

Three Levels of Motivation in Instruction: Building Interpersonal Relations with Learners

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As teachers and instructors, what role do you think you should play in the students' lives? Take a minute to think about it, did you have a professor that you feel what you learned from him and his class shaped your life? On the other hand, was there a professor that you never went back to him again? The teachers' goal should not simply be to teach the items on the curriculum, but also to be an example as a person and a respectable scholar for the students. What kind of scholar you are and what you offer in your instruction are important motivation for the students, and will impact the students' lives tremendously. The ties between teachers and students are loaded with emotions and responsibilities.

Based on the emotions and responsibilities, this paper proposes a model that identifies three levels of motivation (3LOM) in instruction. It states that motivation can be addressed at three different levels: inclusion, entertainment and edification. It looks at motivation from an angle of social interaction. The focus of the model is to describe teacher's role as an active party in the process of teacher-student interaction. The assumption is that ideal instructional interaction in class, as with any other types of social interaction, should attend to, and indeed give priority to the students' certain needs and desires. Otherwise, it will turn into a bad experience that the participant does not want to repeat. These needs and desires are in a hierarchical order and labeled "inclusion, entertainment, and edification."

The following are the values underlying this model:

- The purpose of instruction should serve the positive needs of the society and promote the development of the society.
- The instructor should first of all have sufficient expertise and good qualities or standards that are acclaimed by the majority of the society.
- The process of instruction and learning is one type of social interaction that should be carried out accordingly.
- The instructor should seek to understand the needs of each student.
- The instructor's first priority is to teach the things as listed in the curriculum.
- Secondly, if s/he can, the instructor should explore the learner's potential and provide guidance for the learner to achieve his potential in the future.
- Learners have their own free agency. The instructor is not to force changes on them but cater to their individual potential and ambition.

An important stimulus of the model is Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The way that the three levels are organized as a hierarchy is exactly following Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The highest level, edification, is the educational equivalent of Maslow's ideas of self-actualization and self-transcendence. Other reference to literature in instructional design principles, motivation and good practice in classroom have also contributed to the development of the three levels in this model of motivation.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

The 3LOM model developed its framework from Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, which stated that "human beings are motivated by unsatisfied needs." Those needs are in a hierarchal order with "certain lower needs need to be satisfied before higher needs can be satisfied."

In the hierarchy, Maslow included some general types of needs (physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization). He argued that these "needs must be satisfied before a person can act unselfishly." He called these needs "deficiency needs. As long as these cravings are satisfied, human beings will move towards growth, toward self-actualization. Satisfying needs is healthy; blocking gratification makes us sick or evil." (Maslow, 1943) "Needs are prepotent. A prepotent need is one that has the greatest influence over our actions. Everyone has a prepotent need, but that need will vary among individuals." (Maslow, 1943) An actress may have a need to feel that her change of image is liked by the audience. A prisoner will need to satisfy his cravings for freedom and will not

worry about his look. In a school setting, a professor may need students' respect and attendance in class. A student may feel that he needs to keep up with the rest of the class. Maslow's theory provided an effective tool that helps us understand ourselves as human beings.

Based on Maslow's theory, we should view instructional interaction as a social process in which the learners are motivated by certain needs to be active.

Basic Principles of Instructional Design

The three basic principles in instructional design are that: instruction should be appealing, effective and efficient. (Smith & Ragan, 1999) All the three can be considered as constructs of motivation. Lacking of any one of the three is likely to result in discouraging students' interest in the instruction. The 3LOM model aims to help achieve these goals in instruction.

Related Literature on Classroom Motivation

Literature on methods of motivation and classroom practices were referenced to make the 3LOM model more applicable. Two of the writings are especially enlightening.

C. J. Bonk and V. P. Denn's (2001) article *We'll Leave the Light On For You: Keeping Learner Motivated in Online Courses* provided some very detailed tips that are implementation-oriented. Bonk and Denn summarized ten points that are motivating in online classroom: tone/climate, feedback, engagement, meaningfulness, choice, variety, curiosity, tension, peer interaction, and goal driven.

The 3LOM model is in agreement with the above article. All the ten points map directly onto one or more of the three dimensions of 3LOM model. For example, Tone/climate and peer interaction are absolutely important in inclusion. Engagement, variety and curiosity are all good methods that will build up the dimension of entertainment. Feedback and goal driven are methods for edification.

Chickering and Gamson (1987) in their *Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education* listed the following ideas: 1. Encourages contacts between students and faculty. 2. Develops reciprocity and cooperation among students. 3. Uses active learning techniques. 4. Gives prompt feedback. 5. Emphasizes time on task. 6. Communicates high expectations. 7. Respects diverse talents and ways of learning. These seven principles also can find their counterpart in the 3LOM model. The first principle, "encourage contacts between students and faculty refers to inclusion" and the second one, "develops reciprocity and cooperation among students" refers to inclusion. The third one, "using active learning techniques" is more about entertainment. The fourth, sixth and seventh principle all fall into the dimension of edification.

Although the 3LOM model has many things in common with the other two articles, there are some principle differences too. First of all, as stated at the beginning, the 3LOM model looks at the issue of motivation from a social psychological point of view. It emphasizes that motivation can be gained at three different dimensions instead of many isolated points.

Secondly, 3LOM model implies that the teacher is an active party that is aware of the students' needs in the teacher-student interaction process. The teachers take the initiative to satisfy those needs and make the teacher-student interaction alive.

Level of Inclusion

Inclusion is a prerequisite for social interactions. We need to be included in a group to carry out communications or interactions. One implication of inclusion is unconditional acceptance. The student should feel that he is welcome simply because he is a student in the class. The teacher should be careful not to be judgmental with the students when they first meet. Unconditional acceptance is the door opener for the new comer. To include people in, we give them signals by responding to their presence and paying them attention, respect or care. This is to satisfy the learner's social or emotional needs. As Edgar Dale wrote in his book *Audio-Visual Methods in Teaching* (1946), "Good teaching involves the feelings as well as the intellect." In the class, if a student felt ignored or rejected in his attempt to start a conversation, or came across some unfriendly comments, he would not feel the atmosphere was comfortable for him to be there. An instructor should make sure to include all students in the learning process.

Virtual inclusion can be achieved through two types of relations built in the instruction – learning process: first, a positive personal relationship between the instructor and individual learner; second, spirit de corpora in the classroom. The earlier these relations are formed, the better they will help the instruction and learning process. Edgar Dale wrote some similar ideas about this years ago. He used the word "mood of mutuality." As he said, "Learning blossoms in a mood of mutuality. Such a mood must permeate the classroom, the shop, the home, or wherever else teaching takes place, if it is to be good teaching." (1946)

Building a positive personal relationship between the teacher and the learner A positive personal relationship between the instructor and the learner should be a two-way relationship that includes two facets: the instructor genuinely cares about the learner and the learner trusts and looks to the instructor for guidance if he feels he needs any. For the instructor to form a personal positive relationship with the individual learner, the instructor should prepare to build rapport with the individual learner from the very beginning. The instructor should target to gain the learner's trust as soon as the learner appears in his world, in class as well as after class. It's important that this friendly relation be built in the first few contacts because first impression is a very powerful factor that shapes our perceptions of other people. However, this doesn't mean that the teacher totally lost the chance if s/he did not become friends with the students in the first place. But an early friendship is more preferable.

The following methods can be used:

1. Know the students personally

This includes remembering students' names and addressing their names clearly, chatting with the students to find out some relevant background information, such as their interests and career goals.

2. Show appreciation in students' abilities

Teachers should know clearly how the students perform in the class. It is important for the teachers to spot one or two things that a student is good at and show sincere and generous appreciation. Teachers should also be understanding. If a student is not doing well, the teacher should find out the reasons and help with solutions.

3. Be available when students need help.

Besides the teaching-learning interactions in class, teachers should also maintain good communications with the students after class, such as keeping regular office hours or replying emails carefully and timely if students contact him. The point here is the students should get the idea that the teacher is approachable and ready to help when needed.

Maintaining spirit de corpora in the classroom For a student, unpleasant feelings with one or two peer students in the class are likely to ruin the whole learning experience. Teachers should be careful not to encourage any cleavage between students consciously or unconsciously. Often times, top students received much of the teacher's favor while problematic students obtained much of the teachers attention either in a positive or negative way. It is easy for students to feel that they have different status in the class. Negative feelings such as jealousy or contempt toward each other among students are not likely to help with students' growth and should be prevented.

1. Teachers should treat every student equally.
2. Peer students should be encouraged to respect and help each other before they compete. Students should also be encouraged to remember each other's names.
3. Learning groups can be formed and shuffled regularly.
4. Fair group work norms should be formed in the class.

Level of Entertainment The idea of entertainment means making the learning process fun and relaxing instead of boring and frustrating. The point is to remove the fatigue or stress resulted from the intense intellectual process in the learners' brain and help the learners to concentrate on the learning easily and as long as possible.

There are three aspects to consider when designing entertaining instruction: choosing entertaining learning materials if possible, using entertaining delivery methods and the instructor personally developing entertaining teaching style. These three methods are complementary to each other. The instructors should use them in proper situations.

1. *Choosing entertaining learning materials*

If the instructor has the authority to decide what materials to use, he can choose learning materials that are more appealing to the learners, such as using books written in a language that is more colloquial rather than deep and complicated professional prose.

2. *Using entertaining delivery methods.*

Most of the time, instructors do not have much freedom to choose easy learning materials. If this is the case, the instructors can work on making the delivery methods entertaining.

Most popular examples of entertaining delivery methods are the use of multi-media such as video, audio, graphics, games and many other creative ways to make the instruction a fun thing. For example, many professors bring refreshment to their classroom or arrange students to bring food once in a while. Others would start the class by playing a little piece of lively music. These different strategies all serve one purpose, which is building a relaxing or refreshing atmosphere in the classroom.

3. *Teachers developing entertaining personal teaching style*

A teacher's teaching style is much related to his or her personality. Some people have the talent to be humorous, witty or funny when they talk, such as some talk show hosts or hostesses and comedians. Others might be born with an easy going and happy temperament that lighten up things. These are all places that a teacher can explore to make his instruction entertaining. Telling jokes is a method that can help a teacher to be entertaining. However, the jokes should be relevant to the instruction, clean in both the language and ideas. In another word, it should be good humor. The instructor should have some skills in telling jokes too. Otherwise, the jokes will not work. If used wisely, the jokes can greatly help the learners understand and remember the learning material.

It is hard to sum up all the methods of entertaining instruction in class. Different people have different strategies. Depending on the specific circumstances, the instructor should adopt the appropriate method to cheer up the learners.

Level of Edification

Literally, edification means intellectual, moral, or spiritual improvement. What this paper is trying to say is that in the instructional process, a learner experiences revolutionary upgrade in his understanding in one or all of the above domains, which results in changes in his way of thinking and/or behaviors in a better way.

Intellectual edification deals with our understanding of the objective world. In the process, we move closer and closer towards the truth. Examples are that we feel good when we are exposed to the rules about how things exist and evolve in the world. For example, people are no more afraid of eclipse when they understand what causes it.

Edification in the spiritual and moral domains deals more with our life views. It helps to answer questions such as "What is the meaning of life?" and "What is a good way to lead this life?"

The strategy recommended for edification is self-actualization, and self-transcendence for spiritual and moral development. Self-actualization means to "become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming." (Maslow, 1943) Self-actualization was used by Maslow in his hierarchy of needs. Edification in instruction should be aligned with each student's self-actualization to be most motivating. However, helping the learners to achieve self-actualization is not exactly what edification means. The instructor should first make sure that the learners' self-actualization will benefit but not harm the world. Otherwise it is not edification. The reason is simple. We do not want to help somebody to become another Adolph Hitler. Also, the use of the ideas of self-actualization and self-transcendence in this paper only refers to people's attitudes about living a meaningful life. Practices such as using drugs to help human beings' perception go beyond normal to realize self-transcendence are not the concern of this paper.

Edification in the intellectual domain Intellectual edification means the increase of knowledge about the objective world, which includes us as human beings, nature, and the relations and rules of the objects in the universe. At a basic level, the learners should be exposed as much as possible to general knowledge and skills, which is to allow them to function well and handle the problems in daily life. At a second level, they should acquire some awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses. Based on this, they will be able to focus on their strengths and fully develop their potential. The result of the basic level is that students should have the confidence to say that "I am as good as anybody else." Besides, some students should be able to say "I am really an expert in this area." As a matter of fact, due to one reason or another - either biological or social factors - it is not reasonable to expect every student to reach this level. But the teacher should be alert to detect those students who are exceptional in one way or another and help bring out the best of those students.

a. Acquiring general knowledge and skills.

General knowledge and skills have been receiving much attention in education. It is not new idea. One example is K-12 education. What the students are expected to learn through K-12 years are mostly focused on general knowledge and skills. In almost every country and educational system exists a curriculum that defines the goals and objectives of the K-12 education. The curriculum specifies what kind of skills and knowledge every student is expected to obtain in his or her school years. Those skills and knowledge focus on different subjects: Language, Mathematics, Arts, History, Physics, Chemistry, Geography, Science and so on. To better understand all the different general knowledge and skills, let's borrow Gardner's (1993a) theory of multiple intelligences, which describes,

...all human beings represent the culmination of an evolutionary process that has yielded at least eight relatively discrete information-processing mechanisms. All of us possess linguistic intelligence; logical-mathematical intelligence; musical intelligence; spatial intelligence; bodily-kinesthetic intelligence; naturalist intelligence; interpersonal intelligence; and intrapersonal intelligence.

Based on multiple intelligences, some general knowledge and skills students should have are: the capacity to observe and gather useful information, the capacity to effectively communicate with other people orally and in written form, the capacity to maintain good relationship with people around, the capacity to understand the emotional world of oneself and other people, the capacity to make sound judgments on things happened and react properly, the capacity to understand nature and the universe, and the capacity to appreciate different types of arts.

b. Help students becoming expert in an area (or areas) of interest.

Teachers should pay enough attention to students so to detect students' strengths or potential. After communicating with the students about their interests or ambition, teachers should provide guidance in determining an area of interest and further development. In other words, teachers should help students to be aware of their strengths and potential. Students should be encouraged to become expert in one or more areas of interest or whatever their potential is.

Because of limited opportunities of contact or large number of students to work with, it might not be easy for a teacher to know students well enough to determine their potential area. Some other ways can be used to help the teachers. First of all, teachers should get involved with students as much as possible; second, the students should be encouraged to exhibit their strengths whenever there is a chance; third, teachers should work closely with students' parents or families to learn more about the students.

2. *Edification in moral and spiritual domains*

There are two levels in moral and spiritual edification: self-actualization and self-transcendence.

a. Self-actualization

As stated earlier, Maslow (1943) defines that "the need for self-actualization is the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming." One key question here is "How can one know what he is capable of becoming?" There are two possible ways an individual finds out about his potential: personal awareness and external influence. Personal awareness is mostly developed as individuals accumulated life experiences. In the process, they gradually come to realize his or her potential and become determined to fully develop it. External influence is from individual's community or society, such as a certain way of living valued or some social standards in the culture. As the individual grow up in the culture, he or she is expected to achieve it as an ideal.

Those who came to know their potential through personal awareness are most likely "People who have everything can maximize their potential. They can seek knowledge, peace, esthetic experiences, self-fulfillment, oneness with God, etc. It is usually middle-class to upper-class students who take up environmental causes, join the Peace Corps, go off to a monastery, etc." (Maslow, 1943) However, the appreciation and support from their family, friends or mentors might not be indispensable but important.

A typical example of living up to the standards of the society to carry out self-actualization is found in Confucianism, a traditional Chinese philosophy, which is also understood as scholar's philosophy in China.

In the past, all scholars (man only) in China were taught to go through a same life ladder. First, a man should do self-cultivation, which means that he should seek education and cultivate good qualities. Second, a man should raise a good family and maintain a harmonious household. This implies that men should be good husbands and fathers. Third, a man should use his wisdom and skills to serve and govern his country, like obtaining a prominent position in the emperor's court. Fourth, a man should aim to make world peace.

Nowadays, people have much freedom to choose the things they like. Edification can happen in many different ways. Cultural background such as life style and values is an important factor that influences self-actualization.

b. Self-transcendence

Self-transcendence means to "connect to something beyond the ego or to help others find self-fulfillment and realize their potential." (Maslow, 1943)

Examples of this are mostly found in different religions. In Christianity, Jesus Christ is regarded as the savior of the world. He sacrificed his own life for the world. A recent example would be Mother Teresa, who lived and worked to promote the happiness of a people in a strange land. In some western churches, people are encouraged to become like God and Jesus Christ. In Buddhism, it is believed that everybody can become a Buddha, who is regarded as saint and almighty because he is completely unconnected with, therefore unrestrained by the secular world.

The above are some areas that an instructor might look to edify his learners morally or spiritually. A key idea with the results of edification should be changes in a learner's way of thinking, behavior or both. Otherwise, edification does not happen on the learners' side.

3. *Methods to make edifying instruction*

- a. Choose meaningful, relevant and applicable learning content.

Learning materials should be related to learners' careers, goals or something that is part of the students themselves or their life.

- b. Encourage self-reflection

Encourage students to check their own progress. The students should learn to learn from their own experiences and be able to adjust their goals.

- c. Provide intervention when necessary

Teachers should be aware of students' development and be prepared to give further guidance when needed.

Inclusion, entertainment, and edification are the three things a teacher can look at to make his instruction motivating. They are hierarchical in the way that they motivate the learners at different levels based on the needs and desires as expected in the psychological process of human interaction. The levels of inclusion and entertainment are important factors to foster learning, however, these two are not the final goal of instruction. They help to achieve the third level of edification. Without reaching the level of edification, inclusion and entertainment do not have much significance in an instruction-learning interaction. Also, there are no absolute rules as to when and how to implement them in the instruction. But it is critical that teachers should use them flexibly at the appropriate time.

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