ED 387 840   CS 509 041

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TITLE   Motivating Students: A Teacher's Challenge.
PUB DATE   Apr 95
NOTE   21p.; Paper presented at the Annual Sooner
                Communication Conference (6th, Norman, OK, April
                1995).
PUB TYPE   Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.)
                (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE   MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS   *College Students; Higher Education; Motivation
                Techniques; *Speech Communication; *Student
                Attitudes; *Student Motivation; *Student Needs;
                *Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Student Relationship;
                Teaching Methods; Teaching Styles
IDENTIFIERS   *Communication Strategies; Maslow (Abraham); Teacher
                Immediacy

ABSTRACT
        Motivation can be defined as exciting the mind of the
student to receive the instruction. Excitement, interest, and
enthusiasm toward learning are the primary objectives in motivation.
College professors need strategies to reduce student boredom and
enhance student motivation. Students will learn what they want to
learn and will have difficulty learning material that does not
interest them. The understanding cf motivational theory centers on
the work of the psychologist, Abraham Maslow. Maslow's (1943) view of
motivation is based on a hierarchy of needs, structured from the
lowest to the highest: (1) basic physiological needs, (2) security
and safety, (3) social affiliation, and (4) esteem and
self-actualization. College professors need to take these student
needs into consideration when planning their motivational strategies.
According to J. P. Raffini (1993), unless students have adequately
satisfied their biological needs for food, water, sleep, and
temperature regulation, it is unlikely that they will become
interested in the division of fractions or the rhyme scheme of a
Shakespearean sonnet. Through teacher-student interaction, college
professors can become aware of the physiological needs of the
students that are not being met. Strategies particularly applicable
to communication courses would include the following: (1) getting to
know students personally; (2) using a variety of approaches in the
classroom; and (3) helping each student attain some degree of
success. (Contains 24 references.) (TB)

Running Head: MOTIVATING STUDENTS

Motivating Students: A Teacher's Challenge

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Abstract

Developing motivated learners is an ongoing struggle for college professors. This essay discusses motivational techniques used in the college classroom in correlation with Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Several motivational strategies are suggested in order to satisfy the needs of students and encourage learning. Specific motivational strategies are proposed for a communication course.

Motivating Students: A Teacher's Challenge

Introduction

What does the term "motivation" mean? One technical definition describes motivation as the extent to which certain stimuli, objects, or events effect the occurrence or nonoccurrence of the behavior in question (Usova & Gibson, 1986). More simply, motivation can be defined as exciting the mind of the student to receive the instruction. Excitement, interest, and enthusiasm toward learning are the primary objectives in motivation.

Every year Professor Richards (1987) asks the same question, "How am I going to motivate a group of students who do not want to learn?"(p.65). Student motivation is a major problem in classrooms today. Many students are bored, inattentive, and unable to see much connection between schoolwork and their lives outside classrooms. Their boredom diminishes attention, lowers achievement, and is a likely reason for dropping out of school (Hootstein, 1994).

College professors need strategies to reduce student boredom and enhance student motivation. The purpose of this essay is to provide college instructors

with several strategies to make learning interesting

and relevant, and therefore, of value. An additional

purpose is to help instructors develop a better

understanding of student motivation. In order to

motivate students, professors need to know both what is

effective and why it is effective.

Motivation Theory

Student learning and memory are closely tied to

motivation. Students will learn what they want to

learn and will have great difficulty learning material

that does not interest them (McKeachie, 1994, p. 349).

According to Lehman (1989) motivation is a sum of

complex forces influenced by experiences, situations,

and environment.

The understanding of motivational theory centers

on the work of psychologist, Abraham Maslow. Maslow's

(1943) view of motivation is based on a hierarchy of

needs, structured from lowest to highest: Basic

Physiological Needs, Security and Safety, Social

Affiliation, Esteem, and Self-Actualization. A lower-

level need must be met before the needs above it can be

met.

College professors need to take each of these

needs of their students into consideration when

planning motivational strategies.

Physiological Needs

According to Raffini (1993), unless students have

adequately satisfied their biological needs for food,

water, sleep, and temperature regulation, it is

unlikely that they will become interested in the

division of fractions or the rhyme scheme of a

Shakespearean sonnet (p. 12).

Through teacher-student interaction, college

professors can become aware of the physiological needs

of the students that are not being met. A minor action

such as adjusting the thermostat may help secure the

attention of the students. If a student tends to doze

off in class, a one on one discussion with the student

will let the student know that you noticed and are

concerned. Students need to feel that they are not

just one of the mob. They need individual attention

(Berdeaux & Borden, 1984).

Many college students have jobs and/or families.

They have responsibilities competing with education for

their time. By learning about each student, their

background, their motivation, and their personal

characteristics and capabilities, instructors can become aware of the physiological needs of their students.

Security and Safety

According to Raffini (1993), college students must feel safe from both physical and psychological harm or intimidation before they can focus their attentions on the work of school (p. 12). Anxious or alienated students are unlikely to develop in a chaotic classroom (Brophy, 1986). When instructors resort to screaming, threatening, and ridiculing, students often respond by either withdrawing into themselves or lashing out with vengeance. Students need to be challenged without being intimidated or tricked (Marshall, 1986).

Many college students suffer from the fear of school. It usually stems from a person's unpleasant past experience with school. Students may fear being called on and not knowing the "right" answer and being embarrassed in front of peers, being ridiculed by a professor or classmates. This fear stems from the inability to perform at the same level or pace as the rest of the class, taking tests, and a host of other situations.

The college professor plays an important role in creating a supportive environment in which the security and safety needs of the students are met. Brophy, Rashid, Rohrkemper, and Goldberger (1983) claim that teachers' expressions of belief or attitude about academic activities should tend to develop similar beliefs or attitudes in their students. Therefore, if the instructor is a patient, encouraging person who makes students feel comfortable during academic activities and supports their learning efforts an effective learning environment will result.

Teacher immediacy has a tremendous impact on students' motivation. Frymier (1993) defines teacher immediacy as communication behaviors that enhance physical and psychological closeness with another. Nonverbal immediacy has been operationalized as behaviors such as eye contact, smiling, positive use of gestures, vocal variety, forward body leans, and a relaxed body position. Verbal immediacy has been operationalized as verbal behaviors such as use of personal examples, using "we" and "our," using student's first names, and using humor in class (Frymier, 1993).

Teacher immediacy can help motivate students by meeting their need for security and safety. Verbal and nonverbal immediacy provides communication professors with the opportunity to model the behavior they want their students to exhibit during a speech. It also narrows the distance between the instructor and the student.

Social Affiliation

To avoid feeling isolated or alone, students must develop reciprocal relationships, and they must be able to identify themselves as members of a larger group. Many college students join sororities and fraternities in order to acquire social affiliation. This sense of caring and belonging is often threatened in classrooms where students are forced to compete against each other (Raffini 1993). We all need to feel that we belong and we need to give and receive affection. Every human needs human contact.

Johnson, Johnson, and Scott (1978) claim that liking for teacher and classmates affect the instructional climate of the classroom and student motivation to achieve learning goals. Therefore, college instructors should create a classroom in which

collaborative and cooperative learning take place.

Teaching strategies such as group activities, peer

tutoring, student-led discussions, and classroom

debates help create an environment in which there is

interdependence of group members working toward a

common goal (McKeachie, 1994).

Another way in which the professor can fulfill the

need for social affiliation is to incorporate

simulation games, sociodrama, and role playing into the

curriculum (Hyman, 1974). By incorporating games as a

teaching strategy, the professor builds upon the

knowledge and skills the students bring to the teaching

situation. Because many college students are older,

non-traditional students, they bring a variety of

experiences into the classroom. Instructors should

relate games to the objective currently being taught.

Regardless of age, most college students enjoy the

pleasure of playing, the active participation, and the

suspense about the outcome of games. Hyman (1974)

concludes that motivation increases with games, and

since students already have the motivation to play,

they will therefore learn, since learning is required

in order to play and win. By engaging in these types

of activities, students learn competition, cooperation, and empathy. They are recognized as part of a group. In our culture, social recognition is recognized as a dominant source of motivation (Weiner, 1979).

Self-Esteem

According to Raffini (1993), a sense of personal esteem is developed through countless experiences with significant others whose actions and reactions teach us who we are and whether we are worthwhile and valued human beings (p. 13). College professors can make their students feel valued by appreciating and acknowledging their contributions to the classroom experience. During class discussions, teachers can praise a student's comment or question. Instructors who are successful in producing student learning gains tend to have higher expectations and personally acknowledge the contributions of students (Gibson & Dembo, 1984).

Newby (1991) claims that teachers should engage in confidence-building strategies in order to motivate students and build self-esteem. Many times students may not have experienced success as children in school or adults in their work or social life. As a result,

some may feel inadequate and unequipped to learn and

compete, imagining that the others are more capable

than they (Berdeaux & Borden, 1984). If college

professors instill in their students the belief that if

they try to do something they will succeed, the effect

on performance will be dramatic (Keller, 1983).

Classrooms are public settings, so that failure

often means not only personal disappointment but public

embarrassment before the peer group (Brophy, 1986).

Therefore, instructors should create college classrooms

in which fear of failure, test anxiety, and concern

about avoiding ambiguity and risk are minimized.

Success is a major factor in motivating students.

Self-Actualization

Maslow (1943) describes self-actualization as an

intrinsic drive to meet full potential. Armed with a

sense of curiosity and creativity and a belief in our

own worth, each of us is inextricably involved in a

lifelong process of striving to reach and understand

all that exists in our world of experience (Raffini,

1993). Teachers can capitalize on this need in order

to facilitate learning and retention.

According to Garcia (1993), academic learning is

intrinsically difficult, requiring concentration, self-
regulated behaviors, persistence, cognitive effort and
a positive, mastery-oriented outlook. Teachers can
help students become mastery-oriented by structuring
specific goals in which students will be expected to
meet in a class. Goal structure defines which goals
students are to accomplish, how students are to be
evaluated, and how students are to relate to each other
and to the task (Ames & Ames, 1984). By setting goals,
students will know exactly what is expected of them and
they will know what to work toward in order to achieve
success.

Klein and Freitag (1992) claim that students can
be taught to utilize self-motivational strategies in
order to fulfill the need for self-actualization, in
other words, as a means of accomplishing their goals
and succeeding. Instructors should challenge students
with assignments that are hard enough to require some
effort, but easy enough to be completed with no more
than a modest amount of assistance (Hoostein, 1994).
Professors should also stress the importance of
consequences. By setting goals, instructors let
students know what they are expected to do and the

consequences of their actions. Bandura (1974) suggests

that behavior is pictured as a function of its

anticipated consequences. The expectancy that given

consequences will follow any behavior and the affective

value of those possible consequences are both reasons

for success and failure (Nicholls, 1979).

Communication Courses

As a communication instructor, I would like to

propose several motivational strategies that may be

useful in the communication field, specifically in the

basic speech course.

Personalization

In order to create a personal environment,

professors should make a point to memorize their

student's names and learn as much as possible about

their interests and backgrounds. This is a simple, but

effective way in which instructors can motivate

students. An audience analysis, conducted by the

instructor, will help students realize its' importance

before, during, and after a speech. The communication

instructor can personalize a classroom in a number of

other ways. Professors can verbally critique a speech.

They can write personalized messages on written

critiques. They can visit with students before and after class about mutual interests.

Variety

When students anticipate different, interesting things happening each class session, they are motivated to attend regularly. Communication instructors have unlimited resources in which to vary activities. After discussing a chapter on persuasion, instructors can divide the class into teams and have them participate in a persuasive debate. Video tapes of prepared speeches can be shown as models and also to help students learn how to critique other speeches. Students can participate in contests or games as a means of reviewing for a test. Students can be divided into groups to discuss certain aspects of a lesson or to brainstorm for topics.

Success

Every student should be able to experience the joy of being successful. It is up to the professor to provide each student with the opportunity to be successful in some area, on some level. Because my basic speech course consists of speeches, tests, and written assignments, every student will excel in at

least one of those areas. My students know exactly
what I expect of them, therefore if they do what I ask
they will succeed. Even if the overall speech is not
exceptional, speech professors can praise certain
aspects of the speech on the critique. For example,
the organization may have been weak, but the delivery
was exceptional. The joy of even a small success can
be the encouragement a student needs to want to
continue learning.

Conclusion

This essay proposes a variety of teaching
strategies that teachers can use in order to motivate
students. If teachers and students are going to share
a successful classroom experience, it is essential that
teachers become aware and understand the needs of their
students. Once teachers acknowledge these needs, the
motivating techniques are endless. Effective
instructors successfully motivate and stimulate student
thought and interest and justification for these
efforts ground themselves on more and better learning
for students (cited in Weimer, 1993, p. 73).

Underlying the educational process, according to
Berdeaux and Borden (1984), is the need for teachers to

know their students--their backgrounds and motivations,

their personal characteristics and capabilities.

Without that knowledge, even the most skilled professor

cannot do a fully effective job of teaching.

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