

Role of Teachers in Motivating First Generation Learners of Elementary Level

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Abstract

Teachers play the pivotal role in the learning process of students and motivation is a key factor which influences learning. Thus, motivating students in right direction becomes a major responsibility for teachers. First generation learners are deprived of the knowledge support system of family and hence it is of utmost importance to define the role of teachers in motivating first generation learners of elementary level. This article aims to categorize different types of motivation in learning and define teachers' role in motivating students in the context of first generation learners.

Keywords: Role of teachers, Motivating students, First generation learners.

1. Introduction

The role of teachers has evolved a lot from ancient time. In ancient time, education was not for all. It was only available to few higher segments of the society. Interestingly, the more it has become available for all, more the teachers have turned into friend, philosopher and guide. In India, after the 'right to education act' (2009), it has been the right for every child to get education. According to census 2011, India has literacy rate of 74%. The rest 26% is deprived of formal education. According to UNESCO list of countries by literacy rate (2015), literacy rate among the age group of 15 years to 24 years is 86.1%. Literacy rate for citizen over 15 years of age is 69.3%. And it is only 41.6% for the age group of more than 65 years. It says that citizens of age group 15 years to 24 years are highest contributors in the improvement of literacy rate in India. However, as data signifies, at least 30% of the generation which are studying in elementary level of education at present (age group 5 years to 10 years) are first generation learners whose parents and grandparents are not formally educated. In this context, to ensure improvement in literacy rate and to educate future generations, it is very important to motivate first generation learners with right spirit.

Teachers have to play the key role in this process of motivation.

2. Motivation in Education

Motivation is the factor which directs a person to behave in a particular way which results in achievement of some goal. In positive connotation, motivation may be defined as contagious. If teacher herself/himself is not motivated, she/he will fail to motivate students. Teaching as a profession demands high morale and ideological firmness from teachers. For any teacher, the job of teaching first generation learners of elementary levels is a task of huge challenge. At the same time, it also becomes a source of immense satisfaction if succeeded. Generally, motivation is considered to be of two types namely, Intrinsic and Extrinsic.

2.1 Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation comes from within a person. It is the inert force which comes from curiosity and self-efficacy (Noels, 1999). Curiosity is natural to elementary learners while, self-efficacy develops through maturity. A teacher will be successful if she/he acts as a catalyst for the curiosity of elementary level first generation learners. Gradually, she/he can set a standard for students which may drive them to reach, maintain and even surpass the set level.

2.2 Extrinsic Motivation

Extrinsic motivation refers to behavior that is driven by external rewards. For students it may be praise, recognition, good grades. First generation learners lack in confidence and it makes them introvert. Generally, they don't participate in the class. If praised or encouraged in front of class, it boosts their confidence and motivate them to excel. Teachers can create an environment which allows them to participate actively.

Elementary level learners are neither motivated nor demotivated to learn. They are just like clay and a visionary and motivated sculpture can create any wonder of it. Children learn through their experiences and curiosity. Formal educational set up doesn't match with their inherent characteristic. Teachers have to play the role in creating environment and providing tools to learners so that they can learn through fun and play.

3. Motivating Strategies

Teachers' role in motivating students is undoubtedly important. However, understanding of importance is just one step. Next important step is to define some specific strategies for teachers which will help them to motivate students.

3.1 Self-Motivation of Teachers

As discussed earlier motivation is contagious. A teacher with low enthusiasm and poor job satisfaction cannot motivate her/his students by mere use of motivation strategies. Specifically, in elementary level, students are not matured enough and replicate the actions and behavior of their teachers. If they don't find their teachers to be energetic and motivated, they would lose their concentration to some other things.

3.2 Logically Viable Targets

First generation learners should not be judged with other students in the class in a same manner. A teacher should focus more on the improvement rather than only looking for highest grade or mark. Teacher needs to assess capability of each students of the class and to set target in such a logical way which gives them early opportunity for achieving success. This will inject some confidence within students. Target should be such which is achievable (Shrivastava, 2012) but at the same time it should compel students to improve further than their earlier level or standard. Failure to achieve unrealistic goals may frustrate first generation learners and may create inferiority complex and recognition of their true effort may boost them to perform at par with other classmates.

3.3 Creation of Suitable Class Room Environment

By nature, learners of elementary level are more attracted towards outward activity. As first-generation learners' mostly come from poor socio-

economic background, they help their elder family members in earning in different forms. They have lesser concentration and not habituated to be confined to a place for long. So, it is important to make classroom a pleasant, relaxed and enjoyable experience (Brophy, 2004). To avoid boredom, the teacher should move around the class to reach each and every students. To create a safe and homely environment, it is vital to appreciate students for their positive attributes which is not limited to their grade. Knowing students does not mean only memorizing their names. It demands more attention to know their backgrounds. For example, if a teacher praises the handcrafting skill of a student whose family runs on handcrafting, it pulls her/him mentally from the backward socio-economic strata and make her/him to feel proud about her/his family. Lesson should be designed with fun activities like group games, role playing, drawing etc.

3.4 Effective Utilization of Teaching Aids

Teachers should utilize teaching aids like weapons to conquer attention of the class. Variety in learning experience makes it a joyous experience. Wise use of models, audio-visuals, slide presentation, drawings induce interest among students. It makes each class a new adventure and instead of avoiding, students will wait for some new surprise in each class.

3.5 Effective Feedback

Students should be given open positive feedback in every single opportunity but should not be criticized openly in front of class. Too much competitive environment hampers the learning spirit and built anxiety among students. Elementary level first generation learners should be abstained from comparing themselves with each other. Rather each student should be judged on her/his improvement with respect to last performance.

3.6 Enhancing Scope of Students' Participation

It is extremely important to ensure students' participation in the learning process. Students always prefer to learn by doing some activities like drawing, designing, creating models, solving puzzles etc. rather than just listening to lectures. A teacher has to provide that scope so that, the class turns to be two-way communication and learning by doing takes place. When students participate in class they concentrate more and learn more (Davis, 2009). Group task, group discussion, brainstorming, debate etc. plays a major role to ensure students' participation.

3.7 Ensuring Students' Self-Motivation

Teachers should act as facilitator and students should be given opportunity to find solutions (Dailey, 2009). By this, students become more confident and learn more. It is specifically important for first generation learners as they do not have support at home, until they develop self-motivation, they will not succeed in learning.

4. Discussion

Motivating first generation learners of elementary level has always been like a challenge for any teacher. However, if succeeded, it has to be considered as a huge contribution towards nation building. Motivation leads to hard work and perseverance. Hard work and perseverance leads to improvement which in turn ensure a strong base for elementary students. If base is strong, then only today's elementary students will reach to higher studies. And this has a huge impact on the socio-economic improvement of relatively less privileged strata of our country. A teacher can play vital role in motivating first generation learners. For that, they need to deploy some strategies. These strategies will actually work passively. These strategies will ensure more concentration from students. With enhanced concentration, students will surely improve in studies compared to their prior performance. This will boost their confidence and they will become more self-dependent.

5. Conclusion

Role of teachers in motivating first generation learner of elementary level is very crucial. From socio-economic perspective, it has a larger impact as it helps relatively less privileged part of our society to come forward. Teachers may use various strategies to motivate students. However, the prime importance is to plant the seed of self-motivation in the deep of the new minds. This process starts with extrinsic motivation and focuses on improvement rather measuring grades or marks in absolute. Gradually learners develop their self-confidence and find intrinsic motivation with maturity in age.

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