

Instructional strategies for motivating students in Higher Education

**By Dr S. Machingambi
Teaching and Learning
Development Centre, Mangosuthu
University of Technology**

Introduction

- Successful teaching in HE entails influencing the ways in which learners understand, experience, or conceptualise the world around them(DHET, 2010b).
- Teaching should result in learning, understanding & competence
- Learning occurs if certain preconditions are cultivated & nurtured in the teaching & learning process.
- Motivation is a potent factor & precondition for sustained learning.

Conceptualisation of motivation

- Ahuja(1991) perceives motivation as the action that compels or urges an individual to assume an attitude generally favourable towards his/her work leading to successful performance.
- Mullins(2005) –an action that stimulates an individual to take a course of action which will result in attainment of some goal or satisfaction of some needs.
- Schultz & Schultz(2006)- the complex of forces inspiring a student in an academic organisation to intensify his/her desire & willingness to use his potentialities for achievement of his/her own goals.

Why student motivation is critical

- If a student is not motivated to learn, even the most talented & experienced practitioner will face difficulty in helping the student achieve his/her fullest potential
 - Performance =f (ability x motivation).
- Many students tend to lose enthusiasm & interest for learning as the year progresses- apathy, drop out rates
- Students overwhelmed by the increasing complexity of learning in Higher Education
- To counteract distractions which compete for students' time, energy & attention.
- Length of time students take to graduate

The Problem

- SA's graduate output has major shortcomings in terms of overall nos, equity & the proportion of the student body that succeeds
- Current performance in HE is marked by high levels of failure & dropout (CHE, 2013)
- Only 1 in 4 students in contact institutions graduate in regulation time (Scott, Yeld and Hendry 2007)
- About 55 % of students never graduate at all
- Under 5% of African and coloured youth are succeeding in any form of HE(CHE, 2013)
- High rate of absenteeism

A model for the motivational design of instruction

Good everyday teaching practices can do more to counter student apathy than special efforts to attack motivation directly(Sagant, 2000)

- Show the relevance of material
- Define course goals & help students develop own personal goals
- Adopt a supportive teaching approach & hold realistic expectations for students.
- Make use of students interests & background
- Instil in students skills for independent learning

Show relevance of materials

- Motivation is highest when the subject meets the immediate needs of the learner.
- University students are relevancy-oriented(Knowles, 1998)
- They must appreciate the reason of learning something
- To be of value, learning must be applicable/related to their career aspirations.
- Relate theories , concepts, course information to settings that students are familiar with.
- Involve students in choosing projects that reflect their own interests
- Dewey(1997)- Experiential learning is an effective motivational technique as it gives meaning and purpose

Define course goals & help students develop personal goals

- Berry (1998) goals are the central features of the motivational structure as they provide **direction** for action and **energy** for the **persistence** of behaviour
- A goal can be regarded as that which the student is trying to accomplish or the object or aim of an action
- Goal setting is well located within the goal setting theory of motivation originated by Edwin Locke in USA in the sixties.
- The theory has it that setting goals motivates students to strive towards achieving the goals (Cheminias, 1998)

Implications for practice

- The lecturer to set clearly formulated learning outcomes & goals & discuss these with students.
- Assist students reflect on their personal goals for the course.
- Spell out what you expect students to master and also your expectations about their participation.
- Research by Donald et al (2001) has shown that a lecturer's expectation has a powerful effect on a student's motivation & performance
- Give an outline of course outcomes & discuss course goals with students early enough in the course.

Adopt a supportive teaching style

- A supportive teaching style that allows students autonomy has been shown to foster student interest, enjoyment, engagement & performance
- The critical question is 'What constitutes supportive teacher behaviour?'
- It ranges from giving hints & encouragement, listening, being responsive to student questions, & showing empathy to them (Stumpf, 2010).

Implications for practice

- Lecturers to strategise with those who are struggling with their learning
- Teach students how to learn e.g
- outlining specific strategies of completing an assignment, note-taking or reviewing for an exam
- Provide sufficient choices to students
- Tzuriel(2000)–student motivation increases when they feel some sense of autonomy in the learning process & it declines when they have no voice in the class structure.

Instil in students skills for independent learning

- Robins(2007) -maintaining motivation depends on a feeling of control over challenges.
- The feeling of control develops if skills are applied gradually & if students are encouraged to apply their skills in active problem solving.
- Assign students independent work on projects & research related activities.
- Without opportunities to experience some kind of personal control in learning, students' enthusiasm quickly fades.

Conclusion

- Key conditions that increases the student's motivation to learn in HE
- **RISE** - **R**elevant subject matter
 - **I**nteresting instruction
 - **S**atisfied learner
 - **E**xpectations of success

END

I THANK YOU