

## Chapter 9

# Emotional and Professional Support Measures for ESOL Educator Flourishing: Peer Support and Mentoring as Factors of (Women) Educator Well-Being

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This chapter examines the current situation in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) teacher stress as well as the role of well-being in teacher and student outcomes. It also provides insights into the factors that contribute to the flourishing of the whole language-teaching educational ecosystem. The specific needs of women educators and the essential role of supportive peer communities and mentoring in empowering and providing professional support specifically for ESOL teachers are also examined. Finally, an evidence-based, gender-specific intervention for female educators is briefly examined.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The pursuit of well-being is gradually emerging as a holy grail in education contexts worldwide. From global organisations like UNESCO (UNESCO, 2022), to prominent publishers like Oxford University Press (Mercer, 2012), scholars (Babic et al., 2022), and individual language schools, reflection on the merits of flourishing and positive institutions is spreading in the educational community. More than a decade of positive psychology research as well as evidence from studies in the educational environment in general and the language education domain in particular are billowing fresh air in the sails of reflective educators giving birth to innovative interventions and aligning teaching strategies to contemporary educator and student needs. In part, this movement can be perceived as a response to the influx of teacher burnout and attrition that have reached record highs causing a global movement of quiet quitting or outright turnover (Kyrikaki, 2023; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). Particular focus of attention on distinct groups of educators, such as language teachers and women educators reveals unique challenges that can impact well-being and efficiency and require distinct emotional and professional support. It could be argued that the COVID-19 situation and the additional burden of the extreme demands it has placed on teachers' shoulders has necessitated and expedited a shift in perspective and focus toward reflective solution-based approaches. Researchers and practitioners alike have been placing increasing attention to mental fitness, empowerment, and well-being not merely as remedial measures but as a paradigm shift in the focus of education.

This chapter examines the current situation in ESOL teacher stress as well as the role of well-being in teacher and student outcomes. It also provides insights into the factors that contribute to the thriving of the whole language educational ecosystem. The specific needs of women teachers and the essential role of supportive peer communities and mentoring in empowering and providing professional support specifically for language education contexts are also examined. A comprehensive framework especially designed for this distinct demographic is also presented in brief.

## **TEACHER STRESS: A GLOBAL EPIDEMIC**

Education is burdened with excessive stress rates and health problems related to burnout, which exact a heavy toll on society both financially and emotionally (Acheson et al., 2016; Carver-Thomas, D., & Darling-Hammond, L., 2019). A survey on the quality of work life among 30,000 teachers in the USA by the American Federation of Teachers (2015) revealed that 73% find their work stressful "often", a significantly higher percentage than the 30% rate of general population workers with a similar response.

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