

Go with the flow

Looking at student motivation in your class

Rationale

Motivation is arguably the most important factor affecting how much your students learn. Challenge is a crucial element of motivation, so it is a good idea to look at your teaching on a regular basis in terms of how easy or difficult the work is for your students.

Activity

To reflect on how your students are reacting to a lesson and raise your awareness of the level of challenge in your class.

Note

Csikszentmihalyi has defined 'flow' or 'satisfaction' as an optimum state of affairs where challenge and skill are matched.

- Low challenge combined with high skill and a lot of confidence leads to frustration and boredom ('flight').
- High challenge with low skill and a lack of confidence leads to anxiety ('fight').

This can be represented in the first diagram opposite.

Step One

On a piece of A4 paper, sketch a diagram like the one opposite.

Step Two

As you are teaching, map the different lesson stages and activities into the chart, according to your perceptions. There is a completed example opposite.

Step Three

After the lesson, look at your chart. Ask yourself the following questions:

- How could I achieve more *flow*, less *flight* and less *fight* next time?
- How could I move some of the items in 'Flight' and 'Fight' into the middle 'Flow' section, matching both challenge and skill for my students?

Variations

Instead of thinking of the group as a whole, focus on one individual and map their 'flow' in your lesson.

Fill in a 'flow diagram' for your own life as a teacher. When do you feel you are in each of the three zones

