

ELT Research Papers 12–08

A global study of primary English teachers' qualifications, training and career development

Helen Emery, University of Essex



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Abstract

This research reports a global study of primary English teachers' qualifications, training, teaching experience and career development. Data were collected via the use of an electronic survey, which gathered almost 2,500 responses and in-depth face-to-face interviews with classroom teachers and head teachers in nine countries around the world. Subjects represented rural and urban teachers who worked in state and private institutions. The findings indicate some global trends in areas such as the widespread nature of English Language Teaching (ELT) and the drive to introduce English to ever younger learners. On the positive side, findings indicate that class sizes are small for the majority of teachers (under 35 children). However a cause for concern is the low number of teachers with a degree, and the number of teachers who have undergone specific training to teach the age that they currently teach, or to teach English. These findings are balanced by the fact that 85 per cent of teachers report they have undertaken some sort of professional development training since starting to teach. Teachers were overwhelmingly positive in their attitudes towards the profession, and most said they would recommend primary English teaching to others as a career. The study raises issues which it is felt should be taken up by ELT providers, and describes some solutions to problems which have been developed in certain contexts.

1

Introduction

With the progress and demands of globalisation, English is being taught to ever younger learners these days. In many cases this has been a success – for example in Maharashtra State in India where English was recently introduced to all children from Grade 1. Reports state that children with no previous background in English, now speak the language and ‘the children of maidservants and workers now use English’ (Mukund, 2009: page 50). However, in some cases the implementation of English into the curriculum (or the lowering of the age where English is taught) has happened very quickly, with inadequate preparation. A recently documented case is that of Rwanda where, until 2009 French was the language of instruction in 95 per cent of primary and secondary schools. In 2009 English was introduced suddenly into the curriculum as the language of instruction for core subjects including Maths and Science – although few teachers could speak it. Teacher preparation consisted of a month of intensive English, but it is not clear whether they also received any instruction in appropriate methodologies to use, particularly with young learners (McGreal, 2009; Vesperini, 2010). Without adequate training, these teachers will not be able to teach their subjects in such a way that the learning potentials of students are maximised.

The Bangalore conference on Teaching English to Young Learners (Enever, Moon & Raman, 2009) emphasised some of the problems occurring as a result of inadequate preparation for teaching at this level: for example teachers’ inability to deal with problems that occurred in the teaching context because of lack of training, employers’ acceptance of low level qualifications to teach young learners, teachers’ inadequate English language proficiency and the fact that some teachers were required to teach English when this was not their subject specialism (Chodijah, 2008; Enever et.al. 2009; Graddol, 2006; 2008; Kgwadi, 2008; Wang, 2002; 2007; 2009). The inclusion of teachers who are not fully prepared to teach English at primary levels will have an impact on what can be achieved. This research study therefore aimed to find out:

- how primary English teachers in various countries around the world were trained
- the qualifications they have
- the support for professional development they receive
- the opportunities for promotion open to them
- whether they are happy in their chosen careers.

2

Literature review

The age factor and teaching languages to Young Learners

These days foreign language programmes in schools are starting at an increasingly early age around the world (Nikolov, 2009) and English has become the most popular second or foreign language to study. In a survey carried out by Papp (2011) 42 per cent of respondents said that English was introduced into formal education in their institution at the age of five or younger. Of the remainder, 25 per cent started learning English at age six, and 16 per cent by the age of seven. It would appear from the results of this study that children who start to learn English after the age of seven are becoming the exception. Often the pressure to start learning a foreign language early comes from parents, who are keen for children to progress. Hsu & Austin (2012) report that this trend is very prevalent in Taiwan, where parents regularly enrol young children in after-school English programmes. Vago (2005; cited in Nikolov, 2009a) reports that while Year 4 is the compulsory start for foreign language learning in Hungarian state schools, over half of learners choose to begin well before this age. Nikolov (2009b) in a comparative study of young Hungarian learners taking English or German as a foreign language, found that the students taking English were more ambitious, tended to 'strive higher' and a greater number opted to take external language proficiency examinations. However, not all studies of age-related motivation have come out in favour of younger learners (e.g. Williams, Burden & Lanvers, 2002); and a study by Djigunovic (2009) found that young Croatian learners were more motivated by the learning conditions than by age factors alone.

Djigunovic lists the learning conditions which may affect motivation as being: class size, number of hours of English instruction per week, having a teacher who was specially trained to teach the subject to young learners, and the type of activities that they were given. Being taught in a very large group, for only two periods a week was found to be one of the least likely factors to lead to motivation to learn the language. Overall, we can see that there are certain conditions to be met if children are to successfully learn a second language at this level: teachers must be adequately trained, class sizes must be small and activities used must enhance the learning environment and appeal to young learners at the same time.

Different teaching contexts and the impact they may have: Teacher shortages and overcrowded classrooms

A frequently cited problem encountered by primary English teachers is that of large or overcrowded classes and the impact this situation can have on teaching and learning. Large classes have been defined as consisting of a range of pupil numbers in different contexts. Smith and Warburton (1997) define large classes in the UK as those consisting of 25–30 learners; O'Sullivan (2006) states that large classes in the USA consist of more than 35 learners and Nakabugo, Opolot-Okurut, Ssebbunga, Maani and Byamugisha (2008) define the situation in Uganda as being more than 70 learners.

Very large classes (for example, more than 65 learners) are usually found in developing countries where there is not enough money available to pay for additional teachers and build more schools. Teachers have reported large classes as having a negative impact on their teaching and students' learning. Baker & Westrup (2000, p 2) list some of the problems of teaching large classes:

- desks and chairs are fixed or difficult to move
- students sit close together in rows
- little space for the teacher to move about the classroom
- not enough space for students to move during the lesson
- walls between classrooms are thin, noise will disturb other classes
- not enough textbooks for all students
- other teaching resources may be limited as well.

To this list we may add that pair and group work may well be difficult, noise levels will be high and many students may not hear what the teacher is saying (and learning will be affected) and teachers may not have time to do all the marking necessary. Overall, motivation levels of students and teacher will suffer.

Many countries are experiencing an acute shortage of primary school teachers, particularly English teachers. For many this has resulted in their employing teachers who may not be fully trained to teach young learners, or may have inadequate English themselves. Graddol (2010) believes that the scale of the problem is greater in India than in other countries, however, it is not clear to what extent this situation exists around the world.

Teachers' qualifications and training

Initial Teacher Training

The necessity of adequate training for teachers has been emphasised in several reports (e.g.: Garton, Copland & Burns, 2010; Papp, 2011; Rixon, 2000) however, different countries may view the training requirements of teachers differently. In some countries a basic educational qualification is provided by the government which is deemed sufficient for all teachers – regardless of the age they will be teaching or the subject area. In other countries, teachers are given a more specialised training aimed at equipping them with the specific requirements of their future career.

Cameron (2001) believes there are two common misconceptions related to teaching English to young learners: that teaching English is a straightforward process that can be undertaken by anyone with a basic training in ELT, and secondly, that the language taught to children only needs to be simple as cognitively, they are not as developed as adult or teenage learners. Cameron's points emphasise the necessity of specific training for primary school teachers. Howard (2012) states that in the UAE some teachers coming into primary education have a qualification to teach English to adults and 'subsequently adapt pedagogies and techniques to suit the particular requirements of young learners' (page 71), although she does not mention how this group learn to adapt their teaching. She goes on to say that other teachers are trained as primary teachers, but without specific qualifications or training to teach English language. We can see then that in certain contexts, teachers may enter the profession with different qualifications, specialisms and training experiences.

Initial Teacher Training programmes frequently include a supervised Teaching Practice element, where teachers are scored on their performance and receive post-teaching evaluation. In the UK all primary school teachers are required to have undertaken Teaching Practice in order to gain Qualified Teacher Status (Skills Funding Agency, 2010). However, this is not the case in every country.

Teacher Development

Maley (quoted in Spratt, 1994) differentiates Teacher Training, referred to as Initial Teacher Training or ITT and Teacher Development, or TD. ITT is usually related to the needs of a particular course, has terminal outcomes which are pre-empted, involves information and skills transmission, has a fixed agenda and is directed in a top-down manner. TD on the other hand is a continuing process, is related to the needs of the individual teacher, has open ended outcomes, involves problem solving, has a flexible agenda, is peer-orientated and takes place in a bottom-up fashion (Spratt, 1994, p 54). ITT is usually aimed at student-teachers with little or no teaching experience, whereas, TD aims to further develop those with several years experience in the field.

In some countries it is compulsory for teachers to undertake regular in-service training after they have qualified, in other countries this is provided but is not compulsory. In yet other countries, continuing training is simply not available for teachers. Moh (2009) reports that in Nigeria, after initial training 'the teacher is left alone to recycle whatever knowledge they had acquired at the training college, completely oblivious to whatever research or practice might subsequently have been carried out in the field of study' (page 197). Further training may be more easily available if a teacher works in a major city, whereas rural teachers may go a whole lifetime without attending a single training course.

As teachers' careers develop, they may not receive any further training but this is when it becomes important for them to develop themselves and their teaching, to prevent becoming stale (Harmer, 2007). This development usually takes on a reflective nature; teachers are encouraged to identify a problem or an area of their teaching which could benefit from a different approach, and to seek out ways of doing this. Harmer (2007) lists several ways in which teachers can seek to develop their skills:

- being a reflective teacher
- keeping a teaching log or journal
- observing peers teaching
- recording themselves to watch (or listen to) and reflect on later
- engaging with professional literature
- through professional organisations
- carrying out action research in the classroom.

Membership of a Teachers Association

Membership of a local teachers association can be beneficial to a teachers' personal development (Edge & Garton, 2009; Harmer, 2007; Scrivener, 2009) as they often provide workshops, conferences and publications at low cost to members. Teachers Associations can be divided into those that operate globally such as TESOL, based in the US (current membership figure 12,137 in 152 countries), TESOL Arabia (current membership 1,188 in 30 countries) and IATEFL, based in the UK (current membership figure 3,763 in 127 countries) and local teachers associations which operate mainly at the level of a particular country and its immediate neighbours.

Teacher satisfaction

Spratt (1994, p 80) asks teachers to rank the following list of factors, according to how important they consider them to be in contributing to their job satisfaction:

- security of tenure
- access to good school equipment and resources
- a good salary
- a good pension
- a sense of achievement through work
- long holidays
- well-motivated students
- a pleasant school building
- a supportive head teacher
- other (please specify).

Although there is no right or wrong answer for this activity, the task requires teachers to assess their current post and to discuss why they are or are not happy, and which of the criteria mentioned previously are important for their job satisfaction. Being able to clarify what is important for job satisfaction is important in any career, not least teaching which is often regarded as a stressful occupation.

Spratt's list of factors contributing to teachers' happiness can be said to apply in general to all teachers, however in some contexts additional criteria may also play a part. As mentioned previously, overcrowded classes can lead to high levels of stress for teachers, and research supports the fact that rural teachers often experience lower levels of job satisfaction than urban teachers (Farrel & Oliveira, 1993; Rozenholtz, 1985; Sargent & Hannum, 2003). A study by Abdullah, Uli & Parasuraman (2009) found that graduate teachers were more satisfied than non-graduates, higher-ranking teachers were more satisfied than ordinary teachers and older teachers were more satisfied with their jobs than younger teachers, however it is not clear why this might be.

3

Research design

The study consisted of a survey, delivered for the most part in electronic format, and in-depth personal interviews with teachers and head teachers around the world.

Survey design and analysis

Questionnaires are a widely used method of collecting data from a large population and this has been made easier through the development of electronic survey tools. The current study used Qualtrics (www.qualtrics.com) for this purpose. An online survey was developed and distributed to teachers around the world with the help of the British Council, local teachers associations and local universities. Hard copies of the survey were provided to teachers in Sudan and Cuba because of problems with internet access. The results of these surveys were loaded into the system manually by the researcher.

Questions were grouped into five broad areas: information relating to the respondents; respondents' current teaching context; Initial Teacher Training; Continuing Professional Development and attitudes towards the profession. Most questions were of a fixed response nature, although some asked teachers to give additional information relating to a particular question, e.g. *Are there any problems that you experience in your teaching which you feel training could help with?* If a respondent answered 'yes' a follow-up question asked what type of training course they would like and why.

The survey was designed in such a way that respondents did not have to answer each question in order to proceed to the next, and so response numbers vary between questions. This in itself was not thought to be a problem as the numbers involved were large (2,478 teachers took part in the survey). The survey results were analysed through the use of descriptive and where applicable, inferential statistics.

The survey returned responses from 89 countries, although the number emanating from each country varied considerably. Ten countries returned over 60 responses: Argentina (311), Croatia (240), Germany (318), Italy (295), Lithuania (74), Romania (90), Serbia (65), Spain (96), Taiwan (88) and Ukraine (69).

Interviews with teachers and head teachers

In-depth personal interviews were carried out with classroom teachers of English and head teachers at primary schools in 9 countries: Bangladesh, Cambodia, Cameroon, Cuba, Egypt, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand and the United Arab Emirates. Additionally, in India Tibetan refugee teachers living and working in exile were interviewed. These countries were chosen as they represented different geographical regions and economies and had different historical and political reasons for the teaching of English. In each country teachers and head teachers were selected to interview from both state and private institutions. Some head teachers (and some teachers) had to be interviewed through the use of a translator as English was not their main subject.

In total, 85 interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed and analysed using a conversation analysis method. Each interview lasted between 20 and 45 minutes. Some teachers chose to be interviewed in a focus group, but the majority of participants were interviewed individually. With the exception of interviews carried out in Cameroon, all interviews were conducted by the same researcher.

Interview questions sought to probe deeper into issues raised by the survey. Although not all the teachers interviewed had completed the survey this was not judged to be important. It was hoped that their replies would help shed light on some of the major issues raised by the survey, and provide opportunities to ask open-ended questions which could not otherwise be aired.

Teacher interviews focused on:

- why or how they had come into the profession
- their qualifications, training and career development
- attitudes towards the profession
- their teaching context.

Interviews with head teachers focused on:

- why or how they had come into the profession
- their training and qualifications, and any specific training they had undergone to prepare them to become a head teacher
- issues connected to the management and running of their school, including numbers in classes, teachers' salaries, releasing teachers for in-service training
- attitudes towards the profession, including future educational directions.

4

Main findings and discussion

Survey participants and their teaching contexts

Survey participants

Eighty per cent of participants work in state schools and 20 per cent in private institutions. This contrasts with other recent surveys of primary teachers, for example Papp (2011, p 2) where ‘almost half of respondents work in language schools’ and are presumably working in the private sector, and the survey of Garton, Copland and Burns (2011) where 32 per cent of respondents work in the private sector. It can be difficult to collect data from the state sector through online surveys as in some countries government schools are not as well resourced as those in the private sector, and teachers do not have access to computers and the internet. This is particularly apparent with teachers in rural schools.

By far the largest group of respondents are female (91 per cent) which is in line with response data from the Garton *et al* (2011) survey – 80.4 per cent female respondents, indicating that globally primary school English teaching is a job that appeals to women. The largest group of respondents (35 per cent) were aged 31–40 and only five per cent were aged under 25, which might reflect the length of time it takes to complete teacher training. Alternatively, the low numbers of respondents aged under 25 might be partially attributable to the higher proportion of inexperienced teachers working in rural schools. As mentioned earlier, rural schools often do not have the computer and internet facilities that urban schools have, making survey response more difficult.

In terms of respondents’ experience, the largest group (40 per cent) had been teaching for more than 15 years. Only 14 per cent had been teaching for less than three years. This is interesting data in that it appears to indicate that teaching is a long-term career: people who embark on the profession tend to stay with it. The data in response to the question *How many years have you been teaching English?* is less clear-cut with roughly equal numbers of teachers answering 4–8 years, 9–14 years and over 15 years. These figures indicate that many teachers probably started their career teaching subjects other

than English, but more recently have taken on ELT. This may be a reflection of the current global trend for English teaching, and the fact that English is being taught to ever younger and younger learners.

When asked why they had chosen to become a primary English teacher (see Table 12 for full results) 77 per cent replied ‘I like children’ and 68 per cent ‘It’s interesting work – there are many varied activities during the day’. 29 per cent of respondents said they had chosen this field because ‘It’s a respectable job’; 20 per cent responded that primary teaching ‘Offers secure employment’, but only 2 per cent said they had chosen the career because it offered good promotion opportunities.

When asked if they taught other subjects in addition to English, 44 per cent of respondents said yes. Some of the subjects they also taught include a variety of other languages (too numerous to mention all of them here), maths, science, history, geography, PE, religious studies, art, health studies, music, social studies, cookery, ICT, human rights and foreign literature.

Participants’ teaching contexts

In terms of class size, 92 per cent of teachers reported that they taught classes of under 35 children. Only eight per cent of teachers taught classes of more than 50. Two per cent of teachers reported they taught classes of more than 65. These teachers worked in Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Cameroon, Croatia, Czech Republic, Egypt, Germany, Italy, India, Romania, Poland, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Uruguay, the USA and Yemen. In each country, only one teacher reported they taught these large numbers, with the exception of India (6 teachers), Sudan (5), South Africa (3) and Italy (2). However, during interviews a different picture emerged: many teachers reported that they or other teachers in their schools had classes of over 65, and one teacher in Bangladesh said he had 150 children in one of his classes. Hoque (2009) states that the average teacher: student ratio in Bangladeshi state primary schools is 1: 56 and as such, every class would be classified as *large*. It may well be that 150 students is an exceptional case.

When the researcher visited rural primary schools in Cambodia to interview teachers, she observed several classes with up to 80 children in them. Some were sitting on the floor in a line under the blackboard as there were no desks or chairs for them, and the teacher leaned over them to write on the board. The teacher in Bangladesh said that the school would not be appointed a new teacher if there were fewer than 80 children to teach. In this case the additional students would be distributed among the other classes. It becomes clear that while in some countries we talk of the *maximum number* of pupils allowed in a class, in other countries it is the *minimum number* allowable.

One reason for the relatively low numbers of teachers who said they taught large classes in the survey might be due to the fact that these teachers work in schools with computers and internet access, whereas schools with very large numbers of pupils in classes are likely to be under-resourced and their teachers may not have been able to participate in the survey.

In interviews, teachers reported many problems connected with teaching large classes: one of the main issues was cramped conditions. An Indian teacher with more than 50 students in her class said:

I cannot move about the class to check what they are doing as the desks are too close together and I may catch my sari. I have no idea what those at the back are writing in their books as I cannot see them. I have an operating space of about two or three square feet at the front of the room.

Other commonly reported problems caused by large class size were the breakdown in discipline, noise levels, resulting teacher stress levels and finally the lack of learning. Large class sizes are often attributable to a school's financial situation, and in private schools this may be determined by how much available cash the school has to pay out in salaries. The head teacher of a private school in India, where all classes numbered more than 50 said:

We have 2,700 pupils at this school and out of that 250 students are not paying any fees because they cannot afford it. So 92 per cent of the tuition fees are going only for the salaries of the teachers... we are in a very hard position. If you want to maintain the quality, you want the good teachers to stay... it's a very old school so teachers' are on very high salaries. It's hard to make ends meet.

The shift system in schools

In interviews, several teachers reported that their schools operated morning and afternoon/evening shifts. This system enables a school to educate double the number of pupils, and is seen as an economical solution to the need for new schools to be built as the population grows. Usually the primary section or lower primary in a large primary school will be taught in the early mornings, from 7a.m. till after lunchtime, and the upper primary or secondary school from early afternoon onwards. Some teachers interviewed said that they worked both shifts, but not necessarily at the same school. Five of the 11 teachers interviewed in Egypt said they undertook this work as they could not support their families without the extra income.

Teacher shortages

Cambodia has long experienced a shortage of primary school teachers, and from 1996–2002 the government dealt with this problem by hiring contract teachers (Geeves & Bredenberg, 2005) however the scheme was eventually wound up as it had 'raised awkward questions about teacher quality and educational efficiency' (*op.cit*, page 4). One impact of the teacher shortage in Cambodia in recent times is that NGOs and gap-year holiday companies are employing local teachers and western expatriates to teach in state institutions. An American teacher who had come to Cambodia for a two week teaching vacation said:

I'm not a certified teacher... no... my day-to-day job is in the corporate world. In fact I haven't received any teacher training, but I love the work. I enjoy teaching English in particular... but I think it's important to give back to the community in any way you can. I like to do my bit to help.

A Cambodian teacher who was interviewed said that he was employed by an NGO to teach English in local state primary schools, and was paid by the hour. It was to his advantage to teach as many lessons in a day as he could, and he managed to earn up to \$400 a month doing this. This may be compared to the \$50 a month that a state primary school teacher paid by a local education authority might earn. However, this practice was not without its drawbacks, and one head teacher complained that teachers who were employed to teach in multiple schools often had no time to plan lessons, stay to talk to pupils after the class, set or mark homework and were not available for staff meetings or to meet parents.

An innovative response to teacher shortages

As mentioned earlier, many countries deal with teacher shortages by increasing the numbers of learners in a class. However in Cuba a different approach has been adopted. Carnoy, Gove and Marshall (2007) report that class sizes in primary schools in Cuba are small: currently about 20 pupils, however the country still has an acute shortage of teachers in rural areas, particularly English teachers. In interviews, teachers said that the Cuban government's response has been the implementation of *TV English*, English language lessons which are broadcast around the country, and can be shown to children by a teacher with minimal English. These programmes are delivered bilingually, and separate series broadcast lessons for adults before they leave for work in the mornings and for school children during the teaching day.

5

Age of starting to learn English

In response to the question *What age do children start learning English in your school?* 54 per cent replied at age six (Grade 1) or younger. Only four per cent responded children started learning at age ten or older. Again, this reflects the global trend for learning English at ever younger ages.

The largest group of teachers (74 per cent) teach children aged 9–10 years old, 58 per cent teach children aged 7–8 years old and 56 per cent 11–12 years old. Only six per cent of teachers teach children under five years old. First impressions of these figures may seem odd, given that the majority of respondents said children started learning English at their schools before the age of seven. However, if these figures are viewed in relation to the number of years experience that teachers have, a trend becomes clear: more experienced teachers are teaching older learners and inexperienced teachers are teaching younger learners. This theory is borne out by a cross tabulation: ($X^2 = 35.83$, $df = 16$, $p < 0.001$) indicating a significant difference between the ages of learners taught by teachers with less experience and those with more experience.

In interviews, several teachers said that for them, promotion meant moving out of primary classes and into secondary. Further promotion would mean teaching in the upper secondary school and taking examination classes. This is a worrying trend, as it means that in some countries, the lower end of the learning cycle will always fall to inexperienced teachers. Undoubtedly some newly qualified teachers are very good, but this trend will deprive young learners of being taught by some of the more experienced teachers.

6

Teachers' qualifications and training

Qualifications held and initial teacher training

In many countries there are several training pathways open to primary teachers, and a variety of qualifications are deemed acceptable to employers. In respect of qualifications, 38 per cent of teachers reported that they held a degree and 25 per cent that they held a Masters Degree; 35 per cent said they did not have a qualification to teach primary levels, and 21 per cent reported that they were not qualified specifically to teach English. These figures are worrying given the trend in developed countries to ensure that teaching is an all-graduate profession and to find so many teachers who are not adequately qualified for the teaching they are currently undertaking. However, these figures have to be balanced with the fact that 77 per cent reported they had done Teaching Practice as part of their initial teacher training, and 26 per cent said this had lasted for more than 20 weeks. Again, this has to be balanced by the fact that 26 per cent said their Teaching Practice lasted less than four weeks in total. While 20 per cent of teachers said that hardly any or none of their Teaching Practice was devoted to the age group that they currently teach, 53 per cent reported that all or most of it was. From these figures, we can see that a global picture is beginning to emerge, showing distinct differences between those teachers who are well-qualified and well-trained, and those who are not.

In Thailand one teacher reported that she had not undertaken the standard teacher training route into the profession:

I worked in a [Buddhist] temple school for two years, teaching English to poor boys... they are training to be monks. At this time I had no qualifications, but this experience enabled me to pass the teachers training test, to do a BEd and to get this job in a [government] school.

In one country, eight out of nine state primary teachers had to be interviewed through a translator as they had insufficient English language to be interviewed otherwise. All these teachers had ELT as a designated subject in their school, and all said their initial teacher training had included a specific focus on ELT. It is not known to what extent this situation exists in other areas of the country, or in fact in other countries around the world.

Continuing professional development

In terms of their development since qualifying, 85 per cent reported that they had undertaken some sort of training course. Most teachers said the courses had been organised by their Ministry of Education (54 per cent), with local teachers associations coming second (2 per cent). Of the teachers who had not undertaken any post-qualification training courses, 79 per cent responded that they would like to attend further training courses or workshops should they be available. Some of the reasons they said they would like further training include:

- to learn about classroom management and dealing with discipline issues
- new methods of teaching
- to focus on group work and group management
- learn how to use technology
- children's psychology and how they learn at different ages
- to keep up to date
- I need extra practice with primary classroom
- teaching methods for large classes
- it is good to meet other teachers at workshops to share experiences and ideas

- training sometimes helps me find solutions to my problems
- to sustain contact with real English language
- to learn how to motivate students
- to refresh ideas
- I want to learn how to deal with parents
- I would like to improve my speaking ability
- I want to know about CLIL
- to help me enrich my knowledge
- my students are always changing – I need to know how to teach them
- without training I could be left behind
- a good teacher is a life-long learner.

Only 30 per cent of teachers said they were a member of a teachers association, and 67 per cent were not convinced that there were clear cut benefits to joining. This seems strange given the fact that 29 per cent of their teacher development courses and workshops had been provided by local teachers associations, with only the Ministry of Education providing more. One possible reason for the difference in opinion relating to teachers associations may be due to cost. A primary school head teacher interviewed in Cameroon said that he would love to be a member of his local teachers association, but that joining would cost him two weeks' salary and as he had a family to support, joining was not possible.

7

Opportunities for promotion

Thirty-six per cent of respondents believe there are opportunities for career development as a primary school English teacher in their country. This is a fairly low figure, but might not in itself be an issue for the profession. During interviews, many teachers said they were happy to remain in the classroom as this is why they had chosen to go into the profession in the first place.

Becoming a school principal one day appealed to 21 per cent of teachers in the survey. Nearly all teachers interviewed said they would not like to become a principal or head teacher because of the administrative burden the role would involve. Most said they loved teaching and wanted to stay in the classroom. Some said they would like to become a Head of Department if it was possible, but others said that promotion for them involved moving out of primary teaching and into the secondary section of their school.

8

Teacher satisfaction and attitudes towards the profession

What makes a good primary English teacher?

Teachers were asked to rank a list of personal and professional qualities in response to the question *What makes a good primary school English teacher?* (see Table 32) The largest number of participants put *Good English language skills* as most important, and *Having children of your own* as least important. Other qualities deemed important were: *Teaching experience*, *Teaching knowledge*, *A kind and understanding personality*, and *Good qualifications*. Areas that teachers regarded as being of less importance were: *Knowledge of the syllabus and exam system*, *Ability to keep discipline*, *Knowing the rules of English grammar* and the *Ability to play games and sing songs*.

Teacher satisfaction

Are teachers happy? Less than two per cent of primary school teachers said they were unhappy in their chosen profession, and 44 per cent said they were very happy. 69 per cent said they would like to stay in this job, and only 9 per cent said they would like to leave teaching and take up another job. During interviews, one of the main reasons teachers gave for wanting to leave the profession was money. A great many of the teachers interviewed said they did not earn enough, and this was particularly acute with male teachers who had a family to support.

It was reported above that only eight per cent of survey respondents taught classes of more than 50. Of this group, 88 per cent responded that they were 'happy' or 'very happy' they had become a primary school English teacher; 12 per cent said they were 'not so happy' and nobody responded they were 'unhappy' or 'very unhappy'. Although the sample size in this case is small, if tested on a larger scale it may indicate that large class size is not a determining factor in job satisfaction for primary school teachers.

When asked if they would recommend a career in primary English teaching to young people today, 65 per cent said yes, they would. During interviews, one of the main reasons given for not wanting to recommend primary teaching as a career was the low salaries on offer compared to those in other professions.

23 per cent of respondents said they gave private tuition after school hours; ten per cent said they worked in more than one school and seven per cent said they had another job which was not connected to school teaching. In interviews, the most frequently given reason for taking on additional work was to supplement a teacher's income. Male teachers in particular were more likely to take on additional work. However this was not a trend that was borne out by the survey data: a chi square test did not indicate significant differences between numbers of men and women who said they gave private tuition after schools hours, or who had an additional job ($X^2 = 4.74$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.19$).

Sometimes teachers found themselves working very long hours to make enough money to support their families. Of the male teachers interviewed in Egypt (all were from the state sector) one said he had a full time job as a primary school English teacher and worked for an additional four hours a day, seven days a week, as the manager of a small private hospital. Other teachers said they gave private lessons after school hours for up to five hours a day, or worked at two schools – one in the mornings and the other in afternoons/evenings.

Teachers' pay as a contributory factor to their happiness

The survey did not ask about teachers' pay for the reason that direct comparisons between countries are difficult because of differences in the cost of living and the perks that some teachers receive in addition to their salary. However, low salary was a problem that affected many of the teachers who were interviewed, and was the most commonly cited reason for dissatisfaction within the profession. A newly qualified primary school teacher in the state system in Egypt would expect to earn LE 300 per month (£33). In Cuba, newly qualified teachers reported they earned 400 Pesos per month (about \$16) and they said they could earn much more by working as waiters or taxi drivers in the tourism sector. This appeared to be an attractive prospect for some of the younger teachers interviewed, and according to Carnoy, Gove and Marshall (2007) is becoming an increasing problem for Cuba.

The Tibetan teachers living and working in exile in India reported they earned less than a third of what the Indian teachers working in private institutions did. However, for this group salary did not seem to matter: they were the happiest of all teachers interviewed. A recent article in *The Sunday Times* (Oakeshott, 2012) reports on a study by the Institute of Economic Affairs which found that the most important indicator of happiness in the population is wealth. However this may not be true for all cultures and the Tibetans seem to buck the trend in this respect. The Dalai Lama believes happiness is internal and 'can be achieved through training the mind' (H.H. The Dalai Lama & Cutler, 1998). He believes it is particularly important that people 'reach out to help others' by 'endowing the seed of compassion' for others, and lessening their self-interest. The world of the Tibetan teachers reflects this belief: they teach longer hours than other teachers around the world (currently 6 days a week) and receive less pay, but are supremely happy. The teachers reported that their happiness comes from their belief in the Dalai Lama's teachings. It may also be due to training their minds as he suggests.

9

Conclusions and recommendations

This study has indicated that certain global trends exist in the training, professional development and teaching careers of primary English teachers around the world. Some trends are extremely positive, for example that so many teachers reported they are very happy they chose the profession and would not want to leave it for another type of job. However, not all the trends are positive, and the profession needs to get to grips with certain issues if high quality English teaching is to be offered to all learners. The recommendations which follow have arisen from the findings of the study.

Recommendation 1: Conditions for learning

Conditions for learning in some primary English classes are not ideal. Measures need to be taken to reduce class sizes where possible, and to deal with teacher shortages. This could be done by:

- Adopting a shift system of teaching in schools, so that classes can be split.
- Training and hiring more teachers.
- Investigating the use of technology in place of a teacher where none is available.

Ideally, schools should only hire English teachers who are proficient in the language. This could be done by interviewing teachers in English, or asking them to provide certificates showing that they had been specifically trained to teach the subject.

Recommendation 2: Initial Teacher Training

Many teachers have not been specifically trained to teach English, or to teach the level that they currently teach. This will impact on children's learning and may also lead to teachers feeling stressed in their jobs. One specific finding that arose from the study was that younger or inexperienced teachers tended to teach the early grades, and more experienced or older teachers taught the upper grades. In some contexts promotion for a teacher means moving up the school to teach the higher levels. It is strongly recommended that education providers recognise that teaching younger learners is a worthy profession and not just a starting point for newly qualified and inexperienced teachers.

- Teachers of early years need specific training to teach this age group.
- Teacher training needs to focus on the level to be taught by a teacher when they qualify, and training providers are encouraged not to continue with the current system of providing a generic teaching qualification, which does not focus on a particular age range or level of learner.
- Teachers of English language need to be specifically trained to teach this subject.
- Students should only be selected for training as an English teacher if they have a good knowledge of the language, or if their training provides adequate instruction for them to acquire this knowledge.

Recommendation 3: Professional Development for teachers

Teachers like professional development and see it as an essential part of their job. However many teachers are still not receiving any in-service training. In some cases head teachers have said that they find it difficult to release teachers for these courses as there is nobody to take their classes while they are away. More in-service courses and workshops need to be made available for teachers, and these need not cost a great deal of money.

- Heads need to recognise that in-service workshops provide valuable professional development for teachers, and this has to be taken into consideration when allocating staff timetables.
- Alternatively, workshops could be organised at weekends so that teachers do not have to miss classes to attend them. However, a balance has to be found between work time and teachers' home life. Introducing more non-teaching days into the curriculum could be a solution to this problem.
- Attendance at professional development sessions could be legitimised by linking participation to promotion.
- Experienced teachers could be encouraged to present workshops at their school which would be open to teachers within their district.

- Good teachers could be identified and asked to teach model lessons to a group of students, so that other teachers might watch and learn from them.
- Teachers need to be encouraged to carry out action research projects in collaboration with others. Findings and recommendations could be beneficial to the school or wider education community as a whole.

Recommendation 4: Promotion opportunities for classroom teachers

Only a third of teachers think primary English teaching offers any sort of promotion opportunities. If the profession wants to attract high quality applicants and retain the best that it has, then efforts have to be made to offer more promotion opportunities. This might involve organising training courses in educational leadership for teachers selected by their school. Once a teacher had taken part in the leadership programme they would be eligible to apply for posts of responsibility either at their current school or at another one. Leadership posts should carry additional salary increments to incentivise them.

Recommendation 5: Teacher satisfaction

Most primary English teachers are happy they went into the profession and do not want to change their job. In order to maintain this level of satisfaction, employers are going to have to work hard. The profession is marked by poor levels of pay in some cases, and the global spread of tourism is increasingly offering other more lucrative work opportunities for people with a good level of education and high levels of English. If the profession is to retain its best teachers then efforts have to be made to keep teachers happy. Keeping teachers happy could be achieved through the implementation of the recommendations made above. The current study did not seek to find out exactly which aspects of their job make teachers happy, however it did uncover some interesting findings in this respect. Access to good quality training and development is valued highly; earning enough money to support your family is also rated as important, but money on its own is not the driving force behind a teacher's job satisfaction.

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Appendix 1 – Survey respondents



#	Answer		Response	%
1	Private		428	20%
2	State		1,663	80%
	Total		2,091	100%

Table 1. What type of school do you currently work in as your main job?



#	Answer		Response	%
1	Rural		659	27%
2	City/town		1,809	73%
	Total		2,468	100%

Table 2. About your main job. Is this a rural or city school?





#	Answer		Response	%
1	No		1,241	59%
2	Yes – I give private tuition		490	23%
3	Yes – I work part time in another school (please say what type of school this is)		213	10%
4	Yes – I do another type of job (please say what this is)		154	7%
	Total		2,098	100%

Table 3. Do you do any other paid work apart from this job?



#	Answer		Response	%
1	Male		218	9%
2	Female		2,206	91%
	Total		2,424	100%

Table 4. Are you male or female?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Under 25		113	5%
2	26–30		447	18%
3	31–40		849	35%
4	41–50		643	26%
5	Over 50		384	16%
	Total		2,436	100%

Table 5. How old are you?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Less than 1 year		67	3%
2	1–3 years		265	11%
3	4–8 years		531	22%
4	9–14 years		572	24%
5	15+ years		970	40%
	Total		2,405	100%

Table 6. Your teaching history. How many years have you been a teacher?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Less than 1 year		102	4%
2	1–3 years		341	14%
3	4–8 years		701	29%
4	9–14 years		594	25%
5	15+ years		663	28%
	Total		2,401	100%

Table 7. How many years have you been teaching English?

Appendix 2 – Respondents’ teaching contexts

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Under 5 years old		139	6%
2	5–6 years old		654	26%
3	7–8 years old		1,435	58%
4	9–10 years old		1,830	74%
5	11–12 years old		1,374	56%

Table 8. What ages of children do you teach? (you can tick more than one box).

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Less than 20		835	34%
2	21–35		1,465	59%
3	36–50		118	5%
4	51–65		17	1%
5	66–80		16	1%
6	More than 80		18	1%
	Total		2,469	100%

Table 9. How many children are in the main class you teach?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Under 5 years old		444	18%
2	5		186	8%
3	6		699	28%
4	7		430	17%
5	8		413	17%
6	9		208	8%
7	10		54	2%
8	Older than 10		39	2%
	Total		2,473	100%

Table 10. What age do children start learning English in your school?



#	Answer		Response	%
1	No, I teach English only		1,356	56%
2	Yes, I teach other subjects (please say what)		1,050	44%
	Total		2,406	100%

Table 11. Do you teach any other subjects (in your school) besides English?

















#	Answer		Response	%
1	It's a good career		463	19%
2	It has good pay or pension		88	4%
3	There are lots of teaching jobs available		132	5%
4	It offers secure employment		480	20%
5	I like children		1,868	77%
6	I wasn't qualified to do anything else		60	2%
7	You have a short working day		128	5%
8	The job is not too difficult		28	1%
9	It's interesting work – many varied activities during the day		1,651	68%
10	There are good promotion opportunities		47	2%
11	I chose it instead of doing military service		3	0%
12	Opportunities to travel		117	5%
13	Not a lot of other jobs were available at the time		121	5%
14	Somebody recommended teaching as a career		137	6%
15	You get a house with the job		10	0%
16	You have long holidays		304	13%
17	The training was easy		20	1%
18	It's a respectable job		691	29%

Table 12. Why did you become a teacher? (please tick three reasons).

Appendix 3 – Initial teacher training and qualifications held






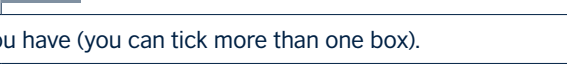
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Secondary school leaving certificate		727	31%
2	Teaching certificate		1,248	53%
3	Bachelors degree		901	38%
4	Masters degree		574	25%
5	Postgraduate teaching certificate or diploma		467	20%
6	Other (please state what)		321	14%

Table 13. Please tick the qualifications you have (you can tick more than one box).



#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		1,530	65%
2	No		815	35%
	Total		2,345	100%

Table 14. Do you have a qualification specifically to teach primary education?



#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes – please say what this is:		1,839	79%
2	No		479	21%
	Total		2,318	100%

Table 15. Do you have a qualification specifically to teach English?



#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		666	29%
2	No		1,664	71%
	Total		2,330	100%

Table 16. Are you currently studying for a further qualification?







#	Answer		Response	%
1	Bachelor's degree		110	17%
2	Masters degree		152	24%
3	Postgraduate certificate or Diploma		110	17%
4	CELTA/ DELTA/ Trinity certificate		31	5%
5	Doctorate		44	7%
6	Other – please say what		193	30%
	Total		640	100%

Table 17. If you said yes, what is this?



#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		1,801	77%
2	No		525	23%
	Total		2,326	100%

Table 18. Did you do teaching practice in a school as part of your training or qualifications?







#	Answer		Response	%
1	2 weeks or less		155	9%
2	2–4 weeks		291	17%
3	4–8 weeks		396	23%
4	8–12 weeks		272	16%
5	13–20 weeks		172	10%
6	More than 20 weeks		453	26%
	Total		1,739	100%

Table 19. If you answered yes to the previous question, how long did your Teaching Practice last for?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	All of it		724	41%
2	Most of it		368	21%
3	About half of it		376	21%
4	Hardly any of it		149	8%
5	None of it		148	8%
	Total		1,765	100%

Table 20. How much of your Teaching Practice was devoted to teaching English?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	All of it		401	23%
2	Most of it		523	30%
3	About half of it		489	28%
4	Hardly any of it		160	9%
5	None of it		193	11%
	Total		1,766	100%

Table 21. How much of your Teaching Practice was devoted to teaching the age group that you currently teach?

Appendix 4 – Professional development since qualifying

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		1,939	85%
2	No		342	15%
	Total		2,281	100%

Table 22. Have you received any training since qualifying as a teacher?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		277	79%
2	No		11	3%
3	Unsure		62	18%
	Total		350	100%

Table 23. If you answered NO to the previous question, would you like to attend further training courses or workshops?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Ministry of Education or other government organisation		1,029	54%
2	British Council		429	22%
3	Local teachers association		548	29%
4	The school where you work		475	25%
5	Other (please say who)		321	17%

Table 24. If you have had further training since qualifying, who provided it?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	No problems		1,152	52%
2	Yes, I would like a training course because...		1,061	48%
	Total		2,213	100%

Table 25. Do you experience any problems in your teaching which you feel training could help you with?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		679	30%
2	No		1,556	70%
	Total		2,235	100%

Table 26. Are you a member of an English teachers association?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes definitely		722	33%
2	Sometimes		833	38%
3	No I don't think they do		108	5%
4	I am unsure		535	24%
	Total		2,198	100%

Table 27. Do you think English teachers associations provide any useful benefits?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		410	18.59%
2	No		1,795	81.41%
	Total		2,205	100%

Table 28. Have you ever won a teaching award or prize?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Ministry of Education		177	32%
2	Your school		171	31%
3	British Council		35	6%
4	Teachers Association		49	9%
5	Other (please say who)		120	22%
	Total		552	100%

Table 29. If so, who awarded the prize?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		781	36%
2	No		804	37%
3	Not sure		592	27%
	Total		2,177	100%

Table 30. Do you think there are opportunities for career development as a primary school English teacher in your country?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		451	21%
2	No		1,169	54%
3	Not sure		542	25%
	Total		2,162	100%

Table 31. Would you like to become a school principal one day?

#	Answer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Response
1	Good English language skills	940	435	290	193	116	66	43	23	13	7	2,126
2	Having children of your own	39	140	53	65	67	75	112	141	213	1,221	2,126
3	Knowledge of the syllabus and exam system	19	104	222	172	215	211	291	306	407	179	2,126
4	Good qualifications	195	272	261	326	187	232	215	178	185	75	2,126
5	Teaching experience	234	341	368	342	369	200	119	89	51	13	2,126
6	A kind and understanding personality	314	203	231	228	277	360	214	186	86	27	2,126
7	Ability to play games and sing songs	32	110	128	201	248	317	416	303	276	95	2,126
8	Knowing the rules of English grammar	12	98	118	133	157	240	291	494	393	190	2,126
9	Teaching knowledge	289	332	308	268	252	153	132	145	190	57	2,126
10	Ability to keep discipline	51	90	147	197	238	271	292	262	312	266	2,126
	Total	2125	2125	2126	2125	2126	2125	2125	2127	2126	2130	–

Table 32. In your opinion, what makes a good primary English teacher? Please rank in order of importance. 1 = most important, 10 = least important.

Appendix 5 – Teacher satisfaction

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Very happy		957	44%
2	Happy		987	46%
3	Not so happy		191	9%
4	Unhappy		10	0%
5	Very unhappy		11	1%
	Total		2,156	100%

Table 33. Are you happy you became a primary school English teacher?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	I would like to stay as a primary school teacher		1,498	69%
2	I would like to teach in another type of organisation (please say what)		474	22%
3	I would like to leave teaching and take up another job (please say what)		189	9%
	Total		2,161	100%

Table 34. In the future, would you like to stay as a primary school teacher, or move into some other kind of work?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		1,410	65%
2	No		200	9%
3	Not sure		551	25%
	Total		2,161	100%

Table 35. Would you recommend a career in primary English teaching to young people today?

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