

The Effect of Motivation on Academic Performance: Practicum Report

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Abstract— The article is from a practicum report carried out at Rusau Primary School in JOS, Plateau State. The investigation was a case study that examined motivational strategies teachers used in class to develop pupils interest in learning.

The population of the study consist of primary three pupils. 1 (one) pupil was selected for the case study with major problems in reading, writing and identification of letters. A test was administered to spot out those with major problem.

The researcher used interview, observation and techniques to obtain relevant information on the study. It was discovered that positive incentives such as reward or praise are more effective than threats or promise of low grades. Recommendations for teachers, government and non-governmental organizations were made.

I. INTRODUCTION

The task of the teacher is made easier when the pupils are motivated. Motivated pupils are eager to learn, attend classes regularly and on time. The teacher should work very hard to plan adequate learning activities to maintain the zeal of the class.

Motivation also play an important role in learning activities. Both the teacher and pupils have important role to play in motivational strategies. However, many teachers lack the motivational strategies that will be implemented in the classroom to enhance learning either in reading, writing or other school activities. Most of them blame the pupils for their poor academic performance. Most teachers only have a particular methodology to motivate pupils and if such techniques failed, they always blame the pupils and in most cases label them as “Slow Learner”. More attention is given to those who easily cope with class work.

David G. Myers (2001) indicated that motivation is a energizing and directing of behaviour, the force behind our yearning for food, our longing for sexual intimacy, our need to belong, and our desire to achieve. In a study of over 80,000 students at 110 high schools, researchers found that when asked why they were bored in class 75% of students said because the materials was not interesting and 39% said the materials was not relevant to them (Yazzie – Mintz, 2006). Teachers help increase students’ interest in academic content and their engagement, by giving students authentic tasks include opportunities to problems solve situations that mirror the kind of ambiguity student’s face in real life (Apart, 1991; Ritchhart, 2002).

Borich and Tombari (1997) have said that the project based learning recognizes that the teacher is the last piece in the intrinsic motivational puzzle.

Consequently, Blumenfed and her colleagues urges teachers to support their learners interest, effort and achievement by:

- i. Avoiding statements implying that innate ability is all that is require to complete project,
- ii. Focusing learners’ attention on both the process of completing the project and the end product, and
- iii. Making encouraging statements to learners.

Oladele J.O. (1989) mentioned that since learning leads to change in behaviour, them there is a relationship between learning and motivation.

Attention is drawn to the following ways in increasing classroom motivation.

- i. Focus the learners attention on the learning outcome. Example telling older pupils that a certain task is likely to contribute to success in life is likely to stimulate them.
- ii. Capitalise on the child’s curiosity, need and interest.
- iii. Make extensive use of incentives designed to intensify learning activity.
- iv. Reward and incentives can be concrete or symbolic like a cup or trophy for winning a completion.
- v. Organize and set the learning tasks that are appropriate to teach learners ability level.

Clearly, a teacher cannot replace parents and provide the love and care that children must have. But teacher’s can certainly assure students’ safety in the classroom and develop a students’ feeling of belonging to the class groups (Holt, 1970). When students feel safe they are more apt to demonstrate creatively, intellectual curiosity and higher – level thinking (Cornelius – white, 2007). Freedom and choise motivate students to be active participants in the learning process.

The Statement of the Problem:

The lack of motivational strategy by most teachers is mainly responsible for classroom learning problems. In most primary schools pupils find it difficult to cope with their class work either in writing or reading. Furthermore, most of them disliked the teachers due to the manner he or she handles the subjects. Most of the classroom was teacher centred instead of the child centred. He was the sole authority in the classroom.

It was the responsibility of the school authority to evaluate the learning situation in the classroom but they were silent over the issue.

Learning cannot be effective in the classroom without learning materials. The researcher observed this problem in the school the study was carried out. For instance, there was

no proper blackboard in the class or writing materials to encourage pupils. In addition, there was lack of furniture in the rooms such as desks or chairs. Most of them sat on the floor to write.

Finally, most of the methodology used by the teachers failed to encourage learners to develop interest in the classroom.

Purpose of Study:

The motive behind the study came from personal observation of learning situation going on in the classroom and the problems associated to it.

Specific Objectives:

The objectives of the study was to:

1. Identify motivational strategies that are effective in the classroom.
2. Find out the effectiveness of both positive and negative reward in the classroom situation
3. Recommend ways how best learning can be enhanced in the classroom.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study was a case study conducted in Rusau Primary School. Rusau is located close to student village hostel, University of JOS in Plateau State, Nigeria. The population of the study mainly consist of primary three pupils for the case study. Out of the primary three pupils, only one was selected for the study with major problems in reading and writing. Before selection, the researcher administered test to spot those with difficulties in the two areas (Reading and Writing).

The researcher collected data mainly from primary source. The primary data was collected through interviews, observation and general test.

General Information on the Child

Name of the Child: Aminu Adamu

Age: 8 years

Sex: Male

School: Rusau Primary Rusau, Plateau State

Nationality: Nigeria

Tribe: Hausa

Father's Name: Mallam Audu Adamu

Mother's Name: Hauwa Adamu

Father's Occupation: Farmer

Mother's Occupation: Petty Trader

Parents Educational Background: Non- Formal Education

Looking at the nature of the child home background and the general information about the school, the parents and the teachers have lot to do in order to motivate pupils to develop interest in learning. This can be done through praise, taken, interaction and encouragement toward academic work.

Interview with the Child:

The researcher interviewed Aminu about his family background. He was not from literate home where children were given the necessary encouragement or motivation. The child lacked basic learning materials. The parents do not provide breakfast or lunch for him.

According to Aminu, the teacher do not pay much attention to him in class. They called him "Good for nothing".

Observation on the Child:

The child came from poor family where the parents do not care much about formal education.

Aminu hardly came to school with learning materials. Breakfast or lunch was not provided for him at home and as a result usually slept in class.

It was also observed that the teachers do not use motivational techniques to encourage the slow learners. More attention was given to those that performed better in class. Token or praise was not encouraged in class especially for those who failed to mention up in class. The used of negative reward was more rampant than positive reward.

Test Conducted for the Child:

For the researcher to evaluate the child academic performance and identify factors, responsible for it, tests were conducted on writing and reading. Aminu performed poorly on the two subjects. It was observed that proper teaching methodology was not adopted by the teachers to assist the child. His academic performance was below primary three level.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Effect of Positive Incentive on the Child Academic Performance.

The researcher gave the first test to Aminu by writing the twenty –six letters in the alphabet and to identify the vowels from those letters. At the end of the exercise, he was able to write ten letters correctly. The rest were either turn down or not written correctly. For instance, d was written as b, M for W, V for U. He was not able to identify the vowels such as "AEIOU".

To make Aminu happy, the researcher gave him new exercise book and pencil. He was also taught the twenty –six letters in the alphabet (A to Z) and the vowels (AEIOU). He was praised for any additional letters written correctly. He was given reward such as biscuit and other items and also developed close relationship with Aminu. After one week, he was able to memorize the twenty six letters and the vowels. Aminu and the researcher converted the twenty –six letters into a new song titled "ABCD". The vowels were also converted to another song titled "AEIOU" meaning "I own you".

The child was rewarded for pronouncing and identifying the vowels "AEIOU" because "I own you". The techniques helped him to develop more interest and learnt them faster.

The researcher also allowed the child in decision making by allowing him to write the letters in he loves. Aminu was able to write all the letters in the alphabet and the vowels. Positive incentives such as praise, reward and high marks were used rather than negative incentives such as threats or promise of low marks. The activities helped him to improve on his academic performance.

Through close interaction, the boy was able to improve in writing, reading and spelling. He cultivated the idea of self

reading. Here the issue of safety and belongingness in the class made Aminu to be hard working.

To incorporate Aminu into the school community, he was assigned to a small group that pursue common goal together. He was appointed as group leader. The boy was able to relate to other pupils in class through group reading and writing. The researcher discovered that promoting co-operation among pupils in class motive them to develop team spirit.

IV. CONCLUSION

The main aim of the study was to examine motivational strategies and its effect on academic performance. The study was carried out of Rusan Primary School on Primary three pupil who was considered to be a slow learner. Much attention was not given to him due to his poor academic performance especially in reading and writing. But through motivation, the boy improved in class. He was allowed to initiate idea on his own and he was also encouraged to participate fully in class without threat. He was also encouraged to cooperate with others through group work.

Recommendations:

In view of the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. The teacher should endeavour to measure social relationships among pupils in class.

2. The teacher should inspire both love and respect in his pupils.
3. The classroom teacher should develop teaching methodology that will promote learning in class.
4. Government and Non-governmental Organizations to provide in – service training for teachers for effective classroom management.
5. Train and qualify teachers to teach at lower primary school.

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