Strategies for developing achievement motivation

Achievement motivation results from an interaction between personality characteristics, environmental factors and competition involving a desired goal or reward that cannot be attained by all, where success is gained through competition with others where the goal is not equally available to all, and where the results are judged against the performance of others and are not publicly known (Biggs & Moore, 1993, p. 111). Those who are successful in achieving a goal develop a high need for achievement while those who are unsuccessful learn to fear failure and avoid situations that threaten their already low self-esteem (see Chapter 3).

In a classroom situation, achievement motivation is critical for learning. Students who believe that they will be successful if they put in a reasonable degree of effort will be motivated to learn. Elliot and Dweck (2005) suggest that competence represents the core of achievement motivation at the school level, and that “achievement motivation” should be re-conceptualised as “competence motivation”. Students who value themselves as “competent” in a field of learning will be motivated to strive for success while those who lack this confidence in their own ability will give up trying. Strategies that increase student’s self-confidence in an area of achievement should enhance motivation to achieve, while experiences that lead to a decrease in perceived level of personal competence will have a negative effect on motivation to achieve. Brier (2006) outlines a series of activities designed to enhance motivation to achieve in classroom learning among students in Years 6–8. Activities include storytelling, role play and a homework program.

Activities

1. Can you remember any of the factors that gave you self-confidence as a learner? Perhaps there was a particular teacher, or encouragement from mum or dad?
2. What type of strategies could a teacher use to increase students “competence motivation”? Make a list of factors that would increase your feelings of competence and those that would take away from your feeling of competence.
3. All students must learn to cope with failure experiences. How should a teacher use a failure experience to enhance a student’s “competence motivation”?
References

