



## Physical education teacher motivation

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### Abstract

For over 25 years, motivation has been considered to be an individual phenomenon that explains the *direction* (or initiation), *intensity* (or vigor), and *duration* (or perseverance) of voluntary behavior (Mitchell 1982 Mitchell, T. R. 1982. Motivation: New directions for theory, research, and practice. *Academy of Management Review*, 7(1): 80–88. [Crossref], [Google Scholar]). Applying these terms to teaching implies that teacher motivation is the psychological process underpinning what a teacher chooses to do, how much effort a teacher puts into what s/he does, and how long s/he will persist. Put simply, teacher motivation is a multifaceted construct with great potential to impact teachers' behavior.

The valuable outcomes of motivated teachers are well-documented. Among school sites in Kentucky, North Carolina, and Maryland, teachers' motivational responses such as high levels of personal effort and commitment to school-wide educational goals predicted subsequent improvements in student achievement as defined by school-based performance award programs (Kelley, Heneman, and Milanowski 2002 Kelley, C., Heneman, H. and Milanowski, A. 2002. Teacher motivation and school-based performance awards. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 38(3): 372–401.

**Keywords:** motivation and school-based performance awards

### Introduction

For over 25 years, motivation has been considered to be an individual phenomenon that explains the *direction* (or initiation), *intensity* (or vigor), and *duration* (or perseverance) of voluntary behavior (Mitchell 1982 Mitchell, T. R. 1982. Motivation: New directions for theory, research, and practice. *Academy of Management Review*, 7(1): 80–88. [Crossref], [Google Scholar]). Applying these terms to teaching implies that teacher motivation is the psychological process underpinning what a teacher chooses to do, how much effort a teacher puts into what s/he does, and how long s/he will persist. Put simply, teacher motivation is a multifaceted construct with great potential to impact teachers' behavior.

The valuable outcomes of motivated teachers are well-documented. Among school sites in Kentucky, North Carolina, and Maryland, teachers' motivational responses such as high levels of personal effort and commitment to school-wide educational goals predicted subsequent improvements in student achievement as defined by school-based performance award programs (Kelley, Heneman, and Milanowski 2002 Kelley, C., Heneman, H. and Milanowski, A. 2002) [16]. Teacher motivation and school-based performance awards. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 38(3): 372–401. [Google Scholar]). It is not surprising, therefore, that over 75% ( $n=772$ ) of the public primary and secondary teachers Ofoegbu (2004) Ofoegbu, F. I. 2004. Teacher motivation: A factor for classroom effectiveness and school improvement in Nigeria. *College Student Journal*, 38(1): 81–9. [Google Scholar] surveyed agreed that teacher motivation is an essential element in enhancing classroom effectiveness and the overall quality of schools. Teacher motivation, or lack

thereof, has even been associated with teacher burnout (Anderson and Iwanicki 1984 Anderson, M. B.G. and Iwanicki, E. F. 1984) [1]. Teacher motivation and its relationship to burnout. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 20(2): 109–32. [Google Scholar]; Fejgin, Ephraty, and Ben-Sira 1995 Fejgin, N., Ephraty, N. and Ben-Sira, D. 1995. Work environment and burnout of physical education teachers. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 15(1): 64–78. [Google Scholar]; Smith and Leng 2003 Smith, D. and Leng, G. W. 2003. The prevalence and sources of burnout in Singapore secondary school physical education teachers. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 22(2): 203–18. [Google Scholar]), and teachers' job stress (Davis and Wilson 2000 Davis, J. and Wilson, S. M. 2000. Principals' efforts to empower teachers: Effects on teacher motivation and job satisfaction and stress. *Clearing House*, 73(6): 349–53. [Taylor & Francis Online], [Google Scholar]), while the motivation construct as a whole has been predictive of job dissatisfaction and turnover intentions (Moreira, Fox, and Sparkes 1995 Moreira, H., Fox, K. R. and Sparkes, A. C. 1995. Physical education teachers and job commitment. *European Physical Education Review*, 1: 122–36. [Crossref], [Google Scholar]; Richer, Blanchard, and Vallerand 2002 Richer, S. F., Blanchard, C. and Vallerand, R. J. 2002. A motivational model of work turnover. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 32(10): 2089–2113. [Crossref], [Web of Science @], [Google Scholar]). Thus, motivated teachers seem to be a crucial component to the effective functioning of schools, and ultimately, the longevity of teachers' careers.

Despite these developments, the motivation of the specific

discipline of physical education (PE) teachers has received little attention (Moreira, Fox, and Sparkes 2002 Moreira, H., Fox, K. R. and Sparkes, A. C. 2002. Job motivation profiles of physical educators: Theoretical background and instrument development. *British Educational Research Journal*, 28(6): 845–61. [Taylor & Francis Online], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]). Recent reviews of the PE literature in the areas of teachers, teaching and teacher education clearly demonstrate that researchers have just begun to explore this topic or related psychological topics regarding PE teachers (Graber 2001 Graber, K.C. 2001. Research on teaching in physical education. In *Handbook of research on teaching*, 4th ed., ed. V. Richardson, 491–519. Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association [Google Scholar]; Kirk, Macdonald, and O'Sullivan 2006 Kirk, D., Macdonald, D. and O'Sullivan, M. 2006. *Handbook of physical education*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. [Google Scholar]). Indeed then, understanding physical educators' motivation to teach certainly merits study.

According to Moreira, Fox, and Sparkes (2002), teacher motivation is defined as or relates to decision making, enthusiasm, and commitment to his/her work. These researchers surveyed 183 British physical education teachers. The researchers used the Motivation Profile for Physical Educators instrument. The four areas this instrument assessed were job satisfaction, job dissatisfaction, personal investments, and career alternatives. The researchers' theory is that these four areas relate to job commitment. Regarding job satisfaction, it was found that physical education teachers were motivated by intrinsic factors. For example, they were motivated by positive feelings of observing their children improve and become successful. The converse of that regarding job dissatisfaction was that teachers were less or not motivated when their children did not improve or were not successful. Furthermore, their job dissatisfaction also stemmed from high administrative loads, the low status of physical education in the school, poor resources, disenchantment in children, and lack of recognition. Extrinsic factors such as personal investments were of less importance to these British physical education teachers. It was found that investment in housing, status, or salary, were of less importance. Regarding career alternatives, physical education teachers indicated that they were motivated by the opportunity to seek promotion at their school. Also, physical education teachers were motivated by career alternatives such as sport-related jobs outside of the school system and sport-related jobs at higher levels of education.

The principal research questions that emerged from this literature review are as follows: (a) What are the characteristics of a physical education program? (b) What motivates physical education teachers to improve their instruction? (c) What are the perceptions of physical education? There is minimal research on what motivates physical education teachers to improve their instruction. There are a few studies that discuss their levels of job satisfaction. There have been several studies on the characteristics of an effective physical education program. However, this study is an extension of previous studies on characteristics of an effective physical education program because this research also investigates the effects of a PEP grant on a physical

education program. Last, it is necessary to further investigate the perceptions of physical education. In this study, the physical education teachers were interviewed about how they believed physical education was perceived within their school community.

### Self-determination theory

A useful theoretical model for understanding individuals' motivation is self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci and Ryan 1985 Deci, E. L. and Ryan, R. M. 1985) <sup>[7]</sup>. *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*, New York: Plenum Press. [Taylor & Francis Online], [Google Scholar], 2000 Deci, E. L. and Ryan, R. M. 2000) <sup>[8]</sup>. The 'what' and 'why' of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4): 227–68. [Taylor & Francis Online], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]; Ryan and Deci 2000a Ryan, R. M. and Deci, E. L. 2000a) <sup>[8]</sup>. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: Classic definitions and new directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25: 54–67. [Crossref], [PubMed], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar], 2000b Ryan, R. M. and Deci, E. L. 2000b. Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55(1): 68–78. [Crossref], [PubMed], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar], 2002 Ryan, R. M. and Deci, E. L. 2002. "Overview of self-determination theory: An organismic dialectical perspective". In *Handbook of self-determination research*, Edited by: Deci, E. L. and Ryan, R. M. 3–33. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press. [Google Scholar]). SDT postulates that the impetus of motivated behavior is having the experience of choice (*autonomy*) and a sense of efficacy in performance (*competence*), along with feeling securely connected to the significant others in one's social milieu (*relatedness*). Deci and Ryan (1985 Deci, E. L. and Ryan, R. M. 1985) <sup>[7]</sup>. *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*, New York: Plenum Press. [Taylor & Francis Online], [Google Scholar], 2000 Deci, E. L. and Ryan, R. M. 2000) <sup>[8]</sup>. The 'what' and 'why' of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4): 227–68. [Taylor & Francis Online], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]; Ryan and Deci 2000a Ryan, R. M. and Deci, E. L. 2000a) <sup>[8]</sup>. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: Classic definitions and new directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25: 54–67. [Crossref], [PubMed], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar], 2000b Ryan, R. M. and Deci, E. L. 2000b. Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55(1): 68–78. [Crossref], [PubMed], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar], 2002 Ryan, R. M. and Deci, E. L. 2002. "Overview of self-determination theory: An organismic dialectical perspective". In *Handbook of self-determination research*, Edited by: Deci, E. L. and Ryan, R. M. 3–33. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press. [Google Scholar]) contend that all humans possess the innate psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, but it is only when these needs are perceived to be met that motivation is elicited, sustained, or enhanced. In other words, perceiving that a task is done out of volition, can be successfully performed, and will ensure a secure relational

base within one's surrounding specifies the foundational premise for motivation, as defined by SDT.

Probably the most distinguishing feature of SDT, when compared with other motivation theories (Gagné and Deci 2005 Gagné, M. and Deci, E. L. 2005. Self-determination theory and work motivation. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 26: 331–62. [Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]), is that this theory treats motivation as a multidimensional concept that not only varies in level (i.e., how much), but also kind (i.e., what type). Accordingly, Deci and Ryan (1985 Deci, E. L. and Ryan, R. M. 1985) <sup>[7]</sup>. *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*, New York: Plenum Press. [Taylor & Francis Online], [Google Scholar], 2000 Deci, E. L. and Ryan, R. M. 2000 <sup>[8]</sup>. The ‘what’ and ‘why’ of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4): 227–68. [Taylor & Francis Online], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]; Ryan and Deci 2000 Ryan, R. M. and Deci, E. L. 2000a <sup>[8]</sup>. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: Classic definitions and new directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25: 54–67. [Crossref], [PubMed], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar], 2000b Ryan, R. M. and Deci, E. L. 2000b. Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55(1): 68–78. [Crossref], [PubMed], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar], 2002 Ryan, R. M. and Deci, E. L. 2002. “Overview of self-determination theory: An organismic dialectical perspective”. In *Handbook of self-determination research*, Edited by: Deci, E. L. and Ryan, R. M. 3–33. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press. [Google Scholar] trichotomized motivation into three distinct orientations: *intrinsic motivation*, *extrinsic motivation*, and *amotivation*. Intrinsic motivation represents voluntary behaviors that are solely performed for the pleasure and satisfaction derived from the experience. Extrinsic motivation is characterized by behaviors that are engaged in for the fundamental goal of receiving or avoiding some external consequence (e.g., rewards, punishment, or guilt). A motivation, or the absence of motivation, is displayed when individuals perceive the contingencies between their actions and the outcomes of their actions as purposeless, and thereby act passively. Altogether, SDT posits that one's perceived fulfillment of the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness provide the nutrients for intrinsic motivation, whereas perceptions of partial or no fulfillment are considered the nutrients for extrinsic motivation and amotivation, respectively.

### **SDT and classroom teacher motivation**

The research available on classroom teacher motivation from a SDT perspective has shown that extrinsic incentives (e.g., extra pay, narrow standards, rigid accountability) typically impair teachers' self-determined motivation and performance, while intrinsic strategies believed to improve teaching ability and student learning usually enhance teachers' self-determined motivation. To illustrate, Pelletier, Séguin-Lévesque, and Legault (2002) Pelletier, L. G., Séguin-Lévesque, C. and Legault, L. 2002. Pressure from above and pressure from below as determinants of teachers' motivation and teaching behaviors. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 94(1): 186–96.

[Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar] found that the more pressure and constraints teachers perceived at work from colleagues (i.e., complying with teaching methods), administration (i.e., complying with specific curriculum), students (i.e., unmotivated toward school) along with the need to meet certain performance standards, the less motivated they were toward work, and in turn, the more controlling they were with their students. Alternatively, the higher perceptions teachers had of their students' motivation to learn, the more motivated they were at work.

In another study, teachers reported higher levels of motivation when they felt their principal exhibited empowering behaviors such as self-awareness, an understanding of group dynamics, and an ability to adequately handle ambiguity (Davis and Wilson 2000 Davis, J. and Wilson, S. M. 2000 <sup>[6]</sup>. Principals' efforts to empower teachers: Effects on teacher motivation and job satisfaction and stress. *Clearing House*, 73(6): 349–53. [Taylor & Francis Online], [Google Scholar]). This research suggests that the presence of teacher teamwork and principal support in meeting school goals fosters an intrinsic motivational climate for the teachers. Moreover, Sheldon and Biddle's (1998) review of teacher motivation studies applying the tenets of SDT concluded that a necessary reform strategy for increasing teachers' interest and intrinsic motivation would be to provide greater opportunities for teachers to raise their professional standing and conduct. Collectively, these empirical findings suggest that the informative feedback teachers receive from their students and working culture are tremendously important to their intrinsic motivation.

### **SDT and PE teacher motivation**

Only one study to date has specifically examined the motivation of in-service PE teachers. Embracing the framework of personal investment theory (Maehr and Braskamp 1986 Maehr, M. L. and Braskamp, L. A. 1986 <sup>[3]</sup>. *The motivation factor: A theory of personal investment*, Lexington, MA: Lexington. Books [Google Scholar]) instead of SDT, Lindholm (1997) <sup>[19]</sup> Lindholm, J. A. 1997 <sup>[19]</sup>. Secondary school physical education teacher motivation: An application of personal investment theory. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 16: 426–39. [Google Scholar] compared the self and work perceptions of PE teachers to those of a normative sample of adults. Results indicated that physical educators' motivation was shaped by both personal incentives (i.e., accomplishment) and work perceptions (i.e., commitment, power) to a significantly lesser degree than the adult sample population.

Generally, when SDT has been incorporated in the field of PE, it is has been with regard to student motivation. An upsurge of scholarship has confirmed that teacher-created learning contexts that promote need satisfaction in students lead to increased student levels of intrinsic and self-determined motivation, which in turn, were linked to students' future intentions to partake in physical activity and teacher-rated student motivation behaviors (Ferrer-Caja and Weiss 2000 Ferrer-Caja, E. and Weiss, M. R. 2000. Predictors of intrinsic motivation among adolescent students in physical education. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 71(3): 267–79. [Taylor & Francis Online], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]; Ntoumanis 2001 Ntoumanis, N. 2001. A self-

determination approach to the understanding of motivation in physical education. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 71(2): 225–42. [Crossref], [Google Scholar], 2005 Ntoumanis, N. 2005. A prospective study of participation in optional school physical education using a self-determination theory framework. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 97(3): 444–53. [Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]; Standage, Duda, and Ntoumanis 2003 Standage, M., Duda, J. L. and Ntoumanis, N. 2003. A model of contextual motivation in physical education: Using constructs from self-determination and achievement goal theories to predict physical activity intentions. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 95: 97–110. [Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar], 2006 Standage, M., Duda, J. L. and Ntoumanis, N. 2006. Students' motivational processes and their relationship to teacher ratings in school physical education: A self-determination theory approach. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 77(1): 100–110. [Taylor & Francis Online], [Google Scholar]. It is equally common to find research studies and practical sources for teachers (e.g., Kilpatrick, Hebert, and Jacobson 2002 Kilpatrick, M., Hebert, E. and Jacobsen, D. 2002. Physical activity motivation: A practitioner's guide to self-determination theory. *Journal of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance*, 73(4): 36–41. [Taylor & Francis Online], [Google Scholar]; Mandigo and Holt 2000 Mandigo, J. L. and Holt, N. L. 2000. Putting theory into practice: How cognitive evaluation theory can help us motivate children in physical activity environments. *Journal of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance*, 71(1): 44–9. [Taylor & Francis Online], [Google Scholar]; Whitehead 1993 Whitehead, J. R. 1993. Physical activity and intrinsic motivation. *President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports Physical Activity and Fitness Research Digest*, 1(2): 1–8. [Google Scholar]) That integrate SDT as a tool for teachers and coaches to motivate children in physical activity environments. Therefore, it is evident that SDT is an applicable platform for examining the construct of PE teacher motivation.

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