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THE ROLE OF STUDENTS' MOTIVATION AS INNOVATION IN EDUCATION

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Absract
The article considers role of students' motivation in education process.

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Lecturers frequently bemoan the lack of student motivation and ask what they can do to improve it. Most lecturers would agree that a complete lack of motivation of any kind - amotivation - is highly undesirable. Eurther, most lecturers would claim that intrinsic motivation is more desirable than extrinsic motivation. Hence these are the two principal questions that will be addressed in this section. Eirst, then, how can we avoid students becoming amotivated? For some students this will be next to impossible, since they may have entered higher education with the sole aim of enjoying the social life. But there is also evidence that what we do to students at university can lead to their becoming a motivated. In one of our research programmes investigating students' approaches to essay writing we discovered, through a combination of focus groups and questionnaires, that certain factors lead students to lose their motivation. Of particular importance is the feedback given, both in terms of the mark awarded and the written feedback provided. One group of students approached essay writing with an understanding motivation (very similar to deep approaches to studying), in that they enjoyed writing, had an intrinsic interest in the essay, and read extensively in order to develop their own conclusions in response to the essay title. Because of the amount of reading they did, and their relative inexperience as writers, they often had problems focusing their essay, developing arguments that adhered to academic conventions including writing within the word limit. As a result they received poor marks but had difficulty in understanding where they had gone wrong. They felt that feedback was inconsistent, unclear and contained insufficient detail to be helpful. As a consequence, they avoided this understanding strategy on the grounds that it was unlikely to lead to a high mark. Furthermore, they tended to disengage with feedback, ignoring it altogether. In addition, students were highly critical of what they regarded

as a 'glass ceiling' - an unwritten rule which seemed to prevent them from achieving marks higher than a low upper second. Those who did try perceived effort (in essence, achievement motivation) to be the way to achieve this, but were disappointed with only small mark increases not worthy of the substantial increase in work [1]. This simply reinforces the idea that poor feedback and support may promote mediocrity, even in those initially striving for more. It is only part of the answer to this problem, but it would appear that one way of avoiding a motivation is to make sure that students are given full and appropriate feedback. When terms such as 'developing an argument' are used, there needs to be some explanation of what this means. One way of achieving this might be by setting up a database of examples, which could act as an essay feedback bank that staff could draw on. This would enable markers to demonstrate what aspects of an essay are likely to attract good marks in a personally meaningful way that could be used in future assessments. The second issue is that of how to encourage intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivation. There is much evidence to suggest that the majority of students tend to adopt surface approaches (of which extrinsic motivation is a part) at university. There is some evidence to suggest that changes at a course level may be effective. Ramsden's course experience questionnaire measures five subscales: good teaching (providing useful and timely feedback, clear explanations, making the course interesting and understanding students); clear goals and standards (clear aims, objectives and expectations regarding standard of work); appropriate assessment (extent to which assessment measures thinking and understanding rather than factual recall); appropriate workload (the extent to which workloads interfere with student learning); and generic skills (extent to which studies have supported the development of generic skills). Kreber found a positive correlation between generic skills and independence with deep approaches, and a negative correlation with heavy workload and deep approaches. Found that students' perceptions of their learning environment were a stronger predictor of learning outcomes at university than prior achievement at school. Again there is no easy or guaranteed solution to this, and some authors are rather pessimistic as to what can be achieved by individual lecturers or even groups of lecturers contributing to course perceptions. Biggs points out that university education is part of a system, and that most systems are resistant to change, instead tending to return to the state of balance that has developed within them. What this means is that students' approaches to study and their motives are determined by a number of aspects of the higher education system, including their perception of the department and university they are in, and even of the university system in general. Trying to change students' motives by changing the way one module or group of modules is taught is unlikely to be effective, since all the other aspects will be working against this change. Similar, rather disappointing conclusions come from attempts to train students to approach their studies in different ways. Norton and Crowley found that the training programme they

devised had little effect on how students studied. Purdie and Hattie found that their training programme led to a temporary improvement in approaches to studying but that these rapidly reverted to their initial levels after the training came to an end. On a more positive note Cassidy and Eachus redefined a research methods module at the University of Salford [2]. The redefined module used more seminars (and therefore, fewer mass lectures), was assessed by assignment work only, encouraged more feedback from tutors, more contact with tutors, and favoured independent learning. Self-reports of the students' research methods proficiency and their module grades were recorded. Findings illustrated that the students reported a higher level of proficiency after completion of the research methods module, indicating that the redefined module heightened the students' beliefs regarding their own capabilities. In addition, there was a positive correlation between students' perceived proficiency and marks on this programme. Whether or not this change was maintained for any length of time was not determined, but since students' post-module perceived proficiency increased, this type of programme may influence student motivation by improving their academic confidence. There is one other aspect of higher education which does seem to be crucially important in students' motivation, and that is the assessment system. Entwistle and Entwistle describe how final-year students start out with good intentions, are intrinsically motivated and attempt to adopt deep approaches to their studies. However, asexamination time approaches they become increasingly extrinsically motivated and adopt surface, rote-learning approaches. Similar findings have emerged in research by Newstead and Eindlay, and a deep, strategic approach to studying appears to be associated with high levels of academic achievement only when the assessment focuses on and rewards personal understanding; in instances where this is not the case surface approaches will likely be more effective. The assessment system should be one that encourages conceptual understanding as opposed to rote learning. This might be achieved through the increased use of problem solving, case studies and the like, where knowledge has to be used rather than just learnt. What is more, such assessments could take place under formal examination conditions, thus avoiding some of the problems associated with continuous assessment (such as student cheating, which is where this chapter began). In a review of research into motivation in learning and teaching contexts, Pintrich sums up concisely some of the actions we as teachers might take to support our students that have been explored and hinted at above. Should be considered in relation to both the academic task (e.g. writing an essay) and topic/academic content of the task (e.g. theories of moral development). It should be borne in mind that a student may be intrinsically interested in theories of moral development but lack confidence in essay writing as well as perceiving this task to be vocationally irrelevant. Hence providing an engaging assessment topic may not be enough to support and encourage the use of intrinsic motivation and high levels of achieving orientation if students have not been

sufficiently supported in their development of essay-writing skills and thus writing confidence [3].

The question of how to explore and support the development of our students' motivation is far from simple. This research field can be a daunting one to navigate, with related research using disparate approaches and terminologies. It has provided a brief insight into some of the research findings regarding student motivation. Essentially, students can be motivated or a motivated, reflecting the extent to which they want to succeed. In addition, they can be intrinsically motivated and/or extrinsically motivated. Intrinsically motivated students want to learn for learning's sake, while extrinsically motivated students study for external rewards. One might expect that motivation would correlate with both student behaviour and with academic achievement but research has produced inconsistent results. In addition, one might expect students to become more highly motivated and more intrinsically motivated during their time in higher education; once again, however, results are inconclusive.

Literature

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