

Ready to Bloom? A Guide to Professional Development for Teacher Well-Being

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We, educators, are like the most precious flowers in a professional garden, destined to flourish across many seasons, but only under the right conditions. Too often, teachers face relentless demands to “bloom” continuously, despite depleted inner resources and often substandard teaching/learning environments.

Drawing on my interactive workshop at the Bloom TESOL-Hungary Conference (3–5 October 2025), this article expands the topic to offer a comprehensive guide to teacher well-being support through targeted continuous professional development (CPD). My aim is to offer self-assessment tools, evidence-based strategies, personal anecdotes from my CPD journey, and actionable steps for growth. I will also touch upon how opportunities like Erasmus+ courses can truly transform the thinking and approaches to language teaching.

Teacher Well-Being Foundations

Well-being is more than the mere absence of illness, nor is it a way to identify *feeling good*; it is “a positive state that encompasses physical, mental, and social well-being... [where one’s] life is meaningful, purposeful, and fulfilling” (Seligman, 2002, p. 66). The World Health Organization (WHO, 2022) identifies teacher well-being as coping with everyday stress, realising abilities, productive work, and community contribution. Ask yourself how many of these four aspects are met on a daily basis for you.

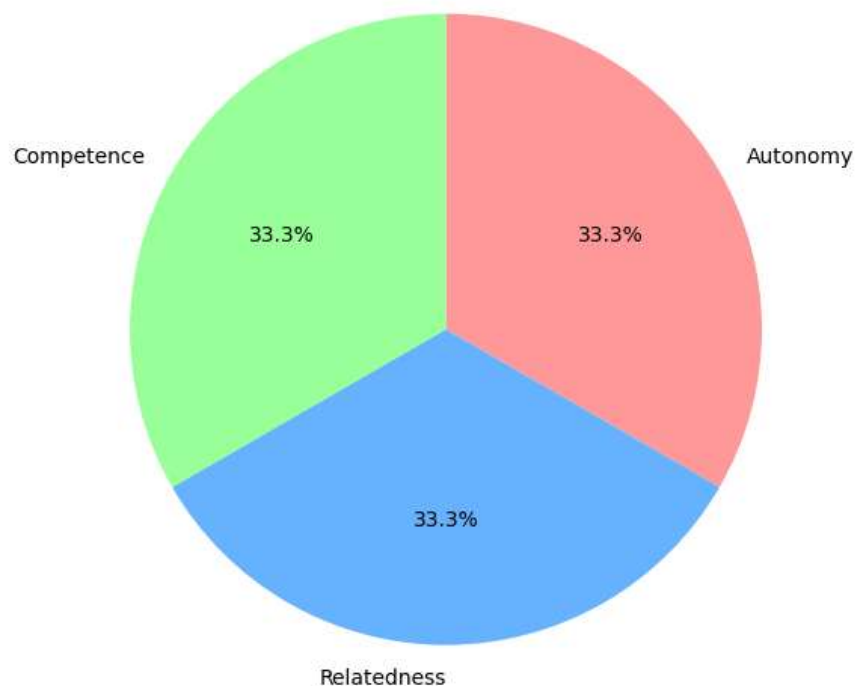
In this context, Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000, pp. 72–73) provides the following additional core needs (spelling the acronym ARC):

- Autonomy (feeling in control of one’s actions),
- Relatedness (feeling connected and belonging with others), and
- Competence (feeling effective and capable in one’s activities).

Ask yourself how important these core needs are for you and if they are equally important as Figure 1 shows.

Figure 1

Ryan and Deci’s (2000) ARC Needs: Autonomy, Relatedness, Competence



Teacher well-being manifests as a complex, dynamic state with mental–physical balance, growth orientation, focused awareness, joy in work, and supportive environments. These aspects are incorporated into the PERMA Model. It was developed by Seligman (2011), who originally conceptualised well-being through five pillars. Later adaptations formally expanded the framework into six pillars to explicitly incorporate physical health (leading, e.g., to Butler & Kern, 2016). Table 1 shows the six pillars of the PERMAH Model.

Table 1

Six Pillars of the PERMAH Model

Pillar	Description	Application to Teaching (Big Scope & Tiny Milestones)
Positive Emotions (P)	Cultivating joy and optimism	Big Scope: Celebrate major student achievements like graduation or winning competitions. Tiny Milestones: Notice small wins daily, like a student finally mastering a tricky grammar point.
Engagement (E)	Flow states in tasks	Big Scope: Design immersive projects where students and teachers are deeply involved (e.g., multi-week debate series). Tiny Milestones: Get lost in grading a single creative assignment or cocreating posters with students while building on their curiosity.
Relationships (R)	Strong social bonds	Big Scope: Build a mentoring network with colleagues and alumni for long-term collaboration. Tiny Milestones: Share a coffee or quick encouragement with a student or colleague to strengthen daily trust.
Meaning (M)	Purpose beyond self	Big Scope: Inspire societal impact through teaching (e.g., developing cross-cultural understanding or language empowerment initiatives). Tiny Milestones: Help a student communicate effectively in a real-world situation.
Accomplishment (A)	Mastery and goal pursuit	Big Scope: Earn advanced certifications, lead a workshop, or implement a school-wide program. Tiny Milestones: Complete a short online professional development module or finish grading an assignment (aka just getting through the day).
Health (H)	Physical and mental vitality	Big Scope: Lead school-wide wellness initiatives like walking meetings or mindfulness programmes for staff. Tiny Milestones: Take a 5-minute stretch break between classes or swap one coffee for water to stay energised.

(Cocreated with ChatGPT)

Table 1 describes the six pillars of the PERMAH Model and provides ways each can be developed. Both ambitious, long-term goals and small, achievable daily actions contribute to sustainable teacher wellbeing. On a daily basis, this means having the ability to zoom out and relate our actions to our longer-term goals and identify how each action may lead to a more sustainable, growth-oriented career, which will, in turn, create a more flourishing work environment.

Ripple Effects

We often position teacher well-being as being optional when in reality it is foundational. It supports teacher retention and increases teaching quality and effectiveness. What it also does is directly impact student achievement, and it helps manage diverse learner needs. Empirical evidence is stark: Teachers' emotional exhaustion negatively correlates with student performance (Klusmann et al., 2016), whereas teacher well-being elevates student well-being through supportive mediation (Bilz et al., 2022). From a number of perspectives, it is essential to tend to teacher well-being so that overall school environments, classroom environments, and teacher–student self-confidence may thrive.

In Hungary and globally, neglected well-being exacerbates burnout, with stressors like administrative loads and emotional demands amplifying risks. Yet, proactive cultivation does offer exponential returns. With teachers juggling multiple roles such as supporters, innovators, facilitators, critical thinkers, global connectors, technology integrators, curators, mentors, coaches, collaborators, communication strategists, and linguists, their wellbeing plays a prominent role in ensuring professional sustainability, stability, and long-term growth.

Do you regularly get the feeling that teacher stress is *your* problem to fix alone? Instead of seeing burnout as a personal failing (“You should just do more self-care!”), view it as a sign that the whole system needs uprooting. The many shifts in responsibilities,

workloads inside and outside classrooms, and the growing usage of Artificial Intelligence all put well-being high on the priority list for schools, leaders, and even policymakers. Gkonou's (2025) TTedSIG webinar outlined a multilevel framework: Government policies/funding, leadership (workload management, peer time), and personal practices (mindfulness, boundaries). Identifying responsibilities and actions to take at each level is essential.

Your Well-Being Toolkit

Now that we have an overview of what well-being is and how it can impact our work and environment, let us check the practical steps we can take as educators to preserve our own well-being. Start with self-awareness: Reflect on personality traits, strengths, weaknesses, and the positive impacts of teaching. You can now begin to broaden positive emotions via student–colleague–parent relationships, block out time for a mentor consultation, and build your professional networks.

Key questions should include:

- How do you prioritise your own well-being as a teacher?
- What are your boundaries, and how do you communicate them to students and colleagues?
- Do you have specific stress triggers? How can you identify and manage them?
- Are you kind and understanding towards yourself, especially when things are challenging?
- What are your personal and professional development goals?
- How can you incorporate these goals and make time for them?

Practical “little helpers” form a holistic routine:

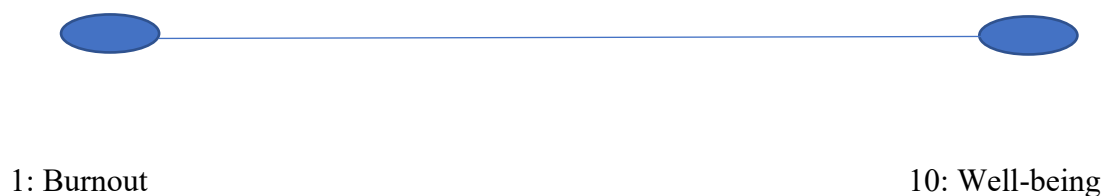
- Basics: Sleep, nutrition, hydration, stretching, task breakdown (1–2–3 focus technique).
- Senses and Flow: Meditation, music, scents, a short walk, new routes/tools, reduced screen time.
- Boundaries and Rest: Say “no”, limit work emails, build work/rest rituals.
- Social and Creative: Purposeful contact, DIY projects, exhibitions, community joins, photography.

Proactive and responsive measures work together to support well-being. Proactive strategies focus on prevention through intentional habits such as self-care routines, ergonomics, exercise, nutrition, sleep, and nature time, while responsive strategies involve adapting to challenges through mindful communication, reflection, feedback, and support networks. My pro tip is: Ask others in your network what works for them. Better still, involve your classes by having them brainstorm effective ways to approach the topic of wellbeing.

We need to understand where we are and where we wish to be. A simple scale as seen in Figure 2 can help.

Figure 2

Well-Being Scale



Well-Being Ownership

If your aim is not merely to survive, take a close look at what is pulling you back, what gives you energy, and consider ways to address your key pain points. The chart of the Well-Being Wheel in Figure 3 can help you reimagine your future self.

Figure 3

Well-Being Wheel



(by Kovács, using Canva)

Figure 4 below illustrates the options in greater detail for those of you willing to commit to a more thorough review of habits and routines that influence your own personal well-being.

Figure 4

Well-Being Measures and Strategies



Note. First presented by Kovács using Canva at 4th International Language Coaching Conference, Málaga, June 2024.

Professional Development as a Catalyst for Blooming

Professional development (PD) is not just another box to tick—it is the sunlight your career needs to truly bloom. Participating in professional development programmes builds lasting habits, sharpens your teaching toolkit, deepens insights into student learning, boosts your credibility as an educator dedicated to your profession, and helps you to deliver real value while transforming challenges into growth opportunities.

Certainly, possible hurdles connected to such professional development programmes like tackling red tape, stepping out of your comfort zone, encountering language barriers, or experiencing mindset blocks can feel daunting. However, programmes like Erasmus+ cut

through these challenges with immersive real-world practice, available funding, Europe-wide networks, ready-to-use strategies, the opportunity to reconnect with your passion, and genuine renewal.

Take my own story: an Erasmus+ course in Tenerife was pure “sunlight”. Diving into real-world immersion accelerated my shift from teaching to coaching, giving me strategies I can now share. Empowering my experiences to form new, applicable ideas has helped me “shine” brighter and pass those insights on to colleagues.

Since then, I joined another course in Florence, Italy, exploring outdoor and urban learning. Working in parks, botanical gardens, and open squares showed me how stepping outside the classroom boosts student engagement, well-being, and inclusion. It reframed learning in fresh, exciting ways—perfect for any ELT context.

Assess your professional garden: Where do you need more sunlight? Start small: Book a professional development programme, set one boundary to improve your well-being, connect purposefully with a professional. As educators, we are all brilliant and precious; let’s cultivate conditions to thrive collectively.

So, are you ready to bloom?

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