Report on a teacher motivation workshop

Timothy J. Knowles
Sophia University, Tokyo

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This paper is an account of a workshop on Teacher Motivation, and contains input from both coordinator (the writer) and participants. It begins with a consideration of the nature of our motivation, and how we might most usefully conceptualise it. A number of questions arise which show that it is not a straightforward concept. Some of the main ideas from the body of theory of occupational motivation are then briefly examined, to see if they can be applied to the particular situation of an EFL/ESL teacher. Responses from the workshop indicated that while many questions remain unanswered, the theory can help us to conceptualise our motivation. In this brief discussion, no single branch of theory seemed to be stronger, but the author suggests that goal-setting theory might provide a particularly useful avenue.

本論は、職業に対する教員の意欲に関するワークショップの結果についてまとめたものであり、ワークショップのコーディネーター（筆者）と参加者両方の意見が含まれている。手順として、まず意欲とはどのような性質を持つものか、さらにはいかに教員がその意欲を概念化し、有益なものにできるかという問題を考察する。その過程において、意欲が単純な概念ではないということを示すいくつかの疑問が生じる。本論では職業意欲についての理論で示されているいくつかの主要な概念を簡単に検証し、その上で、それらがEFLやESLの教員という特定の状況に応用可能であるかを考察する。多くの疑問が未解決であるものの、ワークショップの結果から、職業意欲についての理論が教員の熱意を概念化するのに役立つということが示唆された。ある特定の理論が突出して有効であるという立場はとらないものの、本論では、ゴールセッティング理論をとりあげ、その有効性について論証してゆく。

This is an account of a workshop devoted to investigation of the motivation of teachers in general, and the motivation of teachers of English as a Foreign (or Second) language in particular. It was intended both for practising teachers, with a view to deepening awareness of their working situations, and for those who might manage teachers. As it was a workshop, much of the input was contributed by the participants themselves, and in order that the topic might be discussed on the basis of personal experience and their own stories, participants were reassured that their contributions would not be recorded, and that I would not take notes. Therefore, it is possible to give only a very broad outline of participant concerns and input, which will mainly be in the form of reaction to my own input. First, the motivation of language teachers is examined, and some issues that need to be considered are suggested. This is followed by a brief account of some of the main theories and ideas from a variety of disciplines, together

with some reaction of the participants regarding the possible usefulness of these theories.

What is a motivated teacher?

The workshop (though not this paper) was given the title "Why Bother" because the phrase illustrates three ways that one might conceive of motivation. Firstly, the word *bother* itself can convey the sense of doing something more than what is actually required: in short, *going the extra mile*. Secondly, there is an implied choice: one can choose not to bother if one prefers. And thirdly, of course, there is the implied cynicism of the question: that not bothering might actually be the normal option and that bothering is the choice of a select few special teachers. However, such views can only be starting points and it is clear that practitioners have many different conceptions of motivation. Indeed, one of the stumbling blocks to researching motivation is that there is a lack of consensus as to what the real nature of motivation is, and the way in which its absence or presence might be apparent. It was for this reason that early in the workshop, the participants were invited to reflect upon their own conceptions of motivation by addressing the question: "What is a motivated teacher?"

There were about 25 participants, of whom eight were Japanese. About half of the participants were women. Some of them chose to reflect on the teachers that they had encountered in their own education, with the teachers' motivation showing itself by the effects of that motivation on pupils, often to the extent of the pupil choosing that teacher's subject for further study. However, there were very wide-ranging descriptions of that ideally motivated teacher herself, and what exactly she *did* or how she *acted* to make her appear motivated. For example, that teacher might have been strict, or she may have been easy-going. She may have been a hard taskmaster, or she may have allowed complete learner autonomy.

Other participants considered how their own motivation might show itself in their own practice. Many motivating or demotivating factors were mentioned: for example salary, job conditions, and the aims of the institution or curriculum. However, the predominant motivating factor appeared to be their own relationships. This relationship might be with the students, in which case motivation might be related to a desire for them to learn English, and also to develop into happy adults. There is also a relationship with the subject (in this case, the English language), with motivation connected with the enjoyment of working with the subject and the desire to communicate that enjoyment.

There were many contrasting suggestions from the participants as to how their own motivation might be seen in the ways that they acted. They may spend time preparing materials, or prefer to spend that energy actively with the students. They may write lesson plans, or shun any such rigidity. They may work with the aims of the institution, or actively rebel against them. They may seek to improve their teaching practice, or they may have confidence in the way they already do things. And they may or may not seek promotion. In short, it appeared that motivation showed itself in different ways in different teachers in different situations.

Conceptualising motivation to teach

The above issues show that any manager hoping to increase or preserve *motivation* needs first to be sure of what that concept might be, both in the minds of individual teachers, and in terms of practice. In order to rather starkly illustrate the specific situation of motivation in an educational environment, workshop participants were asked to consider the differences between motivation in the task of teaching and in the task of painting fence posts. One obvious difference is the human factor, but that is not the whole story. I would suggest that a particular difference lies in the ultimate goal of the enterprise. The fence post is complete when it is painted, but in the classroom, goals can be extremely diverse unless there is a rigid testing system.

Some other questions that might be considered include whether or not motivation is something innate in the teacher or whether it is something that can be acquired. Associated with this is the possibility that when we are considering that the effect that a teacher has had upon us might be due to her motivation, it may be better to describe the cause as a certain aptitude for teaching and communication. Also, could motivation be seen as something that can become a permanent personal attribute, or more contingent on changing teaching contexts? Would it be better to concentrate resources on training a teacher to cope and flourish in all circumstances, or to somehow create an ideal teaching environment? If we even knew what an ideal situation were, might this then reduce the challenge that a motivated teacher might desire?

Another important question that was raised during the discussion was the relationship between the motivation of the teacher and the motivation of the learner. Put simply, is motivation infectious? Indeed, does the influence work both ways, with teachers in turn motivated by motivated learners? Anecdotal evidence might appear that it does. If part of a teacher's motivation is towards creating a motivating environment, that environment may be, to some extent, self-perpetuating. Similarly, there is the question of how motivated a teacher might be to allow learner autonomy, and, as it were, stand back while the learner makes his own decisions.

One final, but important question concerns the nature of English Language teaching, and whether there are any features that might lead us to consider motivation differently from other teaching contexts. In the context of this workshop, there is the fact that the non-Japanese participants were working in a culture which was not originally their own. Also, career structures, wherever in the world one might be, may not be as firm and predictable as in other fields. Further, as mentioned above, the very nature of the subject may mean that goals can be very unclear, with very few of the foreign teachers in Japan working towards any set criterion. Very importantly, however, many Japanese High School English teachers in the workshop were obliged to work towards university entrance tests, within a rigid and secure career structure.

Theory

One might hope that the questions we have asked are addressed in the literature of occupational motivation. However, Dörnyei (2001) observes that educational psychologists have ignored teacher motivation, despite

the possibility that "the teacher's level of enthusiasm and commitment is one of the most important factors that affect the learner's motivation to learn" (p.156). Applied Linguistics, in particular, concentrates more on the motivation of the learner, and the only substantial review of the motivation of TEF(S)L teachers appears in Pennington (1995), with recent research limited to such papers as Kim and Doyle (1998), Doyle and Kim (1999), Kassabgy et al. (2001), and Tardy and Snyder (2004).

Nevertheless, despite Dörnyei's pessimism, much empirical work has been undertaken in general education, mainly in the various fields of administration and management. The problem is that this work stretches over a range of disciplines, and as many results are clearly contingent on contexts, it is not easy to develop theory that might fit the teaching profession as a whole. There *is,* however, a very large body of theory related to occupational motivation. Although it has been developed from observation of occupations other than teaching, it is to theory that the workshop turned in order to discover if it might be helpful in our conceptualisation of our motivation as teachers.

Early theory

Early theory, dating back to the Greeks, suggests that we consider rationally our alternatives, and then simply act to maximise positive results and minimise negative results. By the beginning of the twentieth century, such concepts of instinct (as inherited or innate psychophysical disposition (McDougall, 1908)), and unconscious motivation (e.g. Freud, 1915) had been introduced. Later came the idea that unconscious motives were not instinctive, but were actually learned behaviour (Thorndyke, 1911). Another important introduction was the concept of *drive*, as a reservoir of energy within an organism, impelling behaviour (Woodworth, 1918).

The general workshop reaction to this early theory was that we might indeed consider our alternatives, but the choice we make is far more than simply balancing the results. And although there may be occasions in the classroom that we do things without thinking, it is difficult to conceive that our motivation is all instinct, or unconscious. On the other hand, the idea that we might choose one particular class activity, such as pair work, because in the past it has succeeded (and avoid other options that have not succeeded) seemed reasonable, although it says nothing about how well we might perform. Given that teaching can be a tiring activity, mention of *energy* and *drive* seemed appropriate, but it was difficult to see how the theory alone can help us understand motivation towards teacher-like activity.

Needs theories

The Hierarchy of Needs Theory (Maslow, 1954) is well known. An individual needs first to satisfy the three *deficiency* needs: physiological, safety and security, and belongingness before he can start to satisfy the two *growth* needs of esteem and ego and self-actualisation. The Existence-Relatedness-Growth (ERG) Theory (Alderfer, 1972) later reduced these three stages to three (*existence*, *relatedness*, and *esteem/ego*), and allowed that regression from a higher to a lower level would be possible.

In many ways, these theories seem self-evident. A teacher would be unlikely to go the extra mile on a task, such as

materials writing if physiological needs were not met. However, it is not unheard of for a teacher who is in a very insecure position to work hard at tasks that seem to fall within the realm of *growth*. Alderfer does partly address such a concern, but then we have the fundamental criticisms of these theories: how can we know which category of needs is being satisfied? Are materials being written as a duty, to relate better with the students, or as a form of self-actualisation? In the end, it seems that these theories are helpful for reflecting on our needs, but are of little practical use.

The motivator-hygiene theory

The most important tenet of this theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) is that satisfaction only occurs as a result of factors intrinsic to the content of the job, such as the work itself, recognition, and responsibility. These are referred to as *motivators*, in contrast to *hygiene* extrinsic factors, such as salary and company factors. Any attempt to reduce dissatisfaction by manipulating these extrinsic factors would not increase satisfaction, but would lead to a *neutral* state. The implication is that more attention should be paid to content factors, than to salary and bonuses: a position that has led to much argument. From the point of view of the educational context, Nias (1989) and Dinham and Scott (2000) have suggested a third group of factors, which are external to the work being carried out, yet have an involvement with the school as a social system, such as recognition, teamwork, and relationships.

There has been much empirical work done in education on the basis of Herzberg's theory, and Owens (1995), in a review of two decades of literature, accepts it as being "the state of the art" (p. 57). When put to the participants of this workshop, the reaction was that it is obvious that job satisfaction is due to intrinsic factors, but, well, salary was important also. To take a leaf out of the book of the Hierarchy of Needs, if the salary is not sufficient, then teachers would not be in a position to appreciate the intrinsic rewards of the job. However, this is close to what Herzberg is saying: salary increases would not increase satisfaction: the best they could do is put the teacher in a neutral state so that she can enjoy the rewards of teaching. The question hanging over this avenue of thought, however, is how job satisfaction actually relates to motivation: are teachers specifically motivated to act in order to increase job satisfaction, and if so, is this motivation necessarily towards teaching well?

Self-determination theory

Developed by Deci and Ryan (1985), Self-Determination Theory goes some way towards answering the question of the importance of satisfaction. The primary concern of Deci and Ryan is the wellbeing of individuals, and their assumption is that humans work better in conditions that support their natural inclination toward activity and integration, and do not exploit their vulnerability to passivity. Thus, a manager should identify conditions that elicit and sustain the motivation to do an activity for the inherent satisfaction of the activity itself. The theory asserts that these conditions should support competence, autonomy, and relatedness (including security). Extrinsic rewards can actually be detrimental, inasmuch as they promote a more *controlling* environment, and a reduction in autonomy.

However, if the individual identifies with the rewards and regulations (perhaps having a say in their establishment) then this might serve to actually enhance intrinsic motivation.

Deci and Ryan have conducted much research into the application of their theory in the field of education (documented in Ryan & Deci, 2003). Most of this work relates to the relationship between student and teacher, and one main finding is that teachers who have not been pressured are more likely to allow their students more autonomy. In turn, the more autonomous students are, the more intrinsically motivated they have been found to be. One of the greatest and most damaging pressures on both teachers and students was found to be tests.

Workshop participants found it difficult to recall experiences in which salary actually reduced their motivation to do an activity (or, as I put it, *go the extra mile*). However, the problems of deadlines and imposed goals were familiar, particularly the problems of being forced to work towards tests. The problem, however, in cases like this is actually defining what desired teaching activity might be. It has been demonstrated that learning can be damaged by strict testing (see Kohn, 2000; Swope & Miner, 2000; Whitford & Jones, 2000; also the Self-Determination Theory web-page). However, the job of a teacher might nevertheless require him to work towards a test, and many teachers pointed out that if the students are expecting them to do that, then not to do so might reduce their motivation, and therefore learning.

As a different example of a controlling influence, I suggested the influence of technology, such as complex computer and video rooms, introduced in many cases to *help* the teacher, yet possibly detrimental inasmuch as it may reduce autonomy, forcing her to work in a way that she has not chosen. One simple example might be the introduction of computers in the classroom. The teacher may choose not to utilise them, but the technology often requires the students to be seated in ways which do not suit the way that she would choose to teach. The establishment might believe that these teaching aids are helping her to teach in a way that improves learning, but in reality, this might not be the case. The teacher is being controlled, and might then lose motivation.

Flow theory

This is also very much concerned with the intrinsic qualities of a task. The state of flow is conceived as being felt when "opportunities are in balance with the actor's skills" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1979, p.261), with challenges being neither too great, (resulting in stress) nor too small (hence boredom). A person would work best when in this state of flow. Csikszentmihalyi's many research subjects have not included teachers. Indeed, he complains, in Csikszentmihalyi (1997) that studies of intrinsic motivation in teachers were scarce. He describes *flow* in the educational context in terms of the relationship between student and teacher, with students trying harder if they recognise commitment and enjoyment in the teacher.

Many teachers can tell a story of when they have reached this *state of flow*: feeling that everything is going right, and being driven along by that feeling. It happens, for example, according to one participant, when a group task that she has organised is going particularly well. It seems here that much of the intrinsic reward is provided by the educational process itself, with various tasks, such as writing materials,

becoming autotelic (worth doing simply for their own sake). This is all very well for the teacher, but for the educational process as a whole, perhaps goals are going to be beyond these individual tasks and activities. Nevertheless, the link between the enthusiasm of the teacher and the efforts of the students is well worth considering.

Expectancy theory, social cognitive theory, and self-efficacy.

Expectancy Theory describes motivation as a function of *expectancies* (beliefs that particular actions would lead to particular outcomes) and *valences* (the value placed on the anticipated outcomes) (Lewin, 1938; Tolman, 1959). For work situations, expectancies may be divided into two: E1, the individual's belief that effort will lead to performance, and E2, the belief that a given level of performance will lead to a particular outcome, such as a pay raise (Vroom, 1964). Thus, the motivational level of a teacher writing materials might be a function of the belief that if she tries hard, she will be able to write the materials, the belief that those written materials would then provide the desired outcome, and the value given to that outcome.

Unfortunately, most research into this theory has focused on pay rather than other types of reward, and, as has already been discussed, the issue of influencing the teacher's perception of performance by means of reward manipulation seems rather problematic. Much may depend on the task, the direct intrinsic reward, and the context. Such variables are considered by Social Cognitive Theory, which has extended the concept of expectancy in order to explain behaviour in terms of the reciprocal causations among the person (e.g. ability), the environment (e.g. pay) and the behaviour itself (e.g. success or not). The main construct is *self-efficacy*, defined by Bandura (1997) as "an individual's belief (or confidence) about his or her abilities to mobilize motivation, cognitive resources, and course of action needed to execute a specific task within a given context" (Stajkovic & Luthans, 2003, p.126).

An employee with high self-efficacy beliefs would make efforts that, if well executed, would lead to a successful outcome, while those with low beliefs would stop trying prematurely. Bandura has identified four categories of experience and information that might determine those beliefs. First is the previous success on a challenging task (although perceptions can vary, depending on ability, and complexity of the task). Secondly, beliefs can be affected by *vicarious learning* form competent colleagues, or by careful modelling. Thirdly, they can be enhanced by appropriate verbal persuasion, and finally, there is the importance of the individual's physiological or psychological state.

This is a complex body of theory that is still rather difficult to grasp. Many participants of the workshop could recall a situation in which their belief in themselves was enhanced by each of the four factors above, particularly by modelling and verbal persuasion, which was seen as simply good institutional support. However, the relationship between the teacher and her task must surely be more complex than it appears as described here, and the concept of efficiency is being constantly adjusted. For example, Eden (1996) has suggested the term *means-efficiency*, to refer to the belief that one has the tools (and not just the ability) to do the job. For the teacher, perhaps, this might be the belief that the computers are not going to freeze.

Goal-setting theory

The final theory to be considered comes as a result of a quarter of a century of research from Locke (2003), and Latham (Locke & Latham, 1990) who set out to explain why some people perform better on work tasks than others with similar abilities and knowledge. They concluded that performance is affected by the setting of goals, through the direction of action, the degree of effort and persistence, and the stimulation of planning. The more specific and difficult the goal, the higher is the performance, as long as commitment is sufficient. Commitment requires conviction that the goal is important, and that it is attainable. It is enhanced by recognition, rewards, and participation in goal-setting. Self-efficacy is important here too, as it influences the difficulty of the chosen goal. Feedback is necessary to give a clear indication that movement is fast enough, and in the direction of the goal.

Much of the earlier conversation in the workshop concerned the various aims that teachers might have, and the difficulties of conceptualising motivation in the face of so many individual contexts. We began discussion of theory by considering needs, but it is probably more natural and useful to consider motivation in terms of goals. The institution may have goals, the students have their goals, and participants in the workshop showed that they each have a variety of goals: to motivate the students, to help them develop socially, even to get them through tests. The strength of the goal-setting perspective is that we can consider this multiplicity of goals. As long as there is an appropriate goal, and the commitment to that goal is sufficient, then performance is enhanced. If the performance of one actor (the teacher) in the educational endeavour is enhanced, then this in turn allows other actors (e.g., the learners) to work towards their own goals in their own way. This suggestion was respectfully put to the participants of the workshop, who were invited to consider it in their practice.

Conclusion

This workshop provided some insight into the complexities of our motivation to teach. By being able to discuss their motivations with other teachers, who might be working in very different contexts, and have very different stories to tell, I hope that participants gained a new perspective on why it is that they make the efforts that they do. I also hope that educational managers might have gained some ideas as to how to foster motivation towards a performance that will help learners achieve their goals.

We have considered some of the better known theories pertaining to motivation. No single branch of theory appears to be more relevant to the teachers than any other, and some unanswered questions from the participants show that more thought needs to be given to individual and contextual differences. However, I think it is agreed that they all provide insights and opportunities for reflection. In time, there will be sufficient research into the teaching context for more unified theory to be developed, but perhaps at present goal-setting theory, with its broad statements, provides us with the greatest opportunities for development.

Tim Knowles has been teaching in Japan for 25 years, and is now in the General Foreign Languages Center at Sophia University, Tokyo. He is currently researching into teacher motivation for a Doctor of Education Degree at Bristol University, UK.

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