

Motivational Pedagogy: locking in the learning

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INTRODUCTION

As teachers, we have long since recognised that motivational factors are linked to the achievements of students. The importance of motivation in learning is so taken for granted, that it now seems obvious, however knowing how to inspire students to learn or indeed implementing 'Motivational Pedagogy' is an art form. It is not an inherent skill specific to all teachers, but a fundamental element to be developed in the modern educator's armoury. If we are to believe motivation is having "a desire and willingness to do something" (Geen, 1995), motivation within classroom pedagogy consequently becomes crucial to inspire learning.

Learning requires engagement, which is linked strongly to emotions and motivation. "Children will only seek learning strategies if their levels of motivation are strong enough to engage them in learning. Kids who complain of boredom are not seeking better teaching strategies they are seeking higher levels of motivation." (John Joseph, 2003)

Motivational Pedagogy is the art of teaching using extrinsic rewards, while steering the learner to intrinsic self directed competence. We believe that reinforcement, or external reward, is important for initiating actions or making sure they are repeated, however it is only through intrinsic motivation that the 'will to learn' is sustained.

Utilizing this knowledge of motivation, what are the key elements of an exploratory teaching framework that are appropriate to the middle years of schooling?

CONTEXT

We are senior teachers with over 20 years experience with Education Queensland. Our careers began as Physical Education teachers, before working in the classroom teaching years 1 to 7. It is however in the area of middle schooling, where we have had the most experience, working with the minds of preadolescent and adolescent students. For the past eight years, we have worked cooperatively at Laidley District State School. Laidley is a rural shire with an approximate population of 13 500. It is located about one hour's drive to the west of the capital of Queensland, Brisbane. Laidley is a prominent town in the fertile Lockyer Valley, which is steeped in early settlement history. Originally a farming community, the shire of Laidley is emerging more as a rural residential centre. Laidley District State Primary School opened in 1999 and currently has a school population in excess of 600 students. The school

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operates on a stage based integrated curriculum. All classes within the school are multi-age, allowing for progress in terms of ability.

It is no coincidence, that as we have developed our Motivational Pedagogy over the past few years, the 'I'm bored' line has all but been eliminated from our classroom completely. Seventy-three per cent of students in the 2007 cohort have been requested by parents to be in our class. Motivational Pedagogy has had a significant impact on the academic performance of our students. Evidence of this can be clearly quantified from our results in the Queensland Statewide Year 7 Tests of 2004, 2005 and 2006.

The increased percentage of these class groups from year 5 to year 7 results is undeniable since the inception of our 'new' teaching framework: in 2004 and 2005 there was an average increase of 30-50% above state average growth in both Literacy and Numeracy. In 2006 a 15% increase above state average growth in Literacy and a 35% increase above state average growth in Numeracy was achieved.

Tracing student growth has provided us with the necessary feedback and incentive to develop our motivational approaches to teaching and learning. Results, such as those presented, are difficult to refute and make compelling data in support of our teaching framework.

We argue that in the middle school it doesn't matter how well the teacher understands the content or processes of learning, without effective motivational practice it is difficult to:

- manage behaviour;
- develop routines, organisation and relationships;
- implement curriculum planning for academic achievement.

The emergence of Motivational Pedagogy in our current middle school teaching practice generates engagement - 'Locking in the Learning'.

WHAT DOES MOTIVATION LOOK LIKE?

Behaviour Management- 'Locking the Gate'

- Motivated students who are engaged and on task, significantly reduce issues of inappropriate behaviour.
- Boundaries are collectively established and accepted by motivated learners thus promoting self discipline and self regulation.
- Motivated students strive to be the best they can be, leading to positive self esteem and productive outcomes.
- Motivation enables and encourages the building of relationships and respect.

Develop Routines, Organisation and Relationships – 'Keys to Success'

- Motivated teachers establish familiar routines, which provide their students with a supportive, non-threatening learning environment.
- Motivated learners develop teamwork, empathy for others and cooperative skills.
- Motivated students are efficient, organised and remain focused and on task.

Guide to Curriculum Planning- 'Activating the Alarms'

- Motivation is initiated through measured planning, taking into account students' desires and curiosities.
- Teachers take the responsibility to engage their learners, challenge them intellectually and guide the transition from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation.
- Teachers recognise that individuals are motivated uniquely and cater for all.

DATA COLLECTION

Like Bruner, we have observed that all children have a built in 'will to learn' and it is the responsibility of teachers to maintain an environment conducive to academic development. A diagnostic process (Figure 1) has facilitated the accumulation of data over the past eight years. Close observation of student engagement has resulted in reflective dialogue between

"Teachers come and go, but every so often one comes along, that you will always remember. One who makes learning an adventure."

Parent Volunteer

"To be a student in MacPeel is to have fun whilst learning, yet the expectations are high and you are motivated to be the very best you can be."

Student

"Thank you for changing our lives. He loves school again and most importantly he likes himself."

New Parent to the School



us as cooperative teachers. From these discussions, the initiatives are designed, enacted upon, evaluated and adjusted according to the degree of success (Figure 1).



“Learning requires engagement, which is linked strongly to emotions and motivation.”

Figure 1. Diagnostic process within a cooperative teaching classroom to accumulate data.



DATA ANALYSIS

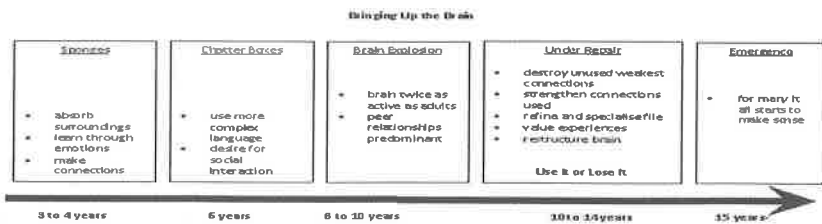
It is our observation that those who have made the transition to be more intrinsically motivated have the ability to cope and develop a positive self concept. For others, the challenges appear daunting, their interest wanes, progress slows and their self concept is adversely affected.

As Professor Roger Slee (Deputy Director General of Education Queensland) discussed at length at the Science in the Middle Years Conference (University of Queensland) in 2004 ... the downward trend of student results in the middle years together with the lack of engagement was a fundamental problem inhibiting overall results. He echoed a deep concern shared by most educators about the drastic decrease in achievement during the middle years.

Our findings consolidated the theory that during this middle phase of learning young people are experiencing the greatest physical, emotional, intellectual and social changes in their lives. The relationship between teacher and student therefore is especially crucial in the middle phase of learning as diminishing self esteem and an erosion of confidence occurs, whilst students begin to recognise their individualism.

This analysis has been linked to Fuller's (2005) studies on the adolescent brain (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Developmental stages of the brain



We have recognised through our experiences the distinct link between emotion and motivation. As Fuller maintains, hormones are powerful in the adolescents' brains, showing more activity in the emotional parts of the brain than they do in the planning and impulse control parts of the brain. This means that adolescents learn best, when there is emotional investment. The learning experience becomes a shared enterprise. The emotions and life contexts of those involved in the learning process must therefore be considered as an integral part of learning. The goal of the learner is central in considering what is learned. (Gredler, 1997)

Our studies found, as children grew older, often their attitude to school deteriorated and that adolescents' academic motivation declined overtime. Considering how to increase motivation in these students is a major issue for schools. That is the challenge for us as middle school teachers.

ELEMENTS OF THE FRAMEWORK

It is generally accepted that there are two types of motivation. Extrinsic motivation exists when a student is compelled to do something or act in a certain way because of factors external to him or her. Intrinsic motivation occurs when people are internally motivated to do something because it either brings them pleasure, they think it is important, or they feel that what they are learning is significant.



"Intrinsic motives are those that are satisfied by internal reinforcers and are thus not dependent on external goals. Extrinsic motives, on the other hand, depend instead on needs that must be satisfied by external reinforcers." (Sprinthall and Sprinthall, 1981) In our view Motivational Pedagogy consists of six approaches.

The following are examples of extrinsic approaches.

EXAMPLE 1. REWARD MOTIVATION APPROACH

TEACHING APPROACH: Positive body language; Display of students' work; Reward draws with stationery and book prizes; Verbal praise; Computer programs that develop skills with instant reward; Stickers and stamps; Individuals racing the clock; Class display 'Paparazzi Board' to celebrate achievements; Humour and fun.

Corresponding STUDENT RESPONSE or ACTION: Mirror positivity; Pride in work and a desire to share; Repeat desirable behaviour; Increase self esteem; Drive to pursue further challenges; Repeat desirable behaviour; Desire to improve personal best; Sense identity within the class group; Enjoy learning.

EXAMPLE 2. GUIDED MOTIVATION APPROACH

TEACHING APPROACH: Word walls, information charts and maps; Number facts grid as an aid to new concept development; Manipulative material - clocks and representative material (eg straws, weights, measuring devices, 3D shapes, squared mat, money, MAB, stop watches); Concept reinforcement games; Individual or small group assistance; Genre deconstruction; Using acronyms to recall genre sequence and structure; Graphic Organisers, Levelled reading material; Strategy approach to spelling; Part whole concept development; Verbal cues; Setting out procedures.

Corresponding STUDENT RESPONSES or ACTION: Visualize information, allowing for organisation of thoughts and ideas and Initiative to complete tasks; Opportunity to move on to new concepts and Understand relevant mathematical links promoting a desire to accomplish recall; Manipulating concrete material to see and feel the responses and reactions; Practise to reinforce and consolidate learning; Understand through direct communication; Visualize finished product and Readily recall and identify components of the genre; Remember information; Comprehend and build strategies on previous success; Widen vocabulary; Demonstrate complex skills; Understand through direct communication; Organised work; accurate results.

EXAMPLE 3. REALITY MOTIVATION APPROACH

TEACHING APPROACH: Writing for a real life purpose (eg magazine or news publications, postcard to be sent to friend, recipes, experiments); Real life Maths; Community projects; Scientific investigations.

Corresponding STUDENT RESPONSE or ACTION: Reflect on positive experiences; Retelling and recounting events; Correspond across the world to communicate news and current events; Select relevant material to share; Record information for future use; Plan strategies to solve a problem they have a vested interest in; Identify methods; Calculate and measure for solutions; Justify a realistic answer; Involve themselves in community initiatives; Experiment with common objects and substances; Question the validity of results.

MOVING FROM THE EXTRINSIC TO THE INTRINSIC

As teachers can employ a variety of extrinsic rewards, a student needs to work towards independence and intrinsic drive for self directed competence. In fact overuse or inappropriate use of extrinsic motivation can impede the transition to intrinsic motivation. "Extrinsic motivation can destroy intrinsic; additional extrinsic motivation is known to have a negative impact on intrinsic motivation." (Deci, 1975) Students know when they deserve rewarding and they have a strong sense of what is 'fair'. The aim is to nurture the transition from a short term goal motivation to a more independent learning drive.

The following are examples of intrinsic approaches.

"Learning will be far more long lasting when it is sustained by intrinsic motivation than when it is driven by the more transitory push of external reinforcers."

Bruner, 1962

"Those who have made the transition to be more intrinsically motivated have the ability to cope and develop a positive self concept."





“Children learn more from guided experience than authoritarian instruction.”

“... adolescents learn best, when there is emotional investment.”

“Knowing how to inspire students to learn or indeed implementing ‘motivational pedagogy’ is an artform.”

EXAMPLE 4. CURIOSITY MOTIVATION APPROACH

TEACHING APPROACH: Hands on Science experiments; Practical real life problems to solve in Maths; Discovery of the patterns and ‘tricks’ with numbers in Maths; Expository and persuasive writing where evidence is needed to back up opinion or cause change; Opportunity and resources to enable emersion in reading topical information; Experimenting with different mediums to create art work; Integrated Studies Units with a thematic approach and an orientating phase to provide a base knowledge and stimulate questioning (KWL).

Corresponding STUDENT RESPONSE or ACTION: Touch, mix, investigate, collect, observe, record, measure; Apply and link skills and knowledge via discovery; Link Maths concepts to enable development of problem solving strategies; Debate, justify, present opinions; Widened reading, knowledge and vocabulary on topics of interest; Creative original pieces; Regularly reflect and analyse.

EXAMPLE 5. COMPETENCY MOTIVATION APPROACH

TEACHING APPROACH: Portfolio folders (work samples); Project criteria and assessment rubric; Report Card; Ownership of task; ‘Raising the bar’- challenge with tasks just beyond current level of mastery; Focus on what they do know and what they need to learn; Monitoring own progress from regular quantitative assessment tasks.

Corresponding STUDENT RESPONSE or ACTION: Collect, file and display work samples for viewing with pride; Develop and demonstrate their skills and knowledge and Self assess during and at the completion of their task; Reflect discuss and reflect on achievement and work habits; Display initiative and responsibility; Determination to reach expectations; Build on previous knowledge; Evaluate own performance through self assessment.

EXAMPLE 6. METACOGNITIVE MOTIVATION APPROACH

TEACHING APPROACH: Throughout the duration of an Integrated Studies unit, the initial question is revisited; Self Assessment Checklist of Mathematical concepts; Relating skills and knowledge to real life situations; Working on projects which they can relate to their values and goals in life.

Corresponding STUDENT APPROACH or ACTION: Link learning constantly back to initial question; Self regulate their concept mastery; Link learning to life application; Develop positive citizenship roles and responsibilities.

KNOWING YOUR STUDENTS

Motivational approaches can be expressed from a developmental point of view along a continuum. The teacher needs to consider the student’s age, stage and interest level before employing strategies that lead to working towards independence and intrinsic drive with self directed competence.

Students come into our classroom from lower grades with a need for short term external rewards. It is our job as middle school teachers to ‘wean’ them off these and create an emotional attachment which is crucial to becoming an intrinsic learner.

“Intrinsic motivation may require an external reinforcement to get it under way, but once it comes to function autonomously, that is, independently of the external reward, real learning can become a solid, life-time pursuit.” (Allport, 1967)

CONCLUSION

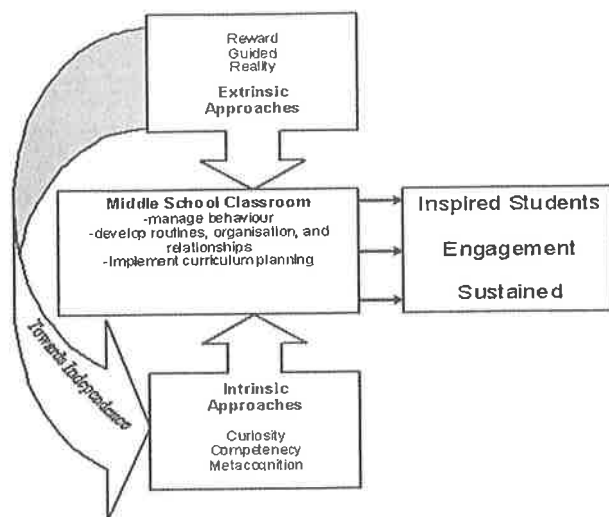
According to International and Australian research studies, 40% of an individual’s academic success is attributed to the effectiveness of classroom practice of which motivation is an essential element. “Differences in the effectiveness of classroom practice are about four times more important than differences between schools in explaining the variation in achievement among students.” (Cuttance, 1988)



Professional, passionate teachers, who can deliver high quality education always make the difference. Indeed teachers must accept that they hold the keys to student achievement. It is their classroom practice that unlocks the middle school learner. Ultimately how they apply Motivational Pedagogy enables students to reach their potential.

We have been passionate about our teaching of middle school students. In Motivational Pedagogy, we are exploring a teaching framework we believe can minimise disengagement at a time when it is undeniably at its highest (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Motivational Pedagogy teaching framework.



Motivational Pedagogy is the art of teaching using extrinsic rewards, whilst steering the learner to intrinsic self-directed competence. Recognising how students are motivated, gearing planning to assist them ultimately in becoming intrinsic learners, and implementing inspirational curriculum delivery; all combine to 'Lock in the Learning'.

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The good teacher explains
The superior teacher demonstrates
The great teacher inspires*

William Arthur Ward