South Dakota State University

EPSY 302: Educational Psychology

How knowledge of human motivation and behavior should influence strategies for organizing and supporting individual and group work in the classroom.

Motivation to learn can be described as an individual’s willingness to engage, commit, and persist in an educational task. Most learners because of human nature are willing to engage and commit to educational tasks expected of them. They do this because they need approval of others and are generally eager to figure things out. It is a teacher’s understanding of how to help learners persist, when the going gets tough, and the learners are not quite sure they have the time, interest, skills, or energy to complete the task. Theories related to “motivation to learn” can help the educator design assignments and educational tasks in ways that are more likely to work.

A simplistic but helpful way to look at motivation to learn is to consider the learner’s expectation for success completing an educational task if he/she invests focused energy; and the learner’s value for the educational task or activity being completed. This is referred to the E x V model for motivation to learn. If a learner believes he/she can be successful and if he/she values what he/she is doing he/she is more likely to engage, commit, and persist with energy. The learner then is more likely to learn using personal motivation effectively.

There are many things teachers can do to help increase a learner’s expectancy for success and value for the educational tasks. If the teacher modifies or builds assignments and classroom tasks with the learners E x V in mind the teacher will find students more motivated to participate enthusiastically. Appropriate, relevant, enjoyable, and meaningful tasks are more valuable to learners. If tasks are related to learner’s goals they are also viewed as more valuable. Tasks that are logical next steps connected to what the learners already knows allows the learner to feel more expectation for success at the task and related learning. When the teacher gives clear directions and expectations for success the learner is more likely to know what must be done to succeed, this will sometimes help learners feel more ready to engage, commit, and persist.

Teachers may need to talk individually to learners to help the learner consider his/her personal expectancy for success and value for the task.

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