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Introduction

For the purposes of this action research project I will be exploring the impact of different 'beginnings' to lessons, a period of time often referred to as 'the establishment phase'. I am going to be looking at the impact different 'beginnings' will have on the motivation of students, so as such, a large portion of this action research will also be exploring motivation as a whole.

Motivation is a subject that has always interested me as a reflective teacher, especially due to working in the prison education sector. This is because lessons within the prison education sector are often for long periods of time; in my experience three hours is 'par for the course'. Also there is the issue of the rolling student population within the prison education sector, meaning that on a week-by-week basis students are constantly leaving your lessons or joining your lessons; even to a point where it can happen mid-lesson.

I will proceed by initially justifying this proposal outlining its merits and worth. I will then look at existing literature on motivational theory both inside and outside of the education field. I will also look at what literature is available on the subject of classroom management and learning styles that are of particular relevance to the beginning of a lesson and motivation. I shall then proceed to critique and discuss methodology to be used for such a piece of action research and finally conclude on how such an action research project could be undertaken.

<u>Justification</u>

Following almost twelve months of working in prison education I have observed that it is very important for the motivation of the students that they are initially 'captured' *(sic)* within the first moments of a lesson. The period of time appears to differ from student to student as some seem more willing to wait for their motivation, whereas others will be immediately put off for the entire session.

As the lessons are three hours long without any official breaks (although we do tend to allow 10-15 minutes for a drink mid-way) I feel it is a problem I would like to at least explore and have possible solutions too at least within my armoury as a reflective teacher.

Currently, the students will enter the classroom either at the same time or slightly after myself. As I work in an open prison where (I assume) things are slightly more relaxed than a higher security prison, the students tend to enter over a period of approximately 5 minutes, which can sometimes be up to 10 minutes depending on if they have had other orders to undertake first. There are therefore problems within this in itself. The students who enter the room first can not be expected to begin work immediately and conversely I myself would not want that to happen as I would not want to exclude the later arriving students.

However, the problem arises when the earlier students begin their own discussions and conversations, as expected, whilst waiting and then need to have their minds and therefore motivation bought back to the subject of the imminently starting lesson.

The intention therefore of this action research is to explore both how to gain that initial interest in the lesson to be studied that session and then how to create a motivated student for the entire lesson; if indeed the two are linked.

As a consequence of this it may also be found out how much is a suitable period of 'teacher talk' time at the beginning of a lesson with this particular population of students.

"If a man will begin with certainties, he will end in doubts; but if he will be content to begin with doubts, he will end in certainties"
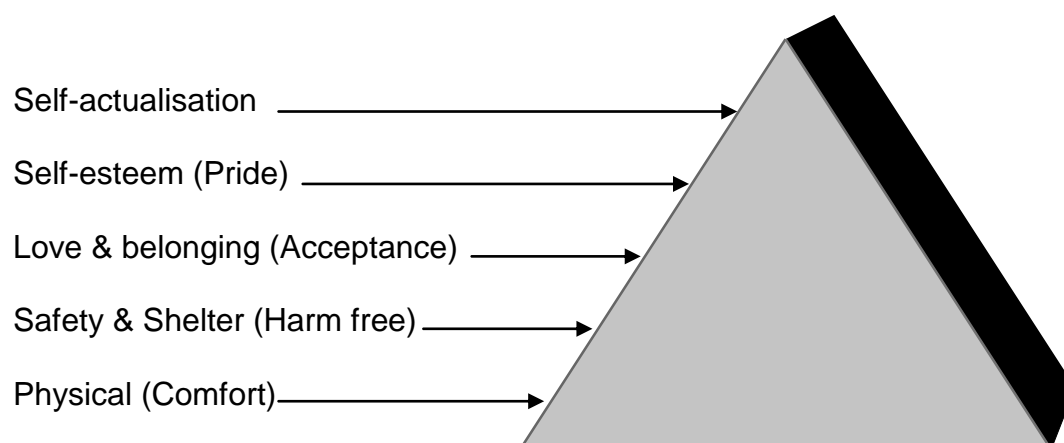
Francis Bacon (1561-1662 – Advancement of learning)

Literature Review

In this section I am going to look primarily at motivational theory and how that relates to the management of classrooms and learning styles of students. The reason for this is to try and explore the links that different beginnings of lessons can have on motivation in the later stages of this action research.

Much of the motivation theory available today comes from a very business centred stand point with the likes of Maslow, McGregor, Mayo and Herzberg all working with motivational theory in practice in the workplace. Additional to this a lot of the works previously carried out have come from a transatlantic (American) standpoint. Although I am working on the premise that 'people are people'; at least in the western world.

In the first half of the 20th century sociologist Abraham Maslow proposed that all humans have universal needs and said needs could be categorised into a hierarchical structure. Maslow labelled the five categories as; physical, security, social, esteem and self-actualisation.

Self-actualisation

Self-esteem (Pride)

Love & belonging (Acceptance)

Safety & Shelter (Harm free)

Physical (Comfort)

He theorised that each underlying need had to be satisfied until the subject could move onto what he saw as a more prepotent need. For example it would be almost impossible to achieve success in further education if one was not properly fed and watered in the first place.

This theory has great impact on educational structure. In order to maximise on the effectiveness of institute-wide and individual classroom teaching programmes teachers in particular must consider students' needs and their hierarchical order. Maslow's work says that this must be a top priority in the development of any programmes so that students have the capability of reaching their highest levels of potential. For instance, if a student has not had breakfast they will be preoccupied with the need for food ahead of being able to learn anything.

Douglas McGregor (1960) however in his Human side of Enterprise works identified what he saw as two theories on an individuals behaviour in the workplace; Theory X and Theory Y.

Theory X assumes that humans have an inherent dislike of work and will avoid it if at all possible. Due to this dislike of work, people must be controlled and threatened to work hard enough. Theory X also assumes that the average human dislikes responsibility, prefers to be directed and desires security above all else. Theory Y assumes that humans will direct themselves if they are committed to the goals of the organization. It also assumes that if a

job is satisfying, the result will be commitment to the organization and under the proper conditions, humans will seek responsibility.

To this end McGregor suggests that dependant on which type of employee (or in the case of education, learner) you have, this should directly determine the style of management (teaching) that should be given in order to attain the best results.

Moving on, George Elton Mayo (1927) performed research on human relations and motivation theory at the Hawthorne Works of the General Electric Company in Chicago in the mid 1920's. From his research, he came to find that work is what he called a group activity. The need for recognition, security and sense of belonging is a greater factor in moral than physical conditions of the workplace. Complaints are often symptomatic of disdain over an individual's status and position at work. Social demands both inside and outside the workplace, the latter being uncontrollable, contribute to the attitude, effectiveness and thus motivation of an employee.

As a contrary to this however, Frederick Herzberg's (1959) theory on human relations and organizational motivation includes two components; hygiene and motivation. Unlike Mayo, Herzberg believed that both approaches must be done simultaneously to achieve the desired outcomes.

Hygiene theory refers to the work environment and includes the organization, its policies and administration, type of supervision employees receive, working

conditions, interpersonal relations, status and security. Where as, motivation refers to the actual 'on the job' activities. These include recognition, interest and opportunity for growth. The underlying theory behind this two-pronged approach is to treat employees as well as possible, minimizing dissatisfaction. When people receive recognition for achievement, it drives interest and a sense of responsibility, allowing the individual to grow and advance in their work.

All of the above literature however, as previously stated, is based upon research undertaken in business within a 'working' environment, and although much of this more humanistic theory has been adapted to the education sector, most notably Maslow's work, there are other bodies of work I would like to explore which have their grounding in Education initially. It can however be said that the majority of this work is grounded in the primary and secondary environments and indeed there is little if any work on motivation and 'capture' of students within a prison environment available at the time of writing.

It does to me seem somewhat inappropriate to use purely the afore mentioned humanistic approach to motivation, therefore on a more behaviouristic note I have looked at the works of Bandura (1982) and the theory of social learning end self-efficacy. This theory looks at the learner's self-regulation. It explores how a sense of 'self' influences the choice of activities to be undertaken, how much time the learner is willing to spend on

the activity and how persistent the learner will be in accomplishing the desired end product of the activity.

Another aspect of self-efficacy is attribution theory, this demonstrates that a students internal or intrinsic sense of self belief, in working hard to achieve a goal are the determining factors in whether or not the learner will succeed. Studies have focused on goal orientation and the idea that motivation is determined jointly by the expectation that the effort will lead to the goal and that as some may say, more importantly, the goal is worth attaining. The 'goal' however can be either a tangible item or more 'extrinsic' feeling of worth or achievement such as those Maslow discusses in his hierarchy of needs, once the physical and security requirements have been attained.

Finally I have looked at the constructivist approach to learning theory and thus learning styles. John Dewey (1938) was one of the first to clearly enunciate this idea that learners 'construct' knowledge for themselves, each learner individually constructs meaning to a subject as they learn. The key principals being amongst others, learning is an active process; the learner needs to have the feeling of doing something or they will not feel as if they are learning. People learn to learn as they learn; we create patterns in our own head explaining what we've learnt and how we learnt it in order for us to repeat the exercise. Learning is a social activity; our learning is intimately connected with all we come into contact with. Where as traditional education has always been very insular it can now be seen that we absorb more of our surroundings

along with our learning, leading onto learning being contextual depending on where we are and why we are there.

On top of all of this comes the key component of motivation. Not only is it the case that motivation helps learning, it can be said it is essential for learning to take place. This also includes an understanding of ways in which knowledge can be used, As Knowles (1983) amongst others talks about "Unless we know the reasons **why**, we may not be very involved in using the knowledge that may be instilled in us"; even by the most severe and direct teaching.

In summation, there are hundreds if not thousands of researched papers and books on motivation in various walks of life with the vast majority being based in the business world. I have however looked at, what many others and I, would see as the key theories and the theories that can best be translated into the education sector. Maslow's hierarchy of needs explores the needs of the individual to gain universal needs, whereas McGregor focuses on what he believes is human natures intrinsic dislike of work. Mayo's work believed that security and recognition are all a person needs where as Herzberg's believed that on top of this the person needs the basics of a Maslow like hierarchy to be motivated.

The education specific theorists (along with probably myself) seem to believe that all of these approaches (in conjunction with each other) can apply to the motivation of learners. However the critically reflective teacher must seek to constantly learn on how best to use existing theory on motivation and

classroom management and learning styles for the specific needs of the

learners being taught on a day-to-day basis.

Action Research

"Action Research is simply a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by

participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of

their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which the

practices are carried out" (Carr and Kemmis, 1986)

This is the Classic definition of action research; from which it can be seen it is

very much related to the idea of self-reflection and the notion of reflective

practise coined by Donald Schön (1983)

Kurt Lewin is credited as the person who coined the term action research and he devised a model for action research involving a spiral of steps to be taken.
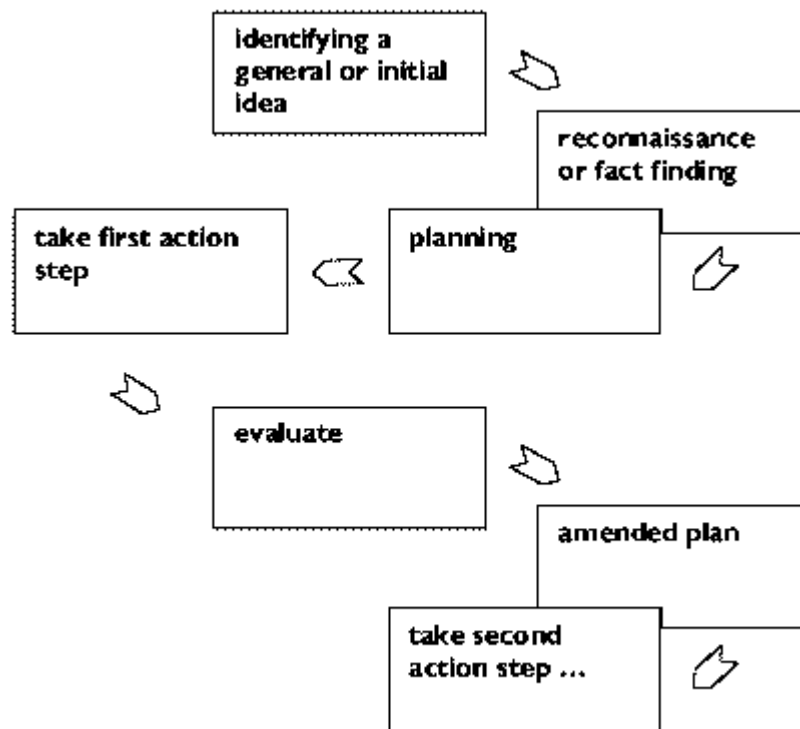
However as McTaggart (1996) discusses it is a danger that the use of this model becomes simply a procedure to slavishly follow using research for researches sake. He states "It is a mistake to think that following the action research spiral constitutes doing action research". He continues, "Action research is not a method or a procedure for research but a series of commitments to observe and problematise *(sic)* through practise of a series of principles for conducting social enquiry".

Research Methodology

There is no point in doing research for the sake of research, infact Benjamin Jowett the British Theologian (1817-1893) In Unforgotten Years, by Logan Pearsall Smith, is cited as saying "Research! A mere excuse for idleness; it has never achieved and will never achieve any results of the slightest value"

This could be the case if the research has no direction; the methodology therefore is to give the research its purpose and direction. Indeed a favoured quote in Alice's adventures in Wonderland as cited in Saunders, M, Lewis, P and Thronhill, A. Research Methods for Business Students. Where Alice is talking to the Cheshire Cat goes as follows;

"Would you tell me please, which way I ought to walk from here?"

"That Depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.

"I don't much care where," said Alice

"Then it doesn't matter which way you walk," said the Cat.

The methodology I will be using for this action research will be mainly qualitative. I am not attempting to prove some hypothesis in this action research; I am however trying to 'explore' a question in order to aid my own personal development as a reflective practitioner.

Before I look at the specifics of my personal action research I feel I must explain the meanings of some of the issues I will deal with during its course.

Reliability – The reliability of the research refers to how real to life the results are. If the research was carried out again and the conditions were constant, would the same results be yielded? And can the research be verified?

Validity – The validity of the research refers to, how appropriate the research is. It is a question of whether the intent of the research has been reached.

Triangulation – Triangulation is a term, which in the context of action research refers to getting 'a third view' of the results. One experiment can yield a set of results, but if the same results were sought using a different method of experiment, would the results be the same?

Bias – This issue is important when analysing the data, to see if there are any emerging themes created. Are these themes if there are any, truly there or are they merely 'created' by a researched who is hoping or expecting to see certain results? One way of over coming bias is to get a 'second opinion' on any research findings.

Ethics – Ethics within research is a huge area and guidelines have been set out by BERA (British Educational Research Association). To this end I will speak about specific ethical issues of my research as it arises later.

The research question I would like to explore following on from my introduction and justification in this action research project is in two-fold

'Do different beginnings to lessons affect the motivation of students? And if so in what way?'

In order to evaluate this I feel I must briefly at least first look at the social, historical and institutional aspects of the current situation. The learners in question are all inmates in an open prison; they are there for any number of offences from blue-collar crime, to driving offences, to violent crimes and in some cases, crimes resulting in the death of another human being. The learners can be in the institution in which I teach, for a week or so or up to a couple of years. They have to prove willing to learn when they come to the education block and they have to earn the privilege to attend education, even though each and every inmate **must** be doing something with their time from 8:30am through until 4:00pm.

Initially therefore it is wise to look at what 'motivation' the learners have when first attending classes. In order to do this I would make sure my research methods are consistent 'before, during and after' the interventions I would use in order to research my question.

As previously stated there is a rather 'ad-hoc' status to the current beginning of lessons I am teaching, however I have devised four separate possible interventions to make at the beginnings of lessons over a period of time in order to explore my research question. They are as follows;

- Enter the room and join in any existing conversations and slowly guide conversation around to the lesson plan.

- Enter the room and wait for class to quieten down before starting with lesson plan.

- Enter the room and request (or order) silence then begin with lesson plan.

- Enter the room and immediately beginning with lesson plan.

As the learning groups are relatively small, between two and ten students 'on average' per lesson, I would intend on carrying out individual semi structured interviews with the learners both before and after the intervention period. I have considered questionnaires and surveys and although both are exceptional tools for action research I feel that due to the small size of the learning groups the time saving elements of questionnaires and surveys are not great enough to warrant using them. Also I feel that as long as I create a 'semi' structure to the interviews I can gain relevant information to analyse.

However I would only be able to carry out interviews, semi-structured, structured or unstructured as long as I had the agreement of both senior education personnel, senior prison personnel, and of course the inmate leaner, for confidentiality reasons, and those of ethics. I would make sure I followed the full BERA guidelines for ethics in educational research especially as I would want to retain the trust and respect I have gained from my students and colleagues at all times during any research. Also there is a responsibility to keep individuals names out of any research, as I wouldn't want this to

jeopardise their possible parole or sentence opportunities in a prison environment. I would also want any findings to be as valid as possible as there may be a big impact on the teaching of inmates in the long term as there already appear to me to be many issues with size, resources and time of lessons in the prison environment.

I would back up the semi-structured interviews with observation of the learners before, during and after the intervention period in order to gain some triangulation in my methods. Triangulation is of vital importance because with any research and indeed, any data patterns may appear to be there at first but they could be for any number of reasons and may be simple anomalies.

By using a secondary method of gaining qualitative (or quantitative or mixed) data, I will be able to cross-reference the results I find in analysis, to see if the same findings can be said if the interventions were looked at in a different way. My observations on an observation sheet could then be further 'backed-up' by use of my teaching diary, noting my own reflections on individual lessons. Finally as a further piece of triangulation It may be possible to asses the learning of the students over the whole length of the individual intervention to see if an academic improvement has been gained, which although not necessarily a direct correlation to motivation as being explored, this would still be a desired outcome.

I believe these methods will be valid in so much as I believe that if the environment is constant then a similar qualitative study of the same class

would yield very similar results. These results then themselves being able to be analysed, in order to explore the subject of motivation and its link to how lessons are begun; if indeed there is a link. Validity, as Gronlund, 1981. In Cohen, Manion and Morrison, Research Methods in Education states;

"Validity, should be seen as a matter of degree rather than an absolute state" Hence the writers then go on to say that we should at best strive to minimise invalidity and maximise validity. This is because there are many kinds of validity and consequently it is impossible for any research to be 100% valid in all aspects at all times.

The data I gather from these qualitative methods of research could then be analysed by hand to see if there are any patterns where motivation improved in certain situations or even became lessened in other situations.

Due to my long-standing involvement in my current workplace and close working relationships with all members of staff, and a generally healthy working relationship with the learners over the period of my employment there is an obvious fear of bias on my own behalf. I would attempt to avoid this in all I do myself as part of the course of my research. However in an attempt to eliminate this from the analysis of the qualitative data gathered during the action research process I would gain a 'second opinion' from a colleague, more that likely outside my employment. I would hope that this would at least minimise bias in my analysis.

<u>Conclusion</u>

As this action research is purely hypothetical I do not have any raw or indeed analysed data to draw any conclusions from. In the case of my proposed research question, I would infact simply be exploring any correlations that may have occurred. Therefore without any data this is simply not possible.

However I have devised a timescale of my hypothetical actions and interventions. The following chart shows my intervention and Research strategy. It is based on four interventions over a period of 8 weeks, assuming that I am teaching five classes per week, one on each day, Monday to Friday.

One week's schedule

Monday	No Intervention – Observe Class – Interview Students
Tuesday	Intervention – Observe Class
Wednesday	Intervention – Observe Class
Thursday	Intervention – Observe Class
Friday	Intervention – Observe Class – Interview Students

Therefore on Weeks one, three, five and seven, each of the four interventions will be trailed individually using the above as a structure for my own actions and in the intervening weeks, i.e. weeks two, four, six and eight, I will analyse the data gathered. This is however a rough timetable as it may or may not depend on the data gathered, as to what will occur in subsequent weeks.

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