Factors that influence teacher’s motivation to foster self-regulation in young learners: Results of a research study in Singapore

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To share findings about

• an action research project

• the issues we face when fostering self-regulation in our Singaporean children

• the factors that trigger teachers to change their classroom management strategies
Children who are self-regulated learners usually show active learning behaviours and personal responsibility towards achieving their goals.
What is “self-regulation”?

Tick the boxes which you think are most appropriate.
When do your children stay focused at a task without adult’s assistance?

Tick the boxes which you think are most appropriate.
Self-regulation is defined as the child’s ability to:

- communicate needs, wants, and thoughts verbally
- sustain attention and be enthusiastic and curious in new activities
- inhibit impulsivity and follow directions
- take turns and be sensitive to other children’s feelings

(Blair, 2009)
Introduction

• Despite the ongoing emphasis in teachers’ professional training in early childhood programs, regarding the importance of fostering self-regulation skills in our children, it has been observed that children still lack these important skills.
Hence, in order to find out the factors that influence teachers’ motivation to foster self-regulation in young learners, a research team worked with teachers of two child care centres in Singapore, to help them implement some classroom management strategies that may help promote self-regulation.

This report is part of a bigger scale action research project.
Research Question Investigated

What factors motivate teachers to foster self-regulation in young children?
Setting and Sampling

- **Setting**
  - Two independently-run child care centres which are part of an organisation in Singapore.
  
  - Two class teachers from each of the respective Kindergarten 1 classes participated in the research study.
Setting and Sampling

• *Sampling*

– The child care centres were selected through convenience sampling.
Methodology

• The small scale qualitative action research study was conducted in a naturalistic setting in two child care centres.

• The research method comprised a *before-and-after* intervention to investigate if differences were found in the children’s behaviour and the consequential teacher’s motivation, before and after the implementation of some classroom management strategies.
Research method

(A) Pre-test

1. Interviews were conducted to find out teachers’ views on self-regulation as a strategy to support children’s learning.

2. An hour classroom observations for each teacher were conducted at the 2 centres

(B) Research Intervention (2 months)

Teacher’s training: Concept of “self-regulation” was shared with the teachers including some suggested strategies to help foster children’s self-regulation ability.

* Research members monitored the progress of the teachers and the children through an ongoing communication with the teachers
Research method

(C) Post-test

1. interviews were conducted to find out teachers’ views, (if any) on changes in self-regulation as a strategy to support children’s learning.

2. 2-hour classroom observations for each teacher were conducted at the 2 centres
Pre-Test Interview Questions

1. Describe a typical day in your classroom (your teaching routine)
2. In your view, what is self-regulation?
3. Do you think your children are focused during class activities without direct instructions by an adult? Why?
4. Can you describe the type of strategies you have used to help children cultivate self-regulation?
5. Are you satisfied with your classroom management situation now?
6. Do you face any challenges in getting children to stay focus on their tasks?
Post-Test Interview Questions

1. Do you see any difference in the children’s attention during the class activities after the suggested intervention strategies?

2. Did any of the strategies help children to improve their self-regulation? An example?
Research Tools

• Questionnaires/Semi-structured interviews

• Video camera

• Observation records
Results of the Study
Results to the research question

“What factor/s motivate teachers to foster self-regulation in young children?”

• Teacher-child interaction style
• Teachers’ evaluation of their own classroom management practices
• Teachers’ knowledge of “the Concept of Self-Regulation”
Results to the research question

“What factor/s motivate teachers to foster self-regulation in young children?”

• Teachers’ understanding of the benefits of self-regulation to children and to themselves
• Lessening of teachers’ work stress
• Working culture and practices of child care centre
Teachers’ motivation to foster self-regulation skills in the children include:

1) their cultural practices which determine their interactive teaching style with the children
   Teacher’s classroom management style was more influenced by their cultural background than their pedagogical knowledge;

2) their understanding of the benefits of self-regulation—after seeing the benefits to themselves and to the children, they were more convinced to put in effort in their daily practice.
Teachers’ motivation to foster self-regulation skills in the children include:

3) their emphasis on academic delivery over other aspects of the children which contribute to high work stress level

4) evaluation of their own classroom management practices- the more dissatisfied a teacher was with her practice, the more she was willing to try.

5) the working culture and practices in their own child care centre- given support, the teacher would have a higher motivation to step out of her comfort zone to try new methods to manage her children.
Take a look at the following video and pay attention to the children’s behaviour in the respective groups.

Did you observe the characteristics of ‘self-regulation’?

Tick the boxes which you think are most appropriate.
Video
Implications for best practices

Teaching to enhance Development & Learning

- Give children time and opportunities to problem-solve and negotiate amongst themselves

- Assign responsibilities to children

- Both class teachers need to adopt similar behaviour management practices for consistency
Implications for best practices

✔ Allow more time in small group activities

✔ Formulate and reinforce rules more often to help children remember

✔ Have learning centres that are attractive and engaging to the children
Professional pathways

✓ Plan learning experiences - discuss self-regulated learning and link it to pre-school learning outcomes

✓ Continuous professional development and mentoring will aid teachers to support children’s self-regulated learning
How can we bring ‘self-regulation’ home?

Open discussion
Implications for best practices

**Home-school connections**

- Advocate for self-regulated learning: get parents involved if possible

- Document children’s progress in self-regulated learning and share with parents and the community
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