

How do the teachers
think they foster a
desire for lifelong
learning in the child...



I am going to focus on the motivation of children, looking at how to improve it in the classroom. It is important at this point to explain what I mean by motivation. I think that motivation is when children feel that they have a purpose and a need for doing work; they also enjoy their work and are enthusiastic about their learning. I think that children will then have an ambition to do well and have pride in the work they do. This would then be stimulated and encouraged by the teacher. I believe that this then helps then to gain more confidence about their learning and achieve better results in class.

I searched for a dictionary definition to clarify the term “ Motivation”. It states that it is ‘ a basis for an action or a decision’ something that encourages’ and ‘ something that causes and encourages a given response’. To me these definitions offer a number of words to encompass the word ‘ motivation’. Such words as ‘ desire’ ‘ inspiration,’ ‘ incentive,’ and ‘ motive,’ all of which I feel are important within learning.

I agree with Wlodkowski and Jaynes(2000) description of ‘ motivation’ “ Motivation to learn is a value and a desire for learning— this means the child is not only willing to learn but also cherishes and enjoys the act of learning, as well as the outcome of learning. ” Before I begin to address the main issues within my assignment I feel it is impotent to look at the context I have found myself in. My school is situated in Manchester. It is inner city school. The area appears to be poor and deprived. Most of the children in my class live within the school locality.

The school is currently performing below average in comparison with other schools, but has made improvements since 2003. The subjects that have improved include Numeracy, which was supported by the Education Action Zone and Manchester Education partnership. I. T has also been addressed and has improved through the addition of laptop computers and daily use of the computer suite. The school has not got on OFSTED report available on the internet so I could not view the information about the school.

I took an interest in what the school's aims were. I felt this would give me general information in regards to how they intended the school to run. The report states, ' We aim to provide: A curriculum, which meets the needs of all children, by maximizing potential and developing their skills to become individual, lifelong learners' and A stimulating, purposeful and purposeful and peaceful environment in which to work and play. ' (Government Annual Report 2006: 6) I wondered whether this was actually the practice of the school or comments supported by the teacher's in order to satisfy expectation from parents. I found myself in a similar situation during my last placement in a school in Manchester. Both my previous and current schools are located in poor areas and it seems to be that poor motivation of the children is a recurring issue.

As it is a lower achieving school, it appears that some of the children are more disadvantaged in their skills and abilities. I feel that this may have a negative effect, as children need some academic and practical skills to find the subjects interesting and to fully enjoy the lessons. This interest and willingness to learn will hopefully result in ' motivated children'. This is also driven by the fact that children need to be motivated first.

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As I find myself in these different contexts I realize that the standard guides for QTS alone don't deal with each varied context in schools. They provide an idealistic view of what's achievable and must be adapted to suit each school. In order to develop as a teacher, I must therefore adapt my teaching in order to suit the setting, ethos, and learning styles of the individual children. I have been placed in the year 3/4 class that is class of 23 pupils.

There are three pupils who are Asian and two girls from the Czech Republic. The three year 4 children who have been placed in the class all have special needs. There are also 3 children who misbehave and are disruptive within the classroom, one of whom has been sent to the year 5 class for a period of a few weeks. The parents are interested in their children's learning but do not take a huge active role within the school or children's learning at school. I think this is probably reflected in their home environment also.

I feel that parents have a large part to play in helping to promote 'motivation' with their children, especially in their feelings towards school. Some of them are hostile towards the teacher; others have difficulty as English is their second language. This therefore causes problems with communicating with the teacher. I think this may influence their children's attitudes towards learning in this environment and this may have an effect upon their motivation.

An example of this was when the teacher in the class tried to initiate a conversation with a parent of the pupils. The parents walked past and ignored the comment from the teacher. If there is little rapport between home and school. This makes it very difficult for the child to have a positive

outlook of learning in school. This brings me to a quote from Juvonen and Wentzel (2000) " Supportive teacher-child relationships may motivate children to become jmore involved or engaged in the school environment" (Juvonen, J and Wentzel, K. R 2000: 210) I agree with this statement.

I believe that this is an important factor; good relationships along with support would help to encourage young children's learning and performance in school. I began looking closer at the situation I had found myself in and started thinking about my focal concern in relation to the class. When I went into the room I noticed that the teacher had an active approach with the children, asking then questions and suggesting feedback, which seemed to encourage the children to interact well within the lesson. An example of this was when the teacher said, " What do you think about the ending of story, Anna? And " could you tell me how you came up with that answer" Ben? " this encouraged a response from the child, which is hopefully followed by active participation from the child. I found this an enjoyable and effective form of teaching.

I did, however notice that after this immediate interest from the children they did seem to lack motivation once these probing questions ceased. I also noticed that they are not differentiated by ability, apart from having the brighter children on the middle table. The other children are placed on tables surrounding them, with the boys who are disruptive at the front. The teacher arranged it like this because he believed it would retain the attention of those who were misbehaving at the front.

He also felt that the interaction from the high ability groups would encourage the others to become more engaged in the lesson. I have questioned whether this good classroom lay out if it is to promote motivation and improve learning? Because of this seating arrangement the lower ability children may not feel valued and as a result think their ideas and work are of a 'poorer standard'. The teacher uses the support workers to help and assist the lower achievers in the class. This seems to help the children remain focussed and motivated. It was when working with the lower ability children that I noticed that they didn't seem to be motivated or interested in completing their work. An example of this is when one child in the class said, "I feel ill, I can't be bothered to do this work".

I replied by saying "Why not? He said "because I can't be bothered, why do we have to do this stuff? (Pointing to his work). I wanted to explore this further so I said, "Why do you think"? He said shrugging his shoulders "I don't know". This seemed that he lacked aim and purpose. This wasn't a 'one-off' comment; it was also reflected in the attitudes of others in the class. I wondered whether this was a result of little differentiation in the class and whether it occurred with both the lower and higher achievers.

This may be one of the factors but it will also be a result of a number of other influences. I began thinking about these influential factors. It could be because a child has a poor relationship with the teacher. As Juvonen and Wentzel (2000) state, "A conflictual teacher-child relationship may be related to children becoming disengaged or uninvolved or may foster a feeling of alienation and loneliness." (Juvonen, J and Wentzel, 2000) This

then made me think about the effect of a relationship between parent and child at home.

Their parents may have a negative attitude towards schooling or with the teacher. This may have an impact on the children's feelings of school. I now feel at this point that I need to gain some feedback and views from the teacher. I joined a discussion with the teacher and support worker. I took an immediate interest as they were talking about the individuals from the group I had observed as 'de-motivated' in the class. One of the groups is regarded as having a sharing SEN so the worker has devised an IEP for her.

They described how enthusiastic she was at learning and how she always seemed keen to work. Another boy they spoke of was a boy from the group I am focusing on. The teacher said, "He's just a difficult boy, he's genuinely likeable but is extremely lazy, he always seems so tired and can't be bothered to do his work. I wonder if his parents' got him to bed earlier that he might be more able to complete the work in the lesson the following day." From this comment I felt that the teacher realized motivation was an issue but he expressed it in a different way to me. It may mean that our perceptions of the situation are not the same and this may mean we would approach the concern differently.

I have also noticed that the group also seems less motivated in class when they are set work to do independently. They daydream, work slowly, talk to one another and need to be constantly told to stay on task. They sometimes get distracted because of the three boys who create a more chaotic atmosphere in the class as a result of their behaviour. Also, some of the

children don't seem to have the confidence to complete work on their own and they often copy each other's work. This may be because the children 'get away with it' in the lesson and as a result are used to doing this.

As I began thinking more about the context in which I found myself, I wondered why else I found this issue important. I looked back to the time when I was a child. I thought about when I was in school in regards to my motivation towards work. I realized that I wasn't always motivated in class to complete work but this was because of a number of reasons. Sometimes it was like completing any work because I wasn't in the mood to be in school. Occasionally I found the work I did was laborious and uninspiring and the teacher's delivery of the lesson was not engaging.

This made me realize that within the school environment I am in there would be a set of different reasons why the children are unmotivated this also means that what motivates one child may not motivate another. I will look at my own thinking in terms of the group in the class who are not motivated. This may lead to further questions and concerns. My first thinking about motivation was that the children's poor motivation was mainly a result of the teaching from the class teacher, as Beard and Senior (1999) says: Teaching methods most likely to motivate students to learn or to maintain are those which actively involve them, lead to a sense of achievement and maintain a high level of arousal. " (Bear, R and Senior I 1999: 55) I agree with this to an extent as I feel it is ineffectual to engage students in an activity where they don't see the point, as it becomes tiresome and time consuming for both the teacher and the child. The teacher demonstrated ways of engaging the class, as I mentioned previously.

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This, however, was only temporary. I think this idea of engaging the children are a vital joint, not just to promote motivation but of overall enjoyment in learning. I have thought of ways to engage children and realize that children have different perceptions of enjoyment and motivation towards their work. I wondered why some children were eager to learn and master new interesting challenges while others devalue and disengage from academic activities. One example I thought of was that in some cases, doing minimal work motivates children.

Children may not want to put a lot of effort into the work and just do the bare minimum to get through each lesson. Alternatively children like to engage in energetic and innovative activity. This may be the case of the children in the low, middle or high ability groups. They may work hard only if there is a challenge in a situation and they may find routine tasks and conformity in activities boring. Higher ability children in the class may be motivated if they are set more challenging work, which stretches them and helps them to get more out the work they are doing.

Another possibility is that children enjoy getting lots of rewards and see this as the only incentive to getting their work completed. This will occur when the rewards are significant and meaningful to the child. There are, however pros and cons of using reward systems. One advantage is when I noticed was when a boy with suspected ADHD needed constant encouragement and attention to do any work.

Encouragement worked really well and helped him to sit down and get work done. Other advantages are that it encourages children to work for a short

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term basis until the next reward. They get work completed so that the teacher has 'finished' work from them. It is an easy strategy to use by most teachers where they see an instant result in the children's approach to learning.

It can also be used within each class in the school so that it is adopted as a whole school policy and is a fair way of rewarding for each child. A negative factor is that children may always expect a sticker and work at the same level to get one. Teachers would need to increase the outcome of what the child does in order for this to work. If stickers' are used then it loses the child's curiosity to do any work and prevents them from progressing in areas they are better at. There are some forms of encouragement which will not work, for example if you reward children all of the time it may encourage them to do less work. The attitudes of the children and the school situation need to be assessed therefore, before any type of reward system is adopted.

I am also aware that children often prefer particular subjects. Children may feel that they are really good at one subject and enjoy using the skills in that particular area. An example of this is of one child in a year 2 class I have worked. He was distracted during the literacy and numeracy lessons but when it came to subjects such as art he was so enthusiastic and positive. He worked well independently and produced lots of creative work.

This is a possibility with the children in my group. I have noticed that two children on the table react well to lessons in music. When the class is sitting in a circle, practicing their skills in music, these children really came alive. They use their musical instruments enthusiastically, co-operate well with

others in the class and show a real interest in the lesson. I began thinking about this attitude towards subjects with relation to cross curriculum links.

They children in the group may become more motivated if there is more variety in the lessons. This may mean incorporating a number of subjects in a topic-based way. For example, you may set up a lesson incorporating literacy, art, geography and music. This would give the children the opportunity to use a range of skills for each subject and be more stimulated by the variety in the lesson. I remember learning in this way when I was younger.

It has made me think about the implement of this if i were to implement it into modern day schools in future contexts. Would it have the same positive effect as it had on me? Children also have different learning styles. Each of us learns differently, some are ' hands-on-learners, some are visual learners, and some are auditory learners and so on. This means that i will have to think about a variety of teaching methods in order to stimulate learners and assist with motivation.

Beard and Senior offer a reflection on this, " a diversity of cognitive styles allows the teacher to express or illustrate ideas in ways, which appeal to different pupils" (Beard, R and Senior, 2000, 63) This is in accord with my own experience where I have seen good practice in a year 2 class. The teacher constantly adapted her style of delivery to the class. The teaching kept the children very involved within the lesson and they seemed to enjoy the variation in the teaching. Another way to engage children would be to ask questions and prompt pupils to make their own discoveries. This would

especially help with the group in my year 4 class, as they are older and more able to do this. It would provoke them to think more for themselves.

The examples above illustrate different ways in which children can be motivated and for these reasons I realize that motivating all children will be difficult. I have looked at how children can be motivated but now I feel that I should consider the ways, in which I have engaged and involved learners in previous classes. This would help me to reconsider factors, which may help with motivation the context I am in. During a placement in a reception class I have helped to motivate children by using stickers.

Behaviourists support this motion, “ You provide motivation through incentives and rewards to establish behaviour, which in time becomes their own rewards. ” (Beard, Senior, 2000) Children can inculcate their own interests and goals through rewards and verbal cues. This helps if children lack an urge to work independently and only apply themselves if external pressures are exerted. This helps when the behaviour of the child is said to be extrinsically motivated, when the goal of their behaviour is tied to the completion of the act. Although this worked in this particular situation, I think other approaches may be needed with older children.

They may not appreciate stickers in the way younger learners do. I have also written positive comments on the children’s drawing on specific things about their work. I then spoke to them on a daily basis after they did work about areas they did well in. During discussion I gave immediate feedback to their comments in lesson to promote their confidence about speaking out in class and sharing their ideas.

I think this also helps me to see whether they have gained understanding and helps them to articulate their thinking. This strategy of discussion helps them to become more engaged in the lesson and in turn encourages them to see the purpose in the work they are doing. Positive encouragement and feedback will help children to feel special. This may increase their enthusiasm and motivation in learning.

I also encouraged questioning through the discussion on the carpet. I have also use ' self-assessment' sheets in the past with a reception class. I simplified objectives and got them to tick whether they could do the task or not. This enabled me to get an idea of how they felt they were achieving. Although I have used various strategies I would, like to find a more lasting way of keeping the group in this year 4 class motivated to do their work.

I realize now that the desire for learning may be intrinsic, which is an individual response that cannot be taught. I think this idea of ' self-motivation' is an important area for older learners. They have a more advanced ability to understand the reasons and aims for completing work and hopefully to be motivated in the activities they do in the class. It is not enough for me to want them to learn as it is for them to want to learn themselves. The teacher also helps through their ' high' expectations of each individual child, which will improve their motivation.

The pupils need to know the expectations of the teacher and that these will vary between individual teachers. Although this is important, I realize that motivation for learning stems more from an internal goal of wanting to do well. I agree with Decharms who suggests, " The fundamental step in helping

a person to change himself for reasons that are important to him/her. ”

(Decharms, 1999.

65) If this change is going to have a lasting effect I think that the impetus for change must come from within the child. The teacher must then help to nature the child's desire to improve himself. Lewin provides another perspective on this idea, stating, “ Learning feeds on success, a person's goal and achievement are limited to what he thinks he can achieve. ” I thought carefully about the meaning of this statement and to what effect this would have on ' motivation. It made me think that children may have a poor self-perception of their own work. This may then mean that the children don't push themselves enough and may not realise the real potential of what they can do.

This relates to the child's own ' self-image' and identification of themselves in the context of the school. This brings me to the idea of support from friends to increase motivation. I think intrinsic motivation may be influenced to some extent by relationships between pupils. I think that the teacher could do more to foster peer-group interaction in order to help make this move towards intrinsic motivation.

I think it may be effective if the children worked with their friends in pair and group work. I also feel that sharing and working with their peers' increases children's enjoyment of learning. If I was able to adapt the way children work in class, this may get them more involved in their work. Children often work better in small groups where there is no individual competition. Children may concentrate more on the learning in the group rather than having to pursue

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their own goal, which in some respects, is more challenging. They may feel more at ease with their friend and approval of one another also plays an important role in engaging the need for achievement.

It may, however, also have a negative effect and may encourage chatter and distraction. On the other hand, it may help if the teacher provided an atmosphere in which the friends approve of each other's development and gain support from their endeavours. The children in the class are friendly with one another and collaborate well then they are in a more settled environment to work. This may be difficult in the class I am in as there are three boys who disrupt and distract the other children.

The idea of 'Achievement motivation' is one aspect to look at which relates to working with friends. For example, children may want to do something better than others, this completion may give them the drive to work harder it may mean that the children could do work that is better than they have done before or they produce something no one else has done. Finally it may mean doing something that will take a long time, which would result in personal success. These would work according to the intentions of particular children in the class and what they themselves intend to achieve. In school, children rarely set goals for themselves but have a set of goals, which are imposed by the teacher. If, however they were to set goals for themselves they could think about the consequences of what they do, show more determination to do things and show concern for these acts on others.

They then have more personal responsibility in their learning and further self-confidence and motivation to do work. This may mean that I get children

to set a personal goal based on their own strengths. The teacher could help to make them aware of their own potential and then plan activities to attain these goals. It is important that the teacher doesn't determine the child's goal but helps to develop commitment and purpose so that the child can reach his own goals more effectively. I agree with Decharms who says, "Responsible direction both from the teacher and from within the child imparts meaning to learning.

" (Decharms, 1990. 14) The teacher can help by setting realistic goals, influenced by factors such as the child's ability. Their skills and the context they learn in. This made me consider how far this is feasible if the goals set don't match national goals. The teacher will need to ensure that the personal goals that they set also relate to goals set by the whole school as well as by national government bodies.

The conclude, I would say that giving children individual choices in the actions of their work helps motivation. To giving children choices in learning they are then able to work to their strengths and progress in areas that are important to them. These choices would relate to document objectives but children would feel that they have had input into the activities they do and the learning that take place. This would make the teaching more personal and would target individual learning abilities of each child in the class this opportunity of more independent learning is supported by the view of Bruner who says, " lack of motivation is likely to be problem when learning is imposed on a learner, they fail to enlist natural curiosity or it seems irrelevant, inappropriate to their level of learning" I strongly agree with this.

I have described the many different ways with which teachers, parents and peers can help to promote the child's own desire for life-long learning. There is, however, only so much that they can do before it comes down to the child's own desire to want to learn and find out more about things. This is crucial if children are to get through their education and achieve their own personal goal in life. Through writing this assignment I have developed my thinking about 'motivation'. The reading I have done has enhanced my understanding of motivation and broadened my knowledge on issues surrounding it.

My own practice will now be critical in helping to create and maintain a desire for life-long learning. I can now anticipate my practice with regard to my own personal strategies. I will adopt an enthusiastic style of teaching, which uses stimulating lesson ideas and resources. I will build a positive relationship with the pupils' parents. I will then prove the children's independence and motivation towards their own learning.

I hope that by implementing these ideas, in future practice I will enhance this area within my teaching and further my own professional awareness.