

employee motivation literature review essay sample

[Psychology](#), [Motivation](#)



In any discipline, the importance of getting people to do what you want is a key leadership skill. This is especially so in my discipline, education.

According to Gorozidis and Pappaioannou (2014), self-determination theory (SDT) identifies three types of motivation that can affect people's behavior— intrinsic, or inner motivation; extrinsic, or outside motivation; and the absence of motivation, or amotivation. The most effective of these is intrinsic motivation, in which the individual engages in the activity simply because he enjoys it rather than because he is being externally pressured or rewarded to do it (Gorozidis & Pappaioannou, 2014). Thus, teachers have a greater likelihood of influencing students to do what they want if they employ intrinsic motivators rather than extrinsic motivators or no motivators at all. Nohria, Groysberg, and Lee (2008) identify the four drives that underlie motivation, i. e., the four basic intrinsic motivators: the drive to acquire, the drive to bond, the drive to comprehend, and the drive to defend.

Each of these drives is an inherent component of the human personality, so they are always relevant and generally effective intrinsic motivators. The drive to acquire is insatiable and comparative; we never stop wanting more, and we want to know that we have as much or more than others (Nohria, Groysberg, & Lee, 2008). This drive to acquire can be applied not only to corporate employees who want raises, bonuses, and corner offices, but also to students who want achievement, good grades, and scholarships, as well as the future rewards of a good job and a high income, so this intrinsic motivation is mainly fueled by the desire for external things. The drive to bond is largely overlooked in motivational literature, and yet it is a basic and very powerful human drive. Employees want to bond with their coworkers,

and students want to bond with other students. Bonding gives people a feeling of belonging. Nohria, Groysberg, and Lee (2008) state, “ The drive to bond, when met, is associated with strong positive emotions like love and caring and, when not, with negative ones like loneliness and anomie” (p. 2).

This drive is equally as significant among students as among workers and can be leveraged to promote greater motivation to do what the teacher wants done. Moreover, the authors emphasize that this drive is the most influential one in terms of employee commitment, so it can be assumed that it is also the most influential for students as well. The drive to comprehend is the most obvious motivator for students. Nohria, Groysberg, and Lee (2008) explain that people “ want very much to make sense of the world around us,” which gives rise to theories that help us understand events and figure out how to respond reasonably to them. Encountering things that seem to make no sense is frustrating, but being able to figure out the answers invigorates us (Nohria, Groysberg, & Lee, 2008). We want to be challenged to grow and learn, but tasks that are boring or dead-ended demoralize us (Nohria, Groysberg, & Lee, 2008).

The drive to defend leads to a desire to “ create institutions that promote justice, that have clear goals and intentions, and that allow people to express their ideas and opinions,” which creates an environment in which people feel secure and confident (Nohria, Groysberg, & Lee, 2008). This is the ideal environment in which students can learn, because feeling threatened is distracting but feeling safe allows them to focus intently on what they are learning. Motivation in education is a pivotal topic, because

regardless of how impressive a school's or a teacher's credentials and resources are, if students are not motivated to learn, those credentials and resources can provide little value.

In my personal experience as a teacher, I have found that students are most motivated to learn when they find the subject enjoyable, when they feel comfortable in the class, and when the classwork includes “doable” challenges, i. e., challenges that the students know are within the realm of possibility for them. Making the class enjoyable is an art, especially when the subject being taught is not intrinsically interesting to most students, so I have learned to stage topics to pique students' interest, then to start the lesson with tantalizing bits of information that are sure to spark interest before continuing with the lesson. Creating these sparks of interest and fanning the flames of motivation by building enthusiasm quickly and revealing the answers a bit slowly, piece by piece, as the concept comes together in the lesson, helps students achieve and maintain motivation that can carry them through the lesson.

Sometimes, this strategy works so well that it inspires students to make that subject their major, or even their life's work. This underscores the power and influence for motivation that creating intense interest in a topic can have. Worthwhile education is not just the imparting of knowledge, or even the ability to develop interest and motivation to learn. Within the context of Jesuit education, there are spiritual values that intersect with teaching and motivation. Kitching (2013) notes that Saint Ignatius' emphasis in Jesuit education is that it be centered in God. There is no greater pursuit than the

quest for the knowledge of God, but Saint Ignatius' concept of education emphasized whole-person development that encompassed not only the learner's mind and heart but also his body and his will (Kitching, 2013). Every dimension of the learner, from the intellectual to the affective, the spiritual and the physical, and even the imagination are valued in the holistic Ignatian view of education (Kitching, 2013).

Ignatius believed in developing the whole person, not just attempting to transfer information to students. The implications of Jesuit values on motivation are also relevant. Claywell, Pennington, and Spade (2014) identify six faculty roles in education and the most and least influential Ignatian value for each according to their research. Teaching effectiveness, for example, is most influenced by the Ignatian value of care of the person (Claywell, Pennington, & Spade, 2014). Other influential Ignatian values include men and women for others and contemplatives in action and care of the person (Claywell, Pennington, & Spade, 2014).

The authors cite Lowney, who “purports that self-aware leaders understand their strengths, weaknesses, values, and worldview”—qualities that make these leaders “confident innovators, adapting to change while interacting with others in a loving attitude” (Claywell, Pennington, & Spade, 2014, p. 2). The motivation of educational leaders is equally as important as motivating students, because it is the leaders who will impact the motivation of the students. As leaders inspired by the Ignatian values, teachers need to develop motivational strategies that demonstrate an understanding of all four of the drives that motivate people and to incorporate them into the

drive that we all have to know and love God and to be in an intimate spiritual relationship with Him.

References

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