

# Language Teachers Become Researchers: Emotions and Workload Intensification in Mexican Higher Institutions<sup>1,2</sup>

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## Abstract

Work demands of language teachers in higher education have increased in the past two decades in Mexico as a result of the Professional Development Programme (*Programa para el Desarrollo Profesional Docente*—PRODEP) policy. The main goals of this policy are to increase the quality of teaching and encourage efficiency and productivity among university teachers as researchers. This article presents tentative answers to the effects the PRODEP policy have had on language teaching practices in Mexican public universities. Also, teachers' emotions regarding the PRODEP policy insertion in their workplaces is reviewed. Following a qualitative approach, the present data was collected through questionnaires, informal discussions and in-depth semi-structured interviews. Results suggest that although the PRODEP policy has been beneficial for higher institutions statistics, it does not entirely aid in increasing the quality of teaching because of the emphasis placed on research. It is necessary, not only for policy makers, but for individual institutions to carry out a revision of the effects of the PRODEP policy in their particular contexts, and to make the necessary adjustments to redirect its objectives if teaching quality is their goal.

## Resumen

Los profesores de lenguas en universidades públicas han sufrido un incremento en su carga académica en las dos últimas décadas en México como resultado de la política del Programa para el Desarrollo Profesional Docente (PRODEP). Los principales objetivos de esta política son incrementar la calidad de la enseñanza y fomentar la eficiencia y productividad en los profesores universitarios como investigadores. Este artículo presenta respuestas tentativas a los efectos que el PRODEP ha tenido en la enseñanza de lenguas en universidades mexicanas. De igual forma las emociones de los profesores sobre la inserción de la política del PRODEP son revisadas. Utilizando un enfoque cualitativo, los datos de este estudio fueron recolectados a través de un cuestionario, discusiones informales y entrevistas semiestructuradas a profundidad. Los resultados sugieren que la política del PRODEP ha sido beneficiosa para las estadísticas de universidades públicas, aunque parece no estar ayudando a incrementar la calidad de la enseñanza debido al énfasis puesto en la investigación. Es necesario que los diseñadores de esta política así como las instituciones realicen una revisión de los efectos del PRODEP en sus contextos particulares y hacer los ajustes necesarios para redirigir sus objetivos si la calidad de enseñanza es su meta.

## Introduction

Language teachers in Mexico have faced a change in their jobs in the past decades because of international education policies which have made teachers in state universities become researchers (Borg, 2009). Before, the responsibilities of Mexican language teachers were mostly focused on teaching and designing lessons (Ramírez, Reyes & Cota, 2010). However, in the 1990s, a change from planning to evaluation and from the process to the product was the result of the state's intervention in higher education regulation, due to the international changes originated by globalization (López, Lagunes & Recio, 2009). Thus, the federal government inserted control policies

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through financial incentives in order to encourage efficiency and productivity among university teachers (Mendoza, 2002).

Following recommendations from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank political projects (Robertson, 2012), the *Research University* model was inserted into Mexican state universities, despite these institutions being inadequate and not having the tradition of carrying out research (Acosta, 2002). Thus, the Teachers' Development Programme (*Programa de Mejoramiento del Profesorado* - PROMEP), now called Professional Development Programme (*Programa para el Desarrollo Profesional Docente* - PRODEP), was introduced in Mexico's public universities as a support for teachers' professional development (López, Lagunes & Recio, 2009). The PRODEP's purpose is to improve fulltime teachers' abilities to conduct research, teach and innovate in order to create a new academic community that is able to change its environment. This government programme supports the education of teachers working in state universities to study master's and doctorate programs at national or international institutions. As a result, 8,141 teachers obtained scholarships to pursue master's and PhD degrees between 1998 and 2012 (PROMEP, 2013). The PRODEP is not only supporting full time teachers conducting postgraduate studies, but it is also providing state universities with funds to hire new teachers, finance research group projects, and finance research products, such as articles and books. All of this financial support is awarded through different evaluation systems of the PRODEP policy.

The main objective behind this government programme was to increase the educational quality in Mexican state universities. However, an assessment system introduced by the PRODEP policy made teachers diversify their responsibilities, since every three years they have to present evidence of different academic activities (López, Lagunes & Recio, 2009). Although the main purpose of the PRODEP programme was to increase quality in teaching practices through teacher development, teachers are experiencing work overload and pressure to perform different roles which may not be helping this objective. Furthermore, the fact that national evaluations praise only research outcomes (e.g., books, articles, conference presentations) while teachers have to present evidence of other responsibilities, may be deskilling teachers in other areas of their work (Apple, 1986). As Padilla and Serna (2012) suggest, the result may not be an increment in the quality of teaching, as more emphasis has been placed on research outcomes by national and institutional assessment systems. Thus, teachers' energies are divided and consequently the time they used to spend on designing lessons has reduced considerably, as well as the time they spend with their students, creating a distance between them. Robertson (1994) mentions that "This process has highlighted teachers' managerial work (e.g. management of students and other education workers) and de-emphasised their pedagogical one" (pp. 144-145).

It is important to understand how teachers deal with the different roles they have to perform in Mexican universities. In addition, it is paramount to understand if these changes have contributed to an increase in the quality of their language teaching practice. By examining the emotions of Mexican language teachers concerning their roles as fulltime teachers in public universities in Mexico, this study aims to shed light on teachers' adjustment to the PRODEP policy and provide tentative answers to the effects these have had on language teaching practices in Mexican public universities. For this

reason, a brief review of the topic of emotions and its role on teachers work intensification is presented in the following section.

### **Emotions and Academic Work Intensification**

Emotions and the reactions originated by them influence people's beliefs, thoughts and behaviour. According to Zembylas (2004) teachers' emotions "are not just matters of personal dispositions but are constructed in social relationships and systems of values in their families, cultures and school situations" (p. 186). Thus, relationships constructed in educational settings are shaped by the diverse emotions originating in the complex process of fulfilling not only learners' but also teachers' objectives that, as explained before, have been expanded through years.

Most teachers believe they should not show their emotions to students (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003) since teaching is a "labour of love" (Hargreaves, 1998, p. 840). Thus, most teachers exercise emotional regulation in order to modify or adapt their emotions in their daily interactions with students, especially when negative emotions are experienced. The regulation of emotions in any profession has been labelled as "emotional labour" (Hochschild, 1983). According to Hochschild (1983), the time and effort that the regulation of emotions takes can develop into stress and burnout.

Frustration has been found to be the emotion most reported by teachers in different studies (Chang, 2009; Sutton, 2007). Cowie (2003) found that EFL teachers in Japan experienced positive emotions in their teaching practice by developing a caring relationship with students; however, relationships with colleagues and institutional contexts resulted in frustration, disappointment, and anger. These feelings of frustration and anger transformed into stress and burnout, while others decided to leave their jobs. Frustration can be caused from factors outside the classroom, such as administrative work, externally mandated change or reformation, and conflicts between the teachers' teaching goals and expectations from school administration (Cowie, 2003; Hargreaves, 2004; Zembylas, 2003). Besides creating stress, frustration may also lead to developing cynicism for educational policies (Day & Leitch, 2001). Thus, teachers may use certain strategies to fulfilling all the roles required by educational policies.

The process of performing different roles at the same time as adjusting to different assessment systems while their working conditions remain the same, is what Apple (1986) calls the intensification thesis. Apple states that teachers have to face pressures imposed by external demands while their working conditions are not suitable to the requirements expected of them. Therefore, intensification imposes on teachers' different tasks or roles that they have to perform, even if they have no resources or time to achieve them. The intensification of teachers' working conditions includes **deskilling** (bureaucratic control incorporated into teachers' day-to-day practices) and **deprofessionalisation** (teachers' activities are reduced to the execution of decisions made by others) (Apple 1986; Apple & Jungck, 1992). Deprofessionalisation is the result of "a new work order" created by globalization, in which the teaching profession is under control by the state, in *an apparently flexible, democratic, and empowering way* (Smyth et al., 2000, pp. 6-9; my italics). However, intensification implications range from teachers "being not allowed time at all even to...have a cup of coffee or relax, to having a total absence of time to keep up with one's field" (Apple, 1986, p. 41). The excessive

workload placed on teachers is contradictory because, if current changes want to promote teacher development, intensification leaves no space for this.

Currently, most Mexican teachers have to please different assessment systems (institutional and national) if they want to keep their jobs. Thus, pressure on teachers is at its highest level, and they have become “winners and losers in a game of academic prestige” (Adler & Harzing, 2009, p.74). This has created opaque academic practices, not only because of the financial incentives some assessment systems provide, but also because promotions and tenures sometimes depend on these institutional and national evaluations. As expressed by Lawrence (2008):

*Measurement of scientific productivity is difficult. The measures used...are crude. But these measures are now so universally adopted that they determine most things that matter [to scholars]: tenure or unemployment, a postdoctoral grant or none, success or failure. As a result, scientists have been forced to downgrade their primary aim from making discoveries to publishing as many papers as possible—and trying to work them into high impact-factor journals. Consequently, scientific behaviour has become distorted and the utility, quality, and objectivity of articles have deteriorated. Changes...are urgently needed... (p.1)*

The purpose of this study is to explore the emotions experienced by language teachers in Mexico regarding the introduction of the PRODEP policy and its implication on their working conditions, as well as the impact of this on teaching quality. To explore this, the following research questions were developed:

1. What emotions have language teachers experienced due to the introduction of the PRODEP policy and change in their working conditions in public universities?
2. Has the PRODEP policy enhanced teaching quality in Mexican state universities?

To address this, the objectives of the study are to:

- a. Map out the emotions Mexican language teachers experience in their job in order to fulfill all the tasks implied by their new position as teachers and researchers in public universities in Mexico.
- b. Understand how teachers face all these emotions in daily practice regarding their roles as practicing teachers, researchers, tutors, administrative staff and thesis supervisors in public universities in Mexico.
- c. Explore language teachers' perceptions of the PRODEP national education policy and its effect on teaching quality.

This article presents results addressing the second question and the last two objectives.

## **Methodology**

In order to understand Mexican language teachers' adjustments to the different roles they perform, and how the PRODEP policy has influenced teaching quality in Mexican state universities, a case study approach was used. This design is a descriptive case study that allows the “exploration of multiple perspectives which are rooted in a specific context” (Ritchie et al., 2014, p. 66). A case study allowed the researcher to describe a specific situation, as well as provide personal accounts of participants in order to show their reality (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Yin, 1984). By allowing participants to speak for themselves, the researcher is not interpreting, evaluating or judging

participants' information but presenting language teachers' views and experiences of their teaching situations in higher education institutions under "globalized" demands.

### *Participants*

A purposive sample strategy was used to select participants from different higher education institutions in Mexico (Patton, 2002). This ensured that all participants were fulltime teachers and belonged to a research group required by the PRODEP in order to be qualified as a suitable lecturer for bachelor degree programmes. A sample of 24 language teachers from ten state universities agreed to collaborate with this study (16 female and 8 male). Participants' teaching experience ranged from five to 34 years, while ten held a PhD degree and 14 a master's. The language teachers worked in state universities located in north, central and south Mexico. This helped to have a representative picture of the diverse realities in which academics worked and developed as researchers in order to fill the requirements expected from them. All participants performed the roles of language teachers, researchers and tutors, and some of them were also performing the roles of administrators and consultants, as well as being involved in continuing education programmes. All of these roles were required by changes that higher education institutions have gone through since the inclusion of the PRODEP policy in 1996. Due to this, language teachers have to diversify their time and efforts in all these activities in order to be evaluated, keep their jobs, and have access to merit pay through institutional and national incentive programs. However, individual institutions regulate access to these merit payments, and so there are different realities in the experiences expressed by the participants of this study.

### *Instruments*

In this study, data was collected through questionnaires (see Appendix A), informal discussions and in-depth semi-structured interviews (see Appendix B). In the questionnaire, teachers were asked to provide information about their personal situation, qualifications, teaching experience, and hours dedicated to the different roles required by the PRODEP. Informal discussions were held with some participants a day or two after the interviews; these were in a neutral place in order to allow participants to more freely express their feelings about the pressures of performing different roles during a typical work day. In the interviews, teachers were asked about their emotions regarding the roles required from them in universities since the implementation of the PRODEP policy. Also, teachers were questioned about their research qualifications and how these have influenced their daily teaching practices. Interviews were carried out in order to obtain meaning through interactions between the researcher and the realities participants expressed.

### *Data Analysis*

Data from the study was analysed using thematic analysis (TA) in order to understand language teachers' perceptions of the PRODEP policy and its influence on teaching practices (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Thematic analysis was carried out following a systematic, six-stage process including: data preparation, data familiarization, coding, defining themes, reviewing themes and writing (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After transcribing the interviews, the analysis was done deductively. First, two interviews were analysed in order to define codes and emergent themes, then, the same interviews were

analysed by a colleague in order to validate the codes and themes identified. After a consensus on themes and codes was reached, the transcripts of the remaining interviews were analysed.

## Results

The main purpose of this study was to explore the emotions Mexican language teachers experience as a result of the changes the PRODEP policy brought to their working conditions in order to enhance teaching quality. Teachers reported experiencing diverse emotions regarding their students, colleagues, the PRODEP policy and the intensification their job has suffered in the past decade. All 24 participants of the study reported being aware of the mixed feelings they experienced in their job as full time teachers in public universities. Emotions reported by participants can be divided into positive (emotions experienced because of their interaction with students) and negative (emotions experienced because of their interactions with colleagues, authority, lack of time to perform all the roles expected from them and the workload they had as a result of the insertion of PRODEP in public universities). Although participants recognised that PRODEP has brought benefits to university teachers, they also highlighted some negative effects the policy has had on teachers' professional lives. Participants agreed that PRODEP has had a two-fold impact on institutions. Thus, the results are organised into benefits and pitfalls of this policy.

### *PRODEP Benefits*

All participants agreed that PRODEP has brought benefits to state universities, as teachers have had the opportunity to study master's and PhD degrees in national and international institutions. This has helped not only teachers to possess the qualifications needed to conduct good research, but it has also provided universities with the credentials needed in order to obtain the resources asked for by national budget programs (Acosta, 2014; Mendoza, 2002). As one of the participants expressed:

*The PRODEP has helped with the professionalisation of language teachers...has helped with the credentialisation, has helped Mexico to compete in numbers with other countries. We know globalization has pushed us to this. At this current time, we have to present evidences and evidences are unfortunately statistics. Universities have to present numbers...how many doctors, how many master's... (PARTICIPANT-21)*

This professionalisation has made teachers better prepared, since most of them have studied in recognised universities, and this has allowed them to acquire the skills needed to conduct quality research. As one of the participants stated:

*Before PRODEP, we did not conduct research...with this new policy, people began to conduct research and there is advancement in this area...In general, I think it is a good initiative because now research is being done. Before, we did not do anything. (PARTICIPANT-19]*

Research has been emphasised in higher education institutions through PRODEP, as the certification of this same policy gives privilege to research products such as books, chapters and articles. According to Acosta (2014), this is based on rational choice theories, which state that individuals, groups and institutions can only change through financial rewards for production. This differentiation on incomes was supported by the OECD (1997, p. 215) recommendations. Thus, institutions have supported the qualification of teachers so universities can have the statistics required for national

budget programs and obtain funding. Consequently, teachers are qualified to perform the different roles required from them; however, there are some facts about the insertion of this policy that are not positive. As Mejia (2014) suggests, universities currently live in tension in order to comply with the levels of productivity, efficiency, quality and competence demanded by international and national assessment systems. This tension has caused the PRODEP pitfalls that are highlighted in the following section.

### *PRODEP Pitfalls*

As explained before, Mexican universities are given funding based on the number of teachers with postgraduate studies or teachers in the National System of Researchers (*Sistema Nacional de Investigadores* - SNI). This is a Mexican Federal Government system that evaluates the productivity of academics every three years and gives financial incentives based on this assessment. Thus, teachers have to go through different institutional and national assessment systems that certify that they have the required credentials. This evaluation process is usually done in the first term of the year and has caused what a participant called "the evaluation trap". Teachers have to present evidence of the different activities they performed during the year to different institutional and national assessment systems, such as an annual evaluation by higher institutions, a national evaluation by the PRODEP, a national evaluation by the SNI, and an institutional evaluation for a teaching incentive. All these assessment systems have different formats to be filled which are very time-consuming, as expressed by one participant:

*It is a new rubric or a new format you have to fill. It is annoying to fill different forms every year. Last year, they have the genius idea that we have to fill a form for staff meetings so they could register how many meetings we were having and if we did not have this form then we would not have points for the annual teaching incentive so what should you do? Fill the forms, give your classes or talk to the student waiting for you in your office? You end up working at home and on weekends and this is extra time...they have been very intelligent because it is an obligation if you are in a research group. (PARTICIPANT-8)*

The pressure imposed on teachers has caused some to lose not only their spare and family time, but also their health, as some participants reported that colleagues were suffering facial paralysis, articulation pains, and other health problems. All of these health problems have been caused by stress and anger that all the participants expressed regarding the time and effort they had to invest in when filling in forms to be evaluated by the different assessment systems. Not all teachers have to go through all of them, since some (such as the PRODEP, SNI or teaching incentive) are optional; however, due to the access to funding this represents for universities, teachers have more pressure to go through them. In addition, the teaching incentive and the SNI imply an increment for the teachers' salary. Thus, it is understandable why some teachers decide to go into these assessment systems.

Furthermore, in order to fulfil the expectations of PRODEP regarding research production, teachers have to be members of a research group. According to teachers participating in this study, the evaluation that the research groups have to go through has caused a *simulation game*, as teachers have decided to adjust their capacities to the system by sharing authorship in articles and conferences so they can present an acceptable number of articles or presentations in national or international conferences

each year. Smyth et al. (2000) suggest that “Teachers are simultaneously experiencing significant changes to their work, as well as responding in ways that actively shape this process” (p. 14). Most participants (15) expressed that their colleagues were exercising this practice:

*I sometimes see colleagues that work in teams and present two or three conferences and the three of them are authors in all of them...but that was the individual work of each of them, however, their names are in the three conferences as authors (PARTICIPANT-1)*

*I know there is a lot of simulation...But at least one of all those articles was written by him [one of the interviewee's colleagues]... He did something in that research project. (PARTICIPANT-17)*

The main objective behind the PRODEP policy is to increase the education level in the state's higher universities, but is this happening? It seems that as Nias (1991) suggests in the reconstruction of teachers' identity, individuals are making use of their internal resources to adjust to new requirements in state universities. Results suggest that some teachers who have had the opportunity to acquire more qualifications (a master's or PhD) are under institutional pressure to increase their productivity, because this increases the institution's statistics, and consequently the access to funding. Thus, some participants reported that for a number of their colleagues teaching is not a priority.

*Students come and...you get to know absolutely everything or a lot of what is really happening in classrooms. In some cases, not all my colleagues, but some who have studied and have now the PRODEP certification or are in the National Research System...in classrooms, they are not showing that. Am I clear? Maybe these colleagues are very good researchers but for teaching they are completely outdated or they have remained in the same stage when they began...and they are giving very inefficient classes... We are not able to share knowledge in an accessible way for students so I believe is not congruent. (PARTICIPANT-4)*

Some teachers consider that teachers' work intensification has caused some teachers to put teaching aside and prioritize other activities because these are more important to institutional and assessment systems. Thus, in order to report activities in other roles expected of teachers, students are not receiving the same attention as before.

*Sometimes because you are conducting research or administrative work, you neglect your classes, right? Your students, right? Who are you supposed to be working for? And yes, I feel that educational quality is affected in that sense. Students do not have the same attention as before even though you want to give it to them because you are also required to perform other activities. (PARTICIPANT-20)*

Some participants consider the researcher role that teachers have been pushed to perform has made some teachers obtain academic status, because before researchers were mostly found in research centres without teaching duties. Thus, teachers' recognition as researchers has made some of them only focus on this role.

*Fifty percent of them [referring to teachers who have had a PRODEP scholarship to study a master's or PhD] are more interested in being acknowledged in academic status and this has no impact on their teaching practice. This is something I observe and this is a problem. (PARTICIPANT-5)*

Participants also expressed that some teachers who now have recognition as a researcher consider being a teacher as a step backward for their academic status.

It is important to mention that some participants were trying to provide a politically correct answer and were constantly making references to the fact they were not talking about their own colleagues or institution. However, we have to be aware that Mexican society is a collectivist one (Hofstede, 2010) and there are power relationships in play here. Some participants expressed in the informal discussions that they prefer to evaluate their colleagues in a positive way so they do not have an enemy who can block them in future evaluations or academic tasks. Hofstede (2010) has identified that Mexico is a collectivist, hierarchical society in which offence leads to shame and loss of face. Thus, it is understandable that participants were careful about evaluating their colleagues, as this could have negative outcomes for them, their work environment or job security.

However, some participants (5) also expressed that the PRODEP policy pushed them to perform other roles that they now enjoy. They expressed that if they had to go back to the time when they only had to prepare and give classes, they would feel unfulfilled. As one participant expressed:

*I like to be active in the different roles we have to perform; I feel I would give a step backwards if I stopped doing all these different tasks... I would not feel as fulfilled even though I would be less overwhelmed. (PARTICIPANT-12)*

Thus, it seems that some teachers have found that the different academic tasks they have to perform now have given dynamism to their jobs. It may be that these teachers have developed intrinsic motivation for some roles or, as Ballet and Kelchtermans (2008) put it, "The intensification impact turns out to be very different among different teachers. Not all teachers experience it as negative or inhibiting, or as de-professionalising or deskilling in its consequences" (p. 3). Thus, some teachers may feel the changes are positive, as they feel more rounded; however, all the participants highlighted the lack of time, poor institutional support and excessive paperwork they need to present in order to show evidence of all the activities in the different institutional and national assessment systems. These same factors were found in a study about productivity and conducting research in a southeast Mexican university (Reyes & Hernández, 2014). Thus, the policy may have pushed some teachers to develop other skills, and they have found satisfaction in these other roles. However, the lack of time and pressure to register the evidence or paperwork of the different activities is what most teachers resent, since lack of time and institutional support are preventing these changes from being beneficial to teachers' professional development, and consequently to the students.

#### *Is Research Really Influencing the Teaching Practices?*

It seems that conducting research may not have the expected direct impact on educational quality in Mexican higher institutions. Most participants (14) considered that most of the research reported as a PRODEP policy product has had few implications for teaching practices.

*We just went through an accreditation process recently and when we were being interviewed, I was asked: What is the impact of research done in your department in the educational programme? Suddenly, I could not defend that point...because ummm not all the research conducted in the department is in the area of foreign languages, and so what should I say? [PARTICIPANT-17]*

*They have a status as researchers, so now they only conduct research, and if what they do research about was for the benefit of the academic community...but not really, they do not apply anything of that in their classrooms. Sometimes...I think they even neglect their work in classrooms. (PARTICIPANT-5)*

It may be that the pressure to perform different roles, as well as the need to present results every year to the different assessment systems, has made teachers simplify their classes and teaching styles. As Apple (1986) suggests, teachers are going through a deskilling process in which students are the ones being affected. However, some participants expressed that their postgraduate studies have made them more critical, giving them the opportunity to try new things and apply some of the aspects learnt in their classes. Thus, Ballet and Kelchtermans (2003) suggest that intensification is an individual experience that creates diverse responses in teachers' lives. For some, the pressure and diversity of roles may be stressful and too much to cope with, while for others the process has developed intrinsic motivation and given their working lives an upgrade.

## **Discussion**

The aim of this study was to understand the emotions that language teachers have faced due to the changes in their working conditions as a result of the PRODEP policy in Mexican state universities. As mentioned before, the purpose of PRODEP is to improve fulltime teachers' abilities to conduct research, teach and innovate in order to increase the quality of teaching.

The participants reported a wide range of emotions regarding their students, colleagues, administration and the PRODEP policy. Although the policy has been successful in giving teachers the opportunity to conduct postgraduate studies, the intensification of teachers' work produces some negative academic practices (Apple, 1986), that perhaps do not completely support teachers' professional development. Results show that the different roles teachers have to perform as a result of the introduction of the PRODEP policy has reduced the time and space for teachers' relations with students. Also, the different assessment systems teachers have to go through in order to maintain their jobs or have access to merit pay seem to have started practices, such as sharing authorship in articles and conferences to present more results in evaluations or restricting thesis supervision to members of their research groups because of the pressure to show academic products. Thus, the diversity of roles and activities has reduced the time teachers dedicate to students. Furthermore, the value given to research in the different evaluation schemes perhaps gives the message that conducting research is more important than teaching. It seems that the main objective of the PRODEP policy is not completely being achieved since participants in this study revealed that some teachers are giving more time and emphasis to researching than to teaching. The same result was found by Bak and Kim (2015, p. 1) in Korea where their study on the effects of a research performance system and its influence on teaching revealed that financial incentives on researching rather than teaching could have redirected attention of some professors from teaching to research, thus reducing teaching quality. Findings of this study suggest that the same seems to be happening in Mexican universities. Results suggest that teaching activities are perhaps neglected due to the emphasis on research

and on the diversification of activities that teachers have to report on in the different assessment systems, in order to maintain their jobs, have access to merit pay or be selected for a teaching incentive.

Recently, Malcolm (2014) highlighted that the questions concerning the benefits of research on teaching were still unanswered after decades of studies. In the same vein, López, Lagunes and Recio (2009, p. 9) remark that In spite of the effort placed, research activity did not sufficiently supported the formation of bachelor degree students. Although research has increased in state universities (Matute et al., 1995), research carried out in the field of language teaching is considered emerging and not of the expected quality (Reyes & Hernández, 2014), since most language teachers do not have the training nor the institutional support to carry out good quality research. How, then, is research expected to have a positive influence on teaching quality? Although some teachers may be using some of the skills acquired by conducting research, not all of the research done is relevant to the content of the courses that the teachers are responsible for.

### **Conclusions**

The PRODEP policy has been nurtured by international standards in order to create competitive schools and provide human capital in this economically growing world; however, as Robertson (2012, p. 11) clearly argues, the case of Finland clearly weakens all the OECD regulations regarding the successful school/good teacher/high student performer. Finland does not follow the teacher policies suggested by the OECD and, in spite of this, it has a successful economy that has had good results in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) rankings. The PISA test evaluates the performance of 15-year-old students on mathematics, science and reading. Finland teachers teach very few hours, are not evaluated, have personal autonomy, and do not receive merit pay. Thus, it is paramount for Mexican policy makers to review the PRODEP policy focus and make the necessary adjustments if teaching quality is the PRODEP's main objective.

As expressed before, language teachers experience negative emotions due to the lack of time and diversity of roles they have to perform due to the PRODEP policy. Some of these roles, administration or agent duties, take a lot of time and generate stress, anger and frustration. These feelings can develop into burn out and make teachers leave their jobs. Thus, authorities need to review working conditions in specific contexts in order to adjust their productivity requirements so teachers can focus their energy in those activities that can make a positive impact on teaching quality in higher education institutions.

Specific requirements for particular contexts need to be reviewed since, as expressed in the informal discussions in this study, even within our country language teachers in state universities experience different realities. A way to ameliorate the negative effects of work intensification is to establish realistic requirements regarding the quantity of the research products that are required in institutional and national evaluations. Also, the frequency of these evaluations needs to be readjusted because the teachers reported spending a lot of time on filling in forms, which causes stress and anger. In addition, research guidelines in some institutions require teachers to present results within an unrealistic time period, compromising quality. Teachers that are members of the SNI

should have specific conditions within higher institutions in order to maintain their national research status since they represent more funding to universities.

If the purpose of providing teachers with postgraduate studies was to raise teaching quality, then it is paramount that teaching skills be re-evaluated. As suggested by Bak and Kim (2015), “when multiple tasks are significant to organizational values, the incentive structure must assure that each task or activity offers professors the same marginal return on their efforts” (p. 1). In Mexico, every institution has its own requirements regarding productivity, access to merit pay, tenures and pensions. This represents a challenge for institutions since, by implementing international policies and standards, they may not be taking into account the complexity of their particular contexts. It is important then, not only for policy makers, but for individual institutions to carry out a revision of the effects of the PRODEP policy on their particular contexts, and to make the necessary adjustments to redirect its objectives.

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## Appendix B

### Semi-structured Interview Guide Format

1. When you think about emotions and your job as a teacher, researcher, tutor, administrative and supervisor, what comes to mind?
2. What emotions are originated by the pressure to perform all these roles in your work hours every day?
3. Which emotions are relevant to you when:
  - a. Teaching
  - b. Researching
  - c. Tutoring
  - d. Doing administrative duties
  - e. Supervising student's thesis
4. Why do you associate that emotion to that particular job responsibility?
5. Which role originates more positive emotions? Why?
6. Which role originates more negative emotions? Why?
7. What do you do when you experience a negative emotion in (activity that causes more negative emotions)?
8. To which of these activities do you dedicate more time (teacher, researcher, tutor, thesis supervisor, administrative)? Why?
9. To which of these activities do you dedicate less time? Why?
10. How do you manage the different emotions caused by the pressures of performing all these roles in your work hours every day?
11. Do you think your research skills have helped you to increase the quality of your teaching practice? If yes, how? If no, why?
12. What factors can help you to increase the quality of your teaching practice?