



The Motivation to Teach
A development program for schools



#1 Motivation to Teach



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The Motivation to Teach

Since the start of mass schooling and with its spread across the world, public education has been repeatedly burdened with the expectation that it can save society. Schools and their teachers have been expected to save children from poverty and destitution; to rebuild nationhood in the aftermath of war; to develop universal literacy as a platform for economic survival; to create skilled workers even when there is little demand for them; to develop tolerance amongst children in nations where adults are divided by religious and ethnic conflict; to cultivate democratic sentiments in societies that bear the scars of totalitarianism; to keep developed nations economically competitive and help developing ones to become so; and, as the United States' Goals 2000 for education proclaimed, the way educators prepare the generations of the future should eliminate drug dependency, end violence in schools and seemingly make restitution for all the sins of the present generation.

The Paradoxical Profession

The topic of teacher motivation deserves particular study because the role of the teacher is paramount both in the lives of individual students and in the greater society. As reflected in the quote above, teachers are in a position of high expectations but often work in environments that are not conducive to meeting their basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. This program will explore some of the reasons individuals choose to become teachers, theories and research

concerning motivation in general, factors affecting motivation in the workplace, the condition of burnout, and how to maintain motivation at work and in one's personal life.

Why Choose Teaching?

Research suggests that although teachers enter the profession for a variety of reasons, those reasons tend to be intrinsic and/or altruistic. An Australian study surveyed more than 1,600 students enrolled in teacher training programs to try to identify common themes in the motivation to pursue teaching as a career. The study included participants in both undergraduate and graduate programs, and those enrolled in early childhood, primary and secondary strands. Interestingly, the "highest rated motivations for choosing teaching included perceived teaching abilities, the intrinsic value of teaching, and the desire to make a social contribution, shape the future, and work with children/adolescents".

In another Australian study, 98 first-year students enrolled in teacher training were surveyed about their reasons for choosing teaching as a career. "Participants reported strong motivations for teaching related to working with children, worth of teaching, intellectual stimulation, and helping others". Barmby's survey of 246 teachers in England and Wales also revealed that "altruistic, intrinsic and children-oriented motivations . . . were identified as more important for entering teaching. This was as opposed to extrinsic reasons such as 'Job security', 'Promotion prospects' and 'Salary'.

Teachers who are already engaged in the teaching profession seem to be similarly motivated. For example, a study of 107 EFL/ESL teachers in Egypt and Hawai'i (USA) "ranked 'Really helping my students to learn English,' [and] 'Having a job in which I can perform to the best of my ability,' . . . among the top five in importance" in value.

The combined elements of helping others and perceived teaching ability, with the resulting effectiveness of instruction, are highly motivating factors for many teachers reflects a common theme for becoming a teacher.

These tend to be intrinsic motivations—the desire to help others, the desire to make a difference in the world, the love of the subject matter—rather than extrinsic. Money and status are not strong motivators to become a teacher in most well-developed educational systems. However, these extrinsic factors can come into play when the realities of teaching become apparent and the intrinsic motivations are not enough to keep some teachers going.

Factors Affecting Motivation

It is the recurring experiences of positive events emanating from the intrinsic rewards of teaching that help maintain teachers' motivation.

Job satisfaction at school – making teachers happier

An important step in developing a high quality schooling system is recognising the importance of teacher job satisfaction.

“I have known since I was five that I wanted to be a teacher. I always said, “I’m going to be a teacher; I’m going to be a teacher.” I thought about nursing or some other ‘helping people’ professions, but I always knew that my strengths lie in helping people and I’ve always loved kids. So, it was just a very logical option. “

“I have an aunt and a sister who are both teachers so that made me more interested. They inspired

me”.

“ Being a teacher was kind of the second thing on my list. I just made the decision that that was the lifestyle [teaching] that I wanted.”

“I started looking at the employment opportunities and thought, Phys Ed wouldn't be a bad match. I like working with kids, I love coaching, I love teaching, so Phys Ed would be a natural fit for me. “

The Motivation to Teach

Teacher motivation can be defined in terms of attraction, retention and concentration as something that determines 'what attracts individuals to teaching, how long they remain in their initial teacher education courses and subsequently the teaching profession, and the extent to which they engage with their courses and the teaching profession.

Motivation to teach refers to one's feelings about the teaching profession. Some factors are: desire to work with young people, feel stimulated to teach others, and feel efficacious and motivated in the classroom.

Motivational factors help people make the decision to enter the field. Some people believe that by providing their service they will be contributing to humanity. Their position as a teacher is a challenge, and helping young people learn and succeed brings them joy. People who feel challenged by their work are more apt to persist in and have a greater satisfaction with their employment. They believe they can make a difference, and that keeps them motivated to stay in the profession.

The Opportunity to Teach

What can administrators do to help ensure that teachers are working at their best?

Autonomy: Teachers' schedules need to allow for time to improve and reflect on their practice.

Teachers who are overworked and are not given this time to reflect on their teaching are unable to review lessons taught, make necessary adjustments, and monitor and revise based on student needs.

Teachers who aren't given time to prepare for and review their classes are also at high risk of burnout.

Curriculum standards should be clearly articulated for the teachers, so that the skills addressed remain consistent from classroom to classroom, but teachers should be given the freedom to work beyond those standards to best meet the needs of their students.

Mastery: Teachers also need to be provided ample, high-quality professional development opportunities to perfect their craft. Some teachers already attend professional development sessions each year, but many of these are one-size-fits-all presentations that don't necessarily translate into a teacher's particular classroom. Professional development needs to be differentiated as we differentiate for our students. Teachers should be able to dictate their needs and problems and work through them in small professional learning communities with master guides to help them. Key teaching concepts of assessment, differentiation, and core content should be worked through in these learning cohorts, with relevance as close to the individual classroom experience as possible. If teachers are given the opportunity in teacher-centred learning environments to master their craft, then they will be more able to transfer these skills into student-centred learning environments. Indeed, professional development that is on-going and directly relates to the classroom experience of the teacher would eradicate the issues that these "teacher-proof" curricula aim to address.

Purpose: When they enter the profession, most teachers do have a strong sense of purpose. However, it is only with the support of administration, parents, and society at large, that a teacher will be able to sustain this. By allowing teachers to put their true selves into their work, by supporting the individuality in style that each teacher can bring to their teaching, school communities can fuel teachers' sense of purpose in the profession. Students connect to the person that is teaching, not simply the content being taught.

Job Satisfaction and Emotional Factors

The mental health of a teacher relates to job satisfaction. Both positive and negative factors cause various degrees of satisfaction. Positive factors are enthusiasm and a high level of energy when teaching in the classroom. Negative factors are stress, burnout, and anxiety. Negative factors hinder the performance of a teacher and reduce satisfaction.

Anxiety, stress, and burnout can affect a teacher's ability to create an environment conducive to learning. Burnout most often occurs for those teachers who are very dedicated and committed to their careers. They tend to work long, intense hours to achieve their goals. For teachers to remain enthusiastic year after year, the principal must implement strategies that will enhance the mental health of the teaching staff.

Five suggestions are offered for principals to use with teachers. They are:

- positive feedback,
- high standards,
- opportunities for professional growth,
- support systems, and
- increased parental and community involvement.

The mental health of a teacher might be more important than a teacher's knowledge of the subject matter and methods of teaching.

Anxiety is a concern with beginning teachers and can result in a negative effect on thousands of students across the country. New teachers have very high expectations, and burnout results when reality is not constant with those expectations. Teacher burnout is a cause of attrition and must be dealt with to lengthen the time that teachers remain in the profession.

Two dimensions of teacher motivation are the motivation to teach and the motivation to remain in the profession.

Early teacher motivation research had common interests in initial teachers' motivation for career choice. Richards indicated that satisfaction and good preparation for family life were top reasons for entering teaching, and Fox listed four frequently nominated reasons:

- a desire to work with children or adolescents,
- a desire to impart knowledge,
- the opportunity to continue one's own education and
- service to society.

Those entering primary teaching were more focused on the needs of children. Those entering secondary teaching were strongly influenced by a former teacher being a positive role model or a strong interest in a subject area.

A lot of research has pointed out that teachers suffered from higher levels of professional stress and lower levels of motivation than other professional groups.

What motivates people to want to become a teacher?

Making a difference in people's lives comes in at #1

- #2 Working with children or young people
- #3 Opportunity to teach subjects that interested participant
- #4 Quality of professional life
- #5 Having their own classroom
- #6 Career opportunities in teaching
- #7 Salary and benefits
- #8 Community leadership opportunities
- #9 Portability of skills for other kinds of work
- #10 Looking for a career change

Qualities that are important to people as a teacher

1. Motivated teachers are interested in what they do: they look at teaching in a different way to teachers who are not motivated. You can see who they are because they talk about stuff in a different way. They look to other motivated teachers and get ideas from them. They examine what they do in the classroom and question its value without blindly following a book or sticking to the 'one size fits all' syllabus. They get their students to think about their learning and question why they're in the classroom.

2. Motivated teachers think about how learning can happen in different ways and experiment with different techniques and approaches. They examine what works and what doesn't. They are not afraid to throw it all up in the air and begin again. They don't settle for average in their work and encourage their students to do the same.

3. Motivated teachers think about their responsibility to encourage learning and do what they can to make sure that happens. They don't think that learning is only about remembering rules, or answering questions correctly, or filling in the gaps, or getting a good mark in the test. They understand that a strong motivational flow in their classroom produces results.

4. Motivated teachers are keen to learn & develop and they want other teachers to feel the same way because it's good when teachers are learning and developing. They enjoy what they do and don't see it as just a 'job'. To the motivated teacher, teaching is a career; it is a profession rather than a McJob and they do what they can to be good at what they do.

5. Motivated teachers want other teachers to learn & develop, so they go to training workshops and

give training workshops. They reflect on their teaching regularly and in different ways. They join social networking sites like Twitter to share their thoughts, ideas and develop from seeing what other people in their profession around the world in different environments think about teaching and do in their classrooms. They read people's blogs and write their own.

6. Motivated teachers try out new things with their students that they have found out about from interaction with other teachers. They look at what is current in education and look at how they can incorporate new ideas and new ways of teaching into their teaching without losing the integrity of what learning is about. They aren't afraid to try things in their classrooms that might not work because if you don't try, you'll never know.

7. Motivated teachers make the staffroom a good place to work because they talk about what they're doing with their classes and are happy to be able to pass on a good activity / website / Web tool that they've read about and are going to try out or have tried out. They want other people to be empowered and to try these things out too.

8. Motivated teachers are interested in their students and want their students to be motivated so they do things in the classroom that will nurture that kind of philosophy. They talk to their students about why they are trying something new and what the perceived benefits will be to their learning so that their students develop an interest and a responsibility for their own learning.

9. Motivated teachers teach more than just the syllabus. They know that the individuals in their classroom all learn in different ways and that different things will motivate them. They know that beyond what has to be learned, there are different ways to learn these things and strive to give their

students opportunities to learn in the way they want to.

10. Most importantly, motivated teachers enjoy their career and this makes them better at it, which means that, for most of the time, real learning goes on, which is varied in content and relevant to the students and incorporates a rich variety of material, methods and instruction.





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