

# Motivation and Teaching-learning Process

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## Abstract

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*Presently, it is frequently heard that students are under stress and demoralised, because of one reason or another. Some of the students even do not feel like to attend the school. The author has the opinion that the major key factor of distress among today's youth is lack of proper motivation and positive feedback from teachers as well as parents. This write-up focus on the role of motivation during teaching-learning process in school, and role of parents in motivating their children at home. In this article an attempt has been made to suggest some very useful and practical strategies to motivate the students. It will not only make the teaching interesting but also improve the achievement of students.*

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### Introduction

Motivation is typically defined as the force that account for the arousal, selection, direction, and continuation of behaviour. Nevertheless, many teachers have at least two major misconceptions about motivation that prevent them from using this concept with maximum effectiveness. One misconception is that some students are unmotivated. Strictly speaking, that is not an accurate statement. As long as a student chooses goals and expends a certain amount of

effort to achieve them, he is, by definition, motivated. What teachers really mean is that students are not motivated to behave in the way teachers would like them to behave. The second misconception is that one person can directly motivate another. This view is inaccurate because motivation comes from within a person.

### Definition of Motivation

Motivation is defined as "some kind of internal drive which pushes someone to

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do things in order to achieve something" (Harmer, 2001). As stated by Brown (1994), motivation is a term that is used to define the success or the failure of any complex task. Steers and Porter (1991) deal with three matters while discussing motivation:

- what energizes human behaviour,
- what directs or channels such behaviour, and
- how this behaviour is maintained or sustained.

Motivation is thought to be responsible for "why people decide to do something, how long they are willing to sustain the activity and how hard they are going to pursue it" (Dörnyei, 2001). Ryan and Deci (2000) state that "to be motivated means to be moved to do something". Unlike unmotivated people who have lost impetus and inspiration to act, motivated people are energised and activated to the end of a task. "Interest, curiosity, or a desire to achieve" (Williams and Burden, 1997) are the key factors that compose motivated people. However, they believe that arousing interest is not enough to be motivated. This interest should be sustained. In addition to this, time and energy should be invested and the effect which is required needs to be sustained so as to reach the aim. According to Steers and Porter (1991), motivation can be characterised as follows:

- needs or expectations,
- behaviour,
- goals, and
- some form of feedback.

#### **Motivation and Classroom Dynamics**

The signs of positive motivation are many and varied, but it is fairly easy to recognise when a group of students is

well motivated. For example:

- They participate actively and willingly with one another in learning activities.
- They are attentive to what the teacher and other students say and the questions they ask.
- They do their homework regularly and prepare the next day's activities.
- They find input material interesting.
- They are willing to cooperate with one another or with the teacher when practical difficulties arise.
- They come to class with well-organised notes.
- They are willing to "have a go" even if they find an activity difficult or unfamiliar.

The signs of poor motivation are equally varied and are, to a large degree, the mirror image of those mentioned above. They include the following:

- Students tend not to arrive on time for class or enter the classroom with evident reluctance.
- They are listless during and become restless towards the end of the lesson. (They can't wait to get away.)
- They are unwilling to cooperate with one another on learning activities.
- They find study materials and learning activities boring or complain about them not being useful.
- Disagreements or tensions arise among group members for no apparent reason and are difficult to resolve.
- Students are unwilling to depart from habitual routines or familiar activities, even if the teacher explains their relevance in learning terms.
- They seem not to retain what they have done in previous lessons.

### **Various Strategies for Motivating the Students**

Some students seem naturally enthusiastic about learning, but many need—or expect—their teachers to inspire, and stimulate them: “Effective learning in the classroom depends on the teacher’s ability to maintain the interest” (Erickson, 1978).

Unfortunately, there is no single magical formula for motivating students. Many factors affect a given student’s motivation to work and to learn (Bligh, 1971; Sass, 1989) interest in the subject matter, perception of its usefulness, general desire to achieve, self-confidence and self-esteem, as well as patience and persistence. And, of course, not all students are motivated by the same values, needs, desires, or wants. Some of your students will be motivated by the approval of others, some by overcoming challenges.

Researchers have begun to identify those aspects of the teaching situation that enhance students’ self-motivation (Lowman, 1984; Lucas, 1990; Weinert and Kluwe, 1987; Bligh, 1971). To motivate the students, teachers can do the following:

- Show a deep seated interest for the students.
- Give frequent, early, positive feedback that supports students’ beliefs that they can do well.
- Ensure students’ success by assigning tasks that are neither too easy nor too difficult.
- Create an atmosphere that is open and positive.
- Help students feel that they are valued members of a learning community.

- Provide immediate reward to those who put in extra efforts in the class activities like drawing a star on the wrist or giving them beautiful flower from the garden.
- Always reinforce the positive response of the students, say: good! very good, excellent, etc. to ensure that it matters a lot to you.

*Some characteristics that emerge as major contributors to student motivation*

- Instructor’s enthusiasm
- Relevance of the material
- Knowledge of subject matter
- Skill to communicate that knowledge
- Organisation of the course
- Appropriate difficulty level of the material
- Active involvement of students
- Variety
- Rapport between teacher and students
- Use of appropriate, concrete, and understandable examples
- Involving the students in different class activities.

### **I: Combining Instructional Objectives and Behaviours**

**1. Set high but realistic objectives for your students:** Research has shown that a teacher’s expectations have a powerful effect on a student’s performance. Set realistic objectives for students when you make assignments, give presentations, conduct discussions, and grade examinations. “Realistic” in this context means that your standards are high enough to motivate students to do their best work but not so high that students will inevitably be frustrated in trying to meet those objectives. To develop the

drive to achieve students need to believe that achievement is possible which means that you need to provide early opportunities for success (American Psychological Association 1992; Bligh 1971; Forsyth and McMillan 1991; Lowman 1984).

**2. Help students for self evaluation:**

Failure to attain unrealistic goals can disappoint and frustrate students. Encourage students to focus on their continued improvement. Help them to evaluate their progress by encouraging them to critique their own work, analyze their strengths, and work on their weaknesses. For example, consider asking students to submit self-evaluation forms with one or two assignments (Cashin, 1979; Forsyth and McMillan, 1991)

**3. Suggest students how to succeed:**

Reassure students that they can do well in and tell them exactly what they must do to succeed. Say something to the effect that "If you can handle the examples on these problem sheets, you can pass the exam. People who have trouble with these examples can ask me for extra help." Or instead of saying, "You're way behind," tell the student, "Here is one way you could go about learning the material. How can I help you?" (Cashin 1979; Tiberius 1990).

**4. Strengthen students' self-motivation:**

Avoid messages that reinforce your power as an instructor or that emphasises extrinsic rewards. Instead of saying, "I require," "you must," or "you should," stress "I think you will find." or "I will be interested in your reaction." (Lowman, 1990).

**5. Avoid creating intense competition among students:**

Competition produces anxiety, which can interfere with learning. Reduce students' tendencies to compare themselves to one another. Bligh (1971) reports that students are more attentive, display better comprehension, produce more work, and are more favourable to the teaching method when they work cooperatively in groups rather than compete as individuals. Refrain from public criticisms of students' performance and from comments or activities that pit students against each other (Eble, 1988; Forsyth and McMillan, 1991).

**II: Framing and presenting the matter to motivate the students**

**1. Be enthusiastic about your subject:**

A teacher's enthusiasm is a crucial factor in student motivation. If you become bored or apathetic, students will too. Teacher's enthusiasm comes from confidence, excitement about the content and genuine pleasure in teaching. If you find yourself uninterested in the material, think back to what attracted you to the field and bring those aspects of the subject matter to life for your students. Or challenge yourself to devise the most exciting way to present the material, however dull the material itself may seem to you.

**2. Work from students' strengths and interests:**

Think from the student's point of view how they feel about the subject matter, and what their expectations are. Then try to devise examples, case studies, or assignments that relate the course content to students' interests and experiences. For instance, a chemistry

professor might devote some lecture time to examining the contributions of chemistry to resolving environmental problems. Explain how the content and objectives of your course will help students achieve their educational, professional, or personal goals (Brock 1976; Cashin 1979; Lucas 1990).

**3. Follow the maxims of teaching:** Try to follow the different maxims of teaching like simple to complex, general to specific, concrete to abstract, analysis to synthesis and particular to general, etc. If teacher use these maxims not only students feel interested in the subject matter rather teacher will enjoy it and feel satisfied.

**4. Increase the difficulty of the material with passage of time:** Give students opportunities to succeed at the beginning of the year. Once students feel they can succeed, you can gradually increase the difficulty level. If assignments and exams include easier and harder questions, every student will have a chance to experience success as well as challenge (Cashin 1979).

**5. Vary your teaching methods:** Variety reawakens students' involvement in the course and their motivation. Break the routine by incorporating a variety of teaching activities and methods in your course: role playing, debates, brainstorming, discussion, demonstrations, case studies, audiovisual presentations, guest speakers, or small group projects (Forsyth and McMillan 1991)

### **III: Discourage grades/marks**

**1. Emphasize mastery and learning rather than marks/grades:** Ames and Ames (1990) report on two secondary

school mathematics teachers. One teacher graded every homework assignment and counted homework as 30 per cent of a student's final grade. The second teacher told students to spend a fixed amount of time on their homework (thirty minutes a night) and to bring questions to class about problems they could not complete. This teacher graded homework as satisfactory or unsatisfactory, gave students the opportunity to redo their assignments, and counted homework as 10 per cent of the final grade. Although homework was a smaller part of the course grade, this second teacher was more successful in motivating students to turn in their homework. In the first class, some students gave up rather than risk low evaluations of their abilities. In the second class, students were not risking their self-worth each time they did their homework but rather were attempting to learn. Mistakes were viewed as acceptable and something to learn from.

**2. De-Emphasising the marks system Researchers:** Recommend de-emphasising grading by eliminating complex systems of credit points; they also advise against trying to use grades to control nonacademic behaviour (for example, lowering grades for missed classes) (Forsyth and McMillan, 1991; Lowman 1990). Instead, assign ungraded written work; stress the personal satisfaction of doing assignments, and help students measure their progress.

**3. Frame exam/test paper that encourage the kind of learning you want students to achieve:** Many students will learn whatever is necessary to get the marks they desire. If you base your tests on memorising details,

students will focus on memorising facts. If your tests stress the synthesis and evaluation of information, students will be motivated to practise those skills when they study (McKeachie, 1986).

**4. Avoid using marks as threats:** As McKeachie (1986) points out, the threat of low achievement may prompt some students to work hard, but other students may resort to academic dishonesty, excuses for late work, and other counterproductive behaviour. Moreover this will create stress in their mind and they will feel burdened.

#### ***IV : Reinforcement –A key factor to motivate the students***

**1. Give feedback as quickly as possible:** Return tests and papers promptly, and announce the reward publicly and immediately. Give students some indication of how well they have done and how to improve. Rewards can be as simple as saying a student's response was good or giving him a candy or star, etc. or mentioning the names of contributors. "Reena has given very good example of a periodic change around us, very good Reena, well done."

**2. Reward the achievement of students:** Both positive and negative comments influence motivation, but research consistently indicates that students are more affected by positive feedback and success. Praise builds students' self-confidence, competence, and self-esteem. Recognize sincere efforts of each student. If a student's performance is weak, let the student know that you believe he or she can improve and succeed over time (Cashin, 1979; Lucas, 1990).

**3. Show them the good work of their peers:** Share the ideas, knowledge, and accomplishments of individual students with the class as a whole. There must be a one good quality in every student. Announce that good quality of a student in the class.

- Make available copies of the best papers and essay exams.
- Provide class time for students to read papers or assignments submitted by classmates.
- Have students write a brief critique of a classmate's paper.

**4. Giving negative feedback with a difference:** Negative feedback is very powerful and can lead to a negative class atmosphere. Whenever you identify a student's weakness, make it clear that your comments relate to a particular task or performance, not to the student as a person. Do not announce the weakness of students in front of a whole class. Try to cushion negative comments with a compliment of some good work done and in a separate room.

**5. Avoid demeaning comments:** Many students in your class may be anxious about their performance and abilities. Be sensitive to how you phrase your comments and avoid off hand remarks that might prick their feelings of inadequacy.

**6. Avoid comparison.** Never compare the performance of two students. Simply give individual feedback whenever required. Comparison creates jealousy among the peer groups and hurt the feelings of students when compared with bright students. Moreover, it will de-motivate the students to work harder and lead to lost of interest in the subject.

**V: Guidelines for parents to motivate their children**

Teacher can arrange parent teacher meeting (PTA) twice a month and guide the parents and suggest different ways to motivate their children. Teacher should always start the PTA with positive outlook. Discuss all the good work of a child then tell them the weakness and the way to overcome those limitations. Teacher can give the following guidelines to the parents.

**1. Inspire their thirst for knowledge:** If you want your child to be a stellar student, don't limit learning to the walls of his classroom. Your child needs your help to really "open up the world of ideas," joy in discovery will transfer to his/her schoolwork, so you'll boost his/her academic achievement, too!

**2. Fill your child's world with reading:** Take turns reading with your older child, or establish a family reading time when everyone reads her own book. It's important to show her that "it's not only a school task." Demonstrate how important reading is to you by filling your home with printed materials—novels, newspapers, even posters and place-mats with words on them. Children can learn to read by living in an environment that's rich in words.

**3. Encourage self expression:** Encourage your child to express his opinion, talk about his feelings, and make choices. He can pick out a side dish to go with dinner and select his own extracurricular activities. Ask for his input on family decisions, and show that you value it. "One of the things valued in school is class participation practice at home expressing his feelings" is good for self-esteem and self-confidence.

**4. Show enthusiasm for your child's interests:**

Encourage him to explore subjects that fascinate him. If he's a horse nut, offer him stories about riding or challenge him to find five facts about horses in the encyclopaedia. Make sure he has the tools he needs if your child love looking for sea life at the beach during family vacations, bought her little nets so that she could catch crabs and minnows. Now she's a marine biologist.

**5. Provide play opportunities:** Provide your child different opportunities that support different kinds of learning styles — from listening and visual learning to sorting and sequencing. Your child will develop his creative expression and problem-solving skills as he builds. He'll need lots of unstructured play time to explore them. Although sports activities and language clubs are valuable experiences, too many scheduled activities can add "too much stress" to your child's life, and distract him/her from exploring the pleasures of learning at his own pace.

**6. Be a role model:** Point out the new things you learn with enthusiasm. Let them see you in action: choose an activity that's unfamiliar to you both, such as playing tennis or speaking English, and schedule a lesson or pick up a couple of instructional tapes. "Parents are the single most important modeling agent in a child's life" and if you "demonstrate that learning is a lifetime adventure," your kids will get the message.

**7. Talk to him/her about his/her school:** Ask about what she/he is learning in school, not about his/her grades or test scores. "Even if he/she doesn't do well grade-wise, never

compare them with the other students, he/she might still be learning and improving and you don't want to discourage that. Have him/her teach you what he/she learned in school today — putting the lesson into his/her own words will help him/her retain what he/she learned.

**8. Celebrate achievements:** No matter how small or big it is you should celebrate

each and every achievement of your child. Completing a book report calls for a special treat; finishing a book allows your child an hour of video games. You'll offer positive reinforcement that will inspire him to keep learning and challenging himself. "If a child feels as if he is successful regardless of what it is, it builds him up and makes the next challenge easier."

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**Internet sites**

[http://www.wpi.edu/~isg\\_501/motivation.html](http://www.wpi.edu/~isg_501/motivation.html).  
[www.hltmag.co.uk/jan04/](http://www.hltmag.co.uk/jan04/)  
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