

Boost intrinsic motivation in your students: practical tips!

Many educators struggle with low student motivation: students don't read the material, don't participate in classes, and slack off in groups without actively contributing. Joost Jansen in de Wal, a professor in Educational Sciences, addresses these issues by applying principles from motivation theories in his teaching.

During this EduSnacks webinar, he discussed concrete steps educators can take, based on self-determination theory, to prevent these motivation problems. He shared successful practical examples and course designs that align with students' interests and needs.

In this article, we delve into the practical tips and applications of intrinsic motivation that Joost Jansen in de Wal discussed.

Self-determination theory: the foundation of motivation

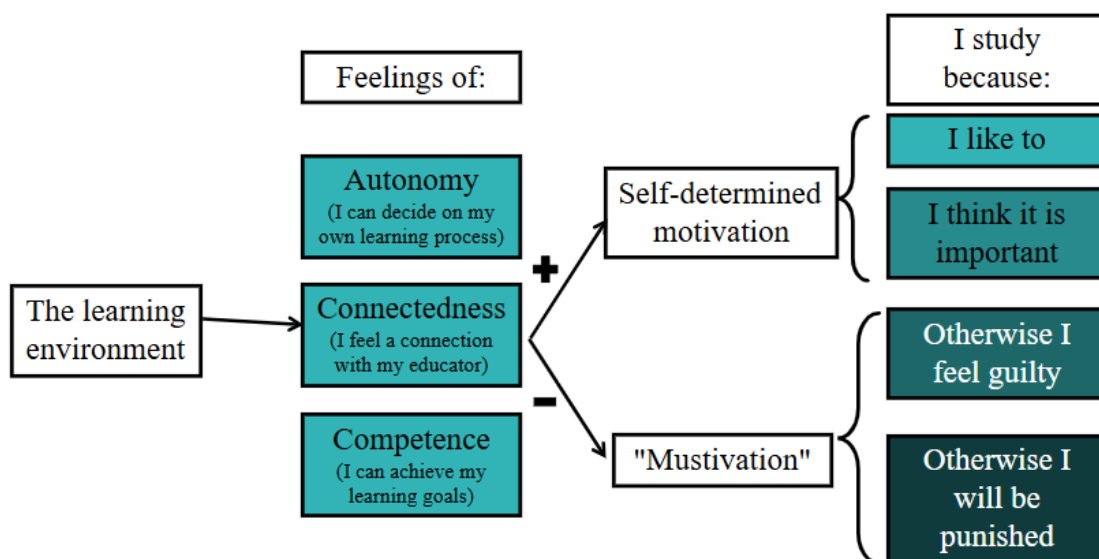


Figure 1. The self-determination theory

Central to the webinar is the self-determination theory, which asserts that the type of motivation students have is crucial. According to the theory, motivations range from least beneficial, such as learning out of fear of punishment, to most beneficial, like learning because it's enjoyable. Intrinsic motivation, where students learn due to the satisfaction the activity itself provides, is the most sustainable.

Three psychological needs

To foster intrinsic motivation, self-determination theory posits that three psychological needs must be fulfilled:

1. **Autonomy:** Students need to make decisions about their own learning process.
2. **Relatedness:** A sense of connection with the instructor and learning environment is essential.
3. **Competence:** Students need to feel capable of achieving their learning goals.

Supporting autonomy

The instructor stressed the importance of providing choices to support student autonomy. He distinguished between two types of choices:

- **Option choices:** Students choose between different activities (e.g., writing an essay or giving a presentation). These choices must align with their interests to be effective.
- **Action choices:** Students have the freedom to decide how they will tackle a task (e.g., a project or advisory report). This encourages creativity and ownership.

Practical example: Joost Jansen in de Wal allowed students in his 'Lifelong Learning' course to decide how to demonstrate they had met the course objectives. This led to diverse and creative outputs, such as employer advisories and critical evaluations of education policies.

Supporting competence

Providing autonomy can initially cause uncertainty among students. Therefore, it's important to offer structure and support:

- **Examples:** Show students successful assignments from previous years.
- **Clear expectations:** Communicate what is expected of students.
- **Process support:** Offer interim feedback and weekly assignments that contribute to the final product, such as processing literature and integrating it into their work.

Joost Jansen in de Wal described how he guides students step-by-step and provides examples, making them feel supported when they dive into challenging tasks.

Staying engaged with your students

Engagement can be further stimulated through personal attention and informal moments:

- **Personal conversations:** Encourage students to discuss their ideas after classes.
- **Feedback:** Provide personalized feedback on their plans and progress to help them achieve the course objectives.

Small design choices

In addition to major design choices, such as altering the overall assessment, educators can also make smaller design choices to support student motivation:

- **Weekly assignments:** Integrate choice into weekly assignments.
- **Interactive lectures:** Set goals for small groups to achieve and discuss the results collectively.

Conclusion

Applying self-determination theory and fulfilling the psychological needs can lead to highly engaged and motivated students. Providing clear structure and support can resolve uncertainties and create an environment where intrinsic motivation is fostered.

The practical tips from this EduSnacks webinar show that it's possible to strengthen students' intrinsic motivation by giving them more autonomy, and supporting their competence and relatedness. This leads to deeper engagement in their learning process and greater enthusiasm for their courses.

This article has been created using UvA AI Chat and based on the EduSnacks webinar on 26th of September 2024. All AI generated text has been checked and edited for accuracy. EduSnacks is a series of 30-minute webinars hosted online via Zoom. These bi-monthly sessions offer you the latest insights from educational research and provide you with practical tips that you can instantly apply in your teaching practice. Hungry for more knowledge? Visit our [webpage](#) for more information!