differences in intergenerational collaboration across vocational school environments.

Data were collected through semi-structured individual interviews, which provide sufficient flexibility to explore participants' experiences while maintaining consistency across interviews [20, 21]. An interview guide was developed on the basis of previous literature and the study objectives.

The interviews explored five principal thematic areas:

- intergenerational support and reciprocal learning;
- perceptions of generational differences and stereotypes;
- barriers to intergenerational collaboration;
- the influence of school leadership on intergenerational relationships;
- school climate as a context for professional cooperation.

Table 1. *Profile of the Study Participants (n = 14)*

Participant characteristic	Description
Participants	Fourteen teachers of practical vocational subjects
Educational setting	Secondary vocational schools in selected regions of the Czech Republic
Age composition	Younger (≤35 years), middle (36–50 years), older (>50 years) generations
Teaching experience	Up to 5 years; 6–15 years; more than 15 years
Professional background	Teaching qualification; teaching qualification combined with vocational experience
School size	Small, medium-sized and large secondary vocational schools
Geographical coverage	Selected regions of the Czech Republic
Sampling strategy	Purposeful sampling with maximum variation

Open-ended questions encouraged participants to reflect on their own professional experiences, attitudes, and specific situations encountered in educational practice. Interviews were conducted in locations selected to ensure participants' comfort and privacy. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' informed consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim to preserve the authenticity of participants' narratives.

The interview transcripts were analysed using inductive thematic analysis, an established qualitative analytical approach for identifying recurring patterns of meaning within textual data [21, 22]. Analysis proceeded through an iterative process involving repeated reading of transcripts, familiarisation with the data, open coding, identification of meaningful units, development of thematic categories, and continuous comparison across interviews. Initially, codes were generated directly from participants' narratives in order to remain close to the original meanings expressed by participants. Subsequently, conceptually related codes were grouped into broader thematic categories reflecting the principal areas addressed in the interview guide. Table 2 summarises the thematic categories and examples of the codes used to organise the interview material.

Table 2. *Thematic Categories and Examples of Codes*

Thematic category	Examples of codes
Intergenerational support and learning	transfer of experience; informal mentoring; reciprocal inspiration
Perceptions of generational differences	stereotypes; different working styles; digital competencies
Barriers to collaboration	lack of time; resistance to change; limited communication
School leadership	managerial support; organisational conditions; recognition of collaboration
School climate	openness; trust; team tensions

Throughout the analytical process, interpretations were continuously compared with the original interview transcripts to ensure consistency between the emerging themes and participants' accounts.

Several strategies were employed to enhance the trustworthiness of the study in accordance with established qualitative research criteria [23, 24]. Credibility was strengthened through prolonged engagement with the data, repeated reading of interview transcripts, and continuous comparison between individual interviews during the coding process. Dependability was supported by maintaining a transparent analytical procedure, allowing the progression from initial codes to final themes to be systematically documented. Confirmability was enhanced through continuous reflection on analytical decisions and by grounding interpretations in participants' own narratives. Transferability was addressed by providing a detailed description of the research context, participants, and analytical procedures, enabling readers to assess the applicability of findings to comparable educational settings. Given the interpretive nature of qualitative inquiry, the researcher also adopted a reflexive approach throughout the study. Continuous reflection on the researcher's professional background, assumptions, and potential influence on data collection and interpretation supported the examination of interpretive assumptions while maintaining transparency throughout the analytical process.

The study was conducted in accordance with the fundamental ethical principles governing qualitative social science research. Prior to participation, all participants received detailed information regarding the aims of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, the intended use of the data, and their right to withdraw from the research at any stage without consequences. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection commenced. To ensure confidentiality, all personal identifiers relating to participants and their schools were removed during transcription. Data were anonymised and stored securely, with access restricted exclusively to the research team. Throughout the study, particular attention was devoted to protecting participants' privacy, maintaining confidentiality, and ensuring that all findings were presented in a manner that prevented the identification of individual teachers or educational institutions.

3. RESULTS

The findings are presented according to the four research questions formulated in the methodological section. The analysis is based on fourteen semi-structured interviews conducted with teachers of practical vocational subjects employed at secondary vocational schools in selected regions of the Czech Republic. Although all interviews contributed to the thematic analysis, only representative quotations are presented to illustrate the principal themes identified across the dataset. The findings demonstrate that intergenerational collaboration is a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by reciprocal professional learning, interpersonal relationships, organisational culture, and school leadership. Rather than functioning independently, these dimensions interact to influence teachers' everyday experiences and contribute to the creation of supportive and healthy school environments. The participant counts in Tables 3–6 indicate how many interviewees expressed each reported theme. Categories overlap and should not be interpreted as mutually exclusive groups or population prevalence estimates.

3.1. RESEARCH QUESTION 1: PERCEPTIONS OF INTERGENERATIONAL COLLABORATION

How do teachers of practical vocational subjects perceive intergenerational collaboration within vocational schools?

Intergenerational collaboration was perceived by almost all participants as an integral component of everyday professional life rather than as a formally organised institutional process. Twelve of the fourteen participants described cooperation across generations as a natural feature of their daily work, emerging spontaneously through shared teaching responsibilities, informal conversations, collaborative problem-solving, and the exchange of practical experience. Participants consistently emphasised that successful collaboration depended primarily on interpersonal relationships rather than chronological age.

Teachers repeatedly described cooperation as a reciprocal process in which each generation contributed different forms of professional expertise. Experienced teachers were perceived as providing practical knowledge, pedagogical judgement, and emotional stability developed through years of teaching practice. Simultaneously, younger colleagues were recognised for introducing innovative teaching methods, digital technologies, and greater openness to educational change. Eleven participants explicitly stated that both generations benefited from this reciprocal exchange and rejected the assumption that knowledge transfer occurred in only one direction.

One experienced participant explained:

> "The youngest colleague is twenty-three and the oldest is sixty-six. We all approach teaching differently, but we complement one another. Experience and new ideas naturally come together during everyday work." (P4)

Similarly, a younger participant highlighted the value of learning from senior colleagues:

> "Older colleagues help us understand situations that cannot be learned from textbooks. Their experience gives us confidence, while we can support them with new technologies and teaching methods." (P9)

These narratives illustrate that participants perceived intergenerational collaboration as a mutually beneficial relationship rather than a hierarchical transfer of expertise. Participants frequently stressed that professional respect emerged from demonstrated competence and willingness to cooperate rather than from age itself.

Ten participants further emphasised that effective collaboration developed primarily through informal interactions rather than formal mentoring programmes. Everyday consultations, joint preparation for practical lessons, spontaneous discussions after classes, and collaborative problem-solving were repeatedly described as the most valuable opportunities for professional learning. Formal institutional mechanisms supporting intergenerational collaboration were mentioned considerably less frequently, and participants generally considered them supplementary rather than essential.

An experienced teacher described this process as follows:

> "Most of what we learn from each other happens naturally. We discuss situations after lessons, ask each other for advice, and solve problems together. That is far more valuable than formal meetings." (P2)

Another recurring theme concerned the importance of mutual trust. Nine participants explicitly stated that trust represented the fundamental prerequisite for successful collaboration across generations. Participants argued that teachers were willing to share their experiences only when they perceived an atmosphere of openness, professional respect, and psychological safety within the teaching staff. Conversely, environments characterised by interpersonal distance or poor communication substantially reduced opportunities for reciprocal learning. Participants also emphasised that intergenerational collaboration extended beyond the exchange of professional knowledge and contributed to the social functioning of teaching teams. Eight participants described cooperation as an important source of emotional support, professional encouragement, and collegial relationships, particularly when managing demanding educational situations. Consequently, collaboration was perceived not only as an educational resource but also as a factor promoting professional wellbeing and strengthening team cohesion. Overall, the findings indicate that teachers of practical vocational subjects perceive intergenerational collaboration as an essential element of everyday professional practice. Rather than being determined by age differences, successful collaboration depends on reciprocal respect, willingness to share expertise, interpersonal trust, and opportunities for informal professional interaction. These findings suggest that intergenerational collaboration represents an important psychosocial resource contributing to collaborative professional cultures within vocational schools. Table 3 summarises these perceptions and their reported participant counts.

Table 3. *Teachers' Perceptions of Intergenerational Collaboration*

Theme	Participants (n = 14)	Representative finding
Intergenerational collaboration as part of everyday professional practice	12	Collaboration emerged primarily through routine professional interactions rather than formal institutional mechanisms.
Reciprocal professional learning	11	Both younger and older teachers perceived themselves as contributors to shared professional learning.
Informal collaboration	10	Everyday consultations and spontaneous discussions were considered more valuable than formal mentoring programmes.
Mutual trust and professional respect	9	Trust was identified as a prerequisite for effective knowledge sharing across generations.
Professional and emotional support	8	Collaboration promoted collegial support, confidence, and team cohesion.

3.2. RESEARCH QUESTION 2: VALUABLE FORMS OF SUPPORT AND RECIPROCAL LEARNING

Which forms of intergenerational support and reciprocal learning are considered most valuable by teachers of practical vocational subjects?

Participants consistently described reciprocal learning as one of the most valuable outcomes of intergenerational collaboration within vocational schools. Thirteen of the fourteen participants reported that professional learning occurred continuously through everyday interactions rather than through formally organised professional development activities. Participants perceived reciprocal learning as an ongoing process embedded in routine teaching practice, where advice, feedback, observation, and shared problem-solving created opportunities for professional growth across generations.

The findings demonstrated that the nature of knowledge exchange differed according to teachers' professional experience. Experienced teachers were widely recognised as important sources of practical expertise acquired through years of vocational teaching and professional practice. Twelve participants emphasised that senior colleagues provided guidance in classroom management, communication with students, organisation of practical instruction, assessment strategies, and responses to unexpected situations arising during vocational training.

One participant reflected on this experience:

> "Some situations simply cannot be learned during university studies. Experienced colleagues know how to react because they have encountered similar situations many times before. Their advice often helps us avoid unnecessary mistakes." (P6)

However, reciprocal learning was not perceived as a one-way transfer of professional experience. Eleven participants highlighted the valuable contribution of younger teachers, particularly regarding educational technologies, digital communication, innovative instructional methods, and contemporary approaches to student engagement. Participants repeatedly described this relationship as complementary rather than hierarchical, emphasising that each generation possessed specific competencies that enriched the professional capacities of the teaching team.

As one senior participant explained:

> "Younger colleagues show us new ways of working with digital technologies, while we can offer practical experience that only develops over many years. Both perspectives are equally important." (P11)

Beyond professional knowledge, participants also attached considerable importance to the transfer of interpersonal and professional values. Ten participants emphasised that experienced teachers served as role models whose attitudes, patience, professional responsibility, and communication styles influenced younger colleagues. Respect, empathy, professional ethics, and calm decision-making were repeatedly identified as qualities that could only be developed through long-term professional experience and interpersonal interaction within the school environment.

At the same time, younger teachers were perceived as introducing enthusiasm, creativity, flexibility, and openness to educational innovation. Nine participants stated that collaboration with younger colleagues encouraged more experienced teachers to reconsider established routines and remain professionally engaged despite long teaching careers. Participants therefore viewed reciprocal learning as a dynamic process in which both generations simultaneously acted as learners and contributors. An additional finding concerned the importance of informal communication. Twelve participants described everyday conversations before or after lessons, spontaneous consultations, joint lesson preparation, and collaborative reflection on teaching experiences as the principal settings in which reciprocal learning occurred. Formal mentoring programmes or structured institutional initiatives were mentioned considerably less frequently and were generally viewed as complementary rather than central mechanisms supporting professional development. Several participants also stressed that reciprocal learning extended beyond teaching practice and strengthened interpersonal relationships within the school community. Eight participants reported that opportunities to communicate outside formal teaching activities, including informal meetings and collegial conversations, contributed to greater trust, openness, and willingness to seek professional support when facing demanding educational situations. These interactions strengthened both professional confidence and a sense of belonging within the teaching staff.

Overall, the findings suggest that participants perceived reciprocal learning as a multidimensional process encompassing the exchange of professional expertise, pedagogical innovation, technological competencies, and interpersonal values. Rather than representing isolated learning activities, these interactions formed an integral component of everyday professional life and contributed to both teachers' professional development and the creation of collaborative and supportive school environments. Table 4 presents the forms of reciprocal learning and the contributions associated with them in the interviews.

Table 4. *Forms of Reciprocal Learning and Their Contributions*

Form of reciprocal learning	Participants (n = 14)	Main contribution
Everyday professional learning	13	Continuous learning embedded in routine teaching practice.
Transfer of practical experience	12	Experienced teachers supported classroom management, vocational instruction, and problem-solving.
Exchange of digital and innovative teaching practices	11	Younger teachers contributed technological expertise and innovative instructional approaches.
Transfer of professional values	10	Respect, responsibility, patience, and professional judgement were transferred through everyday cooperation.
Informal communication and collegial reflection	12	Daily discussions and shared reflection supported continuous professional development.
Emotional and collegial support	8	Reciprocal learning strengthened professional confidence, trust, and team cohesion.

3.3. RESEARCH QUESTION 3: ORGANISATIONAL AND INTERPERSONAL FACILITATORS AND BARRIERS

What organisational and interpersonal factors facilitate or hinder intergenerational collaboration?

The analysis demonstrated that intergenerational collaboration was influenced by a combination of organisational and interpersonal factors that either facilitated or constrained reciprocal cooperation within vocational schools. Participants consistently emphasised that successful collaboration depended less on age differences themselves than on the organisational environment in which professional relationships developed. Across the interviews, barriers and facilitating factors frequently coexisted, illustrating the dynamic nature of intergenerational collaboration.

The most frequently identified organisational barrier was insufficient time for professional interaction. Twelve of the fourteen participants reported that demanding teaching schedules, administrative responsibilities, and organisational requirements substantially reduced opportunities for meaningful collaboration. Although participants expressed a willingness to exchange experiences, they often described everyday school routines as limiting opportunities for shared reflection, informal consultation, and joint planning.

One participant commented:

> "Everyone is busy with their own classes, paperwork and organisational duties. We often solve problems individually simply because there is no time to sit down together." (P5)

In addition to time constraints, participants identified the absence of systematically organised opportunities for professional collaboration. Ten participants explained that intergenerational learning depended largely on individual initiative rather than institutional support. While spontaneous cooperation frequently occurred, participants noted that structured opportunities for collaborative reflection, peer learning, or interdisciplinary meetings were relatively uncommon.

Interpersonal factors were equally influential. Eleven participants highlighted mutual respect as the most important prerequisite for effective cooperation across generations. Participants repeatedly stated that collaboration developed successfully only when teachers acknowledged each other's professional competencies regardless of age, length of teaching experience, or previous vocational background. Respect was consistently associated with openness to different perspectives and willingness to learn from colleagues representing different generations.

One experienced teacher reflected:

> "Age itself does not determine whether cooperation works. What matters is whether colleagues respect each other professionally and are willing to listen." (P8)

Communication emerged as another critical determinant of intergenerational collaboration. Ten participants described open communication as essential for building trust, resolving disagreements, and creating opportunities for reciprocal learning. Conversely, communication characterised by avoidance, limited feedback, or reluctance to discuss professional challenges often resulted in misunderstandings and reduced willingness to cooperate.

Participants also referred to resistance to change, although this issue was interpreted more cautiously than stereotypical assumptions about older or younger teachers. Nine participants observed that reluctance to adopt new approaches could occur across all age groups and was more closely related to individual personality characteristics, previous professional experiences, and organisational culture than to chronological age. Participants therefore challenged simplified assumptions that resistance to innovation was exclusively associated with senior teachers.

Another organisational factor concerned the recognition of collaborative activities. Eight participants expressed the view that schools tended to value individual teaching performance more highly than collaborative professional practice. Several teachers suggested that explicit recognition of mentoring, experience sharing, and teamwork could strengthen teachers' motivation to engage in intergenerational collaboration. Conflicts between generations were discussed by comparatively fewer participants. Six participants reported having experienced tensions associated with different teaching styles, communication preferences, or expectations regarding professional responsibilities. However, these conflicts were generally described as manageable when supported by open communication and constructive leadership. Participants consistently emphasised that interpersonal conflicts were not inevitable consequences of age differences but rather reflected broader organisational conditions influencing professional relationships.

Overall, the findings indicate that organisational structures and interpersonal relationships jointly shape opportunities for intergenerational collaboration. Participants perceived limited time, insufficient institutional support, and ineffective communication as the principal barriers, whereas professional respect, openness to reciprocal learning, and collaborative organisational cultures were identified as the strongest facilitators. Importantly, participants consistently rejected the notion that age itself constituted a barrier to collaboration, instead emphasising that organisational context determined whether generational diversity became a professional asset or a source of division. Table 5 brings together the organisational and interpersonal factors identified as supporting or constraining collaboration.

Table 5. *Factors Facilitating or Hindering Intergenerational Collaboration*

Factor	Participants (n = 14)	Influence on collaboration
Limited time for professional interaction	12	Reduced opportunities for collaboration, reflection, and knowledge sharing.
Mutual professional respect	11	Strengthened reciprocal learning and collaborative relationships.
Open communication	10	Facilitated trust, feedback, and constructive problem-solving.
Lack of structured institutional support	10	Collaboration depended primarily on individual initiative.
Resistance to change	9	Influenced willingness to adopt new approaches but was not associated exclusively with age.
Recognition of collaborative practice	8	Increased motivation for mentoring and experience sharing.
Interpersonal conflicts	6	Occurred occasionally but were generally manageable through supportive leadership and communication.

3.4. RESEARCH QUESTION 4: SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND SCHOOL CLIMATE

How do school leadership and school climate influence intergenerational relationships among teachers of practical vocational subjects?

Participants consistently described school leadership and school climate as the most influential contextual factors shaping intergenerational collaboration within vocational schools. Rather than perceiving collaboration as an individual characteristic of teachers, participants emphasised that supportive organisational conditions created by school leaders largely determined whether cooperation between generations flourished or gradually weakened. Across the interviews, participants repeatedly linked positive professional relationships with leadership practices that encouraged openness, trust, and shared responsibility.

Thirteen of the fourteen participants identified school leadership as a decisive factor influencing the quality of intergenerational collaboration. Participants explained that school leaders contributed not only through formal organisational decisions but also through their everyday communication, visibility within the school community, and willingness to facilitate dialogue among teachers. Leadership characterised by accessibility, fairness, and active interest in staff relationships was consistently associated with stronger collaboration across generations.

One participant stated:

> "The headteacher sets the atmosphere in the school. When people feel respected and supported, they naturally cooperate more and are willing to share their experience." (P7)

Similarly, another participant observed:

> "Good leadership is not only about organising work. It is about creating an environment where people trust each other and are not afraid to ask for help." (P10)

Twelve participants further emphasised that school climate directly influenced their willingness to engage in reciprocal learning and professional cooperation. Schools characterised by mutual respect, open communication, and collegial support were consistently described as environments in which generational differences became valuable professional resources rather than sources of division. Participants frequently referred to trust as the central element connecting school climate with successful intergenerational collaboration.

Conversely, participants reported that less supportive organisational climates substantially limited opportunities for cooperation. Nine participants described situations in which insufficient communication, fragmented relationships, or low levels of trust reduced teachers' willingness to exchange professional experience. In such environments, collaboration became largely task-oriented and formal, while opportunities for spontaneous professional learning diminished considerably. Participants also highlighted the importance of leadership in recognising and valuing collaborative behaviours. Ten participants explained that when school leaders explicitly acknowledged mentoring, teamwork, and knowledge sharing, teachers became more motivated to invest time and effort in supporting colleagues from different generations. Recognition was therefore perceived not only as a managerial practice but also as an important signal that collaborative professional relationships represented a valued component of the school's organisational culture. Several participants further described school leadership as playing an important role in preventing or resolving interpersonal tensions. Eight participants reported that disagreements associated with different teaching approaches or generational perspectives rarely developed into more serious conflicts when school leaders responded promptly, encouraged constructive dialogue, and created opportunities for joint problem-solving. Participants therefore viewed leadership as an active mediator capable of transforming potential sources of disagreement into opportunities for professional learning. An important finding concerned participants' perception of school climate as a dynamic organisational characteristic rather than a stable attribute of the institution. Eleven participants stated that the quality of interpersonal relationships changed over time in response to staff turnover, changes in school leadership, organisational reforms, and deliberate efforts to strengthen professional collaboration. This finding suggests that supportive school climates are not fixed organisational conditions but continuously evolving social environments requiring sustained leadership and collective engagement.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that school leadership and school climate constitute fundamental organisational conditions influencing the quality of intergenerational collaboration within vocational schools. Participants consistently perceived leadership practices promoting trust, open communication, professional recognition, and collaborative problem-solving as essential prerequisites for creating supportive educational workplaces. These organisational conditions not only facilitated reciprocal professional learning but also strengthened teachers' sense of belonging, professional confidence, and collective responsibility for educational practice. Table 6 summarises the leadership and school-climate factors described by participants.

Across all four research questions, the findings demonstrate that intergenerational collaboration among teachers of practical vocational subjects extends beyond the exchange of professional experience and represents a multidimensional

organisational process shaped by interpersonal, professional, and institutional factors. Participants consistently perceived collaboration as a reciprocal relationship characterised by mutual learning, professional respect, and shared responsibility rather than by hierarchical transmission of knowledge from older to younger teachers. The analysis further indicates that successful intergenerational collaboration depends primarily on supportive organisational conditions. While reciprocal learning emerged naturally through everyday professional interactions, its quality was substantially influenced by school leadership, organisational culture, and the psychosocial climate of the school. Participants repeatedly identified trust, open communication, professional recognition, and opportunities for informal interaction as the principal conditions enabling collaboration across generations. Conversely, organisational constraints, particularly limited time, insufficient institutional support, fragmented communication, and reduced opportunities for professional interaction, were identified as the principal barriers limiting reciprocal learning. Importantly, participants consistently rejected the assumption that chronological age itself represented the primary source of intergenerational difficulties. Instead, organisational context determined whether generational diversity functioned as a professional asset contributing to collaborative school cultures or as a factor reinforcing interpersonal distance. Taken together, the findings suggest that intergenerational collaboration should be understood as an important organisational resource that contributes not only to professional learning but also to teacher wellbeing, psychosocial safety, and the development of healthy school environments. Figure 1 organises these themes into a conceptual sequence. Its arrows represent the authors' interpretation of participants' accounts, rather than causal effects established through longitudinal or experimental analysis.

Table 6. *School Leadership, School Climate and Intergenerational Collaboration*

Organisational factor	Participants (n = 14)	Contribution to intergenerational collaboration
Supportive school leadership	13	Encouraged collaboration through openness, fairness, and active communication.
Positive school climate	12	Strengthened trust, mutual respect, and willingness to share professional experience.
School climate as a dynamic process	11	Participants perceived organisational climate as evolving through leadership and staff interactions.
Recognition of collaborative practice	10	Increased teachers' motivation to mentor and cooperate across generations.
Lack of trust and communication	9	Reduced reciprocal learning and professional cooperation.
Leadership as conflict mediator	8	Supported constructive dialogue and prevented escalation of interpersonal tensions.

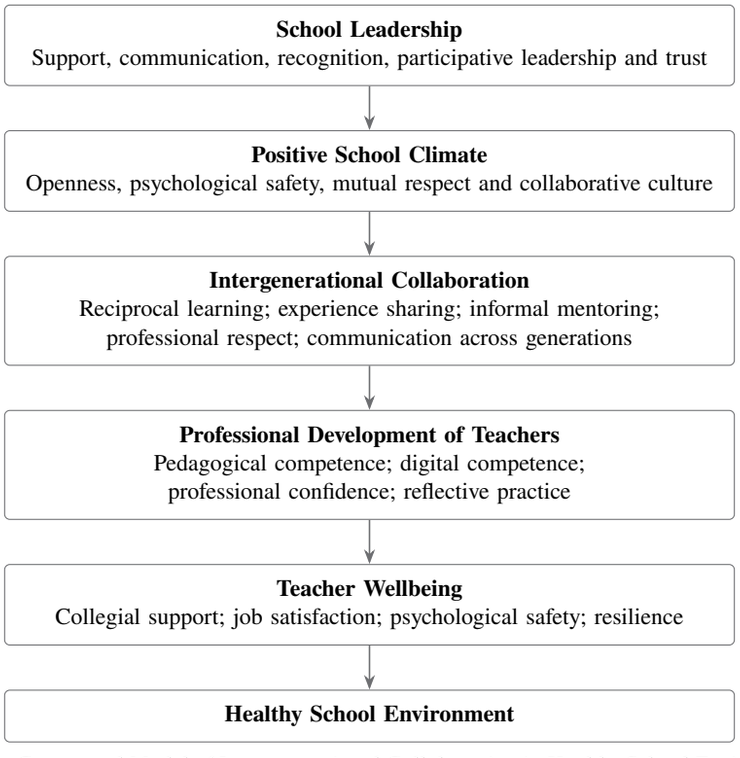


Figure 1. *Conceptual Model of Intergenerational Collaboration in Healthy School Environments*

4. DISCUSSION

The conceptual model in Figure 1 summarises the principal relationships identified through the thematic analysis. Participants consistently described school leadership as the organisational factor initiating the development of supportive school climates characterised by trust, openness, and collaborative professional relationships. Within these environments, intergenerational collaboration emerged through reciprocal learning, informal mentoring, and continuous experience sharing between teachers of different generations. These collaborative processes strengthened teachers' professional competence, confidence, and reflective practice while simultaneously enhancing psychological safety, collegial support, and job satisfaction. In participants' accounts, these connected processes contributed to the development of healthy school environments that support both professional effectiveness and teacher wellbeing. The present study contributes to the growing body of research examining collaboration within school communities by offering an in-depth qualitative perspective on intergenerational relationships among teachers of practical vocational subjects in secondary vocational schools. While previous studies have predominantly examined mentoring, teacher induction, or collaborative professional learning in general educational settings, the present findings demonstrate that intergenerational collaboration within vocational education represents a multidimensional organisational process extending beyond the exchange of professional experience. Participants consistently described collaboration as a reciprocal relationship that simultaneously supported professional learning, strengthened interpersonal trust, and enhanced teachers' professional confidence. Rather than perceiving generational diversity as a potential source of conflict, participants viewed differences in professional experience, pedagogical approaches, and technological competencies as complementary resources that enriched everyday educational practice.

One of the principal findings concerns the reciprocal nature of intergenerational learning. Existing literature frequently conceptualises intergenerational knowledge transfer as a process through which experienced teachers support novice colleagues during professional adaptation [8, 9, 11]. The present findings support the importance of these mentoring relationships but also illustrate within this vocational-school sample how that knowledge exchange occurs in both directions. Experienced teachers contributed pedagogical judgement, practical expertise, and professional resilience, whereas younger colleagues introduced innovative instructional approaches, digital competencies, and greater openness to educational change. These findings reinforce recent perspectives suggesting that intergenerational collaboration should be understood as reciprocal professional learning rather than hierarchical knowledge transmission [4, 14].

A second important finding concerns the organisational conditions supporting intergenerational collaboration. Participants consistently emphasised that collaboration emerged primarily through everyday professional interactions rather than formal mentoring programmes or institutional initiatives. Informal communication, spontaneous consultations, and collaborative problem-solving were described as the principal mechanisms through which professional knowledge was exchanged. This finding expands previous research highlighting the significance of professional learning communities by demonstrating that reciprocal learning often develops through routine workplace interactions that remain largely invisible within formal organisational structures [7]. Consequently, strategies aimed exclusively at implementing formal mentoring programmes may overlook the substantial educational value of naturally occurring professional dialogue among teachers.

Perhaps the most significant contribution of this study relates to the role of school leadership and school climate in shaping intergenerational relationships. Participants consistently associated supportive leadership practices with greater trust, openness, and willingness to collaborate across generations. Importantly, school leaders were not perceived merely as organisational managers but as active facilitators of collaborative professional cultures. These findings are consistent with the relational dimensions considered in Thapa et al.'s school-climate review [2]. Mareš [25] and Holeček [26] provide broader psychological perspectives on educational practice. Within the present sample, participants' accounts suggest that leadership may influence intergenerational collaboration indirectly through the creation of psychologically safe organisational environments characterised by professional recognition, open communication, and mutual respect. In this sense, school leadership represents not simply an administrative function but a central organisational mechanism through which healthy interpersonal relationships are cultivated within educational institutions.

The findings further indicate that barriers to intergenerational collaboration are primarily organisational rather than generational. Participants consistently rejected simplified assumptions that age itself represented the principal source of professional tensions. Instead, limited opportunities for communication, insufficient organisational support, time constraints, and fragmented professional relationships were identified as the dominant obstacles to collaboration. This observation is particularly important because it shifts attention away from generational stereotypes towards modifiable organisational conditions that can be addressed through school leadership and institutional policies. Such an interpretation challenges deficit-oriented perspectives on generational diversity and instead conceptualises diversity as an organisational asset whose benefits depend upon the quality of the professional environment.

An additional contribution of the present study lies in extending contemporary discussions concerning teacher wellbeing and healthy school environments. Although participants rarely referred explicitly to wellbeing, their narratives consistently

connected successful intergenerational collaboration with greater professional confidence, collegial support, psychological safety, and reduced professional isolation. These findings suggest that reciprocal collaboration contributes not only to teachers' professional competence but also to their psychosocial wellbeing. This relationship is particularly relevant within contemporary educational systems, where teacher wellbeing has increasingly been recognised as a prerequisite for sustainable educational quality and positive school climate. The conceptual model proposed in this study illustrates these interconnections by proposing how supportive leadership and positive organisational climates create conditions for intergenerational collaboration, which may in turn strengthen professional learning, collegial relationships, and healthy school environments.

Collectively, the findings suggest that intergenerational collaboration should not be regarded as an isolated educational phenomenon but rather as an integral component of organisational functioning within schools. By integrating perspectives from professional learning, school leadership, organisational climate, and teacher wellbeing, the present study offers a broader conceptual understanding of how generational diversity may contribute to the development of resilient, collaborative, and health-promoting educational communities. This conceptual perspective represents the principal theoretical contribution of the study and provides a foundation for future research examining organisational mechanisms supporting teachers' professional development and wellbeing across different educational contexts.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The findings of the present study suggest that intergenerational collaboration should be regarded as an important organisational resource rather than merely a consequence of age diversity within teaching staff. The results indicate that collaboration between teachers from different generations contributes not only to professional learning but also to stronger collegial relationships, greater professional confidence, and the development of supportive school environments. Schools should therefore create conditions in which reciprocal learning becomes a natural component of everyday professional practice rather than an occasional activity dependent solely on individual initiative. A central implication concerns the role of school leadership. The findings demonstrate that supportive leadership creates organisational conditions in which teachers feel respected, trusted, and encouraged to share their professional experience. School leaders should therefore intentionally foster open communication, psychological safety, and opportunities for collaborative dialogue among teachers from different generations. Creating time and space for professional reflection, joint problem-solving, and the exchange of teaching experiences may strengthen collaborative school cultures and reduce professional isolation among teachers.

The study further indicates that schools should recognise the educational value of informal professional learning. Participants consistently described everyday conversations, spontaneous consultations, and shared reflection on teaching practice as the most meaningful forms of reciprocal learning. Rather than relying exclusively on formal mentoring programmes or structured professional development activities, schools should actively support organisational practices that encourage continuous interaction and mutual learning throughout teachers' professional careers. Particular attention should also be devoted to vocational education, where teachers of practical vocational subjects frequently combine pedagogical qualifications with extensive occupational experience acquired outside the educational system. These complementary professional backgrounds represent a valuable source of expertise that should be systematically utilised through reciprocal collaboration. Schools should therefore create opportunities for teachers with different professional trajectories to exchange both pedagogical knowledge and practical vocational experience in ways that enrich teaching and strengthen students' learning experiences.

The findings also highlight the importance of viewing intergenerational collaboration as part of broader strategies aimed at promoting teacher wellbeing and healthy school environments. Strengthening trust, collegial support, and professional recognition may contribute to greater job satisfaction, stronger organisational commitment, and more resilient teaching teams. Rather than implementing isolated interventions, schools should adopt comprehensive organisational approaches that integrate collaborative leadership, supportive school climate, and reciprocal professional learning into everyday educational practice. Finally, the conceptual model proposed in this study may serve as a practical framework for schools seeking to strengthen collaborative organisational cultures. By illustrating the relationships between school leadership, school climate, intergenerational collaboration, professional learning, teacher wellbeing, and healthy school environments, the model provides school leaders with a structured perspective for planning and evaluating organisational development initiatives. Such an integrated approach may contribute to more sustainable school improvement by recognising that collaborative relationships among teachers represent a fundamental component of educational quality and organisational wellbeing [13].

Collectively, these implications suggest that intergenerational collaboration should not be understood solely as a mechanism for transferring professional knowledge but as a strategic organisational resource capable of strengthening professional learning, teacher wellbeing, and the long-term development of healthy, collaborative school communities.

6. STRENGTHS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The present study possesses several methodological and conceptual strengths that enhance the credibility and relevance of its findings. First, the qualitative research design enabled an in-depth exploration of teachers of practical vocational subjects' experiences of intergenerational collaboration within secondary vocational schools. By focusing on participants' own narratives, the study captured the complexity of professional relationships, organisational dynamics, and everyday educational practice in a manner that would have been difficult to achieve using quantitative approaches alone. The use of semi-structured interviews further provided sufficient flexibility to explore individual experiences while maintaining consistency across the principal research themes. A further strength of the study lies in its focus on teachers of practical vocational subjects, a professional group that has received comparatively limited attention in previous research on intergenerational collaboration. Unlike teachers of general academic subjects, teachers of practical vocational subjects combine pedagogical responsibilities with vocational expertise acquired through previous occupational experience. This dual professional identity provided a unique perspective on reciprocal learning, professional collaboration, and the organisational conditions supporting knowledge exchange within vocational education. An important contribution of the study is the development of a conceptual model illustrating the relationships between school leadership, school climate, intergenerational collaboration, professional learning, teacher wellbeing, and healthy school environments. Rather than presenting isolated findings, the model integrates the principal themes emerging from the qualitative analysis into a coherent organisational framework that may inform future research as well as practical interventions aimed at strengthening collaborative school cultures.

Several limitations should nevertheless be acknowledged when interpreting the findings. The study was conducted using a qualitative design based on purposeful sampling, and the findings should therefore be understood as analytically transferable rather than statistically generalisable. Although participants represented diverse professional backgrounds, teaching experience, and organisational contexts, all data were collected within the Czech educational system. Educational policies, organisational structures, and cultural characteristics may differ across countries, and caution is therefore warranted when applying the findings to other educational contexts. Another limitation concerns the exclusive focus on teachers' perspectives. Although participants provided valuable insights into intergenerational collaboration, additional perspectives from school leaders, students and other educational professionals, together with more detailed comparisons of beginning teachers' experiences, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of organisational processes influencing collaborative school cultures. Similarly, the use of multiple qualitative methods, such as classroom observations, focus groups, or document analysis, could further strengthen future investigations by enabling methodological triangulation. The interviews were not designed to establish causal effects on wellbeing, and no independent wellbeing measure is reported. The proposed model therefore summarises perceived relationships that require further examination.

Future research should therefore examine intergenerational collaboration across different educational settings, school levels, and national contexts to determine whether similar organisational mechanisms operate in diverse educational systems. Comparative international studies could contribute to a deeper understanding of how educational policy, organisational culture, and leadership practices shape collaboration between teachers from different generations. Longitudinal research would also be valuable in exploring how intergenerational relationships evolve over time and how collaborative organisational cultures influence teacher wellbeing, professional retention, and sustainable school improvement.

Overall, despite these limitations, the present study provides an original contribution to the growing literature on collaborative school cultures by demonstrating that intergenerational collaboration represents considerably more than the exchange of professional experience. The findings suggest that reciprocal learning, supportive leadership, and positive school climate constitute interconnected organisational resources capable of strengthening teacher wellbeing and contributing to the development of healthier and more resilient educational communities.

7. CONCLUSION

Intergenerational collaboration represents considerably more than the coexistence of teachers from different age groups within the same educational institution. The accounts analysed in the present study suggest that reciprocal collaboration between teachers of practical vocational subjects constitutes a valuable organisational resource that supports professional learning, strengthens collegial relationships, and contributes to the creation of supportive and healthy school environments. Rather than being determined by chronological age, successful collaboration emerged as a dynamic process shaped by organisational culture, school leadership, interpersonal trust, and opportunities for everyday professional interaction. A central contribution of the study lies in demonstrating that intergenerational learning within vocational education is fundamentally reciprocal. Experienced teachers contribute pedagogical judgement, professional resilience, and practical expertise developed through years of educational and vocational practice, while younger colleagues introduce innovative instructional approaches, digital competencies, and openness to educational change. This reciprocal exchange extends beyond the traditional understanding of mentoring as a one-directional transfer of knowledge and illustrates the com-

plementary nature of professional expertise across generations. The study further highlights the pivotal role of school leadership and school climate in creating organisational conditions that enable meaningful collaboration. Participants consistently perceived supportive leadership, open communication, psychological safety, and professional recognition as essential prerequisites for effective intergenerational relationships. These findings suggest that collaborative organisational cultures do not emerge spontaneously but require intentional leadership capable of fostering trust, reciprocity, and shared professional responsibility.

An important theoretical contribution of the study is the conceptual model developed from the empirical findings, which illustrates the interrelationships between school leadership, school climate, intergenerational collaboration, professional learning, teacher wellbeing, and healthy school environments. By integrating these dimensions into a coherent organisational framework, the study extends existing knowledge on collaborative school cultures and provides a foundation for future research examining the mechanisms through which intergenerational collaboration may influence teachers' professional development and organisational wellbeing. From a practical perspective, the findings indicate that schools should move beyond isolated mentoring initiatives and adopt comprehensive organisational strategies that embed reciprocal learning within everyday educational practice. Strengthening opportunities for informal professional dialogue, collaborative reflection, and intergenerational exchange may contribute not only to teachers' professional competence but also to greater psychological safety, stronger collegial support, and more sustainable school improvement. In this respect, intergenerational collaboration should be recognised as a strategic component of healthy school environments rather than solely as a mechanism for professional knowledge transfer.

Overall, the present study suggests that the educational value of generational diversity extends far beyond differences in age or professional experience. When supported by collaborative leadership, positive organisational climates, and reciprocal professional learning, intergenerational collaboration becomes a significant organisational asset capable of strengthening teacher wellbeing, enriching educational practice, and promoting resilient and health-supportive school communities. It is this broader organisational perspective that represents the principal contribution of the study and offers a meaningful direction for both future research and educational practice.

Author Contributions

All authors contributed equally to the conception, development and preparation of this manuscript. All authors reviewed and approved the final version for publication.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest relevant to this study.

Data Availability

The findings supporting this study are presented in the article through thematic summaries, participant counts and anonymised quotations. Interview materials are subject to the confidentiality arrangements described in the methodology, with access restricted to the research team to protect participants and their schools.

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