

Motivation

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An ongoing issue for teachers is motivating their students in a positive and constructive way. Teachers have to be certain that their students are equally being motivated and challenged enough in order to stay on track. This is a difficult task for the teacher considering that every student learns differently and every student is diverse in their own ways. Strategies in the classroom such as using intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and taking into account outside factors that can influence a student's motivation helps to make motivating the students easier. "In the formal world of the classroom, teachers hold an extreme position of power" (Vialle, Lysaght, Verenikina, p. 136). With this said students look up to their teachers and expect the teacher to guide and encourage them in a constructive manner and lead them towards a positive outcome.

Student motivation naturally has to do with students' desire to participate in the learning process. But it also concerns the reasons or goals that underlie their involvement or noninvolvement in academic activities. Although students may be equally motivated to perform a task, the sources of their motivation may differ. "A growing body of evidence suggests that when students are intrinsically motivated they tend to employ strategies that demand more effort and that enable them to process information more deeply extrinsic rewards, on the other hand, should be used with caution, for they have the potential for decreasing existing intrinsic motivation" (<http://cse.unl.edu/~mbeerman/psych97-1/cabela.html>). I feel that a student who is intrinsically motivated undertakes an activity for their own sake, for the enjoyment that it provides, the learning it permits, or the feelings of accomplishment it evokes. On the other hand an extrinsically motivated student performs in order to obtain some sort of reward or avoid some punishment external to the activity itself, such as grades, stickers, or teacher approval.

Most children, as they work through their years of school do, in fact, find areas of study they genuinely enjoy. These areas are different for different people. The general problem of matching individual interests to a fixed curriculum is one that is impossible to solve. People obviously have different backgrounds, beliefs, and goals. What is relevant for one

will not be relevant to another. Of course, we can force something to be relevant to students and we can put it on the test, but this only makes it have the appearance of significance, it does not make it interesting. This is why some children have a hard time being motivated. If we extrinsically motivate students all the time by offering rewards for every time they answer a question right or for every time they do something well they will begin to think that every good deed they do deserves a reward or that they will only do things if a reward is involved. "Students who are naturally curious when faced with an extrinsic reward do generate questions, but those questions have little to do with the content the teacher wishes to convey. Instead the questions are of the nature of: "How can I bend the rules to win the game?" or "What's the least amount of effort I can put in and still satisfy the teacher?" (<http://www.engines4ed.org/hyperbook/nodes/NODE-148-pg.html>).

A lot of what I have just talked about "stresses that students should frequently experience reinforcement or rewards for their achievements. Prior achievement affects motivation by providing students with information about the effectiveness of their problem solving skills. According to Albert Bandura, this contributes to a sense of self-efficacy, or the conviction that one can successfully do what is necessary to produce a particular outcome" (Biehler/Snowman, p. 420). I believe that self-efficacy enhances motivation in students and contributes to their achievement. Self-efficacy is a feeling that one can successfully achieve a particular outcome, which should always be made prevalent in the classroom. It is a teacher's duty to make sure that all students feel as if they are able to accomplish anything. They should be made to feel that what they start will always have a positive outcome as long as they try their best. The best way for a teacher to do this is through positive reinforcement, make a systematic effort to sustain the students interest, try to make lack of effort seem unappealing and urge students to select short-term and long-term goals.

I have a strong opinion on motivation and the child's home environment. When a parent encourages discussion with their child the child becomes aware of what is going on in the world and develops a sense of curiosity about the world around them and becomes

interested in different types of information. “Children's home environment shapes the initial constellation of attitudes they develop toward learning. When parents nurture their children's natural curiosity about the world by welcoming their questions, encouraging exploration, and familiarizing them with resources that can enlarge their world, they are giving their children the message that learning is worthwhile and frequently fun and satisfying” (<http://www.ericfacility.net/ericdigests/ed370200.html>). When the child is in the classroom they will view themselves as competent people and will be more willing to pursue tasks that involve a challenge. With this said they are more motivated when it comes to taking risks in the classroom and asking questions, they are more intrinsically motivated.

A teacher's attitude and personality may also influence a student's motivation. “If you admired or had a crush on an elementary school teacher, you were probably eager to earn that teacher's approval by performing well in class. If you disliked or feared a teacher you may have lost all interest in learning and simply endured school until the end of the year” (Biehler/Snowman, p. 387). I know that on my practicum in Fiji my students came to school motivated each day to learn something new. I do believe that it had a lot to do with the way in which I was passionate about what I was teaching. I think it also had a lot to do with the students taking a liking to me. This was because I was a fresh new face that was full of new things for them to do and learn. When a teacher gives a positive vibe towards their class it encourages the children to want to work hard for that teacher and make them proud. In turn the student becomes motivated without any type of reward that is offered to them.

“Carmen sat in a rocking chair in the literacy center reading. When she finished her book she sat up, raised the book over her head, and exclaimed out loud, "This is such a lovely, beautiful story. It makes me feel so good inside, I think I'll read it again." She settled back into the rocking chair and continued reading. Orville Prescott, the noted book reviewer, wrote that few children learn to love books themselves. Someone must lure them into the wonderful world of the written word. Someone must show them the way (Morrow, 2004). If us as teachers teach students to read and write and they have no

desire to do so we have not accomplished anything “It is time for us to focus on motivation as well as skills, since motivation to read and write and literacy ability go hand in hand. They must be nurtured simultaneously (Morrow, 2004). Teachers need to make reading and writing stimulating and not make it a chore. Reading to students with enthusiasm and inspiring questions will teach the students that reading and writing is fun and interesting. I know that when I listened to my prac teacher read a story to the class their eyes were glued to the book and could not wait to hear what was coming next. They all wanted to get a book and start reading it just like their teacher did. I feel that this was because the teacher created a literacy rich environment. What I mean by this is that all the walls were covered in great things to read which really stimulated the student’s curiosity about reading and writing. “Motivated readers and writers initiate and sustain literacy activities, and they choose to read and write for pleasure and for information. We have found from research that classrooms providing children with access to materials, choice, challenge, and collaborative experiences are motivating” (Morrow, 2004).

When researching the topic on motivation I came across “achievement goal theory of achievement motivation”. It is said that there are three types of achievement goals, task-oriented, performance-oriented and work avoidant-oriented. Students who “strive and work for task-oriented goals are doing so because they want to improve their competence and/or increase their understanding. They gain positive feelings from success, knowing that they have mastered what they want to learn” (Barry and King, p. 517). These students seek out something that they are interested in learning and work towards their full potential to accomplish their task. They are task-oriented because they have a thirst for knowledge and they base their standards about learning on what they set out as their goal. Students who “strive and work for performance-oriented goals are doing so because they want to demonstrate their ability or competence or to gain fine impressions of their abilities compared to the efforts and performances of others” (Barry and King, p. 518). An example of this could be a student accomplishment in a task is derived from doing better than others on a test or in the playground. Students who are “work-oriented endeavor to complete work in the classrooms with a minimum of effort” (Barry and King, p. 519). It is said that these students are trying to avoid failure, expressing their

dislike of school work or handling personal pressure experienced in classroom work tasks. They believe that hard work does not lead to success, which explains their lack of motivation. School success to these students means managing to avoid school work.

This relationship between teaching and the teacher's learning does not benefit the teacher alone, but it benefits the students in many different concrete ways. First, “the teacher who is also a learner will better understand and sympathize with the difficulties students encounter in their learning, and therefore better modify the presentation of the material” (<http://biology.georgefox.edu/BioChem%20web/chemfiles/meverest/pot/node1.html>). Second, “as time goes on, the learning teacher will have better and better mastery of the material which will almost certainly result in better teaching”. The teacher who does not have strong command of the material will likely leave the students more confused than they were before the lesson or class started. Finally, “the enthusiasm of the teacher who loves to learn will be evident to the students”. When the students see the degree to which the teacher finds enjoyment in the material, they too will be motivated toward learning.

References

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Task # 2

By: Robyn Shadlyn 2638162
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