Teachers’ motivation and learners’ interest in learning: perspectives of an adult educator

Isaac Kofi Biney

School of Continuing and Distance Education (SCDE), College of Education, University of Ghana, Legon

Email: ikkbiney@yahoo.co.uk/kbiney@ug.edu.gh/Cell: +233 (0) 243601020

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines teachers’ motivation in teaching and learners’ interest in learning. It is a library study undertaken by an adult educator. Teaching in today’s classroom demands a range of skills and expertise far beyond the knowledge of subject matter. Teachers are confronted with a number of challenges, yet, significant success of getting learners learn depends on certain attitudinal qualities. The genuineness of teachers in valuing learners in the learning setting is important. Effective personal relationships between teachers and learners and creation of democratic classrooms are equally important. However, teaching act performed when the learner is unwilling, using that learner as a means to an end, amounts to ‘intellectual rape’. The study recommends that governments, educational leadership, private sector players and the extended families should provide support to both teachers and learners to engender remarkable feats of learning. This will, in no doubt, makes both teachers and learners’ become critical thinkers and innovators in their teaching and learning settings.

Key words: Teachers’ motivation, learners’ interest, learning, democratic classrooms, critical thinkers and innovators

INTRODUCTION

Globally, the importance of the teacher in any educational enterprise cannot be over-emphasized. Success of education is the quality of teaching. Good curriculum actually reveals that it is the human touch provided by the teacher that ensures good and lasting results produced. Teaching is exciting, rewarding and uplifting. No wonder, Parkay (2013) opines that teachers receive great satisfaction from making a difference in their learners’ lives. The climate of accountability and new programmes being mounted in our tertiary institutions, following knowledge explosion, makes it imperative that both teachers’ and learners’ stay abreast with time. Hence becoming a successful teacher, today, requires high levels of professionalism and commitment.

In spite of the fact that teaching has huge rewards, it has huge challenges as well. The fact that education and teaching is a dynamic enterprise, makes it imperative for teachers to continue to update themselves. This is because no one has a crystal ball to see into the future new changes in the offing, especially in terms of curriculum, programmes, adult learners variability and diversity in learning settings.

Teaching is a profession because its members possess specialised knowledge and can apply this knowledge to increase the chances of solving educational problems. McNerney and Herbert (2001) observe that the range of demands placed on teachers and the number of people involved in the enterprise, as well as the public’s common
knowledge of life in classrooms, combine to make teaching what might be called the ‘people’s profession’. Thus for many teachers, too, the process of teaching is a meaningful reward in itself. Whether it is explaining an idea, working with small groups, or designing instructional units, the actual work is highly gratifying. Teachers often draw their deepest satisfactions in and from the act of applying their craft. Of course, teachers vary in which activities they find rewarding. It is perhaps on that basis that Ryan and Cooper (2000) opine that some teachers draw their rewards from establishing a nurturing, cooperative environment, and from unraveling complicating problems for learners. Some even draw their rewards from seeing learners work and learn independently. The implication is that, for most teachers, these activities must happen before they become fulfilled.

Effective teaching is much more than an intuitive process. A teacher must continually make decisions and act on those decisions. To do this effectively, the teacher must have knowledge, both theoretical knowledge about learning and human behaviour and specific knowledge about the subject matter to be taught. A teacher also must demonstrate a repertoire of teaching skills that are believed to facilitate learners’ learning. They must necessarily display attitudes that foster learning and genuine human relationships. After all, the degree of motivation exhibited by both teachers’ and students’ matters most in any learning setting. Farrant (1980) observes that the engines of human motivation are interest and desire. These are essential ingredients, especially in adult learning setting, where facilitation is learner-centered. When teachers’ motivation and learners’ interest are working at full power, remarkable feats of learning can be achieved (Farrant, 1980).

Motivated teachers are committed to learners. They are also noted for their persistence in challenging situations, demonstrating inspiring teaching skills that have the potential to raise hitherto less ranked school to respectable position (Johnson, 1987). The teacher by his or her training strives to help every learner realises his or her potential as a worthy member of society. He/she works to stimulate the spirit of inquiry, the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, and the thoughtful formulation of worthy goals in learners. Indeed, an able school inspector today will judge the quality of a teacher less by what he or she sees the teacher doing and more by what the teacher has enabled the learners to do (Johnson, 1987). The teacher’s job then is to plan and guide the learning of his or her learners, provide suitable materials, arrange the activities through which they will best learn. As a professional adult educator, given the learners something to do, is often, the best way of arousing their interest.

This paper which is a library research thus examines the concept of motivation, and that of teachers’ motivation and learners’ interest to learn in any learning setting. It establishes that whilst it is important that teaching and learning are necessary conditions for producing human capital, it is equally significant to ensure that challenges that tend to demotivate teachers in teaching are addressed. Additionally, those that dampen the interest of students in their learning activities, are to be addressed to engender quality human capital for Ghana’s development.

**Motivation defined**

Historically, the word ‘motivation’ according to Chauhan (1995), comes from the Latin root word ‘moveers’ which means ‘to move’. What then is motivation? Elliot and Covington (Snowman and Biehler, 2006) define motivation as the selection, persistence, intensity, and selection of behaviour. Fasokun et al. (2005) define motivation as the degree of energy behind an action or behaviour. Hoy and Hoy (2003) also define motivation as an internal state that arouses, directs, and maintains behaviour. In simple terms, motivation is perceived as a need or desire that energises behaviour and directs it toward a goal. It involves the processes that energises, direct, and sustain behaviour. It is the willingness of a person to expend a certain amount of effort to achieve a particular goal under a particular set of circumstances.

From the definitions enumerated above, one can deduce that a motivated behaviour is a behaviour that is energised, directed, and sustained. It also means that both teachers and learners must necessarily be motivated in one form or the other in any learning setting to learn, perform, and excel in their responsibilities. After all, the only security that a person can have in this world is a reserve of knowledge, experience and ability. Without these qualities, money is practically nothing (Ellis, 2006). More so, we all have to start from somewhere but without any foundation in education, thus motivation to learn, which is mostly facilitated by teachers, it is hard to get anywhere in learning endeavours.

There are a number of questions to be answered as far as teacher availability and motivation in Ghana are concerned. The questions are: As a country, do we have the required number of teachers to teach in our classrooms? If the answer is even yes, the follow up question to ask is: Have we motivated them to give off their best to engage and encourage students to learn? First, Ghana currently needs about 45,000 extra teachers to provide universal basic education (Anamuah-Mensah, 2015). That, in itself, should make the Government of Ghana encourage many young people to take to teaching education through incentive packages and continuing professional training. Second, the institution of good service conditions could also serve as an attraction to practicing teachers and, thus, motivate potential teachers.
to join the teaching fraternity. Indeed, Anamua-Mensah (2015) observes that Ghana currently has only 4.1 percent of the population accessing post-secondary education. He adds that if we have to search for a vaccine for malaria, a cure for cancer and HIV and AIDS, the laws of probability suggest that it is more likely for us to find this in the minds of the 96 percent, if only we develop them, than in the privileged 4 percent. It thus appears to me that this can be achieved not only through training more quality teachers, but also, motivating them to undertake this noble work of teaching.

No wonder, explaining what energises and direct our behaviour, Hoy and Hoy (2003) indicate that it could be drives, needs, incentives, fears, goals, social pressure, self-confidence, interests, curiosity, beliefs, values, expectations, and more. They added that some psychologists have explained motivation in terms of personal traits or individual characteristics. For example, certain people have a strong need to achieve, a fear of tests, or an enduring interest in art, so they behave accordingly. They work hard to achieve, avoid tests, or spend hours in art galleries. Other psychologists see motivation more as a state, a temporary situation (Hoy and Hoy, 2003). If, for example, an adult learner takes his/her note book and starts reading it because he/she has an examination tomorrow, he/she is motivated at least for now by the situation, thus, an examination. Of course, the motivation adult learners experience at any given time, is usually a combination of trait and state. In any case, an adult learner must first be interested in a programme, before enrolling, in it.

Some explanations of motivation rely on internal, personal factors such as needs, interests, curiosity, and enjoyment. Other explanations point to external environmental factors, including rewards, social pressure, punishment, and so on. Motivation that stems from factors such as interest or curiosity is called intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is the natural tendency to seek out and conquer challenges as we pursue personal interests and exercise capacities (Deci et al., 1985; Reeve, 1996; Hoy and Hoy, 2003). When we are intrinsically motivated, we do not need incentives or punishments, because the activity itself is rewarding. Raffini (Hoy and Hoy, 2003) states simply that intrinsic motivation is “what motivates us to do something when we don’t have to do anything” (p. 112). In contrast, when we do something in order to earn a merit increase, avoid criticism from parents, please the teacher, or for some other reason that has very little to do with the task itself, we experience extrinsic motivation. We are not really interested in the activity for its own sake; we care only about what we will gain or give us (Hoy and Hoy, 2003).

Maslow (Myers, 2011) advanced the theory of hierarchy of needs ranging from physiological to self-transcendence needs. According to Maslow, motivation is constant, never ending, fluctuating and complex and that it is an almost universal characteristic of particularly every organismic state of affairs. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs theory, include physiological needs: hunger and thirst, thus, most basic needs that have to do with survival physically and psychologically; Safety needs: protection, security, order, law and stability. It also include belongingness and love needs: family, affection, relationship, work group; esteem needs: achievement, competence, independence, status, responsibility, reputation; self-actualisation needs: need to live up to our fullest and unique potential or potentialities, talents, capacities, personal growth and fulfillment, becoming everything one is capable of becoming. Indeed, self-actualisation is a healthy person’s prime motivation. Maslow, with his conception of self-actualisation as the ultimate aim of learning, also sees goal-formation as a highly dynamic process occurring through the interaction of the learner with his/her experience. Finally, self-transcendence needs: need to find meaning and identity beyond the self was the last of the needs added by Maslow later stages of his life (Myers, 2011). It states that some people also reach a level of self-transcendence, thus, a stage in life whereby people strive for meaning, purpose, and communion that is beyond the self, that is transpersonal.

Maslow’s hierarchy of needs theory has received numerous criticisms. Gboku and Lekoko (2007), in many African societies, needs are not regarded in hierarchical terms with some achievable only after others have been satisfied. Consequently, people do not satisfy lower-level needs before moving on to higher-level needs. More so, hierarchical approach to learning experience assumes that adult learners are essentially alike. It is also important to recognise that adult learners are unique in the different aspirations, values, knowledge, skills, experiences and problems they have. This should be expected because the settings in which adult learners comes from are not the same. As a result of these differences, adults’ learning needs may differ greatly from one individual to another. That notwithstanding, Gboku and Lekoko (2007) observe that motivation is the foundation and is at the centre of participation at various levels, and in different contexts and capacities, in adult teaching and learning. Let us now turn our attention to motivation in teaching and learning.

Motivation in teaching and learning

Motivation is a critical aspect of teaching and learning. Highly motivated teachers provide compelling visions of classroom teaching that are far richer and more dynamic. Teachers’ emphasise on the importance of listening to their learners and learning from them emanate from the degree of what they bring into the course they are pursuing. It is therefore not surprising to learn that some
teachers go a great length to make it both desirable and possible for learners to be good on the course they have chosen to pursue. Paley (Hall et al., 2007) opines that these teachers see their [learners] as much more than a faceless mass. Their classrooms become communities in which they and [learners] are individuals who learn together and from one another. Afterall, no one head is a repository of all knowledge, and the teacher is not a ‘fount of all wisdom’ trying to fill the empty buckets of learners. Adult learning, in any case, emphasis more on dialogue, equality and vast, rich and diverse reservoir of experiences learners’ come along with to learning settings.

Freire (Jarvis, 1983) observes that both teachers and learners engaged in teaching and learning should not have mutually distinct roles, but that in a genuine dialogue, the teachers teach the learners, but they learn and teach the teachers as well. Hence, in dialogue, there is also a mutual planning of the teaching and learning, so that it is relevant to the needs of the learners. It means that teachers must develop intense love for, and faith in, their learners. This, however, can be realised when the teacher is filled with a high degree of motivation. Perhaps Freire’s philosophy of teaching is summed up best by a Chinese poem:

Go to the people, live among them, learn from them, love them, serve them, plan with them, start with what they have, build with what they have, but with the best leader, when the work is done, the task is accomplished, the people say: we have done this ourselves (Lao Tzu, Chinese Philosopher, 6th Century, B.C.).

Annan (Haffer, 2011), reflecting on the crucial importance of teachers in Africa, aptly observes that:

This continent [Africa] has enormous human potential and education is the means to set it free. But for this, we need more teachers. It is true that books are important and so are chairs to sit on. But if there is no motivated teacher in front of the chairs, if there is no one to write on the blackboard [or whiteboard] and to convey values and knowledge, Africa’s potential will not be realised (p. 19).

A motivated teacher engaged in teaching depends heavily on a responsible and caring exercise of imagination. Thus, teachers who listen carefully in order to discover students’ perception necessarily use their imaginations to find ways in which to respond. Noddings (1996) observes that the standard mode of establishing uniform objectives and forcing them on everyone [or every learner in the classroom], through repeated use of standard lessons, will not do. The fact really is that there is an individual difference in the classroom. Each adult learner in the classroom possesses unique traits and qualities which is different from his/her colleague. In such situations, not only must teachers exercise imagination to find ways of inviting learners to learn, they must also use imagination to direct their own perceptions.

Perhaps it is on this basis that Perrone (1991) asserts that if teaching is to be rewarding and as intellectually challenging as it needs to be to sustain well those currently in classrooms, and also ensure a steady supply of socially committed, intelligent men and women to enter and remain in the field, teachers must make the principal decisions about curriculum as it unfolds in their own classrooms. He also adds that if learning is to be connected to student intentions and needs, as it should be, the curriculum will require a high level of flexibility, situated in relation to particular students. This assertion is supported by Purkey and Novak (1996). They indicate that teachers should see students [adult learners] as able, valuable, and responsible people. They add that most young people who choose teaching do see students [adult learners] that way, but the initial shock of reality in today’s schools, can blur their pre-service perceptions. They finally assert that an exercise of imagination is needed, not to create rosy illusion, but to rediscover what is really there.

Teaching can be formal or informal. The formal teaching is an approach in which the teacher acts as an instructor, taking up a position at the front of the class where the teacher can exercise full and firm control over the class and decide on what and how to teach the students. Lessons are planned to last for a set length of time and everything is done according to a time table. The informal teaching is an approach that deliberately avoids the instructors’ role inherent in formal teaching and structures the classroom environment in such a way that each learner is encouraged to use time, space and available resources to progress along a path of learning that is initiated by his or her own interests and enquiries. In the informal teaching situation, we see the teacher as a facilitator and motivator of learning. The teacher is a guide or counsellor. The emphasis then is to help learners solve their problems. This is exactly what adult facilitation or teaching is all about.

Teaching in such settings involves creating situations to facilitate learning and motivating learners to have interest in what is being transmitted to them. It is an activity of imparting knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and understanding to learners. Teaching does not occur without a supposed learner. Thus, whenever teaching goes on, learning should also go on. Teaching and learning are the two side of the same coin. It means that teaching is inseparable from learning. Afterall, every good teacher will learn more about his or her subject every year, month and every week if possible. Teachers exhibit collegiality, interacting with others in a courteous, conscientious, and generally businesslike manner. These behaviours are observable indications of a social contract among teachers themselves and between teachers and the learners.

Sometimes, in the classroom setting where learners seemingly appear unmotivated, they would not expend the necessary effort to learn. Such low level of motivation
does not facilitate effective teaching and learning. Hyman (1970) likened low motivation in teaching and learning situation aptly in this way:

The teaching act performed when the learner is unwilling, using that learner as a means to an end, is ‘intellectual rape’. By forcing a learner mentally into position of receiving knowledge, regardless of his or her attitude, the teacher is attempting to achieve normal values in a normal act but has as surely violated the person or the learner as much as the rapist has his or her victim. And as in rape the seeing becomes ‘dirty’ and distasteful, so in intellectual rape, the learning is denigrated. Little wonder that many learners attempt mental abortion at the end of such a demoralising experience (p. 9).

To overcome a challenge revealed by the above assertion, it is imperative that teachers necessarily strive to become committed to the needs of their learners. It means that today’s teachers need to develop reflective attitudes and abilities. As observed by Snowman and Biehler (2006), reflective teachers help formulate thoughtful instructional goals and plans, implement those plans, observe their effects, and judge whether their goals were met. It is also not surprising to learn that teachers who learn in their classrooms, who conduct research and write about their observations, become the best possible teachers (Patterson, et al., 1993). They are thoughtful about how learners learn and how they can help their learners excel in their studies. They understand that real learning is always active and collaborative, for both children and adults. This observation is extremely significant because Johnson (1987) has earlier revealed that:

Teaching is not answering; it is asking questions and providing the means to find answers. Besides, most questions worth asking are not the sort that can be answered yes or no. Teachers should not, however, just preside over exchanges of ignorance. When misstatements of facts are made, they should be corrected, and when no one knows the facts, they should be pursued, preferably by a [learner]. Sometimes a few minutes of organised information giving are called for, when interest is high and facts are needed, to continue the discussion (p. 29).

Motivation then is the foundation of teaching and learning. It is at the centre of participation at various levels and in different contexts and capacities, especially in adult teaching and learning. If adult learners do not complete their assignment because they are bored, then lack of motivation is involved. Similarly, if adult learners encounter challenges in researching and writing a term paper, but persist and overcome hurdles involved in researching, then motivation is equally involved. Teachers imbued with motivation in their teaching can be likened to Washington (1977) observation that, “great men cultivate love and that only little men cherish a spirit of hatred. Assistance given to weak makes the one who gives it strong; and that oppression of the unfortunate makes one weak” (p. 120). It is imperative to say that one thing that is worth living for and dying for, if need be, is the opportunity of making someone else happier and more useful. This is exactly the work of a motivated teacher who is willing to do everything to ensure that he or she excels or succeeds in his or her work. Let us now turn our attention to learners motivation to learn in our learning settings.

Learners’ motivation to learn

Highly motivated learners are eager to attend lectures and get absorbed in the learning process. Teachers are always concerned about developing a particular kind of motivation in their schools; the motivation to learn. Brophy (Hoy and Hoy, 2003) describes learner’s motivation to learn as “a [learner] tendency to find academic activities meaningful and worthwhile and to try to derive the intended academic benefits from them” (p. 116). Indeed, many elements make up the motivation to learn. These include planning, concentration on goal, metacognitive awareness of what to learn and how to learn it, the active search for new information, clear perceptions of feedback, pride and satisfaction in achievement, and anxiety of the person’s mental efforts (Hoy and Hoy, 2003). These elements though important, but to adult learners as observed by Knowles et al. (Nafukho et al., 2005), the adult needs to know why to learn, responsibility for decisions taken, learners’ experiences, coping with real life, real-life applications and motivation to learn. These are significant principles that inform many adult learners participation in learning activities.

Motivation to learn thus involves more than wanting or intending to learn. It includes the quality of the person’s mental efforts. For example, reading a text ten times may indicate persistence, but motivation to learn implies more thoughtful, active study strategies, like summarizing, elaborating the basic ideas, outlining in your own words, drawing graphs of the key relationships, and so on (Brophy 1988; Hoy and Hoy, 2003). It would be wonderful to learn if all adult learners who attend lectures are filled with the motivation to learn. Sadly, however, they do not. Even if the learners did, school work might still seem unimportant to some learners some of the time.

However, teachers have three major goals to make learners become motivated. First, teachers must get learners productively involved with the class in order to create a state of motivation to learn. Second, teachers must make learners go beyond simple participation to cognitive engagement. When that is done, learners will learn to think deeply about what to study. Third, teachers must develop in learners the trait of being motivated to
learn, so they will be able to educate themselves for their entire lives (Blumenfeld et al., 1992; Hoy and Hoy, 2003).

It was therefore not surprising to learn that Skinner (Knowles, 1973) emphasises that “learning does not occur because behaviour has been primed (stimulated); it occurs because behaviour, primed or not, is reinforced” (p. 126). That in itself indicates that reinforcement is key to motivation in learning settings. For example, a mere praise, a pat on the shoulder, clapping and asking a learner to explain how he/she arrived at a particular answer in a class goes a long way in motivating other learners learn to put in their best in class.

That notwithstanding, today’s generation of [young adults] have grown up in a fast-paced, technology-changing world that has profoundly altered the way their brains learn, think, read, socialize, and interpret information-creating a new generation of innovative, video-game playing, multitasking [learners] (Learning and the Brain Conference, 2010; Parkay, 2013). Parkay adds that today, it is abundantly clear that technology has transformed how, when, and where [learners] can learn. Often referred to as the iGeneration, digital natives, netgens, millennials, or generation tech, today’s [young adults] live in a world that is connected to, and continuously transformed, by technology.

According to Parkay (2013) a network password is more important than a social security number to today’s [young adult] learners. This observation by Parkay is an unmistakable truism. In fact, earlier on.

Rosen (2010) observed that today’s [learners] are more “wired” than their teachers, with few exceptions. Generations ago, [learners] came to school with notebooks, pencils, and pens; today, they come to school with smartphones, laptops, MP3 players, and iPods. Rosen (2010) aptly puts it in this way:

[learners] spend their days immersed on a ‘media diet,’ devouring entertainment, communication, and any form of electronic media. They are master multitaskers, social networkers, electronic communicators, and the first to rush to buy any new technology (p. 2).

Teachers as agent of change need necessarily have to acquire basic knowledge, and skills in computing. This in a way will help them gain insight or awareness into the technology-rich world of their learners. In fact, the skills that they will acquire in computing will enable them keep up with their tech-savvy learners when teaching them in classroom with technology. This, in itself, will go a long way to enable the teachers’ secure or gain the attention of the learners. It will also excite and motivate learners to listen with rapt attention and learn whatever is taught. This is buttressed by the fact that, for today’s student, anywhere, anytime learning is a reality. This is because, their learning options include online instruction, various forms of e-learning and blended learning, that is, a blending of traditional face-to-face instruction and online learning.

Notwithstanding the advantages coming from technology transforming teaching and learning in today’s classrooms, the schools in Ghana are yet to fully unleash technology’s potential, to transform teaching and learning in our classrooms. Large number of learners are still taught through the traditional face-to-face instruction. Some effort are, however, being made by presently by the University of Ghana Distance Education program which is powered by Sakai Online Teaching and Learning Management System. The University of Ghana has a state-of-the-art computer laboratory for the distance education students. The students learn through personal iPods uploaded with learning materials provided to them.

(Parkay, 2013) observes in U.S. that more than half of high school learners are excited about using mobile devices to help them learn; however, only 15 percent of school leaders, including teachers, support this idea. Additionally, 65 percent of teachers think educational computer games could help them engage their learners, and 46 percent say they would like training on integrating gaming technologies into their teaching, but only 11 percent of teachers actually use them in the classroom. Prensky further adds that the traditional classroom lecture creates massive boredom, especially when compared to the vibrancy of learners media-saturated, tech-driven world.

Aside technology-driven learning, learners still learn in class when teachers offer innovative ideas through the use of variety of instructional methods, including lecture, discussion, role play, and simulation. For instance, lecturing can be used creatively to encourage learning. It can also motivate as many learners as possible to actively participate in lessons in class. Indeed, a liberating and motivated teacher will illuminate reality even if he or she lectures. Group work and independent study can equally be encouraged among learners to enable them learn to discover valuable information for themselves.

Challenges confronting teachers in teaching

The teacher is daily faced with a variety of problems in their teaching-learning situations. First, teachers are found as key to good education, but they are also found as key to poor education (Limbough, 2005; Sowell, 2005; Nelson et al., 2007). Limbough and Sowell (2005) add that when teachers are excellent a school is excellent. But as is widely known, many schools are not excellent, and many teachers are weak and ineffective. This situation would only arise when teachers’ motivation is low. It also means that, that critical interest and desire to teach is virtually vanished, and learners are only used as a means to an end. Eisner (2002) opines aptly that;

"if a teacher attempts to teach but does not succeed in helping the [learner] learn, then he or she may be said to
have lectured, conducted a discussion, demonstrated, explained but not to have taught. To teach, in this sense, is known by its effects. Those effects are learning. Just as one could not be said to have sold something unless another bought, so too, one could not have said to have taught unless another had learned” (p. 158).

Next, some teachers also face the challenge of making their lectures as enlivening and critically stimulating as possible. No wonder, Freire (Brookfield 1990) associated lecturing with the worst kind of banking education, that is, with the approach whereby experts see themselves as depositing knowledge in the empty vaults of [learners’] mind. Some teachers’ abuse lecturing because they assume authoritarian or teacher-centered position of lecturing. Hence the method has been pronounced dead. However, it is not all kinds of lecturing that is banking education. As observed by Brookfield (1990);

“you can still be very critical lecturing [in class].The question is not banking lectures or no lectures, because [some] traditional teachers will make reality opaque whether they lecture or lead discussions. A liberating teacher will illuminate reality even if he or she lectures” (p. 72).

Many other teachers find themselves daily facing challenges and frustrations that their training has not equipped them to handle. For instance, a class made up of more than five extremely talkative and deviant learners makes control or class management sometimes difficult. Securing class order appears seemingly insurmountable. Sometimes, even the most capable and dedicated teachers can become disheartened in the face of such rowdy and noisy classrooms. Less motivated teachers tend to adopt authoritarian measures in such classrooms which more other than not help them achieve good results in the short-term, but backfire in a big way, in the long-term.

Over-flowing class is another problem confronting many teachers today to come up with that unique motivation in executing their work well. A large class size is overwhelming to some teachers. A class size ranging from twenty-five learners to forty-five learners is quite a manageable class where independent teaching and attention is guaranteed. The same cannot be said in secondary and tertiary institutions in Ghana, where some classrooms and lecture halls can accommodate as many as two hundred learners, each of them attracting the teacher’s attention for help. Some people will still argue that poor teacher with thirty students will still be poor with a class size of even fifteen learners. It can, however, be said that there is a limit to acceptable class size in our schools and institutions. This is significant because a manageable class size affords the teachers the opportunity to teach the learners on how to innovate to solve and also bring up new ideas.

The enthusiasm for, and ability to learn or lack of this, originate within each learner. That notwithstanding, the purpose of teachers should be to help each learner become a more organised, self-managing, enthusiastically learning learners, even if only gradually and never uniformly. The fact is that some learners will never achieve this goal, while others will have achieved it, before teachers ever meet them. The job of teachers is to do the best to arrange things so that both teachers and learners can live and learn together.

The best cues to any method of grouping come from the needs of learners, teachers’ abilities, training, personality, and temperament. It is also a fact that adult learners in particular, like to work in groups, as a change from always meeting in a class. However, some teachers who are to be monitoring, thus, responsible for keeping track of the academic, social, psychological, and physical situation of learners in their group works, are not carrying out this role effectively. If they do, teachers will be in the position to see who is bored, and who is over-challenged. It will also offer the opportunity for teachers to share with learners their progress and problems and then offer them the needed help or support.

**Strategies to improve teachers’ motivation and learners’ interest**

Even though there are numerous challenges confronting teachers in their day-to-day interaction in the classroom setting, partly due to low motivation, there are strategies that can be adopted to address many of the challenges. This is significant, especially where teachers want learners to experience new developments, as they take control of the content and format of the learning sessions.

First, teachers adopting lecture method to teach learners in classroom setting should learn to establish the broad outlines of a body of material to be taught. Guidelines must also be set for independent study, and model intellectual attitudes you hope to encourage in learners. This is significant because if you want learners to be critical of their ideas, to be ready to support their arguments with evidence, and to be able to explore alternative perspectives and interpretations, then you must be ready to model these attitudes and actions in their lectures.

Second, teachers must learn to further encourage learners’ interest in a topic, and also set moral culture for discussions. Thus, teachers can increase enormously the chances of subsequent discussions being focused, rigorous, and respectful if their preliminary lectures set the right tone. Indeed, skillful teachers do research their learners whenever they are going to lecture. The teachers should also learn to pace their presentation so as to carry their learners along. This, in a way, will cause as many learners as possible to enjoy the chances to luxuriate in listening to a lecture.

Third, teachers will succeed largely in lecturing their
students in class when they announce at the outset that they will break up their material into twenty- or thirty-minute chunks of exposition, but that after each chunk they will invite ten minutes of questioning. Indeed, before each portion of a lecture, they endeavor to begin with a new critical incident question to focus students’ minds on the themes they will address in the upcoming chunk. Teachers can sometimes allow a stretch break of a couple of minutes three or four times during two hour lecture. Clearly, lecture method should be a question and answer session with its central themes determined by learners' interests.

Next, teachers must be convinced that whatever they teach matters to the lives, needs, and interests of their learners. If they do not, then they should change the way they teach, or change job. The fact really is that teachers’ interest and conviction are contagious; so are their boredom and indecision. Teachers must allow for digressions in their class. In fact, they should be convinced of the importance of what they and the class are doing, but should learn to keep their work in perspective.

Again, it is also instructive that teachers do their best to ensure that every learner in the class has enough to do, and gets some feeling of reward and satisfaction from doing their work. Success can be realised in teachers teaching, especially when teachers learn quickly as they receive their learners’ attention span, and endeavor not to exceed it. The fact really is that attention differs for each learner from day to day, from subject to subject, and from activity to activity. When teachers take notice of these, they will come to appreciate when force from the outside, rather than interest from within, is the main motivating force.

Teachers should be prepared and ready for a change of pace if interest in their teaching is flagging. It does not hurt to have a few games or contests in their repertoire, a joke or two will also provoke learners’ interest in the teaching session. Teachers must further make their classrooms attractive and stimulating by ensuring that the classrooms remain clean and neat.

Johnson (1987) opines that good spirit in class is more important than order. Good spirit in a class partly arises from interest and partly from the way teachers treat learners and the way they treat one another. Teachers must endeavor to create good spirit by being kind to their learners. This should be done through observation, intelligence, and empathy. Teachers should figure out what each learner needs and, to the best of their ability, provide them. They should learn to be polite, laugh with their learners, respect each learner, and also find something special to admire about each learner in their class. Thus, teachers should look hard, listen well, and find a chance to mention special things about learners in public or in private, whichever seems better.

In adult learning environment, for instance, teachers must place increasing emphasis on the importance of building an educative environment in all educational institutions. Thus, teachers have the obligation to help adult learners learn proactive ways of learning. They should impress on the learners to endeavour to take initiative in their learning activities because teachers are not everywhere. In doing so, learners are encouraged to develop that intellectual curiosity and are to strive for the spirit of inquiry so as to become committed to their learning endeavours.

To be successful in this direction, the role of the teacher should shift from that of transmitter of information to facilitator and resource to self-directed inquiry. They should also regard education as a lifelong process. The fact still remains that knowledge gained at any point in time will become increasingly obsolete in the course of time. This is where it becomes increasingly imperative that today’s teachers learn to teach learners to innovate new behaviors to achieve new outcomes in their learning settings. To Friedman (2000), it is important to understand that innovations are fashioned from existing knowledge. Innovative behaviours and innovative outcomes have known components. The challenge in innovating, however, is to extrapolate from the known to the unknown. This is where teachers filled with motivation matters most. This is because they will endeavor to teach learners from known situation to the unknown situation, to make breakthroughs in development-oriented, scientific and technological fields.

Teacher-learner relationship is equally important in fostering motivation in teachers and unleashing and boasting learners’ interests and desires in learning. Relationship matters in adult learning. Galbo (1989) reveals that teachers who developed personal relationships with [learners] had the significant influence on them. Hence, mentor-mentee relationship is important in teaching and learning environment because it goes a long way in building trust with learners. It helps in overcoming resistance to learning. It also serves as an indicator of what teachers can do to improve their skills to enhance learners’ classroom responses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering that learners’ learning take place mostly in our schools, it becomes imperative that teachers strive hard to become committed to the needs of learners. This should be by directing learners on the path of learning how to learn on their own. This will help them to become critical thinkers, discoveries and innovators in their own rights.

Knowing very well that an unmotivated teacher will inadvertently use learners as a means to an end makes it important that as many teachers as possible capacities are built through regular in-service training. The
governments and the private sector players should continuously support learners to build up their capacities, motivation and confidence to drive learners to learn on their own.

Genuine dialogue and mutual planning must be encouraged by the extended families and educational leaderships in our institutions to help learners foster increasing level of critical thinking and innovative spirits in their learning activities. This requires that learners should be perceived equal, valued and respected in learning settings.

Democratic classrooms must be created by teachers in educational institutions such that learners will not be hindered to express themselves freely. Such situation will make many learners develop intellectual curiosity and strive for the spirit of enquiry so as to become committed to their learning endeavors. It means, therefore, that teachers should place increasing emphasis on building an educative environment in classroom settings, especially in the case of adult learners.

Teachers as facilitators’ should help adult learners learn proactive ways of learning. They must also learn to resolve common problems in the classrooms, including outbursts of emotion, and overly talkative group members in the classrooms. When that is done, guided discussions in the classrooms will remain focused, balanced and educational for everyone.

Learners should be taught to take initiative in their learning endeavors. This is because their teachers are not omnipresent. It also means that a lot of learning in the educational institutions are to be done by learners themselves. As they continue to explore in their learning activities they will learn to become problem solvers at their communities and workplaces.

CONCLUSION

This paper has highlighted teachers' motivation and learners' interest to learn in learning setting, including classrooms. It established that whilst it is important that teaching and learning are necessary conditions for producing human capital, it is equally significant to ensure that challenges that tend to demotivate them are addressed. It also tackled challenges that seek to dampen the interest of students in their learning activities.

Teaching is a noble, challenging, stimulating, and rewarding job that one can set one’s mind and heart to it. That in itself makes it imperative that as many teachers as possible are made to execute their work with motivation and enthusiasm. This is because motivation constitutes the foundation of teaching and learning. Much success can be achieved by teachers in their work when they establish credible and mutual relationship and also empathise with adult learners. Effort must be made to arouse learners interest and desire. They should further encourage discovery learning, group work and independent study among learners to foster the drive for innovation amongst them. This goal can be achieved, especially when many learners today are tech-savvy, hence with a little push by teachers, many learners will strive to become critical thinkers and innovators. This is also significant to the extent that it is the production of innovations by humankind that is primarily responsible for humans’ superior control of the environment.

Creating genuine dialogue and cooperative planning by teachers with learners are some of the surest ways of bolstering and encouraging learners to learn to unleash and unearth their hidden potentials. The fact really is that of all the learning people acquire in their lifetime, none is more valuable than learning how to learn on their own. Empowering learners to learn on their own extends significantly beyond teaching the usual study skills. Afterall, human learning is necessary for survival, and success.

REFERENCES


