TEACHERS ENGAGEMENT IN ACADEMIC MOTIVATION OF SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Review Paper

ABSTRACT

Teachers in schools can boost students' academic motivation by providing them with support and encouragement. This study attempted to explore the factors teachers use to support students' autonomy, competencies, and interests to boost their motivation for learning. Interpretative phenomenological analysis of qualitative research methodology was used in this research. The study was conducted on 18 school teachers working in government and private schools in Kolkata, India from whom data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The results showed that teachers employed four key themes to raise students' motivation for academics in the classroom. Highlighting the significance of learning, inspiring learning environment, promoting unique activities and resolving other issues were the major affairs that were reported. A favourable learning atmosphere, the benefits of extracurricular activities, the necessity of specific classes, the significance of learning for professional and personal growth, and counselling were also highlighted as ways to motivate students.

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INTRODUCTION

For students learning should be integrated into play to ensure that students learn every day in a playful environment. An individual gains the opportunity to explore new chances by taking on new difficulties through learning. The ability to learn is a crucial one that supports a person's overall development. Students' capacity for learning can increase due to their own desires to know something new or due to the encouragement and assistance they receive from their teachers (Schuitema et. al., 2016; Theobald, 2006; Thoonen, Sleegers, Peetsma, & Oort, 2011).

Children are naturally inquisitive, questioning, and enthusiastic towards learning. Entering the school, they are full of energy and eager to quickly explore and learn everything around them. Success in their exploration or discovery leads to great happiness, motivation, and a lifelong desire to learn more new things about the surroundings. Studies showed that a child's willingness to participate in school activities, which is correlated with motivation, determines how well the youngster adjusts overall (Hinshaw, 1992). Children who receive appropriate assistance and constructive criticism in school grow up to be imaginative, daring, and driven learners (Bain, 2004; Ferlazzo, 2015). According to a study, students' interest in learning will rise when they recognize the value of knowing a certain subject and how it will affect their daily lives (Theobald, 2006). Similarly, Martin et al. (2002) highlighted the connection between classroom

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exercises and their impact on students' lives. When education is connected to real-world experiences, students are more likely to be motivated to learn. According to Ming-Te Wang and Jacquelynne S. Eccles at the University of Michigan (2012), peer and teacher influence on students' motivation varies in addition to parental influence. Numerous studies revealed that social environments, such as the classroom, school, and family, as well as internal personality traits influence academic motivation in all students, even those with high intellectual capacity (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Wentzel, 2002).

Effective student engagement refers to the meaningful involvement and active participation of students in their own learning processes (Bain, 2004; Ferlazzo, 2015; Schuitema et. al., 2016). It encompasses various aspects, including:

Cognitive Engagement: This involves students' investment in learning, their willingness to exert effort, and their use of deep learning strategies such as critical thinking and problem-solving.

Behavioural Engagement: This includes students' participation in academic, social, and extracurricular activities. It involves attending classes, completing assignments, and participating in discussions.

Emotional Engagement: This aspect covers students' emotional responses in the classroom, their sense of belonging, and their relationships with peers and teachers. Positive emotions such as interest, enthusiasm, and motivation are crucial.

Social Engagement: This involves collaborative learning and the development of interpersonal skills through group work, peer interactions, and communication.

Active Learning: This includes hands-on activities, interactive lessons, and opportunities for students to apply what they learn in real-world scenarios.

Effective student engagement leads to better academic outcomes, higher levels of student satisfaction, and increased retention rates. It is often fostered by creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment, using varied teaching methods, providing timely feedback, and encouraging student autonomy and voice in the learning process.

Effective student engagement in the classroom can be challenging due to several factors:

Diverse Learning Styles: Students have different learning preferences (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, etc.). Catering to all these styles in a single lesson can be difficult.

Varied Academic Abilities: Classrooms often contain students with a wide range of academic abilities. Providing materials and activities that challenge advanced students without overwhelming those who struggle is a complex balancing act.

Lack of Interest or Motivation: Some students may not find the subject matter interesting or relevant, making it hard to engage them.

Class Size: Large class sizes can make it difficult for teachers to give individual attention to each student, recognize when someone is disengaged, and provide meaningful feedback.

External Distractions: Students can be distracted by factors outside the classroom, such as personal issues, social media, or noise.

Limited Resources: Schools may lack the necessary resources, such as updated technology, books, or materials, which can hinder the ability to create engaging lessons.

Teaching Methods: Traditional teaching methods may not always resonate with modern students. Innovative and interactive approaches require additional preparation and resources.

Cultural and Socioeconomic Differences: Diverse cultural backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses can affect how students engage with the material and participate in class.

Behavioural Issues: Classroom management challenges, such as disruptive behaviour, can detract from the learning environment and reduce engagement for other students.

Assessment Pressure: High-stakes testing and an emphasis on grades can lead to a focus on rote learning rather than genuine engagement with the material.

Teacher Burnout: Overworked and under-supported teachers may find it difficult to maintain the energy and creativity needed to keep students engaged.

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach, including differentiated instruction, active

learning strategies, incorporating technology, fostering a positive classroom environment, and ongoing professional development for teachers. This study concentrates on how teacher participation can improve students' academic motivation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is widely acknowledged that one of the most important factors influencing the effectiveness and quality of any learning outcome is students' willingness to learn (Mitchell, 1992). According to the study, national intervention is crucial to raising the academic standards' rigour and inspiring all students, even the most disengaged and demotivated ones (Brewster & Fager, 2000). Investigating the components of school-age academic motivation is crucial because academic intrinsic motivation in the formative years of education significantly impacts future achievement in life. Teachers' encouragement and involvement in the classroom have a distinct impact on children's motivation for academics.

Numerous studies on school children's motivation for academics have been carried out. Some examined the relationship with academic achievement, while others concentrated on the roles of peers, teachers, and parents. Research on intrinsic motivation has demonstrated its correlation with a series of positive results, including interest, performance, persistence, and positive emotions (Bouffard et al., 2001; Hardre & Reeve, 2003; Coutts, 2004; Valle et al., 2016). Most studies have indicated that higher learning achievement is correlated with students' increased approach to learning (Nunez et al. 2019).

In addition to assisting a child in succeeding in school, academic motivation also helps the youngster realize the value and satisfaction of learning in other spheres of life, including the workplace, community, and school. Gottfried (1990) defines academic motivation as "enjoyment of school learning characterized by a mastery orientation; curiosity; persistence; task-endogeny; and the learning of challenging, difficult, and novel tasks" (p. 525). According to Pintrich and Zusho (2002), academic motivation refers to internal processes that initiate and maintain actions intended to meet particular academic objectives. A cheerful, academically motivated child feels that education is vital, is eager to learn, and enjoys engaging in learning-related activities.

Researchers found that middle and high school pupils who successfully finished their assignments and applied the principles their teachers had taught in class had higher levels of motivation (Trautwein and Lüdtke, 2007; Dettmers et al., 2010). Teachers' feedback is also very important to students because it shows how the student is doing academically (Trautwein et al., 2009; Núñez et al., 2015a). Giving feedback enables students to learn from their successes and failures as well as opportunities for future improvement. Students' motivation to learn increases with the amount of positive feedback they receive. A study by Wang and Eccles (2013) found that those who perceived teachers as warm, caring, friendly, and approachable are more likely to attach themselves to their learning in school.

King (2015) reported that students who felt care and belonging in an academic environment showed high academic achievement while those who thought others were unfriendly expressed discontent with their learning According to Jang et al. (2016), Korean students who studied in circumstances that supported their autonomy showed more psychological need satisfaction and increased learning engagement, whereas students who learnt in environments that suppressed their autonomy demonstrated a disinterest in learning. Guvenc (2015) reported that academic engagement is influenced by motivation, and the degree of assistance provided is based on the teacher-student connection.

Wentzel and Wigfield (1998) discovered that students' academic motivation is positively impacted by their good and healthy interactions with teachers during regular classroom activities. Students who exhibit good behaviour and receive encouragement and motivation from their teachers are more likely to be motivated and enthusiastic about learning. Therefore, it is crucial to comprehend how teacher engagement affects students' academic motivation in the classroom. This study focused on how teacher engagement strategies can affect students' academic motivation in the classroom.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Effective student engagement is a multifaceted concept that involves various parameters or criteria, which can be broadly categorized into behavioural, emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions (Bouffard et al., 2001; Pintrich & Zusho, 2002; Hardre & Reeve, 2003; Coutts, 2004; Trautwein & Lüdtke, 2007; Dettmers et al., 2010; Jang et al. 2016;). Here are some key parameters for each category:

1.   **Behavioural Engagement**

   A. Active Participation: Students are actively involved in classroom activities, discussions, and collaborative work.

   B. Attendance and Punctuality: Regular and timely attendance is a basic indicator of engagement.

   C. On-task Behaviour: Students remain focused and attentive during lessons and activities.

   D. Completion of Assignments: Consistent and timely submission of homework and projects.

2.   **Emotional Engagement**
   A. Interest and Enthusiasm: Students show genuine interest and enthusiasm for the subject matter.
   B. Positive Attitude: A positive attitude towards learning, teachers, and classmates.
   C. Sense of Belonging: Students feel connected to the school community and classroom environment.

D.   **Motivation: Intrinsic motivation to learn and achieve.**

3.   **Cognitive Engagement**
   A. Critical Thinking: Engagement in higher-order thinking skills, such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

   B. Self-regulation: Ability to set goals, monitor progress, and reflect on learning.

   C. Effort and Persistence: Willingness to put in the effort and persist through challenges.

   D. Curiosity and Inquiry: Active questioning and exploration of topics beyond the surface level.

4.   **Social Engagement**
   A. Collaboration: Effective participation in group work and collaborative projects.

   B. Communication Skills: Ability to communicate ideas clearly and listen to others.

   C.   Supportive Interactions: Positive interactions with peers and teachers, providing and receiving support.

   D. Respect and Inclusivity: Demonstrating respect for diverse perspectives and fostering an inclusive environment.

5.   **Environmental Factors**
   A. Classroom Environment: A supportive and well-structured classroom that promotes engagement.

   B. Relevance of Content: Curriculum that is relevant and connected to students' lives and interests.

   C. Teacher Support: Availability and approachability of teachers, along with their ability to provide constructive feedback.

   D. Use of Technology: Effective use of technology to enhance learning and engagement.

6.   **Institutional Support**

   A. Extracurricular Activities: Opportunities for students to engage in activities outside the classroom that interest them.

   B. Parental Involvement: Encouragement and support from parents or guardians.

   C. School Policies: Policies that promote student well-being and engagement, such as anti-bullying measures and mental health support.

7.   **Personal Factors**

   A. Self-efficacy: Students' belief in their own ability to succeed.

   B. Goal Orientation: Clarity and alignment of personal and academic goals.

   C. Time Management: Effective management of time to balance academic and personal responsibilities.

Each of these parameters contributes to a holistic understanding of student engagement. Effective engagement strategies should address these various dimensions to create a comprehensive and supportive learning environment.

Finally, we wish to investigate: *How does teacher engagement influence the academic motivation of school students?*

Objectives of the study
- To explore the engagement of the teachers in the academic motivation of the schools at the primary level

- To know about the ways teachers morally support the students to motivate them to their better academic achievements

METHODS

Sample
The study was conducted on the teachers working in government and private schools in Kolkata, India. In this study, purposeful random sampling was employed. To obtain a variety of data from various locations in Kolkata, 24 primary school teachers were contacted by phone. Finally, eight teachers from private schools and ten teachers from government schools expressed interest in participating in the study. Of these, eleven are female teachers and seven are male teachers in the 28–41 age range. Among the 18 teachers, 8 had B.Ed., 7 were postgraduates, 3 had PhD degrees, and all had a minimum of 4 years of teaching experience.

Procedure
Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data from the primary school teachers in different schools in Kolkata on their engagement in enhancing the student's academic motivation at the primary level. The open-ended questions were used without any predetermined limit. Three experts verified these questions, and their recommendations were followed in the revisions. To ensure authenticity, the updated draft was sent to three teachers who were not involved in the study. Questions were asked both in Bengali and English depending on the comfort of the interviewees. Every interview was conducted over the phone, and the audio clip contains the responses that were captured. Every teacher had a brief personal profile taken. However, following the ethics of qualitative research, the respondent's identity was kept private. During the interview, a few valid questions were asked to the teachers firstly, how do you motivate students in the class? Secondly, how do you give feedback to the students in the class?

Instrument
Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) of qualitative research methodology was used in this research. Research states that an individual's experience of a specific affair can be understood in detail with the help of IPA (Alase, 2017; Smith, 2011). Through IPA interviews, interviewers can gain insight into interviewees' subjective experiences and engagement with a specific issue (Joshi, Vinay & Bhaskar, 2020). IPA offers descriptive viewpoints in addition to interpretative assessments and experiences of the respondents (Smith, Osborn & Samara, 2008). In circumstances where a larger sample size is needed for in-depth analysis, IPA is typically employed (Smith, 1996). Here, teachers utilize IPA to investigate various teaching strategies that they employ in the classroom to encourage students' academic progress.

Data Analysis
Each interview was analysed following the steps proposed by Smith and Osborn (2003) mentioned in the research by Joshi, Vinay and Bhaskar (2020). In order to determine the main themes of academic motivation, every recording interview was carefully examined, and all pertinent material was recorded. Based on the verbatim transcripts, emerging themes were identified, recorded independently, and compared and contrasted before being grouped together based on commonalities. Every interview that was done for the study went through this procedure.

RESULTS
The teachers' responses collected through semi-structured interviews were then analysed and revealed the following aspects of their involvement in students' academic motivation. The findings are expressed in four major themes which were obtained by grouping the responses taken from the analysis.

1. **Highlighting the significance of learning** - Teachers are crucial in helping children understand the significance of learning. They do this by guiding their students through a variety of methods that communicate the goals, benefits, and ramifications of learning.

    i) *Personal development* - Learning is an indication of mental and brain activity. The brain is kept occupied by curiosity as it looks for original information about the surroundings. These students' growth curves and confidence are boosted by this knowledge, which is a measure of their level of contentment.

      "Students who are good in academics always ask questions and try to analyse with rationality." (Participant 3)

    ii) *Professional development* - Professional development is facilitated by learning, which offers a verified route to improve one's performance in one's sector.

"It is observed that students, who worked hard, improve a lot for getting better chances like school captain, sports captain." (Participant 12)

iii) *Changed the perspectives* – Learning always helps one see things differently and keeps the mind open to new possibilities. For a deeper comprehension of everything, it helps to alter one's values, behaviour, and attitude.

"The knowledgeable students are more understanding and open-mindedness compared to others." (Participant 16)

2. **Inspiring learning environment** - By fostering a positive, upbeat environment with lots of light, fresh air, and friends' support, teachers can increase their students' passion and drive for studying. Teachers can act as a catalyst for students to look forward to learning.

i) *Positive classroom* - A positive environment encourages students to investigate novel concepts by making them feel safe, secure, and at ease during their education. Their sense of respect and acceptance in the educational environment is made possible by the teachers' assistance.

"In a positive environment children work as a team and celebrate the achievement together." (Participant 6)

"In a supportive environment children show their real curiosity and unique ideas." (Participant 17)

ii) *Colourful classroom* – classroom painted with bright colour, full of needed supplies (books, school dress, pen, pencil, table, chair etc.) as much as necessary encouraged students to study more.

"Students are more likely to study in a colourful classroom full of famous quotes, and motivating posters." (Participants 2, 7, 13)

iii) *Natural learning environment* – Students enjoy studying more intently and with a clearer mind in an open environment. When exposed to outside environments such as gardens, ponds, and rooftops, they pay closer attention to what they are learning.

"Students are more excited in classes taken in open space". (Participants1, 4)

3. **Promoting unique activities** – In addition to the academic curriculum, extracurricular activities help students acquire skills outside subject-specific knowledge. These exercises help pupils develop their moral principles, intellectual prowess, social skills, personality, and character.

i) *Adequate learning* - Co-curricular activities merged with academics ensure students get to learn effectively. Science lab, computer lab, projects, and experiments in different fields all are part of co-curricular activities.

"Students who are more active in computer class tend to be good in other subjects also". (Participant 18)

ii) *Cultural values* - Students get to study about a range of cultural activities that are based on diverse faiths, beliefs, and values, ranging from traditional to national levels. Students learn about these events through books along with extracurricular activities based on different cultures organized by schools.

"Those students are more knowledgeable who take an active part in different cultural programmes because taking part in the event enables them to know in detail about the background of the event" (Participants 10, 11)

iii) *Personality development* - Students who actively participate in extracurricular activities improve their leadership, coordination, and communication abilities. Students gain a sense of community and sharing through a variety of activities such as debate, recitation, creative competitions, and group discussions. These experiences also help to

positively form students' personalities.

"Students, who always take part in co-curricular activities besides study, are generally smart, cooperative, friendly, good speakers and good coordinators". (Participants 8, 12)

4. **Resolving other issues** – Even though students have access to all the amenities, it can occasionally be challenging to figure out why they lack motivation. Teachers then make an effort to learn about the issues that students are concentrating on.

   i) *Nurturing special skills* - Sometimes students endure criticism from society for their academic performance. Then, teachers provide students the chance to recognize the unique abilities they possess such as by assigning creative writing assignments to develop writing abilities or arts and crafts projects to explore creativity in athletics, painting, or creating, among other areas.

   "I have one student in my class who is wonderful at painting but not very good in study. I asked her to paint whenever she loves to do it because I observed that after painting she gives attention to her study." (Participant 5)

   ii) *Special class* - Arranging separate classes for kids who struggle with learning encourages them to pay closer attention in class, take their studies more seriously, and find solutions to challenges outside of the classroom.

   "In special class, few students talk about family problems." (Participant 4)

   iii) *Counselling* - If teachers are unable to identify the cause of a student's low academic motivation, they will recommend them to the school counsellor, who will ultimately assist the student in increasing their academic drive.

   "We have few students who improved

much in study after having few counselling sessions." (Participant 14)

To draw a graph representing successful student engagement, we need to consider several key factors that influence engagement, such as:

1. Attendance: Consistent presence in class.

2. Participation: Active involvement in discussions and activities.

3. Assignments: Completion and quality of homework and projects.

4. Motivation: Students' enthusiasm and interest in the subject matter.

5. Feedback: Constructive feedback from teachers and peers.

6. Support: Availability of academic and emotional support.

A suitable graph for this purpose could be a radar chart (also known as a spider chart), as it can display multiple variables on a single plot, making it easy to visualize the level of engagement across different dimensions. The average rounded score of ten random students from our survey had the following scores (out of 10): Attendance: 8, Participation: 7, Assignments: 9, Motivation: 6, Feedback: 8 and Support: 7

Here is a radar chart (Fig. 1) representing successful student engagement across various factors. Each axis represents a different dimension of engagement, with higher values indicating better performance in that area. This graph allows for an easy comparison of strengths and areas needing improvement for a student's engagement.
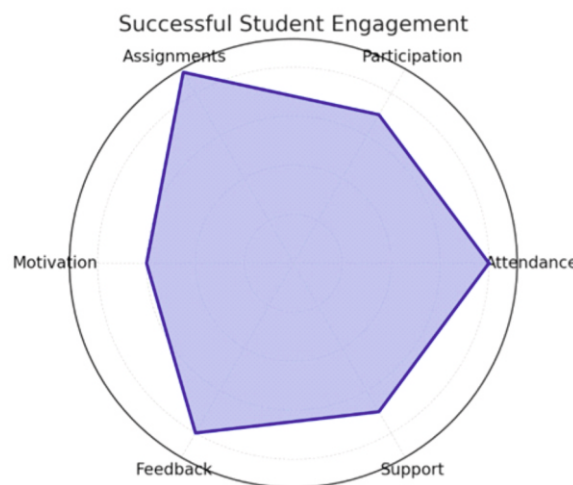

Fig. 1: Radar chart representing successful student engagement across various factors.

DISCUSSION

Learning is an inevitable tool that nourishes the student's minds and calms the soul. It is a continuous process that encourages acquiring knowledge, competencies and skills to develop future opportunities and to deal with the continuous changes in life. Teachers encouraged the students for reading habits, building a learning network, asking questions, conducting research and exploring new facts so that every moment can be enjoyable for the students and they learn something new in each moment. This finding is supported by other studies which stated that students' motivation to learn can be increased by the support of teachers (Ferlazzo, 2015; Schiefele & Schaffner, 2015; Schuitema et al., 2016).

The classroom is the second home for the students and teachers make efforts to make the students feel comfortable as much as possible. They tried to create an environment that is more conducive to engagement and learning as a positive learning environment allows the students to develop a sense of belonging, and trust and feel encouraged to tackle challenges, take risks and ask questions. Schuitema et al. (2016) in their study reported teachers play an important role in creating a supportive environment for student's autonomy.

Teachers involve students in co-curricular activities at schools as these are part of academics and make the learning experience exciting for the students. Through different activities, students learn much better because participation in an activity brings out their natural skills. Fostering a positive environment, teachers help students acquire higher motivation that leads to wonderful learning outcomes. In the studies, it is found that teachers by supporting students' likings and interests help them develop personal interest and engagement in work which leads to motivation (Schuitema et al., 2016; Stearns, 2013). Teachers encountered many issues with students while teaching in schools. Sometimes they had to solve some other issues outside of academics. They refer counsellors sometimes if they become unable to solve those special issues which decreases the motivation of the students in learning. This finding is in accordance with the study of Thoonen et al. (2011) which stated that teachers support their student's learning by connecting to the personal world of the students.

CONCLUSION

Student motivation has an impact on learning, which is an essential tool. It equips students with the abilities that motivate them to take on life's problems. In addition to innate learning abilities, teachers' engagement greatly influences students' drive to learn. Teachers may help students become more motivated to learn by helping them see the value of education, creating a welcoming and supportive learning atmosphere, and providing encouraging comments for their future success.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE SCOPES

This study used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), a qualitative research methodology, to highlight teachers' importance in students' academic motivation in schools. The study cannot be applied to other sectors because it is limited to primary school teachers in Kolkata. Similar large-scale research on different topic groups from different sectors of other states or nations can be carried out in the future.

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