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**Language Learning and Language Teaching:
Episodes of the Lives of Six EFL Teachers in Iran**

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Abstract

Teachers are the most important players of every educational system in different societies; accordingly, understanding their personal reflections may help us gain valuable insights into what it means to be a teacher in a specific cultural and social context. The purpose of this case study was to investigate the life and career of 6 non-native English speaking teachers in state educational systems and private institutes in Iran so that a clear image of EFL teacher's perceptions on their own language learning, teaching experiences, current conditions and expectations, and their possible attempts to innovate in their classrooms would be obtained. By conducting a series of repeated interviews and observations within the period of one year, the researcher collected the required data and examined them through the process of meaning categorization. The outcomes suggested that most teachers either in state or private schools were not satisfied with their current living status or working conditions. Moreover, they were struggling with lots of de-motivating factors in their career and life due to some external and internal policies imposed by authorities. It is discussed that by giving voice to EFL teachers in Iran, their real status would be revealed and, consequently, some improvements would be made towards their essential needs and expectations.

Keywords: English language teaching, Non-native speaking teachers, Teacher's life histories, Life stories.

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Introduction

In a study concerning the lives and works of teachers, there are many different aspects to be taken into consideration; aspects that together constitute essential parts of a significant whole. An in-depth literature review indicates that these aspects have been mainly brought to light and examined through the application of life histories. As a methodological approach, oral life history interviews were used to have an access to the socially constructed reflective thoughts about an individual's life (Malm, 2001). Life histories are not only accounts of individual's life experiences, but also how and why they have lived their life in the way that they have, and the thoughts and ideas that have guided their everyday behavior and interaction with others (Yow,1994). The power of the life history method in illuminating subjective teacher experiences in social-historical contexts has made it 'probably the only authentic means of understanding how motives and practices reflect the intimate intersection of institutional and individual experience in the postmodern world (Dhunpath as cited in Goodson & Choi, 2008). Goodson, et al, contend that in relation to teachers' life stories, it is also necessary to understand each individual in relation to a wider (historical, cultural) context. He suggests that history data can be collected at a number of levels: the teacher's own personal account of his/her life experiences and background; teachers' life styles, life cycles and career stages; critical incidents in the teachers' lives and work, and being able to see the individual in relation to the history of his/her time.

In this regard, in order to have a clear understanding of the current conditions, status, problems, expectations and preferences of non-native English teachers in Iran as an example of nonwestern countries, through a longitudinal case study, the life and career of six non-native speaker (NNS) English teachers in state educational systems and institutes were explored by focusing on the following research questions from the teacher's own perspectives:

1. What educational experiences did they have?
2. What teaching experiences did they have?
3. What teacher training experiences did they have?

Review of the Related Literature

In the past three decades, interest in life history research – the collection and interpretation of personal histories or testimonies – in the social sciences has continually grown (Roberts, 2002). The popularity of this research method suggests a growing reluctance on the part of many researchers in the social sciences to infer too much from survey-based studies. For some, life history research reflects a turn away from objectivity and a privileging of subjectivity and positionality (Riessman, 2001). For others, life histories provide a rich source of data that enable researchers to explore the life course and to examine the relationships between cause and effect, and agency and structure. This renewed interest in the individual reflects a wider popularity shift, and is associated with post-modernism.

Non-native English Speaking Teachers

According to Moussu and Llorca (2008), although the majority of English language teachers worldwide are non-native English speakers, no research has been conducted on these teachers until recently. After the pioneering work of Phillipson in 1992 and Medgyes in 1994, nearly a decade had to elapse for more research to emerge on the issues relating to non-native English teachers. The publication in 1999 of Braine's book *Nonnative educators in English language teaching* appears to have encouraged a number of graduate students and scholars to research this issue, with topics ranging from teachers' perceptions of their own identity to students' views and aspects of teacher education.

As an example of life story studies of English teachers, in a case study, Hayes (2009a) explored the motivation and circumstances of 7 Thai teachers in government schools to see why they decided to become a teacher of English. In this study, data was derived from a series of in-depth life history interviews which lasted between 3 and a

half hour for each informant. According to Hayes, the findings suggested that individuals may choose to become members of their state teaching systems first and foremost, and that their choice of subject to teach was a secondary consideration, simply arising from their own school performance in and aptitude for that particular subject.

In a similar case study, Hayes (2009b), through in-depth interviews, explored the life and work of a non-native English teacher in a government secondary school in Thailand and examined in particular her perceptions on her own language learning, her experiences as a teacher of English and her attempts to innovate in her classroom within Thai educational setting. In this study, a two-hour interview was recorded and transcribed. The resulting data was, then, analyzed through a process of ‘meaning categorization’ (Kvale, 1996) with stretches of talk being attributed to thematic categories and sub-categories. At last, Hayes came to these findings: (1) One’s own experiences as a student of English exert a strong influence on the way that one teaches, at least initially; (2) Even where motivation to enter teaching is less than optimal, positive experiences as a teacher can provide the stimulus for a rewarding career; (3) Long-serving teachers have a powerful role in the socialization of beginning teachers—for good or bad; (4) Continuing in-service training throughout a teacher’s career may assist in providing the professional renewal that could encourage more reflection on one’s teaching practices; (5) A teacher who is of a reflective and questioning disposition can successfully implement a student-centered language teaching approach, even with classes of 40 or more students; and Finally (7) we have learnt above all that it is possible for a committed teacher to live out her beliefs and principles even within an administrative framework that does not at first sight appear conducive, and, in so doing, provide her students with positive learning experiences as well as herself with a rewarding career.

In the same vein, Smith (2010) reported some of the findings of a wider- life history study of 40 female secondary school teachers. The study was intended to investigate the women’s perceptions of the factors affecting their career decisions and, as a part of this, to gain

insights into the factors affecting the likelihood of women aspiring to, applying for and achieving headship posts. In so doing, open-ended, life history interviews were conducted with teachers, at different life and career stages, providing a series of snapshots of women's teaching careers. To the end of the study, he stated that three spheres of influence on the women's career decisions emerged from teacher's narratives: that is, *societal factors*, such as socialization and the social construction of women's maternal and relational roles; *institutional factors*, such as endemic institutional discrimination; and *personal factors*, including motivation and values, aspirations, perceptions of school leadership and the women's self perceptions about the extent to which they had exerted their personal agency in their approach to career management. He argued that women's awareness of their own potential for agency, and how they choose to exert it, was key considerations in understanding female teachers' career trajectories. At the end, he concluded that there was a need to move beyond an analysis in which the existence of barriers to progression was taken as a given and assumed to be a major career-shaping force, to an analysis that affords scope for taking into account the multifarious ways in which women exert their agency in the career context, making conscious and positive choices which may be at odds with traditional, hierarchical notions of career.

It is glaringly apparent that the power of life history method, as Goodson & Choi (2008) propose, in illuminating subjective teacher experiences in social-historical contexts has made it probably the only authentic means of understanding how motives and practices reflect the intimate intersection of institutional and individual experience in the postmodern world. In this regard several studies focused on the experiences of non-native English speaking (NNES) teachers in Western contexts but very few studies, if any, have attempted to explore the experiences of non-native English speaking teachers in Eastern context.

Moreover, other researchers so far have used merely descriptive designs and yielded imprecise information through large scale surveys, while, the qualitative nature of this study, (i.e., a case study) added a spice of novelty to the existing studies. Through this research,

an opportunity was provided to scrutinize how teacher's perceptions, their individual or social conditions and other factors may have a direct effect upon their learning or teaching experiences; such as teacher's motivating and de-motivating factors.

Method

Participants

In this case study, through convenient case sampling, six teachers (3 females and 3 males) were selected from among experienced NNES EFL teachers. In order to understand the real status of teachers in different contexts, the researcher selected the samples from among different public (n=3) and private (n=3) schools. Their professional experience ranged from 3 to 7 years of teaching practice. Their age ranged from 22 to 30 years old. Participants' profile is represented in

Table 1

Participants Profiles

Participants	Age	Educational Background	Teaching Experience	Teaching Context	Marital Status
Babak	29	BA in English literature MA in TEFL	7	Public schools private institutes	single
Zahra	24	BA & MA in TEFL	4	Public schools	single
Parisa	24	BA & MA in TEFL	3	Public schools	single
Ali	22	BA in English literature	5	Private institutes	single
Hadi	30	BA in English literature	5	Private institutes	single
Mitra	24	BA in English literature	5	Private institutes	married

Instruments and Procedures

A tailor-made life history questionnaire which elicited information about respondents' personal information, life at home, school, college, and teaching and teacher training experiences was used in the interview sessions. For a deeper interpretation and understanding of the data at hand the teachers were also asked follow-up questions related to their life stories through telephone conversations. Moreover, a set of observations conducted by the researcher over a one-year period scrutinized the issue from a different perspective and unveiled the extent to which whatever was said by the teachers in the interview sessions was right and observable in the real context(s).

Due to the nature of the study (i.e. a longitudinal qualitative research), data analysis, through an ongoing process, took place both during and after data collection. Units of analysis consisted of segments of the teachers' conversations at meetings and interviews. Emerging patterns and themes from the teachers' conversations were coded according to the related literature and recurring themes into several categories. These emerging categories and recurring themes formed the basis for analysis and interpretation of the data.

In so doing, the transcriptions were made right after the interviews. As data collection progressed throughout the study, observations data were produced too. All the data collected from the teachers were compiled and filed separately under each teacher's name. Then, the data were re-visited and re-examined; the assigned codes were analyzed to reduce data into categories or clusters. As a result, regularities or patterns that emerged from the data generated the main categories which were relevant to the research questions. Once, all the data were examined, different sources of data were cross-checked for recurring themes to enhance the validity across data. In order to enhance the reliability of the data, those teachers' quotations which seemed to provide concrete evidence to support the interpretations were selected. In addition, as regards reliability of the meaning categorization process, the results and interpretations were, then, testified through member checking and also by 2 other applied

linguists. Table 2 exemplifies how the codes and the categories were created from the interviews.

Table 2
Data Coding and Categorizing

Categories	Teacher's statements
Working conditions	I want to see a better working condition in our school because the atmosphere is so dead and disappointing (Parisa). Our working condition is so unstable and stressful (Hadi).
Job Security	We don't have any job security of any kind; managers can fire and replace us whenever, they want and we can do nothing (Ali). Fortunately, we have job security and a permanent job (Zahra).
Teacher's motive	I chose to be a teacher because I wanted to have a permanent job (Babak). I just wanted a permanent job as my father had asked me and I decided to study TEFL at university, now, if I find another job I may quit teaching (Parisa).
Schooling	My secondary school was the worst time of my life because I learned nothing at public schools and I became totally disappointed (Ali). All our classes were teacher-centered, crowded and test-oriented (Mitra).

Results

The patterns emerging from the coded data were reduced into main clusters based on the recurring themes. Tables 3 to 7 represent the outcomes of data categorization relevant to each of the three research questions that dealt with teachers' educational experiences, their teaching, and their teacher training courses, respectively. The results related to the first research question are provided in the same table as all the participants had somehow the same educational experiences.

Table 3
Teachers' Educational experiences

Themes	Informants' views
Schooling	<p>All the participants attended either private (Zahra, Parisa) or public (Babak, Ali,Hadi,Mitra) schools but in neither case they enjoyed a good education. The same books have been studied for over 10 to 20 last years. Most of the teaching was exam-oriented. They experienced very crowded classes.</p>
Quality of teaching English at schools	<p>They all had teacher-centered classes. The dominant method was grammar translation with emphasis basically on reading and translation. Their class atmosphere was de-motivating. English language learning was of no value in secondary and high school.</p>
Private English language learning	<p>Most of the informants (except for Babak who learned English by himself) started going to private language institutes from their teenage years. They enjoyed the method of teaching that was mainly CLT. Learning English in private institutes played the role of an intriguing factor for the informants to enter the university. They experienced challenging classes, great books and wonderful atmosphere.</p>
University experience	<p>The informants were satisfied with good education in the university. Most of the classes were practical, up-to-date, energetic and motivating, though different methods were used for EFL instruction. They experienced a student-centered class at university for the first time. They entered the university with great enthusiasm, energy and enjoyed studying there (except for Mitra who got disappointed because of lack of sufficient facilities).</p>

Plans to continue higher education	<p>They felt disappointed for continuing their education due to the problems they faced due to inappropriate teaching.</p> <p>They hesitated to do higher degrees because their salary would be cut into half if they wished to continue their education.</p> <p>Most of them except for (Ali) did not have a plan for a PhD degree.</p> <p>Babak was not allowed to continue his studies for one year because he was a public school teacher.</p>
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Table 4
Teaching Experiences: Public School teachers

Themes	Public school teachers' views
Motive	All informants were motivated to be a teacher in hope of having a permanent job and job security.
Salary	<p>All of them (except Babak) were satisfied with their salary but believed that their salary is lesser than that of other state organizations.</p> <p>Babak believed that teachers have lots of problems in making a living..</p>
Job Security	They were satisfied with having job security and insurance. All of them had stable conditions.
Workplace	All informants' (except for Babak) workplaces were far away from the city and they had to spend hours to get there.
Expectations	<p>They believed that there was not any difference between a hard working and dedicated teacher and the one who is not working or determined in his job. They expected active and hardworking teachers be appreciated by authorities and have some advantages over others.</p> <p>They were so motivated for teaching at first but were disappointed little by little because nobody cared about or appreciated their work</p> <p>They liked to be able to practice whatever they learned in the</p>

university in their classes but it was impossible so they preferred teaching in private language institutes too. .

Working conditions	<p>They were not satisfied with their current working conditions and believed that no improvement is likely to take place. They experienced a dead atmosphere in educational system of Ministry of Education. They tried to be different and make students motivated.. There was a balance between their work and life because they were off for two days a week. They believed that the only thing which is important in public schools is the passing rate of students. They were not satisfied with the scoring system of public schools because they were required to sign and give commitment to pass all students; and were not allowed to fail anybody at public schools. They believed that public schools are product oriented and just care about the scores. They believed that the words and actions of supervisors were completely contradictory. They were really under pressure and liked the school principals to cooperate with them in face of new methods of teaching. None of the teachers (except Parisa) wanted to give up teaching even if they found another job</p>
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Table 5
Teaching Experiences of Private School Teachers

Themes	Private school teachers' views
Motivation	<p>They all wanted to be a teacher from their childhood. They became disappointed frequently due to some narrow-minded views and unfair decisions by their managers or supervisors.</p>
Salary	<p>Some of them received their salary some months later than the due time. They had to argue about the amount of their salary every term because there was no regular framework for payments. They believed that the payments were not fair because some teachers got four times as much as others. They believed that their salary was low and not sufficient for one's</p>

primary needs.
They had to work overtime but still could not make a living.

Job security

They were dissatisfied with having no job security
They did not have any insurance and had no right to object to anything..

Workplace

They were dissatisfied with non-qualified teachers who teach English even with different majors like chemistry and physics
They had conflicts with narrow-minded managers who just misused English teachers.
They believed that public schools are lagging behind; their system of education is old and disappointing.

Expectations

They believed that it would have been better if they were self employed .
They wanted Ministry of Education to pay attention to the terrible conditions of teachers in language institutes.
They liked to be a university instructor rather than language schools.
They believed that by teaching in language institutes, none of their needs and expectations including educational, financial or occupational have been met.

Working conditions

They believed that most teachers get tired of teaching due to supervisors misbehaviors
who always wanted to catch and prove them wrong
They believed that the main problem of Language schools is management.
They were not able to disagree with manager's decisions.
They considered their part time job too demanding.
They had to keep the students motivated all the time and that put a lot of pressure on them.
They did not receive any support from Ministry of Education.
They were totally disappointed by supervisor's comments and feedback.
They had to change their workplace and start to work in new language institute(s) several times.
They were dissatisfied with the current conditions of private language schools.
They were forced to implement some wrong methods of teaching in their classes.
They had to work in a stressful and unreliable conditions.
They tried to practice the latest trends of teaching.
They were satisfied with some of their working conditions like

working downtown, having optional working hours.
They had to take a written and oral exam along with demonstration and unreasonably pay an amount of money without receiving any certificate or degree each time as they enter a new private language school.

Table 6
Teacher Training Experiences of Public School Teachers

Themes	Public school teachers' views
TTC Courses	All participants had some general and special teacher training courses which were held once a year. They all believed that they were not able to practice whatever they were told in teacher training courses because they were both too general and useless or too specialized and not applicable.
School supervisor	They all experienced many contradictions in supervisor's words and recommendations in workshops and their observation of teachers. They all had problems with contradictory behavior of public school supervisors.
Needs and expectations	They believed that they had some superficial seminars regarding the importance of research in education. They needed to have research- oriented-teachers but nothing has happened in practice. One of the teachers(Zahra) was not welcomed for doing a research regarding education They wanted the Ministry of Education to care more about research.
Limitations	In their teacher training courses, they were told by the supervisors to pass all the students.

Table 7

Teacher Training Experiences of Private School Teachers

Themes	Private school teachers' views
TTC Courses	They all had some totally useless TTC courses at the beginning of entering private schools which were just held by the managers as a good source of income for their school. They were just charged by managers for attending these useless TTC courses.
Supervisor	They all believed that the presence of supervisors is more kind of a threat than support They all had problems in dealing with private school supervisors and meeting their experiences.
Needs and expectation	They needed support and collaboration on the part of supervisors. They needed to have up-to-dated, practical and productive teaching training classes.
Limitations	They all had to take part in the so called TTC courses because school managers wanted to make sure they were practicing teaching methods the same as the private school guidelines. They were taught the principles of CLT in their TTC courses by those who themselves were not very good at teaching.

Discussion

By exploring the life history of six English teachers in Iran from their own perspective, both in state and private language schools, it became clear that depending on the context of their workplaces, there are some positive and negative factors which affect Iranian teachers' life and carrier to a great extent. The results indicated that public school teachers had better life and career conditions in some respects like having: job security, permanent job, monthly salary, job satisfaction, life and career balance, and stability of their current positions. However, by experiencing some difficulties and dissatisfactions, they had a worse condition compared to private language institute teachers in other respects like: difficulty in continuing education, dead

atmosphere of education, no improvement in their work or life conditions, limitations in practicing their innovations, scoring system of ministry of education, distant workplaces, boring job atmosphere, no appreciation of hardworking and innovative teachers, no use of their specialized knowledge in their classroom, and non-scientific workshops.

On the other hand, private language teachers enjoyed better conditions like having: flexible working hours, close workplaces, lively and dynamic atmospheres, interest and motive in teaching, implementation of their specialized knowledge. But, at the same time experiencing disappointing conditions like: low salary, no job security, no job and career balance, instability of their current position, stressful circumstances, demanding job requirements, non-scientific guidelines, weak management, overtime working hours, dependency, and no regular leave.

The results suggest that the participants in current investigation, either in state or private language schools, were struggling with lots of problems in their life and career. Of course, there were some pros and cons for both.

All in all, state teachers had better life and career conditions in some respects compared to private language institutes' teachers. It can be inferred from the results that the most important advantage for public school teachers compared to private language institute teachers is having *job security and a permanent job*. Due to job security, they can put up with all other difficulties and feel relaxed at their life and workplaces. If there was not any job security for them, nobody would have thought twice about quitting that boring atmosphere in public schools. Policy makers are thus recommended to create an interesting and rewarding situation in which every teacher is interested and willing to excel.

On the other hand, teachers in private language schools enjoy a good and lively working atmosphere but still there was no job security or permanent job. Therefore, they would not have chosen to be teachers if they had a second chance of choosing their career. Even some of them liked to change their current position with public

teachers and work in that overwhelming dead atmosphere -public schools- to the cost of having job security and a permanent job, while, public teachers like to work simultaneously in public and private language schools to enjoy both job security and desired educational atmosphere.

Here, the point is that those teachers who are working in language institutes and are doing their best in foreign language teaching with the latest and the most up-to-date and practical trends of education are not supported by Ministry of Education, insurance companies or any other organizations. On the other hand, those teachers who are working in public schools and are enjoying job security and a permanent job cannot have any autonomy and freeness in their teaching and have to confine themselves in those traditional teaching methods that have been the same since 30 years ago.

Findings also indicate that there is a *life and career balance* for public teachers but not for teachers at private language schools. Teachers at public schools work 24 hours per week and have more free time for other life matters. Moreover, in their free time they do not have to be concerned about any preparation in their teaching practice because every year they teach the same books that have been the same since their school time when they themselves were students and studied those books in their secondary and high schools.

On the other hand, private school teachers have to keep themselves and their knowledge and skills practical and up-to-date; in line with their dynamic and high-level standard working conditions; in order to be able to survive in that instable and unreliable situation they are confronting with. If they do not do so, there is no place for them and they will lose their job. Therefore, in their free time they have to work on improving their skills and knowledge and keeping themselves always ready for their classes. That is why teachers working in language schools called their job ‘demanding’ and stated that it takes them too much time and energy; but what they get at the end, nothing, as long as there is no job security , no permanent job , no insurance , no retirement, or worse no enough salary.

Regarding the first question that dealt with teacher’s educational

and learning experiences, the theme emerging from the results is that public school teachers have lots of difficulties in continuing their education. This fact strengthens the belief that public schools do not welcome any innovations or improvements in their system of education; it is best manifested in the difficulties that public school teachers who want to continue their education will confront. As was stated by the state teachers, all of them have become disappointed in *continuing their education* while they were teaching in public schools due to many problems they have faced with. First, their salary is cut in half because their working hours decreases. Second, their workplaces are far away from their universities and they have difficulty in attending the university. Third, whatever knowledge or skills they learn or study at universities is not applicable in the confined and dead atmosphere of public schools. Moreover, there is no appreciation of hardworking and innovative teachers and even worse, in some cases punishment of innovative ones is normal. Now, with these conditions why they should put up with all the difficulties of continuing their education when nothing important will happen for them.

Further scrutiny of the outcomes disclosed the fact that *none of the teachers, either in public or private language schools, enjoyed a good education during their school time*. It means that the disappointing system of the education they grew up in as students is still the same but now their role has changed as teachers. In other words, it indicates that public schools are lagging behind and no improvement has been occurred in their long-lasting traditional trends of education. *But at their university level, almost all of them were satisfied with their educational experiences*. Accordingly, it seems that teachers have to be familiar with the latest trends and innovations in EFL teaching in their universities and not in their workplaces. Therefore, it seems that the cause of the new trends and innovations in EFL teaching are universities that move forward in line with the world. Universities have direct and indirect effects on teachers by shaping their minds and views and making them qualified teachers equipped with the latest innovations in their major and at the same time on public and private language schools.

Regarding the second question about working condition of the

teachers, the results indicated that there was no improvement in public school teacher's work conditions. In other words, they are experiencing kind of *dead-end jobs*. They describe the atmosphere of public schools as a 'dead atmosphere' with no innovations and improvements at all. Moreover, when they want to practice new methods of teaching, learnt at their universities, they confront with severe limitations in public schools and even worse, with the traditional and narrow-minded view of principals and supervisors. That is why any new teacher who joins this system of education, little by little, loses his motive and interest in making any difference, exactly like the experienced teachers who have many years of working experience in public schools. It seems that public schools have to prepare students for University Entrance Examinations and that is why nothing has happened there since 30 years ago; because this system of education is basically and fundamentally affected by backwash effect of exams especially University Entrance Examination. Public schools keep themselves away from the latest trends of education in the world and adhere to the wrong and traditional methods of education that, as a result, have no appropriate output and make both students and teachers disappointed and hopeless to the extent that, as state teachers maintained: *students know they are just wasting their time and energy in public schools*. On the other hand, teachers in private language schools enjoy a lively and dynamic atmosphere of. This encouraging and rewarding condition is one of the advantages of private language schools compared to public schools. In this regard, there is a competitive atmosphere in private language schools among teachers; because they want to keep their instable job and conditions and they have to be better and work more enthusiastically in their teaching in order to be able to survive there; something which is absent in public schools.

What makes the situation even more overwhelming is the *scoring system of the public schools* in which nobody fails. And if you want to fail some weak students, you will be punished or face with lots of problems in your workplace. It seems that the only thing which is not important in public schools is the quality of education; this creates a disastrous educational system. It is not weird why all students and

teachers want to experience the quality of EFL teaching in the lively and dynamic atmosphere of private language schools that *have been more successful in their aim which is teaching English in the most effective way compared to public schools*.

Regarding responses to the third question that dealt with teacher's training experiences, public school teachers believed that there are very few *non-scientific/academic workshops* held once or twice a year but they are either too general or too specialized and not practical in the current system of education. The authorities hold some workshops that guide teachers in terms of efficient teaching but, in practice, they themselves want and expect something else from the teachers. Some workshops emphasize that teachers should not be score-oriented and should push students toward acquiring knowledge, but, this is not possible in an educational system which is completely score-based and teachers and public schools are valued and judged according to the passing rate of their students. If a teacher passes all the students in exams, they give her some bonuses and appreciate her, on the other hand, if she fails some students she will be blamed and, in some cases, punished by school principals.

Teachers in private language schools, on the contrary, have different experiences. They do not have any regular Teacher Training Courses during their teaching; but, they attend some TTC courses when they enter their teaching carriers in the institutes, where the main reason for the TTC courses is basically charging teachers; but teachers are all either English majors and had studied those lessons at universities or have experience in different language schools with the same trends of teaching. But attending in the so-called TTCs are due for all.

The results of the study showed that there are societal, institutional, and personal factors affecting teacher's lives and career to a great extent; something which confirmed the findings of Smith's (2010) study in which he reported some of the findings of a life history study of 40 female secondary school teachers. To the end of the study, he stated that three spheres of influence on the women's career decisions emerged from teacher's narratives: that is, societal

factors, such as socialization and the social construction of women's maternal and relational roles; institutional factors, such as endemic institutional discrimination; and personal factors, including motivation and values, aspirations, perceptions of school leadership and the women's self-perceptions about the extent to which they had exerted their personal agency in their approach to career management.

This study also confirmed the findings of Hayes (2009a) regarding the motive of becoming a state teacher in which he explored the motivation and circumstances of 7 Thai teachers in government schools to see why they decided to become a teacher of English. Hayes' findings suggested that first and foremost individuals may choose to become members of their state teaching systems and that their choice of subject to teach was a secondary consideration, simply arising from their own school performance in and aptitude for that particular subject.

The findings of this study also agree with the outcomes of the similar study of Hayes (2009b), who through in-depth interviews explored the life and work of an NNS English teacher in a governmental secondary school in Thailand. Hayes concluded that: 1. *one's own experiences as a student of English exert a strong influence on the way that one teaches, at least initially.* In the present study, English teachers also practiced according or contrary to, their own educational experiences either in university or public and private language schools. 2. *Even where motivation to enter teaching is less than optimal, positive experiences as a teacher can provide the stimulus for a rewarding career.* In the present study also, some public or private language schools were doing their best in their career to the extent that they had positive experiences and feedbacks from their life and career. 3. *Long-serving teachers have a powerful role in the socialization of beginning teachers—for good or bad.* This one is also confirmed in this study as teachers said about the experienced teachers who affected their career condition to a great extent either in public or private language schools. 4. *Continuing in-service training throughout a teacher's career may assist in providing the professional renewal that could encourage more reflection on one's teaching practices.* This finding was not confirmed because these TTCs, either in public and

private language schools were regarded impractical and not useful at all. 5. *Finally, it is possible for a committed teacher to live out her beliefs and principles even within an administrative framework that does not at first sight appear conducive, and, in so doing, provide her students with positive learning experiences as well as herself with a rewarding career.* This finding was also confirmed in this study by what public and private language schools did in their works in spite of all the limitations they experienced in their workplaces.

The most important outcome of the study is its contribution to revealing this hopeless socio-educational context in the hope of providing an opportunity to bring about some improvements in the Iranian educational context in general and teacher's life and carrier conditions in particular. It is hoped that by these kinds of studies, some consideration and more importantly, actions be taken by top educational or governmental authorities in order to release the difficult conditions that teachers are confronting and struggling with in this context. This study made it quite clear that as long as English teachers are experiencing such kinds of difficulties, no improvement in their life and career and as a result in socio-educational context of Iran either in public or private schools is likely to take place, therefore, significant steps should be taken to improve the current conditions.

Findings of the current study call for a close attention from the Ministry of Education, the policies of which, wrong or right, are well manifested in public contexts. Through this study, the educational authorities can see how disappointing the current situation is in public schools for both teachers and students and how ineffective are the old and traditional methods of teaching foreign languages in public schools. The awful side of the problem is that this traditional unsuccessful method has been the same since 30 years ago. They can see the attempts of teachers who want to bring about some innovations in their works but due to the hard and rigid conditions they cannot implement what they want. The authorities can analyze and judge the results of their policies more clearly and hopefully take some actions in order to rebuild the infrastructures and renew their policies, regulations, and attitudes towards education and teachers.

Now, it is quite clear that the main players of every private language schools are the teachers. If it is taken for granted that the main duty and aim of Ministry of Education is the very act of education, as it can be derived from its title, why those teachers who are the main players or applicants of the current improvements in EFL education in Iranian society, are having the most unreliable and instable jobs and are those who are suffering the most from the lack of job security and permanent job. Are their works not worthy of appreciation or attention by any organization? It seems logical that at least some actions be taken by Ministry of Education or other organizations to provide private language teachers a stable and reliable working condition.

By taking a glance at the current trends of TEFL in public schools, it seems logical to expect further studies the outcomes of which may bring about fundamental improvements in state educational system. It would be better to scrutinize the outcomes of the situations where students and teachers spend their EFL courses in private language schools instead of wasting their time and energy at public schools. There, it is thought possible, that they can both learn a foreign language more effectively and at the same time be prepared for other exams too.

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