



A Self-Determination Theory Perspective of Teacher Motivation and Self-Directed Learning Skills to Enhance Academic Performance in Selected Lower Quintile Primary Schools

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ABSTRACT

Learners from low socioeconomic contexts are often instructed by poorly trained and qualified teachers, causing them to be often poorly motivated for their tasks, which is detrimental to learner performance. This study explored (a) factors that influenced the motivation and teaching behaviour of lower quintile schoolteachers with a view to enhancing learner academic performance and (b) the self-directed learning skills reflected in teachers' teaching behaviour that enhanced learner academic performance. This study followed a basic qualitative study method in which semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 purposively selected teachers from lower quintile primary schools. The participants listed a supportive school environment, collegiality, organisations, and community projects that support education in small towns as extrinsically motivating contextual factors. Furthermore, the reciprocal influences of communities with a low socioeconomic status, poor parental involvement, ill learner discipline, and limited support from the Department of Basic Education in providing specialised psychological and remedial support for struggling learners were factors that had a negative bearing on the participants' relatedness, competence and autonomy. Future research is needed to explore the drivers of motivation in lower quintile schoolteachers by using a greater sample of participants from primary and secondary schools.

Keywords: Motivation, lower quintile schools, Self-determination theory, Self-directed learning, Teachers

INTRODUCTION

Quality education for all learners hinges on well-qualified, trained, adequate, and motivated teachers (UNESCO, 2021). Teacher motivation hence affects the quality of teaching and thereby impacts learner academic achievement (Fives & Buehl, 2016). In the same vein, Voskamp et al. (2020) aver that all countries, regardless of their socioeconomic status, need teachers who are motivated to achieve the educational goal of developing self-directed, intrinsically motivated learners

who can function effectively in the twenty-first century.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite the importance of motivated teachers, Iliya and Ifeoma (2015) have both expressed and observed an increasing concern about the generally low or declining motivation levels among formal public schoolteachers in developing countries. This dwindling motivation is a problem because motivated teachers are particularly essential for disadvantaged learners from low socioeconomic contexts (Dembélé &

Rogers, 2013). The sad reality is that learners from these contexts are often taught by demotivated, poorly trained and qualified teachers instead. Teachers in low socioeconomic contexts are depicted as demotivated and blamed for the deteriorating learner performance and learning outcomes. Unmotivated teachers and poor socioeconomic contexts are a detrimental combination preventing learning and learner success (Mlachila & Moeletsi, 2019; Roodt, 2018). Notwithstanding the negative portrayal of teachers in social media and government reports as demotivated, Condy and Blease (2014) aver that, in the public's opinion, there are also many South African teachers who are motivated and dedicated to educating learners despite the challenges described in this article.

Despite the great need for teacher support from the education system and the necessity of motivated, capable teachers in developing SDL, most efforts to improve the quality of education in South Africa have focused on providing schools with physical resources rather than providing teachers with resources to improve their teaching competence and motivation, help them achieve educational outcomes and, thus, help learners become self-directed learners (Yiga et al., 2019). Furthermore, most South African studies on teacher motivation discount contextual challenges and the snowball effect these have on the experiences and motivation of teachers in lower quintile schools. Hoy (2021) affirms that the interpersonal, economic, and political contexts which affect teachers' praxis are often overlooked. It is evident that research is required to address these lacunae in the body of literature and thereby improve teacher motivation and thus also learning and performance in learners, especially within lower quintile schools.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of this study was to explore what influence teachers' motivation and perceptions of their relatedness, competence, and autonomy to develop SDL skills of learners in their teaching context.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Against this background, the following research question was posed: What influence teachers' motivation and perceptions of their relatedness, competence and autonomy to develop SDL skills of learners?

The subsequent sections outline teachers' perceptions of their motivation and factors that can influence teacher motivation. Ryan and Deci's (2002) SDT is presented to conceptualise how motivational factors can influence teacher motivation and teaching behaviour and enhance learner academic performance. SDT offers a suitable framework for this study, as it concerns not only types of motivation but also the circumstances that promote and maintain motivation. This article concludes with the empirical section of the study and the findings.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Schunk et al. (2016) distinguish between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, where motivation can be inferred from a person's actions, effort, persistence, goals, and verbalisations. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) define teacher motivation as that which drives teachers' decisions and goal setting, their efforts to sustain an activity, and their persistence in pursuing an activity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Factors that influence teacher motivation

When differentiating threats to teacher motivation, Frase (2002) distinguishes between work context factors (the teaching environment) and work content factors (teaching). Work context factors encompass teachers' baseline needs, such as manageable class sizes, favourable discipline conditions, availability of teaching materials, the quality of the principal's supervision and the meeting of basic psychological needs, such as money, status, and security. Work content factors comprise prospects for career development, recognition, challenging and varied work, increased responsibility in the institution, accomplishment, empowerment, and authority. Richardson (2014), Iliya and Ifeoma (2015), and UNESCO (2021) identified various interacting influences on teacher motivation that overlap with the work context and work content factors mentioned by Frase (2002). These influences include compatible teacher salaries, recognition for performance, social respect for the teaching profession, harmonious relationships with the school community, accountability and support from the institution, managerial excellence in the institutional environment, the opportunity to have input at school management and policy level, and decent physical teaching conditions and learning materials.

Usher (2021) avers that teacher motivation is influenced by the interacting influence of personal factors, environmental factors and teaching behaviour. Personal factors include teachers' perceptions of their competence, their sense of belonging in their teaching contexts, enthusiasm for teaching, and perceptions of their teaching responsibilities. Environmental factors

involve, among others, teacher-school collaboration, principal instructional leadership, support or pressure from school principals, the school's social context, and parental involvement. The quality of teaching behaviour can be deduced from teachers' classroom management, the cognitive support they offer, the cognitive activation they use in their lessons, their autonomy-supportive teaching strategies, and the social and emotional support they provide to learners (Usher, 2021). Hoy (2021) affirms that learners are strongly motivated to learn when they recognise a caring connection with their teachers, especially those learners who experience challenges at home or school.

This study explored teacher motivation through the theoretical lens of SDT by Deci and Ryan (2002), which is discussed in the following section.

Self-determination theory

Ryan and Deci's (2002) SDT distinguishes between extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation, and amotivation, each reflecting varying levels of self-determination. SDT asserts that an individual's motivation is influenced by three basic psychological needs: competence, relatedness, and autonomy. These three needs must be met before an individual will experience the intrinsic motivation to learn, engage with others, perform in academic settings, and grow psychologically (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

The SDT could shed light on whether the participants' (teachers') motivation is influenced by intrinsic, extrinsic, external, introjected regulation, regulation through identification, or amotivation and how these influence their teaching behaviour (discussed in more detail in the next paragraph). SDT could shed light on the extent to which the teachers' three basic psychological needs,

namely competence, relatedness and autonomy, are met in the three lower quintile schools.

Intrinsic motivation relates to the most self-determined level of motivation and is evident when an individual pursues an activity out of task interest and enjoyment rather than external recognition or rewards (Ryan & Deci, 2002). Extrinsic motivation is the pursuit of activities to attain recognition, rewards or outcomes rather than enjoying the activity itself (Ryan & Deci, 2002). According to the SDT, extrinsically motivated goals and behaviour can be assimilated into intrinsic goals and behaviour and can thus easily be mistaken for intrinsic motivation.

Ryan and Deci (2002) highlight four forms of self-determination and autonomy that distinguish true intrinsic motivation from extrinsically motivated goals. The least autonomous form of extrinsic motivation is external regulation. In this instance, an individual's motivation is driven by external factors such as reward and recognition, which encourage them to pursue or perform something. The second type of extrinsic motivation is introjected regulation, which describes individuals whose performance and achievement are driven by feelings of pressure to meet others' expectations, as well as guilt, anxiety, pride, and egoism (Vanasupa et al., 2010). Individuals can also demonstrate a more autonomous or self-determined form of extrinsic motivation, which is called regulation through identification. Regulation through identification manifests when an individual knowingly values and commits to a goal and makes it a personal goal. An example is teachers who motivate their learners to study hard because they see it as relevant, valuable, and necessary for learners to perform academically and reach a life goal of secondary and tertiary studies. The last and most autonomous form of extrinsic motivation is integrated

regulation, which occurs when identified regulations have been fully assimilated into an individual's beliefs, values, and personal needs. Integrated motivation seems similar to intrinsic motivation but is still classified as extrinsic motivation because the goals that individuals are trying to achieve are for reasons extrinsic to the self rather than for the natural enjoyment of the task (Vanasupa et al., 2010). The third type of motivation is amotivation, which refers to a complete absence of any motivation or self-determination to pursue an activity (Deci & Ryan, 2002).

According to the self-directed learning theory (SDT), an individual's social context influences their motivational regulations indirectly by meeting three innate psychological needs – autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2002). In the context of this study, the interrelated influences on teacher motivation will affect the outcome of the teachers' three basic needs being met, as explained by Richardson (2014), Iliya and Ifeoma (2015), and Usher (2021) and described above.

Autonomy refers to the degree of choice and control an individual feels they possess in pursuing an activity and the need to feel that an activity is consistent with their values (Ryan & Deci, 2002). For example, teachers' need for autonomy will be met if they have the freedom to decide on and implement new ideas with the support of the principal or school management team. Ryan and Deci (2002) explain that autonomy support entails the support of perspectives, thoughts, questions, and initiative by an individual who is often in a position of authority. This entails a strong element of competence on the part of the school principal or management as well as the teacher.

Competence signifies the need to interact effectively with the environment

and reach valued outcomes. The need for competence involves feelings of efficacy when an individual interacts with the social environment and has the opportunity to exercise and express their capabilities (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The desire for competence will lead teachers to pursue challenges that are suited to their capability and enhance that capability through activities in class. It is my belief as an educator and researcher that the more competent teachers perceive themselves to be in a particular task, the more intrinsically motivated they will be to pursue their goals and thereby achieve a greater sense of wellbeing. For example, teachers will be more intrinsically motivated if they perceive themselves as self-directed learners and are able to teach their learners so that they achieve academically. I also believe that teachers' perceptions of competence will be enhanced if their teaching competence is validated and their input in education supported by the DBE, principals, school management teams, and staff. Positive perceptions of their self-efficacy and competence can also be experienced when teachers see how their teaching and engagement add to learners' academic progress and personal growth.

Relatedness refers to the basic need to feel connected to others in one's social context and feelings of being cared for and respected and belonging to an individual's or one's own community (Ryan & Deci, 2002). In the context of this study, significant others for teachers refer to the stakeholders in education, such as the DBE, the school as an organisation with principals, school management teams, parents, staff, and learners. According to Thoonen et al. (2011), schools with sound working conditions, support, and cooperation among the personnel satisfy teachers' need for relatedness and can further motivate them to experiment with new approaches to improve their teaching activities. Such teacher collaboration

fosters autonomy and relatedness as it allows teachers to share their ideas, solve problems together with personnel, and gain feedback and information based on others' experiences. Teacher collaboration thus provides support to teachers, triggers professional culture, and enhances intrinsic motivation. Teachers' need for relatedness can be met if they experience harmony between their personal commitments and interests and those of other stakeholders in education, such as the DBE, parents, staff members and learners (Thoonen et al., 2011).

METHODOLOGY

Empirical investigation

The study was a qualitative one built on the constructivist paradigm. A basic qualitative study enables an inquirer to explore how people make sense of their world and what they experience within the world (Merriam, 2009). A constructivist paradigm was suited to the epistemological position of this study, as the intention was to "[understand] the world of human experience" (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p.36) in which "reality is socially constructed" (Mertens, 2005, p.12), which required a more personal manner of data collection and analysis. Consequently, this study's qualitative research methodology was fitting for the real-world settings and lived experiences it was intended to explore. The SDL skills that are enhanced in learner academic performance through improved teacher motivation were identified from the responses of the 12 research participants.

After obtaining permission from the DBE and ethical clearance from the university under whose auspices the study was conducted, I employed an independent person to recruit participants for this research. Lower quintile schoolteachers were purposively selected as I was

interested in their subjective interpretation of the complexity of their own motivation as a tool to improve teacher motivation and thereby enhance learner academic performance. Five primary schools were selected but only three primary schools volunteered to participate in the research. Since a small sample size was desired to conduct in-depth interviews, only four teachers from three schools were purposively selected to participate in the study voluntarily. The schools are located in the Eastern Cape province, which is known for its poor academic results. The language of instruction in all three schools is English and Afrikaans, and the learners who attend these schools are English, Afrikaans, and isiXhosa-speaking learners. I abided by all ethical aspects of conducting research, which included obtaining informed consent from the participants and respecting and upholding confidentiality and anonymity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

I used individual semi-structured interviews to gather in-depth information. Content and thematic analysis were used to analyse the data as part of a hybrid approach to data analysis by Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006), which allowed the use of both deductive analysis and inductive analysis. Purposive sampling was used to build a trail of evidence from the data collection together with rich, descriptive findings “thick” in detail supported by verbatim quotes from the data, and participant validation were used to produce trustworthy reliability (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The data analysis process that was conducted according to the above premises is presented under the themes and sub-themes it generated below. The schools have been coded as S1, S2 or S3, and the participants are referred to as P1, P2, P3, and so on.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

To answer the research question, participants were asked whether they perceived themselves as motivated, to give reasons therefor, and to explain what kept them motivated (or demotivated) to help learners achieve academically. I used a priori codes derived from the literature to categorise the responses referring to teacher motivation and SDL as well as an inductive approach where the themes created are linked to the interview data (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The following themes emerged from the study.

Perceptions of motivation

Although all participants perceived themselves as being intrinsically motivated, only three participants’ responses (S1P1, S2P7, S1P3) seemed to reflect the characteristics of intrinsic motivation. S1P1 described themselves as “*a self-motivated person [who loves] teaching [and who plans], set[s] goals for lessons, and will seek help until [they achieve their goals]*”.

Other participants used words such as “passion”, “love”, and “commitment” to describe their intrinsic motivation. However, a closer analysis of what appeared initially to be intrinsic motivation based on the responses revealed that most participants’ motivation could be classified rather as externally regulated or motivated by introjected regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2002).

P5S2 perceived themselves as an intrinsically motivated individual while they were regulating through identification with the goals of education, expectations from the school community, motivation from teaching expertise and experience that drove their motivation (Usher, 2021). The participant expressed:

“You cannot be without hope, irrespective of what is going on in schools today. I am a teacher for 27 years and I always said I want to make a change in this community. Our community look up to teachers so we cannot be without hope and motivation for our community’s sake” (P5S2).

Extrinsically integrated sources of motivation

This theme revealed that most participants had extrinsically integrated sources of motivation rooted in their perceptions of their teacher responsibilities (Usher, 2021) and the social context of the lower quintile schools where communities rely on schools not only for their children’s academic performance but also their holistic education.

Participants referred to the emotional and social support teachers provide learners, such as hope, empathy, and a positive mindset; these can be associated with their basic need for relatedness within their social contexts (Ryan & Deci 2002). S1P4, for example, clarifies: *“You must have hope; otherwise, you will fail your learners and many other people”*.

A few participants (S1P2, S1P3 and S2P7) found their motivation from internal, spiritual, and altruistic sources. S1P2 explained: *“When I feel unmotivated, I pray. I read the Bible and even use Jesus as an example to motivate myself and my learners”*. S2P7 elucidated: *“I get motivated through the Grace of God. Every day He gives me new hope and energy, and I carry that over to my learners”*.

Other responses were related to a positive mindset and awareness of how

one’s disposition can influence learners and other staff. P5S2 clarified:

“You must have empathy. I put myself in the shoes of these children and the problems they experience at home. You must have passion and a love for your work. To cater for and help the poorest of the poor... that is my motivation.”

S1P4 further mentioned: *It is difficult to stay motivated, but you must have hope and get yourself up, otherwise you will fail your learners and many other people in this country”*. In the same vein, S3P9, S3P10 and S3P11 expressed that they believed human learners need kindness to keep them motivated.

The responses above seem to indicate extrinsically integrated motivations, given that the type of motives the participants expressed and the goals they set out to achieve were for reasons extrinsic to the self (Ryan & Deci, 2002; Vanasupa et al., 2010). For example, participants S1P4, S2P5 and S3P10 are motivated by their professional responsibilities as teachers and role models to achieve the broad educational goals set by the DBE and the school. Thus, participants’ motivation is really influenced externally by the social context of their classrooms and learner interactions that create a sense of belonging for them and their learners (Ryan & Deci, 2002; Usher, 2021).

Motivational effects of relatedness

Participants from schools 1 and 2 (S1P1, S1P3, S2P3, S2P8) mentioned a supportive school environment, manageable class sizes and useful resources for teaching (Frase, 2002; Iliya & Ifeoma, 2015;

Richardson, 2014, Thoonen et al., 2011) as sources of their motivation. All the participants from school 1 emphasised the support of their principal and school management team as factors that influence their motivation to enhance academic achievement (Thoonen et al., 2011). One participant elaborated:

“I seek help from more experienced teachers. The principal and SMT is [sic] always supportive; they will praise and approve any of my ideas if it benefits the children in their learning. We have resources here, neat classrooms, Internet...” (S1P3)

The involvement of organisations such as the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the Cookhouse Windfarm Project, together with other resources from organisations like SASKO (*Suid-Afrikaanse Sentrale Koöperatiewe Graanmaatskappy*) and the contributions they receive in the form of learning materials, has had a positive influence the participants’ need for competence, autonomy, and relatedness. The participants explained that the support they received aided them in doing their work better:

“Our Foundation Phase learners received beautiful reading books from SASKO” (S3P9).

“Our principal wrote a letter to UNICEF. They donated ten laptops that I use in the multigrade classes. While I am busy with one grade, the other grade can use the laptops to do activities” (S3P11).

It was remarkable that only one participant (S1P1) mentioned the DBE as a

motivational factor. S1P1 reported that she was motivated by the workbooks the DBE distributed, as these made teaching and assessment easier for her.

Contrary to the views above, one participant (S2P7) expressed: *“The school gives support, but nothing is done at this school to personally strengthen us to make us feel we are cared for as human beings”*. Some participants’ needs for relatedness with parents were met through their interactions during the training of parents at teacher-parent meetings. The following responses exemplify their extrinsic motivation:

“Luckily, the GM Foundation assists us how to train [sic] parents to help them understand the curriculum” (S1P1).

“At least the Siyawela Programme of Cookhouse Windfarm helps us to guide parents [on] how to help learners at home with routine and interest in schoolwork.” (S2P7)

The General Motors (GM) Foundation, sustained by the Cookhouse Windfarm Project, has empowered the participants to become competent in guiding parents to give their children cognitive, emotional, and motivational support. The participants also reported that they had the autonomy to decide how to work with their learners’ parents. Participant responses (S3P12, S3P9) revealed teachers’ efforts to involve parents in their learners’ academic performance. As such, these teachers, too, are extrinsically motivated and likewise use extrinsic rewards to motivate their learners. S3P9 clarified:

“I get motivated when I see how our learners

perform in competitions such as the WOW Afrikaans spelling competition. I write reports about them in the local newspaper to motivate them and their parents. Every Monday at assembly ... we announce the star of the week in each grade; we also reward our top ten achievers quarterly. At the assembly, we also reward them for values such as kindness and honesty.

The most challenging aspect of participants' relatedness with parents appears to be the reciprocal influences of poor parental involvement commonly found in low socioeconomic status communities where learners lag behind with a myriad of emotional, motivational and educational problems. The following response of S1P4 encapsulates many participants' helplessness and frustration:

"This whole community makes it difficult. The conditions of many learners are atrocious. I can see the alcohol foetal syndrome in so many learners, but the Department does not do their part. Where are the social services? Many learners cannot concentrate in class. All they care about is that learners must pass or be progressed. Parents are just not interested".

These challenges compromise participants' sense of competence, since they do not have faith in the parents' commitment to cooperate with schools and act in the interest of their children's best education. There seems furthermore to be little alignment between participants' educational goals for learners, parental support, and support from the DBE regarding specialised psychological and

remedial guidelines to attain these goals (Ryan & Deci, 2002).

Motivational effects on competence

A few of the participants' (S1P3, S2P8, and S3P9) need for competence was extrinsically motivated by their learners' progress and the acknowledgement they received for their competence when their learners performed well in competitions. Participants' (S2P7, S2P8, and S3P10) expressed that their needs for competence were not met because of work content factors (Frase, 2002; Richardson, 2014). They mentioned, in particular, that the DBE workshops they attended were too general and only focused on content and assessment issues, thus not very useful in unique teaching contexts. Participants also felt that they were uninformed about alternative pedagogical methods to support struggling learners: *"The majority of them are repeaters with learning problems; what can I do?"* (S2P8). S3P10 added: *"In a multigrade class, learners with learning problems suffer the most. They are so dependent on me, when I am busy with another grade they cannot continue with the work on their own".*

Participants' (S1P3, S2P5, S2P8, and S2P7) perceptions of their competence were also affected by their perceived inability to connect with uninterested, ill-disciplined learners and learners with learning problems. Another challenge relating to perceptions of competence is the use of English as the language of instruction. S1P1 indicated that learners' poor English language proficiency influenced their engagement with the learners. They explained that many learners never speak English at home, as many often live with their grandparents who only speak isiXhosa or Afrikaans. These learners do not necessarily have the adequate skills to learn and understand effectively in English.

Motivational effects on autonomy

Two participants mentioned that they have the autonomy to experiment with teaching methods, for example, teaching creative writing outside the classroom. These examples of autonomy and teacher motivation have been confirmed by Ryan and Deci (2002) and Usher (2021), who found that teachers' autonomy is positively influenced by good principal instructional leadership and support from school principals. S1P3 explained: *"The principal and SMT is [sic] always supportive; they will approve any of my ideas as long as it benefits the children in their learning"*.

S2P7 experienced the development of study skills and other lifelong learning skills as time consuming because the curriculum already has too much content to teach in the time the Department has designated. This participant's external regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2002) stemmed from a fear of non-compliance, as they mention: *"I don't do new things, be safe and do just what the Department requires"*.

Learner discipline is an area that affects teacher motivation. The many laws and policies on learner discipline made participants cautious to discipline learners. It can be deduced that they might experience a lack of autonomy to handle discipline problems in their classes and, therefore, rely on their principals and school management teams to handle such problems.

Self-directed learning skills developed to enhance academic achievement.

Participants were also asked to describe what strategies they used to enhance learner academic performance. Responses revealed that various SDL skills such as goal setting, planning, positive motivational beliefs, metacognitive

monitoring, resource finding skills and self-reflection were developed to enhance academic achievement. Most of the responses indicated the provision of motivational and emotional support to enhance learning, which corroborates the findings of Usher (2021). S3P9 clarifies: *"I try to get down to their level, I show that I have educational expectations for them, ask them about their dreams, I open myself up on a personal level so that they can connect with me."*

Given the school community's socioeconomic conditions, it is understandable that participants emphasised these types of support to enhance academic achievement. S3P11 explained that teaching learners to have distal goals kept them focused and motivated to learn. S3P11 illustrated with this example: *"I ask them, do you also want to work on a farm forever, or drive a tractor? You can also be a teacher or a lawyer one day if you work hard now"*.

A few participants exposed learners to different learning strategies, such as cooperative and problem-based learning. S1P1 gave their learners cooperative homework tasks to teach them to take responsibility for their own learning and broaden their thinking skills while working with peers. However, no solution is without its issues: Some parents have objected to the former learning practice over concerns about their children's safety: *"Parents called me to say they do not want their children to work with other learners at their homes or places where their safety cannot be guaranteed"* (S1P1). These concerns are comprehensible, considering the prevalence of crime and bullying in many low socioeconomic communities.

Participants reported that they also provide cognitive support: *"I give extra lessons for the struggling learners"* (S1P1). S2P5, S2P6, and S2P8 mentioned using a

drill-and-practice approach for struggling learners and roleplay and humour in lessons to engage learners. Strategies for cognitive activation mentioned were oral questioning to activate prior knowledge. S1P1, S1P2, S1P3, and S2P7 modelled metacognitive monitoring in teaching learners to monitor their own understanding and progress through self-questioning.

Participants further reported using scaffolding, adjusting teaching strategies, or finding supplementary resources as measures to support learners. They assisted struggling learners by using YouTube videos, mnemonics, time planning on mind maps, and teaching them imagery to aid their visual memories (S1P1, S1P2, and S1P4). S3P10 reported: *“I explain the rubrics to them so that they know what to do. I tell them to do research to get more information”*.

Two participants referred to the important skill of autonomy in learning. S2P7 confirmed:

“I even use extramural activities to develop my learners’ self-directed learning skills to plan, to work together with other learners and to learn to take responsibility for what you must do and to take turns to be leaders”.

Exposure to these SDL skills is beneficial if learners are able to transfer these skills to their academic learning, which can enhance learner academic performance. S1P1 developed autonomy by teaching learners how to conduct a task analysis and then allowing them to choose their own group members, decide on what resources they needed, and how, when and where they would complete the tasks.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to explore what influence teachers’ motivation and perceptions of their relatedness, competence, and autonomy to develop SDL skills of learners. This study revealed that most participants’ sources of motivation were extrinsically integrated motivation that stemmed from their need for relatedness with learners and the broader school community (Iliya & Ifeoma, 2015; Richardson, 2014), other work content factors such as availability of teaching materials, the quality of the principal’s supervision mentioned by (Fraser, 2002), their teaching self-efficacy, and their enthusiasm for teaching (Usher, 2021). Participants reported that environmental factors such as departmental support, effective teacher and school collaboration, motivational climates at schools, principal instructional support, and parental involvement as areas that affected the need for relatedness. Teachers also reported that the DBE workshops they attended in the past did not address their unique teaching contexts, which had a negative influence on their perceptions of their own competence. Participants also felt insufficiently equipped to teach ill-disciplined learners and learners with learning problems, and departmental time pressures to complete the syllabus basic jeopardised the need for autonomy. Amotivation was not prevalent in any of the participants’ responses, which contradicts the findings of Iliya and Ifeoma (2015), Roodt (2018), and Mlachila and Moeletsi (2019), who reported declining motivation levels among teachers in low socioeconomic communities. However, this research does corroborate the findings of Condy and Blease (2014), which include that there are still many motivated, committed teachers who work conscientiously to educate learners despite the circumstances in which they educate.

The participants developed many SDL skills directly and through modelling, social and emotional support, goal setting,

resource findings skills, task analysis, strengthening motivation to learn and task strategies. Surprisingly, many participants still emphasised drill and practice in their teaching. This transmission style of teaching may still be useful in lower quintile schools where learners experience learning backlogs, poor parental involvement is prevalent, and learners depend greatly on guidance and support from their teachers to perform academically.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The results illustrate the need for professional development that would increase teachers' motivational beliefs to handle environmental factors in lower quintile schools that deter their teaching behaviours from facilitating academic achievement. Teachers will benefit from context-specific workshops that empower them with pedagogical strategies to deal with ill-disciplined learners and learners with learning barriers in lower socioeconomic contexts. The DBE and schools should facilitate training to foster parental involvement in their learners' academics and satisfy teachers' need for relatedness with parents and the broader community.

There is a need for a renewed awareness among the DBE, school leadership, and personnel of the indispensable role that each play in the other's perceptions of their own competence, relatedness, autonomy and, ultimately, teacher motivation. While the findings of this study did not reflect low teacher motivation in poor socioeconomic contexts, many other variables were not accounted for that could also influence motivation. Future research is therefore needed to explore the motivation of lower quintile schoolteachers with a larger sample of participants from primary as well as secondary schools.

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