

**THE ROLE OF MOTIVATION IN LEARNING AND CLASSROOM REWARD  
SYSTEM IN THE NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The Concept of motivation has been so vital to men's actions for optimal result and productivity. In the classroom, motivation of students by teachers and other educational stakeholders play an essential role in the teaching – learning processes. The Latin word, 'movere' means to move into action and do well. Motivation is functional in achieving success on the part of students. Students exhibit great passion, interest and enthusiasm when they are being motivated to learn. This paper sets out to examine the benefits of achievement, which among others tend to build and promote healthy competition among students. The theories of motivation are well discussed: the expectancy – value theory, self-determination theory, and achievement – goal theory. Also, factors that influence motivation are highlighted. Again, strategies teachers could use to support students' expectancies of success and value beliefs and limit perceptions of cost are stressed. Another area of touch is the classroom Reward system and motivation learning engagement. These include types of rewards for students in the classroom. Finally, this paper therefore makes recommendations to teachers, the government and other educational actors in ensuring motivated classroom and teaching-learning environment.*

**KEYWORDS:** Motivation, Classroom, Learning Environment, Educational Stakeholders,  
Reward System

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**INTRODUCTION**

In the classroom setting, there are many factors that enhance the motivation of students towards learning and academic achievement. Obviously, teachers aid in the process of students' accomplishing outcomes by communicating clear expectations and values (Williams & Williams, 2011) and parents reinforce the message at home. There is an assertion that classroom motivation is made manifest as a function of five components namely: student, teacher, content, method/process and environment any of which can hinder or enable students' motivation. Its is also on record that personal factors attributing to motivation include a student's aptitude, self – efficacy, autonomy through self – regulatory process and other abilities (Caprara et al. 2008; Zimmerman, 2008). Individual's view about his or her competence with different contents are considerable predictors of potential academic achievement when accounting for intelligence and IQ (Ackerman, Chamorro Premusic, & Furnham. 2011)

Nevertheless, the question remains, what can educators do to engage at risk students or students who lack motivation to persist in educational endeavours? A number of studies have shown that an individual's learning techniques and the conditions under which academic tasks are done increase compliance with these tasks and raise academic progress (Cerasoli, Nicklin, & Ford, 2014; Hardre & Sullivan, 2008). Also, motivation within the context of a student's environment is affected by the influence of teachers, parents, siblings, classmates, friends, and the existence of other activities that compete for the attention and time of the student (Reyes, Brackett, Rivers, White, & Salovey, 2012).

## **CONCEPT OF MOTIVATION**

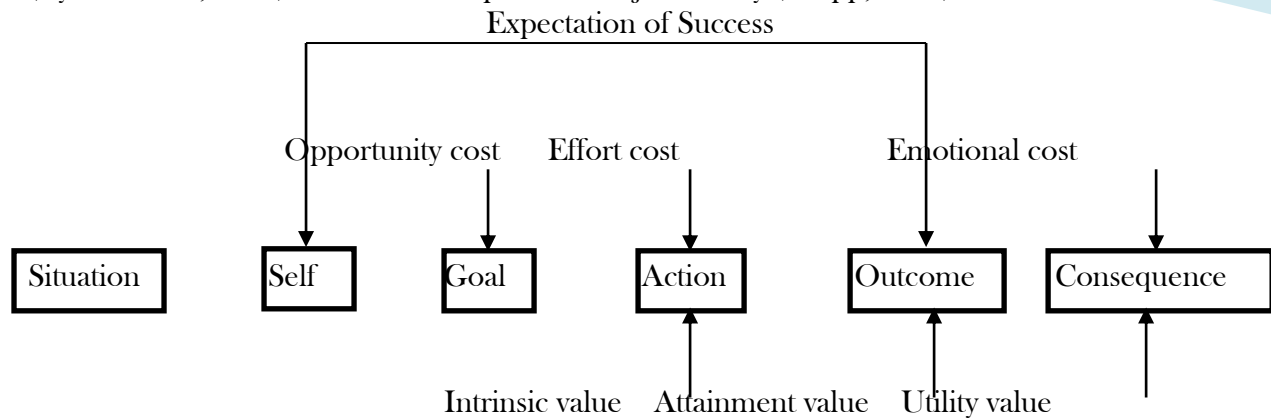
The term motivation is derived from the Latin word 'movere', meaning 'to move'. It can be referred to as a combination of motive and action. An action word that influences every aspect of our daily lives. It is fundamental in the level of success an individual attains. Motivation is a personal and internal feeling. This feeling arises from needs and wants. It is a continuous process because it is one of our needs.

## **THEORIES OF MOTIVATION**

- **Expectancy – Value Theory**

Expectancy – value theory depicts motivation as the result of the feasibility and desirability of an anticipated action (Achtziger & Goil Witzer 2018; Schnettler, et al, 2020). The expectancy is usually triggered by incentives of the situation and expresses the subjective probability of the feasibility of the correct action. The value indicates desirability of an action which is determined by the incentives of the situation and the anticipated consequences of the actions. In Arkinson's (1957) achievement motivation theory, expectancy and value were assumed to be inversely related. The greater the desirability, the more difficult the feasibility of the action and vice versa. Thus, Knowing the subjective probability of success was regarded as sufficient to determine the incentive of task. However, it turned out that the assumption of a negative correlation between expectancy and value was not tenable (Wigfield & Eccles;1992). In a more modern view, expectancy and value beliefs are assumed to jointly predict achievement-related choices and performance. (Trautwein et al., 2012). Situation expectancy – value theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020) is a modern theoretical framework for explaining a predicting achievement – related choices and behaviour. Expectancy of success and subjective task values are regarded as proximal explanatory factors determined by a person's goals and self – schemas. These in turn, are shaped by the individual's perception and interpretation of their developmental history and sociocultural background. The expectancy component in the situated model (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020) is called expectation of success. It represents individual's belief about how well they will do on an upcoming task, targeting the anticipated outcome of an action. The expectancy component of Eccles' motivation theory shows expectancy component some similarities to self-concept of ability and self - efficacy (Harter, 2015; Schunk & Dibenedetto, 2016). However, the expectation of success does not focus on the present ability but future, and it targets the perceived chances of success rather than the ability perceived probability of performing an action which may lead to success (Muenks et al., 2018). The value component of the situated model is divided into three types of value beliefs and three types of costs that contribute to approaching or avoiding certain tasks (Eccles & Wigfield 2020). The three value beliefs are attainment value, intrinsic value and utility value. The three types of costs are named opportunity costs, effort cost and emotional costs (Flake et al, 2015; Jiang et al 2018). Attainment value represents the importance of doing well on a task. This belief is strongly associated with the person's self as aspect of one's identity and

performing an important task. Intrinsic value is the enjoyment a person gets from doing a task. Intrinsic value is considered a counterpart to intrinsic motivation in self - determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2009) and interest in person - object theory (Krapp, 1999).



Integrating situation expectancy - value theory into the basic motivational model

- **Self - Determination Theory**

Self-determination theory by Deci and Ryan, 2000 is a macro theory for understanding human motivation, personality and well - being. The theory has its roots in early explorations of the concept of intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2019). Self - determination is regarded as the basis for explaining intrinsically motivated behaviour where the action is experienced as autonomous and does not rely on controls and reinforcers. Self - determination theory provides a counter - weight to expectancy - value theory and social cognitive theory, where the external incentives such as expected or real rewards to motivate behaviour are still visible.

The overarching framework of self - determination theory encompasses six mini theories: basic psychological needs theory, cognitive evaluation theory, organismic integration theory, causality orientations theory, goal contents theory, and relationship motivation theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Each mini-theory explains specific motivational phenomena that have been tested empirically. Basic Psychological needs theory argues that humans are intrinsically motivated and experience well - being when their three innate basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness are satisfied (Conesa et al., 2022). Autonomy refers to a sense of ownership and the need for behaviour to emanate from the self. Competence concerns a person's need to succeed, grow, and feel effective in his goal pursuits. Finally, relatedness refers to establishing close emotional connections to others and a sense of belonging to significant others such as parents, teachers, or peers.

- **Achievement Goal Theory**

Anyone working as a teacher may have noticed that some students are very interested in learning something new, while others are motivated by obtaining good grades and avoiding poor ones (Eison, 1981). This fundamental distinction between individuals concentrating on the process of learning and individuals focusing on the external reasons for learning, can also be found in achievement goal theory. The theoretical framework has evolved steadily over four decades and is nowadays a key approach in motivation research (Jordan & Kaplan, 2020). Achievement goal can be characterised by the intention to engage in competence - related behaviour. In an attempt to further develop achievement motivation theory, some researchers have called attention to two types of achievement behaviors: task- oriented, learners pursue the

goal of developing high abilities. Ego - oriented, learners care deeply about proving high abilities to themselves or others and demonstrating low abilities.

### **FACTORS THAT AFFECT MOTIVATION IN LEARNING**

In order to enhance students' motivation to learn, teachers could use a set of strategies that are applicable at all school levels and could be adapted to suit all curricula areas. Multiple motivation factors work together to influence how students learn and achieve.

Motivation can be enhanced by instruction that supports learning - related expectancies of success and strengthens perceptions that learning is useful. It also helps to keep in check students' beliefs that learning involves unreasonable effort, emotional, or opportunity cost. Motivation is complex and involves multiple factors. These factors work together to influence how students think, feel, and behave in classrooms and beyond (Higgins, 2012). That is, the effects of each motivation factor on students learning and attainment depends on the strength (or lack of strength) of other key motivation factors (Hattie et al., 2020).

Therefore, to create learning environments where students are invested in their learning and acquire important skills, teachers need to a) understand the key consequences of motivation factors working together and b) use this new understanding to design instruction in ways that support students' motivation to learn.

- Strong expectancies of success together with perceptions of usefulness and manageable cost support student learning.

Students tend to learn effectively when they think they can perform successfully in learning tasks (that is, have high expectations of success), believe that learning helps them achieve their goals, and they perceive that studying is not overly taxing in terms of the effort required, the emotional cost involved, or the opportunities that they forgo when they undertake learning tasks. These three key motivation factors (that is, expectancies, value, and cost) work together to influence what students do in learning settings (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020)

Hodis & Hodis (2020) in [nzceri.org.nz](http://nzceri.org.nz) reveals how Students' expectancies of success, utility value and cost beliefs work together. This, importantly explains the fact that no motivation factor operates in isolation from other important motivation factors.

### **STRATEGIES TEACHERS COULD USE TO SUPPORT STUDENTS EXPECTANCIES OF SUCCESS AND VALUE BELIEF AND LIMIT PERCEPTIONS OF COST.**

These strategies include:

1. Provide clear and detailed explanations of what each learning task/assignment is.
2. Break up long or complex tasks into smaller chunks that can be attempted in different learning sessions
3. Make explicit what "doing well" or "success" at a given task looks like. This strategy will reduce students' perception of emotional cost (e.g anxiety) and increase their confidence that they could do the task.
4. Communicate clear expectations about task work and performance. This strategy dovetails with the previous one to support expectancies of success. In addition, it helps students develop realistic perceptions of effort cost.
5. Ensure that all foundational skills and sub skills that are required for completing a complex task are in place.

6. Be ready to provide scaffolding that helps students navigate difficult or juncture points successfully.
7. Communicate consistently to students that you are available to offer assistance if they encounter difficulties. They can be given clarifications or assistance if not overcome.
8. Communicate your enthusiasm for the outcomes facilitated by task engagement (e.g deeper understanding; ability to use new knowledge, engagement outside school to help one's family, friends or community).
9. As prior success is a key determinant of strong expectancies of future success, set up tasks in ways that make it easy for students to begin working on them. Make the first task accessible so that all or most students can tackle them without difficulties.
10. Encourage Students to acknowledge their own successes at task, create a class environment in which students draw confidence from instances in which they did well to develop an "I can do" mindset about task engagement and performance.
11. Provide feedback on tasks in ways that make it easy for students to perceive missed steps, errors, or lack of progress as informative.
12. To support students' motivation to learn and develop skills, promote an exploration mindset for your classes. Focus on the malleable nature of skills and abilities and help students map how much they have learnt about a specific topic or issue.
13. Previous or prior knowledge is a catalyst for new learning. Introduce new topics in ways that help students link new information to what they already know.
14. When you introduce major opportunities (and time) to reflect upon with, these tasks could be seen as their learning opportunities. Learning associated with their families, and, beneficial to them, and their communities.
15. Whenever possible, provide students with meaning to fuel choices about their tasks and assignments. These could include the selection of intermediate steps and tasks, the delivery of the outcome of their learning (e.g, orally, in written form, as a performance, as a movie etc.) as well as working the tasks in groups or individually.
16. Manage carefully the level of competitiveness in the class, as well as between working groups.
17. Distractions are important sources of elevated perceptions of cost. [nzcer.org.nz).

### **CLASSROOM REWARD SYSTEM AND MOTIVATED LEARNING ENGAGEMENT**

A classroom reward system is one approach to classroom behaviour management. Students are best motivated to do their best in class when exposed to classroom rewards. It is a way of acknowledging students' achievement and positive behaviour in class. Using this approach, teachers become more engaged in their lesson, recognise students strengths, foster a love of learning, and create a classroom culture based on respect and acceptance.

### **TYPES OF REWARDS FOR STUDENTS IN CLASSROOM**

According to varthana.com, there are five kinds of rewards to encourage and acknowledge students positive behaviour in the classroom. These are:

- Verbal praise: Positive compliments and praise contribute to students' confidence and motivation, encourage students' behaviour and success in the classroom.
- Certificates and trophies: These tangible rewards function as permanent symbols of achievement and recognition. They provide a sense of pride and can be of hard work.
- Academic incentives: These can be additional opportunities for students to learn and succeed academically, they can be extra opportunities or special projects as rewards that can increase students' academic engagement and performance.
- Gifts and Celebrations: Stickers, Snacks, a simple party or books can all be effective classroom rewards.

- Privileges: Allowing extra time for activities, such as selecting class projects or enjoying free time, rewards students with a sense of control and autonomy. These can act as incentives to perform well in order to earn these special privileges.

### **IMPORTANCE OF CLASSROOM REWARD SYSTEM**

- Improved academic outcomes
- Enhanced teacher focus
- Daily homework completion
- Motivation for effort and achievement
- Boosted confidence and self-esteem
- Reinforcement of positive behaviour
- Increased engagement
- Immediate feed back

### **CONCLUSION**

Motivation is a vital ingredient in purposeful learning and teaching. It is an ingredient in fostering purposeful, effective and worthwhile classroom activities. Students' motivation is pivotal for learning and achievement in school. Teachers play essential role in creating learning environments that foster Students' motivation to learn. To help teachers achieve this goal, strategies must be well spelt out to support students expectancies of success and value. Students need to be sufficiently motivated by praise, academic incentives, privileges, gifts and celebrations and the like. The teacher who is motivational need to engage his students in tasks that are learner-centred. He should communicate effectively those learning tasks to the students. The teacher has to make simple the students' learning programmes, skills, activities and tasks. This is because students are encouraged often to proceed learning from the simpler to the most difficult task; and from the known to the unknown and not otherwise.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The classroom environment should be arranged in a way that promotes rewarding learning and positive outcomes.
- The teacher should initiate a system of reward that encourages healthy learning competitions among learners.
- The government should provide or make available teaching aids which include text books, projectors, computers, and other learning materials which may be meant to simplify the tasks of both the teachers and students in the classroom.
- Curriculum designers should draw up learning contents that allow for the sense of participation and contribution on the part of the student.
- A highly motivational teacher should equally be rewarded by the school system for his ingenuity, discretion and sense of purpose in the delivery of his lessons.

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