TEACHING AND LEARNING IN SCHOOLS: THE DIMENSIONS THAT AFFECT MOTIVATION AND PUPIL LEARNING.

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Abstract

Motivation of pupils in the classroom is considered a challenge as it has become quite difficult to compete with the stimulus in the world outside the classroom. Media, computer games etc. involve the child in being passively entertained rather than being actively engaged. In spite of these varied factors that affect motivation, the different motivational patterns of students can be studied and catered to. This review attempts to focus on the reasons for lack of motivation, the different factors that motivate pupils to learn, the role of teachers and the techniques used to enhance motivation to learn, and finally the various aspects that enhance pupils' motivation to learn apart from the teacher.

Keywords: *Motivation, pupil learning, parental involvement, classroom climate.*

Introduction: Motivation is an indispensable part of learning and is closely linked to the efficiency of pupils. (Sharma, 2005). Motivation is referred to as a form of personal quality, which can directly affect learning (Long, 2000). Motivation can influence what, when, and how we learn (Schunk, 1996). Some of the teachers claim that motivation is the reason for pupils' learning differences. Teachers largely see motivation as something with which pupils are gifted or not (Morgan & Morgan, 1999). The educational reform framework states that "students do not have tools like concentration, persistence, volition, goal orientation, delay of instant gratification, and strategies for acquiring and retaining new information needed to be successful" (Alderman, 2004 pg 10,11). Johnston, Halocha & Charter (2007) point out that Pupil tend to be passive in classroom.

There is a different perspective which considers motivation as a responsibility of teachers and enhancing pupils' motivation as a component of the teaching process (Prinz, 2007). There is

also a view which indicates that the primary function of a teacher is to motivate pupils, sustain it and eliminate the various things that affect motivation (Squires, 1999).

"Research conducted to date has shown that a variety of factors impact on students motivation and engagement, including the nature of pedagogy they receive (Teven & Mc Croskey, 1979), relationships they have with their teachers expectations for their children (Dandy & Nettlebeck, 2000), peers (Wigfield & Tonks, 2002), class climate (Qin, Johnson & Johnson, 1995), School culture and structure (Anderman & Maehr, 1994), socio – demographic status (Becker & Luthar, 2002), gender (Martin, 2003 a, 2003 b, 2004) and age (Martin, 2001, 2003 d)" (Martin, 2008).

Reasons for lack of Motivation: Many experiences in school and classroom tend to weaken an individual's self worth as students believe that ability is the main reason for failure. In competitive environment the primary motivation for many students is to protect their self worth from the perception that they have low ability. To protect their self-esteem, students adopt failure avoiding strategies like unrealistic goals and with holding effort. Teachers tend to characterise these unmotivated pupils as lazy or apathetic which further lowers their self-esteem. Lack of persistence, a preference for easy tasks over the challenging ones and a tendency to give up at the first sign of difficulty is a major hindrance to pupil achievement. It is observed that pupil who lack optimum motivation for intellectual development are at a disadvantage where as pupil with optimum motivation maintain interest, goal setting and self monitoring (Nicholls,1979 as cited in Alderman, 2004).The students who are at risk of failure primarily come from poor families who cannot fulfil their physical and mental needs (Hodgkinson, 1993, as cited in Alderman, 2004). In many cases the motivational problems are complicated by school climate and teaching practices that prevent students from attaining their fullest potential. The cultural and ethnic diversity of the school population, the discrepancy between the students and their teachers with respect to aspiration present a motivational challenge (Garibaldi, 1993, as cited in Alderman, 2004). The absence of challenging curriculum in many schools is another problem. One of predominate problems for the students is their belief that they cannot learn, and this is complicated by a lack of effective learning strategies (Licht, 1983, as cited in Alderman, 2004). Students are put under stress, and because of anxiety and stress their performance tends to deteriorate. (Sharma, 2005). Insecurity can do a lot of harm to learner's motivation (cotton, 1997)

Enhancing motivation to learn: Motivation cannot be seen in isolation. As discussed above there are several reasons for lack of motivation. The problems stated above need to be addressed in order to enhance pupil motivation. These problems can be overcome only with the combined effort of schools, teachers, parents, and communities.

Role of Teachers: "Teachers have a key role to play in motivation. They are more important than the methodology, working environment or equipment. Their support, enthusiasm, positive approach in providing a learning experience which has practical application, vocational value and is enjoyable and fulfilling are key motivational components".(Chambers, 2001. pg 132).

Enthusiastic teachers who are knowledgeable and skilled work harder to make learning more meaningful for students, even those who may be difficult or unmotivated (Guskey & Passaro, 1994 as cited in Day 2004)

"Teachers should attempt to make everything they teach as intrinsically interesting as possible and should avoid handing out material rewards when they are unnecessary, but teachers should not refrain from using extrinsic rewards when they are needed (Ryan & Deci, 2000, as cited by Slavin 2003 pg 349). The teachers should with over the students and convince them about the prominence of a particular topic that is to be presented and explain how the knowledge gained will be beneficial for them in the future (Bergin, 1999, Zahorik 1996 cited by Slavin).

Teachers should help the students set their own goals, as one basic principle of motivation is that people tend to work harder for goal set by themselves rather than the ones set others (Ryan & Deci, 2000 as cited in Slavin, 2003).

Informing the students what exactly they are expected to do, how they will be assessed is important. Specificity is important. Students seem to fail on certain tasks due to confusion and lack of clarity about what they are expected to do (Brophy, 1998, cited by Slavin 2003).

Providing clear, Immediate and frequent feedback to students on their performance is important "specific feedback is both informative and motivational" (Kulhavy & Stock, 1989 cited by Slavin 2003 pg 353) "Similarly, feedback about mistakes or failures can add to motivation if it focuses only on the performance itself (not on students' general abilities) and if it alternate with success feedback" (Clifford, 1984, 1990 cited by Slavin 2003).

Teachers should increase the value and availability of Extrinsic motivators. As discussed above "Expectancy theory of motivation implies that students must value incentives or rewards that are given by the teacher in order to motivate them. For instance students might not be

interested in teacher instead they might value an extra free time or notes sent to parents. So the teacher should identify the extrinsic motivators that are more valued by the pupils and make them available to them Slavin, 2003).Teachers can use praise as a motivator in classroom. "Praise is effective as a classroom motivator when it is contingent, specific and credible" (Slavin, 2003 pg 356). Teachers can encourage pupils to emphasise on learning rather than good grades.

A preference for challenge rather than for easy work has to be fostered among the students. An incentive to satisfy interests & curiosity rather than to please the teachers and obtain good grades should be developed. Independent attempts rather than dependence on the teacher had to be encouraged. Pupils should also be encouraged to exercise independent judgement rather than relying on teacher's judgement.

It is believed that a good theoretical understanding and knowledge of motivation helps the teachers to apply the implications of theories in the classroom. Motivation theories can assist teachers support the learners in establishing and maintaining motivation.

Applying conditioning theories in the classroom: Teachers need to ensure that the students are ready to learn. The previous knowledge has to be checked before teaching a topic to make sure that the pupils understand what is going to be taught. The teacher can help the students establish associations between stimuli and responses. Learning and classroom activities should be associated with pleasing outcomes. Desired behaviours should be reinforced and undesired ones are to be extinguished progress in learning and behaviour should be reinforced.

Applying arousal theories in classroom: Teachers should try and maintain an optimal level of student motivation. Periods of boredom and high anxiety must be avoided. Novelty and incongruity should be employed into teaching and student activities. At the same time, care should be taken, that it is not overdone, because too much of novelty might disrupt the classrooms and creates doubts about learning among the pupils. Positive emotions about learning should be developed in students and not uncertainty (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996).

Applying Humanistic theories in the classroom: Teachers need to show positive regard for pupils. Pupils need to be separated from their actions and they are to be accepted from their actions and they are to be accepted for what they are rather than for how they act. Pupils need to be encouraged with regard to their personal growth by providing them with choices and opportunities to initiate learning activities and establish goals.

Pupils should be allowed to evaluate their learning. Pupils are to be provided with resources and encouragement in order to facilitate learning (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996).

Classroom climate: "Classroom climate refers to the atmosphere of the classroom-its social, Psychological, and emotional characteristics" (Dunkin & Biddle, 1974, as cited in Pintrich & Schunk, 1996, pg 341). Warm, cold, permissive, democratic, autocratic and learner centred. These are some of the terms used to describe classroom climate.

An essential feature of the teaching skills involved in establishing a positive classroom climate is concerned about how best to foster pupils' motivation towards learning .The general appearance of the room also has an impact on the student. A well kept room with appropriate resources establishes a positive expectation towards the lesson.Display of Pupils work in the classroom acts as a motivator.(Kyriacou, 1991).

A study on different forms of leadership and their affect on motivation and behaviour by Lewin, Lippitt and While (1939) shows that the authoritarian or autocratic teacher was cold and harsh, took control and explained the pupils what to do, he assumed complete responsibility and did not give the pupils a chance to make contributions. The democratic or collaborative teachers worked with the pupils cooperatively, encouraged them and allowed them to share their ideas. The laissez faire or permissive teacher used hands - off approach and allowed the pupils work on tasks with minimal supervision and did not provide suggestions, instructions or assistance.

Authoritarian and democratic styles of teaching yielded high productivity. Although effective the group with authoritarian teaching was characterized by tension anxiety and overt rebellion. The laissez – faire teaching showed the lowest productivity. Pupils preferred the democratic style of teaching. It is evident from the study that laissez – faire style create chaos & uncertainty. Authoritarian style leads to frustration and negative group atmosphere and democratic style allows the pupils to achieve their goals.

The onus lies on the teacher to foster collaborative relationships in the class and encourage solving and decision making by pupils and also allow the pupils to share ideas and there by create a congenial atmosphere in the class.

"Teacher expectations can act as self – fulfilling prophecies because student achievement comes to reflect the expectations". Roenthal & Jacobson, 1968, as cited in Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). Rules are to enforced fairly and consistently and make the pupils aware that the rules are same for everyone. Differential expectations based on qualities like gender, ethnicity, parents'

background which are unrelated to performance should not be formed. It has assumed that all pupils can learn and that assumption or expectation should be conveyed to the pupils. The teachers need to keep in mind that the upper limits of student ability are not known and are not relevant to school learning.

"Six dimensions of classrooms that affect motivation and that are modifiable were identified. They are task design, distribution of authority, recognition of students, grouping arrangements, evaluation practices and time allocation. The acronym TARGET is used to represent these dimensions" (Epstein 1989, as cited in Pintrich & Schunk, 1996).

School climate: The climate of a school also has an influence on the outcome of the teacher as well as pupils. The three affective aspects of school climate are. "a) a sense of community and belongingness b) warmth and civility in personal relations and c) feeling of safety and security". "The conditions for acquiring self regulated learning and volition can be fostered in schools" (Corno,1993,& Pintric, 1995 as cited in Alderman,2004)

The communitarian view concentrates on the quality of social relations among the individual in the observed that schools where the administration, faculty and the pupils demonstrate mutual respect and concern for each other, the teachers and pupils showed positive outcomes. (Lee et al.,1998 as cited in Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). The second dimension also talks about the affective school life. "In terms of teacher – student relations, certainly a feeling of concern, care, support, and respect for students and positive teacher – student interactions would be associated with positive motivational outcomes (Calabrese & Poe, 1990, as that cited in Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). The third dimension suggests that the school needs to ensure physical safety and create an environment which is free from the fear and anxiety or physical harm. It is argued that there are a number of research studies that show how anxiety hinders thinking and undermines learning itself. Being able to master that anxiety is an important stage in motivation (Jarvis, 2006)

The schools should develop common school norms, values, and shared beliefs as schools with shared beliefs and goals seem to function better and more effectively. The schools should try and provide opportunities for all students to be recognized and rewarded. Evaluation practices should focus on progress and improvement.

Parental involvement: The role of parents in motivating the child cannot be underestimated. To a large extent intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation and expectation for success are

influenced by the pupils' experience at home and the amount of encouragement they receive from parents (Kyriacou, 1991). Research shows that when the parents are autonomy supportive, their children became more intrinsically motivated.

Studies on child rearing practices have highlighted how pupil motivation to do well at school can be fostered by parents through developing the child's self-confidence regarding their own capabilities as individuals, and praising them whenever they have undertaken tasks successfully (Smith et al., 2003 as cited in Kyriacou,2009). The failure to achieve can also be the result of being over motivated (Covington, 1992).so the parents should see that the child is not over motivated. At times the parents try to identify themselves with the child and put too much of pressure on the child to succeed. Parents have an active role to play in helping, facilitating and supporting the child and a passive role in the attitude they manifest to learning (Chambers, 1999).

Parent involvement in schools can have a positive influence on the school in general as well as on the students and teachers (Epstein, 1986, 87, 1995 Lee et al., 1993, as cited in Pintrich & Schunk, 1996).

Role of the pupil: "For competence development and motivation, students must have a responsive environment, but personal agency beliefs are often more fundamental" (Ford, 1995 as cited in Alderman 2004). Students need to develop their own self regulatory strategies in order to cope with setbacks. The fundamental aspect of self regulatory capabilities is the ability to deal with failure and build resilience to setbacks. Self regulated learners use self instruction and self monitoring, they also manage their time and environmental resources in order to achieve their goals. some of the self regulation strategies used by students are self evaluation, goal setting, planning, seeking information, environmental restructuring, rehearsing and memorising, seeking peer assistance and seeking teacher or adult assistance (Gorrell, Hwang,,&chung,1996 as cited in Schunk & Zimmerman, 2008)

"Individuals are naturally motivated to learn when they do not have to fear failure, when they perceive what they are learning as being personally meaningful and relevant and when they are in respectful and supportive relationships with teachers" (McCombs & Pope, 1994, as cited in   OECD). Japanese culture has a form of internal motivation known as 'mastery. This is the process of

trying to be better than one other than yourself. You are allowed to progress only when you have mastered everything in your current level.... progression through perfection (Gilbert, 2002).

Intrinsically motivated students learn what it means to seek out, master, and derive pleasure from optimal challenges. Intrinsic motivation is a natural process that arises out of the basic psychological needs of the student (Deci & Ryan, 1985 as cited in Schunk & Zimmerman, 2008). "students with a will to learn are characterized as believing in themselves and in their ability to think for themselves. They also develop a sense of personal effectiveness and the belief that they cause their own achievements" (Alderman,2004 pg 12)

Conclusion: International studies reveal that there is no single factor associated with successful learning and no single motivational theory that is applicable universally. In order to attain motivation, all the politicians, schools teachers, parents and local communities should work in coordination and cooperation and bring in a learning culture as it is successfully done to a large extent in countries like France, Germany, Japan, South Korea and Sweden.(OECD,2000)Though all the above stated factors matter, the role of the teacher seems to be the most influential. As Brophy (1989) rightly points out that when the right things are taught the right way, motivation takes care of itself. The teacher should wisely develop the ideal motivational states in the classroom. Instead of a general motivational approach the teacher should individualise and cater to the differences in each student's motivational patterns. Research shows that students whose parents and teachers are autonomy supportive showed better conceptual learning and greater enjoyment, they were also more intrinsically motivated which in turn helped them to engage in self regulated learning and sustained motivation. currently research is undertaken on the ways to improve intrinsic motivation and self regulated learning among the pupils in these changing times, as some of the teachers consider it a challenge to motivate students now a days. Teachers have a vast knowledge base of motivational research and theories, they have a wide range of choices, and they have to make wise, powerful strategic decisions so that the selected motivational strategies are effective.

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