

**FACTORS AFFECTING MOTIVATION OF ADOLESCENT  
LEARNERS IN CENTRAL DURBAN**

**BY**

**SEEMA BARATH**

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degree of Masters in Education by coursework in the Faculty  
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## **DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY**

I hereby declare that this dissertation in its entirety, unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, is my original work. The dissertation has not been submitted for degree purposes at any other university.



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Seema Barath

University of KwaZulu - Natal, Durban

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\*Pseudonym used

# **DEDICATION**

**This dissertation is dedicated to my parents  
Mr Gopie Singh and the late Mrs Shanthi  
Singh.**

## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of the study was to gain an understanding of the factors that affect motivation of adolescent learners in the classroom. The pilot and main research study was conducted with 42 adolescent learners in Grades 8 to 12 at Sunflower Secondary School<sup>1</sup> in Durban. The theoretical frameworks that underpinned this study were the ecosystemic perspective, the systems theory and the humanistic theory. These frameworks guided my focus on the interactions that learners, peers, and educators and the whole system of education have with each other as well as on the role they play in motivating each other.

The study used a qualitative research methodology. This approach allowed the researcher to interview the participants of Sunflower Secondary to ascertain rich data as to what factors motivate adolescent learners in the classroom. A semi structured interview schedule was used.

The interviews were tape recorded, transcribed and analysed. Central themes emerged, revealing that educators and peers motivated adolescent learners to learn in the classroom. A list of guidelines was also developed to assist educators in motivating adolescent learners to learn in the classroom.

1. Sunflower is pseudonym.

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

I am an educator at a secondary school and, for some time now, I have been concerned about learners' low levels of motivation. As a result, I have wondered what it is that I can do to enhance their motivation in my classes. This dissertation reports a study in which I sought to understand factors that influence learner motivation. Chapter One introduces this research study which took place at this school, discusses the background and purpose of the study, provides its theoretical location, followed by the research methodology, ethical considerations as well as its limitations. In the last section, the structure of the dissertation is presented.

### **1.2 Background and purpose of the study**

I have been teaching at Sunflower Secondary School for the past seven years and over these years, I have noticed that learners who lack motivation to do their work have increased in number. In the same way, my concern about issues of motivation has grown. As an educator, I get concerned when learners lack motivation as it impacts negatively on their work and mine, too. For example, I get concerned when a learner is reluctant to complete tasks in the classroom or when a capable learner is made to repeat a grade because they have not satisfactorily met the requirements for promotion. The behaviour displayed by such learners in the classroom includes boredom, disruptiveness, or non participation during lessons. Sometimes these

learners abscond while lessons are being conducted. What is worse is when they, during class time, play on their cell phones, sending messages, engaged in games or when they play cards during class lessons.

My observations have been that very few of these learners are able to work independently and that they seldom attempt to do homework activities. My concern stems from perceptions that learners who do not believe that they can do well and who are not motivated to apply any effort in their studies are quick to give up when they experience problems (Muthukrishna, 1998). It also stems from the fact that this seems to be a widespread problem as many educators I know complain about the lack of motivation on learners' part. Widespread as this problem seems to be, nothing seems to be done about it at school or even departmental level.

It is this concern that has led me to do an in-depth study on the motivation of adolescent learners. The primary purpose of the research was to identify factors that could enhance the motivation of adolescent learners in the classroom. The secondary purpose was to develop guidelines that educators can use to enhance learner motivation in the classroom. In Chapter Two, I explore related literature to see if any factors have been identified as promoting learner motivation.

### **1.3 Theoretical location**

This study falls within the discipline of Educational Psychology, focusing on adolescent learners in the classroom and the issues affecting their motivation to learn. Educational Psychology is concerned with the practice of education, particularly the teaching-learning process, the learning context, the learner and the teacher (Good and Brophy, 1994: 27). Within the discipline of Educational Psychology, I selected to use the ecosystemic perspective (Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana, 2002: 44), the systems theory (ibid) and the humanistic theory (Eggen and Kauchak, 1997:348) as the theoretical frameworks to underpin this study.

The ecosystemic approach highlights the dynamic, interdependent relationships of individuals and groups within different social environments (Donald, Lazarus, and Lolwana, 2002: 45). In this study, this framework will be used to understand this interdependence and how it can be used to create an environment where learners feel supported and are motivated to learn. When using the ecosystemic perspective, learners cannot be seen in isolation from the context in which teaching and learning takes place. Instead, their actions or behaviour in the classroom need to be understood within the contexts of important role players for example, their parents, peers, educators, grandparents and community leaders as well as other people who have an influence on their lives. However, for the purpose of this study, only the influence of peers and educators was looked into as these are the people who inhabit the classroom context of learning.

Located within the ecosystemic perspective is the systems theory (Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (1997: 36) which focuses on different levels and groupings of the social context as "systems" where the functioning of the whole is dependent on the interaction between all parts. In this theory, classes are seen as sub-systems of the school system in the same way as educators and learners. Within this theory, one needs to look at all these parts to understand how learning is influenced or not influenced by relationships or interactions taking place within the classroom. This theory will be used as a lens to understand the dynamics of classroom interactions between teachers, learners and their peers as sub-systems of the school system, and how these can be used to improve learner motivation.

Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (1997: 37) further explain that in terms of systems thinking, there are no linear cause and effect relationships. A fundamental principle of thinking in terms of systems is that cause and effect relationships are not seen as taking place in one direction only. An example described by these authors is the way we blame one another in our relationships. Blaming is one-directional thinking because we see the other person as the cause of our own discomfort and frustration (ibid). This is relevant to this study, as learners tend to blame the educator and/or their peers if they fail to produce good results.

Lastly, the humanistic theory was used. This theory focuses on the learner as a whole person and examines the relationships among physical, emotional, intellectual and aesthetic needs (Elliott, Kratochwill, Littlefield, Cook & Tavers

(2000: 4). The lower level, more basic needs must be fulfilled in order for the individual to be able to move on to address the higher level needs. That is why a positive classroom climate and caring learner educator relationship are seen as extremely important to the development of student motivation (Huitt, 2003: 8).

Using these three theories, I argue that unless teachers understand those factors that positively influence adolescent learners' learning in the classroom, they cannot create learning environments that enhance the learning of all learners. These theories are discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

#### **1.4 Research questions**

The study attempted to answer these research questions:

1. What motivates adolescent learners to learn in the classroom?
2. What can educators do to motivate adolescent learners in the classroom?

#### **1.5 Research design and methodology**

A qualitative methodology was used to understand factors that affect the motivation of adolescent learners. According to Hull (1997:14) the purpose of qualitative research is to understand human experience with the intention to reveal both the processes by which people construct meaning about their worlds and to report what these meanings are. In this study, it was possible to establish the extent to which the participants get motivated by the educator and peers in the classroom. The qualitative paradigm was found to be suited

to the purpose of this study as it allowed me to probe the influence of peers and educators in motivating adolescents in the classroom.

A case study design was selected for this investigation. A case study, according to Cohen and Manion (2000: 181) provides a unique example of real people in real situations. Contexts are unique and dynamic; therefore, case studies investigate and report the complex dynamic and unfolding interactions of events, human relationships and other factors in a unique instance (ibid). In this research study, focus was on the classroom as a natural setting.

## **1.6 Sampling and research methods**

The sample was taken from Sunflower Secondary because of its accessibility since it is where the researcher is employed as an educator and because it is where the problem of poor motivation has been observed. Purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002: 46) was applied. Patton maintains that the logic and power of purposeful sampling is derived from the emphasis of seeking to gain an in-depth understanding of the cases for study, for example of people, communities and organizations because they lead to selecting information-rich cases for in-dept study (ibid). Further, he emphasizes that information rich-cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research (ibid).

To get information rich cases, I selected 16 learners from Grades 8 to 12 in the pilot study and 26 learners from the same grades in the main research

study. The learners were of different academic abilities, some of them being high achievers, others average and below average in scholastic achievement. I obtained the school's schedule of results of the last examination that was compiled by the educators of the school. This schedule of results guided me in selecting participants for both the pilot and main studies.

The pilot study was useful in highlighting how the main study can be sharpened. For example, it pointed the need to obtain an equal number of learners of different academic abilities and including more semi structured questions to assist in the main study. In the main study, data was gathered using semi-structured individual interviews (Appendix D) held at Sunflower Secondary School. All interviews were audio taped with individual learners' consent. Data was transcribed and a descriptive analysis technique (Creswell, 2003:18) was used. More details of the methodology and research process are provided in Chapter Four.

## **1.7 Ethical considerations**

Several ethical requirements had to be satisfied during the course of the study, the main being access, ethical clearance, confidentiality and informed consent.

**Access:** Permission to conduct the study was sought from the principal of Sunflower Secondary School as well as from the School Governing Body. Once they understood the purpose of my research study, they were willing to allow me to use learners as informants, (Appendices B and C).



**Informed consent:** Once school management granted permission, I verbally approached learners that I thought would provide me with information rich cases to participate in my study. Once they fully understood what was involved and expressed willingness to take part, I wrote to their parents explaining what I wanted to investigate and to ask for permission to involve their children for this purpose (Appendix C). All 42 parents signed and returned the letters.

**Anonymity and confidentiality:** In all my correspondence with the school, parents and participants, I assured them that their identities would be protected and that whatever interactions we have regarding the research project, it would remain confidential and would not be used for any other purpose except for research.

**Ethical clearance:** A requirement of the University's Research Office is that all researchers dealing with human subjects need to acquire ethical clearance from the university's Research Committee. This requirement was met and clearance certificate number HSS/05096 was obtained (Appendix F).

## **1.8 Limitations of the study**

One of the limitations of the study is that the researcher is also an educator at this school; therefore, there is a possibility that the learners may not have divulged all the details of their interactions with their educators and peers in and outside of the classrooms. Although many of the participants were eager and spoke candidly, I am aware that adolescents are sometimes secretive

about personal matters. In addition, these learners may have mentioned things that they thought the researcher wanted to hear. Another limitation is that the samples were not selected as friendship groups, which would have allowed the researcher to compare and verify claims made by peers.

## **1.9 Structure of dissertation report**

There are six chapters altogether in this dissertation.

In Chapter One, I have introduced the study and given a brief overview thereof. In addition, its purpose, theoretical frameworks used and the research process are some of the aspects of the study provided. I have also listed what I anticipate to be limitations of the study.

Chapter Two is the review of literature on motivation. Focus is on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as well as the role of the educators and peers in the classroom. In this chapter, I explore what has been done around motivation and I analyse it with the hope to identify contradictions, omissions and overlaps.

Chapter Three tables the theoretical frameworks underpinning this study, namely, the ecosystemic perspective, the systems theory and the humanistic theory. These were used to understand factors affecting the motivation of adolescent learners within the learning context. These frameworks are also later used to guide the data collection and analysis processes.

In Chapter Four, I present a detailed account of how the research process unfolded. The research is based on a case study of selected learners at Sunflower Secondary School. A qualitative research design and methodology were used and data collection methods included document analysis and semi-structured interviews.

Chapter Five tables the results of the research and a discussion thereof is provided.

In the last chapter, Chapter Six, a summary and conclusion of the study is presented. In addition, this chapter also provides guidelines for the educator on the factors that improve motivation among adolescent learners in the classroom. The limitations of the study are pointed out and recommendations for further research are provided.

# CHAPTER TWO

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Goals are important as they force us to look carefully at life and to decide what is important to us. They motivate us and keep us focused so we don't follow other pathways impulsively. By identifying our goals, our dreams take on a more realistic and attainable form (Le Roux & De Klerk, 2001:130)

### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I review relevant literature on learner motivation in the classroom. The primary purpose of reviewing this literature is to explore what has been done in this area and to get a better understanding of the selected topic. The secondary purpose is to formulate guidelines that educators can use to improve levels of learner motivation in their classes. Special reference will be made to studies that interrogate the numerous factors that generally impact on young people's motivation to learn. In reviewing literature, I became aware of the paucity of South African studies on the subject of learner motivation, as a result, most of the studies cited herein are from international contexts.

### 2.2 What is motivation? A definition

Various researchers provide numerous definitions of motivation and the general consensus is that motivation directs a person towards a specific goal (Le Roux and De Klerk: 2001). They argue that when a person has a great desire to realize a certain goal, their motivation level increases and so does their energy level. On the other hand, Charles and Sentec (1995: 72) explore the word "motive" and conclude that it comes from the Latin root meaning to

'move' (movere), and is defined as an emotion, desire or physiological need that incites a person to do something. Motivation could also be seen as the force that energizes and directs the behaviour of each individual (Bany and Johnson, 1975: 189) whilst others view it as representing forces that act on or within a person causing the person to behave in a specific, goal directed manner (Hellriegel, Slocum and Woodman, 2001: 130).

Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (1997) argue that one is motivated when s/he has the interest and the will to achieve. Gross (2003) adds that in studying motivation, one has to take into account all those pushes and prods, biological, social and psychological that defeat our laziness and move us either eagerly or reluctantly to action. A common social push, for example, is to conform to peer culture which often manifests as a desire to be accepted by peers. This peer influence may cause a learner to view scholastic achievement as something either worth or not worth striving for, depending on the attitude of one's peers.

What all these definitions highlight is that motivation is instrumental in activating and directing behaviour towards achieving a certain purpose or goal in life, and that it is an internal state which influences and encourages positive behaviour. By taking cognizance of these points, one realizes the importance of motivation in the classroom as it seems necessary to direct learners' behaviour for them to achieve and obtain their goals in life. It also seems pertinent for effective teaching and learning to take place, hence this dissertation's focus on what motivates adolescent learners to learn in the

classroom and on what can educators do to enhance adolescent learners' motivation to learn in the classroom.

### **2.3 Sources of motivation and de-motivation**

According to Le Roux and De Klerk (2001:136), there are several sources of motivation, the individual being the most powerful resource. A person who is unable to motivate him/herself is viewed as someone who is not proactive but who only reacts to circumstances (ibid). They add that family and friends can also be sources of motivation provided they are 'trustworthy, available, and ...motivated' (ibid: 136). A study of suburban, middle class dropouts with previous academic success identified lack of encouragement and low expectations of important adults as having contributed to the de-motivation and subsequent dropping out of the studied group (Collins, 2003). In addition, irrelevance of classroom activities, inequitable treatment and negative relations with peers were also cited as some of the factors that can de-motivate learners (ibid). In another study, Ntombela (2003) cited the inflexibility of the curriculum as a potential de-motivator for adolescent learners. This finding endorses Collins'(2003) assertion that irrelevant classroom activities do not motivate learners.

These are important factors to take note of as they highlight the important role played by significant adults (in this case, educators) in learners' lives whilst also pointing out that the company learners keep determines their level of motivation. If, for example, a learner hangs around peers that are unmotivated and bunk school, chances are that the learner will not be

motivated and will be likely to bunk school too. In other words, whilst there is a lot that educators and parents can do to keep adolescent learners motivated, learners also have a huge responsibility to motivate themselves and to seek for inspirational mentors (Le Roux and De Klerk, 2001).

In addition, the source of learner motivation can either be extrinsic or intrinsic. Hunt (2001: 2) explains that extrinsic motivation refers to motivation that comes from outside the person and intrinsic motivation as motivation that stems from within a person. Elliott *et al* (2000:2) provide examples of extrinsic sources of motivation such as praise, awards, prizes and grades. These extrinsic sources cited above are used to motivate and improve student performance in order to receive a reward like passing a test or to avoid a penalty like failing a grade (Lile: 2002:1). On the other hand, a teacher trying to adapt the subject and the classroom setting to appeal to a learner relies on intrinsic motivation (Child: 2004:76). An example of intrinsic motivation is the student who goes to class because s/he is interested and finds it satisfying to learn more about a certain subject.

A common question that many learners often ask when a piece of work is given to them is, "Is this work for marks?" In explaining the reason behind learners' enquiry about mark scheme prior to doing activities, Muller and Louw (2004:170) highlight that extrinsically motivated behaviors are undertaken to attain an end state that is separate from the actual behaviour. The activity motive is determined by some external contingency such as good marks or the avoidance of negative consequences. Kohn (1993) points out

by using extrinsic rewards to motivate learners, the intrinsic value is undermined by a task contingent reward. A task contingent reward relates to learning that occurs from an end into a means. The learner begins to complete similar tasks for the external reward and the source of motivation shifts from intrinsic to extrinsic. It is in this vein that Chance (1992) cautions teachers not to bribe children with extrinsic rewards such as obtaining extra marks as this conveys the message that the activity is very important if one has to be coerced into doing it, implying that the activity is not exciting on its own. The learners that are intrinsically motivated will, on the other hand, complete the exercise to the best of their ability because s/he wants to learn (Lile, 2002: 1).

Child (2004: 76) adds that the inherent interest in some aspects of school work is sufficient to arouse the children for these external stimuli promote learning and increase the learners' curiosity which encourages them to learn further.

With regards to intrinsic motivation, Bantjies (2005:1) highlights that intrinsic motivation is dependent on factors like biological, cognitive, affective, conative and spiritual factors. Biological sources outlined by Huitt (2001: 4) refer to decreasing hunger, thirst, touch, smell, etc. and to maintain homeostasis, balance. These factors can affect learning in the classroom as Gross (2003: 119) illustrates that if you are trying to learn while your stomach is trying to tell you its lunchtime; you probably won't absorb much of what you are reading. Cognitive factors involve developing meaning or understanding



and maintaining attention to something interesting or threatening (Bantjies, 2005). Affective factors maintain high levels of optimism and enthusiasm; conative means to take control of one's life and spiritual factors refer to understanding the purpose of one's life (ibid).

The interplay of all these factors leads Bany and Johnson (1975:183) to caution that motivation is a complex problem in the classroom: Understanding motivation requires a grasp of the concept of motivation, what it is and how it relates to some aspects of an individual's behaviour in the learning situation. As teachers, it is important that we are aware of these factors and how they influence learners' behaviour in the classroom.

In another study, Condry and Chambers (1978) found that when students were confronted with complex intellectual tasks, those with an intrinsic motivation used logical information gathering and decision making strategies than students who were extrinsically oriented. Lepper (1988: 2) adds that students who are intrinsically motivated tend to prefer tasks that are moderately challenging, whereas extrinsically oriented students prefer tasks that are low in area of difficulties. Extrinsically oriented students are inclined to put forth minimal amount of effort necessary to get the maximal reward. As a result, educators need to find ways to keep them motivated and ensure that there are constant activities available. The activities that educators could use in the classroom are discussed in the next paragraphs, together with Curriculum 2005.

Curriculum 2005 refers to an outcomes-based system of education that incorporates fun activities and emphasizes the use of exercises that promote group work and independent thinking. Such a curriculum is currently being implemented at schools from grade R to grade 10. I am making reference to Curriculum 2005 as this curriculum has implications for educators' practice in the classroom. Within this curriculum, the educator is no longer seen as a dictator but rather as a facilitator in the learning process as emphasis is on assisting learners to satisfy their own curiosity and to promote their own learning (Lile 2002: 2).

The Department of Education and Training has, since adopting Curriculum 2005, embarked on a massive drive to retrain educators so that they can be fully fledged to facilitate learning in the classroom. Workshops for further education and training were arranged for educators in the year 2005. I also attended one of the training workshops arranged for educators and there was a great emphasis on promoting the autonomy of learners in the classroom. This makes it even more necessary that educators understand factors that enhance learner motivation to improve the quality of learning in their classrooms.

From reviewing the above studies on extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, I can safely conclude that educators need to have a full understanding of extrinsic and intrinsic factors that motivate learners as this will assist them in motivating learners further in a classroom. In addition, I think it is important that extrinsically motivated learners be encouraged to develop intrinsic

motivation in the classroom as Lile (2002: 1) emphasizes that an intrinsically motivated student is the goal of all motivational development. This means that intrinsic motivation can be developed and reinforced in the classroom. Intrinsic motivation is improved in the classroom by teachers providing proper instruction to the learners, using achievable and relevant material. A caring teacher improves the intrinsic motivation of students whilst his/her positive energy provides a successful learning atmosphere (Lile, 2002: 2).

## **2.4 Motivation in the classroom**

It is important that educators understand sources of motivation for different learners so that they can plan and structure classroom activities accordingly. Keeping learner motivation high is essential in any classroom as it charges them to achieve great heights scholastically. Failure to keep them motivated results in a great deal of boredom in the classroom. For example, at Sunflower Secondary it is common to see bored and unmotivated learners play games on their cell phones during class time, disturbing both educators and other learners. Unfortunately, such behaviour does not lead to learning and has the potential to discourage other learners.

It is clear that motivation is critical to learning. This is reiterated by Lile (2002: 4) who asserts that motivation is the key to all learning, arguing that when learners are motivated, they can achieve much more. Therefore educators need to do a lot more to improve their students' motivation and the effort involved is an essential part of the teaching profession. It is in this light that Dornyei and Otto (1998a: 1) suggest that since motivation is so central to all

classroom activities, it must be considered as a bigger process that involves individual learners, the school environment, the class group, the working atmosphere as well as the educator who directs the situation. In other words, to understand learners and what influences them, we cannot view them outside of the environment in which learning takes place.

A study conducted by Jones and Jones (1990), as cited by Charles & Sentec (1995) presented an overview of motivation in the classroom. The study presented an overview of what motivates learners of all age groups to learn in the classroom. They concluded that learners become actively involved in lessons where they expect to succeed, successful completion of the task is valued and they find the climate of relationships acceptable. In this study the educators and peers played a very major role in motivating other learners in the classroom. The following factors were suggested to keep learners of all age levels motivated and involved in the classroom: seeing learning modeled by adults as exciting and rewarding; the information learnt relating to their own lives; and contact with their peers being positive (Charles and Sentec, 1995: 75).

A synthesis of research on classroom motivation was also offered by Brophy (1987: 205) who presented a number of suggestions for educators to adapt lessons to learners' interests. Some of these suggestions included novelty and variety, active responses by the educator had to be provided, fantasy and simulation were to be included. In addition, the educator's enthusiasm had to be increased. Consolidating the ideas of Brophy, (1987) and Jones & Jones

(1990) as cited in Charles and Sentec (1995: 75), the following generalizations were warranted and offered practical advise concerning learner motivation:

- Learners like to work with others at ideas, activities and objects that they find novel, intriguing and related perceived life concerns.
- Learners seek out people and conditions that help meet needs important in their lives. Students try their best to avoid cooperating with people and conditions that they find unpleasant.
- Learners engage in tasks that are unpleasant in order to please people they see as important.

The above study certifies that educators play a very important role in the lives of learners. In addition to educators, peers also have an essential part to play in classroom interactions, therefore learning and teaching becomes more effective in classrooms where both educators and learners work together. The findings of this dissertation had established the same, namely, that the educator plays a very important role in the lives of the learner.

An important point to keep in mind is highlighted by Whalen and Csikszentmihalyi (1991) who suggested that it is better to motivate learners through what they enjoy and respond to positively in the classroom. In that way the learners will be encouraged to learn and will be motivated. As already indicated earlier under sources of motivation, many students perceive a lack of connection between classroom content and their lives as the main cause of alienation from school (Ellioltt *et al*, 2000:4 ). In such

instances, learners tend to be uninvolved in classes as their educators are often distant and inflexible. The study concluded that in classrooms where educators successfully work with learners, they created learning environments where students are enthusiastic; educators are supportive and have high expectations for student achievement (ibid). The above study is relevant to this dissertation as it emphasizes the role that the educator can play in the classroom.

Literature revealed that there are differences between learner experiences as they progress up the education ladder. Several researchers reported that as children move from primary to secondary school, they more often than not find themselves in classroom environments that are more competitive than what they were used to in primary school (Harter, 1996; Midgley, Anderman & Hicks, 1995, Ruble 1983 as cited in Lam, Yim, Law & Cheung, 2004). While some educators argue that competition plays a vital role in creating work oriented norms and thus improving achievement by enhancing the motivation of learners more educators seem to view competitive classrooms as having less favorable effects on learning and motivation, especially among less able students (Glasser, 1969). Eccles and Midgley (1989) explain the increase of competitiveness in the classroom environment in the transition to secondary school as associated with negative change in motivational orientation and a decline in academic performance for some children.

A study by Elliott *et al* (2000: 7) highlighted the general fear of success in the classroom during adolescence as well as the fear in specific areas that can

affect student performance. In the case of mathematics and science, for example, many girls in the United States are reported to fear being successful because they see success in these fields as a male thing. This is said to be so strong a perception that girls begin to fall behind boys in mathematics and science during the middle school years and they never catch up. This trend points to the need for parents and communities to work closely with schools as well as educators in challenging stereotypes and to be actively supportive of their students' learning.

The above studies reflect the importance of motivation in the classroom. It is of utmost importance that educators have an understanding of motivation in the classroom in order to motivate learners.

## **2.5 The role of educators**

From the studies highlighted above, it is evident that the role of educators and peers is of paramount importance in promoting effective learning and teaching in the classroom. This means that in the classroom the educator and learners need to work in harmony to avert chaos in the classroom. In this way learning will take place effectively. There is a lot of literature referring to the important role of the teacher in learning. Dornyei and Otto (1998 b) maintain that many students do well at school in order to please their educators or parents. Educators also exert a direct motivational influence by actively socializing the learner's motivation through appropriate, task presentations and their feedback.

The importance of the educator in the classroom was further highlighted by Ames (1992) who states that educators determine the classroom life by the performance, appraisal, reward structure they introduce. In as much as educators are capable of positively influencing what takes place in the classroom, they can also de-motivate learners. Harter (1992) also pointed out that the combination of grading practices, standard test scores, and a focus on the correct solutions decreases interest in, and the enjoyment of, the learning process whilst also moderating the learners' preference for challenge.

To further explain the role of educators in the classroom, Charles and Sentec (1995: 2) highlighted that they have a different meaning for the term motivation. Their meaning refers to a process by which motives are instilled into students that is what does a teacher do to get students interested in lessons and willing to work at them. When educators speak of motivation as a component of a lesson, they refer to what they do to attract student's interest and engage them in the work provided. These are the beliefs of teachers in a classroom which are pertinent to this study. The above beliefs are useful to educators in order to assist learners in the classroom.

On the other hand, Glasser (1990: 122) provides suggestions to assist educators to promote motivation in the classroom. One of the suggestions given is making learners to work together in small learning teams, providing a sense of belonging and providing motivation. Teams also provide freedom and fun with less dependence on the educator, enabling educators to function



as facilitators rather than dictators and emphasizing quality in all learner's work (ibid). stresses the value of organizing and conducting lessons in the classroom; that the school, the classroom and the teaching learning process should be organized and conducted such that learner's, while working at lessons can satisfy their needs. They will thus learn, behave well and take an interest in education. The above suggestions by Glasser (1993:81) are very pertinent to educators as the knowledge described above can assist them in enhancing motivation in the classroom and in turn improve academic performance of learners.

A study by Middleton (1995) found that educators often struggled on how to motivate their learners. Strong, Silver and Robinson (1995: 9 -10) provided suggestions and discussed four issues which are necessary in meeting learners' motivational needs. These four issues are discussed below, namely, promoting success, arousing curiosity, allowing originality and encouraging relationships. Success can be developed by clearly defining what success is, valuing it in the classroom and assisting learners to see how they can attain it. Curiosity can be aroused by making sure that lessons offer contradictory information which puts learners in an active role in solving the unknown. Originality can be promoted by allowing many opportunities for students to express autonomy. By encouraging relationships, learners' innate need for interpersonal involvement is fostered. By encouraging the above factors learners are naturally involved and driven to learn.

In another study, cited in <http://www.k-state.edu/catl/stimmot.htm>, they

provided suggestions for educators to stimulate learners motivation to learn in the classroom.

Some of the educator actions suggested included:

- ◆ Educators that seemed to enjoy teaching.
- ◆ Educators who made presentations which were not dull and boring and spoke with expressiveness and variety in tone of voice.
- ◆ The use of humour where possible.
- ◆ Changing approaches to meet new situations.
- ◆ Seeking clarity on what s/he wants to help learners learn.
- ◆ Course material clearly explained and to the point explanations given.
- ◆ Demonstration of the importance and significance of the subject.
- ◆ Enthusiasm displayed by educators that were enthusiastic about the subject matter.

When these actions were implemented, it is reported that learners responded by learning quickly, getting better grades, beginning to apply learning and remembering the learning material. The above study highlights the crucial role that the educator plays in the classroom which can result in the learners' improvement in learning.

## **2.6 The role of peers**

An emphasis on the role of peers is given by Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (1997) who assert that the values by any one learner could be seen as interacting with, shaping and being shaped by the values of his peer group

and educator. Elaborating on the role of peers in the classroom, Muthukrishna (1998:141) states that learners who have too many experiences of failure in the classroom and who attribute their failure to causes that are not under their control develop a serious motivation problem called learned helplessness. This could have serious repercussions on learners' peers as learned helplessness refers to an acquired pessimistic and helpless state. This is a state to be avoided as once it is established; it is very difficult to reverse (Dornyei and Otto, 1998: 13).

Elliott *et al* (2000: 6) reveals that research conducted by Martina Horner in 1970 demonstrated a pattern that is evident presently. She found that some students avoid success because they fear that this will jeopardize their relationships with peers. Others may avoid a situation in which their academic conflicts with the expectations held for them by their families and communities (*ibid*). Adams (1998: 162) reiterated that peer interaction in the classroom is vital for effective teaching and learning to take place.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have discussed motivation in the classroom, sources of learner motivation, especially extrinsic and intrinsic motivation as well as, the role of educators and peers in the classroom. All these aspects are important in understanding classroom dynamics as well as outside factors that impact on in class interactions. In addition, they throw light on how educators can structure the learning environment to create welcoming classrooms where adolescent learners see the relevance of what they learn and feel valued as

members of the learning community.

# **CHAPTER THREE**

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In this chapter I will discuss the theoretical frameworks that informed the research study. These frameworks were useful in deciding which data to focus on and how to make meaning of the collected data.

### **3.2 The theoretical location of the study**

This study falls within the discipline of Educational Psychology. Its main focus is on adolescent learners in the classroom and the issues affecting their motivation to learn. Three theoretical frameworks were found useful for this study, namely, the ecosystemic perspective, the systems theory and the humanistic theory. The significance of these theories for this study will be discussed below.

### **3.3 The ecosystemic perspective**

Tyler (1995: ) defines the ecosystemic perspective as a social system that can be considered in terms of interpersonal relationships, families, groups, organisations and societies. Changes in one part of the system affect the rest of the system. This means that if one person in a group, or organization, is affected by an ordeal, for example, the learner is not performing to his/her optimum in the classroom, then the educator needs to take into consideration all the factors including the home environment which includes the relationship

with the learner's parents, grandparents as well as siblings. The peers in the classroom as well as outside factors play a crucial role in the lives of learners, generally.

According to Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (1997) the ecosystemic perspective connects the individual's psychological development to a social context and the systems within it. The different levels of the system in the social context influence and are influenced by one another in a continuous process of dynamic, balance, tension and interplay (ibid). When the relationships and cycles within the whole system are in a state of balance, the system can be sustained (ibid: 45.). In this dissertation I focused on the role the educator and the peer play in motivating adolescent learners in the classroom.

Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (1997) provide us with a theoretical framework for understanding why the general challenges of development cannot be separated from the challenges of social issues and special needs. The challenges such as peer pressure, cooperativeness in the classroom and working in harmony in the classroom are all interconnected as learners and educators bring their own personal talents to influence the social nature of the classroom and the process of teaching/ learning. For these authors, (Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana, 1997: 162) motivation is linked to the question of what learners are learning in school and how appropriate or useful they see it to be in their lives. It is in the same spirit that Molnar and Linqvist (1989) argue that as part of the ecosystem of the classroom or school, one's thoughts, attitudes

and behaviour influence the thoughts, attitudes and behaviour of the people with whom one shares the classroom and school. This is very important for educators to know as they tend to have more authority in the teaching/learning context and they set the tone of classroom interactions. In other words if an educator expects much or little from a learner, learners tend to perform accordingly. When our expectations as educators set the standards to which learners should perform, it is referred to as the self-fulfilling prophesy (Moletsane,1998). In this dissertation many learners mentioned that they performed according to their teacher's expectations.

The ecosystemic perspective is important for understanding the development of children in more holistic terms (Tyler, 1992). It is also important in understanding classrooms and schools by viewing these as systems within the social context (Plas, 1986, Van der Hoorn, 1994). Even the factors that affect motivation in adolescent learners cannot be seen in isolation but holistically. This approach was useful in enabling me to view the extent to which the peer and educator influences the adolescents' motivation in the classroom.

On the other hand, Molnar and Lindquist, (1989: 16) state that from an ecosystemic perspective, problems are not seen as the result of one person's deficiencies or inadequacies but are viewed as part of a pattern of interpersonal interactions. Brophy (1987) argues that motivation to learn is a competence acquired through general experience, but stimulated most directly through modeling; communication of expectations and direct

instruction or socialization by significant others especially parents, educators and including peers. This is in keeping with the ecosystemic perspective in the sense that there should be consultation and co operation by all role players in the classroom to ensure that effective learning and teaching takes place in the classroom. This concurs with Bateson (1979) who argues that there are numerous role players in the classroom, including learners, educators, parents, administrators and officials representing both the teaching authorities and government.

The use of the ecosystemic framework in this study is useful as it highlights the need to have co-operation from all role players. If there is an imbalance in the classroom with the educator or peers, it will have an adverse effect on the entire class. This is because learners do not learn in a vacuum, but are constantly in contact with people around them, people who influence them positively or negatively. An example given by Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (1997: 37), is how a pattern of 'taking it out' on others can become established if the educator 'takes it out' on some learners and their reaction 'causes the educator to continue the pattern'. In this way, the behaviour is reinforced and a vicious cycle is established. The more it is established, the more it becomes 'a rule' of the way things happen and are expected to happen in the classroom (ibid).

Bearing the above in mind, Spinelli (1989: 1) adds that as human beings, we attempt to make sense of all our experiences. Through our mental acts, we strive to impose meaning upon the world. The ecosystemic approach allows



human beings to make sense of their abilities, to interact effectively with all role players in the classroom, for example in this dissertation the focus was on the educator and the learner interacting with each other to promote motivation in class. According to Cooper and Upton (1990), the ecosystemic approach is based on communicating effective interpretation to others. This has a fundamental impact on the teaching/learning process. If, for example, the learner is constantly interrupted by the peers in the classroom, this would not motivate the learner to learn as it was also a finding in this dissertation that learners do not like to be disturbed by their peers in the classroom. Peers have a powerful influence on the development of any child (Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana 1997: 91).

There is no one correct environment that will suit all people but rather that a positive environment will be one which as closely as possible matches the needs and values of the people concerned (Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana, 1997). In this study the environment that has to be a positive one is the classroom and the people concerned are the educator and peer and the role that they play in motivating adolescent learners to learn in the classroom.

The main elements of ecosystemic approaches used by educators involve changing the educators' negative perceptions of pupil behaviour to a positive interpretation and entering into a co-operative rather than confrontational relationship with the learners. This would make the educator's role in the classroom no longer that of dictator but rather that of facilitator.

### **3.4 The systems theory**

Within the ecosystemic perspective is the systems theory which focuses on seeing different levels and groupings of the social context as "systems" (Donald et al, 2002). For example, they highlight that a school system has different parts; staff, its students, its curriculum and its administration, all of which are sub-systems of the school systems. According to Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2002) this theory is important in helping us understand the whole as it forces us to look at the relationships between the different parts of the system. There are several layers of sub-systems in the school system and if we want to understand how learners get motivated in their classrooms, we have to consider the role of the other sub-systems. This study took it into account that learning takes place in a social context and that the different role players influence and are influenced by one another in a continuous process of dynamic, balance, tension and interplay.

Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (1997) further explain that the ecosystemic approach sees different levels and groupings of the social contexts as "systems" where the functioning of the whole is dependent on the interactions between all parts (ibid, 36). The relationship between educator, learner, school administration and the curriculum are all important in understanding what motivates learners to learn but for the purpose of this study, not all of them were explored. The motivation theory that encompasses the ecosystemic approach is the humanistic theory. The humanistic theory will be further discussed below.

### **3.5 The humanistic theory**

The humanistic theory according to Muthukrishna (1998: 140) refers to universal needs that people are constantly trying to satisfy. These needs create tensions in people and motivate them towards goals that could satisfy the needs (ibid). Hamachek (1987) as cited in Eggen and Kauchak (1997:349) states that humanistic psychology views motivation as people's attempts to fulfill their potential as human beings. Eggen and Kauchak (1997: 349) further add that according to the humanistic view, learner motivation depends on how the learners view themselves as people and how they see the school contributing to their growth. If classes are conducted in a personal and meaningful manner, students tend to be motivated to learn.

Purkey and Novak (1984) as cited in Eggen and Kauchak (1997) highlight the fact that good teaching is the process of inviting learners to see themselves as able, valuable, and self directing and of encouraging them to act in accordance with these self -perceptions. Educator' abilities to answer questions such as "Why do we have to learn this stuff?" and to help learner's see the connection between what they are learning and their personal growth is crucial to motivation and learning.

Hamachek (1987) cited in Eggen and Kauchak (1997: 349) elaborate that two elements of the teaching - learning processes are essential to the humanistic psychologists: the learner - educator relationship and classroom climate. Supportive and caring educators believe each learner is important as an individual, and they consider the learners emotional well being and personal

growth. Humanistic classrooms are safe environments where learners believe that they can learn and are expected to do so. Each person is valued because s/he is a valuable human being. Convincing evidence supports the role of climate in both learning and motivation (Anderson, 1982; Brookover et al; 1978; Lezone, 1981 cited in Eggen and Kauchak (1997).

The humanistic perspective is very relevant to this study as it can be used to guide educators, learners and other role players in creating supportive and caring classrooms which are fundamental for motivating adolescent learners in the classroom. It is not surprising that Keller (1983) found that students learn best when motivated. Therefore, an educator needs to create interest for each individual learner, that is, consider how they learn and at what pace do they learn. Learners are motivated for a variety of reasons but all motivation leads to learning.

The humanistic theory focuses on physiological needs, for example, the need for shelter, warmth, and medical care. Safety needs refers to safety from physical harm at school and in the community. Belongings and love needs refers to love and belonging such as being a member of a group and having friends. If these needs are not met, the result is loneliness and alienation. Esteem needs refers to the individual's need to feel a sense of self worth and gaining recognition from others. If these are satisfied, the learner develops a sense of self confidence and a valued individual. Self actualization needs refers to the highest level of needs when all other basic needs have been met (Elliott et al 2000: 4). The humanistic theory formed one of the theoretical

frameworks in this dissertation. The humanistic theory has implications for educators. The educator needs to take cognizance of the learner as a whole. Child (1975: 37) explains that hungry or frightened learners are less likely to aspire to the requirements of school than well fed and secure learners. Learners starved of affection at home are less likely to cope than those from emotionally well balanced home backgrounds. Educators need to look holistically at a learner in a classroom.

Davis, Feruling and Oldman (1989: 189) argue that motivation is important not only in the process of learning but it is also important in the application of what you have learnt. Learning is still one thing, using what has been learnt is another. Using your skills and knowledge involves motivation, among things. When you are motivated to use the skills and knowledge you have learnt, then you are on your way to realizing your talent and your potential. Motivation is a necessary condition if you are to learn and it is a necessary condition if you are to use what you learn. Thus the present study in this dissertation would be useful to educators and departmental officials in trying to make teaching and learning at schools more authentic and meaningful. Learners would be motivated and both learners and educators would enjoy being in the classroom.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

This chapter focused on the different theoretical frameworks that were selected to underpin the research study, namely, the ecosystemic approach, the systems theory and the humanistic theory. These approaches were

useful in informing data collection and analysis in this dissertation.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 Introduction

The research study reported here focused on establishing factors that motivate adolescent learners in the classroom. In this chapter I will document how the research process unfolded. The study sought to answer the following research questions:

- What motivates adolescent learners to learn in the classroom?
- What can educators do to motivate adolescent learners in the classroom?

### 4.2 Research design and methodology

The methodology that was used in the research was based on a qualitative paradigm. A qualitative paradigm, according to Patton (2002: 11), emerges from the researcher's observations and interviews that occur in the real world rather than in the laboratory. Bogdan and Biklen (1992: 30), describe qualitative research as descriptive in that the data collected in qualitative studies are in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers. Qualitative research tries to understand the subject's viewpoint. This design was useful in allowing me access to the learners' classroom experiences. According to Hunt (2001: 7) the researcher or observer wants to be "in the shoes" of the participants to understand their experiences. Qualitative research tries to give us a rich, multidimensional view of a topic or phenomena.

In this study, I was interested in what motivates adolescent learners to learn

in the classroom and what can educators do to motivate them to learn in the classroom. I chose to use a qualitative research approach for this dissertation as there are advantages of using a qualitative, interpretive orientation in research. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2000) the main advantage is that it offers greater validity and less artificiality. The data simply describe what happened. Patton (2002: 26 - 27) highlights pure descriptions and quotations as the raw data of qualitative data of qualitative inquiry. In this dissertation semi structured interviews were conducted. Mondungwa (1995: 26 - 27 ) further adds the results of the research are discussed in the light of the relevant literature and information obtained from similar studies. Semi structured interviews need to be analyzed to ensure the trustworthiness of qualitative research.

Sandelowski (1986) claims that a qualitative study can be considered credible when it presents such accurate descriptions or interpretation of human experience that people who also share that experience would immediately recognize the descriptions. Truth value is the most important criterion for the assessment of qualitative research. To this, Krefting (1990) adds applicability which refers to the degree to which the findings can be applied to other contexts and settings or with other groups.

### **4.3 Research methods**

Once the methodology was identified, I selected to collect information - rich data from the participants. I devised an interview schedule (Appendix D) to guide data collection during this process. Interviews can be constructed



around schedules of questions (Lofland and Lofland, 1984). The reason that I had chosen interviews using a semi structured questionnaire was to solicit the adolescent learner's opinions, ideas and thoughts about the topic and for them to flow freely. This concurs with Patton (2002: 55) that the semi structured interviews added depth, detail and meaning at a very personal level of experience.

Poggenpoel (1998) suggests that it is important to maintain the interviewee's motivation hence the interviewer must keep boredom at bay, for example by keeping to a minimum demographic and background questions. The researcher was pleased to note that the participants were continuously sharing their rich classroom experiences and were very interested and did not give an indication that they were bored or wanted to terminate the interview.

## **4.4 Research process**

### **4.4.1 The pilot study**

A pilot study was conducted to field test the research instrument. A pilot study draws subjects from the target population and simulates the planned procedures for data collection and data analysis.

#### **4.4.1.1 Pilot sample**

Purposive sampling was used to identify the pilot sample. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2000) explain purposeful sampling as a type of non - probability sampling. Non - probability sampling exists in the qualitative

paradigm because of its concentration on specific cases and on in depth analysis of the specific.

The sample chosen for the pilot study consisted of 16 learners from Sunflower Secondary. They were of different academic abilities. All 16 participants were interviewed at Sunflower secondary. Each interview lasted for approximately thirty minutes.

#### **4.4.1.2 Pilot findings and discussion**

The tables below show the number of participants that participated as well as the different ages of male and female participants.

**Table 4.1 - Gender of participants**

Male	8
Female	8
Total	16

Since learners included in the pilot were from different grades, there were differences in their ages, too. The table below indicates those differences.

**Table 4.2 - Age of participants in years**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
13	3	2	1
14	3	1	2
15	2	1	1
16	3	1	2
17	3	1	2
18	2	1	1
<b>Mean: 15.5</b>	<b>Totals: 16</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>

The participants ranged in age from 13 to 18 years old, the mean age being 15.5 years

**Table 4.3 - Participants per grade**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
8	4	2	2
9	2	1	1
10	2	1	1
11	4	2	2
12	4	2	2
<b>Mean: 10</b>	<b>Totals: 16</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>

As Table 4.3 indicates, 25% of the participants were in grade 8, 12,5% from grade 9, 12,5 % from grade 10, 25% in grade 11 and 25% from grade 12.

During interviews, I observed that most of the participants were not speaking candidly, their responses were inhibited. In the pilot study learners identified various factors that motivated them in the classroom. The educator and

peers played a very important role. They indicated that the educators encourage them to learn in the classroom and that their peers are a great influence in the classroom. However in the main study more questions were added to the interview schedule to allow for more information to be obtained about the factors that motivated adolescent learners in the classroom.

#### **4. 4. 2 The main study**

The main study consisted of 26 learners from grades 8 to 12. Woolfe, Dryden and Shreelagh (2003: 75) maintain that in qualitative research, an intensive investigation can be conducted with a small number of cases. It is impossible to carry out effective qualitative research with very large samples of people, since as numbers increases, so does the difficulty of doing justice to the mass of qualitative material that is produced (Woolfe, Dryden and Shreelagh, 2003: 75)

The pilot study assisted the researcher to fine tune the main study by formulating more questions to obtain more information. The interview questions that were used allowed the participant not to think about responses but rather to let the information flow. The participants were more at ease and answered openly. It was as Patton (2002: 47) sums qualitative research up, that “qualitative data tells a story”.

In addition, whilst during the pilot study, I kept my cell phone on, I realized that this had interrupted the interview process. In the main study, I rectified this problem and the interviews were conducted smoothly without

interruptions. I adjustments in the main study such as placing the tape recorder in a non conspicuous place in the room in order to avoid distracting the participants. The number of participants that I interviewed in the main study per day was reduced to two as compared to four conducted in the pilot study. The four interviews were extremely monotonous in the pilot study and the interview process was very tiresome for me and therefore the number of interviews conducted was reduced to two in the main study.

#### **4. 4. 3 The main sample**

The main sample consisted of thirteen males and thirteen females learners. Purposive sampling (Patton: 2002) was used again to select the main sample. None of the participants in the pilot sample were included in the main study. The researcher did not include those participants that participated in the pilot study as those participants were aware that the research was being conducted on motivation in the classroom. The researcher did not want participants to have preconceived ideas of motivation in the classroom.

#### **4. 4. 4 Data collection methods**

There were two data collection stages and methods used. The first stage involved document analysis. The process of analyzing school records enabled the researcher to identify learners' scholastic achievement. This was necessary to identify learners' differences in ability and to identify potential participants. The second stage was the individual interview. A narrative interview was held with individual participants at Sunflower Secondary

(Schurink, 1998: 298). Each interview lasted for approximately forty five minutes. These were tape recorded with the permission of participants obtained prior to learners being interviewed. The interviews were later transcribed.

#### **4. 4. 5 Data analysis**

After the interviews were transcribed, Poggenpoel (1998: 336 - 345) descriptive analysis technique was used which involved the following procedure. The transcripts were read through carefully to get a sense of the whole. I selected one of the interviews transcripts and jotted down some thoughts in the margin. When I completed reading all transcriptions, I underlined units of meaning and identified subcategories into major categories. The major categories were clustered together and arranged into major topics. The topics were abbreviated as codes and the codes were written next to the relevant text. The codes were highlighted by using highlighter pens and written in the margins of the transcripts.

Central themes were identified by using the highlighted codes. To ensure trustworthiness of the interviews, Guba's (Lincoln & Guba: 1985: 290 - 296) model of trustworthiness of qualitative data was used. There were four criteria used to ensure trustworthiness namely credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Credibility refers to descriptions of human experience that people who also share that experience would immediately recognize the description (Sandelowski: 1986). Once the transcriptions were completed, I met with the participants and they were given an opportunity to

examine my transcriptions to ensure that I had successfully captured their responses. Lincoln & Guba (1985: 290 - 296) state that transferability involves the burden of demonstrating the applicability of one set of findings to another context.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) add that this stage is more the responsibility of the person wanting to transfer the findings to another situation or population. I maintained transferability of the findings by looking at other current studies (Elliott *et al* 2000) obtained from other literature and those that were similar to the one I conducted on motivation in this dissertation. This was done to ensure that this study can be replicated if another person/researcher wishes to do a similar study. This can be done if another researcher refers to the original theoretical framework to show how data and analysis was guided.

Dependability was maintained to ensure I accounted for changing conditions such as analyzing the different studies to the chosen area of motivation. The reliability of this study was essential for the results to be verified and the published work of other researchers played an important role in placing the results in the context of established knowledge and to identify the results that support the literature or claim unique contributions (Poggenpoel, 1998: 334). Confirmability focused on confirming the validity of the findings of the study in this dissertation to other current studies on motivation. The above criteria assisted me in determining the truth value of this dissertation.

#### **4. 4. 6 Ethical measures**

In Chapter One I indicated that there were ethical requirements that needed to be taken into account at the beginning of this study. Once the participants were identified, I sought to ensure that they took part with a full understanding of the purpose of the study. Therefore, they were informed of what the study entailed so that they took part with a full understanding of the purpose of the study. Since the participants were minors, parental consent was needed. Consent forms were sent out to their parents/guardians (Appendix C). All participants and their parents/guardians were assured that all would be done to protect the identity of the school as well as that of the participants.

To ensure anonymity, pseudonyms have been used throughout this dissertation. The researcher had to ensure that the information obtained from learners was strictly confidential. Permission was also obtained from the principal of Sunflower Secondary as well as from the chairperson of the school governing body (Appendices A and B). An ethical clearance that was a requirement from the University of KwaZulu Natal was obtained and a clearance certificate number HSS/05096 was obtained (Appendix F).



# CHAPTER FIVE

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter lists and discusses the results from the individual interviews held at Sunflower Secondary. A variety of relevant literature was used to verify the results by reflecting on similar studies that were conducted in the classroom on motivation.

### 5.2 Findings

#### 5.2.1 Learner profiles

The following tables include information on the gender, age and grade of the participants.

**Table 5.2.1 - Gender of Participants**

Male	13
Female	13
Total	26

**Table 5.2.2 - Age of participants in years**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
13	2	1	1
14	6	3	3
15	6	3	3
16	5	3	2
17	5	2	3
18	2	1	1
<b>Mean: 15.5</b>	<b>Totals : 26</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>

The participants ranged in age from 13 to 18 years old, the mean age being 15.5 years.

**Table 5. 2. 3 - Participants by grade level**

<b>Grades</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
8	2	1	1
9	6	3	3
10	7	3	4
11	5	3	2
12	6	3	3
<b>Mean: 10</b>	<b>Totals: 26</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>

The above table indicates that 25% of the participants were in grade 8, 67% were from 9, 70% from grade 10, 45 % in grade 11 and 50% from grade 12.

### **5.3 Factors that motivate learners to learn:**

#### **favourite learning areas**

There were differences in learners' preferences for learning areas.

In grades eight and nine, the favourite subject was Natural Science. In grades 10, 11 and 12 the most favourite subject was Accounting.

Some of the reasons supplied by the learners as to why the above subjects were their favourite included the following:

**Grade 8 learner:**

*Natural Science is my favourite and very interesting. You can learn and we can have fun while learning.*

**Grade 8 learner:**

*I like my Natural Science teacher and her ways of teaching. We study a lot of very interesting stuff and it is exciting.*

**Grade 9 learner:**

*I like Natural Science because I learn about different insects. It is a fun subject.*

**Grade 10 learner:**

*Accounting makes your mind think. I like using numbers. It puts your mind to work.*

**Grade 10 learner:**

*I like my Accounting educator and her ways of explaining.*

**Grade 11 learner:**

*I love Accounting since I want to follow my father's footsteps. My teacher is also my inspiration in my life.*

It is evident from the participants' responses that most of them like these subjects because of the enjoyment these subjects bring. In most cases, what the learners say is a tribute to the educators who succeed to create exciting lessons. In that way, these educators play an important role in keeping learner motivation in the classroom up. The fun and excitement that the participant's experienced in the classroom is in keeping with Jones & Jones (1990) cited in Charles and Sentec, (1995: 75) who state that the educator plays a very important role in the classroom. The educator needs to be knowledgeable of the subject matter, needs to be caring and to show an interest in the learners needs to use strategies that are appropriate and also needs to serve as good role models to learners.

#### **5.4 Sources of motivation in the classroom**

Some of the responses were:

**Grade 8 learner:**

*The educator.*

**Grade 9 learner:**

*The educator & the environment.*

**Grade 9 learner:**

*Educator & peers.  
Strictness of educator.*

**Grade 10 learner:**

*Understanding the subject.  
By sitting alone.*

**Grade 11 learner:**

*The educator.  
When the work is fun and I understand everything.*

**Grade 12 learner:**

*The marks obtained in class.  
The educator.*

There were several sources of motivation that were listed by the learner, the most popular being the educator. According to the twenty six participants interviewed in the main study, 61% of male learners have attributed their motivation to the educator who encourages them in the classroom whereas 31% of female learners viewed the educator as a source of motivation. A smaller percentage (38% of male learners and 23% of female learners) saw peers as their source of motivation in the classroom. From the statistics obtained from the interviews conducted it is clear that the educator plays a greater role than the peer in the classroom in encouraging learners to learn.

## **5.5 Sources of de-motivation**

It was interesting to learn that peers can sometimes be a source of de-motivation.

Some of the responses regarding factors that discourage them from learning in class included:

**Grade 8 learner:**

*Noise and friends who are not interested in school .*

**Grade 9 learner:**

*My classmates and when they discourage me I tend to be noisy and destructive like them.*

**Grade 9 learner:**

*When we are too cramped in class. Boring to learn when the teacher teaches it wrong and I can't keep quiet when there is noise.*

**Grade 10 learner:**

*Noise in the classroom and people who are distractful and noisy, and when teachers dominate and dictate to us.*

**Grade 11 learner:**

*Pupils who disturb teachers. Our class pupils, learners picking on one another. You are afraid to open your mouth. They (with reference to friends) have no respect for your feelings. There is no unity in our class.*

**Grade 12 learner:**

*Teacher needs to teach to us instead of talking to the board and when you can't communicate with the teacher and when everyone is talking and can't hear what the teacher is saying.*

The main factors that demotivate learners to learn in the classroom seem to be the following: bad teaching methods, noise in the classroom as well as classmates that distract learners.

## **5.6 Learners' perceptions on learning**

I was curious to know what learner's perceptions of learning are.

Some of the responses from the learners were as follows:

### **Grade 8 learner:**

*Yes, I like to learn because it keeps me occupied. And I like to know more about things in a particular subject.*

### **Grade 9 learner:**

*Yes I like to learn and to have fun. I believe by learning, you prepare for the future and it increases my level of intelligence.*

### **Grade 10 learner:**

*Yes I like to learn when the lesson is interesting. Explained more in detail.*

### **Grade 11 learner:**

*Yes I like to learn when I understand the subject. Also when you have a good teacher. There must be interaction in class between teacher and learner.*

### **Grade 12 learner:**

*Yes learning in school is fun.*

From the interviews conducted 96% of the participants like to learn and they have various reasons for wanting to learn.

## **5.7 Responses of learners with regards to their peers liking/disliking to learn**

Some of the responses were as follows:

### **Grade 8:**

*They like to learn to get good marks. My friends learn so they can have knowledge and have a brighter future.*

### **Grade 9:**

*I feel they like to learn. Some of them find subjects easy. They understand the work.*

### **Grade 9:**

*My friends like to learn to improve their studies and for some that don't like learning, I don't bother about them.*

### **Grade 10:**

*Yes they have goals and own opinions on how to live. My friends want to learn and be someone.*

### **Grade 11:**

*No, they seem happy doing nothing. Staying away is not a big thing to them.*

### **Grade 12:**

*Some of them like to learn to be successful whilst others are distracted and some are lazy.*

The above are some of the responses of learners and 77 % of participants are very sure that their friends like to learn. This in turn is reported to have a positive effect on learners as their peers play an important role in their schooling career (Jones & Jones (1990) as cited in Charles and Sentec



(1995) highlight that having a positive and cordial relationship with peers in the classroom allows learners to be actively involved in lessons and encourages them to the extent they expect success.

## **5.8 Discussion**

There are serious concerns that adolescents have in the classroom. These were categorized and then further reduced to themes. The main themes that emerged were:

- 1) *Educator as a source of motivation in promoting fun and exciting ways to learn.*
- 2) *Educator making the classroom conducive to learning.*
- 3) *Learners' expectations of educators.*
- 4) *Role played by educators and peers in promoting motivation.*

These themes are summaries of participants' views of what motivates them in the classroom. There are different views that the researcher recorded from the participants. There are various factors that motivate adolescent learners to learn in the classroom.

## **5.9 Theme 1: Educator as a source of motivation in promoting fun and exciting ways to learn.**

The quotations as expressed by the participants show a concern for the activities completed in the classroom. The classroom activities play an important role in promoting motivation of adolescent learners in the classroom.

Some of the participants' comments were as follow:

**Grade 10 learner:**

*Our educators' should make our work and assignments more fun.  
Lessons should not be boring.*

**Grade 9 learner:**

*The lessons should be full . If the period is enjoyable as well  
as interesting, the learners will be more motivated.*

**Grade 10 learner:**

*I never understand the short stories as it is not related to our daily lives  
When I understand the work, you enjoy the work.*

Good and Brophy (1990: 212) reiterate that learning should be fun adding that any motivation problems that may appear should be ascribed to the educator's attempt to convert an enjoyable activity to drudgery. Maehr, Martin and Midgley (1991) claim that school policies and practices should stress "task mastery and effort" rather than relative performance and competition.

Lepper (1988), adds that various task dimensions can also foster motivation to learn. Tasks should be challenging but achievable. Relevance also promotes motivation, as topics should be meaningful and challenging but achievable. Motivation is promoted as "contextualizing " learning, that is helping learners to see how skills can be applied in the real world. This is beneficial because learners' curiosity can be stimulated.

Muthukrishna (1998: 145) says the kinds of learning tasks and classroom activities that are set by the educator will influence learners' motivation in a number of ways. These will in turn influence which tasks learners choose and how quickly they settle down to these tasks as well as their level of effort and persistence. Tasks that are challenging are more likely to facilitate an interest in learning. Educators need to find ways to arouse and maintain learner curiosity. One way of achieving this is to use a problem based approach to learning which requires learners to seek information to solve problems for themselves. Without motivated learners, your ability to deliver the activities in class effectively is impaired as cited in [http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/teaching and learning/library/motivation and the learner's social, emotional and psychological blocks to learning will dominate](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/teaching_and_learning/library/motivation_and_the_learner's_social_emotional_and_psychological_blocks_to_learning_will_dominat).

There were other concerns from learners regarding the educator as a source of motivation in promoting fun and exciting ways to learn.

**Grade 10 learner:**

*I like subjects like Speech and Drama because this allows us to be creative and free to explore different personalities.*

**Grade 10 learner:**

*There are physical examples, plays and group work which requires learners to seek information to solve problems for themselves. The teacher is strict plus there is fun time. We also do work on the grounds for speech and Drama.*

Lile (2002) maintains that a teacher's positive energy could lead to the learners' becoming more motivated. If the learners see that the educator is happy to be in the classroom and excited to teach them, then the learners

can learn by this example.

*This was evident in what these learners said .*

**Grade 9 learner:**

*When the teacher introduces fun ways, don't be serious all the time.*

**Grade 10 learner:**

*If I was a teacher, I will ask them what is fun to make their learning more interesting. When teacher's are nice, when they talk to you that is when you learn the best.*

Elliott *et al* (2000) state that attention and interest are maintained when educators are able to make content personally relevant to learners and feedback about learning progress is essential for both learning and motivation. A positive attitude is a must for a successful learning atmosphere. To promote self confidence, positive approval and praise helps if the educator is self confident. Positive efforts are very effective even if the learner is wrong. The learner's know that when you have tried and not succeeded is not such a big problem and learners' will not be so reluctant the next time they are called on to participate.

This shows that the learner needs to feel accepted. According to a study cited in <http://www.zeri.org/initiative/basicconcerns.htm>, learning must be fun and challenging in order to be effective. Every learner is a unique, talented and creative individual that needs to be nurtured and allowed to grow in a caring and co operative environment.

The above explanations is in keeping with the humanistic theory which states

that the full development of an individual affectively as well as cognitively is important and humanistic educators need to focus on individuals reaching their full potential (Elliott, *et al*, 2000: 3).

***A Grade 12 learner stated:***

*Depending on how the topic interests me in a way, and If I am Interested my brains tend to function and that makes me keep it in my mind. I never tend to forget.*

Brophy (1986) elaborates that most learners as they work through their years do in fact find areas of study they genuinely enjoy. These areas are different for different people. The general problem of matching individual interests to fixed curricula is the one that is impossible to solve. Learners obviously have different backgrounds. Brophy (1986) reminds us that what is relevant for one will not be relevant to another.

MacAulay (1990) and Hamachek (1995) as cited in Donald Lazarus and Lolwana (1997: 116) have identified educator characteristics that are generally found to provide a positive influence in the classroom. These include warmth, friendliness, being supportive, having good communication, skills, empathy, being orderly and in control, having respect for the learners, providing positive feedback to learners, rewarding learners for positive behaviour and being fair.

## 5.10 Theme 2: Learner's expectations of educators

### **Grade 12 learner:**

*Tuition by class teachers should be given at no extra cost during lunch time and after school for example Maths.*

### **Grade 12 learner:**

*We should not be paying for the tuition.*

### **Grade 10 learner:**

*They should break the work down.*

### **Grade 9 learner:**

*An approach where teachers can teach you individually.*

Some of these responses were spontaneously expressed by the learners. They were extremely excited when the researcher had asked them to suggest how educators can help them to learn better. It was obvious that it was the first time that they felt they were consulted.

I suggest that the Department of Education and the different educator unions ensure that those educators who provide extra tuition for their own learners and charge an extra fee for tuitions should be disciplined. This practice should be discouraged as it leads to those learners who can afford the extra fees not wanting to pay attention in class. This results in them becoming demotivated leading to disruptive behaviour in class. This also leads to educators not giving of their best during school time. As a result of poor teaching, learners are forced to attend extra tuition and to pay exorbitant fees

for this service which should have been given freely in class from the beginning.

The following statements point to the fact that these learners have expectations of their teachers to assist them in their future.

**Grade 9 learner:**

*I don't want to be a street kid. I want to have a future. I want to help my mother. When you finish school, study earn your own money, without qualifications you can't get a good job . I need my teacher to help me.*

**Grade 8 learner:**

*I want a good job with a high salary. I want to work in a bank.*

**Grade 10 learner:**

*Your parents pay school fees to give you a comfortable life.*

**Grade 12 learner:**

*Teachers need to be concerned about you and give you the best education in the class.*

These show that participants have serious concerns about their future and the educator plays an extremely important role in motivating the adolescent. They are motivated to study as they are aware that their qualification will enable them to get better jobs in the future. It shows that they are interested in obtaining employment. The participants are aware that their parents are paying for their school fees and they are living a comfortable life and they expect their educators to do their best as well.

Elliott *et al* (2000) add that learner motivation according to the humanistic view depends on how the learners view themselves as people and how they see the school contributing to their growth. If classes are personal and meaningful, learners are motivated to learn. From the findings it appears that adolescent learners come to school to ensure that their education will assist them and they expect their teachers to assist and support them fully.

Further responses show the concerted effort that they are making in order to prove themselves and to be powerful in the future and they expect their educators to be supportive of them.

***Grade 10 learner:***

*When the teachers put me down, I want to prove a point I want to be someone. I want to be successful. I don't want to be seen as a dumbo.*

***Grade 9 learner:***

*I want to pass and get more information. I like to learn because someday it will help me to get a job and be someone powerful .*

In the classroom, learners constantly receive information from educators and peers about their performance in tasks either with respect to some external standard or in comparison with others. This information influences their beliefs about their own ability to perform tasks successfully and in turn influences their motivation to learn (Muthukrishna, 1998: 141).

It is evident from the information obtained that learners' expectations of their



educators in motivating them in the classroom is important to their academic performance.

**Grade 10 learner:**

*My teachers keep reminding me how successful you can be and that motivates me. The important thing in life is never to give up on your dreams.*

Thanasoulas (2002) says that research has shown that the way learners feel about their accomplishments and the amount of satisfaction they experience after task completion will determine how educators tackle subsequent learning tasks and by employing appropriate strategies.

Dorneyi (2001: 134) presents an area of increasing learner satisfaction and the question of rewards and grades. The above refers to motivational strategies aimed at increasing learner satisfaction on allowing educators to display their work, encouraging them to be proud of themselves, to celebrate success as well as using rewards (Covington, 1999). Sometimes it is argued that a learner's motivation depends on the goals he/she is striving to achieve (Eggen and Kauchak, 1997). However, Campbell (1997) clarifies that the educator uses an understanding of individual and group motivation behaviour to create a learning environment that encourages a positive social interaction in the classroom.

### **5.11 Theme 3: Educators promoting a conducive classroom environment.**

A conducive classroom environment is when interpersonal relations and

dynamics within the classroom between educator and learners do not negatively affect the teaching / learning process. It is important in learning to ensure learners are able to obtain the optimum benefit in the classroom.

The following quotations by participants explains the factors that occur in a classroom.

**Grade 9 learner:**

*I feel scared in some classes. I can't ask questions.*

**Grade 10 learner:**

*They (with reference to teachers going to shout you.)  
Mr "M" is too meticulous and the language is too high.*

A tense classroom climate can undermine learning and demotivate learners according to Thanasoulas (2002). Learner motivation will reach its peak in a safe classroom climate in which learners can express their opinions and feel that they do not run the risk of being ridiculed. Brophy (1987) concludes that learners motivated to learn need both ample opportunities to learn and encouragement and support of the educators.

It is important that the educator organizes and manages the classroom as an effective learning environment since motivation is unlikely to develop in a chaotic classroom. Also anxious or alienated learners are unlikely to develop motivation to learn. It is important that learning occurs within a relaxed and supportive environment (Brophy: 1987).

Some of the responses from participants are as follows:

**Grade 10 learner:**

*A teacher that calls me like Mrs A. has an open door policy . I like her as a person. If you have a problem, she is compassionate, you can tell secrets to the teacher.*

**Grade 11 learner:**

*When the teacher is calm, passive respectful, takes care and not embarrasses you and insults you, you do better.*

Brophy (1987) further emphasizes the fact that classroom climate is important if students experience the classroom as a caring and supportive place, then there is a sense of belonging and every one tends to participate more fully in the process of learning. This is consistent with Maher, Martin and Midgley (1991) who also elaborated that learning in the classroom is critical but depending on their degree of congruence with classroom goals and practices, school wide goals either dilute or enhance the classroom environment to support motivation to learn.

Charles and Sentec (1995: 75) claim that if you genuinely want your learners to make an effort to learn and enjoy learning it is much better to motivate them through what they enjoy and respond to positively. This does not mean your program has to be rapidly easy, it can be rigorous yet still enjoyable. This is in keeping with what Dornyei (2001: 120) who asserts that "whatever is done by an educator has a motivational, formative influence on students".

In other words an educator's behaviour can be a powerful motivational tool.

An educator's influence is manifold ranging from the rapport with the learners to educator's behaviour which prevails upon or "attract" learners to to engage in tasks. Alison (1993) examines a key element of trust which could lead to enthusiasm. At any rate educators impart a sense of commitment and interest in the subject matter.

The following participant stated the following concerning the classroom:

***Grade 10 learner:***

*Lessons should be interesting. Posters of the lessons should be stuck on classroom walls. Learners should work in groups.*

Eggen and Kauchak (1997: 349) claim that classroom climate is an outgrowth of the collective learner - educator relationship that form over time. Humanistic relationships form over time. Humanistic classrooms are safe environment where students believe they can learn and are expected to do so. Standards remain high but attainable. Each person is valued as s/he is a valuable human being. Establishing a caring, co-operative learning environment is essential to fostering intrinsic motivation. When learners feel safe, the need for extrinsic rewards is eliminated (Brandt: 1995). In classrooms where learners are encouraged to take risks, be independent thinkers and be responsible, a learning community is developed in which learners interact and learn successfully.

Muthukrishna (1998) confirms that the learning environment should include

interaction as well as opportunities for construction of meaning. Learning is a social activity and therefore opportunities need to be created for learners to interact both with their teachers and their peers. Learners should be taught to work co-operatively in small groups.

In motivating environments, learners understand what they are expected to learn and why they are expected to do so. They should learn that they are expected to explain and justify how they solve problems and how they arrive at their answers. Learners should also learn to respect one another's thinking, to figure things out together and to work collaboratively to find solutions.

The following quotations reflect the participants perception of their educators:

***Grade 9 learner:***

*It s difficult to learn EMS . The teacher is too cheeky.*

***Grade 10 learner:***

*Some teachers are intimidating, embarrass you in front of class when you ask questions, you are not free.*

Lile (2002) states that some educators run their classrooms almost very strictly, almost as sort of a dictator in class. The educator gets upset at the learners who don't try when it appears the reason is that they don't understand what is asked of them.

The following quotations from participants express concern about the educators and the teaching/learning environment.

**Grade 10 learner:**

*I have a communication problem with Mr. T. so it is difficult to ask and answer questions. I would not be able to talk freely.*

**Grade 11 learner:**

*There should be a lot of communication between them. Another participant stated I must feel free at all times. I must not be forced by the teachers.*

**Grade 12 learner:**

*An educator should create a democratic environment and not inflict their ideas onto learner's religious affiliations for example wearing a scarf. Every day the learner should display good behaviour.] Teachers should interact with students.*

Good and Brophy (1990: 228) note that the simplest way to ensure that people value what they are doing is to maximize their free choice and autonomy. A sentiment shared by Ushioda (1997: 41) who remarks that "self motivation" is a question of thinking effectively and meaningfully about learning experience and learning goals.

The following displays the participants insecurities against their educators:

**Grade 10 learner:**

*Our teacher's should not be dominating or else this will affect our learning. More interaction with the teachers is important. We learn from our mistakes. Experience is the best teacher.*

In a study cited in <http://www.aseesa-edu.za/metacog.htm>, the role of the educator is not terminated once the learner has greater control over his/her learning. Instead the educator's responsibility increases as a consultant. He/she is required to create suitable environmental conditions for optimal learning to take place.

## **5.12 Theme 4: Role played by educators and peers in promoting motivation**

### **Grade 9 learner:**

*I like enthusiastic teachers. Teachers that want to work. I am motivated when teachers try and help us and go out of their way.*

### **Grade 10 learner:**

*I love it when teachers explain and explain until we understand the work. There is a two way communication process in class.*

### **Grade 11 learner:**

*I am motivated when you have a positive teacher who loves what they are doing and the teacher must teach with a smile.*

Lumsden (2002) believes that learners must feel that the educator is genuine and supportive, and that the learner's values and opinions will be respected. Educators must be kind and listen fairly to the learners and be patient when they don't understand. A caring educator who tries to develop a warm environment and communicates this well to learners will in return build a desire to learn and participate.

The above reasons for being motivated in the classroom is in keeping with

the humanistic theory.

There was another major concern from a learner as stated below:

**Grade 12 learner:**

*I am motivated when the teacher makes the lesson fun and some teachers motivate and help us for example the Maths teacher. He makes an effort even though the learners shows disrespect. He makes an effort to read and explain to us.*

Harris (2001) asserts that proper classroom explanation is needed from the educator so the learners can understand well what is expected of them.

Brophy (1987) and Keller (1983) believe learners learn best when motivated. In order to understand what motivates a learner, an educator must also understand what it is that will create that interest for each individual learner.

Elliott *et al* (2000: 4) further elaborates that although learners' motivational histories accompany them into each classroom setting, it is essential for teachers to view themselves as "Active Socialization Agents" stimulating learner motivation to learn. Eggen and Kauchak (1997) conclude that when learners feel in control of and responsible for their own learning, climate improves and motivation to learn increases.

Participants have the following to add about their peers in the classroom:

**Grade 9 learner:**

*I like getting high marks if my friend gets good marks then I also want*



to get good marks.

**Grade 10 learner:**

*My friends sit near me, my friend always give me the work, they help me learn. I am motivated when teachers make up fun activities and have crosswords, games and make jokes with the learners and to create a special bond with the learners.*

**Grade 11 learner:**

*I am motivated when I look at my friends Peter and Thomas. What they find interesting? I was once told "Knowledge is the key to success. If you can get it, take it - You never know when it can benefit you.*

According to Bantjies (2005), when learners don't care about what they are learning , the work that is memorized is quickly forgotten.

Bearing the above in mind, Bany (1975: 198) states that much of the school curriculum is not related directly to an individual's needs, goals and purposes. Much of what the learner is expected to do in school does not have much bearing on anything outside the classroom.

Lile (2002) notes that an extrinsically motivated learner studies and learns for other reasons. Such a learner performs in order to receive a reward, like graduating or passing a test. If there is an assessment to be given at the end of the lesson then the work gets done. It seems that when intrinsic motivation is low or absent, extrinsic motivation must be used Lile (2002). Covington (1999) believes that grade focus on extrinsic motivation performance outcomes rather than on the process of learning itself. Consequently many learners are grade driven.

Nicholls (1984) examines two types of motivational goals towards school learning: ego orientation and task orientation. They involve different ways of thinking about oneself, about the task and about the learning outcomes. Muthukrishna (1998) explains that task orientation involves a commitment to learning for its own sake.

The goal is to increase understanding and to develop new skills, to improve performance. Task involvement means an interest in doing one's best, without regard for the performance of others. The goal of learning is to gain understanding, insight or skill, and to accomplish something that is challenging. Ego orientation on the other hand is when the aim is to perform better than others or to establish that one's ability is superior to another.

***Grade 10 learner:***

An example of ego orientation is when a participant stated, *I love it when I get better marks than my friends.*

Learners constantly receive information from educators and peers in the classroom, about their performance on tasks either with respect to some external standard or in comparison with others (Muthukrishna: 1998). This information influences their beliefs about their own ability to perform tasks successfully and in turn, influences their motivation to learn. Learners who do not believe that they can do well are not likely to be motivated to apply effort and will give up easily when they experience problems.

**Grade 10 learner**

*I am motivated when the teacher is constantly checking on me and convince me to do the work.*

Stipek (1988) adds that to a very large degree, students expect to learn if their teachers expect them to learn. This shows that they need constant approval from the educator to work in the classroom.

The following response from a learner is explained below:

**Grade 10 learner:**

*I am motivated to learn when I am full and I must not be hungry.  
I can concentrate in class.*

Muthukrishna (1998) asserts that a learner will strive for a need at a higher level only if lower level needs have already been met. For example, if physiological needs such as sleep or food are not met, a learner may not concentrate on, nor benefit from a group reading activity (which is an educator's attempt to meet a higher level need). Thus a learner's desire to fulfill a lower level need may be in conflict with the educator's aim to use a higher level need as a motivation for learning.

There are other extrinsic factors that affect adolescent learners apart from being in the classroom. They are in the class but they are constantly thinking about other things.

**Grade 9 learner:**

*My girlfriend motivates me to come to school.*

It is clear that the learner is looking for other aspects to motivate him rather than the classroom environment itself. The other aspect includes the immediate family, the extended family and friends and is in keeping with the systems theory where the functioning of the whole person is dependent on the interaction between all parts (Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana: 1997).

The following participants confirm that the learner cannot be seen in isolation.

**Grade 12 learner:**

*Figures run in my blood. My father is my inspiraton.  
A lot of motivation comes from my parents, from home for example my brother, grandfather apart from my friends and teachers. We all help each other.*

**Grade 10 learner:**

*My mother never go to university but she insists I do. She wants me to be what she could not. My father finished matric, my mother did not, and she had me when she was fifteen. They were not stable, financially. If I can learn from their mistakes , I'll have a better life.*

**Grade 11 learner:**

*It is important to come from a loving and cosy home. My friends tend to judge me for example an old shirt that I wear. They don't know what problems you had.*

From the above quotations it becomes clear that the different systems are important and that all systems are interrelated as the class is a subsystem of the school. A learner is influenced by factors such as the family members as

well as peers. The educator and learner are both involved in the interaction of the physical, cognitive, social, emotional and moral development that occurs throughout life. The interactions make up the process of teaching/learning (Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana, 1997: 63).

### **5.13 Emerging guidelines**

In analyzing these findings, I concluded that educators are the key to learners' motivation. To assist them in doing their task by creating conducive conditions for learning, I have identified the following factors as a guide they can use in motivating adolescent learners in the classroom.

- ❖ Give learners a sense of purpose of learning. This finding was also confirmed by Elliott *et al* (2000). When learning is relevant and applied in the real world, it can be valuable.
- ❖ Incorporate fun and creative activities negotiated by the educator with learners to ensure that those learners that are experiencing difficulty are able to participate in classroom activities.
- ❖ Reduce noise levels in the classroom and gainfully occupy learners in the classroom in order to prevent disturbances and to promote learning and participating in classroom activities.
- ❖ Be aware of learners that sit furthest away and find ways to include them in classroom activities.

#### **5.1.4 Conclusion**

From the above findings it is very clear that there are various factors that motivate adolescent learners to learn in the classroom. In the next chapter the findings will be summarized and the guidelines for educators to provide motivation in their classrooms will be listed.

# **CHAPTER SIX**

## **RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

### **6.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, a summary of the major findings of the study is presented, conclusions drawn and recommendations made relating to the factors that motivate adolescent learners in the classroom.

### **6.2 Summary of study findings**

The study confirmed that various factors encourage adolescent learners to learn in the classroom. The following are the findings that emerged from the study:

- ⇒ It is clear that educators play an important role in motivating adolescent learners in the classroom as the learners attributed their motivation to the educator in making their lessons exciting.
- ⇒ Peers have a positive effect in encouraging learners to learn in the classroom. Learners who have a positive and cordial relationship with peers in the classroom are actively involved in lessons and are encouraged to be successful.
- ⇒ The majority of the participants were extrinsically motivated as their responses showed that they were grade driven and the marks obtained by learners were important to them.

### **6.3 Proposed guidelines for educators to assist adolescent learners in the classroom**

- Educators need to provide learners with proper explanations in the classroom. In this way the learner would understand activities better in the classroom and in turn learners would be motivated to listen. Lile (2002) also confirms that proper explanations by educators would improve motivation of learners in the classroom.
- Tasks should be broken down and simplified by the educator to allow for the learners that are not coping in the classroom to make meaning of classroom activities.
- The language spoken by educators should be simple in order for all learners to understand.
- Educators need to find ways to arouse and maintain learner curiosity and in turn improve motivation. Educators should promote clubs at school, for example, the science club, the poetry club and the mathematics club. These clubs should stress fun activities, talks, quizzes, debates as well speakers from other schools can be invited to give light as to what is happening in their schools. These activities can be incorporated into the classroom. This will enable learners to be involved with learners from other schools to ensure that participation of learners is optimal.
- 'A problem based approach' to learning which requires adolescent learners to seek information to solve problems for themselves can be adopted by educators ([http://www.teacher.net.gov.uk/teaching and learning/library/ motivation](http://www.teacher.net.gov.uk/teaching_and_learning/library/motivation)).



- Motivation of learners can be improved by educators making content personally relevant to learners and feedback about learning progress is essential.
- Educators need to be seen as genuine. Lies spoken to learners can easily be discovered. An example of this is if an educator informs learners that they are writing a test on a certain day, or completing an activity on a certain day, it should be done. There should be no broken promises given to adolescent learners. This will result in learners respecting, as well as treating the educator with dignity.
- If extra tuition is given to learners by educators, then there should be no extra cost attached to it.
- Educators need to provide in-class support to learners experiencing difficulties with the classroom activities.
- Educators should encourage peer groups to be formed in the class which will allow peers in the same classroom to assist learners to learn.
- The educator needs to negotiate with learners classroom rules and regulations.
- Educators need to explore how motivation to learn can be encouraged by creating different kinds of learning environments and using different teaching methods.
- A sense of enthusiasm should be created among learners in order for them to enjoy their learning. They are important because they influence how learners think about themselves and their peers and how they approach the tasks (Muthukrishna, 1998: 150).
- Learners completed efforts such as posters and written articles should be

placed on the classroom walls to motivate learners.

- Educators need to reflect on and evaluate their lessons on an ongoing basis. It would be more beneficial to afford learners opportunities to be part of the evaluation process as they are affected by what goes on in the classroom. In this way the educator is well aware that learners are interested and motivated.
- Educators should have an open door policy in negotiating the rules of the classroom and assisting the learners to be motivated in the classroom. The learners should not feel intimidated to approach educators. The educator should operate on democratic principles.
- Educators should conduct classroom meetings on an ongoing basis with learners (Glasser, 1990: 81).
- Educators should refrain from instilling fear in the learners in the classroom.
- Educators should limit their screaming and shouting in the classroom. Learners should be gainfully occupied. Learners would benefit by ensuring that learning can be fun and exciting and not monotonous and drudgery.
- Boredom should be alleviated by incorporating creativity into lessons. Educators are to constantly discuss with other educators how to find new and fun ways of preparing lessons. It should be done on an ongoing basis.
- Educators need to improve communication between heads of departments, other educators at school, principals and members of the governing bodies to alleviate any problems regarding motivation of

adolescent learners. These are linked to motivation in the classroom as communication among all stakeholders in a school is important to ensure that learners are happy and motivated in the classroom to ensure the maximum amount of learning takes place.

Ames (1992) believes that if learners perceive meaningful reasons for engaging in an activity they will be more likely to approach tasks that are exciting and engage in learning. In short, tasks that emphasise relevance and meaningfulness will motivate learners to focus on understanding the contents of their activities. This approach is in line with the principles of Curriculum 2005 as formulated by the department of education (Muthukrishna, 1998). Curriculum 2005 focuses on the learner being at the center of learning and the educator is seen as a facilitator.

#### **6.4 Recommendations for further research**

This study focused on establishing the role of the educator and the peer in motivating the adolescent learner in the classroom. There needs to be further research done focusing on the role of the parent and the extent to which they motivate adolescent learners in the classroom. Educators also need to be interviewed in order to determine how they perceive the role they play in the motivating adolescent learners in the classroom.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

The study highlighted the factors that motivate adolescent learners in the classroom. It also highlighted the important role played by educators in making the learning process meaningful and interesting. From the findings of this study, it is clear that educators have a huge responsibility in creating classrooms that are conducive to learning and where learner motivation remains high. It also emerged that educators need to foster a genuine love of learning for the sake of knowledge acquisition, not for marks or any other external factors. If they are motivated and enthusiastic themselves about their learning areas, it is likely that learners will also become enthusiastic. Directly or indirectly, educators act as role models for their learners and they need to be exemplary in what they do. As significant adults in the learners' lives, this is a responsibility we cannot and should not take lightly.

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## **APPENDICES**

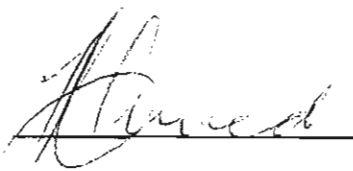
### **Appendix: A**

#### **Letter to the School Principal**

28 April 2005

I am presently completing my Master's degree in Psychology of Education at the University of Kwazulu Natal. One of the criteria for completing my degree is to conduct a research study. I wish to do that study with the grades eight to twelve and I request your permission to go ahead.

My research study is on Factors affecting motivation of adolescent learners in the classroom. I will interview learners during breaks and after school. Permission has been obtained from parents/ guardians. All precautions will be taken to keep all information provided confidential.



Principal

Thank you for your co - operation

Researcher


S. Barath

## Appendix B

### Letter to the School Governing Body

28 April 2005

My name is Mrs. S. Barath. I am an educator at this School and I am presently completing my Master's degree in Psychology of Education at the University of Kwazulu Natal. One of the criteria for completing my degree is to conduct a research study. I hereby request your permission to conduct a research project on factors affecting motivation of adolescent learners in the classroom. The study involves interviewing learners here at school. All precautions will be taken to keep all information provided in strict confidence.



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Chairperson of the School Governing Body

Thank you for your co - operation.



Researcher

S. Barath

## Appendix C

### Letter to Parent/Guardian

28 April 2005

Dear Parent/guardian

My name is Mrs. S. Barath. I am an educator at Sunflower Secondary and I am presently completing my Master's degree in Psychology of education at the University of Kwazulu Natal. One of the criteria for completing my degree is to conduct a research study.

My research study is on Factors affecting motivation of adolescent learners in the classroom. The study involves me interviewing your child at the school. Participation in this study is voluntary and that participants are free to withdraw from the study at any stage. I do promise to ensure that all information provided by learners will be kept in strict confidence. If you consent, please sign this form and return to me.

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Parent/guardian

Thank You for your co- operation

Researcher

S. Barath



## Appendix D

### Interview Schedule

What is your least favourite subject?

Why is it your least favourite subject?

What is your favorite subject?

Why is it your favorite subject?

When do you learn best? (time of day, conditions, etc)

Where do you learn best?

/ In the classroom, what encourages you to want to learn?

In class what discourages you from learning?

Do you like to learn?

Why do you like/dislike learning?

Do your friends like to learn?

Why do they like/dislike learning?

What can teachers do to help you learn better?

Do you enjoy learning?

What do you enjoy the most about learning?

What do you enjoy the least?

What about your friends - do they enjoy learning?

Why do they enjoy /not enjoy to learn?

Do you ever find that some teachers make learning easy?

What do they do to make it easy?

If you were a teacher, what would you do to encourage your learners to learn?

Are there any other factors that affect your learning?

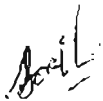
# Appendix E

## Letter of Appreciation

Thank you for participating in this study. I have thoroughly enjoyed the time that we have spent in our conversations together. I have learnt a great deal and I have gained a deeper insight into the lives of learners in the classroom.

The research findings will be available to you as soon as possible. You are most welcome to have a look at it as a copy of the report will be available from me.

Thank you



Researcher

S. Barath

JKZN ethical certificate



RESEARCH OFFICE (GOVAN MBEKI CENTRE)  
WESTVILLE CAMPUS  
TELEPHONE NO.: 031 - 2603587  
EMAIL: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

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06 OCTOBER 2005

MRS. S BARATH (951053096)  
PSYCHOLOGY OF EDUCATION

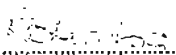
Dear Mrs. Barath

**ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL NUMBER : HSS/05096A**

I wish to confirm that ethical clearance has been granted for the following project:

**"Adolescent learners in central Durban - Issues affecting their motivation"**

Yours faithfully

  
.....  
MS. PHUMELELE XIMBA  
RESEARCH OFFICE

PS: The following general condition is applicable to all projects that have been granted ethical clearance:

THE RELEVANT AUTHORITIES SHOULD BE CONTACTED IN ORDER TO OBTAIN THE NECESSARY APPROVAL SHOULD THE RESEARCH INVOLVE UTILIZATION OF SPACE AND/OR FACILITIES AT OTHER INSTITUTIONS/ORGANISATIONS. WHERE QUESTIONNAIRES ARE USED IN THE PROJECT, THE RESEARCHER SHOULD ENSURE THAT THE QUESTIONNAIRE INCLUDES A SECTION AT THE END WHICH SHOULD BE COMPLETED BY THE PARTICIPANT (PRIOR TO THE COMPLETION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE) INDICATING THAT HE/SHE WAS INFORMED OF THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT AND THAT THE INFORMATION GIVEN WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL.

cc. Faculty Research Office (Derek Buchter)  
cc. Supervisor (Ms. T Nlombela)