Motivating Students to Learn

Question......

Key Points:
- One of most important ingredients of instruction and learning
- Extremely difficult to measure
- ALL students are motivated
- Made up of a combination of many factors
- “Motivation” is a construct - not directly observable - it must be inferred.
- Constructs are created by scientists.
Factors Affecting Motivation

- Student personality
- Student ability
- Characteristics of learning task
- Incentives (internal/external)
- Instructional setting
- Teacher behaviors

Definition of Motivation

- “The internal process that activates, guides, and maintains behavior over time that has both INTENSITY and DIRECTION

Theories of Motivation:

- Behavioral
- Human Needs
- Cognitive Dissonance
- Attribution
- Expectancy
Motivation and Behavioral Learning Theory

- Motivation is the product of reinforcement
- Behaviors that have been reinforced in the past are more likely to be repeated
- An inadequate explanation of human motivation due to complexity of humans and context of situation.
- How does one determine incentive value of an event or consequence ahead of time???

Motivation and Human Needs

- **Premise**: the driving force behind behavior is the satisfaction of needs
- Needs vary in importance and order of consideration
- Maslow's hierarchy - deficiency versus growth needs

Motivation and Human Needs

- Self-Actualization Need
- Aesthetic Needs
- Need to Know and Understand
- Esteem Needs
- Belongingness and Love Needs
- Safety Needs
- Physiological Needs

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs
Motivation and Cognitive Dissonance

- Motivated by need to maintain positive self-image.
- Cognitive Dissonance Theory: people will experience tension or discomfort when a deeply held value or belief is challenged by an inconsistent belief, behavior, or outcome (Festinger, 1957).

Motivation and Cognitive Dissonance

- To resolve this discomfort or inconsistency, people may:
  1. Change their behavior (in the future)
  2. Change their beliefs (not usually likely)
  3. Or develop justifications or excuses that resolve the inconsistency and discomfort.

Attribution Theory and Motivation

- Why did something happen??
- To what can we attribute the event??
- Explanation of motivation that focuses on how people explain the causes of their own successes and failures.
- Characteristics of most explanations:
  1. internal - external
  2. stable - unstable
  3. controllable - uncontrollable
Attribution Theory (continued)

- Central assumption: people will attempt to maintain their self-image.
- Most people tend to attribute their own success to personal factors (i.e., their own efforts or skill or ability); but attribute their own failure to external, uncontrollable factors (i.e., bad luck).
- Locus of Control: Internal (self-efficacy) versus external.

Attributions for Success and Failure:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribution</th>
<th>Stability</th>
<th>Unstable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success:</td>
<td>Ability</td>
<td>Effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failure:</td>
<td>“I’m smart.”</td>
<td>“I tried hard.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I’m stupid.”</td>
<td>“I didn’t really try.”</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>External</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success:</td>
<td>Task Difficulty</td>
<td>Luck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failure:</td>
<td>“It was easy.”</td>
<td>“I lucked out.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“It was too hard.”</td>
<td>“I had bad luck.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Implications of Attribution Theory to the Classroom:

- If one believes that past failure was due to lack of ability, one is likely to expect to fail in similar situations and unlikely to exert effort. (Example: kids with failure histories in school/academic setting.)
- If students believe they will fail, poorly motivated to do academics, which increases likelihood of academic failure.
If one believes failure was due to lack of ability, expect failure in similar situations; exert LESS effort

Less effort leads to more failure and more negative, internal, stable attributions

Need to emphasize EFFORT attributions in academic work

Motivation and Expectancy Theory

Premise: motivation is based on the EXPECTATION of reward.

\[ M = P_s \times I_s \]

Motivation (M) = Perceived Probability of Success (Ps) x the incentive value of success (Is)

Motivation highest at moderate probability for success

Success on very easy tasks are less valued

Implication: Tasks for students should be neither too easy nor too difficult.
Anxiety, Motivation, and Performance

- Numerous sources of anxiety for students: teachers, exams, peers, social relations, achievement settings, distance from home (for younger children).
- Performance and motivation suffer in face of overwhelming anxiety.

What will help? Accepting, comfortable classroom climate, opportunities to correct work before handing it in, clear instructions, avoid time pressure, begin tests with easy items, train in test-taking skills.

Principles for Providing Incentives to Learn

- Clear expectations
- Clear feedback
- Immediate feedback
- Frequent feedback
- Social response to appropriate behavior
- Praise should be contingent, specific, credible
- Increase value, availability of extrinsic motivators