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MOTIVATION

Objective:

"Motivation is the portal to engagement" (Barkley, 2010, p.15). This quote conveys the necessity of dissecting motivation in order to comprehend its impact in learner engagement. As a result, what exactly is motivation? Behaviorist models suggest motivation can be externally adjusted via reinforcement and punishment, however, cognitive models rely on needs models, such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs, starting with the fundamental physiological needs such as safety and security and progressing to self-esteem and self-actualization (Feinman, 1975). Goal theories, on the other hand, focus on performance goals relating to reputation and self-perception, learning goals relating to learning the task and concepts taught, and even work-avoidant goals relating to a challenge refusal and a minimal time and effort investment (Barkley, 2010). Intrinsic motivation theory combines both needs and goals models and emphasizes autonomy, competence and relatedness. The current model portrayed in the textbook is a product equation of expectancy and value. Expectancy relates to the self-perception that learners have in the degree to which they can successfully complete a task, and value relates to the degree to which they value its opportunity and reward. It is interesting to note the relationship between the two, as one cannot exist without the other to yield motivation. This has significant implications as will be discussed in the decisional section of this journal, in regards to creating an environment that has both high expectancy and high value to maximize learner motivation and thus increase engagement.

Reflective:

The immediate personal reaction to motivation is excitement. I think of enthusiasm, drive, dedication and discovery. I do not think of external motivators such as excellent grades or excellent memorization rewards as those are merely behavioristic principles, facades, in my opinion, knowledge disguised in mere mechanical visual memory and redundancy as opposed to true conceptual understanding and critical thinking. Intrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is leading towards self-actualization, through the adoption of learning goals, the connection to learning communities, the appropriate growth mindset mentality (Smilkstein, 2011) and an accurate expectancy, self-perception and value portrayal.

Interpretive

Further analysis of motivation leads to the power load margin (PLM) formula by McClusky (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Load referring to important factors in the adult learner's life such as family commitments, work responsibilities and goals. Power referring to enabling factors such as physical health, financial stability, social support and coping skills. Margin is as a result the relationship, analogous to a mathematical equation P/L=M. This further reveals the complexity of intrinsic motivation, as it can increase and decrease due to a Power surplus or Load surplus respectively. The implications are most visible in the expectancy area, as a learner with insufficient coping skills may have an altered self-perception in their capabilities, resulting in a decreased confidence. As a result, although the learner may value the task, the decrease in confidence results in **dissembling**, where excuses, difficulty denial and even knowledge understanding pretenses ensue. These learners can be *overstrivers*, where their lack of confidence is high yet as they fear exposure, they pretend and exert extraneous effort to ensure success and protect the ego (Barkley, 2010). Expectancy is thus crucial, where learners need to have an

accurate self-perception of their ability to succeed at the task at hand. Let us move to the implications of value, the importance of the need to know as pointed by Tough, as adults desire immediate knowledge application (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). A learner with high success expectancy, that fails to either see the relevance, value or practical application of the task, may engage in **evading** where only the minimal requirements are completed without engagement. A learner with low value attribution and low success expectancy will **reject** the task at hand with resentment and anger and will reinforce negative self-perceptions. These are *failure-accepting* learners, that have disengaged from the learning process. Thus both expectancy and value work together, coherently, to create the product of engagement. A high success expectancy and high value attribution will result in **engaged** learners eager to grasp new insights. These are *success-oriented* learners who enjoy learning for the sake of learning. Now the question naturally arises in regard to the implications relating to the classroom environment that will increase motivation and result in deep engagement. An environment where goals are clearly established and compatible, feedback is relevant, continuous and immediate and tasks are sufficiently challenging (Barkley, 2010). Moreover, the environment should consist of a cooperative and collaborative learning community, aimed at promoting learning goals, with minimal pressures for performance goals, and no evident fear of embarrassment or failure.

Decisional:

Let us examine the means of how to create an environment for increased intrinsic motivation, high expectancy and high value, in order to maximize student engagement. I propose starting with clear, concise goals, yet the mode of delivery is crucial. A handout will most likely only be read by a certain percentile of learners, some of which may need clarification. I suggest

an in class out-loud reading of the learning outcomes and goals. Learners not only have the ability to ask questions, they also have the ability to establish a sense of connection to their peers, as each learner takes a turn in reading a course goal. A positive environment is further accentuated where there is no fear of embarrassment, as the educator reinforces that throughout this activity, and confidence and self-perception increases. The educator can purposefully make a mistake in reading the initial course goal, to allow the students to correct her, as she models how easily mistakes can occur and how there is no anxiety, fear or sarcasm elicited as a result. Not only did this activity increase expectancy, it also increased the tendency towards learning goals as opposed to performance goals, and it increased the "flow" or deep engagement of the class.

Furthermore, to increase the value of the task or concept, I propose a real-life context analogy, where learners are enlightened of how they can use the material beyond the lecture hall, with immediate application in a real-life context. These analogies can be presented or brain stormed in groups, depending on the level of content comprehension. Feedback is another crucial component of increasing engagement, and an effective feedback strategy I currently see with my mathematics students that I tutor, is the use of guided reflections journals. At the end of each class, the students answer four questions in regards to the concepts covered, their understanding, their difficulties as well as their reflection on their learning process. It allows for an additional educator/student interaction, as these journals are read after class and the educator response can be accessed via an online course. Technological advances allow for immediate feedback online in courses that are technologically enhanced, and its immediacy allows learners to better prepare and become more self-aware, more motivated for the following class. This is particularly useful for learners experiencing anxiety, as they may not seek the help of the educator or even admit to

having anxiety. The private, confidential, reflective journal allows these students to voice their concerns, without fear of embarrassment and it allows the educator to make use of alternate techniques specifically for the student. A concrete example is the use of practice self-marking exams, for those with exam anxiety. Moving to the last aspect of sufficiently challenging tasks, as supported by Vygotzky's zone of proximal development (Barklay, 2010), I suggest both problem-based and task-centered learning. Case studies are an excellent example, where the learner is autonomous and self-directed, thus increasing expectancy and value, as there are no constraints and applicability to a real-life problem is evident, as fitting with andragogical principles (Merriam & Bierema). Cognitive autonomy support can radically influence intrinsic motivation and student engagement as the learners diverge from performance goals and start toward knowledge insight, problem solving, critical thinking and evolving in their learning process. As a result, I am certain there are numerous other equally effective strategies to increase motivation and student engagement, however one aspect one should not dismiss are the fundamental needs. Encouraging students to lead a healthy lifestyle, get sufficient sleep or even allow them an opportunity for a five minute walking/water break is also quite important. I look forward to implementing all of the discussed strategies in my teaching career in order to increase motivation and learner engagement.

References

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