Motivation as critical factor for teacher development in contextually challenging underperforming schools in South Africa

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Motivation as critical factor for teacher development in contextually challenging underperforming schools in South Africa

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There is considerable interest in teacher development at present. This is especially so at underperforming schools, where teacher development is seen as an essential ingredient in transforming these schools into performing schools. Since many teachers at these schools might be reluctant to participate in development activities, it is important to identify the factors that might motivate them to do so. This article first surveys the literature on aspects of motivation, professional development and adult learning principles in relation to contextual factors that affect underperforming schools and various motivation theories. The article then reports on a qualitative study that was used to explore the factors that motivate teachers to participate in development activities. These are related to theories of motivation as well as principles of adult learning. The underlying assumption is that a greater understanding of these factors could help development programme designers devise ways of encouraging teachers at underperforming schools to participate in professional development activities.

**Keywords:** adult learning; extrinsic motivation; intrinsic motivation; teacher development; underperforming schools

**Introduction and background**

Since 1994 the South African secondary schooling system has been undergoing major educational transformation (Bantwini 2012), similar to what Kelania and Bowers (2012) describe in Benin, another country on the African continent. Although the two countries have different political backgrounds, their current situation is similar in that both countries are experiencing high levels of poverty and low levels of socio-development: education is seen as the most important means of social and economic mobility for individuals. In South Africa, transformation in education includes new curriculums, changes in methodology, open access to all schools and the integration of 19 former departments of education into one national department and nine provincial departments. Although there have been almost 20 years of democracy, there are still significant differences in the quality of education results. In an attempt to address this situation, a programme of transformation has been devised for schools that underperform in the literacy and numeracy tests performed in Grades Three, Six and Nine or in the final school-leaving examinations, the

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National Senior Certificate examinations (NSC) (see Table 1). This has immediate implications: the management and administration of teachers have to make it possible for them to acquire knowledge of and the ability to use innovative teaching strategies and techniques to achieve the required standards. As Chapman and Harris (2004, p. 224) and Mitchell (2013, p. 387) point out, professional development is a crucial factor in achieving the necessary school improvement.

Kelania and Bowers (2012, p. 710) identify motivation as one of the most important factors in successful development programmes. This raises the question of which motivations drive teacher involvement and what might make teachers reluctant to participate. Some of the reasons why teachers steer clear of involvement in development activities are a lack of funding, time constraints, tradition, habit, behaviour, insufficient self-confidence, interest, expected outcomes, appraisal, emotion, stress, job variety and management and collegial support (Kwakman 2003, p. 155, Ahl 2006, p. 394, Christie 2008, p. 152, Thoonen et al. 2011, p. 498, Kelania and Bowers 2012).

Teachers are confronted with a variety of curriculum changes and contextual and organisational challenges. These changes require participation in development activities and it is therefore important to understand how teachers understand the factors that motivate them to participate in development activities. Another factor is the approach taken in the presentation of development activities. Thoonen et al. (2011, p. 503) argue that professional development needs to be informed by adult learning theories and the notion of lifelong professional learning. They see adult learning theories as emphasising four outcomes: conceptual change, reflective thinking, experimentation and innovation. It is important to consider these desired outcomes when identifying appropriate ways of motivating teachers to commit to development activities.

The teachers in this study were all at underperforming schools (sometimes referred to as ‘failing schools’). Underperforming secondary schools are schools that have achieved a pass rate of less than 60% (Report on the National Senior Certificate Examination Results 2011, Department of Education [DoE] 2011) in the NSC examinations. For the last few years, there has been a steady increase in the percentage of candidates who passed the NSC examination. Identification of underperforming schools is done anew each year.

The results indicate that the proportion of underperforming schools in South Africa has decreased from 34.1% in 2011 to 21.2% in 2013. The overall NSC pass rate has also shown a steady increase of 8% since 2011. The results indicate that it is possible for a school to change its status as an underperforming school to a performing school in one year. Clearly, however, sustainable development is needed to ensure that schools remain performing schools.

Labelling schools as failing or underperforming may have different effects on the teachers in these schools. It may motivate the teachers to work harder or it may

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Overall pass rate (%)</th>
<th>Schools under 60% (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>70.2</td>
<td>34.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>73.9</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>78.2</td>
<td>21.2</td>
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</table>

make them feel that they are failures, resulting in their continuing in a negative spiral (Pintrich and Schunk 2002). Blackmore (2004) indicates that these labels, such as underperforming schools, influence teachers’ emotions and their dedication for their work. In the case of underperforming schools, this label is allocated from outside and the school does not have any say in it. From the DoE it may just be an organisational or administrative action, but the potential motivational consequences must also be considered (Gunter 2004). Labelling has the potential to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. It influences the people who are labelled but also how other people see and experience these people (Woolfolk 2010). The underperforming label becomes more complicated when it is considered that it is taking place in a performativity culture. According to Ball (2012), performativity is now at work at all levels and in all kinds of education and public service where everything must be measured and is compared with these and other schools. This rigorous process required teachers and principals to spend increasing amounts of their time in making themselves accountable, reporting on what they do rather than doing it. This research will therefore explore the potential influence of the underperforming label on the teachers in the case-study schools and how it influenced their attitude and motivation to develop themselves.

Bantwini (2012) explains that teachers in rural and township areas, where the districts organise professional development, are not satisfied with the development provided. Unlike innovative and driven teachers, they see professional development as the sole responsibility of their district office. This article focuses on development in schools of this kind, which are most in need of development because of their low level of performance.

In this article, the background of this study will be described before the theoretical framework and the methods are outlined. Next a detailed discussion of the results is given. Finally, a summary of the findings and some recommendations will be presented. The main research question that will be explored is: How does the context in underperforming schools influence teachers’ motivation to participate in development activities?

Underperforming schools may have a negative, multi-directional influence on teachers and their motivation level. Low motivation levels of the staff may be the reason for underperformance, but being at a school that is labelled underperforming is intrinsically demotivational. It is thus a matter of some urgency to identify the factors that could motivate these teachers to engage in activities that could improve the quality of their work and consequently enable the schools where they teach to become performing schools.

Contextual challenges of underperforming schools

There is a huge disparity between the infrastructure and resources of schools classified as previously advantaged and those classified as previously disadvantaged. As already stated, the majority of these previously disadvantaged schools, which are situated in townships established for people of colour during Apartheid in South Africa, are categorised as underperforming schools (Christie et al. 2007, p. 3, Moloi 2010, p. 623). Making a related point, Heystek (2007, p. 498) underlines the link between poor performance and the availability of equipment and facilities. One way of changing the situation is for teachers to participate in development activities. That makes it important to explore the factors that would make teachers in
underperforming contexts willing to participate in development activities. As Schunk et al. (2008, p. 268) point out, contextual factors strongly influence the intrinsic motivation of teachers. At township schools they are confronted with the effects of poverty, vandalism, crime, violence, poor infrastructure, lack of resources, absenteeism, high dropout rates, overcrowded classes, gangsterism, drug abuse, teenage pregnancies and a large number of learners from one-parent households (Christie et al. 2007, pp. 65 and 89, Pashiardis and Heystek 2007, p. 44, Moloi 2010, p. 622, Mampane and Bouwer 2011, p. 114). These factors directly and indirectly affect the students’ performance and teachers’ motivational levels to develop themselves. Fataar (2009, p. 9) argues that many teachers in township schools spend more time responding to the social needs of the students than they do teaching the core curriculum. Other factors that are likely to affect performance are poor attendance by teachers and students, low morale within the schools, and fragmented relationships between principals, students and teachers (Fataar and Paterson 2002, p. 7).

Thoonen et al. (2011, p. 506) refer to contextual factors that have a positive effect on teachers’ willingness (internal motivation) to engage in development activities. Examples are: teacher interactions (as an example of external motivation – to be with friends, but it can also serve as internal motivation because it makes you feel valuable), a spirit of cooperation, participative decision-making and a climate of trust. These factors also influence the teaching and learning process and may thus help to change an underperforming school into a performing school. However, as Bubb and Earley (2010, p. 75) point out, teachers who work in schools in challenging circumstances need help (e.g. food schemes for students, which is an external motivational factor) to meet the requirements of their complex roles. Teachers should thus be given sustained support in the development process.

The Department of Basic Education provides development opportunities for staff members to help them understand and cope with changes in the curriculum and methodology. At present these compulsory training sessions normally occur during the school holidays. As a result, these developmental opportunities, which are intended to motivate teachers, have the opposite effect because teachers may be emotionally and/or physically exhausted at the end of a term; even if this exhaustion is just a psychological effect because teachers were used to having their holidays. It is important to recognise that, like other people, teachers are not all equally motivated to work hard and do the maximum of what is expected of them. The employer (the provincial department and the principal, at school level) has to play a strong role in motivating teachers to do their utmost to improve the quality of teaching, especially in underperforming schools.

**Background and rationale**

This study is set in the context of a performance management system in which the Integrated Quality Management System is one of the performance measurement instruments used to appraise teacher performances and from this plan development programmes for each teacher. The Integrated Quality Management System offers a 1% annual salary bonus if teachers perform at a certain level as indicated in the policy. This monetary reward is expected to motivate teachers to participate in further development activities. The Integrated Quality Management System includes personal and professional growth plans intended to stimulate development. The Personnel Administrative Measures, which serve as the base document for the work
allocation and development of teachers, prescribe 80 hours of professional development for teachers (Educators Employment Act 1998) per annum. This indicates that professional development is regarded as important in the schooling system. However, it is doubtful whether the prescribed number of hours is met since there is no formal monitoring system. This may influence the development process negatively. As stated previously, there are contextual factors that could affect the participation of teachers in development activities. Some examples are negative attitude, lack of resources, lack of funds, overcrowded classes, vandalism, violence, poor infrastructure, low morale and fragmented relationships (Fataar and Paterson 2002, p. 7, Christie et al. 2007, pp. 65, 89, Moloi 2010, p. 622, Mampane and Bouwer 2011, p. 114).

The national Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development 2011–2025 is a Department of Basic Education initiative. This prioritises training for underperforming schools to improve the quality of teacher education and development in order to improve the quality of teachers and of teaching and learning (Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development 2011).

Based on the NSC examinations pass rate for 2013, 21.2% of schools in South Africa are underperforming. That means that their pass rate in these examinations was lower than 60% (Report on the National Senior Certificate Examination Results 2011). Many of the underperforming schools are in poor socio-economic environments (Christie et al. 2007, p. 3, Moloi 2010, p. 623). It is therefore worth exploring the context of schools in these communities and the possible effect on teachers’ willingness to participate in development activities.

The Western Cape, where the research was done, is the province with the lowest percentage of underperforming schools (6.73%), whereas the Eastern Cape has the highest percentage (44.8%) (Report on the National Senior Certificate Examination Results 2011). There has been a significant decrease in the number of underperforming schools in the Western Cape since 2011. These numbers decreased from 34.1% in 2011 to 21.2% in 2013 (see Table 1). The Western Cape Education Department (WCED) is committed to providing support to underperforming schools. It is possible that these development initiatives could have been responsible for the improvement.

**Professional development**

We will use the concept of professional development, which goes beyond staff development. Professional development can also include personal development, which is not necessarily limited to the actual work the person is doing.

According to Mitchell (2013, p. 390), professional development is the process whereby an individual acquires or enhances the skills, knowledge and/or attitudes for improved practice. As can be seen, this definition takes account of the moral purpose of teaching. This resonates with Kwakman’s (2003, p. 152) view that professional development in schools requires the involvement of teachers in activities aimed at acquiring new knowledge, skills and values that will improve their teaching. The Personnel Administrative Measures (Employment of Educators Act 1998) refer to professional development as the extent to which teachers have the opportunity to develop their existing skills and expertise as well as new skills and expertise in their learning area and in educational thinking, administration, management and
vocational and technical areas. It thus encompasses a wide variety of skills and knowledge.

Principles of adult learning inform the development of new skills, knowledge and values: individuals make meaning of their experiences. This development includes an opportunity for critical reflection of the personal assumptions on which the teachers’ interpretations of and orientation to various social practices are based. This view on learning focuses on the individual as the source, the means and the ends of learning (Saloa and Rönnerman 2013, p. 600). The implementation (enactment) of the development activities requires each of the teachers to be motivated because they have to be personally involved in the process. Teachers at a school labelled ‘low performing’ that is situated in a low socio-economic environment may find it difficult to be highly motivated to participate in development activities.

Although it is the individual teacher’s responsibility to participate in development activities, principals as leaders in schools need to accept their responsibility to act as motivators, space creators or participants for and in the learning process. White (2013) indicates that leaders should model the value of ongoing professional development to motivate teachers to participate in development activities. It becomes a process of ‘we are developing’ rather than a process of ‘you must develop’ because you are underperforming. White (2013) emphasises that this relationship and specifically trust are important aspects to motivate development. Zachariou et al. (2013) also refer to the importance of principals in development, emphasising their role in ensuring that development is sustained. This is directly linked to the intrinsic motivation of individuals to be committed to development over a long period (years), specifically in underperforming schools.

Although all teachers need some development, the focus of this article is specifically on the role of development in underperforming schools as a means of school improvement (Mitchell 2013, p. 395). The implication is that observable and short-term improvement must be the main objective. In a complex school context where parents, children, teachers and the socio-economic environment all have to be included, development may have to be a longer-term process. However, at the same time short-term results are required.

Teachers must have a high level of motivation before they will be persuaded to move out of their comfort zones. This is especially true at underperforming schools where teachers have to do more professional development than those at a performing school. Heystek (2011) makes the point that development is demanding because it requires physical, emotional and cognitive change in the individuals concerned. Apart from effort and involvement, time and money are often needed, making teachers reluctant to participate, especially at an underperforming school. Furthermore, development is sometimes scheduled over weekends or holidays or after the formal dismissal of classes, which may make it difficult to attend. Another reason for resistance to change is the uncertainty it brings (Bush and Heystek 2006, p. 63, Stensaker and Meyer 2012, p. 108). Any uncertainties teachers have should therefore be addressed in the development process. Appropriately designed professional development has to take account of the personal circumstances, interests, perceptions, needs and uncertainties of the target group involved. However, it is not always possible or desirable to perform only the development that the teachers concerned see as personally valuable; goal-driven development with new goals or a change in official policy (e.g. curriculum) necessitates development that teachers may not see as personally valuable.
Professional development can enhance the educational outcomes of learners and assist teachers to operate more effectively in the classroom by extending the professional experience of the teacher, developing knowledge and understanding and making staff feel valued (Martin and Dowson 2009, p. 347, Mestry et al. 2009, p. 475, Bubb and Earley 2010, p. 1). It also assists teachers in the delivery of the curriculum as it makes them aware of new developments. In South Africa, underperforming schools are expected to develop into performing schools. Teachers are therefore enjoined to participate in development activities to raise the level of learner performance.

Conceptualisation of motivation

There are a number of different ways of defining motivation. Martin and Dowson (2009, p. 328), for instance, define motivation as a set of interrelated beliefs and emotions that influence and direct behaviour. Motivation thus has a psychological base. Schunk et al. (2008, p. 176) and Ahl (2006, p. 387) argue that motivation provides the energy and direction for particular behaviour. This implies that people need a stimulus to energise them to move in a certain direction. As Goetch (2011, p. 89) points out, to be ‘driven to do something’ implies ‘having a reason’ to do it.

Motivation can be categorised in a number of ways (Porter et al. 2003, p. 55). Those highlighted in this article are intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as well as rational and emotional motivation. Extrinsic motivation refers to participating in an activity as a means to an end, whereas intrinsic motivation, which is sometimes known as self-motivation, is the willingness to participate in an activity for its own sake (Porter et al. 2003, p. 55, Schunk et al. 2008, p. 249). Goetch (2011, p. 89) argues that self-motivation leads to peak performance and continual improvement. For sustainable transformation of an underperforming school into a performing school, teachers must preferably be intrinsically motivated. However, although external motivation is not normally associated with sustainable development, it can initiate development. Both types of motivation can play an important role in teacher participation in development activities.

Rational motivation is related to activities with a rational basis (e.g. realistic goals), while emotional motivation stems from feelings and emotional activities. Judge and Ilies (2002, p. 798) categorise goal theory, expectancy theory and self-efficacy theory as theories of performance motivation. In their discussion, they ascribe differences to the individuals concerned in the situation as well as contextual aspects such as different schools (Judge and Ilies 2002, p. 797). Economic rational theories assume that facts and figures motivate people. The 60% pass rate is an example of a rational motivational goal; people could work harder to achieve it. However, if the goal seems unachievable or unrealistic, it will have little or no motivational value. All of these theories have inherent problems. Motivational theories – for example, the needs-driven theory of Maslow (Maslow et al. 1998) – are typical of higher-order, needs-driven theories. The expectancy theories may also be associated with this approach. A goal may be tied to facts and figures, but may also have emotional aspects tied to it. Depending on the value or principles included in the action or goal, the action may have emotional and/or rational motivational value for different individuals (Reeve 2011).

The current motivational theory employed by the DoE and implemented by principals seems to be a combination of rational and emotional theories. The Department
uses blame and threats, both of which are strongly linked to internal motivation (Pintrich and Schunk 2002). Teachers are assessed and measured, and are blamed and shamed if they do not achieve the required examination results as well as literacy and numeracy levels expected by the department. Labels such as performing and underperforming, failing and succeeding are used to categorise schools and are made public so that parents and communities are aware of the quality of the education in a particular school. The pass percentages of schools are usually published in regional newspapers and can be easily accessed via the Internet from the DoE website. This form of motivation may be termed motivation by threats.

To understand the effect that particular forms of motivation are likely to have, it is important to understand the concept of motivation and the basic theories behind it. Motivation can be associated with either positive or negative feelings. Reaching the goal of 60% in the final NSC examinations may lead to a positive feeling of accomplishment and competence, and being threatened with losing your job or being labelled as underperforming if 60% is not attained may lead to negative feelings – but both of these kinds of threats may have different effects on individuals. Although threats may be a negative form of motivation and not recommended over the long term, they may serve to break the stranglehold of negative feelings and an underperformance mode of delivery. It is, however, preferable for motivation to be associated with positive feelings and experiences to optimise teaching and learning (Heystek 2011, p. 10). Social learning theory takes the view that people desire positive results (Pintrich and Schunk 2002). The motivation to do things is influenced by agency (inherited personality) and structure (environment). How individuals think and reflect on development activities is also influenced by their environment.

Porter et al. (2003, p. 58) note that a positive approach also needs to take into account the social and contextual factors. For this reason, this study focuses on positive factors that could motivate teachers to improve their own as well as their students’ performance.

**Research methods and design**

Since this study investigated human experiences, the approach taken was qualitative (Lichtman 2011, p. 240). This study explored the experiences of teachers, focusing on the factors that positively influence their participation in development activities. An interpretive approach was used to understand how teachers experience development activities in their school and their motivation towards participation. In line with Merriam (2009), p. 5, the purpose of this interpretive research was to describe, understand and interpret the context.

**Sample selection**

Two township schools were selected on the basis of their NSC results two years previously when they were categorised as underperforming schools. The two secondary schools were selected from a total of seven schools in the Metropole East region in the WCED that had been underperforming in 2010, but had developed into performing schools in the interim. The two schools were similar with regard to their socio-economic context as well as their academic performances.

Purposive sampling was done by selecting teachers with 10 years’ or more experience because it was assumed that their experiences could aid the exploration of the
role of motivation in development. These teachers had been in the school for a long time and therefore had personal experience of the problems and issues in the school with regard to underperformance as well as the improvement in the school. Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p. 363) state that purposive sampling sets criteria for representation of key attributes when planning initial data collection. The principal of each of the schools selected was requested to compile a list of the names of post level one teachers (male and female) who met the following criteria:

- Teachers with 10 years’ or more experience.
- Teachers who had achieved 60% or higher in their subject in the 2011 NSC examinations.
- Teachers who participated actively and willingly in development activities.
- Teachers whose school attendance was good.

Teachers who met these criteria were seen as having a high level of motivation. We selected four teachers per school from this list and invited them to participate voluntarily in this study. All of them formally agreed to do so. After they had been fully informed about the nature of the research, these seven teachers were asked whether they were willing to be part of the research. It was made clear that the decision was entirely theirs. All seven formally agreed to participate.

Data gathering
Data were gathered from the principals and teachers by means of semi-structured interviews. According to Merriam (2009, p. 86), semi-structured and unstructured interviews are the most common form of data collection in qualitative analysis. The interviews were tape-recorded with the prior permission of the participants to ensure that the researcher and participants can recall what exactly was said and why. The interview schedule focused on factors that motivate teachers to participate in development activities, factors that deter staff from participation in development activities and the expectations teachers have of development activities. The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes and were conducted after the formal school day had ended. Every effort was made to avoid having a negative influence on planning and development time.

Reliability and validity
Merriam (2009, p. 209) states that conducting the investigation in an ethical manner can ensure validity and reliability. The following four principles of ethical procedure that Denzin and Lincoln (2011, pp. 65–66) advise, were adopted.

Informed consent
Permission to do the research was requested from the WCED and the principal and teachers of the selected schools, and ethical clearance was obtained from Stellenbosch University. Participants were asked to take part voluntarily in the research. They all signed the forms agreeing to participate after they had been fully informed of the purpose of the research and how and where the findings would be disseminated. Their human rights were respected.
Non-deception
To ensure that there was no unintended misrepresentation, interviewees were given an opportunity to check the researchers’ interpretation of the data to make sure their responses had been correctly represented. This strengthened the trustworthiness of the data.

Privacy and confidentiality
To ensure the privacy of the participants, all records were securely stored in a safe. Furthermore, the interviewees and the schools are referred to only by their pseudonyms. Care was taken throughout the research process to respect the dignity of the participants and not to cause any harm, physical or emotional, or professional embarrassment to them.

Accuracy of data
Ensuring that data are accurate is a cardinal principle in the qualitative study. The use of the voice-recorder and transcripts of the actual interviews proved useful in the translation and analysis of the data. Permission was obtained for the use of the audio-recorder. The consent forms took full account of all of the above ethical requirements.

Data analysis
Data were transcribed verbatim and analysed immediately after the interviews. The data were coded and categorised according to themes. These were then verified by the participants.

Discussion
The following factors were identified as having the most power to motivate these teachers to participate willingly in development activities. The references in brackets in the discussion refer to the school (S), the principal (P) or a specific teacher (T) in school 1 or 2.

Passion
Most of the participants mentioned that they had a passion for working with children from disadvantaged backgrounds and this motivated them to participate in development activities. Their comments indicate that growing up in a similar environment background to the children they are working with had motivated them to participate in development activities. The context in which they work was therefore a driving force for development:

I grew up very poor. I see a lot of the children in myself when I was a learner. I want to make a difference in the community. Poverty – it is difficult. (P1, S1)

I am paid well. Teaching is my passion. I like it, I want to be here. It is a noble profession. (T4, S2)
The comments of many of the teachers echo the sentiment that they viewed themselves as in service of the community. For them it is a matter of doing what is best for the child. They view development activities as an opportunity to help disadvantaged children reach higher goals in life. The following is how one teacher put it:

Oh man, for me it is always, everything you do, must be for the best of the child, for the best of the child and the school obviously, because you are in service of the community. It is mainly about doing the best for the child. I always put the child and the school first. (T2, S2)

Passion as a motivational factor features strongly in the emotional and internal categories of motivation. Passion is not only associated with higher-order needs according to Maslow, but is also a socially driven motivation because the teachers want to improve the communities. The poor socio-economic background of these schools thus motivates teachers to participate in development activities as they can relate to them. In other words, their empathy with children from disadvantaged backgrounds drives them to participate in development activities that could benefit the learners.

**Empowerment, acknowledgement and collaboration**

Many of the participants engage in self-development activities. Reasons for doing so include gaining more knowledge about subject matter, developing skills to convey subject content and boosting self-confidence. In their comments, they mention that this empowers them to manage their large classes and to improve learner results. As one of the teachers says:

I’m going. I paid for the course myself. So, it is my own development and I need it. If I don’t go, no one will feel I should have gone, no one will be glad if I go. It is my own development. I feel I need those skills to do justice to my class. I want to develop myself in order to do it with more confidence. (T4, S2)

This statement can be linked to the internally driven motivational factors. The need for confidence and improving results drives the search for empowerment. Improving the results relates to the need for achievement that drives teachers to empower themselves.

Teachers also mentioned that acknowledgement in the form of praise or a mere ‘thank you’ from the principal could motivate them to participate in development activities. The following are some of their comments:

For example small things, if it is a teacher’s birthday, give him a card or a thing that the teacher can feel that the school cares. Yes, a small thing. You can make a card on the computer and those types of things. (T3, S2)

If you have incentives for a teacher, I mean there isn’t money, but it will help. Maybe, what I also said, maybe if there is a meeting tonight, or whatever, if the teachers can go home early, then you will feel like coming back again. But money we can’t get, not here. (T2, S1)

Give a little more time, be accommodating. We worked until late last night. Give us off a little earlier. The whole programme will still be done during the day. Understand that all we ask is: give us a little more time. (T1, S2)

The responses indicate that teachers want to feel that they and the contribution they make are valued and that their needs are understood. They therefore seek recognition from the principal as an indication of this. This is an external motivational
factor (acknowledgement) that becomes an internal motivation (must be for the best of the child) which can have a positive influence on the motivation of teachers to participate in development activities.

Collaboration is an example of a socially driven need. Teachers mentioned that they view the staff as a team and they should all work towards the same vision to meet the needs of the children that they serve. The following are some of the reasons they gave:

- I think if you do more things together, you can show more compassion for people and have more sympathy with people if there are problems. So that type of thing is addressed if you socialise. Then you can understand each other and help each other. Then the help comes easier. (T2, S1)

- There is more support if we work as a team, that we work towards a point. One person, one swallow does not indicate summer. (T4, S2)

Collaboration needs positive interpersonal relationships. The interaction between teachers is thus an important motivating force. These statements indicate that teachers view collaboration as teamwork, with the expectation of improvement. Empowerment and collaboration refer to emotional and internal motivation, whereas acknowledgement is more rational and external.

**The 60% criteria from WCED**

The 60% criteria requirement to be labelled as a performing school is more of a goal and external motivational factor. This externally determined and stated goal is internalised by the teachers. The following are some of their comments:

- We have winter schools, we have after-school classes. We did the telematics also. We had more parent meetings, because we realised that we must get out from under that 60%. To get 60% is not really difficult. It is not a very high level that you should reach. 60% can be easily attained. So it actually says that if you are under 60%, then you are reasonably weak. (T4, S2)

- One should not hide behind context. I still read success stories every day about children who come from township schools. They sit and learn by candle light, but then they get A symbols. If you want to think a little further, you need to put in more effort. (T2, S1)

The 60% criteria requirement to be categorised as a performing school is thus viewed as a motivator by most of the teachers. For them it is a challenge to achieve 60%, so in their difficult context, attaining this goal is a real achievement. However, some teachers feel that contextual factors play a huge role in the attainment of 60% and so schools should be treated individually and should not be measured using the same instrument. In interpreting the results obtained from these schools, one must consider that these schools have already become performing schools. This indicates clearly that the teachers concerned had been motivated by some of the factors mentioned in this article.

**Presenters of activity**

The presenter is an external and emotionally based type of motivation. Teachers mentioned that the presenter’s style, whether passive or active, plays an important
role in motivating them to participate in development activities. One of the principals mentioned that:

If the presenters do not stimulate my interest, I will not be interested. I am a guy who likes action. (P1, S2)

This has direct implications for the selection of presenters. They need to be able to interest participants and keep their attention. This means they have to be knowledgeable about the subject and have an effective presentation style that takes account of the different learning styles of their teacher audience. The presenters need to understand that learning styles are shaped by life experiences and influenced by preferences and expectations. Principals and other organisers of development activities in schools therefore need to do all they can to make sure that the presenters are carefully selected.

**Approach and self-esteem**

Teachers mentioned that the approach the principal uses to inform them of development activities strongly influences their motivation to participate in development activities. Most of the teachers in this study seemed to resist an authoritarian approach and respond positively to a more democratic approach. This is reflected in the following comments:

They [school management team] have already decided. You must only abide. That authoritative, autocratic attitude. That is what sometimes … It is because of that that we sometimes speak past each other. (T1, S1)

I feel that you as principal should know your staff and must be willing to communicate with staff at ground level. That personal touch is important to me. (T2, S2)

Most teachers want to be involved in decisions that affect them and their development. This is an external but emotional motivator. One of the teachers felt that his opinion should be valued, implying the need for respect and professionalism when dealing with people.

The teachers’ interviews also revealed that how teachers view themselves in relation to others is an important factor. This was mentioned particularly in relation to the management of large classes. Teachers view themselves as inferior if they cannot manage large classes or ill-disciplined students; development may therefore increase their confidence, which may raise their self-esteem and can be seen as an internal and emotional motivator.

**Conclusion**

This research has revealed specific factors that can positively motivate teachers to spend time on developing themselves. The findings indicate that teachers are passionate about working with students from disadvantaged backgrounds because it gives them the opportunity to invest in these children’s future. They view their work as service to the community and find fulfilment in enabling the students to perform well. These responses reflect intrinsic motivation, doing an activity for the inherent pleasure that it provides, as well as for the emotional satisfaction it offers. These internal motivations would be difficult or even impossible to dictate. These teachers are on a higher level of needs motivation (according to Maslow) because their basic
needs have been fulfilled. They have a secure income and secure personal circumstances. Therefore they can live for their passion – to make a difference in other people’s lives.

Principals can positively influence the teacher’s internal motivational levels. Acknowledgement is one method of increasing the willingness of teachers to be involved in developmental activities. Another method of strengthening teachers’ internal motivation is to appoint teachers whose passion and drive will inspire others to higher levels of school performance.

The teachers’ need for collaboration is reflected in their view that working together as a team is important. This also reflects the value placed on trusted relationships, which is related to Maslow’s need for belonging and McClelland’s need for affiliation (Evans 1998, p. 37). As such, it is emotionally based. Successful collaboration is also associated with acknowledgement, a strong internal motivational factor that can improve the quality of education in the long term.

The goal of attaining a 60% pass rate in the final school examinations is viewed as a motivator by the teachers. This is usually an extrinsic factor, but it seems that teachers made it intrinsic because most of them viewed it as an achievement, given their challenging context. This may also relate to the need for acknowledgement that has already been mooted. According to the responses given, this provides the energy and drive for participation in development activities and to improve learner results. The expectation of achieving 60% relates to Vroom’s expectancy theory, which assumes that people make rational choices about their work behaviour (Porter et al. 2003, p. 13). Their goals must be achievable and realistic to have motivational value for the participants. In the case of the two schools, the school facilities and equipment available were not a big deterrent or demotivational factor. Since it seemed achievable, the 60% goal proved motivational. In other schools with different conditions and circumstances, the 60% may be perceived as too high and may therefore not motivate teachers to participate in development activities.

A more democratic approach from the principal was mentioned by all of the teachers from both schools as an important factor that motivates them to participate in development activities. This relates to the leadership style of the principal and how he/she manages or views the teachers. It thus seems that a Theory Y approach is a positive motivator because it has a more positive outlook on people. A principal adopting it is in a position to have a more positive motivational effect on the teachers than a principal who adopts a Theory X approach (Pintrich and Schunk 2002).

The data suggest that most of the teachers who engage in development activities do so because of their passionate commitment to meeting the challenges of the underperforming context as well as their disposition. Teachers are thus motivated by internal and emotional factors.

Principals, who are the leaders at the school and are ultimately responsible for development activities, should take account of the factors mentioned to motivate staff to participate in development activities. Knowledge of motivation theories is imperative to assist in this process. Given that quality education needs quality teachers (Hildebrandt and Eom 2011, p. 422), teacher development must be supported and encouraged so that it can ensure quality teachers and enable an underperforming school to become a performing school.

Many teachers at underperforming schools buckle under the pressures of poor infrastructure, lack of resources, ill-disciplined students and poverty. In other words, these have a negative effect on the motivation of teachers. However, it seems that
some teachers are able to rise above even the most difficult circumstances (Pashiar-dis and Heystek 2007, p. 44). It is thus imperative to gain an understanding of the factors that enable these teachers to do so. This study provides a useful contribution.

References


Mitchell, R., 2013. What is professional development, how does it occur in individuals, and how may it be used by educational leaders and managers for the purpose of school improvement? *Professional development in education*, 39 (3), 387–400.


