The Nature of Recognition in TEFL Teachers' Lives[*]

La naturaleza del reconocimiento en la vida de los maestros de inglés como lengua extranjera

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This article aims at sharing a vital issue that emerged from the findings of a qualitative research study into collective responses of teachers of English as a foreign language to an extended change process in their Mexican university context from 1989 to 2003. The data generation process employed was comprised of semi-structured interviews as well as the concurrent analysis of the data, based on aspects of grounded theory. The results of this inquiry demonstrated features of the complexity paradigm of educational change. In particular, how teachers' receptivity to change was strongly influenced by the teachers' transforming construal of their professional identities owing to the growing recognition they acquired in their context.

Key words: Educational change, professional development, professional identity, recognition.

En este artículo se aborda una problemática vital, descubierta en los resultados de una investigación cualitativa. Dicha investigación se enfocó en las respuestas colectivas de maestros de inglés como lengua extranjera, en el contexto de una universidad mexicana, entre 1989 y 2003, hacia un proceso de cambio. En la recolección de datos se emplearon entrevistas semiestructuradas, así como el análisis concurrente de los datos con base en la teoría fundamentada. Los resultados mostraron características del paradigma de la complejidad del cambio educacional. Específicamente, se observó que la receptividad hacia el cambio fue influenciada fuertemente por la construcción positiva de identidad profesional propia de los maestros, cimentada en el desarrollo de su reconocimiento como profesionales dentro de su contexto.

Palabras clave: cambio educacional, desarrollo profesional, identidad profesional, reconocimiento.

Introduction

An important issue that interrelates with, and possibly influences, how teachers respond to change is the sense they have of their own professional identity. According to the findings of this study, this understanding is strongly influenced by the achievements teachers perceive during their struggle for recognition as professionals.

> All human beings … we need to be given a pat on the back … to be told that we're doing well ... that kind of thing gives you strength. (Irma/16/02/05)

The above is an extract from my research data that succinctly sums up the importance of the main topic of this article. We all need to feel accepted for who we are, as well as identified, singled out, respected, taken into consideration and esteemed; in short, 'recognized', especially by 'significant others' (Heikkinen, 2003, p. 4). By 'significant others', I am referring to the members of our family, our friends, our colleagues and work authorities in our social context. The different degrees of recognition that we perceive ourselves to have achieved from these 'others' may influence or affect our personal construal of our professional identities regarding our self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem (Zembylas, 2003). This in turn may also influence our productive performance in our work context. For example, positive reinforcement may motivate us to interact and collaborate more with others (Beijaard, Verloop & Vermut, 2000). However, in contrast, when we do not receive this vital feedback, we may often feel undervalued, and so reluctant, to make any kind of effort at all to interact with others and participate in change initiatives (Giacquinta, 2005; Greenberg & Baron, 2000). Even worse, it has been argued that a lack of recognition may contribute to a teacher's burn out (Cano-García, Padilla-Muñoz & Carrasco-Ortiz, 2005). However, it is not easy to achieve recognition. This is especially the case of language teachers whose standing as professionals is not often taken seriously by other teachers, especially in a university community where, more often than not, the study of languages is not considered a real discipline or science and, therefore, worthy of respect (Johnston, 1997).

This article provides the basis of my argument. First it introduces the research context. This introduction is followed by a summary of the methodology and the research process I employed. Then it reports on and interprets the findings regarding the lived experience of eleven TEFL teachers and me while engaging in educational change from 1989 to 2003 in our university context in Mexico. Finally, it concludes with a discussion of the implications for practice and educational research.

Research Context

In this inquiry in particular, I am focusing on a small number of teachers in the School of Languages at a Mexican university where the lingua franca is Spanish. Since the beginning of the 1990s, these TEFL teachers have been involved in a series of changes including innovation in curriculum design and, perhaps even more importantly, teacher development and professionalization. These changes in teachers' work contrast strongly to the situation in former years when teachers commonly lacked any training at all, even of first degree status, and the principal change in the institution itself was the inclusion of English language teaching in the university, first as a subject and then as a BA degree at the new School of Languages[1], which took a full 30 years to accomplish.

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[1] At that time, even though it was called a School of Languages, the only language that was taught at the beginning was in fact English.

Investigating Lived Experience

I employed aspects of a life history approach in my research process, given that life history research specifically has as its focus the "phenomenal role of lived experience and the way in which members interpret their own lives and the world around them" (Plummer, 1983, p. 67). That is, from this viewpoint, the researcher is interested in exploring

…how individuals or groups of people who share specific characteristics, personally and subjectively, experience, make sense of, and account for the things that happen to them. (Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p. 39)

Furthermore, in teacher education (Feuerverger, 2005; Lyons & LaBoskey, 2002; Phillion et al., 2005), and especially in the field of language teacher education, it has been affirmed that not only the researcher, but also the informants may profit in various ways from participating in narrative inquiry (Doecke, 2004; Golombek & Johnson, 2004). For instance, one of the benefits is that the relating of a lived experience requires both reflection and meaning making that lead to teachers' understanding their practices (Freeman, 2002; Jay & Johnson, 2002) and their experiences. During the process of narrative inquiry, the researcher has access to this understanding that will enable him or her to both analyze, and interpret, the teachers' experience, sometimes with the informants' help (Barkhuizen & Wette, 2008).

Research Procedure

The first step in my research procedure consisted of identifying the informants who would be involved in this inquiry. Given my inside knowledge of and experience in the context, this was not a difficult task. The most obvious choice owing to her crucial involvement in the changes was the person who had been dean from the beginning of the change process up to 1995. The

rest were the ten teachers who were the original focus of my inquiry. That is, the small number of teachers who, like myself, had become involved in the changes in which I and most of my informants participated in together from the beginning of the long change process. This occurred when all but two of my informants, who were not yet teachers in our context, worked together during the design and implementation of the curriculum 'Plan '90', the in-house MA in TEFL, the distance BA in TEFL and the first design stage of a further new curriculum for the BA. These were in addition to different projects (e.g. the setting up of a S.A.C. and engagement in research) in which some of us became engaged while at the same time participating in professional development (postgraduate TEFL diploma, MSC in TEFL, and PhD studies).

Methods of Data Generation and Analysis

In life history studies, the most common strategy used in the generation of data in order to gain knowledge of an informant's context and career (Drever, 2003; Gillham, 2000; Kvale, 1996) is the interview-conversation between informant and researcher (Goodson & Sikes, 2001). In other words, what Goodson (2001a) has referred to as 'grounded conversation'. That is, conversations prompted by the general concerns of the researcher with the purpose of affording "individuals with the opportunity of telling their own stories in their own ways" (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, p. 186). These conversations have the purpose of encouraging informants "to reflect on the past and to look again at their own life and experiences in an introspective and subjective fashion" (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, p. 192).

As a complementary tool, I employed an interview method known as the Critical Incident Technique. 'Critical incidents' may be understood,

on the one hand, as occurrences that have marked an important change in a person, institution or social phenomenon. On the other hand, they may not be so dramatic or obvious. However, the fact that the person recalls them "reveals, like a flashbulb, the major choice and times of change in people's lives" (Sikes, Measor, & Woods, 1985, p. 57). This interview method is useful as not only did it generate data regarding my informants' perceptions, but it also permitted me to probe further into their responses in previous interviews, as well as to triangulate and verify the issues that were emerging.

Based on Kelly's Personal Construct Theory (Kelly, 1955), I also employed a repertory grid interview technique as another complementary tool in order to explore, triangulate and thus verify my informants' personal constructs that had emerged during our other interview sessions. Kelly uses the term personal constructs to refer to "the dimensions that we use to conceptualize aspects of our day-to-day world" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison 2000, p. 338). According to Kelly, a person's construct system represents truth as they understand it.

Throughout the research process I also kept a personal log. These notes proved to be very useful. They not only provided support for both a critical and reflective approach to my research process, and a means of balancing the subjectivity of my interpretations (Deshkin, 1988), but they also assisted in my analysis process.

The methods of data generation and data analysis were initially two overlapping and inter-related procedures throughout my field work (Figure 1). Carrying out both these procedures concurrently helped to inform me concerning what questions to ask and which issues to pursue in subsequent interview sessions.
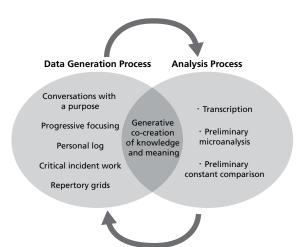

Figure 1. Research process. Stage one: While in the field.

Later, when I had concluded my field work, I revisited my data as a whole and employed a more systematic approach in order to reduce, arrange, analyse and interpret the data more thoroughly (Figure 2). To this end, I used aspects of the grounded theory approach to data analysis (Charmaz, 2003; Goodley, Lawthom & Moore, 2004; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1998;).
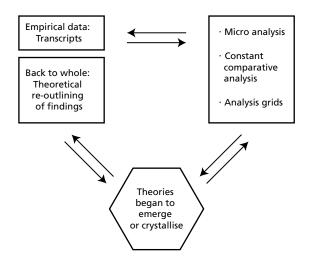

Figure 2. Research process. Stage two: Systematic approach to analysis.

As a result of the methods I employed during my analysis and interpretation of the data, theories began to emerge or crystallize (Richardson, 1997). According to Richardson (1994), the notion of a crystal

> …combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multi-dimensionalities, and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change, and alter, but are not amorphous. Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities *and* refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, arrays, casting off in different directions. What we see depends upon our angle of repose. (p. 522)

Depending on the different 'angles of repose', that is, interest and attention, I focused on my informants' perceptions, first verbally, and then later as I examined and re-examined the transcripts, first informant by informant and then collectively, comparing and contrasting the different informant responses, the different facets of the crystal became more and more apparent. As a result, this process enabled me to understand more clearly, though arguably not completely (Richardson, 1994), the interrelated and dynamic nature of the issues encapsulated in my informants' responses. This subsequently led me to re-examine my data from the point of view of the Complexity Theory.

Interpretation of Findings

My findings appear to support Kemmis' (n.d.) view that

> …changing a practice requires not only changing the knowledge and actions of individual practitioners but also changing extra-individual features and elements of situations that are necessarily implicated in practices. (p. 26)

In particular, they reveal both the kinds of recognition needed by teachers as well as the impact these have on the formation and transformation of teachers' professional identities. In order to interpret these perspectives, I will refer to Honneth's (1995a) theory of recognition based on his interpretation of Hegel's writings (1979), as well as Huttunen and Heikkinen's (2002) and Heikkinen's (2003) subsequent adaptation of this theory to educational practices. In an attempt to protect my informants' identities, I have replaced all their names with pseudonyms.

Recognition of our Limitations

Firstly, 'recognition' in one sense refers to what we acknowledge regarding our limitations. "What we acknowledge –that is realize, admit or confess– is our commitments, obligations or responsibilities, and our flaws, mistakes, sins or guilt in failing to meet these (Ikäheimo, 2002, p. 142).

Most of the teachers recognized that before the 1990s we had had no formal teacher training and so we believed that we had been ill prepared to be teachers. Although we had several years of teaching experience, we felt at a disadvantage. Some of the Mexican teachers believed that they lacked both oral and teaching skills due to the fact that they were a 'product' of the old system having previously studied at the School of Languages. Furthermore, we had no contact with the 'outside' e.g. the TEFL community in Mexico and abroad or even any real contact with the other teachers at the School. Thus, as my informants acknowledged, during our conversations, both they and I had felt isolated, alone and insecure. This lack of professional confidence and professional esteem as teachers culminated in a lack of professional respect and mutual recognition of ourselves as teachers. However, it also resulted in being a motivational force that greatly contributed to our desire to become actively involved in professional development and the institutional change process given that, as Honneth (1995b) affirms, "the experience of personal disrespect represents a moral driving force in the process of societal development" (p. 248).

Recognition of Self
by Significant Others

According to Honneth (1995a), the first level of recognition most human beings desire is a basic recognition of our existence in social interaction as this signifies for us that we have the right to exist, that we are accepted for who we are. Thus, if we are successful at this level, we may achieve self-confidence.

> …relation of recognition thus also depends on the concrete physical existence of other persons who acknowledge each other with special feelings of appreciation. The positive attitude which the individual is capable of assuming toward himself if he experiences this type of emotional recognition is that of self-confidence. (Honneth, 1995b, p. 253)

In short, at this first level we need to feel that we are accepted by 'significant others' who care about us and have an interest in our welfare (Heikkinen, 2003). When people respond in kind, this may result in what Huttunen and Heikkinen (2002) refer to as a "positive circle of recognition" (p. 3) that as a result may create a strong sense of solidarity among those who are involved.

> Reciprocal recognition of work creates a strong feeling of solidarity in the community. This is the case of a positive working atmosphere where individuals give their best and recognize each others' work....This positive circle of recognition is very fruitful both for the individual and the community. (Huttunen & Heikkinen, 2002, p. 5)

This view was corroborated by the data that emerged in my inquiry. The level of recognition that we received from each other was decisive. It was especially important given that at first we did not receive this from anyone else at all in our professional context; that is, from either the University authorities or from the TEFL community in general. Our particular "positive circle of recognition" was based on the following aspects. We recognized and respected each other's.

- Strong work ethic
- Honesty and reliability
- Commitment

Strong Work Ethic

Our conscious or unconscious evaluation of each other's strong work ethic is evident from the different terms we used when describing each other. At the same time, these descriptions revealed the characteristics we valued, both in ourselves as well as in others. We identified each other as hard workers, that is

- People who do not give up easily
- People who do not 'fall asleep' on the job
- People who willingly devote their time to their students, colleagues, and the School
- People who cared about their students and what they, as teachers, were doing, not for personal gain, but because, for them, teaching was more than just a job.

In other words, according to one of my informants

> These are the people that still care. These are the people that do make an effort. These are the people that are involved in things that seem to be for the good of others rather than for themselves. These are the people who don't just take teaching as a pay check. I mean they're into it. (Chela/10/12/04)

That is, we 'still' had a strong sense of moral purpose. Our first priority was the educational welfare of our students. Consequently, we did everything within our power to improve the standards of learning and teaching at the School; for example, the design and implementation of standardised examinations.

Our Honesty and Reliability

Other vital elements of our interrelationship are that we do seem to have identified each other as people who were honest and reliable. These conceptions of each other's trustworthiness were

grounded in the types of behaviour we had witnessed during our experiences together. Carlos provided an example of such behaviours in the following extract.

> I know that they are honest. They are the people you're always going to be with you. I know that once they get involved with you, with the project, they are going to be there, they are going to participate until they finish it. And you can't find that in other people. (Carlos/12/02/05)

Apart from honesty, Jorge also referred to other aspects regarding why he felt he could rely on each of the other informants.

> I knew they were bright people with brilliant ideas and so I liked working with them because I knew that they would work and they would pull you to work at the same pace. (Jorge/14/06/03)

Here Jorge appears to be referring to a sense of trust that emerged from the recognition of each other's worth that I am labelling *competence*. This *competence* that we perceived in each other was not only based on our identification of each other "as bright people with brilliant ideas", but also, as Jorge implies here, echoing the previous extract, that it was further influenced by our perceptions that we were all equally reliable. That is, Jorge was not only certain that we would work hard, but also that we had the *competence* to sustain one another's involvement in the changes. Therefore, it would appear that we evaluated each other as trustworthy colleagues based on our observations of each other's behaviour while engaging in what Wenger (1998, p. 78) refers to as "joint enterprises" during the change process.

Our Commitment

Furthermore, we recognized and valued each other's sense of commitment. In particular, we recognized in each other a constant "task commitment" (Kelly & Spoor, 2005, p. 4) to our professional growth on the one hand, and the effective implementation of the institutional changes that we designed and implemented together on the other. Our sense of commitment to the change projects never seemed to waver, even when our goals appeared to be difficult to achieve and when we were faced with obstacles, such as lack of time allotted to work on the projects and the absence of adequate funding to finance them. We were 'happy' to participate because we wanted change and were convinced that it would produce positive outcomes. In addition, we realized that we were working with people who were equally committed because they shared this same belief in, and desire for, change. This was noted by Veronica in the following extract.

> If they also believe in what you believe, you'll be working with people who are really also committed. They really want to change. They are the ones that work hard, because sometimes you don't get extra money. The higher authorities, they don't even **meet** you to say thank you. So it's something that you have to believe in and you have to have the right people, the people who also believe in what you believe. I mean to be successful comes from the people involved who are committed to being successful themselves. (Veronica/02/03/05 [bold is informant's emphasis])

In short, we identified each other as hardworking, trustworthy and committed teachers who believed in change and who were also intrinsically motivated by a shared set of values that we all respected.

Recognition of Professional Self by Others

At the second level of recognition referred to by Honneth (1995a; 1995b), teachers need to feel recognised as such by others (Heikkinen, 2003). If teachers are successful at this level, they may achieve self-respect (Honneth, 1995a; 1995b). "Self-respect grows out of the responsibility which the individual gains in the struggle for recognition at the level of the Civil Society" (Huttunen & Heikkinen, 2002, p. 5).

According to Heikkinen (2003, p. 1), in education, a teaching qualification "is the most official authorisation to work as a teacher, the epitome of the second-level recognition of a person as an autonomous professional". In Mexico, educational authorities are now beginning to encourage teachers to sit examinations in order to acquire a teaching qualification. However, during the time frame of this inquiry (1989-2003) there was no such qualification. In fact, our postgraduate TEFL programme was one of the first for obtaining teaching qualifications in the country. To gain respect as a professional in Mexico, teachers needed only to have an advanced degree in their field. Thus, at the beginning of the 1990s when my Mexican colleagues were given the opportunity to study for a postgraduate TEFL diploma and so gain first degree status, they were highly motivated to participate as it meant that not only would they learn more and enhance their own self-respect as teachers, but by this means they could become recognized by others as a teacher in their context.

Professional Self-Esteem

Professional self-esteem is the third and highest level of recognition (Heikkinen, 2003; Honneth, 1995b; Huttunen & Heikkinen, 2002). Success at this level is based principally on others; that is, on your particular "value community" (Heikkinen, 2003, p. 4) e.g. acknowledgement of your abilities and accomplishments at work (Honneth, 1995b).

> Self-esteem is built through the respect one receives for one's work. Here it is essential that one is recognised for some work through which one expresses oneself… Self-esteem means that one sees one's work being acknowledged and recognised… one really becomes recognised as a person who has something to give to the community. (Huttunen & Heikkinen, 2002, p. 5)

In our context, prior to the 1990s we were very much treated as "ugly ducklings" (Aide/01/04/04)

by the members of our university context, that is, "as nobodies who had no research interest and no academic interest" (Aide/01/04/04). It would appear therefore, that when some of my informants were singled out and offered grants to study an MSc in TEFL by distance in 1994, they perceived this as proof that there were people who believed in their ability to succeed. For example, as María remembered,

> What most motivated me was my self-esteem because I was officially invited by the British Council. Well, that [invitation] made me want to study. Because I said, 'well if The British Council feels that I can do it, I can do it'. So I applied for the Masters and I was accepted. (María/13/10/03)

This extract affords a clear example of how teachers' beliefs about their competencies may be influenced by *their* perception of the opinions of 'significant others'. In addition, it appears to be an example that yet again corroborates Bandura's (2001) view that efficacy beliefs may influence the choices we make. The fact that an institution such as The British Council, that we all respected, had taken interest in, and had contacted María, was a motivating force for her to enroll in postgraduate studies. More specifically, María seems to have interpreted the British Council's 'invitation' as *their* recognition of the fact that she was capable of obtaining an MSc. These beliefs not only motivated Maria in her receptivity to continue studying, but also appear to have influenced her own evaluation of her professional self.

Another factor that was emphatically reiterated in the data was the way in which my colleagues' self-confidence as teachers also grew because they could now achieve the status, standing and recognition that they had always desired. Firstly, within our context, by having obtained further degrees, they were now also officially awarded first degree status and so became eligible for full-time,

tenured teaching positions, giving them complete job security.

> I was **happy** because, well, as I say, it helped me to get degree status. In other words, we could say that it was a radical change because I had been working as a teacher employed by the hour. So on finishing the TEFL diploma I could get degree status and then I could put in for a full-time position. (Rosario/05/12/03 [bold is informant's emphasis])

As Rosario remembered, studying a further degree and subsequently achieving first degree status made her "happy" because she now achieved access to significantly greater financial security and secured a highly coveted full-time tenured position. This situation appears to corroborate Hargreaves' (1998) view that "When our status increases, we feel happiness, satisfaction and contentment along with pride" (p. 326). In other words, as a full-time position in our context meant honour, prestige, and the right to be involved in the academic decision-taking process, it would appear that her sense of professional self-esteem was enhanced by this achievement. Professional self-esteem is regarded by many as the highest level of recognition that may be achieved. This recognition, therefore, helps us to understand why Rosario emphasised so strongly that she felt "happy". For her, obtaining a full-time position symbolised that her ability and accomplishments had been fully recognised by her employers, the University authorities who constituted her particular "value community". In fact, my colleagues' ambition to gain full-time tenured positions seems to have been another of the motivating forces that initially encouraged several of my informants to study first for the TEFL postgraduate diploma and then for an MSc in TEFL. For example, María commented that the only possibility that she had of gaining a full-time position was by having a master's degree.

Secondly, our status and standing improved through the recognition we gained both within the University itself and among similar institutions elsewhere. The other schools on our campus now seemed to respect us more, thanks not only to our evident academic achievements, but also to the changes we had effected, including the relationships that we had developed with the educational world outside our immediate context. Even more impressively, other educational institutions in the country also began to recognise our institution as a 'good' School. Rosario mentioned the following:

> The School began to have a name in the Republic. So different states in the Republic began to call for people, because they said, 'well, they have a solid education. It is a School that has a name'. And so we can now find our graduates in the entire Republic. (Rosario/15/10/03)

Due to this recognition, both we and graduates of our courses began to receive invitations to participate in programmes run by other institutions and to advise them on their proposed curricular changes. Consequently, at the present time, we often find ourselves coming across our ex-students and peers to whom we have given consultancy services when we attended conferences at other institutions in many other parts of Mexico. Thus, it would appear, as Raphael mentioned, that "working at the University of Veracruz and being involved in these projects has given us a lot of **prestige**" (Raphael/14/06/03[bold is informant's emphasis]). Raphael's emphasis of the word 'prestige' implies the importance we had placed on being reified as professionals. In contrast to the pre-1990s, we no longer felt completely isolated within our context, but rather felt we had now achieved wide recognition. This new turn of events obviously contributed to the strengthening and transformation of our personal construal of our professional identities. My findings, therefore, seem to concur with Honneth (1995b), Huttunen

& Heikkinen (2002) and Heikkinen (2003) that professional self-esteem is based principally on the acknowledgement of your abilities and your accomplishments at work by "significant others".

Recognition of our Social Identity

I would add a fourth level to Honneth (1995a; 1995b) and Heikkinen's (2003) proposed levels of recognition that needs to be focused upon: namely, the recognition of our social identity. Our social identity is enhanced by our social integration. That is, our personal internal recognition that we belong to a group with whom we can identify and be identified.

Regarding my informants and I, we recognized each other as members of a group with whom we had not only grown both on a personal and professional level and with whom we had collectively shared experiences of change, but also as a group by means of which we had managed to achieve so many of the changes in our educational institution. This was important, because as María noted:

> The School has grown a lot. I believe that it is because we have worked not individually, but as a group. It's a personal satisfaction, but it's also satisfying that we have worked together as a group … If we hadn't worked together as a group, well, nothing would have been accomplished. Even if we had had all the support from the university it wouldn't have been worth anything. (María/14/07/03)

In sum, our collective pride, based on the development of our confidence, respect and esteem both in ourselves and in the other members, seems to be a highly relevant aspect of the emotionality that bonded us together. This emotionality, to a large extent, was not only dependent on our accomplishments but, perhaps more importantly, on the recognition these afforded from the 'significant others' in our community. This is

supported by Honneth (1995b), who claims that an individual

> …can only learn self-confidence and self-respect from the perspective of the approving reactions of partners to interaction, their practical ego is dependent on intersubjective relationships in which it will be able to experience recognition … these relationships establish the moral infrastructure of a social life-world in which individuals can both acquire and preserve their integrity as human beings. (p. 253)

In our case, the most significant 'others' with whom we had "intersubjective relationships" that enabled us "to experience recognition" (Honneth, 1995b, p. 253) and so develop an increased sense of self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem were the other members of our small culture with whom we identified and still to this day identify.

Conclusion

While I would not presume to generalize my findings, as *each* educational context will necessarily have some idiosyncratic dynamically interacting characteristics and thus *context-specific* 'change frames'[2]; what I can now confidently confirm is that my findings seem to point to the need for change-oriented policymakers, managers and leaders to thoroughly review *their* current practices in order to look at the nature of change, as well as teachers' practices in a less technicist (Schön, 1983, 1987; Kemmis, n.d.) and managerially oriented way. In particular, my findings seem to concur with Tsui's (2007) conclusions that an EFL teacher's identity formation is "highly complex relational as well as experiential, reificative as well as participative, and individual as well as social (p. 678).

This is strongly influenced by a fundamental need to be recognized as a professional. "Recognition

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2   By 'change frames' I am referring to the "multiple foci or lens for understanding the dynamic and interrelated nature of the change process" (Hoban, 2002, p. 35).

is an essential element in the formation of a person's identity" and as such "it could even be called a vital human need" (Heikkinen, 2003, p. 1). However, this "fundamental struggle for recognition…is not an easy challenge" (Heikkinen (2003, p. 1). In addition, Honneth (1995b) suggests that in education the basic first level of recognition (recognition of self by significant others) is often ignored, whereas the second and third levels of recognition (recognition of professional self by others and professional self-esteem) are more high-ranking. Therefore, Heikkinen (2003) points out the need to focus more on the basic level of recognition, especially when it is an element that can influence a teacher's work. However, I would also like to add to this by pointing out that although there is a wealth of research that has focused on the importance of understanding teachers' professional identities, there still seems to be a lack of inquiry regarding the specific personal and professional factors, such as the all important role of recognition that may influence the formation and transformation of our identities. Therefore, a lot more attention needs to be paid to exploring these factors and the possible impact that they may have on both teachers' practices, as well as on teachers' responses to change in different contexts of educational change. This could then lead to further research regarding what educational authorities could do to enable and support the necessary processes involved in the formation and positive transformation of teachers' professional identities which may hopefully, in turn, motivate our educational authorities to create at least some of the conditions necessary for our personal and professional well-being as teachers. These conditions are essential to enable us not only to transform our sense of professional identity and become more efficient in our daily practices, but also to become more positive in our responses to the many change initiatives that are nowadays a frequent occurrence in our professional lives in the field of education.

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