

THEORETICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR DEVELOPING THE PROFESSIONAL MOTIVATION OF FUTURE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS

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Abstract

The professional motivation of future English language teachers is a crucial factor influencing teacher effectiveness, professional growth, and educational quality. Motivated teachers demonstrate higher levels of commitment, pedagogical competence, and engagement in lifelong learning. Therefore, understanding the theoretical and pedagogical foundations of professional motivation is essential for improving teacher education programs. This article examines major motivational theories, pedagogical approaches, and factors contributing to the development of professional motivation among future English language teachers. The study emphasizes the importance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, professional identity formation, reflective practice, collaborative learning, and practical teaching experiences in fostering motivated and competent educators.

Keywords: Professional motivation, English language teachers, teacher education, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, professional identity, pedagogical foundations, lifelong learning.

Introduction

The quality of education largely depends on the competence and motivation of teachers. In contemporary educational settings, English language teachers are expected not only to possess linguistic and pedagogical knowledge but also to demonstrate strong professional commitment and enthusiasm for teaching.

Consequently, the development of professional motivation has become one of the central objectives of teacher education programs. Professional motivation serves as a driving force that influences an individual's attitudes, behaviors, and aspirations within a chosen profession. For future English language teachers, motivation affects their willingness to acquire professional competencies, engage in continuous learning, and successfully adapt to educational challenges. Without sufficient motivation, even highly knowledgeable teacher candidates may struggle to achieve professional success. The increasing globalization of education and the growing importance of English as an international language have intensified the need for highly motivated language teachers. Therefore, teacher education institutions must create learning environments that foster professional motivation and prepare future teachers for effective professional practice.

Theoretical Foundations of Professional Motivation

Professional motivation has been extensively investigated within psychology and educational sciences. Several theoretical perspectives provide a comprehensive understanding of motivational processes.

Self-Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory, developed by Deci and Ryan, suggests that individuals are motivated when three fundamental psychological needs are satisfied: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In teacher education, future English language teachers become more motivated when they are given opportunities to make independent decisions, demonstrate their abilities, and establish meaningful relationships with peers and instructors.

The theory distinguishes between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation emerges from genuine interest and personal satisfaction, whereas extrinsic motivation is driven by external rewards or recognition. Research consistently indicates that intrinsic motivation contributes more significantly to long-term professional commitment and effectiveness.

Expectancy-Value Theory

Expectancy-Value Theory explains motivation through two key factors: expectancy for success and task value. Future teachers are more likely to invest

effort in professional development when they believe they can succeed and perceive teaching as meaningful and valuable. Positive educational experiences strengthen both expectancy and task value, thereby enhancing motivation.

Achievement Motivation Theory

Achievement Motivation Theory focuses on individuals' desire to attain success and avoid failure. Teacher candidates who strive for excellence and view challenges as opportunities for growth tend to exhibit stronger professional motivation. Educational environments that provide constructive feedback and recognize achievements contribute significantly to motivational development.

Social Cognitive Theory

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes the role of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to individuals' beliefs in their ability to perform specific tasks successfully. Future English language teachers with high levels of teaching self-efficacy demonstrate greater persistence, confidence, and resilience in professional situations.

Collectively, these theories suggest that professional motivation results from the interaction of personal beliefs, educational experiences, social influences, and professional aspirations.

Pedagogical Foundations for Developing Professional Motivation

The development of professional motivation requires carefully designed pedagogical practices that encourage engagement, reflection, and professional growth.

Student-Centered Learning

Student-centered learning shifts the focus from teaching to learning. It encourages active participation, autonomy, and responsibility. Through project-based learning, problem-solving activities, and collaborative tasks, future teachers become active constructors of knowledge rather than passive recipients of information.

This approach enhances intrinsic motivation because students experience greater ownership of their learning process and perceive their educational activities as meaningful and relevant.

Reflective Practice

Reflection plays a fundamental role in teacher development. Reflective practice encourages students to critically evaluate their experiences, identify strengths and weaknesses, and establish professional goals.

Reflective journals, portfolios, self-assessment activities, and teaching reflections enable future teachers to develop self-awareness and professional confidence. Reflection also promotes lifelong learning habits that support long-term professional motivation.

Practical Teaching Experience

Teaching practice is among the most influential factors in developing professional motivation. School internships, classroom observations, and microteaching sessions provide opportunities for future teachers to connect theory with practice. Successful teaching experiences strengthen self-efficacy and reinforce professional commitment. They allow teacher candidates to observe the impact of their work on learners and develop a realistic understanding of professional responsibilities.

Supportive Learning Environment

A positive educational environment significantly contributes to motivation. Teacher educators who demonstrate encouragement, empathy, and professional guidance help students develop confidence and enthusiasm toward teaching. Supportive peer relationships also foster a sense of belonging and professional identity. Students who feel valued and respected are more likely to remain motivated and engaged in their studies.

Integration of Educational Technologies

Modern educational technologies create innovative learning opportunities and increase student engagement. Digital tools facilitate communication, collaboration, creativity, and access to authentic language resources.

Future English language teachers who develop technological competence feel more prepared for contemporary educational environments, which positively influences their professional motivation and confidence.

Professional Identity and Motivation

Professional identity formation represents an essential component of teacher education. Professional identity refers to how individuals perceive themselves as members of a professional community.

Throughout their educational journey, future English language teachers gradually construct their professional identities through academic experiences, teaching practice, and interactions with mentors and peers. A strong professional identity provides a sense of purpose, direction, and commitment.

Teacher education programs should encourage students to explore their teaching philosophies, professional values, and career aspirations. Such reflection enables future teachers to establish meaningful connections between their personal goals and professional responsibilities.

Mentorship programs also play a significant role in professional identity formation. Experienced teachers serve as role models who demonstrate effective teaching practices, professional ethics, and lifelong commitment to learning.

The Role of Motivation in Teacher Professional Development

Professional motivation extends beyond initial teacher preparation and influences continuous professional development throughout a teacher's career.

Motivated teachers actively participate in workshops, conferences, research projects, and professional learning communities. They continuously seek opportunities to improve their teaching practices and expand their professional knowledge.

Furthermore, motivation contributes to resilience and job satisfaction. Teaching often involves significant challenges, including workload pressures, classroom management difficulties, and educational reforms. Strong professional motivation enables teachers to overcome obstacles and maintain positive attitudes toward their profession.

The Influence of Foreign Language Learning Experiences

Future English language teachers experience education from both learner and teacher perspectives. Their own language-learning experiences often shape their beliefs, attitudes, and professional motivation.

Positive language-learning experiences frequently inspire individuals to pursue teaching careers. Supportive teachers, engaging activities, and meaningful communication opportunities can serve as powerful motivational influences.

Even negative learning experiences may contribute to professional motivation by encouraging future teachers to improve educational practices and create more effective learning environments for their students.

Teacher education programs should encourage critical reflection on previous language-learning experiences and their implications for future teaching practices.

Lifelong Learning and Professional Motivation

The rapidly changing nature of education requires teachers to engage in continuous professional development. Lifelong learning has become a necessity rather than an option.

Professional motivation serves as the foundation for lifelong learning. Teachers who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to pursue advanced qualifications, participate in professional development activities, and remain informed about emerging educational trends.

Universities can foster lifelong learning by promoting research skills, critical thinking, independent learning, and professional inquiry. Such initiatives help future teachers recognize that professional growth is an ongoing process.

Collaborative Learning and Professional Motivation

Collaboration enhances both learning outcomes and professional motivation. Group projects, peer teaching activities, and cooperative learning experiences enable future teachers to exchange ideas, provide mutual support, and develop professional relationships.

Collaborative learning also prepares students for real-world educational contexts where teamwork and professional cooperation are essential. These experiences

contribute to increased confidence, communication skills, and commitment to the teaching profession.

Conclusion

The professional motivation of future English language teachers is a multidimensional construct influenced by psychological, pedagogical, and social factors. Theoretical frameworks such as Self-Determination Theory, Expectancy-Value Theory, Achievement Motivation Theory, and Social Cognitive Theory provide valuable insights into motivational processes. At the pedagogical level, student-centered learning, reflective practice, practical teaching experiences, collaborative learning, and technology integration play significant roles in fostering motivation.

Teacher education institutions must recognize that motivation is not merely a personal characteristic but a professional competence that can be nurtured through appropriate educational practices. By creating supportive learning environments and promoting professional identity development, institutions can prepare future English language teachers who are committed to lifelong learning, educational innovation, and professional excellence.

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