MOTIVATION & HUMAN BEHAVIOUR

Introduction

Human development, performance and activities are surprisingly diverse and endless, and people can choose from a wide array of choices of activities depending on their types of motivation. Motivation can be **generally** defined as an internal force that keeps an individual in motion (physical or mental). It is an internal state that maintains and guides action and behaviour. Motivation is one of the most complex and slipperiest concepts in (educational) psychology; it is often used interchangeably (though often misleadingly) with such concepts as **determination, interest, enjoyment, pleasure, will, desire, drive, motive, urge, incentive, arousal, impetus, etc**. In short, it is assumed that any human action should be justified by some or other reason prompting the individual to doing such or such action. As a general rule, without motivation (that is, the heart to do something), there is little possibility (unless urged and obliged to) for an individual to undertake any sort of activity that might lead to his/her development (development in its large and continuing sense).

There is sound evidence from scientific research about motivation that this concept is studied differently from one scientific approach to another; it is possible, nonetheless, **to identify four approaches to motivation: the behaviourist, the humanistic, the sociocultural and the cognitive.**

I- The Behaviourist Approach to Motivation

This approach posits that any action is motivated by the type of **incentives** used to cause that action. By incentives, behaviourists refer to any external element/entity which has the power to lead individuals into and encourage a given action. Incentives can be divided into two: rewards and punishments (**incentives can have a different and large number of forms in life**).

People are engaged in schooling (learning in schools) because they are encouraged by the reward of being a learned (not illiterate and having much knowledge) individual in society; they are also engaged in schooling by being discouraged by ignorance. Other forms of rewards and punishments can be used to motivate a given behaviour, depending on societies,

gender, age and economy, etc. For example, a reward which is motivating for a boy may be discouraging for a girl.

Incentives can be physical or verbal (also abstract). They are used by both parents and schools in order to maintain good (positive) habits and behaviour and/or discourage negative ones.

II-   The Humanistic Approach

This approach states that what keeps people dynamic and permanently on the move is the search to satisfy some needs (needs which allow Man to feel human). This approach holds that needs exert a powerful pressure on individuals; this pressure is an urge (a motivation) that does not stop until the need is satisfied. Abraham Maslow, the leading figure in this approach, classified human needs into five levels split into seven levels (later reevaluated to eight) on what is known as **Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.** He believes that people must satisfy their needs from bottom to top, in an orderly way (it is not possible to move to level three without satisfying levels one and two, for example).
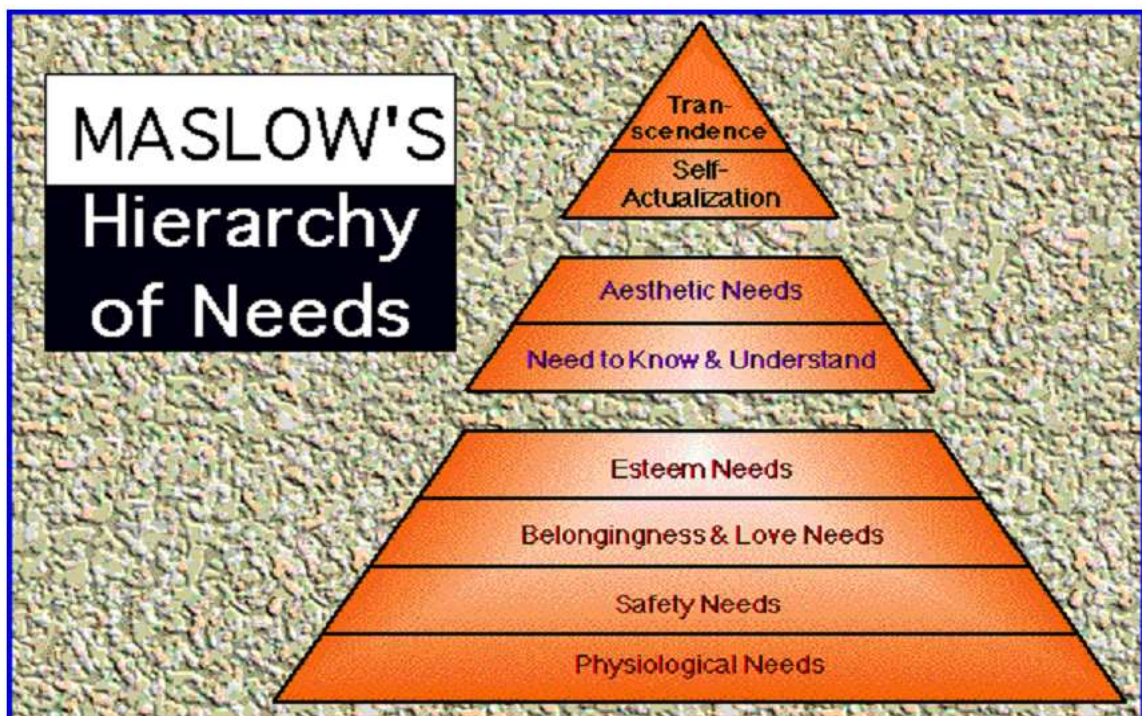
What first motivates people is the satisfaction of their **physiological needs** (eating, drinking, housing, sleeping, being physically fit or going to doctors if sick, having sexual relations, bathing, etc). After satisfying physiological needs, people seek (are motivated) to satisfy **safety needs**. Safety needs can be expressed when people want to be out of and far from

danger and **make positive predictions about the world and the future** (example, parents need **to be sure** that their children will have a good education and a comfortable house, etc.).

Belongingness (also love) needs are at the third level. People cannot live isolated from society; they first need to be respected and accepted by their own family, and by others (society/community in general). Therefore, people will do their best (motivated) in order to understand what leads to acceptance and/or rejection when trying to integrate a group. In other theories, and in general psychology, this belongingness need is called **socialization**. This need to belong can have a wide range of forms: identity, ethnicity, religion, political orientation, scientific organisation, and so on and so forth. Closely related to belongingness are **esteem needs**. Esteem can be defined as having a positive image one's self; this can be through feelings of pride, honour, being important, influential in society, confirmed and valued by others, etc (the opposite is to feel shame and not being at ease in front of people).

Need to know and understand is clearly the most relevant level in terms of what motivates people to learn (with the fourth level, this level distinguishes them from animals). Human beings, since childhood, have an insatiable curiosity to discover and learn about every aspect of the universe (if perceptible to the senses or to the mind!). This curiosity to know can be expressed by children who relentlessly ask their parents: What is this? Where does it go? Why does it look like this? etc. Governments in all parts of the globe expend billions of amounts of money to finance research (scientific or religious) in order to try to answer an endless number of unsolved questions that might lead to humanity's wellbeing and happiness.

Aesthetic needs are at the sixth level; they reflect people's need to appreciate beauty, organization and shape (they all can be physical or ideal/abstract). People seek a house (four rudimentary walls and a roof!) to be protected from cold and heat is at the first level (physiological); but they also want this house to be big, nicely coloured and furnished with a beautiful garden outside! Moral values, reading poems and going to museums are also examples of aesthetic needs.

The seventh level is the self-actualisation level which, according to Maslow, is rarely and never satisfied.

Maslow's theory and ideas can have **many implications in education**—teaching and learning (at home, in society or in schools)—depending on contexts. For example, if a teacher notices that a pupil has problems of concentration this can be interpreted as lack of sleep or

malnutrition; lack of sleep and malnutrition can be an indicator of sickness (not going to doctors) which, in turn, can lead the teacher to understand that the child's parents have no sufficient income (money). Ideally, this would result in the teacher's raising the child's issue to authorities in order to find an appropriate solution to the child's family (at least to help the child attend school).

III- The Sociocultural Approach to Motivation

This approach posits that individuals are permanently called (invited) by their respective societies to integrate and learn the values of (or from) those societies. This is particularly applicable in the case of children. The principle is that humans are social beings; they need to conform to the norms, conventions and rules of their respective societies. Every individual is constantly surveilled by his/her society in terms of good or bad conduct in almost all the society's or community's affaires. When realising this fact, individuals are motivated to (re)adjust their behaviour in order to conform and adapt to the social norms.

Derived from this approach and of direct relevance to SLL and FLL is the theory of **Integrative vs. Instrumental Motivation.** This theory is initially formulated around the bilingual (French and English) Canadian context. It states that people are motivated to learn a second or foreign language either because they want to integrate the target language's community (to move and live with that community) or because they want to use the language as an instrument to reach another goal (job, having online friends, studying abroad, etc).

IV- The Cognitive Approach to Motivation

This is probably the strongest, yet the most complex of the approaches to motivation. It holds that people **can decide** to engage in an activity when and only when **they think** that they can successfully exert a certain control on the activity after evaluating the activity and one's abilities and capacities to engage in that activity. It is called cognitive because many "mind operations" are set at work before generating a decision and taking a decision (example, assessing, measuring, comparing, reflecting, memorising, testing, imagining, guessing, concentrating, paying attention, etc). This approach is represented by many theories, but only three are presented in this lecture (and course): Attribution Theory, Goal Theory and Expectancy Value Theory.

1- Attribution Theory

People relate past experiences to future ones. Therefore, people stand on past experiences as a basis to reflect and evaluate similar experiences in the future. More specifically, they explain and justify past experiences **by attributing some causes to success and failure in that experience**. For example, people can justify success in baccalaureate to personal effort and hard work, but they can also attribute success in baccalaureate to chance and cheating, etc. Attributions (explanations of achievement or failure) in past experiences can be formulated using three criteria: ***locus of control, controllability and stability.***

Locus of control refers to the location of the cause of success or failure; the locus of control can be **internal** to the individual (example: deciding to use an appropriate strategy) or **external** (example: there was a particularly long strike or traffic accident the day of the examination). Controllability refers to whether the individual can control the cause of success/failure or not (example: an individual can decide to (control the) use a particular strategy but cannot control the strike). Stability refers to whether the cause of success/failure is stable or not (that is, it has a regular and predictable mode of operation); for example stikes are not stable because they do not have a fixed time/schedule.

People are of course motivated when they attribute success and failure to causes they can fairly control and which can be reasonably stable, be it an internal or external locus of control (example: next time, there will be no strike (not stable) and I will work very hard (control of time of study) and I will use appropriate strategies (internal).

2- Goal Theory

This theory states that people evaluate their abilities and capacities before they set goals and engage in their pursuit to reach them; **depending on their capacities,** people make decisions to set such or such goal. Accordingly, educational psychologists identified four types of goals (especially in educational contexts); these are **mastery goals (also called learning goals), performance goals, social goals and work-avoidance goals.**

Here is a brief definition of each type. Mastery goals are set when an individual engages in a domain/activity (task) to understand it, to know as much as possible about it (to become competent in that domain); the individual thinks that the activity is worth studying even when there is no reward or encouragement behind and after studying it. This is of course the very

image of a motivated individual and it is highly desirable in education. Performance goals are seen when an individual has as an objective the beating of a competitor in the classroom, showing off and exhibiting performance and high achievements (doing well as reflected by grades) among classmates, and seeking revenge in the upcoming exams! This type of goal is related to competition and is the opposite of the work-avoidance goal. The third type—social goals—are very much like performance goals; they are set by individuals who have the satisfaction and pleasing of others—such as parents and teachers—as a goal (look dad, I got a 20/20 in maths or French—although this can be attributed to cheating!). Work-avoidance goals refer to the goals that individuals set when they do not want to appear ridiculous and hurt their self-esteem and self-image. This is characterised by absenteeism and lack of participation in the classroom whenever they think that the task is absolutely challenging and unsolvable.

Goals have some characteristics; these are clarity, proximity, and feasibility. A goal which is not clear is demotivating; a goal which is highly challenging can be interpreted by some students as not feasible; a goal which is far away (in time or in place) to reach may also be demotivating and discouraging. Teachers should take into consideration the types of goals that learners have by understanding the three characteristics of goals, in order to **expect some kind of progress and achievement after the end of the year for every learner.**

3- Expectancy Value Theory

This theory is a pragmatic and reality-driven one; it encompasses both attribution and goal theories. People decide to engage in a domain/activity when they believe they have chances to successfully reach outcomes (goals) but also when those outcomes are expected to have some kind of value. Both criteria (abilities and the value of the outcome) play a joint role in determining whether the individual will engage in the activity or not (it is reasonable to engage in an activity in which people really have no chances of success, but also it is not reasonable to engage in an activity that has no value and from which I expect no reward or pragmatic use (what's the use of the activity?). In short, at the same time people question their abilities to engage in the task, they also question the outcome expected after completing the activity.

Expectancy value distinguishes among four different types of value derived from different sources: **attainment value, intrinsic value, social value and utility value.** Attainment value

refers to the feasibility of the task/activity—that is, the possibility to attain high levels of mastery and competence in that activity (it is similar to mastery goals). Intrinsic value refers to the enjoyment of the activity per se (to like and be interested in the activity itself). Of course people would be counterproductive if they do things against their will (heart)! Social value is different from intrinsic value because, for the former, the source of motivation comes from society. If an activity is regarded/considered valuable and important by the community, there is more likelihood for people to regard the activity in the same way as the society does—if the contrary , it would be the contrary for the individual (**this resembles both the sociocultural approach to motivation, as well as the performance and social goals in goal theory).** The last type of value is the most pragmatic because it can produce a clear-cut decision as to whether or not to engage in a given domain/activity: it is called utility value. An activity can be attained, intrinsically and socially motivating, but what its utility is in one's life after completing it is very decisive, everything depends on how people intelligently expect positive outcomes after completing the activity. For example, an individual can decide to study Arabic, not English, because he/she believes that this is only key to understand and unravel messages of the Quran and to go to paradise (as a final expected outcome).

General summary

From this presentation, it should be understood that people's motivation is very diverse and complex to study. Teachers should take into consideration every explanation possible provided by one of the four approaches to motivation. It is the teacher's responsibility to motivate learners by carefully devising classroom practice and activities suitable for each learner's type of motivation. After all, without motivation, no engagement is to be hoped and no achievements (good results) to be expected: teachers can be told to seek another job by the education inspector!