

Literature Review

Ginger Jordan

EDU372 Educational Psychology

Dr. Julie Ann Adkins

October 12, 2015

Motivation Aligns with Success

Poor planning is ineffective and sets students up for failure, but proven strategies incorporated in daily instruction can improve motivation and encourage student success. Imagine a teacher standing in front of her class thumbing through pages, unprepared, and losing the attention of the students. Time is wasted as she decides which lesson will be presented next and what assignments need to be completed. Students are chatting amongst themselves or daydreaming out the window. As the teacher passes out a thick packet papers, the students groan unenthusiastic about their next assignment. This common scenario brings about the question, what effects can strategies incorporated in daily instruction have on student motivation and the mastery of lessons? If teachers design their lessons in a way that motivates students, the outcome may produce higher test scores and cognitive ability. My goal was to find out how motivation impacts student learning, and if an educator could specifically tailor lessons to improve motivation and have an influence in achieving student success.

Literature Review

The first article, "*Five Key Ingredients for Improving Student Motivation*", was written by Kaylene Williams from California State University and Caroline Williams from the University of Wisconsin. This article describes the lack of learning that takes place when students are not motivated. The focus is on providing educators with appropriate knowledge to execute improving student motivation in their own classroom. The five main components directed at improving motivation in this article are: the environment, student, teacher, content, and the method in which the instruction is delivered. Teachers can also record and watch themselves in action while teaching, and reflect back on how they can improve (Williams & Williams, 2011).

In this article, motivation is described as being the most fundamental component an educator can target when trying to improve student learning. There is no one theory to explain all of human motivation, but there are numerous cross-disciplinary theories to hypothesize specific strategies can produce the incentive for an increase in student motivation. The authors explain that learning cannot take place unless students are asking questions, offering answers, and showing a desire to learn. The learning process must be interesting, stimulating, and relevant to the child's upcoming needs (Williams & Williams, 2011).

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivators were evaluated in students. The most common intrinsic motivators students have in common were: active participation, curiosity, challenge, and social interaction. The common extrinsic motivators were recognition, competition, and avoidance of unnecessary work. Their study showed students who were inspired by extrinsic motivators were scored lower academically than students motivated by intrinsic motivators (Williams & Williams, 2011). This goes to show that the importance of motivation should not be overlooked by teachers.

Further, the article noted the basic needs of students and if those needs are not met, learning will be significantly more difficult. For instance, if a student did not eat breakfast they will have a more difficult time concentrating in class. If the student feels unappreciated or unrecognized, they will lack motivation to learn. The professor's knowledge of the content being taught also plays a significant role in motivation. The educator should be certified in the subject area they are teaching. While providing instruction, teachers must keep the content interesting and entertaining. This can be accomplished by embracing technology, teaching students how to apply what is being learned to real life, share personal relevant experiences, and build upon student strengths (Williams & Williams, 2011). Building positive relationships with

students and knowing what they enjoy and are engaged in after school can help steer learning conversations. Students will feel that the teacher genuinely cares about them and is interested in them as a person. Once they feel that acceptance, they will be more likely to open themselves up to learning. Once at the upper end of the hierarchy, students will begin self-learning and will be able to cognitively and behaviorally develop knowledge and relate this information to real life (Williams & Williams, 2011).

Another article, "*How Motivation Influences Student Engagement*" is a qualitative case study written by Sitwat Sied and David Zyngier, who use the Self-Determination Theory to examine student motivation when subjected to various types of engagements. The authors believe that motivation must be present for heightened learning to take place. This article focuses on which motivators, intrinsic or extrinsic, is more connected to student motivation. The research studies show higher achievement levels are met by students who are intrinsically motivated (Sied & Zyngier, 2012).

However, all students cannot be solely intrinsically motivated all the time. Teachers can also use extrinsic rewards such as candy, prizes, certificates, stickers, and other rewards to encourage motivation. A study conducted in a fifth grade elementary school class, with a diverse group of students, indicated only two of the students studied was motivated extrinsically. All students studied had a desire to learn and enjoyed challenging classwork. The results of the study can help teachers decide which type of strategies can be used to intrinsically and extrinsically motivate students and encourage a greater learning experience (Sied & Zyngier, 2012).

Knowing the importance of the intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, teachers can design their lesson plans and use strategies to help promote better learning outcomes. In the article "*An*

Analysis of Strategies for Teaching Standards-Based Lesson Plan Alignment to Preservice Teachers”, Bryan Drost, Anita Levine, and Suny Oneonta discuss their research findings that showed teachers who used effective lesson plans had students with higher test scores. The study consisted of 87 teachers across the United States who consistently shared in common three instructional methods: hands-on learning, collaboration, and expository. By using these strategies, students stay engaged and learning during the lessons. This is found to be more effective than simply sitting and listening to a lecture. Teachers can use formative, summative, and diagnostic assessments can be used as tools to gauge student learning throughout the lesson. Monitoring student performance through modeling, journaling, think-pair-share, and other formative assessments can not only provide immediate feedback for teachers, but can keep students engaged and learning. Teachers should be encouraged to attend professional development classes to learn to prepare properly aligned lesson plans that reflect the standards, objectives, assessments, and instructional activities that facilitate motivation to improve student performance (Drost, Levine, Oneonta, 2015).

The next article I reviewed was “*Student Motivation and the Alignment of Teacher Beliefs*” written by Jeff Weisman, to evaluate studies to determine if teachers are using the most effective motivational strategies in the classroom. The study showed that teachers do not always identify which motivational practices are most effective when preparing their lesson plans. If teachers want to be effective in the classroom and yield higher caliber students, they must learn to recognize what motivates students (Weisman, 2012).

As students reach adolescence, their motivation and academic interests begin to decline. Once students reach secondary education levels they are bored with school and the learning process. Because of the variance in age and maturity levels, the use of motivational techniques

will also vary from elementary to high school students. During the survey, the majority of teachers expressed that they felt student motivation was attributed to the use of enthusiasm, humor, concern, and personal interest in the students. The teachers thought the goal-achievement theory and motivation from intrinsic stimuli were subsequent reasons for student motivation. However, the students expressed they felt they were mainly motivated by wanting to achieve their goals. When teachers set high expectations and can motivate students without causing them to get overwhelmed and frustrated, they will be able to create an atmosphere conducive to active learners. If students are mostly goal and intrinsically motivated, teachers must improve lesson plans and activities that motivate and support the students' rationale (Weisman, 2012).

In the fifth article, "*The Effect of the Teacher's Teaching Style on Student's Motivation Action Research*", Maria Barberos, Arnold Gozalo, and Euberta Padayogdog focus their study on effective strategies and teaching methods that are proven to increase student motivation. This article confirms that not all students are motivated by the same desires, wants, and needs. Some students may simply just seek the approval of others when conquering a challenge. The authors explain that gender, culture, and ethnicity also affect as student's motivation in the classroom. The studies discussed in this article indicate that no single teaching method will motivate all students. The key motivator is to find a way to help students relate the content of the lesson to their own lives. Also, the research shows that when teachers often give positive support and feedback, student performance improves. Teachers should assign tasks that the students are able to perform without becoming overwhelmed. Instruction should be on their ability level, not too difficult, yet not too challenging. The study also showed an increase in student cognitive ability when teachers can identify strengths and weaknesses and build off of prior knowledge (Barberos,

Gozalo, Padayogdog, 2014). The results also revealed that out of the students evaluated, the boys were more motivated by attitude, and the girls were more motivated by wanting to please parents and/or the teacher.

Analysis

After reviewing the literature, I found the data supports my thesis. Each of the articles gave information that supports the idea that if teachers plan and use strategies within their lessons, student motivation will be increased and may result in improved student performance. From “*The Five Key Ingredients for Improving Student Motivation*”, I learned that motivation is one of the key components to student motivation. Each student is an individual and has their own ambitions and desires. Without motivation, very little learning can take place. The teacher is responsible for getting to know the students and finding out what the driving force is that inspires them to want to learn and perform while feeling good about the process. The five “ingredients” discussed within the article were the teacher, student, environment, content, and process. The teacher has the ability to control the environment to make students comfortable and can present content in a way that encourages learning. Teachers can also record themselves in the classroom and review to see how they might improve. Reviewing themselves may show a variety of areas that may need improvement. The teacher may not be providing enough verbal cues during a lesson, their body language could be sending mixed signals to students, or they could be unintentionally overlooking frustration signals of the students. Watching themselves and taking note of student reactions can help correct the tone of lessons and improve performance. The intensity of the teacher can affect the arousal of the students (LeFrançois, 2011). No single theory can be appointed as the tool for motivation. Depending upon the individual, theories for motivation will vary.

The reviewed text exposed the most common intrinsic motivators among students who were studied shared the desire for a challenge, curiosity, active participation, and to socially interact with one another. When the motivators are present, students will have a desire to engage in learning. However, as Maslow describes in his hierarchy of needs, if students lack the basic necessities such as food, security, acceptance, or approval, they will have a more difficult time reaching substantial motivation (LeFrançois, 2011).

In the article, “*Student Motivation and the Alignment of Teacher Beliefs*”, it is understood that teachers often think they know what and how to motivate students, when in reality they are incorrect. Teachers must form interpersonal relationships with students and discover what they are passionate about and what drives their aspirations. If teachers target instruction between what students already know and what they need to learn, they will have greater success (Weisman, 2012). When tasks are too difficult or sufficient instruction is not provided students get frustrated and lose motivation. Targeting the instruction on their ability level and offering support and guidance can keep the motivation and enthusiasm to learn.

I agree with all of the findings in the studies and realize the topic is broad and could be further narrowed down to determine the implications of more specific motivators. For instance, refining the search to find which intrinsic and extrinsic motivators work best to encourage learning. Also, locating studies and data on specific age groups of students and how their motivation varies between grade levels. While reviewing the literature, I also began to question if motivation differs between male and female teachers. Each gender react to situations differently and I wonder if that had any bearing on student motivation.

Teaching is more complex than simply demonstrating how to do something to students. By using psychology, teachers can analyze their effectiveness and determine if their instructional

procedures are relevant. Each class is different, so from year to year teachers must get to know a new class of students and what motivates each one. Strategies that worked well one year may not bring success the following year. Teachers must be flexible and direct instruction to students in differentiated and personalized methods. When students' needs are being met, they will gain interest and become encouraged and excited to learn (LeFrançois, 2011).

Summary of Practical Implications

Based on the information learned from reviewing the literature, I will do my best to motivate and encourage my students to reach their maximum potential. To do so, I will begin getting to know each of my students individually. I will ask questions and watch as they interact with one another. Knowing what their strengths and weaknesses are can in planning lessons. I can help build upon weaknesses to encourage positive attitudes and help students to reach their goals. We can set personal and classroom goals together and track progress throughout the year. I would like my students to feel that the classroom is a safe learning environment, where it is okay to make mistakes, encourage one another, and celebrate successes. I will provide extrinsic motivators to encourage my students to keep working towards their goals, while noting the intrinsic motivators are mostly the driving force behind their enthusiasm. Helping them to feel good about themselves and providing incentives for them to work towards will help boost enthusiasm and provide support. As each individual in my class reaches their goals and crossing milestones, we will celebrate those successes and encourage one another along the way. Being prepared and having plans readily available and of value will contribute to student achievement.

Conclusion

As the studies have shown, if teachers understand student motivation and adequately plan for success, students will improve academically. An uninformed and unmotivated teacher cannot adequately motivate students to learn. As mentioned, I would like to find out more about which

specific motivational strategies work best for specific grade levels. Additional information on the roles of male and female teachers and the influence of their motivation on student success is also of interest. Teachers can make a difference in the lives of students if we educate ourselves and put forth effort into motivating our students to achieve great accomplishments.

References

- Barberos, Maria, Arnold Garzalo, and Euberta Padayogdog. (2014). "The Effect of the Teacher's Teaching Style on Students' Motivation." *Action Research*. NYU Steinhardt. Retrieved from Web. <<http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/teachlearn/tfat/research/motivation>>.
- Drost, B., Levine, A., & Oneonta, S. (2015). An Analysis of Strategies for Teaching Standards-Based Lesson Plan Alignment to Preservice Teachers. *Journal of Education*, 195(2), 37-47.11p.
- LeFrançois, G. (2011). *Psychology for teaching* (11th ed.). San Diego, CA: Bridgepoint Education, Inc.
- Saeed, S., & Zyngier, D. (2012). How Motivation Influences Student Engagement: A Qualitative Case Study. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 1(2), 252-267.
doi:10.5539/jel.v1n2p252
- Weisman, J. (2012). Student Motivation and the Alignment of Teacher Beliefs. *Clearing House*, 85, 102-108. doi:10.1080/00098655.2011.653016
- Williams, K., & Williams, C. (2011). Five key ingredients for improving student motivation. *Research in Higher Education Journal*. Retrieved from EBSCOhost Online Research Database. <http://www.aabri.com/manuscripts/11834.pdf>