Early Career Framework

Core Induction Programme

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Week

5: Understanding pupils as learners

Session Elements

- practical exercise
- reflection
- independent planning

Learning Intentions for this session

You will learn that:

7.3 The ability to self-regulate one's emotions affects pupils' ability to learn, success in school and future lives.

7.4 Teachers can influence pupils' resilience and beliefs about their ability to succeed, by ensuring all pupils have the opportunity to experience meaningful success.

7.6 Pupils are motivated by intrinsic factors (related to their identity and values) and extrinsic factors (related to reward).

You will learn how to:

Motivate pupils, by:

7m. Supporting pupils to master challenging content, which builds towards long-term goals.

7n. Providing opportunities for pupils to articulate their long-term goals and helping them to see how these are related to their success in school.

7o. Helping pupils to journey from needing extrinsic motivation to being motivated to work intrinsically.

Introduction

You have already learnt how teachers can have a dramatic effect on pupils' success at school and their later life chances, particularly for the most disadvantaged pupils. This week you will see how teachers can influence wider outcomes, which are important both in their own right and because they are associated with long-term success in education. This includes self-regulation, motivation and resilience.

Research and Practice Summary

This reading will help you understand some of the theory behind this week's topic. We will start by introducing some of the key concepts (these are in bold). You will also see some suggestions of how to put these concepts into practice. **When using these concepts in your own practice you will need to take account of your pupils' characteristics, the context of your classroom and the nature of the material that you are teaching.**

Observations and conclusions

After another difficult Year 8 geography lesson, Amy is concerned about her pupils. She hoped that her enthusiasm for geography would quickly develop pupils' love of learning geography, but this does not seem to be happening.

Amy has decided that as some pupils seem unwilling to complete challenging activities, she needs to make her lessons more exciting in

order to appeal to them. After their first end-of-topic assessment had disappointing results, Amy concluded that her pupils must lack motivation to learn. She decided to explore ways to improve their motivation.

Amy's mentor challenges Amy to more clearly separate out what she observes in her pupils' behaviours and the conclusions she draws about why they behave in this way. The mentor cautions Amy against drawing unfounded conclusions about pupils' experiences, as she has done here, and reminds her that there are many plausible explanations for why pupils behave as she is observing.

What might be going on for Amy's pupils in the situations she is experiencing? What factors might be behind what Amy is observing in her class? What strategies might she use to engage her pupils more effectively in their learning?

Self-regulation refers to a pupil's ability to monitor, evaluate and modify their emotions and behaviours. This includes, for example, controlling emotions of anger, frustration or embarrassment – all common emotions experienced by pupils across their school career. The most effective learners are able to effectively regulate their own emotions, meaning they are better able to learn well, and to form positive relationships with others. If pupils struggle with this it can affect their own learning and future lives and may also negatively affect their peers.

The Education Endowment Foundation report that – on average – pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, and lower-attaining pupils, are less effective at self-regulation than their peers. Therefore, explicitly teaching self-regulation may be particularly beneficial for these pupils.

Pupils' self-regulation depends on their prior knowledge and their stage of development. However, developing pupils' self-regulation is as important for early years practitioners as for teachers of older pupils – especially as it relates to the regulation of emotions, which supports successful learning.

Approaches to developing pupils' emotional self-regulation include:
- using story books and discussing how characters may feel and why
- developing pupils' vocabulary to describe their emotions
- teaching self-calming techniques, like deep breathing
- supporting pupils to recognise their own body clues linked to strong emotions, like a changing tone of voice, hot face and increased heart rate

Resilience refers to the ability to cope with and overcome challenges. Supporting pupils to overcome challenging goals, and to understand the connection between

effort and success, can support the development of resilience. Meeting goals that are not sufficiently challenging or where pupils do not have to work hard is unlikely to develop resilience.

Resilience is linked to pupils' beliefs about their **ability to succeed** – they are more likely to persist in the face of challenge or adversity if they believe that they will, eventually, achieve their goal. An important way that teachers can influence their pupils' beliefs in this area is to create regular opportunities for pupils to experience meaningful success. 'Meaningful success' could mean different things to different pupils – for some it will be working through a tricky activity on their own; others may value answering questions correctly in front of their peers. Where challenge is too low, success is unlikely to be meaningful. Challenge is a function of the learning goal of the lesson and the degree of support available to help reach this goal.

To help all of your pupils experience meaningful success on a regular basis, and develop resilience, you should:

- pitch the learning goals of your lessons to be challenging enough for pupils that success has meaning (i.e. that it's not too easy to succeed), but not so challenging that success seems out of reach
- adapt the level of support, or scaffolding, available to all pupils – including both lower and higher attainers. This will help all pupils to master the challenge in the lesson, with sufficient effort to make success meaningful, and learn what you want them to learn
- consider the range of activities in your lessons and how these play to your pupils' respective strengths – if some pupils are more able to express their ideas orally than in writing, for example, exploit opportunities for them to 'succeed' through discussion at the same time as you work to develop their written literacy
- be specific in your use of praise so that it is clear to pupils when and how they are 'succeeding' (e.g. 'that was an excellent answer because…' or 'what an improvement since last week. You've really improved your…')
- praise pupils' attitude and effort as well as outcomes of their work – emphasise the importance of learning behaviours that lead to success in the longer term

Supporting pupils' resilience and beliefs about success

Amy reflected on her mentor's feedback and decided to explore her pupils' behaviour some more. She observed them with another teacher and was impressed at how engaged the class was in their learning, but she also noticed that many of the class seemed to 'give up' when they found some more difficult activities quite challenging. This led Amy to reflect on where the pupils might be struggling.

Amy has decided that she needs to develop pupils' resilience, so that they are more able to keep going with suitably challenging learning activities. After learning more about how teachers can develop pupils' resilience, Amy decides that the first thing she needs to do is to pitch the learning goals appropriately. The school's Year 8 geography curriculum is insufficiently challenging for some of Amy's pupils so she plans ways to raise the challenge for these pupils.

Next, Amy reviews the support that she gives to pupils. After reviewing pupils' exercise books, Amy observes a group who seldom complete activities in full and often make quite significant errors in their work. Their exercise books are covered in red pen and points for improvement. Putting herself in these pupils' shoes, Amy understands how rarely they must experience success in her class. Amy resolves to more effectively scaffold learning for these pupils and create opportunities for them to feel successful in their learning.

Amy is already confident with how she uses praise – especially when it comes to praising effort and perseverance. Even so, Amy realises that she could be more specific with some of her praise and compare what pupils are doing now with what they have previously done to highlight improvements.

Together, these new approaches will help to develop pupils' resilience and self-belief, which will help all pupils experience meaningful success.

Motivation is important for pupils' success at school and later life chances. It is usually defined as a kind of driving force that influences the selection, direction, and continuation or discontinuation of behaviours.

It can be helpful to think of two types of motivation: intrinsic motivation, related to pupils' identity and values; and extrinsic motivation, related to reward and sanctions. Intrinsic motivation is the self-desire to seek out new things and new challenges, to analyse one's capacity, to observe and to gain knowledge. It is driven by an interest or enjoyment in a goal or task, and derives from the individual rather than relying on external implementation. Pupils who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to engage in learning willingly, as well as work to improve their knowledge, skills and performance. Conversely, extrinsic motivation refers to behaviour that is driven by external factors such as grades, praise or the avoidance of punishment.

Some forms of extrinsic motivation can very powerfully influence pupil behaviour, but it may also have undesirable consequences if pupils focus too much on the competition, and on 'winning' at the expense of intended learning. For example, pupils who rush to finish work 'first' may not think as carefully about their learning as they would if they were less motivated by the reward offered for speed.

In any scenario pupils will be influenced by both types of motivation, but developing pupils' intrinsic motivation linked to learning will support their success because they will engage more willingly in their learning without the need for external validation.

It is important to recognise that motivation is not visible, and that it is easy to make assumptions about the motivations behind pupil behaviours that may not be correct. It is helpful to remain mindful of the difference between observable actions and hypotheses about the drivers of these actions. For example, a pupil who appears 'lazy' may in fact by struggling to focus because of events happening outside school in their family or friendship group, or because the work they are completing is not sufficiently challenging.

To increase pupils' motivation, you can support them to:

- **master challenging content, which builds towards long-term goals** – success is motivating, especially when it is challenging to achieve and links with pupils' long-term goals. For instance, accurately and judiciously using challenging, technical vocabulary in writing will motivate an aspiring journalist
- **explore their long-term goals** – whether or not they articulate them freely, most pupils have long-term goals. However, there is often a mismatch between these goals and what pupils think they need to do to achieve them. Discussing long-term goals with pupils and linking this to their learning can be highly motivational. For instance, you may be able to make connections between pupils' goals and their current learning that they are not aware of such as between the digestive system in biology and a pupil interested in becoming a chef. You might also highlight to pupils the value of transferable skills that they are developing, and where qualifications are a prerequisite to the career path that they wish to follow
- **develop intrinsic motivation** – extrinsic motivation can be a very powerful driver, but it is not always sustainable for pupils in the long term – into adulthood – because it relies on an external source of reward and sanction. You should help your pupils to journey from needing extrinsic motivation towards having the intrinsic motivation to work without external input. As well as supporting pupils to master challenging content and connect learning to personal goals, you can help them to find interest and enjoyment in their studies. For instance, by demonstrating your own enthusiasm for what you are teaching, or through the pedagogical approaches you use

Motivating reluctant learners

Much of what Amy is now doing will help to increase her pupils' motivation as well as their resilience and self-belief. As pupils experience meaningful success more often, they will likely experience increased motivation, too.

Like Amy, many teachers think that improving the motivation of pupils who are struggling will improve their learning. In fact, it often works in reverse – improving pupils' learning improves their motivation.

Self-Study Activities

Review: 15 mins

Read the research and practice summary on this week's topic. As you read, reflect on:

1. the practices that you are already doing well
2. the practices you are doing some of the time, but could do more of/more consistently
3. the practices you do not use in your teaching yet

As you work through the activities in this week's self-directed study session and mentor meeting, aim both to refine and extend what you already do well, and to build your skill and confidence in using practices which are not yet a regular part of your teaching repertoire.

Plan and Theory to Practice: 30 mins

1. Reflection

Use the research and practice summary for this week to reflect on the pupils you teach. If you teach more than one class, choose just one as the focus for this activity.

As you review your pupils, consider these questions:

- how would you describe this class overall in terms of their resilience, self-regulation and motivation? Try to be clear about (a) what you can observe and (b) the conclusions you draw from these observations
- what variation exists within the class? Are there pupils who present quite differently to their peers? What implications might this have for teaching and learning?
- what groups are there within the class in which pupils have similar characteristics relating to resilience, self-regulation and motivation? How might this influence your approaches to teaching this group?

2. Practical exercise

Now select two pupils from the class who especially interest you. You might want to focus on one who you feel is particularly flourishing and one about whom you have some more concerns. Write a short description of each pupil. The purpose of this activity is to encourage you to consider in some detail how your pupils vary as individuals and how this has implications for your teaching.

As you draft each description:

- think about what you have observed about this pupil in relation to their resilience, self-regulation and motivation
- include relevant information that you know about the pupil – such as details they have told you about themselves, or which you have gained from liaising with parents, carers and/or colleagues
- include hypotheses about how what you observe and know influences the pupil as a learner
- consider how this pupil may experience learning in your class. For example, to what extent do they have the opportunity to experience meaningful success? Are they able to express their long-term goals and see how their learning helps to work towards these goals?

3. Independent planning

Use your learning from this session so far to identify opportunities for you to intervene in meaningful ways with one or more of your pupils to influence positively their resilience, self-regulation and motivation. Make a note of these strategies, which could be targeted at an individual, group or whole-class level.

You will review and develop these strategies in your mentor meeting this week in preparation for trying them out in your teaching.

Next Steps: 5 mins

Bring your descriptions and notes from this session to your next mentor meeting. Be ready to discuss your ideas for intervening with pupils with your mentor.

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