

# Materials and Teaching in the National English Program in Basic Education: Teachers' Perspectives<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This article reports the results of a small-scale qualitative study concerning the teachers' perspectives of didactic material used in the NEPBE/PNIEB program, in central Mexico. Twenty-four teachers working in different contexts and levels of elementary schools at PNIEB were interviewed. The data revealed that didactic material is an area that needs to be addressed because the books used should be more in alignment with the content and the objectives of the program. Furthermore, administrative problems threaten the stability of the program and create conflicts for teachers and students. Nevertheless, the teachers solve these problems with creativity and enthusiasm due to their professionalism and dedication.

## Resumen

En este artículo se reportan los resultados de un estudio cualitativo a pequeña escala, sobre las perspectivas de los maestros acerca del material didáctico usado en el PNIEB, en el centro de la República Mexicana. Se entrevistó a 24 maestros que trabajan en diferentes contextos y niveles de escuelas primarias del NEPBE/PNIEB. Los datos revelan que el material didáctico es un área que necesita ser atendida pues los libros que se usan deben estar más alineados al contenido y a los objetivos del programa. Aunado a ello, los problemas administrativos ponen en riesgo la continuidad del programa y crea conflictos para maestros y alumnos. Pese a todo, los profesores resuelven los problemas con creatividad y entusiasmo debido a su profesionalismo y dedicación.

## Introduction

Examples of didactic material are textbooks, visuals, technology or any other supplementary materials, either authentic or specifically designed for educational reasons. This material is an important aspect for teachers to consider when planning and teaching. This article explores how NEPBE/PNIEB (National English Program in Basic Education/Programa Nacional de Inglés en Educación Básica) teachers approach the use and development of didactic material during the processes of planning and teaching English as a foreign language at the levels of preschool and primary school in central Mexico. This small-scale research project uses a qualitative research approach based on the voices of 24 NEPBE teachers in the State of Guanajuato and their experiences on using didactic material. The data comes from semi-structured interviews of the teachers from a variety of contexts in both urban and agricultural areas. The participants are students in either a BA in TESOL at the University of Guanajuato or the ICALT (In-Service Certificate of English Language Teaching) from the University of Cambridge, also offered at our university. This article focuses on teachers' perspectives and experiences of their use of didactic material in the national program.

## The NEPBE

Before addressing the issues related to didactic material, it is important to look at the NEPBE program to better understand its foundations, history and objectives. For many years, the first contact with English in the Mexican public school system was at secondary level. A number of programs have been initiated in different parts of Mexico. Enciclomedia was a program which

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started in 2003 with subjects such as Mathematics, Science and Spanish (ELLIS-SEP-ILCE, 2006), yet, it was not until 2007 that English was incorporated into this program in Guanajuato. Other programs included giving extracurricular English classes before or after regular classes, financed by the school and/or the parents.

The NEPBE program states that English is required for a better future of Mexican children, in order to meet their educational needs nationally and internationally in three phases from 2009 to 2012. According to this program, English is offered as an extracurricular class such as "sports, arts, culture and languages" (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2011, p.53) using social practices ("patterns or ways of interaction"; *ibid*, p. 68) and competencies of the language. Another part of the program is the role that didactic materials play, as expressed in the following extract:

*Teaching materials play a highly significant role in this program. As it can be inferred from the characteristics and definition of the components in the English syllabuses, the quality and types of materials that the students will use – printed or multimedia – influence greatly on their learning of English. (ibid, p. 88)*

A key phrase in the quote above is "quality and types of materials". Then, the next excerpt continues explaining:

*...texts and materials should be authentic, for instance, commercial labels, letters, dialogues, instructions, rhymes, etc. However, it is also true that teachers do not have frequent access to these English language materials or texts. Nonetheless, it is of paramount importance for those – particularly the spoken and written texts – designed for teaching, to reflect the characteristics of those used in real life, that is, they have a clear social and communicative purpose, a context, and respond to authentic language models. (ibid, p.88)*

In order to overcome the possible lack of authentic material, authentic tasks are vital when planning classes in the NEPBE. Other materials to be used are information and communication technologies (ITC), which include computers, radio, TV and video. Each context will determine whether this is feasible. After having provided a small section on the NEPBE program, we will now discuss the didactic material that is used in this program.

### **Didactic Material**

While planning a class, a teacher often considers what didactic material can be used to help with executing the class and achieving the objectives. For primary school teachers, this didactic material may be the textbook, workbook, flashcards, storybook, recorded songs, photocopies, posters, visuals, board games, or realia. Additionally, the use of information technologies, as mentioned in the NEPBE program, is suggested. The use of interactive smart boards may be available for some teachers in Mexico due to the implementation of the previous *Enciclomedia* program. Still, another option is the material that teachers create or adapt on their own for their classes. A teacher may not have any material at hand and the teacher decides to create his or her own material to meet the needs of the students. Another reason may be that a teacher believes that the material provided is not appropriate or attractive and a solution for this is to produce material. Didactic material may be a complement to teaching because it provides variety, creativity and visual stimulus. When selecting didactic material, Cunningsworth (1984) suggests:

*It is very important that the teaching materials used should take the learner forward as directly as possible towards his [or her] objectives. The objectives should be decided first, in line with the overall aim of the teaching programme, and then materials should be sought which can be related to these objectives. The aims of a teaching programme should determine the course materials to be used and not vice-versa. (p. 3)*

In the above, the objective is paramount when deciding on didactic material. From the above, we can say there is a direct relationship between the teaching program, the objective and the

didactic material. The aim of didactic material is also to help the teacher “bring the real world into the essentially artificial classroom situation and thus to relate the language items he is teaching to actual usage” (Ellis & Tomlinson, 1980, p. 301).

When discussing about material, Cunningsworth (1984) mentions that textbooks are perhaps what teachers rely on most when planning their classes, but at the same time, he gives the following advice on the use of textbooks:

*Textbooks are only an aid to the language-learning process, which also depends upon individuals, their needs and their relationship in the classroom. Teachers and students find their own ways of using textbooks to suit these circumstances, and to suit their own methods of learning. (p. 8)*

Thus, textbooks are an addition to be considered by the teacher and not the basis of the teaching itself.

Regarding materials for young learners, Ghosn (2013) mentions a number of aspects that should be considered when selecting these types of material. She points out that they should be attractive and appropriate for the learners, incorporate the four skills, be sensitive to the learners’ cultural context, and take into consideration the lives of the learners and their variety of levels of proficiency. For young learners, teachers need to consider the age, developmental and cognitive stages, level of language, the status of literacy in L1 and L2, learning context, motivation and interests. Concerning the language used, Ghosn (ibid) points out that the didactic material should have a number of aspects such as “meaningful and logical discourse”, a “volume and repetition of language input and output”, social interaction, scaffolding and activities that promote students’ linguistic development (p. 65). Thus, it can be observed how complex the process of planning and selecting material for children is.

On the same subject, the study on *Early Language Learning in Europe* (ELLiE) reports what has been found concerning young learners’ preferences for classroom activities. Enever (2011) points out that young learners favored games, learning new words and singing.

In this section, we have looked at examples of didactic material, reasons to use it, what one should consider when selecting it and what activities young learners prefer. In the next section, we present the research questions and the methodology used for this project.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions that guided us during this investigation were the following:

- What are the perspectives of didactic material of teachers who work in the NEPBE program?
- Do the teachers have any problems concerning their use of didactic material? If so, how do the teachers solve these problems?

### **Methodology**

This research was carried out using a qualitative approach because we are looking at teachers’ perspectives and their opinions concerning the didactic material used within the NEPBE program. Richards (2003) states that qualitative research aims to “study human actors in natural settings, in the context of their ordinary, everyday world” and “seek to understand the meanings and significance of these actions from the perspectives of those involved” (p. 10). In this study, we focus specifically on NEPBE teachers -the social actors- in their schools and what their perspectives are concerning the use of didactic material. Richards (2003) also points out that a reason to use qualitative research is that it provides “a person-centred enterprise and therefore particularly appropriate for our work in the field of language teaching” (p. 9).

## Techniques

In this research, we decided to use interviews, specifically semi-structured, as the main technique for gathering the teachers' perspectives. These participants were our students in two programs: the BA TESOL and the ICELT run by our university's Language Department. The interview questions (see Appendix 1) were sent via e-mail to the participants before the interview as a way to have them think about their perspectives before the interview.

For the interviews, the participants had the choice to decide between Spanish or English when answering the questions. Each interview was carried out by two of the researchers. All interviews were audio taped and later transcribed by one of the researchers.

## Participants

In total there were 24 teachers, nine men and fifteen women, who participated in this research. All were practicing NEPBE teachers in a variety of contexts in the State of Guanajuato. They had worked from six months to two years as NEPBE teachers and from two years to five years as EFL teachers at different institutions. The large majority of the participants were beginning teachers (twenty teachers with less than two years of experience). The other four have three to five years of teaching experience. The average age of the teachers was 24 years old; the oldest was forty years old and the youngest 22 years old. For more than half this program was their first job. Twenty of the participants are studying their BA in TESOL and the other four are taking the ICELT. Concerning the teachers' contexts, they worked in a variety of different settings such as rural agricultural towns (nine teachers), small cities (eight teachers), a large industrial city (seven teachers), as well as in diverse levels of preschool (four) and primary (twenty). These participants usually juggle two jobs as EFL teachers and a few have three jobs. All teachers study on the weekends in Guanajuato. The teachers were invited to participate in the research and when they accepted, they were given a consent form to sign.

Once the interviews were transcribed, the researchers read through the interviews a number of times, looking for "units of meaning" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). These units of meaning were compared to each other, looking for similarities and differences using Maykut and Morehouse's (1994) constant comparative method. Once finished, the researchers assigned the units of meaning themes that were eventually agreed upon and filtered. Three themes emerged and will be presented in the next section as well as the analysis.

## Findings

After analyzing the data, the three emerging themes are: 1) Textbooks; 2) Administrative Problems; and 3) Resolving Problems Related to Didactic Material.

### *Textbooks*

Of the 24 participants 21 expressed displeasure with the book they were using in the NEPBE program in the interviews. This did not seem surprising to the researchers because the participants were our students and for many months before this research the students would voice opinions about the various problems they had with the program and the textbooks in our classes when discussing academic issues. This was our motivation to research this area more formally. According to the NEPBE program, the general purpose is to teach students the social practices of the language in order to satisfy their communication needs and to develop a series of learning strategies with a product as a final step. The following excerpts show the opinions of the general consent of the participants concerning their perspectives of their textbooks in relationship to the national program.

*Teacher 7: You use, for example if the book has three, four activities... you use two because the other one has nothing to do with the syllabus.*

*Teacher 1: We have a textbook but the content is not always the same as the program; there are some things that are not included. We use what is useful and then we invent or create materials.*

*Teacher 8: Sometimes you can't use the book because it does not follow the program or the syllabus. So it's useless sometimes.*

Most participants had to adapt the use of the textbooks because they felt they were not in complete alignment with the program. The following is another teachers' perspective of how the textbook was at a higher level of the children.

*Teacher 13: I remember the book they had last semester, the kids didn't even want to use it because it was very complicated.*

For beginning teachers, the task of planning a lesson and teaching becomes difficult if the textbook is not in complete agreement with the program. Some books are more in line with the official program, while others seem to be more advanced, or the sequence of the units creates confusion for the teacher. Based on the teachers' perspectives, it seems that the textbooks should be carefully planned to meet program objectives and needs of the students in different contexts.

#### *Administrative Problems*

During the interviews, the teachers brought up a number of problems concerning the use of didactic material and administration. In this section these problems are presented under two sub-headings: 1) Lack of Financial Aid for Supplementary Materials, and 2) Lack of Administrative Support for the Teachers.

#### *Lack of Financial Aid for Supplementary Materials*

The majority of the teachers said that, although the school year started in August, they did not receive the complete book sets until the end of January. Some had the teacher's book, but the students did not have their book, or vice versa. Some had a different book than what the students had or perhaps they were missing the audio recording. The problem seemed to be the lack of consistency in what materials were given to the teachers and students in the different contexts. The following scenarios show these inconsistencies:

*Teacher 17: The thing is that there are different publishers for the books. A co-worker got all the books for the children and they were complete and from the same publisher, however the teacher's book he got was from a different publisher.*

*Teacher 16: Another problem is that since there are not enough books for every grade, they mix two different kinds of books and give them to the same grade. Some of my students' books are missing pages. The students ask me: "Teacher, why don't I have twenty pages?"*

*Teacher 21: We received a CD, but in one of my groups I didn't receive the teacher's pack and the teacher's book, so I don't have the audio to play and the majority of the activities in the book have audio and another problem is that there are no CD players in the class. In one school I have completely nothing and in the other school there is one but for two teachers... it's difficult.*

The data showed differences in what teachers and students received as textbooks as well as with the materials that accompanied them. Within these differences there are inconsistencies or con-

traditions, which may be confusing for both the teachers and students during the teaching and learning processes.

Another problem is the late arrival of the books and materials. Teachers repeatedly stated that they were waiting for the books to come, often as long as six months. In fact, one teacher (Teacher 8) said: "I did not have a textbook for two years". The teachers below spoke of the delays they encountered and their consequences, along with the decisions they are forced to make.

*Teacher 4: The textbook just arrived, but I do not have the teacher's book. So there are listening exercises that I cannot use in class because I do not have the CD. When students see that there is an icon of a CD in their book, they ask me to play the CD, and they ask me to burn it. They also ask me to buy some speakers.*

*Teacher 3: The books just arrived in January, but I don't have the teacher's book, so they are listening exercises that I cannot use. How can I use them if I don't have the CD?*

Again, inconsistencies in the materials coupled with the late arrival of textbooks and materials can be frustrating for teachers when deciding how to plan classes.

For the most part, teachers did not have all of the textbooks in class and because of this they felt the need to find other materials or create their own materials. This may be a survival instinct of the teachers to come up with material when they are planning their lessons due to the limited published materials given to them. So, the teachers created their materials but they needed money for photocopies or other materials such as colored paper, markers, etc. In the following excerpts we can see how the participants express their concern about this:

*Teacher 15: I have to pay for my copies and look for the cheapest ones, and I have to save some money making my own pictures.*

*Teacher 7: I pay for the copies sometimes. Well, most all of the time I have to pay for the copies.*

In addition to copies, the teachers sometimes needed to use the Internet or a CD player in the classroom. Again we can observe problems that arise in the following extracts:

*Teacher 21: In one school there is a photocopy machine and in the other school there is not, and there is no Internet either. Well there is Internet, but only on one computer but the principal is always using it.*

*Teacher 13: In the school there weren't any CD players, or posters. The other teachers and I bring our own material. Actually I bought myself a CD player for this reason because they didn't have any and I said I need it and that's why...I saved a little money and I bought a CD player to use in class. The other teachers do the same.*

According to what the teachers said, it seems that some of them are not given enough support in terms of extra materials such as a CD player for English classes. The absence of a CD player is an additional problem for the teachers. These problems do not help a teacher to plan his or her teaching and because of them the teacher must make decisions as to what to do.

Concerning support from the teachers' schools, we look at those teachers who received support and what support they got in the next statements:

*Teacher 2: My school supports me by giving me some materials, such as cardboard, markers, glue, and paper.*

*Teacher 11: The school asks the parents for markers, colors, pencils, and erasers.*

*Teacher 22: [To pay or not for material]...depends on the school. Well in kindergarten I had the opportunity to make as many copies as I needed, but in the other school I could not.*

Now, we include comments from the teachers who did not receive any support in the next excerpts:

*Teacher 9: We are not allowed to ask for anything or for money.*

*Teacher 20: We have to buy our own [material] even though once they gave me some posters that weren't very useful.*

Repeatedly, the teachers mentioned that they created their own materials, which consisted of flash cards, visuals, memory games, bingo games, printed copies from the Internet, or cutouts from magazines. The teachers spent their own money and time creating this material. The following quotes are examples of this creation of material:

*Teacher 6: I create my own material with my own money or print images or get images from magazines and then make them last longer. I put plastic on it to make it last long. To create material is very important.*

*Teacher 9: Sometimes, I have problems creating material because, for example, with first graders you have to teach them words that rhyme. I spend a lot of time looking for other kinds of resources that work for me.*

In this section data regarding the inconsistencies of the didactic material and the textbook was presented and in the next section we look at the lack of administrative support.

#### *Lack of Administrative Support*

When asked about didactic material, the teachers reflected on their concerns in relation to the lack of administrative support. The next teacher spoke openly – and angrily – about his bad experience.

*Teacher 6: I feel like nobody takes it, well not even the coordinator, sometimes seriously, for example, yesterday we had a course, and it was supposed to be training. I feel that they made us waste our time in those courses. From their part, there is not, we cannot say anything good. No commitment.*

These teachers did not seem to hesitate to say that there is a lack of communication or support on the part of the coordinator, as the teacher refers to this in the following statement:

*Teacher 17: The coordinator did not support us. On the contrary, she sent us e-mails and one day she said something and on the next one said something totally different. She left us with a question mark because she never answered our questions.*

The next teacher comments on how he felt when he first began teaching in the program. He alludes to the fact that he had to figure it out on his own.

*Teacher 2: The first semester I was there was very complicated because I had problems with my planning. They sent us to the war without weapons. And I, OK, I know how to speak [English] but how do I teach it? No support and lack of communication.*

Another teacher mentions the lack of support from the coordinator and the confusion he had when he began to teach and with other administrative tasks that he was asked to do.

*Teacher 3: I had a very bad experience with the coordinator. It was the same: Your groups are here, go and work. Everything was at the last minute. When we started, we were told that they were going to give us a format to do our planning, the month ended and then they told us that the principal should*

*sign our planning. But the coordinator told us that she was going to give us the format and she said: "No, I will not give it to you. Do it yourself. And I need it by x day." So the coordinator never gave us support in any way. Again there was not any support.*

The teacher continues on with the work the coordinator asks the teacher to do but the frustration escalates more and more in the following:

*Teacher 3: She said: "I lost the papers. Print them again and give them to me tomorrow." The coordinator made us spend money for the planning. She asked us to print it, and then she said: "I am going to give it back to you so that the principal can sign it." At the end she asked us to print them again and there were around 30 sheets. She asked us to meet at 8 o'clock and then she arrived at 10 with her hair wet. That was frustrating.*

Most teachers agreed that they needed support from the coordinator, but they were left alone. They often did not receive information about the program, planning, materials, or textbooks. Two teachers acknowledge that their coordinator promised to provide them with materials, but the promises never turned into a reality.

*Teacher 24: It was a promise that we were going to receive flashcards, but they never arrived.*

*Teacher 23: Every September and January they promise to give us material but they don't do it.*

The lack of administrative support added more pressure on these teachers, which in turn demotivated and frustrated them in their work. As teachers in a national program, they want to get help from the coordinators concerning administrative and teaching aspects. The last theme to be discussed relates to how the problems concerning didactic material are resolved.

### **Resolving Problems Related to Didactic Material**

As mentioned previously, teachers face a number of difficulties when carrying out their practice in the NEPBE program. Those difficulties, pointed out in the interviews, can be listed as follows: limited didactic materials, inconsistency among the textbooks used in the same school, not having the textbook on time or not having it at all. As a result, teachers have to use their creativity in order to achieve the program objectives and the final products, by creating or adapting material, by investing their own money for material and by collaborating with other teachers.

It is not only the teachers who have problems to deal with; coordinators have to cope with the dilemma of who actually receives didactic materials, such as wall charts, books, CDs, and supplementary materials. One way the coordinators deal with that problem is by organizing raffles. NEPBE teachers mentioned that coordinators raffle the materials to distribute them among teachers arbitrarily. The way these raffles are conducted depends on the regional coordinators.

*Teacher 12: There are posters, textbooks, CDs and reading textbooks. But these things are not enough for all my colleagues. So, there are raffles to see what teacher gets what thing...*

*Teacher 14: Someone in our region sent us an e-mail informing us that there were books, but not for everyone, so we were told that there was going to be a raffle.*

However, raffles do not solve the problem for the teachers who do not get any of these materials. Therefore, teachers often respond to the lack of didactic materials by using their own money from time to time.

In order to resolve the problems regarding didactic material, teachers need to take into consideration a number of aspects such as time, number of classes and students, how to reuse or recycle materials and how to make material last more. In the excerpts below, we can appreciate how teachers make these decisions:



*Teacher 20: I think that the problems related to the material do not have so much to do with creating or adapting the material itself, but rather the time, the number of students and classes, and the money we need to invest.*

*Teacher 13: I create materials which can be re-used, such as portable letters for students who are learning to write; for children in second grade I use recycled sheets of paper for the drawing and writing activities that are done inside the classroom... I try to make the materials durable and affordable.*

To deal with the lack of didactic materials, teachers collaborate with each other in planning and sharing material. In fact, experienced teachers tend to help new teachers because they consider it important; hence, the latter have fewer difficulties when they begin to teach in this program.

*Teacher 2: I feel good and I share with new people telling them: "Do this", "I recommend this activity for this product" or "Do it this way", because the teachers come to teaching without any aids. They don't know what to do. We don't have materials like books but I have some ideas and old books that I prepare my classes with.*

*Teacher 8: We share ideas... We are already in contact with the other teachers: Listen, I have some planning. If you want, I can send it to you if you don't have anything or any idea of how to do something. If someone at the school needs help, we can help with an idea and they can adapt it for their context.*

In spite of these problems, the teachers said they like working with children and enjoy their work. They realize how much they have learned through this teaching experience and their positive professional development.

*Teacher 15: I feel very pleased with my job despite all of these conflicts and moreover, I feel comfortable in the classroom with the children.*

*Teacher 4: So it depends on your good will to help the children learn, your need for them to learn because you see them and you become fond of them. So you find a way..., I carry all of the didactic materials that I produce for their learning experience.*

The data seems to demonstrate that teachers have a sense of commitment to the children. They keep working in the program because they like their job and enjoy working with children. This is revealed in their creativity, generosity and a spirit of commitment to their students and job. While this is positive, the problems of the textbooks and didactic material need to be addressed more seriously in order for the betterment of the program. In the following conclusions from this study, we offer some suggestions for teachers, coordinators and those responsible for the program in order to deal with the challenges the NEPBE program has.

## **Conclusions**

Data show that didactic material is an area that needs to be attended to in order to improve the quality of teaching and to ensure the continuity of this national program. Participants in this project reported a number of issues that affect their work at different levels. First, most of the teachers did not like their textbooks and expressed perspectives that the textbooks are not aligned with the program, whose main purpose is to develop the social practices of the language and specific competencies in the language. Teachers perceive this fact as a problem, especially in regard to the number of groups and the amount of work that the achievement of goals may involve.

Second, the administrative problems of this program have a negative impact as well. This section is where we could see more of the teachers' frustrations with the program when they had to

deal with the day-to-day planning and teaching of children. The lack of administrative support in some schools has led teachers to be more creative in the manner in which they use and share the material they create, since some do not receive support from either the schools or the parents. While these teachers have become more creative in their work, they would like to have support from their coordinators and institutions. Yet, a small number of teachers voiced that they had support from their schools. All this reveals how complex the implementation of the NEPBE program is and how difficult it is to work with the material, because at times, this is not available or is not sufficient for the task of teaching. These difficult conditions hinder their teaching practice and cause stress to the beginning teachers. Concerning difficult conditions that teachers work in, Davies (2009) claims:

*Unquestionably and unsurprisingly conditions contribute significantly to the general failure of Mexican public ELT, especially in lower secondary, and primary schools: low student socio-economic status, large group size, poor classroom facilities, and low teacher competence (pp. 8-9)*

The above quote represents what may happen to this program if the problems are not addressed.

Third, to solve the problems of didactic material, participants use their creativity and have different strategies such as sharing ideas and materials, using old books, producing reusable materials, adapting materials depending on the objective, and making copies with their own money. They create material because they feel that didactic material is an important part of their teaching practice with children. In spite of all these problems, teachers are motivated and want the program to be successful because of their commitment with the children and profession. We also found that very few of the participants could use videos or computer programs or had access to authentic material; all of these are part of the national program. The participants tended to ask for the basics of paper, copies, markers, posters, flashcards, and CD players. While the teachers spent more time and money on didactic material, we felt the administrative problems should be solved.

The study reported here is only a small part of what may be the problems and challenges that teachers face in the NEPBE program. One of the limitations found in this study is the number of participants. We could only report the experience of 24 teachers who work in different parts of the State of Guanajuato. Their conditions might be similar to or different from those in other states in Mexico, therefore, they cannot be generalized. For future research, it would be good to evaluate how the program is working and what has been done by the SEP to solve the current problems. As Davies (2009) mentions, the implementation of English programs in Mexico needs to be well planned and not developed only "as part of the global rush to English" (p. 8). One of the solutions would be the implementation of English as a curricular subject:

*The reform of curricula (particularly the pivotal lower secondary school curriculum) could usefully involve many of the more effective teachers and institutions (identified through research) as well as the traditional strategic planners and managers of Mexican public ELT (at the SEP and autonomous universities). This course of action might improve Mexican public ELT significantly. (Davies, 2009, p. 18)*

This would mean thinking carefully about the diversity of contexts across Mexico and carrying out research to make more informed decisions regarding this program, the education of young learners and how this program continues and connects to higher education. It is important to constantly review and reflect on this program and its evolution. Didactic material is an important element in the implementation of any program, but this cannot be separated from a solid administrative plan, which needs to be carefully monitored and evaluated to allow for its continuity. It is clear that in order to consolidate this program, it is necessary to implement textbooks nationwide that are in alignment with the program objectives and meet the needs of the different con-

texts in Mexico, as well as providing additional visual aids and administrative support. Consistency and the availability of the textbooks and didactic material are strongly recommended.

To conclude, the textbook and didactic material must be distributed before English classes are given at the beginning of the school year. In order to be effective, the program and material should be constantly reviewed so that adjustments can be made to improve the teaching of English in the public sector. From preschool all the way to university, the teaching of English needs to be evaluated so that students reach the designated level of English. Providing a good level of English classes with qualified teachers is required for a program to be successful (Davis, 2009), because the NEPBE is probably the first contact that these young learners will have with English. This positive contact depends on a number of factors and didactic material is one of them. The challenge of the SEP is to make sure that this program works and is successful if Mexico is to enter into the globalized world.

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### Appendix 1: Interview Questions

1. ¿Cómo llegaste a ser maestro del programa PNIEB/NEPBE?
2. ¿Cómo te sientes de ser parte del programa PNIEB/NEPBE?
3. ¿Cómo planeas tus clases?
4. ¿Qué materiales utilizas?
5. ¿Usas un texto? ¿Por qué si o porque no?
6. ¿Te proporcionan materiales para tus clases?
7. ¿Cuál es tu opinión sobre este material?
8. ¿Crees que el material es suficiente?
9. ¿Si necesitas crear tu propio material, cómo lo haces?
10. ¿Tienes problemas para crear, adaptar o usar material? Favor de explicar más.
11. ¿De qué manera te apoya la coordinación de PNIEB/NEPBE o la escuela en donde impartes clase para el material didáctico que requieres?
12. ¿Cómo percibes tu identidad dentro de este programa?