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**An Investigation of Teachers' Perspectives on  
Effecting Teaching Strategies Employed by Post-  
Primary Teachers in DEIS and Non DEIS Schools  
to Support Academic Motivation and Engagement.**

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*An Investigation of Teachers' Perspectives on Effecting Teaching Strategies Employed by Post-Primary Teachers in DEIS and Non DEIS Schools to Support Academic Motivation and Engagement.*

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## **Abstract**

This mixed-methods study investigated active teaching methodologies (ATM) employed by teachers to support academic motivation and engagement, while exploring the influence of socioeconomic factors on student motivation and engagement. The research included twenty-nine teacher surveys and two semi-structured interviews. According to the findings, all participants used ATM, which increased student motivation and engagement. However, classroom management issues, particularly in DEIS schools, hindered ATM implementation. Socioeconomic factors perpetuated educational poverty cycles. Teachers played a critical role in mitigating the impact of socioeconomic factors on students' academic success. The findings also highlighted the need for adequate training and CPD to effectively implement ATM.

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## List of Acronyms

ATM	Active Teaching Methodologies
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DES	Department of Education and Science
JCT	Junior Cycle for Teachers
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

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# **Chapter 1: Introduction**

## **1.1 Origin of the Dissertation**

This chapter delineates the background to the study and the rationale for choosing to investigate this topic. The foundations of education modules have provided the researcher with valuable insights into various theorists who have explored the field's fundamental concepts. The researcher developed a keen interest in the influence of socioeconomic factors on students' motivation and engagement in the school environment among other topics covered. Furthermore, the researcher has been researching and planning to implement ATM in the classroom in preparation for school placement in DEIS and Non-DEIS post-primary schools, recognising their potential to improve student learning experiences. Thus, the intention of this study is to examine teachers' perspectives on effective teaching strategies employed by post-primary teachers in DEIS and Non-DEIS schools to support academic motivation and engagement. This study examines how socioeconomic factors like family income, parental education level, race, and gender influence students' motivation and engagement in post-primary schools. Furthermore, key findings from this study will help provide insight into how equipped teachers are in implementing ATM in addition to pinpointing if there is a need for further professional development.

## **1.2 Background to Study**

By exploring relevant literature and theories in the field, this study seeks to understand how socioeconomic factors can shape students' educational experiences, as well as the effectiveness of ATM in addressing potential disparities. The study intends to gain a comprehensive understanding of these factors and their implications for future educational practice by looking into relevant literature and theories in the field.

Three-quarters of students in non-DEIS schools, compared to just over half of students in DEIS schools, had parents who expect them to complete a university degree (Nelis et al, 2021). Despite the fact that most differences in achievement are driven by home and parental characteristics, Torres (2018) emphasised the critical role of teachers as the most important school-level determinant of students' educational outcomes. Numerous studies have shown that teachers play an important role in shaping students' academic performance. Teachers must not only impart knowledge but also create a supportive and stimulating learning

environment. Similarly, Ekmekci and Serrano (2022) claim that teachers are the most important contextual factor influencing student achievement. The quality of instruction, instructional methods, and ability to engage students can all have a significant impact on their motivation, learning outcomes, and overall educational experience.

The strategies claimed by active learning have a long history in pedagogy and have gained attention in educational research to address potential disparities caused by socioeconomic factors. Furthermore, teachers can likely restructure the teaching and learning environment by providing different learning strategies to students and finding ways to motivate students to learn and to engage them in active learning (Rugutt and Chemosit, 2009). These methods encourage students to actively participate in the learning process, fostering critical thinking skills, comprehension, problem-solving abilities, and interest in the subject (Lundahl, 2008).

### **1.3 Rationale**

In light of the evolving world we live in, it is crucial for educators to possess the knowledge and skills required to effectively engage and motivate students in various educational settings. The primary objective of this research is to examine how teachers utilise their expertise and understanding to implement ATM, ultimately fostering academic motivation and engagement within post-primary schools.

**Therefore, the questions that drive this research are as follows:**

- What effective teaching methodologies do post-primary teachers employ in schools to support academic motivation and engagement?
- How do socioeconomic factors, such as family income, parental education level, race and gender influence students' motivation and engagement in post-primary schools?
- Do teachers feel adequately equipped and provided with the necessary resources to implement active teaching methodologies for their students?

The researcher hopes that the findings of this study will be useful in my future practice as a professional teacher, as well as in any potential publications that result from this work.



## **1.4 Dissertation Layout**

The dissertation is arranged into five distinct chapters. Chapter one presents the background to the study, highlighting the rationale behind the study, the research questions and the overall methodologies used. Chapter Two reviews relevant literature, opening the first section with a discussion on ATM, the advantages and barriers of using them to promote academic motivation and engagement; the second section will present socioeconomic factors and how they can influence student motivation and engagement; the third section will investigate how teachers are significant in promoting student motivation and engagement; the fourth section will conclude on the research analysed. The methodology is discussed in Chapter Three, which highlights the rationale for using a mixed method approach, for selecting different participants, and discusses the limitations of this method of data collection, as well as the ethical considerations. Chapter Four presents the main findings based on the themes that emerged during the analysis phase. The final chapter compares the findings and results of this study to the findings of previous studies discussed in chapter two in an attempt to triangulate the interpretation of the data with published material.

## **1.5 Conclusion**

Finally, summaries of the main findings are presented, with references to the main research questions and implications for future practice. This chapter also discusses recommendations for furthering this research and methods for improving this study.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The literature review will provide an overview of research that emphasises the importance of active teaching methodologies in promoting motivation and engagement in post-primary schools. It will investigate the difficulties that educators may face when implementing these methodologies in post-primary schools. In addition, the review will investigate the impact of socioeconomic factors on student motivation and engagement. Furthermore, it will investigate the impact of both intrinsic and extrinsic factors on students' motivation to learn, as well as how teachers can play an important role in fostering motivation and creating a positive learning environment. The information gathered from the literature review will be used to gain a better understanding of how active teaching methodologies can effectively support and enhance motivation and engagement among students in post-primary schools.

### **2.2 Active Methodologies**

Active methodologies are those that focus the teaching-learning process on the students as the protagonist of their own learning, promoting significant learning through their own practical experience, which lasts longer than rote learning (Rodríguez-García et al., 2022). Likewise, Kane (2004) implies that 'active' learning seeks to encourage independent, critical thinking in learners, encourage learners to take responsibility for what they learn and engage learners in a variety of open-ended activities to ensure they have a more protagonistic, less passive role than in 'the transfer of knowledge' view of education. Similarly, Hattie's (2012) 'visible learner' refers to making teaching visible to the student, such that they learn to become their own teachers, which is the core attribute of lifelong learning or self-regulation, and of the love of learning that we so want students to value. Likewise, Dewey outlined a pedagogical vision that is grounded in the active energies that drive human beings to understand themselves and the world around them (Voparil, 2008). Furthermore, Dewey's 'experiential learning', occurs when a person's judgement, feelings, or skills change as a result of living through an event (Beard, 2018). Kolb's experiential learning theory model depicts a cyclical four-phase process: concrete experience; reflective observation; abstract conceptualisation; and active experimentation. The model suggests that a learner must experience, reflect, think and apply learned content in a cyclical process (Andres, 2019).

An advantage of active learning, such as utilizing simulation, is that it requires students to make decisions, see the outcomes, and adapt or react to their decisions (McKeachie, 2013). This can stimulate curiosity and boost self-confidence. Similarly, Wolfe (2003) implies it also provides students practice in thinking, which leads to better and more effective decisions. It requires students to utilize higher-order thinking skills, such as synthesizing and evaluating information, not just information memorization and recall. Furthermore, one of the hallmarks of an active/experiential teaching strategy is that it promotes student engagement in the learning process by the use of multiple modes of instructional delivery. In addition, applying concepts via guided in-class exercises accompanied with real world examples is also a feature of active/experiential learning (Andres, 2019).

While there are many benefits of using ATM some researchers have noted that active learning may be dysfunctional under certain circumstances and it is not yet clear why active teaching/learning succeeds or fails in real-world settings (Markant et al. 2016). Similarly, Kane (2004) implied that active learning can be deceptive: because learners happen to be engaged in some kind of observable activity, this does not mean that they are necessarily the ‘subjects’ of their own learning, rather than objective recipients of information. Furthermore, Fuller et al. (2000) highlights that whilst the depth of understanding as a result of active learning techniques is difficult to assess objectively, it may accumulate over time with the consistent use of interactive methods (Revell and Wainwright, 2009). Incorporating cooperative learning into the classroom is a critical component of active learning. According to Powell and Kalina (2009) when students master completion of projects or activities in a group, the internalization of knowledge occurs for each individual at a different rate according to their own experience. Vygotsky believed that internalization occurs more effectively when there is a social interaction and embedded in a particular cultural setting. Similarly, Dewey argued that education should be concerned with transformative experiences, rather than solely concerned with knowledge (Beard, 2018).

Active learning is an important component of the Irish curriculum because it involves adapting teaching pedagogies to meet the diverse needs of the students in the classroom. As Black et al., (2004) explains, a learning environment has to be “engineered” by teachers to involve students more actively in the learning tasks. Similarly Vygotsky’s ‘Social Constructivist’ theory emphasises the role of social influences on cognitive development. Furthermore, Vygotsky's theory places a strong emphasis on the role and influence of

teachers, as well as how they can help students develop. Active methodologies must be well applied and put into practice, as they must be structured on the basis of solid approaches that have an impact on variables that generate significant learning (Rodríguez-García et al., 2022). Hattie's (2012) 'visible' aspect refers to making student learning visible to teachers, ensuring clear identification of the attributes that make a visible difference to student learning, and all in the school visibly knowing the impact that they have on the learning in the school. The effectiveness of active learning is partially related to instructional support (Wolfe, 2003).

### **2.3 Socioeconomic Factors**

Inequality in education is a structural issue that affects many societies around the world. Bourdieu proposed that "Habitus" is established primarily in the family, but in differentiated societies the school also plays a key role (Riley, 2017). Bourdieu highlights that symbolic power is formed and maintained by people within institutions. Similarly, Clancy (1995) highlights the educational system as an instrument of cultural domination; its real function is best understood in terms of the need for social control in an unequal and rapidly changing social order. Even before students go to school there is a structure of systems and policies in place. According to Parsons (1985), schools are important because they serve as a link between the family and society. Schools, particularly in the post-primary educational system, take on the role of agent and children are treated according to universalistic standards.

Furthermore, children tend to achieve a certain status in secondary school that prepares them for the transition into society. Furthermore, Mac (2009) found through his research that children from a poorer socio-economic background appear more often than not in the low performing band in schools. According to Mac's (2009) research, there is frequently a difference between the school environment and the child's home environment, which can have an impact on children's ability and school performance. Also, Giddens (2021) states that studies carried out in a variety of countries demonstrate that social and family background are the major influences over school performance and thus reflected in subsequent levels of income. Similarly, Bernstein (1975) states that children from various backgrounds develop different codes, or forms of speech, during their early lives, which affect their subsequent school experiences. Furthermore, Bernstein argues that lower-class children's speech represents a 'restricted code,' which is a specific way of using language that contains many unstated assumptions that speakers expect others to know (Giddens, 2021).

As teachers it is critical to identify strategies for overcoming the inequalities that students face, as each student comes from a different cultural background. Students from low socioeconomic families are frequently identified as difficult to discipline and comply within the school environment. Sullo (2009) highlights that students who derive from supportive home environments value their learning, therefore respond well to the reward/punishment model which exists in the majority of schools. Therefore it is important as teachers to identify students who might have a difficult home environment and might find school very challenging. Morcom (2014) believes that teachers have the ability to create a suitable learning environment within a school that accommodates in order to accommodate the variety of different intelligences. Morcom (2014) has a great point because as teachers we don't just educate students, we offer emotional support to them during difficult times. Also, schools prepare children for the roles they will occupy in their adult lives by socialising them into the values, knowledge and skills that a functioning society requires. Research studies indicate that environmental experiences during early adolescence have a greater influence on students' future education and career path than their experiences during late adolescence (Ekmekci and Serrano, 2022).

## **2.4 Motivation and Engagement**

When it comes to how a student learns and processes information their level of motivation is an important factor. Williams and Burden (1997) differentiated two aspects of motivation: initiating motivation which was concerned with the reasons for doing something and deciding to do something, and sustaining motivation referring to the effort for sustaining or persisting in doing something (Han and Yin, 2016). Similarly, Rugutt and Chemosit (2009) state that motivation has been defined as the energy and the desire that is innate within all individuals, and high levels directed toward a particular situation results in greater amounts of energy expended on that task. Studies have shown that when teachers offer an experiential learning and mastery-oriented classroom climate, students can become motivated to invest more effort and use deeper learning strategies (Andres, 2019). Locke and Latham (2002) noted that, to maximise task motivation, a task should be designed to be attainable and provide optimal challenge (i.e. equal to or slightly beyond skill level). Similarly, Valerio (2012) implies that allowing students to choose themes or topics enables new knowledge, skills and understandings to be made visible, as well as providing students with a sense of ownership over their work.

There are various types of motivation that a person can experience. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are the two main types that have a significant impact on a student's overall level of motivation. 'Goal theory' of motivation maintains that the perceived purpose of a task is a critical factor in the quality of engagement in the task (Locke and Latham, 2002). This theory describes two goal orientations, mastery goals and ego goals. Mastery goals are intrinsically motivating, self-referenced rather than based on normative comparison and concerned with increasing competence through effort (Rugutt and Chemosit, 2009).

Intrinsic motivation is defined as the performance of an activity or behaviour because of one's inherent satisfaction or goals, and not for a separable outcome (Ryan and Deci, 2000). A body of scientific research suggests that intrinsically laden academic environments enable students to be creative, self-empowered, self-disciplined and engaged (Bowman, 2011). Ego goals, in contrast, are extrinsically motivated with success determined in reference to others and concerned with displaying competence for others to see (Rugutt and Chemosit, 2009). Extrinsic motivation is defined as the act of performing an activity in order to gain a separable outcome or a reward. This is often seen as the more dominant motivation type within a person, and the reason for this is that as one grows up, society implements many ideals into a person that diminishes one's intrinsic motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2000).

Teachers are an influencing agent for student motivation. Teachers have been found to be the most significant contextual factor impacting student achievement (Ekmekci and Serrano, 2022). For instance, encouraging students in their pursuit for excellence in learning, providing positive feedback, being involved in positive interactions, remaining enthusiastic about students and student educational growth, and cultivating a positive classroom environment, have a strong impact on student academic motivation (Juarez, 2001). The real work of teachers is that of functioning as instinctive pride builders in the classroom (Bowman, 2011). Teachers can likely restructure the teaching and learning environment by providing different learning strategies to students and finding ways to motivate students to learn and to engage them in active learning (Rugutt and Chemosit, 2009).

Teachers in DEIS schools face significant difficulties in motivating students to learn and participate in class activities. Principals indicated in the 'Beyond Achievement' report about three-quarters of students in DEIS schools identified unauthorised student absenteeism as a hindrance to learning. Furthermore, two-thirds of students in DEIS schools had principals

who indicated that students not being attentive was a barrier to learning (Nelis et al., 2021). These barriers make it extremely difficult for teachers to implement active learning methodologies in the classroom in DEIS schools. As previously stated, the influence and perspectives of the family on education have had a significant impact on students' attitudes toward secondary school. According to studies, less than one-third of students in DEIS schools have a parent who has a university degree, suggesting that they may lack role models for university attendance. Furthermore, less than half of DEIS students are expected to complete a university-level qualification (Nelis et al., 2021).

## **2.5 Conclusion**

The evidence presented shows that ATM promote student-centered learning, critical thinking and practical application of knowledge. However, ATM implementation may face difficulties, particularly in DEIS schools where socioeconomic factors can have an impact on students' motivation and engagement. Motivation and engagement are essential for effective learning, with both intrinsic and extrinsic factors influencing students' motivation to succeed. Teachers play an important role in motivating students and creating a positive learning environment. Educators can strive to create inclusive and engaging learning environments that cater to the diverse needs of students by understanding the complexities of these factors and implementing appropriate strategies.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The researcher used a mixed-methodology analysis of teachers' perspectives of effective teaching strategies in post-primary schools to support academic motivation and engagement. Interviews were the main source of qualitative data, permitting the researcher to observe and gather more descriptive data (Creswell, 2013). Similarly, according to Scott and Morrison (2006, p. 182), in qualitative research, 'the focus is one seeing the world through the eyes of those being studied'. Online survey's gathered quantitative data that were used to collect numerical data for statistical analysis. Creswell (2013) states that by gathering qualitative and quantitative data, the researcher is obtaining statistical and personal data, which can lead to a more in-depth understanding of the research question. Similarly, Johnson and Christensen (2014) implies 'that it is wise to collect multiple sets of data using different research methods and approaches in a way that the resulting mixture has complementary strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses'. The quantitative data from the questionnaires were analysed to identify trends among the participants, while the qualitative data from the interviews were used to determine why participants associate certain teaching strategies with effective methods of motivating and engaging students in post-primary schools. This section informs readers about the methodology, data analysis, participants, and limitations of research. This chapter described how study participants were chosen, as well as any ethical concerns that may arise during the study's course.

### **3.2 Selected Methods**

As previously stated, a mixed-method approach was used to collect qualitative and quantitative data. Mixed methods are particularly well-suited to multilevel investigations because they allow for the deliberate and strategic integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches throughout the research process, providing a way to understand processes and effects between levels (McCrudden and Marchand, 202).

Braun and Clarke's (2006) distinction between qualitative and quantitative research is somewhat simplified, they write that the most basic definition of qualitative research is that it uses words as data, collected and analysed in all sorts of ways. Quantitative research, in contrast, uses numbers as data and analyses them using statistical techniques. Furthermore,



Creswell (2013) implies that in qualitative research, the data collection and analysis are simultaneous activities. This procedure differs from traditional approaches in quantitative research, in which data collection occurs first, followed by data analysis.

Denscombe (2010) states that the mixed methods approach essentially acts as a “third paradigm” for research purposes. He believes that the method fosters a podium of different beliefs and realistic actions. Similarly, according to Creswell (2013), combining qualitative and quantitative data collection methods provides for a deeper knowledge of a research issue. During this research there were two semi-structured interviews carried out with teachers with more than three years’ experience. Interview questions were open-ended to encourage a natural flow of information, thus enabling deeper responses (Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2011). Similarly, Freeboy (2003) describes the semi-structured interview as beginning with a ‘predetermined set of questions, but allows some latitude in the breadth of relevance’. The interviews allowed the respondents and the interviewer to interact in a relatively informal and unstructured atmosphere, encouraging participants to develop ideas, answers and precise opinions dynamically beyond the questionnaire. The questions were piloted and tested on one experienced teacher to ensure they were appropriate and aligned with the research questions. The researcher collected quantitative data from online surveys completed by experienced teachers working in DEIS and non-DEIS post-primary schools in Ireland. It is customary for the researcher to ask brief, open-ended questions that make no assumptions.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

#### **3.3.1 Qualitative Research**

The researcher conducted two semi-structured interviews to collect qualitative data. Both teachers were chosen from a private city school but have prior experience working in DEIS schools. Each participant was given a 'Research Information Sheet' and a 'Consent Form' prior to the interview, which explained the format and purpose of the interview (Appendix A and C). Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Creswell (2013) implies qualitative researchers analyse their data by reading it several times and conducting an analysis each time. Each time

you read your database, you develop a deeper understanding about the information supplied by your participants.

A standard practice for qualitative research has become accepted in which interviews are conducted, the data are coded, and the results reported in the form of summaries written in formal language (Packer, 2011). With the consent of participants interviews were recorded. Sapsford and Jupp (1997) highlight that the semi-structured style interviews allow for elaboration of the interviewees regarding questions asked, enabling the researcher to gain rich insight into the mindset and thought process of the participants.

### **3.3.2 Quantitative Analysis**

An online survey was used to collect information from qualified post-primary teachers working in a DEIS and a private school for this study (Appendix D). The researcher will be collecting primary data which involves directly obtaining responses from people (Fallon, 2016). The teachers were chosen at random and the sampling size was 29 returned online questionnaires. Each participant was given a 'Research Information Sheet' and an 'Online Consent Form' that contains a detailed description of the research study. The questionnaire included reflective questions to which respondents can provide more detailed responses, questions to be answered on a five-point scale, and questions to collect demographic and other potentially useful information. The questionnaire collected data and information to support the qualitative analysis in this research study.

There are multiple advantages to using an online survey to collect quantitative data in two different post-primary schools. As Minnaar and Heystek (2013) highlight, respondents may complete the survey in their own time, taking as much time as they need to answer individual questions, which is convenient. Furthermore, Wilson and Laskey (2003) point out that once respondents submit their complete surveys, the researcher automatically receives the raw data, which is stored in a database from where it can be exported effortlessly to a spreadsheet and be readily available for analysis. Fallon (2016) implies that by conducting quantitative research, your analysis allows you to accomplish three important goals. First, you describe your data, Second, you ascertain whether the variables you examined in your sample are likely related in the population. Third, you determine whether the relationships or effects are important.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

Analysing the data began with the process of comprehending; comprehension was achieved when collected data facilitated an in-depth inquiry (Mayan, 2009). While analysing the information, the researcher John Tukey coined exploratory data analysis (EDA). Tukey implies that exploratory data analysis is an attitude, a state of flexibility, a willingness to look for those things that we believe are not there, as well as those we believe to be there (Raghavender 2019). Similarly, Marshall and Rossman (2006), imply the researcher must immerse themselves in the data during the first phase of the research process.

The researcher analysed the data after the participants completed the interviews and surveys from the research study. To ensure that a potential bias from a specific approach is not repeated in other ways; quantitative data can be used to supplement or elucidate qualitative data, thereby improving the description (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). The researcher examined the interview data by listening to and transcribing both interviews in order to become acquainted with the transcripts. Any emergent or recurring themes that addressed the research questions were identified, coded, and analysed further. Thematic analysis can be described as ‘a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within the data’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Similarly, Howitt and Cramer (2008, p.328) states that the task of the researcher in thematic analysis is to ‘identify a limited number of themes which adequately reflect their textual data’. To ensure the required level of analysis was conducted on the data, the researcher followed the Braun and Clarke (2006) phases of thematic analysis, as outlined in the below table.

Step	Phase	Description of the Process
1	Familiarise yourself with your data:	Transcribing the data, reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2	Generate initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3	Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes and gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4	Reviewing the themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic map of the analysis.
5	Defining and naming the themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6	Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

**Table 3.1** Phases of Thematic Analysis. Source: Braun and Clarke (2006, p.87)

The researcher collected survey data using Google Forms for analysis and interpretation and basic descriptive analysis was performed using Microsoft Excel. Throughout the analysis, graphical data such as charts and graphics were used to represent the data. To ensure confidentiality, all files were encrypted for quantitative analysis and stored in a single, password-protected application. Interviews were recorded as mp3 files on the researcher's password-protected laptop and were uploaded and transcribed using Sonix, an automated transcription service. The interviews were then typed in Microsoft word and saved on the researcher's password-protected laptop.

By analysing the interview and survey responses, the researcher conducted theme analysis by locating repeated subjects in accordance with the research questions in this study (Patton, 2005). The mixed methodology approach revealed themes that were inextricably linked. The information gathered was used to evaluate the mixed-method strategy. The researcher was able to write the analysis for this research paper after collecting data from participants in order to produce the key findings.

### **3.5 Ethics**

Ethical approval was granted by Hibernia College's Ethics Committee and the principles of the Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (BERA, 2018) were applied to ensure that the study adhered to all relevant ethical standards. Prior to beginning the research, the researcher obtained written permission from the School Principal and members of the faculty. Each faculty member who was asked to complete a questionnaire or participate in an interview as part of the research project was given a detailed letter of explanation and a consent form. During the research study, no participants' identities will be revealed, nor will their trust be jeopardised in any way. Furthermore, it was made clear to participants in the Research Information Sheet and Consent Form that they have the right to withdraw content without negative consequences during the data collection phase and up to one month after data collection is completed. All data was used in line with the Data Protection Act 1998. Given the small sample size, this study also ensured there was no possibility of deductive disclosure.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

The researcher was aware of the limitations of the size of the study's design, the need for care in the analysis and interpretation of data (Bazeley, 2010) and the impact of researcher bias and reflexivity on the study (Malterud, 2001). Furthermore, following an examination of the ethical challenges associated with data collection and the restrictions around GDPR, the research concluded that the most effective course of action would be to conduct a particular case study utilizing a mix methods approach. Ethical considerations for data collection were described, as well as an examination of the limitations experienced in a mixed methods case study approach. The results of the data collection and analysis of the data are presented in the next chapter.

## Chapter 4: Findings

### 4.1 Introduction

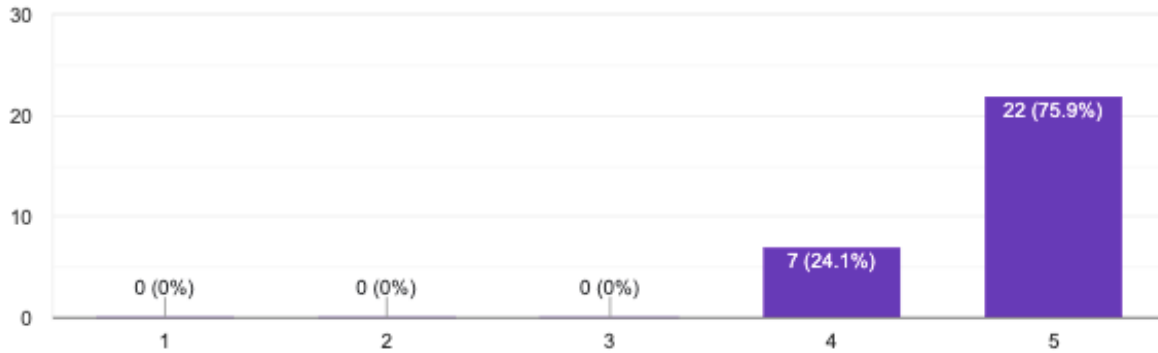
This section outlines the findings from the online surveys (n=29) and semi-structured interviews (n=2). The researcher used a mixed methods approach to investigate teachers' perspectives on effective teaching strategies employed by post-primary teachers to support academic motivation and engagement. In the initial stages of the study, quantitative research was carried out and a number of themes emerged which informed further areas of exploration through semi-structured interviews. The researcher conducted two semi-structured interviews with DEIS and non-DEIS teachers working in Irish post-primary schools. Four predominant themes emerged from the findings in relation to the research question: *Participants and School Setting, Student Motivation and Engagement, Active Teaching Methodologies and Socioeconomic Factors*.

### 4.2 Participants and School Setting:

Participants in this study were all practicing post-primary teachers in both DEIS and Non-DEIS schools in Ireland. From the quantitative findings, there were 17 (58.6%) teachers working in a DEIS school and 12 (41.4%) teachers working in a non-DEIS school out of the total population (n= 29) sampled. In relation to the semi-structured interviews, interviewee A has over five years' experience and interviewee B has over 20 years' experience. It is important to note that the interviewees were speaking from their own experiences, which in some cases included multiple schools.

### 4.3 Student Motivation and Engagement:

Participants in the survey were asked to consider whether motivation and engagement have a direct impact on student outcomes in the classroom by rating their response on a Likert scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being strongly agree and 1 being strongly disagree. According to 75.9% of participants, motivation and engagement have a direct impact on student outcomes in the classroom. Figure 1 depicts a bar chart that summarises the responses to this question.



**Figure 1:** Teachers perspectives on whether motivation and engagement have a direct impact on student outcomes in the classroom on a scale from 1-5 (n=29).

Furthermore, survey participants were asked to identify the primary causes of low engagement in DEIS and non-DEIS schools. Some of the responses from participants included *“lack of self-esteem, poor parental support, feeling lost/unsupported, learning difficulties, physical/mental or emotional challenges, poorly prepared lessons and peer influences”*.

Motivation was later investigated in greater depth through interviews in which participants were asked about intrinsic and extrinsic motivators that influence student motivation. Firstly, there was agreement across interviewees that teachers have a significant influence on a pupil’s motivation to learn. Interviewee A stated *“that there is a lot more emphasis on personal reward in the Non-DEIS school they are currently teaching in because the students want to get high points. However, there is some parental pressure to do well in school because many of the parents own businesses and are very successful”*. Similarly, interviewee B said *“the students see the link straight away between getting good grades, going to college and having a good life”*. Both interviewees agreed that parent-teacher meetings in non-DEIS schools were much more focused on exam results and class averages. In comparison, Interviewee A stated that *“some students in a DEIS school would have a personal incentive to do well in school, but you would have to motivate them a little more in class. After a test, for example, you could tell students, we’ll have a relaxing class where we can play Kahoot and other games”*. Also, Interviewee A noted that *“if students wanted to go to college in DEIS schools, their parents would ask a lot more questions because many had not gone to college themselves and wanted to learn more about the process”*. On the contrary, interviewee B stated that, *“depending on the parents’ attitudes, students in DEIS schools may be motivated*

by 'social personal motivation' to do well in school and attend college". Furthermore, interviewee B stated that *"teaching students from their point of view is critical in order to keep them motivated and engaged"*. Interviewee B, for example, stated that *"in non-DEIS schools, you could ask students where they had been on holidays, and the majority of students would say they had been away. However, in a DEIS school, you would have to adjust your perspective to suit the students seated in front of you"*.

Following that, participants were asked whether they believed extracurricular activities had an impact on students' motivation and engagement in school during the interviews.

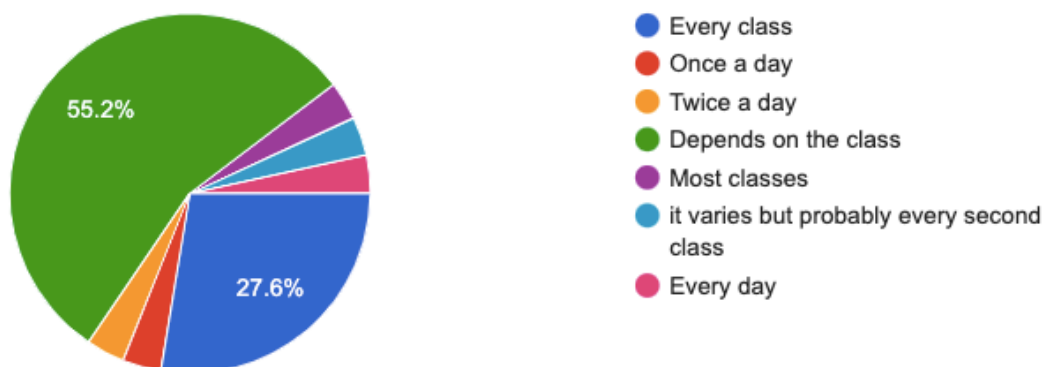
Interviewee A said *"yeah it is really beneficial, it can inspire them with their writing, however, it can depend on how self-motivated the student is in terms of catching up on material missed"*. Furthermore, interviewee A stated that in their experience, it is more common for students in DEIS schools to not email the teacher, not ask friends, and not have the notes taken down by the next class and simply use the excuse "oh, I wasn't here".

Interviewee B was passionate about how extracurricular activities can influence student motivation. From their personal experience *"it has a huge, huge impact on student motivation, especially in DEIS schools because it may be the reason why a lot of students come to school"*.

#### **4.4 Active Teaching Methodologies:**

All participants (n=29) in DEIS and non-DEIS schools stated that they use ATM in their classroom. Participants in the survey were asked to choose one of five multiple-choice answers to indicate how frequently they would use active teaching and learning strategies in the classroom. According to the survey results, 55.2% of participants said it 'depends on the class' how frequently they use ATM. Figure 2 displays a pie chart summarising the responses to this question.

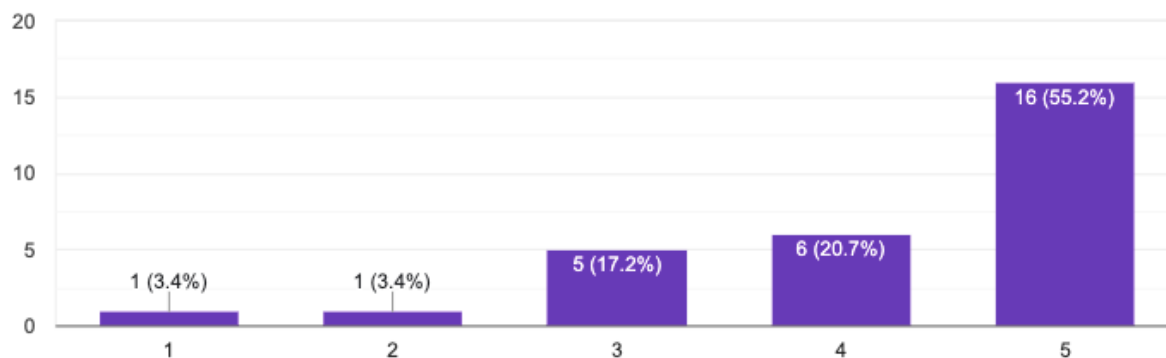




**Figure 2:** How frequently teachers use active teaching methodologies in the classroom (n=29).

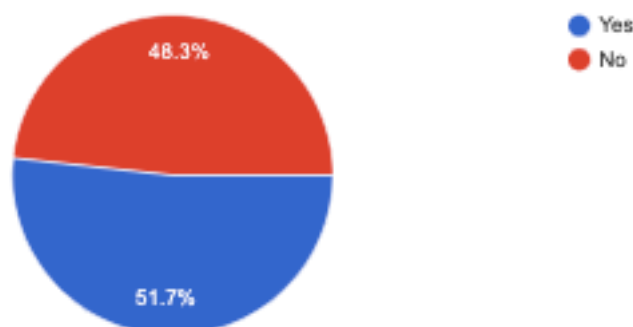
The interviews provided a more in-depth look at ATM in DEIS and non-DEIS schools. Both interviewees stated that their ATM differed depending on the school, class, and other factors. Furthermore, both interviewees stated that classroom management, particularly in DEIS schools, was a barrier to implementing ATM in the classroom. Interviewee A stated that *“getting through the curriculum, particularly English texts, is a much slower process in DEIS schools due to classroom management”*. Similarly, Interviewee B stated that *“implementing active teaching methodologies in DEIS schools can be much more difficult because you are dealing with more classroom management issues while explaining the learning intentions, explaining the exercise, and then suddenly the class is finished”*. Moreover, interviewee B noted that *“at senior level in particular it was very much ‘chalk and talk’ and you didn’t really have time to be doing a lot of group work or doing very nice stuff”*.

Participants in the survey were asked to consider whether active teaching and learning strategies improved students’ motivation and engagement in the classroom by rating their response on a Likert scale from 1 to 5, with 5 being strongly agree and 1 being strongly disagree. Figure 3 illustrates a bar chart summarising the responses to this question.



**Figure 3:** Teachers perspectives on whether active teaching and learning strategies improved students' motivation and engagement in the classroom on a scale from 1-5 (n=29).

According to the survey, 51.7% of participants said there was a whole school approach to using ATM to motivate and engage students. Figure 4 displays a pie chart summarising the response to this question.

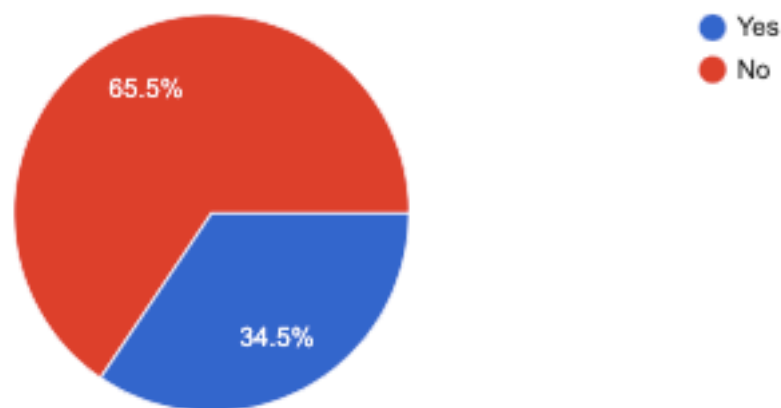


**Figure 4:** Teachers perspective on whether there is a whole school approach to using active teaching methodologies to motivate and engage students (n=29).

This was later discussed in the interviews and both interviewees expressed very similar views on the whole-school approach to ATM. According to interviewee A “fifth and sixth years can be hard to do group work with because they’re really focused on the Leaving Certificate exam questions. They’re a bit more independent and the teachers know that”.

According to Interview B, “the school and the teachers involved run the JCT days and other in-service days very well, and they have a lot of good information in terms of teaching methodologies that you can implement in your classroom”.

According to 66.5% of survey respondents, the DES has not provided adequate training for teachers to implement ATM in the classroom. Figure 5 displays a pie chart summarising the responses to this question.



**Figure 5:** Teachers perspective on whether the Department of Education has provided adequate training for teachers to implement active teaching methodologies (n=29).

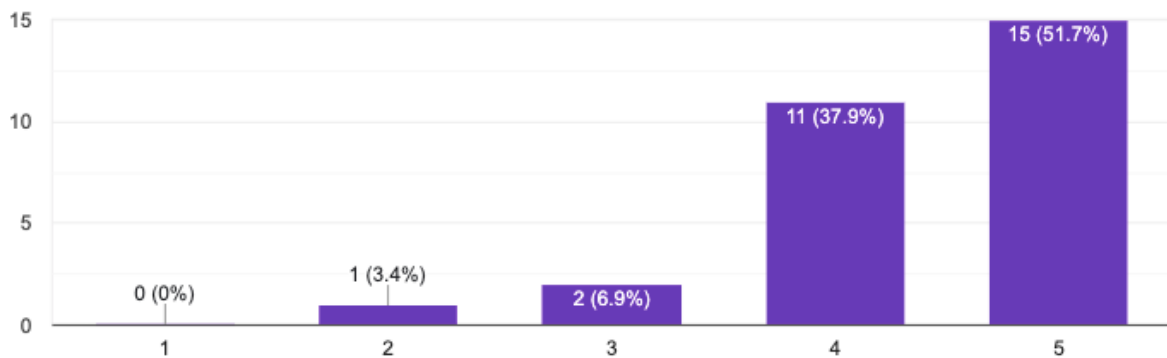
When asked what strategies they would like the Department of Education to implement, one participant from a DEIS school explained “*successfully implement peer learning and inquiry based education into the classroom environment*”. Another participant from a Non-DEIS school stated “*more training and CPD courses for teachers in relation to student engagement and involvement in the classroom*”.

This question was discussed in greater depth during the interviews and participants had varying reactions to the survey results. Interviewee A stated that “*the Department of Education has provided JCT training days and you can do personal CPD in your own time. However, it would be useful to have something a bit more subject based*”. Similarly, interviewee B noted that the JCT days, “*in terms of teaching methodologies have been very beneficial and can be modified for senior cycle classes*”.

#### **4.5 Socioeconomic Factors:**

Participants in the survey were asked to consider whether socioeconomic factors influence student motivation and engagement by rating their response on a Likert scale from 1 to 5,

with 5 being strongly agree and 1 being strongly disagree. The responses to this question are summarised in figure 6 below.



**Figure 6:** Teachers perspectives on whether socioeconomic factors influence student motivation and engagement on a scale from 1-5 (n=29).

According to the data analysis, 51.7% (9 teachers from a DEIS school and 6 from NON-DEIS school) of participants strongly agree, and when asked how or why in the next question, participants gave a variety of answers. One participant from a DEIS school stated “generally speaking, those from a low socio-economic background have experienced poor educational achievement, have had poor engagement in the educational system with little or support from home and so the cycle of educational poverty continues”. Another participant from a Non-DEIS school explained “I feel students from middle/high class families are more motivated to engage with education and learning as they are aware of the value education holds in society”.

During the semi-structured interviews, socioeconomic factors were thoroughly explored. Interviewee A observed that in a DEIS school, “students may not have the support or resources at home, so if they need extra help with homework, they may not have it and may act out in school as a result”. Likewise, interviewee B said “everything comes from the parents, if their parents had a positive experience with education and went to college they will instil this in their children”.

Other socioeconomic factors were discussed during the interviews, particularly in relation to DEIS schools, where interviewee B described “some students coming to school hungry.” Furthermore, interviewee B stated that, “thankfully, many DEIS schools have breakfast clubs

*and offer students subsidised lunches in order to encourage students to come to school".* Interviewee A also stated that *"a lot of the parents in DEIS schools might be receiving some sort of social welfare payment or might have a medical card."* Interviewee A noted that *"students in non-DEIS schools might not have the same knowledge as students in DEIS schools about social welfare and medical cards".* Other issues, such as a lack of books and stationery, can be a major issue in DEIS schools, negatively impacting students' motivation and engagement to learn. *"In DEIS schools, you might have to print off the PDF version of the text, because the students wouldn't be able to afford the book, this could be after a week without the book, or even after writing to the parents",* said interviewee A.

During the semi-structured interviews, attendance issues in DEIS schools were raised. According to interviewee A, *"attendance at DEIS schools can be quite low and this is often influenced by parents or guardians".* Furthermore, interviewee A stated that *"some parents would have never gone to school and they think it's not that important because they survived so long without it. So it's definitely like a very mixed attitude towards attendance".* Similarly, interviewee B said that *"in my many years of working in DEIS schools, the attendance was very poor".*

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

To conclude this chapter, several findings were identified in terms of teachers' perspectives on effective teaching strategies employed by post-primary teachers to support academic motivation and engagement. It was discovered that an array of factors influence students' motivation and engagement in DEIS and non-DEIS schools. It also emerged that classroom management issues can have an impact on using ATM in the classroom. Further to this, the following chapter aims to discuss the findings in relation to previous literature established in the literature review.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The data analysis collected through online surveys and semi-structured interviews, combined with the literature review, aided in the analysis of recurring themes for this study.

Through the research process, the researcher aimed to gain an insight into effective teaching methodologies used by post-primary teachers to support academic motivation and engagement in their students, while also examining the impact of socioeconomic factors on students' motivation and engagement. Furthermore, this chapter seeks to investigate whether teachers in post-primary schools in Ireland feel adequately equipped and resourced to implement ATM for their students.

### **5.2 Active Teaching Methodologies**

All participants (n=29) in DEIS and non-DEIS schools stated that they use ATM in their classroom. Drawn from a constructivist framework, active learning refers to a learning situation in which students are active participants rather than passive observers (Özlem Sila Olgun PhD, 2009). This is consistent with the findings of Rodriguez-Garca et al. (2022), who state that ATM are those that center the teaching-learning process on the students as the protagonists of their own learning, promoting significant learning through their own practical experience, which lasts longer than rote learning. Cooperative learning in the classroom, facilitated by the teacher, is an essential component of active learning. Interviewee A stated that "collaborative work is really good for the students" and can be carried out through activities such as "think-pair-share". Interviewee A continued to say, "I'm a language-based teacher, so I like to do a lot of different role play between students to improve their fluency and vocabulary. They can learn a lot from each other". This supports the view of Powell and Kalina's (2009) findings that when students master completion of group projects or activities, internalisation of knowledge occurs at a different rate for each individual based on their own experience. Similarly, Vygotsky believed that internalisation occurs more effectively when there is social interaction and when one is immersed in a specific cultural setting.

Furthermore, Dewey argued that education should focus on transformative experiences rather than just knowledge (Beard, 2018). Collaborative learning helps students improve their higher-level thinking, oral communication, self-management, and leadership skills.

According to the survey, 55.2% of participants said that active teaching and learning strategies improved students' motivation and engagement in the classroom. In accordance with the findings, one advantage of active learning, such as simulation, is that it requires students to make decisions, see the results, and adapt or react to their decisions (McKeachie, 2013). This is consistent with Kane (2004), who claims that 'active' learning seeks to encourage independent, critical thinking in learners, to encourage learners to take responsibility for what they learn and to engage learners in a variety of open-ended activities to ensure they have a more protagonist, less passive role than in a 'knowledge transfer' view of education. Similarly, Wolfe (2003) implies it also provides students practice in thinking, which leads to better and more effective decisions. It requires students to utilize higher-order thinking skills, such as synthesizing and evaluating information, not just information memorization and recall. Furthermore, active learning allows students to take on a more protagonist, less passive role than in traditional transfer of knowledge approaches (Özlem Sila Olgun PhD, 2009).

According to the survey results, 55.2% of participants said it 'depends on the class' how frequently they use ATM. This was later investigated in the interviews, in which both interviewees stated that 'classroom management', particularly in DEIS schools, was a barrier to implementing ATM in the classroom. According to Flower, Mckenna and Haring (2017) behavioural problems in the classroom and poor classroom management may lead to decreased academic learning and achievement. Furthermore, Grey and Panter (2003) state that difficult pupil behaviour challenges teacher confidence and self-esteem. These findings are supported by the 'Beyond Achievement' report, which found that principals in DEIS schools were more likely to indicate that aspects of student behaviour hindered learning (Nelis et al, 2021). Interviewee B echoed the views of Flower, Mckenna and Haring (2017) when they stated that "*implementing active teaching methodologies in DEIS schools can be much more difficult because you are dealing with more classroom management issues*". It is evident that, particularly in DEIS schools, behaviour can be a barrier to implementing effective teaching methodologies.

According to the survey results, 51.7% of participants said there was a whole-school approach to using ATM to motivate and engage students. One of the key principles of the 'Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools 2022' is that students are active agents in their own learning, engaging purposefully in a wide range of learning activities facilitated by their

teachers (Department of Education, 2022). This supports the viewpoint of Black et al., (2004), who explain that a learning environment must be "engineered" by teachers in order to involve students more actively in the learning tasks. Similarly Vygotsky's 'Social Constructivist' theory places a strong emphasis on the role and influence of teachers, as well as how they can help students develop. Furthermore, Wolfe (2003) states that the effectiveness of active learning is partially related to the instructional support. Finally, this supports Hattie's (2012) 'visible' aspect, which refers to making student learning visible to teachers, ensuring clear identification of the attributes that make a visible difference to student learning and ensuring that everyone in the school is aware of the impact that they have on how students learn.

### **5.3 Student Motivation and Engagement**

Motivation and engagement, according to 75.9% of participants, have a direct impact on student outcomes in the classroom. Rugutt and Chemosit (2009) state that motivation has been defined as the energy and the desire that is innate within all individuals, and high levels directed toward a particular situation results in greater amounts of energy expended on that task. The combination of specific student characteristics in facilitative classrooms working on specific activities may effectively harness motivation and result in high levels of engagement (Ward and Gray, 2014). Similarly Kim, Speed and Macaulay (2018) state that statistically there is an increase in student performance when students experienced active learning compared to their didactically-taught counterparts.

Motivation was later investigated in greater depth through interviews in which participants were asked about intrinsic and extrinsic motivators that influence student motivation. According to interviewee B, students are intrinsically motivated because *"the students see the link straight away between getting good grades, going to college and having a good life"*. Similarly, interviewee A stated *"that there is a lot more emphasis on personal reward in the Non-DEIS school they're currently teaching in because the students want to get high points"*. Prior research has also favoured intrinsic motivation by suggesting extrinsic motivation is detrimental to learning as it distracts from tasks (Vansteenkiste et al., 2009, cited in Froiland et al, 2012, p.97). This supports the views of Ward and Gary (2014), who state that a sense of self-efficacy, or the belief that you can succeed at a task, is one individual quality that has been positively related to motivation. Similarly, Bowman (2011) states that a body of



scientific research suggests that intrinsically laden academic environments enable students to be creative, self-empowered, self-disciplined and engaged. Finally, A body of scientific research suggests that intrinsically laden academic environments enable students to be creative, self-empowered, self- disciplined and engaged (Bowman, 2011).

There is considerable evidence to suggest that when teachers relate topics to students' everyday lives, it can significantly improve motivation and engagement in the learning process. This supports the views of Ekmekci and Serrano (2022), who state that teachers have been found to be the most significant contextual factor impacting student achievement. This was evident in the interview findings when interviewee B stated that "teaching students from their perspective is critical in order to keep them motivated and engaged". This is consistent with Daniels and Perry's (2003, p.107) studies that children need their teachers to show an interest in them in order to provide quality learning experiences that motivate them to learn. Students are more likely to see the relevance of the material to their own lives and are therefore more motivated to learn and engage with the material. This can be related to the 'self-determination theory' (Deci and Ryan, 2013) that students are more motivated when they feel a sense of autonomy, competence and relatedness in their learning. When teachers relate topics to students' everyday lives, it can increase students' sense of relatedness to the material and provide a context for the learning that enhances their understanding and engagement. Furthermore, teachers can likely restructure the teaching and learning environment by providing different learning strategies to students and finding ways to motivate students to learn and to engage them in active learning (Rugutt and Chemosit, 2009). Finally, this study highlights the importance of the teacher's ability to form positive relationships with their students and create a supportive learning environment. Interviewee B concurred with Deci and Ryan (2013) on the importance of getting to know students on a more personal level, particularly through extracurricular activities.

According to both interviewees, absenteeism can have a direct impact on student motivation and engagement, particularly in DEIS schools. Interviewee B said that "*in my many years of working in DEIS schools, the attendance was very poor*". Similarly, interviewee A said "*attendance at DEIS schools can be quite low and this is often influenced by parents or guardians*". Attendance is seen as a clear, measurable indicator of participation in schooling, though physical presence is not always a guarantee of engagement in learning (Jeffers and Lillis, 2021). This is consistent with the findings from the 'Beyond Achievement' report that

principals indicated about three-quarters of students in DEIS schools identified unauthorised student absenteeism as a hindrance to learning. Furthermore, two-thirds of students in DEIS schools had principals who indicated that students not being attentive was a barrier to learning (Nelis et al, 2021). The findings show that absenteeism is one of the most significant barriers to student motivation and engagement in schools, particularly in DEIS schools where absenteeism is prevalent. However, highlighting motivation, enabling young people and their parents to see the purpose and possibilities of schooling, can have a positive impact on attendance (Jeffers and Lillis, 2021).

#### **5.4 Socioeconomic Factors**

According to the results of the data analysis, 51.7% of participants strongly agreed that socioeconomic factors can influence student motivation and engagement. One participant from a DEIS school stated “*generally speaking, those from a low socio-economic background have experienced poor educational achievement, have had poor engagement in the educational system with little or no support from home and so the cycle of educational poverty continues*”. This supports Mac’s (2009) findings that children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to be in the lowest-performing band in school. These findings are also supported by Giddens’ (2021) studies, which show that social and family background have a significant influence on school performance, which is reflected in subsequent levels of income.

Furthermore, both interviewees agreed that socioeconomic factors, such as family income and parental education can significantly impact students’ motivation and engagement in post-primary schools. Interviewee A observed that in a DEIS school, “*students may not have the support or resources at home, so if they need extra help with homework, they may not have it and may act out in school as a result*’. According to Sullo’s (2009) research, students who come from supportive home environments value their education and thus respond well to the reward/punishment model that exists in the majority of schools. This supports the view of interviewee B who implied “everything comes from the parents, if their parents had a positive experience with education and went to college they will instil this in their children”. According to Bourdieu, "Habitus" is formed primarily in the family, but in differentiated societies, the school also plays an important role (Riley, 2017). These findings are consistent with Mac’s (2009) research, which implied that if there is a significant difference between the

school environment and the child's home environment, it can have an impact on the child's ability and school performance. Teachers' recognition of these factors and their ability to address them in the classroom can help mitigate their impact on students' academic success.

### **5.5 Continued Professional Development (CPD)**

Finally, this chapter investigates whether teachers believe they have the necessary tools and resources to implement ATM in their classrooms. According to 66.5% of survey respondents, the Department of Education has not provided adequate training for teachers to implement ATM in the classroom. When survey participants were asked what strategies they would like the Department of Education to implement, one participant from a DEIS school stated, "successfully implement peer learning and inquiry based education into the classroom environment". CPD is essential for teachers to keep their knowledge, skills, and abilities up to date in today's rapidly changing educational environment.

The literature highlights that staff should not only see professional development as an individual pursuit but as a collective activity, thus including all staff in the school not solely teachers (Jeffers and Lillis, 2021). This supports the viewpoint of Forte and Flores (2014), who claim that collaborative CPD allows teachers to gain new ideas by encouraging a reflective and questioning process on their professional practices. As educators, it is imperative that we engage in ongoing self-reflection and evaluate our teaching practices. One model of reflection that can be particularly useful is Schön's "reflection-in-action" process. This model involves taking a pause to consider previous actions and potential future actions in order to improve one's teaching practice (Lindroth, 2015). When educators are encouraged to reflect on their practice, they are more likely to share their insights and experiences with colleagues, which can lead to a collective improvement in teaching practice (Tan, 2020). This is supported by interviewee B, who stated that *"the school and the teachers involved run the JCT days and other in-service days very well, and they have a lot of good information in terms of teaching methodologies that you can implement in your classroom"*. The findings from the study reveal that while many teachers recognize the benefits of these methodologies, they often face several challenges in implementing them effectively. These challenges include limited time, lack of training and support and insufficient resources.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

This chapter aimed to discuss the quantitative and qualitative data findings in relation to relevant literature. The results of the study indicate that teachers in DEIS and Non-DEIS schools use a variety of effective teaching methodologies to support academic motivation and engagement, including project-based learning, inquiry-based learning and differentiated instruction. These methodologies are characterized by their focus on student-centered learning, active participation and relevance to students' lives. Moreover, the study found that socioeconomic factors, such as family income and parental education level can significantly influence students' motivation and engagement in DEIS and Non-DEIS schools. The study reveals that these factors can create a range of barriers to academic success, including lack of resources, limited opportunities and cultural stereotypes. The discussion chapter concludes by highlighting the need for ongoing professional development for teachers working in DEIS and Non-DEIS schools to enhance their pedagogical knowledge and skills. It suggests that the DES facilitates this through training programs, mentorship, and collaboration with other educators in similar subjects. Overall, CPD is critical for teachers to stay informed, engaged and effective in their teaching practice, which ultimately benefits their students' learning outcomes. The final chapter of this thesis presents the thesis's conclusions and recommendations for future research.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

### **6.1 Introduction**

While not without its limitations, the study aimed to identify effective teaching methodologies that promote academic motivation and engagement in students, as well as investigate the influence of socioeconomic factors on students' academic success. Finally, the study aimed to examine whether teachers feel adequately equipped and resourced to implement ATM in their classroom. This chapter summarises these findings and outlines the limitations of the study, which influenced the researcher's recommendations. The recommendations focused on aspects such as continuous professional development, which could assist teachers in implementing effective teaching practices to increase student motivation and engagement, areas for further research, and the implications for future practice.

### **6.2 Summary of findings**

The findings of this research study address many of the research questions, but to varying degrees due to the limitations discussed in section 6.3.1. Following an analysis of the data based on the research questions and topics, the following findings were reached:

#### **6.2.1 Active Teaching Methodologies**

The study's findings confirmed that all participants, both from DEIS and non-DEIS schools, used ATM in their classrooms, emphasising the importance of active student participation in the learning process. According to the findings, classroom management issues, particularly in DEIS schools, were identified as a barrier to implementing ATM. These findings were supported by the 'Beyond Achievement' report, which found that principals in DEIS schools were more likely to indicate that aspects of student behaviour hindered learning (Nelis et al, 2021). Creating a learning environment that actively engages students and is supported by teachers, the school's quality framework, instructional support, and making student learning visible to teachers and the entire school community are all part of this approach.

### **6.2.2 Student Motivation and Engagement**

According to the findings, active learning experiences have been statistically shown to improve student performance when compared to didactic teaching methods. Ekmekci and Serrano (2022) stated that teachers have been found to be the most significant contextual factor impacting student achievement. The findings established that when teachers relate topics to students' daily lives, motivation and engagement in the learning process improve significantly. These findings emphasise the critical role of teachers as the most important contextual factor influencing student achievement. The study's findings also indicated that absenteeism, particularly in DEIS schools, has a negative impact on student motivation and engagement.

### **6.2.3 Socioeconomic Factors**

According to the findings of the literature review, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to have poor educational achievement and low engagement in the educational system. According to Mac's (2009) findings, children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to be in the lowest performing band in school. The findings show that parents' influence, positive experiences with education, and educational attainment can shape students' attitudes towards education. According to the findings, teachers can play a critical role in mitigating the impact of socioeconomic factors on students' academic success by recognising and addressing these challenges in the classroom.

### **6.2.4 Pedagogical Knowledge**

According to the findings, participants believed that the Department of Education had not provided adequate training for teachers to implement ATM in their classrooms. The findings also indicated that teachers must engage in CPD to keep their knowledge, skills, and abilities up to date in today's rapidly changing educational environment. The findings have highlighted the challenges that teachers face in effectively implementing ATM, such as limited time, a lack of training and support, and insufficient resources.

## **6.3 Limitations**

### **6.3.1 Study Size**

Firstly, a relatively small sample size was examined, and larger sample size studies are thus required for confirmation and further exploration of the results. The semi-structured interviews consisted of two teachers from the same private city school, so they may have a certain bias when compared to other types of schools and academic performance. Despite the fact that the interviewees had prior experience working in other schools, the researcher could have interviewed a teacher from a different school to obtain comparative data.

### **6.3.2 Research Methods**

Additionally, there are limitations to the mixed methods approach used within the data collection process. The study was conducted solely by the researcher and therefore, the level of 'methodological expertise' was reduced in comparison to the pragmatist approach of multiple researchers engaging in a research study (Johnson and Christensen, 2014, p. 671).

### **6.3.3 Research Bias**

The researcher made every effort to remain objective and unbiased in this dissertation; however, the researcher acknowledges that bias persists. To combat bias, objective questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and a reflective outline on bias in conversation with an assigned critical friend and research supervisor were used.

## **6.4 Areas for Further Research**

As a result of the limitations and research findings, a number of aspects for future research were considered while conducting this study. If the opportunity to select students for participation in a subsequent study on this research topic arose, the data obtained could be compared to that of this study. Further study in this area could highlight the potential disparities between teachers' and students' perspectives on the factors influencing student motivation and engagement.

According to the findings of this study, parents are one of the most influential factors in student motivation and engagement. As a result, gathering parents' perspectives on this topic

and exploring ways in which they can collaborate with schools to improve their child's motivation and engagement would be beneficial. Further research could look into the efficacy of various strategies and approaches that parents and schools can use in collaboration to foster motivation and engagement, such as providing opportunities for student choice, offering praise and encouragement and setting goals.

Long-term research should be carried out to examine the prolonged effect of ATM on student academic achievement, knowledge retention, and the development of essential skills outside of the classroom. Additional studies need to be conducted to investigate effective approaches for preparing and supporting teachers in implementing ATM, particularly in teacher education programmes, as well as the impact of ongoing CPD and mentorship on teachers' confidence, competence, and sustained use of active learning strategies. Further research into effective classroom management strategies specifically designed for active learning environments could be especially beneficial to teachers in DEIS schools.

## **6.5 Recommendations**

The findings highlighted the importance of professional development in the field of ATM. Failure to adopt and integrate ATM in the classroom by teachers can have a negative impact on students' academic performance and learning outcomes. Another suggestion is for teachers to collaborate and share best practices for incorporating ATM. According to Hargreaves (2019), teacher collaboration can boost student achievement while decreasing resistance to change. This can be accomplished by holding regular team meetings, joining professional learning communities, or using online platforms.

Furthermore, issues with classroom management hampered the implementation of effective teaching methodologies in the classroom. Schools, particularly DEIS schools, should develop and implement specific classroom management strategies to address the challenges associated with the implementation of ATM. These strategies should aim to foster a positive and supportive learning environment that reduces behavioural issues while increasing student engagement. Furthermore, parents and the school community should be involved in comprehending and promoting ATM. Educate parents on the benefits of active learning and how they can support it at home. Furthermore, emphasising motivation and assisting students and parents in seeing the purpose and possibilities of schooling can improve attendance.



Finally, the findings suggested that student choice and autonomy be allowed, such as allowing students to choose their own topics for assignments or projects. Giving students a sense of ownership of their education can boost motivation and engagement. Allowing teachers to set goals with students and celebrate success can boost student motivation and engagement in the learning process.

## **6.6 Implications for Future Practice**

After completing this research study, the researcher has gained a better understanding of the complexities of student motivation and engagement. This study provides insight into theories of student motivation such as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, as well as self-efficacy. In the future, the researcher can create ATM and assessments that tap into students' intrinsic motivation while also fostering a sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Furthermore, the researcher has a better understanding of the impact of socioeconomic factors on students' motivation and engagement as a result of this research. With this knowledge, the researcher will be able to identify and address the unique challenges that students from disadvantaged backgrounds may face. Following the completion of this research, the researcher will be able to incorporate these ATM into their practice and cater to diverse learning styles while providing appropriate support to ensure that all students have equitable opportunities for success.

## **6.7 Concluding Remarks**

Overall, the study's findings highlight the significance of ongoing professional development for teachers in ATM, as well as the importance of addressing the impact of socioeconomic factors on students' motivation and engagement in post-primary schools. Educators and researchers can continue to improve the implementation and effectiveness of ATM, promoting student engagement, motivation, and learning experiences by addressing the recommendations and conducting additional research in the areas mentioned.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A- Information Letter for Participants

Dear Teacher,

I'm writing to inform you about a research project I'll be working on as part of my Professional Masters in Education at Hibernia College Dublin. This letter will inform you about my research and request your permission to participate in this research study if you so desire.

The research title is: 'An investigation of effective teaching practices used by post-primary teachers in DEIS and Non-DEIS schools to support academic motivation and engagement.' The purpose of this study is to look into the factors that influence student engagement and motivation in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas of Ireland. The study will also look into how socioeconomic factors such as family income, parental education level, race, and gender influence students' motivation and engagement. There will also be an exploration of pedagogical knowledge that my colleagues and I can use to engage and motivate students from these areas.

Interviews would take place on school grounds at the convenience of the school and the teachers involved. Interviews will be recorded with your written permission for transcription and dissemination. The study's participation is entirely voluntary. Interviewees have the option of refusing to answer any questions or withdrawing from the study at any time. No specific school, teacher, or student will be identified in any publication of the work. Only those who return a signed copy of the consent form will be purposefully chosen to participate in the study.

Any data gathering will be strictly underpinned by the school's ethical code of conduct and follow the British Educational Research Association's (BERA) ethical guidelines for educational research. Information gathered will be held in the strictest of confidence and pseudonyms will be used to ensure anonymity. The school's name will not appear on any research findings. Interviews will be recorded, and the data will be securely held under Hibernia College Research Ethics guidelines. Participation in the study is voluntary and participants can withdraw from the research at any time. The results from this research study will be reported in my research project and may be disseminated through professional publication.

I would appreciate your cooperation in providing access to the staff at the school over the coming weeks. If you have any queries or require further information on the research study, please do not hesitate to contact me.

This research study has received Ethics approval from Hibernia College Dublin. If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent you may contact: School of Education, Hibernia College Dublin.  
Tel (01) 6610168



\_\_\_\_\_

Date:

## **Appendix B- Principal's Letter**

Principal's name and school address

Dear Principal,

I'm writing to inform you about a research project I'll be working on as part of my Professional Masters in Education at Hibernia College Dublin. I am researching effective teaching practices used by post-primary teachers in DEIS schools to support academic motivation and engagement.

The purpose of this study is to look into the factors that influence student engagement and motivation in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas of Ireland. The study will also look into how socioeconomic factors such as family income, parental education level, race, and gender influence students' motivation and engagement. There will also be an exploration of pedagogical knowledge that my colleagues and I can use to engage and motivate students from these areas.

This letter aims to provide you with an introduction to the research project and to seek consent from you for the project to move forward in order to inform my future professional practice as a teacher. With your permission, I'd like to interview three different classroom teachers. In addition, I would like twenty staff members to complete the online questionnaire. The staff will be asked to participate in semi-structured interviews to gain an understanding of the project's goals. Please find a copy of the information and consent forms enclosed for your review. Only those who return a signed copy of the consent form will be purposefully chosen to participate in the study.

Any data gathering will be strictly underpinned by the school's ethical code of conduct and follow the British Educational Research Association's (BERA) ethical guidelines for educational research. Information gathered will be held in the strictest of confidence and pseudonyms will be used to ensure anonymity. The school's name will not appear on any research findings. Interviews will be recorded, and the data will be securely held under Hibernia College Research Ethics guidelines. Participation in the study is voluntary and participants can withdraw from the research at any time. The results from this research study will be reported in my research project and may be disseminated through professional publication.

I would appreciate your cooperation in providing access to the staff at the school over the coming weeks. If you have any queries or require further information on the research study, please do not hesitate to contact me.

This research study has received Ethics approval from Hibernia College Dublin. If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent you may contact:  
School of Education, Hibernia College Dublin.  
Tel (01) 6610168

\_\_\_\_\_

Date:

## Appendix C- Participant Consent Form

Participation Consent Form	
<b>Researcher:</b> <b>Email:</b> <b>Phone:</b>	██████████ ██████████
<b>Organisation:</b>	Hibernia College Dublin
<b>Supervisor:</b>	██████████
<b>Title of Study:</b>	An investigation of teachers' perspectives on effective teaching strategies employed by post-primary teachers in DEIS and Non-DEIS schools to support academic motivation and engagement.

**Please read and fill out this permission form carefully if you are willing to participate in this research.**

Have you been fully informed/read the information sheet about this study? Yes/No

Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study? Yes/No

Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions? Yes/No

Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without giving a reason for withdrawing and without your withdrawal having an adverse effect for you?  
Yes/No

Do you agree to take part in this study, the results of which are likely to be published or presented at a conference? Yes/No

Have you been informed that a copy of this consent form will be kept by the researcher?  
Yes/No

Are you satisfied that any information you give to the researcher will be kept confidential?  
Your name and the name of the school will not appear in the research report. Yes/No

**Please do not hesitate to contact the researcher with any questions or requests for further information.**

**Participants Name:**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Researcher's Signature:**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix D- Questionnaire**

How long have you been a qualified educational practitioner? \*

- 1-5 Yeaars
- 5-9 Years
- 10-15 Years
- 15 + Years

What type of school are you teaching in? \*

- DEIS
- Non-DEIS

Can you explain how you determine whether or not students are motivated or engaged in a lesson? \*

Long answer text  
.....

What do you think are the primary causes of the lack of engagement? \*

Long answer text  
.....

Active learning strategies, such as group work, discovery learning and collaborative learning are widely utilised in social constructivist classrooms to motivate and engage students. \*

**Would you incorporate any of the above strategies in your classroom?**

Yes

No

How often would you use active learning strategies in your classroom? \*

Every class

Once a day

Twice a day

Depends on the class

Other...

Do you think that using active teaching and learning strategies increased or improved students' motivation and engagement in your classroom? \*

Strongly Disagree      1      2      3      4      5      Strongly Agree

From your teaching experience thus far, do you think a student's socioeconomic background has anything to do with motivation and engagement? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree

In relation to the previous question, \*

**Exactly how or why?**

Long answer text

---

Do you believe that parents/guardians have an impact on student motivation and engagement in school based on your teaching experience thus far? If so, how so? \*

Long answer text

---

Do you employ any specific teaching strategies to help engage or motivate students in your classroom? If yes, share some examples \*

Long answer text

---

Do you believe that motivation and engagement have a direct impact on student outcomes? \*

1      2      3      4      5

Strongly Disagree                                    Strongly Agree

Is there a whole school approach to using active teaching methodologies to motivate and engage students? \*

Yes

No

Do you think your school has enough resources to engage and motivate students? i.e. technology, books \*

Yes

No

Do you think the Department of Education has provided adequate training for teachers to implement active teaching methodologies in the classroom? \*

Yes

No

What strategies would you like the Department of Education to implement to help student motivation and engagement in your school? \*

Long answer text  
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## Appendix E- Interview Questions

*It is intended that the interview questions will be largely influenced by the results of the quantitative online questionnaires, which will be supported by the following questions:*

1. How long have you been employed as a teacher?
2. How long have you been a teacher in this school?
3. What subjects do you teach?
4. What classes do you teach right now?
5. How is the overall attendance in the school?
6. Have management discussed attendance with you before?
7. Do you prefer teaching the Junior or Senior cycle classes?
8. Do you notice a difference in motivation and engagement between junior and senior cycle classes?
9. Is there a class or subject group that you find challenging to motivate/engage?
10. Do you think different classes or age groups need different methodologies to engage them in lessons?
11. What do you think are the main reasons for the lack of engagement?
12. Do you think Covid'19 had an effect on student motivation and engagement?
13. Do you think the Department has implemented strategies to overcome this?
14. What strategies would you like the Department to implement to help student motivation and engagement?
15. Can you describe how you know when students are lacking motivation and engagement during a lesson?
16. Do you think a student's socioeconomic background has anything to do with motivation and engagement? If so, why?
17. From your teaching experience, what practices would you use in the classroom to help engage or motivate students?
18. Have you any examples about methodologies that helped motivate students over a long period of time? i.e.: within the school year.
19. Do you think technology is beneficial when engaging and motivating students in the classroom?
20. If so, what kind of platforms do you use?
21. Do you think parents have an effect on student motivation and engagement in school? If so, how?

22. Do you think there is adequate training provided for teachers to implement effective teaching methodologies into the classroom?
23. If more training on student engagement and motivation was developed from the Department of Education, would you be interested in attending?
24. If so, is there a particular topic or subject you would like discussed?
25. Do you think there's something teachers can do to improve? If so what?
26. Is there a whole school approach to using active teaching methodologies to motivate and engage students?
27. Are there certain programmes in the school to look out for students who aren't engaging in lessons?
28. If you had to pick one thing that could be done to motivate students, what would it be?
29. How is the engagement in the school compared to a few years ago?
30. How do you deal with students who are upset or don't want to work in school?
31. Do you think there is a difference in student engagement in Non-DEIS and DEIS schools?
32. If so, why do you think there is a difference?
33. Do you think your school has enough resources to engage and motivate students? i.e. Laptops, books etc
34. What other resources do you think the school could use to motivate students?
35. Do you think students lack motivation due to socioeconomic factors such as family income levels, parents' level of education, race?