

Murphy, Mary, 2007, *Pupil Motivation: Perceptions of Teachers at Primary Level*

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

One of the specific aims of the Primary Curriculum (Government of Ireland 1999) is to enable children to become lifelong learners through developing positive attitudes to learning and the ability to learn independently. This challenges teachers and educationalists to establish how best to bring this aim to fruition. This study examines the perceptions of practising teachers regarding the motivation of pupils at primary level within the context of the Primary Curriculum.

The literature review traces the development of the theory of motivation under the following headings: early theories, cognitive theories and social theories of motivation. Eighty-two practising primary teachers were surveyed using questionnaires and interviews.

In keeping with the dictates of the Primary Curriculum (Government of Ireland 1999), teachers aspire to use a variety of approaches in their teaching. Evidence from this study indicates, however, that traditional methods of teaching are still being used in the more academic subjects e.g. Irish and mathematics. Findings show that teachers perceive pupils as being most motivated in curriculum areas that involve active learning e.g., P.E., art and music and least motivated in the more academic subjects. e.g., English. Irish and mathematics.

The study provides evidence that some pupils of low ability do not expend effort on given tasks, as to do so and not succeed would be an admission of low ability. Findings indicate that the majority of the teachers surveyed use reward systems as a method of motivating pupils, in spite of evidence from the literature indicating that reward systems do not have a long-lasting positive effect on pupil motivation. The study shows that social aspects of classroom management and school environments affect pupil motivation, e.g., ability grouping and public displays of work.