PEER-LED TEAM LEARNING
LEADER TRAINING

ARE INTERNALLY-MOTIVATED STUDENTS MORE CONFIDENT?

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Every student has a different reason for being in the workshop class. Does this motivation affect their expectations? Motivation can be seen as the engine that drives us. Every action we perform is the result of our motivation to perform it. This concept has been studied by many psychologists, including Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (Richard, 2012). Their studies describe two different kinds of motivation.

External: The subject is compelled to perform the task because of an outside influence. This could mean that he or she will be rewarded, or praised.

Internal: The subject is compelled to perform the task by their own desire. He or she would perform the task without the prospect of a reward.

Internal motivation is more desirable than external motivation, but it is not always achieved. In order to explain this, Deci and Ryan have put forth their concept of Self Determination. They believe that all humans are born with the tendency to seek out chances to "master and integrate new experiences." There can be obstacles in the way of this goal, and tools to help, created by the social environment. They found that the following factors contribute to internal motivation:

Competence: The stronger a person feels he or she understands a concept, the more likely he or she will be motivated to explore it further.

Autonomy: The more a person feels he or she can perform a task without assistance, the more motivated that person is to perform it.

Relatedness: The more a person can relate to and care for others, the stronger he or she desires to perform for them.

Deci and Ryan's theory suggests that the more a leader can foster these three factors in people, the more likely those people will become internally motivated.

Observations

I found that the students with the more obvious signs of being intrinsically motivated were the same students who expected good grades. These students found the workshop to be helpful in their study of chemistry, and would complete the workshop problems if they weren't required. Some of the students who expect A's actually would do the workshop problems because they enjoy them. The students who expect the lower

grades, on the other hand, do not share as great an appreciation for the workshop. While some appreciated the help workshop provided for them in general chemistry, they were only taking the class in order to graduate, or for other externally motivated reasons.

In order to achieve intrinsic motivation, competence is important. The students who anticipate the highest grades clearly would evaluate themselves as being competent. The belief that the students are competent relates deeply to their being internally motivated.

Implications

The fact that motivation relates so strongly to self-expectations has tremendous implications on educational theory. While my observations reveal a link between competence and internal motivation, it does not determine whether one causes the other. It is possible that in order to become competent, students must be internally motivated, or it may be the other way around. This does imply, however, that competent students are, in this instance, internally motivated. This is to be celebrated, because competent students are the ones who are more likely to succeed in life, and motivated students are the most likely to really appreciate their success.

The more we work on helping our workshop students feel confident in their abilities in general chemistry, the better they will be for it. Not only will they do well in the course, but they will enjoy doing well, for the work they put into it, and the result they get out of it.

Conclusion

While I discuss only one aspect of Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory, that the more internally motivated students are the ones who feel the most secure in their knowledge, this is nonetheless very helpful. To encourage students to remain internally motivated we should try to focus on building up their competence, as well as autonomy and relatedness. As we help them, as workshop leaders, to grasp an understanding of general chemistry, they will become more motivated to help themselves learn it. The course may only last a semester, but what we impart in the students could be much more permanent.

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