

An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of ESL Teachers' Motivational Beliefs in Developing Different Pedagogical Strategies

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Motivated teachers affect not only the quality of their own teaching and job satisfaction but also the motivation and learning outcomes of their students and the development of the whole school. While the significance of teacher motivation in pedagogical development is an increasingly important factor in the evaluation of teachers in higher educational institutions, little effort has been made to strengthen their motivation.

The research question guiding this study was “How do teachers of English as a second language (ESL) in a private tertiary college in Hong Kong make sense of their motivational beliefs in developing or adopting different pedagogical strategies?” The study used interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) to investigate the motivational beliefs about the pedagogical development of ESL teachers in higher education. In a qualitative inquiry, this study employed semi-structured interviews to explore the motivational beliefs of four full-time ESL teachers working in the Department of English at the research site.

Three superordinate themes and their respective sub-themes emerged from the data analysis: 1) Students as the Major Driving Force, with sub-themes a) Turning Students' ESL Needs into Teachers' Motivation, b) Higher Education Students' Learning Attitudes and Characteristics, and c) Students' Satisfaction; 2) Perceptions of Teachers' Teaching Abilities, with sub-themes a) Evaluations of Their Teaching, b) Teachers' Role Models, and c) Peer Observation; and 3) Perceptions of the Administration, with sub-themes a) Adherence to or Autonomy from Departmental Guidelines, and b) Perceived Effectiveness or Ineffectiveness of College Practices.

The findings in this study are relevant for the motivation of higher education faculty members by learning about students' academic needs, personalities, and satisfaction needs, and of teachers' pedagogical strengths and weaknesses. Higher education administrators can also tailor professional development programs to meet faculty members' individual needs. Additional research is needed to explore the perspectives of teachers of other subjects or in different types of higher educational institutions who may receive and react to different sources of motivation.

Introduction

Motivation provides an incentive that results in the imitation of learnt behavior (Bandura, 1977). Not only does it trigger an action, but it also affects individuals' choice of action, their commitment to the action, and the effort devoted to accomplishing the action (Bandura, 1994). In education, empirical studies have suggested that a high level of teacher motivation is positively linked not only to teachers' teaching quality and job satisfaction (Evans, 1998; Shoshani & Eldor, 2016; Wang et al., 2020) but also to students' motivation, learning, achievement outcomes (Dörnyei, 2003; Haruthaithanasan, 2018; Kassabgy et al., 2001; Lazarides et al., 2021; Naz & Rashid, 2021; Roshandel et al., 2018), and school development as a whole (Ames, 1990; Osman & Warner, 2020). Teacher motivation, as reflected in their cognitive teaching behavior, therefore, has been gaining increasing attention in education research.

Higher education institutions have also become invested in teacher motivation. Some even include this in their staff appraisal criteria. In other words, teachers' cognitive motivation (Bandura, 1994) to develop different pedagogical strategies is becoming just as important in evaluating teachers' performance as their actual teaching behavior, if not more so. However, teacher motivation for pedagogical development might not be properly addressed, despite occasional seminars organized by institutions. It should also be noted that professional development or training for teachers in pedagogical change, if there is any, may not necessarily translate into new teaching practices, because some teachers may not see the need to change in the first place (Ertmer et al., 2012; Le Fevre, 2014; Goodyear & Casey, 2015).

For faculty, members' appraisal criteria not being aligned with the institution's practice could put them at a disadvantage, as they are being