

## **Motivational Models – Research Overview**

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There are many good theories about motivation and your college textbooks probably have discussed them in detail. They appear to be arranged into three basic categories, expectancy-value model, goal orientation, and attribution theory.

### **Expectancy-value Model**

The expectancy-value model has two key motivational beliefs. One is the task value. What satisfaction will the attainment of that task give the learner? Is it an intrinsic or utilitarian value and what is the cost (time, effort) of that attainment? And what is the expectancy value, the extent to which the child believes he/she will do well. These beliefs directly influence choice, persistence, extent of effort, and actual performance.

A student may be competent in an area, but choose not to engage in it because it is not of sufficient value to the student. This model identifies the value of the task and the expectancy of success as key motivational processes. Some direct determinations of these processes are the student's memories of past successes and failures, his believe in himself to control the situation, and his ultimate goals. Contributing to these factors are the student's social world, his interpretation of that world, prior achievement-related experiences, positive and negative, and aptitude.

### **Goal Orientation**

The students must have specific reasons or goals for engaging in academic tasks. Just getting through the algebra to complete a requirement for the larger goal of graduation may permit the student to finish the course with a good grade, but if learning the theories for application in later life is not a goal, then the learning will be quickly forgotten.

A student's personal goal orientations are important because they influence students' cognitive strategies, task selection, and perceptions of competence. The two general orientations are learning oriented and performance or ego-oriented. Students with mastery or learning orientation seek to develop new skills and increase their competence. They will apply more effort and time to the task. They also tend to hold an incremental view of intelligence; that is it is something they can expand and increase. The problem with performance or ego goals in general is that they lead

to superficial engagement in academic tasks and the retention of such information is unlikely. The performance may just be for the grade or ego and not for the retention of knowledge.

### **Attribution Theory**

Generally students make an inference about the causes of a particular outcome. They attribute success or failure to factors which may or may not be within their control. They are ability, effort, task, difficulty, and luck. Others attributes they assign to the outcomes are mood, illness, fatigue and help from others. If the outcome is failure, then the student is more likely to blame factors outside his control. These students react to failure with irrelevant statements, stereotypic responses and derogatory comments. “I was sick when you covered this in class.” “I lost my text book and couldn’t study.” “The test was too hard.” “I’m stupid.” “I never did have a good memory.” In other words, it just isn’t his fault. The responsibility for the failure lies outside his control. This is referred to as learned helplessness. Since he believes he has no control over the failure, he sees no possibility of changing it. Since he is going to fail anyway, he usually chooses to avoid the task and there by avoid failure.

The mastery oriented student looks to himself for answers to his failure. “Did I try hard enough?” “Did I put in enough time reading the problems?” “I need to slow down and figure this out.” He maintains mature strategies in the face of failure and determines what he can do to turn future events into successes. He perceives that success is within his capabilities. Albert Bandura refers to this as self-efficacy, the belief in one’s own capabilities to organize and execute the actions necessary to manage particular situations to result in success. Some refer to it as a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Although you may have little control over which model the student unknowingly adopts to satisfy his motivational needs, understanding them will give you clues as to why some students do what they do. However, the most important thing is to remember the basic motivational needs of all students, be aware of how they are using them in your class and plan how you will capitalize on these motivational needs to increase the student’s interest and effort in your class.