

Psycho-Pedagogy (Master01)

Lecture 04: Theories of Motivation (Part 03)

2.5 Self-Determination Theory

During the 1970's, the "Rochester School" on motivation in educational psychology has been set forth by Deci, Ryan, and their colleagues. Their work is crowned by a book in 1985 entitled 'Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behaviour' which designed the basic concepts of the self-determination theory (SDT). This theory has been one of the most influential theories of motivation that has been exploited to state the basics of motivation in relation to autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

For Ryan and Deci (2002: 5), SDT is based on the principle that there exists a research support "in favour of human tendencies towards active engagement and development and that there is, as well, manifold indications of fragmentation and conditioned responses." This is a good evidence that individuals possess natural inclinations toward both internal and external development. Therefore, it is well established that human beings are active, their engagement is built on the basis of their intentional choice, and their striving for psychological growth leads to their development.

SDT postulates that human behaviour is motivated by three innate psychological needs. These are relatedness, competence and self-autonomy. Jacobs and Eccles (2000: 413) refer to relatedness as a feeling of being "securely connected to the social world and to see oneself as worthy of love and respect." It is being aware of being related to other individuals or groups of people. Deci and Ryan (1991: 243) report that relatedness refers to "a person's striving to relate

to and care for others, to feel that others are relating authentically to one's self, to feel satisfying and coherent involvement with the social world." The need for competence encompasses one's feeling of ability and confidence to reach desired results, and to get rid of negative outcomes. Self-autonomy is concerned with learner's ability to control his or her cognitive processes, learning management and learning content which are tightly connected to learner's attitudes towards his or her independence, responsibility, choice, decision making, critical reflection and detachment.

According to Deci and Ryan (*op.cit.*, 1985), the level of self-determination determines the individual's motivational type. They make the distinction between three broad types of motivation: IM, extrinsic motivation (EM), and amotivation. These types are situated on a continuum from self- determined to non-self-determined as shown in the following figure:

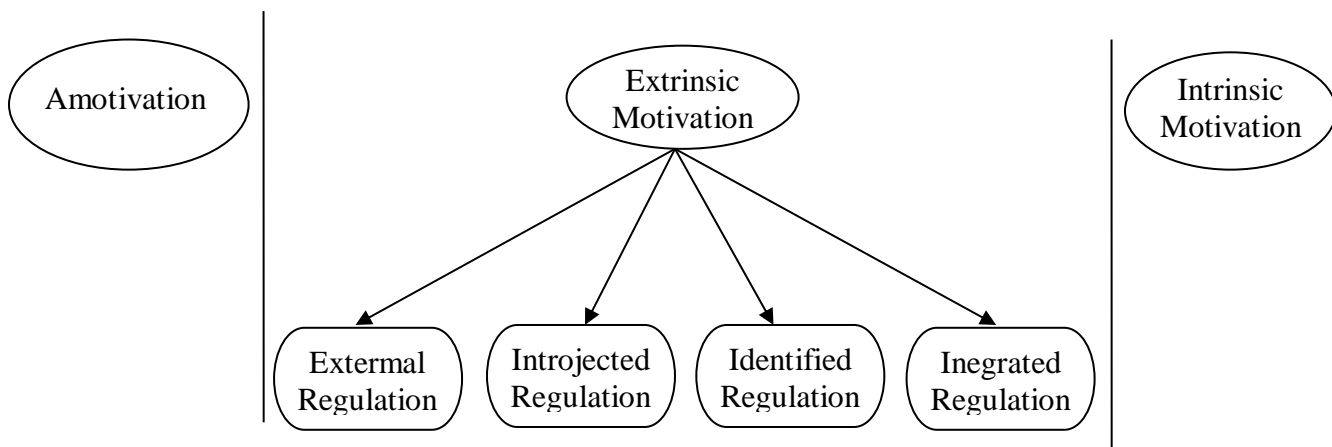


Figure 3: Orientation Subtypes along the Self-Determination Continuum

(Gagne & Deci, 2005: 336)

Accordingly, motivational orientations can be categorized into intrinsic, extrinsic, and amotivation and lie on a continuum from self-determined to non-determined. IM represents the highest level of self-regulation. The extrinsic category includes different four levels of regulation, whereas amotivation epitomizes the lack of intrinsic or extrinsic factors for performing a particular task.

2.5.1 Definition of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

IM refers to the tendency to engage in an activity which is connected to the experience of pleasure or inherent interest. A person is intrinsically motivated when he or she performs an activity out of personal preference, because it is interesting for him or her. IM arises from individual's need for competence and self-determination. These feelings involve the natural satisfaction which is the origin of performance. The purpose of the activity is engagement in itself, which is an intrinsic end. Thus, feelings of competence are strongly connected to individual's purposeful and personal challenge which coincides with his or her perspective. Self-determination implies that the individual is controlling his or her environment.

For Deci and Ryan (1985: 39), IM is seen as "motivation to engage in an activity because that activity is enjoyable and satisfying to do". It is the undertaking of an activity for its own sake, enjoyment provided, learning, or feeling of competence. When the main reason for acting or doing is to get something inside the activity itself, then motivation is considered intrinsic. IM is the desire to take part in an activity purely for the sake of contribution which stems from curiosity. It involves motives that are inside, linked, and essential to the resulting behaviour. According to Wigfield (2000: 141), intrinsically motivated students "do activities for their own

sake and out of interest in the activity.” We conclude that the existence of this type of motivation is conditioned by the students’ genuine interest in the activity which is promoted by the need to feel competent and self-determining.

EM prompts individuals to take part in activities for external outcomes which are separable from the behaviour itself. In other words, it is a means to an end. An extrinsically motivated individual have no interest in the activity he or she is performing per se. Thus, EM is learning that occurs as a result of forces from outside the individual. According to Deci and Ryan (1985: 39), EM refers to “actions carried out to achieve some instrumental end such as earning a reward or avoiding a punishment.” This kind of motivation refers to the participation in an activity to obtain some reward or avoid some punishment. That is, EM is said to be extrinsic when the only reason for undertaking an activity is earning something external to the activity. The resulting behaviours are not autonomous as they are caused by factors of control existing outside the person. Wigfield (2000: 141) states that extrinsically motivated students “do activities for instrumental or other reason, such as receiving a reward.” According to Wigfield’s description of these students, it can be concluded that if students display an external interest in the activity or content, EM is the dominant one.

Investigations in the field of motivation theory are now concentrated on techniques for enhancing IM toward learning tasks which are put under study to explore how activities themselves might be designed. One form of motivation does not fit all learners’ needs. The combination of both types of motivation plays a crucial role for the whole motivation.