



Diversifying Teaching Strategies to Increase Student Motivation

What is this Research About?

Researchers have examined factors that affect student motivation in the university environment. Lack of motivation can lead to decreased work effort over a student's academic career. Factors including professors' personal and professional qualities, evaluative practices, atmosphere of the classroom, and types of evaluation, can affect motivation levels. In this study, researchers examined the relationship between the use of diversified learning strategies and students' motivation.

What did the Researchers Do?

The researchers conducted a multi-case study following four highly-reviewed instructors, each of whom used at least 6 teaching strategies including lectures, teamwork and instructional games. The researchers interviewed each instructor about their teaching. They also conducted classroom observations. The researchers also assessed motivation from the students' point of view. Students from each of the four instructors' courses completed a detailed questionnaire of the positive and negative contributions to motivation. The questionnaire included instructor qualities (i.e., being understanding), course structure (i.e., strategy effectiveness), and student factors (i.e., relationship with classmates). Finally, the instructors interviewed 10 students from each of the four instructors' courses.

What did the Researchers Find?

The researchers found that diversifying teaching strategies can increase motivation when the context of the course is considered. The effectiveness of the teaching strategy will differ depending on the course discipline. For instance, teamwork might be more beneficial for certain majors like Engineering. Although using diversified teaching strategies can increase motivation, if it does not line up with the student's expectations of the course, additional strategies may decrease motivation. For example, one student described a classroom workshop as "babyish" because it did not match their idea of university maturity. The researchers also found that instructors primarily relied on formal lectures as the main teaching strategy despite often considered de-motivating by students.

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Snapshot

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→ How to Implement this Research in Your Classroom

On its own, varying teaching strategies cannot increase motivation. However, when used appropriately for the course content and paired with positive instructor qualities, student motivation can be improved by using diverse teaching methods. The instructors in the study were highly-reviewed by students because of their diverse learning environment, as shown by the questionnaire. Professors can learn from the four instructors by implementing teaching strategies that match the course content. When possible, a switch from formal lectures as the primary strategy to more interactive strategies can help keep students motivated.

→ Citation

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