

# PNIEB Teachers' Profiles and Professional Development: A Needs Analysis <sup>1</sup>

*Peter Sayer<sup>2</sup>, The University of Texas at San Antonio*

*María Virginia Mercau, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana Iztapalapa*

*Guadalupe Blanco López, Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla*

## Abstract

The implementation of the PNIEB presents a tremendous demand for new classroom teachers, which is exceeding the available pool of qualified candidates. Therefore, there is an urgent need to focus on teacher training, and to organize teacher training efficiently in order to maximize the effects and make wise use of limited resources. The authors report on a needs analysis study undertaken to identify key areas to focus training efforts for PNIEB teachers. The study consisted of a national survey of 370 teachers representing 24 different states. The analysis of the surveys identified three different profiles of PNIEB teachers. Each type of teacher identified has different strengths and professional development needs. Given this diversity, a "one size fits all" approach to teacher training does not seem adequate. The findings suggest that training programs for PNIEB teachers should take a differentiated approach, and be tailored to respond to their specific linguistic, pedagogical and educational needs. The authors conclude by encouraging long term capacity building, in particular by creating specializations within *licenciaturas* and *diplomados* that focus on working with specific needs and characteristics of children in public schools.

## Resumen

La implementación del PNIEB presenta una demanda considerable de nuevos maestros, lo cual exceder la cantidad de personas disponibles que cuentan con el perfil establecido. Por esta razón existe la necesidad de concentrarnos en la capacitación de maestros y de organizar dicha capacitación de manera eficiente con la intención de que se haga el mejor uso posible de los recursos limitados de que se dispone. Los autores reportan un estudio de análisis de necesidades desarrollado con la intención de identificar las áreas principales en los que podría enfocarse la capacitación para maestros PNIEB. Consistió en la aplicación de una encuesta nacional a 370 maestros provenientes de 24 estados. El análisis de los resultados de la encuesta reveló tres perfiles profesionales diferentes de maestros PNIEB. Cada perfil presenta ciertas fortalezas o destrezas y ciertas necesidades de capacitación. Dada esta diversidad, ofrecer un solo tipo de capacitación para todos los maestros parece no ser la respuesta adecuada. Los resultados obtenidos sugieren que la capacitación para los maestros PNIEB debería responder a las necesidades lingüísticas, pedagógicas y educativas específicas de los diferentes grupos de maestros PNIEB. Los autores concluyen con una recomendación para construir a largo plazo la capacidad de los programas para formar maestros de inglés, particular con especializaciones brindadas por las licenciaturas y diplomados que traten de las características específicas de los niños en escuelas públicas.

## The challenge of teacher training in the PNIEB

In order to implement the PNIEB, administrators have had to focus on developing at least three areas: developing the curriculum, developing the materials, and developing teachers<sup>3</sup>. Whereas the curriculum is developed by the national ministry and textbooks by publishers working with ministry guidelines, teacher training is the responsibility of local actors at the state level. The PNIEB coordinators at the national Ministry of Education (SEP) have determined a minimum

---

<sup>1</sup> This is a refereed article.

<sup>2</sup> [peter.sayer@utsa.edu](mailto:peter.sayer@utsa.edu)

<sup>3</sup> See Ramírez Romero, Sayer & Pamplon Irigoyen (forthcoming) for a description of the perspectives of the various stakeholders of the PNIEB, as well as the other articles in this special issue relating to aspects of the curriculum, methods, and materials.

acceptable profile for teachers, including a base level of English proficiency; however, state coordinators are the ones charged with hiring and providing in-service professional training.

According to a 2012 SEP report, in order to fully implement the PNIEB 99,500 English teachers will be needed. This represents a tremendous demand for new classroom teachers, and a significant challenge to state coordinators and local universities to create training programs: from *licenciatura* and *diplomados*, to workshops and language improvement courses. This is a *capacity-building project*, because it entails creating or significantly expanding professional development programs. For pre-service teacher training, the *normales* (teacher training schools) only train English teachers for *secundaria* levels. In the autonomous and other universities, BA-TEFL programs are usually fairly small and generally more oriented towards working with adult L2 learners or for working in private schools.

For in-service teacher training, the PNIEB program in many states is brand new, and state coordinators are often concerned first and foremost with making sure there are enough teachers in the classrooms. With a few exceptions, most state PNIEB programs do not have the resources to hire enough supervisors or coordinators to organize professional development programs. In some cases, some state coordinators have partnered with external organizations or local universities to provide English language improvement classes, *diplomado* courses focused on teaching methods, and workshops. The national PNIEB office has provided some initial training for PNIEB teachers and supervisors (first done by trainers from the Tecnológico de Monterrey, and then during 2010-2012 through the ITESO in Guadalajara). However, what is needed is for states to develop a carefully-designed and sustained program of on-going teacher training that responds to the professional development needs of their teachers. To this end, this research seeks to contribute by providing a needs analysis that can inform the design of these programs.

### **Objectives and research questions**

English has been taught at the *secundaria* (middle school or lower secondary) level since at least 1954, and possibly since 1927 (Reyes Cruz, *et al*, 2011). With the implementation of the PNIEB in 2009, English instruction was extended through primary and preschool. In 2011, high school became compulsory, and also included English. So, as of 2011, English is included as part of the national curriculum in every grade of public K-12. According to the curriculum, a child starting in the PNIEB in 2011-12, would graduate in 2025 having studied English for 13 years. The curriculum is designed for the student to advance from the A0 beginner level to a B2 "independent user" (equivalent to the First Certificate level) on the Common European Framework of Reference scale (Council of Europe, 2001).

However, we know that students' success in learning an L2 does not only depend on the curriculum, the method, or the textbook. Rather, a large part of the success of the PNIEB will depend on the teacher. We argue that effective PNIEB teachers will need three things: (1) a decent level of English proficiency, in particular oral language proficiency, (2) knowledge of effective teaching methods, including communicative and sociocultural approaches, and (3) the knowledge and disposition for working with children (with various capacities and needs) in public school settings (Mercau, Sayer & Blanco, 2012).

The hiring of a large number of young teachers to work in a new program with a new curriculum creates an obvious need for teacher preparation and training. Unfortunately, in many states there was no pre-existing state program prior to the PNIEB, and coordinators and supervisors have had to develop *ad hoc* a training program, often with very limited resources.

To this end, we wanted to conduct a study that would allow us to offer information that would be useful to administrators and those involved in developing training programs for PNIEB teachers. This research responds to the following questions:

- a. Who are the PNIEB teachers? What are their profiles?
- b. What do the teachers consider to be the main strengths and weaknesses of working in the PNIEB?
- c. What do the PNIEB teachers perceive as their main professional development needs?
- d. What are the specific needs for different profiles of PNIEB teachers?

Our goal, therefore, is both to identify the areas that teachers need to improve, as well as recognize the strengths they bring that training programs can build on. In this article, we describe the analysis based on a national survey of PNIEB teachers. We argue that training programs should not take a “one size fits all” approach, but rather take a *differentiated* approach. A differentiated approach is based on the specific needs of individual teachers. This will both maximize the benefits of training for busy teachers, and be the most cost effective for under-resourced programs.

We begin by giving brief background about primary English language teaching (PELT) in Latin America and the problem in finding qualified teachers. We then describe the study, explaining the methodology and providing an analysis, results, and recommendations.

### **PELT and teacher training in Mexico and Latin America**

The PNIEB represents the largest expansion of English language instruction in Mexico’s history. However, the phenomenon of extending English to the public primary school curriculum is part of a global trend called PELT: Primary English Language Teaching (Moon & Enever, 2010). Cha and Ham (2008) note that during 1920-1944 only 12.3% of countries (N=65) included English as a second language in the primary curriculum, whereas by 1990-2005 this number had risen to 69.0%, and has undoubtedly continued to rise, especially in developing nations. In Latin America, the trend is the same, though the numbers are somewhat lower: only 44.4% in Latin America (N=18) included English in the curriculum at primary levels. However English is firmly established in secondary education: 100% of Latin American countries include English in the secondary curriculum. The justification is that in order to support neo-liberal economic policies, countries need to have more citizens with greater English proficiency; therefore, it is necessary to expand English instruction to more people, and start instruction earlier in the curriculum. This can be called a “more & earlier” policy or approach to English acquisition in education (Hamid, 2010).

A review of current PELT programs in Latin America indicates that Mexico is the first country in the region to integrate English in every grade in K-12 public education (Sayer, forthcoming). However, it was not the first country in the region to adopt the “more & earlier” approach. Argentina reformed their curriculum in 2006 to begin teaching English in fourth grade (Zappa-Hollman, 2007). Colombia began the *Programa Nacional de Bilingüismo* (PNB) in 2004 (Herazo Rivera, et. al., 2012), and Chile initiated its *English Opens Doors Programme* in 1999 (Matear, 2008; McKay, 2003). All of these authors note that in each country one of the main challenges administrators faced in trying to establish an effective program was finding enough people who were capable of providing high-quality instruction in English.

*Foreign language teacher training in Mexico*

The terrain of second or foreign language teacher training (FLTT) is very complex and can be analyzed from many different perspectives. Here we will mention just three different stands. First, Burns and Richards (2009) note that the development of the field of second language teacher education has been shaped by its response to two issues. On the one hand, there has been an internally initiated change as the knowledge base and associated instructional practices of FLTT has shifted through the efforts of applied linguists and specialists in the field. On the other hand, external pressures such as the globalization and the role of English as a language of international trade and communication have had an impact on national educational authorities who produced new language teaching policies, among other changes.

Both of these trends are evident in Mexico. The internal change has general manifested in the importation of ELT methodologies from English-speaking countries. Likewise, university teacher trainers more than often have trained themselves abroad in one of those countries and bring this knowledge to their Mexican classrooms. The external pressures in Mexico are seen in two sometimes-opposing processes going on: international English language expansion (we can see the PNIEB as an example of this), and the constitutionally recognized right of indigenous Mexicans to receive school instruction in their mother tongue. This means that Mexican Spanish speakers learn English at school as an additional language while different Mexican ethnicities need to learn Spanish as a second language and English as an additional language.

Secondly, there is the recognized fact that the tendency in FLTT has been to view L2 teaching as a matter of translating theories of second language acquisition (SLA) into effective instructional practices (Johnson, 2009). Many FLTT curricula designers have drawn the content for their programs from the field of theoretical and applied linguistics; however, L2 teachers' knowledge about their teaching practice and about the context where they teach has often not been considered or systematically incorporated into FLTT in this country (Ramírez Romero, Sayer & Pamplon Irigoyen, forthcoming).

In Mexico, this model of teaching prospective teachers language formal properties and theories of SLA has two implications that ought to be considered. The first one is that since prospective teachers are not going to teach their L1 but a foreign language, they need to spend several years developing proficiency in the language while at the same time learning how to teach it. Second, most (if not all) the SLA research studied in Mexican FLTT programs have developed in English speaking countries and it is sometimes hard to find its immediate application in Mexican contexts. A prime example of this is the bulk of SLA research which draws on immigrant second language learners in the United States; the processes involved with these learners in ESL settings are arguably different than those in EFL settings like Mexico.

According to Freeman and Johnson (1998) the knowledge base of FLTT must include not only disciplinary or subject matter knowledge that describes how languages are structured, used and acquired but it must also include content of L2 teaching: pedagogical and contextual information that in service teachers can provide.

Thirdly, there is an emerging approach in FLTT that goes beyond the consideration of the second language teacher as technicians defined by certain behaviors, knowledge or language teaching methods. This new approach places *identity* at the center of language teaching and learning. According to Miller (2009) current research on teacher identity stresses the fact "that language teaching cannot be separated from social language use in the classrooms, and the centrality of situated meanings within repertoires of social practices, involving specific social and institutional contexts and memberships" (p. 173).

In this view of teacher training, the preparation the individual goes through in becoming a professional teacher – learning the disciplinary knowledge and content – is a process of identity construction (Sayer, 2012). The teacher's identity is seen as transitional, in process, co-constructed in situ and negotiated. Novice teachers will deploy and test the resources they have (their personal biography, knowledge, interaction skills, beliefs about teaching and learning) in social and institutional contexts and in this never-ending process they will be building and negotiating their identity. At the same time, the learners and other institutional members have the power to either accept and legitimize or deny both the message and the identity of the speaker (Miller, 2009).

The Colegio de Letras Modernas of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) began offering modern languages courses for teachers (*normalistas*) as early as 1913. The UNAM created BA, MA, and PhD programs in 1916, 1922, and 1942, respectively<sup>4</sup>. However, there were few language teacher preparation programs elsewhere in the country, and during the 20<sup>th</sup> century the demand for teachers quickly outpaced the capacity of programs, so that by the 1970s most English teachers did not have professional qualifications. Generally, someone with good English (or an native English speaker) could be hired as an English teacher regardless of his or her lack of credentials. In the 1980s, there were only four undergraduate and two masters programs for ELT in Mexico. However, by the 1990s the picture changed drastically: according to the Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior (ANUIES) 35 universities initiated BA programs in ELT. Twenty years later most of the state public autonomous universities have BA programs and some of them also postgraduate programs in the field. These university programs offer subjects on the fields of language acquisition, pedagogy, English and Spanish, didactics, culture and sociolinguistics. Lately due to the great need of primary and kindergarten teachers, some universities started to develop courses on children's development and on teaching languages to children.

Alongside the university system there is the Normal Schools system, the national teacher training institutions. Since 1946, the Escuela Normal Superior has been in charge of preparing secondary teachers in different subjects, including English. According to the 2012 curriculum, individuals studying to be English teachers in public schools will reach the B2 level<sup>5</sup> and take a subject called "social practices of language" (*prácticas sociales del lenguaje*).

One difference that is worth noting between university-trained and *normalista* English teachers is that the latter must complete a significant amount of classroom-based practicum hours (called *práctica docente*, equivalent to field experience, service learning, or student teaching). In-service training takes many forms. Teachers in private schools often receive little or no training<sup>6</sup>, whereas state programs (both previously and now under the auspices of the PNIEB) have usually relied on English textbook publishers, their own supervisors, or external courses<sup>7</sup>.

4 See <http://www.filos.unam.mx/LICENCIATURA/modernas/historia> .

5 The level refers to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), and is equivalent to a First Certificate or "independent user" level; see <http://www.dgespe.sep.gob.mx/>. However, it is unclear whether most Normal students can achieve this goal without taking many (and expensive) additional English classes. Currently, many public secondary teachers have a low level of English, often A2 or lower.

6 In private schools, teachers are often asked to implement content-based teaching without having been training in content-language integrated learning (CLIL) or other content-based pedagogical approaches (see Sayer & López Gopar, in press).

7 A certain number of PNIEB teachers and supervisors from each state received an initial training in the curriculum, first from the Tecnológico de Monterrey and subsequently from the ITESO in Guadalajara. In some states teachers have received training from Dartmouth College in the Rassias Method, and more recently the British Council has been awarded a contract to train PNIEB teachers.

### **A survey of PNIEB teachers**

In order to discover what sorts of training programs would best fit PNIEB teachers, we decided to adopt a *needs analysis* approach. Nation and Mcalister (2010) state that a needs analysis is simply a formal procedure to: "examine what the learners know already and what they need to know" (p. 24). Richards (2001) explains that needs analysis arose as an approach in education in the 1960s as an approach to develop curricula based on the learners' needs. Needs analysis was introduced into TESOL by the 1980s through the sub-field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), where course designers need to develop language courses that responded exactly to the specific necessities of a group of learners (English for nursing, English for tourism, etc.). In our case, we adapted the approach to focus not on language learners and their needs for learning English, but rather on language teachers and what they need to be effective L2 English teachers.

Nation and Macalister (2010) and Richards (2001) point out that a needs analysis can be influenced by the perspectives and biases of those who are carrying out the analysis. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that we are all university-based scholars who have been involved in working with and training English teachers in Mexico for many years. We have been involved in the development of *licenciatura* and *diplomado* programs, as well as collaborating directly with the SEP, state coordinators, and with people at other institutions on different aspects of the PNIEB. Furthermore, our understanding of what an English teacher working in Mexico should know is informed by our own work (e.g. Sayer, 2012; 2002) as well as our readings in the area of language teacher learning (Freeman, 1996) and the knowledge base of teacher education in ELT (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). So, even though we bring this background to our work, our motivation for this study was to try to understand better who the PNIEB teachers are, and to be able to disseminate this information to help inform teacher development efforts for PNIEB teachers.

#### *Methodology*

The most feasible way to obtain descriptive information from a large number of participants across the country was to develop an on-line questionnaire. Questionnaires or surveys are a common tool for conducting needs analysis, because as Richards (2001) points out, "they are relatively easy to prepare, they can be used with large numbers of subjects, and they obtain information that is relatively easy to tabulate and analyze" (p. 60). The limitation we faced here is that the veracity of the information provided has not been independently confirmed (often called "triangulation of data") and so, for example, information about the respondent's certification or TOEFL level may or may not be accurate, though this is a shortcoming with all research relying primarily on questionnaires. However, the trends detected in the survey do align with what we have encountered in interviewing and observing PNIEB<sup>8</sup>, and we are confident that the findings described in this study accurately represent the profiles and tendencies of PNIEB teachers across Mexico.

#### *Design of the instrument*

We began the design of the instrument by generating a long list of possible questions, based on our own previous experiences with English language teaching in Mexico, and from our interactions with PNIEB teachers. Next, we followed the guidelines for constructing questionnaires in applied linguistics suggested by Dörnyei (2003) and Brown (2004). We consolidated questions so the survey could be completed in about 15 minutes. The instrument consisted of a survey with 20 items (see Appendix A), 18 closed type items (multiple choice,

---

<sup>8</sup> The lead author has been involved in several national and local projects with PNIEB teachers, including as lead investigator for the SEP on the national evaluation of the pilot phase of the PNIEB during 2009-2012, and has conducted site visits and interviewed teachers in 16 different states.

lists, and Likert scales) and two open-ended items to elicit further opinions about the program. The design of the instrument reflected the objectives: items 1-9 ask about the respondent's professional profile, items 10-14 about the working conditions and contract, and 15-18 asks the teachers to identify and rank aspects related to their practice and perceived training needs.

The survey was administered via SurveyMonkey, an on-line questionnaire tool. The pilot version was completed by 10 individuals, who offered feedback and suggestions to improve the items. The final, revised survey was administered during summer of 2012.

### Sample

Our goal was to distribute the survey as widely as possible, both to listen to the experiences and opinions of as many teachers as possible, as well as to ensure the reliability and validity of the instrument (Dörnyei, 2003). We used email lists and social media – especially through Facebook pages and PNIEB teachers' blogs – to recruit teachers to respond to the survey. All participants who responded and included their emails were entered in a raffle, and we distributed three packages of books and didactic materials in English to the winners.

Ultimately, there were 370 teachers from 24 states (75%) who responded to the survey. The number of responses and the variety of states covered were sufficient to make us fairly confident of the reliability of the instrument ( $n=370$ , about 5% of  $\mu$ ). The state with the most responses was Puebla ( $N=117$ ), while Tlaxcala (43), Sonora (38), Estado de Mexico (37), and Baja California Sur (31) also had a significant number of responses, and we recognize that the high number of teachers from these states do skew the results somewhat<sup>9</sup>.

### Analysis

For the closed items, we first used the SurveyMonkey software to perform a basic descriptive analysis. Items 3 and 4 allowed us to determine the basic academic preparation of the teachers, and a closer analysis of these items revealed three main profiles of teachers detailed below. Once we had identified the three profiles, we used a spreadsheet to sort and separate the data according to each profile, creating a separate dataset for each; this analytic technique enabled us to determine with precision which responses correlated with which profile, and to bring the data back to answer our main research questions, which we describe below.

### Findings: General findings

The survey yielded a wealth of descriptive information that allows us to answer the first research question and have a sense of who the PNIEB teachers are. In general, we can characterize the teachers as well prepared in the field of English language teaching, with a decent level of English. These results align with the findings of a national evaluation of the pilot phase of the PNIEB (Sayer, 2012). In this study, we identified three profiles of teachers that we will discuss in detail below: (1) teachers with TESOL degrees from universities, (2) *normalistas*, and (3) a heterogeneous group of English speakers who have studied various careers.

Figure 1 includes the general information about the teachers. What is notable here is that more than three-quarters of teachers have university-level studies (76.2%), and of those 64.3% have finished some kind of *licenciatura* (undergraduate degree), while 11.3% are either *pasantes* or have completed a master's degree. Furthermore, the trend towards teacher certification is evident. Despite the limited resources many states face, more than half of teachers have received some kind of certification, and more than one third (37.4%) have obtained the *Test of Knowledge of Teaching*, a Cambridge examination that covers basic principles of English

<sup>9</sup> More detailed reports on the responses of teachers from Tlaxcala are given in Mercau, Sayer and Blanco (2012), and from Puebla in Blanco, Mercau and Sayer (2013).

Language Teaching in foreign language contexts. However, only about half the teachers (49.7%) have received any kind of training specifically aimed at preparing them to work with children.

Some kind of certification <sup>10</sup>	51.9%
University-level studies <sup>11</sup>	76.2%
TKT certification	37.4%
Language proficiency certificate (e.g. First Cert.)	28.4%
TOEFL (institutional)	72.7%
Training to work with children	49.7%
Training on PNIEB curriculum	88.1%
Have had payments ( <i>quincena</i> ) delayed	78.9%
Teach full time in PNIEB (6 or more groups)	77.2%

Figure 1: General profile of PNIEB teachers

The data also reveals that more than three-quarters (77.2%) teach full-time in the PNIEB, which we defined as teaching six or more groups. Of these, 63.0% have 6-8 groups and 14.2% have more than 8 groups. One figure that is striking is that almost 4 of 5 teachers (78.9%) reported that they have at some point not received their regular salary on time. Furthermore, 76.4% responded that "job instability due to type of contract" was either "serious" or "very serious", while only 16.0% reported that this was not a concern for them. This is highly problematic, because it generates instability and *desconfianza* in the program amongst teachers. As we were contacting teachers to recruit them to take the survey, we also discovered that several programs were temporarily suspended, including Puebla, Chiapas, and Baja California, and the *quincena* (bi-monthly) payments have been routinely delayed by several months in many others.

Figures 2 and 3 show the employment situation of the teachers. Since most work for *honorarios* (this refers to wages paid on a temporary contract with no tenure and limited protections and rights for workers), the majority of PNIEB teachers do not have the same pay and benefits that their *titular* peers and other unionized school employers enjoy. Some programs, such as Mexico City, have created *comisiones* (tenured union contracts) for the PNIEB teachers, and other states, such as Tamaulipas, have contracts that are fairly well paid and offer benefits, but the majority does not. Figure 2 shows that the vast majority (92.4%) works with temporary contracts and no benefits, while only 1.7% has a tenured union position (*plaza* or *comisión con el sindicato*).

10 This is a general category included any officially-recognized certification in teaching methodology (e.g. TKT) or language proficiency (e.g. First Certificate).

11 This includes anyone with "pasante de licenciatura" or higher.



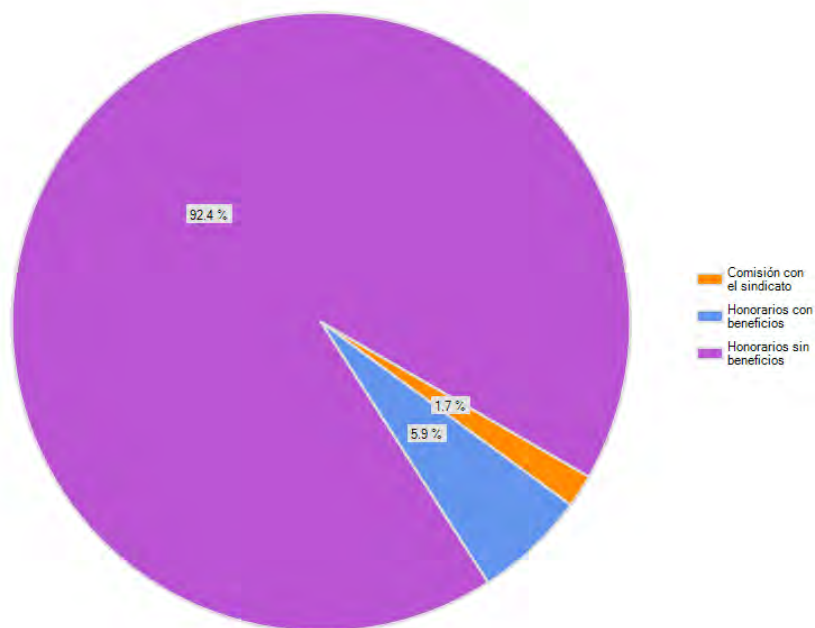


Figure 2: Contract situation of teachers

The information summarized in Figure 3 indicates that only 10.9% of teachers earn more than 80 pesos (about US\$6.50) per class hour. Most (83.3%) earn between 50-80 pesos per class (US\$4-6.50), and are not paid for preparing lessons or marking homework. Often, the contracts are only for 10 months (excluding summer during July-August), and they may or may not receive an *aguinaldo* (a stipend paid at Christmas by law).

So, in general the PNIEB positions are characterized by fairly low wages, non-permanent contracts, problems and irregularities in payments, and the lack of basic benefits such as health insurance and time paid for work done in preparation and grading of lessons. We believe that unless basic salaries and contracts are improved, the PNIEB will lose many good teachers, since without these, most teachers will prefer to work in private schools, where they can earn better wages (in fact, some PNIEB teachers do have to work extra shifts or even weekends in private schools and language centers). Therefore, even though there is strong pressure to expand the program to include more schools and students<sup>12</sup>, we would urge administrators and state coordinators to improve the labor conditions for PNIEB teachers, both for the benefit of hard-working teachers who deserve to earn a living wage, and for the overall stability and effectiveness of the program.

<sup>12</sup> The SEP has set a target date of 2018 for the *generalización* of the program. So far, Tamaulipas is the only state with 100% coverage, and many states less than 10% of the total student population at the pre-school and primary level are currently receiving English classes through the PNIEB.

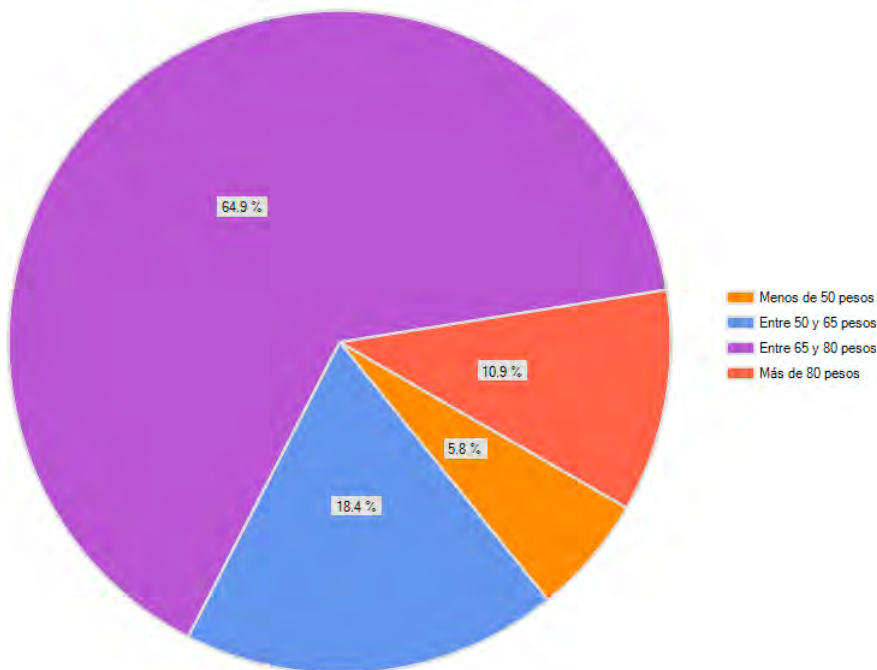


Figure 3: Pay scale of teachers

Since the current project is framed as a needs analysis, the survey also focused on identifying the training that PNIEB teachers have received. Here, the tendency that we detected is that there is a great variation in training approaches being used across the country.

### Three profiles

The results of the survey indicate that there are three main profiles of PNIEB teachers: (1) university-trained teachers who are graduates of a BA in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (BA-TEFL or equivalent, usually called *licenciatura en enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras*) from an autonomous public or private university, (2) *normalistas* who are graduates of the Normal School program to train secondary (equivalent of grades 7-9) public school English teachers, and (3) others who have English proficiency and a degree in a field outside of ELT. Of the 370 respondents of the survey, we classified 194 teachers (52.4%) with profile 1, 62 teachers (16.8%) with profile 2, and 113 teachers (30.5%) with profile 3. The remaining respondent we were unable to classify with a high degree of reliability. We will briefly give the background for each profile, and describe what this research indicated are their strengths and training needs.

#### *Profile 1: University BA-TEFL graduate*

The university system was described above. Many *licenciatura* or BA-TEFL programs were established in the language departments of the autonomous state university during the 1990s and 2000s, and increasingly private universities are offering an ELT-related degree as well. According to the survey, individuals with this profile make up over half of the teachers in the PNIEB program.

Description of strengths: The main advantage the university-trained teachers have is their level of English. The teachers in the survey generally felt more confident about their language skills, and prioritized improving their English somewhat lower than group 2 (see below). This likely reflects the fact that most university BA-TEFL programs either have a high level of English as an entrance requirement, or students take English classes as part of their program (many have up

to 10 hours a week of English), and have an exit examination. Consequently, most BA-TEFL graduates have an equivalent of B2 level (about 550 TOEFL) or higher. Only 26.8% of teachers in this category felt their lack of English fluency impeded their teaching in the classroom.

A second strength the survey identified amongst university-trained teachers is their knowledge of contemporary approaches to teaching English as a foreign language, in particular using communicative language teaching methodology. While the PNIEB program, which is based on a sociocultural approach which emphasizes social practices of language, does represent a shift in thinking; however for teachers with a strong foundation in communicative language teaching, with its emphasis on interaction and contextualized, meaningful opportunities to use the language, the sociocultural focus of the PNIEB program does not represent a radical change of thinking.

Training needs: The data suggest that the graduates of university BA-TEFL programs recognize two main weaknesses in their preparation. First, the programs designed in the 1990s were aimed at preparing pre-service teachers for the existing job market: for adolescents and adults, and for private schools and language centers. Therefore, they have little or no course content that prepares them for working with children in public primary school settings. Moreover, most programs do not require a student teaching or service learning component in the classroom. Oftentimes the "social service" requirements (generally 480 hours is required for undergraduate students) are completed in non-school settings. The result is that most graduates are ill-prepared to face the realities of working in large classrooms, where the challenges are less about ELT methodology and more about classroom management, behavior problems, and working with large groups with limited resources. In the survey, 49.5% of teachers with this profile<sup>13</sup> responded that they lacked sufficient preparation in working with children; 59.8% ranked working with children as one of their top training needs. As well, 73.2% of these respondents said that they felt that as English teachers they were not well integrated with the regular *titular* teachers or their school context. 75.3% of these teachers said they faced behavior and discipline problems that they were not fully equipped to deal with, including 35.6% of the teachers who reported serious behavior problems; 58.2% said classroom management was a top training need.

The second area that teachers with this profile identified was the challenge they face working with children with special needs. Generally, most BA-TEFL programs do not include coursework that addresses how to work with children with different capacities, and 71.1% of teachers indicated that this area was highly relevant for their classrooms. Other areas that the teachers with this profile mentioned as important training needs are working in rural areas (33.5%), working with heterogeneous groups (31.9%), and working with children who speak an indigenous language as their mother tongue (29.9%).

Finally, it should be noted that although we identified high English proficiency and training in communicative language teaching methods as two strengths of this group, the teachers indicated that they wanted further training in these areas, including 48.5% who still considered improving their English as one of their top training needs. Nevertheless, the needs of this group of university-trained teachers clearly contrasts with the second profile, teachers from the Normal Schools.

---

<sup>13</sup> The figures cited here consider the responses in the first two categories of the four-point Likert scale on the survey, called "extremely important," and "important".

### Profile 2: Normalista

Although the PNIEB only started in 2009, English has been included in the public secondary (or *secundaria*, grades 7-9) curriculum since at least 1954 (and perhaps since 1927, see Reyes *et al.*, 2011). The Normal Schools have traditionally been the training institution for public school teachers, including English teachers. Graduates usually get jobs within the teachers union (called the *Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación*, or SNTE, a powerful organization in Mexican politics). Since the PNIEB is still new, and most PNIEB teaching positions are not under a union contract<sup>14</sup>, there is no training program specifically for teaching English in primary schools. Most PNIEB teachers who are *normalistas* have been trained to teach English at the secondary level. According to the survey, *normalistas* make up the minority (less than one in five) of PNIEB teachers in most states.

Description of strengths: The *normalista* program is tightly connected to the public school system, and the curriculum is almost entirely geared towards public classrooms. Therefore, pre-service teachers have significant opportunities to learn about the realities and challenges of teaching in public schools, including extensive practicum hours. Graduates then are well equipped to confront the realities of public schools, and generally do not have the same classroom management and behavioral issues that other teachers face. They have usually studied courses in child psychology and development and working with children with special needs. In this sense, the *normalista* profile is almost the mirror image of the university-trained teacher's profile.

Training needs: A significant shortcoming of the normal programs is the amount of English teachers usually acquire. Most normal programs are weekend programs, and students do not study English as a subject. Rather, they are supposed to have a minimum level of English as an entrance requirement, and study independently during the program. However, these requirements are often not met, and the result is that graduates often have little opportunity to practice and develop their English proficiency unless they take extracurricular classes. Consequently, 73.3% of these teachers said that improving their English was one of their top training needs, including 41.7% who reported this as their greatest need.

The second training priority that this group of teachers reported was in the area of improving their teaching methodology; 66.7% reported this as one of their top training needs. It should be noted that although this profile has different strengths and needs than profile 1, they do face some of the same issues. For example, many reported problems in classroom management, although to a lesser extent than the profile 1 teachers (56.7% to 75.3%).

### Profile 3: Other background

Besides the two profiles described above, there is third profile: teachers without professional credentials. This is something of a catch-all category, but generally these teachers hold a BA in a different field (a wide variety, but tourism and graphic design/visual arts were the top two), though 59% do not have a degree. They seem to be hired because of their good English language proficiency, and most have some kind of certificate (such as the institutional TOEFL or any of the Cambridge international tests). Many have a methodology short teacher training course known in Mexico as a "teacher's certificate". This is a six-month-course on teaching methodology given by private language centers. According to the survey, this group makes up about a third of PNIEB teachers.

---

<sup>14</sup> A few states, including Mexico City, have created unionized PNIEB positions, but teachers in most states work for "honorarios" or temporary contracts.

Description of strengths: The main strength of this group of teachers is their proficiency in English. Although the survey did not capture this, we suspect that some may have been schooled in the United States as children of immigrant families who have returned, or others may have lived or spent time in English-speaking countries.

Training needs: Obviously, this group is distinguished from the previous two by its lack of preparation in English as a foreign language teaching methodology. 63.3% of respondents from this mixed profile prioritized ELT methodology. Interestingly and somewhat contradictorily, this group tended to give less importance to professional training and overall prioritized specific training needs lower than the other two profiles. One interpretation could be that because of their lack of formal teacher preparation in ELT, they are less aware of the complexity of the field and consequently less able to self-evaluate and express their training needs. Also contradictorily, over half (50.5%) prioritized English proficiency as a key training need, despite the fact that they seemed to have been hired because of their English competence and in spite of their lack of ELT credentials.

Despite their formal training, many of these teachers do have previous experience working with children, especially in private schools. However, many of their comments reflected their problems in understanding how to work with the PNIEB program, as well as the conditions in public schools. One teacher added the following comment:

*Yo entré a trabajar con el programa PNIEB en Octubre del 2010, la verdad me enviaron así sin preparación previa, simplemente me llamaron, me ofrecieron las horas [y] me enviaron las direcciones de la escuelas y al día siguiente simplemente me presenté y pues organicé mis horarios como pude, porque son 3 escuelas totalmente distanciadadas, es hasta más de una hora manejando para poder llegar a ciertas poblaciones rurales, y sin libros ni nada, entonces yo hice mi plan de clase. Obviamente yo ya tenía experiencia con niños, ya tenía 3 años trabajando en colegios con grados de preescolar y primaria, así que no me costó trabajo. Lo que me cuesta aún trabajo es planear con el formato PNIEB la verdad aún no me familiarizo con su formato y tomando en cuenta todos los aspectos que se supone se deben anexar, yo estaba acostumbrada a planear mis clases como en [la escuela particular], [...] y hasta Marzo del 2011 me enviaron a un curso de capacitación que no son muy buenos, porque no me esclarecieron mis dudas, sino por el contrario creo que regresé más confundida, eso de tomar en cuenta los diversos environments y todos los demás aspectos era nuevo para mí.*

Our interpretation of these comments is that because these individuals' understanding of the teaching is based on their practical experience in the classroom (if they have any), they have difficulty assimilating new concepts from PNIEB because they do not have the theoretical background.

### **Conclusions: Recommendations for developing teacher training programs for PNIEB**

In Mexico, FLTT programs for pre-service training has been the purview of the public or "autonomous" universities, the normal (teacher training) schools, and more recently of private universities. The different approaches taken by these institutions have resulted in somewhat different strengths and weaknesses of their graduates, as revealed by this research. Our analysis presented in this study reveals the relative merits of the programs and the teachers they produce.

In this study we identified three profiles of PNIEB teachers: (1) teachers with BA-TEFL degrees from universities, (2) *normalista* teachers, usually with a degree to teach English to secondary students, and (3) teachers with a non-ELT background, often with a degree in tourism or some non-education field. Overall, our recommendation is that coordinators, supervisors, and those designing training courses should take a *differentiated approach* to professional development. By

a differentiated approach, we mean that courses should have components or modules that are specifically tailored to the needs of teachers in order to maximize their benefits and use limited resources more wisely. For example, some teachers will benefit from workshops focusing on working with children with special needs, or methodology courses. The results indicated that a majority of teachers feel they need help with classroom management and their English level. Teachers identified the latter as their number one concern: over 60% said that it was "important" (37.6%) or "extremely important" (25.6%) to further improve their English abilities. However, we should note that English classes too should be aimed at the teachers' specific level of proficiency. Coordinators can use diagnostic tests to determine which teachers are at which levels (A2, B1, B2, etc.).

However, we would also note that the training should be supported by the administration. Especially given the low salaries and time constraints that many PNIEB teachers face, teachers need to be given the time and resources to participate in trainings. One teacher noted:

*Ha sido placentera [mi experiencia en el PNIEB], el aprendizaje adquirido por medio de mi carrera ha sido el que se ha aplicado en este tiempo, la única situación en la cual podría mencionar problema alguno es la paga y la falta de beneficios. De igual manera, se nos pide de manera OBLIGATORIA acreditaciones de TKT (que tengo en proceso) cuando una licenciatura debería poseer una mayor importancia y valor.*

Finally, this study can serve as an example of how a *needs analysis* can be conducted in order to identify and prioritize teachers' training needs. The inauguration of the PNIEB represents a historic opportunity to give all Mexican children a real opportunity to learn English. However, access to English acquisition will continue to depend on the quality of the teachers in program, and the capacity and approach of pre-service and in-service teacher preparation programs must be adapted to fit the needs of the new dynamic of ELT that the PNIEB presents.

## References

- Cha, Y.K., & Ham, S.H. (2008). The impact of English on the school curriculum. In B. Spolsky & F.M. Hult (Eds.), *The handbook of educational linguistics* (pp. 313-327). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Brown, H.D. (2004). Research methods for applied linguistics: Scope, characteristics, and standards. In A. Davies and C. Elder (Eds.), *The handbook of applied linguistics* (pp. 476-500). Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Burns, A. and Richards, J. (eds.). (2009). *The Cambridge Guide to Second Language Teacher Education*. (pp. 1-8) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Council of Europe. (2001). *Common European framework of reference for languages*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2003). *Questionnaires in second language research*. Mahwah, NJ, Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Freeman, D., & Johnson, K. (1998). Reconceptualizing the knowledge-base of language teacher education. *TESOL Quarterly*, 32(3), 397-417.
- Freeman, D. (1996). The "unstudied problem": Research on teacher learning in language teaching. (Eds.), *Teacher learning in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hamid, M. O. (2010). Globalisation, English for everyone and English teacher capacity: Language policy discourses and realities in Bangladesh. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 11(4), 289-310.
- Herazo Rivera, J. D., Jerez Rodríguez, S., & Lorduy Arellano, D. (2012). Opportunity and incentive for becoming bilingual in Colombia: Implications for *Programa Nacional de Bilingüismo*. *Íkala: Revista de Lenguaje y Cultura*, 17(2), 199-213.
- Johnson, K. (2009). Trends in second language teacher education. In A. Burns and J. Richards, J. (eds.), *The Cambridge Guide to Second Language Teacher Education* (pp. 20-29). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Matear, A. (2008). English language learning and education policy in Chile: Can English really open doors for all? *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 28 (2), 131-147.
- McKay, S. L. (2003). Teaching English as an international language: The Chilean context. *ELT Journal*, 57(2), 139-148.

- Mercau V., Sayer P., and Blanco, G. (2012). *Estudio del perfil y análisis de necesidades de formación de maestros PNIEB de Tlaxcala*. Memorias del XIII Encuentro Nacional de Estudios en Lenguas. Tlaxcala, Mex: Universidad Autónoma de Tlaxcala.
- Miller, J. (2009). Teacher identity. In A. Burns and J. Richards, J. (eds.), *The Cambridge guide to Second Language Teacher Education* (pp. 172-181). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Moon, J., & Enever, J. (2010). *A global revolution? Teaching English at primary schools*. British Council Seminar Series. Available at (accessed December 12, 2012) <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/seminars/a-global-revolution-teaching-english-primary-school>.
- Nation, I. S. P., & Macalister, J. (2010). *Language curriculum design*. New York: Routledge.
- Ramírez Romero, J. L., Sayer, P., & Pamplon Irigoyen, E. N. (forthcoming). Teaching English in public primary schools in Mexico: Perspectives of the stakeholders. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* (Special issue on Education in Mexico and Latin America).
- Reyes Cruz, M., Murrieta Loyo, G. & Hernández Méndez, E. (2011). Políticas lingüísticas nacionales e internacionales sobre la enseñanza del inglés en escuelas primarias. *Revista Pueblos y Fronteras Digital*, 6(12), 167-197.
- Richards, J. C. (2001). *Curriculum development in language teaching*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Sayer, P. (forthcoming). Expanding global language education in public primary schools: The national English program in Mexico. In T. Ricento (Ed.), *Global English and language policies: Transnational perspectives*. New York: Springer.
- Sayer, P. (2012). *Ambiguities and tensions in English language teaching: Portraits of EFL teachers as legitimate speakers*. New York & London: Routledge.
- Sayer, P. (2002). *Teacher cognition and language teacher education: An ethnocognitive study of teacher knowledge, language, and decision-making in an EFL context*. Unpublished MA thesis, Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca, Oaxaca, México.
- Zappa-Hollman, S. (2007). EFL in Argentina's schools: Teachers' perspectives on policy changes and instruction. *TESOL Quarterly*, 41(3), 618-625.

**Appendix A: Needs analysis survey**  
**[insert survey]**