



Research Paper

Role of Motivation and Self Efficacy In Student Learning

Abstract

Important motivational factors that influence learning are goals, outcome expectations, values and self-efficacy. Goals enhance learning through their effects on perceived progress, self efficacy and self evaluation. The perception of progress raises self efficacy and sustains motivation. Goal properties of specificity, proximity and difficulty level, enhance self-perception and motivation, as do the self set goals for which people make a commitment to attain. Outcome expectations affect learning and motivation because people strive to attain desired outcomes and shun undesirable ones. People also act in consonance with their values, working for those outcomes that they find self satisfying. This paper looks into the motivational processes that influence student learning.

Keywords - Goals, Outcome expectations, Values, Self-efficacy.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Motivation has a direct impact on how an individual learns. It affects an individual's energy levels, determines the persistence in striving for achieving the goals and affects the sense of self-efficacy in personal competence. Self-efficacy stresses that human actions and success depend on how deep are the interactions between one's personal thoughts and a given task. Key motivational factors that influence learning are goals, values and expectations. People set goals for learning and assessing their progress against the pre-set goals. Values reflect what people find self-satisfying for reaching their goals. Highly motivated students are more attentive to their learning processes and display greater progress as compared to their unmotivated peers. They also put higher amount of effort to learn with persistence. This leads them to a greater satisfaction and positive effects on future endeavours. Clearly, motivational processes play a vital role in initiating, guiding and sustaining students' efforts for self regulating learning.

II. DISCUSSION

Human behaviour, sustained over long periods of time, persists owing to goal setting and self valuation of the progress. A goal reflects one's purpose in life (Locke & Latham, 2002). Goal setting involves establishing a standard or objective to serve as the aim of one's actions (Locke et al., 1981). People can set their own goals or they can be established by others, such as parents, teachers, supervisors etc (Schunk, 2001). Tolman's (1951, 1951) theory of *purposive behaviourism* contends that learning is more than strengthening of responses to stimuli, since all behaviour is goal directed. It is either getting-on or getting-from a specific goal object or goal situation (Tolman, 1932). Students do not study because they have been reinforced for studying in the past for getting good grades. Instead, studying is a means to reach the intermediate goals, which, in turn, enhances the likelihood of going to the university. Initially, people must make a commitment to attempt to attain their goals. Then they need positive self-evaluation of progress by raising their own self-efficacy which could sustain motivation. Goals motivate people to exert effort necessary to meet task demands and to persists with the task over time (Locke & Latham, 2002). Goals direct people towards task features, behaviours to be performed and potential outcomes. They give a 'tunnel vision' for focus which helps the effectiveness of their approach that could raise performance.

Goals by themselves, do not automatically enhance learning and motivation. Rather, the attributes of specificity, proximity and difficulty determine self-efficacy, motivation and learning. Students find daily goals easier to attain as compared with the weekly goals. For young children, distant goals do not lead to any motivation, they prefer to see them on immediate basis. Gradually, teachers can set weekly goals after the students have learnt how to achieve the daily goals. Challenging but attainable goals raise motivation and self-efficacy better than easy or hard goals. Specific goals (eg, learn ten new words today for English dictation) are better than general goals (eg, do your best) for the students for incorporating specific standards of performance

(Locke & Latham, 1990). Specific goals help in establishing the amount of effort that would be needed to achieve the goals and make it easier to promote self-efficacy (Bandura, 1988). Goals are distinguished by how far they project into the future (Schunk, 2001). Proximal, short-term goals are closer at hand, are achieved quickly and result in greater motivation, as compared to the temporarily distant long-term goals (Bandura & Schunk, 1981). Children have short-term frames of reference and are not fully capable of representing distant outcomes in their thought process. In schools, teachers plan lessons for the year, keeping in mind the goals that will be attained at the end of the session but daily lesson plans have short term goals.

Goal difficulty which refers to the level of task proficiency has an impact on motivation. The amount of effort people will expend to attain the goal depends on the proficiency level they have. Individuals prefer to expend greater effort to attain a difficult goal than an easy one (Locke & Latham, 2002). However, if the skills needed for reaching the goal are missing then, difficulty level of goal will have no effect. People will neither commit to attempting the goal nor work whole-heartedly (Schunk, 2001). Such students need a lot of encouragement from the teachers and regular feedback from them. Allowing students to set their own goals enhances self-efficacy because there will be a higher level of commitment (Schunk, 1985). If a class is asked how many puzzles they will solve in a given period, the self-set goals will be more visible as compared with teachers setting the number of puzzles to be solved by the whole class. Regular feedback on goal progress is especially valuable for tasing self-efficacy (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). When students are informed that they are competent and can improve their performance by working diligently, it would lead to higher levels of self-efficacy. This will further lead to higher motivation (Schunk, 1990).

Before performing any action, the personal beliefs called *outcome expectations* about the anticipated consequences play an important role (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2006). Tolman (1949) also discussed *field expectancies* which involve relations between stimuli and response. They help people form cognitive maps or internal plans comprising expectancies of which actions are required to attain the goals (Schunk, 2001). People decide the best course of action with the help of their cognitive maps. Here, people's personal experiences and observations impact the outcome expectations (Bandura, 1981). Individuals act in ways they believe will be successful and attend to models who teach them valuable skills. Over long periods, those behaviours get sustained where people believe that their actions will give them the desired outcomes. For example the external outcomes of students may pertain to the opportunity to get a good grade in exams, getting recognition by teachers and parents, their names appearing in newspapers and acceptance by universities. However, the internal outcomes might be to feel good about themselves, feel proud of their work and raise their own feeling of self esteem. Internal satisfaction occurs when learners act in accordance with their personal ethical beliefs. Those students who believe that they are making little progress in learning get demoralised and lackadaisical. The teachers role in such a case is to make students notice everyday progress, however little it may be. That will sustain the effort and students will start building their sense of self-efficacy (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001).

Learners also have the perceived importance of learning which acts as a *value* accorded to the effort. Students prefer to expend effort towards outcomes that they feel will benefit them and avoid making any effort for those outcomes that they do not value. Values can be developed both enactively or vicariously. When people learn by doing, they also experience the consequences of those actions. But many values are learnt by observing others. Children acquire values from their parents, teachers and peers. When they observe peers getting rewarded, they imitate the actions. For getting teacher approval, they write neatly for their assignments. Thus, teachers have the responsibility of promoting achievement values in all students by teaching them how to set goals and assess the goal progress. In due course of time, teachers can build learner's efficacy expectations. Self-efficacy refers to a person's beliefs about his own capabilities to learn (Bandura, 1993). It is different from knowing what to do. It is more about one's perception of ability. It's a key to promoting a sense of agency in people that they can influence their lives and build it as they want (Bandura, 2001).

Self-efficacy is about the perceptions of one's capabilities to produce actions. Students may believe that a positive outcome will result from certain actions but also believe that they lack the competence to produce those actions (Schunk, 2001). For example, a student may believe that if he correctly answers the teachers' questions, he will get her praise (positive outcome expectations) which will be valued. But if he doubts his capabilities to answer the questions correctly, he may not do that (low self-efficacy). Students who perform well, mostly have a high sense of self-efficacy. However, there is no necessary relation between self-efficacy and outcome expectations. Even students who have a higher self efficacy, may expect a low grade if they think that the teacher doesn't like them. Self-efficacy also transfers to new situations. Those students who feel confident about language skills, may also feel more motivated in science class and vice versa. Generally, high ability students feel more efficacious about learning compared with the low ability students. That doesn't however mean that self efficacy is just another name for ability. Collins (1977) identified high, average and low ability students in mathematics. She gave them problems to solve and told them that they could rework those they missed. Regardless of the ability level, students with high self efficacy solved more problems correctly and chose to rework more problems they missed out, as compared with the students of low self-efficacy. Thus, self-

efficacy not only influences the effort students make to participate eagerly but also affect persistence and learning. Students with higher self-efficacy expend much more effort and persist longer on problems than those students who doubt their capabilities, especially when faced with difficulties (Schunk, 2008). Successes raise the level of self-efficacy and failures lower it. When students observe the similar others succeeding, they feel motivated to try the task, however difficult it might be. Conversely, when students observe their peers failing, they also might get dissuaded from attempting the task.

Self-efficacy has effects on choice, effort, persistence, achievement and career choices (Pajares, 1997; Schunk & Pajares, 2005). Students high on self-efficacy are more likely to be cognitively engaged in learning when the task was perceived as difficult but less likely to be effortful. Conversely, when the task was deemed easy, there was lower cognitive engagement (Soloman, 1984). Clearly, self efficacy is a significant predictor of learning and achievement (Schunk, 1981). When the situation is specific, dynamic and fluctuating, self efficacy was more likely to be present as compared with the environment that is more stable and static, where the concept of self-concept is more dominating. The quantum of self-efficacy also might fluctuate within a day due to the amount of preparation, physical condition such as sickness, and mood fluctuation. Learning also gets affected by the nature of task. Greater length of the task reduces the amount of effort and the general classroom conditions also affect the self-efficacy (Schunk & Pajares, 2002). However, learners are able to alter and adjust their social environments for enhancing their learning and achievement (Schunk, 1999).

Parents, teachers and coaches are important role models in children's social environments. Bandura et al. (1996) found that parents' academic aspirations for their children affected not only the children's academic achievement but also their self efficacy. Those children who are exposed to adult models learn to be more self-efficacious. Zimmerman and Ringle (1981) had children observe models successfully/unsuccessfully attempt to solve a puzzle who were also verbalising their optimism or pessimism. When the children observed the confident models, they could achieve the same task more effortlessly as compared with those who were exposed to the models who were pessimistic. Similarly, observing peer models performing a task can also have an impact on the sense of self-efficacy. Brown and Inouye (1978) investigated the effects of perceived similarity in models' competence. Telling students that they were more competent than the models led to higher self efficacy. Peers who readily master skills may help teach skills to the students who are observing them but may not have any impact on the self-efficacy for those who are experiencing learning difficulties. During small group work, peers can enhance self-efficacy. When each member has some responsibility and members share rewards based on their collective performance, it helps the low-ability students to do better. Teachers need to select tasks carefully because unsuccessful groups do not raise self-efficiency. Also, teachers need to assess the abilities and skills of the students, such as, writing, analysing, interpreting, researching and organising, before forming the groups since students come with different strengths.

One way to raise self-efficacy is to use *coping models* who initially demonstrate skill deficiencies and later go on improving their performance. Determined efforts and positive self thoughts overcome difficulties (Thelen et al., 1979). In contrast, *mastery models* demonstrate faultless performance with high confidence from the beginning itself. Coping models may lead to better learning by students as compared with mastery models since students may find the performance of coping models more similar to their own performance and they may not relate to the effortless and rapid learning of master models. Yet another variable for the teachers to be cognisant about is the *number of models*. As compared with the observation of a single model, the observers find multiple models more effective since they might just find similarity to at least one model (Thelen et al., 1979). The belief that one is more talented than an unsuccessful model can raise the level of self-efficacy and achievement equally well.

Self-efficacy predicts the acquisition and performance of motor skills (Poag-DuCharme & Brawley, 1993). They assessed the self-efficacy level for performing in-class activities and overcoming barriers to daily exercising habit of students. Self-efficacy related positively to the initiation and maintenance of regular exercise. Lirgg and Feltz (1991) exposed students to a skilled or unskilled teacher or peer, demonstrating a ladder climbing task. Then sixth grade girls were asked to do the ladder climbing exercise. Those who had observed the models doing the task, had a better performance as compared to those who didn't see any. Also, those who saw the skilled models perform the task had a greater self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is as relevant to the teachers' instruction as it is to the students (Tschannen-Moran et al. 1998). Teachers' own beliefs about their capabilities to help students learn is referred to as *instructional self-efficacy*. How much would they persist with their effort towards students is affected by personal beliefs of self-efficacy. Teachers with low self efficacy may even avoid planning for activities that they feel exceed their capabilities. They wouldn't persist with students with learning difficulties, nor would they expend greater effort to make better learning material and not re-teach content in the ways students learn better. On the other hand, teachers with higher self efficacy will design challenging activities to help students succeed. They would also persevere with such students till they learn. Thus, teachers' motivation and commitment towards students get affected by the sense of self-efficacy (Chan et al. 2008). They

also create a positive classroom climate, support students' ideas and address their needs (Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). Feltz et al., (1999) also showed the same predications for the efficacy of coaches.

Ashton and Webb (1986) distinguished between *teaching efficacy*, which is more about outcomes of teaching in general and personal efficacy, which is defined as *self-efficacy* to perform particular behaviours for certain outcomes. It's possible for a teacher to have a higher self-efficacy and lower teaching efficacy, if the teacher believes that the learning outcomes depend on the student's home environment, which remains out of control of the teacher. Goddard et al. (2000) gave the concept of *collective teacher efficacy*. It depends on teachers getting solid support from the school administrators and an environment which values professional learning and development. In schools, where teachers work collaboratively to achieve common goals are apt to feel collectively self-efficacious. In loosely knit or very tightly administered schools, it is mostly missing. Also, in some schools, it might be present at the departmental level but not at the whole school level. The sources of collective self-efficacy are the same: vicarious experiences, social persuasion, performance attainments and physiological indicators. When teachers work collaboratively on projects, learn from each other, receive encouragement for professional development and work together to cope up with difficulties, the collective self-efficacy rises (Goddard et al., 2004). It also leads to greater job satisfaction and teacher retention. Capara et al. (2003) found positive relationship between job satisfaction and collective self-efficacy. Even a higher measure of self-efficacy at individual teacher level will not translate into collective self efficacy when the environment is not conducive and responsive to change.

III. CONCLUSION

Self-regulated learning offers an important perspective on academic learning. Students' beliefs of self-efficacy and goal orientation provide the foundation for motivation and personal accomplishment. Unless people believe that their actions can produce the outcomes they desire, they have little incentive to act for achieving their goals. Motivation depends on self efficacy beliefs. With a strong sense of efficacy, people approach the most difficult and challenging tasks successfully. They have greater intrinsic motivation and deeper engrossment in the task at hand. They are able to maintain strong commitment towards their goals as they raise their self-concept. Compared with students who doubt their learning capabilities, those who feel efficacious for learning, work harder, persist longer and achieve higher. The self-efficacy beliefs that the students hold when they approach new tasks and activities serve as a filter through which new information is processed.

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