An exploration of Existential Needs and Self-Determination Theory within an educational context

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Abstract

In this concept paper ideas of the psychology of motivation in the twenty first century are explored as an introductory study on motivation theory. Drawing from the work of Leontiev (2012 a, b) and Längle (1999, 2012), as well as Deci and Ryan (1985, 2000), an overview of existentialist motivation is presented. Längle (1999) proposes that the four fundamental existential motivations centre on having a place in the world, a valued existence, a shared existence, and a meaningful existence. This section is followed by an analysis of the more traditional and mainstream approach of Self-Determination Theory, which explores issues of self-regulation and self-determination from existential underpinnings. Further exploration of Self-Determination Theory and the needs of competence, autonomy and relatedness, as well as the conceptualisation of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as a continuum, follows. Concluding comments are made as to the relevance of the overview for an educational context.

INTRODUCTION

The field of motivation science can be approached from a historical perspective, where major developments in scientific and educational theories will reveal certain approaches to motivation and human behaviour. According to Leontiev (2012), human behaviour was initially explained as stemming from internal causes: the individual. He terms this an 'Aristotelian way of thinking'. This viewpoint was replaced by behaviourist thinking, and external causes were deemed as the primary cause (or origin) of human actions. Currently another paradigm shift can be observed and researchers and prominent theories now favour explaining human behaviour as determined by the interaction between external and internal causes (Leontiev, 2012a). Normally a historical approach of motivation would include Drive Theory, Conditioning Theory, Cognitive Balance Theory and Humanistic Theory, and approaches deemed recent or contemporary normally comprise Achievement Motivation, Attribution Theory, Self-Determination, and Self-Regulation Theories. Within Social-Cognitive and other approaches several models have been developed (Schunk, 2009).

While multidisciplinary in essence, motivation science needs to be informed by research, and claims need to be substantiated by empirical data, embedded within a specific scientific theory, e.g. Social Cognitive Theory or Constructivist Theory (Pintrich, 2003). However, motivation can also be approached from a more existential perspective, where the underlying 'forces' or 'needs' determining human behaviour, will provide some answers on the meaningfulness of life in general.

Motivation forms an important part of learning theory. Therefore a basic understanding of motivation is essential for explaining why, for instance, sometimes both children and adults with similar abilities, seem to blossom when faced with tasks and challenges, while other sseem lethargic and disinterested.

In this paper two perspectives on human motivation are explored. The first part takes a brief look at some contributions on fundamental motivational issues. It is argued that some understanding of motivation as a more philosophical concept is crucial for the development of understanding of the nature of human behaviour. The second

part discusses Self-Determination Theory as an example of a well-developed contemporary theory of human motivation, and its relevance for education and learning.

MOTIVATION AND HUMAN BEHAVIOUR

In a conversation about human behaviour, a central question would always be: what moves (wo) man? Is the ultimate goal in life to fulfil basic needs: to survive, and to procreate? Is the human being ultimately driven by basic instinct? If this is true, there are very few differences between man (as a higher form of life) and other mammals. On the other hand, if the human can be seen as different from other animal species, how can one describe these essential differences? What is the impact of self-consciousness of the environment and the cultural position on the nature of human activity? Philosophers over time have grappled with these issues, and, in line with the development of scientific theory, differing answers to the motivation of human behaviour have been given.

An existential view of motivation: Alfried Längle

An existential view of motivation is necessarily a theoretical and philosophical one. To ask what moves man, is also to ask what is it like to be a human. How does man perceive himself, and what are the crucial aspects and events within his life that ground his behaviour, but also, ultimately, give meaning to his life? In this respect, this orientation, according to Längle, has strong relations to the concept of *Dasein* of Heidegger (Längle, 2012). A human being has an awareness of being in the world, which would include the ways the individual becomes aware of the self and of being in a relation to the outside world.

Motivation, Consciousness and Self-Regulation, a work edited by Leontiev, is partly devoted to some perspectives on this existentialist view of motivation. According to Längle (2012, p. 28):

> Existential analysis has an integrative view of motivation. Motivation arises from a correspondence between external

stimulus and subjective, inner potential. Motivation also arises from the continuous inner needs of the individual. This includes a spiritual, and, therefore, essentially human, striving to become oneself by seeking engagement and communication with others. This concept of motivation is rooted in the fact that existence can be characterized as '*being* in the world'. This means being – and becoming – an integral part of the world, and living '*in between'* both internal and external worlds…Conceptualizing existence as an inseparable connection with *otherness* and with a 'world', in a similar way as Heidegger (1979), in the concept of Dasein, forms the basis of motivation.

Existential needs thus have to do with the fact that one is aware of one's position in the world, and also conscious of the self: you are thus living within (and communicating with) your own (internal) world, whilst also defining the external world in which you find yourself. The 'gratification' of existential needs results in a 'feeling of humanness' and their thwarting may result in feelings of 'humiliation' or the 'loss of conscious self-reflection' (Leontiev, 2012a, p. 16).

A central question regarding motivation would therefore always be whether motivation stems from the 'inner world', or from interaction with our material or spiritual environment. According to Alfried Längle, one of the most important questions that must be answered, is whether motivation is *intrinsic*, is inherent in the human spirit, or whether we as humans need to be motivated from *outside* (Längle, 2012). It seems as if Längle, as well as Leontiev, see motivation as the result of the interrelation between the self and the world, and also that motivation stems from the notion of 'being in the world'. Deci and Ryan (1985) indicate similarly that, 'human beings act on their internal and external environments to be effective and to satisfy the full range of their needs'.

In his writings, representing present day existential psychological views, Alfried Längle stresses the fact that motivation is the result of the continuous interaction between the individual and the environment: 'Motivation is understood as engaging in that continuous flow that is established by nature between the person and his/her world' (Längle, 2012, p. 30). From an existential point of view, motivation thus stems from the process of being provoked towards interaction, of dealing with encounters. This perception of motivation sees behaviour thus not as

a reflex action, but a 'decided act'. Längle (2012, p. 31) differentiates three steps in this motivational process: first there is the recognition of something that speaks to us and challenges us towards action – we thus recognize the 'situational meaning'. The next step has to do with harmonizing – and comparing the situational meaning or value with our own values, attitudes and capabilities – and thus deciding whether we would want to engage in action. After the development of 'inner consent' the person actively harmonizes and integrates the new value into a wider meaning or context.

This understanding of motivation as a conscious decision to act, stemming from an evaluation of worth and own capabilities, is based on the concept of free will and choice. In this respect the views of Victor Frankl are clearly central. The *will to meaning* is central to human motivation. Frankl's Logotherapy is based on the fact that man has a natural will to meaning (to find meaning in life) and constantly has the choice to find this meaning in a variety of ways (Leontiev, 2012b). This primary motivation is rooted in the 'spiritual (noetic or personal) dimension of (wo)man' and Längle concludes that Frankl's primary motivation 'turns out to be an immediate consequence of the realization of the person's will, the human expression of freedom' (Längle, 2012, p. 29).

Längle thus argues that man is constantly provoked into dialogue and action – with the 'given facts of our existence'. He identifies four realities that can be called 'fundamental existential motivations' or existential questions (Längle, 1999; Längle, 2012):

Ich bin – kann ich sein? (I am – can I be?) This condition arises from the basic (astounding) fact that I am in the world. In order to claim my 'place in the world' I need to accept the protection, space and support that life offered me.

Ich lebe – aber mag ich auch leben? (I live, but do I like it?) In order to have a meaningful life, one needs relationships, time and closeness. One needs to experience meaningful relationships, spend time on worthy things and experience closeness with things, plants, animals, and people. Fulfilment of these conditions gives a sense of the depth of life and a feeling for the value of life. To experience these relationships also requires an action from my side – one has to seize life and actively turn towards a relationship (even if it might bring

grief?).

Ich bin ich, aber darf ich so sein? (I am myself – may I be like this?) This dimension has to do with finding and appreciating one's own uniqueness and judging one's life according to one's ethical code and boundaries. 'The sum of these experiences builds *one's own worth* of what identifies my own self at its core: the self-esteem'.

Ich bin da – aber wofür ist es gut? (I am there – for what is it good?) In order to find fulfilment and be fruitful, one has to transcend oneself and have a 'field of activity, a structural context and a value to be realized in the future'. This implies that one has to have a life orientation – find a place where one is needed and feels integrated in the larger context of life. This would require that I not only expect from life, but that I be willing to do and give to others (not necessarily only to people).

Längle (2012, p. 37) concludes that the conceptual basis for motivation is thus based on a 'connection to the world, with one's life, with one's being a person, and with meaning'.

The Self-Determination Theory of Deci and Ryan: Existentialist roots

While many mainstream motivational theories do not touch upon foundational issues, Self-Determination Theory, as developed and refined by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (Deci & Ryan, 1985; further elaborated on in various publications, e.g. Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000) can be seen as having some roots in existentialist views and addresses fundamental needs. According to this theory man has three basic needs that can be seen as 'vital necessities' linked to the 'uniquely human aspect of being' (Leontiev, 2012a, p. 19). In Self-Determination Theory 'needs specify *innate psychological nutriments that are essential for ongoing psychological growth, integrity, and well-being'* (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 229). These needs (for competence, autonomy and relatedness) are 'innate for all humans in all cultures and apply in all situations' (Pintrich, 2003; Andersen, Chen & Carter, 2000). Motivation – in self-determinist terms – is thus seen as dynamic, and in a state of development as the result of the interaction with the environment. Without satisfaction of these needs, man will not find it

possible to develop in a healthy and optimal way.

As indicated, the first need is the need for *competence.* This need refers to the desire of man to be competent in his interactions with the environment. Humans have the need to master their world and experience feelings of being capable. Interpersonal events and structures can conduce feelings of competence (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 58).

Secondly, humans strive to fulfil the need for *autonomy*, i.e. to be in control of their life. This need literarily has to do with the desire to determine one's life and behaviour. It involves integration and freedom to live a healthy life (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 231). The opposite of this would be a life that is controlled by the environment, be it external control by humans or other physical factors.

The third need (the need for *relatedness*) links to the existential needs of Längle and refers to the need for humans to be in a relation to the world, to experience closeness and contact, and to belong to a family or a group. This third need, termed by Andersen et al. (2000, p. 270) as a 'need to human connection', includes the need for 'tenderness, warmth, emotional responsiveness and acceptance'.

Gagné and Deci (2005, p. 337) further states that Self-Determination Theory (SDT) 'defines these needs as universal necessities, as the nutriments that are essential for optimal human development and integrity'. The authors then continue:

> According to this definition, something is a need only to the extent that its satisfaction promotes psychological health and its thwarting undermines psychological health. Using this definition, the needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness are considered important for all individuals, so SDT research focuses not on the consequences of the strength of those needs for different individuals, but rather on the consequences of the extent to which individuals are able to satisfy the needs within social environments.
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> (Gagné & Deci, 2005, p. 337).

It seems clear that, within this theory, if all three these needs (of

competence, autonomy and relatedness) cannot be satisfied, the human will not be able to function optimally. The Theory of Self-Determination – and especially the development of the concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation – has had a profound impact on motivation in education contexts (see Deci & Ryan, 1985, chapter 9) and will therefore be discussed in more detail in the next section.

Leontiev (2012a, p. 21), also with reference to the needs as described by Maslow and Nuttin, in his overview of 'fundamental' motivations, postulates that all existential needs have the following commonalities: 'on the first level we find basic needs for vital development and biological contact; on the second one the basic needs for personality development and psychosocial contact; on the third level the basic needs for existential support and universal integration'. He further concludes that future trends in fundamental motivations will continue to explore the differences in motivation between human and subhuman species, but also between 'obligatory' and 'facultative' motivations. His integrative model deals with self-actualisation on three levels: that of biological existence, social systems and personal existence.

For the existentialist motivation theorist, motivation ultimately involves the 'movement of the will' – and thus reflects human freedom of choice. A fundamental structure of any motivation will include: 'the connection with the world, with one's life, with one's being a person, with meaning' (Längle 1999; 2012). To simplify these quite complicated and complex views, one could argue that the essential existentialist view of motivation is thus found in human: world relationships, and includes biological, social and existential aspects.

Motivation and Education

The term motivation stems from the Latin verb *movere* (to move), and the study of motivation in various disciplines then has to do with factors that instigate and affect human behaviour, whether it be in the personal arena, the work place the classroom, or on the sports field. To be motivated means *to be moved* to do something, to engage in activities (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and thus motivation can be described as the 'system of processes and mechanisms that bring a living creature into motion' (Leontiev, 2012a, p. 9). The study of motivation

also includes processes of 'instigating and sustaining goal directed behavior' (Schunk, 2009, p. 509). Pintrich (2003, p. 669) indicated the object of theorising around motivation a concern with the 'energization and direction' of behaviour, and concludes that it 'comes down to a central question of what do individuals want and whether there are basic needs that define what people want.'

In education, goals are central, but the paths of reaching these goals (via an instructional model) and the norms and values of individuals and society also play a role. Very broadly, and without reflecting any particular cognitive theoretical perspective, Schunk (2009) gives the following overview of motivation in educational contexts: Students enter the classroom with certain *goals* in mind (to learn, to be first in class, or even to make new friends). They also have *expectations* and *beliefs* about their own potential to master learning, as well as about the *value* and *consequences* of learning. Apart from the fact that they experience different *emotions* about learning (the affects), they also receive varying levels of support during the process. During learning various instructional, contextual and personal variables come into play. A number of personal variables are closely associated with motivation, e.g. their self-regulation, the choice of activities, as well as the determination and perceptions of the student. After task completion, the student will reflect on the outcomes, and attribute success or failure to different causes. Students who do well should then sustain their self-efficacy and motivation for learning.

Self-Determination Theory and Education

Self-Determination Theory (first formulated in Deci & Ryan, 1985) has as its central feature the idea that man has an innate need and capacity to steer his own life – and this involves choice: 'self-determination is the capacity to choose, and to have those choices…be the determinants of ones actions' (p. 38). One would engage in a task if it is aligned with own goals, and, as already indicated in the previous section, if it enhances feelings of *competence*, *autonomy* and *relatedness*. In an ideal setting humans thus would be naturally motivated to engage in activities supporting his existential needs. Self-determined behaviour is initiated autonomously and is characterised by 'choice, flexibility, and absence of pressure' (Bergin and LaFave, 1998). A lonely person

might thus deliberately and willingly seek companionship, and a less effective person might naturally strive to perceive himself as more competent. If an activity has no relation to these innate needs, one might argue that an individual would not experience any motivation to engage in it. However, Ryan and Deci (2000) point out that humans are more complex than this argument allows. It is part of human nature to pursue a 'unified sense of self" and to engage in interesting activities and to seek connections with individuals and groups. If the three basic needs are satisfied, it provides support ('nutriments') to engage in other activities:

> These inherent integrative tendencies require nutriments of need satisfaction to be sustained and for positive consequences to follow, but need satisfaction is not necessarily the aim of these actions. Thus, for example, it is adaptive for children to play, but they do not play to feel competent. Similarly, curiosity-based exploration, openness to the sensory experiences of nature, and assimilation of values extant in one's social milieu – all natural activities – require the nutriments of basic need satisfaction to operate optimally, but these activities are not necessarily (indeed may seldom be) consciously intended to satisfy basic needs.
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> (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 230).

Based on the above, Self-Determination Theory firstly distinguishes between *motivation* and *demotivation* (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Especially in an educational context, one would be either motivated to engage in a task because it is inherently interesting, or one would have no interest to engage in it. This is many a time the situation within reading for pleasure contexts. If behaviour does not result from an innate need or curiosity, and one still engages in it, other reasons were at work. In such cases, the engagement in an activity or task would be the result of other causing factors, e.g. coercion and force, or external reward upon completion of the task.

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

Therefore, further, two types of motivation can be distinguished:

intrinsic and *extrinsic* motivation, a distinction used in various motivation theories. Ryan and Deci (2000) use the following distinction as point of departure: Intrinsic motivation refers to doing something because it is 'inherently interesting or enjoyable', while extrinsic motivation refers to doing something 'because it leads to a separable outcome'. In extrinsic motivation the focus is thus not on the activity itself, but rather on an outcome, e.g. the rewards (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Moran, Diefendorff, Kim & Liu, 2012). A central issue in the class room will thus be whether learning tasks are pursued because of enjoyment of the activity itself, or whether – as many a time in the case of reading – the motivation rather stems from the possible outcomes and educational value attached.

Intrinsic motivation

Intrinsic motivation can be regarded as the prototype of self-determined activities (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Intrinsic motivation has less to do with outcomes and consequences of tasks. It can be described as spontaneous, and the natural pleasure of engaging in the activity or task is the fundamental motivation for behaviour. Experiences of fun and challenge, and an inherent interest in the activity is the reason for action. Linked to basic needs, one could thus argue that intrinsically rewarding activities lead to feelings of happiness and well-being. This is important for human development and also a marked feature of human nature. An engagement in reading or learning in this case would be for the pleasure of the activity itself.

An important point to be noted regarding intrinsically motivated behaviour, is that it is task dependent: individuals are intrinsically motivated for some tasks (e.g. reading about soccer, or painting) and will engage in it out of choice, without expecting any reward. Engaging in the activity is reward in itself. For other types of tasks this intrinsic motivation does not exist (e.g. reading about history, or cleaning and organising the painting utensils).

Deci and Ryan developed Cognitive Evaluation Theory (1985), a sub theory of Self-Determination Theory, to address factors undermining and developing intrinsic motivation, relating it to the fundamental needs discussed above:

To enhance intrinsic motivation, feelings of *competence* (efficacy) should be fostered. Tasks should therefore be experienced as challenging and rewarding. Furthermore, research has shown that regular *feedback on positive performance* further enhances intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985, p. 81). However, these experiences of competence, must be accompanied by a feeling of *autonomy* (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 58). The decision to engage in behaviour rests within the self. One should thus perceive behaviour done because of *choice*, and as self-determined. Intrinsic motivation thus further implies a high degree of perceived internal *control* (Pintrich, 2003).

Relatedness also plays a role in intrinsic motivation. According to Andersen et al.(2000), *relatedness* is more important than normally perceived within Self-Determination Theory, and this 'sense of connection' will possibly impact positively on autonomy. Intrinsic motivation will flourish in a *warm and caring environment*, where relatedness is experienced, e.g. between a student and a teacher (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p.235).

Motivation is not static. Intrinsic motivation can increase or diminish due to an impact on competence, autonomy and control, and can thus be affected by, e.g. offering rewards for previously internally motivated behaviour, or being in a threatening environment.

Important for educators, for teachers and parents, would thus be the question on how to enhance intrinsically motivated behaviour, because it culminates in high quality learning and achievement. Actions and responses of *teachers* need to develop and support feelings of competence and self-determination, instead of focusing on external rewards. Positive feedback builds feelings of competence (and self-efficacy) and will increase intrinsic motivation, while repeated negative feedback and criticism will impact negatively on motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

In schools, unfortunately, research has pointed out that intrinsic motivation becomes weaker with each grade and therefore the powerful (even if not always desirable) impact of external factors on motivation needs to be considered.

Extrinsic Motivation

Classically, extrinsically motivated behaviour is termed to be controlled by external factors and 'reinforced' by rewards. Behaviour is embarked upon because of totally external reasons. Within Self-Determination Theory, however, the concept of external motivation has been expanded further to differentiate between types of motivational styles. Not all forms of extrinsic motivation should be regarded as a poor alternative to intrinsic motivation, as externally motivated behaviour can also represent 'active, agentic states' (Ryan & Deci, 2000). While intrinsically motivated behaviour should ideally be developed in individuals and groups in educational and work settings, unfortunately and realistically speaking, humans engage in a variety of activities – sometimes for periods stemming most of their adult lives – that are not inherently pleasurable or enjoyable. Externally motivated behaviour is a fact of life:

> Frankly speaking, because many of the tasks that educators want their students to perform are not inherently interesting or enjoyable, knowing how to promote more active and volitional (versus passive and controlling) forms of extrinsic motivation becomes an essential strategy for successful teaching.

> (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 55).

Self-Determination Theory does not view intrinsic or extrinsic motivation as unitary concepts. In terms of being extrinsically motivated, one can perform a task 'with resentment, resistance, and disinterest or, alternatively, with an attitude of willingness that reflects an inner acceptance of the value or utility of a task'. Self-sanctioned behaviour, assumed with a sense of volition is quite different from feeling pushed into action by external forces. One can thus engage in activities, not because it is inherently so enjoyable, but because it would be instrumental toward achieving a chosen objective in life, or one can comply to do something because you want to 'avoid sanctions' (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Within extrinsic motivation, while widely recognised as a dominant force of motivation, different types can thus be distinguished (as developed later within the Theory of Self-Determination). Central in this argumentation is that extrinsic motivation differs vastly in the *extent* to which it is autonomous.

In Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) this issue is explained using the phrase '*internalization and integration* of values and behavioral regulations': Internalisation refers to the process of "taking in" a value and integration to the process of making a value one's own. Through these processes behaviour can become more self-determined.

Using these concepts, one can thus interpret motivated behaviour ranging from totally unmotivated, to absolutely and personally committed forms of motivated behaviour.

The sub-theory of Organismic Integration Theory was developed within Self- Determination Theory to describe this continuum of motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000; De Naeghel, Van Keer, Vansteenkiste & Rosseel, 2012). This model differentiates different types of motivation, depending on the degree of self-determination or autonomy involved:

Behaviour	Non self-Determined		Self-determined
Type of Motivation	Amotivation | Extrinsic Motivation	|	Intrinsic motivation
Type of Regulation	Non | *External* Introjected *Identified* Integrated | Regulation | *Regulation* Regulation *Regulation* Regulation |		Intrinsic Regulation
Locus of Causality	Impersonal *External* Somewhat Internal External	*Somewhat Internal* Internal	Internal

Figure 1: The Self-Determination continuum*

* The self-determination continuum, showing the motivational, self-regulatory, and perceived locus of causality bases of behaviors that vary in the degree to which they are self-determined (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 237; Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 61.)

At the extremes one finds *amotivation* (where no motivation for behaviour exists) and *intrinsically motivated behaviour*, which is internally regulated with a total sense of autonomy and where the locus of control is internal. Four other regulatory styles of motivated behaviour are identified, dependent on the extent to which the behaviour is autonomous or externally controlled. *Externally motivated* behaviour is regulated by external factors like rewards or praise; *introjected behaviour* reflect some internalisation of values (and also to avoid guilt or anxiety and pressure because it is the "right thing to do"), but the control is still perceived as outside of (external to) the individual. With *identification* there is a greater amount of internal control and values and goals are self-endorsed. *Integrated behaviour* reflects high internal control and there is "congruence between the self and values and goals" (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The person thus has made the reasons for engaging in the behaviour his/her own. While the activity may not be "enjoyable", the person can identify with the reasons for engaging in this act, e.g. to alleviate suffering (Moran et al., 2012).

Through research Self-Determination Theorists have identified conditions within social contexts that would promote intrinsic motivation and also facilitate the processes of internalisation and integration of externally motivated behaviour. It is pointed out that, while a person's motivation can move within this continuum, there is no sequence of behaviour. Important for education and classroom contexts is that the development of cognitive capacity over time leads to more internalised behaviour.

Gurland and Glowacky (2011, p. 2) rightly argues that "motivation is indexed not by whether individuals engage in an activity or not, but rather by how they *experience* the activity – as interesting, enjoyable, and personally valued versus as pressured or coerced". Thus, genuine interest – a sense of truly ''wanting to'' – is the hallmark of autonomous self-determined motivation. Self-Determination Theory suggests that learning would be facilitated by situations which are less externally regulated, and where more opportunity for internalisation is offered. Bergin and Lafave (1998) further adds that *controlling* events (rewards, threats, assessment) undermine intrinsic motivation, where *informational* events about competence would enhance development towards intrinsic motivation (also see

Cerasoli and Ford, 2014). As such, classrooms should also support the basic human needs of competence, autonomy and relatedness. The question for educators would thus be how to motivate students to be self-determined, to engage in behaviour out of free choice and not because of external pressure. Research quoted by Moran et al., (2012) indicates that academic achievement, perceived competence, and a general sense of well-being are some of the positive impacts of autonomous, internalised motivation in education. Furthermore, Gurland and Glowacky (2011) summarises that offering choice, as well as information on the importance and value regarding tasks, result in more self-determined motivation.

An important clarification, related to extrinsic motivation worth mentioning, is the impact of *rewards* on motivation. Within motivation literature, a recurring conclusion is often that reward (associated with extrinsic motivation) will impact negatively on intrinsic motivation, or hamper the process of moving towards intrinsically motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Monetary reward, especially, is pointed out as having a negative impact on intrinsic motivation, but other types of rewards, e.g. prizes, food and toys, as well as competition, are also deemed to undermine internally regulated behaviour. This is the result of a shift in "perceived locus of control" – external instead of internal. However, as pointed out by Bergin and LaFave (1998): "…when there is zero intrinsic motivation, extrinsic rewards can help by providing incentives for development of competence, which may result in intrinsic motivation. Note that motivation researchers are not unanimous in condemning extrinsic rewards where interest already exists." Similarly, in work contexts, external reward, occurring in different degrees within individuals, will not impact negatively, provided that the behaviour is rather more autonomously motivated than control motivated (Moran et al., 2012).

Schunk (2009) supports this view for educational contexts: "Rewards can help develop skills, self-efficacy and interest when they are linked to one's actual performance and convey that one is making progress in learning". He concludes that grades can function in the same way. As a form of feedback, it can be indicative of increased competence and can build self-efficacy and further intrinsic motivation.

The implementation of the principles of Self-Determination Theory can influence the ways learners and teachers approach learning and

teaching (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier & Ryan, 1991). Teachers should create a social environment where feelings of competence, relatedness and autonomy are fostered. A caring classroom atmosphere where positive feedback and support is given, where learners have some choice as to what and how they learn will ultimately lead to intrinsically motivated behaviour. Education will then become an activity which learners can enjoy and achieve.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Motivation should not be seen as explaining instinctive human behaviour, or as a driving force to fulfil basic needs. In the broadest sense the answer to what motivates an individual could be linked to the existentialist question about the meaning of life. Behaviour is affected by interactions between a person and his internal and external world. These interactions are stirred by a need to understand your place and path in the world, as well as a need to feel competent, and to live a meaningful life in terms of your relationships and values. The life you live is substantially influenced by the choices you make and whether you feel a sense of autonomy in the unfolding of your life.

A brief overview of fundamental motivations has demonstrated the human need for competence, autonomy and relatedness as described in Self-Determination Theory. These needs have relevance for goal setting and the performance of tasks in various settings, including the educational arena.

Self-Determination Theory has contributed specifically towards the study of motivation by identifying different types of external motivation, based on the extent of self-regulation involved. The performance of tasks and the living of a satisfying and healthy life is seen as to be dependent on integrated and intrinsically motivated behaviour where autonomy is high.

Self-Determination Theory has been established as a valuable framework in research on learning and reading motivation, and various teacher strategies have been developed based on the development of integrated, intrinsic and autonomous behaviour. Andersen et al. (2000) concludes that Self-Determination Theory, and the work of Deci

and Ryan, within the present view on psychology – and specifically motivation and personality – ranks amongst the most important theoretical contributions with implications for society (and thus also for education) in the widest sense.

Various researchers, (Vallerand, 2000; Andersen et al., 2000) indicate the need for further expansion of the theory to include the impact of social cognitive aspects, as well as the impact of relationships and individual differences. In reading motivation studies (e.g. Wigfield, 1997; De Naeghel, Van Keer, Vansteenkiste & Rosseel, 2013; Guthrie & Klauda, 2014) Self-Determination Theory has been adopted as a useful framework, which should also be further expanded in future research. The application of Self-Determination Theory in diverse cultures should be included in these attempts.

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