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8

# ‘I want to make the invisible visible’: Teacher motivation in Argentinian prison education

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## Why a chapter on prison education?

Prison education is underrepresented in education forums. Prisons are envisaged as settings with difficult circumstances for both teachers and learners. Bhatti (2010) argues that both teachers and learners feel peripheral to the dynamics of social participation. Studies originated in different settings stress inmates' exclusion from society and formal education before incarceration (Brine 2001; García et al. 2007; Hughes 2012; Wilson and Reuss 2000). In some cases, adult and young prisoners' trajectories are summarised through the school-to-prison pipeline concept (Raible and Irizarry 2010; Winn and Behizadeh 2011).

According to Harbour and Ebie (2011), marginalisation is one form of oppression. In Freire's terms, pedagogy needs to challenge oppression and promote social justice. Freire (1969, 1970, 1992) conceived education as a way to integrate people in the construction of a participatory and democratic nation. Integration, in Freire's view, entails reflection, action, and the development of a critical stance. Education becomes a resource not only to help the oppressed to learn and write, but to encourage them to find their own voice, their liberation. This is achieved through praxis, that is, through seeking and enacting liberation (Freire, 1970). In such a scenario, Freire (1992) argued that one of the educator's tasks is to discover with their learners the possibilities for hope.

As a teacher of English as a foreign language in Argentina I decided to explore English language teaching (ELT) through a focus on teacher motivation in 'difficult circumstances' with the aim of representing those colleagues working in less

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mainstream contexts. I approach the intersection between teacher motivation and prison education from a person-in-context, relational view of motivation (Ushioda 2009). This relational view of teacher motivation entails that we understand the benefits of prison education as these will impact on teachers' motivation.

### Education in contexts of confinement

Prison education is not an easy enterprise. Schools in contexts of confinement in different countries operate within a larger institution, the prison, with dissimilar aims. While schools aim at empowerment, prisons aim at control.

Diseth et al. (2008) assert that prison education aims at preparing inmates for life after prison and therefore attempts to reduce recidivism. Within this perspective, Wilson and Reuss (2000) illustrate how education can change offending behaviour through the deployment of empowering pedagogies. Reports indicate that education through formal schooling and language skills development and training has the power to influence academic achievement, employment opportunities, and social involvement (Brazier, Hurry and Wilson 2010; Faltis 2014; Hartnett, Novek and Wood 2013). Behind these aims, teachers mediate between the prison and the outside world.

In contrast, García et al. (2007) describe prisons as social containers, and some prisons, as reported from Argentina (Manchado 2012), obstruct the educational process. For example, they do not offer adequate classrooms, spaces which are independent from the prison building, or teaching and learning materials (but see Batchelder and Rachal 2000). In addition, prison life interferes with delivery of lessons or learners' attendance.

Such conflicting aims and constraints raise tension. Blazich (2007) states that prisons are based on control and homogenisation, and conditions of security in contrast with school aims. According to Spaulding (2011), prison educators in the US live the tension between prison administrators' controlling aims and educators' desire to teach. The author adds that teachers sustain their motivation because they feel they matter and make a difference in the lives of their learners. Conversely,

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international studies on inmates' educational motives reveal that they choose education for its instrumental and development value upon release, but also as an escapist solution to avoid prison work and routines (Diseth et al. 2008; Hughes 2012; Manger et al. 2010). Upon this last perception, Mazzini (2011) observes a paradox: while mainstream education is sometimes seen as oppressive, prison education is felt as liberating.

In Argentina, the context of this study, the current national law of education (Ley 26,206) includes education in context of confinement. In addition, another law (Ley 26,695) states that all inmates have the right to education and that the government must provide the necessary conditions for learners and teachers. According to Article 140 of this law, all inmates who complete secondary education will enjoy benefits such as early temporary release. The law also states that the prison institution will guarantee the appropriate infrastructure for the school, and that inmates may opt for face-to-face or distance instruction. However, inmates are not allowed to have internet access as they cannot have contact with the 'outside' world through mobile phones or digital means of communication.

### **Teacher motivation**

Teacher motivation plays a substantial role in teaching and learning practices. I approach the field of (language) teacher motivation following Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011), who see motivation as influenced by four factors:

- intrinsic motivation or autonomous motivation emerging from the educational process itself, the subject-matter, vocational goals and the common good, autonomy, relatedness, teaching efficacy (see also Lauermaun and Karabenick 2013; Nitsche et al. 2014), and personal efficacy;
- social-contextual influences over which teachers have varied levels of control and management;

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- the temporal dimension, i.e., teaching as a lifelong process (this includes career structures and promotion possibilities);
- negative influences (e.g. stress, content repetitiveness, or little intellectual challenge) which make teacher motivation fragile.

In a similar vein, Woolfolk Hoy (2008) views teacher motivation as a complex construct influenced by teachers' context, learners' perceptions and learner motivation, teacher efficacy, and teacher citizenship realised through, for example, offering extra help and support. Nevertheless, Alexander (2008) is cautious about truisms (e.g. personal fulfillment, contribution to society at large) in the teaching profession and their influence on sustaining motivation. In her view, high altruism can prove detrimental when teachers' dreams are not achieved. She suggests that high goals need to contain a dose of pragmatism to make teaching sustainable over time.

The ELT literature offers qualitative studies on teacher motivation among novice teachers (e.g. Kumazawa 2013) and experienced teachers with their learners (Banegas 2013), and mix-method studies with experienced teachers (Kubanyiova 2009). However, these reports are usually situated in mainstream settings, and therefore language teachers who teach in difficult circumstances such as contexts of confinement are underrepresented in the literature.

The perspectives presented above indicate that teacher motivation is a dynamic concept and that it should be approached from a view which considers the teacher as a person in context. Ushioda (2009: 215) calls for 'a person-in-context relational view of language motivation'. She explains that this approach entails examining motivation as 'emergent from relations between real persons, with particular social identities, and the unfolding cultural context of activity'. Although she refers to language learners, the same view could be applied to teachers if we see teaching and learning processes as interrelated, and teaching as a learning career. Ushioda's call is a necessary element in the study and development of teacher education. By studying teachers as people, we also move away from teacher training (teachers as

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technicians) and encourage teacher education where teachers become in-context professionals.

Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to explore the motivation of two ELT teachers and their practices in the context of prison education, and their perceptions of their own practices. I seek to value the work of those colleagues who work under difficult circumstances in prison education and help other colleagues working in similar context reflect on their own motivation and teaching practices. Sometimes, the reading of other professionals' stories becomes an invitation to 'write' our stories too.

In what follows I first share the stories of Clara and Marta (pseudonyms) which I gathered through their journals and interviews. Then, I examine their motivations in terms of similarities and differences, and in terms of two periods: initial motivation and sustaining motivation over time. Last, I discuss their perceptions of their teaching practices in prison education.

### **Clara and Marta**

Over one school year, I interviewed Clara via Skype and Marta face-to-face. Both requested to receive my initial questions beforehand by e-mail. They were close to retirement age (53) when I approached them in 2013. I contacted them via email and later I explained my aims and what was required from them. I was acquainted with them through our national teacher association and professional contexts.

Interviews were carried out in Spanish and audiotaped. In the interviews we talked about their personal and professional backgrounds, their trajectories in prison education, and their teaching practices as regards lesson planning, materials, and classroom management.

Additionally, I suggested keeping a teaching journal for the time they wished to record their lessons (content, activities, materials) and their own as well as their learners' feelings. Only Clara produced a teaching journal with entries written in English. She was happy to share it with me and was open for a follow-up interview

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based on her entries. Due to time constraints and summer holidays (December-February) by the time she sent me her notebook, I decided not to pressure her with further interviews.

Out of both participants' willingness, they shared with me samples of their learners' activities (Clara) and teacher-made materials (Marta). I valued flexibility and respect for their time and engagement over strictness in relation to the nature of the data. However, such samples were not included in my data because the learners were not aware of my project.

Below I present both Clara's and Marta's stories based on the data I gathered. I first offer a view of Clara through her teaching journal and interviews. Second, I focus on Marta's experience.

Clara's story

### *Clara's background*

Clara graduated as a teacher of English in her city of birth and residence in northern Argentina. She wanted to become a veterinary, but such a course involved moving to a different city and her family could not afford it. Therefore, she enrolled in the English language teaching course in her city. At the time of her participation she was 51 and with a teaching experience of 31 years. She had worked in private and state education at all levels, from kindergarten to teacher education. Some of the schools where she worked are located in marginalised areas. She was actively involved in her local teacher association and church and did voluntary work particularly with teenagers 'at risk'.

Clara learnt about the English teaching post in prison education when the school principal approached her by telephone. She started as a substitute teacher and then became a permanent member of staff. She has worked in this setting for six years and teaches males and females separately. **It is a mixed prison and the school is within the prison building.** At this school, learners study English for three years. The school has ten classrooms, a room with computers, and other facilities. No internet use is allowed to the learners. Learners are around 20 – 50 years of age. On average, Clara has between two and ten learners per lesson. She teaches English

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two hours per week and is in charge of two different classes, thus making a total of four hours of teaching workload.

Clara kept her teaching journal between September and October 2013. She wrote her entries in English. On some days she made the distinction between 'Ladies' and 'Boys' or 'Gentlemen' to signal the different groups of learners. Her entries kept the pattern: lesson description of contents and activities, her perception of learners' attitudes, and her own feelings.

In her narrative, Clara usually talked about related her experience to her teaching practices and how she felt related to her students beyond the limits of a syllabus or the classroom.

When Clara talked about her teaching practice, she described what she taught (e.g. grammar, vocabulary, language functions such as describing, etc.) and the activities and strategies employed. One aspect I noticed is her use of games and tasks such as creating a Facebook profile (on paper), writing an 'escort' ad (carried out with her male learners), writing a 'gossip corner' for a local magazine (with her female learners) and roleplaying where learners pretend to be a celebrity (e.g. Lionel Messi) and a famous local interviewer. She allowed them to imagine and pretend and did not censor their productions. In one entry about learners pretending to interview a celebrity she wrote:

This time they could ask whatever they wanted, e.g. Where do you have sex?!!! Finally they wrote paragraphs with their own 'ideal routines' and the celebs' 'dark routines'.

Clara's goal was to be a good citizen and work towards the common good. Clara envisioned prison education as an opportunity for learners to integrate into mainstream society. Along these lines, she conceptualised prison (education) through a journey metaphor:

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These lads come from very difficult contexts where the State never saw them, and sees them when along their journey they arrived at the context of confinement.

The following quotes (all quotes come from the interviews with Clara) attest to the role of prison education represented through her job as a teacher. When asked about what the school aimed at, Clara said:

We're trying to make them become part of a society they were never part of. We're aiming at them getting to know a different world, a better world. That education can give us that world. Why do I need to go back to my cart to collect food for the pigs?

With this role in mind, education becomes liberating, a space of freedom which is achieved by teachers supporting learners and relating to them:

To them, we're a window to the sky. We're educating, and that involves being with them.

In relation to prison education features, Clara insisted that it was similar to any school 'extramuros' (Spanish for outside the prison walls). However, similarities seemed to be in terms of organisation, the curriculum, and facilities only. At different times, she highlighted that learners in the context of confinement had a history of marginalisation and that the context of incarceration demanded inclusive and context-responsive pedagogies which responded to the learners' biographies.

Furthermore, she valued the respectful and collaborative working atmosphere between the prison staff and the school staff, the school staff among themselves, and between the school staff and the learners. On several occasions she mentioned



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how protected she felt in the school contrary to people's prejudices. **In answer to a question about what a day is like at the school,** she compared prison education to mainstream education:

We've got a wonderful computer room. I feel protected by them (the learners). They'll be the first to defend me. They're looking forward to seeing you. There are no issues of misconduct. The teaching and learning situation is ideal.

Clara also envisioned prison education as an opportunity for professional development inside the classroom and through regular seminars and meetings. She shared with me some of the reading material she had collected from different seminars delivered by psychologists, lawyers, and pedagogues (she was generous enough to post them to my home in southern Argentina). She also valued attending ELT conferences and reflected on the need to benefit from all types of speakers:

I always hear complaints, people saying what's the use of this for me, I can't implement it. And I think I work in a more difficult context and nevertheless I always get something useful... that I have to adapt, of course.

Throughout the interviews, Clara maintained an optimistic and positive attitude. She only raised some concerns in relation to whether learners were aware of the role and impact of education in the context of confinement, and whether education could reduce recidivism. **When I asked her about what day-to-day issues worried her, she said she was** concerned with learner mobility and fluctuation:

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I worry because the lessons are not so regular because some come, some go all the time, or the presence of babies in class because the ladies come with their babies.

Clara's work towards the common good permeated her teaching practices in such difficult circumstances. **In response to a question about what profile teachers should have to work in prison education, she** believed that passion, creativity, motivation and commitment had to be a vital part of a teacher's attitude. However, I felt that she implied that we had to move beyond teaching and being a teacher and live our explorations as people, as citizens who had to engage with fellow citizens at critical levels of social justice. The following extracts illustrate these aspects:

Let's bring passion to the classrooms. If I weren't convinced that every day is a new dawn, I should stay at home.

You need imagination, from the person inside you, motivation, and the willingness to do things.

Working in prison education is a great challenge, but not a challenge for the teacher as such. It's a great challenge for the heart. I believe that when we learn to see life from the heart we'll have a different outlook. We're very quick to judge and see others' mistakes.

Clara later explained that she sought to explore relatedness beyond ELT by listening to her learners' stories, bringing poems they could share with their relatives, cakes to share, and keeping them in her prayers at mass. She felt that she developed motherly feelings for them. However, she sometimes felt that high levels of relatedness could become an issue:

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A small gift for a mom can bring her trouble with other girls who don't come to school, 'why did she bring something for you only'? I also listen to their sorrows and they affect me obviously because I am free, they aren't.

According to Clara's accounts, her teaching practices were characterised by autonomy to develop the syllabus, lesson plans, and materials. She indicated that her syllabus and lesson planning had to respond to the fluctuating learner population, their interests, 'la calle' (the street, i.e. life outside), and engaging activities. When I asked her to talk me through her journal, she described the activities she had recorded and added that:

I work a lot with magazines, photocopies, with what we have. We don't have a coursebook, we don't need the latest. I think that after 31 years of teaching I don't need a book, I need my brain more.

She emphasised learner motivation and felt that their motivation depended on her motivation and professionalism to develop engaging lessons:

Everything's got to be different, attractive, that they feel that they're doing things to have a good time too. They loved the gossip corner, or playing that they're interviewing with an imaginary mic. I've got to do things that engage them. We make paper cellphones and we write messages we then exchange. I love it when I see them with me, engaged in my lessons.

In relation to learners' motivation and her practices, I found that in one of her entries on a lesson with the 'boys' she wrote:

We usually make use of guessing games and memory games. They are excellent at playing dominoes as they are very good observers.

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However, in another entry regarding the 'ladies' she wrote:

Ladies do not enjoy games at all because they don't want to be 'losers'.  
Sometimes they argue so I don't use games very often.

How she felt connected to her learners was clear from her diary. She wished to respond to their likes and needs:

José enjoyed the class very much especially because I had brought some pastries with caramel jelly. They love this!!!

We didn't work a lot because they (the ladies) wanted to talk about Mother's Day and they asked me to bring something for the celebration.

Her trying to meet their demands acted as a source of motivation. All her comments on her emotions and learners' attitudes were positive. For example, she wrote:

I felt extremely happy as they were enthusiastic with the activities. They were very interested in their performance.

It is a great pleasure to work with them. I feel satisfied with their success.

They were very happy when they 'imagined' they were interviewing Messi.

When I asked her how they treated her, she mentioned that she felt respected and loved. She insisted that the learners were tidy, proactive in class, and always made her feel welcome. Based on these perceptions, she worded her motivation to be there and to be part of my research:

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You know that I promote religion (Catholicism). We don't go there for the paycheck. We go because we want other things in life, we've got other challenges. It's what I want in my life. I'm very happy because in this way *I want to make the invisible visible.*

Clara seemed to be concerned with learner motivation and engagement and therefore her lessons aimed at making them enjoy the activities. At a surface level, I felt that her positive comments and her 'happiness' were derived from her learners' motivation. I will discuss the deeper level in another section below.

### Marta's story

Marta graduated as a translator of English from University of La Plata. She had aimed at studying Psychology but at the time the military government closed the School of Psychology among others. As a teenager and young adult she taught English at a private language school. With her husband and children they moved to a small town in southern Argentina where she taught English at the local secondary school for a number of years.

Her lived experiences in that context played a significant role in her later decision to join prison education and in achieving her aims related to social issues and to engage with people through and beyond English language teaching:

Teaching in that town was an incredible experience. You had children of all ages, the mayor's son and the gaucho's son together. You know what I found fascinating? I was embarrassed to teach English there, because you saw the country lads and thought what's the use, it was ridiculous even. But I then realised that English was the perfect excuse to bring us together, to do things, and to learn that they did need English to read the instruction manuals of engines and electronics. It was a defining experience.

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Later, they moved to a different city also in southern Argentina. As an adult she studied Social Psychology. At the time of her participation she was 53 and had worked as a translator at a research centre for 23 years.

Marta resumed teaching in 2010 when she saw a prison education post advertised in a local e-newspaper. Similarly to Clara, she started as a substitute teacher before becoming a permanent member of staff.. Marta had only male learners aged 25 – 50. She taught two hours a week and on average she had between five and ten learners per lesson. At her school, secondary education could be completed in three four-month modules and it was not entirely face-to-face. Learners took face-to-face lessons and then engaged in self-directed learning. The school did not have classrooms but what she called 'boxes', a room with thin partitions which could accommodate around ten people.

As a teacher in prison education, three factors played a paramount role in sustaining Marta's motivation: the school coordinator's encouraging and hands-on managing style, her colleagues, and instances of professional development. She remarked that:

Something wonderful that happens to us is when we, people who work in contexts of confinement, get together. Last year I attended a convention and shared my experience of teaching English through drama. There's so much you learn from others, sharing, finding more about prisons, what they do and go through.

Throughout our interviews, Marta displayed different attitudes and perceptions of her job in prison education usually connected to her interest in social justice and social issues.

In relation to prison education, Marta was aware of the institution-within-institution dynamics which operate at her job and employed a journey metaphor to

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indicate that a prison was 'the last stop' in her learners' lives after all other state-run and church-run institutions had failed. Despite this grim definition, her attitudes and perceptions were positive and hopeful:

Although we're a bit tight for space, there are posters, poems on the walls, good vibes. It is a school and it feels like a school. Besides, the school is a space of freedom within the context of confinement. And contrary to what many people think that it's unsafe, you feel a lot safer working here than in a school outside.

Marta also commented on her personal transformation working in this context and how her attitudes changed. For example, she adopted a new attitude towards personal freedom:

On the first day I felt like I'd always been there. But on the second or third day, when I left, I felt something like oxygenation and something very deep thinking- I leave, they stay. I valued freedom on a much larger scale.

In our last interview, she remarked how she had erased those features and practices that constituted a prison because her focus was on the human element:

At the beginning they made me jump when they ran the nightstick along the bars. Then you stop seeing the bars because you care about the people. I remember that there are bars when we take a picture and we then see them at the back.

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Marta was critical about her fellow citizens. She believed people were not aware of the fact that there are people living inside the local prison, located in an urbanised area.

Does anyone think that we've got neighbours living there? We just go past and say how terrible! A prison in the middle of the town.

Throughout the interviews, Marta emphasised that she saw her learners as learners and not as inmates or criminals, words which she resented. She developed a protective and motherly attitude towards them and began to notice how they could be transformed through prison education and dialogue.

Like mothers we worry about them, that they don't do drugs. We spend a lot of time talking. In the beginning they're distrustful, defensive, but then their look becomes softer. First they shake hands, then they kiss, and then they hug you.

However, she also admitted dual feelings when learners left the prison:

On the one hand you're happy that they're released but you get that sensation of not being able to help them anymore. Will they get a job? Will they reoffend? Will they be happy?

Marta also commented on her learners' motivation to learn English and how this perceived motivation was another factor to sustain her own motivation:



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When I was explaining something they'd say 'right, because if we travel', and that's a positive projection that makes my soul happy. They think that perhaps they can travel. Once a learner told me that he'd never imagined he'd be speaking in English. Others say that they want to make the most of studying here because when they leave they won't study

Last, Marta's teaching practices appeared to be shaped by her teacher autonomy to plan and deliver lessons which responded to her concerns related to high learner mobility, different prison education programmes, and limited time. She deployed a wide range of strategies which included use of drama (Marta was an amateur actress) and role-play, translation, language awareness techniques, emphasis on oral work, and use of authentic sources such as maps. When I asked her about her self-perceived strengths, she was confident to say that her acting skills helped her at pedagogical and relational levels with her learners.

With reference to learning materials, she developed her own worksheets which she collected in a home-made Spanish-English exercise book. When I noticed her conversational tone in writing instructions and explanations in Spanish, she elaborated on this feature.

It's like I talk to them when they complete the worksheets autonomously. They love it. And year after year I change it, I improve it.

Overall, Marta seemed to base her decision to join prison education on her interest in helping disadvantaged groups of people and experience as a teacher in a small town in southern Argentina.

## Understanding Clara's and Marta's motivations

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Both Clara and Marta had a Freiran (Freire 1969, 1970, 1972) view of education that is, education could make a difference and integrate people into society. Furthermore, they believed that education could bring hope and empowerment and develop emancipatory learners' trajectories to fight their stories of marginalisation and social injustice as discussed in Bhatti (2010). In line with Diseth et al. (2008), they saw prison education as one way of influencing their learners' lives. However they had concerns about the extent to which this was attained and sustained after life in prison and were aware of dissonant opinions among their fellow citizens.

Both teachers referred to prisons through journey metaphors which underlined learners' biographies of neglect and oppression. However, they envisioned prison education and their own teaching roles as liberating, with their classroom as a space of freedom within the limits of confinement, and highly dialogue-based. These conceptualisations confirm Mazzini's (2011) observed paradox between oppressive mainstream education and liberating prison education.

In relation to their working contexts, Clara and Marta were aware of their schools operating within the prison as a larger institution. They actively engaged themselves in creating conducive conditions for learning and relating. In this respect, their experiences offer a more promising picture of working conditions in contrast to Manchado (2012), and did not reveal any tensions between educators' and prison administrators' aims as argued in Spaulding (2011). On the contrary, the prison education environment was perceived as more supportive and safer than 'normal' schools. In addition, they did not see the prison as an interfering factor in the school environment. Marta, for example, offered accounts of transformation and to a certain extent of normalisation and adjustment to given and socially accepted prison features. In this sense, their view of prison education was balanced because they were aware of strengths and weaknesses in the system.

### Initial motivations

In terms of initial motivation to work in prison education, Clara and Marta seemed to share motivational factors even though these, in turn, may rest on different

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drives. From a relational perspective of motivation, they were drawn into prison education by vocational goals, the common good and social justice. Such drives are aligned with influential factors such as teacher citizenship and truism as reported in Woolfolk Hoy (2008) and Alexander (2008). However, while Clara's drive was Catholicism-influenced and based on experiences of working with less affluent groups, Marta's motivations were driven by her interest in (social) psychology and earlier teaching experiences in difficult circumstances in mainstream education. In this latter case, Marta's desire to be a psychologist was achieved in her working as a teacher for children 'at risk' (and now in prison education) even when she had studied English-Spanish translation instead of English language teaching.

Following Dörnyei and Ushioda's (2011) factors of teacher motivation listed earlier in the chapter, Clara's and Marta's initial motivation was intrinsic but it was not affected by the educational process itself or teaching efficacy. On the contrary, teaching English was relegated to a second plane. In this regard, they did not see themselves as teachers of English or teachers, but as people wishing to help the oppressed and 'invisibilised' people studying in difficult circumstances. Along these lines, I shall add that social-contextual factors and personal efficacy also influenced their decision as they believed that they could make a difference and help reshape the context in which their learners and they themselves are inscribed.

Based on Clara's and Marta's compelling stories, teachers may feel motivated to work under difficult circumstances when their drive to work for the common good, sense of citizenship, collaboration, and social responsibility are so high that challenges are perceived as new opportunities for professional and, above all, personal development. In addition, teachers' awareness of personal efficacy and unfulfilled dreams may make them assess prison education or any other less mainstream teaching contexts as means to achieve their personal aims and test their capabilities.

Sustaining motivation

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According to Ushioda (2009), motivation is a dynamic process over which different contextual factors exert varying degrees of influence. Therefore, my second question sought to examine those factors which affected Clara's and Marta's motivation to maintain their teaching posts in a context of confinement.

Clara and Marta's professional and personal trajectories with prison education were influenced, as in initial motivation, by intrinsic factors such as vocational goals, hope, personal efficacy and teacher efficacy. However, relatedness became a powerful source for sustaining motivation. Relatedness was observable through the influence of learner motivation and feedback on teacher motivation. The impact of learner motivation and engagement on teacher motivation emerged more explicitly in Clara's story. Relatedness was also experienced through motherly feelings and good rapport with the learners, and a positive and learning professional atmosphere.

Therefore, the journey Clara and Marta started first as substitute teachers and later as permanent teachers was signalled by their personal motivations and drives beyond teaching English or formal education. Their initial motivation was intrinsic and personal. However, other factors such as relatedness, teacher efficacy, teacher autonomy, and sense of achievement shaped their motivation and practices throughout their experience as teachers of English in prison education.

In line with Spaulding's (2011) discussions, motivation was sustained through the realisation that their action made a difference and they mattered to their learners. Clara and Marta treated their learners as fellow citizens rather than inmates or criminals. Furthermore, what may have started as personal truisms became socially-shared truisms. In other words, Clara and Marta accepted their teaching posts because they personally felt that they wanted to help people in contexts of confinement. Following Alexander's (2008) discussion on truisms in teaching, there appears to be no issue with high truisms in Clara's and Marta's stories. On the contrary, their concerns revealed their awareness and pragmatism in their posts.

In their journey and background, the two teachers moved from personal or individual motivation to social motivation, i.e. motivation resulting from social interaction and engagement through different situations and behaviours. Based on

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the experiences reported in this chapter, social motivation and collaborative actions may help teachers involved in prison education and other less favoured settings perceive themselves as active contributors to the dynamics of social participation. Through their own voices, their learners may also become 'visibilised' and counteract feelings of peripheral participation as outlined in Bhatti (2010). Through their concerted and orchestrated actions, they may influence the lives of those in contexts of confinement and also the lives of those who inhabit more comfortable environments. Involvement in prison education settings should seek empowerment, awareness, and pro-active actions of social actors inside and outside prison walls.

### Teacher autonomy and teacher efficacy

Clara's and Marta's perceptions of their own teaching practices may be associated to their ways of sustaining their motivation through two main factors: teacher autonomy and teacher efficacy.

Their practices were characterised by teacher autonomy at the level of syllabus design and materials development, and context-responsive strategies such as the use of roleplay and games to promote oral work based on their observations of learners' interests and classroom attitudes. This institutional-assigned autonomy was exploited possibly given the fact that both were experienced teachers and had the support of their school heads and colleagues. Their practices illustrate Brazier et al.'s (2010) suggestions that teachers should develop their own materials with the resources available and in line with their own contexts and learners. In so doing, teachers will strengthen the links between formal education and the world, needs, and interests around them.

According to Clara's journal and Marta's interviews, they seemed to enjoy the respect and appreciation of their learners. Both teachers were aware of their strengths, challenges, and concerns, but their determination to stay in prison education may be indicative of their perception of their own personal and teacher efficacy. Simply put, they know it is a challenge, but they want a challenge because they know they can accomplish the task.

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In sum, teacher autonomy and teacher efficacy play a significant role in maintaining motivation, particularly in marginalised settings. This shows that while teacher efficacy may not be crucial for initial motivation, it becomes so for sustaining motivation. Teachers who take the role of course and materials developers may find in this activity another source of motivation and means to explore relatedness. Their voice and above all, their settings, will shape the lessons and learning processes. Autonomous teachers will strengthen a dialogic and liberatory pedagogy by talking to their learners not only face-to-face but also through their learning materials. However, autonomy in this regards needs to be conferred and supported by colleagues and school administrators and be based on informed and shared decisions.

### Concluding remarks

Although these two stories are based on local experiences in two different Argentinian cities, the experiences narrated and discussed here may resonate with prison educators' trajectories elsewhere, mainstream ELT, and with teachers of subjects other than English as a foreign language. The teaching profession, whatever the context and circumstances, is inherently dialogical, dynamic, and relational, and accordingly, teacher motivation reflects the processes and biographies inscribed in the experience whether this takes place in contexts of confinement or other difficult circumstances.

The two stories explored confirm that teacher motivation needs to be examined from a relational, in-context view of motivation (Ushioda 2009) which captures initial personal factors as well as socially constructed drives. Such an approach will help us see teachers not only as professionals but as human beings with aims and drives which transcend the opportunities and limitations of formal education. Although teachers may seek to materialise their personal intrinsic motivation in a classroom inside a prison or elsewhere, we also come to learn that they can and

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have also worked for the common good and social justice outside the classroom and beyond the teaching profession.

Teachers interested in working in difficult circumstances such as prison education settings may observe that such difficulties may come from our own prejudices or fears of the unknown. Making contact with teachers already working in prison education or doing an Internet search for projects, school-based publication, or teacher conferences may help them gain confidence and understand what qualities are needed to work in such a context.

With the aim of broadening the scope of teacher education, teacher education programmes need to include in their knowledge base aspects and practices situated in less mainstream contexts such as prisons. For example, there should be practicum opportunities to teach some lessons in the local prison and/or work on projects with involve the wider community in different ways. In addition, trainees should be provided with tools and guidance to develop materials and context-responsive lessons for teaching in prisons. Because the teaching profession is not only targeted at mainstream and comfortable environments, teacher educators should promote discussions around personal motivations to join the teaching profession and analyse the different setting where teachers can make a difference. There should be room to reflect on how our motivation fluctuates as it is impinged by our own biographies as persons in context.

Overall, teacher motivation cannot be disassociated from the personal motivations beyond the profession or the context, the 'difficult circumstances', where practices occur. The lived experiences shared by Clara and Marta show us that teacher motivation needs to be approached from a holistic and humanistic framework which includes the personal. Such implications do not only apply to teachers working in prisons but to all teachers in mainstream ELT since we cannot detach our identity from our teacher identity. Every teacher is a unity and we transport our identities and motivations through our personal and professional settings. After all, we are all humans. Being human is essential; being a teacher is optional.

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### Suggested further reading

Artiles, A.J., Kozleski, E.B., and Waitoller, F.R. (eds.). (2011). *Inclusive Education: examining equity on five continents*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

This edited collection contains reports from nine different countries. Authors discuss the complex relationship between inclusion and equity in education and the concerns behind education for all and for every context.

Pane, D.M. and Rocco, T.S. (2013). *Transforming the School-to-Prison Pipeline*. Rotterdam: Sense Publications.

In this thought-provoking book, the authors condense stories of both students and teachers in US prisons. The book offers a bottom-up approach to prison education and ways in which teachers, teacher educators, and administrators can generate alternative and context-responsive pedagogies.

Zoukis, C. (2014). *College for Convicts: The Case for Higher Education in American Prisons*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

Zoukis makes the case that education, whether it is face-to-face or distance, decreases crime and recidivism rates particularly if inmates move from secondary to higher education. Although it is set in the USA, the author's conclusions are internationally applicable.

### Engagement priorities



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- The chapter focuses on two teachers working in relatively minimum security prisons. Teachers may feel that they are working for the common good and that education in prisons is a form of liberation. Do you think their learners would share these views? Why do they study? What are their motivations depending on the sentences they have to serve?
- Working and relational conditions in minimum security prisons may differ from medium and maximum security prisons. How might teachers' motivations in such context compare and contrast with the teachers' stories reflected in this chapter?
- As explored in this chapter, teachers' decisions to join prison education maybe influenced by their professional background and years of experience. Do you think that novice teachers may be equally amenable to working in prison education?
- Clara and Marta secured their posts through interviews with the school authorities. What teacher profile do administrators seek in different teaching-learning contexts? Does this profile match professional development opportunities? Do affective/personal factors outweigh professional factors in some marginalised contexts such as prisons?

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