

A New View on Teaching Motivation—Self-determination Theory

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Self-determination Theory categorises motivation into three broad types: amotivation, extrinsic motivation, and intrinsic motivation according to the level of self-determination. This theory argues that people's motivation is a developmental process across time and place. Furthermore, it emphasizes that three basic psychological needs—a need for competence, a need for autonomy, and a need for relatedness—are the nutriments of motivation. Thus, as this theory not only concerns the type of motivation, but also the circumstances that promote and maintain motivation, it offers insight to the nature of lecturers' motivation. It is claimed to be one of the most influential theories in contemporary motivation psychology.

Keywords: new view, teaching motivation, self-determination theory

Introduction

Although motivation is a term frequently used both in educational and research contexts, there is little agreement with regard to the exact meaning of this concept. The term has a number of different interpretations, and it has become to be used in different ways by different people. The notion of motivation, as in *Oxford Dictionary of English*, is a reason or reasons for acting or behaving in a particular way. Brophy (Brophy, 1985) defined motivation as “a theoretical construct used to explain the initiation, direction, intensity, and persistence of behavior, especially goal-directed behavior” (Brophy, 1985, p. 3).

The usual meaning of motivation for the teacher is probably the interest that something generates in the students. A particular exercise, a particular topic, a particular song, may make the students appear involved in the class, to the teacher's delight. (Butler & Shibaz, 2008, p. 454).

There are well-established theories that have been applied extensively in the study of motivation. Little systematic, theory-driven research has been conducted on teacher motivation (Butler & Shibaz, 2008). It has therefore been proposed that “one potential fruitful strategy could be to extrapolate from theories that have suggested useful in studying motivation in educational contexts, albeit for learning rather than teaching” (Butler & Shibaz, 2008, p. 454). These theories include: Achievement Goal Theory, Self-efficacy Theory, Expectancy-Value Theory, and Attribution Theory.

Theories Extrapolated From Studying Motivation

Achievement Goal Theory

Achievement Goal Theory emphasizes that setting goals is the engine that promotes and motivates people to adopt certain actions (Elliot & Dweck, 2005). Early studies on motivation to achieve distinguished between varieties of mastery, learning, or task goals. Achieving a sense of competence is the core of the achievement goal construct (Elliot & Dweck, 2005). This theory has been widely applied in explaining students' learning motivation. Recently, however, some researchers such as Malmberg (2008) and Butler and Shibaz (2008) have used it to successfully explore teachers' goal orientation and the relation between teachers' motivation and students' outcomes, such as help-seeking and cheating. Butler and Shibaz (2008) in a study of middle school teachers in Israel found that teacher mastery and ability-avoidance goals were associated with their communication and behaviour in the classroom. "[T]eaching, like learning, will be more effective when teachers strive to learn and acquire competence than when they are concerned mainly to avoid failure and the demonstration of inferior ability" (Butler & Shibaz, 2008, p. 465). Another finding was that teacher achievement goals were influenced by context (Butler & Shibaz, 2008).

Malmberg (2008) studied beginning teachers in Finland and found that achievement goal orientations and especially mastery goal orientations were found to increase over time. The interpretation was that teachers became more reflective about their teaching, increased in confidence and developed an improved sense of wellbeing. In part, the findings were explained by a lack of normative assessment in the practicum context. Therefore, these researchers argued that schools should provide support for teacher development, because such support promotes mastery goals for teaching. All these findings suggest the potential of an achievement-goal framework for conceptualising qualitative differences in teachers' motivation for teaching and the importance of context on teacher development.

Self-efficacy Theory

The second theoretical perspective can be drawn from self-efficacy Theory. This theory emphasizes that people make decisions based on their beliefs about their own capabilities to achieve success (Bandura, 1997). Bandura (1997) argued that cognitive processes influence the establishment of goals. If a person has strong perceptions of self-efficacy they will set, and persist with, more challenging goals. Confident individuals anticipate successful outcomes. The higher the sense of efficacy is, the greater the effort, persistence, and resilience they have in achieving those goals. Self-efficacy is not concerned with the skills one has, but rather with judgements of what one can do with those skills (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy Theory focuses significantly on perceptions. An example would be a teacher's perceptions of teaching ability in a particular task, such as teaching English reading or the teaching of particular aspects of a subject.

Researchers such as Pajares (1996) etc, have conducted research on teachers' motivation from the perspective of self-efficacy in academic settings. Their research reveals that teacher efficacy is one of the most important variables related to positive teaching behaviour and student achievement. Furthermore, meta-analysis research by Stajkovic and Luthans (1998), which examined the results of 114 studies with 21,616 participants, showed there is a 72% probability that persons with high self-efficacy on a task have better performance than those with low self-efficacy. Their findings suggest Self-efficacy Theory is useful for the present study: The

theory can account for the development of teachers' self-confidence and sense of agency in their teaching. In contrast, if teaching staff do not have confidence in English, they might have low self-efficacy to teach English, teach inadequately, and hence be poorly motivated.

Expectancy Value Theory

The third theory which offers some explanation of teachers' motivation, for school teaching, is Expectancy Value Theory. This theory emphasizes a person's expectancy of success in a certain task and the values the person puts on the task (Eccles & Wigfield, 1995). The expectation of success is based on beliefs of competence. A number of studies that focused on the relationship between ability-related beliefs and career-choice were conducted to investigate motivational factors influencing the choice to teach among beginning pre-service teachers (Richardson & Watt, 2006). These studies presented a comprehensive understanding of teachers' motivation for choosing teaching as a career among school teachers at two times: on entry to teacher education and immediately prior to completion of their qualification. Motivation factors in their studies included: social influences: positive prior teaching and learning experiences; perceived teaching abilities; intrinsic values; personal utility values including job security, time for family and job transferability; social utility values including shaping the futures of children/adolescents, enhancing social equity, making a social contribution, and working with children/adolescents; and the negative motivation of having chosen teaching as a "fallback" career. The results of these studies enabled participants to be categorised into three types according to their differences in motivation: "highly engaged persisters", who had an interest in teaching due to its intrinsic rewards and their enthusiasm for working with children and adolescents; "highly engaged switchers" who were contemplating another job when they completed their teacher education; and "lower engaged desisters" who perceived minimal rewards from career prospects and teaching. There were two limitations of the studies: first, their participants were beginning teachers, and so do not represent the whole body of teachers; second, the motivation factors investigated in their studies were not systematically incorporated into any motivation theory. There is a necessity to conduct a study that investigates motivation factors systematically among teachers with careers of different lengths.

Attribution Theory

The fourth theory to be considered is Attribution Theory. Attribution Theory views past successes and failures as important factors when individuals attempt actions in future (Weiner, 1986). Perceived control over competence is the central focus of the theory. A key argument is that attributions are perceived causes of outcomes. Kelley and Michela (1980) described the consequences of attributions for an individual's motivation and behaviour as the attributional process. This process includes three dimensions: stability, locus, and control. Causes can be divided into internal or external (locus) to the person, and controllable or uncontrollable. Weiner (1986) argued that an external and controllable attribution is possible if it is made by the person who is instrumental to the success of the action. This theory has been used to demonstrate the link between teachers' feedback and student attribution in the classroom. The implication of this research for higher education is that if lecturers adopt practices that provide effective feedback on students' learning, students may well be motivated towards learning. All theories discussed above in relation to teachers' motivation are drawn from social cognitive psychology. These theories emphasize that people undertake actions and maintain them on the basis of their beliefs about their competence.

Self-determination Theory (SDT)

Self-determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2002) has two strengths in explaining people's motivation. First, the theory categorises motivation into three broad types: amotivation, extrinsic motivation, and intrinsic motivation. Further, SDT argues that people's motivation is a developmental process across time and place. Furthermore, SDT emphasizes that three basic psychological needs—a need for competence, a need for autonomy and a need for relatedness—are the nutriments of motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1991). Thus, as SDT not only concerns the type of motivation, but also the circumstances that promote and maintain motivation, it would be an appropriate framework for examining lecturers' motivation. Therefore, this attribute of the theory makes it more powerful than the other four theories previously discussed in explaining teacher motivation.

In SDT, Ryan and Connell (1989) argued types of motivation can be examined at a level and arranged in a continuum according to the levels of self-determination. In SDT, self-determination means the process of autonomy, which “refers to being the perceived origin or source of one's own behaviour” (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Connell, 1989, p. 8). From lower to higher levels, motivation is designated as: amotivation, external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, integrated regulation, and intrinsic motivation (see Figure 1) (Ryan & Connell, 1989).

The Continuum of Motivation

Ryan and Connell (1989) presented motivation along a continuum that ranges from amotivation through extrinsic motivation to intrinsic motivation. The principle inherent in this continuum is that of level of self-determination (see Figure 1). Amotivation (AM), extrinsic motivation (EM), and intrinsic motivation (IM) respectively entail low, medial, and high levels of self-determination.

Amotivation (AM) refers to a state in which there is resistance to engaging in an activity. Behaviour corresponding to this type of motivation is neither self-determined nor self-regulated. For example, if a student says “I do not want to do the assignment, nothing about it interests me, and nothing can push me to do it”, then this student is amotivated.

Extrinsic motivation (EM) refers to motivation to act that is largely driven by sources outside of the individual. Ryan and Connell (1989) divided extrinsic motivation into different types which they termed “regulations” (or the value underlying an action) and arranged these along a continuum. In ascending order of level of self-determination, these are external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and integrated regulation. The following paragraphs will discuss each of these forms of extrinsic motivation in turn.

External regulation is the least self-determined type of extrinsic motivation as it is reinforced by specific external rewards or punishment. External regulation is considered to control extrinsic motivation behaviour; it is promoted and maintained by the contingency but will disappear when the rewards and punishments are withdrawn. Introjected regulation involves the process in which external demands become a strategy to generate an internal response. Thus, to make sure they perform an activity, they place pressure on themselves through internal reinforcement, such as shame or guilt. Identified regulation, a more self-determined type of regulation, exists when an individual's motivated behaviour is consciously driven by their values and goals. Because this regulation is so closely identified with self, motivation can be explained as a way to maintain particularly motivated behaviour and thus achieve high quality performance. Integrated regulation is the fullest, most

complete type of self-determined regulation across the continuum of extrinsic motivation. This type of regulation is driven by a strong sense of self, and is likened to intrinsically motivated behaviour.

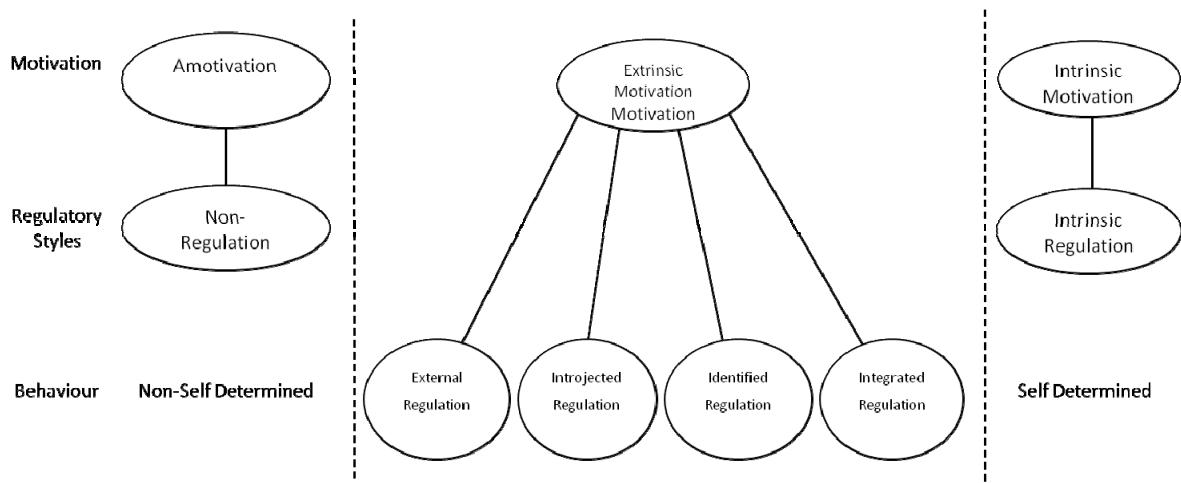


Figure 1. Self-determination continuum showing types of motivation with their regulatory styles (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 72).

The last type of motivation in SDT is intrinsic motivation (IM). IM refers to disposition to engage in an activity for the pleasure and satisfaction that is inherent in the activity (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Deci and Ryan argued: “When intrinsically motivated, a person is moved to act for the fun or challenge entailed rather than because of external prods, pressures, or rewards” (p. 56).

The Maintenance of Motivation

SDT not only emphasizes the types of motivation, but also emphasizes the maintenance of motivation. SDT postulates that the satisfaction of the three psychological needs and a supportive social context are the nutrients or contributors that can optimally maintain the function of the types of motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2002).

SDT posited that needs are innate rather than learned. The definition of needs is congruent with Hullian thought (Hull, 1943). Both approaches specify a set of innate or essential nutrients. However, SDT’s approach is quite different from previous theories because it is embedded in an organismic-dialectical metatheory” (Deci & Ryan, 2002, p. 229). Further, Deci and Ryan (1985) stated that the three psychological needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness are essential to humans’ growth, integrity, and health.

The need for competence involves a feeling of effectiveness when a person interacts with the social environment experiencing opportunity to exercise and express one’s capability (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The need for competence will lead people to seek challenges that are optimal for their capability, and to enhance that capability through activities. The more competent individuals perceive themselves to be at a particular task, the more intrinsically motivated they are in pursuing their goals, and a greater sense of wellbeing will be achieved. Autonomy refers to how individuals endorse their actions (deCharms, 1968; Deci & Ryan, 1985). Autonomy in SDT “refers to a quality of self-involvement in momentary behaviour, whereas self-actualisation refers to a sense of long-term growth” (Deci & Ryan, 2002, p. 326). The concept of autonomy support (Deci & Ryan, 1985) involves “one individual (often an authority figure) relating to target individuals by taking their perspective, being responsive to their thoughts, questions, and initiatives” (Deci & Ryan, 2002, p. 17). This means that the more support people experience, the more autonomous they are. SDT further suggests that an

autonomy-supportive context tends to maintain or enhance intrinsic motivation. Relatedness describes feelings of connectedness to others with a sense of being cared about and respected, and having a sense of belongingness with individuals and with one's community (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Deci & Ryan, 2002). By belonging to a community and being aware of what is going on, persons feel secure and develop a sense of harmony with the group. They feel supported when they pursue their personal commitments and interests. This "secure relational base appears to provide a needed backdrop a distal support for intrinsic motivation" (Deci & Ryan, 2002, p. 235).

Conclusion

Self-determination Theory (SDT) not only categorises motivation into three broad types: amotivation, extrinsic motivation, and intrinsic motivation according to the levels of self-determination, but also emphasizes the maintenance of motivation. The three psychological needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness are regarded as the maintenance. Further, SDT argues that people's motivation is a developmental process across time and place. Thus, SDT appears to offer insight to the nature of academic lecturers' motivation. It is claimed to be one of the most influential theories in contemporary motivation psychology.

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