



National Foundation for Educational Research

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Thematic Probe Learner Motivation 3-19: an International Perspective

Executive Summary

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INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORKS (INCA)

Thematic probe on learner motivation, 3-19: an International Perspective

Executive Summary

About the probe

In November 2004, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA, www.qca.org.uk) commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales (NFER) to undertake an international thematic probe on learner motivation. This thematic probe aims to provide users of the INCA website with an international perspective on how countries seek to motivate learners aged three to 19.

Research questions

The probe seeks answers to the following questions:

- How much importance does the government attach to learner motivation? What initiatives has the government put in place to improve learner motivation? What does this indicate about how learner motivation is conceptualised and how learners are perceived to be motivated? What measures of learner motivation does the government use?
- What is the important literature on learner motivation? What information does this literature provide about the existence of any government initiatives aimed at learner motivation? How is learner motivation defined and measured in the literature? What findings are there for how learners are motivated?

Scope of the probe

The thematic probe covers information on learner motivation in school education across the 3–19 age range from all countries with Archives on the INCA website¹. Information is also included from other Member States of the European Union (EU) participating in the Eurydice information network on education in Europe².

¹ Australia, Canada, England, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the USA and Wales.

² Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Iceland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia (in addition to the European Eurydice Network countries covered by INCA).

Research methods

Two main strands make up the probe, using the following research methods:

- i) a questionnaire – sent to contacts in all countries covered by the scope of the probe³
- ii) an international literature review, scoping publications dating from 2000, which includes sources highlighted in questionnaire returns and those identified from a range of educational and sociological databases.

As such, the probe represents an initial survey into an international perspective on learner motivation. It does not seek to analyse the impact of government initiatives on learner motivation, nor to provide an analysis of the findings of the available literature. This could be a focus of a full INCA thematic study into learner motivation.

The report and summary

The probe report comprises:

- the identification by country of government policy, learner motivation initiatives and related literature as highlighted in the questionnaire responses⁴
- a review scoping the international literature on learner motivation⁵.

This summary draws together the common themes and issues from across all three Chapters of the report. It provides an overview of the range of definitions of learner motivation and how it is measured (Chapters 2 and 3); highlights the common and distinct areas in government policy, strategies and initiatives on learner motivation across the countries (Chapter 2); and outlines the themes in the literature findings (as found in Chapter 3). It is illustrated with country examples drawn from Chapter 1.

What is ‘learner motivation’?

For the thematic probe, a definition of learner motivation was initially adopted as:

*a range of an individual’s behaviours in terms of the way they personally initiate things, determine the way things are done, do something with intensity and show perseverance to see something through to an end.*⁶

However, in seeking to identify how these behaviours might be enhanced – as evident in government policy and in the literature – a range of definitions of learner motivation become apparent.

³ Responses were received from Queensland (Australia), Austria, British Columbia (Canada), the Czech Republic, England, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Scotland, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Kentucky (USA), and Wales.

⁴ Covered in Chapters 1 and 2 in the full report.

⁵ Covered in Chapter 3 in the full report.

⁶ Coles, M. and Werquin, P. (2005) (forthcoming). *The Growing Importance of NQS as a Resource for Lifelong Learning Policy*. Paris: OECD.

The top three most consistent ‘definitions’ of learner motivation, both in the literature and in the underlying directions in government strategy across the INCA and Eurydice countries, would seem to be related to:

- **developing positive attitudes towards learning** – *‘interested, excited and motivated to learn’* (QCA, 2000, p.32); *‘zest for learning’* (OECD, 2000, p.11); *‘energy and drive’* to learn (Harlen and Deakin Crick, 2000; Martin, 2003); – often linked with young people’s readiness and desire to engage in lifelong learning
- young people **developing their own learning strategies**, self-regulation and capacity to persevere – *‘their capacity to learn, adapt and change in response to internal and external stimuli ... closely identified with the ‘will to learn’, which determines the effort that a learner will put into a task’* (Harlen and Deakin Crick, 2000)
- learner’s self-concepts and **perceptions of themselves as a learner**, including awareness of ambitions and aspirations – *‘knowing what you want to achieve and being willing to pursue those goals, even in the face of difficulties’* (DfES, 2004, p.26).

In addition, two substantial areas are evident in the literature and can be identified to some degree in the country responses. These are less coherent in definition, but have an overarching emphasis on:

- **learner achievement** – this aligns motivation with academic achievement, improvement and progress; the underlying impetus seems related to *‘accomplishing a goal or learning outcome’* (Bartz and Mathews, 2001) or level of academic attainment
- **engagement and participation** – in a lesson or task through *active engagement* in the classroom, and in lifelong learning as reflected in retention and drop-out rates.

Finally, two smaller areas in the literature, but contributing to distinctive flavours in government strategy in particular countries, are: learner motivation defined by **learner wellbeing and self-esteem** (the reverse, de-motivation, stress and anxiety, also noted in the literature); and **learner involvement** and collaboration in determining the content and direction of learning.

How is learner motivation measured?

Learner motivation would appear to be a **complex area to quantify**, cited as ‘*notoriously complex*’ and ‘*difficult to measure*’ (e.g. Harlen and Deakin Crick, 2002; OECD, 2000; Cook *et al.*, 2001). That said, a range of ‘indicators’ reflecting learner motivation is evident in the literature and government policy, including:

- learner attitudes
- learner characteristics
- attainment and academic progress data
- behavioural and psychological indicators
- attendance/drop-out data.

A variety of research methods is used to explore learner motivation, including self-evaluation/self-report, observation, pupil/teacher perceptions, and motivation tests. In addition, researchers have developed ‘scales’ or groups of measures from which to assess ‘motivation’. For example:

- Martin (2003) has developed a ‘student motivation wheel’ which assesses motivation in terms of ‘boosters’ and ‘guzzlers’ using a series of statements to which students respond on a scale of 1 to 7 (strongly disagree to strongly agree). ‘Boosters’ include statements such as ‘*if I try hard, I believe I can do well*’; whilst ‘guzzlers’ include ‘*when exams and assignments are coming up, I worry a lot*’.
- The Northern Ireland Curriculum Cohort Study has considered learners’ engagement with school and learning. Using a selection of measures from a survey of pupils’ curricular experiences, researchers ascertained how far pupils felt involved and engaged in their learning (Harland *et al.*, 2002). Although not necessarily a proxy for learner motivation, responses to statements ‘*I find it hard to concentrate in some subjects*’, ‘*I find some subjects boring*’ and ‘*I look forward to coming to school*’ gave an indication of pupil engagement with learning at school.

These kinds of ‘indicators’ perhaps offer a ‘best fit’ measure of learner motivation, taking into account attitudes, backgrounds, responses to a range of items, and perhaps mapping to attainment data.

- A key reflection point on learner motivation definitions and measures is how do governments wish to measure ‘learner motivation’? Attainment data or levels of achievement as proxy measures for levels of motivation would seem to reflect government strategy in a number of INCA/Eurydice countries, in terms of their emphasis on raising standards and improving effective teaching and learning. But in examining policy translating to practice, what other indicators could be explored? Might measures be adopted that do not rely on testing, or achievement outcomes, especially (as is summarised later) given some of the negative connotations of assessment on motivation?

Government policy and initiatives on learner motivation

The probe highlights government policies and strategic directions for raising learner motivation across the INCA and Eurydice network countries. Questionnaire responses addressing the first set of aims of the probe are summarised below.

How much importance does the government attach to learner motivation?

Learner motivation seems **important to many** of the responding countries.

- However, two-fifths of them appear to have **no specific government policies** directly targeting learner motivation; with several stating that learner motivation, like other directives, would come under regional jurisdiction (such as in the cantons in Switzerland) or the responsibility of individual schools and teachers (in the Czech Republic and the Netherlands for example).
- That said, one-fifth of the responding countries identify **specific government-level initiatives**, directives and strategies in place which directly address learner motivation. This is seen, for example, in the national strategies for education in England – which include pupil progress and personalised learning. Other learner motivation areas are similarly specifically included in the curriculum frameworks in Australia (Queensland) and Singapore.
- Nearly two-fifths of the responding countries include learner motivation **within government-level** education policy, but **do not view it as an isolated matter**, nor do they exclusively aim policy at enhancing motivation. For example, Finland's Education and Reform documents 2003–2008 cite the importance of vocational training, careers guidance and flexible study modules; and following results from TIMSS and PISA, the German government has prioritised a number of areas including the extension of full-day schooling.
- A number of countries are undergoing or have recently undergone **curriculum reform** or review **which has brought learner motivation to the fore** (for example, the Education and Training Reforms for the Future in Queensland (Australia) and extensive curriculum review and consultation in Northern Ireland).
- **Teacher training and professional development** is also a priority for some countries with regard to learner motivation techniques. Important in Finnish policy, for example, is the principle of offering continued 'support' and development for teachers in fostering learning through a positive school ethos.
- In addition, some governments have **commissioned research** specifically into learner motivation (Austria, for example); and highlight research and development into educational materials as important to learner motivation (as is the case in Hungary).
- Other countries **target specific groups** of the population where motivation would appear to be a concern. For example, Hungary's 'Human Resource Development Operative Programme' (2004–2006) prioritises opportunities for disadvantaged

groups such as the Roma population; and the Ministry of Education in New Zealand has commissioned a study to examine the experience of Maori students in the classroom.

The table below outlines some further country examples of governments' policy relating to learner motivation.

What initiatives has the government put in place to improve learner motivation? Some country examples

<p>Specific learner motivation initiatives – Singapore</p> <p>The Ministry of Education has introduced key initiatives to maximise students' motivation to learn, and to allow their learning to carry on through life beyond examinations. A key country flavour is the initiatives directed at teachers.</p> <p>'<i>Teach Less, Learn More</i>' (TLLM) allows teachers more time and space for innovative teaching and content reduction. It encourages a conscious effort not to overload students with homework, revision lessons and tests.</p> <p>'<i>Strategies for Active and Independent Learning</i>' (SAIL) promotes self-directed learning, and employs self and peer evaluation.</p> <p>http://www.moe.gov.sg/speeches/2004/</p>	<p>Learner motivation within other strategies – New Zealand</p> <p>A strong government policy on raising achievement is apparent. The Ministry of Education's mission includes to '<i>raise achievement and reduce disparity</i>', which aligns with the government's goals of reducing '<i>systematic underachievement in education</i>' and building '<i>an education system that equips New Zealanders with 21st century skills</i>'.</p> <p>Among the priority areas for raising student achievement, 'stronger self-management skills' are espoused. These include aspects such as the ability to set goals, be resourceful, make the most of opportunities and have resilience to get through difficult times – all related to 'self-regulation' strategies in our definitions of learner motivation.</p>
<p>Curriculum review brings motivation to the fore –Queensland (Australia)</p> <p>The response to a recent government White Paper, the Education and Training Reforms for the Future (ETRF), has put learner motivation at the heart of reform, in the form of pupil engagement. Strategies and curriculum materials across all phases of schooling have been developed, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the preparatory year (five- to six-year-olds) emphasises active learning, play and investigations • materials for pupils aged five to 15 aim to engender motivation and skills for lifelong learning – new curriculum materials describe the 'Attributes of a Lifelong Learner', and the Key Learning Area syllabuses set out a learner-centred approach • a State Action Plan for the middle years (ages eight to fourteen) emphasises intellectual challenge and support in transition as important to learner motivation • reforms in the senior years (15–18) recognise flexibility in the qualification system as impacting on learner motivation. <p>http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/etrf</p>	<p>Commissioned research on learner motivation – Austria</p> <p>The Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture has commissioned a study into 'The Objective of Lifelong Learning: How Can Schools Help to Build Educational Motivation?'. The motivational attitudes of 490 students were surveyed from the standpoint of young people's ability to deal with ongoing change in all spheres of life and work.</p> <p>Findings include: pupils seemed poor at coping with failure; girls seemed less confident in their abilities to deal with change than boys; and teachers underestimated their role in influencing learner motivation.</p> <p>Recommendations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • motivation should be fostered at an early age • self-regulation strategies, assessment for learning and building competencies (such as interpersonal skills) should be prioritised • the curriculum should take account of pupils' interests • more accessible and attractive school environments.

What does this indicate about how learner motivation is conceptualised and how learners are perceived to be motivated?

Across the INCA and Eurydice network countries, government policy and strategic thinking for raising learner motivation highlights a range of themes indicating how learners might be motivated. The top three most frequently referred to areas, across eight or more of the countries involved, are:

- improving the personal and vocational relevance of the curriculum
- greater flexibility and choice in the curriculum
- emphasising differentiation and support for the individual.

A number of countries (or individual states) emphasise all three of these arenas (including for example, Queensland (Australia), England and Northern Ireland).

Other prevalent themes in government direction for motivating learners, evident across five or more of the countries, are:

- enhancing learner involvement and say in their learning
- broadening the range of qualifications and courses available
- focusing on elements of assessment for learning
- improving understanding of learning styles and preferences
- creating specific provision for gifted and talented learners.

Distinctive country flavours are evident in how different governments conceptualise learner motivation. In addition to those examples highlighted in the table above:

- France offers a **holistic approach** to addressing learner motivation, the lack of which might be seen in absenteeism, drop-out and boredom. A philosophy imbuing all aspects of education would be to identify the conditions which offer a positive approach to education, and to involve teachers, parents, pupils, educational decision-makers, social services and so on, in the solutions.
- Latvia on the other hand, offers '**special interest education**' in order to motivate learners. Citizenship and positive attitudes towards self and others are encouraged. Programmes in cultural education, sport, creativity and environmental education are offered.
- Spain has linked motivation almost entirely and uniquely to the **role of teachers**, with many innovative projects cited in the 1990s as contributing to current **pedagogy** – although hardly any current initiatives emphasise learner motivation.

What is the important literature on learner motivation?

The literature review carried out as the second strand of the probe identifies a range of international literature on learner motivation, from the specified publication dates 2000–2005.

The literature is categorised by date and country of publication, the type of paper/report (research study, evaluation, discussion, etc), pupil age range, curriculum area, and target group – summarised in the table below.

Range and type of literature

The following table summarises the range and type of identified literature.

<p>Volume</p> <p>Published between 2000 and early 2005, a total of 527 sources were categorised as being of potential interest to the review. 33 of these sources were obtained to illustrate the themes identified and to examine the relationship with government policy.</p>	<p>Country</p> <p>The literature identified emanated chiefly from the USA, Australia and UK (although a bias towards the criteria for publication in the English language should be noted here). Some country comparisons/compilations were identified. In addition, questionnaire responses from Finland, Hungary, New Zealand, Norway and Switzerland highlighted a number of items of research literature.</p>
<p>Type of literature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mainly empirical research projects (including the development of motivational models and theories, and some motivational testing, case studies and surveys) • some discussion papers of theoretical and practical aspects of learner motivation • a range of programmes, initiatives and projects – evaluated and described (mainly small scale and school-based, but a small proportion of which were government initiated) 	<p>Age range</p> <p>Literature seems more common in the secondary than the primary age range. Learner motivation literature refers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • primary years – school readiness, reading and writing • middle years – transfer, transition and ameliorating a downturn in enthusiasm for school • senior years – vocational learning, participation and retention in education
<p>Curriculum area</p> <p>Common areas investigated in the learner motivation literature are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • literacy (especially reading) • numeracy • ICT, media and technologies • science and the environment • PE and sport • the arts 	<p>Target group</p> <p>Particular groups of learners targeted in the literature are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gifted and talented • disadvantaged or at-risk groups • those with learning difficulties • those affected by differences in ethnic groups • boys more than girls

What information does this literature provide about the existence of any government initiatives aimed at learner motivation?

In addition to the initiatives and policies recognised at government and state level, through questionnaire responses, the literature review identifies numerous projects, programmes and initiatives at a more local level – either in one school, or being carried out through partnerships between schools and research bodies, or as action research. For example, a school in Australia is piloting its own Individual Student Pathways Programme (ISP) for pupils aged 14–16. The programme provides a framework to help pupils build a graduation portfolio that demonstrates their capacities as lifelong learners and actively engaged contributors to the world of work (Hale *et al.*, 2003).

- In order to glean a more detailed picture of learner motivation ‘*on the ground*’, such projects and their evaluations might be worth collating in a way that would capture greater coverage of this kind of work than has been possible in the probe to date (such as through an audit or survey of regional, local and school-level work in this field). That is, this probe examines publications found on literature databases – it is likely that many local-level, small-scale initiatives and studies are not published in such a way as to be present on such databases. Such information would complement what we know about government policy and strategy on learner motivation as gathered in the country survey. The cost of such an audit though, might preclude this kind of data gathering on an international scale.

What findings are there for how learners are motivated?

Both the literature identified in the review and that associated with government policy and initiatives (acknowledged in the country responses) suggest some of the key areas for how learners are motivated. The probe, however, neither attempts to provide a synthesis of these findings, nor to unpack the theoretical understandings of learner motivation (such as self-efficacy, locus of control, goal orientation, achievement motivation). Instead, it presents the **themes and issues** that would seem to be **key to policy and practice**.

Firstly, dichotomous arguments are considered: motivation as an intrinsic or extrinsic property, assessment as a motivator or de-motivator, motivation as learning oriented or performance oriented, and classroom versus lifelong learning motivation.

How are learners motivated? – dichotomous themes

<p>Intrinsic motivation</p> <p>Learners motivated through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> targeting individual learning styles cooperative learning (such as group participation and collaborative evaluation) pupil choice in how they learn <p>successful if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> learners develop their own learning strategies and can self-regulate 	<p>... .. Extrinsic motivation</p> <p>Learners motivated through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> rewards and incentives grades and assessments <p>successful if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> it reflects students' interests it is consistent in implementation pupils believe there is a chance of success
<p>Assessment as a motivator</p> <p>Learners motivated by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> formative elements of testing feedback class tests 	<p>... .. Assessment as a de-motivator</p> <p>High stakes assessment results in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> transmission teaching repetitive practice for tests lower self-esteem for lower-achieving pupils
<p>Learning oriented motivation</p> <p>Learning oriented culture based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> learner involvement individual learner needs self-assessment and self-regulated learning 	<p>... .. Performance oriented motivation</p> <p>Performance culture leads to orientations towards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> getting grades social status
<p>Motivation for a lesson</p> <p>Techniques for motivating learners in the classroom, maintaining their attention and staying on task, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> self-reflection (a reflective journal for example) self-monitoring organisation and planning skills peer collaboration 	<p>... .. Motivation for lifelong learning</p> <p>Motivation for lifelong learning/to create a passion for learning seems to require similar approaches to classroom motivation and, in addition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> enrichment experiences the connection of topics to real life learner-centred education nurturing students' self-esteem and aspirations

As the table above shows, these themes have similarly contrasting arguments. On the one hand, learner motivation appears to be encouraged by 'assessment for learning', highlighted for example as important in government policy in England and in Liechtenstein – where learner motivation is felt to be intrinsically linked to '*holistic pupil evaluation*' (that is, frequent evaluation, assessment and discussion of mistakes and how to improve). On the other hand, extrinsic goals and rewards also motivate learners to some extent, as again, reflected in government policy, such as in the national monetary rewards awarded in Poland to students achieving top marks (some 5,000 plus students receive such awards monthly). The key to addressing these issues might be in the balance between the two sides here.

- Whilst several of the responding countries indicated policies aimed at alleviating ‘performance’ culture, literature suggests that there are motivational components and processes that link with performance, assessment and extrinsic means. In particular, the extent to which students feel in control of their learning, recognise their progress and understand how their learning builds on other knowledge, seem related to actual performance (OECD, 2001; Moor *et al.*, 2004). The balance between performance goals and learning goals might therefore be important.
- The review highlights similar findings for how learners are motivated to engage in a lesson or task, and how they might be inspired as lifelong learners. However, given the additional ways in which students might also be nurtured in their passion for learning (as shown in the table above), a key point for consideration is the extent to which addressing motivation for lifelong learning might bring ‘added value’ to policy on classroom motivation. Certainly, a number of governments highlighted encouraging lifelong learning as underlying their education mission – and research would seem to support this.

Secondly, as with government policy and initiatives on learner motivation, the literature also indicates how learner motivation is conceptualised and what issues are of concern to researchers and academics in the field. Findings most pertinent to, or with potential implications for, policy are summarised here.

Learner characteristics

Accounting for about one-fifth of the issues addressed in the literature, findings show that learners’ characteristics such as their gender, academic self-concepts, self-esteem, preferred learning styles, and their own goals and ambitions shape their motivations for learning. The most pertinent include:

- A need to address **boys’** self-regulation strategies such as planning, study management, and perseverance. The literature highlights techniques for motivating boys, including: making schoolwork **relevant**, providing **variety** in content and method, having **a say** in content, and attention to teacher-pupil relationships – aspects covered generally in government policy, though not necessarily solely with regard to boys. **Pastoral support** for boys, via role models, and the use of respected boys’ cultures, for example – would seem uniquely important here – and is apparently rarely highlighted in government policy.
- Attention in the literature to children’s **social and coping skills** – shown to impact on young children’s school readiness, and older children’s achievement motivations – links with several of the countries’ concerns with learners’ self-esteem, wellbeing and resilience (emphasised for example in Finland’s Healthy Self-Esteem Project; and in Sweden’s focus on reducing learner stress).

Teaching pedagogy

Teaching pedagogy is by far the most common area highlighted in the literature on learner motivation. The most topical findings on teaching method and approach follow.

- Using **ICT** in teaching and learning is found to be motivational for learners, in that many software packages provide **learner-centred**, authentic experiences, to solve **real-life** problems. ICT is used as a motivational tool in a number of ways, for: gaining technical skills (such as animation and digital skills, using PowerPoint etc); learning about other curriculum areas or for making other areas more appealing; and **improving motivation and achievement in literacy** and communication (by the use of video-conferencing and internet diaries, for example). Indeed, a major difference in the learner motivation research across the subject areas identified in the review, is that for literacy, the key question under investigation is *how do you motivate learners to read?*; whilst for ICT, the literature tends to address *‘how do you use ICT to motivate learners?’*

ICT is also important in government policy for some countries, including e-learning initiatives to take forward the personalised learning agenda (identified in England, for example).

Research highlights, however, that young people can be more internet ‘savvy’ than their teachers, and consequently, that there may be a need for **teachers’ continuing professional development** (CPD) with regard to **developments in ICT** (this is identified as a current priority in Spain, for example).

- The motivational aspects of **practical and learner-centred teaching and learning** – such as, hands-on learning, investigative approaches and using learning journals – are emphasised in the literature findings. Findings from the secondary school research seem especially positive about independent project work. This supports a number of government strategies, such as the French ‘travaux personnels encadrés’ (TPE) (supervised individual research projects).
- **Pupil involvement and collaboration in their learning** would appear to impact positively on learner motivation, through for example, cooperative learning, group participation and interaction, collective evaluation, and learners’ feeling that their questions and concerns are taken seriously. Such concerns would also seem prevalent in **government policy** – in particular **learner involvement and say** in their learning. In this regard, there appears to be less research which focuses specifically on pupil involvement in the content and delivery of their learning, and whether this influences their motivation. That said, **a study of a negotiated curriculum**, introduced to 15-year-olds in one high school in Australia, showed students’ confidence enhanced, and developments in their achievement, courage, respect, personal growth and responsibility for their own learning (Shillinglaw, 2001).
- Further review of the research in this area may be warranted in order to address policy.

- Learning that is **individually-tailored, differentiated and supportive** of the individual, is one of the most highlighted areas in the country questionnaire responses. Programmes such as the French ‘Programmes personnalisés d’aide et de progrès (PPAP)’ (personalised support and progression programmes) for pupils aged eight and nine years; and the individually tailored learning pathways encouraged in the senior years in Australia and Lithuania were identified for example. Findings directly supporting these strategies would seem to be less explicit.
- Further review/research of individualised or personalised learning, and its impact on learner motivation, might prove beneficial.

Teacher role

As well as teaching pedagogy, teachers’ own perceptions and experiences emerge in the findings, with possible implications for professional development and training.

- Findings from several studies highlight a **limited awareness amongst teachers** of the influence that they can have on learner motivation (Givvin *et al.*, 2001; Spiel and Schober, 2002). Continuity of teaching, teacher enjoyment, **teacher role in mediating challenge**, and teachers’ awareness of their pupils’ motivation, seem important. Teachers’ professional development might be addressed in terms of training, knowledge and experience of learner motivation and motivational strategies, and their perceptions of their role in mediating learner motivation. This issue reflects one of the key policy considerations raised in an OECD report into motivating students for lifelong learning, which suggests that **teachers, too, need to be motivated for lifelong learning**. It finds that, in most of the countries in the study, ‘*training to equip teachers for [this] innovation, appeared to be insufficient*’ (OECD, 2000, p. 59).

Classroom climate

The literature also highlights that:

- The classroom environment is associated with learner motivation, especially in terms of the **pastoral and peer environment**. Classrooms which feel safe, non-controlling, and that support learners’ autonomy, wellbeing and self-esteem appear to encourage learner motivation. Best evidence syntheses commissioned by the Ministry of Education in New Zealand on a range of issues related to children’s engagement and achievement, highlight the classroom climate (the ‘learning community’) as important to learners’ experiences.

Curriculum and assessment

About one-tenth of the foci in the literature refer to the curriculum and assessment – with findings chiefly related to the personal and vocational relevance of the curriculum. Other areas important to learner motivation include learner enjoyment; appropriate level of challenge; assessment for learning; the enriched curriculum; and the arts as a tool for raising motivation. Flexibility and choice (a prevalent theme in government direction and strategies) appear not so dominant in the literature.

- Much research points to the need for the curriculum to provide **relevant** and meaningful learning – to engage learners through making **connections to real life**, to young people’s interests and to the world of work. Such research would seem to attend to the definitions of motivation as **engagement**, rather than as self-regulation (as in the initial definition for the probe). That said, according to young people themselves, curriculum relevance could be enhanced through an increased emphasis on skills (such as ICT, life skills and study skills) and personal and social development (as identified in the recommendations set out in the retrospective views of the Northern Ireland cohort, when interviewed at age 17/18, Moor *et al.*, 2004).

All these areas resonate strongly in government policy across a range of countries. In addition, cross-cultural research identifies the importance of **relevance to the particular group** of learners involved (taking into account, for example, their ethnic and cultural backgrounds), and again, this is borne in mind in some government policy (in countries including Australia and New Zealand, for example).

- A body of evidence shows **assessment for learning** (that is, areas such as the tools and techniques for evaluating one’s own learning and progress, classroom assessment, formative assessment, reports and feedback) to be a motivational tool. As this is a fairly recent development in education, it would appear to be ripe for further research with specific regard to learner motivation. Several countries formally highlight this area as important to learner motivation; and many raise elements of learner progress and feedback without attributing these sorts of labels.
 - Is this an area for inter-country exchange and learning for policy?
- The **enriched curriculum** and extra-curricular activity are outlined as motivational tools, particularly with regard to gifted and talented learning, across a number of countries (examples include the summer schools provided by the National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth in England, <http://www.warwick.ac.uk/gifted/>).
 - The impact of the enriched curriculum/extra-curricula programmes on all types of learners’ might warrant scrutiny in any further in-depth review.
- In addition, motivating learners through **thinking skills, creative development** and **the arts** receives much attention in the literature worldwide. This, again, is an area reflected in government literature. For example, Creative Partnerships (funded in England by the Department for Education and Skills, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Arts Council) enables schools to develop partnerships with creative and cultural organisations and individuals (such as theatres, artists and designers), with the aim of motivating learners through bringing the arts and science curriculum to life (<http://www.creative-partnerships.com>). Similarly in the USA (noted in Kentucky), the Arts Education Partnership provides a network of partner organisations that promote the role of the arts in learning, child development and school improvement. With regard to learner motivation, children’s active engagement in the classroom through hands-on learning and emotional engagement would seem important in this initiative (<http://www.aep-arts.org>). In Poland, monthly awards from the Ministry of Culture and Art are made for particular achievements in the field of art.

- Whether the benefits of these areas translate into learner motivation, as defined by self-regulation, personal initiation and determination, could be usefully explored in a full-review – particularly given the number of creative and arts-related initiatives highlighted in the government literature.

School and provision

Just under one-tenth of the issues in the literature reviewed refer to school provision such as ethos and culture, school environment, and site of learning – the latter of importance to learner motivation:

- Some evidence suggests that the **site of learning** affects learners' motivations. Out-of-hours provision in centres which might appeal to young people's interests, such as study support centres, including sports venues, for example, can affect motivation (as highlighted in the 'Playing for Success' evaluation in England (Sharp *et al.*, 2003)). The community school and community-based programmes in the US would appear to enhance aspects of learner motivation. Extended school provision would also seem to impact positively on pupil attainment, attendance, behaviour, engagement and motivation. In addition, flexibility in the site of learning, particularly for the 14+ age range, would seem important in government policy on learner motivation (in countries including England, Northern Ireland, Sweden and Switzerland, for example).

Mapping the literature and government policy

By mapping the themes in the literature against the emphases found in government policy across the INCA and Eurydice network countries, many aspects of learner motivation appears to be conceptualised in similar ways by researchers and policy-makers. In particular, the areas of **differentiation and support for the individual**, the **personal and vocational relevance** of the curriculum, **flexibility and choice**, and understanding children's **learning styles** and characteristics would seem to be arenas to the fore for both sets of stakeholders.

However, the following areas for consideration are raised.

Support in the literature for government strategies

Government strategies for improving learner motivation supported by the literature findings include:

- improving the personal and vocational relevance of the curriculum
- a need for teacher training and professional development (with regard to understanding learner motivation and their role in motivating learners)
- a focus on elements of assessment for learning (with potential for inter-country exchange and learning regarding policy)
- attention to boys' motivation
- the use of ICT in teaching and learning
- practical and learner-centred learning
- the use of the arts and creative learning.

Areas which might warrant attention in government policy

Findings highlighted in the literature as important to learner motivation, and which might warrant consideration by policy-makers include:

- learners' understanding of how their learning builds on and links with other learning
- the notion of extended schools
- learners' enjoyment and building enjoyment into the curriculum.

Areas for further review

In order to better frame implications for government policy and strategy on learner motivation, certain areas of the learner motivation literature would seem to require further investigation. These include:

- an exploration of 'assessment for learning' (formative, evaluative and reflective assessment) and its impact on learner motivation
- research on pupil involvement in the content and delivery of their learning
- research into strategies for individual differentiation and support and the impacts of individualised or personalised learning on learner motivation
- an investigation of the impact of curriculum flexibility and choice on learner motivation.

To conclude, international perspectives on learner motivation reveal some common areas of concern, as well as distinctive country flavours, in addressing learner motivation at government level. The literature review also identifies numerous small-scale projects and evaluations of learner motivation '*on the ground*'.

The probe shows how learner motivation links to other topical arenas in policy and literature, particularly assessment for learning, the personalised learning agenda and lifelong learning. It also identifies the range of teaching approaches, learners' own attributes and areas of the curriculum that can all have an influence on improving learner motivation. Given this 'melting pot', it is likely that no one single initiative, theme or strategy would improve learner motivation alone. Future developments in the field of learner motivation might arise in countries adopting and adapting programmes and strategies highlighted in this INCA probe, to their learners' particular circumstances.

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