

VISION AND MISSION: THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF 'POSSIBLE SELVES' IN RUNNING ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' ASSOCIATIONS

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Abstract: English language teachers' associations (ELTAs) encompass many dedicated English Language Teaching (ELT) professionals worldwide. Leaders of these professional communities have clear ideas about educational change and consider their colleagues as front-line change agents in society (Bolitho, 2012). However, the motivation of leaders to run these professional organisations has received scant attention in previous research in the subdiscipline of applied linguistics or in teacher education. The present focus group interview study aims to reveal the motivation of leaders of ELTAs to sustain the learning organisations through the "possible selves" concept (Markus & Nurius, 1986). The qualitative investigation involved 27 leaders, presidents, vice presidents, and other executive board members representing 13 ELTAs from four continents around the world. Data collection was carried out with four focus group interviews in three different countries over three months. The focus of the discussions was to ascertain how leaders reflect on the roles and purposes of these ELTAs through their mission statements and whether long-term goals or vision influence their motivating behaviour in running these communities. The most common emerging views appear to be around mission, vision, support, obligations, sustainability, legacy and future. The findings established that, apart from ELTAs providing continuing professional development (CPD), human factors play the most important role in running these professional organisations. As a result, a new theory- and data-based model was created, the Possible English Language Teachers' Association Self with its three future self components, that is, 1) the ideal ELTA self, 2) the ought-to ELTA self, and 3) the feared ELTA self, each one having its positive and negative influences.

Keywords: vision; mission; possible selves; ideal self; ought-to self; feared self

1 Introduction

Second language (L2) education research and activities, mainly conferences and publications, have shaped many EFL teachers' lives and practice in the language classroom and their views about language learning and language teaching (Rixon & Smith, 2017). As a result, in educational linguistics, language teacher cognition, that is, their beliefs, knowledge, theories, attitudes, assumptions, conceptions and perspectives, have changed, yet empirical enquiry into ELTAs and their effect on language teachers and language learning has been scarce. ELTAs have been influential in many ELT professionals' lives worldwide in the last half century (Aubrey & Coombe, 2010; Borg, 2015), since the birth of the two largest English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers' organisations, the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) in 1966 in the USA and the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL) in 1967 in the UK.

Only in the last decades has there been a growing number of research articles on ELTAs (Allwright, 1991, Gnawali, 2016; Smith & Kuchah, 2016), and some publications by

IATEFL or the British Council (Allwright, 1997; Falcao & Szesztay, 2006; Gomez, 2011). Still, these learning organisations deserve more attention in order to understand how they influence their members' professional growth and through that language education in general. There is a proliferation of professional associations available for language teachers to join, including general Teachers' Associations (TAs), Subject Teachers' Associations (STAs), Language Teachers' Associations (LTAs) and so on. Although the acronym TA is often used in research on this topic, most recently in "Teacher Association Research" (Smith & Kuchah, 2016), given that my enquiry focuses exclusively on English Language Teachers' Associations, I have elected to use the full acronym ELTA throughout my paper.

A comparison between the initial objectives of ELTAs and their current purpose shows that they constantly offer more diverse and higher quality assistance to their members in their professional development. With all their effort and selfless devotion, leaders dream of wider membership, higher attendance at conferences, more meaningful Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activities and quality publications in order to sustain long-lasting organisations. Although both TESOL and IATEFL and their affiliates and associates are established organisations and there is a growing number of ELTAs in the world, some concerns are being heard from their leaders about decreasing membership and dropping numbers of conference participants. Lamb (2012) draws attention to problems in his subject association research and advocates involving the younger generation with their approach to the profession.

Within the field of language pedagogy, not only does English as a global lingua franca propose new challenges and questions for all professionals involved in teaching EFL on how to approach teaching the language in the classroom worldwide (Illés & Csizér, 2015), but political, social and economic changes in societies also suggest questions for teachers' associations in the future. These include the internet revolution, globalisation, commercialisation, diversity and ethical issues. Notwithstanding all genuine efforts of their leaders, there is also a real danger that some national teachers' associations could cease to exist. The present focus group interview study 1) aims to provide a deeper understanding of how leaders see the roles and purposes of their ELTAs and 2) investigates the motives of highly motivated leaders in running and sustaining their learning organisations. One of the motivational factors in running ELTAs is what hopes, dreams, expectations and fears the leaders have for their communities. Therefore, the possible selves theory (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and theories developed from it in the interconnected disciplines of second language education, applied linguistics and psychology, namely, the L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2005) and the possible selves in language teacher development (Kubanyiova, 2009), are outlined briefly.

In the following section a brief background to the research study is offered from a theoretical point of view to justify the research niche that the current inquiry aims to fill by answering the research questions. Then, in the rest of the paper, the investigation is presented and discussed in detail.

2 Theoretical background

To be able to gain an insight into the different components of the investigation, first a brief overview of ELTAs and their mission and vision statements is offered. In order to provide a general understanding of the motivational drive for altruistic voluntary work, the

motivations of leaders and the future-related self-concept coined “possible selves” (Markus & Nurius, 1986) are explored from a theoretical standpoint. Finally, vision is explored in connection with goals or future plans, not only on an individual level but also on an organisational level.

2.1 ELTAs and their mission

ELTAs are professional organisations for those professionals who are engaged in ELT, working in different geographical locations and diverse contexts around the world. These professionals join ELTAs in order to a) develop their needs in the field of continuing professional development, as either “knowledge receivers” or “knowledge providers” (Borg, 2015), and b) belong to a professional community of like-minded people (Gnawali, 2016; Motteram, 2016; Smith & Kuchah, 2016). Using Lamb’s (2012) definition, teachers’ associations (TAs) are “networks of professionals, run by and for professionals, focused mainly on support for members, with knowledge exchange and development as well as representation of members’ views as their defining functions” (p.296).

From the websites and constitutions of ELTAs it can be observed that they organise themselves around a mission statement, a code of practice and a set of goals. They declare their aims, goals and purposes in their mission statement, what it is they offer to their members, and often express explicitly how these goals are achieved. Additionally, in some cases ELTAs also have a vision statement. Mission and vision are often confused with each other and are wrongly used interchangeably. Put simply, while a mission statement refers to the present, stating the goals and the purpose of the organisation, and indicating the ongoing activities and CPD possibilities offered for the members, the vision statement outlines what an organisation strives towards in the future, a more universal aim, either concerning the ELTA’s life or education as a whole.

On their website IATEFL (n.d.) states their mission, and similarly, goals and practices are expressed in their mission statement:

Our goal is to provide general support in helping teachers and other ELT professionals in their professional development, and to provide a platform where they can offer their views, exchange research and teaching experiences and learn from each other in the field of professional development.

As well as their mission statement, TESOL (n.d.) has a vision statement which emphasises the need for professional associations in our globalised world, as well as its role in responding to the new demands of human communications. Their statement is: “To become the trusted global authority for knowledge and expertise in English language teaching”. This emphasises the need for professional associations in our globalised world, as well as its role in responding to the new demands of human communications. Interestingly, the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language in Hungary, (IATEFL-Hungary) has both a mission and a vision statement. The mission statement of IATEFL-Hungary (n.d.) reveals that “We promote collaboration among English language teaching professionals by organising national and international projects with local and global impact. By doing so, we aim to support a high quality of ELT in Hungary for all.” The vision statement of IATEFL-Hungary (n.d.) claims: “We believe in a future where quality, professional development and equal opportunities are valued in English language learning and teaching in Hungary.”

2.2 Possible selves

In an attempt to find answers to the questions of “why people decide to do something, how long they are willing to sustain the activity and how hard they are going to pursue it” (Dörnyei, 2001, p.8), different motivation theories have tried to provide various answers in the field of social sciences. Understanding what the driving force is behind the actions and cognitions of people still remains a hidden terrain, despite the many motivational theories and studies. In the last few decades theorists have turned towards the dynamic nature of self-systems and investigated how the self regulates behaviour, sets goals and how motivation is transformed into action (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011).

The conceptualisation of the future-oriented self-concept coined “possible selves” by Markus and Nurius (1986) has served as a solid foundation for various inquiries, both in L2 learning motivation (Dörnyei, 2005; 2009) and language teacher motivation (Kubanyiova, 2009) in the fields of applied linguistics and language education. The future-related self-images refer to the individual’s desired, hoped or feared selves. According to the definition of Markus and Nurius,

[p]ossible selves represent individuals’ ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming, and thus provide a conceptual link between cognition and motivation. Possible selves are the cognitive components of hopes, fears, goals, and threats. (1986, p.954)

According to Oyserman and James (2009), the future selves are the desired and feared images of the self already in a future state but they are also strongly tied to the present and past selves. Higgins’ (1987) self-discrepancy theory emphasises that the ideal self is connected to those aspirations, hopes and wishes that the individual would like to achieve, whereas the ought-to self (Higgins calls it ought self) is a person’s representation of attributes that a person believes s/he ought to possess, that is, duties, requirements, obligations or responsibilities, which derive from other people’s expectations of the individual. As a result of this, people compare their actual self and their ideal and ought-to selves, and out of the tension between these components a motivational drive is activated in order to reduce the gap. Apparently this motivational power does not work on its own, but only if certain conditions are met (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014; Hadfield & Dörnyei, 2013). For example, if the future self-image is perceived as plausible, elaborate and vivid; if there is a gap between the current self and possible selves; if the future self-image does not clash with social norms (family or peers on an individual level, schools, institutions or society on an organisational level); if ideal and ought-to selves are counterbalanced with the feared selves; and if the future self-image is connected to concrete strategies with clear plans and roadmaps for action.

Based on the possible selves theory in mainstream psychology, the theoretical construct of “The L2 Motivational Self System” was proposed by Dörnyei, (2005; 2009) to understand L2 learners’ motivation, in which L2 learners’ imagined future selves are defined. This conceptualization contains contextual, personal and temporal dynamics, and guides the learners to motivate them to learn a new language. The model is comprised of the first two facets of possible selves, the ideal L2 self, which represents the learner who has acquired the target language and is proficient in it, and the ought-to L2 self, based on one’s sense of duties, obligations, or moral responsibilities which represent the learner with all the

expectations coming from parents, teachers and peers. The third construct of the model is the L2 learning experience, which is connected to the actual experience (either positive or negative) with the process of language learning and the learning environment.

The role of the teacher in motivating learners is essential but the motivation of teachers is just as important (Williams, Mercer & Ryan, 2015). There is a strong link between language teachers' enthusiasm and motivation to teach, and a direct effect on students' motivation and development (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Kubanyiova (2009) reveals the connection among teacher cognition, teacher motivation and teacher development, with a strong emphasis on language teachers' future selves. As a result, Kubanyiova proposed the concept of possible L2 teacher self, which represents teachers' ideal, ought-to and feared selves associated with the language teachers' identities. Kubanyiova's (2012) theoretical model of Language Teacher Conceptual Change explains in detail the role of possible selves in language teachers' development, and how their teaching strategies are influenced by the different language teacher selves. In this model, the ideal self represents language teachers' aspirations, the ought-to self refers to teachers' perceived external obligations in connection with their work, and the feared self represents possible negative consequences when obligations are not met.

In order to validate the construct of the L2 motivational self-system, quantitative studies have been carried out on L2 learners (Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Ryan, 2009; Taguchi, Magid, & Papi, 2009) and qualitative studies have been conducted as well (Kim, 2009; Lamb, 2012). The results provide strong empirical evidence to reinterpret L2 motivation from a self-perspective (Ryan, 2009). Although research carried out on possible selves and teacher motivation is still scarce, in the last few years some studies have explored how the three future selves derive their motivational capacity in guiding teachers' behaviour towards an ideal teacher self, away from a feared or towards or away from an ought-to teacher self (Chan, 2014; Dörnyei & Chan, 2013; Hiver, 2013; Kubanyiova, 2009, 2012; Kubanyiova & Feryok, 2015; Kumazava, 2013). Hiver (2013) in his study reveals that continuing teacher development is an emotional quest; teachers view CPD as a positive enhancement if it is driven by ideal teacher selves, whereas teachers driven by feared teacher selves are accompanied by negative emotions.

2.3 Vision

Goals are cognitive plans for the future; vision, however, is more than long-term goals or future plans. Visions help people to picture themselves in some possible future state and serve as a mirror image to the actual self as opposed to people's potential states, hopes or fears (Hadfield & Dörnyei, 2013). If individuals have a strong vision or image for the future, if they work hard to achieve it, if they are motivated in their goal-setting, for instance, enthusiastic, persistent and hard-working, they can achieve better results (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014). As the authors underline, teachers can create, develop and sustain teacher vision, although there are some necessary conditions to maintain it, which are as follows: 1) teachers need to reflect upon their past experiences as inspirations for their vision; 2) they should understand their strengths or expertise and where their passion lies; and 3) they need to construct an image of their desired teaching selves. Revisiting images of past learning experiences is crucial, because such memories can have an impact on their original intentions. The vision of the ideal future L2 self works in the same way with language teachers (Kubanyiova, 2012), and ELTAs can be investigated with the same conceptualisation.

Underhill (2006) deals with leadership of ELTAs through the perspective of vision, providing some useful tips for developing personal leadership skills.

Out of the seven different types of vision coined by van der Helm (2009) (that is, religious, political, humanistic, business/organisational, community, public policy and personal visions), not only personal vision has significance in the present study; community vision or organisational vision need to be included as well, in order to understand the complexity of ELTAs as learning organisations. Personal vision naturally can refer to L2 learners, L2 teachers or leaders of ELTAs in the current situation. In the case of organisational vision, Lipton (1996) claims that apart from identifying the mission, the strategy and culture are vital to include. He believes that first and foremost it is fundamental to clarify the reason, the purpose and the benefits of our actions, identify their uniqueness and whether we communicate clearly in a transparent way what we do and why we do it. In the case of ELTAs this has great importance because clear communication and transparent goals help with projecting messages, as Underhill (2006) points out.

Finally, culture cannot be neglected as an additional component to focusing on vision. We need to reflect on our leadership styles, look at ourselves and how we treat one another, re-visit the original motives which we stand for, decide what we believe about ourselves and what values we hold. These components are crucial not only for company employees but for ELTAs, too, in order to make their communities a pleasant place to work with others. Lipton (1996) argues that visioning needs imagination, a trust in intuition, and a deep emotional commitment to the desired future.

2.4 Research questions

With the conclusions on possible selves from mainstream psychology, the literature on L2 motivation and language teacher motivation, and some input from personal and shared vision, the current study aims to employ these motivational self-constructs to reveal some of the driving forces behind ELTAs. It investigates not only how leaders of ELTAs promote professional development to the members of their associations, but also how to make their ideal of ELTAs as drivers of change in language teacher education sustainable.

Therefore, the paper aims to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What are the missions of ELTAs?
- 2) In what ways does the vision of leaders of ELTAs help shape the life of their professional communities?

3 Research Methods

This section outlines the research approach and methods, presents the design of the research instrument, enumerates the criteria used for the selection of participants, explains the reasons for sampling and describes the context and setting, as well as the data collection and analytical procedures. The study intends to understand people's views and perceptions, thus a phenomenological approach is used with an interpretive paradigm. Exploratory research using qualitative – verbal – data is applied to provide a deeper understanding of how leaders of ELTAs perceive the mission and vision of their learning organisations through the history and activities of their ELTAs, and reflect on how their long- and short-term goals have shaped the

life of their communities. Focus group interviews (FGIs) seemed to fit as the best research instrument to find answers for the main research question and its sub-questions.

3.1 Designing the research instrument

Semi-structured FGIs were conducted in three different countries with 27 leaders of ELTAs from 15 countries, from four continents (Africa, Australia, Europe and South America). The choice of the data collection methods is reinforced here because FGIs can serve as a “collective brainstorming” (Dörnyei, 2007, p.104), where participants think together, inspire and challenge each other, and where “within-group discussion can yield high-quality data ... that results in deep and insightful discussion”. The common knowledge, the shared experience and the familiarity with a given topic allow participants to provide rich data for the given study. The participants share the same background which gives potential for a mutually enriching conversation (Litosseliti, 2003). Krueger’s (2002) model of “Designing and Conducting Focus Group Interviews” was used as a firm guideline. The author’s previous experience as leader of an ELTA, and therefore as an insider, helped to focus on complexities and subtleties of the ongoing operational tasks of professional communities, and so aided in formulating the best feasible questions regarding the past, present and future as well as the plans, hopes, desires and fears of ELTA leaders.

3.2 Participants

The participants of the focus group interview study were selected by purposive sampling (Dörnyei, 2007) and were current or former board members, presidents or vice presidents of ELTAs. The majority of the participants were women (21 women, 6 men) and the average age was 48; the youngest was 27 with only 5 years of teaching experience, whereas the most experienced professional was 73 years old, with more than 50 years of teaching experience and considerable leadership experience. The average teaching experience of the participants was 25 years, ranging from 5 years to 50 years. More than 70% of the participants were university teachers and the majority of them regularly attended conferences of different ELTAs.

As a result of serving their professional communities for a number of years, the participants understand the structure and the history of their associations, and can compare different strengths, values and visions about the future directions of their ELTAs. They have the insight to identify the presence or lack of long-term strategic plans of their organisations in order to provide orientation for the future. In order to find these leaders of ELTAs, conferences seemed the best accessible settings, as they are meeting points for professionals; thus choosing these events as ideal occasions for conducting the FGIs seemed a logical decision. Those leaders were selected who had been inspiring professionals or whose ELTAs had made considerable and influential contribution to the profession over the years. In the findings and discussion sections of the current paper, self-chosen pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of the participants.

3.3 Data collection

Data was collected in English, as the participants of the study were carefully selected from different countries and English was the common language for communication. The interviews were organised according to the practical guide for applied research by Krueger and Casey (2009). The pilot and the first interviews were held in a Hungarian context, in the researcher's immediate environment, at Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), Budapest. The third interview was organised at a partner association's conference in Central Europe, where many committee members from neighbouring countries represented their ELTAs, and finally, the fourth focus group interview took place in the UK at the 52nd IATEFL conference.

	Location of the interviews	Time	Participants	Positions	ELTA Name	Pseudonyms
1. Pilot FGI	Budapest Eötvös University Hungary	Feb 2018	5+2*	Former vice presidents, committee members and volunteers	IATEFL-Hungary	Angelina (Hungary) Gertrude (Hungary) Grace (Hungary) Marilyn (United States) Stella (Hungary)
2. FGI No.1.	Budapest Eötvös University Hungary	Mar 2018	6+2*	Former presidents and volunteer	IATEFL-Hungary	Annabel (Hungary) Freddy (Germany) Helen (Hungary) Linda (Hungary) Marco (Hungary) Mildred (Hungary)
3. FGI No.2.	Terme Topolsica 25 th IATEFL Slovenia conference Slovenia	Mar 2018	11+2*	Present or former presidents, committee members and volunteers	ELTAM FIPLV HUPE IATEFL Slovenia IATEFL TDSIG TETA	Angela (Croatia) Bob (Montenegro) Claire (Slovenia) Daniela (Croatia) Denysam (Australia) Dorothy (Bosnia Herzegovina) Lucy (Slovenia) Mike (United Kingdom) Sophie (Slovenia) Tamara (Montenegro)
4. FGI No.3.	Brighton 52 nd IATEFL conference UK	Apr 2018	6+2 ¹	Present or former presidents or vice presidents	BRAZ- TESOL CAMELT A ELTAM FAAPI SKA SUKOL	Alison (Macedonia) Emily (Finland) Evelyn (Argentina) Francis (Brazil) Harold (Cameroon) Leena (United States)

Table 1. Overview of the Focus Group Interviews

¹+2 means the researcher, who acted as moderator, and one co-moderator in each FGI.

The interviews lasted between an hour and an hour and a half and were recorded with the participants' prior consent. The length of the video-recorded FGIs were as follows: the pilot FGI (FGI#P): 1 hour 34 minutes; the first FGI (FGI#1): 1 hour 31 minutes; the second FGI (FGI#2): 46.5 minutes; and the third FGI (FGI#3): 1 hour 8.5 minutes; the total length of the video-recorded FGIs is 259.5 minutes, with an average of 65 minutes/FGI.

The interview guide consisted of the list of moderator's skills, bulleted outline of the interview, the recommended pattern for the beginning, the assistant moderator's skills, a list of different question types in order to yield rich data and the detailed focus group interview schedule. For each focus group interview an assistant moderator supported the success of the sessions. They helped with arranging the room in either a circle or a horse shoe shape for proper eye contact, assisted with placing high quality voice and video recorders, regularly checked them for optimal recording, helped with refreshments, observed non-verbal gestures and cues, took notes throughout the discussion and gave feedback. The pilot focus group interview served to test whether the interview schedule consisted of the right questions, and that the topics were engaging enough to induce a dialogue for an hour and a half. The focus group interview guide helped with the flow of the process and learning about the moderator's role and effectiveness.

Table 1 provides an at-a-glance summary of the place and time of the FGIs, as well as the associations, the participants with their pseudonyms and the countries of origin.

3.4 Data analysis

In total the transcript of the 259.5 minutes of video-recorded interviews ran to 38, 290 words over 87 pages, providing a significant amount of data for analysis. The transcripts were analysed using the constant comparative method (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). The coding procedure began with a careful reading of the data in order to identify recurring themes and sub-themes. The FGIs were transcribed not only reporting the discussion but also including metalinguistic signs, hesitations, pauses, and other emotional reactions of the participants. Given the nature of FGIs, where only one person speaks at a time, meta-language also had an important part in the analysis, as it can indicate agreement, disagreement, support or interest.

The notes taken during the FGIs by the assistant co-moderators were also used, with their summarizing comments taken into consideration. Video recordings had an additional benefit, as they made it possible later for the researcher to interpret laughter, a head nod or head shake, eye contact between participants or a wink, intonation, words specifically stressed or passionate comments. Initial groupings were modified and new headings were created as a result of the procedure involving a constant checking of the established categories against the data. After this first step, the second level coding continued, the interview transcript data was analysed for themes connected with the research questions, using chunks or units. Some of the emerging themes were highlighted and later included in a codebook. During the coding process, the following main themes were identified: 1) issues regarding ELTAs as communities 2) the most important findings in connection with executive boards or committees and 3) leaders' personal motives, experiences and perceptions.

In the data analysis procedure, NVivo 12 software (Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software) was used; cases were made for the interviews and for the participants, enabling analysis both within a given interview and across two or more

interviews, in order to be able to see similarities and contrasts between the different groups. Coding the participants enabled a similar analysis to be made at a later stage, including various other demographic and role information. The first analysis was a simple word frequency analysis, including synonyms. It was interesting to see that, although most of the expected words appeared at a high frequency, some appeared at much lower frequencies, such as “committee”, “organisation”, “community” and “goals”. The most outstanding themes denote the codes, although they appear in several contexts, referring to either two or three main categories. Significant words were coded as thematic nodes that enable the opening up of a rich field for in-depth analysis. To ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of data collection and interpretation, the following techniques were used: member checking, keeping a reflective research journal, and creating an audit trail.

4 Results and discussion

This section gives an account of the results of the investigation which is combined with the detailed discussion. The quality and the relevance of the majority of the quotes are so powerful that they give a sound reason for combining the results and the discussion parts of the paper. As many of the descriptive quotes speak for themselves, some of the findings of the study are expressed using the participants’ statements.

The theoretical framework of possible selves offers a possibility to gain a deeper insight into the highly complex system of individual and collective motivational factors involved in running and maintaining these professional communities. The forthcoming subsections provide evidence from the empirical findings of the FGIs and thus operationalise the future ELTA selves: 1) the ideal ELTA self, which encapsulates the highest ideals that drive leaders in their desire for deliberate change in supporting EFL teachers to promote L2 learning; 2) the ought-to ELTA self, which concerns the features of external expectations in the forms of either positive or negative images, as a powerful drive either to meet outer motives or avoid negative consequences, and finally 3) the feared ELTA self, which summarises all the threats that jeopardise the existence of ELTAs, thus representing real danger for leaders and causing them to fear that their valuable work could be diminished or destroyed in a short time. As these future selves often appear together as counter-acting components in the forms of desire, expectation or fear, the sections are organised around the categories that emerged from the analytical coding as follows: “mission”, “vision”, “support”, “obligations”, “sustainability”, “legacy” and “future”. In many instances categories are approached from different angles in order to give a comprehensive picture. In these categories the three possible selves are interconnected; sometimes only one of them is significant and they sometimes exist side by side, depending on the context or the age of the ELTA.

4.1 The mission in ELTAs

The findings illustrate that the goals and original aims of ELTAs are in synchrony with the leaders’ initiatives, that is, “excellence in teaching”, “quality language teaching”, and the roles and purposes of the teachers’ associations in fulfilling their mission by providing CPD to their members. This echoes increasing evidence from research on ELTAs and CPD (Paran, 2016). Gertrude (FGI#P, p.24) contemplated on mission in the following way:

In a way our ELTA demonstrates equal opportunities for me. My personal mission, personal professional mission, is that you can be a good teacher and give good teaching and education in the country, in a small school as well. But to be able to do that I need an association and I need these contacts with people like you. I think teachers' associations have a very important role in that; everything they provide helps the teacher not only to stay alive but to believe that you are good at your profession.

After multiple iterations of the data, several themes have suggested that the drive behind leaders' motivation to sustain their ELTAs is strongly connected to the leading teachers' desired future image in connection with their organisations, in which the vision for change and improvement is essential. Leaders of the teachers' associations are not only responsible for their own learning but care for other teachers' CPD as well. This view is highlighted from both teachers' associations' mission statements on their websites and the explicit indications of the FGI participants', for instance, with Lucy's (FGI#2, p.3) words: "We offer a base for all those teachers who strive to become the best versions of themselves by offering independent, innovative and up-to-date seminars and conferences, regularly keeping our members informed."

The participants of the FGIs repeatedly expressed their appreciation for their ELTAs for providing CPD and connected their own enthusiasm for volunteering to the feeling of gratitude. This reciprocity was expressed by Marco (FGI#1, p.26): "... yes, this give-and-take ... is the beauty of such an organisation... any civil organisation is based on this...". These views correspond to Gnawali's (2016) conclusion in his case study on his ELTA, which supports its members' professional development, and in return members volunteer their time and energy to organise activities and expand the ELTA's connections. In each focus group interview right from the birth of ELTAs the social element is underlined, the need to step out from the ordinary everyday work in teachers' own institutions and take the opportunity to reflect on their own work, skills and professional development and hence see them from a different perspective, for instance, as Stella (FGI#P, p.24) explained:

One of the association's tasks is to give an opportunity to teachers to step out from their classrooms and develop skills outside the classroom. Skills like editing, leadership skills, presentation skills, when you go to a conference to a partner association, etc. So these are the skills which you wouldn't be able to develop if you just kept to your everyday teaching. And these are transferable skills and are very useful skills in all.

Through the enquiry into leaders' views on their wish to maintain their ELTAs, two major factors could be identified. First and foremost is the altruistic drive to assist in providing CPD to all members of ELTAs and other EFL teachers, in the forms of training, mentoring and developing their pedagogical practice. The second incentive is the social aspect of supportive learning organisations, beyond tangible benefits, as already highlighted by Falcao and Szesztay (2006), offering a protective social network for professionals as a safety zone. In one of the FGIs Mildred (FGI#1, p.19) elaborated on the topic:

I think what keeps an association like IATEFL alive is a good balance of the tangible benefits and also the less intangible, the community-feel benefits. It's for the tangible benefits, you find out about resources or you learn a new activity or ... we can't really compete... because there is so much available now on the internet; Increasingly even before the internet with the publishers, with RELO; there was a lot on offer... so we

can only compete and in fact compete is not the right word, if we keep up the intangible benefits. And the intangible benefits, like the sense of belonging, the opportunity for others to feel part of a community; ... The “sense of belonging” is linked up to “I’m doing something” and “I’m part of...”, “I’m a member here”. Yes, you are a member but this is not a “service providing association”; because we can’t compete there at all ... it’s a community of like-minded people.

In conclusion it can be said that the data collected in this focus group interview study confirm that the roles and purposes of teachers’ associations are to facilitate high-quality training and learning possibilities in every obtainable way and at the same time the social element of supportive learning is just as crucial. Whether this should be expressed in writing, in either a mission statement or a vision statement or both, is a different question, which is elaborated in the following section.

4.2 Mission statements and vision statements

ELTAs express their goals and purposes in their mission statement on their websites and additionally, in some cases ELTAs also have a vision statement. Although each FGI started with some definitions, examples and mutual understanding of these concepts, nonetheless, the word “vision” or the expression “vision statement” or other ELTAs’ slogans were accepted with reluctance by some of the FGI participants, and even rejected. Annabel (FGI#1, p.5), who was a leader from the early, initial phase in one of the associations, claimed that “We never wanted to have mission statements or stamps or business cards and molinos, logos or whatever... we wanted to be together and work; so we focussed on activities rather than visions and paper and PR.” Sophie (FGI#2, p.4), who had spent many years organising professional events for her ELTA, explained: “I think there are no words that can actually achieve this; an event like this [referring to the conference]. ... The majority of efforts go into the conference; because this is where inspiration comes from”. Linda (FGI#1, p.23) was even more critical:

Just language-wise those mission statements have no meaning... I mean seriously they don’t mean a thing; they are so general that there is no meaning and I think you can see that we approached it from the activities; from the concrete side rather than all these empty words.

Whether these statements are accepted with natural ease or renounced, there was a mutual agreement on a strong desire to act for the common good as a reason to volunteer for the organisation. Most of the participants agreed that even though the ELTAs have official mission statements, the common will is more important in keeping the organisations together. Lucy (FGI#2, p.3) said: “I don’t think it’s important who writes down what; it’s important what the reflection is what we believe in and what we want to achieve”. Daniela (FGI#2, p.2) recalled one of the actions of her ELTA:

We actually asked our people to think of a slogan that would be good for our organisation. And somebody came up with the idea: “Inspire and be inspired!” We’re trying to make people enthusiastic about their jobs; they’re inspired but they’re also inspiring students, other teachers; so I don’t know, what that is... Mission or vision, whatever. But it’s powerful because motivation is the force that drives people to achieve results.

Although an internal consistency concerning the mission statement and vision statement was clear throughout in some of the FGIs, some mild shifts in opinion could also be traced during the discussions. Whereas in the beginning there was a feeling of rejection towards these concepts, the intensity of this renunciation softened over the course of the discussion, as in Annabel's (FGI#1, p.28) words:

You don't have this vision every day but it's something that you're going towards and then you probably never reach it... I always find it strange when it's verbalised because I think what really matters is the process itself. ... if they are phrased before the action then it's dead; so it has to be there first and then retrospectively you can call it a vision but I don't think it works the other way round.

The disinclination to use the word "vision" or "mission" among some of the participants poses the question of the relevance of tangible future images. This suggests the idea that when people are strongly motivated to accomplish a task, to achieve something, they may not need to have concrete pictures in connection with the future to motivate them; their strong desire for action is so determined that it serves as a force for action for a long time (Dörnyei, Henry, & Muir, 2016). Nevertheless, for other participants these concepts were more natural, as they brought examples from the past when their ELTAs organised mission and vision generating days, for instance, Mildred (FGI#1, p.29) recalled an event: "These are usually British Council initiatives. I was also at the mission and vision forming workshop in Budapest and later in Skopje in the early 2000s and they were also British Council-supported regional events." Stella (FGI#P, p.3) remembered the day clearly when her ELTA wrote their mission and vision statement many years previously:

I remember well, when I was the vice president, that was when these mission and vision statements were formulated. We organised a day with an outsider facilitator from the field of marketing and the committee came together and brainstormed, discussed the ideas and came up with a mission statement and a vision statement for our ELTA.

For other participants it was a positive sign that their ELTAs have long-term goals and they are expressed in either a vision statement or even having the concept "vision" as a directional guidance for their actions. Evelyn (FGI#3, p.16) proudly reflected on these ideas in the following way:

At least we mention the word vision in our ELTA's mission statement; which is a lot... beyond the tasks that we all agree on ... making visible this idea of vision in the way we envision the future. And I believe that one of the main concerns for the association is to make a democratic vision of the ideas related to English teaching in relation to education. How do we, teachers of English see education? And that is something that we are all quite concerned about.

In this conceptualisation the teacher profession is strongly connected to education at large. What the future holds for ELTAs is expressed in the positive future images held by their leaders, which is discussed in the next section.

4.3 A desired future self-image of learning organisations

The FGIs were abundant with various vivid images of desired future ELTAs, mentioning such sub-themes as membership, change, identity, succession, legacy, support, challenges, goals, initiatives, collaboration and internationalisation. Beyond these elements and segments of ELTAs, an overarching picture of the future ideal ELTA self emerged, which was expressed either in the form of individual vision or shared vision. The different forms of possible selves appeared on either 1) an individual level or on 2) the board or committee level; nevertheless, most of the time all three future selves referred to the learning organisations of the participants, to their own ELTAs, which they are most involved with, as their most distressing concern, thus on 3) an ELTA level. Whether vision is expressed in a vision statement or not it is still the underlying force for motivated behaviour in leaders of these professional communities in establishing or running their organisations; it is still the core component of ELTAs. Harold (FGI#3,p.17) combined mission and vision, personal vision and community vision and their connection to the present and past in the following excerpt:

The people who initiate an association always have a vision; and it is their vision. It could be an individual, it could be a collective vision but it is a vision. Now that vision gets transformed into a mission. ... And that mission is not just what we are doing; it's what we are there to do. ... then the different people who would take on different leadership positions, shape that mission with the individual visions as well as the collective vision. ... To know the real vision of an association, we need to go back to the people who started it. ... So who should have the vision? I think the vision, the initial vision comes from the start but every member of the leadership team... because to be honest, people don't get into leadership in our associations... the thing that generally motivates us to want to get into responsibility in associations where we have been members is because of something we feel that we can bring to promote the agenda because we like the association, otherwise we would be leaving the association and not struggling to get a step forward; so it's always because we want to take a step forward; so I think the vision belongs to the whole association. And it's shaped by its members.

In the FGIs there were several examples where in the history of the organisations the transformation of dreams or hopes could be detected, from past to present, as these visions had become reality and the once only hoped for or deeply sought-after dreams became transformed into ordinary routine. To bring some examples, such endeavours include establishing Special Interest Groups (SIGs), creating regional branches, decentralisation of the national organisation by moving some activities out of the capital to various regions, or opening and widening possibilities by inviting teachers to participate in activities as well as involving school teachers in the life of ELTAs, in order to stop being an "elitist clique or a closely-knit community with their own jargon that no outsiders would understand", as Annabel (FGI#1, p.15) said. Helen's (FGI#1, p.14) story is still valid after two decades as a general statement for her ELTA just as well as for others, as she recalled her greatest endeavour:

Certainly the biggest challenge I would call it today, in those days I possibly called it a headache, is how to attract people who are not these famous English teachers ... but sort of ordinary English teachers who have never heard about IATEFL; but we believed, and I think the mission comes into the picture in retrospect, we believed that

they would benefit from joining our ELTA and I think that was the period in 1995-96, when we went to the country, to organise regional workshops ... and somehow tried to spread the word a little bit beyond teacher trainers, beyond university people, beyond prominent English teachers. That's how I saw my mission if I could say.

It is noteworthy how dreams in the past throughout the years have become reality and the once "future goals" operate as everyday reality in the life of some ELTAs. These ideals were only aspirations for a long time, operationalised as a motivating behaviour, whereas currently they work as ordinary routine in some of the organisations, without anyone noticing how long they took and how much effort was necessary to achieve those goals. Looking at this phenomenon through the possible selves, it seems as if an ideal future aspiration, an ideal ELTA-self, manifested itself in desirable goals or struggles for the association to become as their leaders desired it to become. In the FGIs the wish to achieve internationalisation was also emphasised by participants both from Europe and from the South American continent. Although Marco (FGI#1, pp.10-11) only spoke about his ELTA in retrospect, this endeavour for working together is expressed in the effort to achieve collaboration through mutual initiatives among the different ELTAs:

Getting back to the issue of vision, although we didn't have a formulaic vision, as such, but right from the outset I remember that we wanted to internationalise our ELTA. And we were the first in this block [in Central Europe] that we kept inviting people from neighbouring countries because we wanted to internationalise this organisation. And soon or soonish, a little later, other organisations followed suit and joined in ... And I think that's a vision. A vision, that our country has become now a free country, part of Europe, and that's why, especially the neighbouring countries should be represented at our conferences and vice versa.

Other emerging themes - mentoring and supporting the general membership - are still future images to strive towards, as expressed by Leena (FGI#3, p.3): "Leadership for us and for me personally is mentoring and teamwork and finding the best person for the job." Mentoring and young teachers were also connected; the ideal future ELTA self was often expressed with the aspirational images of involving the young generation as a succession of the learning organisation. However, this conceptualisation can also be projected as a fear, as the excerpts indicated by Helen (FGI#1, p.20), Angelina (FGI#P, p.14) and Emily (FGI#3, p.15): "... a lot of younger people today do not believe in a community of like-minded people."; "... this might be just a different generation. These new teachers coming out they don't feel the need to belong"; "... young teachers may think that they don't need an association because there is Facebook etc." Annabel (FGI#1, p.15) proposed a question: "Why isn't it natural for a qualified English teacher automatically to join the professional association, as happens in the case of so many professions, like doctors or engineers? You cannot be a doctor without being a member of the chamber of the medical profession."

Despite these negative comments many examples have proved that it is still possible to get students and novice teachers engaged in the life of ELTAs, for instance, by involving them as student helpers or inviting them to co-present at conferences, mentoring them, and letting them bring their skills in. Freddy (FGI#1, p.21) highlighted the importance of succession by saying: "This is another element that I think we can strengthen the association with. If we see ourselves as role agents, as handers over, as gatekeepers." Denysam (FGI#2, p.13) also connected mentoring with the young generation: "You can replace the old

committee members with the youngsters coming through, whom you mentor. Get them involved. Respect the skills that they have and we don't have. Use them; don't be scared."

As we have seen, desired future ELTA self-images manifest in the forms of wishes, hopes or plans, anything that would serve the professional development of the members, strengthen the organisations and make them more sustainable. It can work on an individual level, on a committee level or can refer to the whole organisation. As the very nature of the non-profit framework makes it difficult to run such big systems without substantial income, long-lasting motivation, enthusiasm and determination are the only potential answers behind leadership, as no outer pressure can force any of the leaders to work for the communities. The "give-and-take", as Marco (FGI#1, p.26) said before, is in synchrony with Underhill's (2006) statement: "Having fun and learning from it as you go, so that you are always having your cake AND eating it, in the sense of working towards your vision AND learning from it as you go" (p.65). Obviously, it would be ideal to get financial support for running these ELTAs but sponsorship is often accompanied with other interests that are not in synchrony with the vision of leaders. The next section examines this topic.

4.4 Support, a double-edged sword: A blessing or a curse?

ELTAs are non-profit membership-based organisations, run by volunteers for the mutual benefit of ELT professionals by offering CPD opportunities in a supportive professional network. Members pay a nominal membership fee towards the costs of running their ELTAs, and as an additional income some CPD events or conferences generate funding for further costs, for instance, having a paid secretary, providing an office and editing publications. Even if the organisers' work is not rewarded financially, there are supplementary costs to run these ELTAs, especially when organising events or providing a better-quality service. Thus, ELTAs work or have worked together with outer bodies, mainly with publishing houses, or in many countries either with the British Council or the US Embassy or both, or in some fortunate countries with the Ministry of Education or other educational organisations. These outer bodies often provide the background resources, for instance, offering venues, financing marketing or publishing materials. Some of the participants in the FGIs have reported that in the past, especially after establishing their organisations, prodigious support had been given by these bodies to set up and later to maintain and develop ELTAs, with successful publications, trainings, workshops or summer courses. Marco (FGI#1, p.8) recalled these times:

One thing we shouldn't forget is that we got a lot of support, and not only financial support from the British Council in the first place. So they gave us all the support that we needed. In terms of how to manage such an organisation, British Council was always behind us... they had the money, so we didn't have to be bothered where to get the financial support or... we had the spirit but we knew very little about how to promote ourselves or how to squeeze money out of some outside organisations.

Therefore, although a future image of the ideal ELTA-self proliferates in the abundance of CPD events that are financed and co-organised by the previously mentioned official bodies or other organisations, still the current reality rather envisaged a feared future ELTA image, with a total lack of support, in which financial aid dries up. Sophie's (FGI#2, p.6) bitter comment expressed many leaders' views: "When you come down to financial

support... we have zero financial support. There is no such thing as a financial support in this matter anymore”.

Unfortunately, support given by commercial enterprises also contains danger for ELTAs. The publishing houses are not only in an advantageous position to be able to offer fees to renowned ELT speakers to be invited to hold plenary talks and provide their events either free or at a lower price than ELTAs can, but more and more CPD events, conferences, trainings or webinars are being offered by them to practising teachers. Additionally, most of the time they are also able to offer tangible benefits to the attendees, such as books, T-shirts, mugs or magazines. These were referred to as perks and freebies in the FGIs, which might serve as an extra inducement to EFL teachers to attend these events. For instance, as Freddy (FGI#1, p.15) said: “You kept saying that you were struggling with the conference numbers. And then Oxford threw a conference and then they get freebies; ... and all these teachers happily going quickly to the event”. Marco (FGI#1, p.16) referred to the same theme: “Publishing houses had all these in-service teacher trainer courses where every teacher got new books, free, obviously, and the conferences are free too. It is a big attraction and our ELTA has never been in that position.”

It may seem that ELTAs are independent organisations, free of the bias of supporting bodies; however, in order to function or survive in difficult times, they have to make compromises and accept certain conditions. Therefore, trainings and events offered by publishing houses or other profit-oriented organisations appear as competition for ELTAs, and commercialisation emerged in several FGIs as a manifestation of a future feared ELTA self. In Harold's (FGI#3, p.20) words both vision and fear emerged: “I want to make sure that IATEFL focuses on its members and co-operates with organisations that don't take us away from our core mission because we are getting so much of a business around and being guided by publishers”. The following excerpt by Mildred (FGI#1, p.27) gave voice to the same fear:

IATEFL, big IATEFL has slipped a little bit; it's become very commercial, it's a UK-based charity, whereas before it was an association for teachers by teachers. So over the years it's been slipping and there are many good reasons why it's been slipping. It's got to create money for nine full time jobs, but as a result it's no longer a teachers' association. ... So I think when you ask these questions “What is our mission?” “Are we really doing it?”, then it's a corrective... good to ask these questions because life has changed so much; so just to recap, are we still a community? Maybe we can get back on track; maybe... or if not? Because if it becomes as commercial as it now is then I think volunteers are going to leave because what's the point then of volunteering for a commercial company?

We can conclude from the excerpts quoted above that ELTAs are dependent on outer support, for their CPD events, conferences, publications, and in other ways, and therefore they need a good relationship with these organisations. At the same time, it is always a question how much compromise leaders should take on or refuse. These examples can serve both as desired future images, having a harmonious relationship between the parties, working together for the professional benefit of EFL teachers, or they can appear as feared ELTA selves, feeling threatened by competition and rivalry.

4.5 Ought-to ELTA selves as opportunities for change or obstacles to improvement

ELTAs serve their members; this is a statement with which nobody would argue. But how ELTAs serve their members comes from the actual needs of the membership. Continuous contact with the members and reflection provide answers to these questions. Checking the needs of members or other EFL teachers gives immediate feedback for the leaders of ELTAs, and can provide new directions and future goals. It can be assumed that in many cases, after identifying problems through receiving feedback about difficulties, careful planning of goals and appropriate actions followed and resulted in developments in ELTAs. Additionally, in the case of outer expectations, certain needs and obligations had to be fulfilled; in this way an ought-to ELTA self had become internalised and was transformed into an ideal ELTA self. This is a manifestation of a new phase in the life of an ELTA, resulting from a shift from a social obligation (ought-to ELTA Self) to a future self-image (ideal ELTA self) and/or later to reality (actual ELTA self).

On an individual level leadership can be strongly connected to ought-to selves, as the initial selfless motivational drives of active volunteers in ELTAs can rapidly turn into expectations and obligations when these members take turns in office as leaders or task-holders. These moral obligations may match the leaders' previously held aspirations about the tasks and duties, and act as a positive motivator in the position they take on, but they can also be foreshadowed by the immediate social pressure one finds oneself in, and perceived as a negative hindrance. This is in line with Higgins' (1987) self-discrepancy theory, which explains the mismatch between the actual self and the desired future self and concerns attributes that one believes one ought to possess in order to meet expectations.

On an organisational level other ELTAs represent sought-after examples that the committee or the leaders feel they ought to comply with. These examples can be individual leaders or former committees on either a national level or in an international context. In the present study ELTA ought-to selves are coined in two forms: 1) "external ought-to selves", which represent expectations and requirements that derive from outer sources; and 2) "past ought-to selves" with demands and pressures radiating from the past, either from previous committees or other members of the community. Depending on the aspirations of the leaders of the ELTAs or the stage at which the ELTA is at a given time, the same constructs can operationalise either as ideal future images or ought-to selves if they appear as a demand from external sources. Let us take an example regarding publications, newsletters or bulletins (weekly or monthly publications sent to the members), magazines (written by teachers for teachers on pedagogical issues) or peer-reviewed journals for more academic articles or research papers. In an ELTA's life these publications need to be coordinated, edited, proofread, illustrated and printed or digitally prepared; many people are involved in the mechanism before the readers receive them, and moreover, they cost money, even if the majority of the participants are prepared to work voluntarily. Therefore, depending on the number of dedicated volunteers, some ELTAs have all of these publications, some have only a few and some ELTAs have none, to save money, effort and time. To illustrate this with a collaborative project, where some ELTAs work together, they can compare each other's activities and decide if the same activity is appealing to them and can function as a desired future state or it emerges as an unnecessary action that they would not like to identify with. However, in a worse case it can be an obligation that the project requires them to fulfil.

In the first instance, when an ELTA has all these publications, it refers to the actual ELTA self, although some time ago in the past the leaders were planning to have them, and

they possibly appeared one after another in the history of the organisation. Helen (FGI#1, p.9) recalled the memory in this way: “They [the editors] had a vision in 1995-96; at least she [referring to one of the editors] certainly had a vision how she wanted to have it; semi-academic publication which includes peer-reviewed articles.” And then Linda (FGI#1, p.10) added: “it [one of the publications] had the more academic articles. Then they were all peer-reviewed ... and the other remained the newsletter sort of thing.” Nonetheless, some ELTAs have no newsletter, no magazine and no peer-reviewed journal either. In one of the FGIs Angelina (FGI#P, p.12) referred to a collaborative project of three ELTAs, when “one of the ELTAs had no publications at all and the leaders of their ELTA said that they felt no necessity to provide one for their members. Then the project leader hit the table and said that each ELTA must take something on.” This case serves as an example for a negative external ought-to self, where the expectation is derived from an outer source and caused discomfort but did not serve as a motivational source to achieve something better.

In conclusion, on a closer examination of the reports by the participants in the FGIs regarding the history of their ELTAs a recurring pattern emerged. Even in the most successful times in ELTAs plenty of problems appear which set challenges for leaders in office. These challenges are connected to either new possibilities or skills in the form of positive solutions or can be failures, threats or dangers and cause negative tension. Encouragement, in whatever form it comes, helps overcome difficulties, set goals or plans and leads to action, whereas criticism hinders change and development. Someone else’s image might serve as an ideal example, but on the other hand, if externally identified goals are forced, it is difficult to cope with or live up to their expectations. These cases all demonstrate how difficult it is for leaders to comply with their own inspirations, outer expectations and fears. Moreover, their motivation is dependent on skills, experience and long-lasting motivation which can be at stake due to the offensive behaviour, either from previous committees or other members of the community. Yet, the ultimate aim is to nurture sustainable professional organisations, with a smooth flow of succession and continuous growth, both in numbers of members and quality of professional development. How to achieve this might pose a question for stakeholders. The next section delves into this topic.

4.6 Sustainability: Hope for the future or fear of the unknown?

A recurring pattern in the study is that the younger generation prominently expressed a strongly desired picture of ELTAs in which novice teachers, students and enthusiastic professionals take over the baton from the current leaders. This sub-theme emerged the most frequently, and strongly connected to Lamb’s (2012) concern to involve the young generation in the teaching profession, thus creating the strongest urge for sustainability, which was formulated by Claire (FGI#2, p.11): “the students, the young teachers definitely are the future” and Marco (FGI#1, p.28) asked: “How to engage our successes, the younger generation to become part of this wonderful operation? How can we awaken their interest in becoming volunteers and be part of such a nice professional organisation?” In each FGI this theme emerged in different ways, often referring to the same topic; Freddy (FGI#1, p.15) remembered one of their SIGs: “... and this takes me back to your initiative ... that was the ‘YETI’, the Young English Teachers’ Initiative. Pretty early on you tried to get young teachers and create a structure for it.” Stella (FGI#P, p.14) recalled the same in another FGI: “That was actually the first SIG in our ELTA. This was the only SIG that had existed before the 2005 conference. The YETI SIG.” Alison (FGI#3, p.14) in the excerpt below included legacy, succession and sustainability, referring to the future at the same time:

... sustainability of membership... that's why we are also very focused on students of English language at different departments around the country and we've been signing agreements of co-operations with English departments around the country so that we can actually have students as members but also as helpers at our events ... and that way we can grow the association; we need fresh blood. I want to have young and enthusiastic teachers of English that will take my ELTA into a new direction.

Another important emerging sub-theme was the fear of not managing to find successors; this is in accordance with the phenomenon of leaders who hold onto their positions for too long and are not able to let go. Some participants expressed their fear of leaving their leadership positions without knowing what the future holds, and therefore they hold on to their status, not being able to let their leadership roles go. This anguish came up again and again in the discussions, either in a question form, for instance from Mike (FGI#2, p.9): "You said you're tired... you've been involved in ... for how many years?" Both answers from Claire (FGI#2, p.9) and Sophie (FGI#2, p.9), "too many" and "far too many", indicated that it would be time to move on. Gertrude (FGI#P, p.12) identified emotional involvement as an explanation for this phenomenon:

I see the difficulty in letting things go; however organised an organisation is, it always depends on the personal commitment and the personal attachment of the people who are doing it. And if you are both fully committed and fully attached emotionally to a task, then it's very difficult to give it up.

In some ELTAs succession is secured by an automated mechanism with a clearly set rota of leadership positions and a predictable change as the result of elections, as Angela (FGI#2, p.1) recalled: "I was a board member for 6 years and now I'm on the supervisory board" and Lucy (FGI#2, p.2) explained: "After being a president I became the president of the supervisory board and I'm also on the conference organising committee." Francis (FGI#3, p.6) brings a very similar example: "I was elected Vice President in 2013-2014 and then I became president in 2015-2016. Once you finish being a president you become member of the advisory Council." Another area of concern which emerged from the analysis of the FGIs regarding the sustainability of committees and ELTAs is regarding transparency and the delegation of tasks among the committee members. In line with Lipton's (1996) statement, procedures, rules and transparency are important guidelines, otherwise unclear positions and unresolved conflicts can lead to insoluble problems in leadership. The same happens when certain task-holders do not share their expertise with others and keep their know-how to themselves. The sustainability of the ELTA is at stake, or as Underhill (2006) states: "it can be an excuse for limited vision" (p.66). The lack of transparency not only erects obstacles for running their ELTAs but can hinder the smooth transition between committees as well. Interestingly, having faced possible threats and fears, some solutions sprang up from the discussions for succession at the time of change-over, as seen in Mildred's (FGI#1, p.22) view:

One danger is that when there is a change-over, although it's just good to step back and let the people coming in do their own stuff. And the worst thing you can say: "Oh, I did that five years ago!" Because that really just takes away the excitement and people need to move on and let them discover it ... and then just let go...

This view was emphasised clearly in relationship with legacy and sustainability by the participating leaders, emphasised by Alison (FGI#3, p.14), recalling the results of the pilot leadership programme of IATEFL with other associations: “Currently committee members are at a certain age, they have other interests and they don’t have younger members to take over. That’s why I want to leave that legacy; to make my ELTA sustainable for as long as possible.” However, as a contrast, the fear of not finding successors triggers motivated behaviour and acts as a stimulus for action. The negative feared ELTA self could be interpreted as the springboard for action and serve as an example for the ideal ELTA self in the present for other ELTAs. The counterbalance of the ideal ELTA self, that is, the feared ELTA self has only strengthened the existence of this newly emerged theme, as Harold (FGI#3, p.13) said: “Then I reached the point and said: ‘Okay, what is going to be my legacy when I leave this association?’ Because that’s the problem; my greatest fear of all is what if it dies when I leave?” The counterweight of establishing and running successful ELTAs is the death of these organisations, something unimaginable for leaders, the greatest fear of all. Still, however inconceivable, in all four FGIs the case of the Austrian ELTA came up, causing real surprise, astonishment or even bewilderment among the participants, for instance, in Alison’s (FGI#3, p.14) claim: “the Austrian association of English language teachers is gone ... it doesn’t exist anymore and it’s sad to see an association fall apart”, or as Marco (FGI#1, p.23) encountered it:

Two years ago I went to Graz to their conference and it was the last ever conference of the Austrian association. I asked one of their leaders why it was dying out. And he said: “There is no interest any longer. Everything is accessible on the internet; and teachers believe that they have become so professional that there is no way forward...” I felt very, very sad, to be honest. And there is a real danger, even here, that this might befall us as well.

It appears that the reasons behind the decision of the Austrian ELTA, and these also emerged as concerns from the present focus group interview study, were the decrease in interest among EFL teachers, the lack of support for the ELTA and the recognition of a changing world with both the resources on the internet and the increasing presence of global English. Dörnyei (2005) claims that harmony between the ideal and ought-to self is just as necessary as offsetting the impact of the feared self. The feared ELTA self is a representation of everything that should be avoided and that causes discomfort or danger and serves as an additional motivational source to achieve better results and accomplish ideals. Running and sustaining ELTAs in the future is strongly connected to language teacher education pedagogy if we look at how language teachers act in the world as responsive meaning makers (Kubanyiova, 2015). As we have seen, legacy is a strong drive to motivate leaders for the sustainability of ELTAs. Those participants of the FGIs who are still in office gave voice to their own individual vision regarding the future of their ELTAs. Sustainability is connected to hope and anticipation or to despair and apprehension, with either a strong ideal ELTA self or a strong feared ELTA self, regarding leaders’ individual legacies. This can be such a strong motivational force that it inspires leaders to serve the members of their ELTAs and become change-makers for their societies.

5 Conclusion

This study aimed to unfold how leaders of English language teachers’ associations perceive the roles and purposes of their professional communities and view the past, present

and the future of their ELTAs. By investigating the mission and vision of ELTAs in the light of their success in their organisations, the study focused on leaders' views, based on their own professional background and experience of their past. The study has revealed that leaders of ELTAs not only aim to achieve their goals through continuously developing their own knowledge and skills and thus remaining effective teachers in their own profession, but at the same time they devote their time and energy to providing opportunities for other professionals to foster collaboration and co-operation to enhance their professional growth. The results proved that effective leadership is essential not only to establish these learning organisations but also to maintain them by offering a variety of high-quality CPD and an engaging community which teachers like to belong to and where they can meet regularly with other like-minded professionals, which is in line with Underhill's statement (2006), where they "can see the benefits and the creative influence of a professional mouthpiece that an association might bring" (p.64).

Additionally, the findings have proved that an ELTA's mission, that is, providing CPD to the members of the associations, is fulfilled in various ways: by organising conferences, editing newsletters and magazines and offering more online activities; personal contacts and mentoring were equally highlighted. Whether the aims are explicitly expressed in mission statements or goals or not, does not change the benefits ELTAs offer. Individual and shared visions were also explored, although the views of the participants on ELTAs' vision were divided and, in some cases, strongly questioned. Some stated that vision statements are empty words while others exclaimed that we need vision statements when motivation is decreasing, and some expressed the opinion that vision statements can work as inspiration for the future.

Having examined the possible self-theory of Markus and Nurius (1986) in mainstream psychology, Dörnyei's (2005) L2 Motivational Self System and Kubanyiova's (2009) possible L2 teacher self construct, the present study has approached the future dimensions of ELTAs in the same light and conceptualised the possible teachers' association self as a result of the investigation. It has been argued that ELTAs, just like learners or teachers, can have their own desired future selves and can have a transformational impact on education and society both through their practice and their learners' success. Participants' views on clear future vision in connection with changing times, recognition from educational authorities, striving for common goals, sharing values, accepting differences and other dreams are in line with Dörnyei's (2005) L2 Motivational Self System, and could be seen as an ideal ELTA self, as a desired future self-image of ELTAs' leaders. Another motivational self-construct, the "ought self" (Higgins, 1987) can be identified from the experiences of leaders in connection with outer pressures, duties, obligations, moral responsibilities or avoiding disappointing others, all of which are factors that can undermine creative leadership and lead to fatigue. Both the "external ought-to selves" and the "past ought-to selves" can act as positive or negative motivators. External ought-to selves can serve either as good examples to be looked upon and strived towards, for instance, the activities of another ELTA, conferences, CPD events, online presence or publications. With some encouragement these positive external ought-to selves can turn into desired future ELTA images. On the other hand, negative external ought-to selves might project rejection, denial or refusal, and can easily turn into apprehension or doubt if the goal seems too far or unachievable. A negative influence can be identified with past ought-to selves as well, with demands and pressures emanating from former committee members of the organisation, whereas positive examples from the past can act as stimuli for motivated behaviour to an individual, to a committee and on an ELTA level, too.

All those concerned in the different FGIs with the leaders of these ELTAs gave voice to their fear for the future of their communities, their legacy and all those negative examples that they aim to avoid. Having explored past experiences in establishing or passions for running ELTAs and their purposes in maintaining them, throughout all the discussions the participants expressed their vivid future self-image of their own ELTAs and ELTAs in general, and, as a counterbalance of these ideals, the threats and dangers to the existence and the maintenance of ELTAs foreshadowed by the feared ELTA Self.

It is outside the scope of this study to find general answers for the underlying motivation of leaders; still, the participants' insights have been essential for the conducted research. Beyond the limitations of the study, further research could be carried out to examine leaders' desires for action that is so determined that it lasts for many years. These investigations for long-lasting motivation could be done with the components of Directed Motivated Currents (Dörnyei, Henry & Muir, 2016) or other, context-related theories (Ushioda, 2009). It would also be interesting to see how leaders envisage their ELTAs in ten years' time. The conceptualisation of the possible teachers' association self in the present study has evolved as a novel data-based concept which may add a new layer to the self-theory framework in the field of applied linguistics and to the practice of language pedagogy. Teachers' associations are complex organisations, concerning their convoluted structures with constantly recurring issues. Their leaders' future self-image for their own professional communities, and through that for the global education scenario in a wider context, may lead to the hope of change in education and society at large.

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