

Learner motivation



It is important for teachers to analyse their own beliefs along with the needs of students before applying extrinsic motivation to planning and programming (Santrock, 2008; Marsh, 2004). Although extrinsic motivation is a beneficial tool for both teachers and students it must not be used alone wherever possible (Marsh, 2004; Ormrod, 2006). With the intention of developing and enhancing enjoyment and success in future and lifelong learning, learners must be given the opportunity to partake in tasks that promote intrinsic motivation (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002).

That is, tasks that will increase student will and desire to participate in an activity, with or without prospects of a reward (Ormrod, 2006). When planning lessons a teacher must select content and tasks that are enjoyable, challenging, relevant and interesting (Marsh, 2004), this will help to engage students (Santrock, 2008). Elements of choice in regards to learning activities give students a sense of control over their work and evoke enthusiasm (Howe, 1999), when this occurs intrinsic motivation begins to manifest (Santrock, 2008; Ormrod, 2006).

We must now investigate activities and strategies that have the ability to spark interest in learners. Gardner's Multiple Intelligences theory offers educators the opportunity to captualise and maximise learner interest, enjoyment and potential by looking beyond the rigid structures of curriculum and testing (Santrock, 2008; Ormrod). Gardner's theory identifies eight types of intelligences, one or more of which may or may not be inherent in particular learners (Marsh, 2004).

These are, “ Linguistic (word smart), Logical/Mathematical (number/reasoning smart), Spatial (picture smart), Body/Kinesthetic (body smart), Musical (music smart), Interpersonal (people and social smart), Intrapersonal (self smart) and Naturalist (nature smart) (Whitaker, 2002). ” Multiple Intelligences not only facilitates the unveiling of learner’s special or hidden abilities and interests, but it also makes available the opportunity for a teacher to identify and strengthen areas of potential weakness (Wilkins, 1996; Lefrancois, 2000).

In conclusion, these factors enable teachers to provide stimulating and appropriate learning tasks (Jasmine, 1996), thus, potentially resulting in learner motivation, which in turn promotes a quality teaching and learning environment (Hattie, 2003; Department of Education and Training, 2004). It is important to note that the use of multiple intelligences in the classroom is translated into individual learning which generally requires more planning than whole class activities (Marsh, 2004; Santrock, 2008).

However, it is not particularly appropriate nor is it necessary to apply multiple intelligences to every aspect of planning for teaching (Ormrod, 2006; Lefrancois, 2000). The combination of commitment to teaching and learning and appropriate resources are paramount to the effective use of multiple intelligences in the classroom (Whitaker, 2002; Lefrancois, 2000). Resources for multiple intelligences include practical and innovative ideas for classroom structure and teaching activities and strategies.

For example, Hawker Brownlow Education published a vast range of texts specifically for Multiple Intelligences that contain an abundance of creative

classroom activities for even the most inexperienced teacher. This range of resources are clearly explained and conveniently accompanied with photocopiable hand-outs. Multiple intelligences is also helpful in addressing issues of self-esteem as it has the capacity to boost a learners success, (Santrock, 2008; Howe, 1999) low self-esteem can also be linked to low or non-existent motivation.

Self- esteem is one of a myriad of potential reasons a learner does or does not display motivational behaviour (Marsh, 2004; Ormrod, 2006). Motivation is “ variable and complex” (Marsh, 2004), so naturally there are many other factors that can potentially contribute to why or why not a student may or may not be motivated. These include student self-esteem, the teacher themselves – including; support, classroom climate and clear objectives and expectations (Westwood, 2004), tasks that are beyond a child’s capacity and personal or domestic issues (Ormrod, 2006; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002).

Although personal and domestic issues are something to be discussed with the student and/or the parents, the other three areas must be considered when planning and programming (Lefrancois, 2000) in accordance with quality teaching and related strategies (Department of Education and Training, 2004; Hattie, 2003). A teacher could weigh themselves down trying to define and understand what motivation actually is (Brophy, 1998), nonetheless, it is clear is that it is a fundamental area of development in terms of student success.

After all, if a student cannot see the point or is completely disinterested in tasks then no real learning will occur (Santrock, 2008; Hattie, 2003).

Importantly, extrinsic motivation as part of planning and teaching can provide a starting point for or enhance learner motivation (Schunk, 1991). Intrinsic motivation is of course significantly more important than extrinsic motivation in regards to a learners internal desire to learn (Brown, 2000; Walker & Debus, 2002), however, this discussion has suggested that learning via extrinsic motivation is far more productive than surface learning or no learning at all.