

Institute for Christian Teaching
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ENHANCING INTRINSIC MOTIVATION
IN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS:
A CHRISTIAN APPROACH

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INTRODUCTION

I believe God has put in every human being the potential to develop. This potential I want to say is limitless. A bean seed, or any seed for that matter has the potential of multiplication to any number we cannot even imagine. In the process many people will enjoy the bean food. God has put in every school child the potential to develop to limitless heights that no man can imagine. This is regardless of the country, the status, city whatever, where the child comes from. He has the potential of being an important somebody.

As normal children in our youths, we had dreams of ourselves as great people when we reach maturity. We have imagined ourselves as leaders of our societies, teachers, business people, etc. Every normal child has dwelt upon such like dreams. As we reached high school, such like dreams and imaginations of ourselves have been declared an impossibility. But Jesus has said all things are possible with God. This Jesus said because He knew that as we relate our lives and depend on God, the impossible, according to man, is possible with God.

Proofs for this are historically too many to enumerate. People who have come from poor backgrounds, disadvantaged societies have risen to great positions of honor, leadership and trust, because they were encouraged to ignore their social environment but trust in divine power.

The topic enhancing intrinsic motivation in secondary

school student, has this basis in point. God has laid a seed of great potential in every student. The dreams the students have about themselves should be enhanced, supported, developed, encouraged until they are realised. Students need to be encouraged to hang on to their dreams and not be told that their dreams are impossible to realise. To inform the student that his dreams or imaginations are beyond reach is simply telling him there is no God to assist him. It is telling him that his faith has been misplaced and that you, who are telling him, know better than God and can therefore choose for the student.

It is only Christian teachers who can enhance intrinsic motivation of students. Christian teachers are the ones who can integrate faith and learning. They will be able to do so because of their experience with God. They understand the great potentials that are in their students.

BACKGROUND

According to the South African Journal of Higher Education vol. 3, 1989, the pass rate of the secondary school students registered for the state examination was less than fifty percent. At the end of 1993, the examination results for the Department of Education and Training (DET) as reported in the news was about thirty eight percent.

Teachers are blamed for the poor examination results. During the course of the year 1993 they had been involved in the strikes of various kinds against the department and the

state. Much of the teaching time was lost on strikes and things like sports.

It is a sad fact that students themselves do not take their education seriously. It is not uncommon to find students loitering in the streets during school time. Within the school premises, some students are generally found standing near the toilets while the classes are going on.

The author's conviction is that the system of education needs to be reviewed. There is no doubt that the teachers have lost sight of their responsibility as teachers. The students no longer know the direction to be followed. The parents blame the teachers and the teachers blame the department of education. Particularly for the secondary school students the purpose for education has been lost sight of. There are today such expressions like "pass one pass all". The meaning being that if there is any one student who happens to pass the internal examination the whole class would have to be promoted to the next class by force from the student body. That is the current situation of our secondary school students. Many a time the school is compelled to yield to student pressure.

In our country education had been brought by the missionaries. They established primary schools, secondary schools and colleges all over the country. Characteristic of these schools were the teaching of the Bible and the Christian teachers. When the schools became State schools gradually the Christian standards fell away. The Bible was no

longer the core to the school curriculum. It did not matter whether the teacher was a Christian or not. Those missionary schools were indeed "the light of the world". Education was paramount and highly valued by all people.

This paper proposes the return to the "old time" system of education. True education can only be understood in the light of God's word.

In order to understand what is comprehended in the work of education, we need to consider both the nature of man and the purpose of God in creating him. We need to consider also the change in man's condition through the coming in of evil, and God's plan for still fulfilling His glorious purpose in the education of the human race. (White, 1952)

INTRINSIC MOTIVATION DEFINED

Intrinsically motivated activities are the ones for which there is no apparent reward except the activity itself. People seem to engage in the activities for their own sake and not because they lead to an extrinsic reward. The activities are ends in themselves rather than means to an end. (Deci, 1975, p. 13)

Deci defined intrinsic motivation in terms of the innate needs to be competent and self-determining in relation to one's environment. These needs underlie a wide variety of behavior including exploration, play, and learning and motivate people to seek out and attempt to conquer an ongoing series of challenges that are optional or appropriate for their capacities. (R.J. Corsini, vol 2, 1984, p. 251).

It was intrinsic motivation that led God to come down and die the death of shame on the cross. This love could not be paid for by any price. Jesus illustrated this activity by

the story of the lost sheep. The shepherd went in search of the sheep. When he found it, he took it and put it on his shoulders. When coming home, he calls his neighbors and says "rejoice with me for I have found my sheep which was lost". The reward was joy for the accomplishment of the activity. The sheep had been saved.

ORIGIN OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

True education by its nature is inherently Christian. Education finds its meaning from God. God has given life purpose and meaning. An enjoyable education is the education from the source of education which is God's. The difficulties the system of education is facing is the loss of its origin. With Christian perspective it is easy to understand why parents, teachers and students have lost the meaning of life, and education has no more attraction. When true education has effected its course in the life of the student, it will demonstrate independence and creativity of mind. A Christian student will be able to come up with new patterns of thought. He will acquire research ability, the power to gather, sift, and manipulate new facts and materials and to handle altogether novel situations. "The educated Christian exercise critical judgement and manifests the ability to interpret and to evaluate information, particularly in the light of the Christian revelation". (Holmes,1987, p. 5)

Christianity , far from being a Bible department religion, has a right to control instructions in all

departments. The general principle of Scripture applies to all subjects, and in all subjects, the Scripture supplies rather detailed principles.

The school's task is to motivate and equip individual students to think and act for themselves in the dignity of persons created in God's image. According to McCombs and Whisler, students want to assume and are capable of assuming learning responsibilities in different degrees. They also differ in the degree of need for becoming dependent versus independent learners. The authors ascribe this learning attitude of students, among other factors, to the fact that the educational system had not been geared to activate independent learning to a satisfactory degree and teachers had not been prepared adequately to help students develop learning skills that are needed to become and remain autonomous learners.

Christian commitment does not restrict intellectual opportunity and endeavor, but rather it fires and inspires purposeful learning. Christian education should not blindfold the students' eyes to all the world has to offer, but it should open them to truth wherever it may be found, truth that is ultimately unified in and derived from God. It should be a liberating experience that enlarges horizons, deepens insight, sharpens the mind, exposes new areas of inquiry, and sensitizes our ability to appreciate the good and the beautiful as well as the true. (Holmes, 1987)

INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

The severe training of youth, without properly directing them to think and act for themselves as their own capacity and turn of mind will allow that by this means they may have growth of thought, feelings of self-respect, and confidence in their own ability to perform, will ever produce a class who are

weak in mental and moral power. And when they stand in the world to act for themselves they will reveal the fact that they were trained like the animals and not educated. Their wills, instead of being guided, were forced into subjection by the harsh discipline of parents and teachers. (White, 1968, p. 3.)

According to Deci and Ryan, "schools are keenly involved in evaluating children's performance and they pressure the children toward good performance in a variety of subtle and not so subtle ways". They believe children have intrinsic motivation to do well but the teachers do not give the students that opportunity to use their will power. Pressurizing students robs them of self-determination and saps their intrinsic motivation. The theory of cognitive evaluation sees the central question in the classroom to be how to maintain or enhance children's intrinsic motivation for learning. Bruner (1962) suggests that one of the most important ways to help children think and learn is to free them from control of rewards and punishments. Patterns of doing what is believed to yield rewards and forestall punishments result in impoverished learning. By learning what to do to get rewards and by doing just what the teacher wants, children can become overachievers, but they will fail to develop the capacity to transform their learning into flexible, useful cognitive structures. They may memorize well, but they will not develop their capacity to think creatively. "To the degree that one is able to approach learning as a task of discovering something rather than learning about it... there will be a tendency for the self-

reward or more properly be rewarded by discovery itself".
(Deci, p. 247)

In our schools . we need to create conditions that will stimulate commitment and responsible choice, felt to be originating from within the individual. Such conditions of commitment, internal choice and responsibility within a person, will encourage the feeling and acting like an Origin. De Charms (1976) says, "the person should be encouraged to consider carefully his basic motives (self-study) in a warm atmosphere of acceptance by others in the group. The setting should help him to translate his motives into realistic short- and long-range goals (internal goal settings) and to plan realistic and concrete action to attain the goals (planning and goal-directed behavior). Finally, the setting should help him to learn to accept responsibility for selected goals as well as for the success and failure of his attempts to reach them (Weiner, 1980, p. 255)

Self-Regulated Students

When a student is intrinsically motivated he will be a self-regulated student. His approaches in learning strategies will be definite. He will do a self-evaluation of his studies. He is not going to depend on his teacher for evaluation. Such a student will be able to set goals for himself. It is like when you undertake a long journey by car. Even before you leave home you target the hours to be spent

on the journey. If you do not time yourself, you are running the risk of wasting your hours unnecessarily on the journey.

A self-regulated student sets goals in his studies and has self-made plans clearly defined. His work is characterized by organization and transformation. There is movement and development all under control. The student seeks for information. He leaves no stone unturned. This enables him to choose more relevant information and discard information that does not hit the nail on the head.

A self-regulated student keeps records and monitors his work. He is self-consequating. He takes responsibility for his actions and decisions whether wrong or right. He is able to learn from his mistakes. He can talk from experience.

He takes time to rehearse and memorize his work. This is part of the learning process. He takes it upon himself to seek peer, teacher or adult assistance. Those areas of study which are not clear, he will do his best to find help on. He reviews his tests, notes and texts. This is an intrinsically motivated student.

Enhancing Intrinsic Motivation

Interest in the concept of autonomous learning has stemmed from developments in understanding of what it means to learn. Psychologists and educators have increasingly recognized that learning is an internally mediated active generative, and constructive process of attending, processing and transforming information into both relatively stable and

dynamic knowledge structures. This has resulted to an increased interest in understanding the nature and role of various student's thought processes that contribute to learning. Learning can, in fact, be conceptualized as inherently autonomous, as stated at the beginning. It is independent and self-directed in nature. If you observe students learning in a group setting or in contexts that supply a variety of learning aids and supports, you will find that how much is learned by any individual student is a function of that student's motivation and ability to engage in appropriate self-directed, self-regulated and autonomous information processing activities. (McCombs, 1989, pp. 277-278)

We must recognize that autonomous learning is largely a developmental phenomenon. It depends on the learner's development and capabilities for self-regulation and control as well as personal beliefs and competence and the knowledge that learning can lead to the achievement of personal goals. To become autonomous learners, students must develop various cognitive and metacognitive capabilities that allow them to actively process information, attach personal meaning to learning activities, and plan and regulate their own learning activities. They must also develop cognitive and metacognitive capabilities for controlling and regulating affective and motivation. The development of these latter capabilities depends on the development of self-system structures. (McCombs , p. 278)

Recently, educational researchers have given increased attention to time variables that are related to school learning. It has been documented that when learning time (time allocated or time spent) is held constant, on any task, achievement among individual learners varies markedly. In fact, the existence of individual differences in learning is one of the most widely accepted generalizations in education. A major focus of much educational research has been the discernment of factors that contribute to this variation in achievement. Implicit in theoretical models of schooling is the notion that time is an important determinant of degree of learning... Specifically, three time variables have been identified that may contribute significantly to variability in achievement across individual students, teachers and schools. These are (a) time allowed or allocated for learning, (b) time spent or engaged in learning, and (c) time actually needed for learning. (Gettings, p. 3)

The value component of student motivation involves students' goals for the task and their beliefs about the importance and interest of the task. This motivational component essentially concerns students' reasons for doing a task. In other words, what are students' individual answers to the question, "Why am I doing this task?" The research suggests that students with a motivational orientation involving goals of mastery learning and challenge, as well as beliefs that the task is interesting and important will engage in more metacognitive activity, more cognitive

strategy use, and more effective effort management. (Pintrich p. 34)

Integration of Faith and Learning

It has been expressed over and over again by various authors that "all truth is God's truth". Jesus, answering the doubting Thomas said, "I am the way and the truth and the life: no one comes to the Father, but by me." (John 14:6) Education has to do with human life. The source of life is God. The way to life is Christ. Christ is the author of life. (Acts 3:15) True education leads to the knowledge of Christ.

There is no subject at school which has nothing to do with the truths. Think of any: Health Education,, Biology, Psychology, etc. All are directly leading the young to the Great Creator of the Universe. The teacher who leads the students through the various fields of education must be the disciple of Christ otherwise there is bound to be a conflict of ideas.

Edward H. Rian says:

Christianity includes all of life. Every realm of knowledge, every aspect of life and every fact of the universe find their place and their answer within Christianity. It is a system of truth enveloping the entire world in its grasp... The present tendency in education to add religion to the courses of study is comparable to attaching a garage to a home. What the building of knowledge needs is not a new garage but a new foundation. (Gaebelien, p. 18)

Students need to know that the author of true science is God. As man relates himself closer to God, he gets to understand better the operations of God in God's universe.

Specifically in this paper, the author proposes that

as the principles of motivation are applied in the light of God's words problems of students in the secondary schools will be handled better. Through God's help educators would achieve better results for the betterment of the country.

The Bible has a number of stories where Jesus applied intrinsic motivation to his individual contacts. The woman who was a sinner who used oil of great expense to anoint Jesus as recorded in Luke 7. In verse 50 Jesus said to her, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." The story of a tax collector, who climbed a sycamore tree showed how Jesus loves the sinner. He said, "Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for I must stay at your house today." (Luke 19:5) These two quoted instances were of people who had been isolated by their communities because of their unacceptable behaviors. While Jesus did not condone their behaviors, yet He demonstrated love to them and won them for God.

In this paper the author wants to emphasize the basic need of a curriculum that is Christian based, taught by Christian teachers, resulting in Christian educated students.

Students could be intrinsically motivated in the school situation when local members of the community who have demonstrated honest, and hard work in their lives are invited. These people would address students in their field of operation. By their example of success in their careers, the young people could be persuaded to follow their examples. A God-fearing nurse or a business person who can witness to the fulfillment of their professional activity could be

brought to the school to talk to the students.

While attending an International Faith and Learning Seminar, Dr. Calvin Seerveld gave me an example of a friend of his who had received true Christian education. His friend sells fish and when asked about his work, he says, "I enjoy seeing people satisfied with the fish I sell to them. I know I sell it at a satisfactory price. The people know I cannot sell them bad fish because I love God. They trust me. I am happy to provide them with a satisfying service." Students who will be intrinsically motivated in their service for the people because they do their work before God are needed. They will demonstrate honesty to themselves, to the people they serve and to God their Creator.

Enhancing intrinsic motivation through autonomy teacher support would be the creation of a warm, challenging atmosphere in the classroom where trust and acceptance of students' ideas are respected and guided by Christian teachers. It would be a classroom atmosphere where students would experience themselves as responsible for their actions. Students do need a reasonable amount of freedom if they are going to accept responsibility of their actions. This would also help us to know our students and be able to help them.

The teacher who knows his pupils knows what they want to learn, how they want to learn it and when they want to learn it. Because he knows this he is able to plan a strategy to coax them over to his side, to make their wishes subservient to his and consequently to motivate them to effective education more easily. (Avenant, 1990)

A truism is that students learn better in a situation

in which they feel comfortable and recognize a sense of community where they are acknowledged as individuals and have the opportunity to experience success. (Stanford, 1978 p. 60)

Autonomy in the Learning Process

The view of education espoused herein is one in which the child plays an active part. Self-determined activity, as believed, results in the integrated internalization of values and knowledge, phenomena which cannot be forced into one, but rather must be openly and willingly accepted and assimilated. From this view, the task of teaching is one of preparing the conditions in which openness to learning and responsibility are maximized. The artful task of teaching and parenting with respect to education is thus one of creating conditions ripe for autonomous assimilation and growth. In short, it is the art of instantiating for every child a facilitating environment. (Hastings, 1987, p. 229)

It is important to clarify that an autonomy-supportive context for learning is not a permissive one. The autonomy supportive classroom is not one where there is complete freedom for students to do whatever they want. Rather there is a good deal of consistent structure imposed by teachers. The determining factor in autonomy-supportive versus controlling classrooms is then not whether there are rules, disciplinary techniques and directives, but rather the way which these structures are imposed and the extent to which choices and independence are encouraged when possible.

(Hastings, p. 218)

Autonomy develops and is strengthened only in so far as it is exercised, and eliciting that exercise requires skilled and creative practice. One cannot push someone to be self-directed without unwittingly undermining that goal. Similarly, one cannot teach another to be responsible without first giving over some responsibility. In this sense, autonomy promotion is a facilitative rather than a training process. It requires attending to the internal frame of reference of the child or student and supporting responsible action as it emerges from within. It means affording opportunities for action rather than assigning them. It means nurturing independent solving of problems rather than dictating the search for answers. Thus autonomy grows when there is, from parents and teacher, support for autonomy. (Hastings, p. 214)

CONCLUSION

The students under our care are God's children with limitless potentials. These potentials need to be discovered early in life so that they can be supported and protected. Students' dreams and imaginations very important for teachers to nurture and encourage.

This approach to education calls for the reviews of our education system. The system of education should be a Christian system of education taught by Christian teachers who will be able to integrate faith and learning.

True education has to do with the individual's life

and the individual's relationship with other people. True education has its origins with God. God is the source of all life. The student needs to understand that without faith in God life would be meaningless. God has given His people the freedom of choice, and has laid the responsibility of their choices on them. "If you obey, you shall live."

In true education, there is no force but choice with responsibility. Secondary school students are of the age that can make choices and take responsibility of their choices. The teacher should provide choices or options for pupils in the classroom situations. The school should do the same for the student body. Common practices such as independent study, self-directed learning, learning centres, contracts and projects are all methods that allow a certain degree of freedom and choice.

When teachers and their students become partners in education, true learning will take place. The students and the teacher cooperatively will examine what learning resources are available in the school community. They will look at each of the resources creatively to determine new ways of using them. As in the self-directed level of deciding what to learn, teachers concentrate on assisting students in determining criteria for selecting the methods and materials to be used or combinations of resources that will best meet the student needs. Some possible criteria for selection include the potential value of the methods or resources for meeting the student's long-term goals, how the method fits

with pupils preferred style of learning, and the potential for expanding the individual experience with a variety of materials. The teacher's role is that of helping students how to use materials, assisting in the location of materials, serving as a general guide to learning.

I want to believe that God does not have only one way or method of leading us to Him, but several. Our faith in God is as the result of His various ways of attracting us to Him. It is with this understanding that I believe teachers could use their relationship with their students. The trust the teachers have in God will be the same that the students will develop for their teachers and their God. Learning together-teacher and students.

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