

Teachers of English learners: perceived motivators to becoming principals of high-needs schools

Motivators to
becoming
principals

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study was to explore intrinsic and extrinsic motivations that led 28 teachers of emergent bilingual (EB) students to seek a master's in educational administration with a focus on bilingual/English as a second language (ESL).

Design/methodology/approach – To address the study objectives, the authors used a qualitative phenomenological design. The authors conducted online interviews with 28 teachers of EBs. The authors used the self-determination theory as the theoretical framework.

Findings – Primarily, teachers of EBs were intrinsically motivated to seek the principalship. The authors identified additional motivators that were not found in the previous literature which heretofore was based on general education teachers' responses. Those motivators were, gain advice from mentors, promote cultural awareness, commit to a campus-wide impact, increase awareness of the importance of bilingual/ESL education programs, and foster a relationship with the school community.

Practical implications – Identifying the intrinsic and extrinsic motivators for teachers of EBs who desire to move into a principal position may aid faculty in university principal preparation programs and administrators in school districts to support and mentor these teachers to better serve as leaders in high need schools.

Originality/value – There is little known about intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of teachers of EBs which influence their decisions to change their career paths to become principals.

Keywords Self-determination theory, English learners, Extrinsic motivator, Intrinsic motivator, Principal preparation program, Teachers of emergent bilingual students (EBs)

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2020), there has been an increase in the enrollment of emergent bilingual students in the United States from 3.8 million students in 2000 to 5.0 million in 2017. Such numbers suggest there is a need for highly qualified leaders who understand how to lead campuses and implement quality programs for

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high numbers of emergent bilingual students. The 1,247 Texas public school districts represent an ideal example of the rapid demographic changes in the United States, with 94% of the districts serving identified emergent bilingual students (Texas Education Agency, 2021). The total enrollment of the emergent bilingual students starting from early childhood education through grade 12 in 2020–2021 was 1,108,207 students (20.7% of the total enrollments) who were served with 22,378.5 campus principals and 22,871 teachers (Texas Education Agency, 2021). From the teacher pool come the principals.

We based our study on a federally funded project, Preparing Academic Leaders Project (PAL), a national professional development (NPD, U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition, #T365Z170073) grant. The work in grant actualized Menken's (2017) recommendation that all school principals should have formal preparation to be able to work with emergent bilingual students in that we served in-service teachers who were admitted to a principal preparation program and who served on campuses with large numbers of emergent bilingual students. The intent of Project PAL has been to prepare a next generation of school leaders who (a) are competent as teachers of emergent bilingual students, (b) can be prepared to lead and advocate in high need schools, (c) can improve their bilingual/ESL education backgrounds, and (d) can be prepared in instructional leadership to build the pedagogical capacity of their teachers who teach emergent bilingual students (Irby *et al.*, 2020).

Few researchers have explored teachers' motivations to become principals (Pijanowski *et al.*, 2009). However, we found no researchers who had addressed the motivations of teachers of emergent bilingual students to become principals. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore motivations that led 28 teachers of emergent bilingual students to seek a master's degree in educational administration with a focus on bilingual/ESL education. The results of this study should provide principal preparation program faculty and practicing school leaders with information on motivators that could guide them in developing, recruiting, and placing new diverse school leaders into the principalship.

Theoretical background

Self-determination theory was used as our theoretical framework. Deci and Ryan (2000) defined self-determination theory as a theory of motivation aimed to explain individuals' goal-directed behaviors. It proposes autonomy, competence, and relatedness as three universal psychological needs (Deci and Ryan, 2000; Forner *et al.*, 2020; Ryan and Deci, 2019, 2020; Ryan *et al.*, 2019). Kaur and Noman (2020) indicated that self-determination theory literature is focused on how teachers can support autonomy for students, but little is published related to principals' clear behavioral guidelines for leading and autonomy, competence, or relatedness, and we found no literature on these topics related to pre-service principals.

Self-determination theory motivations are classified as either intrinsic or extrinsic (Deci and Ryan, 2000; Ryan and Deci, 2019, 2020). Intrinsic motivation is connected to the activities with rewards being the satisfaction associated with the personalized activity itself (Deci and Ryan, 2000; Ryan and Deci, 2020). Conversely, extrinsic motivation is energized by physiological, external drives and is not connected to any personalized activity itself (Deci and Ryan, 2000). Self-determination theory holds that when individuals make changes in their lives, they do so based upon both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Deci and Ryan, 2000).

For our study, we used intrinsic motivation to refer to bilingual/ESL teachers' leadership actions as they pursue school leadership positions. On the other hand, we used extrinsic motivation to refer to those aspects that are not associated with the inherent bilingual/ESL teachers' leadership actions. The type of motivation in which bilingual/ESL teachers engage

as they make decisions to become principals also may satisfy basic psychological needs. We suggest that the self-determination theory can aid in understanding the motivations of bilingual/ESL teachers who seek to be principals in high need campuses.

Literature review

Principals who are knowledgeable about emergent bilingual students and are committed to bilingual education are needed (Alanis and Rodriguez, 2019; Brooks *et al.*, 2010; Hunt, 2011; Menken, 2017), specifically, to maintain an effective bilingual education program that offers administrative support and instructional leadership (Alanis and Rodriguez, 2019; Calderón and Carreón, 2001). Principals who must implement bilingual education programs may find this challenging, particularly if they do not have a background in bilingual/ESL education (Padron and Waxman, 2016). Menken and Solorza (2014) found that none of the leaders in their study without formal education in bilingual education “hold a number of misperceptions about bilingual education, bilingualism, and language learning as well as limited understandings of their emergent bilingual students” (p. 11). Alternatively, they found that leaders who are well prepared or who hold a degree in bilingual/ESL education are able to “actively support, sustain, and protect their school’s bilingual education program” (p. 11). Lamentably, Menken and Solorza (2015) argued that few principals receive appropriate preparation that makes them competent to serve campuses with high emergent bilingual populations. Some higher education institutions purposefully redesigned their principal preparation programs to incorporate course content related to leading schools that serve emergent bilingual students (Irby *et al.*, 2020; Reeves and Tuyle, 2014). The PAL project is one of those higher education programs with a collaboration between educational administration and bilingual/ESL education in two different departments that supports a joint principal preparation program focused on training leaders to serve emergent bilingual students (Irby *et al.*, 2020).

Grady and O’Dwyer (2014) noted that leaders who have bilingual education training develop a familiarity with research-based guidelines and standards for educating emergent bilingual students that allow them to lead their schools in implementing effective programs. Additionally, it has been determined that such principals are highly skilled in human relations and in confronting racial tensions and communicating with people who have ingrained negative attitudes (Alanis and Rodriguez, 2019). It is critical to train academic leaders from bilingual/ESL education-focused campuses, because they are responsible for (a) articulating their school’s policies on emergent bilingual students to school staff, community, and families, (b) modeling the behaviors and attitudes they expect teachers to adopt, (c) designating the staff that oversee their school’s program for emergent bilingual students, and (d) ensuring that the staff receive adequate professional development (Hill and Flynn, 2004; Horwitz *et al.*, 2009; Irby *et al.*, 2020; Tung *et al.*, 2011; Wrigley, 2000). Additionally, such leaders are expected to (a) improve climate, (b) set high expectations, (c) validate diverse language and cultures, (d) establish and nurture human relationships, (e) provide opportunities for planning and designing curriculum for emergent bilingual students, and (f) offer staff development on effective emergent bilingual teaching strategies (Collier and Thomas, 2014; Tong *et al.*, 2014; Villareal, 2001). Other research-based responsibilities include (a) recruiting teachers who are culturally responsive, (b) providing guidance to teachers, (c) mapping assets represented by the community, (d) organizing instruction with flexibility and instructional design, (e) aligning curriculum horizontally and vertically, (f) establishing a program that capitalizes on the linguistic strengths of students, families, and communities, (g) ensuring grade level content, and (h) promoting instructional approaches that foster biliteracy development, content acquisition (Villareal, 2001), and academic language (Irby *et al.*, 2018). These concepts are considered important for leaders to

know in the implementation of bilingual/ESL programs. Though we have reported some literature on what principals should know in order to lead bilingual/ESL programs, we could find no research exploring the factors that motivate bilingual/ESL teachers to pursue the principalship.

A number of researchers referred to reasons for general teacher motivations in their decisions to pursue leadership positions as motivations (Bass, 2006). Researchers classified these motivations as intrinsic or extrinsic in nature (Carne, 2013; Hancock and Müller, 2009; Hancock *et al.*, 2019). For principal preparation programs, intrinsic motivation plays a significant role in increasing candidates' engagements (Froiland and Worrell, 2016; Ryan and Deci, 2020). Several researchers identified making a difference in the school community as an intrinsic motivator (Barton, 2011; Bass, 2006). Other researchers considered the opportunity to serve others to be another intrinsic motivation. Hancock *et al.* (2019) described this motivation as the teachers' desire to assist other teachers with curriculum development and instructional innovation. Hancock *et al.* indicated that an altruistic nature is exhibited among teachers, and they wish to help other teachers to be better instructors. Several researchers indicated that teachers are motivated to join principal preparation programs based on their desire to impact students and teachers' lives by learning to provide instructional and professional support for teachers (Bass, 2006; Hancock and Müller, 2009; Hancock *et al.*, 2019; Morton, 2011; Weiner and Holder, 2019). In addition, teachers' desires to serve as administrators originates from their passion to have the opportunity to initiate change in learning environments (Barton, 2011; Hancock *et al.*, 2019; Morton, 2011; Weiner and Holder, 2019) and to address the challenges of the position (Bass, 2006). Experiencing the professional challenge of the job was found to be an intrinsic motivator for teachers to pursue principalship programs (Erdem and Cicekdemir, 2016; Hancock *et al.*, 2019). Barton (2011) highlighted the desire to lead as an intrinsic motivator.

Extrinsic motivation is driven by external benefits and gains. Cooley and Shen (1999) found that financial reward represented one of the top motivations that helped teachers make the decision to pursue the principalship. Pijanowski *et al.* (2009) discovered that increased compensation was perceived by superintendents as the top strategy for attracting principal candidates from among the teacher ranks. It was indicated that gaining job prestige (Hancock *et al.*, 2019) and job security are extrinsic motivators (Gagne and Deci, 2005; Ryan and Deci, 2000; Hancock *et al.*, 2019). Given the virtually non-existent body of research on the motivation of teachers of emergent bilingual students who aspire to be principals, the literature reviewed above was used to explore the motivations of bilingual/ESL teachers who wished to lead schools that have high numbers of emergent bilingual students.

Research questions

We developed one research question to identify the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. The question was: What are the intrinsic and extrinsic motivators for teachers of emergent bilingual students to become school leaders on high need campuses?

Methods

A phenomenological approach (Creswell and Poth, 2016) was employed to answer the research questions. Based on the definition, phenomenology centers on the individual's real-life experience (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) indicated that the basic question that is in the phenomenological study is what has the individual experienced in terms of the phenomenon, and Creswell and Poth (2016) noted that the basic question is related to what contexts or situations have typically influenced the individual's experiences of the phenomenon. Our assumption for this study is that teachers' motivation to become

principals is a phenomenon that can be shared by a group of individuals, specifically, a group of teachers of emergent bilingual students.

Sampling and participants

We employed a convenience sampling technique to recruit participants (Etikan *et al.*, 2016). Convenience sampling is appropriate because the participants of the study were the 28 teachers enrolled in the PAL Master's program in educational administration and who were available, accessible, and willing to participate.

The participants consisted of 24 female teachers and four male teachers who were pre-service principals. These 28 bilingual/ESL certified teachers were 16 Hispanic/Latinx, five African American, and seven White. Teaching experience varied, with seven of them having more than 10 years of teaching experience, 12 having between five to ten years, and nine teachers having less than five years of teaching experience. Based on their district type, the teachers in the study were from eight major urban districts, eight major suburban districts, seven independent towns, two other central cities suburban, and three other central cities. The teachers in this study taught in schools which included from 8.8% to 63% of emergent bilingual students. To ensure the participants' confidentiality, pseudonyms were used to replace the participants' actual names.

Qualitative instrument

We employed a semi-structured interview protocol with two parts: (a) a request for participants to order a random list of literature-based motivators on becoming a principal from most important to least and to provide justification for their ordering and (b) an explanation of additional motivators important in the participants' decisions to become principals. The rationale of using the *a priori* list of motivators from the literature was to confirm from the bilingual/ESL teachers the existing motivators of non-bilingual/ESL teacher populations and to have any new ones emerge from our participants. We acknowledge that an *a priori* listing could bias the responses or limit them; however, we allowed the teachers to organically share additional motivators that led them to the principal preparation program.

Face validity of the instrument was accomplished by having three former principals review the list of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, that were extracted from the review of the literature. They were asked if there were other motivators informed by their leadership experiences that were not included in the list; none added any additional motivators. We considered the motivators to be connected to the three psychological needs of the self-determination theory. The intrinsic motivators inclusive of each psychological need follow: (a) impact students and teachers [competence]; (b) have the opportunity to initiate change in learning environments [autonomy and competence]; (c) make a difference [relatedness]; (d) have an opportunity to serve others [relatedness]; (e) have a desire to lead [autonomy]; (f) experience the personal and professional challenge of principalship [autonomy and competence]; and (g) promote professional development for teachers and staff [relatedness]. The extrinsic motivators are: (a) seek security (b) obtain financial reward, and (c) gain prestige – all unassociated with psychological needs addressed by the self-determination theory.

Data collection

Study participants were invited via emails to participate. The email included: the purpose of the study, a Qualtrics survey (demographic data only), and time slots for 30 min ZOOM interviews per participant. Interviews were conducted between July 1 and August 31, 2018.

The interview began with the aforementioned school leadership motivators displayed on the screen and shared with the participants. Participants were given five minutes to read through the list and order them from most influential to least influential motivator for becoming a principal. As each motivator was shared by the participants, the researcher asked follow-up questions of the participants regarding the rank order of each motivator and the reason why specific motivators were personally influential in guiding them to seek leadership positions. Participants were asked if there were additional motivators that influenced their decision to pursue principal positions and why the additional motivators were influential.

Data analysis

Like [Sundler et al. \(2019\)](#), we posited that “meaning-oriented themes can contribute to robust qualitative research findings” (p. 736). We used [Creswell and Poth’s \(2016\)](#) steps in phenomenological research to elaborate the analysis. We allowed for horizontalization of the data by asking each participant to order the motivators in the level of importance in their own experiences of applying for and entering a principal preparation program focused on services to bilingual students. Then we asked them to interpret their ordering and to add additional motivators based on serving emergent bilingual students.

The interviews were transcribed. Two members of the research team reviewed the interview transcripts to identify initial descriptive codes per [Saldaña \(2021\)](#). Using the codes, the two members identified and grouped the relevant topics into larger initial units of meaning of extrinsic and intrinsic motivators. Based on [Krefting’s \(1991\)](#) and [Creswell and Creswell \(2017\)](#) procedures, a third team member was added, and the three members agreed on the wording of the themes as well as the sub-themes. A discussion ensued with the other researchers on the team where we identified the essence of the phenomenon – motivators for teachers of emergent bilingual students to become a principal and enroll in a bilingual principal preparation program.

Credibility and trustworthiness of the study

To increase credibility and trustworthiness of the study, we utilized two main strategies which were low-inference descriptors and investigator triangulation ([Johnson, 1997](#)). For low-inference descriptors, we extracted and used direct quotes from the interviews with the participants. For the investigator triangulation, three members of our research team participated in identifying and developing the themes and the sub-themes, and then those were discussed with the other researchers.

Results

We explored intrinsic and extrinsic motivators that influenced bilingual education teachers’ decisions to aspire to become school leaders. In addition to the original list of seven literature-based motivators for aspiring to be a principal, four new intrinsic motivators from the participants were added: (a) promote cultural awareness, (b) increase awareness and importance of bilingual/ESL education, (c) demonstrate commitment to a campus-wide impact, and (d) foster relationships with the school community. The participants also identified mentor-oriented motivation as one new extrinsic motivator.

Intrinsic motivators

Intrinsic motivators were rated among the highest of motivators for bilingual/ESL teachers who seek principal positions. Participants shared the significance of intrinsic motivations on making their decision to pursue the principalship. Our participants agreed that all seven intrinsic motivators which were gleaned from the literature are important but to varying

degrees. They also shared four new intrinsic motivators that prompted them to pursue principalship.

Have an impact on students' and teachers' lives. Six participants indicated that wanting to have a positive impact on the lives of students and teachers was the first, top motivator selected as influencing their decision to become a principal. They noted that they wanted to make a difference in bilingual children's lives by navigating them towards a healthy and developmentally appropriate path. Furthermore, being able to mentor teachers and broaden their perspective on how to implement effective teaching strategies for emergent bilingual students leads to a positive spillover effect. Therefore, by assuming the principal role, these bilingual/ESL teachers believed they could impact the lives of not only emergent bilingual students, but also the whole student body. Ms. Hernandez stated, "You set the culture for the school, you set the tone for the school, and you overall can make an impact on students and teachers. You are building lives. You are up for the challenge of doing that." This finding is related to our theoretical framework of the self-determination theory's psychological need of competence in that they believed that moving to the role of the principal would provide an opportunity to make an impact on others.

Have the opportunity to initiate change in learning environments. Six participants perceived the opportunity to initiate change in learning environments as their top-ranked motivator. Their teaching experiences provided them with the opportunities to gain a better understanding of the inherent problems of the bilingual/ESL educational system. As teachers, they believe they are limited in their ability to initiate changes in the educational system, but they perceive that the principal position would allow them the opportunity to initiate and improve deficiencies. As an example, Ms. Rodriguez stated:

There are lots of systemic problems in the education system which need to be addressed and you can only address them through education and moving up in the system. As a teacher with a bilingual/ESL background, I know the problems, I have the sense of how they can be resolved, but I need leadership knowledge that helps me solve these problems. Many of the principals do not even know what the bilingual/ESL programs are, that is why they cannot help. I need to be in that role in order to be able to make the desired improvements to the program and help all students.

This representative statement for all participants indicated that bilingual/ESL teachers who were in the pre-service principal program were demonstrating the psychological needs of the self-determination theory as autonomous and competence, as they believed they could act with a sense of volition and could make an impact on others for the betterment of the school.

Make a difference for bilingual/ESL education. Six participants endorsed the motivator to become a leader is to make a difference to bilingual/ESL education. They mentioned that when they would be in a leadership role, that would provide them with an opportunity to improve learning for emergent bilingual students. They explained that their knowledge about bilingual/ESL education and culture, being bilingual individuals themselves, will help them to restructure the bilingual/ESL programs to better serve the students. We share one representative statement from Ms. Jimenez:

As teachers, we all make a difference daily. But the difference is a kind of impact on students' lives. I would impact more students, a multitude, rather than just 20 students in my classroom. I want to be a principal, because I know what my students' troubles are, especially if they are English language learners, because I'm one of them. I moved from a country where my first language is Spanish, and maybe I'm not having the same struggle as they have, but I understand what they are going through. I want to be a leader, and I want to provide them with equal treatment, empowering them to be successful in life. I can see potential in each of them.

They also highlighted that the families of emergent bilingual students feel that they are disconnected with the school leadership because of a lack of communication. Some parents do not speak English; thus, they avoid contacting school administrators. Bilingual/ESL teachers

found that their own bilingual background would build strong bridges and relationships with parents. Ms. Villarreal added,

There are no bilingual administrators in our district. For parents, it's important to see that there are bilingual people in these positions that can help them and assist them. For students, it makes them make connections with someone in that position [so that] they are not just interacting with people from other cultures.

Making a difference is aligned with the self-determination theory in that it is relatedness, the third psychological need, demonstrating a connectedness to others.

Provide opportunities to serve others. Five participants considered the opportunity to serve others to be a motivator in their decision to pursue a leadership position. Participants believed that good principal leaders are those that provide resources and professional development opportunities to school teams. In addition, they emphasized that principals could make a significant impact when they build collaborative teams. As an example, Mr. Lara stated:

The ability to be a leader who works in teams, who builds teams starting from teachers and staff and going down in the ladder to students. These teams would work collaboratively in building the curriculum and setting the school culture.

This theme also is about relatedness in the self-determination theory. The ability to connect and relate to others is emanated through the theme of the principalship would provide opportunities to work with others.

Desire to lead. Three participants noted that having a desire to lead as a highly ranked motivator. These teachers believed that they possessed certain skills such as being an active listener, knowing how to mediate conflicts, and establishing a collaborative school environment that are well-suited to leadership positions. Therefore, teachers believed that holding leadership positions would help them further advance such leadership skills, just as Ms. Pienda stated:

I want to lead, because one of my biggest qualities is that I am an active listener. I take everyone's opinion into consideration. When I was assigned to lead a project, I worked as a mediator between the team members to help accomplish things. . . I want to lead, because I know there is a need to impact students in my community district.

The self-determination theory is found in the responses of the teachers and in the representative comment. The psychological need demonstrated herein is the autonomous need as they demonstrate an internal perceived locus of causality as they would be able to improve school environments if they could lead the school.

Experience the personal and professional challenges of the job. Two participants rated the personal and professional challenges of the leadership position as a top-ranked motivator, but as discussions were held, this was important to more than two teachers. Work-life balance was one of the personal challenges mentioned by the teachers, especially by those who have children, because being a principal places an additional burden on time commitments with the family. Promoting a culturally responsive environment was mentioned by the teachers as a welcomed professional challenge of a principal's job in bilingual/ESL schools. As an example, Ms. Jimenez stated that, "Although I want to promote cultural awareness, I know that there might be some hesitations in promoting cultural acceptance." The self-determination theory's psychological needs of autonomy and competence is shown here in these findings. For example, though they recognize the challenges in such a principal's position, they are ready to stand behind their actions, self-determined to pursue the challenge. They also during the interviews, appeared to demonstrate competence herein as they exhibited a sense of self-efficacy and belief in their abilities to perform the task or stand to the challenge.

Promote professional development for teachers and staff. None of the bilingual/ESL teachers ranked promote professional development (PD) as a top ranked motivator; however, in discussions, they indicated it was an important part of a principal's job. They noted that principals have more access to PD opportunities that would be beneficial to the faculty on their campus. Thus, being a principal who promotes PD would allow bilingual/ESL teachers to enhance their instructional capacities. Additionally, the bilingual/ESL teachers believed that principals can prepare PD programs for school personnel prior to the commencement of the school year as this could improve the faculty's readiness and preparedness. Further, teachers demonstrated that principals play a crucial role in encouraging teachers and staff to attend PD programs in universities and nearby school districts. As Ms. Cavazos stated:

The principal is the one who has access to information about professional development programs for teachers and staff. S/he is the one who can help prepare PD programs in school prior to the start of school, or she can search for these PD programs in the district.

The self-determination theory's psychological need that is demonstrated herein is relatedness. The bilingual/ESL teachers felt that the close work and relationships with faculty and staff would be an advantage for the principal to develop PD programs.

Newly identified intrinsic motivators specific to teachers of emergent bilingual students

In addition to the seven intrinsic motivators identified in the literature and ranked and discussed by the bilingual/ESL teachers, there were four new intrinsic motivators shared by the participants that we did not find in the literature. These four intrinsic motivators were: (a) promote cultural awareness, (b) increase awareness of bilingual/ESL education, (c) commit to a campus-wide impact, and (d) foster relationships with the school community. We considered these newly identified intrinsic motivators as Cultural-Equity-Oriented Intrinsic Motivators.

Promote cultural awareness. Bilingual/ESL teachers emphasized that promoting cultural awareness is a significant reason to pursue a leadership position within their campuses. According to their responses, the cultures of emergent bilingual students are not often promoted due to their being viewed primarily through a lens of either students of color and/or economically challenged groups. Mr. Sharma mentioned in the interview that "After being in the classroom, I have a good understanding of what students need and what their hardships are in school. I want to be an advocate as a principal for underserved students and get the children the best education that they can get." Ms. Rodriguez stated

Promoting cultural awareness is a driving factor for me to become a principal. I would like our district to be a little more aware of our culture. We do have kids that come from economically challenged homes, and I don't think that they are aware of that.

This new motivator would be aligned to the self-determination theory's psychological need of competence as it relates to the self-efficacy of these teachers of emergent bilingual students who believe that principals can promote cultural awareness for teachers and students.

Increase awareness of bilingual/ESL education. According to teachers of emergent bilingual students, some parents are misinformed about bilingual/ESL programs. The teachers indicated that because of parents' lack of awareness surrounding the importance of bilingual/ESL education, many of them are unwilling to enroll their children in bilingual schools. These parents believe that their children will acquire the first language [Spanish] at home without needing a teacher. However, the teacher participants believe that Spanish language used in the social context is not the same as Spanish language used in the academic context. Teachers argued that students need to improve their Spanish language in both social and academic settings. Therefore, teachers found that it is important to have leaders with bilingual experiences and backgrounds to increase awareness and importance about

bilingual/ESL education, increase the importance of dual language programs, and to inform parents on research findings supporting the importance of bilingual/ESL education. Ms. Cavazos stated,

I have heard parents say no, I don't want my child to be in a bilingual program, because I can teach them Spanish at home. As a leader, you have to discuss with parents there is a difference between social and academic Spanish language.

The self-determination theory is shown in this intrinsic motivator in that the bilingual/ESL teachers believed that principals could improve the programs for emergent bilingual students in their schools. This is a psychological need of autonomy in that they felt principals could enact an internal locus of causality to improve such programs.

Commit to a campus-wide impact. School leadership is not only about providing leadership to the population inside the school, but also providing leadership to the entire community. Teachers reported that it was important to serve beyond the classroom, because they believed that their and the principal's role is to serve the entire school and community. The majority of bilingual/ESL teachers believed that they have made a big difference in their classrooms, and they wanted to expand this change. As teachers, they were limited to their classrooms, but leadership positions would give them the chance to initiate change on a broader scale. Ms. Drury stated, "As a teacher I think my hands are handcuffed on how else I can help my students, and I feel in order to make a bigger change, I need to move up." The self-determination theory's psychological need that is shown in this motivation finding from the bilingual/ESL teachers is competence. This indicates a belief that they could make a difference and make an impact as a principal for emergent bilingual students.

Foster relationships with school community. Bilingual/ESL teachers indicated that good leaders are those who can build strong and long-lasting relationships with students, teachers, staff, and administrators. They said that establishing these types of relationships with school members within the school community helps to foster trust between students and the school and increase teacher job satisfaction, thus improving teacher retention. According to the teachers, they would be able to lead and make a difference in children's lives through positive discipline and relationship building. The teacher participants demonstrated willingness to seek administrative positions in order to be able to build positive school communities to provide emergent bilingual students with greater opportunities to accomplish their goals and to help them achieve better academic outcomes. According to Ms. Hernandez,

ESL children are not often receiving equitable opportunities. I am a big proponent for ESL students and see what they can do and let them do as much as they can and then go back and help them. Every child is an individual and let them get the most out of their education. A principal can help ensure this in their work with teachers, staff, parents, and community.

The self-determination theory is noted in this motivation finding as relatedness. The teachers felt that a community could be built to improve bilingual/ESL education.

Extrinsic motivators

Extrinsic motivators, such as financial reward, improved job security, and career prestige, were rated among the least motivators for bilingual/ESL teachers to seek administrative positions. They believed that the financial rewards for the leadership positions are not compatible with the leadership tasks and efforts. They did not find prestige, job security, and financial reward to be strong motivators in attracting them to pursue leadership positions. According to teachers, they would not consider career prestige as a motivator if it had not been listed among the motivators they could choose. Ms. Parker emphasized,

Money or prestige will never be a motivation to be a school administrator, plus there is no big difference in salary between a teacher and the administrator. The principal job requirements and tasks are huge compared with the paycheck. So, money and prestige do not factor in much.

Newly identified extrinsic motivator specific to teachers of emergent bilingual students

During the interviews, the bilingual/ESL teachers identified *mentor's advice* as a new extrinsic motivator that we did not find in the literature. We categorized this new motivator as a Mentor-Oriented Motivation. The teachers mentioned that their mentors advised them to pursue the principalship, because they witnessed that these teachers had leadership skills which could potentially make them good future principals. The former and current administrators encouraged these participants to set their career goals in the direction of being school leaders because high need schools need individuals like them with innate leadership skills and knowledge of the field. Ms. Garza stated,

After taking advice from my former administrators and my current supervisor, they have always said I need to be in a leadership role. And I never saw myself as a leader. They said I was born as a leader, and we need individuals like you in our schools.

Discussion

Several researchers found that intrinsic motivators are generally more influential than extrinsic motivators related to teachers seeking administrative positions (e.g. Bass, 2006; Harris, 2011; Hancock and Müller, 2009). Our results also indicate that the intrinsic motivators of teachers of emergent bilingual students outweighed extrinsic ones in their movement toward the principalship. The three top ranked motivators of teachers of emergent bilingual students in our study were (a) to impact students' and teachers' lives, (b) to have the opportunity to initiate change in learning environments, and (c) to make a difference. These are examples of the motivators that were discussed in the self-determination theory as intrinsic motivators, because they are related to the rewards being the satisfaction associated with personalized activity (Deci and Ryan, 2000). Interestingly, almost 16 years ago, the top three intrinsic-oriented motivators selected by a sample of 860 general education teachers in Bass' (2006) quantitative study aligned with our current results of the top three motivators of teachers of emergent bilingual students. Though these were the same top three motivators for both groups of teachers, we now have more specific information on these motivators from the voices of teachers of emergent bilingual students. Additionally, we note that though the findings could be attributed to any group of teachers who are seeking to become principals, the voices of teachers, who daily educate emergent bilingual students, have not heretofore been heard.

The three least influential among the motivators were (a) to seek security, (b) to obtain financial reward, and (c) to gain prestige, all of which are extrinsic motivators. The participants also identified new motivators that were not listed in the rankings. The only extrinsic motivator that teachers voiced was the advice they received from mentors. The teachers reported that their mentors provided them with feedback on their potential leadership abilities and the positive changes they would be able to make through a leadership role. Our results showed that the teachers of emergent bilingual students emphasized the role of the mentors in guiding them to take a leadership career path.

The four intrinsic motivators that surfaced through the interviews with teachers of emergent bilingual students were: (a) teachers' desire to promote cultural awareness, (b) increasing awareness of bilingual/ESL education, (c) committing to a campus-wide impact, and (d) fostering a relationship with the school community. Bilingual/ESL teachers recognized that the cultural and linguistic background of emergent bilingual students is often

neglected and, thus, holding a leadership position would enable them to address this critical inequity issue through advocating for their emergent bilingual students. Furthermore, wanting to create awareness and improve understanding of the importance of bilingual/ESL programs was highlighted as a motivation among teachers, as they believe that there exists a lack of school and parental understanding on the purpose of bilingual/ESL education and the importance of family/parental involvement in students' educational development. Teachers expressed feelings of limitations in the degree of change they can bring as teachers and believed that taking leadership positions would allow them to foster broader scale change through the establishment of relationships with students, parents, staff, and administrators. These four additional themes that we captured provide further insight into the motivation of emergent bilingual teachers to pursue the principalship beyond the typically examined factors in past studies and beyond the general education teachers.

Bass (2006) indicated that intrinsic motivators are centered in the two categories: (a) service-oriented intrinsic motivations and (b) achievement-oriented intrinsic motivations. We add three other categories to intrinsic (I) and extrinsic (E) motivations which were apparent from the bilingual/ESL teachers: (a) cultural-equity-oriented motivations [I], (b) a broader influence on programming or services to emergent bilingual students [I], and (c) mentor-oriented motivations [E]. The category of broader influence on programming or services was apparent as teachers of emergent bilingual students wanted to make a difference in others and to have a positive impact on teachers, staff, students, and the entire community.

Responses also showed that teachers of emergent bilingual students adopted achievement-oriented intrinsic motivations, because they have the desire to lead as well to possess leadership skills with more understanding of the bilingual/ESL programs including dual language education. The responses showed that these bilingual/ESL teachers tended to adopt service-oriented intrinsic motivators more than did they adopt the achievement-oriented intrinsic motivations. Though we found that the extrinsic motivators were not significant for teachers of emergent bilinguals seeking to lead high need schools, we did find that the self-determination theory's basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness were effectuated throughout the findings.

Implications

As noted by Weiner and Holder (2019), most studies on motivation for teachers becoming principals have been conducted via quantitative methods; however, they indicated that there is a desire for learning more from aspiring principals about their motivations to step into the role. We note that we could find no studies related to teachers of emergent bilingual students and their motivation to become principals. Thus, we added to the qualitative research in-depth understanding of this phenomenon, and we focused on a group of teachers who would have knowledge to lead campuses with a large number of emergent bilingual students. However, more research with teachers of emergent bilingual students is still needed to deepen further the understanding of their motivation to become principals.

Based on the findings, it appears that this group of bilingual/ESL teachers perceived the phenomenon of motivation similarly and differently from non-bilingual/ESL teachers. This finding suggests that motivation may be a shared phenomenon. This finding may be critical for those who wish to further study motivation as a phenomenon.

Ultimately, the findings of our study have implications for school leaders and faculty members in university principal preparation programs. We recommend that school campus and district leaders incorporate motivators in their succession planning. For example, it would be advantageous to know that our participants, teachers of emergent bilingual students, did not consider financial gain or prestige posturing as a motivator for advancing to

the principalship, and this finding is unlike what the superintendents in Pijanowski *et al.*'s (2009) study believed would be the top motivating factor for teachers to seek principalships. Teachers of emergent bilingual students who may be identified for an upwardly mobile leadership succession pipeline should be validated for their altruistic intentions of promoting cultural awareness, increasing awareness of bilingual/ESL education, committing to a campus-wide impact, and fostering a relationship with the school community. Finally, we posit that having an awareness of the intrinsic and extrinsic motivators of bilingual/ESL teachers may better position university principal preparation program faculty to advise, mentor, sponsor, and support potential leaders who have knowledge of bilingual/ESL programming and the desire to serve in high-need schools with large numbers of emergent bilingual students.

Research for future consideration

Recruiting, preparing, and placing diverse principals who are competent in building the instructional capacity of their teachers who serve high needs students is critical for ensuring that *all* students are equipped with a high quality education. Data from NCES (2020) indicate that schools lack diverse principals; therefore, knowing the motivators of the diverse teacher pool who desire to become principals could be advantageous for principal preparation faculty in recruitment and for practicing school leaders in their succession planning. In this study, we explored the motivations that inspire diverse teachers to pursue the principalship. We would recommend that researchers expand this study to include a broad national sample to determine if the motivators that we found hold true in a larger sample or if other motivators emerge in a US or international sample. Additionally, we recommend that a study be undertaken in principal preparation programs to determine if such motivators as we found are considered in their recruitment processes. As well, it would be advisable to determine if practicing school leaders take these motivators into account as they develop a future principal pool in their school leadership succession planning.

Theoretical contribution

In this study, we employed self-determination theory as the theoretical framework, and we furthered this theory in our research with a group of teachers of emergent bilingual students who were seeking principal certification. In the original self-determination theory, intrinsic motivators were centered in the two categories: (a) service-oriented intrinsic motivations and (b) achievement-oriented intrinsic motivations. We advance the theory by adding three other categories to intrinsic and extrinsic motivations which were apparent from our data: (a) cultural-equity-oriented intrinsic motivations, (b) broader influence on programming or services to emergent bilingual students as intrinsic motivations, and (c) mentor-oriented extrinsic motivations. We also validate the self-determination theory's basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness as those needs emerged with this group of diverse teachers.

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becoming
principals

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