

## **Cypriot secondary school teachers' professional life phases: a research-informed view of career-long motivation**

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**ABSTRACT** This paper presents the professional life phases of Cypriot secondary school teachers and discusses the influences underlying their motivation. A comparison is established between teachers within each phase by extracting information from three sources of influence: teachers' characteristics, as drawn from the literature; policy factors; and four motivators (recognition, inspection, personal life and experience). These motivators constitute the essence of the perspectives of twelve teachers and six headteachers, participants in a qualitative research study conducted in six urban lyceums<sup>1</sup> in Cyprus through semi-structured interviewing. A secondary school teacher's professional life is divided into five professional life phases: 0–3, 4–10, 11–20, 21–27, and 28–30 years of teaching experience. Emergent from the educational system of Cyprus, this division adds to the extant literature on teachers' professional life phases. These characteristics, policy factors, and motivators build a research-informed view of teachers' career-long motivation.

*Keywords:* professional life phases; teacher motivation; secondary school teachers; Cyprus.

### **Introduction**

The introduction of the present article has a two-fold aim. First, it identifies the terms 'professional life' and 'career'. Then, it provides a brief overview of some important contributions to the field of research on teachers' professional life or career trajectories from an international context.

#### *Teachers' 'professional life' and 'career'*

According to Day, Sammons, Stobart, Kington, and Gu (2007), the term 'professional life' refers to the number of years of a teacher's teaching experience, but also to professional features, interests and desires. The term 'career' is associated with responsibilities at the level of the classroom and promotion (Day et al., 2007). Promotion relates to advancement, which may prove beneficial to the teacher in terms of material and power advantages (Bayer, Brinkkjaer, Plauborg and Rolls, 2009). In this paper, 'professional life' refers to professional seniority (years of teaching experience). 'Career' signifies the route that teachers choose during their working lives, and identifies certain pathways within the teaching job, which is in accordance with Huberman (1993), who interprets a teacher's life as a career.

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1. Lyceums: secondary schools attended by students aged 15–18 years old.

*Teachers' professional life/career phases*

The VITAE<sup>2</sup> research of Day et al. (2007) found that teachers' lives and their work extend over six professional life phases: 0–3 years, teaching 'commitment, support and challenge'; 4–7 years, establishing 'identity and efficacy in classroom'; 8–15 years, 'managing changes in role and identity: growing tensions and transitions'; 16–23 years, facing 'work–life tensions: challenges to motivation and commitment'; 24–30 years, encountering 'challenges to sustaining motivation'; and 31+ years, 'sustaining/declining motivation, ability to cope with change, looking to retire'.

Day et al.'s (2007) project built upon Huberman's (1993) study of Swiss secondary school teachers' lives, which may fall into a teaching career cycle of five phases. Being related to teachers' years of career experience, the trends that serve as the titles of the phases are: 1–3 years of career experience: 'survival and discovery'; 4–6 years: 'stabilisation and consolidation of a pedagogical repertoire'; 7–25 years: 'diversification, activism, and reassessment'; 26–33 years: 'serenity, affective distance, and conservatism'; and 34–40 years: 'disengagement'.

The study of Christensen, Burke, Fessler, and Hagstrom (1983) identified three stages within teachers' careers: the early years, when teachers put considerable effort into applying their academic knowledge into praxis; the middle years, when teachers seek to be affirmed for being seriously committed to serving education and its purposes; and the later career, when teachers with 20–30 years of experience start to feel dissatisfied with their profession and experience symptoms of fatigue and monotony.

Sikes (1985) positions secondary school teachers into one of five phases that represent age groups. The 21–28-year age group accommodates teachers who are concerned with maintaining student discipline. In the 28–33-year phase, teachers go through the 'age thirty transition' and look forward to promotion. Failing to achieve promotion, they feel resentment for being disregarded, and despite feeling experienced enough to take on additional responsibilities, these teachers may be thinking about leaving the teaching profession for another job. Teachers between 30–40 years of age may experience a peak in their activity and engagement in the school workplace, and they might be characterised by high levels of self-efficacy. Many 40–50/55-year-old teachers hold leadership roles in this phase, and they may go through a process of self-reassessment where they try to see what they have achieved in their life thus far. Teachers 50–55+ years of age are looking to retire and have a diminishing interest in their job.

The trends that characterise teachers' professional life phases are associated with their motivation levels. Since this paper aims to inform, but also to engage the reader in a process of thinking critically about Cypriot secondary school teachers' career-long motivation, in the theoretical framework that follows, I discuss some interpretations of teacher motivation, as well as the factors that may influence teachers' motivation, as these were found in research initiatives conducted at international and national levels.

### **Theoretical framework**

Teacher motivation may be associated with teachers' needs (Herzberg, 1968; Maslow, 1954), which can be extrinsic (e.g., salary, working hours) and/or intrinsic (e.g., achievement, teaching itself). Motivation might be related to the teachers' characteristics, such as commitment (Crosswell, 2006; Dannetta, 2002) and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982; Ghaith and Shaaban, 1999). Motivation is further linked to school leadership (Evans, 1998, 1999). The extent to which teachers' needs are fulfilled, the teachers' characteristics, and the school leadership's characteristics constitute factors that embody the power to expand and heighten a teacher's

motivation levels, or to shrink and lower them, as well as to regulate teachers' commitment to the teaching job, and their classroom and school activity accordingly.

#### *Teacher motivation*

Evans (1999) interprets motivation as 'what makes teachers tick ... what gives them a "buzz"; what interests and preoccupies them; what has them walking six inches off the ground; what sends them home happy and satisfied' (p. 1). Teacher motivation is presented as a state of mind that can infuse teachers with a strong desire to know or learn, and it engrosses their mind with an activity (e.g., teaching). It fills teachers with feelings of enthusiasm or exhilaration, which instil in them a sense of happiness and satisfaction. As it is causal in nature, motivation leads teachers to effectively perform their jobs.

According to Nias (1989), teacher motivation embodies teachers' desire to maximise their efforts to achieve better performance or activity. Jansen (2009) describes teacher motivation as a motive – e.g., a desire driving teachers towards engagement in activity – while Sinclair (2008) associates motivation with energy and teachers' aspirations to learn and grow. Motivation may take the form of a driving force that leads teachers to invest high levels of energy in activity within the classroom and the school, and to pursue and achieve goals aimed at fulfilling their needs (Konstantinides-Vladimirou, 2013)..

#### *Factors influencing teacher motivation*

The needs of the teachers, as well as the teachers' characteristics and those of the leadership of the school, cannot be seen independent of the teachers' work context. Teacher motivation is influenced by contextual factors, and this is evident in the examples of international and national research studies that follow.

At the international level, Bennell's (2004) study of teacher motivation in low-income countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia showed that many teachers working in state schools are poorly motivated due to factors (e.g., low pay, deficient controls) which may place responsibility on a system that deprives teachers of the enthusiasm to engage in extracurricular activities or to diversify their teaching methods. Consequently, teachers stick to traditional teacher-centred approaches, which may have an adverse impact on students' learning.

Similarly, Indian teachers' motivation levels were identified as low in the study of Ramachandran, Pal, Jain, Shekar, and Sharma (2005), where the sample teachers associated their low levels of motivation with the imposition of non-academic duties upon them, a lack of encouragement, delayed salaries, and poor school infrastructure and training quality. The sample managers related motivation to teachers' execution of orders, low levels of absenteeism, and ability to maintain discipline. Indian school managers' focus on obedience and compliance, rather than on the teaching and learning processes, may emerge from the policy system of their country.

Dinham and Scott's (1996) study of teachers and school managers in western Sydney found that teacher motivation is regulated by factors such as student achievement, teachers' interpersonal relationships with students and colleagues, and collegiality. In that context, teachers' motivation is reinforced by their social needs, which thus serve as motivators.

The research of Scott, Stone, and Dinham (2001) into career motivation and satisfaction among over 3,000 teachers and managers in four developed Anglophone countries (Australia, England, New Zealand, and the United States of America), showed that teachers' 'satisfiers' rest on their desire to work with children and contribute to their development. The reported teachers' 'dissatisfiers' relate to the impact of social disruption, disrespect for teachers' professionalism, and lack of collegial relationships. Teachers in these countries seem to be motivated by

altruism, and they are demotivated by a perceived sense of hostility or contempt both from society and their colleagues. Perceived social contempt may be so powerful as to cause teacher frustration, which, in its turn, might take a tumble in teachers' motivational behaviour, indicative of their professionalism. Since professionalism refers to norms of behaviour exhibiting high levels of commitment to the school organisation, colleagues and students (Evans, 1998), a sense of frustration or resentment may turn teachers' commitment into indifference to them.

Within the national context, Zembylas and Papanastasiou (2006) found that Cypriot teachers are motivated by intrinsic sources of satisfaction associated with the field of teaching itself, such as working with children, making a contribution to society, and achieving personal and professional growth. Being derived from the second phase of the study, these findings seem to address the findings from the first phase, which showed that Cypriot teachers are motivated to enter teaching by extrinsic factors, such as the salary, working hours, and holidays associated with the job (Zembylas and Papanastasiou, 2004). Teachers' sources of dissatisfaction, as found by Zembylas and Papanastasiou (2006), included the impact of social problems, failing and disruptive students, the lack of social appreciation and standing, and a lack of reciprocal relationships.

Having compared the satisfaction levels of current and future primary school teachers in Cyprus, Menon and Christou (2002) found that future teachers had low expectations of their jobs, which could be attributed to the headteacher's role, as well as to the organisation and climate of the school. The study also found that primary school teachers are dissatisfied with the promotion system, which is highly dependent on seniority. Similarly, the study conducted by Pashiardis (2000), which examined primary and secondary school teachers' views about the school climate in Cyprus, indicated the need to improve four issues: organisation and administration, especially in relation to a lack of feedback from inspectors; students, with respect to their skills of autonomous studying; collaboration; and communication. These context-specific satisfiers and dissatisfiers, together with the incongruity between the findings in the two studies of Zembylas and Papanastasiou (2004, 2006), and a lack of research on teacher motivation, justify the focus of this paper on the factors that influence Cypriot secondary school teachers' motivation throughout their professional life phases. These factors were uncovered during a qualitative research study that was conducted in six secondary schools, utilising a methodology that is discussed in the next section.

## Methodology

The methodological position of my study, which sought to determine the factors that influence the motivation levels of secondary school teachers as they traverse their professional life phases, lies in the discipline of qualitative research. Qualitative research which, in this study, was designed as a survey, places emphasis on the research subjects' subjectivism, and their social reality is created via the unique way that each individual interprets the world and through the meanings s/he applies to it (Gall, Borg, and Gall, 1996). Being an individual researcher working within the paradigm of interpretivism, I strongly believe that the social reality of teacher motivation can best be built upon teachers' interpretations, the feelings that emerge from their experiences, and their insights.

Semi-structured interviewing served as the method that was used to collect the interpretations that would represent teachers' motivators. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather qualitative data from 12 teachers and six headteachers working in six lyceums in two towns, Limassol and Paphos (three lyceums in each town). The teachers (two from each school) belonged to the mid-career phase, and they had 11–20 years of teaching experience. Since those teachers had already gone through the early-career phase, they could talk about the influences underlying their motivation in the first two professional life phases (0–3 years and 4–10 years), as well as about the factors that influence them in the phase that they are currently in. They

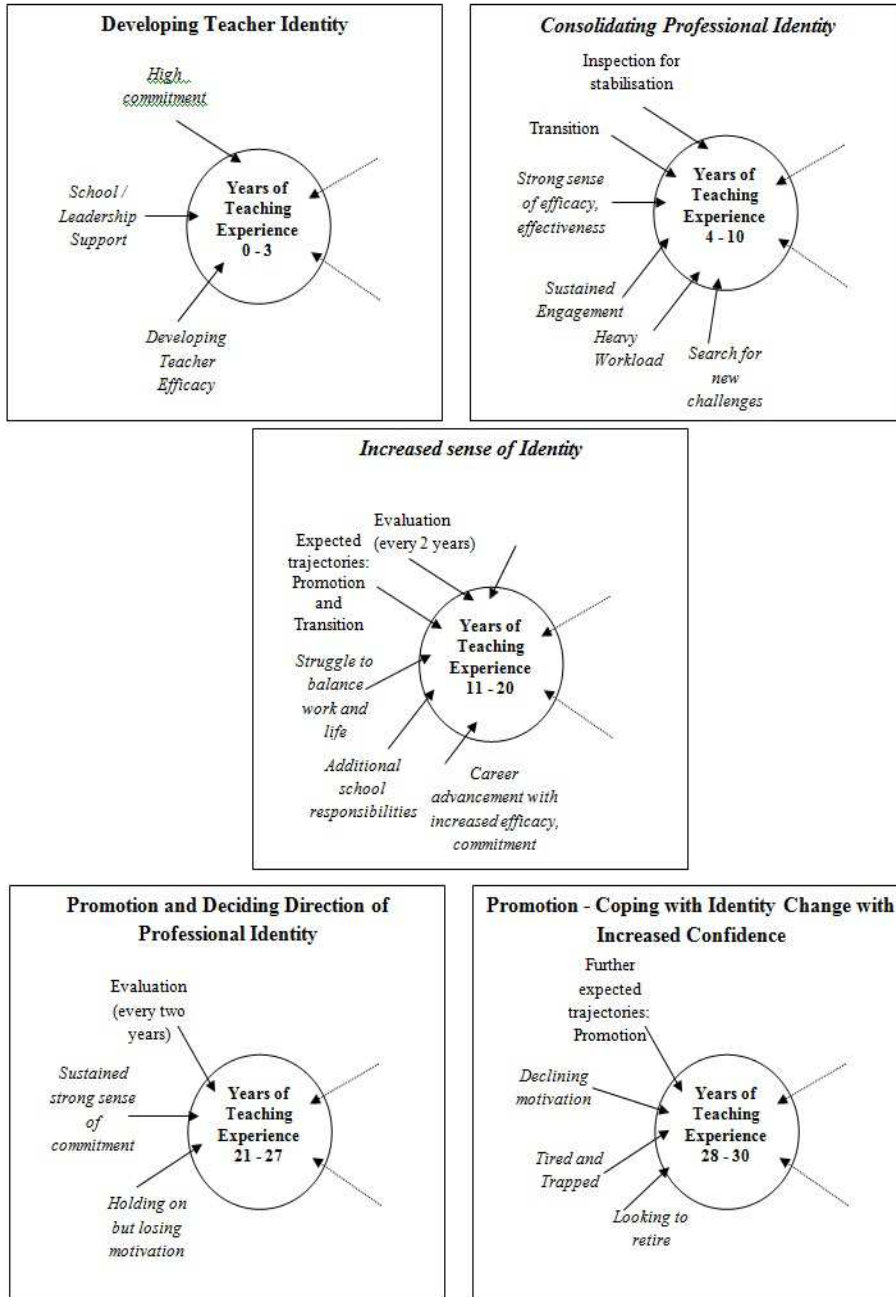
could also anticipate the motivators/demotivators of late-career teachers, as these were perceived by them on the basis of their judgments and observations. The reason underpinning the choice of a sample of mid-career teachers is a personal consideration: perceived apathy was pervasive among many of the teachers who had been working for at least ten years in secondary schools. This consideration is supported by Evans (2002), who states that mid-career teachers (teachers with at least ten years of experience) are vulnerable to demotivation—a state of being bored, and encountering a plateau in their performance. The headteachers had 3–6 years of teaching experience and belonged to the late-career phase (the 21–27-year or 28–30-year professional life phases), and they could discuss the factors that affected their motivation throughout their entire professional life. Headteachers could also refer to the factors that they—from the position of the headteacher—perceive to serve as motivators for teachers.

The sample teachers and headteachers in this study discussed the factors that affected their motivation in relation to their lived experiences, which consequently acted as justifications to their perceptions (Giorgi, 1985). What enabled both of the participant groups to voice their views was a diagram depicting the five phases that teachers pass through in their professional lives (Diagram 1, p. 12).

Each phase includes two sources of evidence: the characteristics assigned to teachers; and the policy factors that affect them. The characteristics (in italics in the diagram) were borrowed from the study of Day et al. (2007), given that they were similar to the characteristics of secondary school teachers in Cyprus. The policy factors (in plain text in the diagram) are derived from the educational system. The empty arrows indicate that there are factors that influence teacher motivation, which will be revealed from the research participants' shared ideas, and these factors reflect the essence or the essential sameness of participants' diverse views, insights, and feelings following analysis of the data.

The interaction of the two sources of evidence (teachers' characteristics and policy factors) serves to shape teachers' professional identity that is why the title of each phase refers to teachers' identity. Teachers' professional identity is a determinant of high importance, for it may influence their emotional well-being and teaching effectiveness, and serve as a key regulator of their levels of motivation, job fulfilment, self-efficacy, and commitment (Day et al., 2007). A teacher's identity is constructed from factors, such as technical and emotional facets (e.g. subject knowledge, student outcomes) (Day and Kington, 2008), but also from an amalgam of other factors, such as teachers' professional and personal experiences, and the context (e.g. organisational culture, school climate, situation-specific events) in which they work. Zembylas (2013) found that power and emotion are factors that shape teacher identity, and Cohen (2008), who investigated the identity talk of three secondary school teachers in an urban school in the Midwestern USA, found that language acts as a means of constructing teacher identity, and that teachers develop complex professional identities when they converse with each other. The variables (technical, emotional, contextual, power, emotion and talk), which are facilitative in building identity, also constitute factors that affect teacher motivation, which reveals the interactive relationship between identity and motivation. That said, professional identity, in this paper, may be seen as transformation of teachers' dispositions to be active in the school workplace.

Diagram 1: Teachers' professional life phases and the factors that influence teachers.

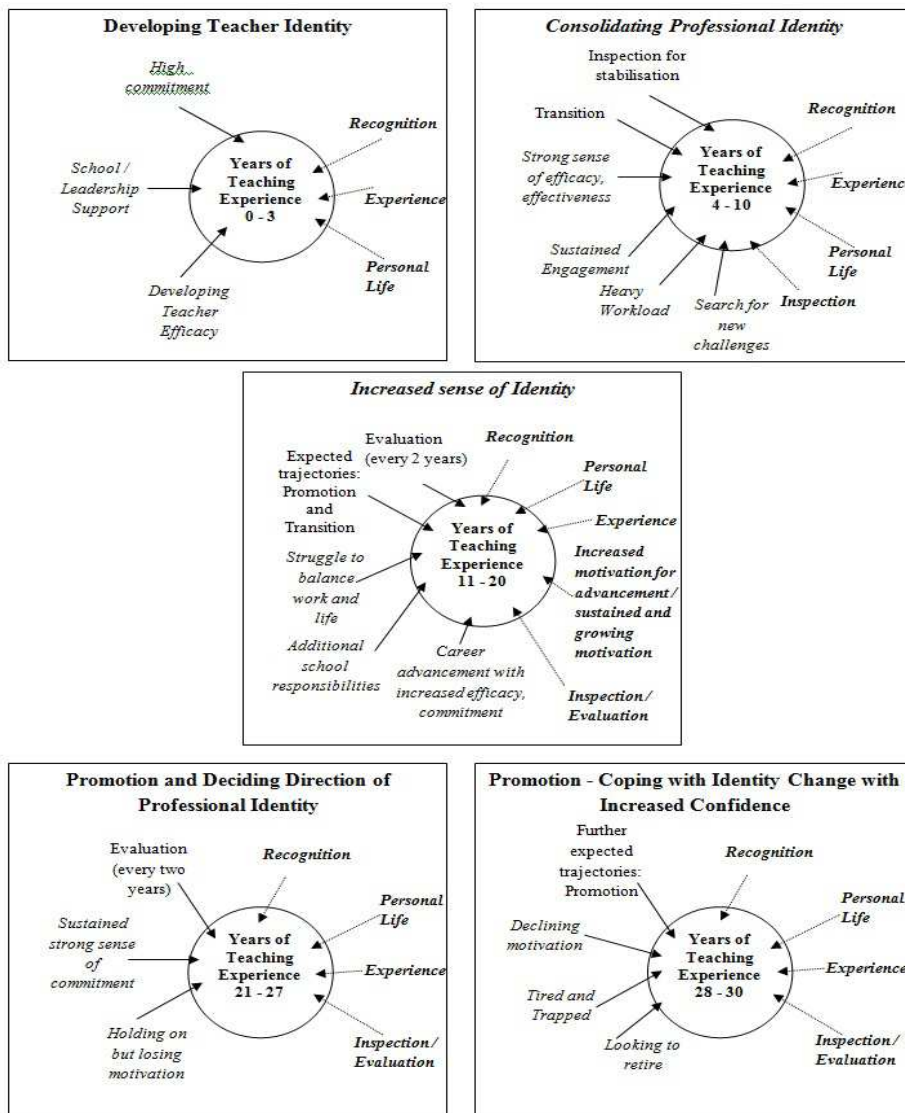


The diagram of teachers' professional life phases was shown to each participant during the interview. The characteristics of teachers and policy factors in the diagram served as tools that stimulated the participants' expression of ideas. While speculating on the factors depicted in each phase, they were asked to name other factors influencing teachers. They were also asked

whether they believed that there was a particular phase in which teachers might experience a peak in their motivation for their job, and if their answer to that question was positive, they stated the factors that lead to that peak in their motivation, and why it would likely occur at that specific time. Both participant groups were asked to identify teachers' strong intrinsic motivators and demotivators.

During the data analysis of the semi-structured interviews, the factors that were discussed by most of the participants were categorised as themes that constituted the essence of the participants' perspectives. Uncovered through the QSR NVivo9 software for qualitative data analysis, those themes—namely, recognition, inspection, personal life, and experience—were added to the characteristics of the teachers and policy factors extant in each phase, and formed the diagram that follows (Diagram 2, p. 14). These factors were added to all of the life phases given that the research participants believed that those factors had the power to enhance teachers' motivation levels at any time throughout their career.

Diagram 2: Teachers' professional life phases and the factors that influence teachers



In the following section, secondary school teachers' professional life phases are discussed individually. The discussion of each phase is built upon the prevailing ideas presented by the research participants (12 teachers, six headteachers) on the three sources of influence during each life phase: 1) the characteristics of teachers that were drawn from the work of Day et al. (2007); 2) the policy factors resulting from the educational system; and 3) the research subjects' perceived 'motivators': recognition, inspection, personal life, and experience. Based on what was reported, it became apparent that the participants' diverse ideas construct a comparison that classifies teachers within each phase into specific groups.

### Teachers' professional life phases

The five phases that Cypriot secondary teachers go through in their professional lives fall into three main career phases: early, mid-, and late-career phases. The early career phase includes the professional life phases of 0–3 and 4–10 years of teaching. The mid-career phase embodies the professional life phases of 11–20 years, and the late-career phase encompasses the professional life phases of 21–27 and 28–30 years of experience. The following section presents these phases based on qualitative analysis of the data, collected from teachers and headteachers who represent a variety of ages and subjects. These data were collected in 2010, when teachers retired at the age of 60 years. Now, they move into retirement when they have completed their 63rd year of age, and from the year 2017 onwards, teachers will retire when they have completed their 65th year of age.

#### Professional life phase 0–3: Developing teacher identity

Day et al. (2007) found that teachers in this cohort enter the profession with high levels of commitment derived from their love of teaching. 'Love of teaching' was described by some participants as a desire to become a teacher who models professionalism, which (desire) develops within one's inner self during his/her childhood. Hehm and Kottler (1993) associate the teachers who love what they do with passionate teacher commitment, which may direct teachers to trajectories of a constant search for more effective methods to teach students, mastery of subject matter, and learning. Professionalism can be modelled through the teacher's fidelity to the school organisation and colleagues, and dedication to make a contribution to the attainment of the needs of all students (Evans, 1998).

The participants in my study attributed teachers' high commitment on entering the teaching profession to two reasons, which helps to classify teachers with 0–3 years of teaching experience into one of two groups: 1) those teachers with a high level of commitment that emerges from their desire to impart knowledge and values to children; and 2) those teachers with a high level of commitment resulting from a strong will to fight the conservatism embodied in some teachers' behaviour towards students. Specifically, three participants said that what influenced their decision to become teachers was their distress and resentment to the way that they, themselves, were treated as students by their teachers, who never allowed them to speak their minds. These three teachers stated their desire to become open-minded teachers who would contribute to change such static and insensitive teacher motivation.

Novice teachers, in the study by Day et al. (2007), are either developing their sense of identity or they are reducing their sense of efficacy. In my study, those teachers were characterised by a developing sense of identity and efficacy, which is probably a result of their contract status. When teachers are appointed to a post, they are given a temporary employment contract and they change schools annually. They are sent to rural or suburban schools, or to other urban schools if there is no post available in their hometown. By transferring to distant school settings,



teachers gain transfer points<sup>3</sup>; however, these points start being considered by the Ministry of Education when teachers gain permanent status. Being on contract, teachers with 0–3 years of teaching experience are required to attend a pre-service training course at the Pedagogical Institute for a year, and after being successful in their exams, they are awarded a certificate that serves as a key to probation (discussed in the 4–10-year professional life phase).

Novice teachers need the support of school leadership to sustain their high commitment and to turn their developing efficacy into developed efficacy. Most of the participants remembered that they did not have this support when they entered the teaching profession. Nobody from the leadership team asked about the problems that they faced in their classrooms, and no one helped them adjust to the new working environment where they found themselves; as a result, they just did what they were required to do. They were not asked to engage in any school or extracurricular activities, as those activities, they stated, belonged to the teachers with a permanent status, which explains the logic underpinning their reluctance to take initiative for an activity within the school.

#### *Recognition*

The support that beginner teachers need to sustain their high sense of commitment may take the form of recognition for their work with students in the classroom. Teachers' need for recognition in this phase classifies them into one of two groups: 1) teachers who see 'recognition' from the school's headteacher and/or departmental leadership as a boost to developing their efficacy; and 2) teachers who see recognition as a tool that would motivate them to engage in activities that take place outside the classroom (e.g., competitions set by the Ministry, European programmes). The first group of teachers linked their efficacy levels to feelings of 'low self-esteem', 'insecurity', 'stress', and to attempts to 'adjust' to the job and 'acclimatise'. Serving as indicators of those teachers' level of vulnerability, those teachers' feelings may relate to their contract status, which cannot be guaranteed, for they may find themselves unemployed the next year or so. That said, I need to claim that a large number of teachers who were on contract status in 2013 found themselves without a job at the beginning of the school year 2014-2015 due to the measures (e.g., salary cuts, increase in the number of students per classroom, decrease of the number of teachers per school) that the Cypriot government had taken in an attempt to deal with the economic crisis that Cyprus has been going through since March 2013. Many of those unemployed teachers kept voicing their feelings of insecurity and their financial difficulties through the media last year, and the teacher association were on continuing negotiations with the Minister of Education in an attempt to gain his promise that all teachers who had been on contract in the year 2013 would be appointed again at the start of the school year 2015-2016.

#### *Inspection*

There is no inspection that is conducted to license newly appointed teachers or teachers on temporary employment contract to teach. The participant teachers' and headteachers' explicit views on this issue help to categorise them into one of two groups: 1) teachers who would like to undergo inspection in the 0–3-year phase; and 2) teachers who are happy to have no inspection. The participants who favour inspection during this phase believe that inspection would help sustain the high commitment that teachers enter the job with, thus motivating them to develop their professional image. Teachers' professional image relates to their identity: the way they perceive themselves and the image of themselves that they disclose to others (Day and Kington, 2008). Some teachers stated that the lack of inspection in this phase made them look inferior to teachers who were undergoing inspection for evaluation. Perhaps, the teachers who were undergoing inspection made such high sense of themselves to themselves that they presented the

image of being superior to the other teachers. The teachers who were delighted with the policy of no inspection linked inspection to promotion, and stated that they did not expect trajectories for advancement. The question that arises here is: Were they actually indifferent to advancement or they used that indifference to advancement as an excuse for their potential reluctance to put (more) effort into their classroom work or to invest (more) energy and time into preparing the lessons that they would be inspected for?

#### *Personal life*

Teachers' personal lives were generally discussed in relation to their struggle to balance work and life, and this gave rise to two themes: health and family. Teachers in the 0–3-year life phase may fall into one of two groups in terms of health: 1) teachers suffering from stress; and 2) teachers unaffected by stress. Teachers' stressful situation was associated with unintentional career choice, meaning that factors other than a conscious career choice (e.g., salary, holidays) led them to the teaching profession. Stress in this phase was further attributed by some participants to beginner teachers' over-commitment to their jobs, but also to their struggle to meet their safety needs. Some participants indicated that some teachers struggle to survive the challenges of a professional life that is new to them. Teachers who are not suffering from stress reportedly made a deliberate career choice to enter the teaching profession.

#### *Experience*

Teachers in this phase lack the experience of teaching in public schools. The participants' perspectives on those teachers' lack of experience divides beginner teachers into the following two groups: 1) teachers facing problems with student discipline; and 2) teachers not facing problems with student discipline. The participant teachers who admitted to dealing with disciplinary problems when they were in the 0–3-year phase reported that these problems were in addition to those associated with mastering the knowledge of their subject and imparting it to their students. Some headteachers attributed beginner teachers' problems with student discipline to three characteristics: 1) the teachers are 'too strict'; 2) the teachers do not diversify their teaching methods (e.g., they avoid using technology in their lessons); and 3) the teachers cannot develop interpersonal relationships with their students. This group of beginner teachers may be classified into Huberman's (1993) 'survival and discovery' stage, where they experience the shock of being confronted with the reality of the classroom, which might be different from their expectations, or it could lead them to doubt their ability to teach. These teachers possibly lack the passion for teaching, for passionate teachers are aware of the challenge of the diverse population contexts of the classrooms and they are confident that they are capable of contributing to all students' learning and achievement (Day, 2004). Similarly, in Day et al.'s (2007) study, the work of teachers with 0–3 years of teaching experience was adversely affected by poor student behaviour. Teachers who belonged to the second group were regarded as effective teachers from the start of their appointment, according to the participants. Their effectiveness was attributed to those teachers' passion for teaching, as well as to the amount of time and effort they invested when preparing their lessons. Passionate teachers show deep care about what they teach and the way they teach it, they keep maintaining their interest in learning more about the content that they teach and the methodology they use to teach, because they are determined to sustain and enhance their teaching competence (Day, 2004).

### **Professional life phase 4–10 years: Consolidating professional identity**

Teachers in this phase might theoretically fall into one of three categories: teachers with temporary contractual status; teachers on probation; and teachers with stability status. Teachers on probation are teachers who attended the pre-service training course when they were on temporary contractual status. Those on probation status are inspected twice a year for two consecutive years in order to gain stability status. The earlier the teachers go through their probation status, the earlier they gain stability in their job.

The characteristics of teachers in the 4–7-year life phase (Day et al., 2007) that also seem to apply to the teachers in the 4–10-year phase in my study are as follows: a strong sense of efficacy and effectiveness; sustained engagement; a heavy workload; and a search for new challenges. In Day et al.'s (2007) work, teachers' high sense of efficacy and effectiveness was attributed to their positive career expectancies or promotion. In my study, this sense could be related to teachers' positive expectations for stabilisation in the teaching profession, and those expectations could help to sustain teachers' engagement in school and classroom activities. With respect to the heavy workload, some teachers in the VITAE project concentrated on classroom teaching in order to maintain a balance between their professional and personal lives; however, in my study, these teachers focused on classroom teaching so as to achieve successful inspected performances. Further, teachers with 4–7 years of teaching experience showed an inclination for 'new commitments' (Day et al., 2007); however, in my study, 'new challenges' were reported by the participant teachers as either new methods of teaching or innovative school activities that would attract headteachers', students', and students' parents' attention while adding value to their professional identity. Professional identity is shaped from the meanings that teachers apply to themselves and the meanings that others apply to them, as well as from the subject they teach, the relationships they build with their students, their values, and their personal lives (Day and Gu, 2010).

#### *Recognition*

Recognition serves as a reward to motivate teachers to sustain their engagement in school activities (e.g., music and poetry events), and to diversify their teaching methods in order to enhance their teaching competence. The need for recognition in this phase divides teachers with 4–10 years of teaching experience into one of two groups: 1) teachers who are empowered by their headteacher's acknowledgement of activities that they initiate within the school; and 2) teachers who are motivated by their students' acknowledgement for using teaching–learning processes that move away from the traditional lesson and the boredom it embodies. Teachers who belong to the first group were motivated to work harder when they received the headteachers' implicit or explicit recognition for the activities that they organised. Teachers in the second group perceived students' positive comments on a successful lesson or a lesson that they enjoyed (e.g., a multimedia lesson) as recognition, which moved them to try to adopt more innovative teaching approaches. Such motivation indicates the power of students' perspectives of a teacher, and that power impacts on a teacher's doing, for students are the best critics of a teacher's performance.

#### *Inspection*

The inspection of teachers with 4–10 years of teaching experience is conducted for stabilisation purposes. That said, the inspector judges whether a teacher deserves to gain stability status because s/he is a competent teacher or not, and no mark is given to the inspected teacher by the inspector. In terms of inspection for stabilisation, teachers fall into one of two groups: 1) teach-

ers who gain a strong sense of efficacy and effectiveness while looking to earn stability status; and 2) teachers who see that kind of inspection as unnecessary, since they pass exams at the Pedagogical Institute prior to the initiation of the inspection process. Underpinning those teachers' perceptions of inspection might be the stress of being observed teaching or the stress of doing (more) teaching preparation for each class daily.

Teachers' positive expectancies for stabilisation in the first group provide them with the power to sustain their engagement, cope with the heavy workload, and search for new teaching practices. Inspection for stabilisation serves as a motivator for them to work harder with their students, and it further helps to consolidate their identity. Seven teachers criticised the inspection system, as it does not allow them to earn a mark; therefore, these teachers indicated that this practice delays their advancement. If compared to other employees of the public sector with regard to promotion, teachers usually start climbing the advancement ladder a lot later than those others, and this is unfair. The stabilisation period in Huberman's (1993) study outlines that teachers in this phase are able to feel independent and experience a sense of belonging with a group of colleagues, which suggests that they can start moving towards advancement in this phase.

Teachers in the second group regard inspection for stabilisation as a stressor that adds to their already heavy workload; this is related to the periods that they teach. There are teachers that teach for 24 periods per week until they have completed eight years of teaching, and those that teach for 22 hours when their teaching experience ranges from 9–16 years.

#### *Personal life*

The participants' justifications of 'personal life' as a motivator helped to classify teachers with 4–10 years of teaching into one of two groups: 1) those teachers who associated the positive feelings they had during that time with having realised that they have a 'steady job' and 'financial security'—such feelings contributed to their good psychological health, which consolidated their sense of identity and their motivation to teach; and 2) teachers who associated their positivity with their personal status. Some teachers said that they got married during that phase, and that the period before and after starting a family provided them with lots of energy, which they used to better prepare their lessons, and to become involved in innovative projects and activities, in which they engaged a mix of talented students.

#### *Experience*

The participants reached a consensus that by the end of this phase, teachers are experienced enough to effectively teach and face any problems with student discipline; they are also able to develop good relations with their students. Six teachers said that although they had been teaching in private institutes before being appointed in the public sector, they needed 6–7 years of teaching in public schools to perceive themselves as experienced enough to successfully deal with three situations: 1) imparting knowledge to their students with effectiveness; 2) feeling strong enough to diversify their methods and risk doing things differently in the classroom; and 3) being trusted as effective teachers by their students.

#### **Professional life phase 11–20 years: Increased sense of identity**

This professional life phase constitutes the mid-career phase, which is the phase to which the participant teachers belong; this establishes the mid-career phase as the focused phase of the current study. The reason underpinning why mid-career teachers were selected as the sample teachers in my study is a personal conceptualisation, as teachers with 11–20 years of teaching

experience tend to be vulnerable to feelings of apathy; I was interested in the factors that would serve as motivators for these individuals. The characteristics of teachers with 8–15 years teaching experience (Day et al., 2007) were rated as similar to the characteristics of Cypriot mid-career teachers with respect to transitions, work–life tensions, and expectancy trajectories for advancement.

In the mid-career phase, teachers are normally classroom-based and seek to gain career advancement with increased efficacy and job commitment. In a few cases, depending on the subject that they teach, there may be teachers who earn a promotion when they are in their late mid-career phase, whereas in the 8–15-year phase of Day et al.'s (2007) study, many teachers hold leadership or managerial roles and look for further promotion. Cypriot teachers begin being inspected for evaluation at the start of the mid-career phase, during their eleventh year of teaching. Inspection for evaluation is the reason why mid-career teachers tend to take additional responsibilities in the school workplace (e.g., they organise extracurricular activities) because extended engagement in activities is a criterion that headteachers take into serious consideration when they write a teacher's report. Headteachers write a report for a teacher who undergoes inspection, and that report is sent to the inspector. This practice illustrates the role that headteachers hold in terms of influencing the inspector about what mark to assign to the teacher. The participant mid-career teachers reported that recognition, inspection, personal life, and experience were strong motivators in their current phase, so strong as to lead many of them to experience a peak in their motivation in this phase.

#### *Recognition*

Recognition was perceived by the 12 participant teachers and six headteachers as the key to teacher motivation because it serves as a tool that urges them to create (more) effective lessons and activities, to confirm that they are doing a job that 'fits' them, and therefore to eradicate any doubts that they might have about their career choice. Mid-career teachers seek recognition from their headteachers, colleagues, students, and students' parents.

Recognition from the headteacher is received by mid-career teachers in the form of praise, and it is associated with three characteristics: appreciation, trust, and evaluation. Headteachers' appreciation was conceived by teachers as a sign of respect, encouragement, and positive feedback. The teachers perceived their headteachers' recognition as a token of trust in their ability to teach, organise extracurricular activities, and take on additional responsibilities related to school activities. The other elements that teachers perceived as evidence of trust in their teaching efficacy was being chosen by the headteacher to teach senior classes, and to teach those subjects that students take during university entrance exams. All teachers considered it a token of trust in their abilities when headteachers either approved of their initiative to organise activities or assigned them the responsibility to lead an activity that promotes the school's prestige.

Teachers expressed their need for recognition from their colleagues, which could take the form of positive feedback on an activity that they organised; this shows that teachers highly value their colleagues' opinions. Mid-career teachers also need to gain recognition from their students and the students' parents. Recognition from students was reportedly demonstrated through students' active interest and participation in the lesson, and through explicit words of thankfulness. Recognition from the students' parents could be received by teachers in the form of praise for the knowledge that they impart on children. Students' parents' praise served as a tool that provided teachers with psychological support. Emergent from expressions of appreciation, such support contributes to teachers' feeling and believing that they matter and that they are trusted. Feeling trusted by parents, teachers may put even greater effort into their work with students, and thus contribute to the eradication of the phenomenon of the 'second school' that persists in the societal context of Cyprus. The 'second school' is a term widely used for the extra classes

that lyceum students attend in the afternoon. These are lessons that prepare students for the Pancyprian examinations<sup>4</sup> in order to enter university; they are the same as the lessons provided to them in the morning.

#### *Inspection*

Teachers are initially inspected for evaluation in their eleventh year of teaching and they earn their first mark then. They undergo these types of inspections every two years. Expectant trajectories for high marks that would speed their advancement had a strong motivating influence over teachers. 'Being mostly interested in evaluation, the teacher puts hard effort into his/her classroom work and maximises his/her abilities' said a teacher. These expected trajectories for promotion are facilitative in dividing mid-career teachers into one of two groups: 1) teachers with increased motivation for advancement; and 2) teachers with sustained and growing motivation.

Teachers in the first group invest high levels of effort to achieve high-standard teaching performances when the inspector comes into their class to observe them (twice in the year that they undergo inspection). They may also take responsibility for a variety of school-related activities during their evaluation year. Teachers in the second group reportedly had high motivation levels from the time of career entry, and given that they always find interest in their job, these motivation levels were attributed by the research participants to their 'love for the job', 'commitment', 'balance of personal and professional life', and 'experience'. Love for teaching goes hand in hand with good pedagogy and good teaching, which embodies the strength to love (Harris, 2007).

When examining mid-career teachers with 18–20 years of teaching experience, the research participants reported three different types of mid-career teachers: 1) those who receive a positive evaluation and are able to sustain their motivation; 2) those who receive a positive evaluation, but their motivation level is beginning to fall; and 3) those who receive a negative evaluation and start to become demotivated.

#### *Personal life*

Mid-career teachers' personal lives were related to their struggles with balancing their work and life in either a positive or negative way. Teachers are negatively affected if they are 'struggling' with this process, and they are positively affected if they have overcome that 'struggle'. Teachers who go through that 'struggle' try hard to balance the demands of their family role with those of their teaching role, because a balance between their work and life enables them to impart knowledge to their students more effectively, and to establish interpersonal relationships with them.

Health and family are the two components of personal life. Health was reported as a positive influence associated with two characteristics: mid-career teachers' age (40–50 years of age), which was described as 'young'; and their feelings of psychological safety, emerging from their sense of family or work stability. Family was discussed by the participant teachers as a positive influence to their motivation when they were happy in their families, and as a negative influence when leading unhappy family lives, for worries in personal life easily bound up with problems in the working place (Day and Gu, 2010).

#### *Experience*

As a motivator, experience was reported as a means that enabled teachers to increase their efficacy, develop collegiality with their colleagues, and build a rapport with their students. The increase in teacher efficacy was linked to three characteristics that emerged from experience:

feelings of confidence; the ability to transfer knowledge effectively; and the desire to take additional responsibilities. Increased teacher efficacy with more self-confidence was associated with experienced teachers' right to choose the subjects to teach. Feelings of confidence were further attributed to mid-career teachers' status of permanence, and were said to move teachers towards taking additional responsibilities (e.g., engaging in and/or organising school activities and projects), achieved through teachers' collegiality. Staff collegiality was reported as a factor that enables teachers to improve their teaching 'selves' through informal professional development, which promotes communication through an exchange of ideas and practices. Experience was reported as a means of moving teachers to develop a rapport with their students, for teachers are more willing to serve students' needs, demonstrate understanding to their problems, and they can manage their time in a way that allows them to teach and build relationships with their students. Experience seems to act as a tool facilitative of teachers' care for students. Communicating care, teachers can help students understand and more easily work with and master the intricate dynamics of a learning situation, because care enables students to relax some or any perceptions over teachers' rigidity. Teachers should practice Nodding's (1984) 'ethical care' and put their students' needs above their own needs, and they should exhibit Delors' and Boykin's (1994) 'caritative' care, and act out of love and compassion, and provoke a participative presence in the students' experiences. By being ethically and caritatively caring, the teacher has to keep his/her own problems sunken and be empathic to students' problems so as to offer his/her undivided attention to their students.

### **Professional life phase 21–27 years: Promotion and deciding the direction of professional identity**

In the career phase of 21–27 years, there are two groups of teachers: classroom-based teachers, and teachers with leadership roles (e.g., assistant headteachers and headteachers). Classroom-based teachers may or may not be looking forward to being promoted to assistant headteachers. Similarly, assistant headteachers might have further expected trajectories for advancement, and they anticipate being inspected for evaluation or have no further expectations.

#### *Recognition*

These teachers' need for recognition could result from their sustained strong sense of commitment and from their ability to hold on, which could halt a declining sense of motivation. Classroom-based teachers seek recognition for the work they do with students in the classroom, whereas assistant headteachers need to be recognised for the work they do as administrators from their leadership position. When they are praised by the headteacher for the work they do, they feel their professional image is reinforced.

#### *Inspection*

Concerning inspection for evaluation, teachers with 21–27 years of teaching experience may fall into one of two groups: 1) those looking forward to being inspected because of their own high expectations for (further) advancement; and 2) those with low or no expectations for promotion. These teachers hold one of two perspectives: either they do not value advancement (and subsequently criticise the promotion system, stating that it relies on seniority and high marks) or if they have already earned a leadership post, they show no interest in further advancement.

*Personal life*

Many teachers' personal lives during this phase are riddled with health problems and family responsibilities, which may lead to a decline in their overall motivation. Three participant headteachers stated that in this phase, they had faced health problems (e.g., constant headaches, backaches, arthritis, high blood pressure). The other three headteachers talked about family responsibilities, such as more economical responsibilities, and a greater need to psychologically support their children who were studying at the university at that time. Both health problems and family obligations were cited as factors that reduced their motivation to teach.

*Experience*

Length of experience either enables these teachers to sustain their motivation, thus allowing them to hold on to their careers because they feel that they are effective at their job, or it contributes to a loss in motivation due to increased fatigue associated with the length of their experience. The teachers who lose their motivation consequently fail to develop staff collegiality or their ability to establish a rapport with their students, and consequently colleagues and students have to bear the brunt of their non-motivational and unprofessional stance towards their job.

**Professional life phase 28–30 years: Promotion – coping with identity change with increased confidence**

In the career phase of 28–30 years, there are teachers with leadership roles who have additional expected trajectories for advancement and anticipate being inspected for evaluation. There are also teachers, assistant headteachers, or headteachers with no (further) expectations because they are tired, feeling trapped, and are looking to retire, albeit with declining motivation.

*Recognition*

Recognition could serve as a deterrent to teachers' declining motivation and feelings of being tired and trapped. Three headteachers attributed their leadership roles to being recognised as good teachers by their inspectors, and they consequently want to sustain the inspector's recognition. All of the participant headteachers stated that what they are most concerned about is gaining the recognition of those in the Ministry of education (e.g. the General inspector of secondary education, the inspectors) for being effective leaders, whose schools achieve high student learning outcomes and do not face problems associated with student misbehaviour. That said, headteachers appear to show special interest in transmitting to the world outside (e.g., Ministry of Education) an image of a school where things and situations are beautified rather than presented as they actually are.

*Inspection*

The participant teachers' perceptions of inspection for their evaluation divide teachers with 28–30 years of teaching experience into one of two groups: 1) those teachers with leadership roles that are still interested in further advancement (in this context, inspection serves as a means of reassurance or as a way to remove any doubts about their ability to work effectively); and 2) those teachers who will retire without getting a promotion and who will leave the job unhappily. The teachers in the second group are linked to factors such as declining motivation, feeling



tired and trapped, and looking to retire. Some mid-career teachers reported a sense of disillusionment; this was stated by teachers with 28–30 years of teaching experience. The following examples are typical of what teachers in the last professional life phase said to mid-career teachers: 'I have no more energy to invest in school. You, the younger teachers should do the work', 'I can't struggle to learn new teaching-techniques now. You can make the difference', and 'It is a job that tears you down, it is soul destroying'. The implication of these statements is that motivation takes a tumble for some teachers after some years of teaching, and those teachers' work with students becomes unemotional and may hamper students' capacity for learning and emotional development.

#### *Personal life*

Being affected by age and responsibilities, health, and family – which are typical features of these teachers' personal lives – contribute to these teachers' declining motivation and expectations of an imminent retirement. Three participant headteachers were going through this phase at the time of the interview; two of them said that they had already started planning the activities that they would do after retirement. The third headteacher, however, stated that she had never lost enthusiasm for her job and that her enthusiasm would remain high until the day she retired. Teachers who sustain their high motivation levels contribute to the development of their schools as 'powerhouses of emotion', where they actually engage with learning, with others and their values, and they experience all kinds of positive feelings in the school workplace (Harris, 2007).

#### *Experience*

Experience seems like a factor that would sustain the motivation of teachers who hold leadership roles, but it does not seem to have the power to halt the decline in motivation among teachers who have not earned a promotion. In terms of experience, teachers with 28–30 years of teaching experience may fall into one of the following three groups: 1) experienced teachers with leadership roles who are motivated to work hard for their school, thanks to their love of their teaching job; 2) experienced teachers with leadership roles who are looking to retire because they do not have any further expectations or goals they would like to achieve; and 3) experienced teachers with no leadership roles who have become static teachers, systematically avoiding preparing their lessons and looking forward to retirement because they feel tired and trapped.

### **Discussion**

The key factors that may cause a teacher's motivation levels to rise, as reported by the participant teachers and headteachers, are recognition, inspection, personal life, and experience. However, these motivators may also act as demotivators—factors that cause teachers' motivation levels to diminish; this constitutes the focus of this discussion. Though excavated from the understandings, feelings and insights of the participant headteachers and mid-career teachers, the issues discussed in this section should be considered as sources of secondary teachers' demotivation. These issues are identified as restrictions to recognition, limits to inspection, problems in personal life, and confines to experience.

#### *Restrictions to recognition*

The participant teachers attributed their perceived lack of recognition from the headteacher to three trends: 1) the headteacher's propensity for highlighting teachers' mistakes; 2) the head-

teacher's antipathy and/or indifference; and 3) the headteacher's exclusion of certain teachers from engaging in activities. The headteacher's tendency to emphasise teachers' mistakes, rather than praise their successes, was reported by the participant teachers as embedded within the Cypriot culture. The headteacher's feelings of antipathy towards some teachers were said to have originated from his/her political ideologies. By 'indifference', the participant teachers meant that some headteachers do not refer to a teacher as a holder of a postgraduate degree in the evaluation report that they write for teachers in the year that they undergo inspection. All participant teachers talked about teacher exclusion as a sign of favouritism, which relies on the headteacher's own perception of teachers' professional competence (Evans, 1999).

For their part, headteachers stated that teachers lack consistency of action; they seek to engage in or initiate activities during the year that they are inspected, but headteachers are clever enough to see who engages in activities consistently every school year, and who regards involvement in activities as a means through which to speed their advancement.

A restriction to gaining recognition from colleagues is antagonism, which flourishes among teachers of the same subject once they have started being inspected for evaluation. Being strong enough to isolate teachers, antagonism may become a source of stress (Hoy and Spero, 2005; Zembylas, 2003). Students' indifference, reported as a sign of disrespect and that might be an outcome of their upbringing, is also rated as a restriction. Further, students' parents' disrespect is evident in their criticism of teachers' high salaries and long holidays. Such criticism may affect teachers' enthusiasm to invest (more) energy into their classroom work or their activity in the school workplace in an adverse way.

#### *Limits to inspection*

The issues that arise as limits to teachers' motivation refer to three characteristics related to inspection: evaluation that is conducted by a single inspector; seniority, which acts as a determinant of promotion; and teacher antagonism as it relates to advancement. Being a centralised entity conducted by a single inspector, inspection for evaluation could lead teachers to feel a sense of doubt as to whether or not they are evaluated fairly. Such doubts which may imply the inspector's inability to properly judge a teaching performance corroborate Learmonth's (2000) view that inspectors might be unhelpful, and unsuitably trained. Seniority, which the system has posited as a key determinant of a teacher's advancement, assigns a privilege to the older teachers with regard to choosing what classes to teach, and causes feelings of resentment to the younger teachers. Teachers' antagonism is associated with Nias's (1989) view on 'rivalry' and serves as an indicator of teachers' struggle to be promoted earlier than those similar to them in terms of experience and training. Such a struggle indicates the teachers' level of distrust in the inspector, and it casts those teachers who are responsible for employing politicians or friends to intervene for the sake of their advancement.

#### *Problems in personal life*

Mid-career teachers' families may jeopardise their motivation when their family situation is perceived as a source of unhappiness. A balance between personal and professional life, as well as having headteachers who exhibit individual consideration towards teachers, could deter potential teacher stagnation that emerges from family problems.

#### *Confines to experience*

What may serve as a confining factor to teachers' experience is that some headteachers hold personal judgments that some teachers are not strong enough to teach senior classes. Such judg-

ments may lead headteachers to assign senior classes to teachers with few years of teaching experience—a practice that contributes to the decrease in experienced teachers' efficacy.

### Conclusion

This paper has discussed the professional life phases that secondary school teachers working in the public sector in Cyprus go through during their teaching career and revealed four strong influential factors that impact on those teachers throughout their professional life. Derived from empirical data, these motivators: recognition; inspection; personal life; and experience, are presented in accordance with two other factors, namely teachers' characteristics, as these emerged from the existing literature; and policies across the career phases (early-, mid-, and late-career phases). All three perspectives are displayed in Diagram 2 (p.14). Each career phase has similar influences on teacher motivation, although these influences may interact at different times and in different contexts, and their interaction may affect teachers' professional identity differently. Presenting Cypriot secondary school teachers' professional life phases and the influences underlying their motivation, this paper embodies some strengths and weaknesses. The key strength of this article resides in two characteristics. First, it divides a secondary school teacher's life into professional life phases embodied in career phases, and adds a new perspective to the existing literature on teachers' professional life and career phases, which may offer insights into another education system. Second, it uncovers those teachers' strong motivators, and adds fresh new insights to the social reality of teacher motivation, which is a neglected area of study at the national level. Having the power to influence teachers' motivation across all phases, teachers' motivators shed light on the following attributes: 1) educational policies: inspection, evaluation, transition; 2) expected trajectories: promotion; 3) intrinsic needs: recognition, efficacy, identity; 4) situational factors: experience, leadership, workload, engagement; and 5) personal responsibilities and problems.

Another strength of this paper is that it provides ground for criticality on implications for leadership practices which cast teachers, headteachers and policymakers responsible for influencing teacher motivation, which can be enhanced at the level of the school and the educational system. Teachers are responsible for inculcating behaviours and actions that could motivate them and their students. Headteachers are responsible for demonstrating attitudes and acts that motivate teachers, and policymakers should take responsibility for implementing changes to the system that would support sound leadership practices while enhancing teachers' motivation.

The weaknesses of this paper revolve around four issues: the four motivators; the 28–30-year life phase, the research settings; and the research data. First, the four motivators (recognition, inspection, personal life, and experience) are discussed in relation to the professional life phases that teachers traverse throughout their career. Yet these motivators are also associated with four 'needs motivators': satisfaction, collaboration, fairness, and decision-making, which were uncovered as factors influencing teacher motivation in my research study on mid-career teacher motivation (Konstantinides-Vladimirou, 2013). Having ranked the motivators as embodying a stronger influence on teacher motivation than the 'needs motivators', and having felt the need to explicitly make a differentiation between the two (motivators and needs motivators), I identified the motivators (recognition, inspection, personal life, and experience) as 'moderators' in that study. The interaction of 'moderators' and 'needs motivators' obliged their co-existence in teachers' professional contexts, and the need for such co-existence yielded a model that provides an elucidatory picture of what motivates mid-career teachers to be active in their working places. However, that model which is called 'the butterfly moderator model' and is illustrated below (on the following page), is not discussed in this paper, for its aim was to present the professional life phases of Cypriot secondary school teachers and discuss the influences underlying their motivation. The reason why the model takes the shape of a butterfly is that a butterfly

symbolises growth, and the model represents the factors that could motivate mid-career teachers to achieve growth.

Second, the changing policy of extending the retirement age of teachers from 60 to 65 affects the life phase of 28–30 years of teaching experience, and indicates the need for formulating this phase as 28–30+ professional life phase.

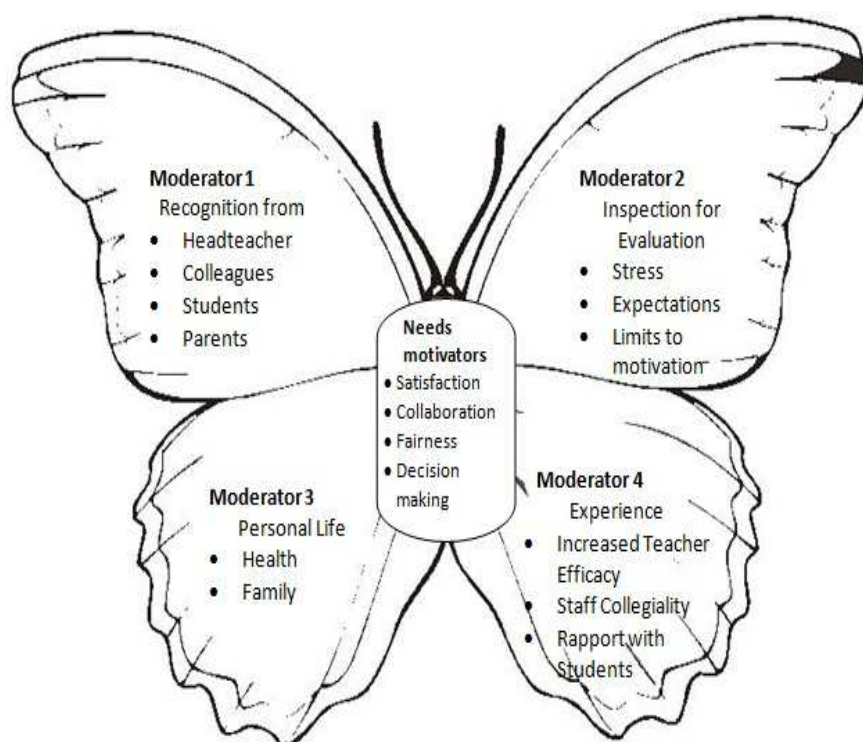


Figure 1: The butterfly moderator model

It might be a weakness that the perspectives of mid-career teachers and headteachers, working in the lyciums of two urban settings: Limassol and Paphos, were used to generalise about the views of Cypriot secondary school teachers, but owing to the transfer of teachers, the number of teachers in each school is usually representative of teachers from all four towns in Cyprus (Lefkosia, Larnaca, Limassol, Paphos).

Further, this paper presents and discusses the perspectives of two data sets though there was another data set made up of 38 students (aged 16-18) who were attending the six lyciums (6-7 students from each lyceum), where the participant teachers and headteachers were working at the time of the research. Although the essence of those students' perspectives reaches a consensus with the essence of the perspectives of the participant teachers and headteachers as regards the four motivators or 'moderators', their explicit views, which constitute qualitative data collected through the research method of focus group, were left out from this paper due to the restriction posed by the word limit of the paper. Yet the students' views on teachers' motivators are both interesting and critical, which suggests the need for their discussion in a future paper. This article may also suggest the need for the discussion of Cypriot secondary school teachers' 'needs motivators' in a future paper where the butterfly moderator model will be fully explained.

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