

## **EAQUALS Online 2022**

### **Professional development activities and tools for teacher wellbeing**

**Speaker: Wioleta Anna Wenclawek**

**by Itir Beğen Yılmaz**

Wioleta Anna Wenclawek has been working as an English instructor at Özyeğin University since 2006. She graduated from Teachers Training College- Department of Foreign Languages in Poland (Adam Mickiewicz University). Wioleta holds a DELTA from the University of Cambridge. She is currently pursuing her MA degree in ELT. Her current areas of interest are teacher motivation and well-being as well as teacher and student development. Continuous professional development (CPD) for teachers in language teaching has received a lot of attention for some time now, and with the pandemic, the link between one's well-being and professional development has become much more obvious. In fact, CPD is very much intertwined with a person's well-being and the environment one works in. This session aimed at presenting different professional development activities and tools that can be implemented in the workplace as well as stressing the importance of well-being and offering some ways of improving one's physical and psychological condition. To this end, the presenter shared her personal experiences and practices conducted in her workplace. The session was divided into the following parts: the importance of CPD, tools and activities for professional development and teacher's well-being, the speaker's personal experience in this regard and the approach at her workplace. This presentation increased the participants' awareness of how significant it is to continuously develop oneself and what can be done in this matter considering personal well-being. It provided guidance for creating developmental opportunities for individuals and teams. Below, you may find the highlights of her session.

#### **What is Professional Development? Definitions in Literature:**

"...any professional development activities engaged in by teachers which enhances their knowledge and skills and enable them to consider their attitudes and approaches to the education, with a view to improve the quality of the teaching and learning process' (Bolam, 1993).

"The maintenance and the enhancement of the knowledge, expertise and competence of professionals throughout their careers, according to a plan formulated with regard to the needs of the professional, the employer and society" (Madden and Mitchell, 1993).

#### **How to develop professionally?**

She believes that the stages of personal development cycle are: Establishing the purpose/direction, identifying development needs, looking for development opportunities, formulating action plan, undertaking development, recording outcomes, and reviewing and evaluating. She suggests that instructors immerse themselves in the developmental opportunities mentioned below:

- Conferences & Workshops
- Team Teaching
- Mentoring

- Classroom Observation
- Teacher Groups
- Learner Feedback
- Professional Portfolio
- Professional Learning Communities
- Writing Teaching & Learning Materials
- Journaling
- Micro Learning

She highlighted that classroom observations, team-teaching & peer observations, Cambridge assessment, teacher groups/team meetings, faculty reading club and learner feedback all contribute to professional development. She underlined that the themes below enable instructors to grow professionally as well.

#### **Themes:**

- Learner-centered teaching
- Improving classroom collaboration
- Vocabulary Teaching
- Flipped Classroom
- Literature in ELT
- Encouraging students to speak outside class
- Improving students' fluency

In a nutshell, multiple opportunities for teachers, sharing culture, team activities, sense of community, higher motivation, support, up to date skills and knowledge and better workplace dynamics nourishes the instructors not only professionally, but also personally.

#### **How is CDP and well-being linked?**

The research shows that well-being encompasses not only satisfaction with the job, but also satisfaction with the overall environment and relationship among members of the school. A study by Turner and Thielking indicates that teacher well-being was a significant predictor of teaching practices. Teachers expressed that how they feel makes a difference in their ability to respond effectively to the challenges they face in class. Professional development activities such as reflection, formal Workshops, feedback, expert coaching, learning community nourish work well-being dimensions. These include self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth.



According to Beltman (2001), the top three contextual factors contributing to teacher's stress level are challenges in classroom/school context, classroom management/disruptive students and meeting needs of disadvantaged students. Thus, it is crucial to focus on teacher well-being.

### Tips for well-being:

- Set aside time to unwind
- plan ahead
- set boundaries
- adjust your expectations
- be socially connected
- be kind to yourself
- get your body moving
- avoid toxicity
- teach with gratitude
- emphasize your purpose (Why are you a teacher?)
- reflect on your physical and mental health on a daily basis (What do I need today?)
- acquire new skills and develop yourself

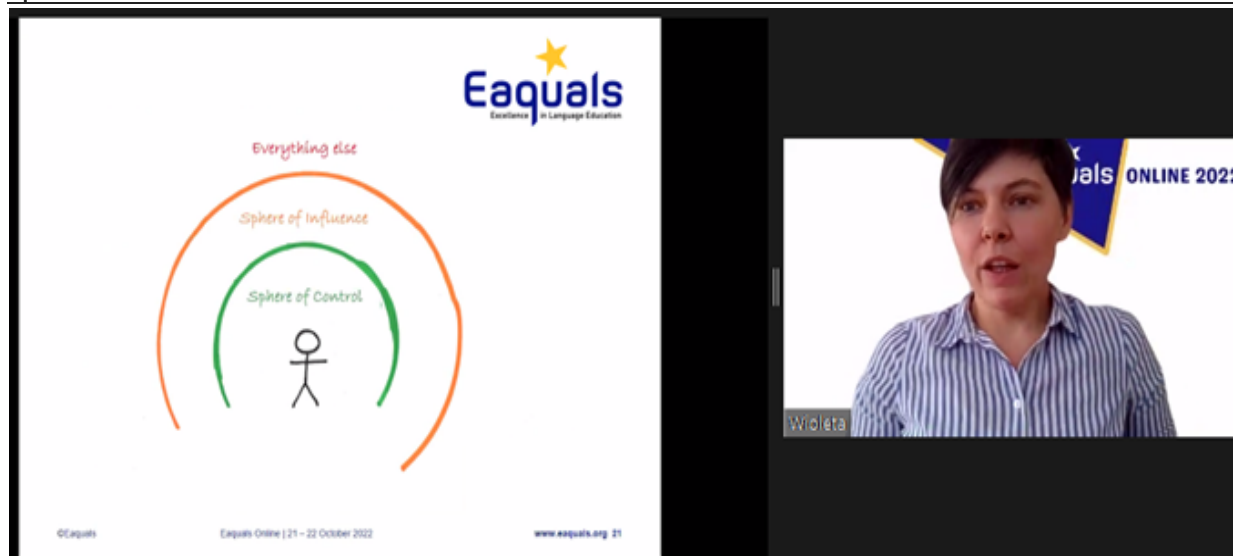
### Five Online Resources for Educators' Well-being by Aga Khan Schools:

1. Breathing exercises: a 7-minute video taking you through a breathing to exercise reduce anxiety.
2. Meditation: A 5-minute video that teaches meditation to reduce stress.
3. Guided Imagery: A 15-minute video taking you through a guided imagery exercise to promote relaxation.
4. Progressive Relaxation: A 6.5-minute video that guides you through a relaxation technique that reduces stress and anxiety in your body by having you slowly tense and then relax each muscle.
5. Self-care and Coping Tips: 5 tips from Save the Children

She ended with 2 Activities to try out.

**Bucket of Moments:** Take a jar or a bucket. Make a note of small things that happen in your workplace and all the small memories that make you happy. Place these notes in the bucket. This may include adding notes you have received from your or a meeting over coffee you had with your colleague or a funny joke you received from a friend. When you feel low or alone, take out any one memory (or more) to help you feel better.

Sphere of Influence:



On a blank piece of paper draw a circle and write in it “within my control”. In this circle, list all problems, issues or matters, you can control. Now draw a bigger circle and write in it.” I can influence” in this bigger circle, list all the things you could possibly influence. On the outside of this circle write the words “Letting Go” and list all the problems that are beyond your control or influence. Focus your energy on the two circles only- on the matters you can control and on those you have influence. Practice reminding yourself to let go of everything else.

All in all, she suggested that instructors should inspire each other through constructive feedback, attending symposiums and conferences, and institutions organizing needs-based sessions.

## Reflections:

In the School of Languages at Sabancı University each and every one of these suggestions are carried out. As clearly mentioned in SL Blog: Personal & Professional Development at Sabancı University School of Languages:

**allaboutPPD@SL** has been designed to do exactly what its name suggests; to provide information ‘*all about PPD*’ at Sabancı University School of Languages. It aims to describe the wide range of PPD activities available in the SL; to provide guidance on core PPD processes, practices and tools; and to allow quick and easy access to institutional PPD resources and online platforms. So **allaboutPPD@SL** is for us teachers; SL’s most valuable asset.

Core principles underpinning the design of **allaboutPPD@SL** are based on an attempt to ensure up-to-dateness of SL PPD activities as well as ease of access to relevant information, resources and links through:

- the use of a ‘Pages’ menu based on SL’s core PPD activities
- a consideration of the continued relevance and usefulness of PPD content; reference to ‘current’ PPD activities to help support up-to-dateness, ease of access and practicality of the maintenance of the website
- the minimal use of visuals in order not to crowd and lengthen the pages

Although there has been a large variety of PPD activities since the SL’s initial years, it is beyond the brief of our website to describe – let alone list – all the wonderful and useful work that has taken place over the years and to acknowledge the valuable contributions of all colleagues involved in this work. Nonetheless, attempts have been made to acknowledge areas of past PPD work through brief descriptions and/or examples in relevant sections of **allaboutPPD@SL**.

It is also important to note that the choice of ‘PPD’ in the name of our website, **allaboutPPD@SL**, is a conscious one indeed. This is based on the belief that although most activities may sound ‘professional’ only, their effectiveness will be largely determined by our willingness and efforts to invest in our own personal development. (Sabancı University School of Languages, 2018)

## References:

Aga Khan Foundation. *Supporting Educators’ Wellbeing and Professional Development*. Aga Khan. [https://agakhanschools.org/Content/downloads/supporting\\_educators\\_wellbeing.pdf](https://agakhanschools.org/Content/downloads/supporting_educators_wellbeing.pdf)

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