

Psycho-Pedagogy (Master01)

Lecture 01: Definition of Motivation

Introduction

It is practically acknowledged that there is a positive correlation between motivation and learning. That is why, comprehending the specific conditions that activate learners' behaviours becomes an inevitable component in teaching. The purpose of this chapter is to outline literature pertinent to: defining motivation, past and present motivational theories, cooperative learning and motivation, and the impact of reward on motivation.

1. Definition of Motivation

The essence of motivation and its impact on human behaviour have long presented difficulties for those who try to comprehend and clarify them, both in the field of language learning and out. Psychology has defined motivation in a wide range of terms, from instincts, to drives, to needs, to conditional behaviour, to processes that activate and guide behaviour. Consequently, the notion of motivation has gained a broad interpretation.

Motivation has an obstinate ambiguous nature that coerces researchers to understand it differently. Consequently, discussing it is not an easy task, and giving it a uniform definition has not been agreed on in research. Except the fact that motivation determines the reasons behind people's thoughts and behaviour, no regular definition has been identified.

Wlodkowski (1982: 5) believes that:

Motivation is the word used to describe those processes that can (a) arouse and instigate behaviour, (b) give direction or purpose to behaviour,(c)

continue to allow behaviour to persist, and (d) lead to choosing or preferring a particular behaviour.

In this sense, the term motivation is used to describe those processes that energise, orient, and maintain behaviour. Keller (1983: 389) sees that:

Motivation, by definition, refers to the magnitude and direction of behaviour. In other words, it refers to the choices people make as to what experiences or goals they will approach or avoid, and the degree of effort they will exert in that respect.

Therefore, motivation is the process whereby goal-directed activity is instigated and sustained. It involves two essential components which are direction and effort. Direction provides information concerning the appealing and non-appealing aspects about activities and why people become involved in some activities and not others. Effort refers to the amount of energy that a person exerts in a specific situation, and clarifies why individuals show different degrees of commitment when involved in a particular activity. Gardner (1985: 50) proposes that “motivation involves four aspects; a goal, effortful behaviour, a desire to attain the goal, favorable attitudes toward the activity in question”. He (*ibid.*, 1995: 279) states that individual differences in motivation are reflected in the latter three aspects listed above.” Thus, motivation involves goals for a determined action with a particular direction; an action or an activity which can be either physical or mental; persistence; and finally, it requires a positive way of thinking toward the target activity.

Okolo (1995: 279) believes that students who are motivated to learn are those who:

- (a) pay attention to the teacher and maintain interest in academic activities,
- (b) volunteer answers in class,
- (c) ask for guidance when needed,
- (d) persist in trying to solve problems themselves,
- (e) complete activities above and beyond those required for a grade, and
- (f) take risks in order to improve their own skills or knowledge.

This implies that the term motivation has been used to signify a range of meaning from a general readiness to do something, to the performance of tasks, direction, persistence of the behaviour, and inclination to take risks. Consequently, motivation is composed of many interdependent factors, such as interest, curiosity, and a desire for something, all of which can result from internal or external factors, or both of them. Webster (1991, in Bellon, 2002: 3) defines motivation as “something (as a need or desire) that causes a person to act.” This denotes that motivation is an internal power that compels a person to perform a determined task. That is why, when applied to education, teachers must be aware of how to enhance this power to make learning a desirable experience.

Lee (2005: 330) defines motivation as:

The force behind behaviour and provides an explanation for why people do things. Motivation influences what people do--meaning their choice of action, as well as how they act, the intensity, persistence, and quality of their actions.

For him, motivation has the potential to influence the what, when, and how of learning, and increases the likelihood of involvement in activities which are designed to improve learners' performance. The relationship between motivation and learning is a reciprocal one. That is to say, motivation has an immediate positive impact on learning and performance and what learners do and learn, in turn, influence their motivation.

Keller (2007: 4) states that “Motivation refers to a person's desire to pursue a goal or perform a task, which is manifested by choice of goals and effort (persistence plus vigor) in pursuing the goal.” According to him, each motivated behaviour has two aspects. The first aspect is the choices the learners make because these options play an important role in determining the number of personal goals they will achieve in their future life. The second

aspect is effort. It involves persistence and vigor. Persistence is revealed through the readiness of students to keep on performing the task even if it is difficult, boring or unchallenging. Because persistence is of paramount importance, learners have to internalize how to monitor their persistence during the learning experience. Vigor refers to the active mental strength which is manifested in the level of activity or involvement in a task.

Finally, academic motivation is a psychological construct used to determine personality dispositions and external influences that impact human behaviour. It is wanting to learn, showing a desire toward learning tasks, and affording school a great importance. That is why, it is vitally important and essential for successful learning. It is a significant variable that requires consideration when developing, monitoring, and assessing instructional effectiveness.