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SELECTED ASPECTS OF JOB MOTIVATION AS SEEN BY *EFL* TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT. The article presents a preliminary report of 120 questionnaires addressed at *EFL* teachers and distributed between 1998-2000. The survey aims at obtaining information on the condition of teacher job motivation at the present stage of their professional career and determining the factors which are positive job motivators and those which are negative job motivators as described by *EFL* teachers. The article presents a brief description of 6 selected questions and the interpretation of obtained results. The survey is part of a Ph.D. dissertation entitled „Motivation and Self-Perception of *EFL* teachers”.

Teaching has for a long time, if not always, been recognised as a profession noted more for the internal satisfaction it gives its members than financial gratification or job advancement.

In the last decade in Poland Teacher Training Colleges (NKJO) as well as Universities have sent their graduates into the school system to meet the continuous demand for *EFL* teachers, increased by the political and economic changes taking place in Poland since 1989. In spite of the large numbers of education graduates, *EFL* teacher shortages still exist both in big towns and small communities. Another important problem is the very low retention span in the career pattern of *EFL* teachers. Understanding the sources of work satisfaction or dissatisfaction which directly affect motivation can be of value not only to teachers themselves, but also to school heads as this may help them develop measures for addressing problems with employees and make satisfactory hiring decisions.

This report refers to some motivational factors such as pay and promotions, teacher-teacher, teacher-headmaster and teacher-learner relations, which exert influence on *EFL* teacher motivation and job satisfaction.

My assumption here is that motivation and job commitment interact throughout the professional career of a teacher. Initial positive motivation has a strong influence on professional commitment. Later, the degree of motivation is affected by actual teacher experience and strongly correlates with the increase or decrease of commitment.

Work dissatisfaction resulting in decrease in motivation contributes to ineffectiveness, psychological distress and low productivity in teachers. This con-

dition, if prolonged, often leads to loss of qualified people from the teaching profession and fewer people entering it with long-term career aspirations.

From the numerous theories of motivation, the theory of human needs developed by Maslow (1968, 1970) has informed much literature and became a springboard for other theories, especially referring to motivation in work contexts. Maslow believes that human needs are arranged in a hierarchy and that certain low-level needs e.g. hunger, safety and security must be satisfied before higher-level needs, e.g. job satisfaction, can be attended to. Drawing on Maslow's theory, Herzberg et al. (1976) identified two sets of factors influencing attitudes to work. Motivator factors, such as achievement, recognition, responsibility or professional growth are intrinsic to the work itself, while hygiene factors such as company policy, supervision, working conditions and salary are extrinsic to the work. Herzberg (1976) argues that motivator factors are the primary cause of people's satisfaction with their work, while hygiene factors are the primary cause of job dissatisfaction. Therefore, he implies the necessity of job enrichment, namely, increasing the scope, tasks and skills needed to perform the job without enlarging the job itself.

As regards the situation in EFL teaching, according to Martha Pennington (1992:207) EFL teachers are positively motivated in their careers by intrinsic work processes and human relations factors. In her study, Pennington (1991) suggested that occupational problems in the field of EFL stem from the lack of:

- concrete forms of recognition of achievement such as pay, benefits, and promotions;
- less tangible psychological rewards such as opportunities for self-expression and growth, a sense of responsibility for, participation in, and commitment to the teaching.

As each of the occupational problems defined by Pennington may influence EFL teachers differently, it is necessary to adopt an individualised approach to the evaluation of motivation in EFL teachers. Suggestions to improve job motivation in Polish EFL teachers should contain a variety of personal growth and career options which will cater for the individual needs of EFL teachers.

This report based on 120 questionnaires resulted in the initial description of the initial results and observations of the condition of Polish EFL teachers job motivation.

1. Objectives of the study

The rationale behind the questionnaire was mainly to observe the factors which exert influence on the motivation and self-estimation of EFL teachers' professional effectiveness in the following categories:

- demographic factors (sex, age, professional seniority, place of work);
- educational background (types of secondary and higher education, professional courses, types of jobs held prior to teaching career, the course of teaching career so far);
- pre and in-service professional teacher training, plans for the future;
- factors within self such as job motivation, aspects of teacher-student relations, the role of external factors in teacher self-perception.

Another important objective of the study was to raise teachers' awareness of performance (Underhill 1992) as regards their professional strengths and weaknesses. This might ultimately lead to the development of their potential and help to sustain a high level of motivation throughout their professional career.

2. Methods of the research

2.1. Description of the questionnaire

The pilot study was carried out by means of a written questionnaire in Polish, addressed at EFL teachers. The questionnaire consisted of four parts, altogether there were 39 questions. In this brief report, however, I will only present the results of 6 questions concerning motivation of EFL teachers.

The questionnaire was distributed between February 1998 and June 1999. The questionnaire was anonymous, the information in it used exclusively for the purpose of my research.

2.2. Subjects of the study

120 actively working EFL teachers who participated in the study were from the region of Wielkopolska, from Bydgoszcz, Słupsk, Gdańsk, Wrocław, Wałbrzych, and Legnica. All the respondents are primary and secondary school teachers; 96% of them are females and only 4% are males. Such sex distribution is partly the natural result of the fact that the majority of EFL teachers in Poland are women, also, that women were more willing to take part in this survey and openly express their opinions.

3. Methods of analysis

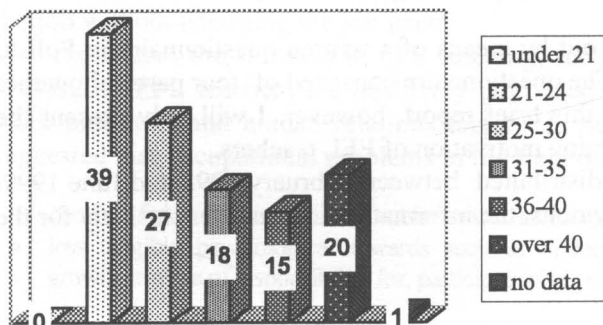
At the beginning of the questionnaire evaluation I created an inclusion/exclusion philosophy, following the criterion of maximal inclusion as defined by Low (1995). My criteria were as follows: I excluded a script where:

- less than 30% of the questions were answered
- all items were rated identically
- the writer added an explicit "don't know" comment – she didn't understand the task.

4. Discussion of the questionnaire

It is interesting to observe that 39 out of 120 respondents are young EFL teachers aged 21-24 at the beginning of their teaching career, 27 are teachers aged 25-30 with a 5-year experience in EFL teaching on average. The next group aged 31-35 consists of 18 respondents with a longer teaching experience, 15

Chart 1: Age distribution



respondents are in the age range of 36-40 and as many as 20 teachers are over 40 with a long experience in teaching.

Out of 120 respondents, as many as 45 (38%) are University graduates with degrees other than English philology; 40 (33%) are either Teacher Training College students (Extramural programme) or

college graduates; only 12 (10%) are graduates of English philology and only 6 (5%) respondents graduated from the Teacher Training College and are currently studying English philology. Altogether in the examined group the number of Teacher Training College graduates – EFL teachers amounts to 59 (49%) and as many as 45 (38%) of active EFL teachers at the time of the survey had formal EFL professional education in progress.

The numbers shown here give some insight into the job market in EFL teaching in Poland, presenting a random sample of the EFL teaching structure in north-western Poland. The study was carried out in a quite extensive region, on groups which were not pre-selected, the results therefore may be considered as reliable and valid. It is interesting to observe the educational background of EFL teachers who work in primary schools, gymnasiums and secondary schools in our region, and to attempt at inferring about its possible effects on motivation and job commitment.

Table 1: Types of academic education of the respondents

No	Age categories	No of respondents	%
1.	No academic education	4	3
2.	Academic education – English philology	12	10
3.	Academic education – other	45	38
4.	Academic education – other + NKJO	13	11
5.	NKJO (graduated or in progress)	40	33
6.	NKJO + studies of English philology in progress	6	5
Total:		120	100

Question 1: What motivates you most to improve your skills as a teacher and to use them in the most successful way in your everyday work. Define on 1-5 scale; where 1 is the least and 5 is the most motivating factor from the ones given below:

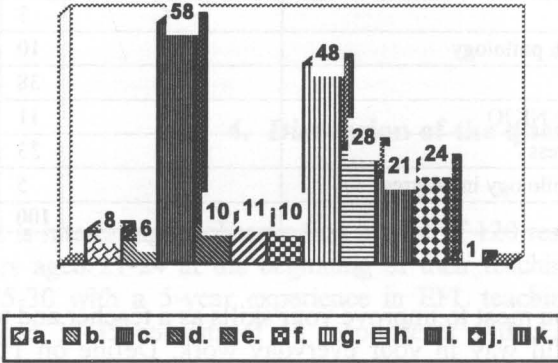
- recognition by the school headmaster /headmistress
- recognition by the colleagues
- respect in your pupils + financial gratification (bonuses, grants, Ministry of Education awards, Regional Education Authorities' awards)
- other awards (if applicable)
- fear of losing professional position
- fear of developing routine and lagging behind younger colleagues
- fear of displaying lack of professional skills in front of the learners and being negatively assessed by them.
- the wish to be the best in one's school
- salary
- the fact that colleagues undergo in-service (EFL or other) teacher training courses

The result distribution of the factors motivating EFL teachers shows that respect shown by one's pupils (point: *c*) is regarded by 58 respondents (48%) as the factor of the biggest motivating impact for their work.

Other highly motivating factors are:

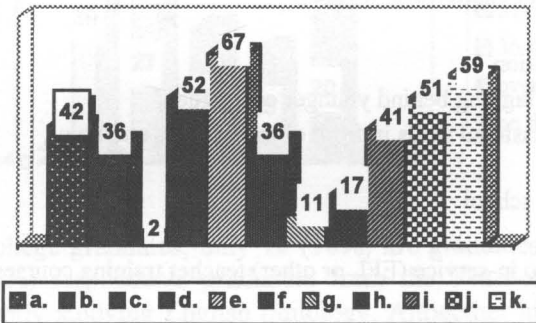
- fear of developing routine and lagging behind younger colleagues (point: *g*) 48 (40%),
- fear of displaying lack of professional skills in front of the learners (point: *h*) where 28 (23%) respondents rated it at the top of the scale.

Chart 2: Most motivating factors



teachers and that these internal motivators increase positive motivation, job satisfaction and commitment in EFL teachers.

Chart 3: Least motivating factors



The fact that a teacher's colleagues undergo in-service (EFL or other) teacher training courses was rated by as many as 59 respondents as the least motivating factor.

The observation that teachers do not consider the recognition by their principals or their colleagues as the source of positive motivation (points *a* and *b*; rated by 42 and 36 respondents respectively) should raise the concern of those in question.

Question 2: Do you try to obtain your learners' opinion of your classes and their evaluation of your teaching during a given school year? What are your means of obtaining this information?

The same factors (point: *g*, *h* and *i*) are among those which respondents classified as 4, which, if totalled with the same points rated as 5 would show that vast majority of respondents consider points *g*, *h* and *i* as exerting the biggest influence on their motivation and job satisfaction.

These results support Herzberg's (1976) belief that motivator factors are of more importance to the

The least motivating factors were the financial gratification and other awards (point: *d* and *e*), where 52 and 67 respondents, respectively, rated it as the least motivating factor. Salary (point *j*) belongs to the same group with 51 respondents rating it as a negatively motivating factor.

The fact that a teacher's colleagues undergo in-service (EFL or other) teacher training courses was rated by as many as 59 respondents as the least motivating factor.

As many as 89 respondents (74%) gave positive answers and 26 (22%) negative; 5 (4%) teachers did not answer at all.

It was an open-ended question and teachers themselves provided either one-sentence answers, or came up with their own categories. In the group which answered positively, the majority of the teachers (89-74%) obtained students' opinion about their classes by talking to them. This information was also acquired by means of anonymous questionnaires prepared by the EFL teacher (54-45%), or more general ones distributed by the school authorities or headmasters at the end of each school year. Five respondents (4%) learned how their pupils evaluated their classes by means of "gentle and attractive attitude to learners", not specifying what it really meant. Another small group (6-5%) assessed their success by the number of students who attended their classes. Only 4 (3.3%) teachers received this information by means of discussions with parents of young learners.

Question 3: Does the atmosphere in your school positively motivate teachers to improve and develop their teaching skills?

The question was answered positively by 78 (65%) of the respondents, negatively by 36 (30%) of them, and 6 (5%) respondents did not answer at all.

The majority of teachers responded simply by giving a yes/no answer. Yet, the comments added by some respondents show that most teachers seem to associate the positively motivating atmosphere in their school with the school Heads and their attitude to teachers. The school whose headmaster encourages teachers to improve their skills, and creates a favourable atmosphere, where teachers do not compete with one another but rather exchange their experiences and help one another, a school where ambitious teachers are appreciated, is highly spoken of by the majority of respondents. This positive attitude of the school Head helps teachers build a positive motivation for their work, sustain this motivation throughout their career and maintain a high level of job commitment.

Some teachers answered negatively explaining that their school authorities put a lot of emphasis on false effectiveness, limiting their concern to the reduction of noise in the classroom, the number of grades in teacher's books and low absenteeism, instead of paying more attention to the needs of teachers. One teacher sadly commented that her headmaster demands that she gets a degree fast or she will be fired, which put so much stress on her that she is considering giving up teaching. Another respondent, a 58 year-old male teacher from a secondary school says that very few teachers around him are concerned about their development; the majority are negatively motivated, the reason being that mediocre and bad teachers earn exactly the same as the ambitious ones, so "why

bother?". Such opinions are a warning to education authorities that the reform should also encompass the problem of attitudes and motivation to help the Polish school system recuperate.

Question 4: Do your school authorities (headmaster/headmistress) promote or reward teachers who develop their teaching skills? Evaluate on the scale 1-5, where 1= not at all and 5= yes, very much.

The response to this question is very interesting since 35 teachers (29%) marked with only 3 the role their headmasters play in promoting or rewarding EFL teachers who improve their qualifications.

As many as 25 (20%) and 19 (16%) gave their headmasters negative grades 2 and 1, respectively.

8 (7%) respondents refrained from answering this question saying that they did not know. Only 13 (9%) gave their headmasters grades 5 and 4. Of course, teachers may be relatively satisfied with their jobs on the whole, yet express considerable dissatisfaction with certain aspects of the work situation, in this case, with the attitude expressed by their immediate authorities.

Question 5: Does the fact of promoting or not promoting more ambitious teachers by your school authorities have influence on your motivation and your pursuing self-development?

From among 120 respondents, 68 teachers (56%) said that this fact had no direct influence on their professional self-development and their motivation. The reason for their attending teacher training courses was that they wanted to become better teachers and have better job satisfaction. Their aim was to improve and develop into better professionals rather than only satisfy their headmasters' ambitions. Such attitude of the respondents makes the issue of teacher self-development even more important and worth popularising among the EFL teachers in Poland.

Question 6: Who in your school encourages teachers towards teacher training and self-development

- a. teachers themselves,
- b. the school authorities?

The respondents' opinion expressed by 68 (56%) out of 120 was that if teachers themselves are positively motivated, they should carry on with their own development and encourage their colleagues as well; 36 respondents (30%) were of the opinion that the encouragement coming from the school authorities would

be welcome, 14 teachers (12%) said that both parties are equally responsible for teacher training and development. Such distribution of results points at the existence of very clear awareness of potential among the teachers, although this realisation is not always put into practice these days. Should this need for self-development in teachers be monitored and actively supported during teacher training sessions, it will certainly lead to teachers' progressing independence in professional development.

Conclusion

For most people work is the central part of their lives, the main focus of their attention, the centre of their universe. Most teachers spend a substantial part of their active lives working, it consumes a large part of their time and energy. As Pennington (1991) says, work is a context for many different types of experiences, both intellectual and social, rewarding as well as frustrating therefore the subject of work motivation and job satisfaction should be of major importance both to employers and to employees.

The results obtained by me through the questionnaire carried out on 120 EFL teachers clearly show that positive job motivation and commitment are directly related to such factors as recognition of achievement, opportunities for self-expression and professional growth. The feedback teachers receive from their educational authorities should actually provide information which will help them identify those aspects of their work that may be improved and move them to the next level of professional development.

Dodd and Pesci (1977) suggest that school Heads develop a "morale action programme" to increase the level of motivation and job satisfaction. Such plan should address the needs of EFL teachers by providing many and varied growth opportunities to keep intrinsic motivation and performance high. It should also aim at improving co-operative decision making coupled with strong administrative support and recognition in order to increase teachers' commitment, loyalty, and involvement. Such plan should also develop a horizontal and vertical job changes to enhance long-term career motivation for younger and older teachers which will increase job diversity, leadership opportunities and the improvement of professional self-image, as well as diversity of financial gratification.

One of the immediate possibilities and short term plans to improve motivation in EFL teachers is to organise workshops, first within a given school, and later by several schools together, where teachers could exchange their experiences and share problems common to their profession, and try to look for solutions together. The assistance, support and understanding coming from their colleagues might be of equal or even bigger value than from outside of the

teaching profession. This sharing of ideas and looking for solutions increases the feeling of belonging, of participation in the process of teacher development. This would lead to the increase of teachers' self-esteem and sustain motivation on the optimal arousal level to continue their work on self-development and to realise their full potential, both personally and professionally.

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