



Section 1. Education system

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RAISING MOTIVATION OF UK PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN THROUGH EFFECTIVE TEACHING

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Abstract

This essay explores aspects of motivation and how best to motivate children through effective teaching; children may be highly motivated in some classes but lack a huge deal of motivation in others. Effective teaching can be used to raise achievement through raising motivation.

Keywords: *Educational Psychology; Motivational Psychology; UK Primary Education; UK Primary Educational Policy*

Introduction

In a mixed ability, mixed age class (Q14), a teacher may use various teaching styles and techniques aimed at motivating all the children – in contrast, a teacher may rely on a more fixed range of methods and display less enthusiasm for the profession; such an attitude may be reflected in the lack of motivation children display in class. There may be a number of children with behavioural problems, and behavioural problems may be caused due to the lack of motivation, as children may not be inspired by the teaching. Their lack of motivation and attitude may also be reflected in their class work and handwriting; the work will often be rushed, messy or incomplete if this is the case. This practice highlights the importance of motivating children through effective teaching and, by doing this, improving their learning.

What is motivation?

The concept of motivation was first noted by psychologist Fredrick Herzber in 1958. Motivation is a word derived from the Latin verb '*movere*' which means '*to move*'. It is used to refer to the reason or reasons behind an individual wanting to engage in a particular behaviour or having the will or desire to do something.

Applying the definition of motivation to learning, it is often described as a key aspect of effective learning in children, and it is also a source of important differences between each child (Leo and Galloway, 1996). However, increasing motivation in children depends on giving children more control over their learning, this can then foster greater self-confidence and increases the perceived relevance and interest of the academic work

undertaken by children. Furthermore, there is a considerable emphasis on the teacher being emotionally intelligent (Goleman, 1996) or skilled enough to identify the particular reason as to why a child is achieving (or not achieving).

Factors that contribute to low motivation

Kyriacou (1997) lists some of the factors that contribute to low levels of motivation in children as being: deficient levels of understanding in their thinking, poor self-confidence in a child, reluctance to apply the mental effort needed, or fear of failure. Many of the factors which Kyriacou has described may be apparent in classroom contexts.

According to Green (1994) motivation refers to the initiation, direction, intensity and persistence of human behaviour. He argues that individuals not only differ in their overall level of motivation, but individuals are motivated by different contexts in relation to them being either intrinsically or extrinsically motivated. Petri (1991) expanded on the notions of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation: he describes extrinsic motivation as a motivation connected to external factors; if applying this concept to children, it can refer to changing their behaviour by means of rewards – this is more commonly seen by the use of stickers etc for displaying good behaviour. Intrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is described as a motivation which is influenced by internal factors. Internal factors can be noted by children wanting to do something for fun; they enjoy doing an activity; or the children want to do it of their own volition. Deci and Ryan (1985) argue that intrinsic motivation is far stronger than extrinsic motivation; they attempt to justify reasons for intrinsic motivation being stronger by using the Cognitive Evaluation theory.

The Cognitive Evaluation theory places an emphasis on the individual evaluating a task in terms of how well the task meets their needs in order to feel competent and in control of their environment and circumstances. In terms of applying this to children, if they think they are able to complete a task they will be intrinsically motivated to complete the task requiring no external rewards. Furthermore, it is for this reason that any work, task

or activity undertaken needs to be at the correct level of each child, building on their own prior knowledge (Q25b); thus, it is important not to alienate children initially when setting up activities, keeping every stage of the lesson clear and level-appropriate (Q25d).

Hargreaves (1967) argues that children in lower ability groups can develop anti-social culture and teachers tend to form negative attitudes towards the children as they begin to resist school rules, while the more able accept school rules. The low ability pupils feel alienated and it is up to the teacher to raise the self-esteem of the children in their class; the teacher needs to make these children feel valued by directly motivating them and looking into their interests, or give them responsibility for their own learning; believing in a child can help raise their self-esteem. However, on the other hand if higher ability children are not developed or engaged appropriately at their level they can also begin to be disruptive in class, but disruptive behaviour may also be evident among lower-ability children.

Motivation and its effects on behaviour in children

Moving the discussion forward and a contrast to what Deci and Ryan (1985) have said above, Bem (1972) argues that children decide upon their own behaviour whether positive or negative from their own attitudes and feelings from watching themselves behave in various situations and the responses they get; hence, children's own perception motivates them to act and behave accordingly, and in reality, extrinsic or intrinsic motivation does not matter to children. However, this point can be questioned, as when a child receives attention for misbehaving or by being naughty, they carry on with their behaviour, especially if they receive no attention for being good – they carry on because no one expects anything different, so the motivation to be naughty is internalised and they voluntarily choose to be naughty. Thus, the internal motivation increases as they achieve their goal of being disruptive and gaining negative attention. Other factors such as peer reaction to poor behaviour are also a driving force for children to carry on misbehaving, as they are known for their silliness in class and enjoy the reputation and attention that this can bring.

One strategy to motivate children who have poor behaviour is to encourage extrinsic motivation to begin with, i.e. by setting up a system where children receive a smiley face on their chart, or a top tomato award, leading up to a weekly dip in the well-done bag at the end of the week (Q2). Where both types of motivations are missing, promoting extrinsic motivation initially, may have a positive impact on the children's behaviour; if this strategy is successful then it may help to internalise this motivation by asking children about what they have learnt from doing that piece of work. Perhaps before setting them an activity or task, explain to them clearly why they are doing this and how it will eventually build up to another task; (Q4) creating interest or curiosity in a piece of work before setting a task, where children have to find out or carry out research in pairs or by providing stimuli initially to get children involved.

In contrast to what has been discussed above about providing means of external motivation first, Sternberg and Lepper (1976) argue that it is very important that when using extrinsic motivation such as rewards etc., that children know that they are not doing a task or activity just for the reward – they argue that once the reward is removed children will cease to do the activity. So, there is a fine line, in creating extrinsic motivation as a foremost; consistency is necessary in rewarding positive behaviour when children are seen to be trying. Whole activities should not be based just on rewards; rather, rewards may be given when someone is seen to be trying hard.

In relation to the use of extrinsic motivation in the classroom, Kyriacou (1991) points out that, although intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are contrasted with each other, it is important to note that most tasks involve a mix of the two. Moreover, pupils may be high in their level of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation; this is perhaps where they find the task they are doing both interesting and, the success of writing about the topic will enable them to be rewarded for their efforts. He further discusses that problems affecting the less able children are often about them having experienced failure at school, this then builds up an emotional resistance to future effort to succeed, largely because it exposes them to further risk of failure.

These attitudes can be addressed by raising self-esteem in class, encouraging self-confidence and putting a stop to giggling in class when a child gets an answer wrong; instead, the child should be praised for trying and attempting (Q31).

Effective teaching as a means to raising motivation

The essence of effective teaching lies in the ability of the teacher to set up a learning experience which brings about the desired educational outcome (Burner, 1966). Motivating children requires effective teaching that can increase motivation and raise achievement.

Looking to the DfES (2004) website for a definition, effective teaching and learning is described as being directly linked to personalised learning; personalised learning for each child demands that strategies are put in place to develop the competence and confidence of every learner (Q10) by actively engaging children and stretching them. Personalised learning requires a range of whole class, group and individual teaching, promoting equality and inclusion in all aspects of teaching (Q19). This can be achieved by the use of ICT and various strategies to transmit knowledge, to instil key learning skills and to accommodate different paces of learning (Q25a).

The clear message in the DfES website, is personalised learning as a factor which contributes to increased motivation, where every child feels that they are learning and making progress – this is done through using various methods of assessment and other means, whereby, enabling each child to stretch and extend their own learning capabilities (Q26b). Unfortunately, this does not always occur with younger primary children.

Effective teaching is the foundation to successful learning in accordance to the learning objectives that have been set; these learning objectives should accommodate the needs of all the children in the class: in practice, effective teaching involves differentiating work in line with the National Curriculum, so that each child has a fair attempt at working at their own ability and level, as this increases their motivation to work hard (Q15). Dean (2005) highlights several factors in effective teaching that enable effective learning, they are as follows: an effective teacher knows

their children and cares for them, they are confident and ambitious, they are enthusiastic, they are supportive, they are clear in their presentation and match the level of children, they have high expectations, they maximise their time with children, keep children on task, there is active involvement in class, there is a clear structure and objectives are clear so children can work towards achieving them, effective teachers use questioning well, they give frequent feedback to children, they keep track of children's progress, they use homework effectively and they use varied teaching styles and techniques. However, Mortimore (1993) argues that even though teaching is an overt activity, the models that have been constructed fail to do justice to the complexity of the components and factors involved.

The factors which are clearly linked to motivation and require immediate attention in classroom practice are:

1. To have high expectations as a teacher, to motivate and enthuse the children.
2. To allow children an interactive/active approach to learning in class, so they are engaged and motivated.
3. To Use differentiation as a means of having achievable learning objectives for children which are neither below their level of understanding or too difficult but to build on their learning progressively, and ultimately increase their motivation.

Impact of high expectation on raising motivation

Having high expectations has a large influence on pupils' motivation (Q1) – Kyriacou (1997) argues that teachers clearly need to have expectations that match the ability of each child; however, he argues that expectations of teachers usually match the children's previous attainment targets and do not reflect what the child may be capable of producing. Subsequently, for children with low attainment and low levels of motivation, it is easy for teachers to expect less from these children. This can be said for more able children as well as they may remain unchallenged in their work. Unfortunately, this may be evident in some classes, where children are intentionally suppressed and kept at the same level for the ease of the teacher.

Similarly, Pilling and Pringle (1978) argue that low expectations about performance can easily trigger a mechanism whereby the performance drops to the level of the low expectations – this then filters into the children's thinking and attitude. Thus, children who are taught by teachers with low expectations then experience demoralisation; which can then regrettably lead to underachievement.

This detrimental effect on children's perception can be seen in some classes: children may expect very little of themselves and at every opportunity protest about how hard things are without even attempting the task at hand. Constant demoralisation may lead to disruption in class and behavioural problems, and such an attitude reflects Merton's self-fulfilling prophecy (1968) which again goes hand in hand in contributing to destroying the children's self-esteem.

Conversely, Bliss et al (1996) argue that when children receive encouragement for their progress, even if only part way along the learning path, learners will believe they are doing well. This sort of encouragement is needed to motivate children, and the impact of this is that children respond to the teacher positively and actively engage in what s/he is teaching, therefore, creating a purposeful learning environment which stimulates and motivates them (Q30).

Interactive/active learning and use of ICT to increase motivation

Every teacher has their own unique style of teaching; this stems from a blend of personality, experience, philosophy, aims and the particular context in which the teacher works (Dean, 2001). A teacher demonstrates their styles in activities they choose to undertake and this should reflect on the various learning modes in the classroom, with all teaching styles needing to be active and engaging, as this promotes active learning.

According to the DES (1985), "Active learning, gives a sense of purpose and success that enhances pupil's enjoyment, interest, confidence and a sense of personal worth. Passive learning and inappropriate styles can lead to frustration and failure."

Similarly, Festinger and Carlsmith (1959) argued that to encourage someone to believe or feel something about themselves, they

should first be encouraged to do it. Within Piaget's approach (1972) he argued that learning is the inevitable consequence of the individual's interaction with the environment, resultantly, any educational experience which requires pupils to interact in some way with the learning task in hand will result in some learning – with both approaches indicate that giving children a first-hand and a hands-on approach to learning is greatly desirable.

Some of the major characteristics associated with active learning strategies include: children being fully involved rather than just passively listening, children being engaged in creative activities (e.g., reading, discussing, writing as a class), and less emphasis placed on information transmission and greater emphasis placed on developing children's skills; greater emphasis placed on the exploration of attitudes and values, this aspect increases motivation in children, where children can receive immediate feedback from the teacher, and lastly, children are involved in higher order thinking skill (analysis, synthesis and evaluation) (McKeachie 1994)

The Constructivism theory (Piaget, 1953) argues that humans construct meaning from current knowledge structures and that constructivism is a description of human cognition which is often associated with pedagogic approaches that promote active learning, whereby learning is by 'doing'. Similarly, Bonwell and Eison (1991) argue that active learning is an umbrella term which refers to several models of instruction that focus the responsibility of learning on learners; this method of teaching children to be active learners is considered more effective than giving them direct instruction. Constructivism also focuses on the teacher being the facilitator; Adler (1982) argued that it is the process of discovery in which the learner is the main agent and not the teacher.

In criticism of the earlier constructivist models, Mayer (2004) argues that the term 'active learning' was developed from an earlier group of theorists who promoted discovery learning, which is inquiry-based learning that was popular in the 1960's. It is suggested that in such learning children are actively engaged, and they are more likely to recall information (Burner, 1961).

However, Kirscher, Sweller and Clark (2006) argue that it is not about children being behaviourally active during learning but rather cognitively active. They continue to critically argue that practicing procedural skills is a necessity for learning to be automated, but while these activities may be motivating for learning; these unguided situations can leave learners less competent than when they began the activity.

However, a balance needs to be maintained in teaching, as too much instruction can potentially leave children unmotivated, uninterested and bored; they switch off completely from the task, and then find unproductive ways to spend their time in class.

The importance of interactive learning is further described by Baker (1994) as the necessary and fundamental mechanism for knowledge acquisition and the development of both cognitive and physical skills. The notion that both theory and practice need to be interlinked from the start is seen as the way forward in teaching today; similarly, Alevent et al (2003) discuss the positive and significant influences of interactive learning on both behaviour and understanding, as the learner is fully engaged. Hence, children may behave better when they are fully emerged in a task, where they have the opportunity to take an active part in the activity.

The use of interactive learning, through speaking and listening, group work, projects, drama etc., in class, can give children a more holistic learning experience. The interactive element allows children the opportunity to explore the concepts or themes by themselves, hence introducing the idea of children being in control of their own learning.

Further still, Malone and Lepper (1987) talk about games as providers of intrinsic learning, they argue that the challenge of a task and curiosity remain the main motives behind the actual learning. Children understand the concept of interactive learning through playing video games – these games tend to hold the user's attention by interactive features. The use of ICT in class gives access to children by bringing their ideas alive; the age of internet is the key factor in making this type of learning natural and accessible to children (Kafai, 1999). Children get both educational and recreational value from this

type of learning (Bobick et al, 1999); thus, interactivity in this way forms the foundation of informed learning.

Interactive learning also appeals to all different learning modes in children, which include: auditory, kinaesthetic and visual learners, since the interactive interface of using ICT allows impact on various senses. Leask and Pachler (2005) argue that interactive resources engage sight and sound which can increase pupil's attention and interest further, facilitating highly motivated learning.

Differentiated teaching as a means to raising motivation and raising self-esteem

The third factor of great importance is the idea of having clearly differentiated learning objectives and tasks to enable children to feel that they are achieving – this in turn has a direct impact on their levels of motivation and self-esteem. In order to meet the diverse learning needs of children, Webster (1995), argues that differentiation is about maximising learning for all children, by taking account of their individual differences in learning style, interest, motivation and aptitude, and reflecting these variations in the classroom.

Webster's argument highlights that differentiation is all about creating equal opportunities in learning for children, thus, effective differentiation promotes effective learning, which in turn builds confidence, which raises motivation, and, consequently, raises achievement. This is why it is extremely important that differentiation of work needs to be targeted to raise the motivation of children who see themselves as being less able; it is about helping them to develop their skills and motivating them to believe that they can achieve.

The best way to meet pupils' different learning needs is to deliver the curriculum in a number of different ways: firstly, to understand that differentiation is seen as the vehicle

by which skills, concepts and knowledge are presented to children in a way that is accessible to them, secondly, by presenting a range of varied and creative tasks at different levels. The reason for this is that it ensures the maximum amount of pupil involvement, i.e.; pupil planning, pupil involvement, pupil assessment and pupil decision making (Spillman, 1991). All these above factors can contribute to high levels of motivation, where children take ownership of their own learning.

Conclusion

Motivation is affected by many factors in a classroom; only a few of the factors related to motivation have been discussed here. However, the factors discussed can aid in motivating children in the classroom, and changing the culture of a classroom where children feel negative about learning, which requires the adoption of interactive/active learning approaches; this will empower children to get involved, allow them to engage fully and motivate them in their learning, and, in turn, raising achievement.

Instilling high expectations and expecting more from the children may be challenging to begin with, but developing classroom resources can give children a reason to try in their work; by giving them a positive incentive to behave and work hard. For example, glittery stars can be given to each child for sitting well during carpet time, leading to a reward at the end of the week; planning should ensure that work is differentiated in accordance to the abilities of the children; children should be encouraged to develop a 'try and have a go' attitude, where it is okay to make mistakes and all participants are learners; making a few changes during carpet time may dramatically change the behaviour of the children; mini exercise activities can also be introduced between sessions so that children understand the reward of making an effort and working hard, thus increasing their motivation.

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Appendix: Standards

- Q1. Have high expectations of children and young people including a commitment to ensuring that they can achieve their full educational potential and to establishing fair, respectful, trusting, supportive and constructive relationships with them.
- Q2. Demonstrate the positive values, attitudes and behaviour they expect from children and young people.
- Q4. Communicate effectively with children, young people, colleagues, parents and carers.
- Q10. Have a knowledge and understanding of a range of teaching, learning and behaviour management strategies and know how to use and adapt them, including how to personalise learning and provide opportunities for all learners to achieve their potential.
- Q14. Have a secure knowledge and understanding of their subject/curriculum areas and related pedagogy to enable them to teach effectively across the age and ability range for which they have been trained.
- Q15. Know and understand the relevant statutory curricula and frameworks, including those provided through the National Strategies, for their subjects/curriculum areas, and other relevant initiatives applicable to the age and ability range for which they are trained.

- Q19. Know how to make effective personalised provision for those they teach, including those for whom English is an additional language or who have special educational needs or disabilities, and how to take practical account of diversity and promote equality and inclusion in their teaching.
- Q25(a). Use a range of teaching strategies and resources, including e-learning, taking practical account of diversity and promoting equality and inclusion.
- Q25(b). Build on prior knowledge, develop concepts and processes, enable learners to apply new knowledge, understanding and skills and meet learning objectives.
- Q25(d). Demonstrate the ability to manage the learning of individuals, groups and whole classes, modifying their teaching to suit the stage of the lesson.
- Q26(b). Assess the learning needs of those they reach in order to set challenging learning objectives.
- Q30. Establish a purposeful and safe learning environment conducive to learning and identify opportunities for learners to learn in out-of-school contexts.
- Q31. Establish a clear framework for classroom discipline to manage learner's behaviour constructively and promote their self-control and independence.

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