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Student motivation and academic achievements

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Zeenat Shah



Education is all about discovering and nurturing the innate talents of a child in a learning conducive environment. This process occurs when children evince their desire to learn and are practically involved in various rigorous academic and other learning endeavours. We believe that igniting a spark of energy and fervor in children to learn and succeed in academic and life pursuits is a fundamental role of schools. Otherwise, when children do not show their motivation and are reluctant to shoulder their responsibility to learn, teaching is like hammering on a cold iron.

To move or to energize students toward academic behavior and improving grades, it is imperative for teachers to know what motivates them in classroom, and how to motivate students to learn at home as well. First they need to discover students' interests and multiple intelligences through variety of learning activities and instru



The word “motivation” has been derived from Latin word “movere” which means to move.

domain of learning, and may play as a driving force to regulate his or her learning. For example, if a child discovers that he can easily grasp grammar, he would love to read grammar. Similarly, if one explores that he is strong enough in calculations, he would enjoy participating and supporting in mathematical lessons. This self-efficacy may provide a base for the child to set a goal for a particular domain of studies. It is basically teachers' responsibility to discover students' dominant learning style and area of strength for setting an academic direction for the child. Schunk, 1983 states that teaching low achieving students to set proximal goals for themselves enhances their sense of cognitive efficacy, their academic achievement, and their intrinsic interest in the subject matter. These goals encourage students to monitor and reflect on their academic efforts and performance.

In the context of Pakistan, student motivation for learning is still an enigma. Teachers blame parents and students that they are not motivated. Sometimes, they even label students uneducable and ridicule their personality for poor academic performance. Teachers often coerce students to

ctional skills. These various instructional skills and multiple learning activities may help teachers to unearth and nourish the innate potentials of a child, and develop his or her self- efficacy.

Self- efficacy has been defined as individuals' beliefs about their performance capabilities in a particular domain. Bandura, 1986; Schunk, 1985 say that self-efficacy includes students' confidence in their cognitive skills to learn or perform an academic course work. Self-efficacy in other words builds a conviction in a child that he or she can perform better in a particular

memorize lessons by heart and reproduce the same text in exams. If they fail to do so, teachers use corporal punishment as the only successful tool for student learning. This punitive behavior of teachers and inability to attract students towards learning has dwindled students' interest in school. As a result, there is high rate of drop out and low scores in board exams by both boys and girls especially in public schools in the country.

In fact most of the teachers have adopted the field without a clear goal for career, and joined it as a lost sailor who had never decided to discover this particular shore or island. When individuals join teaching without any ambition, the process of teaching and learning does not trigger excitement in students, and classroom becomes a hum-drum conventional place. So, due to lack of ambition and verve in profession, teachers perform their duties mechanically instead of doing research and critical reflection on their performance and student learning. A large majority of the teachers neither have any objectives of their lessons nor any desires of student success.

Moreover, education has never been considered a prime priority by policy makers for the nation and they show their half-hearted attitude while allocating annual budget for education and making teacher recruitments. Besides compromising with teacher quality during recruitment process, teachers have fewer opportunities of professional development. Those who undergo training programmes there is no mechanism of assessing implementation of new learning and the impact.

On the other hand, when teachers have high desires of student learning outcomes, even without any professional training, they evince impeccable honesty and curiosity to find the real territory of teaching and learning. Avid reading, critical reflection, research and academic discourse for creativity and innovations in the field become a routine practice for such teachers. Finding individual learning styles and facilitating each individual child becomes a challenge for such teachers. They understand and apply variety of learning resources and activities to discover each child's dominant intelligence of learning.

We have learned from our experiences as teachers and teacher educators, and from literature that besides positive teacher behavior, adequate content knowledge, exciting and thought provoking learning activities, indigenized curriculum, effective assessment system; co-curricular activities also have a strong impact on attracting students toward learning. These outside classroom activities provide multiple opportunities for individual students to demonstrate his/her dominant multiple intelligence. These activities could be games, music and songs, puzzles, visual arts, speeches, debates, science and social studies projects, creative writing, skits, cooking, reciting the Holy Quran and Naat and quiz competitions. When students experience such activities based on their dominant intelligence, they are developing cognitive domain and strive for improvement in difficult subjects as well.

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