

Contents

1. Who is the best teacher (and how do I create one)?
2. Motivating Teachers: the power to improve is already there
3. It is the differences within the school that are the most important
4. Empowerment
5. Wanting to make things better
6. The changes that bring about reform
7. Teaching and learning techniques
8. Motivation through Communication – the Check to Praise system
9. Planning and implementation
10. Teachers as motivators of teachers
11. Beyond the ten points
12. The culture of the school - coercion or incorporation
13. The head teacher, the vision and the motivating school
14. The problem of change
15. Putting the vision to work
16. Wanting to do it is 99%.
17. The caring community.
18. Sharing & trust
19. Expectations
20. Rights
21. The practical psychology of learning
22. Two way motivation
23. Getting the teaching right
24. Personnel Issues
25. The approach to change
26. Management techniques
27. The subject
28. Departmental resources
29. Homework
30. Parents
31. Self-esteem
32. Two sample methods of teaching and learning
33. Maintaining Motivation

Bibliography

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1. Who is the best teacher (and how do I create one)?

When the choice is between the highly motivated individual with the personal drive to make a difference, or the teacher who lacks that drive and for whom teaching is what happens in between the holidays, the answer is obvious.

But less obvious is the answer to the question: how can one motivate a teacher who does not believe that it is possible to make a difference? What does one say to the teacher who declares that, "I'm doing the best I can, but with children from these backgrounds there's not too much anyone can do." Or the teacher who states that, "with better equipment I could do so much more, but the money isn't there..." Or indeed the teachers who complain bitterly that endless government interference is making it quite impossible for them to get on with the job of teaching.

In fact the motivation of teachers relates very closely to how far teachers believe that they can influence the situation in their school. Where teachers are convinced that they can make a difference, then they do just that. What then happens is that the teachers do indeed make a difference, and so there is positive feedback. The more they believe they are helping the pupils, the more they will actually do it.

So the question is, how do we get teachers to believe they can make a difference? The answer lies by and large in the culture of the school.

In an idealised school environment the teacher motivates the pupils, the head of department motivates the teacher, the senior management motivates the head of department and the headteacher motivates the senior management. The senior education officers and/or governors motivate the head and so on ever upwards to the Secretary of State.

In this model motivation overlaps with leadership and the role of the head. Dalin (1994) noted that in the more successful schools, "The headmaster is motivated, plays a more active co-ordination and supportive role, is an instructional leader, works closely with teachers, encourages teachers and shares responsibilities."

He also argues for the need to "encourage teacher motivation and commitment." His conclusion (rather obviously) is that teacher motivation is a key factor that separates the excellent school from the good school.

As Mortimore (1991) points out (p14), "Involving teachers in the corporate life of school and pursuing consistency in their approach to pupils is likely to make the school a less stressful place..." and in the light of recent stress claims against schools, governors and LEAs this can hardly be seen to be a bad thing.

But we may well ask, how can it be that after so many years of work, and after so many billions of pounds spent on education, that we still do not have near-perfect schooling with highly motivated teachers? When we remember that the UK alone spends £18 billion a year on education, and the United States spends ten times that, it is not unreasonable to think that we ought to have got it right by now. If motivated teachers are better teachers why are we not spending more time focussing on the motivation of staff?

Certainly when those of us involved with teacher motivation have asked heads of departments and head teachers what they are doing about teacher motivation we have often got fairly generalised answers. In service training is mentioned, and occasionally an

increase in resources for the school or department, but not much else. There certainly is a view shared by many head teachers that teachers ought to come to school motivated – it is part of their professional duty. It is therefore not primarily the job of the head to motivate the staff – although almost everyone agrees it is the job of the staff to motivate the pupils.

This attitude is very different from that prevalent throughout many other places of work in the UK. For many many businesses and similar organisations motivation of staff is very much a central concern with personnel departments working hard to ensure that staff are giving of their best all the time.

It is interesting and informative to ask why many schools have taken a different view over motivation. The possible answers are

- a) Schools are very obviously under government control – it is the state that says schools should be there and how they should operate.
- b) Almost all teachers work very hard – you can't get them to work harder, nor can you get them to be more efficient.
- c) The evolution of schools in recent years has encouraged the view that motivation is not part of the head teachers' duty.
- d) The way in which teachers work makes motivation difficult

It is worth considering these arguments since they can give a real insight into how motivation of teachers can be arranged.

- a) Schools are very obviously under government control – it is the state that says schools should be there and how they should operate.

The argument here is that what happens in the school is so dominated by government that the amount of space left for the teacher to do his or her own thing is limited. What's more, many teachers feel that the government, and its agencies have been acting extremely unreasonably by demanding a range of changes which teachers cannot deliver.

Such an attitude to work is highly demotivating. Whether it is true or not is more a matter of debate, although most managers in business and industry would argue that they are facing a far worse position in terms of government interference.

- b) Almost all teachers work very hard – you can't get them to work harder, nor can you get them to be more efficient.

It is certainly true that the word efficiency is rarely heard in education, although why this is so is not clear.

Efficiency is largely about achieving better results with the use of the same resources. But in a positive debate on efficiency the head of maths might note that it currently takes ten teacher-hours to teach the principle of multiplying fractions up to a specific point, with an outcome of every pupil getting 90% or above on a test at the end of the ten hours. Why does the teacher not ask if with a different approach the same pupils could reach the same level of understanding in five hours?

Opponents in the school might argue that the five-hour programme was too intense, that the "ten hour" pupils had more fun, or learned to love the subject more. The five-hour programme (it might be argued) gave the same knowledge but the pupils hated the work. This is an unlikely scenario but if true, we would need to redefine our aims. We should

seek the most efficient way of teaching division so that the pupils not only have a certain knowledge and the ability to use it in certain conditions, but could also express a certain measure of joy in the lessons (as measured on our patented joyometer). We would then seek the most efficient way of delivering the whole package. If we could do it in seven hours and retain the joy, then that teaching programme is more efficient than the ten-hour programme, and we would adopt it.

If we could make all teaching just 10% more efficient (i.e. achieving the same results using only nine hours instead of ten) it would be equivalent to adding six more full time teaching staff to every secondary school in the UK - equivalent to increasing the UK school budget by over £300 million per annum!

Of course I might ask, what am I going to do with my spare hours? The most obvious answer would be to increase the incidence of activities that increase my motivation.

How do we actually increase classroom efficiency? Experience shows that many people are concerned about proposals that use the word *efficiency*. Whatever else increased efficiency might mean it is rarely seen to be good news for the workers. To paraphrase a common response from the workplace to the mention of efficiency: "If I could work any harder I would." Efficiency is thus confused with supposed hard work. This common mistake reveals again the problem highlighted by Hopkins and others of the rejection that can happen when a person is told from the top down, this is how you should do it. Following this approach, when the behaviour and discipline policy is debated it is not approached on the grounds that pupils ought to be better behaved, but that this policy will enhance the quality of teaching and learning in the school: in other words it will make the school more efficient. As a result, the proportion of quality teaching and learning time will increase and the amount of time spent on control, administration and simply holding the place together and coping day by day will decrease. To use industrial language, teaching becomes more efficient.

This is not to suggest that we lose sight of the fact that we are working with people. The school does not become a machine. Nevertheless, schools with motivated teachers are more efficient in the process of teaching and learning. Because they do it better, teachers gain more satisfaction for a job well done, and at this point stress levels decline. Through this process, the learning experiences of the pupils are expanded and as we all know, a wide range of experiences is itself beneficial from the teaching and learning point of view.

c) The evolution of schools in recent years has encouraged the view that motivation is not part of the head teachers' duty.

There is a view that it is possible to explain the development of education in the West since the 1950s in a few lines. It may be an over-simplification, but if we can put forward a perspective on how we happened to get where we are today - that can be very useful in helping us to understand what to do now. This can also be very helpful in our attempts to understand why staff motivation is not considered more centrally in the day to day role of senior managers in schools.

Our summary of recent educational history runs thus:

Modern educational endeavour started in the late 1950s with the unexpected announcement by the Soviet Union of the launch of Sputnik. The immediate view in the United States and in Britain was that we were behind the USSR technologically. The only way to catch up, it was believed, was through education. The education in question was to

be not just of a gifted elite, but of all pupils. Thus the educational revolution of the 1960s began.

The first thrust of this revolution was in the form of a significant investment in curriculum reform. The thinking was that if we could produce curriculum materials of the highest quality then education of the highest quality would naturally follow. Since these curriculum materials were to be produced by the top educationalists of the day their quality was guaranteed, and everything should immediately fall into place.

A very large amount of money was invested in this programme of curriculum reform, although there was absolutely no consideration of teacher motivation at this point, save for the fact that somehow teachers would feel better (and thus be more motivated) because they were now using better materials. No one ever thought that the act of giving teachers the best materials would itself be de-motivating – despite the fact that research undertaken 30 years before had shown that the best way to get employees to work better, is to involve them in their own training. We'll return to this and other research findings later.

When the great rise in standards that was hoped for did not materialise there was considerable dismay. What then followed was a long period of debate as to why it was not possible to improve schooling outcomes in this way. How could we have failed so comprehensively when we had used the best educationalists of the day to create state of the art materials?

In one of those strange movements of opinion, which in retrospect is obviously flawed but which at the time seemed perfectly reasonable, it was conceded that the conclusion to be drawn was that the school did not have much influence on pupil outcomes after all. Many individual writers, and indeed even government reports, argued that the family and the home were of far greater influence. In other words it didn't matter what the school did, it was the family and society which were the determining factors. This was probably the most de-motivating factor of all for teachers. We were saying that no matter what you do, it doesn't make too much difference.

There was thus considerable agreement that the curriculum projects of the 1960s failed to produce much change in our schools because, in the words of Bernstein, "Education cannot compensate for society."

So it appeared that we were trying to do the impossible. Western society had such deep divisions within it (which were caused through the very nature of capitalism itself) it was quite impossible for schools to do anything about anything. In western society there had to be 'haves' and 'have-nots'. You could change one pupil from being a 'have-not' into being a 'have' through a combination of chance circumstances and a lot of hard work, but as you did so the chances were that a 'have' would slip the other way and become a 'have-not'. Keeping the political and economic freedom that capitalism brought came at a price. That price was inequality. And if inequality was a fundamental part of our system, then there was nothing that education could do about it. The failure, in educational terms, of a significant percentage of the population was inevitable. This was the argument of writers such as Bowles and Gintis.

Such arguments naturally alarmed many of us at the time. Some responses however were unhelpful. One argument was that education cannot compensate for society because built-in genetic influences determined who succeeded in school and who did not. It still left the school without much of a role and was as de-motivating as ever for the teacher.

What virtually no writers and researchers were doing at this time was to look at one very simple alternative possibility. No one thought that maybe schools can and do make a difference. Curriculum improvement programmes had failed, not because everything would fail, but because they did not include any element of teacher motivation. It took a long time for someone to say, "Schools work – if the people inside them are properly motivated."

It was not until the late 1970s that work restarted on the possibility that schools can and do make a difference. But in order to proceed along that line of thought, someone had to suggest why the curriculum innovations approach of the 1960s had failed.

The explanation of that failure was considered to be largely due to the fact that little thought was given to the implementation of the changes that were being presented to the school. New curriculum materials were handed over to teachers but there was limited involvement from the originators in how these materials were to be used. Teachers became adept at using the bits they liked, while consigning the rest to the back of the store cupboard. The view that teachers would open the new curriculum package like excited children on Christmas Day proved to be as utterly naive as it now sounds.

The overall plan thus failed because of the failure of implementation. If you want a scheme (any scheme) to work in a business (any business) you need the involvement of the people on the ground. Teachers we know are professionals - they are keen to do what they feel is right. But if no one involves them, they will not be willing participants. In this regard teacher autonomy proved to be a more powerful weapon than had ever been considered before.

The 1970s may be seen in retrospect as the decade of trying to work out "why did the Sixties go wrong?" This led to the development in the 1980s of the school improvement movement. In this period school developments were undertaken in which the end users (the teachers) were considered as a major part of the change process.

Also in the 1980s whole-school effectiveness programmes developed, in which people explored further why one school was effective and another was not. But it was not until the end of the decade and into the early 1990s that the issue became crystallised simply by asking;

"What is it that a successful school has which a non-successful school does not have?"

This still does not supply the policies for turning the non-successful school into a successful school. But after so many years of uncertainty, and the constant suggestion that schools could do nothing, it made teaching a much more positive occupation.

In the 1990s the first response to this problem was to study the concept of change and how it takes place within institutions. As suggested above, much of the research was at the whole-school level, and the work developed rapidly.

We say "rapidly" at this point because there was little reason to suggest that anything other than a whole-school approach was what was needed. Indeed articles filled newspapers such as The Guardian and Times Educational Supplement to the effect that the whole-school approach was the panacea that education had been looking for.

It was not until the mid 1990s that it became clear that the majority of schools which could boast some success were in fact only successful in parts. The driving force of