

**Motivation in Education:
Beyond Salary, Benefits, and Welfare**

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Introduction

The term “motivation” refers to a very important concept in education, both for teachers and students. Motivation has been the topic of many scholarly works by educational researchers (e.g., *Teacher motivation and teaching effectiveness among primary school teachers in Obudu Local Government Area of Cross River State*, Agbakala, Agaba, Reamen, & Opie, 2012), is frequently debated in the popular media (e.g., *Shekarau blames exams’ failure on poor motivation of teachers*, Umeh, 2014), and even is discussed amongst educators themselves. However, whenever a term is used, particularly in scientific discourse, it is important to properly define the term, and use it in a way that is understandable to the worldwide academic community.

The international psychological and educational community has defined motivation as “a force that energizes, sustains, and directs behavior toward a goal” (Eggen & Kauchak, 2004, p. 581). Motivation is commonly divided into two broad types: extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation is defined as engaging in an activity as a means to an end (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). In other words, an activity is not done for its own sake, but for some other purpose external to the activity itself. An educator who teaches only for the sake of earning a salary has extrinsic motivation because his work is a means to an end – a monthly paycheck. On the other hand, intrinsic motivation is defined as engaging in an activity for its own sake, because that activity is interesting and enjoyable (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). In other words, intrinsic motivation is when a person participates in an activity simply because they find the activity itself enjoyable. An educator who loves the act of teaching is intrinsically motivated.

However, when educators in Nigeria are asked what they mean by the term “motivation,” the reply will generally be something similar to, “Salary, benefits, and welfare, of course.” Thus, “motivation” in Nigeria is typically reduced to extrinsic motivation only. A comprehensive understanding of motivation, including both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, is valuable both for the wellbeing of students, teachers, and society at large.

EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION

Ryan and Deci, leading experts in motivation, define extrinsic motivation as “doing something because it leads to a separable outcome” (Ryan & Deci, 2000a, p. 55). There are many sources of extrinsic motivation for engaging in an activity. For example, people do many activities, even things they deeply detest, for money. People also do activities for the respect of others. For example, employees will oftentimes perform work responsibilities to earn the respect of a boss or a colleague whom they greatly value. On the other hand, people will also engage in malpractices because of pressure from their friends or colleagues.

Examples of extrinsic motivation are teachers who teach for their salary, teachers who attend in-service training for promotion, and teachers who arrive to school on time to avoid a mark on their record. Other examples of extrinsic motivation are students who study hard to earn good grades, students who behave to avoid a beating, and students who complete their assignments to avoid punishment.

Extrinsic motivation, or doing an activity for some reason besides the activity itself, does have advantages. Short-term behavior can easily be changed through extrinsic motivation (Skinner, 1953). Most people will do any job if they are paid enough money. Students will behave in class if their teacher promises a sweet to well-behaved students. Both teachers and students will arrive on time if they know they will be punished if they are late. However, in

every situation, the person is doing an activity not because are interested in the activity or value the activity, but for some reason besides the activity; the force that drives behavior is external. Thus, if the external reward or the punishment is removed, then their engagement in the activity will stop (Woolfolk, 2007). If there is no threat of punishment, externally-motivated teachers and students will not arrive on time. If there are no grades or certificates to be given, externally-motivated students will not learn. If externally-motivated teachers are not satisfied with their salary, they will not teach. Therefore, extrinsic motivation can be valuable for influencing short-term behavior. However, extrinsic motivation rarely impacts long-term behavior unless the extrinsic rewards or punishment continues indefinitely.

Thus, there are significant disadvantages of extrinsic motivation. First, engagement in the activity generally stops when the source of extrinsic motivation stops (Woolfolk, 2007). If you want a child to sweep the compound today, offer them money to sweep the compound. However, do not expect that child to sweep the compound tomorrow unless you are willing to pay them again.

Another disadvantage of extrinsic motivation is that it focuses only on the external behavior, and not on the internal needs and values of a person (Reeve, 2001). A teacher who only teaches for the salary will generally be quite miserable in the teaching profession. They will not take satisfaction in the art of teaching itself. Teachers who teach because of extrinsic motivation will rarely excel in teaching because they will stick to dry lesson notes that were developed many years ago in their teacher training. A student who studies only for the certificate will not truly understand what they are learning, but simply memorize for the upcoming exam and then forget what she has learned. Studying for external rewards will rarely make a life-changing impact on the student.

Finally, extrinsic motivation tends to result in low enjoyment of the activity (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999). If you are doing an activity for a reason external to the activity, then your attention will be focused on the extrinsic motivation, not on the value and enjoyment that you can get out of performing the activity itself. Teaching can be a very enjoyable activity, but those teaching only for salary, welfare, and benefits generally miss out on the richness of the act of teaching itself. Learning about the wonders and beauty in the world is also a very enjoyable activity. However, students focused only on the certificate or the grade will rarely be able to experience the thrill and delight of discovering and learning something new.

Because of the many disadvantages of extrinsic motivation, including less enjoyment of the activity, avoidance of challenging tasks that develop skills, lower creativity, and poor quality of learning, many scholars and practitioners consider extrinsic motivation as a weaker form of motivation (e.g., Vansteenkiste, Simons, Lens, Soenens, & Matos, 2005). There are two primary advantages of extrinsic motivation. The first advantage is that it can persuade a person to engage in a specific behavior immediately, such as getting staff to submit results on time by threatening punishment if they are late. Extrinsic can also be very useful for tasks that are just not interesting. For example, few teachers would say that they enjoy marking scripts.¹ Therefore, one useful strategy in helping to mark scripts is to give oneself a small reward, such as a sweet, for marking every 25 scripts. However, trying to control short-term behavior through extrinsic motivation such as rewards and punishment can have substantial negative impact in the long-term (Deci et al., 1999).

¹ However, one person should not assume that an activity is not interesting to another person. There are great individual differences in interest, so one activity might be interesting to one person and uninteresting to another person (Reeve, 2001).

INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

Intrinsic motivation is defined as “doing something because it is inherently interesting and enjoyable” (Ryan & Deci, 2000a, p. 55). Humanist psychologists suggest that intrinsic motivation – which includes the tendency to be active, curious, learn, and develop one’s abilities without rewards or punishment – most powerfully reflects the positive potential of human nature (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). They further state that this natural tendency to learn and grow without the promise of rewards or threat of punishment reflects a key source of enjoyment and strength in a person’s life.

Overall, intrinsic motivation has a number of advantages over extrinsic motivation. Teachers and students who are intrinsically motivated have higher performance, greater persistence in the face of challenges, and greater overall wellbeing for the individual (Deci et al., 1999). Intrinsic motivation tends to lead to more engagement with the learning environment, more active pursuit of learning interests, and more effort, which is necessary for the development of skills and abilities (Reeve, 2001). In summary, intrinsic motivation results in high quality learning and creativity (Ryan & Deci, 2000a), both amongst students and teachers.

Many aspects of education can be inherently interesting and enjoyable for both students and teachers. When learning activities are structured in an interesting and relevant fashion, all types of learning is enjoyable. Reading stories about the lives of other individuals and cultures in literature and social studies is interesting. Discovering the various wonders of creation in the sciences is fascinating. The challenge of completing a mathematics problem is be enjoyable.

Likewise, the act of teaching is also quite interesting and enjoyable. I always experience deep satisfaction when I see students’ faces light up when they understand a new concept. The challenge of developing lessons in a way that is interesting and understandable to the students is also quite enjoyable. Engaging students in the process of learning about the world and helping them develop their gifts and abilities is gratifying, even without the presence of external rewards. Therefore, intrinsic motivation can play a powerful role in education, both for teachers and students.

INTEGRATED REGULATION

Because intrinsic motivation is one of the most positive aspects of human nature and because much of education is inherently interesting and enjoyable, educators should focus more of their time and energies discovering how they can foster intrinsic motivation amongst teachers and students. For some ideas on how to do this, see Korb (2012). However, not all aspects of education are inherently interesting and enjoyable. For example, few teachers feel that marking papers is interesting. Few students agree that diagramming sentences is enjoyable. Is the promise of rewards or the threat of punishment the only way to motivate teachers and students for these activities that are not interesting? There is a middle ground between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation: integrated regulation.

Integrated regulation occurs when an activity is in agreement with a person’s values and needs (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). For example, a teacher who does not like attending board meetings but voluntarily attends because he values making contributions to the administration of his school is an example of integrated regulation. Another example of integrated regulation is a student who does not like biology class but still studies hard because she values learning about the world around her and values excellence in all of her studies.

Integrated regulation is still technically extrinsic motivation because an individual is doing the activity for a reason external to the activity itself – because the activity reflects one’s values. This is not intrinsic motivation because the person does not find the activity itself inherently interesting and enjoyable, which is the requirement for intrinsic motivation. However, integrated regulation means that personal values are the driving force that is sustaining behavior, so this person is not being controlled by external rewards or punishment. Therefore, this type of motivation has much more positive outcomes than pure extrinsic motivation through rewards and punishment. Activities that are performed through integrated regulation have many of the same positive outcomes as intrinsic motivation, such as better performance, higher quality of learning, greater persistence in challenging tasks, and better overall wellbeing (Ryan & Deci, 2000b).

Integrated regulation is developed when a person realizes that an activity closely reflects his or her values and needs (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). For example, if teachers use pure extrinsic motivation to try to get students to diagram sentences by beating students who do not complete their homework, then students will do just enough to get their assignment done (perhaps by copying their mate’s answers). However, the true learning of the English language that occurs through diagramming sentences will rarely occur. Instead, if teachers can incorporate this skill into students’ values, such as the desire to communicate in an educated manner, then students will approach this activity with more zeal and effort. Likewise, teachers may not like submitting copies of their lesson notes to the administration. However, if this activity can be integrated into teachers’ values, such as the value of being a professional and of respecting authority, then teachers will be more likely to comply.

MOTIVATION: BEYOND SALARY, BENEFITS, AND WELFARE

Semantics, the study of meaning of words, can seem rather academic at times. However, in this case, semantics may be one factor in the current decline of education in Nigeria. When we limit the meaning of the concept of motivation in teaching to salary, benefits, and welfare, we implicitly restrict the value of the teaching profession to the monetary rewards. When motivation for teaching is limited to rewards, the outcomes of teaching are restricted to short-term behavioral compliance, mundane and outdated lessons, and teachers who do not value education. There will be no creativity amongst teachers, no in-depth lesson planning, and little value for the lives of the students who have been entrusted into their care.

However, the wealth of teaching goes much beyond money and rewards. There is great value in developing the gifts and abilities of students, as well as shaping the lives of today’s students, who will be tomorrow’s leaders. When approached with the right mentality and a broad view of motivation, the art of teaching itself can be immensely enjoyable and interesting.

Educators frequently bemoan the “certificate philosophy” whereby students only attend school to earn a certificate (Korb, 2014). This means that students are motivated to attend school purely through extrinsic motivation. How can educators criticize students for reducing the term “motivation” to only include extrinsic motivation when educators do the exact same thing? If educators expect students to approach education with a nuanced definition of motivation, which includes a passion for learning through intrinsic motivation and the value of learning about the world, then educators must also take a nuanced definition of motivation and allow motivation for teaching to include more than just a salary. Motivation includes not

just the rewards of a salary or a certificate, but also includes internal valuing of the activity itself (integrated regulation) and interest and enjoyment in the activity (intrinsic motivation).

Indeed, research in organizational psychology has found that motivation for work includes much more than a salary. There are many factors that influence motivation for work, or factors that energize, sustain, and direct behavior towards one's work. An influential theory of work motivation is that of Herzberg (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959), who proposed that two primary factors influence motivation in work. First, hygiene factors include salary, benefits, job security, and work conditions. The second factor is called motivators and includes intrinsic interest in the job, recognition, opportunities to be creative, a sense of achievement, and being challenged in work. Herzberg's research found that only the motivators, including interest, creativity, and challenge in work, actually improved employees' job satisfaction and effort. On the other hand, hygiene factors such as salary did not lead to improved satisfaction with work, but instead prevented workers from becoming unhappy. In other words, "while inadequate financial reward can demotivate, nevertheless, beyond a limited threshold, money is a hygiene factor and does not motivate" (Bassett-Jones & Lloyd, 2005, p. 932). While Herzberg's research is over 50 years old, current empirical research still supports this two-factor theory (Bassett-Jones & Lloyd, 2005).

Empirical research has also identified finding meaning in one's work as a significant factor in work motivation (Rosso, Dekas, & Wrzesniewski, 2010). In other words, employees who find value in their work activities have more positive work motivation. Meaning in work can come from work that reflects one's values and beliefs, contributes to the lives of others, builds up the community, and is a spiritual calling. Therefore, when teachers view their work as meaningful, such as the value of having a significant impact on the lives of their students or as a calling from God to develop lives and society, then motivation is greatly improved.

Salary, welfare, and benefits are a necessary outcome of work. Employees could not survive or provide for their families if they had to work without a salary. Employers must provide a fair living wage so that their staff can properly fulfill their duties outside of work. However, motivation solely defined as salary, welfare, and benefits is not the panacea for improving education that many people seem to believe it is. I challenge any individual who thinks this is the case to find well-researched empirical evidence – not just the opinions of teachers and academics – to support their belief. Instead, organizational psychology and educational psychology have provided ample evidence that motivation is a much more nuanced concept, and extrinsic motivation tends to lead only to short-term, surface solutions. Instead, one way to improve education could be to help motivation move beyond salary, benefits, and welfare to focus more on integrating the value of education into the hearts and minds of teachers and students alike. When teachers discover the value and challenge of finding creative, insightful ways to make their lessons interesting and enjoyable to students, many teachers would find that the art of teaching is much more interesting and enjoyable than simply writing and reciting lesson notes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Educators, particularly educators involved in academe, must use the term motivation in the same way that scholars and researchers around the world use the term. Motivation itself is any force that energizes, sustains, and directs behavior toward a goal. Motivation can include interest, enjoyment, valuing of an activity in addition to external rewards. Therefore, if the general term motivation is used, it must refer to both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. On

the other hand, if an educator wants to simply describe salary, benefits, and/or welfare, then the phrase extrinsic motivation must be used.

Educators need to base their suggestions for improving education on empirical research. Too often, educators make suggestions for improving education based on their own limited experiences, and are biased by their own feelings. Perhaps the reason why improving teachers' "motivation" (exclusively in terms of salary, welfare, and benefits) is cited as being a panacea for improving education may be that the author wants his or her own salary to be increased. However, if educators would base their suggestions on high-quality empirical research, a different picture for improving education might emerge.

More high-quality empirical research must be conducted in the field of education. Currently, much of the research that is being done in education simply asks participants to indicate their own beliefs about what contributes to various phenomenon, regardless of whether the participants actually have any knowledge to make an educated response. This, too, will result in biased, inaccurate, and ineffective suggestions for improving education. Instead, educational researchers must start conducting more advanced research designs, which include experimental designs, correlational designs, and even causal-comparative designs, to investigate educational phenomenon, including motivation amongst students and teachers.

Educators should also invest more effort in developing strategies for motivating students and teachers with motivational strategies that lead to more positive outcomes than extrinsic motivation, including strategies that foster intrinsic motivation and integrated regulation. By so doing, teachers and students will put forth more effort, be more creative, and engage in more in-depth learning that has the potential of positively influencing the lives of students in the future.

Finally, employers should pay a living wage to their staff and provide salaries on time. This is a moral obligation as well as a pragmatic strategy for organizational efficiency. According to Herzberg, employees who are not paid a living wage, and not paid it in a timely fashion, will likely be dissatisfied with their working places (Herzberg et al., 1959). It is a great challenge for dissatisfied employees to put in their best efforts.

CONCLUSION

When the definition of motivation is limited to extrinsic motivation only, particularly money, individuals are missing the full richness of life. Money is important to provide for basic needs. However, there are many activities worth doing because of the value that the activity adds to an individual, her family, her community, and her society. For example, a businessperson can be motivated to do her job for the money. She goes to work, does her job, collects her paycheck, and goes home. There is very little joy or satisfaction in the work, because it is only the means to getting a paycheck. Another person can be motivated to do the exact same job because he values providing quality goods to his customers with a high level of customer care. This person goes to his work and does his job with joy and satisfaction because he knows that he is meeting the needs of other people and is bringing his customers joy and satisfaction at the same time. He will collect the same paycheck as the other businessperson motivated by money, but he will experience satisfaction and will be a much better worker because he values what he is doing.

Deci and colleagues (1999) state that many social institutions – such as educational institutions in Nigeria – face problems such as alienation, detachment, and disengagement.

Based on a comprehensive review of many empirical research studies, they report that some of these problems could be resolved by promoting higher levels of intrinsic motivation. Therefore, educators need to consider reframing motivation for teachers and students as the value and enjoyment in education, not because of the salary or the certificates. Let us encourage others who are doing good work to continue to take satisfaction in their jobs. Let us teach our children that there is more to work than a salary and more to education than a certificate. Our work as teachers is to glorify God in service through the noble profession of education. In the end, we will be blessed not just with a salary, but also with the joy and satisfaction of making a meaningful contribution to the lives of our students and society at large.

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