

Motivational Interviewing for Effective Classroom Management

Wendy M. Reinke, Keith C. Herman, and Randy Sprick
Guilford Press
US \$35.00

Review by Karen Marsh, BSc, PGDipCouns, PGCE ¹

I have spent twenty years in the motivational interviewing field, and for the past seven years, I have been working in education. Qualified in counselling and teaching, I have a keen interest in the application of MI in schools and how it fits within a school culture. This book was therefore of particular interest to me as, due to its focus on the application of MI in the classroom.

Essentially this book aims to equip classroom consultants with the skills to enable them to assess and coach teachers to improve their classroom management (with a view to improving pupils' experience of education and achieving better grades). The book combines two main ingredients: the tenets of the MI approach and the classroom check-up model (a consultation process with teachers about methods of teaching, focusing specifically on classroom management).

Sufficient theoretical detail is provided to enable the reader to understand the basic foundation and skills of the MI approach. Additionally a wide variety of examples make the approach come alive. The explanations and sample dialogue extracts give a good sense of the approach that could help a reader feel confident enough to try out the basic skills. The main chunk of the book is devoted to the classroom check-up model and its application. Many practical examples are provided, which again enable the reader to confidently use it.

The book succeeds in meeting the essence of its title. At the end of the text, the reader will likely have a full understanding of the MI approach, the classroom check up model, and how these relate to classroom management. In addition to the plentiful examples which bring the approach and the model to life, there are many photocopiable resources to equip the reader in the application to their work.

It could potentially be quite a challenge to combine the conversational style of the MI approach with a model that is very statistically weighted (not only does the consultation method involve lots of paperwork, the feedback to teachers is presented with numerous percentages and graphs). However, if consultants have the spirit of motivational interviewing as the foundation to their communication, the more statistical aspects of the model could nonetheless be integrated.

I feel that this book is very useful for teachers at differing stages in their career. It could be a useful tool alongside teacher training, and has the potential to be integrated into teacher training programmes. From my own experience of UK postgraduate teacher training, I remember that there was little focus on communication and issues of classroom management. This book could support a worthwhile unit of learning on teacher training to that end.

This book could be beneficial to newly qualified teachers. As in driving (in that one only learns to drive independently after passing the driving test), teaching has a similar nature. Once newly qualified teachers have had chance to settle into their role, the model presented in this book could certainly prove valuable. Teachers who have previously been trained in punitive disciplinary methods may also welcome these alternative ideas to encouraging improved pupil focus and behaviour at school. It may be less beneficial to those who do not work well with figures, given the statistical nature of the feedback. The model is fairly formulaic and may not suit professionals who prefer other methods of assessment.

Overall, I think this book is well presented, easy to understand and has a useful application in education.

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The author reports no conflict of interest.



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