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Villegas-Torres, Perla; Lengeling, M. Martha

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Approaching Teaching as a Complex Emotional Experience: The Teacher Professional Development Stages Revisited

Abordando la enseñanza como una experiencia emocional compleja: las etapas de desarrollo profesional del maestro revisitadas

Perla Villegas-Torres
M. Martha Lengeling
Universidad de Guanajuato, Guanajuato, Mexico

Along the evolving teaching journey, teachers experience a series of events that allow them to transition from novice to expert. Throughout the years, such transition has been the object of theories and debates about how this process is carried out, and when it is that teachers move from one stage to the other. This article presents a study of a Mexican teacher of English and examines the professional-developmental stages based on Huberman's (1993) career cycle model. Its aim is to understand the challenges and decisions a teacher may encounter in her or his career. The article shows the realities a teacher faces by exploring the concepts of emotions, identity, socialization, and agency. Moreover, it questions the belief that teachers achieve expertise through accumulating years of practice.

Keywords: agency, emotions, identity, socialization, teacher professional development

Durante su carrera, los docentes experimentan eventos que les permiten pasar de principiantes a expertos. A través de los años dicha transición ha sido objeto de debates sobre cómo se lleva a cabo y cuándo se efectúa el cambio. Este artículo presenta un estudio de una maestra de inglés mexicana y examina las etapas de su desarrollo profesional basado en el modelo de Huberman (1993). El objetivo del artículo es comprender las dificultades y decisiones que un docente encuentra durante su carrera. El artículo ilustra las realidades enfrentadas por una docente mediante la exploración de los conceptos de socialización, identidad, emociones y agencia. Adicionalmente, desafía la creencia de que los docentes adquieren experiencia mediante la acumulación de años de enseñanza.

Palabras clave: agencia, desarrollo profesional docente, emociones, identidad, socialización

Perla Villegas-Torres https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3153-0920 · Email: p.villegastorres@ugto.mx
M. Martha Lengeling https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2570-5002 · Email: lengelin@ugto.mx

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Introduction

Teachers are part of a continuously changing career with a series of events and incidents which allow them to equip themselves with the knowledge and experiences necessary to move towards expertise. In most cases, it is a complex process characterized by continuous highs and lows because of the tremendous struggles that teachers undertake while handling their numerous responsibilities. Teachers face situations that challenge their stability and they are also given opportunities to change and grow while dealing with students, collaborating with colleagues at work, or exploring professional ventures in their careers. Throughout the years, this process of transitions has been the object of several theories and debates (Berliner, 2004; Bullough, 1989; Burden, 1982; Dreyfus, 2004; Katz, 1972; to name a few) regarding the different stages that teachers go through.

We introduce the participant, Violet, by providing a description of who she is and how she became an English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher in Mexico. Next a literature review is provided regarding teacher professional development (often known as teacher development), and Huberman's (1993) teacher career cycle model: agency, emotions, identity, and teacher socialization. Then, the methodology section shows how this research was carried out using a qualitative paradigm, a narrative approach, and a semistructured interview to gather data. The section of the data analysis shows the different stages that Violet goes through based upon Huberman's (1993) teacher career cycle model. Lastly, we offer conclusions of this research.

Description of the Participant's Background: Violet

We present a description of the participant whose pseudonym is Violet. She teaches EFL at a public university in the northern region of the State of Guanajuato, in central Mexico. Currently, she is in her early thirties and has worked as an EFL teacher for seven years. She feels she was fortunate enough to be hired in the first place where she asked for a job. As most EFL teachers in Mexico, Violet is a non-native English speaker. Teaching English was not the job that Violet had originally imagined devoting her life to. Her first idea was to work in an international business job, and consequently, she studied for and completed a BA in business degree at a large public university. During her studies she felt it was pertinent to simultaneously learn English in the university language department for four years. After graduating, Violet decided to travel to the United States as a tourist for a short period of time, but her trip extended to a stay of three years in which Violet enrolled in more English classes to strengthen her English level. This stay in the United States was meaningful for her and can perhaps be a consolidation of her English. She narrates the events once that she came back to Mexico in the following excerpt:

> When I came back since I studied international business, I wanted to work at the Puerto Interior [an interior logistics center near Leon, Guanajuato], but the salary there was too low and I wanted to continue studying. So, my mom told me: "Why don't you apply at this university [near her home] as an English teacher?" I went and I applied for it. I didn't want to be a teacher, and they gave me the job and I started to teach.

This decision marked the beginning of her journey as an English teacher. She did not plan to be an English teacher, but was offered a job and took it. This represents career entry for Violet which is often the case for EFL teachers in Mexico due to the teachers' proficiency of English. The next section provides a review of the literature and several concepts in relation to Violet's study.

Literature Review

For the purposes of this article, it is fundamental to clarify the concept of teacher professional development, also known as teacher development. As defined by

Bell and Gilbert (1994) "teacher development can be viewed as teachers' learning, rather than as others getting teachers to change. In learning, the teachers [construct] their beliefs and ideas, developing their classroom practice, and attending to their feelings associated with changing" (p. 493). This implies that teacher development cannot occur as top-down or imposed knowledge but instead, it is linked to an internal and personal determination to improve as a professional.

Given the importance that teacher professional development entails in the field of education, this phenomenon has been constantly studied by several authors. In her article, Avalos (2011) presents a review of publications spanning a complete decade from 2000 to 2010 regarding the main factors influencing teacher development, such as teacher learning, facilitation, collaboration, reflection processes, cognition, beliefs, and practice. Avalos's conclusion focuses on the fact that more recent research has attained an acknowledgment of the fact that teachers should be "both the subjects and objects of learning and development" (p. 17). In other words, previous literature concerning this area focused on providing teacher training, presenting teachers only as passive knowledge-receptors. Conversely, the more recent change consists of showing awareness of the fact that teachers' internal reflection and cognitive processes are decisive factors which influence teacher professional development. This same idea is reflected in the assertion that teacher professional development is based on constructivism and thus, teachers should be considered at the same time as learners involved in practices of observation, teaching, evaluation, and reflection (Dadds, 2001; King & Newmann, 2000; Lieberman, 1994; McLaughlin & Zarrow, 2001; Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Such a constructivist approach implies that teacher development does not occur in a linear way, but rather represents a multi-angular progression in which the already-mentioned cognitive processes are carried out. Likewise, Yoon et al. (2007) conducted a quantitative study to examine the existing evidence on teacher professional development and to determine whether it can be directly reflected in students' achievement. After reviewing 1,300 studies that addressed this issue, they found that teachers who receive substantial professional development (meaning an average of 49-hours) can enhance students' achievement with an indicator of 21 percentile points. This information sheds light on the importance of creating more strategies to boost teacher learning and teacher development. Moreover, Dede et al. (2009) sustain that most research in this field is limited in presenting anecdotal work, "without providing full details of the participants, setting, research questions, methods of data collection, or analytic strategies" (p. 8). In this sense, the authors urge researchers in the area to carry out more rigorous studies, with the aim of informing and providing stakeholders (practitioners, students, educational institutions, policy-makers, government, funders, etc.) with the necessary knowledge to make decisions and take actions to promote teachers' learning and development. An objective of this article is to examine in-depth the lived experiences of an EFL teacher providing details on the issues that she faces through her labor to inform readers about the particularities related to teacher professional development.

Previously, a vast amount of literature on models that discuss the various stages of teacher professional development had been published (Berliner, 2004; Bullough, 1989; Burden, 1982; Dreyfus, 2004; and Katz, 1972; to name a few). All have contributed with different perspectives to shed light on this matter; however, in many cases they promote the common belief that teachers achieve expertise through accumulating years of practice. Nevertheless, this idea might not reflect what happens in the actual practice, being that every teacher is unique in their teacher development.

The analysis presented in this article is guided by Huberman's (1993) teacher career cycle model of professional development. This model is used with the aim of exploring the stages of a teacher's career.

Such a model is organized in seven stages. Huberman uses these seven stages to describe the teacher's career cycle of professional development. The first one is the "career entry: survival and discovery", and according to the author it might occur during the first three years of teaching. The second stage is "stabilization," which might go along four to six years of teaching. Around the seventh to the 25th year of teaching, two stages might intermittently take place: "experimentation/diversification" and "reassessment/interrogation." These two stages are interrelated, and teachers might go back and forward between them. Similarly, any of these teachers may advance towards the following stages of "serenity" or "conservatism" approximately occurring in the space from 26 to 33 years of teaching. Teachers can also continuously interchange positions between these two stages or move forward to the final stage known as "disengagement," which is often described with adjectives such as serene or bitter.

There are several reasons for which this model was selected among the others. One of them is that as opposed to other models, it acknowledges that teacher development is not necessarily carried out in a linear or sequential process. Huberman explains this with the following: "It represents the development of a profession rather than a successive series of punctual events. Not always are the cycles experienced in the same order, nor do all the members of a profession traverse each sequence" (p. 3). In a similar manner, Huberman points out that all teachers do not necessarily follow the same fixed pattern in their development by stating that "the sequences characterize the majority of the cases, but never a whole population" (p. 3).

Another feature acknowledged in this model is that every teacher represents a unique situation with its own special characteristics. Therefore, it allows certain flexibility in the study of professional development. Huberman (1993) points out:

> For some, this process may appear linear, for others there are stages, regressions, dead-ends, and unpredictable changes. There are some people who never stop exploring, who never stabilize or who destabilize for psychological reasons. There are people who stabilize early, some later, and some never, some stabilize only to be destabilized. (p. 5)

This excerpt also offers the notion that psychological and emotional factors may be involved in the process of professional development. Similarly, in their study, Malderez et al. (2007) suggest that the process of becoming a teacher involves an experience filled with both positive and negative emotions. This situation becomes especially evident during the first teaching experiences in which teachers tend to overemphasize their difficulties within the classroom. In many cases, teachers might develop a feeling of frustration and defeat that generates the idea of abandoning the profession. This phenomenon is known as teacher burnout which Maslach and Jackson (1981) define as a set of symptoms that include "depersonalization" (meaning a loss of sense of their own reality), "reduced personal accomplishment," as well as "emotional exhaustion" (p. 104). Such symptoms can make teachers feel overwhelmed with negative emotions (Maslach et al., 1996) and thus, they become unable to assertively handle a class.

Also related to these ideas is teacher identity which, according to Norton (2000), has a complex composition since it is fluidly constructed through social interaction. Throughout their careers, teachers' identity tends to evolve and strengthen due to the accumulation of challenges, as well as the positive and negative experiences throughout the teaching practice.

Likewise, another concept relevant to the study of professional development is the term of teacher socialization, defined by Grusec and Hastings (2007) as "the way in which individuals are assisted in becoming members of one or more social groups" (p. 1). When starting their careers, teachers also learn from their peers in both formal and informal situations while

they socialize, observe, reflect, and imitate their peers' practices. Moreover, participation in different social settings allows cognitive development (Lantolf, 2000). In this sense, teachers learn while functioning in different social roles. Knowledge is acquired not only from training programs and peer support, but also from different personal, professional, and social experiences. The guidance and support from a more experienced teacher are fundamental in helping teachers to advance in their learning.

Method

In this section we describe the research methodology and the techniques used to carry out this study.

Qualitative Research

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005) qualitative research attempts to "interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p. 3). For this study, this paradigm supports the researchers to establish direct contact with the participants to collect narratives. It also helps to reconstruct the participants' stories and lived experiences in order to maintain the essence of their accounts. Correspondingly, qualitative research results appropriate when it comes to studying social and human sciences, because "it allows to capture a more human, emotional, and cultural side of the investigation" (Creswell, 2012, p. 40). For the analysis of the EFL teacher's professional development, emotions play an important role in Violet's career.

Mack et al. (2005) state that "the strength of qualitative research is its ability to provide complex textual descriptions about the 'human' side of an issue. It is effective in identifying behaviors, beliefs, opinions, emotions, and relationships of individuals" (p. 1). In this study, the participant's narratives were collected in order to have a broad overview of her experiences and identify the elements involved in her teacher professional development.

Narratives

Narrative inquiry represents a pathway to understand experience. Under this frame, the researcher is able to collect the life experiences from participants to tailor stories that capture their fundamental nature, and finally interprets them in narratives of their experience (Hatch & Wisniewski, 2002). This method allows the empowerment of the participants by means of telling their stories. Empowering relationships involve "feelings of connectedness that are developed in situations of equality, caring and mutual purpose, and intention" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4). This study presents and interprets the participant's story to understand its connection with teacher professional development.

Data Collection: Semi-structured Interviews

Lapan et al. (2011) point out that "semi-structured interviews use a detailed guide to focus on life-chapters, critical life episodes, or specific self-defining memories" (p. 60). Taking this as a guideline, after signing a previous consent form the participant was interviewed, examining events that shaped the participant's career entry and the different stages she went through as a professional. The interview was recorded and transcribed to subsequently proceed to the data analysis. To carry out this study, the teacher's accounts were first collected, in order to learn about her own experience as an EFL teacher. From these stories, her personal ideologies and beliefs were identified, as well as her self-perception.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Before approaching the phases, a point worth mentioning that Bullough (1989) brings to this discussion is that most preservice teachers construct a fantasy in which they picture their future class as an ideal one. Nonetheless, after becoming novice teachers and having their first teaching experiences, they face difficulties in diverse aspects, such as lacking strategies and techniques

for classroom management, administrative pressures, and language proficiency, among others. Due to all these job-related complexities, they soon reach the extreme opposite and develop feelings of insecurity. Regarding Violet's case, she did not have a certain time to idealize how her classes would be. Instead of imaging herself as an EFL teacher, she used to visualize her future as a businesswoman. Nevertheless, while seeking a job with a higher income, she decided to try teaching. In this section, we relate Violet's narrative to four stages of Huberman's (1993) teacher career cycle model of teacher professional development: (a) career entry, (b) stabilization, (c) experimentation/diversification, and (d) reassessment.

Career Entry

Huberman's (1993) model designates the first stage of teacher professional development as career entry. At the same time, he establishes two sub concepts to define this stage: survival and discovery. This first step represents for teachers the hardships of attempting a new career, along with the opportunity to explore the diverse possibilities to solve those hardships. The participant shares her experience as follows:

> I had no clue; I just started to teach. I remember like a month after [starting my teaching job] I did not want to be a teacher. I wanted to quit but then my ego was like: "OK, I have to finish this quarter and that's it, then you can go on."

The participant's description of her first days teaching coincides with the description that Huberman (1993) gives about the period of career entry. The author describes it as a period of both survival and discovery. What is more, he adds the survival aspect has to do with the reality shock, in which most teachers experience strong feelings of insecurity. In Violet's words, these first negative emotions constitute the first red flag that might take the teacher towards an accelerated burnout. Maslach and Jackson (1981) sustain that one of the symptoms burnout includes is a feeling of depersonalization, which Violet shows when not considering herself a teacher. Another feeling associated with burnout is poor personal achievement, which is reflected in Violet's idea of only finishing the semester. Her statement also shows a certain level of frustration since she was not trained to teach, so that during this period she considered leaving the profession.

Insecurity becomes the most representative emotion of novice teachers, as shown in the following excerpt:

> I didn't feel comfortable speaking in front of people, being observed and questioned. I'm very…how can I say it… insecure. I tend to blush very often, which I hate and as a teacher it is awful. I was so nervous, and then students would ask many questions. So, I had to learn to control myself in order to answer those questions and to help my students to understand. It was a big problem for me.

In effect, Huberman (1993) sustains that during the survival stage of career entry teachers tend to feel uncomfortable working in front of the group, suffering from "the vacillation of hostility and intimacy towards one's pupils and uncertainty about the classroom environment" (p. 5). The feeling of preoccupation with the teacher self seems to increase when dealing "with unruly or intimidating students" (p. 5). Probably this comes as a product of the teacher's inexperience and lack of strategies to deal with defiant students, as Violet's account confirms:

> I remember once that I got into the classroom and a male student was like "Oh, it's a lady." I'm very insecure and I was like "Oh, my God, I'm in trouble." I started to doubt my knowledge, to feel that my English knowledge was not enough, and I started to hesitate and that does not help in my development. . . . Sometimes there are some students who feel they know everything and that makes me feel like that.

This excerpt gives evidence of the creation of a vicious circle: the more a teacher vacillates, the more

the students challenge her or his authority. Nevertheless, this is a commonly occurring situation during this beginning stage.

Related to this problem is the teachers' "difficulty of combining instruction and classroom management" (Huberman, 1993, p. 5). The novice teacher's lack of knowledge and experience manifests itself through a frantic search for strategies and activities to compensate for this problem, as shown in the following comment:

> My main challenge at that time was how to plan my lessons, I didn't know how to organize my classes and the materials. Many of the classes that I was teaching at the university were a copy of what my teachers did in the States. So, if I wanted to introduce an activity, I just remembered my teachers from the States.

According to the above, Violet felt she had a lack of knowledge to plan a lesson at the beginning of her teaching practice. This fact drew her to imitate the way in which her former teachers worked. Regarding this issue, Lortie (1975) proposes the concept of apprenticeship of observation which considers that teachers start learning from their former teachers who act as models. Consequently, this influence can be seen when novice teachers decide to imitate the way in which they were taught.

Among her teachers, Violet chose a specific teacher who served as a role model. In the next excerpt she further explains the reasons for her choice:

> I don't like to speak in front of people . . . When I was studying in the States, I had a teacher who spoke five different languages, including Spanish. Once I did not understand something and he said "OK, don't worry," and he explained it to me in Spanish. He never said anything like "Hey guys! She doesn't understand" and he was like "OK, don't worry. I will explain it to you in your own language" and that affected in my life; that's what I want to do when a student is shy. [*sic*]

In reference to the participant's comment, Numrich (1996) explains that normally novice teachers decide to promote or to avoid specific instructional strategies based on their previous positive or negative experiences.

To transition to the stabilization stage, teachers require support from more experienced peers, experience and knowledge that will allow them to develop their own teaching identity as well as to develop and improve their pedagogical strategies. In the following excerpt, Violet narrates the way in which one of her coworkers supported her: "I didn't know how to plan my lessons, or how to organize them, so Juan helped me to have an idea of how to organize my classes." This teaching peer helped her with practical knowledge of the profession, which increased her self-confidence as a teacher. This in turn made her consider teaching as a serious profession. Violet elaborates more on this matter:

> I started to enjoy teaching and yes that's how it happened. It was weird because I did not want it at first, but then I liked it. That was why I started to study the BA [in English language teaching] because I liked to teach after two–three months teaching, and then I started the BA.

Huberman (1993) sustains that in addition to surviving, the stage of career entry also involves an element of discovery. Regarding this, he mentions that the teacher has "the enthusiasm of the beginner, the headiness of finally being in a position of responsibility" (Huberman, 1993, p. 5). The author explains that even when the survival and discovery phases are experienced in parallel, usually one is more dominant than the other. Violet's accounts place her more often on the survival side.

Nonetheless, entering the BA program in English language teaching (ELT) marked a starting point to her developmental process.

> When I entered the BA, I changed a lot. I learned how to organize my lessons. I did not pay attention to the lessons or approaches. I started to play with everything: "I learned this, OK I'm gonna apply it. I learned that and I'm gonna apply it." So, I started to play with the

> methodologies, approaches, or whatever thing they taught us in the BA.

The eclectic methodology that Violet used during this time coincides with Huberman's claim that the entry stage includes a sort of exploration. As he comments "exploration consists of making provisional choices, of investigating the contours of the new profession and with experimenting with one or several roles" (Huberman, 1993, p. 5). However, this continuous trial and error period should not be interpreted by teachers as falling into erratic behavior. Conversely, this exploration will allow them to understand better the particularities of the profession and eventually to find their own teaching style. From here teachers will move to the next stage as in the case of Violet.

Stabilization

At some point in the teaching journey, after solving the initial intricacies that entering a new career entails and getting a more advanced level of socialization, teachers are able to gain a certain level of confidence in their practice. Such confidence is jointly reflected with the development of agency, which may trigger a desire for growing professionally, that is, teachers find themselves at the door of starting their professional development. The next excerpt illustrates Violet's passage through a transitional period in which she moved from the career entry to the stabilization stage:

> When I entered the BA, I changed a lot. I learned how to organize my lessons. I started to feel more comfortable because I felt I have the roots, or I have some knowledge about teaching. So, I thought: "OK, now I can say that I'm a teacher because I'm learning so maybe I'm doing everything wrong but I'm learning so I can experiment with everything."

As Violet explains, starting the BA program in ELT brought her a feeling of confidence. It was then that she felt validated as a teacher within her educational institution with the knowledge she had obtained in the degree program. In this period, she tries to put into practice what she sees in the BA and she is more confident as a teacher.

For Huberman (1993) this behavior is a sign that the teacher has entered the stabilization stage, which is characterized by "an increased confidence, comfort, and a shift away from self-absorption. One is less preoccupied with oneself, and more concerned with instructional matters" (p. 6). After crossing the turmoil, the teachers' pressures are lessened. The new feeling of comfort can be noticed in the following excerpt:

> In my personal life, I'm just shy. For me it is very difficult to go and to talk. If I am like that in the classroom, students do not like it. They expect to see somebody more active. I have to be more extroverted, to look happier, like the opposite that I am.

It seems that this conscious decision-making adds to Violet's professional identity and indicates the transition to the stabilization stage.

Norton (2000) affirms that identity is a fluid process, and here we can see how Violet accommodates herself to the new environment and assumes her role as a teacher. She takes on characteristics that she considers are expected and needed for this role. Huberman (1993) states that "the choice of a professional identity constitutes a decisive stage in ego development and reflects a stronger affirmation of the self" (p. 6). According to Huberman, these factors might put the continuity of teacher professional development at risk. In the next excerpt, Violet details the consequences of falling into a comfort zone.

> I think that for a period I got stuck. I think that it is because I was confident, and I started using the same strategy. I was not even preparing the class or material to engage my students.

Apparently, reflecting upon and acknowledging her own conformative attitude led Violet to consider new

venues for her teaching career. Thus, how long a teacher remains in the stabilization stage depends mostly on his or her introspection and reflection ability. Only in this manner will the person be able to move on in the developmental process. Considering Violet's case, she took agency of her decisions and moved to the stage of experimentation or diversification.

Experimentation/Diversification

According to Huberman's (1993) teacher career cycle model, once being at the stabilization stage, the teachers' journey can take two possible directions: opening their way to reach the stage of experimentation and diversification or going to the stage of reassessment, depending on the teacher's decisions and attitudes. Violet's account shows that in her case she opted for experimenting.

> Then I started to change again and I decided like "OK, let's go back to the basis, and try to explore again" and I tried to experiment again because I think that's the way we can improve.

As Violet manifests, being in a state of stability led her to feel dissatisfied and to look for new challenges. This shows how a reflective teacher can make decisions. Huberman (1993) expands on this situation sustaining that "pedagogical consolidation leads to increase one's impact in the classroom. Teachers embark on a series of personal experiments by diversifying their instructional materials, their methods of evaluation, or their instructional sequences" (p. 8). This perhaps refers to how the teachers have gained control over initial concerns that they faced at career entry, such as classroom management, planning and presenting a class, as well as handling the diverse procedures imposed by the administration. Violet elaborates more on this issue in the following comment:

> I'm still learning, because sometimes I was working with some ideas that I liked, but then I noticed they didn't work with my students. I'm still developing my profile as a teacher: "OK, this can work here; this cannot work here." So, I cannot say that I have one way of teaching.

In the above excerpt Violet shows concern not only about delivering a class, but also, she wants to excel in the use of effective strategies to improve her students' learning. This coincides with Huberman's (1993) argument that:

> teachers' desires to heighten their impact in the classroom leads to an awareness of instructional factors blocking that objective and, from there, to press for more consequential reforms. Teachers in this phase could be the most highly motivated and dynamic. (p. 8)

This willingness of advancing towards expertise leads teachers to search for diverse opportunities that foster professional development. Despite this continuous search for improving her teaching practice, Violet still finds herself insecure at times. She has learned to explore in her teaching and reflect, but she is not entirely secure of her choice of teaching methodology. This attitude might be interpreted as evidence that Violet is moving to the stage of reassessment.

Reassessment

As denominated in Huberman's (1993) model, this stage's name suggests that teachers take a step back to allow reflection on their own teaching practice. During this period, they might look at the journey they have taken so far and ponder on the need to make some adjustments to their beliefs, attitudes, or pedagogical practices. In Violet's experience, it is possible to identify the reassessment stage in the following:

> Sometimes I feel like in the beginning, very insecure. I don't know why. I don't know if it's a process, or it's because I haven't finished my thesis. I think that has affected my development as a teacher and I feel insecure. I'm like: "I cannot tell them [my students] something because I haven't even finished."

Huberman (1993) states that this feeling is part of the stage of reassessment, which is described as "a stage of self-doubt" or "period of uncertainty" in which the teacher "examines what one has made of one's life," and compares it "against one's initial ideas and objectives. One may then decide whether continuing in the same path or striking out but with more uncertainty and insecurity on a new path" (p. 8). This episode in the professional teaching journey can be taken as a growing opportunity when the teacher is able to acknowledge the weak points in order to strengthen them. Once again, socialization plays an important role here, since more experienced peers might guide the teacher to find alternatives to pursue his or her objectives.

Despite the negative emotions associated with the fact of not having formally obtained her degree, Violet continues searching for options to continue fostering her professional development. In the following excerpt she expresses this idea:

> Now I think I am stuck, but I am willing to learn; that is why I'm trying to go in these free online courses, even though I don't do them as I would like. I would like to have more time, but I think that they are helping me in some way; I can continue learning even though I haven't finished my thesis.

As shown in the data describing her professional journey, Violet has frequently faced several highs and lows which, when interpreting Huberman's (1993) teacher career cycle model, promote the transition from one stage to the other. Remarkably, Violet seems to be aware of this idea in her practice, since she summarized her teaching career as follows: "It's been a roller coaster! So, sometimes I feel good or bad. I think that I'm doing well because whatever thing I learned, it is helping me. But then I realize that no, I must do some changes" [*sic*].

Regarding Huberman's (1993) career cycle model, Violet's case illustrates the way in which teachers' careers evolve. As in most of cases, her journey has been full of complexities including emotions, challenging situations, achievements, opportunities of socialization, weaknesses, and strengths that have shaped her identity, as well as her agency to pursue her own professional development. The search for professional development pushes her upwards and allows her to overcome the difficulties that emerge daily.

Conclusion

This study has revisited Huberman's (1993) teacher career cycle model of teacher professional development. The findings obtained challenge the common belief that expertise goes hand in hand with the number of years teaching. The analysis shows that the level of expertise that a teacher develops does not depend on the number of years working in this profession. In their developmental process, teachers can sometimes move from one stage to another because of certain events or circumstances in their teaching practice. In some instances, such events trigger positive emotions and attitudes, and in other instances negative ones. These emotions and attitudes modify teachers' behavior and thus, they end up having an impact on professional development. Even though Huberman's teacher career cycle model provides an estimation of the years a teacher may take to transition from one stage to the other, it also recognizes that each instance is different.

People with whom teachers socialize become an important influence in their professional careers; either when a relative or friend influences their career choice, when remembering and applying the techniques of a role-model teacher from the past, or during the peer-socialization process. All these shareholders, in combination with the varied experiences faced in the teaching practice, contribute to shaping teachers' identity and love for the profession. In no case should teaching be considered a solitary activity, and even when there may be cases in which teachers' personality prompts an isolated practice, since they might not be advancing in their level of knowledge and quality of teaching.

It is fundamental to increase the production of scientific research in this field, with the aim of documenting and informing practitioners on the developmental process that teachers go through during their careers. Furthermore, it is essential to examine this knowledge especially for preservice and novice teachers who are at a greater risk of experiencing burnout or even of leaving the profession. Nevertheless, it is important to change teachers' notion of failure within the classroom to the notion of the appreciation of an opportunity to learn and improve. Novice teachers should know that not everything that goes wrong within the classroom is their fault, and that eventually, with adequate guidance and increased knowledge, they will be able to reach expertise.

Finally, an important aspect to remark on is that taking agency of one's own emotions is a long process. As has been observed in this study, even though Violet has developed the ability to take on a professional identity when being in front of the classroom, she still finds herself overwhelmed with emotions, such as insecurity. Nevertheless, this challenge makes teachers transform their own identity in a positive way. The positive attitude towards professional development boosts teachers upwards in the path towards professional development. Violet seems to have a genuine interest in creating a positive impact on her students' learning.

To sum this up, at the end of the semistructured interview, Violet was asked to define her teaching philosophy to which she answered: "I want to inspire my students." This shows how Violet sees herself as a teacher and the role that she takes on. Her students are important for her, and this authentic concern for overcoming her own weaknesses in teaching constitutes the motivation to make decisions that will bring her closer to reaching expertise.

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About the Authors

Perla Villegas-Torres holds a master's degree in Applied Linguistics in ELT (Universidad de Guanajuato, Mexico), and a bachelor's degree in ELT (Universidad de Guanajuato, Mexico). Currently, she teaches at the Universidad de Guanajuato. She has published several articles and presented in national and international conferences.

M. Martha Lengeling holds a master's degree in TESOL (West Virginia University, USA) and a PhD in Language Studies (Kent University, UK). She teaches at the Universidad de Guanajuato and is a member of the National System of Researchers (*Sistema Nacional de Investigadores*).