

Assignment 4: Choice Newspaper article:

Utilizing Intrinsic Motivation in Teaching: A new Age of Teaching?

According to sociologist Eric Jensen and studies such as the Choice theory, solutions for motivating one's students are already here – but what are they?

By Tobias Haubenwallner, 20.03.2020

Teachers have been dealing with the problem of demotivated students basically as long as schools have existed. According to many of them, this is caused by the different levels competence inherent in every class – advanced students are not sufficiently challenged by the material, so they only do what is absolutely necessary to achieve their grades and nothing more. However, sociologists such as Eric Jensen lay the blame for this on the reward based systems many schools operate on – and offer an alternative. They argue that, by replacing external motivation with internal motivation, one can create an environment which can motivate the whole class – whether the students are advanced or not.

But how does one do this? First of all, what external motivation is has to be clarified. It refers to the reward and punishment based systems of learning which are common in today's school system – grades, additional homework and the likes are used to motivate the students to do their work – which is obviously work they wouldn't want to do otherwise. Therein lies the problem. The work is often repetitive and only attacking one singular intelligence of the students. In short, they tend to find it boring. Internal, or intrinsic motivation on the other hand, comes from the students themselves. Since they do not feel forced to do something, the end results will not only be more creative, but generally of a higher quality. To achieve this, the teacher has to create a productive learning atmosphere. According to the Glasser's Choice Theory, human elements are vital to students success in school. If they can tell the teacher cares about and respects them, they will feel more inclined to work harder in their lesson. This can be done by respecting the students' needs. The need to belong, the need for power, the need for freedom and the need for fun are all driving forces behind any human endeavour, learning included. By letting the students have a say in which topics, methods, group sizes, resources or presentation formats to use, one can address these needs and create a differentiated and varied lesson. This principle can even be applied to homework. By letting students choose in which way to approach a topic, they might regard homework as a creative outlet, and thus more worthwhile.

All in all, one has to consider that this is not only helpful for the students, but also for the teachers themselves. After all, it makes correcting and assessing much more engaging and, more importantly, it makes teaching the lesson itself much more engaging as well. Although many teachers might view this as a higher workload than the lesson planning used primarily thus far, the least that can be expected is to try it – after all, how can one complain about a lack of motivation while not being motivated enough to try and change it.