

# Internal Interest or External Performing? A Qualitative Study on Motivation and Learning of 9th Graders in Thailand Basic Education

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## Abstract

This qualitative research was the first academic attempt to study and discuss the internal and external motivation in learning of students in basic education schools in Thailand. The study addressed two research questions to analyze similarities and differences in learning motivation or interest and teachers' enhancement or discouragement.

- 1) What kind of learning motivation differences were there in Thai classrooms in basic education schools?
- 2) How was the short-term or long-lasting motivation of learners taking place and supported by the teacher?

The data were collected between February and March 2014 in three anonymous schools using observation and questionnaire. English and Mathematics lessons were observed. The teachers and randomly selected students answered the motivation and learning questionnaire after the observation. The two subjects and the level of students were determined in consideration of PISA as well as other international surveys on learning. The expected outcomes were to analyze the learning motivation of ninth graders in three different school types and examine the group and individual motivation states.

The study showed no low motivation in any of the schools. However, the students clearly lost internal motivation and situation-based interest when they were not supported. The motivation in English classes was lower than in mathematics. The more the teachers gave space for different learners and encouraged innovativeness, the better the students' motivation was. However, in most cases, the teachers' motivational support addressed only at the group level. Their approach was mainly controlling and less space-giving. The findings urge for more attention on developing motivation enhancement skills in teacher education and in-service training. Second, the motivation of students should be researched in comparative studies and also nationwide. Third, schools should be more open for research-based development.

**Keywords:** motivation, learning, interest, teacher, student

## 1. Goals, Methods and Expected Outcomes of the Study

The purpose of this research was to study the motivation in classroom learning situations in Thai Basic education system, in schools in Bangkok in particular. To observe similarities and differences of students' motivation and learning in a qualitative sense, this research was conducted in three different types of basic education schools with ninth graders. The research had dual approaches, focusing on learners' motivation and learning and, second, teachers' activities regarding the motivation, support and learning. Given the qualitative nature of the study, this paper does not attempt to produce a definitive understanding of motivation and learning in Thai basic education. Instead, it aims to describe the tendencies and phenomena of Thai students' motivation and learning that have their own value as a proven tendency in Bangkok and provide suggestions for wider country case learning and motivation topics to be researched further. This study aimed to answer the following research questions (RQs):

- 1) What kind of learning motivation differences were there in classrooms in Thai basic education schools?
- 2) How was the short-term and long-lasting motivation of students taking place and supported by the teacher?

Very few or so far no research has contributed about the motivation and learning of students in basic education in

Thailand. Consequently, an outcome of this research will be the first analysis on class-level learning motivation as well as similarities and differences in motivation in the schools of Bangkok. The findings from this study would suggest some updates to teacher education, specifically whether in-service teacher training or coaching might be useful in Thai schools to enhance the students' motivation and learning. In addition, the findings will shed light on the students' motivation and development at the individual level in relation to their performance in learning situations. These findings will then create opportunities for discussions based on related theories about motivation and learning, and may reveal development trends such as pedagogy to support different learners.

Three schools in Bangkok were chosen to be the research field due to the qualitative approach and the physical availability of the schools during the research time. The information about the schools as well as their teachers and students is kept anonymous. The schools represent public, private and university demonstration schools. This school selection offered perspectives about the characteristics of different school types in Thailand which may affect the funding and budgeting, administration, and student intake.

The data collection methods used to collect data in this study were observation and questionnaire with self-assessment. First, English and mathematics lessons in the three schools were observed by two observers using an observation form with guided questions, then after each observation, a self-assessment questionnaire was given to the teacher and another one for two randomly selected students, male and female, from the observed class. The observation form and the questionnaire for the teacher asked for the observer's and teacher's reflections about the students' "learning" during the lesson, the strategies or methods that the teacher used to enhance motivation, and the level of students' motivation in the lesson. Slightly different, the student questionnaire requested the self-assessment of one's own learning and the instructional activities or methods that would support their learning. The data collection was designed in line with a few selected qualitative studies on learning and motivation including Deci and Ryan (2002), Loukomies (2013), Niemiec and Ryan (2009), Palmer (2009), Reeve (2009) and Wisniewska (2013).

To focus more in qualitative analysis, several academic approaches were left outside purposefully, including a question of the gender and motivation (e.g. Wiggfield & Eccles, 2002; Eccles, 1987). The selection of the two subjects, English and mathematics, to be the focus of this study were because of a few reasons. The first subject was chosen due to its status as an international research language and also because of the relatively poor performance in English of Thai students shown in the national examination (National Institute of Educational Testing Service, n.d.). For the mathematics subject, it was chosen since mathematics is one of the in PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) subjects (OECD, n.d.), which creates an opportunity, to some extent, comparative information with other country cases. This same rationale also applies to the selection of ninth graders as the target participants in this study.

To ensure the reliability of the data, each lesson was observed and reflected on by five people: two external observers, the teacher, and two students from the observed class (randomly selected with no prior arrangement), providing data from three different sources for the purpose of triangulation. The data from all three sources were read and coded in order to describe the level of motivation and learning, the type of motivation, and the motivational enhancement strategies being observed in each lesson. A set of values ranging from negative (0) to good (4) was used to indicate the level of students' learning (L), internal motivation (MI), and external motivation (ME). The observed teachers, students and schools remained anonymous during the data analysis process. Only the researchers saw all the materials.

## **2 Learning and Motivation—Theories, Viewpoints and Approaches**

This study regards motivation, first, as a human basic attitude to any new phenomena, being close to natural, situation-based interest, as defined in Niemiec and Ryan (2009). In their self-determination theory (SDT), they explained that people are innately curious and interested and this natural curiosity could be used in learning occasions (e.g., a lesson) easily with good outcomes once the autonomy and independence of curiosity is accepted by others. In their opinion, people even love learning and desire to internalize the new knowledge, related customs and values that surround them. Referring to curiosity (Lowenstein, 1994), interest (Silvia, 2008), and coherence in knowing (Ryan, 1995), Niemiec and Ryan saw education as a positive process that enhances these natural characteristics. Yet too often educators may use external control, too close supervision, institutionalized monitoring and/ or evaluation to suffocate these natural sources of motivation (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; cf. Deci & Ryan 2002). In SDT theories, amotivation is a state where there is no intention to act for outcomes and means just "going through the motions," as Deci and Ryan contributed. On the other hand, motivation involves purposeful action to reach a certain objective (Deci & Ryan, 2002; cf. Loukomies, 2013). This study thus aimed to investigate the motivation and learning of students in classroom contexts and observe how the instructional approaches

mentioned in Niemiec and Ryan (2009) might affect motivation and learning.

In his study, Reeve (2009) concluded that teacher's controlling, institutional learning management measures even prevent students from learning. Regardless of this unwanted outcome, teachers often naturally and intentionally select an institutional approach and reduce the opportunities that curiosity and autonomous learning may offer (Reeve, 2009). In formally controlled situations, the joy of learning, interest and enthusiasm are then replaced by alienation, anxiety and boredom, as Niemiec and Ryan (2009) stated. Also Wisniewska (2013) named boredom as the "antithesis" of an interest. What they all called "intrinsic motivation" is here categorized as internal (long-lasting) motivation, having the characteristics in line with previously mentioned research. "Extrinsic motivation", the other kind of motivation, rising up from the systemic (pre)conditions set by education, is in this study named to be external, situation-based (shorter-termed) motivation. It may in brief be used to describe an action conducted to achieve a formal reward, or avoid a formal sanction (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; cf. Deci & Ryan, 2002; Wisniewska, 2013; Loukomies, 2013; cf. Dweck, 2002).

Contextualizing Niemiec and Ryan (2009) and Reeve (2009), "learning situation" means a lesson which has objectives. Reeve further explained that it may produce new knowledge, fresh understanding and/or behavioral models for "behavers." Being more open, this study accepts a "learning situation" to be a general context that is based on the situation in which learning occurred, as perceived by the self-assessment of students, the teacher, and the observers on a single lesson. This chosen meaning allows, first, everyone to be freed from documenting details of their learning. Second, since the motivation in a learning situation is the main interest for this contribution, no detailed learning outcomes need to be evaluated. Third, institutional control remains to be considered as an obstacle for motivation and learning enhancement if it was found during the lessons observed and analyzed.

Wisniewska (2013) contributed about individual interest, describing it to have an influence on students' choices of activities, intrinsic motivation, and cognitive strategies. The latter relates to present (important) engagement in actual activities and is called "situational interest". It is not long-lasting, she presented, but may lead to a more intrinsic (long-lasting) interest and motivation (Wisniewska, 2013; cf. Loukomies, 2013).

Palmer (2009) saw motivation as a necessary state for any learning, stating that in light of constructivist theories, no learning may take place without motivation. According to Palmer, interest as a precondition to motivation could be seen contextually to be personal and long-lasting or situation-based and thus shorter. He concluded personal interest to be more difficult to be influenced by teachers and situational interest to be more observable in classroom situations. Dweck (2002) stated motivation to be the key "ingredient" for achievements, referring to talented people. In her contribution, encouraging messages are motivating factors for success. Based on Palmer (2009) and Wisniewska (2013), this study mainly concentrated on observing and analyzing situational interest and consequently the motivation it enhanced in a learning situation. This paper also aimed to discuss the situational motivation and interest experiences on a personal level giving space for internal and external dimensions as they appear. Subject-based differences are purposefully given minor attention and discussion in the theoretical framework and approach chosen for this study (see Wisniewska, 2013; Loukomies, 2013). The theory about students' "beliefs" as enhancing motivation factors (Dweck, 2002) is here mainly a tool to name some phenomena that took place in learning situations.

### **3. The English Lessons—Observing Practices and Theories**

For the English lessons, the data collection was conducted in all three schools during the same week. School A was a public school. The number of students in the English class during the observation time was 19. Most of them achieved the lesson goals at a "good" level, according to the assessment of the two observers (researchers) and the teacher. The students reflected that the topic "Ordering and serving restaurant food" was interesting and that they had learned "some content" that they were not familiar with. How was their motivation supported? According to the observers and the teacher herself, the motivating measures were implemented mainly at the group level and compliments were used to enhance the positive atmosphere (cf. Dweck, 2002; Palmer, 2009; Wisniewska, 2013).

The student interests for the lesson varied between "liking" the teaching and listening to the teacher to "good" teaching that also was liked. Considering motivation theories, the main findings in School A English lesson refer to the institutional learning (Reeve, 2009; cf. Wisniewska, 2013) where the teacher's approach is external and the teaching follows a controlled institutional line, while students' curiosity and innovations were given less attention (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; cf. Wisniewska, 2013).

Irrespective of the external learning characteristics that dominated the classroom motivation atmosphere, most of the students seemed to be learning at least "some" of the topics. 10-16 students showed "moderate" to "good" motivation levels as a group. Less motivated students may indicate the lack of curiosity-based, natural interest that

had little space in lesson implementation. Individual learning motivation enhancement was to a large extent replaced by the institutional approach in teaching and learning. Regardless of this approach, both student respondents claimed the lesson to be “good” or “interesting” and no improvements were needed. Their motivation then seemed to be based on curiosity and long-lasting interest and had developed from situational interest (Reeve, 2009; Palmer, 2009; Wisniewska, 2013), since the topic of the lesson was close to the students’ everyday experiences and they managed to learn some. Pure situation-based interest occurred clearly only with the less motivated students and was not difficult to observe. They did what was needed to get the lesson done, going with and “through” their motions (Deci & Ryan, 2002; cf. Wisniewska, 2013).

School B was a private school. The observed English lesson for ninth graders dealt with reading comprehension. According to the observers (a researcher and a student teacher), most of the students achieved the learning goals at a “good” or “satisfactory” level. Also the teacher estimated most of the students had learned well, while the assisting teacher (who helped translate the lesson to Thai) estimated all students to have achieved the goals at all levels. Regardless of these findings, the observers found that the students did not need to think or answer any comprehension questions, neither to use English independently or creatively at all (cf. Deci & Ryan, 2002; Wisniewska, 2013).

The two teachers seem to view innovations and creativity to be the opposite. They reported having promoted critical thinking in the lesson using their motivating methods. These similar and opposite findings refer to Reeve (2009)’s interpretation of a naturally controlling, institutional teaching, and was further confirmed by the teacher’s statement that students’ copy of his answers to the papers was enough for a learning outcome and success in the test—for all. Formulating the expected outcomes by himself, the teacher also aimed for close supervision as mentioned by Niemiec and Ryan (2009). Little or no space for additional curiosity or student initiatives was left in the lesson. In terms of formal and external performing, the lesson was successful and theoretical “reward” (cf. Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Palmer, 2008; Deci & Ryan, 2002) occurred first, in the next test preparation, and second, in the positive atmosphere basing mainly on situation-based interest and short-term motivation to be able to repeat what the teacher just did.

Signs of internal motivation existed, however. The student respondents from School B suggested lesson improvements such as additional use of media application and supplementary contents out of the textbook (which was all the teacher used in the lesson, emphasizing the importance of his written answers). For the male student, the topic was “OK” and he learned enough to know something. The other student saw it similarly. Both of them liked the teacher but only one reported having listened to the lesson carefully. These views confirm close, supervising and institutional teaching with little or no space for internal motivation to be developed (cf. Deci & Ryan, 2002; Reeve, 2009; Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Wisniewska, 2013).

How was the motivation supported? Pedagogical motivation enhancement was observed to be done at the group level. The teacher acted as a role model reading all the text, questions and answers. The teacher (and the assisting teacher) considered they were encouraging students to use critical thinking, using what may be called “motivating messages” (cf. Dweck, 2002). One observer found the teacher was supporting the weaker students, while the other one saw it more to be a ready-made translation aimed for the group. According to the observers, the motivation levels of the students were from moderate to high. The teacher and the assisting teacher estimated the motivation of the students from moderate to high as well. In sum, formal performance, controlled institutional learning with a rewarding, test-oriented atmosphere and situation-based interest seem to have been typical for this lesson. The students would have wanted broader and more vivid contextualized lesson but still did their situation-based learning tasks. Not much space was left for them to create or innovate (cf. Wisniewska, 2013).

School C was a university demonstration school. The lesson addressed environmental topics. According to an observer (a researcher), most students achieved the learning goals in a satisfactory way, while the other observing student teacher estimated them to be fulfilled at a good level for most, while a few students did not participate. The teacher estimated that most of the students had reached the goals at a good level.

How did the teacher support the interest? Motivating pedagogical solutions were implemented at a group level, enhancing advanced students for more activities. The teacher tended to correct wrong answers immediately, yet felt she was encouraging the students’ critical thinking. Apart from this, the student teacher observer saw the teacher’s actions on multiple motivating levels including enhancing a positive learning atmosphere, promoting willingness for critical thinking at an individual level, and motivating at a group level—and correcting wrong answers at once. According to the student teacher observer, the students were highly motivated. She saw the teacher’s practices of rewarding teams to be promoting motivation as the continuous use of English did throughout the lesson. The teacher had sorted the students into three groups and every right answer produced a “credit” for the

team. On the other hand, the student teacher observer found that “punishing” the students who were not following the lesson was also enhancing a positive atmosphere and critical thinking. In our theoretical framework, all these findings refer strongly to institutional, closely supervising, controlling teaching. Less space for creative or innovative motivation enhancement was left (Niemic & Ryan, 2009; cf. Dweck, 2002; Wisniewska, 2013). Referring to Deci and Ryan (2002), this may also indicate “amotivated” students with no clear goals but just “by-passing” the lesson (see also Wisniewska, 2013).

On the students’ side, a situation-based learning interest was evident and further strengthened by “punishing” and credit-based rewards. Situational performance-oriented learning was also supported by their answers. The two randomly selected student respondents did not suggest any improvements to the lesson but considered they had learned with good motivation. One, however, expressed that he did not like lessons or school. It was unclear then for the observers what the reward “credits” for right answers meant for the students in the long run. In terms of assessment, those credits probably do not count; however, considering how much attention they got from the teacher. This again strengthens the situation-based interest and external motivation interpretation that seemed to have dominated this lesson and classroom activities. In terms of learning outcomes and attitudes, the lesson likely was successful as such but created no burning enthusiasm towards English learning.

In brief, differences in motivation and learning between the three schools were distinctive in English. The overarching common themes for all the lessons and learning was that most of the motivation activities were targeted at the whole class and motivating methods were implemented accordingly. The teachers seemed to have approached learning and motivation in controlling and institutional ways, like Niemic and Ryan (2009) as well as Palmer (2009) described (cf. Deci & Ryan, 2002; Wisniewska, 2013). Learning took place at a satisfactory level at least for most of the students—in line with the findings summarized above. Another similarity was the external, situation-based interest. In one school it arose from “rewards” or “punishments” and in another from students’ urges to have the right answers expected in the next test, as the teacher repeatedly said (cf. Wisniewska, 2013).

The teachers assessed the motivation status quite similarly with each other. However, at school B the teacher felt they were promoting critical thinking and good learning outcomes using the methods that allowed only a very limited space for the learners’ natural curiosity and internal motivation. On the other hand, the students “enjoyed” the lesson, but suggested having broader content and more lively presentations, while expressing that they had achieved some of the goals. Their opinions may indicate possible internal motivation according to Wisniewska (2013) instead of test-oriented pressure and external performance needs (cf. Loukomies, 2013). In schools A and C, the students did not suggest any improvements which leads the researchers to conclude that either the teaching was good enough, or they shared no interest in developing their motivation in the long run. Referring to school A, it was possible that the students really found the lesson interesting and useful enough in everyday life, also in the context of long-lasting motivation. In addition, the working methods of the teacher in school A have been found elsewhere to be more motivating but this does not justify claims about the same effects in Bangkok, remaining an interesting detail (cf. Wisniewska, 2013). In school C, the students then might have reflected and thought more about interest in English in an institutional context and as a situation-based interest for the lesson.

#### **4. Mathematics—Problem-Solving and Motivation**

The observations in Mathematics was conducted for ninth graders in the same public, private and university demonstration schools within the space of three weeks. The groups of students being observed may be the same or different from the English lessons. In light of the RQs, this is irrelevant however.

In School A, the learning outcomes of the observed mathematics lesson were assessed to be at the good level for the most of the students, according to the observers (student teachers). The topic of the lesson was decimals. Both of them reported seeing most of the students understood the topic and the teacher gave space enough for innovative problem-solving skills and supported students’ understanding with examples and assisting questions on classroom and individual levels (cf. Niemic & Ryan, 2009; Reeve, 2009; Wisniewska, 2013).

How was the motivation supported? Motivating measures were applied to the whole group, critical thinking was encouraged at the individual level and positive atmosphere was enhanced. The teacher gave positive feedback and encouraged an innovative atmosphere, paying attention to the students who showed difficulties in learning. The motivation level was moderate, and the observers saw “enthusiastic” students with various questions, making the lesson interactive and participatory. According to one observer, most of the students obviously enjoyed the lesson; they were “having fun”. However, some of the students were not interested in the lesson and had their own conversations. Observation outcomes speak for good, space-giving motivation, referring to a natural, long-lasting interest and motivation, which was supported by the teacher in learning (Palmer, 2009; Reeve, 2009; Deci & Ryan, 2002; Dweck, 2002; Wisniewska, 2013).

Furthermore, the mathematics teacher in School A also estimated that most of the students “learned” at the good level but some had difficulties due to their inadequate subject matter knowledge. The teacher also felt he had motivated the entire group and had acted as a role model for the students—this apparently worked well in that particular learning situation. He seemed to have given space enough for participatory learning in problem-solving at class and individual levels and this space then quite naturally launched higher motivation levels (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Palmer, 2009; Reeve, 2009; cf. Deci & Ryan, 2002). The teacher saw the motivation of the students to be moderate, expecting all the students to have this opinion and view. The two student respondents in School A told they had good motivation on an interesting topic. Both students expressed that they liked to be taught and also listened to the teacher. The male student also liked the teaching the way it was performed, having felt it to be good. Their answers reinforce the impression of good motivation that was supported by space-giving, participatory and creative, interactive atmosphere the teacher had stimulated at group and individual levels (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Palmer, 2009; Reeve, 2009; Wisniewska, 2013). They suggested some improvements, particularly more clarity and detailed examples, for the teacher—a more simple approach. In light of all the data, the suggested improvement indicates a good level of internal motivation identified in a situation, where the learning had already been good and liked (cf. Palmer, 2009; Reeve, 2009; Wisniewska, 2013; Silva, 2008; Loukomies, 2013).

In School B mathematics lesson, the learning of trigonometry was reflected to take place at the good or satisfactory levels for most of the students. The observers (two student teachers) disagreed in their findings. One found most of the students to be able to answer the questions and solve problems and the teacher’s motivation strategies were aimed for the entire group of students, while he also corrected the wrong answers immediately for the whole group. This observer reported the teacher used several examples and gave positive feedback for those who did well, enhancing their motivation to go further (cf. Dweck, 2002; Wisniewska, 2013). The motivation was observed to be moderate and some students did not pay attention to the topics but had their own talks, indicating boredom or “amotivation” state (Dweck, 2002; Wisniewska, 2013). Having different reflections on the lesson, the other observer saw learning as satisfactory and found that the students performed but did not quite understand. This observer also noticed that the teacher gave inadequate space for problem solving. Regardless of their performing the tasks, not all students could solve the problem. The teacher was observed to have good examples and give clear instructions but did not provide enough individual support. It was also noted that the teacher controlled the class with loud voice, referring to the institutional and supervising and/or controlling motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Palmer, 2009; cf. Reeve, 2009). According to this observer, the motivation was moderate. Consequently, students who could not solve the problem lost also their short-term interest and began to have their own conversations, chatting loudly at times. The motivation in a controlled, institutional learning atmosphere also changed with “motions” (cf. Palmer, 2009; Dweck, 2002; Deci & Ryan, 2002; Wisniewska, 2013).

The student respondents reported they were learning with “good” motivation about the interesting topics. The female student said that she did not fully concentrate on the lesson. The male student liked the good teaching, but suggested more problem-solving time. In brief, both students had probably felt more natural and long-lasting than only situation-based interest and still had it after the lesson (Palmer, 2009; Silva, 2008; Wisniewska, 2013). In sum, some students remained externally motivated, and some lost their short-term interest and behaved accordingly.

How did the teacher support the motivation? The mathematics teacher in School B estimated the group as heterogeneous in their skills. Subsequently, he had tried to set individual learning goals. His opinion was that most of the students learned most of the topics. His motivation strategies included providing encouragement that was targeted at weaker students (the positive feedback noted by the first observer) and promoting critical thinking. According to the teacher, the students’ motivation was moderate.

It seems that the observers saw the teacher’s plan in dualistic light differently from what the teacher intended. One was able to see the support the teacher had planned to be a motivating individual support for weaker students, while the other found it to be not enough in terms of learning—and thus at least situation-based motivation. These findings suggest considering the mathematics teaching in School B as an effort to give space for—the already existing natural, long-lasting interest (Palmer, 2009; Wisniewska, 2013; Loukomies, 2013) and improve the motivation of the students at the individual level inside the group. While the goals had been on long-lasting motivation based on internal interest, part of the outcome then was comprised from the loss of even the situation-based interest of some students (cf. Silva, 2008; Wisniewska, 2013). At the same time the teacher targeted the teaching for most of the students. He used feedback and several examples and tried to give space, encouraging the weaker students (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Palmer, 2009; Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; cf. Dweck, 2002). As such, the lesson had achieved its learning goals for most of the students and kept their motivation moderate. Apart from this, the students expressed good, long-lasting motivation level regardless of occasional drop-outs in some activities.

School C mathematics lesson was a case where most of the students learned with a good speed (velocity) according to both observers (student teachers). The observers agreed the topic to be so difficult that the students needed to concentrate and follow the teaching carefully. This refers straight to institutional and test-oriented motivation but may as well arise from the importance of the topic, as the observers noted (cf. Deci & Ryan, 2002; Palmer, 2009; Reeve, 2009; Wisniewska, 2013). However, one of the observers remarked that some students were not doing their own “informal” things, showing less situation-based interest (Palmer, 2009; Deci & Ryan, 2002). According to the observers, the teacher’s main motivating measures were the positive, “relaxed” environment and the prompt correction of wrong answers as well as the reinforcement of the right ones. They concluded the overall motivation of the students to be moderate.

The teacher estimated that most of the students had learned well. His own vision on motivation was to motivate and encourage the students at the group level. He wanted to support students’ individual thinking skills and saw the importance of correcting the wrong answers promptly. The teacher assessed the students’ motivation in his lesson to be moderate. He did not have remarks about the pre-existing learning or subject matter skills.

How did the students estimate their motivation? The female student respondent reported studying with good motivation, expressing the teaching style to be useful for her. The male student noted that the topic of the lesson was “OK” and he learned some content. While the female student expressed that she liked to be taught that way but did not listen carefully, the male student regarded teaching as good. He also reported that he liked it. No one suggested any improvements. This indicates again more strongly to external motivation (see Deci & Ryan, 2002; Palmer, 2009) that aimed for lesson-based performance in terms of learning and preparing for tests (cf. Wisniewska, 2013). On the other hand, both students expressed their liking, and thus institutional approach seemed to have been working in this subject (Palmer, 2009, Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; cf. Reeve, 2009).

To summarize the Mathematics lessons in brief, all lessons performed with moderate to good motivation according to the observers, teachers and students. Irrespective of this trend, one should note the participatory and space-giving teaching that produced high problem-solving and internal motivation shown throughout School A lesson. It was agreed by all the five persons who observed or reflected on the lesson. School B had a skillful and individualizing motivation effort that responded to different kinds of learners. Another major finding, the importance of Mathematics seemed to be highly recognized by most of the students and teachers. This status then created situation-based interest as well as long-lasting (internal) motivation in all schools, as Wisniewska (2013) concluded the motivation development to be at times (see also Loukomies, 2013). On the other hand, the lessons on solid institutional position and motivation measures may encourage the teachers to give more space due to the perceived status of the subject. School C seemed to have had a more institutional motivation approach. It was accomplished by situation-based motivation that may reflect the importance of the subject most of the students shared similarly with those from the other schools. Irrespective of this, School C motivation measures were aimed for the group more than in other schools, where the teachers planned and implemented individual learning motivation encouragement activities.

In order to compare the learning motivation in the three observed basic education schools to answer the first RQ, the arithmetic values ranging from 0-4 were assigned to indicate the level of the students’ learning motivation, as assessed by the observers, the teachers, and student representatives. Figure 1 shows the overall learning motivation of the students in the learning situations in both English and mathematics lessons. Figure 2 focuses on the two types of motivation—internal motivation (MI) and external motivation (ME).

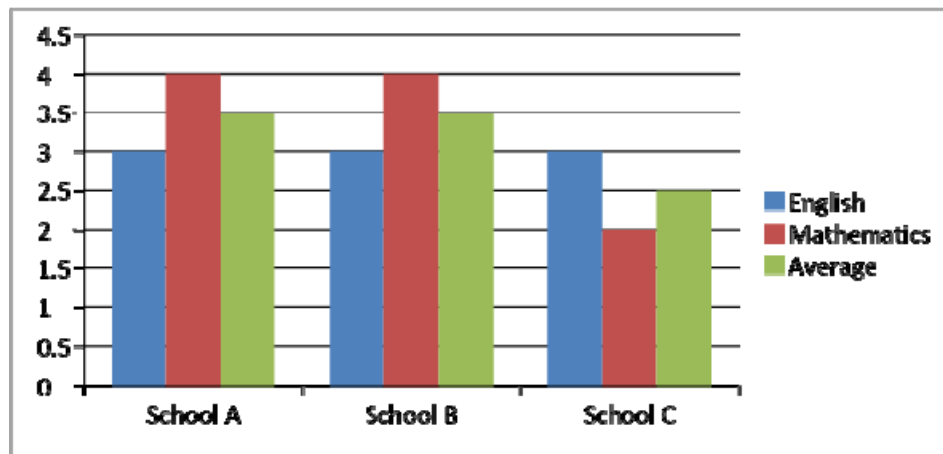


Figure 1. Learning motivation in English and mathematics in the observed schools

As shown in Figure 1, neither lessons nor school was observed to have low or negative learning motivation. Second, the motivation for English and mathematics in schools A and B shows similar trend in this comparison, which is opposite to the observation of this variable in School C. In schools A and B the tendency of the motivation for mathematics learning was higher than for English whereas the learning motivation for mathematics in School C was found to be lower.

When focusing on the internal motivation and external motivation specifically, the external motivation seems to be a little higher in learning mathematics than in English, as shown in Figure 2 below. Again, School C showed the opposite trend. The external motivation to learn English here was very high. These trends may indicate the meaningfulness and overall usefulness of the subjects from the students' perspectives, pointing out their "beliefs". On the other hand, they may tell about the teachers' activities and willingness to give space or even "courage" in their motivation enhancement. Another major finding is that there was less internal motivation to learn English than mathematics in these three schools and six lessons. These findings do not necessarily refer to the teachers' abilities, more likely they refer to the short-term "needs" that are close and meaningful to students' life, being obviously situation-based and developing or processing from external to internal. An option for internal motivation growth existed in those classrooms, as the data indicated.

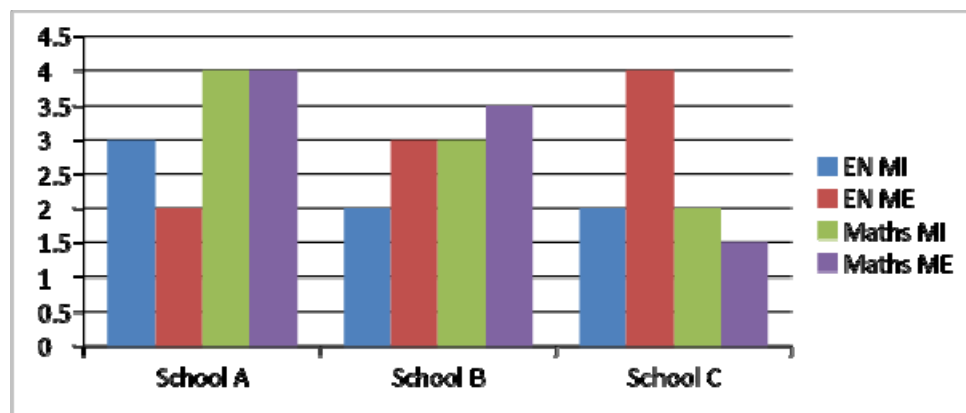


Figure 2. Internal (MI) and external (ME) motivation in English and mathematics in the observed schools

School A had higher levels of internal motivation to learn English than the others and the same emphasis was evident in mathematics. The external, short-term motivation was then similar to high internal motivation in mathematics. Schools B and C shared lower levels of internal and external motivation in Mathematics but "most of the students" learned. While looking at these two Figures, it should be reminded about the motivation measures the teachers in school A conducted for different learners. According to these findings, those measures seemed to enhance high levels of internal and external motivation better than in the other schools.



## 5. From Conclusions to Suggestions

To conclude the investigation on the motivation in a learning situation in the subjects taken into this study, one may summarize some common characteristics for all the lessons and motivation findings. First of all, the motivation was not shown anywhere to be negative. English was less motivating or interesting in a long-lasting, or situation-based, dimension than Mathematics. The more space the teachers gave for individual learning and encouraging learning environments, the better the internal interest and long-lasting motivation development was observed among the students. However, the teachers seemed to often select institutional and controlling approach, reducing the students' interest to a situation-based status or even less.

Suggestions for future research are obvious. First, one should study the best motivating enhancement and learning methods for Thai basic education classrooms from the viewpoints of the students. Second, a larger countrywide basic education study is needed to analyze the overall situation. This qualitative approach has shown some trends of the similarities and differences to be examined further. Third, action research for motivation levels and their "peaks" should belong to all teaching tool packages in every classroom. Access to the classroom learning situation should be made much easier for researchers to speed up the academic outcomes and have research-based suggestions for motivation enhancement. Fourth, an international comparative study would be useful in wider analysis and argument-based development plans.

Suggestions for the practical curricula and teacher education development are quite similar. More research-based teaching and pre-service teacher education courses will be needed. Increased awareness of the meanings, differences and importance of (intrinsic) internal and (extrinsic) external motivation should be taken into mentoring programs, in-service trainings and curricula development. The 21<sup>st</sup> century learning contexts and motivation enhancement should be driven into school-life and learning situations in ways that different students find meaningful and become motivated and more enterprising. Content knowledge as such only then follows, when the motivation is internal and long-lasting.

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