

A Discussion on Giving Students Encouragement and Motivation – Importance, Benefits and Solutions

Đỗ Thị Kiểm

ThS. Trường Đại học Hải Phòng

Received: 10/2/2024; Accepted: 15/2/2024; Published: 19/2/2024

Abstract: *This article presents the reasons why students should be encouraged and motivated in study in general and in language classes in particular and various ways to give students encouragement and motivation in order to improve their academic performance*

Keywords: *Encouragement, motivation, students, improve, academic performance*

1. Introduction

We are now living in such a changing world in which there are so many risks such as pandemics and wars. It is difficult for adults to keep stable, motivated and optimistic in this situation, and it seems far more challenging for young people. University students are not the exception. They face many different challenges in both study and social life. It is likely that in order to study well and make progress, besides making their efforts, students need to be greatly encouraged and motivated from teachers.

In this article, the author would like to discuss the reasons why students should be given encouragement and motivation and how to encourage and motivate students to boost forward.

2. Content

2.1. Definitions

2.1.1. Encouragement

In general, encouragement refers to positive words and behaviors that give someone confidence to do something. In education in particular, encouragement is a powerful force in education. As an educator or parent, your words and actions have the ability to lift students up or break them down. Therefore, encouragement is one of the most powerful tools a teacher can use. It is often the key to unlocking untapped potential in children, especially those who have trouble learning.

Encouraging words and actions are often internalized by students and have the power to motivate them to succeed. Encouragement can even be the difference between students completing school and giving up on themselves.

2.1.2. Motivation

Johnstone (1999, p. 146) considered motivation as a stimulant for achieving a specific target. According

to Ryan & Deci (2000), being motivated means making progress or being in motion to do something.

Motivation can be identified by two types such as intrinsic motivation (an internal force) and extrinsic motivation (an external source).

2.2. Importance of giving students encouragement and motivation

Nowadays, students face so many challenges. They have to deal with many different challenges that have never been faced by their teachers, parents, or school administrators. For example, the rapid pace of advancements in learning technologies means students are constantly needing to adjust to new tools and techniques; increasing social media use by young students can have some positive benefits but at the same time it can also increase their risk of exposure to cyberbullying.

Moreover, learning in the context of the global issues such as pandemics or wars adds another layer of challenges on students. For example, during the pandemic time, at school, students have to get used to new rules such as wearing masks and practising social distancing. Besides, students learning remotely may have to deal with feeling isolated, technology limitations, or struggle with the discipline to stay focused on learning.

With so many variables and constant changes to manage, it can be a challenge to find a sense of stability. This is why encouraging and motivating students are so important. Encouragement and motivation can help them to keep going, even in the face of uncertainty. It can provide the much-needed reassurance that they are on the right track, no matter what projects or assignments they are undertaking.

Take the English majors at the Foreign Language Department, Hai Phong University as an example.

Apart from the abovementioned challenges, they have some other specific difficulties. First, most of them have financial difficulties. They come from families whose incomes are the most affected by the changes of the world these days. Second, most students come from the countryside where English is not a major priority among the school subjects. That's why now in the language classes, they expose many difficulties in language learning due to the limited vocabulary, insufficient grammar and poor pronunciation. These difficulties prevent them from being happy and confident students.

2.3. Benefits of giving students encouragement and motivation

Giving students encouragement and motivation brings about invaluable benefits to students. First, according to many psychologists, students whose teachers offer encouragement are more motivated and more likely to continue their education after leaving school than those who don't get the same support. Second, a teacher's encouragement has a much greater impact on students with average grades and parents with limited educations in the sense that it gives these students great motivation in study and life. These students who reported receiving positive feedback from their teachers more often finished high school and pursued college degrees. The impacts of teacher's encouragement are also regarded as "real engines for social mobility" because they give students great motivation to address social mobility. Some other benefits of giving encouragement are invigoration, confidence and accomplishment.

For teachers, they take the initiative to encourage students in the hope they will be motivated enough to make progress in education long after they have left the classroom. It is true that it is important that teachers know the effects their efforts have on their students, and that the students are likely to benefit most.

2.4. Some suggested effective ways to give students encouragement and motivation

There is no single recommended formula for encouraging and motivating students to succeed. Every young learner is unique and will respond differently to encouragement and motivation. However, there are some universal ways to show encouragement and motivation to students inside and outside the classroom as follows.

Create a culture of encouragement

The path to students' confidence begins by

creating a culture of encouragement. Teachers and parents can build a culture of encouragement by embodying the belief that every student has potential and is the ability to accomplish their goals. Additionally, you should strive to focus on students' positive behaviors and actions as opposed to their negative ones. Both teachers and parents should bear in mind that whatever we say or do to students is based on their benefits. In other words, giving students encouragement should become a culture that everyone is to practise. More specifically, a right classroom environment should be created, an environment that is conducive to learning and where students are able to personalise their learning space, feel able to grow and succeed

Provide verbal praises when students make progress

Keeping students on the right track once they demonstrate progress is vital to helping them achieve their goals. Providing verbal praises is a great way to offer encouragement to students who show progress throughout the learning journey. Fine words always are effective and motivating, especially the intentional fine words about the students' achievements.

Offer tangible forms of encouragement

Tangible forms of encouragement give students a visual reminder that they have the power to learn and succeed. Some tangible forms of encouragement that can inspire students to continue to work toward their goals are stickers or gold stars, ribbons and medals, certificates of achievement.

Praise even the smallest efforts

Students are accustomed to being recognized for achieving major learning accomplishments and milestones. However, a true culture of encouragement involves praising students for small achievements and modest improvements in their efforts. For example, a weak student who has just finished the essay in a shorter time should be praised for his/her improvement.

Students who feel a sense of achievement will inevitably feel more self-confident, better able to lead their own learning and more motivated to succeed. Encouragement can be shown in a boisterous way such as effusive praise, hugs, and hearty cheers or applause, even a soft smile, a kind word, or a light touch on the hand.

Formally recognize students for their accomplishments

Schools with a culture of encouragement

are known for recognizing students for their accomplishments in newsletters and at ceremonies. Others post inspiring messages on social media and post students' names on plaques and on banners in the hallway. When students receive this type of formal recognition, they are reminded that they have the power to achieve success.

Be precise with your words of encouragement

Precision can determine how impactful your encouragement is for a student. Using specific adjectives and descriptors can help your encouragement resonate with a student, whereas general praise is often not as meaningful.

Offer support during failures

It is said that a word of encouragement during a failure is worth more than an hour of praise after success. It is easy to offer encouragement when a student is succeeding. However, encouragement is often the most effective when students receive it when they are struggling to master concepts. By offering support when a student is failing or struggling, you reaffirm your unconditional positive regard for the student. This is a critical way to build trust and rapport with a student and to motivate them greatly.

Get students involved in the classroom

In order to encourage and motivate a student, it is important that teachers understand the learner's motivation for learning languages in the first place. In other words, teachers are expected to know whether the students have an intrinsic motivation or extrinsic motivation so that they can have appropriate teaching methods.

One way to encourage students and teach them responsibility is to get them involved in the classroom. Teachers should make participating fun by giving each student a job to do such as tidying up or decorating the classroom. For example, it is a good idea to assign a student to erase the blackboard or pass out materials. The best way is to conduct pair work and groupwork in class.

Making learning fun and worthwhile

It's important to note that there are some lessons that will never be fun. All subjects have their basics that need to be mastered, such as memorising dates in History or formulae in Physics. And lessons that are primarily geared towards revision or practice for exams are usually at least somewhat stressful, not fun.

But beyond these exceptions, great teachers do their best to make their lessons fun. Again, this can take lots of different forms. In some subjects, it's a question of teaching style; lessons in foreign languages that focus on using the language are undoubtedly more enjoyable than ones focusing on repeating verb endings until they stick. A great teacher inspires their students by answering their questions and sharing expertise, but also by encouraging them to take more responsibility for their learning. The aim is for students to expand their horizons and get to know the joys of learning more about a topic they find fascinating.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, it is very important to encourage and motivate students in study because this brings about many invaluable benefits not only to students but also to teachers. By using various ways of giving students encouragement and motivation, teachers can help students to be more confident and motivated in study and life. It is hoped that information in the article is useful to those who want to raise students up and boost their ability.

References

1. Collins English Dictionary (2015), Harper Collin Publishers
2. Mahadi, T. S. T., & Jafari, S. M. (2012). *Motivation, its types, and its impacts in language learning. International Journal of Business and Social Science, 3(24), 230–235.*
3. Reeve, J. (1996). *Motivating Others: Nurturing Inner Motivational Resources. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.*
4. Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). *Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being.*
5. Johnstone, R. (1999). *Research on language teaching and learning*
6. Schunk, D. H., & DiBenedetto, M. K. (2020). *Motivation and social cognitive theory. Contemporary Educational Psychology, 60, 101832.*
7. Setiawan, M. R., & Wiedarti, P. (2020). *The effectiveness of Quizlet application towards students' motivation in learning vocabulary. Studies in English Language and Education, 7(1), 83–95.*
8. Sheehan, R. B., Herring, M. P., & Campbell, M. J. (2018). *Associations between motivation and mental health in sport: A test of the hierarchical model of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Frontiers in Psychology, 9, 707.*