

REWARDS AS A MOTIVATIONAL DRIVE TO IMPROVING LEARNING PROCESSES

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Abstract

*Motivation is an influential factor in the teaching-learning processes. The success of learning depends on whether or not the learners are motivated. Motivation drives learners in reaching learning goals. It is important to recognise the fact that motivating learning is a central element of good teaching. This suggests that learners' motivation is probably the most significant element of learning. In order to stimulate learning and to motivate good behavior, many teachers use **rewards for students**. This paper therefore focuses on rewards as a motivational drive to improving learning processes. The paper explained the concept of motivation, reward and learning as a concept. The paper also examined the two major types of motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic), reward types, and the principles of reward. The paper furthers the importance of motivation in learning as well as the effects of reward. The paper concluded the teachers should understand that material rewards can be used only when necessary. It was also recommended that teachers need to be aware of the deteriorative effects of the reward systems, because students should not be rewarded when the task is sufficiently interesting in itself.*

Key Words: Reward, Motivational drive, Learning Processes and Improving Learning

Introduction

Reward system originated from behaviorist psychologists that supports and promotes effective learning, good classroom environment and discipline that is now available in schools. Schools manage different types of learners' behaviour by establishing different rules, in terms of rewards, praising or even punishing students for breaking the school rules, this is possible through the application of reward. This system is very significant to prepare learners to behave in a good manner and work harder purposely to get that reward. A student can easily repeat an action on a particular task through rewarding and recognition of a 'good' behavior (Mujitaba, 2019 and Abdullahi, 2021). Today, many schools in Nigeria are now operating the reward system (Abdullahi, 2021). Teachers and students appear to develop interest in it as it is having beneficial effects on the performance of the learners and the learning process

Concept of Motivation

The term motivation is derived from Latin word 'movere' meaning to move. So, motivation is connected with movement in action. Motivation according to Colman (2003) is a driving force responsible for initiation, persistence, direction and vigour of goal-directed behaviour. Motivation is an internal process (within the individual). Whether we define it as a drive or need, motivation is a condition inside us that defines a change, either in self or environment. When we tap into this well of energy, motivation endorses a person to the drive and direction needed to engage with the environment in the adaptive, open minded, and problem solving ways. In the opinion of Brown (2007:38), "Motivation is something that can be likened to self-esteem, be global, situational or task oriented, motivation also typically examined in terms of the intrinsic and extrinsic

motives of the learner”. Motivation is one of the most important variables in learning. A high degree of motivation engenders an active and aggressive attitude with regard to educational goals. Motivation is actually a cluster of factors that energize behavior and give it direction. Intrinsic motivation, for itself perceived needs a goal. While learner who pursue a goal only to receive an external reward from someone else are extrinsically motivated.

Types of Motivation

Self-determination Theory (SDT) explains how learners may be driven to learn by two sources thus “internal and external”. However, there are two main types of motivation; intrinsic and extrinsic motivation; extrinsic motivation is relating to external drive while intrinsic motivation concerned itself with external drive:

Intrinsic motivation

Intrinsic motivation occurs when person is internally driven which could be emotional, biological, spiritual, or social. In this case, there are no external rewards (Mujitaba, 2021). It is inherent in the activities we perform for pure enjoyment or satisfaction. We engage in intrinsically motivated behaviour because we want to experience the activity for its own sake. Intrinsic motivation can be driven by curiosity, which is linked to a desire to know and explore our environment for answers. Intrinsic motivation can also come from the need to actively interact and control our environment (Dalijan, 2019). The Expectant Motivation Theory explains how intrinsic motivation drives us to develop competence, the contemporary research for motivation shows that intrinsic motivation that

originates from internal motives are often experienced as more immediate and potent than extrinsic motivation.

Hassan S.B., Murtala, E.O. Jumai, A.S. et al., (2008) explained intrinsic motivation as the choices people make for their own sake without considering any external component, such that they are intrinsically rewarded. Intrinsic motivation is an inner force that motivates students to engage in academic activities, because they are interested in learning and they enjoy the learning process as well (Mathew, 2005). Their (learners) abilities are put to the test and they are eager to learn even when there are no external rewards to be won (Muhammed, 2005). Students with learning goals of seeking understanding for mastery of science content and skills are said to be intrinsically motivated (David et al., 2007).

Extrinsic Motivation

Here stimulus is outside the person, it can be there in the form of operant conditioning or social cognition. It aims at performing a task for the purpose of attaining an outcome. It may be in the form of some kind of reward, social approval, or appreciation. Asruf (2008) opined that extrinsic motivation is caused by any number of outside factors that might include the hope of financial reward; need to pass an exam or future expectations. According to Marsh (2011), motivation is an external stimulus that follows as a result of a certain response. So, extrinsic motivation is any stimulus that comes from outside of learner, and which drives the learner in the learning process.

According to Ryan and Deci (2007), Deci and Ryan (2012); Niemiec and Ryan (2013), learners are externally driven to perform an action with an anticipation of some outcome other than the learning itself. Chow and Yong (2015) asserted that extrinsic

motivation drives students to engage in academic tasks for external reasons.

Once the rewards or punishments are removed, students lose their motivation (Matt & Dale, 2014). Extrinsically motivated students tend to focus on earning higher grades and obtaining rewards. Lawal (2018) proposed that individuals who are motivated extrinsically rely solely on rewards and desirable results for their motivation. This implies that students who are motivated externally are at a greater risk of performing lower academically than intrinsically motivated students.

Concept of Reward

Reward is giving something to others as an appreciation or souvenir (Wilujeng in Djamarah, 2015). No matter what form of reward given to others, it greatly depends on the wishes. *Reward refers to something that is given as an exchange for a useful idea, good behavior or excellent work.* Reward may also be seen as a symbol of appreciation that is shown to a person after his successful response to a stimulus. Whether the satisfaction is emotional (happy or pleasant) or physical; It may also include good marks or prizes (Suleiman, 2009). Farooq (2018) opined that reward is an appreciation given by the teacher to the students as a gift, because a student has performed well and finished the task of the teacher.

Reward motivates and de-motivates students, depending on how it is used. When and how students have been rewarded may be one reason why they differ in their levels of confidence and motivation. Reward system involved the formal and public recognition of good performance. The system that is used varies according to the individual's performance. Silver or gold award, exercise books, textbook, biro, pencil etc. presented at the end of the year or on the assembly. Schools design their own awards

or certificates, individual classes in primary schools can have their own particular designs in which parents are informed about the awards to their children and can be present at the award giving ceremony (Smith, 2009). Rewards motivate and increase students' interest in learning because they demonstrate behaviors such as choosing challenging activities and spending more time on that task.

Principles of Reward

1. Learners become dependent on short term rewards.
2. Reward flatters the learners into a habit of looking to teacher and others for their only reward.
3. Learners anticipate and develop their own internally administered, intrinsic reward system.

Types of Reward

1. Prize/Gift: Here, the price is stuff rewards. The school stuff prize for example may be pencils, books, erasers, and so on. But when reward is given in the form of a gift, it is otherwise known as material reward.
2. Praise: One of the simplest types of reward is Praise. It could be compliment words such as good, good job and so on. More so, praise can be gestures for instance, head shaking, thumbs up, tapping shoulder, clapping etc.
3. Respect: Respect in the form of honor consists of two kinds, the first is coronation, and the child who gets the honor is announced in front of the class. The second honor can be a position. It means giving power to do something. For

example students who get the highest score are selected as the head of the discussion group.

4. A Sign of appreciation: Reward is also called symbolic reward. Symbolic reward can be letter, certificate, cup, etc.

Learning as a Concept

Educational psychologists have defined learning in different ways and meanings. It has been explained as a quantitative increase in knowledge, memorizing of facts, skills, and methods that can be retained and used as necessary. It is also viewed as making sense or abstracting meaning, relating parts of the subject matter to each other and to the real world, interpreting and understanding reality and comprehending the world by reinterpreting knowledge. It is very difficult to decide what actually happens when an organism learns. It is also defined as adjustment, or adaptation to a situation or improvement.

According to Khalid (2008), learning process is thoroughly depended on reflexes. It is the outcome of a neutral stimulus when it is associated with part of a reflex. He believed that human behavior could be explained entirely in terms of reflexes, stimulus-response associations. There is no place for the mental terms like desires, goals, interest, insight etc. At birth, there are a large number of ontogenetic, embryologic responses called reflexes. No reflex is involved in trial and error learning. A reinforcing or punishing event changes the strength of association between a neutral stimulus and an arbitrary response. The response is not the part of a reflex. Similarly, pairing noxious stimuli with undesirable behaviors can create learned distaste for the target behaviors. For instance, employing the principles of classical conditioning, we can show films that

make drunk driving is a totally distasteful activity.

Importance of Motivation in Learning

- As an important factor towards academic learning and achievement as early as from the childhood stage through adolescence, motivation is very significant and inspiring learners to learn in any learning situation (Elliott & Dweck, 2013). Motivation is one of the greater tasks of teaching. The teacher should make sure that the presentation of every lesson is built on motivation. In order to gain learners' interest and direct their attentions towards what is being learnt, motivation should be initiated at the introduction stage of the lesson and should be continued throughout the entire lesson presentation.
- As an instructor, it is also important to learn the motivation of learners. Motivation helps learners to learn fast and makes them to recognize the need and develops the desire to learn. It also stimulates the interest of the learners, allows them to think, concentrate, and learn effectively. Abubakar (2011) submitted that motivation increases the performance of learning. He explains further that learning is an active process requiring a participative role and influences the rate of learning, the retention of information, and the desire to learn.
- During the learning process, motivation allows the learner to pay attention on what he/she is doing, and therein gain satisfaction. Motivation is also needed as a continue process to ensure solid concentration of the learners on the lessons to be learned. Learners develop some forms of satisfaction when they are motivated (Kulsum, 2019). It helps learners to be self-developed and direct their

behaviours towards particular goals. Motivation also influences the specific goals toward which learners strive, affecting the choices learners make. For example, whether to go for science or art class, whether to attend the school sport activities during the week or complete the homework that is due the next day.

- When learners are motivated, it improves the spirit of initiation and persistence of learning activities in them. At the same time, it increases the specific time they spend on pursuing a task hence an important factor affecting their learning and achievement.
- Motivation enhances cognitive processing. It actually affects what and how information is processed, because motivated students are more likely to pay attention and try to understand the material instead of simply going through the motions of learning in a superficial manner.

Effects of Rewards on Learning

Reward declines the value of productive classroom situation: Motivation from an internal drive (intrinsic motivation) is significant to keep learners engaged during the learning activities; this is very hard to see in our classroom today. Many instructors, in both general and special education have unnecessarily depended on rewards and incentive stuffs in order to manage behavior and learning. A good example is when a teacher rewards a student for not making noise hoping that the reward will increase the chance that the student will maintain silence the next time. To the teacher, he might think his promoting an effective classroom management; meanwhile the student only

learns what behaviors earn a reward but not about the value of a productive classroom situation.

Reward encourages persistent behaviours in learner: Contributions have been made by behavioural psychologists on how to use rewards in the classroom. A behavioural theory was produced in the 1950's that submitted a great influence on the use of rewards in schools. One is the theory of Operant Conditioning which was developed by B.F. Skinner. The theory works on the notion that if a reinforcer is presented after certain behavior is performed, then the strength of the behavior is increased (Costman, 2002). A reinforcer is any stimulus presented after a behavior that increases the chance of the behavior being repeated. Many teachers are using the principles of operant conditioning when they give out stickers, treats, and praise. Operant conditioning also plays an important role when it comes to cautionary statements. Many reinforcement techniques are targeted towards populations with mild handicaps, and such care should be applied when choosing reinforcement with a particular group (MacMillan 2003).

Reward may have negative effect on learner's internal motivation: Motivational studies have been going through series of changes since early 1950's. The Freud's idea that man is motivated only by drives and instincts has started to be rejected by motivation researchers and dissonance theorists (Festinger and Carlsmith, 2009; White, 2009). White explained further that motivation is man's attempt to change his environment, and then feel satisfied when the desired change occurs. These ideas, along with Deci's identification of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation led to the completion of many research studies on the effects of motivation on behavior. Because of this, the idea began to emerge that extrinsic motivators may have a negative effect on a learner's

internal motivation. Since many of the rewards given in school are extrinsic motivators. Intrinsic motivation bitterly increase learner's efforts in learning activities: Researchers have thoroughly investigated the effects of rewards on all aspects of school. Deci (2006; 2007) observed that given money as a reward can have deteriorative effects on motivation. Intrinsically motivated students became less motivated when paid money as a reward. On a contrary opinion, when intrinsically motivated students were given praise as a reward, their motivation was enhanced. Deci (2007) in his continuous explanation maintained that when reward is being considered to be more than what is justified for a given situation, the person puts for more effort in an activity. The type and amount of a reward have an effect on motivation and performance.

Reward also affects quality of learning: Rewards have also been recognised to affect the quality of learning. This was discovered through an educational research conducted by Zasili in 2019 on the effect of rewards on learners' performance at primary school level in Kiama Local Government Area of Kwara State. The study showed that a reward of food distracted the pupils from the learning task, and resulted in less learning. The primary school pupils were given pieces of candy for correct answers in learning tasks dealing with building blocks, while a control group was not given anything for correct answers. The group receiving candy was demonstrated to be slower in acquisition of the new skill, and impelled to make more mistakes than the control group. This study supports the idea that the learning task just becomes a way of receiving reward, like the student from making noise in order to get a piece of candy. Rewards in such situation play no significant role in the classroom because they cause students to make more mistakes and become abstracted.

Using reward does not encourage creative learning: Children choice making about their own learning is also hindered through External rewards. Towards achieving complete educational goals, the learners must always challenge themselves to new and more difficult tasks. Children who are intrinsically motivated take risk and choose more difficult tasks, therefore increasing their learning. Emmanuel and Samson (2012) suggested the way students challenged themselves when graded by a teacher, and when evaluated by themselves. The research was carried out on SSII students, the students were given two tests of both simple and hard Mathematics problems to solve. The students were also given the chance to choose a number of problems to solve, and were told that one test would receive a grade from the teacher, and that the other test was to be completed independently with the students evaluating themselves. The authors discovered that students frequently chose simpler problems when the teacher would be grading the problems, but chose the harder problems when evaluating themselves. The most important factor considered by the students is a good grade, and students will follow the simplest purposely to earn a good grade, even though when working on their own, students did prefer to challenge themselves. One way to arose the interest of the learner in challenging himself is to prepare the classroom environment to make him feel safe and comfortable in doing so. The results of this study recommended that the giving of grades does not promote such an environment, but takes child's attention away from the task of learning and to the task of getting the reward.

When reward is consistently used in the classroom, it affects the quality development for internal motives in learners: The use of rewards has a detrimental effect on the

intrinsic motivation of the learners in contrary to the events taking place in most classrooms today which at the same time affecting the learners' achievement negatively. Though, we cannot conclude that extrinsic motivators have no place in school hence learners are expected to achieve a many objectives. Therefore, it is irrational to expect the learners to be hundred percent motivated at all time (Skimeh, 2003). Extrinsic motivators should be applied in such a way that it will not impair intrinsic motivation. In order to have successful learning process, intrinsic motivation has been described as a very significant quality to have. The challenge is for teachers to arrange the classroom environment in a way that allows intrinsic motivation to develop.

Conclusion

Reward refers to something that is given as an exchange for a useful idea, good behaviour or excellent work, etc. Operant conditioning of B.F Skinner who proposed theory of learning based on operant condition stated that, the function of reinforcement is always to increase the probability of an operant. The paper concludes that motivation from an internal drive (intrinsic motivation) is significant to keep learners engaged during the learning activities; this is very hard to see in our classroom today. Many instructors, in both general and special education have unnecessarily depended on rewards and incentive stuffs in order to manage behavior and learning. It was also discovered from this paper that children choice making about their own learning is also hindered through External rewards. Children who are intrinsically motivated take risk and choose more difficult tasks, therefore increasing their learning.

Suggestions and Recommendations

1. Teachers need to be aware of the deteriorative effects of the reward systems, because students should not be rewarded when the task is sufficiently interesting in itself.
2. Teacher should involve the learners in activities which involve sequential problem-solving and emphasise the process rather than the product or reward. Encourage students to be actively involved in the subject. Structuring a task in this way appears to stimulate the kind of verbal feedback conducive to developing feelings of competence and self-determination in students.
3. Excessive and improper giving reward should be avoided, because student tempted by the rewards, may resort to improper methods like cheating during examination. So schools and authority concerned should put up some barriers over reward situation for avoiding such bad act of examination malpractice.
4. Even though it is important to give reward and praise students that performed well, but that reward should be vary periodically. Sometimes, after receiving material rewards, classroom learning may not be an important and a worthwhile venture.
5. It is important for teachers to avoid frequent giving of reward at every effort because the value of reward will be decreased. For instance, asking students to clap for all correct answer.

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