

THE MOTIVATIONAL DISPOSITION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER TRAINEES

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Abstract: It has been suggested that teacher motivation has a profound effect on the motivation of language learners. While the motivational disposition of students is widely researched, that of teachers has not yet been thoroughly investigated. Even less attention has been dedicated to the understanding of teacher trainees' motivation. The present research aims to fill this gap by means of an interview study with four English language teacher trainees in Hungary with the aim of exploring their attitudes and motivation; to find out how their attitudes and motivation have changed during one year of training; and to see whether they have a strong intrinsic motivation to become teachers of English. Differences in the interviewees' reasons for pursuing a degree in teaching, with both intrinsic and extrinsic motivating factors present, and differences in their career intentions were found. The study also reveals that the interviewees have somewhat negative attitudes towards the teacher training programmes they attend.

Keywords: teacher motivation, teacher training, teacher trainees

1 Introduction

As Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) have pointed out, “the teacher’s level of enthusiasm and commitment is one of the most important factors that can affect learners’ motivation to learn” (p. 158). However, while the motivational disposition of students is widely researched, that of teachers has not yet been thoroughly investigated. Even less attention has been dedicated to an understanding of teacher trainees’ motivation, their initial aspirations and fears that could produce further insights into teachers’ motivational disposition, how their motivation is generated, and how this initial motivation changes over time. The present research aims to fill this gap by means of an interview study with four English language teacher trainees in Hungary with the aim of exploring their attitudes and motivation; how their attitudes and motivation have changed during one year of training; and to see whether they have strong intrinsic motivation to become teachers of English. The study also reveals how the interviewees evaluate the current teacher training programme in Hungary. The study does not claim to make broad generalisations about the teacher training programme in Hungary; however, all of the interviewees showed very strong concordant opinions.

2 Review of the literature

Despite the fact that the present study focuses on teacher trainees rather than on teachers, the literature accumulated on teacher motivation cannot be disregarded. Many factors that affect teacher motivation also influence the motivation of teacher trainees, which is supported by the interviews of this study. Therefore, the first part of the literature review gives an overview of the factors that have an effect on teacher motivation and can potentially influence teacher trainee motivation, as well. The second part of the literature review describes the system of teacher education in Hungary, an extrinsic factor that may shape Hungarian teacher trainees' motivation.

2.1 Teacher motivation

There are four frequently mentioned factors that have a significant impact on teacher motivation. First, it has long been assumed that the major driving force in teacher motivation is the existence of a strong intrinsic component. Intrinsic motivation “implies engaging in an activity for the pleasure and satisfaction inherent in the activity” (Deci & Ryan, 2002, p. 42). In terms of teaching, this intrinsic component is the desire to educate people, to pass knowledge and values on to the next generation, thus making a social contribution. Secondly, “even with the best possible match between a profession and an individual, one’s intrinsic motivation will be inevitably ‘tainted’ by the impact of external conditions and constraints” (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 163). Therefore, contextual factors have high importance beside the intrinsic component; the two factors are closely linked to each other. Finally, teacher motivation is fragile by nature and it is exposed to several negative influences (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). All of these factors are closely related to each other and shape teachers' motivational disposition.

2.1.1 The intrinsic component of teacher motivation

Intrinsic motivation derives from the pleasure of doing and the satisfaction of completing a task. As it can lead to long-term engagement with and a substantial level of effort expended in a particular activity, it is important to consider those factors that can promote or attenuate it (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

According to Csikszentmihályi (1997), the intrinsic component is induced and maintained by two kinds of rewards which he calls the “educational process itself” and the “subject matter” of interest. The educational process refers to the desire in teachers to see that their work is meaningful, useful and important. This can be seen best in the development of their students: changes in students' performances and attitudes as a result of the teachers' work are highly satisfactory rewards in teachers' lives. The subject matter is closely related to the concept of lifelong learning; teachers continuously educate themselves to increase their professional skills and knowledge. It is not surprising that teachers who have a strong desire to educate people strive for broad and up to date knowledge as well as for professionalism.

Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory, a theory of human motivation, postulates that individuals strive to fulfil three basic human needs:

- (1) autonomy,
- (2) relatedness,
- (3) competence.

Activities that provide support for these basic needs are said to enhance the most self-determined form of motivation, intrinsic motivation. Teaching, ideally, satisfies the first two of these human needs: the possibility to be independent in managing one's classes, to individualise one's instructional practices and to develop a good rapport with a range of people (e.g., colleagues, students and parents). Competence, or in other words the teachers' sense of efficacy, is based more on the individuals' beliefs than on the teaching process itself. On the one hand, a teacher's self-efficacy depends on their belief in their own skills and effectiveness as an educator, i.e. their personal efficacy; on the other hand, it is the teacher's general beliefs about the effectiveness of teaching in the face of multiple obstacles that contribute to their sense of efficacy (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998).

2.1.2 Social contextual factors in teacher motivation

The aforementioned intrinsic motivation, however, is exposed to powerful external influences. Extrinsic influences certainly constitute a major threat to teacher motivation and shape teacher trainees' beliefs about the teaching profession. Dinham and Scott (2000) differentiate between two levels of extrinsic factors that affect teacher satisfaction. On the micro-level there are school-based extrinsic factors such as the size of the workload, the atmosphere pervading the particular institution and classroom where the teacher works, the availability of resources and facilities, the school's leadership, and the students' intellectual abilities and behaviour, etc. The macro-level constitutes systemic/societal-level factors such as the status and image of teachers in society or imposed educational changes over which teachers have little control. It should be noted that the micro-level can be both motivating and demotivating, depending on the particular institution where a teacher works; however, the macro-level generally causes dissatisfaction (Dinham, 2008).

2.1.3 Threats to teacher motivation: Negative influences

Although in theory teaching is an extremely rewarding profession, it is still fraught with difficulties that cause widespread disillusionment among teachers. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) list five general demotivating factors that test the commitment of both teachers and teacher trainees:

- (1) the stressful nature of teaching,
- (2) the inhibition of teacher autonomy by set curricula,
- (3) insufficient self-efficacy that is a result of inappropriate training,
- (4) content repetitiveness and limited potential for intellectual development that can lead to burnout,
- (5) inadequate carrier structures (p. 168).

According to Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998), teachers' efficacy, their belief in their ability to exert a positive influence over students, is linked to their enthusiasm and commitment to educating children. However, the overwhelming proportion of theory to practice in teacher training programmes leaves teachers ill-equipped to handle classroom challenges. Many teachers have all their illusions shattered when they start working in an educational institution.

Brookhart and Freeman (1992) in their meta-analysis gave a review of the literature on the past 40 years concerning the attitudes and motivations of teacher trainees. Most of the

studies listed the aforementioned intrinsic reasons for enrolling in teacher training programmes. Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that their motivations were high, some studies revealed that teacher trainees do not regard teaching as a lifelong career and that some of them got disheartened during their first bouts of teaching practice. Accordingly, the motivational disposition of teacher trainees is a complex phenomenon; it is influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors that cannot be separated from each other since they shape teacher trainees motivation together.

Elekes, Magnuczáné, Szabó, and Tóth (1998) investigated the career paths of teachers in Hungary by examining the life stories of nine Hungarian teachers from primary, secondary and tertiary education. They found that Hungarian teachers do not see a distinct career path; there is a career for teachers open only in the sense of professional development, “sideways”, but not “upwards”, with promotion prospects.

It should be noted, though, that – to the best of our knowledge – apart from this article, no research has been undertaken to investigate teachers’ attitudes in Hungary. The lack of research on the motivations and aspirations of teacher trainees is even more pronounced. Since 2006, when in the framework of the Bologna Process the structure of higher education was harmonised with that of other European countries, a teaching degree can be obtained in two stages: after getting a BA degree, prospective teachers have to take an additional entrance examination and complete a Master’s programme, as well. Thus, it is important to investigate what factors influence BA graduates to continue their studies and enter teacher education programmes.¹

2.2 Teacher education in Hungary

With the 2006 implementation of the Bologna Process in Hungary, the traditional undivided teacher training programme was replaced by a two-cycle degree system. Apart from 10 credits worth of foundation courses in pedagogy and psychology in the BA programme, which are aimed at familiarising students with the rudiments of educational psychology and the history of pedagogy, teacher training starts only at the Master’s level. The postponement of pedagogical training was criticised as it would reduce the possibility for students to familiarize themselves with and adopt the right attitude for the teaching profession (Hunyady, 2009). On the other hand, since only a limited number of selected students are admitted to the MA programme in teaching, fewer people become certified to teach, which solves the problem of the oversupply of teachers that was present before the Bologna process and, ideally, ensures that only those who are well-suited become teachers (Hunyady, 2009).

The classes (40 credits) offered in the MA in ELT programme, apart from improving candidates’ language proficiency and imparting knowledge of language teaching methodology, also focus on the theoretical aspects of second language acquisition (e.g., individual differences in language learning), and English speaking cultures. The practice-oriented subject-area training is supplemented with classes for an additional 40 credits offered by the Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology, intended to deepen teacher trainees’ understanding of the theoretical concepts of developmental psychology, educational psychology and the historical and philosophical foundations of pedagogy. Apart from these classes teacher trainees also have to complete one short and one long period of teaching

¹ It should be noted, though, that the two-stage system of teacher training is to be abolished and replaced with the old-type 4- and 5-year teacher training programmes followed by a longer, 1-year teaching practice.

practice. This practice teaching gives trainees the opportunity to see how the concepts they have learnt could be applied in real-life situations. During the 60-hour short practice in the fourth semester and the longer practice in the fifth, trainees not only observe the work of experienced teachers in primary and secondary school classrooms, but can also practice lesson planning, classroom management, and assessment. The fifth semester, which is entirely dedicated to teaching practice, is an innovation of the Bologna-process; it was not present in the traditional undivided form of teacher training.

The literature reviewed has found that teacher trainees have preconceived beliefs about teacher education programmes: they favour practice over theory (Wubbels, 1992) and have low expectations concerning the benefits of their classes in education (Joram & Gabriele, 1998). They also believe that teacher expertise will be gained from actual practice when they eventually start teaching in the classroom (Feiman-Nemser, McDiarmid, Melnick, & Parker, 1989; Joram & Gabriele, 1998). Their lack of faith in pre-service education, especially in the theoretical classes, can affect their self-efficacy negatively, which can lead to demotivation since “individuals’ perception of their ability to perform an occupation determines whether they will choose that occupation or not” (Topkaya & Uztosun, 2012, p. 127). Consequently, how teacher trainees perceive pre-service education is an important source of motivation or demotivation. Accordingly, it would certainly be important to understand the factors that can help in maintaining or even strengthening teacher trainees’ initial motivation to teach and those that have the opposite effect and might even discourage trainees from entering the teaching profession after graduation.

2.3 Research questions

The above considerations motivated the present investigation, which is based on a small-scale interview study carried out with four English language teacher trainees in Hungary. The following research questions were formulated to explore the perceptions of the participants of the study:

- (1) What characterises the motivational disposition of the participating English language teacher trainees?
- (2) Do the participating English language teacher trainees have strong intrinsic motivation to become teachers of English?
- (3) How did the participating English language teacher trainees’ attitudes and motivation change during one year of training?
- (4) What are the participating English language teacher trainees’ views about the current teacher training programmes in Hungary?

3 Research methods

3.1 Participants

For the purposes of this small-scale study, four teacher trainees of English were interviewed about their motivation to become teachers, their opinion on the current teacher training programme they are enrolled in and their future goals. All of the interviewees (two males and two females) are second year MA students from two prestigious universities in

Budapest, Hungary. Their mother tongue is Hungarian. All of them have already completed their short teaching practice and some of them have done private tutoring as well. The interviewees were selected by the use of snowball sampling. In order to ensure confidentiality, each interviewee is referred to here by a pseudonym. All the students were helpful and willing to give their thoughts and opinions, for which we are truly grateful to them.

The interviewees' profiles are as follows:

András is a 28-year-old student from Serbia, where he obtained a college degree in information technology. He took a preparatory course in English at Balassi Institute, Budapest and finished his BA studies as an English major with a French minor in Hungary as well. Currently, he is a teacher trainee student of English and French.

Bea is a 22-year-old student who did postgraduate studies in translating in economics and social sciences. She has a BA in English; her minor during the BA programme was andragogy. At the moment, she is an MA teacher trainee student of English and Hungarian as a foreign language.

Elza is a 23-year-old teacher trainee from Serbia who has a BA degree in English. Her minor during the BA programme was art history. She wrote her thesis in the field of language pedagogy. She does voluntary work in the Museum of Fine Arts and works at children's centres every summer. Now, she is doing her MA in English language teaching and leisure time organization.

Róbert is a 22-year-old teacher trainee of English and Hungarian as a foreign language. He has a BA degree in English. His minor in the BA was Business English.

3.2 Materials and procedure

Data for this qualitative study were collected in November 2011 with the help of a semi-structured interview schedule based on the interview schedule used in the study by Elekes et al. (1998). Since those questions were targeted specifically at teachers, some of them had to be reworded and others omitted altogether in order to suit teacher trainees. The final version of the semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix) used in this study contains six sets of questions:

- (1) general questions on age, mother tongue and previous studies,
- (2) motivation,
- (3) teaching practice,
- (4) thoughts about the teacher training programme,
- (5) thoughts about teaching as a profession,
- (6) future plans.

The interview schedule was piloted with one of the interviewees. Since no questions had to be changed or omitted during and after the pilot phase, this interview was included in the analysis. Each student was interviewed once; the interviews ranged between 15 and 22 minutes in length. The participants were free to raise any other related topic.

The interviews were conducted in Hungarian and were tape recorded, transcribed and analysed by the constant comparative method (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, pp. 126–149).

The excerpts quoted in this article were then translated into English. Five emerging themes were identified:

- (1) motivation to get a degree,
- (2) motivation to teach,
- (3) autonomy,
- (4) financial dimensions of teaching,
- (5) insufficient-self efficacy.

4 Discussion

In the data, all the participants made statements indicating that they are motivated to a certain extent, however, the nature and focus of their motivation is rather different. The interviews have shown that a sharp distinction can be made in terms of teacher trainee motivation: there are students who are attending the teacher training programme in order to become teachers and students who just want to get a degree.

4.1 Motivation to get a diploma

Interviewer: Erm, well, if somebody is applying to the teacher training programme then we assume he/she wants to become a teacher.

András: Wrong assumption.

Two interviewees, András and Róbert stated that they do not intend to become teachers after graduation. For them, the teacher training programme they are enrolled in is only a way to get an MA degree that will serve as a ‘life belt’ during those intervals in their lives when they cannot find a job except for teaching. As Róbert said “it will serve as a supplementary degree”. The reason why they chose to get a teaching degree is that it is still more “concrete” than other degrees, so an MA in teaching gives them a profession that is more ‘tangible’ than that of a philologist. As Elza summarised:

“The reason why many people do the teacher training programme is because they think if anybody asks them what their profession is they can say that they have a teaching degree in English ... to be an English teacher is more concrete.”

Although now intrinsically motivated, this extrinsic motive led Bea to the teacher training programme as well:

“I wasn’t sure whether to apply for teacher training or to a non-teaching programme in the humanities [...] but I didn’t see the future prospects that [a non-teaching major] could offer and then what would I do, what was going to become of me and this is why I thought that teacher training is more concrete.”

The reason for entering a teacher training programme is not only getting a profession, but also gaining the language skills necessary for future careers. For instance, András did not conceal his lack of motivation concerning teaching and his statements indicate that his motives for obtaining a teaching qualification are solely extrinsic, and are not inherent to the profession at all. He is interested in international relations and diplomacy and is planning to work in that field, where language knowledge is extremely important. Consequently, he chose a teacher training programme in English and French, which would give him a degree in two languages, not just one: “I didn’t want a degree only in English; I thought it would be a good

idea to make it a degree in two languages, so it is more useful". Smethem's (2007) qualitative study also revealed this tendency to use the teaching degree as a stepping-stone to other careers. These, whom she calls, "portfolio teachers", see their profession as a part of their career "portfolio" that serves as a proof of their skills and potential (p. 470).

Accordingly, teacher trainees of English and other languages might feel that their good command of the language will be an asset in all aspects of life. It should be noted that in Smethem's (2007) study, the "portfolio teachers" were practicing teachers, who seriously considered leaving the profession, but András does not even want to take up teaching. This is probably due to the fact that for him teaching was a fallback career. He mentioned that originally he wanted to pursue translation and interpreting studies; however, he was not admitted to the relevant programme. Due to his failure, he settled for a teaching course that would still give him a degree in foreign languages.

4.2 Motivation to teach

András was the only interviewee who started his teacher training programme with complete lack of motivation towards becoming a teacher. As he stated "I'm not motivated in teaching children [...] this is a different lifestyle; I don't want it for myself".

Only Elza showed strong intrinsic motivation towards the teaching profession: "To become a teacher is a thought and dream that I've been cherishing for a long time." Though Bea did not have intrinsic motivation when she started her teacher training programme, this changed in a positive way during the first year of training:

"When I applied for the teacher training programme I didn't feel particularly motivated [...] I thought that the work of teachers' is boring but now that I'm doing it I think it is really creative..."

Although admitting that choosing the teaching profession was a snap decision, Róbert still shows some of the psychological needs defined by Deci and Ryan (1985) that relate to the intrinsic component of teacher motivation. To the question about why he would like to become a teacher he gave the following answer:

"I wouldn't like to be a teacher so much but if I have to, then I'm happy to deal with children [...] even if I can't pass my knowledge on to them we would get along well and I think it would be great."

This passage shows that the interpersonal facets of teaching, the fact that he could establish a good rapport with a lot of children, is what makes the profession somewhat attractive for him. This is in line with research by Brookhart and Freeman's (1992), who found that "entering teacher trainees view the nurturing and interpersonal aspects of a teacher's role as more important than the academic aspects" (p. 51).

Despite his need for affiliation, however, among the interviewees he was the only one to mention students' attitude and behaviour problems and the consequent difficulty in managing them. He presumes that the lack of respect from pupils towards teachers is only a problem in state schools and not in language schools; this is why he can only imagine working, preferably part-time, in the latter. Thus, even though his love for children motivates him to a certain extent, the difficulties of dealing with problematic students deter him from seeking a full-time position in a state school.

Interestingly, relatedness manifests as dominance in the discourse of András, who thinks about teaching as a challenge to an individual's ability to control himself and others: "So the main point is that students should see that you are the boss, you are the teacher." He imagines the person of the teacher as "the leader of the pack".

Consistently with the relevant literature (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011), the "educational process itself" and the "subject matter" of teaching emerged as intrinsically motivating factors of the profession in the discourse of Elza and Bea. Making a contribution to children's learning and development seems to be really important for both of them. As Elza said: "There are no bad children or stupid children; because I think that you can bring the best out of all students according to their abilities". Bea articulated her thoughts as follows: "The important thing is to find something that catches the students' attention, and finding out how to attain that is not only a beautiful mission, but also a great sense of achievement if you really manage to do it."

Due to her belief that anyone can learn English, Elza would rather work in a vocational school and not in some elite institution. She would like to make a difference in the lives of her students and she is fully committed to teaching. She finds teaching meaningful if she can teach her students to effectively communicate in the language that will be useful in their lives:

"I believe that everybody can be taught English; and that perfect British or American accent or having all the grammatical structures at your fingertips shouldn't be the aim of teaching; rather it should be to teach a baker or a cobbler, who visit an EU exhibition, to be able to say why their products are good, why they are better and why they should be bought ... basically this."

This sense of vocation was included as one of the main reasons for choosing teaching as a career in Smethem's (2007) study as well.

Bea also perceives teaching as a means to aid those who seek her help: "my expectation for teaching is that I will be needed erm ... so there'll be students who'd like to learn Hungarian or English and I can help them in this." Furthermore, Elza considers teaching to be connected to lifelong learning and believes that through teaching and getting in touch with a lot of children she can learn something new every day. Hence, she thinks that it is a good way to enhance her knowledge, as the following extract shows: "A teacher can erm... remain mentally active, she/he can always have an agile mind, she/he's always 'on the move'; this is a job that requires creativity".

Interestingly, while the need and the opportunity to broaden one's knowledge is extremely motivating for Elza, it is a source of anxiety for Bea. She seems to be afraid that she will lack the necessary expertise to be able to teach efficiently: "Teachers are expected to always know everything. This is really an expectation, and a reasonable one, but it is pretty hard".

4.3 Autonomy

In the views of Elza and Bea, who are characterised by strong intrinsic motivation to become teachers, autonomy in teaching emerged as a key factor related to motivation. They look at the language teaching profession as something inherently creative, as, unlike teachers

of other subjects, they have more freedom in developing their own teaching materials and creating their own syllabus. Bea mentioned that creating tasks and seeing students deeply engaged in those activities is a grand experience. This is why Bea would never teach in a language school, because she thinks that there is a strict syllabus that she would have to follow, which might not be suitable for all of the students.

“I would teach as a private tutor, because there’s more...I think it’s fairer, because in a language school, there’s a set curriculum, and no matter what the group is like, you kind of proceed the way the curriculum dictates. And they pay for that...what you teach is not necessarily the level they would need. But as a private tutor you are solely responsible for what you teach.” (Bea)

This data extract suggests that she feels committed to teaching and feels responsible for the outcomes of her students.

As autonomy arises as such an important concept, the question of institutional and governmental restrictions (e.g., set curricula) is unavoidable. These imposed constraints seem to inhibit teachers in their autonomy, which compromises teachers’ professional integrity and spoils the enjoyment of the subject both for teachers and for students (Smethem, 2007).

4.4 The financial dimensions of teaching

Two of the interviewees, Elza and András, mentioned the financial aspects of teaching, the extrinsic factor that belongs to the macro-level according to Dinham and Scott (2000). Both of them think that the current salary of Hungarian teachers is not enough to make a living. For András, a teacher’s salary is a demotivating factor:

“For me it’s important not to work just for a pittance of 100 thousand, but that they would honour somehow what I’ve learnt so far [...] I’m studying more foreign languages. That’s how I’m trying to sell myself, because that’s the point, selling yourself, then you’ll sell your soul, then something will turn up. The teacher doesn’t sell his soul; he’s just motivated so he’s teaching.”

In the case of Elza, money is a decisive factor in where she will teach. Although she would like to work as a teacher in a state school, she intends to go abroad: “I don’t want to work in Hungary, because if I go home to Serbia I could still make a better living as a teacher than in Hungary.”

Interestingly, it was the most and least intrinsically motivated teacher trainees who raised this subject. In András’s case this was not so surprising, as his main reasons for not wanting to teach are financial ones. But the fact that Elza also mentioned this, highlights its importance and suggests that even the most motivated teachers might be discouraged by the poor reward they receive for their efforts. A 2005 survey of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) revealed that the low salaries are one of the main reasons for the lack of attractiveness of the career. They discourage people from choosing this profession and contribute to teachers’ attrition.

It should be noted that even though both Elza and András are from Serbia, the description they gave of the working conditions in their home country varied greatly. Teachers’ salaries in Serbia were reported to be generally high by Elza, but András thinks that teacher’s compensation is even lower there than in Hungary. As András mentioned “they work for half of the salary of a Hungarian teacher”. Elza, on the other hand, believes that “as a novice teacher I would earn 80000 HUF (in Hungary) [...] while in Serbia a teacher earns

about 400 EUR, that is about 120000 HUF”. Furthermore, András thinks that the teaching methods used by, and probably required of, teachers are much more old-fashioned and less effective than in Hungary.

4.5 Insufficient self-efficacy

One of the salient emerging themes is connected to the interviewees’ opinion about the current teacher training programmes in Hungary. Across the interviews many examples were found of the participants complaining about the content and structure of the programme. Their negative attitudes stem from their conviction that the teacher training programme they are enrolled in overemphasizes the theoretical aspects of teaching and does not offer enough practical training. According to Róbert, “They tell and teach us so many useless things; we have to learn so much that doesn’t make sense and has no practical value.” Elza and Bea criticize their MA programmes in a similar manner: “Lots of pedagogy and psychology courses are not about the things they should be about, as we have to cram dull theories there.” said Elza, while Bea mentioned that “What we’re missing is not the theoretical background [...] but stepping forward and actually speaking; and giving lessons is not practiced enough.” Especially for Bea, who only started studying English in high school as a third foreign language, the lack of practical training is worrisome, as the following data extract indicates:

“The distribution of classes is strange. So, we have very few English classes; a lot in Hungarian [as a foreign language], which is reasonable in the sense that we’ve just started Hungarian, but the number of English classes is so low, I think that at home or somehow everybody has to practice English, so as not to forget how to speak in English [...] This is not an active language practice, only, well, maybe it is only good to increase your passive vocabulary. But for those things in particular that teachers need, in my opinion, like speaking fluent English in a confident manner, we have one, one class this whole semester.”

This shows that the current teacher training programmes do not make enough contribution to the development of the trainees’ personal efficacy.

András raised a very thought-provoking idea: “We learn a lot of psychological and pedagogical stuff, but I don’t feel that would make me better. [...] the way people treat children and all that depends on your personality, so you won’t ‘reprogram’ yourself at PPK.” Accordingly, he thinks that most of the courses offered in pedagogy and psychology will not help him become a better teacher.

The repetitive content and uselessness of the courses was mentioned several times. This seems to be extremely demotivating for Róbert, as the data extract shows:

“I start each and every semester thinking about quitting [laugh]. Because when we come back from a break, either winter or summer, we receive the course requirements... this many home papers for this course, five times as many for another, and they are all completely useless, they do not make sense at all...”

Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) highlight the importance of teaching practice in teacher training programmes, as learning about teaching methods and practices does not necessarily mean that trainees will be able to actually implement those in their classes. Teaching practice, however, gives trainees an opportunity to assess their capability for managing and educating children. Should teacher training programmes provide enough opportunities for trainees to gain experience in teaching in different contexts and environments, prospective teachers could

leave university well-prepared for the profession. The real-life experience and the immediate feedback they get can have a great impact on teachers' sense of personal efficacy.

Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) laid special emphasis on this as “greater efficacy leads to greater effort and persistence, which leads to better performance, which in turn leads to greater efficacy” (p. 234). Similarly, if teachers believe that they do not possess the ability to teach it will make them less enthusiastic and persistent, which will result in poor student outcomes, which, in turn, will negatively influence their efficacy beliefs. This demonstrates the importance of implementing enough practice in the teacher training programmes.

Related to the usefulness of teaching practice is Bea's motivational change during the first year of training. When she decided to enrol in a teacher training programme she was not intrinsically motivated. However, she found her short student teaching practice in Hungarian as a foreign language deeply inspiring: “The teaching practice, which is strictly practical, was great in Hungarian [as a foreign language]. I've learnt much more there than in the past one or one and a half years altogether”; “my best experience [as a teacher] was when I gave a task to the students [...] and practically I couldn't stop them, because they really really liked and enjoyed it, and that was really great”. This implies that teaching practice has a potentially powerful influence on both the professional development and the enthusiasm of teacher trainees.

5 Findings, limitations and recommendations

5.1 Summary of main findings

This qualitative research aimed to explore the attitudes and motivation of English language teacher trainees and their opinion on the teacher training programme they are currently enrolled in. Although this is a small-scale study, the ideas that it brought to light can certainly be of use for both further research and for the planning of teacher training programmes in the future. The findings indicate that not all of the teacher trainees possess the strong intrinsic motivation that is supposed to be characteristic of teachers entering the profession according to the relevant literature. Some regard teaching as a fallback career or as a stepping-stone to other professions. Nevertheless, the educational process itself, the subject matter of teaching, autonomy in teaching, and interpersonal facets of teaching all emerged as inherent motivating aspects of the profession, while the lack of adequate financial reward appeared as one that is demotivating.

The interviewees demonstrated rather negative attitudes towards the current teacher training programme, as it focuses on theory rather than on practice. It should be noted, though, that the interviewees have completed only the first year of their training and the most practice-focused part of the programme is still ahead of them. Furthermore, the interviews show that the current teacher training programmes have the potential to inspire those who are enrolled in them, if the content of the courses responds to their needs. However, the repetitiveness and perceived uselessness of the courses might dishearten even more those who are not intrinsically motivated.

Since teachers' motivation has a significant effect on students' motivation and achievement, it would be very important to ensure that highly motivated and competent

teachers graduate from universities. Understanding the motivational disposition and attitudes of teacher trainees can help a great deal in making teaching a more attractive and prestigious profession, and can also improve teacher training programmes.

5.2 Limitations of the study and recommendations for further work

The current study was designed as a mini-research project. Consequently, the small-scale nature of the study resulted in a relatively small sample size. Furthermore, the study employed a highly criticized chain referral method of sampling. Accordingly, further empirical research would be needed to further validate the findings of the present investigation. Another limitation that should be mentioned is that the study reports on the motivational changes of teacher trainees over time only through retrospection. It should also be noted that the interviewees have not yet completed their education; consequently, their opinions may change by the end of the programme. Longitudinal studies are needed to explore more accurately the motivational disposition of teacher trainees during their education. Furthermore, it would be of particular interest to investigate the motivation of newly-graduated language teachers.

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APPENDIX

The English translation of the interview schedule

1. Age
2. Mother tongue
3. Current and previous studies
4. Why did you join the teacher training programme?
5. What did you want to be when you applied for university? How did your original plans change during these years?
6. Why would you like to become a teacher?
7. What do you expect to gain from teaching? (secure job; long summer holiday; teacher discounts in museums; being part of the teaching community)
8. Do you have any teaching experience? If yes, can you elaborate on the details? (whom, where, when, for how long)
9. Do you teach right now while studying? If yes, where and whom?
10. Do you think it was difficult to get admitted into the university? (high admission scores, a minor subject that is suitable for the teacher training programme)
11. Do you find both the theoretical and practical part of the teacher training programme you are currently enrolled in to be adequate? If yes, why? If not, why?
12. Do you think that the requirements imposed on teacher trainees are reasonable?
13. Do you think that the teacher training programme will equip you for what is out there in real life? If yes, why? If not, why?
14. What do you like most about teaching?
15. What do you think is the greatest difficulty in teaching?
16. Teachers in Hungary are in a difficult situation (low salary, lack of respect). Do you think this is also true for English language teachers?
17. Have you ever considered quitting the teacher training programme? Why/why not?
18. Supposing you quit the teacher training programme, what else would you choose/study and why?
19. What are your plans if you obtain your teaching degree? (Language school or state school? Home or abroad?)