Psycho-Pedagogy (Master01)

Lecture 03: Theories of Motivation (Part 02)

2.3 Maslow's Need Theory

The humanist psychologist Maslow (1970) formulated his theory of human needs on the basis of physical, emotional, interpersonal, and intellectual aspects of an individual to account for human motivation. This theory hypothesizes that individual's ultimate aim is self-actualization, however, this goal is reliant on the achievement of lower needs, such as those for survival, safety and comfort. For Owens (2001: 352), the humanistic ideas are based on the belief that "personal needs to constantly grow and develop, to cultivate personal self-esteem and to have satisfying human relationships are highly motivating drives." This denotes that psychological and cognitive factors are also involved in human motivation.

In this theory, Maslow considered the individual as an integrated, organized whole. Maslow (*op.cit.*, 19) states that:

> It is an experimental reality as well as a theoretical one**((**i.e., an individual as " an integrated, organized whole"**))** must be realized before sound experimentation and sound motivation theory are possible. In motivation theory, this proposition means many specific things. For instance, it means the whole individual is motivated rather than just a part of him. In good theory, there is no such entity as a need of the stomach or mouth, or a genital need. There is only the need of the individual. It is John Smith who wants food, not John Smith's stomach. Furthermore, Satisfaction comes to the whole individual and not a part of him. Food satisfies John Smith's hunger and not his stomach's hunger.

This means that Maslow's theory overlapped the pure biological survival needs to involve self-direction, freedom of choice, positive self-concept, and self-enhancement.

Maslow has interpreted motivation from the angle of needs which are placed in a hierarchical order. The satisfaction of higher level needs is conditioned by the lower ones. The hierarchy is as follows: physiological needs, safety needs, love needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. According to Owens (*op.cit.*, 354), one of the significant concepts that Maslow has introduced is the distinction between deficiency needs and growth needs. The first four needs are categorized as 'deficiency needs' "because (a) their deficiency motivates people to meet them and (b) until the deficiencies are met, people find it difficult to respond to a higher order need." This is what Maslow (*op.cit.*, 57) states:

> Our needs usually emerge only when more prepotent needs have been gratified. Thus, gratification has an important role in motivation theory. Apart from this, however, needs cease to place on active determining or organizing role as soon as they are gratified.

In the light of Maslow's ideas, the emergence of the needs condition their own order. The hierarchical order comes out from the rate of potency that each need represents. Maslow (*ibid.*, 1954: 146) repots that:

> The safety need is stronger then the love need, because It dominates the organism in various demonstrable ways when both needs are frustrated. In this sense, the physiological needs (which are themselves ordered in a subhierarchy), which in turn are stronger than the love needs, which in turn are stronger than the esteem needs, which are stronger than those idiosyncratic needs we have called the need for self-actualization.

Thus, Maslow makes it clear that the shift from one need to the next, in each category, is constrained by the satisfaction of the previous one. On this basis, physiological needs which include food, air, water, sex, rest and sensory satisfaction have to be fulfilled before moving toward the next level of needs.

Ultimately, despite the fact that Maslow's theory is considered as one of the most famous theories of motivation that highlighted psychological and cognitive components in human motivation, the division of the individual needs into five levels of needs and their order of gratification are questionable.

2.4 Attribution Theory

In contrast to behaviourists, cognitive theorists are absorbed by defining and observing IM. Weiner (1986) is one of the prominent cognitivists and whose attribution theory deals with the causal clarifications provided for a particular event or behaviour. This theory postulates that an individual engages in the same inferring process to attribute his success or failure to determined causes for the sake of maintaining positive self-image.

According to Seifert (2004: 138), an attribution can be referred to as “the perceived cause of an outcome”, or “a person’s explanation of why a particular event turned out as it did.” This denotes that the attribution theory looks for explanations and excuses for success or failure. Thus, this theory hypothesizes that individuals have certain beliefs about the causes that lie behind their success and that they search for attributions for their outcomes. Expressing it differently, attribution means the explanation the individual affords for his or her past experiences, which may or may not be motivating for future actions.

Most causes of success or failure share three common characteristics: locus of causality, stability, and controllability. The first is concerned with the location of the cause, i.e., whether the cause is internal or external to the individual. The second is related to the possible change of the cause, i.e., whether it is stable or unstable. The second is connected to the extent to which one considers responsibility for the cause. In achievement related contexts, there are four explanations for success and failure. They are ability, effort, task difficulty, and luck. As a consequence, attribution may be affected by internal factors, such as task difficulty and luck. The main belief of this theory is that people will try to save face and keep a positive self-image. Therefore, the more motivated or efficacious people will communicate the assumption that their success is attributed to their own efforts or abilities, on the other hand, the less efficacious individuals will interpret their failure by external factors such as bad luck. These assumptions lead to the basic notion of locus of control or self-efficacy. Individuals with an internal locus of control believe that they are responsible for their success or failure. Efforts and abilities are the main interpretations for their outcomes. Yet, people with an external locus of control tend to determine external factors as the reasons behind successful or failing experiences.

In general, the attribution theory assumes that motivation results from the desire to get a clear vision about oneself and the surrounding environment, the reasons behind one’s and others’ behaviours, and individuals’ attributions afforded to account for success or failure. The significance of this theory lies in facilitating instruction through the reciprocal interpretation of feedback by both teachers and learners.