Research on the Influencing Factors and Mobilization Strategies of Higher Education Students' Learning Motivation from the Perspective of Teachers

Yuqiao Zheng

University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia
z5526861@ad.unsw.edu.au

Abstract:

This study explored the key factors that affect student's learning motivation and how teachers mobilize students' motivation in higher education. Based on the dilemma of students passively accepting knowledge in the traditional indoctrination education model, this study analyzed the impact of internal and external motivation factors on students' academic performance through a combination of literature review and semi-structured interviews. The results showed that students' learning motivation is affected by intrinsic interest, external incentives (such as grades, and scholarships), and teachers' teaching strategies. Teachers play an important role in mobilizing students' motivation and can enhance students' motivation through goal setting, timely feedback, and flexible curriculum design. However, teachers face challenges such as resource constraints and insufficient personalized teaching in practice. This study suggests that teachers adopt diversified strategies such as cooperative learning and competitive teaching to balance internal and external incentive mechanisms cultivate students' autonomous learning abilities and provide a reference for future educational practice.

Keywords: Learning motivation; higher education; teacher teaching strategies; intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation; cooperative learning and competitive learning

1. Introduction

Due to the dominance of the traditional indoctrination education model, learners mainly play the role of information receivers, while educators are information transmitters [1]. In this model, students can only input knowledge in a one-way manner and find it difficult to output knowledge in practice, resulting in insufficient learning motivation and may lead to a superficial understanding of knowledge and in-

efficient learning performance [1]. Learning motivation has a direct impact on students' academic achievement, personal growth, and career development, and academic achievement is an important indicator of the performance of educational institutions. Therefore, learning motivation becomes the internal driving force for students to achieve their learning goals [2]. However, teachers generally find it challenging to mobilize students' learning motivation. Based on this, this study, through literature review and semi-structured interviews, not only summarizes the theoretical basis of motivational factors in existing research, but also collects teachers' practical experience in regulating motivation in teaching practice, further explores the factors affecting and mobilizing students' learning motivation in higher education, fills the gap in existing research, and provides guidance for educational practice.

2. Theoretical basis

2.1 Self-Determination Theory

The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) proposed by Deci & Ryan divides learning motivation into intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation [3]. Intrinsic motivation refers to students' interest in learning and the personal satisfaction it brings, while extrinsic motivation refers to students' learning for external rewards such as grades or scholarships [3]. In addition, Deci & Ryan believe that the three psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness play a key role in students' well-being and personal development [3]. Autonomy refers to students' ability to freely choose strategies to deal with problems [4]. The satisfaction of this need depends on the recognition of personal needs, constructive support, and care from others. Competence refers to students' affirmation of their own learning behavior and learning ability, such as getting good grades through self-determined learning strategies. Relatedness emphasizes a sense of belonging [3]. When students are depressed, they can get support from their peers and teachers, which helps them regulate their emotions [3].

2.2 Expectancy-Value Theory

Eccles expanded on Atkinson and pointed out that this theory is about explaining the motivation of individual students in choosing learning tasks and persisting in learning behavior [5,6]. The theory believes that the motivation of individual behavior is the result of the interaction of two main factors, namely, expectancy-value. Expectancy is the confidence of students in completing learning tasks. The more confident they are, the higher the level

of expectation and the stronger their motivation. Value is the students' recognition of the significance of learning tasks, which includes the interest that the task itself brings to students (intrinsic value), the benefit of the task to students' career development (instrumental value), the importance of the task to students (added value), and the time and energy that students can bear to participate in the task [7].

2.3 Goal Setting Theory

Locke and Latham advocate that clear, specific, and challenging learning goals can effectively improve students' learning motivation [8]. The core of this theory is that learning goals can provide students with clear directions and drive students to learn, prompting them to work hard to achieve their goals [8]. Clear and specific learning goals can reduce the differences in understanding between students and teachers, and let students know what they should do, and challenging and complex goals can help stimulate students' desire to conquer and encourage them to maintain a long-term focus on achieving their goals [8]. In addition, the degree of student's commitment to their learning goals has a direct impact on the efforts they make in the process of achieving them, and the process of setting learning goals requires monitoring through feedback mechanisms, even if the feedback is specific, it helps students correctly understand their learning progress and status, and helps them make timely adjustments [8]. In this process, teachers can help students understand their learning status through regular homework evaluation, classroom performance feedback, test scores, etc. Rather than just pointing out problems, teachers also provide suggestions for improvement to promote student growth and enhance their sense of self-efficacy.

Teachers can encourage students to choose learning tasks and strategies independently and give them a certain degree of freedom to choose. For example, let students choose to study practical problems that they are interested in and that will help them in their future employment. During the research process, they can freely form teams to conduct open discussions and search for information in books and online websites provided by teachers. In this process, teachers encourage students to solve problems through their thinking, which can stimulate students' interest in learning and desire to explore and help enhance students' intrinsic motivation to learn. The relevance of tasks to students' actual needs can enhance students' sense of identity with tasks and inspire them to make greater efforts. In addition, teachers can appropriately introduce competition mechanisms into the classroom, such as competitions, which can help improve the learning motivation

of some students, especially those with strong external motivation, such as those with a strong desire to win. In the process of competition, teachers can guide students to reflect on their learning progress and results at a certain stage. Through self-evaluation, students can identify their strengths and weaknesses and actively improve, which helps to improve their self-efficacy, maintain long-term learning motivation, and enhance their tolerance for themselves, thereby increasing psychological resilience [9].

3. Research Methods

3.1 Research Design and Method Selection

This study adopted a research method combining a literature review and semi-structured interview. Through the literature review, the existing theoretical basis and influencing factors of students' learning motivation in higher education were sorted out and summarized to ensure that the research questions were fully supported in theory. Based on the results of the literature review, a semi-structured interview outline was designed to explore how teachers in higher education view and mobilize students' learning motivation from a practical perspective. The literature review helped identify the core issues of the study, including the internal and external driving forces of learning motivation, the volatility of motivation, and the role of teachers in mobilizing motivation. Semi-structured interviews further explored teachers' specific experiences and coping strategies in teaching practice and obtained realistic feedback on students' learning motivation in higher education.

3.2 Interviewees and Sample Selection

The interviewees included 15 teachers of different types from different universities, including teachers who teach professional courses, namely subject professors, who play a direct role in regulating students' motivation in course design and teaching methods. Some teachers are responsible for students' academic guidance, psychological support, and career planning, namely counselors, who play an important role in students' personal development and emotional support. And college or department administrators, who indirectly affect students' learning motivation through policy formulation and the creation of a learning environment. The sample selection adopts a purposive sampling method to ensure the representativeness of different types of teachers, covering multiple disciplines and a variety of teaching backgrounds. The selection criteria for the interviewees include teaching age, gender, subject area, and experience in direct contact with students, to ob-

tain a multi-dimensional perspective of different roles in mobilizing students' learning motivation.

3.3 Data Collection Process

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The researchers flexibly adjusted questions based on the answers of the interviewed teachers and explored their experiences and views in teaching practice. Each interview lasted about 45-60 minutes. All interviews were recorded and transcribed for subsequent content analysis and data collation. The interview outline revolved around the definition and characteristics of students' learning motivation in higher education, teachers' strategies for mobilizing learning motivation, challenges and problems of learning motivation, and the role of teachers in motivation regulation. The interviews discussed in detail how teachers viewed learning motivation, especially the changes in students' autonomy and learning motivation in higher education. The author also gained an in-depth understanding of how different types of teachers (subject professors, counselors, and administrators) stimulated students' learning motivation during teaching or guidance, including specific practices such as curriculum design, feedback mechanisms, and cooperative learning. This study collected the main challenges faced by teachers in mobilizing students' motivation in practice, including individual differences among students, external environment, and teaching resources. The author explored how teachers coped with fluctuations in learning motivation through different strategies, as well as the cognitive or practical obstacles that may be encountered in mobilizing students' learning motivation.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Result

In the study, most teachers believed that students' learning motivation mainly comes from intrinsic interest, specifically, 80% of teachers pointed out that interest is the main driving force for students' learning. In addition, 66.7% of teachers believed that although external incentives (such as grades and scholarships) can effectively mobilize students' learning behavior in the short term, the long-term effect is limited. Therefore, how to maintain long-term learning motivation has become a key issue. To meet this challenge, 86.7% of teachers emphasized that clear goal setting and timely feedback are important strategies to enhance students' learning motivation, because clear goals can make students clear the direction of their efforts, and feedback can help students understand their progress and

adjust. However, about 60% of teachers mentioned that the limitation of teaching resources and the limited time of courses hindered their ability to provide personalized teaching, which made it more complicated to mobilize students' learning motivation. Despite this, 73.3% of teachers said that introducing cooperative learning and competition mechanisms can effectively improve students' learning participation and motivation because both cooperation and competition can stimulate students' enthusiasm in different situations. Therefore, teachers play a vital role in mobilizing students' learning motivation, but they also face the challenges of insufficient resources and insufficient teaching strategies.

In response to questions about the characteristics and challenges of students' learning motivation, more than half of the interviewed teachers believed that students in higher education showed strong autonomy and independence, but some students lacked clear learning goals or self-management ability, resulting in significant fluctuations in learning motivation. This fluctuation showed a significant decline in motivation at the beginning and end of the semester, which was closely related to academic pressure, vague goals, and insufficient external motivation [10]. The interview results show that students' learning motivation in higher education is affected by many factors, including personal interests, external motivation, and teachers' teaching strategies. Teachers play a vital role in mobilizing students' learning motivation, but they face cognitive and resource challenges in practice. To better mobilize students' learning motivation, teachers need personalized support and flexible teaching methods, and educational institutions should provide stronger support and resources for this [11,12].

When discussing the role of teachers in motivation and related strategies, the respondents unanimously agreed that teachers should be responsible for the motivation of students, rather than taking students' motivation for granted. Teachers should effectively help students maintain their learning motivation by setting clear goals, providing timely feedback, and flexibly adjusting course design [13,14]. They believe that teaching strategies that focus on individual students' needs, such as case teaching and interactive learning, can significantly improve students' intrinsic motivation to learn. However, they said that in educational practice, the biggest challenge is to balance external and internal incentives. Teachers rely largely on external rewards, such as prizes and scholarships, to mobilize students' learning motivation. This situation will lead to a decline in student motivation when the rewards provided by teachers do not match or meet students' expectations, and too much external motivation damages students' internal motivation to learn [15].

4.2 Suggestion

It is worth noting that different types of teachers have significant role differences in regulating students' learning motivation. This difference mainly exists between subject teachers counselors and management teachers. Subject teachers mainly improve students' learning interest and motivation through course design and practical tasks, but some teachers still rely on traditional indoctrination teaching when mobilizing students' motivation, ignoring individual differences and personalized needs. Counselors help students maintain motivation through psychological support and career planning, while management teachers indirectly promote students' collective learning motivation through system construction and the creation of a learning environment. In teaching practice, teachers are hindered largely by resources, time, and energy. When mobilizing students' learning motivation, teachers are often limited by large class teaching, and teachers' energy is not enough to provide personalized teaching for each student to meet their learning needs. Problems such as limited class time and insufficient resources make it difficult for teachers to provide sufficient support for students. The phenomenon that cannot be ignored is that in higher education classrooms, especially lectures only the first class can be largely attended by all students. From the second class, teachers will find that there are more and more empty seats in the classroom. What is more challenging is that even if students attend class, it is difficult for teachers to ensure their learning status. In addition, some teachers have cognitive deficiencies in the flexible application of teaching strategies, which affects the effectiveness of motivation mobilization.

5. Conclusion

The study found that the learning motivation of students in higher education is complex and diverse, and is influenced by intrinsic interests, external incentives (such as grades and scholarships), and teachers' teaching strategies. Teachers play a key role in motivation mobilization and can improve student motivation through goal setting, timely feedback, and flexible course design. However, some teachers face resource constraints and cognitive challenges of insufficient personalized teaching in practice and rely heavily on external incentives. The study suggests that teachers should pay more attention to individual differences among students, adopt diversified teaching methods such as cooperative learning and competitive teaching to stimulate students' intrinsic motivation and balance internal and external incentive mechanisms to cultivate students' autonomous learning ability. The limitations

of this study are that it is mainly analyzed from the perspective of teachers, lacks direct data support for changes in student motivation, and the sample is concentrated in specific disciplines. Future research should be extended to more disciplines and teaching backgrounds to obtain more representative results. In addition, the long-term impact of different incentive methods on student motivation can be further explored in the future, especially how to use innovative tools to mobilize student motivation in technology-assisted teaching and improve teachers' cognitive and practical abilities to help them more effectively cope with related challenges.

References

[1] Guo P, Saab N, Post L S, et al. A review of project-based learning in higher education: Student outcomes and measures. International Journal of Educational Research, 2020, 102: 101586.

[2] Alyahyan E, Düştegör D. Predicting academic success in higher education: literature review and best practices. International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education, 2020, 17(1): 3.

[3] Deci E L, Ryan R M. The general causality orientations scale: Self-determination in personality. Journal of Research in Personality, 1985, 19(2): 109-134.

[4] Evans P, Bonneville-Roussy A. Self-determined motivation for practice in university music students. Psychology of Music, 2016, 44(5): 1095-1110.

[5] Atkinson J W. Motivational determinants of risk-taking behavior. Psychological Review, 1957, 64(6p1): 359.

[6] Eccles J. Expectancies, values, and academic behaviors. Achievement and Achievement Motivation/Freeman, 1983.

[7] Wigfield A, Eccles J S. Expectancy–value theory of achievement motivation. Contemporary Educational Psychology, 2000, 25(1): 68-81.

[8] Locke E A, Latham G P. A theory of goal setting & task performance. Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1990.

[9] Fletcher D, Sarkar M. Psychological resilience. European Psychologist, 2013.

[10] Bellhäuser H, Mattes B, Liborius P. Daily fluctuations in motivation. Zeitschrift für Entwicklungspsychologie und Pädagogische Psychologie, 2021.

[11] Dunne C. The place of the literature review in grounded theory research. International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 2011, 14(2): 111-124.

[12] Kallio H, Pietilä A M, Johnson M, et al. Systematic methodological review: developing a framework for a qualitative semi-structured interview guide. Journal of Advanced Nursing, 2016, 72(12): 2954-2965.

[13] Morrison G R, Ross S J, Morrison J R, et al. Designing effective instruction. John Wiley & Sons, 2019.

[14] Wlodkowski R J, Ginsberg M B. Enhancing adult motivation to learn: A comprehensive guide for teaching all adults. John Wiley & Sons, 2017.

[15] Rm R. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: Classic definitions and new directions. Contemporary Educational Psychology, 2000, 25: 54-67.