

STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THEIR IDEAL TEACHER: INFLUENCE OF STUDENTS' ACADEMIC MOTIVATION

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Abstract

This study aims to examine whether students' level of motivation to learn in a college influences how they perceive an ideal teacher. One hundred and twenty-two students participated in this study. Participants completed a questionnaire on their motivation and ideal teacher's traits. Results support the view that students are generally extrinsically motivated. Students' academic motivation corresponded to their perception of ideal teacher's behaviour. This study recommends that teachers use different instructional strategies to motivate both intrinsic and extrinsic students.

Key words: Ideal teacher, academic motivation, caring, professional

1 INTRODUCTION

Many studies have been conducted on characteristics to define traits of a good teacher. However it is challenging to identify and measure the variables. Many answers and perspectives are available on this issue. Komarraju (2013) pointed out that there is a need to examine from students' perspective as they differ in their preferences for teacher traits. The level of motivation in university is diverse among students. Some students focus on their level of expertise and foundation for their future career while others only focus on getting their qualifications. Hegarty, Brasco & Lu (2012) found that students' motivation is mostly extrinsic. A study by Mirabela-Constanta & Maria-Madela (2011) found that there are more male students who are intrinsically motivated than female students. Many studies have revealed that effective teaching is positively linked with high academic standards, supportive relationship, ethical values, cultural and scientific knowledge, flexibility and adaptive teaching style of teachers (Cermik, 2011; Wood, Badzinski, Fritz, & Yeates, 2012). Apart from the above findings, Alweshahi, Harley & Cook, (2007) discovered that the characteristic of 'communication' plays a more important role than 'demographic' factors. Komarraju (2013) concluded that extrinsically motivated students place high importance of an ideal teacher being "caring" (encouraging and compassionate) and "professional" (knowledgeable and confident). Hartmann, Widner & Carrick, (2013) also found a positive relationship between the student-faculty relationship and academic motivation. In order to improve teaching quality in an educational setting, it is vital to study the influence of

students' motivation and their perception of an ideal teacher. This study aims to examine whether students' motivation to learn in a college influences how they perceive an ideal teacher.

2 METHOD

This study was conducted at Sunway College, Kuala Lumpur (SCKL), during 2014. One hundred and twenty-two students range in age from 16 to 21 ($M = 18.24$, $SD = 0.91$) who were enrolled in Australian Matriculation (AUSMAT) psychology course participated in this study. Participants completed a 56-item likert-type questionnaire on their motivation and ideal teacher's traits. Motivation was assessed using Academic Motivation scale on a 7-point likert scale. Students' perceptions of ideal teacher were assessed using Teacher Behaviour Checklist.

3 FINDINGS

Participants had a higher mean score, 5.6 ($SD = 0.88$) for extrinsic motivation than intrinsic motivation, $M = 4.93$ ($SD = 0.92$). The mean score for professional traits, $M = 4.46$ ($SD = 0.45$), slightly higher than the mean score for caring traits, $M = 4.34$ ($SD = 0.47$). The result of Pearson's correlation showed that there is a significant positive correlation between intrinsic motivation and caring traits, $r(122) = 0.26$, $p < 0.01$. Additionally, a significant positive correlation was found between extrinsic motivation and professional traits, $r(122) = 0.20$, $p < 0.05$. The result of independent-samples t -test showed that current students' ideal teacher behavior score ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 0.31$) is significantly higher than previous students' ideal teacher behavior score ($M = 4.29$, $SD = 0.44$), $t(120) = 2.74$, $p < 0.05$.

4 DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

As a whole, the results support the view that students are generally extrinsically motivated. Students' academic motivation corresponded to their perception of ideal teacher's behaviour. Students who are intrinsically motivated predicted higher importance placed on ideal teacher being professional (knowledgeable and confident). In contrast, this result suggests that students who are extrinsically motivated predicted higher importance placed on teacher's "caring" traits (encouraging and compassionate). This study filled the literature gap since not many research covered the relationship between motivation and ideal teachers' traits. It is essential for teacher to see themselves through student's perspective in order to continually strengthen their practice.

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