Teacher Expectations, Students’ Motivation and Self Perception in Private Schooling

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explore and describe how teachers in independent school settings in Melbourne attempt to communicate their expectations to students to help them develop positive self perception. It seeks to identify whether they believe these expectations affect student achievement, and what motivational strategies these teachers use to enhance their students’ learning. This is a qualitative study theoretically informed by phenomenological hermeneutic inquiry. Data were collected using in-depth semi-structured open-ended interviews and results were critically analysed and interpreted hermeneutically. Four themes have been identified from the data collected. The focus of this paper however is on the third theme. That is how teachers communicate and enact their expectations to their students. Teachers lived experiences regarding this issue are discussed at length in this paper. When I started making sense of data I realized that these teachers articulated a strong belief that their expectations have a profound affect on the formulation of their students’ self perception and on their motivational level. This paper endeavors to highlight this interconnection between teacher expectations with motivation and self perception as emerged from the data collected for this study.

Introduction

Teacher expectation has been reported by (Good & Brophy, 2000, p.109) as being a powerful tool in the hands of teachers, which they can use effectively to shape their students’ future achievements. High teacher expectations produce high achievements for students and low expectations tend to produce low achievements (Capel, Leask & Turner, 1995; Sadker & Sadker, 1988; Brookover et al., 1982). This issue is important because the ability of young children to learn and become educated is largely in the hands of teachers and many of the teachers may be unaware of the important influence that their expectations can have.

Researchers found that younger children are more susceptible to teachers’ expectancy effects (Jussim & Harber, 2005; Raudenbush, 1984) than students in higher grades, as they see themselves in the eyes of others

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(teachers, parents and other adults) and form self images. With high expectations they are more likely to form positive self-images and with low expectations their self-image is lowered. Such self-images may well remain with them for the duration of their lives affecting their future achievement (Velez, 2006). This suggests a close correlation between teachers’ expectations, self perception and their students’ life-long achievements. Researchers have discovered a cyclical pattern between teachers’ expectations and students’ achievements (e.g. Atwell, 2001; Brookover et al., 1982; Good & Brophy, 2000; Jussim, 1986; Jussim et al., 2005; Jussim & Harber, 2005). They report that teachers’ expectations can greatly influence students’ achievements. From the past 35 years, after the publication of ‘Pygmalion in the classrooms’ by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968), researchers have been trying to explore how teachers communicate their expectations to their students and how these impact on their students’ achievements. However, this paper will provide some fresh insights related to teachers expectations, motivation and self perception. It also provides a framework for teachers to organize and develop appropriate motivational strategies to enhance their students’ self perception in order to increase their achievements. Researchers argue with each success at school children have enhanced sense of motivation and self perception (Blatchman, 1992). In contrast, with each failure at school children feel demotivated and develop a low self perception for themselves (Chapman, 1988).

The findings of the study suggest that self perception, motivation and teacher expectations are interrelated. Research has found that teachers influence students’ motivation through provision of experiences and communication of beliefs and expectancies (Green, 2002). Student-teacher interaction is also important in this regard. Teachers can motivate their students by boosting their self perception, which is imperative to perform better (Lindsay & Dockrell, 2000). Researchers (e.g. Leondari & Kiosseoglou, 1998) have attempted to establish some link between self-perception and motivation. They state that realization of self is a key factor in motivational behaviour. Students’ motivation to engage in a task is also influenced by the conception they hold of themselves (Jennings, 1993). Positive self perception to sustain motivation is important for the students to expend effort to complete a task(Velez, 2006). This study reveals teacher expectation plays a significant role in developing these real selves and motivational behaviours in children particularly at primary school level.

The study and its aims

This study is concerned with teachers’ expectations about students’ achievement. Previous research suggests that teachers teaching styles are affected by the kind of expectations they hold for their students (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1969). Most of this research has been conducted in state school
settings but very little of this research compares teacher expectations in private school settings with teacher expectations in state school settings.

The theoretical framework of this study suggests that there is a strong correlation between teacher expectations and student achievements (Brokeover et al., 1982; Good & Brophy; 1997, 2000; Jussim, 1986; Jussim & Harber, 2005). Students’ achievements may confirm teacher expectations because these expectations create self-fulfilling prophecies (Jussim, 1986; Jussim & Harber, 2005). Teachers adjust their teaching pedagogy and instruction to their expectations for their students and thereby treat their students differently (Cooper, 1986; Diamond, Randolph & Spillane, 2004; Good & Brophy, 2000; Sadker & Sadker, 1988), thus setting the stage for self-fulfilling prophecies to come true. Students, upon recognizing their teacher expectations, behave in a way that confirms to their teacher’s expectations (Atwell, 2001; Brookover et al., 1982; Good and Brophy, 2000; Jussim, 1986; Jussim et al., 2005; Jussim & Harber, 2005). Thus, teacher expectations can strongly influence students’ achievements.

The purpose of my study is to explore and describe how teachers in independent school settings in Melbourne form expectations of their students, whether they believe these expectations affect student achievement, and how these teachers attempt to communicate their expectations to students. This study intends to address the following questions to understand in depth the phenomena of teacher expectations.

1) What do teachers understand by the notion of ‘expectations’?
2) What expectations do they have of their students?
3) How do teachers form these expectations?
4) What factors affect their expectations?
5) How do teachers communicate their expectations?
6) What do they understand to be the relationship between teacher expectations and student achievement?
7) How do teachers believe they enact their expectations?

Methods and Procedure

The study involves five primary school teachers between the ages 20 and 50 from two elite schools in South East Melbourne. A gender balance was sought to avoid gender issues in the selection of participants. Other issues such as the race and social class of the participants were not seen as important considerations. All interested teachers could participate irrespective of their sex, race, and social class. I was also concerned with “experience”. I involved experienced teachers who had been in the field of education for at least 4-5 years. These experienced teachers were more likely to provide necessary information needed to inform this research since they were all qualified, experienced teachers who could shed light on the phenomenon of teacher’s expectations. The reason for the exclusion of new teachers was that they might not be able to appreciate and articulate the
complicity of the phenomenon at this early stage of their careers. The participating teachers are taking 5 to 11 year old students from grade 1 to grade 6 in their respective schools.

Since teachers were involved in my study I needed to fulfil certain ethical requirements before involving them. First, I obtained permission from school principals to grant access to these institutions. All recruitment was done through school principals to avoid bias issues and favouritism. Secondly, I asked teachers themselves to sign consent forms indicating that they agreed to participate in my study. I also assured these teachers that their anonymity and confidentiality would be safe guarded at all stages of the research. In-depth semi-structured, open-ended interviews were conducted to get maximum response and deep understanding of the lived experiences of the respondents.

The interviews were conducted in a mutually agreed location with special emphasis on privacy to the extent possible with the agreement of the participants. With the permission of teachers, the interviews were tape-recorded in order to have an accurate account of what these teachers wanted to say (Burgess, 1984). Notes were taken during the interview to insure against failure in tape recording. Each interview was conducted once, for a period of one and a half hours with each teacher. This is considered as an appropriate length of time to keep the participants motivated and involved. If longer the interview may result in boredom and fatigue for both the researcher and the participant (Burgess, 1994). Before starting the interview, teachers were asked to sign a consent form indicating their agreement to participate in the study and were assured that their anonymity and confidentiality would be safeguarded at all stages of the research.

Later data was analysed following Lichman (2006) three C’s of data analysis that is initial coding, identifying the categories and developing concepts/themes. Then data was imported to NVivo for further analysis.

**Findings and Discussion**

In this section, I report the findings of study analysing the way teachers enact and communicate their expectations to their students and their impact on their students self perception and level of motivation.

*Teachers believe that they can affect students’ achievements by promoting self-esteem.*

All the teachers across the interviews claim that they motivate their students by boosting their self esteem in order to enhance their students’ achievements. One teacher Leanne expressed:

A lot of children that we work with learning difficulties are very prone to low self-esteem …they see on a daily basis within the
classroom a whole range of things that they’re really stuck with or they find challenging … a lot of children … at times become anxious about coming to school ‘coz everything is just too hard and too challenging … so the children have low expectations from themselves…so their opinion is they don’t expect anything from themselves therefore they can’t fail too much … so again as we work with them, we work with them as I said break things down into little chunks to provide things that they can succeed in to give them feedback on that … to develop feelings and showing a bit high expectations for the students.

Leanne believes that it is important to have realistic expectations from these students and convey that you have full trust in them to finish the given task successfully. This will help in promoting self esteem in students.

I try to show them that I believe in them … ummm … not in a false way … ummm … that my belief and my expectation of them is based on reality … in relation of what their skill … what they can succeed at … and if a child is resistant to have a goal something … their perception is the task is to beat … and they’re too worried about failing … so all you need to do is then make it smaller … it’s negotiated in a different way or come from a different angle.

Mary however told that

I won’t be expecting much …only at their own level I have expectations….if you can’t finish two pages of writing then at least one page would be enough for you…because I know this child can’t go beyond one page.

Rena’s ideas are consistent with Mary’s. She believes in having realistic expectations of her students. If they expect too much and their students’ can not achieve it, this will demotivate them. Once the students feel they can do a task and feel happy about it, this will automatically affect their self esteem in a positive manner which will help in forming a positive self image and enhancing their motivational level. For example Rena commented:

The ones that might demotivate them you need to watch yourselves with them then work at their level. I don’t push them too much…if you push them so much …they want to do …because they can’t do it…..just at their level…that’s why I said ones who are challenging , want to do more … I challenge them…..the ones who can’t…what ever they do I am fine ..I am happy with them…so they can achieve as much as they can

Similarly Malinda believes that expectations should be fair and based on each individual child’s reality. She argued
Expectations should always be fair and you should always show expectations depending on the child.

Most surprisingly it has been found through teachers’ interviews that they have grievance against their students parents. These teachers revealed that some parents have unrealistic expectations for their children and they communicate to their children sparingly as well. These teachers strongly believe parents expectations of the students have a strong influence in achievements. These teachers believe that parents’ unrealistic expectations for their children can demotivate them. Malinda for example said

I think parents who are really pushy make it a bit hard when they are too much pushy. Sometimes their child is not capable of achieving what the parents expect them to achieve.

Malinda further believes:

They can’t live up to their parents expectations. It’s going to be very very hard….their mum and dad want them to get A and you are only getting only B. That can be devastating…..and you sort of got to try and like make the parents understand that it’s okay if they only get a C as long as you are trying your best… that’s okay….

Bob like Malinda, argued:

I think the kids who are pushed harder are probably less happy well rounded children. I think they are probably a bit more socially isolated on whole… I think this is probably parent related.

Leanne and Bob plus other three teachers told that when they interact with such parents and recommend to them that they should try to have more realistic expectations for their children but that such parents do not want to understand their point of view and keep on pushing their children for the things they cannot do. That is very frustrating for these teachers.

Effect of teachers’ comments and feedback on students’ motivation and self perception

These teachers believe in using emotional strategies to help their students to enhance their self perception. All the teachers across the interview claim that their positive comments or remarks motivate their students. Their self perception improves which will improve their performance. They feel highly motivated and try to appease their teacher further and put all their effort into their work to listen to those comments again. One teacher – Bob, strongly believes that we all like positive
feedback and we all work hard if we know somebody is watching closely and we have a good positive feedback loop from that.

One teacher Mary deliberately chooses certain comments and remarks to motivate her less able students. For example she explained:

For the weaker children I always be very positive with my comments and I really mean it and I have to encourage them.

Another teacher Bob (who takes Grade 6, 11 year old children,) is very particular about his comments which will be largely dependent on the objective of the activity. His comments are more meaningful and based on reality, just not flowery comments to please students. But they are chosen carefully to bring improvements in the required skills.

To me it’s very much related to what I am expecting. So if I was expecting a child to paste in a photo, to have a clear voice in their writing, and to have a graph they have done in Excel and import in a Word document … these are the things I will focus on. I will say … well done you have achieved all those three goals and I particularly like the way you have expanded on and I will select one factor and sort of discuss with the child.

However the other four teachers appear to use positive comments to help boost their students’ self esteem, especially if they have developed negative self perceptions for themselves. Moreover these teachers strongly believe their small children are more responsive to their expectations and develop self images when given positive comments. For example Rena who takes 5 year old reported using comments like “Well done … Or I can see you counting on your fingers … that is fantastic. I can see you working really hard … that’s great … all of them not just the low or high … all of them get that”. Rena believes that these comments boost up their self esteem. “They want to show they can do it … they try hard for me … and I can see it”.

Bob takes relatively big children (11 year old) believes that at this age they have already developed their self image and needs to be given focused comments rather flowery one. However he believes in giving positive feedback that motives them and boosts their self esteem. Bob explained

We are doing work at the moment on different countries and today I work with four kids whose physical hand skills on mapping who are very poor and very low so I showed them some little tricks today and they were working here with me on this table, and constantly I am saying … ‘Do you know that I like the way you did that? Can you show us how you do that again? Oh that’s fantastic see that, that’s great, so they are learning by me giving him the feedback loop on my expectations.
Bob expressed his satisfaction at seeing these students “puff up their chests” with a little smile on their lips.

Similarly Malinda and Mary also believe in giving positive feedback to motivate their students. They think children who have negative self perceptions of themselves lack confidence and are usually scared of making mistakes. These teachers always try to boost their students’ self esteem by telling them that we are human beings and we all make mistakes. Mary for example tells her students “you make mistakes, you learn from your mistakes. Don’t feel bad about it. It’s perfectly okay if you make mistake and you will only learn by doing mistakes”. She always gives them this positive encouragement to her students.

These teachers also believe in using pedagogical strategies other than emotional strategies to boost up their students self esteem.

_Influence of flexible approach on students self perception and motivation_

These teachers believe by using a flexible approach in their expectations for their students they can motivate them to perform better. They can improve their self perception and thus improve their performance. They do not expect the same from all their students and thus have different expectations from all their students. These teachers believe in making adjustments and having flexibility in handling the curriculum and having expectations to meet their students’ individual needs. For example Mary, Grade two, explained:

In 2006, I have two children with severe learning problems. Severe meaning I was photocopying prep work for these two girls. One of them also had vision problem. Meaning what I was printing or photocopying, it has to be in larger print. That means extra work for me because once you set up your work during holiday that’s it. and if you are getting work from grade ones or preps and parents, and sort of try to fix it up with your own activity for that day that means you are spending a lot of extra time for one or two or two four students.

Mary spoke further about another student with learning difficulty for whom she has to plan totally different work to match his ability level.

I had one child last year with me, who was a boy and he’s left this year. Who had dyslexia problem... The problem was that I had to have a different curriculum just for him. Because whatever I was teaching, it was not appropriate for him. Not at all. He was not even able to read alphabets, no clock phonics, numbers nothing … Whatever he read from the print he could not interpret it into his brain and work out … that was the main problem … so I always get mixed ability students in my grade.
Mary strongly believes in tailoring her instructional practices to the academic levels of her students, reinforcing concepts, giving simpler tasks in the beginning and later introducing more difficult or challenging tasks, or dropping some activities which are beyond their level of understanding. Her motive is to motivate her students by giving them tasks which they can easily accomplish without getting frustrated.

Bob also believes in dropping some activities for his students who have learning difficulties. He explained:

So for my autistic child it’s far less relevant to be doing decimals to three places. It’s more relevant to him to be working at his bus time table and some simple word mathematics questions. So in that manner I can drop activities for him that he does not have to complete.

Bob is quite flexible in handling the curriculum and makes changes according to his students’ level of understanding. Bob explained how he plans activities for his high and low achievers:

At the moment for example I am doing an activity on economy, so my lesser able children just to get them to understand market trends in supply and demand. They may be looking at how much a Thai one dollar is compared to one Australian dollar for example. That might be their challenge. The children who are more gifted I am asking them still looking at finance and economy to look at whether or not it’s better for me to have my back garden paved in concrete, to have a garden… one of the cost of both … you do a model and present your model back to me. So their mathematical skills are in real life and immediate, where other kids are struggling to understand the simple concepts.

Leanne like Bob reported that the class teachers are expected to create the curriculum for all students in the class. So for the ones who have greater difficulties they might have an essential task, but they might differentiate it to break it into smaller steps (as mentioned above) because of childhood difficulties. The amount of work might be reduced and might be put into slightly different format if that is appropriate for the child who is very able they would tend to open and then have it open ended.

The following table would help analyse how teachers expectations from their students affect their teaching strategy, students self perception and motivation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participating teachers/ grade they teach</th>
<th>Belief about expectations for their students</th>
<th>Teaching/ motivational strategies</th>
<th>Belief to increase the challenge for their students</th>
<th>Students reason for low self perception/ level of self perception after the activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bob/ Grade six</td>
<td>Realistic (meaning expectations are based on their learning ability)</td>
<td>Pedagogical/ dropping activities according to their ability level/adapting curriculum</td>
<td>No/differential treatment between low and high achievers</td>
<td>Learning difficulty/ learning ability/ enhanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary/ Grade 2</td>
<td>Realistic/just at their level/rigidly maintained for low achievers</td>
<td>Emotional strategies/ positive comments and feed back/ flexible approach in handling of curriculum/ easy tasks/ working at their level/ reinforcing concepts</td>
<td>No/ differential treatment between low and high achievers</td>
<td>Mixed ability grouping/ learning difficulty/ enhanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malinda/ Grade 3</td>
<td>Realistic/just at their level</td>
<td>Emotional strategies/ positive comments/ working at their level</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Learning ability/ enhanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rena/ Grade 1</td>
<td>Realistic/just at their level/ rigidly maintained for low achievers</td>
<td>Emotional strategies/ working at their level/easy tasks</td>
<td>No/ differential treatment between low and high achievers</td>
<td>Learning ability/enhanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leanne/ Grade 1 to grade 6 Coordinator as well</td>
<td>Realistic</td>
<td>Emotional strategies/ breaking tasks into small chunk/ tailoring instruction</td>
<td>No/but showing a bit of high expectations</td>
<td>Learning difficulty/ enhanced</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Effect of Pedagogical Strategies

These teachers appear to use a range of ways, such as reinforcing concepts, tailoring their instructions and adapting the curriculum to children with learning difficulties who have generally lower academic self perception (Montgomery, 1994) to enable their students to do the tasks successfully and
feel motivated. But when teachers would not give challenging tasks to their students and keep them on lower, easier tasks and feel happy whatever their students do (as mentioned by Rena, Malinda and Mary). This may make their students too relaxed and they may develop a ‘habit’ of doing only easier things and will not try for harder things. This may hold them back from achieving better. And the students who are most likely to develop a low self image that he can do only easy tasks may retain this image throughout the rest of their lives. Researchers for example Diamond, Randolph and Spillane (2004) found that in some schools teachers who had a strong sense of responsibility for students’ performance adjusted their instructional practices to meet students’ needs and they did not look only at their students’ deficits. Researchers (e.g. Atwell, 2001; Ross & Gray, 2006; Wertheim & Leyser, 2002) also report that high efficacy teachers try harder, use management strategies that stimulate student autonomy, attend more closely to low ability student needs, and modify students’ ability perceptions. Thus, this shows quite clearly that a teacher’s own sense of responsibility and self efficacy counts a lot in the process of forming self images by the students and teachers need to aware of their important influence. Teachers need to have high self efficacy and high expectations for themselves in order to help children to have high self perception (Diamond, Randolph and Spillane, 2004). Researchers (e.g. Parsons, Kaczala and Meece, 1982) also found that expressions of high expectations raised students’ confidence. Thus the role of an educator is of immense importance in improving their students self perception by demonstrating high expectations for their students to motivate them to learn.

This issue of promoting self esteem in students to enhance their academic achievements is clearly an important issue for these teachers. If teachers are able to build a high self perception for these students they will be motivated to achieve better throughout their lives as this high self image will stay with them forever (Velez, 2006). These teachers reported that they project onto their students the kind of expectations they have for them, in direct or indirect ways, whichever they choose as being best for their students. They convey to their students, through their behaviour, that they see strengths and weaknesses. These teachers believe their students, in turn, formulate self images and expectations for themselves based on the way they have been conveyed to them. These teachers’ ideas are consistent with Deans (1996), who argues that small children see themselves in the eyes of others (teachers, parents and other adults) and form self images. With high expectations they are more likely to form high self-images and with low expectations their self-image is lowered. Only one teacher Leanne mentioned in her interview that she breaks the tasks into little chunks to make them easier for her students to accomplish them and shows a small level of high expectation to motivate her students. That is a matter of serious concern, whether the other four teachers might inadvertently be developing
low self images in students by conveying their low expectations for them only?

**Effect of Emotional Strategies**

These teachers reported that they use different emotional strategies to help boost their students’ self esteem, especially if they have developed negative self perceptions for themselves. They believe their positive feedback motivates and negative feedback demotivates students (Rubie-Davies, 2007; Velez, 2006). These teachers’ ideas also align with Lindsay and Dockrell (2000) who argue that negative feedback and failure at school will cause frustration and establish lower self image but with each success at school children feel motivated and feel encouraged to learn. However Babad (1990) reports that, even though teachers try to provide emotional support and show more concern and vigilance in teaching low-expectancy students, the fact remains that these low achievers are the victims of more negative teacher affect. Moreover, these teachers communicate their expectations to their high and low achievers differently. They challenge their high achievers and give lower level tasks to their low achievers. It is understandable that these teachers are not giving challenging tasks to their low ability students because they fear that when their students will fail they will be demotivated and develop low self images. But as Good & Brophy (2000) indicate if teachers communicate their low expectations to their students over a long period of time it’s more likely that negative self-fulfilling effects will occur, rather than sustaining expectations effect, which are more devastating. From a phenomenological point of view, this differential treatment between high and low achievers based on their teachers’ preconceived notions about ability will result in lasting low self images if teachers keep communicating their low expectations to their students.

**Challenges of Mixed Ability Grouping to Motivate Students**

These teachers reported issues with mixed ability groupings as well. However research has shown that working in small ability groupings is actually good for students as they work in close proximity with teachers (Benn& Chitty, 1996). Alpet (1974) and Weinstein (1976) suggest that whole class settings often give an impression of teachers’ favouritism of high expectation over low expectation students, whereas small group settings show few differences and teachers more intensively involved with low expectation students. Lyle (1999) argues that mixed ability grouping is effective for ‘cognitive processes’ particularly to develop in-depth understanding of difficult concepts in collaboration with others. Stevens and Crawley (1994), McNamara and Moreton(1997) highly recommend mixed ability grouping as they found such grouping is highly effective in enhancing students’ motivation, self concept and social skills. Furthermore,
Researchers Jussim and Harber (2005) found less powerful effects of self-fulfilling prophecies in ability grouping than heterogeneous classes. These small group settings are no doubt challenging for these teachers but researchers (e.g. Johnson & Johnson, 1990, 1994; Kagan, 1995) argues that teachers need training to run these groups effectively. As far as expectations are concerned, it is reasonable for teachers to have different expectations of students because all individuals are different. But teachers’ expectations should not be lower for anyone and should not be rigidly maintained (Babad, Inbar, and Rosenthal, 1982; van Houtte, 2006). That may result in Galatea effects that can hamper students’ academic achievements. Teachers need to keep their expectations high and communicate them as clearly as possible to let the Golem effects to occur to enhance their students’ academic achievements (Rubie-Davies, 2006). However teacher-student interaction is also important in this regard. Teachers’ differential treatment towards low and high achievers within mixed-ability groups may set in motion negative self-fulfilling effects (Babad, Inbar, and Rosenthal, 1982; Gottfredson, 1995; Jussim & Harbar, 2005; Kuklinski and Weinstein, 2000) which may have an adverse effect on students’ motivation and self concept. This will impede their students learning instead of augmenting it. Thus, mixed ability grouping is challenging yet can be effective if handled appropriately.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study reveals a strong correlation in teacher understandings between motivation and self perception. Through the interplay of teachers’ expectations, teachers can motivate their students to learn by boosting their self esteem. These teachers are trying to provide them with opportunities and make sure their students succeed and show their trust and belief in their students’ ability to succeed. Like Velez (2006), they argue that “instructors demonstrate belief in student’s abilities and validate self-worth’ (p.16). Velez (2006) argues that the inward belief to succeed is central to motivation and is essential for lifelong success. Velez (2006) also strongly claims that educators can cultivate this self worth in themselves, their classrooms and their students through their intrinsic belief in them. Without that students cannot be motivated in a real sense.

These teachers need training in classroom management skills regarding discipline and running activities with mixed ability groups. Small group activities are very effective in engaging children and for allowing teachers to pay personal attention to them. However, managing group activities is challenging especially when low- ability students are also involved in the group activity (Doyle, 2004). Researchers (e.g. Doyle, 2004) place great emphasis on management and rated it higher than instruction because it requires alertness and skills on the part of teachers. Doyle (2004) claims that if teachers lack good management skills then the whole activity
will be fruitless. Thus it becomes imperative for a teacher to have some training in handling low-expectancy students during group work.

Thus this paper confirms the validity of the concept of the interconnectivity between motivation, self perception of students and teacher expectations. In order to motivate children, teachers believe they need to enhance their self perception. Low self perception is understood to lead to lower levels of motivation, which in turn result in lower academic achievements or vice versa (Lindsey and Dockrell, 2000). Thus they together have a profound impact on students’ achievements. The study, in unison with others (eg Wigfield & Eccles, 2000), clearly reveals the fact that a lot more learning is taking place in classrooms where children are motivated to learn.

To conclude the study clearly shows that all five teachers believe in having realistic expectations and working just at their students’ level. Moreover they do not believe in pushing their students too hard in order to achieve better, fearing that they might feel demotivated if failed to accomplish the task. My concern is if teachers are keeping children on easy tasks and providing them with positive feedback and comments all the time, these students will become “habitual “of such a treatment for the rest of their lives and will not strive to do difficult tasks and will always achieve ‘just at their level’ as expected by their teachers. Furthermore they will always depend on teachers’ positive comments/feedback to develop positive self concept and motivation to enhance their achievements. Hence low expectations of teachers can make the life of a teacher ‘easier’ and in ‘justifying’ themselves for their students low academic achievements. Having said that, teachers should not rigidly maintain their low expectations and teaching strategies specifically for low achievers and should not take for granted the kind of work they are doing to avoid the self-fulfilling prophecy affects to occur. The display of at least some high expectation for themselves and for their students would help these students to break the barrier that may come in their way to better achievements. Thus teacher expectations for their students have important implications. Further research is required on how to use the interconnection between teacher expectations, students self perception and motivation effectively to maximize students achievements.
References


