

PSYCHOLOGICAL VIEWS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF INTEREST AND MOTIVATION IN TEACHING PROFESSION

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Abstract: *Educators are one of the most important stakeholders in the educational system. They play important role in ensuring the educational process can be transmitted in institutions. Becoming an educator is very challenging nowadays. They are expected to prepare themselves in every aspect to overcome any problems that may arise in any circumstances. Therefore, interest and motivation towards teaching play important roles in enabling educators to perform well throughout their profession. To address the importance of interest and motivation among educators, this paper discusses the views in psychology and the effects of interest and motivation of the educators in the teaching profession. The past research has proven that an individual's interests, beliefs, likes, and dislikes towards teaching are contributing factors to educators' excellent performance in institutions.*

Keywords: *Educator interest, motivation, psychological view, literature review*

Introduction

Educators are important individuals to the educational system. Without educators, the aspirations of countries are unlikely to be achieved. They do not merely teach the lessons to students but at the same time, they shape the personality of the students, as the future generations. In ensuring the goals of the educational system, there are many challenges that educators have to deal with. According to Al-amarat (2011), the major problems that teachers have to face are parents, students, teachers, educational administrators, supervisors, educational facilities, crime cases in schools, and the physical environment that affect the teaching and learning process. Jacobson (2016) also mentioned that educators experience burnout due to extra workloads and lack of support from the stakeholders. Their personal lives and responsibility as an educator are severely affected. Thus, educators are expected to prepare themselves in every aspect to overcome any problems that may arise in any circumstances.

Other than that, becoming educators in the era of technology is even more challenging as they are required to master Information and Communications Technology (ICT) skills that are integrated into the classroom. Ujir et al (2020) highlighted that the teaching workload in 21st century extends beyond the classroom. Educators are expected to design teaching and learning methods infusing the ICT classroom in ensuring students are attracted to engage more in the classroom. This is vital since the usage of Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

in learning has also been implemented to achieve the aspiration of producing holistic students. The Ministry of Education emphasized in Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 under the aspiration of surge 1 that graduates in higher institutions aim to produce an individual who is competent, holistic, and meets the needs of the country's employment.

Educators need to be equipped in terms of pedagogical knowledge, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) skills in conducting impactful lessons on students. Therefore, interest in teaching and motivation is needed for the engagement of educators in the teaching profession for the long term. Both aspects also help them to face the challenges composedly.

Interest and motivation towards teaching play important roles for educators to perform in educational institutions. It is believed that motivation and interest in teaching do influence educators to inspire students during the teaching and learning process. An individual's interests, beliefs, likes, and dislikes towards teaching contribute to their performance in classrooms.

Therefore, this paper aims to discuss the perspectives of interest and motivation of the educator according to psychology while, highlighting the effects of interest and motivation in the teaching profession based on past research. Other than that, future research will be carried out among the educators in secondary and tertiary levels of Malaysian institutions.

Literature Review

In this part, further definitions, categories of interest and motivation, and some related theories were reviewed. On the other hand, the reviews on literature about the importance of motivation and interest in teaching in assisting educators to perform throughout their teaching service are presented throughout the discussion. Last but not least, this literature review also focuses on the past research on the impacts of interest and motivation on educators' performance to the development of students.

Interest According to Psychology

Many psychologists have been discussing the concept of interest. In general, interest can be related to intrinsic motivation. However, it has been proposed by psychologists that interest is more specific as compared to intrinsic motivation. Interest is strongly associated with one's attitude. An attitude is one's desire, goal or wants while interest is considered as one's activated attitude that can drive oneself to materialize it. As supported by Rummel (1976) who stated, "an interest is thus a power- the force an attitude has towards manifestation in a person's behaviour".

There are two categories of interest used in educational research which are; individual interest and situational interest. "Individual interest is considered to be an individual's predisposition to attend to certain stimuli, events, and objects. "Situational interest is elicited by certain aspects of the environment", (Ainley, Hidi and Berndorff., 2002). This can be supported by Schiefele (1991) who stated that individual interest is a latent characteristic and an actualised characteristic. Schiefele, (1991) also explained that a latent characteristic is an individual's association of feelings with the object or topic. It is something that already existed within an individual. For example, the feeling of excitement when the individual is surrounded by the object or topic is considered as a latent characteristic.

At the same time, an individual's attributes are also an important aspect for individual interest to be considered as a latent characteristic. The individual's knowledge and competence towards the object can also influence the individual's interest to be considered as a latent characteristic. Apart from that, individual interest can be an actualised characteristic when, "... a person is in a state of being interested in a certain topic and wants to learn about (or become involved with) that topic for its own sake", (Schiefele, 1991). This indicates that an individual's interest is intrinsically instilled within oneself without external influences or factors. However, situational interest is generated by the environment that one is exposed to. "Experiencing situational interest can directly promote learning by increasing attention and engagement, (Harackiewicz, Smith and Priniski, 2016).

Importance of Interest in Choosing Teaching as a Profession

In discussing the term of interest, it is basically about things people enjoy doing most of the time. Interest plays an important role in ensuring educators' good performance in the institutions. This can be supported with an excerpt taken in the research conducted by Krecic, M. J. & Grmek, M. I. (2005):

"It is important that an individual chooses the right profession, especially if they choose teaching. Many don't realize how responsible and demanding the teaching profession is. I think you cannot perform it well without a real wish and interest, (Second-year pedagogy student, a future teacher)".

Interest is something that existed naturally within oneself. It cannot be forced but somehow, it can be instilled and grown gradually within oneself as when the person is being exposed to the environment. "Interest, according to traditional vocational and intrinsic motivation perspectives is developed from feelings of competence and control that arise from mastery of the environment", (Morgan,D.Isaac and Sansone, 2001). Finding from Matti, Marja, and Tiina (2018) also supports that first-year student teachers in Finland are more interested in teaching once they are exposed to the real culture by the teachers.

Apart from that, the reason(s) why the educators choose to be in the teaching line need to be considered in identifying their interest in teaching. According to Marcia's Four Statures of Identity, four identity statuses need to be considered in identifying an individual's choice. "Identity diffusion occurs when individuals have not yet experienced a crisis or made any commitments", (Santrock, 2011). Educators might choose the teaching programme without any prior knowledge of the profession. The individuals simply joined the field due to the availability of job opportunities. In the context of this study, educators may join the teaching programme because the profession is perceived as a noble job apart from normal working hours. According to Aydin Balyer and Kenan Özcan (2014) research on reasons of educational students to choose teaching as a career, they found that more than 50% of the respondents agree that they choose to be a teacher due to the working hours meanwhile, more than 45% join the programme because of the high social status.

Aside from that, "Identity foreclosure occurs when individuals have made a commitment but have not yet experienced a crisis." (Santrock , 2011). It happens most of the time when parents act in an authoritarian manner in making decisions for children. Thus, educators choose the career due to the influence given by the family members. They just want to fulfill the parents' wishes without considering their interest in teaching. Another identity status is, "identity

moratorium which occurs when individuals are in the midst of a crisis, but their commitments are either absent or only vaguely defined”, (Santrock, 2011) . In such state, the educators are most probably uncertain about their choice to be in the service. Their interest in teaching is barely present. The fourth identity status is identity achievement which occurs when individuals have undergone a crisis and have made the commitment”, (Santrock, 2011). Concerning the discussion, educators might join the teaching line because of their own choice. However, they might do so without any interest in teaching. Once they have experienced the job responsibilities, they slowly have developed their interest in the teaching profession.

Motivation according to Psychology

Motivation is often associated with an individual who is enthusiastic and passionate about performing the task given. Also, an individual who can keep maintaining their good performance and manage to complete the task given is considered as a motivated individual. The definition of motivation is frequently discussed by researchers and educational psychologists as the concept of motivation is vast to be analysed and understood. This can be supported with a statement by Gardner (2006) cited in Atef and Munir (2009), “motivation is a very complex phenomenon with many facets...Thus, it is not possible to give a simple definition”. All in all, motivation can be defined as, “...process whereby goal-directed activity is instigated and sustained”, (Schunk, Pintrich and Meece, 2008 cited in Hartnett, 2009). Another definition of motivation is, “it is the level of conscious, value and driven behaviours versus habitual and automatised behaviour; and multiple motives for the same behaviour for the same person or different occasion of for different people”, (Sanmugam, 2008). According to Ryan and Deci (2000), “to be motivated means *to be moved* to do something”. Thus, it can be said that an individual who is motivated is usually urged to achieve the goal(s) as it comes from within.

Apart from that, Meece et al. (2013), stated that motivation includes a physical or mental activity. Physical activity encompasses an individual’s effort, perseverance, and other overt actions. Meanwhile, mental activity covers cognitive actions like planning, rehearsing, monitoring, decision making, problem-solving, and assessing progress.

Two types of motivation are usually discussed in educational psychology. According to Santrock (2011), “Extrinsic motivation involves doing something to obtain something else (a means to an end)”. Santrock (2011) also added that extrinsic motivation is often affected by external rewards. For instance, an educator may dedicate himself to the service due to the monthly salary. This is supported by Ryan and Deci (2000) described, “Extrinsic motivation, as an act of doing something because it leads to a separable outcome”. Thus, extrinsic motivation can be classified as something which is done by the doer to achieve something that may not last. With extrinsic motivation on the individual does will achieve his or her goals consistently without having to develop any intrinsic motivation.

Intrinsic motivation, on the other hand, can be defined as “... the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than for some separable consequence”, (Ryan and Deci,(2000). Other than that, Santrock (2011) stated, “Intrinsic motivation involves the internal motivation to do something for its own sake (an end itself)”. For example, an educator teaches the students responsibly because he or she genuinely loves teaching. Moreover, Ryan and Stiller (1991, cited in Ryan and Deci 2000), stated that “Intrinsic motivation has emerged as important phenomena for educators- a natural wellspring of learning and achievement that can be systematically

catalysed or undermined by parent and teacher practices”. It is proven by Chuan (2013) who conducted a study on the pre-service teachers of Teacher Education Institute in Malaysia found that the pre-service teachers are genuinely motivated to become a teacher. They are even more self-motivated and self-determined to reach the goal as they enroll the programme

This type of motivation is more meaningful as the individual wants to achieve the goals authentically because of his or her wish. Besides, the result may last longer as the individual is not affected by external factors such as environment, colleagues, or rewards to perform the task. Aside from that, the level of satisfaction of the individual is higher once the goals are accomplished. It is because the individual would willingly endure the difficulties, challenges, or problems to obtain the goals once he or she would be very determined to fulfill the wish. However, Meece et al. (2013) stated that “Goals may not be well formulated and may change with experience,”. It means that it is acceptable for an individual to attain the goals due to incentives given in the first place as long as he or she has the willingness to complete the task given. Eventually, one will see the importance or benefit of the task and gradually fulfilling the task-driven by one’s need. It can be related to the context which found that the educators might not have the passion for teaching primarily. However, as the educators receive recognitions from the stakeholders, they gradually become intrinsically motivated to teach and ready to face challenges tirelessly.

Theories of Motivation

Various theories are commonly discussed on motivational aspects. The theories encompass of:

- Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs
- Behavioural Theory (Skinner)
- Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura)

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

The well-known humanistic psychologist, Abraham Maslow has introduced his concept of a hierarchy of needs in 1943, discussing the human's actions that are motivated to achieve needs. “...Abraham Maslow’s (1954, 1971) believed that certain basic needs must be met before higher needs can be satisfied”, (Santrock, 2011). An individual can't achieve higher goals when the basic needs are not contented. Besides, McLeod (2007) stated that there was a reason Maslow introduced the theory of motivation. It is because Maslow believed that an individual possesses a set of motivation systems that are unrelated to rewards or unconscious desires.

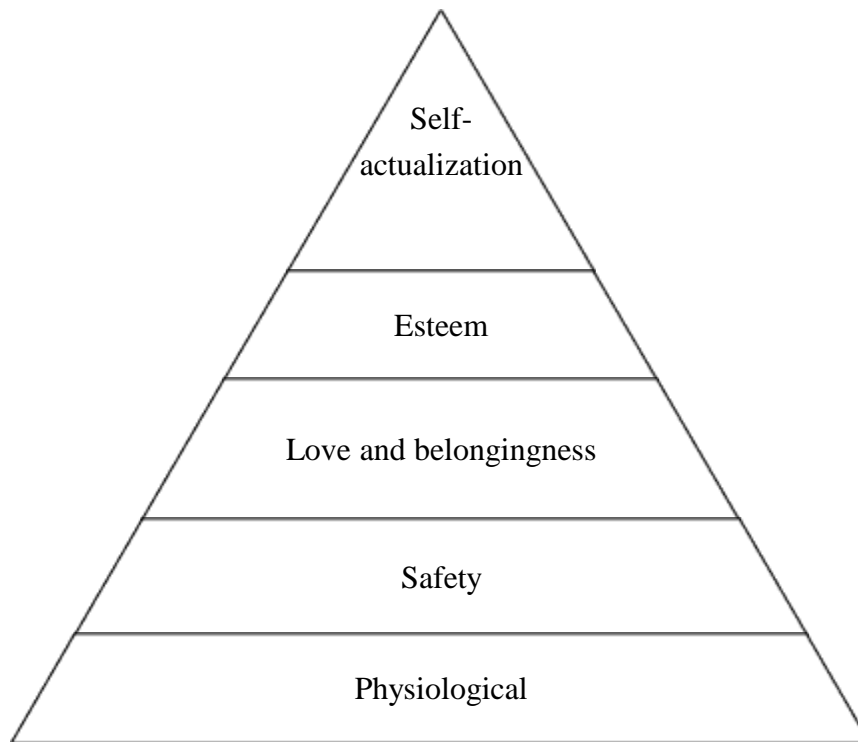


Figure 1.0 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Source: (Santrock,2011)

Aside from that, the hierarchy is displayed as a pyramid. Based on the diagram, the base of the pyramid is the lower-level needs the peak of the diagram is considered as the higher-level needs. The lowest base which is the physiological aspect comprises hunger, thirst, and sleep. "Self-actualization, the highest and most elusive of Maslow's needs, is the motivation to develop one's full potential as a human being", (Santrock, 2011). Thus, once the individual achieves the highest level of needs, it is considered that he or she has reasonably fulfilled all the lowest needs.

Furthermore, everyone is capable and has a desire to achieve the highest level of the hierarchy. However, the process of achieving the highest level is challenging. Failure is the most frequent problem the individual has to endure.

Concerning the study, research done by Guajardo (2011), stated that when the basic needs (extrinsic motivation) and environmental factors are adequately met, the teachers become more motivated to perform in schools. It emphasises the need for educators to be supplied with basic needs in institutions such as teaching aids, classroom facilities, and clear guidelines on teaching so that it will assist them to obtain the highest level of Maslow's hierarchy.

The basic needs are important to assist the educators to adapt themselves in schools or colleges during the first years of the service. They will face challenges in preparing the teaching aids since they are still inexperienced. Hence, the support system from the superiors is important to give proper facilities for the educators to carry out the lesson well in classrooms. Arshadi (2010) conducted a study on the relations of autonomy support, need satisfaction, work motivation, and job performance among the workers of an industrial company in Iran. The finding shows

that autonomy support is related to need satisfaction, that needs satisfaction is related to work motivation and job performance. The result also indicates that there is partial mediation of need satisfaction in the relationship between autonomy support and dependent variables. Hence, the superiors need to provide support and encouragement to educators to utilise their soft skills in teaching.

Behavioural Theory (Skinner)

The theory emphasizes how individuals decide appropriate behavioral actions to meet the needs and determine their own choices. According to McLeod (2007), B.F Skinner believed that observable behavior is more productive compared to internal mental events. It is because the changes of behavior can be observed when an individual becomes highly motivated. Plus, Skinner stated that the best way to understand one's behavior is to study the causes of an action and its consequences.

On the other hand, Skinner suggested reinforcement to increase the behavior to happen. Santrock (2011), who discussed Skinner's reinforcement through behavior stated that positive reinforcement is a consequence that increases the probability that behavior to occur. For instance, positive reinforcement is when a student asks the teacher a good question (behaviour). Then, the teacher answers and compliments the student for asking such a question (consequence). As for future behaviour, the student will ask more good questions to the teacher in the classroom. Meanwhile, Skinner also stated that punishment will decrease or eliminate a response from an individual. "...punishment is a consequence that decreases the probability a behaviour to occur", (Santrock, 2011). It is supported by McLeod (2007), who explained that punishment will weaken the individual's response to occur. For example, a student interrupts the teacher during the teaching and learning process (behaviour). As a consequence, the teacher verbally reprimands the student not to repeat the same mistake. The student will stop interrupting the teacher even though he or she has questions related to the subject learned in the class. Eventually, it may affect the student's interest and motivation to learn and later, his or her academic achievement.

Then, Skinner discussed the negative reinforcement which can strengthen an individual's behaviour. "... in negative reinforcement, the frequency of a response increases because it is followed by the removal of an aversive (unpleasant) stimulus". For instance, a teacher nags at a student to complete the task given. The student does not complete the task and the teacher keeps nagging. Finally, the student completes the task after gets tired of hearing the nagging. The student's response (doing the task given) removed the unpleasant stimulus (nagging).

To relate with the study on educators' motivation, the theory can be as the extrinsic motivation for them to perform in teaching service. As they are given encouragement and support by the supervisors, mentors, and teachers at the school or college to perform, they become highly motivated to teach students. This can be supported by the research conducted by Maphalala (2013, p.126), on the importance of the role of mentor teachers on trainee teachers during teaching practicum. The research found that the mentor teacher has a significant influence on the trainee teachers' development in the teaching profession.

It is because the positive behaviours shown by other teachers in the school gradually affect the trainee teachers' to be intrinsically motivated to prepare themselves as quality future teachers.

Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura)

Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory emphasized how cognitive, behavioral, personal, and environmental factors interact to determine motivation and behaviour", Crothers et al. (2008, cited in Redmond and Funk, 2014). It was supported by Santrock (2011), who stated that social, cognitive, and behaviour play important behaviour in learning. Other than that, Bandura stated when an individual learns, he or she can cognitively represent or transform the experience.

In understanding Bandura's learning model, self-efficacy is considered as one of the important cognitive factors. Self-efficacy is a belief that one can master a situation and produce positive outcomes, Santrock (2011). Self- efficacy has a significant influence over behaviour because it drives an individual to respond.

For instance, a student who has low self-efficacy might not try to study for a test because he or she believes it will not help him or her during the test.

Concerning the study, self-efficacy is important for educators to carry out the task given. Even though the novice teachers do not master the skills, there is an inner belief that can drive them to carry out, sustain and complete the task given.

Effects of Motivation and Interest in Teaching to Educators' Performance in Educational Institutions

The interest in teaching is not only important during the early years of teaching, but it is also important to ensure they are enjoying their career and perceive the teaching profession as a learning process to improve themselves from time to time. This can be supported with a statement by Parkay and Hardcastle (1991), "Teachers who love their profession seem to be committed to it and will not hesitate to benefit from any single teaching moment to make the most out of it". Bedanta (2020) also concluded the teachers' interest in teaching is significantly related to their career choice satisfaction and professional plans. Besides, Utomo (2018) in his study emphasized that teachers become educators because of their motivation to teach. If an individual has no motivation, then they will not be effective in educating or teaching. Therefore, the study highlights the need for motivation in teaching as it will give direct results to the educators, students, and institutions. Also, they become so attracted to discovering knowledge as this becomes part of the teaching-learning process. Apart from that, training also assists educators to improve themselves and master new skills along with the changes in technology. It can be supported with a study on the relationship between training and motivation with teachers' performance conducted by Jabeen, L., & Iqbal, S. (2015). The research reveals that there is a significant finding between ongoing professional training with educators' motivation. Guajardo (2011) also states that the more basic needs (extrinsic motivation) and environmental factors are adequately met, the teachers become more motivated to perform in schools. Teachers have high motivation when teachers feel great satisfaction in a career, relationship with colleagues, salary increases, work that challenges the mind, less administrative responsibility, improve the status and low workload (Jaafar & Salim, 2017). Therefore, the positive environment also plays a vital role in ensuring a continuous and well performance among the educators in respective institutions.

Other than that, the teaching profession does not merely require delivering knowledge to students in the classroom. Educators are also responsible to inspire the students to become a better person not only for themselves but also for the country. Dr Jaimin Patel (2018) has emphasised that “Teacher education and teachers are the major instruments for achieving educational goals and national development hence no nation can rise above the standard of its educational system”. “Teaching is the core profession and the key agent of change in today’s knowledge society”, (Agnes Ebi Maliki, 2013). This is not an easy job as it cannot be done in a blink of an eye. Educators have to face many challenges to producing good students as assets to the nation. Therefore, motivation and interest play important roles that educators educating and shaping the students. According to Celikoz and Cetin (2004, cited in Agnes Ebi Maliki, 2013), teachers develop a positive attitude towards their profession, whereby they will develop creative thinking, motivate their students more easily, and adapt their verbal and non-verbal messages to their students.

Conclusion

In conclusion, interest and motivation are important for educators to remain in the profession. These elements will give a great impact on students, the educational system, and even the country in the long term. Even though there are educators who do not find interest in teaching beforehand, past research has proven that the assistance of the stakeholders and positive work climate contribute to the development of interest and motivation among the educators. Bedanta (2020) discussed that one of the ways to improve educators’ interest in the teaching profession is providing opportunities such as professional training and the latest knowledge for developing and improving themselves. Also, superiors need to nurture positive support groups in each institution to motivate educators constantly in their profession. For example, offer assistance to allow educators to seek solutions especially when they are facing challenges in carrying out the job responsibilities.

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