

Summary

Positive attitudes among teachers are a key priority for policy-makers given evidence that teaching performance is perhaps the main driver of student learning. Teacher motivation is also important for promoting school reform. This chapter investigates what matters to teachers and how best to motivate them. Research on work motivation is used to shed light on how both “intrinsic” and “extrinsic” motivation can promote work outcomes such as performance, satisfaction, and well-being. The analysis stresses that motivation underpins the success of both teachers’ work and the introduction of any renewal in schools. The central message is that teachers’ actions need to be self-motivated, resulting from their acceptance of and identification with the values and objectives of practices and regulations in schools.

Although pay is important, teacher policy needs to address a lot more than pay. Teachers place a lot of emphasis on the quality of their relations with students and colleagues, on feeling supported by school leaders, on good working conditions, and on opportunities to develop their skills. Teacher evaluation for improvement purposes could provide many opportunities for teachers’ work to be recognised and celebrated and help both teachers and schools to identify professional development priorities.

This chapter proposes four ways of improving teachers’ performance, satisfaction and well-being: i) promoting the intrinsic motivation of teachers; ii) fostering the self-motivation of teachers; iii) making a balanced use of extrinsic rewards; and iv) meeting the needs of teachers for good working conditions. These imply bringing greater challenge and variety to teaching, ensuring opportunities for professional growth, offering constructive performance feedback, involving teachers in decision making and helping build a strong sense of professional identification and worth.

The teaching career would also benefit from greater diversification, which would help meet school needs and also provide more opportunities and recognition for teachers. Greater emphasis on school leadership would help address the need for teachers to feel valued and supported in their work. In addition, well-trained professional and administrative staff can help reduce the burden on teachers; better facilities for staff preparation and planning would help build collegiality; and more flexible working conditions, especially for more experienced teachers, would prevent career-burnout and retain important skills in schools.