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Humanidades y Ciencias de la Conducta

Professional motivation and satisfaction of Mexican elementary school EFL teachers in a context of reform: A phenomenological study

La motivación y la satisfacción profesional de los profesores de inglés en la educación primaria mexicana: Un estudio fenomenológico

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study used phenomenological methodology to examine the self-reported levels of teaching motivation and professional satisfaction of five teachers of the National English Program for elementary schools in Mexico. The EFL teachers worked for urban and rural schools, had different levels of English proficiency and variable number of years of experience. Data came from a series of interviews held during a period of six months. Data analysis captured four themes related to motivation: English teaching, students, schools and colleagues. Three themes associated with professional satisfaction were also identified: working conditions, the status of the profession, and professional development opportunities. Results indicated that although teachers had good collegial relationships, they found their profession as stressful and demotivating in terms of school facilities, lack of appropriate materials to support the curriculum, wages and job security. Their dissatisfaction came from teaching in multiple schools, as well as from the lack of local affordable and meaningful development opportunities.

Keywords: teacher motivation, teacher satisfaction, EFL teachers, language policy, basic education.

RESUMEN

Este estudio cualitativo empleó metodología fenomenológica para examinar los niveles auto-reportados de motivación para la enseñanza y satisfac-

ción profesional de cinco docentes del Programa Nacional de Inglés para escuelas primarias en México. Las docentes de inglés como lengua extranjera trabajaban en escuelas rurales y urbanas, tenían diferentes niveles de dominio del inglés y número variable de años de experiencia. De los datos emergieron cuatro temas relacionados con la motivación: la docencia del inglés, los estudiantes, las escuelas y los colegas. También se identificaron tres temas asociados con la satisfacción profesional: las condiciones laborales, el estatus de la profesión y las oportunidades de desarrollo profesional. Los resultados indicaron que aun cuando las docentes tenían buenas relaciones con sus colegas, percibían su profesión como estresante y desmotivante en lo relacionado a la infraestructura escolar, la falta de materiales de enseñanza apropiadas para la puesta en práctica del currículo, los sueldos y la seguridad laboral. Su insatisfacción profesional fue atribuida a la enseñanza en múltiples escuelas y la falta de oportunidades locales, asequibles y significativas de desarrollo profesional.

Palabras clave: motivación del docente, satisfacción del docente, profesores de inglés como segunda lengua, reforma educativa, educación básica.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2018, the Mexican Government, through the Secretariat of Public Education, launched the National English Strategy, formulated by Cambridge Assessment. Its aim is to transform Mexico into a bilingual country in twenty years' time (SEP, 2017). All Mexican EFL teachers will be required to demonstrate their professional preparation not only to teach English as a second language, but also, to use English as a medium to teach content courses, from preschool to higher education. One of the biggest challenges for the successful implementation of the English language education policy has to do with the motivation of teachers to develop professionally and to achieve the desired learning results in students. Research has shown that teachers experience reforms as overload, complexity and tension (Bell & Stevenson, 2006; Lingham, Lingham & Sharma, 2017), which may affect their motivation. Another challenge is the strong emphasis of reforms on teacher evaluation. Teacher evaluation increases stress and decreases satisfaction (Ford, Clark, Fazio-Brunson & Schween, 2017; Jiang, Spote & Lupescu, 2015).

This article presents a phenomenological study aimed at examining the self-reported levels of motivation and satisfaction of five elementary school EFL teachers. The research questions were: (1) How motivated are teachers of the National English Language Program? (2) How satisfied are teachers as EFL professionals? The following sections will provide an overview of the English language education policy since 2009; the concepts and research findings related to teacher motivation and satisfaction; the characteristics and results of a qualitative study; and the implications of the study for professional development and policy implementation.

The National English Strategy

The Mexican educational system has been slowly incorporating English language learning into the curriculum for almost 90 years. In 1925, English became part of the newly established secondary education. At that time,

English was taught to elementary school students only in private schools. In 1992, Mexico decentralized its education system and the 31 states were given autonomy over their education subsystems, which resulted in the inclusion of English in public elementary education in some states. In the state in which this study took place, English was gradually incorporated into elementary education since 1999. Although education was decentralized, the Secretariat of Public Education continued establishing norms and regulations and in 2009 implemented a policy for all states to develop English language competencies in preschool, elementary and secondary education under the title of National English Program for Basic Education (NEPBE). The aim of the NEPBE was to develop the necessary multilingual and multicultural competencies "to successfully face the communicative challenges of a globalized world, to build a broader vision of the linguistic and cultural diversity of the world, and thus, to respect their own and other cultures" (SEP, 2011).

While previous programs had a communicative, functional approach to language, the NEPBE started to promote a sociocultural and linguistic approach. Rather than reflecting on language and analyzing grammar, students are required to develop learning products through being, knowing and doing with English. The program was designed with the advice of the Center for the Teaching of Languages of the Faculty of Higher Studies Acatlán, at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). The NEPBE started off with serious difficulties and some studies attributed its failure, among other things, to the lack of the necessary academic preparation of teachers (Alcántar-Díaz, Navarro-Téllez & Moreno-Villalbaz, 2014; Romero, Irigoyen & Grijalva, 2012; Sayer, Mercau & López, 2013).

In an attempt to better regulate and organize the NEPBE, in 2015 the Office of Curriculum Development at SEP changed the name to National English Program or PRONI, an acronym for *Programa Nacional de Inglés* (DOF: 29/12/2017; Mejía-Bricaire, 2017). PRONI was

formulated with the objective of strengthening the learning and teaching of English as a second language in public education from preschool to sixth grade. To achieve the objective, the program devised the following actions: establishing technical and pedagogical conditions; supporting local education authorities with the production and distribution of educational materials; providing international certifications in English competence and teaching methodology for teachers; and promoting international certifications for students.

The National English Program is mandatory in rural and urban schools, throughout the basic education system, from third grade of preschool to third year of secondary school (ten years). However, the number of hours of English is different depending on the type of school. Locally, the program coordination refers to this difference as “dosage”. Students in morning and afternoon part-time schools take 150 minutes of English classes per week. Students in extended schools take three 60-minute sessions of English per week (180 minutes). Students in full-time school programs take English in five 60-minute sessions from Monday to Friday (300 minutes). To compensate 453 rural and difficult-to-access schools in the state, students in those schools are grouped from grades 1st to 3rd and from 4th to 6th, to take an additional “dose” of two hours and 30 minutes per week.

This English language education program is part of the neoliberal policies prevailing in public education worldwide (Harvey, 2005). Embraced by all political views, these policies protect the interests of large private corporations. Among the characteristics of neoliberal reforms are: a high reliance on student testing and teacher evaluations systems; an intensification of work and a widening scope of teacher responsibilities; a scripted “what works” conception of teaching that diminishes professional judgement; an educational environment that reduces collaboration and forces competition; a commercialization of teaching through an education industry; and a separation between the con-

ception and the execution of teaching tasks (Holborow, 2012; Ross & Gibson, 2006). Neoliberal or market-based educational reforms not only shape public education; they also determine teachers’ understanding of themselves as professionals (Anderson & Cohen, 2015). In such a context, it becomes relevant to inquire into EFL teachers’ motivation to teach and satisfaction with teaching conditions.

Teacher motivation: Concept and findings

Teacher motivation refers to the reasons, which emerge from an individuals’ intrinsic values, to become a teacher and to continue in the teaching profession. The intensity of teacher motivation is indicated by the effort expended on teaching, influenced by contextual factors (Han & Yin, 2016). Teacher motivation has also been conceptualized as self-determination (Roth, Assor, Kanat-Maymon & Kaplan (2007), enthusiasm (Kunter, Frenzel, Nagy, Baumert & Pekrun 2011), passion for teaching (Carbonneau, Valleland, Fernet & Guay 2008), and self-efficacy (Holzberger, Philipp & Kunter 2013). Teacher motivation is an important issue for researchers and education policy makers because it affects what teachers do and what students learn.

Research has explored the various intrinsic factors that influence the motivation of individuals to become language teachers. Some enter the profession because in their previous language learning experiences they used their aptitudes and produced rewarding achievements (Hayes, 2008). Others observed that their teachers enjoyed teaching and this made them think that they would also enjoy it (Warford & Reeves, 2003). Still others feel the need to contribute to society by sharing the language skills they possess (Koran, 2015), or they simply like English language strongly (Wong, Tango & Cheng, 2014). Extrinsic factors such as prestige (Erten, 2014), material benefits and job stability (Gao & Xu, 2014; Koran, 2015), and the pressure of family members or other significant figures to join the profession (Kim & Kim, 2015), also influence language teachers’ career decisions.

Once they become language teachers, their motivation comes from their ongoing experiences and contextual factors. Language teachers appear to be more motivated when they find the proper conditions to use the teaching methods and learning materials they prefer (Kumazawa, 2013), and when they have autonomy to make classroom decisions (Hettiarachchi, 2013; Tsutsumi, 2014). They can also be positively motivated when their abilities and efforts are recognized by students' parents (Yuan & Zhang, 2017), and when their profession is valued by students, parents and the wider community (Hettiarachchi, 2013). Certainly, good wages, job security and pension plans motivate language teachers to remain in their jobs (Gao & Xu, 2014). Motivated teachers are generally more supportive of progressive educational reforms and programs because they permanently improve their practice and make efforts to implement innovations (Sahakyan, Lamb & Chambers, 2018).

Some contextual conditions have a negative impact on the motivation of language teachers. Relationships with unsupportive, uninterested and unqualified colleagues have shown to demotivate teachers (Erkaya, 2013; Hettiarachchi, 2013). Oppressive school cultures (Khani & Mirzaee, 2015) or exaggerated amounts of paperwork and extra classroom responsibilities are also demotivating factors (Kim, Kim & Zhang, 2014; Kumazawa, 2013; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013). Continuous curriculum changes and lack of materials that support curriculum implementation have been found to demotivate EFL teachers as well (Habibi, Sofwan & Mukminin, 2016).

Despite the recognized importance of motivation, teachers, are among the most motivationally challenged professionals in all countries (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007). Studies on teacher motivation in developing countries indicate decreasing levels of motivation resulting in lower quality of education due to heavy workloads, large class sizes, multiple teaching shifts and grade levels, low and irregular payments, lack of social respect

for teachers, few or no opportunities for professional development, poor management, unclear and constantly changing policies, no opportunities to participate in management and policy making, and lack of or poor teaching materials and facilities (Iliya & Ifeoma, 2015).

Teacher satisfaction: Concept and findings

Satisfaction is a teachers' appraisal of the extent to which the work environment fulfills his or her needs or requirements. Evans (2001: 294) defines satisfaction as "a state of mind encompassing all those feelings determined by the extent to which the individual perceives her/his job-related needs being met". High levels of teacher satisfaction have been found to positively influence the quality of teaching as well as students' self-esteem and performance. Dissatisfaction, on the other hand, is a negative feeling toward a job, related to disadvantageous outcomes (Afshar & Dootsi, 2016).

Teacher motivation and job satisfaction are different but linked constructs since one influences the other. To distinguish them, one may think of motivation as an innate stimulus or drive that inspires teachers to act in particular contexts, while satisfaction is the result of an action in a specific context. Research has found that teacher satisfaction is influenced by diverse factors intrinsic to teaching, operating at school level, and operating at the wider system level (Dinham & Scott, 1998, 2000; Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2004).

Factors intrinsic to teaching associated with teacher satisfaction include: working with and for young people, taking intellectual challenges, working with autonomy and independence, and having opportunities to try new ideas (Karavas, 2010). Factors at the school level related to teacher satisfaction are: school climate (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016), positive school relationships (Veldman, Van-Tartwijk, Brekelmans & Wubbels, 2013), and positive leadership (Ghavifekr & Pillali, 2016). Factors that impact teacher satisfaction coming

from the educational system, the wider social context and the government are: community's opinion of teachers, the image of teachers portrayed in the media, the level of support by the system to implement curriculum changes (Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2004).

In general, context seems to be the most powerful predictor of overall teacher satisfaction (Dinham & Scott, 1998, 2000). Teachers with the strongest motivation, desires and expectations, are least happy with their teaching jobs when the environment does not facilitate satisfaction of their needs.

The more difficult and demanding the system, the more dissatisfied teachers become. Overemphasis on standards and evaluation, lack of participation in decision-making, lack of essential instructional resources, lack of administrative support, and lack of trust in professional expertise of teachers seem to increase the degree of teacher dissatisfaction (Ford, et al., 2017; Hewitt, 2015; Holloway & Bass, 2017; Ingersoll, Merrill & May, 2016; Jiang, Sporte & Luppescu, 2015).

Educational policies are part of the teaching context and therefore, may determine teachers' motivation, demotivation, satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Very few studies, however, study the impact of educational policies on teachers' motivation and satisfaction.

The studies on teacher motivation and satisfaction reviewed above were invariably quantitative in nature. To acquire a deeper understanding, this study resorted to qualitative inquiry and examined EFL teachers' motivation to teach under the federal English language program and satisfaction with their working conditions.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a phenomenological approach. The primary objective of a phenomenological study is to understand how a phenomenon appears to a particular group of persons,

based on their personal views and experience (Creswell, 2013). This epistemological perspective assumes that human experience is complex, has meaning, and is grounded in the world (Mason, 2002). Phenomenological researchers are more interested in describing a phenomenon from the way people experience it, than from some theoretical standpoint. To focus solely on the experiences of the participants, researchers bracket themselves out of the study by identifying and setting aside personal experiences with the phenomena under study.

The first elementary school EFL teacher contacted was a master's degree student of the researcher. Then, snowball sampling was used (Patton, 2002). Sampling ceased when saturation was reached in the first round of interviews (Saunders, et al., 2018). Both urban and rural schools were represented in the sample. Following the systematic procedure proposed by Creswell (2013) for conducting phenomenological research, three in-depth face-to-face interviews were conducted with five teachers. Three newspaper articles related to EFL teachers' labor conditions were also analyzed. Interviews were semi structured, focused on eliciting the participants' teaching motivation and satisfaction, and on their views about the English language education program.

The researcher sent by email the interview protocol to the participants two days in advance and asked them to write notes to serve as cues during the interviews. Protocols included a description of the purpose of the research, the process to be followed by the researcher, confidentiality and consent issues, five interview questions, follow up probes to help participants expand on their answers and a final thank you statement. The interview questions were pilottested before the study with a small group of EFL teachers who were taking a master's degree program.

Considering that interview sites provide material space for enactment and constitution of power relations (Elwood & Martin, 2000), par-

ticipants were given two locations to choose for the interviews to take place: a classroom in a teachers' college and a local restaurant. EFL teachers generally do not have a classroom that they can count on because they work for short periods of time in the classrooms where students take the elementary education curriculum. The teachers' college was located out of the city limits and this might have discouraged teachers to select it as a place for the interviews. All participants selected the restaurant.

During the interviews, the researcher engaged in dialogue with teachers to gather information, review information for clarity and intent, and check for accuracy of interpretation. Interviews were recorded with authorization of informants. Interviews lasted one hour and a half, on average, and they were held in a time period of six months.

After finishing each interview, recordings were transcribed, statements were coded and categories were established. Following Creswell (2013), data analysis moved from reducing the information to significant statements or quotes (horizontalization), to combining the statements into themes (clusters of meaning). The significant statements and themes were used to write a description of the participants' views and experiences (textural description).

RESULTS

Participants were all female, basic education EFL teachers, with ages that ranged from 24 to 38 years. They had from three to eight years of teaching experience. They had BA degrees in applied linguistics, international relations, administration, and tourism. Two of them were studying a master's degree in Educational Research. As to their English proficiency, their self-reported levels were as follows: one had A1, two had A2, one had B2 and one had C1, according to the Common European Framework for Languages. Two teachers had taken module one of the Teaching Knowledge Test; the other three did not have a teaching certification. They were concurrently wor-

king in different schools with children of different grades.

How motivated are elementary EFL teachers?

All teachers were asked to describe the types of situations that motivated them and those that demotivated them of the teaching profession. Their responses revolved around the following themes: teaching, students, schools, colleagues, and the curriculum.

Teaching. Two of the teachers expressed that they had always wanted to be teachers because they were inspired by their own teachers and family members who were teachers. The other three somehow found themselves being teachers and said they enjoyed the profession. In general, teachers felt called to teach and took pride in watching students learn English. Only one of them revealed that after two years of teaching, she was looking for some other job and was "in transit" in the profession.

All teachers referred to teaching as a stressful profession. They acknowledged feeling anxious about workload, teacher examination demands, lack of knowledge on aspects of ELT, dealing with unmotivated students, and feeling undervalued as English teachers. One of the teachers expressed: "Sometimes I feel so bad, I can hardly show up to school. I give my students something to work on their own, while I catch up with paper work in class". Another one stated: "I feel so tired after work, that I cannot go back to it at home. I tend to block-out everything that has to do with teaching once I finish school, everyday".

One of the useful, however difficult issues teachers worried about was taking English proficiency and English teaching methods examinations that are constantly due. Teacher evaluation seemed an eternal burden that keeps them enslaved. One of the teachers expressed: "I had the IELTS, but it was due last June, I have to book myself to take it again. My TOEFL-IBT was due last year. I took the Oxford online placement test and I

got a C2 and then the TOEIC and also got C2. I took the test for module 1, band 4 of the TKT and I am taking a course to take modules 2, 3, and 4 to take the test in November”.

Teachers perceived that with time, ELT was losing prestige. It seems that they valued their profession and felt helpless against the attacks by some sectors of society. One of the teachers resented the fact that teachers were blamed for the poor abilities of students to speak English and were criticized on the grounds of their supposedly low level of English proficiency. She mentioned a local newspaper had published that 60 % of English language teachers in public and private schools lacked the necessary academic skills, affecting students’ learning (Hernández, 2018). It was the comment of the coordinator of a bilingual education program at a pedagogical university who was announcing the opening of courses. The teacher expressed her disappointment by the way a person, who most probably did not speak English, discredited English teachers in an attempt to sell his program.

Students. Students were perceived by teachers either as a source of enthusiasm, or as a cause of emotional tension. A motivated teacher declared: “It is so beautiful when students make you feel that planning and preparing materials is worthwhile. Nothing is more rewarding than watching my students enjoy my class”. Contrastingly, another teacher affirmed: “There is a group of kids in one of my classes who hate English. I cannot force them to learn. That I cannot do. They will never learn it and I am aware they probably will not need it anyway. I wish English was not mandatory for all children”.

Schools. Some schools demotivated teachers because their facilities were inadequate. One of the teachers complained: “One of the schools I go to is incredibly poor. I feel so depressed. Kids are so kind, it would be super to have computers and Internet.

Classes would be much more fun”. Another comment related to school deficiencies was: “It’s hard to keep the class going in the middle of September, when is so hot and students are sweaty and annoyed. No air conditioning and no water. We have to take our own water to school, and it gets hot too!” Others talked about their experiences in schools located in problematic neighborhoods of the city. Teachers said they felt demotivated when they were assigned to schools in challenging contexts. In such schools apathy, poverty, absenteeism, drug abuse and disrespect for teachers, is common. Teachers informed that they had experienced awkward situations not only with undisciplined students, but also with parents’ and even with school principals. They could not disclose in detailed manner those experiences, however they referred to the situations as violent and scary.

Colleagues. Teachers seemed to esteem their co-workers. When talking about their colleagues, they used the words: friendly, solidarity, companionship, helpful, support, kindness, understanding, good relationship, sincere, thankful, appreciation and sharing. Teachers appeared to have strong and healthy collegial relationships.

The curriculum. Some contents in the curriculum are of a higher complexity that student can deal with in a foreign language, as expressed by the teachers. They said that they did their best to cover the topics in the syllabus and complained that materials helped little or did not help at all. Their greatest concern were the books provided by education authorities, which came from 11 book publishing companies. Within a single classroom, students were given books from two or three different companies (Macmillan Publishers, Pearson Education, Richmond Publishing, Santillana, Trillas, University of Dayton Publishing, Ediciones SM, Fernández Editores, Editorial Esfinge, Heinle, Cengage Learning). According to what teachers reported, students and teachers were given books from a different series every year, jeopardizing students’ learning and teachers’ work.

How satisfied are elementary EFL teachers?

The themes related to teacher satisfaction that emerged from the interviews with elementary school EFL teachers were: working conditions, the status of the profession, and professional development opportunities.

Working conditions. EFL teachers went through difficult working conditions on at least three grounds. First, they lacked the basic element that a teacher needs to “feel like a teacher”: her own classroom. One of the teachers reported that she visited classrooms in five different schools during the week, one visited four schools and three teachers visited three schools to do their jobs. Second, they were responsible for more than a hundred students who did not receive the sustained exposure to English language that would help them develop proficiency. Incompatibility between English language competence of students and curriculum demands was frustrating for teachers. Third, teachers said they had to tolerate the perception of teaching a “less important” class. These stressful circumstances in which teachers found themselves, at times made them think in leaving the profession. One of the teachers shared her reflections:

“When I get anxious, I think about finding another job. Then I think, how can I leave my job? All I know is teaching, and I love English so much. Being an English teacher is very stressing”.

The working conditions of teachers affect student achievement and academic growth. Students would definitely benefit if EFL teachers were given respect for their work, participation in curriculum decisions and a trusting teaching environment.

The status of the profession. The expression status refers to the level of appreciation of teachers’ work and competence to perform such work. Status is a complex, multifaceted concept impacted by multiple factors that come from society, the government, the education system, schools and teachers themselves. Tea-

chers in this study claimed that EFL teaching had lost some of its status in the last few years due to the lack of job security, benefits required by law and decent wages. Two of them reported mixed feelings about how some newspapers referred to EFL teaching professionals. The researcher made an Internet search and found a newspaper article that belittled the work of teachers (Quintero, 2017). The following is the translation of an excerpt of the article:

“Teachers are not interested in the English program. According to the Teaching Professional Service in the state, only six teachers responded to the call for teaching positions in the present school period, and three of them resigned, therefore, there is a shortage of teachers for that subject... the Secretariat of Public Education mandates the teaching of English and does not supervise that teachers have the necessary knowledge... Poor teacher preparation has caused students to make fun of teachers. Educational authorities have reported that students that make fun of teachers have been punished. Videogames, cartoons and music have helped students learn English beyond the level of proficiency of teachers. In addition to this, no one wants to teach this language”.

The teachers expressed that the media sometimes reported against them and sometimes in their support. Another publication voiced the demands that teachers referred to during the interviews (Peña-Rojas, 2018). The following is a translated excerpt:

“...[teachers] claimed that they practically do not exist as teachers because they do not have pension, medical services, bonuses, and other benefits as other members of trade unions. It is absurd that they are not given the benefits they are entitled to, since English language learning is mandatory in all elementary schools in the country, an important language world-wide and in the border with USA”.

Teachers seemed disconcerted and at times irritated by the ambiguous position given to EFL teachers by educational authorities that demand a high level of English language proficiency in all students and do nothing to dignify the status of ELT professionals.

Professional development opportunities. Teachers reported that they never had access to formal induction to the program nor they had ever participated in a mentoring program. They had never received feedback on their teaching. It was particularly striking that those teachers who studied nonteaching undergraduate programs never completed a teacher education or training program. Once a year, they were invited to a series of conferences given by speakers from other countries who were unconnected to the National English Language Program.

Online courses and programs seemed as the only option for continuing professional development, according to the teachers' views. They lamented the high cost of British language and teaching certifications and the lack of local options and time for teacher development activities.

Teachers revealed that they did not have any opportunities to gather collegially to discuss English language teaching issues. The basic education reform established the School Technical Councils (STC) in 2013, formed by teachers and school leaders to identify the challenges that schools have to face to achieve students' learning. In theory, English language teachers participate in these assemblies, once a month. The teachers interviewed considered that their participation was limited because of their sporadic attendance in schools and the resulting superficial knowledge of the functioning of the multiple schools they visited every day. Furthermore, teachers argued that the STC were not designed to incorporate English language teachers. Schools have a variable number of English teachers or no English teachers at all and issues specific to the field could hardly be of interest to the rest of the teachers.

DISCUSSION

Expectations about English language teaching have grown rapidly in the last decade. From a few private schools that hired English language teachers, the whole public education system is in the process of recruiting professionals to boost bilingual education. The Secretariat of Public Education officially proclaimed this year that in 20 years, all students in Mexico will be bilingual. This policy will certainly impact the English teaching profession. The questions that arise are: how prepared are teachers to cope with this challenging plan? How motivated and satisfied are English language teachers to start off?

Results of this study agreed with previous findings in many grounds. Although some EFL teachers found inspiration in students and had good collegial relationships, they viewed their job as stressful. They seemed demotivated by poor school facilities (Iliya & Ifeoma, 2015) and lack of materials that supported the curriculum (Habibi, Sofwan & Mikminin, 2016; Kumazawa, 2013). Wages, job security and benefits did not correspond with what they expected and needed (Gao & Xu, 2014), and they perceived that their profession was not always valued by the wider community (Hettiarachchi, 2013).

The EFL teachers that participated in this study were dissatisfied with having to spend much of their time going from one school to the next, without classrooms of their own. They aspired to have respect for the subject they taught and the support from the educational system to implement the necessary curriculum changes (Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2004). They expressed their need for local, affordable and meaningful professional development opportunities.

CONCLUSIONS

The motivation and satisfaction of elementary school English teachers appeared to be affected by National English language program which, instead of acknowledging the professional judgement and abilities of teachers to design their own teaching materials, pro-

tected the interests of large book publishing companies. The irrational purchase and distribution of books in public schools has also represented a waste of money in times of financial scarcity for the public sector. On the other hand, new strategies for professional development need to be devised and implemented, so that basic and higher education teachers learn from each other and collaborate in the promotion of academic independence from English speaking countries. Any understanding of the motivations to teach and the satisfaction with working conditions must deal with relations of power and the roles that English language plays in relation to the economy.

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