

A MODEL FOR MOTIVATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper will argue that teachers cannot directly motivate but can provide opportunities for achievement that will be motivating. A two dimensional model will be offered as a means of examining the conditions that encourage self-efficacy and self-improvement. While the model is being implemented in an Education Authority within Scotland and is now available in the public domain (McLean, 2003), it is discussed here in theoretical terms as a means of engaging in the debate surrounding motivation. This paper will:

- argue that optimal motivation comes from self via four internal motivation drivers;
- offer a two dimensional model that can be used to examine practice
- suggest that effective teaching can positively influence learner motivation.

INTRODUCTION

Evidence would suggest that current practices in some schools serve to disempower and demotivate learners (Solomon and Rogers, 2001). Over dependency on external reward systems along with an insufficiently challenging curriculum can result in undesirable behaviour and underachievement.

Pupil management in Britain's schools was dominated until the 1980's by punitive systems of behaviour control. Although replaced by a system of paper punishments the predominant philosophy of corrective punishment prevailed. By the late 1990's most school initiatives involved positive reward based approaches to pupil management (The Elton Report, 1989; SEED 2002). Forty years of research (Docking, 1987; Johnstone and Munn, 1987; Brophy, 1999) has established that authoritative teaching is based upon preventative skills, including setting a warm climate where pupils feel valued and secure, high expectations and standards, and consistency. It also requires control skills covering both assertive strategies that lead to compliance, albeit grudging, and positive strategies that enlist a more willing compliance. The trend in practice has moved from a reactive punitive approach to a reactive positive, albeit corrective approach. The control model still dominates our thinking and practice. Teachers exert most of the effort and still predominately 'do things to' and 'for' pupils rather than with them. For self-directed behaviour to be embraced however, schools need to provide the lightest of touch and the least restrictive structures necessary.

Despite this history of emphasis on behaviourist approaches there has been a recent shift in the rhetoric being used at national level, words like: self-regulation, self-discipline, self-esteem and self-efficacy have become embedded in the discourse. In England and Wales the Education Act (1997) and in Scotland the Discipline task groups (SEED 2001) both encouraged *self-discipline* in schools. However an increased awareness of the importance of citizenship and the active role that young people should play in society (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2002; Crick Report, 1998) would appear to have led to a perceptible lack of harmonisation between the prominence given to young people by schools and that given by society. This move towards a more autonomous group of young people who are self-motivated has left the traditional structures of compliance and control in disarray. The OECD report (2001) looking at "future schools" suggests that *there may now be developments*

in train that will force disruption to the status quo. Among the most important of these factors are the growing power of learners and parents as "consumers"; the impact of ICTs in eroding established school and classroom boundaries; and a potential crisis of teacher supply (OECD, 2001, page 124). The model discussed in this paper suggests that schools need to close this gap and evolve from a control and compliance culture to a new phase involving greater emphasis on self-motivation. We need to encourage young people to invest more in themselves, to become the architects of their own learning.

This paper will:

- argue that optimal motivation comes from self via four internal motivation drivers;
- offer a two dimensional model that can be used to examine practice
- suggest that effective teaching can positively influence learner motivation.

OPTIMAL MOTIVATION COMES FROM THE SELF

McCombs (1993), in citing previous studies, argues that learners of all ages *are naturally quite adept at being self-motivated and at directing and managing their own learning on tasks they perceive as interesting, fun, personally meaningful or relevant in some way* (McCombs, 1991, 1993, 1994, on line). This idea that human beings have an innate desire to learn is not new. A fundamental theme running through a holistic constructivist approach to learning is that integrity is a primary characteristic of the human mind. As such, people are always learning and always want to learn (Poplin, 1988). A key issue for schools would appear to be how they can sustain and develop the motivation to learn that children bring with them to school.

A starting point might be to consider what drives motivation in the first place. Having identified these 'motivation drivers' we will then explore how a school can offer opportunities for these to be influenced positively. Four motivation mindsets (McLean, 2003) can be identified:

- ideas about ability
- interpretations of progress
- attitudes to achievement mind-sets
- self-efficacy beliefs.

Ideas about ability

Learners build up theories about life in order to make sense of their world. From these theories learners create a meaning framework that leads them to interpret events that happen in their world in particular ways. It is these meaning frameworks that dictate the extent to which learners become vulnerable or robust in the face of setbacks and challenges and in this way have a direct link to motivation. These theories and subsequent meaning frameworks are formed almost entirely from the realm of personal experience and as such have been variously described as *folk theories* (Bruner, 1996) or *structures of feeling* (Gibson, 1984). Whilst these meaning frameworks are impacted by a number of outside influences, it is the relationship between particular frameworks and learning with which this paper is concerned. To that end, one of the most important theories that a learner can develop, and which heavily influences their meaning framework at school, is related to intellect.

From an early age learners start to evaluate their own abilities and so build up a personal theory relating to intelligence. The evaluation data that helps them to do this comes from three sources:

- through comparison with others
- through feedback from significant others
- through interactions within their own particular contexts.

According to Dweck (1995) there are two, very different, types of theory related to intellect that can be identified: entity and incremental.

‘Entity theorists’ believe that intelligence is fixed and, although they believe that individuals can learn new information, they also believe that this will not alter their overall intelligence level. Thus, learners adhering to the entity theory may explain their failure in terms of lack of ability rather than lack of effort. Choh Sse Yee and Ling (2001) suggest that entity theorists are *more likely to react helplessly in the face of failure and show negative feelings* (2001, on line).

On the other hand, ‘incremental theorists’ *focus more on behavioural factors as the causes of failure and they view intelligence as something that can be cultivated through effort. Setbacks motivate them to continue to work toward mastery of the tasks* (Choh Sse Yee and Ling, 2001, on line).

The work of Dweck and Leggett (1988) suggests that when learners are faced with failure they respond in particular ways depending on the theory of intelligence that they hold. Entity theorists are performance orientated and perceive failure as a direct result of their lack of ability. Incremental theorists are mastery orientated and perceive failure as a direct result of their lack of effort. Thus learner motivation is affected differently by the experience of failure depending on the theory of intellect that is held. Learners who are mastery orientated may be highly motivated by failure because they are more likely to believe that, if they simply try harder, the task can be achieved.

Interpretations of progress

Learners interpret their progress by assimilating into their meaning frameworks the reasons that others attribute to their success or failure at a task. These will influence their competency beliefs. Eventually these attributions become personal and help to influence the development of their own, very personal, theory of intelligence. There are a number of factors that are attributed to success or failure such as; prior achievement, ability, effort, poor teaching, the difficulty of the task, ‘luck’, help or hindrance from others, mood, health, interest and/or fatigue. The two that we are most concerned with here are related to ability and effort.

Personal theories about intelligence are inextricably linked to the shaping of attributions. Individual beliefs about the causes of success and failure are the basic building blocks of achievement related behaviour (Weiner, 1974; de Charms, 1968). The way that individuals make sense of their world comes down to perceptions that, in the end, are highly personal and subjective. For example, the accuracy of an attribution is not important for it to have consequences. In other words learners may be mistaken in attributing failure to lack of ability but the consequences of such an attribution are still motivationally damaging.

In addition, learners are more likely to be conscious of their attributions when a situation is relatively new, unexpected, of great interest or importance or when the outcome is negative. It is in these circumstances that learners begin to wonder about the causes of the failure or success: did I fail because I did not try hard enough or because I am not able? Such attributions are rich in meaning. They can provide a window into the learner’s biases, predict future behaviour, frame the learner’s problems and help to shape their personal goals and solutions (Dweck and Sorich, 1999).

However, personal beliefs are not the only influence on the attributions learners make to success or failure. Situational factors are also likely to influence how success or failure is interpreted and, ultimately, can help to influence the personal beliefs

that are held. These situational factors include specific information about a task (in particular task difficulty) and teacher feedback.

Attitudes to achievement mind-sets

Achievement attitudes are an integrated set of beliefs that influence how an individual responds to or approaches a learning situation. Such attitudes give meaning and purpose to learning activities since they involve different ways of thinking about oneself, the task and the outcomes. Some learners may see a particular learning situation as a test of their ability while others may see it as an opportunity for learning and improvement. These responses, or achievement behaviours, represent different ideas about success and failure and, as a result, very different reasons for engaging in learning situations emerge. Achievement behaviours are directed at either developing or demonstrating ability.

Some pupils adopt a mastery (sometimes called learning or self-improvement) orientation (Dweck, 1996; Choh Sse Yee and Ling, 2001; McLean, 2003). These 'go for it kids' engage in learning situations in order to accomplish something challenging and gain understanding or insight. Their main goal is to learn and increase their skills. They define success in relation to their own progress, are active learners and process tasks at a deep level. For children who have adopted a mastery orientation, effort is seen as leading to success: the greater the effort, the greater the success. They cope well with failure as this is treated as a necessary part of the learning process.

In contrast a performance (sometimes called competitive or self-promotion) orientation (Dweck and Leggett, 1988; Dweck, 1996; McLean, 2003) represents a focus on relative ability and how others will judge ability. The main goal is to perform well and to show capability of a particular skill. Pupils with this orientation define success in relation to others and the desire to show that they are smarter than others dominates. They have a tendency to become passive learners who process tasks at a superficial level. For learners with a performance orientation it means doing better than others or being successful with little effort. Mistakes and failure suggest low ability. In the same way too much effort would be viewed as an indicator of lack of ability and thus something to be avoided.

These two attitudes are not mutually exclusive of each other. Both goals are natural, necessary and universal and so a mixture of mastery or performance goals might in fact maximise motivation (Barron and Harackiewicz, 2001). There are however, two problems associated with performance attitudes. First, proving one's ability can take too much prominence and force out learning goals. Second, a performance attitude becomes problematic when it is coupled with perceived low competence and so may lead to behaviours related to self-worth protection. In other words they attempt to 'cover up' what they perceive as lack of ability by using self protection tactics such as becoming the 'class clown' or refusing to do set work because it may lead to failure.

Self-efficacy beliefs

Self-efficacy is perhaps the most important internal driver. Tuckman (1999) argues that *the attitude that is often used in conjunction with motivation to achieve, is self-efficacy* (on line). Bandura (1997) contends that self-efficacy plays a major role in the extent to which individuals can produce crucial results in their lives. Interestingly work on self-efficacy spans a range of disciplines and Pajares (1997) reports that it has received *support...from diverse fields...such as addiction, depression, assertiveness and pain control* (1997, on line). In recent years educational research has developed a keen interest in this area of study (Pintrich and Schunk, 1996), particularly in relation to motivation. However, the impact of self-efficacy research findings on practice, has not always been fully developed. In addition exploration of the relationship between

teacher self-efficacy and pupil self efficacy may also contribute to the debate and is worthy of consideration. This model allows us to consider the place of self-efficacy in relation to other important internal drivers.

Self-efficacy, it could be argued, will impinge on:

- the effort we expend on a task
- the choices we make
- how long we persevere with a task
- when we embark upon difficulties
- how we feel.

According to Bandura,

The evidence is relatively consistent in showing that efficacy beliefs contribute significantly to level of motivation and performance. They predict not only the behavioural changes accompanying different environmental influences but also differences in behaviour between individuals receiving the same environmental influence, and even variation within the same individual in the tasks performed and those shunned or attempted but failed.

(Bandura, 1997, p 61)

Self-efficacy in fulfilling goals that help us realise important aspects of our ideal self is particularly useful in generating positive feelings about the self. The value of an educational experience is the extent to which it fulfils the pupil's goals. Feelings towards goal attainment are determined by whether or not our actual self matches our desired self. When we fulfil the goals about who we ideally want to be we get a 'buzz' and feel good. It is even better if our goals are achieved in the context of the highest possible challenge and skill level. Just having high efficacy however is not enough to ensure true self-esteem and intrinsic motivation; these efficacy expectations must be accompanied by a sense of autonomy (Deci and Ryan, 1991).

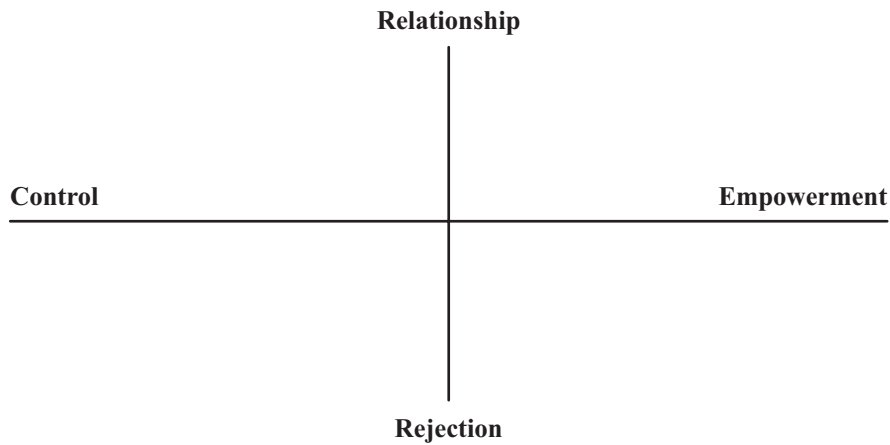
The four motivational mindsets (ideas about ability, interpretations of progress, achievement attitudes and self-efficacy beliefs) are closely interrelated. Learners' ideas about ability, interpretations of progress, achievement attitudes and their resultant self-efficacy interact to create their motivational profile. It could be argued that the primary cause of educational disaffection is repeated attribution of failure to stable, internal, uncontrollable and global factors that suggests failure is inevitable. Pupils with a strong performance attitude and low competency beliefs are especially vulnerable to a spiral of failure avoidance. However, while these uncontrollable and global factors exist, this model is concerned with the facets of learning that teachers can influence, change and contribute towards.

A TWO DIMENSIONAL MODEL OF MOTIVATION

The model offered has, as its cornerstone, the notion that the source of motivation is internal to the self and that motivation will flourish when the classroom is sensitive to and can positively influence the internal drivers.

Two dimensions impact on learners' internal motivation mindsets: the empowerment dimension and the relationship dimension (see diagram 1). Each dimension represents a continuum containing four distinct stages. Each stage describes an aspect of classroom culture. In addition each stage impacts differently on learners' internal motivation mindsets. The empowerment dimension moves from excessive power assertion, controlled by the teacher, to one where the learners are empowered to take control of their own learning. The relationship dimension moves from one where learners feel rejected and worthless to one where they feel affirmed and valued.

Diagram 1: The intersection of the two dimensions



Ideally all the components work in concert and are directed towards the same consistent and coherent outcomes.

The relationship dimension is characterised mainly by two features of classroom practice: engagement and feedback. First, engagement tells learners how the teacher views them as people and refers to the quality of the relationships between the teacher and the learners as well as the relationships between peers within the class. The level of engagement that can be achieved is closely related to the teacher's willingness to understand and get to know learners. Second, feedback tells learners how well they are doing via information about what went well and the qualities that they demonstrated that contributed to progress. Like engagement, feedback requires that teachers get to know their learners well. Affirmation is achieved when teachers know the pupils well and communicate that they value them as people as well as their efforts in learning. An affirming approach alone, however, is not enough to influence the internal motivation drivers.

The intersection of the two dimensions creates classroom 'types' (see diagram 2). Chaos and loneliness are perhaps two of our greatest fears. We strive to avoid loneliness through intimacy with and approval of others (affirmation). We strive to avoid chaos through autonomy and power or influence over our lives (empowerment).

Two external drivers within classroom life produce the empowerment dimension: structure – the amount of explicit information available in the classroom about how to achieve the desired outcomes; and stimulation – motivating activities that involve achievable and appropriate goals and stretch pupil skill level while permitting control.

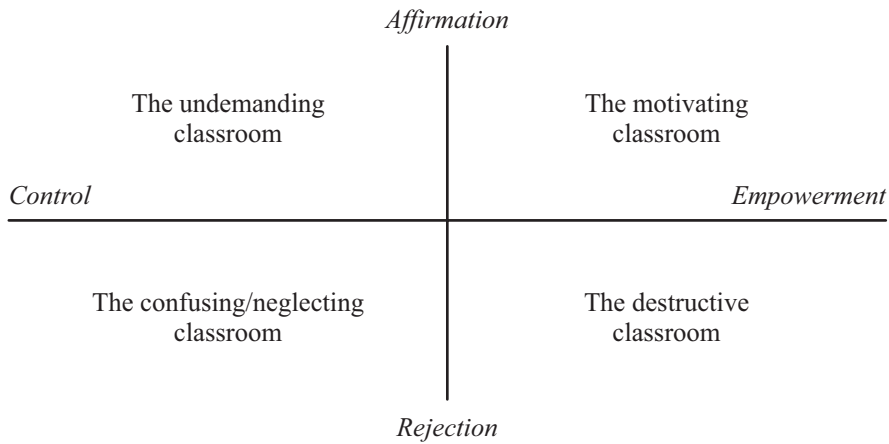
However, an empowering approach alone is not enough to motivate pupils. Therefore the affirmation dimension intersects the empowerment dimension. There is clearly an overlap between the dimensions and drivers. For example, there are empowering aspects of feedback such as giving praise to encourage rather than control or allocating responsibility not blame. Similarly there can be affirming qualities of stimulation such as optimal challenge that enhances one's sense of self.

The model has as its cornerstone the principle that the source of motivation is internal to the self and will flourish when the classroom is sensitive to and can meet pupils' needs. Children are intrinsically motivated to meet their needs for stimulation and self-determination (empowerment) and involvement with and approval of others and a sense of accomplishment (affirmation).

The dimensions of the model are interdependent contributors to pupil motivation. Ideally all the components work in concert and are directed towards the same consistent

and coherent outcomes. From this model we can see how the two dimensions intersect to form a quadripartite model thus creating four classroom types.

Diagram 2: Four Classroom Types



Particular features within a classroom represent each of these classroom types or drivers. The undemanding classroom will be epitomised by being:

- over protective
- passive
- undemanding
- restrictive
- offering praise for easy work
- communicating pity.

The destructive classroom will be one where there are low expectations. There will be forced learning. There is likely to be a chaotic and oppressive atmosphere. Personal blame will be the order of the day and 'plastic' praise will be awarded. In other words, it is praise that just looks like the real thing. In the confusing or neglecting classroom competition will be encouraged. Pupils will have to prove themselves. Things will be uncertain and when praise is given out it will be contaminated and non-contingent. In contrast to all of these there is the motivating classroom. Key characteristics featured in this room will include:

- trust
- autonomy
- creativity
- responsiveness
- a sense of being valued
- self improvement
- clarity
- consistency
- personal success
- encouragement.

Teachers cannot directly motivate pupils to achieve but they can influence how pupils motivate themselves by setting up optimal conditions — the external drivers — which in turn influence the internal motivation mindsets.

DISCUSSION

While life is not as neatly segmented as these models may suggest, it does allow discussion about how the teacher role might evolve as a class matures and as such provides a useful tool for examining and critically analysing practice. The model is essentially about the possible change and development of the teacher/class relationship from control and domination to empowerment.

Despite an historical emphasis on behaviourist approaches there has been a recent shift in the rhetoric being used at national level, words like: self-regulation, self-discipline, self-esteem and self-efficacy have become embedded in the discourse. In Scotland the Discipline Task Group (SEED 2001) encourage *self-discipline* in schools. Better Behaviour, Better Learning (SEED, 2001) indicates a clear commitment to positive discipline through rewards and sanctions. This is encouraging and links well to the notion of motivation. However, there is a failure in the documentation to discuss the relationship between behaviour management, no matter how 'positive', and engagement with learning.

The model offers an opportunity for teachers to reflect on learning and motivation for all and not just specific groups of pupils. Herein may lie a difficulty. The model is built on the premise that the source of motivation is internal to the self. If this is true for the learners in our schools then it is true for teachers working in our schools. For some schools implementing such a model would mean a radical change in practice. McCombs (1994) argues that,

What teachers believe about learners, learning and teaching can predict practice only to the degree that the context and policies of their school support these beliefs rather than interfere with them.

(McCombs, 1994, p 51)

The Scottish school context in 2004 is one in which targets, national tests and league tables have become all important in the drive to raise attainment. To ensure a 'good rating' in the league tables schools in Scotland have become very focused on test results. If the consequence of this is a narrowing of choice, a greater disregard for empowerment and tighter control for teachers and pupils then it could be that, as McCombs (1994) suggests, *schools are actually working against helping learners want to learn and self regulate their learning* (page 67). In an effort to motivate pupils, they are, in fact, being actively demotivated. This demotivation is true not only for pupils. In an era where teachers perceive there is more and more control from and accountability to government then they in turn will become demotivated.

The model also offers an opportunity for staff to reflect on the kind of learning environments they create and how these impact on the motivation of pupils. Schools also need to consider the kind of learning environment in which teachers work. The motivating school is one where the staff: know that management feels positive about them, where the school is going, what the priority goals are, what they are doing well and how they can improve. The motivating school has an affirming ethos that encourages among staff self improvement, autonomy and a sense of relatedness. The climate facilitates involvement with and approval of others, peer group support and role models as an integral part of school life. Continuous professional development should be a great 'liberator' for staff, motivating them to cope more confidently with change. Child centred teaching needs teacher centred management, and management at all levels needs to treat teachers in the same way as they rightly expect teachers to treat their pupils.

CONCLUSION

While undoubtedly tensions and issues exist within our education system, this model offers a way of examining these and highlights possible changes in practice that might move schools from control to empowerment and thus towards the source of motivation that is internal to the self. Integral to the model is the importance of learning. The model not only considers ways of engaging young people with meaningful learning experiences but also allows teachers to view themselves as learners too. This is crucial if our schools are to become true learning communities. Pajares asserts that *researchers and school practitioners should look to students' self-beliefs about their academic capabilities, for they are important components of motivation, self-regulation and academic achievement* (1997, on line). This model offers a starting point for examining current practice in schools ensuring that a *boundless love of learning, natural curiosity, motivation to learn and explore their worlds and an initial excitement about school* (McComb, 1994, page 68) continue into adult life, resulting in life long learning.

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