Motivational and Engagement Factors for Students in classrooms in Higher Education Sector

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***Abstract*: Student engagement has become one of the important areas to be discussed in higher education sector in recent years. In particular, previous research has shown direct links between student engagement in learning and such outcomes as dropout substance use mental health and academic outcomes. Students who are engaged in learning were found to be more successful in academics and less likely to drop out from their studies. They were found to be highly motivated to invest in learning, attend classes, and participate in study activities. Therefore, in light of the positive consequences of student engagement, the current study aims at contributing to the growing body of research by exploring the motivational and engagement factors that influence the students to attend classes and participate in study activities actively.**

***Keywords*: Motivational factors, Engagement factors and Academic Achievements**

1. Introduction

Over the past 25 years, significant research and writings have addressed the way classroom learning environment influences students learning, but more recent studies have focused on how classroom environments affect student's views about the nature and purposes of learning. What makes some students put a lot of efforts and invest working long hours for academic accomplishments? Why other students do seems uninterested in studies in classrooms, do not show much enthusiasm in performing well, and do not seems to be bothered if they fail in some subjects? The answer to such questions is rooted in the theories of motivation. Motivation has been recognized as one of the most important elements of student's success or failure in academics (Hidi & Harackiewicz.2000). Motivation is defined as an individual's wish and will to perform in a directed way which in turn initiates a series of actions to engage in specific activities (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). Motivation in academics refers to the reasons students want to attend, engage in and put efforts in learning and accomplishing in academics (Beck, 2004). In terms of performance, academic motivation results in increased student's engagement in activities related to learning (Conell & Wellborn, 1991). Studies have shown many factors that motivate students to perform well in academics including perceptions of classroom climate, perceived ability, perceived instrumentality of instruction and achievement goals as predictors of engagement and efforts in academics (Hadre et. al., 2007).

Ames and Ames (1984) explained the way learning environments influence student's dispensation of information and understandings about their performance. They examined the importance of learning environment in classrooms in goal setting and consequently affect the way students think about themselves, their tasks and others.

The purpose of this research article is to highlight the motivational and engagement factors for students in classrooms in higher education sector and also describe the relationship between motivation, engagement and academic achievements for students.

2. Literature Review

Student's engagement has become one of the most preferred outcomes of institutions in recent years for the reason that it has strong connection to student's wellbeing. Specifically previous researches have established strong decisive connection between student engagement in learning and behaviour and such outcomes as dropouts (Finn & Rock, 1997), substance use (Bond, Butler, Thomas, carlin, Glower, & Bowes, 2007), mental health and academic outcomes (Bakker, Vergel, & Kuntze, 2015; Dotterer & Lowe, 2011). Students highly engaged in learning in classrooms are found to be more successful academically as well as has less tendency to dropout. They were found to be intrinsically motivated to invest their time in learning, attending classes, responding actively and participate in study activities (Bakker et al., 2007).

Student's motivation and engagement in academics results from their perceptions of their classroom and many times from their interactions with teachers, peers and others in academics (Hardre, 2003; Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). Many other factors also influence and affect student's motivation and engagement to learn including interest in the subject matter, understanding the subject, perception of the usefulness of studying, the desire to accomplish, perception of one's aptitude & capability and perseverance to achieve.

Most studies have examined the relationship between many components of motivation and engagement in student's academic achievements. Though, recent researches have confronted the views that academic motivation is one dimensional and as an alternative they have attempted to understand the relationship between motivation, engagement and academic outcomes from multidimensional aspects (Dowson & Mcinerney, 2001). Researches have proved that motivation does not act individually but may be interrelated, consequently contributing to a significant effect on the motivation and engagement for students to accomplish academically.

Different researches and psychological perspectives explain motivation in different ways. Which perspective is true or truer? It is rational to accept that no one particular type of motivation affects a person at any one time. Numerous components of motivation will be working to influence an individual to become energetic, more engaged and towards the achievement of goals. The social cognitive model of motivation perceives motivation as a dynamic and multifaceted phenomenon (Pintrich, 2000). They do not

categorize students as motivated or non- motivated. They believe that students can be motivated and influenced in numerous ways and by various factors (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002).

However, motivational force alone is not effectively resilient to ensure students perform well in their academics. Between motivation and achievement, students must get intensely engaged, focussed and concentrated on their learning task in order to perform better in assessments and appraisals. This suggests the view that engagement, or being in a state of flow, can be accomplished when the six motivational forces work together efficiently. Flow theory recommends that students can enter a flow state when they are fully engrossed in their learning activity during which they lose their sense of time and have feelings of great satisfaction (Pajares, 2001). Flow was found to be higher in high-achieving students than in low achieving students. Thus it is not unbelievable to propose that students must be in a state of flow to achieve greater heights.

Researches on achievement motivation has long highlighted the cognitive bases of performance, but the modern literature has advanced an achievement goal framework that assimilates cognitive and effective elements of goal-directed performance (See Ames & Archer, 1987, 1988; Dweck & Elliott, 1983; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Elliot & Dweck, 1988; Maehr, 1984; Maehr & Nicholls, 1980; Nicholls, 1979, 1984b, 1989).
Patrick and Colleagues (2007) reflected social and emotional atmosphere in the classroom to be among preconditions to student's engagement with activities and tasks. In fact in numerous other studies, it was reported that emotional engagement, emotional support or positive emotions increased participation in accomplishments and behavioural engagement (Ladd et al. 2000; Li et al. 2010; Skinner et al. 2008). In another research, positive emotions were found significant to maintain behaviour and performance (Clore, 1994; Fredrickson, 2001). Also it was highlighted that positive emotions made contributions not only in behavioural context (Aspinwall, 1998). Li and Lerner (2013) demonstrated that behavioural engagement had impact cognitive engagement. Similarly, Gibbs and Poskitt (2010) considered emotional and behavioural engagements as preconditions to cognitive engagement. Hence in this respect it was stated that the students are first supposed to develop behavioural and emotional engagement preceding cognitive engagement. Further studies conducted in this respect demonstrated that there were mutual relationships between emotional and behaviour engagements (Li & Lerner, 2013; Skinner et al., 2008). Fredricks and colleagues (2004) explained that the emotional, behavioural and cognitive dimensions were not studied simultaneously in many researches and examining these dimensions simultaneously was important. In this context in other related researches, it is observed that mostly behavioural and emotional engagements were studied (Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Patrick et al. 1993; Ryan et al. 1994; Skinner & Belmont, 1993). One of the most important reasons for this could be the fact that it is quite difficult to measure the cognitive engagement.

3. Conceptual Framework

3.1 Behavioral Engagement

Behavioural engagement is defined as an engagement based on individual's engrossment into the academic, social and extracurricular activities of the institute (Fredricks, Blumenfield, & Paris, 2004). In regards to multidimensional conceptualisation of engagement, it is one of the crucial elements of engagement, which is used to regulate whether students are actively involved in both their academics as well as other activities offered by the institute apart from the routine curriculum. Behavioural engagement refers to specific student's behaviour in context to taking initiative, learning, concentrating, putting in more efforts, being persistent in the face of failure, following the rules willingly and positively interacting with professors and other colleagues (Hattie & Anderman, 2013). Study indicates that student's behavioural engagement is likely to lead to greater academic achievement (Hattie & Anderman, 2013).

3.2 Cognitive engagement

As explained by Fredricks et al. (2004), cognitive engagement is an element of engagement, which is based on student's investment in the institute and the involvement in various processes of learning. A cognitively engrossed student is a student who is strategically willing to exert extra efforts for comprehension of complex ideas or mastery of difficult skills (Christenson, Reschly & Wylie, 2012). The studies on cognitive engagement is often related with how much studnets invest in thoughtful learning and whether they are willing to work extra to get better academic outcomes.

3.3 Emotional engagement

Emotional engagement as described by Fredricks et al. (2004) as an element of engagement based on how students identify themselves with their institute. Identification with the institute here assumes sense of belongingness, valuing the institute or feeling of being important to their institute as well as appreciation of achievements in institute relate outcomes (Christenson et al., 2012). With regard to this explanation, emotional engagement emphases on the degree of positive or negative responses of students while interacting with professors, classmates and peers, academics and institute in general.

3.4 Student engagement

Student engagement refers to the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in their education. Generally speaking, the concept of "student engagement" is predicated on the belief that learning improves when students are interested, or inspired, and that learning tends to suffer when students are bored, dispassionate.
Depending on the theorist, different definitions of student engagement were explained. As indicated by an extensive body of academic research, student engagement is supple in character, which suggests of its capacity to vary both as a function of time and

as a function of context (Coates, 2006; Collins, 2014; Conner, 2011; Christenson et al., 2012; Franklin, Harris & Allen – Meares, 2013; Shernoff, 2013).

3.5 Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation is an important element when considering student's engagement in classrooms. It is described as the characteristic of an individual being motivated to perform on an activity for the complete fun and joy that accompanies such activity without any external factors or motives. For example, a student who gets involved in an activity for his or her own joy without being pressurised from outside force or sources to participate in the task could be considered to have an intrinsic motivation.
For the students who possess this quality, there seems to be a chance that such students will achieve autonomy and competence, as well as full fill long term goals. Students with more intrinsic motivation have a greater chance of excelling in their studies and achieving goals.

3.6 Extrinsic Motivation

On the contrary, extrinsic motivation refers to the motivation one has to participate in an activity not for the self- enjoyment but only to accomplish some external goals (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Noels et al., 1999; Noels et al., 2003; Dornyei, 1998). For example, an individual who participates in an activity to receive praise, appreciation, money or any reward as well as evading penalties from an external source is characterised as possessing extrinsic motivation.

4. Importance of Motivational and Engagement Factors for Students

People always consider that students are supposed to reach in institutes for higher education with good reading and writing skills. More frequently, students are able to get through classes without much skilful in reading and writing. The consequence is that the students with the weakest skills often get the smallest amount of training.

The attitude of may professors is that in case if the students are lacking in required reading and writing skills in their high school, then it is simply too late. Moreover, many middle and high school teachers do not know how to deliver explicit writing and reading instructions.

Most of the students recognize that poor literacy skills place them at a disadvantage personally, professionally as well as economically. All the students want to be the enhanced readers and writers, but in contrary to their weak literacy skills, other barriers interfere, such as minimal and unsuitable help and unreceptive surroundings for acknowledging the level of susceptibility they feel.

Motivation and engagement do not constitute and leads an additional element of efforts to enhance literacy. These interconnected elements are prime vehicle for cultivating literacy.

Motivation and engagement should be seen as a very significant element in any learning process. The motivated students have the inner forte to learn, to ascertain and capitalize on capabilities, to progress academic performance and to adapt to the demands of the institute.

5. The Connection between Motivation, Engagement and Achievement

Student accomplishment was also described in specific theories and models with respect to student engagement. Finn (1989), in the *participation-Identification Model*, engrossed on emotional and behavioural dimensions and tried to describe student's drop-out. The model was based on the idea that efficacious students consider themselves with their institutes and that the unsuccessful ones cannot do so. In the model, it was appealed that participation in academics and various class activities enhances student's performance outcomes and their achievements and that student's performance outcomes has influence on their feelings of identifying themselves with the institute.

Csikszentmjhalyi (1990; 1997) emphasizes that converging deeply on teaching with the *Flow theory* leads to a higher level of learning experience. Flow activities involving mentally challenging responsibilities tend to be sustaining and pleasing as well (Shernoff et al. 2003). The Flow Theory was described with the connection between the challenges and the skills of an individual and with the stability in this relationship.The extent of the instructional activities in which flow occurs could be said to bring about student success. As it can be assumed from this theory and the models developed, that the student's involvement in classroom and its activities is considered important for academic accomplishments.

Finally, *Campus-Class-Technology (CCT) Model* was developed by Gunuc (2013). According to this model, for effective student outcomes, the relationships between technology, student engagement and student's achievements were theoretically explained. In this regard, the importance given by the students to college life and college education was among the crucial factors which helped the students have the sense of belongingness to the university or the institute's campus, which allowed them to invest time in the campus and ultimately resulted in increase in class engagement. Another factor influential on class engagement was technology.

Effective integration of technology in classrooms is important for increasing student's class engagement. An increase in student's class engagement not only enhances their academic accomplishments but also leads to the positive results.

In order for students to have an effective learning environment, they should have a high level of campus engagement and specifically class engagement. Student's engagement is considered not only as an pointer of the level of education in the society and their education system but also as one of the indicators of the quality of education given in an institution (Kuh, 2001a). Hence student's engagement is most crucial and beneficial for their academic accomplishments, competencies, achievements, welfare, socialisation, life satisfaction as well as for effective learning (Harris, 2008; Krause & Coates, 2008; Lewis, 2010; Li et al. 2010; park, 2005; Wang & Eccles, 2012; Willms et al. 2009). It is quite impossible to say that an education system with little or no student engagement will bear positive outcomes. In this regard it is seen that there is a positive correlation between student engagement and learning outcomes or academic achievements (Carini, Kuh & Klein, 2006; Coates, 2005; Connell et. al. 1994; Furlong & Christenson, 2008; Marks, 2000; Park, 2005). In other words, student engagement is considered necessary for learning, performance and achievement.

Though some researches have shown positive relationships between student engagement and academic achievements, there are limited studies directly exploring the relationships between the dimensions of student engagement and academic achievement specifically in higher education.

The challenge for teachers is to determine how to *motivate* high school students to read and write so that they *engage* in literacy tasks and are willing to accept instruction and take advantage of opportunities to practice and accept feedback that will, in turn, improve their learning and *achievement.*

Because motivation leads to engagement, motivation is where teachers need to begin. As humans, we are inspired to engage when we are engrossed. So motivation to engross is the first step to improve literacy habits and skills. Motivating students is important. But it is *engagement* that is critical, because the level of engagement over time is the vehicle through which classroom instruction influences student's learning outcomes.

Sustained engagement, therefore, depends on good learning instructions. Good instructions progresses literacy habits and skills to communicate clearly in writing, and to think critically about the content. Gaining these improved skills leads to augmented confidence. Greater confidence motivates students to engage with and successfully complete increasingly complex content-area reading and writing tasks, and this positive experience leads to enhanced student learning and achievement.

6. Strategies to Engage Students

6.1 Giving a reason to read

Giving a reason for reading is also important. When students have a purpose for reading and can make personal connections to what they are reading, they can continue through challenging text. Helping students to make connections is important because personal purpose of reading is the major factor behind the student engagement. Helping students in making connections between their own goals and their choices of texts is also important for how students develop the ability to use text to learn.

6.2 Stronger emphasis on intrinsic motivation than extrinsic

Motivation is the dynamic force that elucidates why people act and behave as they do. Even though the image of a carrot hanging from the end of a stick in front of a person's nose is mostly used as a sign of motivation, you cannot actually motivate another person. Real motivation must come from within – it must be intrinsic. Prizes or rewards (extrinsic) may induce someone into achieving a certain action but amenableness is not motivation. If you want your students to be successful, intrinsic motivation must be permeated into every aspect of group-centred prevention. An intrinsic motivational surrounding can actually change an individual's perceived perceptions of self and direct them into changing their actions.

6.3 Creating Safe and Responsive Classrooms

Sometimes engagement feels like a high risk for many students. Those with low self-esteem, the motivation to read and write depends on their judgments regarding whether teachers will give up on them or believe that they are worth the investment of time and encouragement. Teachers must make clear to students that they care about their learning as well as their well-being as individuals. It is okay to make mistakes in the classrooms.

6.4 Having Students Interact with Text and with Each Other About Text

In classrooms that support motivation, students mostly work in small groups to analyze texts and to edit each other's assignments. Teachers might encourage students to compare and contrast how a scene could be described using first language or home dialects. Different ways of solving problems in math and science and writing are appreciated.

6.5 Using Technology

The use of technology is often highly motivating to students. The ability to study through computer, to add effects to presentations, and to mark text using word processing features motivates many students, especially when this capability is combined with an authentic purpose to read and write. Some students are much more likely to grab the information if it is presented through a computer program.

6.6 Evaluation and Recognition

Brophy (1983a, 1983b) considered much classroom learning as greatly outcome oriented. Students are engrossed in the quality of their work, and the high perceptibility of these outcomes orients students away from the task of learning. This outcome orientation soon shifts to a performance orientation when it is being evaluated on its correctness, absence of errors and normative success are emphasised.

The ways in which the students are evaluated is one of the most important classroom factors that affect the level of student's motivation and engagement. Evaluation practices include standards, criteria, and methods as well as frequency and the parameters of evaluation (Epstein, 1988; Mac Iyer, 1988). The matter is not merely a question of whether students are evaluated or not but more importantly it concerns their perceptions of the meaning of the evaluative parameters (Mac Iyer, 1987).

6.7 Developing Meta cognitive Skills

Meta cognitive skills allow students to realize when they do not understand something or when something does not make sense. Students with good meta cognitive skills can use a variety of "fix-up" strategies when reading or listening, like rereading, questioning the text, relating the content to personal background. These strategies help weak readers to improve reading comprehension. Being able to use meta cognitive strategies independently as needed to strengthen learning is the definition of an "independent learner."

6.8 Developing Vocabulary

Students need a variety of strategies that they can use to learn and remember the many technical terms, key concepts, and academic vocabulary that they encounter in the study of various disciplines. Teachers in each should implement purposeful vocabulary instruction to

- increase reading comprehension,
- develop knowledge of new concepts,
- help students communicate more effectively, and
- Develop understanding of words and concepts with which students are only nominally familiar.

6.9 Generating Questions

Finally, students need to learn how to generate good questions. Questioning is effective for improving comprehension, focusing attention , helps in developing active thinking , helps review content, and relates what is being learned to what is already known . Having students generate their own questions about a text has also been shown to be an effective strategy for improving reading comprehensions.

7. Conclusion

This paper discussed the literature search found by the various researches in their endeavour to specify the basic characteristics of the relationship between motivation, engagement and student's achievements. Supports from the past researches have been proved that motivation and engagement proves to play a very significant role in student's learning outcomes and academic accomplishments. Experts, professors and parents have been engrossed in ascertaining the important factors influencing and affecting student's achievement in academic. Most of the people accept that motivation plays a very important and significant role in determining the student's achievements or failures. Every student has different level of motivation as well as personal, professional and social factors that affect their motivation. It is imperious for researchers, educators and parents alike to recognise

and understand better the interface of the various aspects contributing to student's motivation in order to ensure the academic success of students in higher education sector. Engagement with wisdom is vital, because it is engagement that leads to continued communication and preparation. Coaching, instructions and feedback becomes essential to ensure that students cultivate good practices and increase their proficiency. Increased proficiency ultimately leads to motivation to further engagement and developing a competence that again supports and leads to enhanced student's achievement.

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