

Teacher Socialization of EFL Teachers at Public School Levels in Central Mexico

Socialización de maestros de inglés a niveles públicos
en el centro de México

M. Martha Lengeling*

Irasema Mora Pablo**

Blanca Lucía Barrios Gasca***

Universidad de Guanajuato, Guanajuato, Mexico

This study aimed at exploring the processes of teacher socialization and identity formation of nine English as a foreign language teachers at public schools in central Mexico. These teachers began their careers in the National English Program in Basic Education. Qualitative research and narrative inquiry were used as a basis for this research. The data revealed that the teachers' socialization was somewhat informal in that little was required from them to gain entrance into the program. Once teaching, the participants dealt with challenges in their teaching contexts and the program. From these challenges, the teachers were able to make decisions concerning their future as teachers, forming and imagining their identity.

Key words: EFL teachers, identity, imagined communities, teacher socialization.

Este estudio tuvo como objetivo explorar los procesos de socialización de profesores y la formación de identidad de nueve maestros de inglés en el sector público en el centro de México. Los maestros comenzaron sus carreras de docencia en el *Programa Nacional de Inglés en Educación Básica*. La investigación cualitativa y narrativa fue utilizada como una base para esta investigación. Los datos revelaron que el proceso de socialización de estos maestros fue informal, en cuanto se requirió poco de ellos para entrar a la profesión. Una vez enseñando, los participantes enfrentaron desafíos en sus contextos y el programa mismo y a partir de estos retos fueron capaces de tomar decisiones sobre su futuro como docentes; de este modo imaginaron y formaron su identidad.

Palabras clave: comunidades imaginarias, identidad, maestros de inglés como lengua extranjera, socialización de maestros.

* E-mail: lengeling@ugto.mx

** E-mail: imora@ugto.mx

*** E-mail: blbarrios@ugto.mx

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Introduction

Throughout the years, English as a foreign language (EFL) has grown widely in South America in countries such as Argentina, Colombia, and Uruguay, to name only a few. Many of these countries have implemented bilingual programs in the private and public sectors (De Mejía, 2008; Scaramucci & Boffi, 2014).

In Mexico the implementation of English programs at the primary level began in a few states in Mexico in the 1990s and later expanded to more states in the early 2000s in the public sector (Ramírez Romero, 2015). The State of Guanajuato began in 2009. Nationwide, it was expected that these programs would eventually promote the learning of English to a bilingual stage at the end of high school. One program in Mexico is the PNIEB program (*Programa Nacional de Inglés en Educación Básica* or the National English Program in Basic Education).

Throughout Mexico there is a growing area of research concerning this program (Alcántar Díaz, Navarro Téllez, & Moreno Villalazo, 2014; Domínguez Aguilar, Mayor Turnbull, Moreno Gloggnier, Serrano Vila, & Chanona Pérez, 2014; Ramírez Romero, 2015; Ramírez Romero, Sayer, & Pamplón Irigoyen, 2014; Sayer, 2015a, 2015b). A special issue of the *MEXTESOL Journal* was dedicated to the PNIEB program (Sayer & Ramírez Romero, 2013). The researchers of the present article have also carried out research in this area (Lengeling et al., 2013, Mora Pablo, Rubio Zenil, Crawford, & Lengeling, 2014) and we as well continue our interest in this theme because many of our students in the BA TESOL program at the University of Guanajuato have been part of the PNIEB. They begin their studies and early on become practicing teachers.

This article explores the career entry of EFL teachers in this national program in Mexico at the preschool and primary school levels as well as the teachers' identity formation during this teacher socialization stage. The research questions that guided our study were: (a) How did beginning teachers become socialized members

of the PNIEB program in the state of Guanajuato? (b) What is the teachers' identity formation within this career entry?

PNIEB (*Programa Nacional de Inglés en Educación Básica*)

The PNIEB program was implemented as a federal program in Mexico in 2009 with the intention of providing language teaching in basic education, from the third year of preschool to secondary school from the Mexican Ministry of Education (Secretaría de Educación Pública [SEP]). The program's name was changed in 2014 to PEI (*Programa Estatal de Inglés* [State Program of English]). This change also shows how the state government is now being held accountable for the program, yet the national curriculum still continues with the same intention and principles. The goal is that students will have an A2 level based upon the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) at the end of primary school and hopefully a B1 level at the end of secondary school. This program focuses on the use of "social practices with spoken and oral language to interact with native and non-native English speakers by means of specific activities with the language" (SEP, 2010, p. 21). The PNIEB teaching approach consists of "communicative functions of language" as well as "cultural learning . . . for students to relate with each other, to progress and reconstruct the social world where they live" (SEP, 2010, p. 25).

Literature Review

In this section we will look at three constructs: teacher socialization, identity, and imagined communities. These terms helped us to make sense of how the teachers were socialized into the English language teaching (ELT) profession, and within the PNIEB program, as well as to how this socialization shaped their identities. As part of identity we link the term *imagined communities* to the discussion.

Teacher Socialization in Education and ELT

Research in the area of teacher socialization has been extensive. We can trace early research concerning the influences on teacher learning that pre-date entry into a formal program of teacher education in the work of Lortie (1975), Sirotnik (1983), and Cuban (1984). Also, other studies have focused on how teacher socialization is affected by the quality of relationships teachers have as children with important adults (Feiman-Nemser, 1983; Knowles, 1988; Wright & Tuska, 1967, 1968). Another area of inquiry has been related to the influence of teachers in the lives of learners (Crow, 1987; Lortie, 1975; Ross, 1987).

In the area of education, Killeavy and Moloney (2010) explain that “teacher socialization refers to the influential processes of professional rules, teacher culture, and school environment on teachers in professional groups” (p. 190). Other authors, such as Zeichner and Gore (1990) mention that “teacher socialization research is that field of scholarship which seeks to understand the process whereby the individual becomes a participating member of the society of teachers” (p. 329). This career entry is a complicated stage where teachers become members of the teaching profession and specifically of the EFL profession. This multifaceted stage is when teachers learn and understand values, behaviors, expectations, traditions, regulations, and morals within a society of teachers. This membership is not an easy transition and does not happen overnight.

In the field of ELT, the term *teacher socialization* is often found in the literature of teacher practicum (Farrell, 2001; Merç, 2010; J. C. Richards & Crookes, 1988). Farrell (2001) mentions that teacher socialization:

includes learning how to teach and all the demands associated with teaching, such as coping with school rules inside and outside the classroom, following the school rules for lesson planning, following or developing curriculum learning the routines of the classroom, and learning how to interact with school authorities and colleagues. (pp. 49-50)

Thus, beginner teachers’ socialization involves learning “how to teach” which refers to the skills and techniques needed in class. Also the teacher needs to know how to work with the school administration and coworkers. Specifically, for the PNIEB program, teachers need to deal with their school administrators, other teachers, and even the national program coordinators which are not part of the school.

Also related to teacher socialization is the notion of *teacher stages*. Fuller and Bown (1975) have identified three stages of teacher development which teachers can go through:

The first one is known as the survival stage which is characterized by ideas from the teacher about class control, being liked by students, being observed by the supervisors, or being evaluated.

A second stage involves the teaching situation concerns about the quantity of students in the class, time pressure, lack of materials, etc. A third stage can be described as the concerns about being recognized (socially and emotionally), the bad curriculum materials according to the student’s needs, being fair with students, etc. (pp. 37-38)

In this article we look at the first stage of survival when teachers enter into the profession. Exploring this initial stage will help us understand how these teachers develop as professional teachers and the challenges they may encounter.

Identity and Imagined Communities in ELT

Because we are exploring beginning EFL teachers’ career entry in Mexico or how they become teachers, we will look at identity in ELT. Research on identity has grown in the last twenty years with the work of Clarke (2008), Cummins (2001), Day (2002), Norton (2000), and Pavlenko and Norton (2007), to name only a few. Identity refers to group membership or affiliation to a group (Norton, 2000). Johnston, Pawan, and Mahan-Taylor (2005) define identity as:

First, identity is complex and contradictory, comprising multiple, often conflicting allegiances and belongings. Second, identity is crucially dependent on social, cultural, and political context. Third, identity is to a significant extent established, negotiated, and developed through discourse. All of these qualities mean that identity is not stable or fixed but is rather dynamic and subject to change over time. (pp. 58-59)

Important aspects that make up identity are commitment, multiple contexts, language use in discourse, and negotiation. Identity is ever changing through the use of language depending on the context. Norton (2000) argues how language plays a part in identity formation:

It is through language that a person negotiates a sense of self within and across different sites at different points in time, and it is through language that a person gains access to—or is denied access to—powerful social networks that give learners the opportunity to speak. (p. 5)

Based upon “different sites at different points in time”, a teacher may have the right of entry or not into a group or, more specifically, for a profession such as EFL teachers within a national program. Also, the language can be a person’s mother tongue or an additional language

Another construct related to identity is *imagined communities* (Kanno & Norton, 2003; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007) and the fact that issues such as language and group membership or communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) are also linked. Research in this area can be seen in the work of Smith (2007), Toohey (2000), Tsui (2007), Wenger (1998), and Xu (2012). Kanno and Norton (2003) mention that “imagined communities refer to groups of people, not immediately tangible and accessible, with whom we connect through the power of imagination” (p. 241). Individuals who want to be part of a group of similar people or in this case a group of English teachers use language as a means to identify themselves in different spaces and times. Language

could refer to their native language or English. In the case of the participants of this study, they may envision themselves as successful teachers in Mexico or abroad. In their imagination, they are recognized members of the ELT community. These identities are multiple and multifaceted with relations to a number of aspects, such as English, how they might imagine themselves as possible teachers and members within a community. Both the personal and professional lives are entwined in these identities.

Method

For this research, we relied on a qualitative approach following narrative inquiry. According to K. Richards (2003) two features of qualitative research are “study human actors in natural settings, in the context of their ordinary, everyday world” and “seek to understand the meanings and significance of these actions from the perspective of those involved” (p. 10). We explored the voices of actors, in this case beginning teachers who were situated within the contexts of a national program and schools. We intended to investigate the process of their socialization, the problems they encountered and also the meanings they brought to this process regarding identity.

Narrative inquiry is a branch of qualitative research (Trahar, 2009). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) mention that “narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in a social interaction with milieus” (p. 20). Narrative inquiry helped us to obtain more detailed information about the process of teacher socialization and how teachers perceived themselves while working in the PNIEB program. Neisser and Fivush (1994) make reference as to how narratives can be used: “Particular events become important parts of our life because they provide some meaningful information about who we are, and the narrative forms for representing and recounting these events provide a

particular structure for understanding and convening this meaning” (p. 136). Analyzing and making sense of the events of becoming a teacher in this national program in relationship to teacher identity were the basis for using narrative inquiry.

Participants

The participants taking part in this project included nine students in our BA TESOL at the Universidad de Guanajuato, all beginning teachers (one preschool and eight primary school educators). These nine participants were selected from a class of 15 students: all were taking the course of Classroom Observation in 2014. The nine were selected because they began their teaching careers in the PNIEB program; this was their first job as EFL teachers. The participants consisted of seven females and two males, all Mexicans. They were between the ages of 19 and 21 and came from a variety of contexts: a rural community (1), a small city (5), and two large industrial cities (3). It should be mentioned that these beginning teachers had approximately 35 to 50 students in their classrooms. They went from one homeroom to another giving their classes with their materials. For the most part the homerooms were overcrowded. Because of their different contexts throughout the State of Guanajuato, they all had a different PNIEB program coordinator and every teacher was in a different public school. The group of researchers was composed of a student teaching in the program and two other researchers who were not part of the PNIEB program, yet teachers in the BA TESOL program.

Data Collection Techniques

The two techniques used for data collection were narratives and interviews. For the narratives, the participants wrote about their career entry. First, the students read narratives of how people became teachers in Mexico (see Lengeling, 2013), reflected on this process, and eventually were asked to write

their own narratives. Students explored the beginning events of becoming a teacher and how they felt. These narratives were edited a number of times with the teacher and even with the students’ classmates.

After this initial stage, the nine participants were asked if they wanted to participate in the research project. Also, they were all given a letter of informed consent where the project was explained and they agreed on participating in the study. The next stage was developing questions for semi-structured interviews. The researchers read the narratives a number of times to develop questions. Many of these questions were asking for more elaboration of information found in the narratives (Could you tell me more about how you felt at this point? What exactly happened here?). Each participant was interviewed individually and audio-recorded based upon relevant narrative information. For these interviews, we decided that participants could speak freely and they could incorporate new elements that were probably not mentioned originally in their narratives. The interviews lasted from 20 to 30 minutes. Both the narratives and the interviews were carried out in English. After transcribing the interviews, we coded and analyzed the data from both techniques. Pseudonyms were given to participants in order to protect their privacy.

Data Analysis

For the data analysis, we worked with the transcriptions and made notes of the points where we considered something important was being mentioned, or where we could see a theme emerging, following Miles and Hubermans’ (1994) work on data analysis. After this preliminary work, we started a process of “meaning categorization” (Kvale, 1996), trying to identify the thematic categories or subcategories. In the following sections, we present the data in three themes: (a) Career Entry, (b) Challenges to Overcome and Positive Support, and (c) Looking to the Future.

Findings

Career Entry

In this section, we show how the participants were offered their first jobs as teachers and the initial steps of becoming a teacher. The word *friend* came up many times as to how the participants learned about the opportunity to teach in the program. In the following excerpts the participants were told about the job openings from friends and they also mentioned why they felt they were hired to be teachers:

I knew about the program from one of my friends. She introduced me and that's when I knew about the program, so I went there and I got the interview and then I started working...I think they were desperate to hire people because I just went to ask for information and right away she interviewed me and said: I only have these groups. Would you accept them? And I said yes! (Adela)

I knew about the job because of a friend...They hired me because I was able to speak English, I guess, because I only had high school and that was it. (Nadia)

When I was trying to get into this BA, a friend of mine told me that PNIEB was hiring teachers and the only thing that I had to do was to speak English and I could be a teacher. So I went with the coordinator of the program and she asked me if I knew English and I said yes. "Alright, you are hired. You're a teacher!" (Abel)

In these excerpts the participants seemed to be at the right time and at the right place and a friend was an important contact to pass on information of job opportunities. Adela just went for information and immediately she was given an interview and then offered hours. The excerpts show how the participants viewed their job entry as somewhat easy and even unexpected. However, it can be noticed that it was not only their perception. It seems that those who were in charge of hiring English teachers were not interested in either professional skills or specific qualifications, sending a message of how easy it was to gain access to the English teaching profession. Therefore, the way

they were socialized into the profession at the time of their entrance is somehow informal.

Concerning the participants' command of English, Nadia and Abel mentioned that their use of English proved to be a valuable tool for career entry. The next two participants were told about job opportunities, also by friends, and the job interviews followed the same line as above concerning what was needed to get the job:

It was very easy. A friend told me about someone who was looking for English teachers and at that moment I was still studying English.

I went to the interview with the coordinator in León. He asked me a few questions, such as if I had any experience with kids and giving classes. I told him that I did not have any experience. He told me that he had some hours (6) but he explained to me that the payment was something difficult and I had to wait at least three complete months. I did not care because it was my first job and I was not an English teacher. (Emilia)

A friend of mine told me that the PNIEB was looking for teachers and he introduced me to the coordinator. It was easy at first because the coordinator asked me three questions: Do you have your high school certification? Can you take the TOEFL? and What are you studying? I think they hired me because they needed teachers, because I was taking the BA in English language teaching and because I covered all the paper work as soon as I could. (Beatriz)

The word "easy" was used by both of the participants. There also seemed a preference for someone who could speak English.

Besides friends, the data showed how the role of mothers played an important part in how the participants learned about job possibilities in the PNIEB program and the influence their mothers had upon their career entry. It is often the case that mothers want to help their children to eventually find their careers. Adriana's and Micaela's mothers were primary school teachers and had valuable knowledge of the school culture. These mothers played a significant role when the participants entered the profession.

Well, I started because a teacher was pregnant and she needed someone to be there for the time she was going to be out... My mom is also a teacher, but she is a general teacher in that public school so the English teacher was giving classes to the groups of my mom. My mom told the teacher that I could be a replacement for the three months... They hired me because they needed someone to replace the teacher. It was not like a contract but after the three months passed I went with the coordinator and told him that I wanted to be in the program and I think they hired me because they needed teachers. Now, that I know the program more I think that many teachers are leaving the program and many others are coming so I think it is normal for them to have teachers leaving so I think that the coordinator thought "Well, one more" and I also think that it was because I was in the BA and I had the time to be prepared and all that. (Adriana)

Well, I was studying in the BA and one of my classmates was working in the PNIEB and she mentioned that the PNIEB needed teachers. And my mother was a teacher at that moment and she told me that I should try it and I went to the office in Pozuelos and they hired me... they knew I was studying the BA and I think that is why they hired me. (Micaela)

The two participants suggested that perhaps the reason they were hired was due to the fact they were studying in the BA program. In both excerpts the phrases "needed teachers" or "needed someone" was used which is similar to an above quote from Adela who mentioned she felt the program was "desperate for teachers." Again, we see how the people in charge of hiring new teachers, or the gatekeepers rather, were sending the message that the entrance to this profession could be "easy" in spite of not having any specific teaching qualifications. This is an important element to observe, as these young novice teachers might start constructing their professional identity in terms of how "easy" is to become an English teacher, as this is the discourse they continue hearing from the authorities. In this venue, the theory of *possible selves* (Markus & Nurius, 1986) becomes relevant while trying to explain how these

teachers can perceive themselves. This theory represents "individuals' ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming, thus linking cognition, behavior, and motivation" (p. 954). The risk these experiences bring for the participants is that they might construct their possible selves as future teachers who do not need much but luck or someone else to help them get a job as English teachers. In the next excerpts, the participants' mothers were again instrumental in motivating their children to try out for jobs as teachers:

The principal of the school, where my mother used to work as a cook, wanted to talk to me about a serious matter. My mom told me to go. So I went to the school a day later to talk to the principal. The first thing she asked me was: Do you want to be an English teacher right now? And my answer was yes. I got the job through a friend's recommendation and I only had to present the TOEFL [Test of English as a Foreign Language] exam to get the job. (Adolfo)

My mother had a coworker that was interested in the program and she, my mom, heard about the opportunity and my mom asked her if she could maybe give her information because she was interested in me having that job and she never came forward with any sort of information. So that's when my mother went to another coworker and said: "Would you mind getting me some information?" Then we got all of the requirements, like TOEFL or "*carta de no antecedentes penales*" [Letter of non-criminal antecedents] and I just collected them and went to Guanajuato offices in Celaya... I was hesitant because at the time I was unexperienced and the only thing that was to me worthy of attention was my TOEFL (613). I was relying on the fact that someone would look at my score and would be like: "Oh, maybe she has to know something, because otherwise she wouldn't have this result." But other than that, I didn't have any recommendations. No one was on my side like "you need to hire her." I was just the one that went into the office pretending I knew what I was doing. (Ada)

What is noticed in the data provided is that their job hiring seemed somewhat casual and haphazard as career entry. It was not really planned, but a friend

or a mother told them about the job opportunity and they became teachers quite easily. Furthermore, the TOEFL score represents linguistic knowledge for the participants. It is through the use of another language, English, that these participants became teachers and identified themselves. Their knowledge of the language seems to be a valuable commodity that they had to offer in exchange for a job. In the next section we present the challenges these beginning teachers encountered and also the positive support they were given as EFL teachers.

Challenges to Overcome and Positive Support

Once having accepted to become teachers in the program, the participants learned harsh realities concerning teaching and the program, showing them that teaching is not an “easy” profession as it seemed at the moment they were hired. In the data the teachers mentioned many times not having books at the beginning of the school year and often waiting for four months for the books to arrive. One teacher commented on how she felt bullied by an older content teacher. Another teacher mentioned how she felt when entering the classroom for the first time in the following excerpt:

The first time I stepped into a classroom, I felt really nervous because I was thinking about how to manage the class. I was a student of the language like one of them. (Adela)

At this stage Adela felt quite vulnerable as a teacher and identified herself as still a student. It might be possible that when this participant was hired, she imagined her performance as an English teacher as a positive one. However, reality taught her that teaching was not only about standing in front of a class. She needed to know about classroom management, among other things, meaning that she had to start creating a professional identity. Another challenge that the teachers encountered was the lack of their own classrooms. The

majority of the participants did not have their own classrooms and had to travel from one classroom to another with their didactic material. Participants also commented about the administrative matters and the academic side of the program. All nine participants pointed out that they did not receive their salary on time and had to wait three to four months for their wages. The salary is based on a contract given to the teachers and these PNIEB teachers had very few benefits which did not include vacation pay at Christmas, holiday or summer, or medical coverage. This contract begins and ends when they are teaching and can be canceled at any time. At times the participants did not know if they would have a job for the following school year or even at the same school. While the participants effortlessly got their first job teaching, the process of starting to teach was not as smooth as their entry. In the following excerpt the participant described how she saw the program and her school:

I divided everything into two parts: the program in general and my work in my school. Because in my school I feel very comfortable, the relationship with the teachers, with the director, and with every person in the school is very good, and also the relationship with the kids is good. They are very good kids. But in the program it is different because the salary payment is like they pay you one or two months after you start working. Also the lesson plans are very strict. They need lesson plans and you plan everything and you are very excited about it, like writing down all the activities. When you deliver it to the coordinators, they don't read it. They don't read a lot of the papers and the reports that they ask us to write. . . . So I think that they don't value us as teachers. I think that the coordinators should devote more time with the teachers, because we have meetings and we have workshops and everything but I don't feel the coordinator gets involved with us. Like, we do peer work and we do collaborate together with the teachers in the meetings but the coordinator is just being a boss. I don't think the coordinator is giving us support. I think he is very apart from us. He is “ok, do the work together. Support each other” but he is apart from us. (Adriana)

Many of the participants integrated themselves into the school and created positive relationships with the children, parents, other teachers, and the directors. They began to feel part of a school culture where they were members of a group, an aspect that showed their investment as part of a community, where there were people who could facilitate (or limit) access to their imagined communities. Yet when they commented on the program, they criticized the program naming a number of aspects such as the lesson planning and their training with the program coordinators. Adriana mentions how as a student and beginning teacher she learned valuable lessons of balancing these two roles as well as learning how to deal with large amounts of children and management issues.

One challenge for me was to be more involved with the other teachers. Another one was to balance my time with the BA, because I was studying the BA at the time and also working in the program. So I needed to plan my classes because I didn't feel comfortable going there and didn't know what to do, as well as the homework in the BA. So, it was like a mess for me. It was a challenge to balance my time. As well, with the number of kids, the first groups were over fifty kids per classroom so I didn't know how to manage the discipline, behavior, problems with fights, the kids' bullying so that was not part of teaching English but that was part of myself being prepared to manage those things that were related to teaching. (Adriana)

Her socialization process might have seemed easy at the beginning, but the job required her to be more aware of different situations concerning the program and her own teaching performance. These aspects had more implications than she had thought they would in the communities that she imagined and desired for herself.

The next participant states quite clearly his opinion on what the conflict is. He mentions how he felt positive within his teaching context and shows how he had integrated himself as a beginning teacher. Yet according to him, the program had its difficulties as mentioned next:

The problems are with the program: the administrative things with the coordinator. The coordination of this program is not as good as it should be. With my class and my groups I feel ok. (Abel)

A number of the participants provided data concerning positive support when they became teachers in the program. This support came from the institutions where they worked. The data showed how this positive support made them feel part of the institution or a community.

I have received constant support from the institution because I have my own classroom. They give me the materials I need for the class and if not, the parents help me with the materials. The principal also makes me feel a part of the institution by caring about how I am doing with the kids or if I have any problems or need something. My colleagues have also supported me every day, since the first day of work with the kids. They help me when there are talkative students, when they are not behaving appropriately, or when working with the materials that require kids to be careful. (Beatriz)

Beatriz seemed to be grateful as a beginning teacher where the institution supported her. She also identified herself as a group member of the institution. The institution refers to the school, children's parents, and her colleagues at school. This support consisted of materials, moral backing, and advice given to Beatriz. For beginning teachers this support was important to make them feel welcome to the profession and also it showed them role models. In terms of their imagined communities, these rewarding experiences certainly enhanced the positive image that they can have of themselves in their teaching profession. Their professional identity might be constructed from positive aspects and help them value the institution's efforts. The participants' socialization process can be multilayered and the institution plays an important role in how they perceive themselves and how much they can commit to the program. This is a two-way road in which the more positive experiences they have, the more committed

they feel to the profession. However, as mentioned before, not all of them had institutional support and this was when they started questioning their professional identity and their sense of belonging to the program. The participants also discovered important values, such as cooperation, responsibility, caring, and patience; they also became aware of school policies, which are engrained in the contexts and help the participants construct their beliefs of the EFL profession.

Looking to the Future

Having discussed how teachers entered into the EFL profession and the problems they encountered in their first jobs, we turn now to how they see their jobs for the future, this is, how they see their *possible selves*. This could refer to how they imagined themselves as teachers beyond their career entry. The next two participants mentioned how they felt part of their schools and possible future actions.

I care very much about the environment and right there I feel really part of it (of the institution) so I wouldn't mind if I stayed there. In the program they say that they are going to hire teachers with all the regulations and not just contracts but I don't believe them. (Nadia)

I would like to continue working in the school I am working because I have a very positive relationship with the teachers and the principal in the school and even with the parents and the kids. However, even when I do feel part of the institution where I work, I do not think that I will continue working for PNIEB because they are not giving me the opportunity to grow more in my professional development. (Beatriz)

Another participant explained how she felt positive about her school but she knew that she needed more experiences as a young teacher.

I feel very comfortable in that primary school and I don't wanna change from the school because I feel like I am growing there but I am conscious that I need to look for other opportunities within the PNIEB so I think that I could change from the school to see another environment. Also I see myself working on my own, applying what

we do here in the BA but for me, not for the program, because I see that the program is not going anywhere. (Adriana)

For the above participants their processes of becoming teachers entailed more than an accumulation of skills and knowledge. They evaluated their process of participation in this particular community of practice which entailed negotiating their ways of being a person, not just someone learning how to become a teacher. The context played an important role in how they perceived themselves after having the opportunity to enter the ELT community. Adriana's excerpt relates to imagined communities (Kanno & Norton, 2003; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007) because she envisioned herself in the future and projected her identity as more secure and established as a teacher. In essence, she could visualize herself in the future when she realized the program was not supporting her. Besides imagining herself she wrote of her motivation to move on to another job which could be considered going beyond the career entry stage. She has also formed beliefs of what teacher development holds for her and she acted upon those beliefs.

To conclude this section, we offer the excerpt of a young teacher who reflected on his future and was quite negative about the program. He appeared to have integrated quite well into his school and felt he had been accepted there.

I don't think there is future. I continue working in this program because I couldn't work in another place because I was in the BA, but now that I'm about to finish it I think it is time to leave this program because of a lot of issues that I don't like. I like teaching kids and what I do in the school but the program, in my opinion, is not as good as it should be. In the school they take me serious, and they ask me to go to different meetings of committee work. I count and in this program I don't count. My opinion doesn't count. (Abel)

Abel no longer wanted to stay in the program. He was caught between two communities: the school and

the program. He identified himself as group member of the school but rejected being part of the PNIEB. These two groups seemed to clash with each other and caused Abel some conflict as what to do as a teacher. This situation represents the complexities of the socialization process and how the participant felt empowerment in the school and a lack of empowerment in the program. His demotivation with the program made him imagine what he needed to do in order to survive. These emotions also had a direct connection to his identity formation.

The participants learned from their beginning experiences in this program, but after a period of time they felt they needed to move on to other teaching experiences to broaden their horizons. This is normal for teachers— to change jobs to get more experiences— but at the same time the schools, and specifically the program, are losing valuable teachers.

Conclusions and Implications

After conducting this research, we learned how important it is for teachers to acknowledge their socialization process and the influence this has on their identity formation. As well, teachers need to understand their profession and how they can envision themselves for the future in order to make decisions. In teacher education programs, exploring the themes of identity, experiences, beliefs, and values of beginning teachers should be discussed so that teachers can be aware of what they may encounter in the future and, hopefully, be more prepared for the teaching and learning processes. Preparing students to critically think of these issues is needed and can be implemented through writing, discussion, and observation. This understanding and dialogue combination is also needed for the national program to help the teachers successfully incorporate themselves into the school, program, and profession.

For the stakeholders, such as program coordinators or school directors, more importance should be given to how the English language is placed and viewed positively within the national curriculum and the school.

It is our belief that it should be a graded class which would appear as a grade on the students' grade card. Changing the class status would then affect the position of EFL teachers academically and administratively. EFL teachers would be required to have a degree in the area and they would have more permanency and security as teachers. Hopefully this would eliminate the easy-access or casual entry into the job which was found in the data. We would also suggest that the program explore how it can support these teachers in order for a job entry to be successful and for the teaching and learning processes to be successful emotionally and pedagogically.

Many seemed to be situated in contexts, both in their schools and the national program, where they are often viewed as perhaps "second class teachers," meaning they lacked the support they needed in order to be fully successful members within a variety of groups. This support refers to benefits, classrooms, didactic material, and acknowledgement. It is our hope that these teachers receive this support so that they will feel they are professional teachers within the EFL profession in Mexico and in the world.

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About the Authors

M. Martha Lengeling holds a masters in TESOL (West Virginia University, USA) and a PhD in Language Studies (Kent University, UK). She teaches at the Universidad de Guanajuato and is a member of the National System of Researchers (*Sistema Nacional de Investigadores*) as well as the Editor-in-Chief of the *MEXTESOL Journal*.

Irasema Mora Pablo holds a PhD in Applied Linguistics (University of Kent, UK). She is the coordinator and teacher in the Masters in Applied Linguistics of English Language Teaching program of Universidad de Guanajuato. She is a member of the National System of Researchers (*Sistema Nacional de Investigadores*).

Blanca Lucía Barrios Gasca holds a BA in TESOL (Universidad de Guanajuato). She works as an English teacher at Universidad de Guanajuato and BCENOG. She has presented in different ELT conferences (MEXTESOL, FIID, Jornadas de Estudiantes de Lenguas Extranjeras, 3^{er} Coloquio Lengua y Sociedad, 1^{er} Congreso de Lenguas Extranjeras, CIILE).