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Reconsidering English Language Learning in Costa Rica: Exploring Teachers' Well-Being
and its Importance, Challenges, and Recommendations in the Wake of a New Era in
Education

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Reconsidering English Language Learning in Costa Rica: Exploring Teachers' Well-Being and its Importance, Challenges, and Recommendations in the Wake of a New Era in Education

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Abstract

The lack of empathy and support that educators constantly face has serious consequences. However, this does not seem to be enough to make a significant change in the way this is perceived. The following paper aims to study the current situation regarding teacher well-being among Costa Rican English language teachers. It focuses on stressors, testimonies, and a series of strategies that can be used as a way to cope with this profession's struggles and offer better conditions for English language instructors.

Keywords: English language teaching, well-being, stress, Costa Rica.

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Introduction

Anybody who has had the privilege of teaching a group of people will probably agree that helping others and witnessing achieve their goals is arguably the most satisfying part of the job. No matter how weary we may feel at the end of the day, the reward of being useful and having accomplished something good fuels the desire to keep on going. However, oftentimes we find ourselves in a position where frustration, discontent, and exhaustion find their way to tip the balance in favor of a feeling of powerlessness and despair. The role of the educator goes far beyond the responsibilities inside the classroom. Planning, grading, attending meetings, and other extracurricular duties put a lot of pressure on teachers, who very frequently sacrifice part of their own time to meet the demands of their work. I do not think I am the only one who has considered other professional paths in order to avoid this. While I love instruction, those other time-consuming chores take a toll on both physical and mental health. MacIntyre et al. (2019) affirmed that teaching is among the most stressful jobs. What should concern us all is identifying the factors that affect us as professionals and addressing them appropriately. MacIntyre et al. (2019) also mentioned that teaching a language is more complicated than imparting other subjects, which in turn increases the array of issues.

English teachers in Costa Rica are bound to a series of requirements that set them apart from other colleagues who are in charge of other fields of study. For example, a college degree is not enough. A language certification is needed if they want to apply for a job, and depending on the organization, this might need to be renewed every other year. As Recio (2019) pointed out, educators who intend to work for the Ministry of Public Education (MEP) must have a C1 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), which is one of the international standards to measure language proficiency. This particular situation may create several emotional afflictions, such as stress and anxiety. Not being able to find a position or the risk of losing their employment are reason enough for someone to become restless. While this decision was made to improve the overall quality, it

might prevent great professionals with strong pedagogical foundations from doing what they were trained to do. It is important to remember that knowing a language is one of the variables; how it is taught is just as important.

In addition to what has been mentioned, there is one very specific incident that aggravated the problems regarding teacher well-being and made the situation escalate to a level that has not been imagined. The COVID-19 pandemic put us in front of a computer so we could continue with our duties, and along came a series of negative effects as well. MacIntyre et al. (2020) placed workload, remote learning, and family health as part of the main stressors that injured well-being. Focusing on the instructors' perspective, this change has definitely been grueling, and we need to be better prepared to face the complications that lie ahead of us. This new reality has given education new tools to transform itself. We may be in the middle of a paradigm shift, and that should be seen as an opportunity to improve the conditions in which teachers do their work. I believe that health must be a priority, and raising awareness of its importance is exactly the objective of this paper. Throughout this essay, I will look into the difficulties that afflict educators and their impact in order to foster a series of meaningful and effective practices that can find their way into the system, as well as actionable advice to promote wellness.

Stress and its Triggers

There is a quote I came across not too long after I started working on this text, and I would like to include it even when the context that it was used in does not have anything to do with education per se because I think it is just too powerful. Noah (2022, 2:10) said, "there is something liberating about fighting an obvious enemy, as opposed to one you have to prove exists." I strongly believe that something worse than denying a problem is knowing you have one and do next to nothing to change that. This, in my opinion, is what has been corroding the very foundations of this profession, and throughout this paper, I will try to

address everything related to the one we as educators have. However, I would like to start by giving this document its own voice. The last thing I want is a dull, generic piece of writing that keeps shoving numbers and data down the reader's throat from the very beginning. These elements are key to supporting the point I want to make, but I also want this essay to be as compelling and enjoyable as possible. This decision is probably influenced by my own preference for straightforward texts that keep the reader engaged. An essay is, after all, a means for authors to convey their own thoughts. I want to tell a story, and the reason I am motivated to do this is that it is exceptionally easy for us human beings to find a connection and identify with one. Then, what better way to begin than to start with an anecdote of my own?

Near the end of my fourth year as a teacher, I truly wanted to quit. Seriously. I am not sharing this solely because it serves the purpose of this paper; I genuinely felt like that. I went through an existential crisis that did not dissipate in a matter of weeks. The idea kept prowling my mind for months, and there were a few situations that triggered this. To summarize, I was immensely tired, stressed, disappointed, unmotivated, unhappy, and I questioned pretty much everything that was going on in my life up to that point. On the other hand, there were three strong reasons for me not to give up. First, I love what I do, at least the core task of this job. Second, I felt that my work was meaningful, and the effort was worth it considering I was helping others. The third reason is that my coworkers were not only colleagues; they were friends. That combination guided me to find the strength I needed to be here, four years later, continue teaching. Still, I am getting too far ahead. We first need to establish a starting point and determine the source from which the rest of the issues I will refer to originate. After that, I can then start formulating solutions. Luckily, the answer to the aforementioned predicament is quite simple. I am talking about stress.

Stress could be regarded as the root of all evil since this is where several physical and emotional concerns emanate from. Nevertheless, there are a number of factors that contribute to its buildup. MacIntyre et al. (2019) found that a heavy workload, strenuous

hours of work, and financial struggles are the most common causes. In a profession that requires a lot of academic and social interaction, it should not be surprising that these aspects fuel those stressors. Bethune and Kell (2021) described that teaching sometimes can be mistaken for a lifestyle on the grounds that the work seems to be endless, and it is very difficult to simply forget about it once the shift is over. The most dangerous aspect is that overwork can create the illusion of efficiency, and what it actually does is quite the opposite. By thinking that more means better, this false impression can lead to exhaustion pretty quickly. Similarly, this job involves a lot of giving. It is not bad to show interest and lend a hand whenever possible, yet at the expense of one's well-being is surely a one-way ticket to burnout. In fact, MacIntyre et al. (2019) stated that language teaching, particularly, is highly emotional. The bigger these demands are, the higher the amount of work needs to be put in by educators.

This career has its own set of special characteristics that are perhaps deal breakers for most people. For example, colleagues and individuals who have had the chance to be in front of a group of students know what it feels like to spend part of their free time to either plan a lesson or grade homework. Granted, nowadays there are a lot of occupations that require their associates to work a little extra sometimes, and even when they do, that time is paid of course. That is not the case for most teachers, and what should not be more than just a couple of hours a week eventually becomes part of their daily routine. According to Rasheed-Karim (2020), when it comes to work-life balance, the issue that stands out from the rest by almost fifteen percent in a survey taken by thirty-seven professors in the United Kingdom is maintaining a balance between family time and their duties. In addition to that, Jerrim and Sims (2021) mentioned that one-fourth of teachers in England spend over fifty-nine hours working weekly. The question is, why is that number so high? In a study that collected information from five English-speaking countries, including England and the United States, grading and planning came up as the two main reasons. In my opinion, this should

be seen as a wake-up call in order to take the relationship between those two factors and the damage they could cause to well-being more seriously.

Another element that can definitely make the stress level more volatile is the class sizes. I will not refer to the fact that it is very common for instructors to have more than one workplace, which leads to having several different classes and is sometimes a consequence of not being able to meet their financial needs. Nevertheless, the quantity of students in the classroom is strictly interrelated with workload and is indeed detrimental to well-being. For instance, Atkins (2003) pointed out that there is an evident psychological effect between reasonable and disproportionate responsibilities regarding assessment. Besides, an additional component that is part of the equation has to do with how much teachers have to dedicate to interacting with parents and dealing with extra-curricular situations. Huang et al. (2022) stated that teachers in New York would rather have small-size classes since they are clearly more enjoyable. Likewise, large classes represented a source of stress for teachers in the United Kingdom and Israel. Finally, in a study designed to assess the impact on education policies in Costa Rica, Vega (2022) indicated that a small class represented a positive effect on student performance. A finding like that one could suggest that a reduced number of pupils contributes to a more suitable environment, which may positively influence the psyche of professionals in education. From a very personal point of view, teaching big groups is not really the core issue. I actually believe that it is controllable up to a certain point. Notwithstanding, dealing with the onerous tasks of marking and other external situations do have an impact on well-being.

One last stressor that I particularly identify with is caused by management and unsupportive superiors. There are a couple of thoughts that I would like to get off my chest because this problem is so serious that it easily puts many colleagues off and demoralizes them, myself included. However, there are some data that can support my claims. For example, after conducting a study with the aid of twenty-one Australian teachers, Fogelgarn and Burns (2020) indicated that these educators did not think they were trusted by those in

charge. Similarly, Mercer (2020) investigated the welfare of language instructors in private institutions in Malta. According to her, teachers' well-being and employee satisfaction are not as well appreciated as the organizations' profits (Mercer, 2020). I have been through both scenarios, and I can only say that this is somewhat therapeutic. Employers and heads of departments must always listen to their staff, and they must not minimize circumstances that threaten their emotional stability. Ignoring their concerns might blow up in their faces because discouragement and indifference may result in negative consequences to the quality of instruction, as explained by Mercer (2020). This is not about whining; it is about gradually reversing irregular behaviors and practices that have been normalized.

Just as Huang et al. (2022) described, the mixture of all those ingredients I have mentioned has a risky outcome. Unhappy, pressured, disillusioned professionals working more than they should without a fair compensation may lead to deliberate under-performance, lack of interest and purpose, burnout, poor health, and, ultimately, desertion. Looking for other jobs is perhaps the only way they have to change that and find satisfaction in what they do. For the most part, this career is probably not the easiest or fastest path to getting rich, so why would I sacrifice my own sanity as well? Many people ask themselves this question, and even when more experienced colleagues could handle the pressure of this labor, novice teachers are the ones who are more likely to call it a day. Despite being obvious, Bardach et al. (2022) reported that emotional intelligence is relevant to educators' welfare. If they do not have the necessary tools to cope with the daily difficulties, they are definitely more prone to breaking down. Moreover, Sulis et al. (2021) suggested that pre-service teachers are susceptible to a series of complications that force them to abandon ship. I consider this to be of the utmost importance given that the potential implications might be disastrous. For instance, if this continues to happen, there will be an impact on the quality of education. The number of individuals interested in forging their way in this field can decrease progressively, and many of those who decide to give it a try might not stay for too long. Clearly, we are in dire need of an action plan.

So far, I have examined causes that lead to an adverse effect on physical and mental health among professionals in various countries, but what about Costa Rica? According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (n. d.), Costa Rica is amongst the nations with the worst work-life balance. Out of forty-one countries, it ranks in the thirty-eighth position behind Colombia, Turkey, and Mexico. That elaborate collection of data takes the entirety of the workforce in the country into account, and although it gives an idea of our current situation, it is only the tip of the iceberg, thus, the need to look for something more specific. I will devote the following paragraphs to sharing what I could find out about English teachers in Costa Rica. I will explore their stress levels, causes, and how they feel about their own well-being.

The Costa Rican Context

In an effort to better understand and assess a bit of the reality of English language professors, I had the opportunity to interview several of them over the course of a month. Originally, ten candidates were supposed to be part of this initiative, though only seven of them could participate. The conversations lasted from forty-five minutes to one hour, and these were carried out via Zoom and telephone call. Only one of the participants sent the information in written form since it was not possible to schedule a meeting. As for the other three teachers that could not make it, two of them were sent the questions, but the answers were not returned. The last one was contacted on more than one occasion; however, the attempts were unsuccessful. I acknowledge that this experiment is simply a drop in the ocean, yet the testimonies represent precious contributions that inspire me to keep on doing research on this particular topic. Next, I will give a detailed account about the population, procedure, and the insights generated by this analysis.

Population

With the objective of including the whole spectrum of English language teaching, I compiled the opinions of seven educators who have worked or are currently employed in private and public institutions. They have worked with children, teenagers, and adult learners, and they accumulate between five and twenty years of experience. Two of the participants chose to seek other job opportunities totally unrelated to education more than four years ago. Another contributor is still part of an organization dedicated to English language learning, but this person does not perform any teaching-related duties. The remaining four participants are active English instructors. Furthermore, in an attempt to collect honest statements and let them express themselves without any repercussions, their identities have been concealed. Henceforth, these individuals will be referred to as Participant number 1, 2, and so forth, and the number assigned corresponds to the chronological order in which they were contacted.

Method

This group was given an eight-question assessment that intended to appraise their well-being, measure their stress levels, and share the main reasons that caused that feeling. Sometimes, depending on each participant's comments, more than one question was answered at the same time without the need to ask all of them. Owing to the nature of the exchanges, a very organic interaction was created. As a result, questions that were not initially included yet pertinent to the inquiry were incorporated. The discussions took place in English and Spanish, and except for one particular case, all the interviews took place individually. Participants 1 and 2 joined the same video call via Zoom. Besides, as was mentioned above, Participant 4 shared written responses due to the inability to meet on the date agreed.

Results

Given that some items addressed personal matters, I will focus only on the ones that are exclusively connected to physical and mental wellness. As much as I would have loved to develop this section further, time was the main limitation. Even though I am only scratching the surface of this affair, I am convinced I will continue investigating this topic in order to incite change. Seeing as this is not a comprehensive review, I will summarize some of the responses. Still, I will expand on the one that has to do with stressors more thoroughly and include each answer separately.

The discoveries show that there is an association with the triggers described in the first part of this paper. Question number seven asked participants to rate their occupational stress level on a scale from 1 to 10, to which six of them rated it above 7. In fact, this was caused by work overload, extra-curricular responsibilities, lack of emotional support, and administrative policies. Since two of the collaborators are not part of the teacher workforce, I asked them to recall how they felt. A crucial revelation was covered in question number three. Virtually all of those who continue working in the area of education are still passionate about their jobs. The complications occur when other tasks that are not related to their job, such as substitutions and sudden meetings, begin to steal time they could spend working on their classes. Another item, question number five to be precise, revealed unanimous agreement. No institution, public or private, seems to offer any kind of support when it comes to emotional health. There are not any policies or regulations they can count on, and initiatives that advocate teacher welfare are nowhere to be found. One final aspect in which all of them come to an agreement is the number of students in a classroom. All of them disapproved of twenty or more students in a single group. The last thing they were required to elaborate on had to do with the main issue that took the heaviest toll on their well-being. The following section covers what each one of them expressed.

Participant 1. One additional piece of information is that this individual was the one who rated the lowest stress level for one special reason, which is being currently inactive. In spite of this, what Participant 1 labeled as a major threat to teacher welfare was the lack of vision, leadership, and stubbornness that produces an imbalance in terms of work-related duties. Therefore, the shift is affected and the time dedicated to personal life is diminished substantially. In addition, there is a clear limit as far as professional development goes. In his current position, it is virtually impossible for this person to keep growing academically. This person was also disappointed in the fact that not having a specific degree prevents people from applying for a position, but having one does not necessarily suggest they are going to be compensated fittingly.

Participant 2. This person, who took the interview along with Participant 1, shared similar points of views. The main concern here is that the work schedule frequently merges with free time because there is just too much work. Aside from not being paid during this extra time, there is an excessive amount of meetings and last-minute incidents such as substitutions. This translates into very little time to plan and check assessments. Accordingly, Participant 2 feels trapped in a never-ending working cycle. One very important detail that I cannot leave out is that this educator has been looking for a new job on account of unbearable working conditions. Finally, this teacher spends two to three hours a day worth of extra working time.

Participant 3. Participant 3 criticized committees as the main factor that increases workload both in and outside the classroom. These groups are mandatory and, according to this participant, do not contribute to any significant impact. They represent a loss to their core responsibility as professionals in education. What should be more emphasized, this teacher said, is more training in terms of English resources and how to handle situations when students with special needs are involved. There is a lot of frustration and exhaustion because the public system does not seem to care enough about this, especially in rural

areas. To conclude, this participant averaged an excess of four hours a week, including weekends.

Participant 4. This former educator blamed working schedules, sometimes more than twelve hours a day, and the unfair payment as the main stimulants to quit teaching. This individual went as far as stating that choosing that career path had been a mistake. There are many administrative policies that do not take side with the teacher, mostly when it comes to private institutions. Consequently, a teacher can feel overwhelmed and subjugated. Participant 4 said that the overall well-being greatly improved once instruction was no longer a daily hassle.

Participant 5. Another former teacher, Participant 5 pointed out that the relationship between work and money is perhaps the biggest issue. In the public sector, tenure grants collaborators with a permanent position, and it represents the possibility to increase their salaries. However, educators working in private organizations do not have the same benefits. One of the hardest things, this teacher narrated, was to fake a smile when sadness and fatigue were lurking around. Spending many hours away from home to make ends meet and then being forced to step down to find a better income is a story that is unfortunately too common.

Participant 6. The primary challenge derives from the way responsibilities are handled. This educator mentioned that even when passion has not been affected, the school manages to complicate their job by asking for things suddenly and rushing whenever they want to. What used to be an isolated situation has become normal, which in turn boosts anxiety levels. The value and the perception of being a member of that organization have changed over the last two years. Another element this teacher mentioned was the urgency to be trained and given the tools to deal with students that require special attention in virtual scenarios. To wrap up, this individual spends two hours a day working unpaid extra hours.

Participant 7. Grading along with planning constituted the most time-consuming duties for this instructor. Three to four hours a day of voluntary extra work, including Sundays, was part of a daily routine. Nevertheless, this educator found a new job at another school due to a different reason. Not only was payment not good enough to stay, but the manner in which administrators and principal alike treated the staff. In this particular case, supervisors undermine the educator's role and support the parents since they are the ones paying for their children's schooling. This contributor pleaded for reforms that promote better compensation and a more robust system to have a better schedule.

Reflection

Up until now, I have presented mostly facts about what Costa Rican English language professors go through. I have not shared my opinion in view of the fact that I wanted to stay true to reporting what those people shared and maintain credibility. Here, I would like to interject and expand the discussion. What did I get after analyzing all that data? My takeaway is that no matter how many bales are piled on a camel's back, only one straw is needed to break it. I dare to say that factors such as workload, a lack of fair compensation, extended shifts, and scarce free time combined with too much pressure at work have the same effect of radiation. If you are exposed to it for a prolonged period, you will get sick. Being forced to choose between mental and physical health and a career is not easy. Even I have faced that dilemma because we have been led to accept that many of those conditions that were reported above are part of our job. I somewhat agree since all occupations have their pros and cons. However, abuse and neglect take over when stability is absent. This is what must be changed in order to prioritize welfare. We must be realistic and understand these difficulties are not going anywhere. What we require is a series of changes to balance personal and professional satisfaction.

Safeguarding Well-Being

I have been preaching about well-being for a while now, so I think it would be wise to define it before I dive into a series of recommendations to care for it. Sulis et al. (2021) offered several definitions. Nevertheless, the one that resonated with me the most had to do with life satisfaction. When hedonist and eudemonic standpoints are combined, well-being is characterized by five elements, which are positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. To put it simply, well-being is the subsequent balance between social, mental, and physical conditions and their challenges. For the sake of raising awareness and spreading its importance, I consider that the best way to do it is by sorting the strategies that the community of teachers may find practical. Manning et al. (2020) classified these into actions that can improve well-being temporarily and those which involve changes in the system. The first category, activities that increase well-being provisionally, does not get rid of the stressors, but integrating them into a daily routine will surely keep dangerous stress levels at bay.

Temporary Actions

I feel a little ashamed to confess that sometimes I take for granted and overlook those small efforts that make a huge difference. While I know they are valuable, in early brainstorming stages, I was not even thinking about including them. I changed my mind for two reasons. The first one being that I have been putting some of them into practice for more than six months. I thought that empirical evidence would not be enough, but then I reflected on that. Had I left those actions out, I would have repeated the mistake of belittling their effectiveness. Second, I believe that we need every way, skill, action, and approach that can boost wellness. If I am apparently writing about the importance of welfare, how am I supposed to leave a piece of information that could be useful to others?

Anderson (2010) assembled a list of examples that we should take into consideration. For instance, something as simple as eating properly, plenty of exercise, sleeping well, and finding ways to detach from work can immensely put us on the right track as far as protecting our well-being goes. This author recognized the consequences of stress as well. One of those effects is susceptibility to anxiety and depression, as I have stated before. Equally, Bardach et al. (2022) conceded that burnout is the result of prolonged stress, and this one is composed of exhaustion, detachment of one's mind and body, and lack of personal accomplishment. Anderson (2010) asserted that we focus too much on others, while at the same time we ignore and fail to nurture our own needs. There is a piece of advice that I would like to give, which is related to disconnecting from your duty as a teacher, especially in this digital age. I encourage colleagues to stay away from their cell phone or ignore group chats in their free time. I used to be bombarded by text messages every day except Sundays. I was so overwhelmed that I just could not stand the sight of my device. Now the situation is different, and another key tip that we ought to follow is prioritizing ourselves.

In line with the suggestions in the last paragraph, Anderson (2010) provided a number of guidelines to organize ourselves, plan our time more efficiently and put ourselves first. This author concurred with the notion that educators do not have enough time, which highlights the significance of managing what we do every day. With the assistance of a schedule, I strongly believe that the sense of productivity heightens. Number one on the list is recognizing those private life activities and obligations that we would regard as nonnegotiable. Once we have established that, we should then think about those other responsibilities that are not fundamental. By doing this, it should be easier to reduce workload and balance our spare time. The most difficult action, if you ask me, is learning to say no. How many times have we found ourselves agreeing to go the extra mile in detriment of our emotional or physical stability? Anderson (2010) argued that we comply because we do not want to let others down, yet in turn we end up hurting ourselves. Deep down, I believe

that happens for the reason that we do not want others to imagine we are lazy or uncommitted. In order to function optimally, we have to focus on taking care of our necessities, and then, if possible, give a hand with a particular difficulty.

To conclude, I decided to name this section *Temporary Actions* considering they can increase our well-being. Still, there must be consistency too. There is very little a set of recommendations can do if we do not execute them. Looking after ourselves physically and mentally, arranging our schedule based on priorities, and making decisions that can benefit our well-being are actions that come from within. We are accountable for the changes we want to make too. Likewise, as soon as we have cultivated those habits, we must strive for keeping them around to steadily balance our personal and professional lives.

Organizational Changes

This may be the most challenging part. Making systematic adjustments in both public and private systems that can be beneficial is almost surreal. We have the variables, but the equation seems to be impossible to formulate. I have gathered some initiatives that might as well inspire others to look for a much more feasible tactic. However, while we wait for that holy grail to be discovered, I found that having a mentor and a group of people you can count on, as well as developing self-efficacy and mindfulness, proves to be a successful way to promote welfare.

Almost at the very beginning of the paper, I wrote that having a partner at work kept me from quitting. Well, it just so happens that research backs this up. MacIntyre et al. (2020) observed that, among the top coping strategies that language teachers implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, emotional and instrumental support were key to sustaining well-being. Not every institution has consistent coaching practices, so trying to regulate and standardize this procedure could assist in improving this area. Gałazka and Jarosz (2021)

described a few benefits of coaching sessions reported by teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, they were able to express their concerns and feelings, increased their self-awareness, and became better at problem solving. This surely could be employed on a national scale in our country. I had the opportunity to be a supervisor, and based on my experience, I guarantee instructors do need this kind of aid. In fact, they ask for someone who could tell them what they are doing right or what should be improved. In addition to this, they get an emotional relief when they can communicate their doubts. Equally, inexperienced pre-service teachers are among those who would greatly take advantage of this proposal.

Closely linked to mentorship and how important it could be to novice professionals in education in order to promote well-being and prevent future complications, mindfulness plays a huge role in professional development. Zimmerman (2018) defined mindfulness as the ability to be aware of what is going on around us and accept it. The reason mindfulness is significant lies in the premise that educators have to acknowledge and act upon a variety of situations. Most importantly, this quality strengthens resilience among them, which is obviously essential after having studied the many circumstances that affect their wellness. Finally, Bardach et al. (2022) confirmed that mindfulness can be included in teacher-training programs. This transformation might be slow, but fomenting this skill even from early stages is a massive step forward for education in Costa Rica.

Lastly, self-efficacy, which is described by Bardach et al. (2022) as the power to trust one's knowledge and talents to overcome a wide range of obstacles, ought to find its way into the system. Moreover, it is an ally of well-being. Anderson (2010) stated that great levels of self-efficacy have the potential to boost excitement and dedication to teaching. Bardach et al. (2022) manifested that self-efficacy may be promoted through a selection of techniques, for example, allowing teachers to take part in coaching sessions where their mentors can demonstrate how to handle difficult scenarios. Besides, another practice in which this can be

encouraged is by fostering coordinated discussions to find answers on how to deal with typical situations they may possibly encounter at school.

I have provided some solutions that could be incorporated into the education system by means of training, workshops, and even courses at a college level. The topics of mentoring, mindfulness, and self-efficacy were based on research. However, I wish I could offer more. I wish I could address the issues of extended workload, a better salary, even reducing the number of students in a group. Unfortunately, those depend on policies, regardless of the evidence that suggests that educators are fed up with these conditions. I do not have anything to prove it, but the balance between the following elements are the ones that would hypothetically skyrocket well-being. I am referring to a low number of pupils, ten to fifteen, and a fixed schedule that covers paid planning and grading time. I firmly believe this could be reasonable and achievable, if only there were a reorganization. Until that happens, this is as far as we can get.

Conclusion

Throughout this essay, I have presented a lot of factors surrounding well-being. I first started with a number of stressors that afflict educators. I also presented a series of interviews and their findings concerning the well-being of English language educators in Costa Rica. Finally, I suggested some actions that can be performed to boost wellness at a personal and structural level. Of course, there are some limitations, and I am aware that this is a very superficial analysis, which is why I would like to do a more methodical research on the topic. What motivates me is that any teacher that gets to read this piece will feel identified, or so I feel. The other purpose that makes me want to continue studying this is to reverse the perception of the triggers I showed so that they are not deemed normal. All of us deserve a fulfilling life, and doing what we love for a living should be a blessing, not a daily torment.

I would like to conclude this essay on a high note. Therefore, I would like to finish telling my story. I am still a teacher, but I ended up quitting my previous job. Not because I hated it although I fell prey to various situations I mentioned before almost on a daily basis. I simply was not given another choice. I was pushed to decide between a living and my own professional and academic development. I knew what I wanted to do, so I focused all my strength and energy on pursuing a master's degree in education. Not everything was bad. I can honestly say that I have had enough time to reflect on what I want, what I will not tolerate, and how I want to be treated at work. This time allowed me to rekindle my passion for teaching, just as I have learned to appreciate where I am mentally and how happy that makes me feel. Happy, inspired teachers make a difference, and currently I have six people under my wing that enjoy learning English as a consequence of how they feel. That is the best compliment I can get.

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DECLARACIÓN JURADA

Yo, Jose David Chaves Pérez, cédula de identidad 206600684, estudiante de la Universidad Nacional, declaro bajo fe de juramento y consciente de la responsabilidades penales de este acto, que soy autor intelectual del Trabajo Final de Graduación Titulado **“Reconsidering English Language Learning in Costa Rica: Exploring Teachers’ Well-Being and its Importance, Challenges, and Recommendations in the Wake of a New Era in Education”**, para optar por el grado de Maestría en Educación con énfasis en Aprendizaje del Inglés.

Heredia, a los 03 días del mes de setiembre del año 2022.

JOSE
DAVID
CHAVES
PEREZ
(FIRMA)

Digitally signed
by JOSE DAVID
CHAVES PEREZ
(FIRMA)
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Refrendo

Los abajo firmantes avalamos el Trabajo de Graduación del estudiante José David Chaves Pérez, cédula 206600684, que lleva como título **Reconsidering English Language Learning in Costa Rica: Exploring Teachers' Well-Being and its Importance, Challenges, and Recommendations in the Wake of a New Era in Education**, dado que cumple con las disposiciones vigentes y la calidad académica requerida por el posgrado.

Firmado por JUAN PABLO ZUÑIGA VARGAS (FIRMA)
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Mag. Juan Pablo Zúñiga Vargas
Tutor del énfasis Aprendizaje del Inglés
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