

HELPING STUDENTS BECOME MOTIVATED LEARNERS

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Motivation is an internal state or condition which is sometimes described as a need, desire, or wants that serves to activate or energize behavior and gives it direction. It may be rooted in a basic impulse to optimize well-being, minimize physical pain and maximize pleasure. It consists of the physical, emotional, cognitive, and social forces that drive our desire for and commitment toward reaching a particular goal even when challenges arise. We are simply more motivated toward certain goals at different times depending on our needs, interests, and our beliefs about our ability to be successful in achieving a particular goal. This means that motivation changes and evolves and can be influenced by the environments in which we find ourselves and by the people in those environments.

When we talk about motivation in schools, we are generally talking about whether students are motivated to learn. “Motivation to learn” can be measured by the degree to which students are committed to thinking through problems and working through challenges to master a concept or gain a new skill. The motivation to learn would help to set up an environment that has the greatest potential of igniting the desire to learn in every student.

Motivation is said to be intrinsic or extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is the natural curiosity and desire to learn that we are all born with. We experience intrinsic motivation when we find ourselves seeking answers to a question that intrigues us or pushing ourselves to work hard to master a skill. For a student it includes fascination with the subject, a sense of its relevance to life and the world, a sense of accomplishment in mastering it, and a sense of calling to it. Extrinsic motivation is when we work for an external reward or to avoid an external punishment provided by someone else. It includes parental expectations, expectations of other trusted role models, earning potential of a course of study, and grades. A balanced pedagogical approach in the classroom includes the combination of both types.

Keeping in view the importance of motivation in learning the purpose of this paper is to provide instructors with a general understanding of student motivation from a psychological perspective by identifying effects of motivation on student’s learning and behaviour and to recommend specific strategies to help motivate students in the classroom. The overall study

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consists of participant observational research method. The particular approach used is largely interpretive.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to Ryan and Deci (2000), to be motivated means to be moved to do something. A person who feels no impetus or inspiration to act is thus characterized as unmotivated, whereas someone who is energized or activated toward an end is considered motivated. In the classroom setting, student motivation refers to the degree to which a student puts effort into and focus on learning in order to achieve successful outcomes. Motivation and engagement are very important for sound student learning. Sternberg (2005) believes that motivation is very important for school success, in its absence; the student never may make an effort to learn.

Students not only have different quantities, but also different qualities of motivation that can vary from time to time depending on the learning and teaching context (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Schlechty, 2001). If teachers have a sound understanding of the different types of student motivation possible in any given context, then they are in better position to provide a more conducive learning environment to students that better promotes their learning (Marsh, 2000). Kohn (1999, p. 257) contends, *“the implicit premise of the words “intrinsic” and “extrinsic” is that there are qualitatively different kinds of motivation, and the kind matters more than the amount.”* The question of what motivates children’s behavior in achievement contexts is one of long-standing interest to psychologists and educators. Much of the research in this area has classified motivation as either intrinsic (i.e., inherent to the self or the task) or extrinsic (i.e., originating from outside of the self or the task). That is, students are often thought to be learning either for the sake of learning or as a means to some other end, whether it be praise, tangible rewards, or meeting the demands of powerful authority figures. Numerous research studies have shown that intrinsically motivated students have higher achievement levels, lower levels of anxiety and higher perceptions of competence and engagement in learning than students who are not intrinsically motivated (Wigfield & Eccles, 2002; Wigfield & Wager, 2005).

Some students seem naturally enthusiastic about learning, but many need or expect their instructors to inspire, challenge and stimulate them. *“Effective learning in the classroom depends on the teacher’s ability ... to maintain the interest that brought students to the*

course in the first place.” (Erickson, 1978,). Many factors effect a given student’s motivation to work and to learn (Bligh, 1971; Sass, 1989): interest in subject matter, perception of its usefulness, general desire to achieve, self-confidence and self-esteem, as well as patience and persistence.

Researchers have begun to identify those aspects of the teaching situation that enhances student’s self-motivation (Lowman, 1984; Lucas, Weinert and Kluve, 1987; Bligh, 1971). Research has also shown that good everyday teaching practices can do more to counter student apathy than special effort to attack motivation directly (Ericson, 1978). Most student respond positively to well organized course taught by an enthusiastic teacher who has a genuine interest in student and what they learn. Thus the activities of the teacher undertaken to promote learning will also enhance students’ motivation.

HOW MOTIVATION AFFECTS LEARNING AND BEHAVIOUR

Motivation has several effects on students’ learning and behavior.

- Motivation determines the specific goals toward which learners strive and affects the choices they make.
- Motivation increases the amount of effort and energy that learners extend in activities directly related to their needs and goals.
- Learners are more likely to begin a task they actually want to do. They are also more likely to continue working at it until they’ve completed it, even if they are occasionally interrupted or frustrated in the process.
- Motivation affects what learners pay attention to and how effectively they process it for instance, motivated learners often make a concerted effort to truly understand classroom material—to learn it meaningfully—and consider how they might use it in their own lives.
- Motivation determines which consequences are reinforcing and punishing. The more learners are motivated to achieve academic success, the more they will be proud of higher grades and upset by a low grade.
- Because of the other effects just identified—goal-directed behavior, effort and energy, initiation and persistence, cognitive processing, and the impact of consequences—motivation often leads to improved performance.

STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE STUDENT'S MOTIVATION

Motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, is a key factor in the success of students at all stages of their education, and teachers can play a pivotal role in providing and encouraging that motivation in their students. Some simple strategies to improve student's motivation are as follows:

Giving Students a Sense of Control:

While guidance from a teacher is important to keeping kids on task and motivated, allowing students to have some choice and control over what happens in the classroom is actually one of the best ways to keep them engaged. For example, allowing students to choose the type of assignment they do or which problems to work on can give them a sense of control that may just motivate them to do more.

Defining Objectives Clearly:

Students want and need to know what is expected of them in order to stay motivated to work. At the beginning of the year, clear objectives, rules, and expectations of students should be laid out so that there is no confusion and students have goals to work towards.

Creating a Threat- Free Environment and Providing Positive Reinforcements:

When teachers create a safe, supportive environment for students, affirming their belief in a student's abilities and provide positive reinforcements, students feel highly motivated.

Including Novelty Elements:

To renew interest in the subject matter or just in learning in general, students should be given a chance to get out of the classroom. For eg., taking students to the field trips, bringing in speakers, or even just heading to the library for some research.

Providing Choices and Varied Preferences:

Not all students will respond to lessons in the same way. For some, hands-on experiences may be the best. Others may love to read books quietly or to work in groups. In order to keep all students motivated, mix up the strategies so that students with different preferences will

each get time focused on the things they like best. Doing so will help students stay engaged and pay attention.

Helping Students to See the Value in Learning the Instructional Material:

Teachers can help to draw connections between themes in the curriculum and students' own experiences or current-day events and can help students to see how certain skills will be useful to them in their long-term goals.

Focusing on Personal Improvement:

Teachers should help the student to compare themselves with their previous selves. They should show students their own growth and students will begin to believe in their own learning.

Encouraging Risk-Taking and Experimentation:

When learning is the primary goal, students are encouraged to ask questions, experiment, and take risks in their attempts to approach and grapple with the material. Educators can do this by inviting students to express opinions and insights. "Mistakes" or incorrect answers can be reframed as valuable opportunities for learning and growth by asking students why they think they got a particular result or what they might do differently next time, rather than making students feel embarrassed for getting the wrong answer.

Showing Care for All Students:

Students performed better socially and academically when they feel cared for by their teachers, teachers' attitudes and beliefs can have a profound effect on students. However, it is not the amount of care that teachers have per se, but how much care the students perceive teachers have.

Structuring Positive Competition:

Competition in the classroom motivates students to try harder and work to excel. A teacher should work to foster a friendly spirit of competition in the classroom and provide opportunities for them to show their knowledge.

Offering Rewards for Good Improved Performance:

Offering the students the chance to earn rewards is an excellent source of motivation. A teacher should consider the personalities and needs of the students to determine appropriate rewards for the class.

Giving Students' Responsibility:

Assigning students classroom jobs is a great way to build a community and to give students a sense of motivation. It can also be useful to allow students for leading activities or helping out so that each feels important and valued.

Allowing Team Work:

The team spirit can get students excited about things in the classroom and they can motivate one another to reach a goal. Teachers should ensure that groups are balanced and fair.

Giving Praise and Encouragement:

Teachers can give students motivation by rewarding success publicly, giving praise for a job well done, and sharing exemplary work.

Encouraging Self- Reflection:

One way to motivate students is to get them to take a hard look at themselves and determine their own strengths and weaknesses. Students are often much more motivated by creating these kinds of critiques of themselves than by having a teacher do it for them, as it makes them feel in charge of creating their own objectives and goals.

Being Enthusiastic About the Subject and Being Passionate About Work:

One of the best ways to get students motivated is to share enthusiasm. When a teacher is excited about teaching and doing work sincerely, the students will be much more excited about learning.

Knowing the Students:

When students feel appreciated it creates a safe learning environment and motivates them to work harder, as they want to get praise and good feedback from someone they feel knows and respects them as individuals.

Creating Interest in Learning:

Teachers should relate classroom material to things that students are interested in or have experienced, so as to make things more interesting and related to students thereby keeping students motivated for longer.

Helping Students' Find Intrinsic Motivation:

It can be great to help students get motivated, but at the end of the day they need to be able to generate their own motivation. Helping students find their own personal reasons for doing class work and working hard, is one of the most powerful gifts a teacher can give them.

Managing Students' Anxiety:

Some students find the prospect of not doing well so anxiety-inducing that it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. For these students a teacher should support no matter what the end result is and ensure that students don't feel so overwhelmed by expectations that they just give up.

Making Goals High but Attainable:

Students like to be challenged and will work to achieve high expectations so long as they believe those goals to be within their reach, so a teacher should push students to get more out of them.

Scaffolding Instruction:

When a teacher break instruction down into steps or short-term learning goals and provide clear directions and adequate support to complete each step, reaching a larger goal feels doable for students. Reviewing pre-requisite concepts at the beginning of a new lesson also helps all students to be successful.

Giving Feedback and Offering Chances to Improve:

A teacher should help students to learn exactly where they went wrong and how they can improve next time.

Tracking Progress Regularly:

It can be hard for students to see just how far they've come, especially with subjects that are difficult for them. Teachers should track the progress of the students as a way to motivate them by allowing them to see visually just how much they are learning and improving as the year goes on.

Making Learning Fun:

Adding fun activities into the school day can help students who struggle to stay engaged and make the classroom a much friendlier place for all students.

Focusing on strengths:

It is normal students to feel a lot of self-doubt. Identifying and reinforcing their strengths can help to build confidence important to persisting through challenges.

Providing Opportunities for Success:

A teacher should make sure that all students get a chance to play to their strengths and feel included and valued. It can make a world of difference in their motivation. A teacher should capitalize on students existing needs.

CONCLUSION

Motivated and engaged students learn better and show best possible outcomes in their academic study and by using the appropriate pedagogies teachers can also make classrooms more engaging places for students to learn.

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