

IMPORTANCE OF INCREASING MOTIVATION OF CHILDREN

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The article investigates the importance of increasing motivation of children.

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Motivation, as the name suggests, is what ‘moves’ us. It is the reason we do anything at all. For teachers, a lack of motivation has long been one of the most frustrating obstacles to student learning. While the concept of motivation may intuitively seem fairly simple, a rich research literature has developed as researchers have defined this concept in a number of ways. Social scientists and psychologists have approached the problem of motivation from a variety of different angles, and education researchers have adapted many of these ideas into the school context. While there is a great deal of overlap between motivation theories, researchers differ in their identification of the underlying belief systems leading to motivational variation. Some theorists emphasize belief in oneself and one’s competency, others prioritize goal orientation, and a third group argues that the difficulty of the task shapes individual motivation. This resource will provide an introduction to various theories of motivation, explain the importance of motivation for learning, and outline several practical strategies that teachers can use to support and promote student motivation.

A common distinction made in the literature is between extrinsic and intrinsic forms of motivation. Intrinsic motivation is the act of doing an activity purely for the joy of doing it, and it is frankly very rare in school and work contexts. Extrinsic motivation, or the use of external rewards or punishments to encourage student work completion, is generally painted in education as the enemy of good instruction. This is true to a certain extent because, as learning is comparable to exploration, the use of rewards or punishments tends to outline a boundary around how much a student should explore.

However, there are actually many different forms of extrinsic motivation, and not all are equally likely to lead students down a path of apathy and dissociation from the joy of learning. For example, one extrinsically motivated student may work hard in school because they fear failure and the anger of their parents. Another may study hard because they see the value of the content in helping them work toward their dream of becoming a doctor. Neither student in these examples is intrinsically motivated – their goals lie outside the simple enjoyment of the activity. However, the second student is likely to be more independent and self-guided in their learning because they recognize the value of these extrinsic rewards. This form of motivation is much more sustainable because it does not require constant threats or prizes from teachers or parents. *What are the Different Types of Motivation in Education?*

Motivation in the early years is especially crucial, as this is when we have the opportunity to mould children into confident, resilient, lifelong learners. From a young age,

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children learn about the world around them through curiosity. Many approaches to the early years, such as The Curiosity Approach, harness children's innate interest in their environment. However, as children get older, this eagerness to discover and learn is often not as strong. Instead, many look for external rewards as a mechanism to help them achieve their aims. These two drivers of behavior are intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation is a self-summoned willingness to learn. Those who are intrinsically motivated don't require sanctions or rewards to help steer their efforts. Very young children are often naturally intrinsically motivated, and are led by their innate curiosity. This form of motivation often encourages more efficient and successful learners in the classroom. There are many studies which suggest that children who are intrinsically motivated are better at learning. In fact, intrinsic motivation is often shown as one of the most powerful predictors of academic achievement.

Many students experience a decline in intrinsic motivation during adolescence. Keeping this thirst for learning alive in children can be a challenging task. It's not only the learning environments and universal provision available within schools that help to inspire intrinsic motivation – parenting, biology, age, gender, wellbeing, and peer relationships can also affect to what extent students feel engaged in their learning.

Extrinsic Motivation

Education providers often cultivate intrinsic motivation through extrinsic means. Vansteenkiste define extrinsic motivation as the desire of people to participate in activities in order to gain something different from the task itself. Examples of extrinsic motivation include medals for the winners of a race, chocolate for good attendance, extra break time for positive behavior, vouchers for reading for pleasure, and completing homework in order to avoid a detention.

It is possible to boost intrinsic motivation through extrinsic means. This may be particularly effective for students with particular needs, or disaffected learners, whose background, relationships, or previous experience of education has resulted in a lack of faith in the system. Cameron argues that external motives can promote children's willingness to learn, and that they are not harmful to students' intrinsic motivation.

However, once this process of extrinsically motivating through rewards becomes habitual, it can become challenging to disassociate success with praise and reward, as the individual's attitude becomes controlled by the stimulus alone. Some studies suggest that if there is no genuine desire that steers individuals to engage in the activity, then deep learning must be limited.

Professor Frédéric Guay, an expert in motivation at Laval University in Québec, states: "Rather than focusing on rewards, focus on the quality of relationship with the students. Students who find learning important, even if they don't enjoy it, will bring about the same kind of positive outcomes as you see with those with high intrinsic motivation." Guay suggests that educators should encourage children to express their emotions, and share their experiences towards learning. Their responses can be used to help teachers redefine their practice, and therefore improve the learning experience for all pupils.

How Does Motivation Impact Behavior and Performance?

Motivation pushes children to work hard and aim high in everything they set their minds to. When students are surrounded by a culture of warmth, diversity, and high expectations, they are much more likely to display positive behaviors. Children who are motivated are also more likely to find pleasure in satisfying their academic curiosity.

Intrinsic motivation links strongly to performance merely for the enjoyment of engaging in activities. This pleasure is often the reason that pupils take part in academic tasks.

How Motivation Affects Academic Performance

We know that students who are intrinsically motivated are much more likely to be successful in their education, but can extrinsic motivation help to improve performance?

In a research project run by the Education Endowment Foundation, students in KS4 were offered an incentive for achieving their set GCSE targets. Participants were extrinsically motivated through either a financial reward, or access to a paid trip. Where students were offered a monetary incentive, there was a significant improvement in classwork effort seen within English, math, and science. However, there was no evidence of a significant positive impact on attainment. Therefore, extrinsic motivation can prove to be successful in improving engagement, but as this study proves, there is limited evidence to suggest that it boosts attainment, or would help to maintain effort over a long period of time.

Enjoyment in lessons has been found to be strongly linked to high levels of student motivation. Studies assessing motivation in physical education found that enjoyment is a valuable predictor of two situations – a child's willingness to begin a physical activity, and how long they will maintain it once it's begun. When students have fun and find success, they experience improved self-worth and self-belief, which are key drivers in developing a self-summoned desire to achieve.

Similarly, when assessing pedagogy in physical education, a Public Health study found that class settings, a sense of connectedness, and social dynamics need to be considered if educators are to enhance pupils' motivation, self-determination, and engagement. It also found that developing pedagogies which support young people's mental health and wellbeing and improving relationships with teachers were key motivating factors in pupils' engagement in the subject.

Motivation drives learning. Without it, completing even the simplest of actions can prove challenging, or even impossible. Therefore, it's crucial to understand how to accommodate and facilitate motivation in the classroom. There is a place for both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in education: both forms can complement one another. It may be that methods to extrinsically motivate children are initially required in order to build a culture of achievement and success. Once schools have created an environment conducive to learning, they can gradually begin to replace external motivations in order to further inspire their students' intrinsic desire to learn.

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