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TEACHERS' JOB SATISFACTION AND THEIR ATTITUDES TOWARDS THEIR LEARNERS IN CASE OF IRANIAN EFL TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

Attitudes and feelings affect employees' behaviors, which contribute to the organization's success or failure. This study aims to investigate teachers' overall levels of their job satisfaction and their attitudes towards students' beliefs and motivation.To achieve the goal and to have detailed data, Qualitative research method has been utilized. To collect needed data for the study an interview protocol was designed by the researchers. Those teachers willing to be interviewed were selected from various language institutes in Isfahan.The results showed that teachers' level of job satisfaction was high, although they are not satisfied monetarily. Moreover, the findings of interview demonstrate that almost none of the interviewees thought their colleagues are satisfied with their job. The results from the interviews also give an idea about having friendly teachers-students relationship can affect students' motivation, especially Iranian learners, as they are more emotional. The findings could be important to both learning skills and knowledge of teachers' job satisfaction and confidence at their career and as a result improve conditions for learning English as a foreign language.

Keywords*: Job Satisfaction, Attitudes, Motivation, EFL Teachers' Attitudes, Teachers Job Satisfaction.*

INTRODUCTION

Job Satisfaction is defined as an enjoyable or positive emotional condition that a person is in, which is caused by the judgment of the value, performance or even nature of his or her job experiences (Muller, 2012; Locke, 1976). It worth mentioning that getting familiar with characteristics of jobsatisfaction is important, in other words, we should not be misled by not distinguishing job involvement and job satisfaction (Lodahl & Kejner, 1965). As mentioned by Hong Goo (2011) being totally engross in a job could be meant by job satisfaction term. Academic researchers and human resources experts have defined job satisfaction differently and at very specific levels of conceptual framework. Affective job satisfaction is usually defined as a one-dimensional subjective idea concerning an overall emotional feeling that people have about their job (Thompson & Phua 2012; Moorman, 1993; Kalleberg, 1977; Spector, 1997). Considering the Calderhead's assumption (1998) that teaching is a compound and challenging professional job the present study sought to investigate EFL teachers' job satisfaction as well as their attitudes towards their learners' motivation and beliefs.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Johnson and Holdaway (1994) cited three main reasons for conducting research on the job satisfaction within the educational context. First, the low levels of satisfaction are connected to some negative matters such as absenteeism. Second, the overall quality of life in the society and job satisfaction is significantly related to each other. Third, technology improvement and increases in responsibility pressed teachers and emphasized on more research on the job satisfaction (Alzaidi, 2008). In line with Hong Goo (2011), although the accessible research has not consistently shown a relationship between job satisfaction and job performance, several studies (see Bowling, 2007; Judge, Thoresen, Bono &Patton, 2001) recommended that there is a positive relationship between overall job satisfaction and job performance.

According to Merdassa (2012), it is reasonable assume that the trainee teachers who chose to be a teacher according to their interest tend to have more positive attitudes toward the profession compared with those who chose teaching under influence of others or those teachers who just want to have job. In line with Merdassa's finding, Goodlad (1990) in a study showed that teacher who selected teaching profession in public education for the reason that intrinsic professional values were more satisfied with their job than those who selected teaching because of financial matters.

The researchers also posed a linkage between commitment to an organization and a strong belief in, and acceptance of, the organization's goals and objectives. Teacher satisfaction influenced job performance, and, ultimately, student performance (Hughes, 2006). Johnston (1997) assumed that the most important reason for such a result is "the lack of an institutionalized career structure". Nguni, Sleegers, and Denessen (2006) assumed that as satisfied teachers showed a lot of excitement and interest about giving more energy and time to help student achieve their academic goal, it is essential to investigate all factors that has effect on teachers' job satisfaction. So the needed information will be available to improve and give help the educational system to achieve designed goal (Perie, 1997). Many studies have been conducted that highlighted the fact that teachers' need for motivation, similar to students in order to perform better also many factors that can increase their motivation (Tziava, 2003).

In a study, Coşkuner (2001) examined teachers' perceptions of English language teaching as a career. The study was conducted to investigate whether Turkish state university teachers see EFL teaching as a career. The results of the study showed that teachers generally see ELT as a career andage, sex, and experience did not relate to teachers' commitment, but institution correlated with teachers' commitment. Teachers' entrance into teaching and their current perceptions of ELT as an occupation, teachers' job satisfaction, and their perceptions of professional development opportunities were found to be related to teachers' commitment. Teachers' being proud of their profession, their having positive relationships with their students, and their being satisfied with their

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current teaching position were found among the most important factors relating to teachers' commitment. Low salaries were the most important reason for why teachers might consider leaving teaching.

In the regard of teacher–student relationships Veldman (2005) studied a development of teacher–student relationships and teachers' job satisfaction throughout the careers of four veteran teachers who retained high job satisfaction. Teachers' job satisfaction appeared positively related to the self-reported quality of the teacher–student relationships. Positive retrospective teacher perceptions did not always coincide with positive student perceptions. The researchers found that teachers might have positive job satisfaction despite, in the eyes of the students, a poor teacher–student relationship.

In relation to teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards professional activity, Corina and Valerica (2012) tried to examine the relation between teachers' perceptions of their profession, job satisfaction and mentality towards work. They also investigated whether there are differences in the job satisfaction and mentality towards work depending on the level of teachers' perception of their work or not. The results confirmed that the overall job satisfaction is higher when the teachers' perception of their professional activity is higher. Furthermore, different teachers' perceptions of their profession have effects on the combination of general mentality towards work and its secondary components. Similarly, the same relations are between teachers' perception of their quality work and perception of the motivating potential of the teaching profession and the interaction between their general mentality, positive and negative attitudes towards work.

Hence, it is important to take teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards teaching profession and its effects on their classroom performance into consideration. Moreover, as teachers, according to Fullenand Stiegelbauer (1991), are still playing a crucial role in the success of the educational system, the study specifically intended to investigate English teachers' perception of their overall job satisfaction.

Furthermore, the study can provide an insight into teachers' attitudes towards their students' motivation and beliefs about learning English as a second language.

METHOD
PARTICIPANTS

Participants of the study were English teachers who had their BA, MA, or PhD degree; teaching in Iranian language institutes in Isfahan. The participants were both female and male teachers who had various years of experience (from five years and above). They were selected from at least seven language institutes.

INSTRUMENT

In the study, interviews were utilized to collect the required data. The teachers' interview protocol was developed by the researchers in English as the participants were teachers of English. The first draft of the interview protocol was developed considering the issues pointed in the literature. Then, draft of the interview protocol and content validation form were sent to two experts to be reviewed in order to ensure the content validity.Next, the amendments were done based on experts' suggestions and comments. Furthermore, to ensure the clarity of the interview questions, the second draft was piloted. The results showed that all the questions were clear and the interviewees were not encountered with any problems due to the wording.

PROCEDURE

Many English teachers were invited for the interview; however, only nine teachers (six males and three females) were willing to be interviewed. The analysis of personal interviews with teachers, started after collecting the qualitative data because the collected information were fresh in the researcher's mind. The recordings were transcribed and the observation notes were rewritten as an opportunity for analysis. All performed interviews were recorded and transcribed so that the risk of missing the interviewees' comments was reduced.
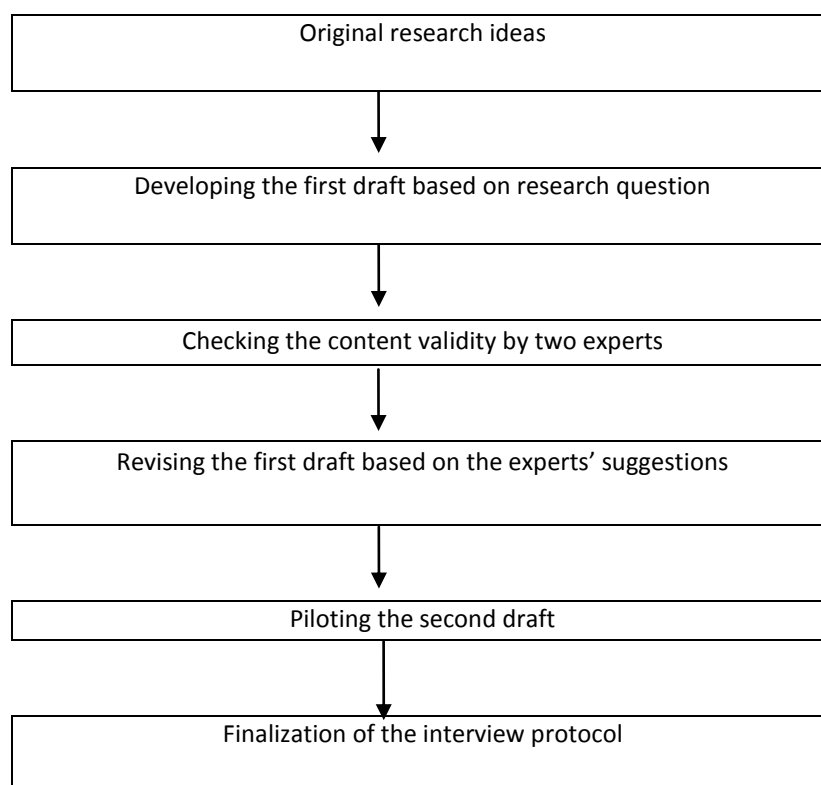
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Figure 1: Stages of the Interview Protocol Design and Validation Procedures

RESULTS

To gain a better understanding of the level of job satisfaction the first question that teachers were supposed to answer was their overall level of satisfaction with their job as a teacher. Responses for the job satisfaction factor ofresponsibility, students' direction of motivation were almost similar and lengthy. The teachers felt very strongly on the questions and were quick to explain their thoughts and feelings. It is worth mentioning that all the information gathered in this part were presented in an unbiased and complete manner.

RESPONSIBILITY

There are two questions concerning responsibility in the interview protocol. First question was asked to obtain their opinion about the most important responsibilities a teacher should take as a teacher, and the second one was related to teachers, learners' relationship, and its effects. In response to the first question, Amir explained that theteacher must use his/ her ability and skills to teach the book in the best way:

It's to teach simply, a teacher comes to a class makes students have fun.Students may not understand, especially at lower levels, what the teacher is doing as long as they happy, they might think, it is a good class. But probably the teacher unfortunately because of lack of knowledge is teaching them some wrong stuff but the point is that teacher must uses the ability to teach the book in the best way.

He believed that what the teacher is going to teach is not important; s/he should try to make the lesson interesting. Arash, referred to three types of knowledge that in his opinion a teacher must acquired. He pointed out '*I should have actually three types of knowledge I mean general English, the second teaching methods, and third I have to make the class happy for them.*'

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Sara spoke in the same way, talking about two qualities that make teachers successful in their job: *'A teacher is someone who has two qualities: One has the knowledge and two, [knowledge to] motivate the students if you can motivate your students and you have the knowledge you would be successful.'*

Moreover, Maziar believed that a teacher has a great responsibility and added:

I believe the responsibilities of a teacher are really beyond what you can imagine. So I believe that the teacher is responsible for the students' learning and must do his job in a way that most of the students' desirers are satisfied.

In response to the same question, Nooshin summarized the most important responsibilities a teacher should take in a sentence: ' *to teach them correctly'.* The following quotes from Shohreh are a little different from others. She believed:

I think a teacher should be punctual at first. [S/he] should be patient, to deal with different kinds of students, different behaviors, and also s/he should love teaching.

When asked to describe their relationship with students, and how important is this relationship to them, the interviewees expanded their answers by more explanation. Among them, Arash was sure firmly about his relationship.He smiled and said:' *I have a great relationship with my all students. My students always appreciate me. It seems we can change or affect their motivation.'*

On the other hand, according to Nooshin, the relationship is important although it is challenging. She added that the teacher and students relationship have effects on students' motivation: ' *especially, Iranian students are really emotional. At first, we have to have a good relationship, emotionally, then they [students] evaluate person as educated person. '*

Similarly, Mehrdad stated that it is important because the teacher wants to talk to students, to teach them, and s/he spends a lot of time with them. He mentioned that he is a friend who tried to help them solve their learning problems.

Daryush, another teacher, said that he has a friendly relationship with the student. And then as talking about the importance of that kind of relationship, he added that he tries to help learners feel free to ask question. According to him, if they face with the problem: *'Once students feel free to ask, it will be helpful, in a case in that, they don't feel free, they afraid of teacher.'* Similar to others' ideas, Maziar and Amir also try to be a friend with their students. Maziar gave explanation in details how his relationship with learners affects both his learners' motivation and his motivation as a teacher:

I believe that the teacher can motivate the students; their performance.The teacher is a person that has great influence on different people so teacher's role and responsibility is very important in the students' lives. If they are not satisfied, I can feel the bad feedback, and it can greatly depress me and on the other hand if I understand students are learning well, and satisfied with what we're doing in the class it's gonna affect me a lot. I will have a lot of satisfaction.

Amir also mentioned that *'basically friendly relationship is what matters'* and as a profession a teacher must have a friendly relationship because it affects students' motivation. Interestingly, Sara and Kiyan presented different ideas. Sara supposed that her relationship is mostly dependent on the students' behavior:

It depends on the capacity of the class. If I see them mature enough I will have a friendship with them, but if I seealthough they are adults they are not mature enough I try to have more authority.

The above comments suggest that almost all of the interviewees believed that teachers should have, and actually have, friendly relationship with learners. The most significant responsibilities according to them are to be patient, to have the ability and skills to teach the materials correctly and in an interesting way. Also, some of them mentioned that teachers should have enough and different types of knowledge to teach and to motivate their students. For example, knowledge about general English, teaching methods, and having enough knowledge to know what makes the class happy for the students. They all referred to the importance of their relationship with learners and mentioned its impact on their learning and behavior.

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WORK

Three questions were asked based on this theme including teaching experience, motivation to choose to be a teacher, and overall job satisfaction. All of the teachers claimed that the level of job satisfaction is high, although they are not satisfied with financial matters. Amir talked about their tutor who always told them that teaching is not a job for making money. Then he added:

Being a teacher is not gonna give you money .That's all. However, you are seeing that you can help other people, make them happy, make them grow, that also make you feel satisfied.

Two other teachers, Kiyan and Arash, were completely satisfied with being a teacher but Kiyan was not happy with his salary. Among all the interviewed teachers, just Shohreh and Mehrdad brought different factors up that in their opinion affect the level of job satisfaction: *'It depends on different features: payment, atmosphere, these are so important but I am satisfied with my job, somehow, problems matters, and financial matters.'* Mehrdad verbalized similarly but explained in more details and talked about status and students judgments in society. According to him, the job itself is satisfactory:

Others consider you as a person who is not important because you are ateacher. Alsothe institute is good but because they want to make money they support students. Students judge according to their expectation they do not know the methodology. Some of them can be reasonable but so the only thing is students' judgments.

When requested to discuss their perception of their colleagues 'level of job satisfaction, the teachers reflected that their colleges are not satisfied with job. For example, Shohreh said '*I think 70% of my* colleagues *in this institute aren't satisfied with their payment and also they have some raises in their payment each year although they are not satisfied'.* However, Maziar said that he is quite satisfied with what he is doing and he hoped his students be satisfied with his job, too. He added:

As far as, financial matters are concern, teaching is not a good job but apart from that I think most of the teachers are satisfied. But I don't think they're satisfied. They just trying to get along with it.

Again, to reply the question why they chose to be teachers, they all had the same opinion that they chose to be a teacher because of some reasons such as loving English, or loving teaching. To make it more clearlyMaziar said:

I learnt English from a native speaker so I started to use it practically so most of what I did was just trying to put what I knew into practice. So that it was a main reason, I chose it. Other reasons for teaching English, at first, I loved teaching.now it's been about 15/14 years that I've been teaching.

Amir and Kiyan referred to their affection for English or just teaching. They emphasized that they did choose to be a teacher. Amir stated that '*Actually because I studied to become a teacher because of what I studied, I've been working, I suppose for 16 years now.'* Based on what Arash said, having a job was the most important reason for being a teacher.

Daryush labeled teaching as one of his first hobbies: *'I chose it. I think that I have the ability to teach. I love teaching; it is one of first hobbies in my life.'* Sara chose to become a teacher even though she had many opportunities to work. She added that she enjoyed getting familiar with different people from different parts of society. However, two interviewees did not choose to be a teacher; Mehrdad said that he chose without intention; he clarified the point:

I chose without intention [it means] it just accidently happened. Then I got really interested, although I didn't choose this job I can say that I interested.

In general, as maintained by teachers who participated in the interview, the most important reasons for them to become an English teacher were their interest in teaching, and English, their ability to teach, opportunity for getting familiar with new people from different parts of society, and having a job.

STUDENTS' DIRECTION OF MOTIVATION

Teachers were also supposed to answer a question associated with students' motivation. In response to this question, Sara, Amir, and Arash answered similarly. Amir reported that:

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Both important and necessary, at higher levels themselves decide to learn and especially,preparation courses for the IELTS and TEFOL ,they know why they are doing but for lower levels especially kids you could argue. Perhaps parents decide for them.

Arash talking about higher level believed that 90% of his learners consider English very important. In comparison with them, Daryush thought very dissimilar. He stated that many learners do not consider English important; English is important for only 10% of learners whom he called them "real learners": '*Nowadays English change to a fashion, lots of people try to learn because others go to language institute. The real learners are less than 10%.*'

Nooshin and Shoherh both bring reasons why they think learners consider English important. Shohreh said that she usually asked such a question from her students: ' *and they say because it's an international language, because I have to.*' Nooshin introduced immigration in case of higher-level students, and in case of students at lower level, traveling to different countries or talking to tourists is considered as two main reasons for the importance of English according to her students.

Maziar categorized students into two groups: those who know why they are learning English and those who are forced to learn English or just come to class to have fun. According to Maziar 60% of learners have goals and consider English important and only 40% are coming for fun.

LEARNING AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Teachers then were asked if learners like to have any plan to learn English or not. Most of the interviewees reported that their students have plan. As mentioned by Kiyan, having a plan is a necessity and learners have topersuade their goals. Amir even referred to three elements as a source of reasons for having a plan; having a goal, age, and level:

Level and age play an important role. So younger probably do not have a plan, they just come because of parents. But adults even if they are at lower level they have a reason. Having a goal is important, traveling, immigration, if they have these goals; they defiantly come with the plan. However,

there are always exceptions. Some people have none of these reasons but they are extremely eager to learn.

Arash explicated that in his opinion, learners who want to get IELTS or TOEFL have a plan to learn English and even sometimes they ask questions how to have plan. He mentioned '*generally their plan is just for the book and what we teach and what we are suppose to do unless they wanaa study technically, I mean study for IELTS or TOEFL.*'

Maziar talked about his best to make his learners to have a plan through providing them with interesting material. Daryush simply said that he could not generalize it; but it depends on the course they are taking, only 12% have plan talking about real learners:

DIFFICULTY OF LANGUAGE LEARNING

Almost all of the interviewed teachers confirmed that their students do not get nervous or at first, they are nervous but after some sessions, they feel relaxed. Daryush gave details that getting or not getting nervous depends on semester, class, and personality:

It depends on the class, semester, the personality of them I try to behave in my class in a way that they feel free. So they wouldn't be afraid of me to talk, maybe the lack of their knowledge is one the reason I think that if teacher make a nice atmosphere where students can rely on each other and they believe that all of them are the same, it would not happen.

Similarly speaking, Mehrdad said that only 34% get nervous. On the other hand, Arash stressed that his students hardly get nervous because:

At first I actually acknowledge them that making mistakes is a part of learning, whenever there is no mistake there won't be kind of learning. You know, I make a situation without any stress so they hardly ever get stressful unless some percent.

In line with him, Kiyan mentioned that it is a tough job; however, he tried to talk to them and to help them feel comfort, and not to de-motivate them: '*I even shift into Persian for one or two minutes and I tell them clearly that's no big deal.* 'Amir asserted that the reason for getting nervous is learners' knowledge and their shyness provided some

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suggestion not let the situation happen; such as creating friendly atmosphere, or not push the learners to do the tasks.

As a whole, interviewed teacher claimed that they think that there is a possibility for their learners getting nervous. They clarified that it is because of lack of knowledge or some psychological problems like shyness. Nevertheless, they all made endeavor to enlighten them about the fact that mistakes are common, or encourage them and provide them with comfortable situation.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

As the required data for this question were gathered only through interview, teachers were supposed to answer three questions when the interview was made. When the question on motivation to choose to be a teacher was posed, they all answered very similar.The most important reasons for them were their interest in teaching, and learning English, their ability to teach, opportunity for getting familiar with new people from different parts of society, and having a job. For example, Maziar started to teach what he learnt from a native speaker and tried to put what he knew into practice. However, the first important reason he mentioned was that he loved teaching and he really enjoyed doing that. However, the only reason that Shohreh brought was that she was interested in teaching but not English, which little by little get interested in English. Keyan even would like to transfer his enthusiasm for teaching to his students.

In answer to the question about the level of job satisfaction, putting their experience aside, the teachers claimed that the level of job satisfaction is high, although they are not satisfied with financial matters. Among all the interviewed teachers, only Shohreh and Mehrdad brought different factors up that in their opinion affect the level of job satisfaction are payment and atmosphere in workplace. In line with Shohreh, Mehrdad talked about status in the society and students judgments. Inline with students' judgments, he said that students judge according to their expectation; they do not know the methodology and he believed that the language institutes support students because the institutes want to make money.Nevertheless, he was

satisfied with his job because his co-workers in language institute were important to him. Amir also talked about his tutor in Abudabi who always told them that teaching is not a job for making money. Then he added he think it is a fact.

When they asked for discussing their perceptions of their colleagues'level of job satisfaction, interestingly all of them assumed that their colleges are not satisfied with job. Asking for giving percentage, they give a high percentage such as 70% of their colleagues. Maziar stated that while he is not sure about all of them, most of his colleagues are just trying to get along with it. Shoherh also mentioned that they have some raises in their payment each year although they are not satisfied.

Generally, regarding job satisfaction, the intervieweeswere not satisfied at all. However, on the subject of helping other people with their needs, making them happy and making them grow, the teachers were all satisfied.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Many studies have shown that work itself, teaching and being a teacher, could play a role as a satisfier, also daily tasks could be classified as a factor that increase job satisfaction as an intrinsic motivator(Fried &Ferris ,1986;Hackman & Oldham, 1980; and Herzberg , 1959). Corresponding to these studies, results of the study showed that the level of job satisfaction is high because the most important reason for teachers is their interest in teaching, English, and their ability to teach.

In addition, the only reason that made teachers feel dissatisfied was the payment. Similar to this result, Coşkuner (2001) conducted a study in which one hundred teachers from nine institutes participated and confirmed the hypothesis that low salaries were the most important reason that makes teachers think about leaving their job.

With regard to teacher and student relationships, Veldman (2005) studied teacher–student relationships and teachers' job satisfaction throughout the careers of four veteran teachers. Findings verified that teachers' job satisfaction is positively related to the self-reported quality of the teacher–student relationships. In the same way, the

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interviewed teachers claimed that they are friend with their students and all of them mentioned the importance of such a relationship and its impact on their learners' motivation and beliefs.

Moreover, according to the results of interviews, teachers tend to transfer not only their knowledge but also their enthusiasm of being teachers to their students which is close to Nguni et al. (2006) findings. According to their study, satisfied teachers show a lot of excitement and interest about giving more energy and time to help students achieve their academic goals.

Consistent with claims supporting the assumption that teachers need encouragement and motivation as well as students to do their job properly, the results of this study showed that behavior of learners which derived from their beliefs(Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Ajzen, 1988) can affect teachers' motivation, just similar to feedback. Toshiko (2010) assumed that when teachers perceive their learners become skilled at what they are taught and feel satisfy with their [students] motivation level and growing in learning, they feel satisfied and motivated. The findings from this study further support Toshiko assumption. To be precise, teachers participated in the study defined a teacher a successful one if s/he can motivate his or her students or have their appreciation. One of teachers, Maziar, explicitly said that if his learners are like nagging all the time or if they are not satisfied, he could get or feel the bad feedback. And it can greatly depress him and on the other hand if he understands students are learning well; therefore, they feel satisfied with class and with what they are doing in the class. It will affect the teacher a lot and s/he will have a lot of satisfaction.

Kennedy (1996) hypothesizes that teachers'beliefs can form the way teachers behave. As Brown and McGannon (1998) suggested ,it is important to help trainees reflect on their beliefs because learners come to class and bring their beliefs to a teacher education program that influence on what and how they learn(Richardson,1996). Accordingly, in response to the questions concerning learners' beliefs, the satisfied teachers assumed that most of their learners consider English important

especially at higher levels, because they have plain goal to learn. Such beliefs help them to do their best to teach material in the best way and use methods that make the material as interesting as possible. In addition to beliefs, generally, teachers participated in the interviews enlightened that they think their learners are enough motivated although it depends on their both level and goals to learn English. They clarified that getting confused is not because learners think that English is difficult, but it is on account of lack of knowledge or some psychological problems like shyness. They referred to three types of knowledge that a teacher should acquire; knowledge about general English, teaching methods, and knowledge how to make learners happy. Such attitudes, popular among them, resulted in behaving and teaching in a way that is best in their opinion. The result is in proportion to McGannon (1998) and Breen (1991) findings. In their studies, they illustrated that teachers had many beliefs about how foreign language are learned and that influenced their teaching. Also, Kennedy's (1996) hypothesis that beliefs can form the ways teachers behave.

Based on the scholars' findings, as teachers are the most important group of professionals for the nation's future especially students, conducting more studies to improve our understanding of teachers' job satisfaction, their thinking and its relationship to effective teaching is still needed. Therefore, the findings of this study could extent our knowledge about teachers' job satisfaction. During the interview, teachers make some comments that could be considered as a topic for research. For example, teachers discussed students' expectation and judgmentsthat sometimes are unreasonable. Although they were satisfied with being a teacher, students' judgments and financial matters are those important reasons that make him sometime feel dissatisfied. Therefore, it seems further research in order to focus on teachers' job satisfaction and its relationship with students' expectation and judgments is necessary.

Studies could focus on how teachers' attitude towards their colleagues' level of job satisfaction can affect their job satisfaction. Such topics would improve our knowledge especially in

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Iran where limited numbers of studies exist on teachers' job satisfaction that is connected with teachers' sense of efficacy (Currall, Towler, Judge, & Kohn, 2005).

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