

Teaching In Schools

Importance Of The Study
Of Motivation

—M. A. Quader—

IN this complex living system of our society it has become urgently necessary to cultivate in the young the will to acquire various cognitive and physical skills. In our modern schools artificial arrangements are made to facilitate all kinds of activities for the children. Many of such activities are not significant for the young lives and are not supposed to occur to the children spontaneously. Many of the children would not learn to read or pore over arithmetic problems without prompting from adults. Teachers should therefore know about the problems of prompting the young.

In this sense a study of motivation is crucial for a teacher. Without the knowledge of the ways and means of encouraging children's learning of knowing about their appetites in the widest sense of the word of being sensitive to their interests the teacher's task would be impossible. For this purpose most teachers would place an understanding of motivation very high on their list of priorities.

Motivation defined: Motivation is an ambiguous word referring to both an inner drive and a push from outside. A working definition of motivation would be that it consists of internal process which spurs us on to satisfy some need. The satisfaction of body requirements such as food air and water is essential but it gives way to or possibly build into an intricate network of other activities designed to satisfy acquired needs. Theories of motivation emphasize internal process and external stimuli. Most theories have biological basis and many others pay attention to the interaction of inner states and external circumstances. In their application to education there is a real difference between the reinforcement model and the horticulture model.

Motivation in Education: Children abound with vitality and an urge to satisfy many kinds of human needs. It is armed with this knowledge that teachers are able to make the formal setting of school into an environment where children can learn and develop conductively and efficiently.

The process of motivation sees the release of energy which can be utilized for and directed towards educational objectives. Where a child is psychologically satisfied where he feels secure and wanted and where he has the opportunity to grow in confidence independence and self esteem through achievement there is every likelihood that he will go on to seek the intellectual satisfactions provided at school.

For our purposes the important emphasis is in the testable outcomes of our methods in the class rooms rather than seeking the elusive origins of human needs. For example we know that young children be-

come puzzled by their surroundings they poke around question and show inquisitiveness. They manipulate and inspect most things that come within reach. The class room should therefore be designed to take advantage of these ready-made characteristics. Children also strive to succeed or achieve in their attempt to master environmental obstacles material social or intellectual. Man would not have survived if this had not been so. Of course the conditions for achievement are varied and research shows that a skilful combination of success and failure is more favourable for stimulating positive achievements than a distant or neutral atmosphere. Children taste success and failure in that order are most likely to continue the struggle to achieve. They also set themselves goals. Teachers must ensure that these goals are adequate and realistic for each child. The Teacher must beware however of prejudging the capabilities of a child to the point where the teacher consistently under or over estimates them. It is easy to give a dog bad name.

Extrinsic motivators in the form of incentives are very necessary things to teachers. Like adults children are interested to know how they are faring in relation to their own previous performance and to the performance of others. Research tells us that the sooner a person knows the outcome of his work the more likely it is that he will be reinforced to continue learning provided he meets with sufficient success because knowledge of repeated failure is not likely to stimulate further activity. As we observe above positive achievement must be a part of the teachers design. Praise and reproof from a respected teacher are powerful incentives. Children delight in approval in the presence of their peers.

A knowledge of childhood motives is one of the essentials of teaching skill. When children are pursuing purposeful activities in class because they feel the need and want to learn their teacher is clearly well on the way to an understanding of this motive.

In the study of motivation we can identify at least three important questions about activity of children (a) what spurs the children to be active (b) why they behave in a particular way than another. (c) How can one bring about a change in the direction of children's activity?

Because the first question refers to speculation about the internal springs of action several explanations in the form of theories of motivation have arisen. The main value of these theories to the teacher is providing a background against which he can tentatively evaluate his experiences of motivational prob-

lems in the class room. One way of looking at these theories is to view them as a continuum from biogenic (having origins in biological process) to sociogenic (having origins in social process). Biogenic theories emphasize innate biological mechanism i.e. instincts or biological needs whereas sociogenic theories lay stress on the moulding influence of cultural determinants. Between these extremes we find moderate views which find place for both biological and social influences. But those like skinner find no place in these theories about what might be going on inside our bodies. They are more impressed by stimulus and response mechanisms which can be observed and manipulated in the study of such problem as habit formation or the effects of reward punishment and deprivation.

The second question relates to habit. Children behave in a characteristic way because they have discovered through experience that some responses are more effective than others.

The third question is of utmost importance to a teacher. By the process of extrinsic manipulation it is possible to change patterns of behaviour. Habit can be broken and alternatives can be substituted in this place. New patterns take the place of old ones by rewarding or reinforcing the former and not rewarding or punishing the latter.

From the many existing theories of motivation we can focus on two contrasting but complementary approaches. The first is a set of empirically tested principles and the second is a overarching theory. Each has something to offer the teacher.

(i) Principles of reinforcement.

This is the work of skinner though based on behaviourist assumptions is pragmatic. He has concentrated on demonstrating the efforts of reinforcement on learning. Most of his work was carried out on hungry animals but the principles seen to work for well-fed humans too. His works derived from the laws of effect of Thorndike Pigeon playing ping-pong with this beaks by manipulating reinforcement. Any curriculum is an attempt to change the behaviour of students so it should be done by the teachers as effectively as he can. But the teacher should know how reinforcement work could help us to avoid undesired responses.

Teacher may choose a reinforcement that works for the individual pupil. These are done by praises attention success etc. He may establish a baseline for the frequency behaviour. This exercise alone can be illuminating. He can use effective reinforcement immediately after the desired behaviour. Skinner also found the different schedules of reinforcement produc-

ed different patterns of behaviour. In these schedules reinforcement are given at fixed intervals variable intervals fixed ratio and variable ratio.

By contrast humanistic psychology is also interested in self motivation. It stresses the power for learning which we possess without external prods and system of rewards and punishments. It is a modern system and can be seen as a reaction against the mechanistic approach of behaviourism. Psychologists like Maslow and Rogers are the exponents of this theory. They are interested in the attributes of persons rather than organisms. Attributes like consciousness self awareness will and intention are concerned with enlarging potential rather than curing neurosis. Carl Roger's significant learning has a quality of personal involvement. It is self initiated and evaluated by the learner himself. Its essence is meaning to the learner.

This has a double implication for the curriculum. First the teacher can attempt to make significant for the learners what he thinks they ought to know. Secondly he should try to find out what is significant to them and allow that to be the substance of the curriculum.

Carl Roger believes that there are ways of facilitating (the term he prefers to teaching) significant learning in our students. His theory is an attempt to help an educational system change itself in the direction of becoming more free more communicative with more self-reliant and self directed participation on the part of both students and faculty. It is a process in which teacher should be a real person in his relationship with his students. He is a person to the student not a sterile tube through which knowledge is passed from one generation to another. When the teacher has the ability to understand the students' reactions from the inside has a sensitive awareness of the way how the students will accept his teaching. He must be close to students feeling capable of being aware of them then it will be easier to impart knowledge to them.

Regarding learning and its facilitation a number of principles written below are related to this new approach. Teacher as a facilitator has much to do with setting the initial mood or climate of the group or class experience accordingly.

1. The teacher should consider the natural potentiality of the children for learning.

2. He must look into the interest of the learners.

3. He must see the relevance of the instruction to the purpose and need of the learners.

4. He must have sympathy for the peer readers because a retarded boy retains it for

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