

CHAPTER 1. TEACHING & MOTIVATION

This chapter will examine several motivational strategies to create effective learning environments. Motivation is closely related to effort to learn as well as to engagement and participation in classroom work. Motivation is 'an internal state that arouses, directs, and maintains behaviour' (Hoy & Hoy, 2003, p. 112).

In order to provide and maintain motivation, teachers should consider students' preferences, likes and needs in selecting appropriate motivators. This calls for **intrinsic motivation** that comes from 'inside' students. Intrinsically-motivated students work on an activity because they enjoy doing it or they find it useful and relevant to their life and purpose. Reading for pleasure or attending seminars of interest are examples of intrinsic behaviours.

As opposed to intrinsic motivation, **extrinsic motivation** should be used with extreme caution. Extrinsic motivation involves using external conditions such as

- Material rewards (prizes, money)
- Grades
- Praise
- Parental pressure.

Teachers should avoid using extrinsic motivators for intrinsically-motivated students. They should also remember that the effects of extrinsic motivators are temporary (for a few weeks only). They can, however, be used as a transition to induce intrinsic motivation. Below are some ways to increase classroom motivation.

1. Raising awareness to increase motivation

Good and Brophy's (2002) review shows that teachers are not aware of what actually happens in the classroom. Some examples of their summary review regarding teachers' lack of awareness are:

Teachers

- dominate classroom discussions
- ask factual questions much more frequently than opinion questions
- discriminate between boys and girls
- discriminate between students of high and low social-economic status
- pay more attention to those seating in the action zone (*front middle row*)
- wait about one second only after asking questions (*instead of 3-5 seconds*)
- either provide answers or call on somebody else without giving any clues when low achievers fail to answer

- wait less time for low achievers to answer
- criticise low achievers more often for failure
- praise low achievers less frequently
- interact with low achievers less frequently and in a less friendly manner
- seat low achievers far away from themselves
- provide briefer and less informative feedback to low achievers
- provide less eye contact and other non-verbal support to low achievers.

In order to raise awareness, teachers could be involved with their colleagues in reflective teaching through action research. That is, they could observe each other as critical friends in order to develop such awareness.

2. Organized lessons to increase motivation

Lesson plans would serve as useful guidelines for presenting effective and organized lessons. Following a lesson plan in outlined form should be helpful. Below is such an outline:

LESSON PLAN FORMAT	
Topic of lesson:	Date:
Aim:	
Objectives:	
Teaching procedures & activities*: (including review, warm up and other stages as well as techniques, tasks and activities)	
Resources & materials: (including print and technological materials)	
Assessment & evaluation: Were the objectives met? What were the main strengths and weaknesses? Was it motivating? Was it at an appropriate level of difficulty? Were the students involved? Did they learn? How do I know?	
Reflection: How did I feel about the lesson? How did my students feel about the lesson? What went/ did not go as planned? What should I change the next time I teach? Other comments?	

* Procedures and activities are combined because they are interwoven.

3. Effective lessons to increase motivation

In order to conduct effective lessons, the following procedures are provided (adapted from Barry & King, 2000; Rief, 2008):

Getting attention

- by means of a silence signal such as a tap on the board, a clap, etc. in order to have a good start

Setting the scene by

- reviewing prior knowledge to make a bridge between the past and present
- asking an interesting question
- adding mystery (i.e. bringing an object in a box or bag)
- telling a story
- showing pictures
- generating discussions

Maintaining attention by

- providing meaningful content
- using interest elements
- relating content to students' lives
- providing natural links with transition signals to maintain organization (e.g. *the next point is, another important point is, etc.*).

Concluding effectively by

- bringing the lesson to an end smoothly through summary, questions and discussions.

4. Clear teaching to increase motivation

Below are some suggestions for clarity of teaching.

- Give examples students understand. Support teaching with clear and specific examples. Consider the following examples:

At the end of the lesson you will be able to learn what context is. This will help you to improve your reading. vs.

Today, you are going to use the surrounding words to find out the meaning of an unknown word. You will guess the meaning from context.

- Make clear connections between topics using transition signals (i.e. the next point is, now we will turn to, the second step is, finally, etc.).
- Teach step by step (in terms of both increasing difficulty and organized content).
- Teach at an appropriate pace (in terms of speech rate, presentation of content and conduct of activities).

5. Motivational strategies to increase motivation

- **Create a relaxed and supportive teaching environment:** if students do not perceive the learning environment as comfortable and anxiety-free, successful learning outcomes will not be achieved.
- **Reflect your enthusiasm and motivation on students:** If students do not perceive teachers as enthusiastic about their teaching, why should they be enthusiastic about learning?
- **Offer an appropriate level of challenge/difficulty:** If classroom activities are too easy, students will be bored; if they are too difficult, they will give up.
- **Offer choices of activities:** Classrooms should be learner-centred rather than teacher-centred. Students will respond more positively to activities matching their preferences.
- **Involve students in classroom activities:** When learners have a chance to participate, they will have a sense of belonging. As a result, they will put extra effort into an environment they feel they belong to.
- **Let them feel that you value them as individuals:** You can show this by asking for their opinions, by respecting their rights and choices, and by treating them warmly through effective verbal and non-verbal support.
- **Relate your teaching to their needs and interests:** If students perceive teaching content as useless or irrelevant, their motivation will not be aroused. Therefore, classroom activities should reflect students' real life situations.
- **Hold high expectations:** Research shows that holding high expectations of students are reflected upon learner outcomes. For example, a research study (cited in Good and Brophy, 2002) claimed to predict high achieving students in several Year 6 classes according to examination scores administered by the researchers. Although there was no such exam to

predict learner outcomes, those particular students scored higher than others at the end of the school year.

Teachers treat their students differently when they hold high expectations of them by: a) creating a warm relationship with them; b) giving them more feedback about their performance; c) teaching them more material; and d) giving them more opportunities to respond and ask questions (Rosenthal, 1974, as cited in Good and Brophy, 2002).

- **Allow students to participate in decision-making:** When autonomy is created in the classroom, they will be encouraged to make more positive contributions. Students' preferences and views should be considered in the selection of content and activities.
- **Create a co-operative rather than competitive environment:** Teachers should strengthen cooperation among students because it will allow students to combine their joint efforts whereas competition will create a tense and anxious classroom climate. Competition is 'you lose and I win'; cooperation is 'we win together.'
- **Stress the value of learning by introducing meaningful and relevant activities:** Teachers should try to instil intrinsic motivation rather than extrinsic motivation. Students should learn for the sake of learning useful and meaningful content rather than grades.
- **Provide evaluative and corrective feedback:** Teachers should provide clear and specific feedback to let students know about their strengths and weaknesses. Students need to be told whether they are on the right track and making satisfactory progress.

It is interesting to note that teachers' feedback attempts are not always effective since they fail to confirm whether the responses are correct (e.g. interjections such as 'right', 'hmm', 'ha').

6. Effective questions to increase motivation

Below are some strategies to ask effective questions.

- Ask one question at a time (*i.e. tell me what motivation is vs. tell me what motivation is and how we can provide motivational environments in the classroom*).

- Ask specific questions (i.e. *"What kind of activities are more effective for classroom motivation?"* vs. *"How can we provide motivational environments?"*).
- Wait 3-5 seconds after asking a question. This will allow everybody, not only quick learners, to process the question.
- Pay attention to your wait time after student response. This will allow students to process the answer.
- Ask question to the whole class (i.e. do not call a name before asking the question). Otherwise only the student called will concentrate on the question.
- Do not respond to call-outs and do not ignore such misbehaviour; show the right way to prevent it.
- Acknowledge correct answers. Do not respond with general phrases such as 'OK', 'all right', 'hmm'.
- Assist with clues or rephrase the question. Do not pass the question to somebody else immediately when there is no answer. Your task is to encourage them, not to embarrass them.
- Avoid immediately repeating the question. Otherwise they might not concentrate the first time you ask a question knowing it will be repeated, anyway.
- After you pass the question to others, return to the student who could not answer and ask for a conclusion, summary or an elaboration (Brown, n.d.).
- Do not answer your own question. If everything fails, try the 'buzz group' technique in which students work out answers in groups. (Brown, n.d.).
- Ask probing questions (i.e. *Why do you think so?; Can you give some examples?; Can you elaborate?; Can you relate what you are saying to real life situations?*).
- Consider Bloom's taxonomy of objectives while asking questions.

Bloom's taxonomy is a classification of instructional objectives and questions. It has six levels: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation.

Knowledge questions serve to check the acquisition of knowledge. Examples: *When did Columbus land in America?, Where was Shakespeare born?*

Comprehension questions serve to see whether students show an understanding of the reading or listening material. Some examples are: *What is the main idea of the first paragraph?; Describe in your own words what the author is saying in the conclusion section.*

Application questions aim to apply knowledge or ideas to new situations. These questions usually serve to solve a problem. Some examples are: *According to our description of Audio-lingualism, which of the following lessons would be considered audio-lingual?; Bearing the definition of metaphor in mind, show the metaphorical expressions in the text.*

Analysis questions require students to examine content in depth by separating it into smaller parts. They are asked to identify reasons, uncover evidence, and reach conclusions. Some examples: *What are the main reasons for inadequate foreign language learning in our country?; Classify the characters in the story according to their psychological mood; Analyse the story and find the similarities between the characters.*

Synthesis questions involve students in reaching a general conclusion by putting different parts together. Some examples: *What would be an interesting name for this story?; What common conclusions can you draw about friendship after examining all the relationships in the story?; Using the following items try to find out a way to survive in the desert.*

Evaluation questions require students to judge the value of information. Examples of evaluation questions are: *Tell whether this technique is effective and why?; Give your opinion on the effectiveness of the university education system in this country.*

Below is a tabular form summarizing these different types of questions.

<i>Knowledge</i>	<i>Comprehension</i>	<i>Application</i>	<i>Analysis</i>	<i>Synthesis</i>	<i>Evaluation</i>
define describe identify list name outline state	exemplify explain identify rephrase specify summarize tell	apply choose demonstrate illustrate perform employ relate show solve use	analyse categorize classify distinguish divide examine justify order separate	collect combine compile create design develop rearrange reconstruct reorganize revise produce synthesize	argue assess decide evaluate compare contrast criticize improve judge rate support value

7. Effective praise to increase motivation

In using praise, you should

- be specific (*i.e. I like the way you ended the story vs. That's a good story*)
- praise for the correct part only for partly correct answers (*i.e. Your thesis statement is good, but you need to find better supporting sentences*)
- be natural when giving praise (do not exaggerate)
- be sincere and genuine (If they don't deserve, do not praise.)
- give private praise to students who may not prefer public praise
- do not overuse phrases of praise; add variety to their use
- attribute success to effort not to luck when giving praise.

Discussion for review

Below are some motivational strategies. Which strategies do you think are more difficult for teachers to be equipped with? Why?

- Create a relaxed and supportive teaching environment
- Reflect your enthusiasm and motivation on students
- Offer appropriate level of challenge/difficulty
- Offer choices of activities
- Involve students in classroom activities
- Let them feel that you value them as individuals
- Relate your teaching to their needs and interests
- Hold high expectations
- Allow students to participate in decision-making.

Further reading

Harmer (2001), Chapter 4

Ur (1996), Module 19