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Motivating factors in online language teacher education in southern Argentina

Abstract

Online teacher education is of growing interest and so is the study of motivation as a key factor in technology-mediated learning environments. This study is based on a pre-service language teacher education programme in Patagonia, a southern Argentinian region with limited face-to-face training offers, limited Internet access and a large number of unqualified teachers. Our goal is to broaden the understanding of online teacher education programmes at undergraduate level in contexts where most trainees are practicing teachers and where online education is the only possibility for holding a teaching qualification. We focused on the motivating factors that led 71 trainees to enroll and to remain in this online teacher training course. Through a mixed methods approach, the trainees completed an online survey (n=71) and participated in a follow-up interview (n=24). Results showed that obtaining a teaching degree, autonomy, and individual activities were key factors in initial and sustaining motivation. Participants' experiences challenged collaborative learning in an online environment.

Keywords: computer-mediated communication; collaborative learning; distance education.

1. **Introduction**

As Simpson (2012, p. 1) puts is, "[o]nline and distance education is very likely the fastest growing area of education in the world today, in both the developed and developing worlds." In language education, White and Ding (2009)observe that the occurrence of substantial developments in language teaching is the product of technological advances on access and

configuration of language learning opportunities (see Dudeney, Hockly, &Pegrum, 2013; Walker & White, 2013).Online courses defined as "web-facilitated, hybrid, or totally virtual" courses (Blake, 2011, p. 19) may be placed along a cline from pure f2f (face-to-face) to non f2f-delivery and are found in language learning and language teacher education. Theystimulate students to increase exposure and engagement but this requires maintaining their motivation (Sansone et al., 2011).

Online teacher education programmes are encouraged by the growth of Web 2.0 applications (see Brown, 2010; Hartnett, St. George & Dron, 2011). In such programmes, (future) teachers can experience the integration of ICT in their classrooms by developing new skills under the light of their beliefs and knowledge of teaching and technology (see Chai & Lim, 2011; Horzum, 2013; Kim et al., 2013; Mouza et al., 2014; Starkey, 2011).

Our investigation centred on an online initial English language teacher education programme in southern Argentina. In this vast region, different tertiary institutions and universities offer around nine f2f language teacher education courses[1]. However there is only one online English language teacher education programme. This opportunity emerged as a response to unqualified practicing teachers in need of a teaching degree and people interested in pursuing English language teaching (ELT) who could not afford to move to cities where f2f courses were located.

We, the two authors of this study and tutors at this online programme, became interested in investigating trainees' motivating factors to enroll and remain in it. From a dynamic and processual view of motivation (Ushioda, 2009), we sought to understand initial motivation and sustaining motivation. To this effect, we examined motivating factors such as autonomy, f2f and distance collaborative learning, future selves, extrinsic and instrumental drives, trainees' perception of their performance, and course materials, online platform, and course status. Data were collected over the 2013 academic year and our research instruments were an online survey and a follow-up interview through Skype.

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[1] Source: http://www.faapi.org.ar/informacion/formacion-profesional/

We consider that our study is significant at a local level and a wider level. To our knowledge, studies on motivation in language teacher education in Argentina have a tendency to examine an f2f delivery mode (see Anglada & Banegas, 2013). Our study is the first attempt to study motivation in online teacher education through quantitative and qualitative data. At a wider level, we believe that our findings may contribute to understanding the interrelationships between motivation, autonomy, and online education without positioning collaborative learning as an inherent benefit.

2. Literature review

Motivation and language education is an inescapable relationship captured in different paradigms (see Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Pigott, 2012; Ushioda, 2011, 2012) and, consequently, research reports based on diverse settings (see Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009; Murray, Gao & Lamb, 2011; Ushioda, 2013a). While the literature is rich on language learner motivation, studies on teacher motivation and motivation in language teacher education (for example see Hiver, 2013; Kumazawa, 2013), whatever the delivery mode, are needed.

The literature offers substantial contributions in the area of online learning and teacher education in relation to tools such as blogs (Cakir, 2013; Fisher & Kim, 2013), and e-assessment (Green et al., 2010; Hung, 2012). The interdependence between motivation and technology in online teacher education has also been the object of contributions which compare f2f and online teacher education (see Eshet, Grinautski & Peled, 2012; Hartnett, St. George & Dron, 2011; Kirtman, 2009; Stockwell, 2013). Drawing on quantitative studies with limited data and factors, these authors agree that collaborative learning and interaction are motivating factors in both f2f and online modes. They also indicate that intrinsic as well as extrinsic types of motivation coexist in both modes. However, while the f2f mode is more motivating in terms of instant feedback and support, the online mode is motivating in terms of autonomy, individual forms of learning, and online interaction.

According to the literature, online teacher education is driven by interrelated motivating factors such as interaction with tutors and students through different webtools, accessibility, and autonomy. Below, we address these factors in detail.

Interaction and its impact on motivation has been the object of mixed-method (Murphy et al., 2011) and qualitative (Xiao, 2012) studies, reviews (Baran, Correia & Thompson, 2011) and reflective accounts (Legg & Knox, 2012). One recurrent aspect in these contributions is tutors' motivating characteristics and roles. They are seen as motivators, facilitators and empowerers, and personal characteristics such as being committed, approachable, empathetic, accepting, humble, and egalitarian appear as motivating (Xiao, 2012). In this tutor-student interaction, personalised feedback (Nunan, 2012) even when it is not immediate is also seen as motivating.

As regards interaction and online tools, a conference on motivation and autonomy in ELT held in Argentina (see Anglada & Banegas, 2012) discussed the use of Web 2.0 tools such as blogs and virtual classrooms (Braun, Cheme Arriaga, & Monserrat, 2012; Cardozo & Orta González, 2012; Castro & Leceta, 2012; also Bonadeo, 2013), Facebook closed groups (Massi et al., 2012) as means to motivate trainees in f2f language teacher education programmes. As DelliCarpini (2012p, 15) puts it, "[t]eacher education programs are not immune to the call for the integration of technology into curriculum and many have developed coursework that addresses this issue". However, Stockwell (2013) warns that technology does not always result in automatic motivation increases as it depends on skills and availability.

Technology availability is linked to accessibility. Authors agree that accessibility is the main motivating characteristic because it is envisaged as an opportunity for autonomy and individual learning styles. Accessibility in time and place allows students, some of whom are practicing teachers, to study autonomously and remain employed and seek upward mobility (Young & Lewis, 2008). Access in time is related to the asynchronicity of online courses. Based on her implementation and investigation of a short online course for trainees, Gakonga (2012) concluded that asynchronous learning gives trainees time to organise, prepare, and deliver their

answers, and ask questions. Yet, time is assessed also as a drawback since online education can become time consuming (Nunan, 2012) and "[l]earners are faced with (…) greater demands for self-organization" (Charlier, 2011, p. 237). Gabriel (2004) investigated the impact of collaborative learning and the social construction of knowledge among eight participating students and two instructors through a web-based Master in Education programme. While participants reported learning more quickly from and with others, they stressed that the programme was time consuming as they needed to check forum posts for participation and new materials continually.

Simpson (2012) states that accessibility is not only physical but also psychological and social. Psychological accessibility is linked to isolation as it could help reduce anxiety (Simpson, 2012). According to Gakonga (2012), less confident learners may contribute without fear of losing face and emailing tutors seems less intimidating than asking a question face to face. However, Nunan (2012) views isolation as a threat. Similar concerns are raised in O'Bannon, Lubke and Britt (2013). Their study involved 78 pre-service teachers who were enrolled in a core technology course focused on wiki technology. The participants reported comfort with the software and valued how wiki promoted collaboration. However, their poor participation responded to the fact that they did not know their peers and wished there had been a stronger f2f element in the course.

As a response to isolation and framed in social accessibility, wider communities of practice can be developed through web tools to interact with international students and top professionals (Nunan, 2012). Interactive accessibility may be achieved through online forums. Nevertheless, the quality of interaction depends on technological development and tutors' moderating skills (for tutoring at a distance see Bertin & Narcy-Combes, 2012). Pawan et al. (2003) indicate that some online asynchronous forum participation (see Loncar, Barrett & Liu, 2014) in in-service teacher education programmes is like serial monologues, that is, "discussions in which participants share past teaching experiences and freely express their opinions with minimal effort made to connect to the contributions of others" (p. 119). These authors examined online

discussions from three online graduate-level language teacher education courses from a U.S. university and found that most participants illustrated serial monologues. They would present their positions on a given topic but there would be no inquiry or discussions following up on the posts made. In a study with online learners of Spanish, Comas-Quinn, de los Arcos and Mardomingo (2012, p. 141) found that tutors' initiated forums were "made redundant by the use of other channels of communication between tutors and the students in their group."

In a thorough analysis of issues emerging in ELT training, Hall and Knox (2009) explain that in distance programmes even the trainers are located in different settings among themselves, the students, and the institution, and both students and tutors may suffer from isolation. The authors gathered data from 24 teachers at 26 providing institutions from all over the world. According to the survey, the reputation and status of distance programmes and their distinctive feature of accessibility/autonomy is still questioned even by distance educators themselves with regards to other programmes. More recently, such a concern is challenged. England (2012, p 3) asserts that "the content of online TESOL is generally the same as is the quality of instruction in face-to-face programmes." In a comparative study of distance and f2f courses, Hansson and Wennö (2005) conclude that quality and outcomes were similar and that time availability and energy rather than distance are determinants of success or failure.

Other motivating factors may derive from cost-effectiveness (Jung, 2005), access to learning materials (Nunan, 2012), collaborative work and interaction (Arnold &Ducate, 2006), digital experience (Gialamas, Nikolopoulou & Koutromanos, 2013), mastery of online tools (DelliCarpini, 2012; but see Hung, 2012), awareness of writing skills development (Doering & Beach, 2002; England, 2012), and situated learning (Garton & Edge, 2012) as trainees can contest ideas discussed in the course in the students' own professional contexts and practices (Green et al., 2010; Nunan, 2012).

Although the contributions above provide rich insights, many of them are quantitative in nature, based on collaborative learning, or framed in the dichotomy of intrinsic/extrinsic

motivation. There is still lack of understanding of what motivates people to enroll in an online language teacher education programme, and what maintains their motivation and how autonomy, intrinsic, extrinsic, and goal oriented factors play a role also in dialogue with personal and interpersonal learning styles. We approach this niche as teacher-researchers wishing to integrate, as Ushioda (2013b) calls for, our teaching and research aims.

In this study we adhere to Ushioda's (2009, 2012) call for a holistic approach to motivation research, and perspectives which integrate possible selves and future self-guides as conceptualised in Dörnyei (2009) and whole persons, rather than mere professionals, in their context.

3. Context

We decided to investigate one programme in particular for the following reasons: (1) we were both trainers/tutors at this pre-service language teacher education programme and therefore we had access granted to official records and trainees, (2) it was geographically located in a region with limited face-to-face training opportunities, basic Internet access, and a high proportion of unqualified ELT teachers (Gough, 2007; JCD, 2013), (3) it was the first completely distance experience of its kind in such a region and one of the first in Argentina. We should clarify that this research interest emerged from our own reflective practices to maintain trainee motivation online and to share local initiatives with an international audience.

Instituto de Formación Docente Continua *Lenguas Vivas* (Lenguas Vivas, Institute of Ongoing Teacher Development), henceforth LV, is a private-run institution devoted toEnglish language teacher education. In 2007, LV decided to explore distance teacher education by offering two programmes: (1) a three-year teaching programme for ELT in primary education, and (2) a four-year teaching programme for ELT in secondary education. Due to changes in the nature and implementation of teacher education in Argentina, in 2010 there started one new

programme which aimed at preparing teachers from kindergarten to secondary and adult education.

According to the institution's records, the new 2010 cohort and programme started with 77 trainees and by 2013, there were 152 new trainees registered; however, between 2010 and 2013, 144 dropped out. Simpson (2012, p.6) warns that "a fundamental weakness" of distance education is its dropout rate. He moves on to assert that dropout rates are difficult to discover or estimate because institutions do not wish to publicise them as these may affect their reputation. However, LV granted us access to their records. At the time of writing this report, there were 171 students enrolled. In our experience as tutors, informal e-meetings with colleagues previous to this study, and emails from trainees who had decided to drop out, drop-out rates were linked to their inability to pay course fees and cope with course demands and their teaching posts. In 2013, the monthly fee was AR\$ 1,300 (USD 130). In a country with growing inflation and where a teacher's salary is on average USD 650, working and supporting a family generate conflicts with obtaining a teaching degree to secure a teaching post. Course demands are described below.

The participants in this study belonged to the 2010 cohort and consecutive cohorts. The 2010 programme consisted of 29 subjects or modules distributed over four years (Table 1). Some of these subjects were eight months (two terms) long, while others were four months (one term) long.

Year 1		Year 2		Year 3		Year 4	
Term 1	Term 2	Term 1	Term 2	Term 1	Term 2	Term 1	Term 2
Education Sciences I	General Psychology	Education Sciences II	ELT Didactics I	Education Management	ELT Didactics II	ELT Didactics III	
Introduction to English Language	English Language I	English Language II		English Language III		English Language IV	
Descriptive Grammar	General Didactics	Phonetics & Phonology II	Discourse Analysis	English for Specific Purposes	Child Psychology	Teenage Psychology	Literature for teenagers
English Literature I	Phonetics & Phonology I	English Literature II	English Literature III	Pronunciation	Literature for Children	Practicum	
-	-	-	Teaching Spanish as a Foreign Language	-	Applied Linguistics	-	-

Table 1. ELT programme at LV

All subjects are entirely delivered online through the use of a learning management system (LMS). The LMS hosts all the teaching and learning materials for each subject each trainee is enrolled in. Trainees can download the materials (e.g. Word documents, PDF files, PowerPoint presentation, YouTube videos, audio files, mid-term exams) and upload their assignments, both oral and written (each subject usually includes four assignments per month).Tutors, in turn, can upload their personalised feedback and grades. Such a description illustrates a static and primitive use of ICT since, citing Cakir (2013, p. 24), "teachers delivered the instructional content and material to students via the Internet, students downloaded and studied the tasks that were assigned to them," without interaction. To reduce this gap, there are forums (between one and three per subject per month) to engage in discussions on a topic suggested by each tutor.

Although we saw our LMS as "intentionally designed to support and accommodate elearning" (Clarke, 2013, p. 123), lack of engagement, demotivation, and group interaction became a concern in our practices. Thus, in 2013, some tutors started to explore Web 2.0 tools off the LMS in order to encourage content interactivity, participation, collaboration (Arnold & Ducate, 2006), and above all, the social construction of knowledge by making trainees publishers (Brown, 2010; Cakir, 2013) and experience the tools they may incorporate in their own teaching practices (Doering & Beach, 2002; Starkey, 2011). To this effect, tutor practices incorporated applications to produce threads with comments (Voicethread), synchronous interaction (Skype), and platforms such as EduGlogster.

Regarding formal assessment, trainees need to submit online and pass 75% of their mandatory assignments (usually around 10 and 14), and pass two mid-term online exams per subject. When they comply with these three requirements, they are in a position to take final exams. In relation to assessment, Nunan (2012) observes that one challenge is assessment security and how to ensure that the exam submitted is actually completed by the students. In this course final exams are proctored and take place at different venues so that trainees can find the

closest from where they live. LV academic and administrative staff play the role of invigilators during proctored final exams. In relation to the scheduling of final exams (February, July, and December), new official requirements later forced distance education institutions to offer a f2f seminar twice a year at different venues.

In view of our literature review and context we sought to explore the following research questions:

a. What motivates trainees to enroll on an online teacher education course?

b. What aspects of the course do they engage most with?

c. What factors sustain their motivation?

4. Methodology

We employed mixed methods as we collected both quantitative and qualitative data and integrated them in our discussion of results (Dörnyei, 2007) in order to provide a deeper analysis. Quantitative data were obtained through an online survey and qualitative data emerged from a follow-up interview with participants.

We started quantitative data collection by designing a Spanish online survey. The link to the survey was posted on the LMS in June, 2013 together with a message about our research aims. We also distributed the link and the message among our colleagues so that they could also encourage trainees to participate in the survey.

The survey consisted of three main sections (A, B, and C) featuring open and closed-ended question items and open-ended questions (see Dörnyei, 2003). The questions and items in sections A and B were newly designed and they responded to the particular characteristics of our course. For the items in Section C we first reviewed the literature and then we designed

them. Although some items were based on the literature, they were designed to match our context.

Section A comprised general questions about the trainees' background: age, gender, number of subjects passed at the moment of the survey, number of subjects taken and dropped out, and access to a computer and online connection. One flaw we both later discovered was the exclusion of city of residence. This may have been caused by our usual disregard of trainees' geographical locations.

Section B was called 'Learning online' and it consisted of four questions. We framed these questions as factor analysis because we wished to explore possible relationships between motivation, time devoted to studying, and online skills. Trainees were asked about the number of weekly hours spent on activities such as 'completing assignments' or 'interacting with their tutors'. Through a Likert scale, they were also asked to describe how regularly they used LMS tools (e.g. forums) or off-site tools (e.g. Voicethread). Based on their responses but framed as open-ended questions, they had to select which tools they preferred the most and the least and support their choices.

Last, Section C consisted of 40 items (e.g. 'Studying online allows me to study from and with others') trainees had to respond to using a four-point Likert scale: 'totally identified, 'partially identified, 'little identified', and 'not at all identified'. These items were also part of our factor analysis as we first produced the items jointly. To ensure reliability, each of us produced our own inductive item categorisation and then we compared our categories. When we revisited the survey for a common categorisation of items, we disregarded items 24, 29, 31, and 36 given their evaluative and loaded nature. We grouped the remaining 36 items as follows (Table 2):

Category	Items
Autonomy	1, 10, 11, 22, 30, 35
Course materials	27, 34
Course status	12, 26, 37
Extrinsic/instrumental/goal-oriented motivation	15, 23, 25, 28
Future selves	14, 18, 20, 21, 32
Learning f2f with others	2, 9, 33
Learning online with others	8, 13, 16, 17, 38
Student performance	5, 6, 7, 19, 40
Technical issues	3, 4, 39

Table 2.Item categorisation.

In the *autonomy* category we grouped those items about working independently and managing one's own time. For *course materials* we focused on reading and audiovisual input as it was what the course mostly featured, and *course status* referred to whether the course was perceived as easy, and whether trainers' performance was motivating. *Instrumental motivation* particularly focused on participants' present practices and the extent to which obtaining a teaching degree was their main drive given the fact that most participants already worked as teachers. By *future selves* we understood participants' ideal identities, imagined trajectories, and career prospects, but also their feared selves as teachers without a degree. The following categories, *learning face-to-face with others* and *learning online with others* sought to assess the social aspect of learning and the impact of physical distance/absence. *Student performance* referred to participants' perceptions of their own academic development and biography. Last, *technical issues* condensed the impact of personal skills and technical problems on their motivation to study this online course.

For analysis purposes in relation to impact of each item in Section C, we condensed those four Likert-scale points into two points ('totally identified' and 'partially identified') adding the percentages of responses. In addition, we converted those negative items such as 'Studying

alone is demotivating' into positive to measure the impact of, in this case, autonomy (see Table 7, items with a + sign mean that they were negative originally). Thus, percentages originally given as identified with the statement were discarded and instead we employed those responses which signalled disagreement with the original item. Conversion of negative items helped us improve our understanding of impact of our categories through a constructive view as tutors.

Follow-up semi-structured individual interviews took place between August and September 2013. These were carried out by one of the authors and tutor of Specific Didactics IV. Due to the multiplicity of participants' settings and availability, interviews were carried out through a Skype call, Skype chat, and Facebook chat. The aim of this online interview was to explore the survey results further and understand participants' motivation to enroll on this online course. One author interviewed 24 participants and transcribed the dialogues. To ensure reliability, both authors served as inter-raters and produced individual thematic analysis of the qualitative data (Attride-Stirling, 2001) through selective coding, i.e., a priori qualitative coding. Our coding made reference to motivation in online teacher education as addressed through the survey. Although we did not measure our percentage agreement, we noted that we had discrepancies around categories related to collaborative learning and extrinsic motivation. Agreement was solved by discussing our different analyses and selecting one of our previously assigned categories or a new category. A posteriori emerging categories not exclusively related to our research aims were shared with the institution administrators with the aim of promoting in-house evaluation.

5. Results

In this section we show the results of the survey and the interviews. The survey was completed by 71 trainees out of the 171 enrolled at the moment of conducting our research. This means that the response rate was 41.52%. Through the survey we asked participants to express their interest in the follow-up interview and 42 out of those 71 accepted to take part in it; however, only 24 finally agreed on a time to be interviewed.

5.1. Survey results

In terms of trainees' background information such as age, 45% of them were between 31 and 40 years old, and 38% between 21 and 30. It should be added that 15% of the respondents were between 41 and 50+ years old. As for gender, 67 respondents were female and 4 were male. This female majority is reflective of the programme population as a whole. According to institutional records, out of 171 students enrolled in 2013, only 15% were male.

We also noted that 61% of participants were in their third or fourth year of the programme. This feature is important as it revealed that more than half of the answers came from trainees who had managed to stay in the programme. The question about the number of subjects passed at the moment of the survey offered an ample range from 0 to 29 subjects. In relation to the number of subjects taken and dropped out, results indicated that 48 participants (69.5%) had never dropped out, 15 participants had dropped out between one and two subjects, and six participants, between three and five subjects.

With regard to participants' access to a computer and Internet, 80% of them indicated that they had their own computer, and the rest explained that they had access to one but it was shared with others. Internet access revealed heterogeneous responses: 75% through Wi-Fi at home, 16% through a landline, 7% through a portable modem, and 1% from their workplace.

The second section of the survey consisted of questions about time spent on different course activities. Table 3 shows the number of hours and participant percentage on each activity.

% activ. Time	Navigating the campus	Reading core materials	Completing assignments	Looking for extra materials	Communicating with tutors	Communicating with e-mates
0 -1h	14	1	1	7	55	48
2- 4h	41	14	9	36	36	25
5 - 7h	19	26	32	22	7	13
8 - 10h	10	22	30	19	0	7

11 - 13h	4	10	6	10	1	1
14 - 16h	4	12	12	4	0	4
17 - 20h	3	6	4	0	0	1
20+	4	9	6	1	0	0

Table 3.Time devoted to course activities.

Question 12 asked participants to state the frequency with which they made use of different resources (Table 4):

% Frequency Resource	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Often	Always
Forums	0	6	14	13	28	**39**
Websites	0	3	1	22	23	**51**
Voicethread	62	20	3	7	3	4
Eduglogster	81	14	1	3	0	0
Skype	43	35	13	3	6	0
YouTube	12	13	23	26	16	10
Chat	33	23	16	10	6	12
Repository	32	30	22	10	6	0
Digital reading material	0	6	7	19	28	**41**
Printed reading material	3	12	14	22	16	**33**
Other tools	17	22	22	17	9	13

Table 4. Use of course tools and resources.

As regards participants' most preferred tools, some participants only chose one tool while others selected three or four. Table 5 shows favourite tools and the most used reasons for such preferences.

Most preferred tool	Percentage of responses	Main reasons
Printed reading material	28.98	"Easier to make notes, highlight, and read from"
YouTube	20.28	"Audiovisual combination and engaging materials"
Digital reading materials (e.g. pdf articles)	18.84	"Easier to carry, immediate access through appropriate devices"
Websites	15.94	"Variety and easy access"
Skype	7.24	"Shortens distances between people and to practise listening and speaking"
Forums	5.79	"Useful for clarifying doubts and build one's ideas upon others"
Chat	4.34	"Makes you feel less lonely; immediate solutions.
Voicethread	2.89	Useful to listen to others' ideas"
Eduglogster	1.44	(no reasons given)
Other tools: audiobooks, Facebook, wikis, Google Docs, blogs, apps.	1.44	"Good for promoting autonomous and collaborative learning"

Table 5. Most preferred tools.

Participants also shared their least preferred tools (Table 6). In general terms most participants chose one. Unlike above, in several cases the participants did not provide a reason for their least preferred tool:

Least preferred tool	Percentage of responses	Main reasons
None of them	40.57	"All of them are useful"
Skype	11.59	"No time for synchronous actions; poor Internet service"
Chat	10.14	"Lack of understanding; no context"
Digital reading materials	10.14	"Hard to read from the screen all the time"
Forums	7.24	"Unrelated contributions; no real exchange of ideas; no feedback from tutors; visually unattractive"
Printed reading materials	7.24	"More comfortable to read from the screen.
Eduglogster	2.89	"Lack of skills to use it"
Repository	2.89	"Outdated books"
YouTube	2.89	"Poor Internet service"
All of them	2.89	"No time"

Table 6. Least preferred tools.

With reference to the 36 items, Table 7 shows the percentages of people totally and partially identified, i.e. the first two points in the Likert-scale, and the overall impact of that category. Overall impact was calculated following central tendency in the data through the

mean. We added the percentages under a given category and achieved a mean *(M)* by dividing

the total sum by the number of items in each category (see Brown, 1988).

Item #	Category & items	% totally identified	% partially identified	Overall impact(*M*)
	Autonomy			**87.66**
1	+ Studying alone is motivating.	62	25	
10	Deadlines help me organise my studies.	49	37	
11	I like deciding about my pace of studying.	69	20	
22	+ Deadlines help me organise my studies.	79	8	
30	I wish I could devote more time.	44	44	
35	I like this course because I can manage my time.	69	20	
	Course materials			**79.5**
27	I like the videos in the materials	59	27	
34	I like having extra reading materials	34	39	
	Course status			**85**
12	+ I do this course because it's demanding	70	20	
26	+ Tutors' level is encouraging	62	23	
37	I like the links among subjects/modules	56	24	
	Extrinsic/instrumental/goal-oriented motivation			**21.75**
15	I teach through the internet	4	3	
23	I'm not interested in learning, I just want the degree to keep my job	0	1	
25	I want to get a better job	31	34	
28	I only do this course because I want the degree	3	11	
	Future selves			**66.4**
14	I'd love to teach through the internet	42	23	
18	Studying online enhances my independence as a future professional	49	35	
20	I do this course because I don't want to be seen like I teach English and don't know.	10	14	
21	Studying online improves my future career.	30	34	
32	My desire to get better inspires me.	72	23	
	Learning f2f with others			**27.33**
2	Lack of f2f lessons doesn't help me progress.	1	11	
9	Being unable to ask orally affects me.	17	25	
33	Lack of f2f contact with peers is a drawback.	14	14	
	Learning online with others			**66**
8	I like emailing my queries to tutors and peers.	41	35	
13	I like interacting in the forums.	28	30	
16	Through this course I can develop my collaborative work skills.	24	35	
17	I like working with my peers online.	21	39	
38	The course allows me to learn from and with others.	45	32	
	Student performance			**49.66**
5	Tutors' feedback is encouraging.	46	31	
6	My English level affects my interest in studying.	7	4	
7	+ My assignment results encourage me to go on.	39	32	
19	Studying online is enhancing my cognitive skills.	31	38	
40	I can improve my English through this learning mode.	39	31	
	Technical issues			**16**
3	My personal technical issues don't allow me to study.	4	14	

4	Institutional technical issues don't allow me to study.	8	10	
39	My technical skills discourage me.	4	8	

Table 7.Impact on motivation.

5.2. Interview results

The interview as a data instrument generated anxiety among trainees as it was the first time they were approached to discuss their views on the course. From a meta-analysis perspective, a few participants also commented that their survey completion, when mostly negative, had been due to personal problems at the time of completing the survey. In another case, a participant emailed the tutor-interviewer (one of the authors) because she realised that she had offered negative views only. In her email she included positive aspects about the programme.

In general, our thematic analysis showed that the 24 interviewees were confident in indicating what motivated them to enroll and stay on the course. They also provided a balanced view of motivating and demotivating factors. They illustrated their feelings with examples of learning experiences and explorations as teachers. Their answers provided an overall evaluation of the course and reflected on the challenges behind working, studying, and supporting a family. We felt that they provided honest responses and did not hesitate to offer critical, but not always constructive, comments on individual tutors or administrative aspects of the course.

From the interviews, the main categories around motivation were directed towards participants' motivation to enroll and stay on the course, and factors which we shall term *motivating factors* and *demotivating factors* as they progressed on the course.

5.2.1. Motivation to enroll on the course

In relation to motivation to enroll and stay on the course, 12 intervieweessignalled that obtaining a teaching degree was their major drive to secure their teaching posts or be promoted. At the time of the interview all participants were working as teachers of English in formal

education or as private tutors. However, three participants stated that their motivation shifted once they discovered they could also learn. For example, one of them explained:

María: At the beginning I just wanted the degree but **then I started to find it interesting**. I'll get the degree but **I've also learnt how to teach**.

(Excerpt 1)

All interviewees (n=24) agreed on and stressed accessibility in time and place as the main motivating factors to enroll and stay on the course. To represent this shared agreement, one participant explained that:

Cecilia: I **can work**, **have a family**, and **study**. Besides, there are no courses in my area. This is the only possibility I have.

(Excerpt 2)

Other participants (n=7) expressed that their interest in English language and teaching acted as motivators to enroll on the course although they were not teaching at the time of joining the programme.

Claudia: I've always liked English, like since I was ten. I also wanted to become a teacher. This opportunity of **distance learning has changed my life**.

(Excerpt 3)

5.2.2. *Motivating factors*

Most participants (n=20)indicated that their autonomy to manage their own studying pace and learning strategies was crucial to stay on the course. As one participant put it, autonomy was connected to her preference to individual work:

Nora: **I'm used to working alone as I know what to do and how**. I know there's a deadline, and I've got the materials and I can complete the assignment whenever I find the time.

(Excerpt 4)

While most participants (n=22) highlighted that this online programme allowed them to work individually at their own pace and place, some (=10) also assessed collaborative work as positive through forum participation and assignments which required that they worked in groups.

Patricio: We can **share opinions**, I **learn** from what **other peers** post. I don't feel all alone when we work in groups.

(Excerpt 5)

However, nine participants indicated that collaboration and peer contact is also carried out through other channels.

Fernanda: I always **get in touch** with people through **our Facebook group**. We have our **cathartic moments** but we also **exchange opinions, tips, materials**. We use it to arrange study groups or get to know more about us all.

(Excerpt 6)

The status of the course emerged as another motivating factor. Some participants indicated that the materials (n=15), nature of contents and assignments (n=13), and tutors' professional profile (n=6) were demanding yet driving forces:

Mel: I love the videos, the oral presentations, the chance to read original sources.

(Excerpt 7)

Celia: We then attend another seminar or workshop elsewhere and the authors are the same or we already know something about the topic.

(Excerpt 8)

Jorge: The level is demanding, **really related to English teaching**, and sometimes I feel it's even **more demanding than f2f courses**. But then, this is tertiary education. Even if we have a family and teach, we need to adapt to the course.

Last, personal feelings of accomplishment and progress in their identities as practicing teachers made participants (n=5) want to stay on the course:

> Lucía: As time goes by I realise that my lessons are getting better, like I feel **more confident** and **more professional**. This is what I want to be.

5.2.3. *Demotivating factors*

Some participants (n=6) expressed that lack of f2f contact generated anxiety among them as they wished to have almost instant answers and feedback from tutors. In this respect, tutor's feedback quality (n=4) emerged as a demotivating factor:

> Micaela: Sometimes you get the assignment and it **just says very good** or excellent. But I **want to know why** it is good and what I need to improve. Their feedback is all we have and it's **discouraging** to see just a very good after I spent so much time completing the assignment.

Some participants (n=4) noted that lack of f2f contact was also compared to lack of synchronous contact with tutors and little speaking opportunities. A participant asserted that:

> Cristina: They teach us about the four skills and that we have to use them when we teach but we **never engage in speaking or talking with the tutors**. We **need**, I think, **more contact with the tutors**, to hear their voices.

While forums and collaborative work were perceived by some participants(n=10) as motivating for they constructed a feeling of community, others (n=9) viewed them as demotivating course features:

> Pedro: I participate in the forums only because they're mandatory. There's **no thread**, people **just leave their comment**. I post my comment and **never look back again**. Many do that.
>
> (Excerpt 13)

> Gracia: The **forums are terrible**. The tutors need to make more engaging forums. But above all the **LMS is visually unappealing**.
>
> (Excerpt 14)

> Juan: **I work alone**. My **mates** are **lost** and I see them **a bit lazy** or **not really committed**.
>
> (Excerpt 15)

> Gracia: **I don't see the benefit of group work**. It's hard to agree on a time to meet online or to agree on how to complete an assignment. **I don't feel I learn from my peers**. And sometimes I don't see the support from the tutors either. I just need the degree.
>
> (Excerpt 16)

Thus nine participants seemed to view communicative channels, such as Facebook, as offering more genuine opportunities for interpersonal relationships and for the social construction of knowledge than forums.

Two participants pointed out that these demotivating features were connected to tutors' lack of online teaching skills:

> Ana: You can tell that **tutors are not ready**. They **don't know how to teach online** so this is why they **have no idea of how to make the most of forums or webtools**. The material is just a pdf, it's just like reading notes.
>
> (Excerpt 17)

However, as one participant explained, none of these demotivating factors appeared to be dropout factors.

> Carlos: I know I'm being very negative about almost everything. But **many of us are still here** because it's **the only opportunity** we have **to study** and **get our degree**.

(Excerpt 18)

6. Discussion

6.1. Research question 1

Our first question sought to examine participants' drive to enroll on an online teacher education course in our context. Through the interviews it transpired that (1) obtaining a teaching degree and (2) accessibility in time and place drove participants to enroll on this course.

The first reason is linked to the fact that most participants were practicing teachers and therefore they needed to start formal training through any learning mode, to secure their posts. Although this extrinsic and instrumental reason did not emerge strongly in the survey (Table 7), participants were more open to disclose this initial factor through the interview (Excerpts 16 and 18). However, participants expressed their interest in learning even when the end-product of this process was their teaching degree (Excerpt 1). In this sense, we believe that participants' initial motivation, where motivation is seen as dynamic and relational, is indicated by future selves which contain elements of who they want to be (Excerpt 10) and what they ought to be. In other words, their ideal selves as professionals and ought-to-be selves as degree-holding teachers enter in a dialogical relationship which makes them start an online language teacher education course.

The second reason, accessibility in time and place, also indicates the instrumental value of the programme. Our data confirms Young and Lewis' (2008) views as participants add this course to their lives without the need to become unemployed or detached from their families. In

this regard, asynchronicity and personal time management, although still with course deadlines, are crucial motivators. In addition, it shows that online teacher education is an opportunity for those who do not have f2f courses in their places of residence (Excerpts 2 and 3).

6.2. Research question 2

According to Table 3, engagement measured by time spent on activities indicates that the most time consuming activities were reading core materials and completing assignments. Conversely, communicating with tutors and e-mates or peers were less time consuming since more than 80% of respondents spent between 0 – 4 hours weekly.

The most time consuming activities or those to which participants devoted most of their time are connected to the most used resources. Table 3 shows that websites, followed by digital materials, forums, and printed materials were always used. At the other end of the spectrum, newly introduced tools such as Voicethread or Eduglogster were never used. However, we may hypothesise that this was so because tutors were still in the process of incorporating them into their practices and therefore there were limited opportunities for participants to engage with them and explore their pedagogical use.

From these tools, Tables 4 and 5 attest to the motivating nature of the tools offered in the course. However, there exists disparity in perception of printed and digital materials. While participants engaged with the latter more often, they still preferred the former. However both types of materials together with YouTube videos and website became the backbone of the course materials, and these are accessed individually. Table 7 confirmed the impact of course materials. This category received 79.5 % of positive impact in the survey.

In relation to forums, while these are said to be used, their use is pressured by their mandatory nature (Excerpt 13). Only 5.79 % of respondents had forums as their favourite tool. These mixed perceptions between use and preference also emerged from the survey (item 13,

Table 7) and the interviews. Participants did not engage with them or demonstrated a clear preference for them due to their poor visual appearance (Excerpt 14), participation in serial monologues (Excerpt 13) as observed in Pawan et al. (2003), and bland forum questions posed by the tutors (Excerpt 14). This last element may confirm that tutors used to f2f instruction do need to learn how to operate in a virtual environment and moderate online courses (Excerpt 17). As forums were the tool most frequently used to engage students in collaborative work, we believe they may have impacted on students' perception of online collaboration. Tutors need to be aware and exploit the pedagogical purpose of online tools in order to provide students with meaningful learning opportunities. This need for tutors' e-training can also be evidenced in participants' concerns with congruent practices (Excerpt 12) and role and impact of feedback (Excerpt 11). This last aspect points out that tutors are seen as sources of motivation and empowerment in online settings as Xiao (2012) observes. These perceptions respond to the need of new skills development for a different teacher training environment as suggested in Bertin and Narcy-Combes (2012).

6.3. Research question 3

Our last research question involved examining factors which sustained trainees' motivation. In this regard, there is a myriad of complex relationships.

Table 7 shows that those items grouped under "autonomy", "course status", and "course materials", which we may assess as contributing to the course status, carried the highest motivation impact among participants. Above all, personal time management and the opportunity of studying alone ranked high among other factors and they were emphasised during interviews (Excerpt 4). Motivation driven by course materials and status were confirmed through the interviews (Excerpts 7 and 8), which, in turn, confirm that the quality of online learning is not challenged (England, 2012). These are all features which can be framed as

individual activities since participants can engage with them without the need to interact with their peers and tutors.

Along these lines, we notice that although online learning is usually seen under a sociocultural perspective (Gabriel, 2004), collaborative learning as reflected in "learning online with others" category did not appear to sustain participants' motivation. This may be explained by participants' poor assessment of forums and other LMS features and tools which should promote and facilitate collaborative learning. The fact that motivational factors such as accessibility in time and place and studying alone are stronger than collaborative work may indicate that students perceive online education in terms of distance and of self-management.

However, there emerged unclear tendencies about the extent to which collaborative learning is discouraged by the course features. On the one hand, data from the interview stressed that obtaining a degree is a major force together with autonomy and personal time management, and even some participants (e.g Excerpt 16) did not see the benefit of collaborative work. On the other hand, a few participants wished for more synchronous spaces for learning or valued group work (Excerpt 5) but this need did not appear as a major concern. However, it should be noted that collaborative work and a sense of community still drove participants to create a closed Facebook group (Excerpt 6) to mitigate the deficiencies found in the forum. This course of action may confirm Massi et al.'s (2012) conceptualisation of online groups to counteract isolation and the redundancy of poorly tutor-initiated forums (Comas-Quinn, et al. 2012).

6.4 Integrating our research questions

Drawing from the discussion above, initial motivating factors were the teaching degree and autonomy to operate throughout the course. Autonomy, framed in self-management and self-access to course materials, was also regarded as a major factor for sustaining motivation.

Despite demotivating factors such as a primitive LMS usage, doubtful tutoring skills, and unidirectional communication and content management, the extrinsic and instrumental of a teaching degree was strong enough to resist any discouraging situations. Even isolation was not a threat as Nunan (2012) suggests. This may be so because participants understood that an online course, however it was delivered, was their only opportunity given their personal circumstances. This interest in a degree can also be recovered from the "future selves" category. Participants wished to see themselves as professional teachers whose career prospects (Young & Lewis, 2008) would improve once they obtained a formal teaching qualification.

Because most of the participants were practicing teachers and had a family to support, the individual and extrinsic drive of obtaining a degree and self-projection of qualified teachers was their initial and constant source of motivation. The online course, viewed as instrumental, became the means to achieve that goal. Such a goal was perceived to be achieved through individual actions such as completing assignments, reading materials and posting on mandatory forums. We believe that the participants did not see collaborative learning and the interactive triad of tutor-materials-peers as a motivating or defining component of the course. On the contrary, we may advance that the relationship was trainee-materials/course as this latter component was the key to achieve their goal of a teaching degree without the time demands of social interaction.

Concepts such as collaborative learning and learning community anchored in a sociocultural view of education should not be seen as default components or motivating factors of online teacher education. While our participants may endorse collaborative learning in their teaching practices, they did not adhere to it in their own formal learning process. This raises important issues for designing online teacher development opportunities. Online course developers should not assume that all trainees or teachers enjoy collaborative learning or that they prefer an interpersonal learning style. Therefore, forum participation or group-work tasks should not be mandatory. Perhaps, it is this last feature that acts as a demotivator of collaborative learning. Thus, trainees should be allowed to choose the processes, procedures,

and instances of collaborative learning. From a practical perspective, this could include allowing trainees to start forum threads themselves and posing their own questions or issues. Building a learning community must be a democratic and participatory act and should not be based on imposition or a condition to obtain a degree. Trainees should have the freedom to choose the task and time for collaborative learning even when they feel that working alone or with others may produce different results.

From a meta-analysis perspective, having followed Ushioda's (2009) words in relation to motivation research, the qualitative component of our study confirmed, developed, and challenged the results obtained through quantitative methods. Along these lines, we feel that interviews became revelatory as regards tutors' practices because the interviews were carried out by a non-controversial tutor. We wonder whether participants would have been open if they had been interviewed by a controversial colleague. This situation may illustrate the shortcomings of investigating practices as an insider since participants could become more open or shut down for fear of offending the tutor-interviewer. In addition, having contemplated personal and interpersonal aspects of motivation in online education provided us with findings which show how certain online course features can support and hinder collaboration.

7. Conclusions and implications

Although this paper is based on one specific programme, we believe that it contributes to understanding online teacher education programmes in settings where most participants are practicing teachers and where no f2f courses are always available or resources are limited.

We believe that primitive technology usage and poor tutoring skills may affect the social construction of learning and therefore trainees seem to project an individualist image of themselves. Yet, this may be a reaction to lack of webtools which facilitate social engagement for learning. This entails that programme developers and institutions need to develop up-dated virtual environments which, even when equipped with collaborative and sophisticated online

tools, allow participants to engage with learning individually. In other words, interaction and collaborative views should not be imposed but negotiated.

Based on our research context and institution, online teacher education, even when it is in the hands of the private sector, helps the state and formal education as a whole as it contributes to the professional development of practicing teachers. These experiences should be seen by ministerial authorities as an invitation to engage in online language teacher distance education programmes which meet the demands of those places isolated from large cities. Nonetheless, e-learning as distance education is still linked to internet access and therefore online education may be restricted and, to some extent, elitist (see Table 3, reasons).

Finally, motivation research in online teacher education should contemplate mixed methods and research instruments which investigate both personal and interpersonal activities and motivation factors through longitudinal studies. Future research should explore how age, and probably gender, may constitute an influential factor in motivation in online teacher education.

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