

The Involvement of Teachers on Academic Motivation of School Students

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ABSTRACT

Students' motivation for academics can be increased by the support and encouragement of the teachers in schools. This study attempted to explore the factors teachers applied for supporting students' autonomy, competencies, and interests to increase their motivation for learning. Interpretative phenomenological analysis of qualitative research methodology was used in this research. The study was conducted on 18 school teachers working in government and private schools in Kolkata, India from whom data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed four main themes teachers used to increase students' academic motivation in schools. Conveying the importance of learning, motivating the learning environment, encouraging special activities and solving other problems were the major affairs reported. For motivating the students, the importance of learning in personal and professional development, the importance of a positive learning environment, the advantages of co-curricular activities and the need for special classes, and counselling were also mentioned.

Keywords: Teacher involvement, Academic motivation, School students

INTRODUCTION

Learning should be play and play should be learning for the students through which they learn every day in a playful environment. Learning gives an individual a chance to take part in new challenges that lead him or her to experience new opportunities. Learning is an essential skill that helps to strengthen the individual's overall development. Students' learning capacity can increase due to their own desires to know something new or due to the motivations and support received from the teachers [1].

Children by nature are curious, full of questions, and enthusiastic towards learning. Entering the school, they are very excited and eager to explore and discover every single thing in their surroundings very fast. If they are successful after exploration or discovery they become very happy, get motivated and want to learn more new things in the environment which lasts for a lifetime. Studies showed that a child's overall adjustment at school is dependent on the child's willingness to want to participate or not which can be directly related to motivation [2]. Children, who are positively and rightly supported and get positive feedback in schools, become creative, adventurous and motivated learners in future [3].

A study reported that interest in learning will increase in those students who understand the relevance of learning a particular aspect, and the implications of that for their everyday living [4]. A study conducted by Coutts [5] emphasized the link between activities exercised in the class

and the relation of these to the lives of the students. Students tend to motivate to learn when they can relate the classroom teaching to their daily life situations.

Student motivation is influenced not only by parents but also to varying degrees by teachers and peers, as stated by Mingte Wang and Jacquelynnes Eccles at the University of [6]. Many researchers reported that internal personality characteristics and the social environment (i.e., classroom, school, family) shape academic motivation for all students including those of high intellectual ability [7].

Students' motivation for learning is generally considered one of the most significant determinants of the success and quality of any learning outcome [8]. The study stated the importance of national interference to increase the rigor of academic standards to motivate all the students including the most disengaged and demotivated learners [9]. Exploring the factors of academic motivation in school children is important because academic intrinsic motivation in the early school years has profound implications for future success in life. Children's academic motivation is specifically

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influenced by the teacher's involvement and encouragement in the school. This study focused on the role of teacher involvement to enhance the academic motivation of school students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several kinds of research have been conducted related to the academic motivation of school students. Some focused on the role of parents, teachers, and peers, some studied the relation with academic achievement. Studies on intrinsic motivation showed the association with a series of positive outcomes like persistence, performance, interest and positive emotions [10,11]. Most studies have shown that the more increases the students' approach to learning, the better their learning achievement [12].

Academic motivation not only helps a child succeed in school but also helps the child to understand that learning is rewarding and important in all aspects of life-school, work and community. Joshi [13] defines academic motivation as "enjoyment of school learning characterized by a mastery orientation; curiosity; persistence; task-endogeny; and the learning of challenging, difficult, and novel tasks" (p. 525). According to King [14], academic motivation refers to internal processes that instigate and sustain activities aimed at achieving specific academic goals. An academically motivated child with a positive attitude has a desire to learn, likes learning-related activities and believes that school is important.

Some researchers showed higher motivation in middle and high school students who completed their assignments successfully following the lessons taught by their teachers in class [15,16]. Feedback from teachers is also essential for students as it gives an indication of the student's progression in academics [17,18]. Providing feedback also gives information about the student's success or failure and the opportunity to improve in future. The more positive feedback students receive the more he or she becomes motivated to learning. A study by Pintrich [19] and Schiefele [20] found that those who perceived teachers as warm, caring, friendly, and approachable are more tend to attach learning in school.

Studies reported that students who experienced care and belongingness in an academic environment showed high academic achievement while those who perceived unfriendly attitudes showed dissatisfaction with learning [21]. Students in Korea who studied in autonomy-supportive environments showed higher psychological need satisfaction and more engagement in learning while students who learned in suppressed autonomy environments showed disengagement towards learning [22]. Smith [23] reported that motivation leads to academic engagement and the relationship between teacher and student determines the amount of support given.

In a research, it was found that positive and healthy interaction with teachers in daily classroom activities has a

positive effect on the academic motivation of the students [24]. Good behavior, support, and positive remarks from the teacher would make the student feel motivated and encouraged towards learning. So, it is essential to understand how teacher involvement influences the academic motivation of children in school. This study emphasized the techniques of teacher involvement for having an impact on the academic motivation of students in school.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How does teacher involvement influence the academic motivation of school students?

Objectives of the study

To explore the involvement of the teachers in the academic motivation of the schools at the primary level

To know about the ways teachers morally support the students to motivate them to their better academic achievements

METHOD

Sample

The study was conducted on the teachers working in government and private schools in Kolkata, India. Purposive random sampling was used for this study. 24 school teachers taught at the primary level were contacted by phone to get diverse data from different parts of Kolkata. Finally, 18 teachers showed interest and agreed to participate in the study (ten teachers from government schools and eight from private schools) among which seven are male and eleven are female teachers with the age group 28-41 years. Among the 18 teachers 8 were having B.Ed., 7 were postgraduates, 3 were having PhD degrees and all of them were having a minimum of 4 years of teaching experience.

Procedure

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data from the school teachers taught at the primary level from different schools in Kolkata to get information on how were teachers involved in the enhancement of the academic motivation of the students at the primary level. The open-ended questions were used without any predetermined limit. These questions were verified by three experts and the modifications were done as per their suggestions. The revised draft was administered to three teachers who were not part of the study to confirm the validity. Questions were asked both in Bengali and English depending on the comfort of the interviewees. All the interviews were taken over the phone and the responses were recorded in the audio clip. A brief personal profile of each teacher was taken. However, the identity of the respondent was kept confidential keeping in mind the ethics of qualitative research. During the interview, a few valid questions were asked to the teachers like firstly, how do you motivate students in the class?

Secondly, how do you give feedback to the students in the class?

Instrument

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) of qualitative research methodology was used in this research. Research stated that an individual's experience of a specific affair can be understood in detail with the help of IPA [25]. IPA interview gives an opportunity for the interviewers to understand the viewpoints of the interviewees for their subjective experiences and engagements in a particular phenomenon [26]. IPA provides interpretative perceptions and experiences of the respondents along with descriptive views [27]. IPA is generally used in those situations where the sample size is small are required to be studied at a deeper level [28]. Here, IPA is used to explore the techniques used in teaching during class environments which teachers used for the academic motivation of the students.

DATA ANALYSIS

Each interview was analyzed following the steps proposed by Trautwein (2007) [29] mentioned in the research by Trautwein (2009) [30]. All the recording interviews were deeply studied and all the meaningful information was noted down for identifying major themes of academic motivation. The emerging themes based on the verbatim transcripts were recorded separately and were checked for similarities and differences between them and finally similar themes were grouped. This process was followed for all the interviews conducted for the study.

FINDINGS

The responses of the teachers collected through semi-structured interviews were then analyzed and revealed the following aspects of their involvement in the academic motivation of students. The findings are expressed in four major themes which were obtained by grouping the responses taken from the analysis.

Conveying the importance of learning

- Teachers play an important role to make children aware of the importance of learning; its purposes, advantages, implications all the necessary information are conveyed to the students through different steps.
- Personal development - learning is a sign of the activeness of the mind and brain. The inquisitiveness
- Keeps the brain busy in searching for creative facts about the environment. This knowledge is the reflection
- Of satisfaction which increases the confidence and growth curve of the self of the students.

- “Students who are good in academics always ask questions and try to analyze with rationality” (participant 3)
- Professional development - learning provides a confirmed path that helps an individual to become better in his or her field which leads the professional development.
- “It is observed that students, who worked hard, improve a lot for getting better chances like school captain, sports captain” (participant 12).
- Changed the perspectives - learning always opens the mind and helps to see the same facts from different angles. It helps to change the attitude, behavior, and values for understanding everything more deeply.
- “The knowledgeable students are more understanding and open-mindedness compared to others” (participant 16).

Motivating learning environment

- Teachers improve children's love and motivation for learning by creating an energetic and supportive environment full of fresh air and light and support from friends, and teachers which become the facilitator to look forward.
- Positive classroom - a positive environment enables students to feel safe, secure and comfortable with learning and motivates them to explore innovative ideas. The supports from the teachers enable them to feel respected and accepted in the learning world.
- “In a positive environment child work as a team and celebrate the achievement together” (participant 6).
- “In a supportive environment child shows their real curiosity and unique ideas” (participant 17).
- Colorful classroom - classroom painted with bright color, full of needed supplies (books, school dress, pen, pencil, table, chair etc.) As much as necessary encouraged students to study more.
- “Students are more likely to study in a colorful classroom full of famous quotes, and motivating posters” (participants 2, 7, 13).
- Natural learning environment - In the open nature students love to study more with a fresh mind and more concentration. They learn more attentively in the open air like in gardens, pond side, and rooftops with exposure to applications.
- “Students are more excited in classes taken in open space” (participants 1, 4).

Encouraging special activities

Co-curricular activities along with academic curriculum develop students' skills beyond subject-related knowledge. These activities enhance the social skills, intellectual skills, moral values, growth in personality and character build in students.

Adequate learning

- Co-curricular activities merged with academics ensure students get to learn effectively. Science lab, computer lab, projects, and experiments in different fields all are part of co-curricular activities.
- "Students who are more active in computer class tend to be good in other subjects also" (participant 18).

Cultural values

- Students get to learn about various cultural events from traditional to national level based on different faiths, beliefs and values. Students learn about these events through books along with co-curricular activities based on different cultures organized by schools.
- "Those students are more knowledgeable who take an active part in different cultural programmes because taking part in the event enables them to know in detail about the background of the event" (participants 10, 11).

Personality development

- Active participation and performance in co-curricular activities help the students sharpen communication skills, coordination and leadership skills. Through different activities like debate, recitation, creative competitions, and group discussion students develop a sense of belongingness and sharing nature which shapes their personality in a positive direction.
- "Students, who always take part in co-curricular activities besides study, are generally smart, cooperative, friendly, good speakers and good coordinators" (participants 8, 12).

Solving other problems

- Sometimes it is difficult to understand the reason behind the low motivation in children spite of having all amenities. Then teachers try to know the problems of the students focusing on those issues.
- Nurturing special skills - students sometimes don't score well in academics for which they received criticism from society. Teachers then provide students the opportunity to identify the special skills present in the students like giving them creative writing to explore writing skills or art and craft to explore creativity in designing or in painting or in sports etc.
- "I have one student in my class who is wonderful at painting but not very good in study. I asked her to paint

whenever she loves to do it because i observed that after painting she gives attention to her study" (participant 5).

Special class

- Arranging special class for students having difficulty in learning motivate them to study more attentively and seriously and solve their problems outside of academic.
- "In special class, few students talk about family problems" (participant 4).
- Counselling - teachers refer school counsellor if they are unable to recognize the problem behind low academic motivation which ultimately help the students to enhance their motivation in academic.
- "We have few students who improved much in study after having few counselling sessions" (participant 14).

DISCUSSIONS

Learning is an inevitable tool that nourishes the students' minds and calms the soul. It is a continuous process that encourages acquiring knowledge, competencies and skills to develop future opportunities and to deal with the continuous changes in life. Teachers encouraged the students for reading habits, building a learning network, asking questions, conducting research and exploring new facts so that every moment can be enjoyable for the students and they learn something new in each moment. This finding is supported by other studies which stated that student's motivation to learn can be increased by the support of teachers [31,32].

The classroom is the second home for the students and teachers make efforts to make the students feel comfortable as much as possible. They tried to create an environment that is more conducive to engagement and learning as a positive learning environment allows the students to develop a sense of belonging, and trust and feel encouraged to tackle challenges, take risks and ask questions. Wang [33] in their study reported teachers play an important role in creating a supportive environment for students' autonomy.

Teachers involved students in co-curricular activities at schools as these are part of academics and make the learning experience exciting for the students. Through different activities, students learn much better because participation in an activity brings out their natural skills. Fostering a positive environment, teachers help students acquire higher motivation that leads to wonderful learning outcomes. In the studies, it is found that teachers by supporting students' likings and interests help them develop personal interest and engagement in work which leads to motivation [34].

Teachers encountered many issues with students while teaching in schools. Sometimes they had to solve some other issues outside of academics. They refer counsellors sometimes if they became unable to solve those special

issues which decreased the motivation of the students in learning. This finding is in accordance with the study of Wang [33] and Wentzel [34] which stated that teachers support their student's learning by connecting to the personal world of the students.

CONCLUSION

Learning is an indispensable tool which is influenced by motivation in students. It provides the skills that encourage students to encounter the challenges in life. Along with the natural ability to learn, students' motivation for learning is much dependent on teachers' involvement. Teachers' role in facilitating students' academic motivation is received through making them understand the importance of learning, encouraging a learning environment, warmth, support and positive feedback for students' overall development and bright future.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE SCOPES

This study has highlighted teachers' role in students' academic motivation in schools using interpretative phenomenological analysis (ipa) of qualitative research methodology. The study is conducted on primary-level school teachers in Kolkata, so it cannot be generalized to other fields. In the future, similar studies can be conducted on a large scale on other groups of subjects from other sectors of other states or countries.

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