

Motivating Every Learner

Alan McLean



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This book is dedicated to the memory of my mother, Mary McLean and my sister, Maureen Morrison, the two personal motivators with whom I was blessed throughout my childhood.

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About the Author

Alan McLean is a Principal Psychologist in a large education authority in Scotland. He taught in a Secondary school and a Special School for students with emotional and behavioural problems. He is the author of the staff development programmes. *Promoting Positive Behaviour in the Primary School*, *Promoting Positive Behaviour in the Secondary School* and the award-winning *Bullyproofing Our School*. He had a weekly column in *The Scotsman* for several years and has been a regular contributor to the *Times Educational Supplement Scotland*. His latest training programme on Motivation was commissioned by the Scottish Government and has been used in schools throughout Scotland.

Route map of the book

Part I What makes pupils tick

Chapter 1 discusses what motivation is. 'What makes pupils tick' is all about how they get their needs met, and Chapter 2 outlines what these needs are. These learner needs provide the foundation for the motivation matrix.

Part II What pupils do to motivate themselves

What helps or hinders pupils getting their needs met? Anything that helps is an *energizer* and anything that hinders is a *drainer*. There are internal (pupil) and external (classroom) energizers and drainers. Part II considers the internal energizers, including, for example, self-esteem and emotional intelligence. These energizers drive motivation from within and shape pupils' capacity to get their needs met from within their own resources. Chapter 3 outlines how pupils' needs organize their personality, followed by Chapter 4 which discusses how pupils meet their needs for themselves. Chapter 5 considers how personality, in particular resilience, shapes the way pupils meet their needs and, finally, Chapter 6 looks at how pupils feel about themselves.

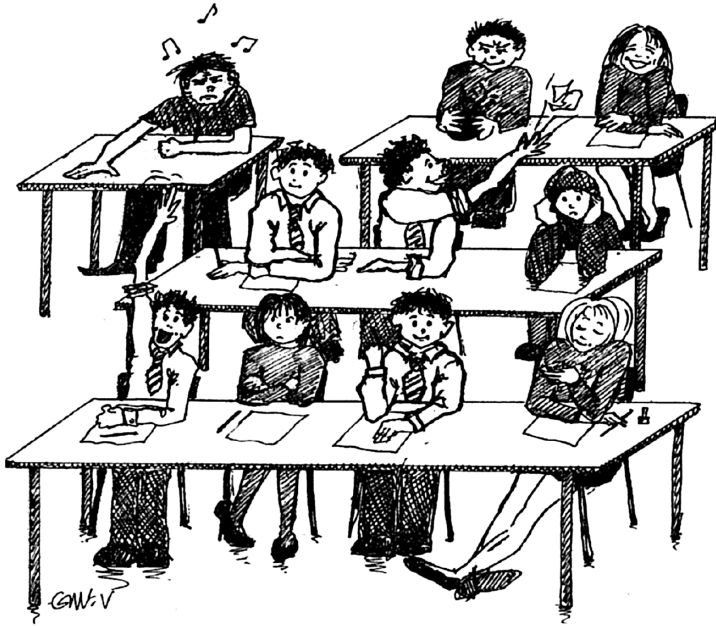
Do not panic! This may sound a bit overwhelming but stay with it and all will be revealed and will fall into place.

Part III What teachers do

Chapter 7 describes *what* teachers do to motivate pupils through the external (*classroom*) *energizers*. Chapter 8 explores teachers' own motivations and perceptions that shape *how* they use the classroom energizers, that is, their teaching styles. It concludes with a discussion of what it feels like for pupils, that is, *the classroom climates*. The teaching styles and classroom climates are presented as layers of the motivation matrix.

Part IV How pupils adapt

Part IV considers how pupils adapt to the classroom climates, as expressed through their learning stances. The learning stances layer of the matrix is developed in Chapter 9. Chapter 10 summarizes the different layers of the matrix. It concludes with an overview of the development of learning stances through the key motivational milestones.



Part V How teachers need to adapt to different stances

Part V explores how teachers might adapt their styles and classroom energizers to the different learning stances. It aims to help teachers find the right *buttons to press*. Four pupil defensive reactions are introduced. In separate chapters, profiles of each reaction are provided along with an exploration of why pupils might react in these ways. Each chapter puts forward examples of particular energizers that work well with these reactions, as well as examples of drainers that make them worse. This part concludes with a chapter on the positive stances and examines why pupils choose to engage and how to keep them engaged. The final chapter recaps on how the learner needs matrix has been built up, identifies some recurring themes and draws some conclusions.

Introduction

Motivation is a personal business. It is appropriate therefore to start a book on motivation with an explanation of my personal motivation.

My interest in motivation was triggered when, as a parent, I found myself struggling to motivate my 10-year-old and 8-year-old sons to take up the guitar. I'll never forget catching myself saying: 'That guitar is getting thrown out in the morning and that's £100 I've wasted.' After six years' training in psychology and 20 years' experience as a psychologist, the only way I knew how to motivate my sons was to try to make them feel guilty.

I realized then I knew little about motivation. I had been working in education too long! I knew how to control, manipulate, reward and punish pupils but I did not know how to motivate them. That came as a bit of a shock to a psychologist who was supposed to know about motivation.

Around the same time, I was becoming increasingly dissatisfied with behavioural models of school discipline. I had done a lot of work over many previous years on promoting positive behaviour and felt we had taken that paradigm as far as we could.

This personal experience as a father also made me realize that self-motivation had been a lifelong personal interest. I am the youngest of six children. When I was 16 I was the first person in my family to sit national examinations. In fact I was the only person in my street in a Glasgow housing estate to be studying for exams. It was this that got me interested in psychology, to find out what made me different from the rest of my family and friends, particularly what made me motivated to work hard at school. As you can see, exploring self-motivation has been something of a lifelong quest.

I have been working on developing my model of motivation for 10 years. In that time I have had many setbacks in trying to make sense of it and communicate it to teachers and others in an accessible and practical way. This journey has been like raising a child, a journey of emotional highs and lows where, no matter what, I could never give up. I hope my obstinacy and persistence has paid off.

One of my sons has, at the age of 17, decided to start learning to play the guitar. Maybe patience is necessary for those of us who seek to motivate.

Part One

What makes pupils tick

1

What makes pupils tick

This chapter outlines the aims and focus of the book, and explores what motivation is about. It gives a preview of the motivation matrix. It argues that misbehaviour is a function of poor motivation and concludes with a description of motivation as a two-way process between teachers and pupils.

This book has been written mainly for teachers but it will be of interest to anyone who wants to develop their ability to motivate others to learn. This depends on the following:

- How do you feel about yourself in your particular role?
- What is your capacity to tune in to people?
- How flexible are you?

The teacher's tool kit has traditionally consisted of pedagogy to teach the curriculum and disciplinary techniques to control behaviour. This book is not about controlling pupils or shaping their learning progress. It is about understanding what makes them want to engage in learning. The overarching aim of the book is to develop a motivational matrix that synthesizes current thinking about motivation to help generate new knowledge. This matrix enables a deeper understanding of motivation by

- affording you the opportunity for self-reflection
- examining the types of learning environments that can exist in a classroom
- exploring the core conditions for learning and teaching.

The motivation matrix takes the lid off classroom life and develops your understanding of yourself and your pupils. The main priority is to help you to make sense of your own ideas and experiences. The matrix will make connections between ideas and show how the different components relate to each other and fit into the bigger picture. For example, popular concepts such as confidence, emotional intelligence and self-esteem will be integrated into the matrix.

Motivating teaching is intuitive and hard to articulate. The matrix will help you identify where there is scope for improvement. For example, you may not be aware of your teaching style and its impact on your pupils. Hopefully the book will increase your self-awareness and therefore your resilience.

The focus of the book

The central focus of the book is teacher–pupil interactions and how they can promote pupils' engagement in learning and *motivational resilience*. Motivational resilience is the capacity to cope with setbacks, adversity, pressure and power. Engagement refers to the intensity and quality of a pupil's involvement during a task.¹ Engaged pupils express their voice and take initiative in trying to produce changes in their environment.² Disengaged pupils, in contrast, are passive or let external forces control their involvement. Engagement is important because it predicts achievement.³ Young people's engagement in learning declines over the school years,⁴ in part due to the way teachers teach.⁵ On a more positive note, however, pupils' motivation is easily malleable.⁶

This book tries to capture the importance of motivation, an issue that 'stems from the complex interactions between individual psychology, the relationship between teacher and pupil, peer group interactions and the link between school and the outside world'.⁷ The more you are willing to immerse yourself in the matrix and, in particular, reflect on your own teaching style, the more useful this book will be to you.



Stop and think

What is the biggest lesson you have learned about motivating pupils?
Why do pupils engage differently in different classes?

You may be looking for tips on how to motivate pupils, especially those who are difficult to engage. Motivational teaching, however, cannot be 'manualized'. The difference between teachers is not down to tips and gimmicks but what kind of teaching style they use. What kind of tip would work for all teachers with all pupils? Consider, for example, the use of praise. Not all teachers are able or willing to give praise and not all pupils are motivated by praise.

Here are some reasonable tips:

- Give high profile responsibilities.
- Negotiate private challenges.
- Maintain familiar routines.
- Surprise them.

Taken together, these tips do not make a lot of sense and contradict each other. Each will work well with some pupils but will drain others. What is the answer? The matrix makes sense of the strategies developed over the years and will also, hopefully, help you generate some new approaches.

The foundation of the matrix is provided by the learner needs. These needs are fundamental to being human and are what pupils are all about. The

matrix also describes how teachers and pupils engage with each other, that is, the teaching styles and the learning stances. There is also a layer of the matrix that describes classroom climates and includes a set of general dos, called *classroom energizers*, and don'ts, called *classroom drainers*. It also provides a set of *stance-specific dos and don'ts*.



Stop and think

Think of a range of pupils you know well, or a whole class. Write each pupil's name on a separate Post-it™. Try to get as wide a range of pupils as possible in terms of what we will call *engage-ability*.

Now rank order the pupils from high to low *engage-ability*.

Now cluster them into high, low and average *engage-ability*.

Consider now what the pupils in your high *engage-ability* group have in common. What is it about them that made you think of them, that makes them so readily *engage-able*? Write down your descriptions.

Finally do the same for your low group.

This exercise will enable you to outline and share your understanding of high and low *engage-ability*. It will be particularly useful to focus on a class and compare your perceptions with colleagues who also teach that class.

When pupils walk into your classroom, they need to feel enthused to learn. Your biggest challenge is that all pupils are motivated in different ways. How can teachers tune into their pupils? The answer lies in recognizing their learning stances. This is your *sim card* connecting you with the learning network in your classroom.

The learning stances reflect the key difference between pupils, namely, how they feel about themselves as learners. They characterize 'engage-ability'. The learning stances matrix develops a greater understanding of learners and generates personalized responses. It captures how the individual changes not only in response to the different classrooms but also as a result of the individual's moods. Teachers do not need to develop different strategies for every individual. Fortunately pupils are more similar than they are different.⁸ To engage every pupil, teachers need to adapt their teaching style to the number of stances instead of the number of pupils in their class.

The differentiating characteristics of each stance together with the *internal energizers* underpinning them provide the essential clues needed to discover the most appropriate *classroom energizers* for each stance.

The essential feature of the learning stances is their dynamism, which underscores the need for teachers to be flexible in their response to the changing stances. The wider the range of energizers in a teacher's repertoire, the more flexible their teaching style will be. This flexibility to change what you are doing, if it is not working, is one of the hallmarks of motivating teaching. The motivating teacher gains influence by demonstrating an ability to adjust to the needs of pupils.

What is motivation about?



Stop and think

How would you define what motivation is?

Motivation is a relatively modern term that was introduced from America in the 1940s. Motivation is all the reasons behind why we behave as we do and revolves around intentionality. We are all motivated by many different things. It is influenced by our past, present and the future.

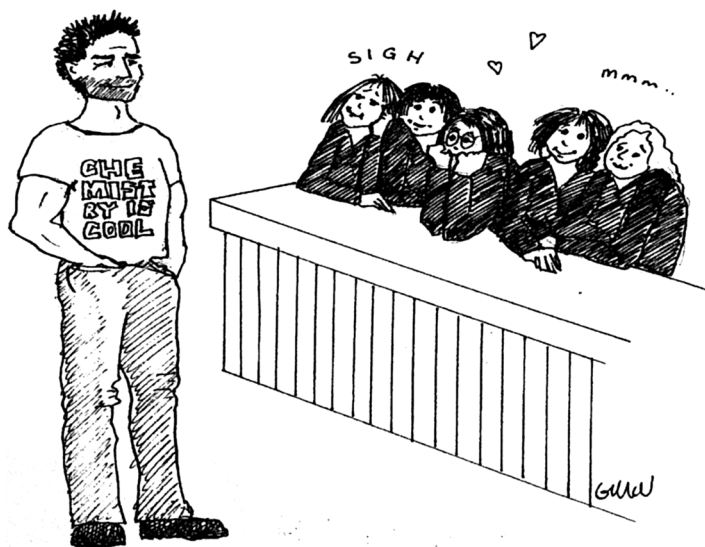
Motivation is the pilot light for learning. (Learning support teacher)

Textbook definitions suggest that motivation is what moves us to action: why we start, go on with or stop an activity; giving a motive to do something; internal processes and external incentives that spur us to satisfy a need; the response we make to challenges and threats in situations where success or failure is possible; the marshalling of enthusiasm, confidence and persistence.



Stop and think

Who is the most motivated person you know?
 What are the hallmarks of a motivated person?
 Who is the most demotivated person you know?
 How motivated are you?



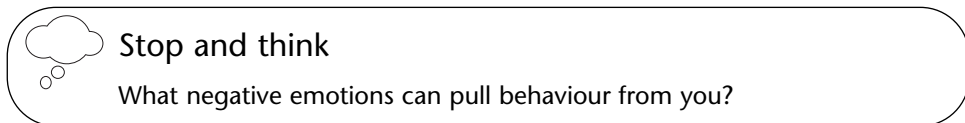
The arrival of the new chemistry teacher resulted in 100% attendance rate by the girls.

When people are asked, *'How motivated are you?'*, they automatically ask, *'How motivated am I to do what?'*, or *'In what context?'*. That is the only way they can answer the question. And yet, teachers regularly complain, in general terms, about a pupil or a class being 'demotivated'. But we cannot actually say a pupil is not motivated; we can only say the pupil is not motivated to work in, for example, my mathematics class. The mistake teachers make is that they think motivation is a feature of the learner. Motivation is not a feature of the learner but of the transaction between the learner and the context. Motivation, like trust, occurs between people rather than within people.

Now rate yourself on how motivated you are in your current job, on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being high. We will return to this later.

- Interviewer: You have been talking about motivation, but motivation to do what?
- Robert, a 10-year-old pupil (at the end of a 12 week motivation programme): Everything.
- Interviewer: What do you mean? I'm motivated to play golf but not to do housework.
- Pupil: Well, what you need to do when doing housework is to put some music on, or treat it as exercise, find something that makes it more enjoyable, that's what being in control of your own motivation means.

The dark and light side of motivation



When I have asked teachers and pupils to talk about what they think motivation is, they invariably paint a positive picture of motivation as some kind of drive to achieve, fulfil a desire and so on. Motivation, however, is more complex than this. Every pupil is motivated. It is just that some of them are motivated to wind the teacher up, to get their revenge, to impress a member of the opposite sex or to avoid more failure, and so on. Motivation can be either positive or negative.

The main theoretical perspective of this book is taken from self-determination theory, developed over the past 30 years, that has enhanced our understanding of the conditions which allow individuals to operate at their best.⁹ Self-determination theory highlights the needs that give our goals their motivational power. If our needs are met our motivation will be self-determined. While all pupils share the same basic needs, they all have unique personalities and backgrounds that lead them to meet their needs in different ways.

If our needs are thwarted we may become driven to get them met in inappropriate ways. Defensive motives come into play following blocks to our basic needs.¹⁰ These defensive motives then create need substitutes that can have negative consequences. Boredom, for example, may be a motivating force that makes us engage in challenge-seeking behaviour.¹¹ We know intuitively about negative motivation, as seen in our wariness about making *emo-tive* comments, in case we motivate negatively.

The shower metaphor

The metaphor provided by a shower is useful for describing the learning stances taken by pupils as well as the different styles of teachers.

The two variables we can manipulate to control a shower are temperature and pressure. The vertical dimension of Figure 1.1 represents the temperature variable with warm at the top and cold at the bottom. The horizontal dimension represents the pressure variable, with weak at the left and powerful at the right side. Warmth and power are fundamental dimensions in the classroom.



Stop and think

- 1 How does it feel to be in a shower that is very warm and quite powerful?
- 2 How does it feel in a shower that is reasonably warm and very powerful?
- 3 What is it like in a shower that is very cold and powerful?
- 4 How does it feel in a shower that is warm but very weak?
- 5 What kind of shared feeling do 1 and 2 have?
- 6 What kind of shared feeling do 3 and 4 have in contrast to 1 and 2?
- 7 What is the feeling generated by a shower that is inconsistent, one minute hot and the next minute cold, in response to someone putting the washing machine on?

The answers:

- 1 Most people would describe a shower that is warm and quite powerful as 'soothing'.
- 2 Most people would describe a shower that is reasonably warm and very powerful as 'invigorating'.
- 3 Most people would describe a shower that is very cold and powerful as 'shocking'.
- 4 Most people would describe a shower that is warm but very weak as something like 'unfulfilling'.
- 5 Both the soothing and invigorating showers have 'energizing' qualities.
- 6 The shocking and unfulfilling showers might be experienced as the opposite of energizing, that is, 'draining'.
- 7 Finally, everyone will have experienced a shower that is inconsistent as 'exasperating'.

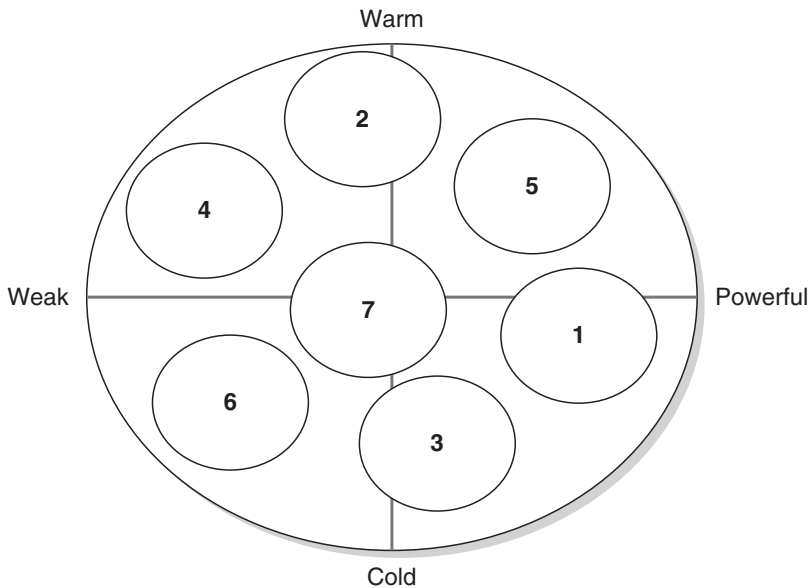


Figure 1.1 The shower metaphor i

These seven descriptors are presented in Figure 1.2. This simple matrix helpfully describes not just the shower experience but also how teachers perceive different pupil responses, that is, learning stances as well as teaching styles and also different classroom climates.



Stop and think

Using these shower metaphor labels:

How would you describe your typical contribution to staff meetings?

How would your pupils describe your teaching style?

How would pupils describe the climate in your class?

Preview of the motivation matrix

The interplay between the three learner needs of affiliation, agency and autonomy will be used to create the *learner needs matrix*. *Affiliation* is the need to feel a sense of belonging. *Agency* is the need to feel that you can meet the demands of the task. Affiliation forms the vertical axis and Agency forms the horizontal axis of the matrix, displayed in Figure 1.3.

Autonomy is the need to be self-determining. It is in large part, a function of how our needs for affiliation and agency are met. Affiliation encourages us to be co-operative and agency encourages us to be ambitious. Autonomy allows us to be both. Autonomy is conceptualized as an arc that balances affiliation and agency. The optimal point is the midpoint of the arc, but you can exercise

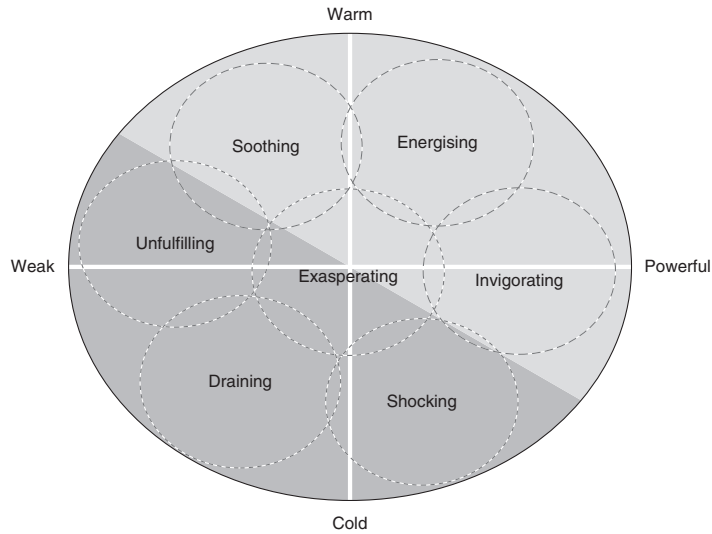


Figure 1.2 The shower metaphor ii

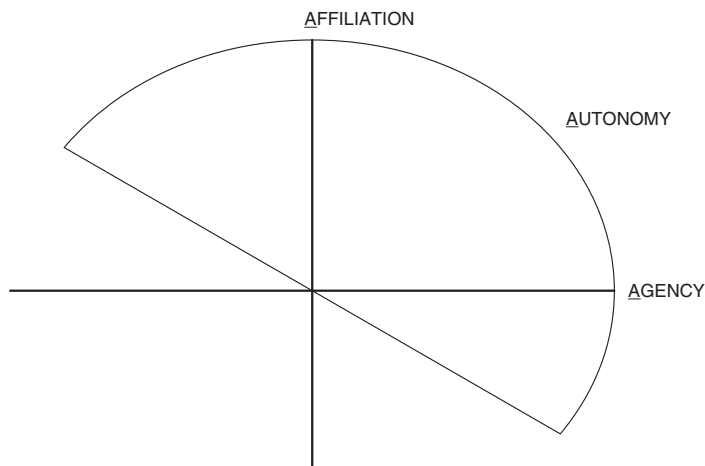


Figure 1.3 The learner needs matrix i

some autonomy from anywhere on the arc. As such, autonomy is a more expansive concept than the other two needs.

This 3A layer provides the foundation for the motivation matrix, a layer of which will be used to describe how teachers motivate pupils. The teaching styles matrix is also conceptualized as an arc, mirroring the autonomy arc. It contains three overlapping teaching styles, as shown in Figure 1.4.

The fundamental goal for the teacher is to attune to pupils and communicate that they are open to compromise. Teaching styles can vary between being soothing and pushing. The trick is to get the balance right, to be flexible rather than too loose or too tight.

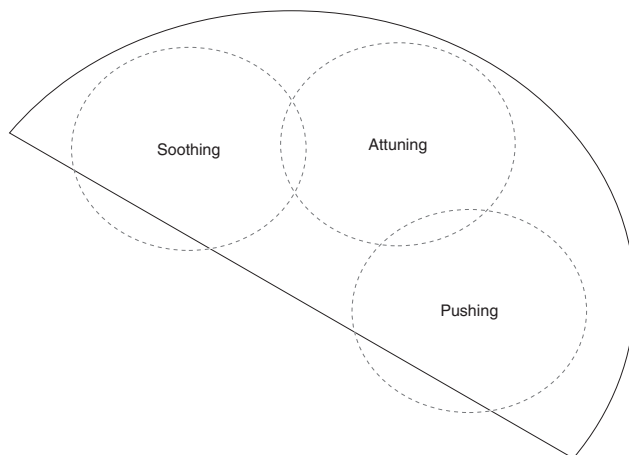


Figure 1.4 The teaching styles arc

If pupils' needs for affiliation, agency and autonomy are met, their personality flourishes and expresses itself through the positive learning stances. A further layer of the matrix will include the three stances, displayed in Figure 1.5, which reflects variants of high levels of autonomy.

Pupils become defensive if their needs are threatened or blocked. This can lead to four defensive reactions. The full set of stances and reactions can now be displayed within the matrix, displayed in Figure 1.6.

Motivation is the new discipline

Discipline, in its literal context deriving from disciple, that is, one who follows, is no longer enough within modern curricula that aim to nurture responsible learners. We need to move beyond behavioural models that control pupils through rewards and punishments, and increase the distance between teachers and pupils to models that see pupils' needs, goals, beliefs and feelings as the important sources of motivational power.

Despite a constant stream of initiatives, aimed at improving discipline, indiscipline remains at the top of the educational agenda in most countries. Our partial understanding of the motives behind difficult behaviour leads to 'hit or miss' interventions whose outcomes are poorly evaluated and therefore teach us little. It can also lead to unhelpful feedback to pupils. Being told you are disruptive will not increase your self-awareness or self-control. Understanding is the hallmark of a motivated school. We need to match our new insights into how pupils learn with a better understanding of how they engage with school.

Progress in behaviour management has given us a good foundation to look at the context of learning. The strategies schools are using, however, including star charts, behaviour target cards and time out, are not always effective, with the same pupils targeted over and over again. The challenge is to get beyond the mechanics of behaviour management to better understand pupil motives. Most misbehaviour is a function of poor or inappropriately directed motivation. In particular, as we will discover later on, most behaviour problems are a result of self-determination, not self-esteem issues as is often assumed.

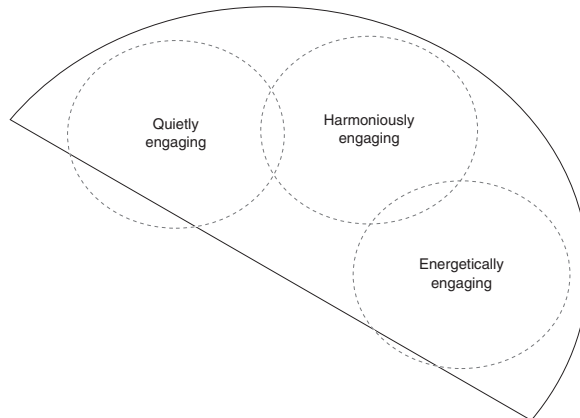


Figure 1.5 The learning stances i

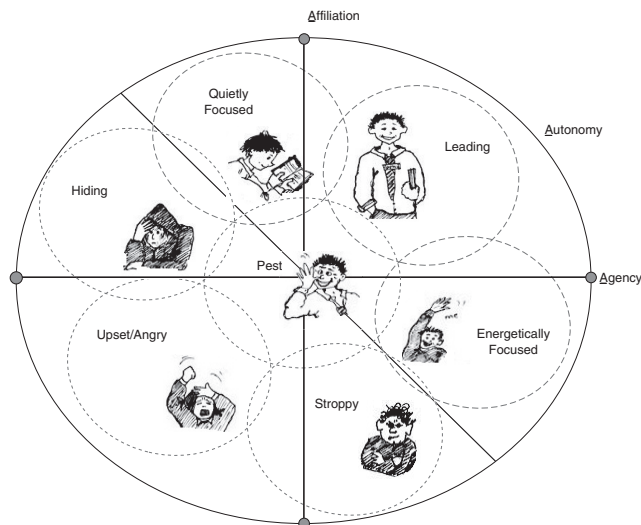


Figure 1.6 The learning stances and reactions i

Behavioural approaches have taken us as far as they can. We need to transcend the coercive relationships that try to redirect unwanted behaviour. The message in traditional discipline is – here are the rules; if you comply you will be rewarded; if you break them you will be punished. If you persistently break the rules you will be excluded. The learning stances matrix is more optimistic and empowering. It recognizes that pupils are actively seeking control and responsibility, and it offers them an opportunity to achieve this.

Motivation is a two-way street

After considering the implications of motivation I realize that I have to make my students aware of the benefits of motivation. There is no point me knowing all this stuff and them not knowing, since after all, it relates to both of us. (Further education lecturer)

The teacher's motivation is downloaded to pupils but pupil motivation can also be uploaded to the teacher. Pupils have a crucial but seldom acknowledged role in creating the classroom climate and supporting teacher morale. They often, however, have little awareness of the teacher's predicament and may not see their part in this dynamic. For example, they do not realize it is their reactions that force the teacher to behave in oppressive ways and not in their preferred teaching style. They think that grumpy teachers are just grumpy people.

Pupils whose motivation is limited have not been exposed to a motivation-rich background and may see school as just an endless set of imposed demands rather than learning opportunities. They need help to understand what motivation to learn is all about. Pupils also need to be encouraged to give feedback to teachers when they are draining their motivation. Schools can achieve this by finding ways to access pupils' views about how they are finding the school, perhaps through the personal learning planning process. This implies a significant attitude shift about the nature of authority towards a more reciprocal contract between teachers and pupils, rather than a relationship that is based on compliance.



Summary of key points

- The motivation matrix will be built up, based on the 3A needs, and will consist of many layers mirroring this pattern.
- Engagement is important because it predicts achievement.
- Motivation is not a quality of the individual learner but of the transaction between the learner and the learning climate.

2

What pupils need

This chapter outlines the needs of affiliation, agency and autonomy (the 3As). Schools must nurture these in their pupils in order to engage them. The interplay between these needs is used to create a *learner needs matrix*. This matrix also profiles the motivational toxins that can pull young people into the dark side of motivation.

A need is something that, when met appropriately, promotes our well-being. Our needs signal the nutrients that are necessary for our well-being. We are not necessarily conscious of them.

The first learner need is for *affiliation*, which is the need to feel a sense of belonging within their class and school. The second, *agency*, is the need to feel competent in meeting the demands of school. Both these needs form binary or two-tailed dimensions. Affiliation and its opposite *alienation* form the vertical axis, and agency and its opposite, *apathy*, form the horizontal axis of the learner needs matrix, as displayed in Figure 2.1. Alienation and apathy are two common routes into disengagement.

Pupils learn within peer groups and these groups have pecking orders which are very important to learners. They call on two main motives to drive pupil behaviour: first, getting along, that is, affiliation and, second, getting

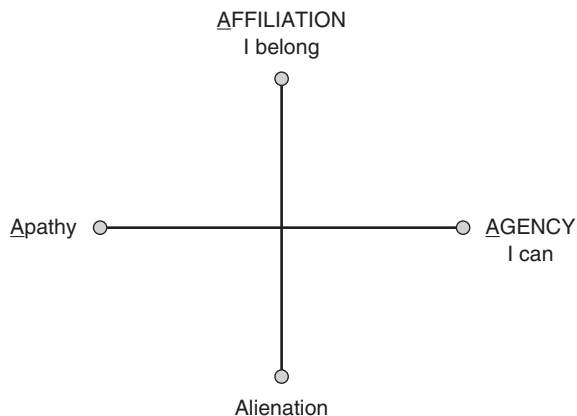


Figure 2.1 The learner needs matrix ii

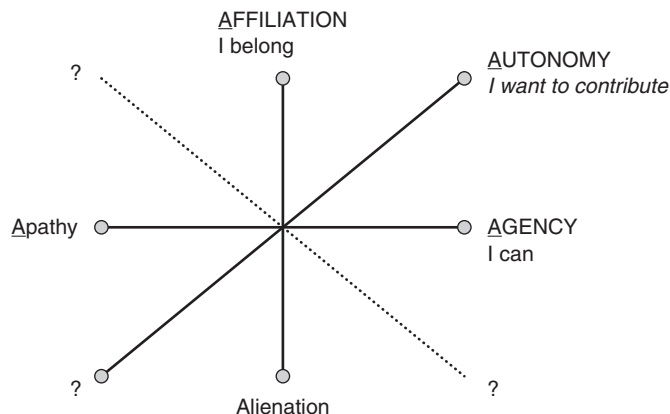


Figure 2.2 The learner needs matrix iii

ahead, that is, agency.¹ Girls are socialized more for affiliation, whereas boys are socialized more for agency.²

Affiliation and agency work together to nurture the third need, namely, autonomy, the need to be self-determining. Our autonomy benefits from the support of others, affiliation and our growing competencies, agency.

The 3A needs are displayed in Figure 2.2. At this stage, the matrix presents a picture of high and low motivation, the light and dark sides of motivation. Pupils with high satisfaction levels of affiliation, agency and autonomy will have high motivation to learn, and those with low satisfaction will have low motivation. However, motivation is not as simple as this and the question marks in the diagram need to be explained to reveal the full picture. An exploration of the multipolar concept of autonomy will help in this quest.

The 3A needs in detail

Teachers engage pupils by meeting their 3A needs, namely:

- affiliation – a sense of connectedness, creating '*I belong*' feelings
- agency – beliefs about competence, triggering '*can do*' feelings
- autonomy – '*I'm trusted*' feelings, generating '*want to contribute*' attitudes.



Stop and think

How well are your 3A needs realized in your working context?

Each of these needs must be considered to understand pupil motivation in a holistic way. Each makes its own independent contribution to how pupils feel about themselves as learners. Pupils have a combination of these needs, with some pupils showing a stronger preference for a particular need.

The 3As also work as a team and can be seen in many aspects of life. For example, as one political commentator has noted, voters consider three things in deciding on a politician:

- Does he care about people like us? (affiliation)
- Does he know what he is doing? (agency)
- Can you trust him? (autonomy)



Stop and think

Use these dimensions to consider your working relationship with your line manager.

So far, brief definitions of the 3As have been outlined. However, these concepts are so central to our role as teachers in creating the energizing classroom that they need to be explored more fully.



Stop and think

What is the best job you have ever had? We will use this context to look at how the 3As work.

Affiliation

Affiliation is a sense of being valued and understood, of feeling part of a team, of feeling an emotional bonding.³ We need affiliation to develop our sense of security. Motivational resilience rests on a strong connection with at least one supportive caregiver in the early years.⁴ People with high affiliation needs are keen to be liked and enjoy friendships and teamwork. This sense of affiliation is what makes soldiers sacrifice their lives in battle.⁵ For learners, a sense of belonging involves allegiance to the values and goals of schooling, as well as a feeling of connection with peers, teachers and other staff.



Stop and think

How did your best job meet your affiliation needs?
 What is your most memorable experience of affiliation in a learning situation?
 What are the hallmarks of high and low affiliation in a pupil or teacher?
 How much affiliation did you have when you started your current job and how much do you have now?