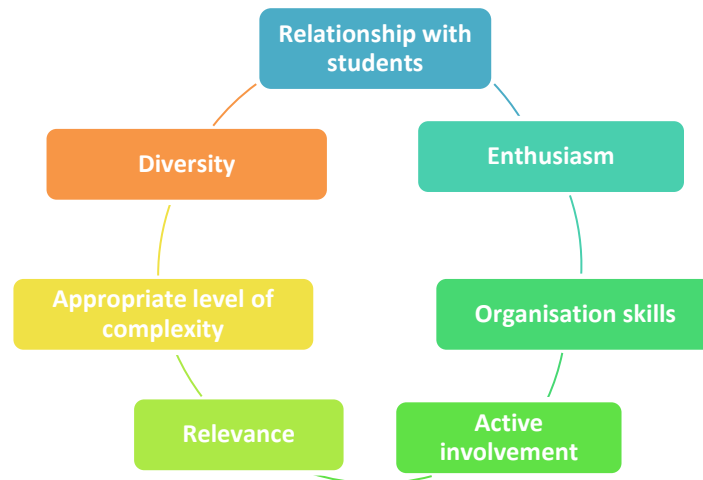


The teaching process and learner motivation

Almost everything that you do in the classroom can have a positive or negative effect on the motivation of your students to learn. The way you interact with them, what are your expectations and demands, what are your beliefs and your teaching style, the activities that you have designed and prepared for them, whether you give your students opportunities to choose, or keep the power of control in your hands. All of these are the components of the teaching and learning process that you can influence, and by which you can stimulate, but also de-stimulate the motivation of your students for learning. Teachers who use more learner-centred practices (i.e., practices that show sensitivity to individual differences among students, include students in the decision-making, and acknowledge students' developmental, personal and relational needs) produced greater motivation in their students.¹

Components of the teaching process that support learner motivation



Relationship with students – Every relationship, including your relationship with students in the teaching and learning process depends on the quality of communication between you and the students, and between the students themselves. If you, by your verbal and non-verbal behaviour, send them the message that you really care about them, that you are interested in what they want, what they think and what they feel, and that you see them as valuable and interesting human beings, then most probably they will care too, and this will have a positive effect on their motivation for learning.

Enthusiasm – If you are not enthusiastic about what you teach, how will your students be enthusiastic about it? If you leave the impression that you would rather be somewhere else, this feeling will soon transfer to your students, too.

¹ Daniels, D., & Perry, K. (2003). "Learner-centered" according to children. *Theory into Practice*, 42 (2), 102-108.

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Organisation skills – When you come to the classroom unprepared, what message do you send to your students (Why would they have to do their homework, if you have not done yours?)

Active involvement – During the lesson, how much time is dedicated to teacher talk, and how much time is dedicated to students' talk or active involvement (participation in a discussion, task-based pair or group work)? A research² in which teachers were asked to record and analyse their lessons showed that the thing that surprised them most was the amount of talking they did. This is not necessarily wrong in itself – teacher talk, as well as anything else that you do during the lesson, should strongly be linked to the learning outcomes that you wish to achieve. However, if during a school year in 3/4 of your lessons about 70-80% is spent on your talking, what do your students do at the time? It is highly unlikely that they learn, and their attention is most probably on something else.

Relevance – How do your students see the content that you teach and that they need to learn? Can they make the connection between the content of teaching/learning and their reality, their experience and their goals in life?

Appropriate level of complexity – The students are motivated for learning:

- When both the teacher and the students take on their part of responsibility for the learning process
- When both the teacher and the students set realistic goals and expectations
- When the teacher helps the students in building their self-confidence and setting their own achievable goals

Diversity – How do you stimulate the interest of your students for the theme of the lesson? Which teaching methods do you use? Does your choice of teaching methods depend on:

- the learning outcomes that you wish to achieve
- the content that is being taught/learned
- the individual needs and learning styles of your students
- the idea that learning activities should enable the students to express their diverse abilities and preferences

Why is motivation important?

Students who perceive their teachers as the ones who create positive learning environment and stimulate their learning and motivation see themselves as more competent, show greater interest in learning, and are more focused on the learning process.³

From our own experience we know that teachers have had a large influence on our life. However, as teachers we tend to forget it. The learning experiences that you, together with your colleagues in school, design and organise for your students have a deep influence on their life now and in the future.

² Richards, J. C. & Nunan, D. (1990) *Second Language Teacher Education*. Cambridge University Press

³ Meece, J. L., Herman, P., & McCombs, B. (2003). Relations of learner-centered teaching practices to adolescents' achievement goals. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 39, 457-475.