

Chapter 8

Managing the Weight of the Chalk: Emotional Intelligence as a Tool for Educator Resilience

ABSTRACT

Educators at all levels of education are expected to balance multiple responsibilities, wearing numerous hats throughout their careers. This dynamic profession demands meticulous preparation, planning, lesson delivery, assessment creation and grading, administrative duties, curriculum development, student counselling, research involvement, and professional development pursuits. These challenges are compounded by evolving educational landscapes, as seen in the New Zealand education system, which has introduced complexities such as increased workloads, diverse student needs requiring differentiated teaching approaches, and the integration of new technologies in teaching and assessment, including distance learning, blended learning, and eLearning. Additional stressors arise from declining educational standards, language proficiency barriers among students, and escalating expectations from internal and external stakeholders. These professional demands are further amplified by the complexities of educators' personal lives amidst global social and economic changes.

INTRODUCTION

Tertiary education today stands at the intersection of theory and practice, where transformative educational strategies must not only be conceptualized but also applied meaningfully in real-world contexts. The earlier sections of this book, *Transforma-*

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tive Practices in Tertiary Education: Bridging Theory and Practice, established the foundation for this journey.

Part One: Contemporary Educational Trends explored the evolving role of higher education in addressing global and local challenges, highlighting how education can transcend traditional boundaries to foster global citizenship and social transformation. **Part Two: Educational Excellence** delved deeper into the innovative tools, strategies, and paradigms necessary to create emotionally, intellectually, and socially enriched learning environments.

Now, in **Part Three: Practical Case Studies**, we transition from theory to application. This section presents a series of case studies that illustrate how transformative concepts are implemented in real-world tertiary education settings. Each chapter offers a practical exploration of a particular challenge faced by educators and institutions, providing models, strategies, and reflective insights that bridge the gap between theoretical ideals and everyday practice. Through these case studies, readers are invited to engage with the realities of the tertiary education environment, learning how to adapt, innovate, and lead in complex, evolving contexts.

This opening chapter addresses one of the most pressing challenges within the sector: **workplace stress among tertiary educators**. Stress has emerged as a major occupational health risk globally, and in New Zealand, conversations around educator stress and burnout have become particularly urgent. Kurt Lewin (1951) posits that all individuals and organizations operate within environments inherently filled with stressors, suggesting that stress is an unavoidable aspect of organizational life. Stress not only compromises individuals' physical and mental health but also exerts a direct influence on work performance and, consequently, on overall organizational productivity (Menon & Akhilesh, 1994).

The consequences of unmanaged workplace stress are considerable. High rates of absenteeism, job dissatisfaction, workplace accidents, and employee turnover are all linked to elevated stress levels (Whetten & Cameron, 2010). Furthermore, Palmer, Cooper, and Thomas (2004) emphasize that work-related stress imposes a substantial economic burden on national economies, accounting for significant costs in terms of sick leave, healthcare, lost productivity, and litigation expenses.

Within the tertiary education sector, educators are increasingly grappling with these stress-related challenges. Heightened workloads, diverse student needs, the integration of digital technologies, and rising stakeholder expectations collectively contribute to elevated stress levels among academic staff. Against this backdrop, this chapter investigates the issue of workplace stress specifically among tertiary educators, analysing its impact on professional effectiveness, efficiency, and job satisfaction.

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