Studying for One's Self vs. Studying for (Significant) Others:
A Critical Review of the Notion of Academic Motivation in Asia

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Abstract

In this study, the notion of academic motivation which corresponds to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and amotivation is critically reviewed with special consideration for non-Western samples and institutions. Although this notion has been put forth as a universal conceptualization of students' academic behavior, an increasing number of works point out the possibility that its validity may be questionable for non-Western samples and institutions. It is highly likely that extrinsic motivation is equally significant and influential as intrinsic motivation despite of the common sense view that the latter is superior than the former with regard to the lasting educational outcomes. The paper concludes with a set of suggestions for higher education practitioners in non-Western institutions of higher education.

Keywords: Academic motivation, Asia, intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation.

Kendin İçin ya da (Değer Verdiğin) Birileri İçin Çalışmak:
Asya'da Akademik Güdülenme Kavramına İlişkin Eleştirel Bir İnceleme

Özet

Bu çalışmada, içsel güdülenme, dışsal güdülenme ve güdülenmemeye karşılık gelen akademik güdülenme kavramı, Batılı olmayan örneklemler ve kurumlara yönelik özel bir vurguyla eleştirel olarak gözden geçiriliyor. Bu kavram, öğrencilerin akademik davranışlarının evrensel bir kavramsallaştırılması olarak ortaya konmuş olsa da, sayısı gittikçe artmakta olan çeşitli çalışmalar, onun geçerliliğinin Batılı olmayan örneklemler ve kurumlar için geçerli olmama olasılığına işaret ediyor. Kalıcı eğitsel sonuçlar noktasında içselin dışsala göre daha üstün olduğuna ilişkin yaygın bir kanı varsa da, büyük bir olasılıkla dışsal güdülenme içsel güdülenmeyle eşit ölçüde önemli ve etkileyici. Çalışma, Batılı olmayan yüksek öğretim

kurumlarındaki eğitim uygulayıcılarına yönelik bir dizi öneriyle son buluyor.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Akademik güdülenme, Asya, içsel güdülenme ve dışsal güdülenme.

Introduction

Why do we study? Why do we work? What has motivated us to study and/or work? The notion of academic motivation has been conceptualized and operationalized to explain and categorize the reasons behind students' academic behaviors. A plethora of researchers investigated and elaborated on this research field. Academic motivation is considered to be a close correlate of academic achievement (Amrai et al, 2011), while few of the relevant studies such as Cetin (2015) fails to find a significant correlation between academic motivation and GPA (Grade Point Average) as an indicator of academic achievement. With a more nuanced research agenda, Young (2005) uncovers the positive relationship between extrinsic motivation and superficial learning on the one hand, and between intrinsic motivation and deep learning on the other, while Stover et al (2014) considers intrinsic motivation, not motivation in general as a marker of highly achieving students. Likewise, Turner, Chandler & Heffer (2009)'s research established intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy as the predictors of academic performance.

A major influence over student motivation would be how/why they decided to study at a particular undergraduate program rather than others. Job prospects, personal tastes and abilities are found to be the most common answers to this question (Juaneda, Herranz & Montaño, 2017). Another study finds that students' current majors are not always their first choice. They aspire for other more 'reputable' programs, but can't get in. Thus they enrol to the second best, not the first best (Awad, Al-Haqan & Moreau, 2017). Not only their motivations before enrollment, but also their future plans are significant sources of motivation. When they are informed about how this module (or this piece of knowledge) would be used in their future career, they are more eager to learn (Riashchenko, Zivitere, & Markina, 2013). Perceived importance of their field of study is another variable found to be associated with academic motivation (Hrbackova & Suchankova, 2016). Converging with these findings, Marić & Sakač (2014) found that "*Individual factors – the perceived interest in content and perceived content usefulness for personal development proved to be the most significant predictors of a high level*

of motivation for learning and academic success" (s.63). Furthermore, peer relations are quite important in the way the knowledge is perceived as useful and actual learning outcomes (Shin, Ranellucci & Roseth, 2017). From another perspective, Duta, Panisoara & Panisoara (2015) point out the importance of effective communication in teaching to motivate the students.

Academic Motivation Scale

Academic Motivation Scale is the most widespread research instrument to study academic motivation. It consists of 7 subscales matching 3 types of intrinsic motivation, 3 types of extrinsic motivation and amotivation (Vallerand et al, 1992). 3 types of intrinsic motivation are intrinsic motivation to know, to accomplish and to experience stimulations, while 3 types of extrinsic motivation are external, introjected and identified regulation. Finally amotivation component refers to lack of motivation (Vallerand et al., 1992).

Intrinsic motivation to know is defined as:

"(...) *the fact of performing an activity for the pleasure and the satisfaction that one experiences while learning, exploring, or trying to understand something new*" (Vallerand et al, 1992, p.1005).

Intrinsic motivation toward accomplishments is defined as:

"(...) *the fact of engaging in an activity for the pleasure and satisfaction experienced when one attempts to accomplish and create something*" (Vallerand et al, 1992, p.1005).

Vallerand et al (1992) states that

"*Students who go to class in order to experience the excitement of a stimulating class discussion, or who read a book for the intense feelings of cognitive pleasure derived from passionate and exciting passages represent examples of individuals who are intrinsically motivated to experience stimulation in education*" (p.1006)

As to extrinsic motivation, the following paragraph clarifies the distinction between three types of extrinsic motivation:

"*External regulation corresponds to EM as it generally appears in the literature. That is, behavior is regulated through external means such as rewards and constraints. For instance, a student might say: "I study the night before exams because my parents force me to." With introjected regulation, the individual begins to internalize the reasons for his or her actions. However, this form of internalization, while internal to the person, is not truly self-determined since it is limited to the internalization of past external contingencies. Thus, the individual might say: "I study the night before exams because that's what good students are supposed to do." To the extent that the behavior becomes valued and judged important for the individual, and especially that it is perceived as chosen by oneself, then the internalization of extrinsic motives*

becomes regulated through identification. The individual might say, for instance: "I've chosen to study tonight because it is something important for me."" (Vallerand, p.1006-1007).

Another delineation of the same extrinsic motivation classification is provided by Stover et al (2012):

"*In extrinsic motivation (EM), (...) the goal being chased constitutes the main driving force of behavior, which is divided into four subtypes of progressive regulation: external, introjected, identified, and integrated. In the first of them, behaviors are enforced by others and are carried out to avoid punishment or to obtain rewards. In introjected regulation, behaviors are executed in order to improve one's self-esteem or to avoid anxiety and guilt that may arise for not carrying them out. In identified regulation, the individual chooses the activities by extrinsic motives (eg, society values enrolling in superior studies). The last subtype (integrated regulation) would appear only in adulthood, when individual needs and values converge with those expected by the social context (eg, studying broadens one's horizons)*" (Stover et al, 2012, p.72).[1]

In their cross-cultural research administering Academic Motivation Scale to Hungarian and French samples, and running Structural Equation Modeling, Tóth-Király et al (2017) provides evidence for cross-cultural applicability of the dimensions of the scale. The scale has been tested and adapted in various countries including Turkey (Karagüven, 2012), Argentina (Stover et al, 2012), Singapore (Caleon et al, 2015) Malaysia (Chong & Ahmed, 2012), China (Zhang et al, 2016) and Norway (Utvær & Haugan, 2016); while a set of studies reports ethnic differences (e.g. Cokley, 2015; Próspero, Russell & Vohra-Gupta, 2012; Reynolds, Sneva & Beehler, 2010; Young et al, 2011a; 2011b).[2] Bui, Tsutsui & Uehara (2015) finds that international students in contrast to domestic students scored higher in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in a Japanese university where majority of the students are from Asian countries. This is explained by the energy and effort needed to adapt to Japanese higher education system and skills and habits needed for adaptation.

Although Academic Motivation Scale is to be noted as the most well-known and widely-researched scale in the field with strong psychometric properties (Fairchild et al, 2005; Guay et al, 2015), its major limitation needs to be noted: It is a self-report measure (Mayer, Faber & Xu, 2007). It needs to be complemented by observations and other direct methods (Fulmer &

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[1] Since the last subtype mentioned above is not empirically supported to be a distinct category, it is no longer considered in the recent research studies in the field.
[2] Some others (Alfaro et al, 2009; Piña-Watson et al., 2015) focusing on academic motivation of ethnic minority students but with the use of other scales could be noted as well.

Frijters, 2009). Nevertheless, self-report measures are still more practical compared to the alternative ways of measuring academic motivation such as phenomenological/authentic, neuropsychological/physiological and behavioral approaches (Fulmer & Frijters, 2009).

Coping strategies and achievement goals (Doron et al., 2011), subjective well-being and mental health (Bailey & Phillips, 2015), metacognitive skills (Oguz & Ataseven, 2016), learning strategies such as deep learning and surface learning (Murayama et al, 2013), student-faculty interactions and academic self-concept (Komarraju, Musulkin & Bhattacharya, 2010), identification with academics (Osborne & Jones, 2011; Walker, Greene & Mansell, 2006), self-efficacy and meaningful cognitive engagement (Walker, Greene & Mansell, 2006), classroom environment perceptions and competence expectations (Sungur & Senler, 2010) and problem-solving abilities (Baker, 2003) are among the variables studied with regard to academic motivation.

As a closing point, we need to note that the research on academic motivation mostly focus on undergraduate and high school students with a few exceptions such as Hegarty, Brasco & Lu (2012) which finds that graduate students' motivation levels are lower than expected. This may point to the need for adaptation of the scale for graduate students or may indicate the fact that pursuing graduate degrees is not always a matter of motivation only. Furthermore, it is found that students enrolled to Science and Literature Faculties are the most intrinsically motivated, while Law majors scored highest on extrinsic motivation. It is also noted that Communication Faculty majors are the most amotivated (Köseoğlu, 2013a). In a German sample, Wilkesmann, Fischer & Virgillito (2012) find that economics and engineering majors are more extrinsically and less intrinsically motivated compared to social science majors. This is explained by the possibility that the former attracts students for the financial prospects. To add to the point, students who are vocationally oriented rather than scientifically oriented are found to be less intrinsically and more extrinsically motivated (Wilkesmann, Fischer & Virgillito, 2012).

Academic Motivation, Culture, Ethnicity and Socio-economic Status

It is a well-known fact that teacher-centered model of learning is highly ineffective (Kit-ling, 2017). This is mostly due to the fact that such a model fails to motivate students. Yardımcı et al (2017) and Zouganeli et al (2014) report that problem-based learning is found to significantly contribute to students' intrinsic motivation, while Wijnia, Loyens & Derous (2011) are less straightforward: According to their findings, problem-based learning alone can't influence student motivation. It needs to be supported by an optimal mix of controlling and

autonomous elements. Likewise, granting student autonomy is a boost for student motivation (Bronson, 2016), however the cultural assumptions of these findings may be tenuous. Although it is found that student autonomy in form of increasing classroom activities are associated with intrinsic motivation and higher course satisfaction (Griffin, 2016), whether it would be applicable in collectivistic cultures needs further research. Thus, how individualism and autonomy are related (are they somewhat identical or not?) needs to be clarified (cf. Chirkov et al, 2003). Without such a clarification, the validity of the below statements would be doubted: "*when students act out of interest, choice, and have an internal locus of causality, they achieve better outcomes, presumably because these satisfy students' psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness*" (Jeno, Grytnes & Vandvik, 2017, p.1). Studies such as Pan, Gauvain & Schwartz (2013) are instrumental to sort out individualistic assumptions of self-determination theory and the notion of autonomy, in particular.

In this vein, King & Ganotice Jr. (2015) finds that Filipino students with high level of interdependent (relational) self construal and feelings of family obligations are academically more motivated than others. Personality types are found to be related to intrinsic motivation (Carbonneau, Vallerand & Lafrenière, 2012). Tanaka & Watanabe (2012)'s findings point out the relationship between intrinsic motivation and family values for a sample of Japanese medical students. Gender is another variable that had been researched with relation to academic motivation: Köseoğlu (2013a) reports that female students are more extrinsically and intrinsically motivated than male students and the latter scores higher on amotivation compared to the former, while Husain (2014) finds no motivational differences across genders. Converging with Köseoğlu (2013a), Adao et al (2015), Eymur & Geban (2011) and Köseoğlu (2013b) report that, overall, females are more motivated than males.

Pace et al (2016) develops an academic motivation inventory to tap different dimensions of student motivation. It can be used for identifying the weaker points and improving overall motivation. However, most of the items resemble typical student experience and course feedback surveys. Thus, its power to offer new knowledge might be limited. A more theoretically orientated and detailed model underlies Vallerand et al. (1992)'s The Academic Motivation Scale which consists of amotivation, intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation dimensions (Alivernini & Lucidi, 2008; Vallerand, 1993) as mentioned in the previous section. Research on this tri-partite model is mostly cross-sectional while longitudinal and developmental research shows that autonomous motivation is the one to develop closely with age and transition to a higher level of educational attainment (Kyndt, 2015; Stover et al, 2012). Nishimura & Sakurai (2017) questions this relationship in their study with Japanese students

and finds quite the opposite: Japanese students move from a more autonomous mindset to a more controlled mindset, but this does not weaken their academic motivation which is attributed to the collectivistic cultural values. Hegarty (2010) finds that intrinsic motivation decreases by age and/or years of education. In another longitudinal study with Chinese students, it is found that "*reducing academic stress can increase students' intrinsic motivation and reduce their amotivation*" (Liu, 2015, p.123). Isiksal (2010) observes higher levels of intrinsic motivation at the final (senior) year of the their study, for both American and Turkish student samples. In the same vein, Van Der Berg & Coetzee (2014) fails to find any meaningful relationship between academic motivation and academic achievement for a South African sample of 1st, 2nd and 4th year students. However, levels of amotivation and academic achievement are found to be correlated. Overall these studies show that the developmental and longitudinal implications of the research on motivation is at best mixed. Let us note that most of the studies on academic motivation are cross-sectional with a few exceptions such as Baker (2003), Murayama et al (2013) and Müller & Palekčić (2005), in addition to the ones mentioned earlier.

In another study, it was found that the Turkish sample had higher intrinsic motivation scores while American sample had higher extrinsic motivation scores (Isiksal, 2010) which needs further discussion and explanation. In another study, Maric & Sakac (2014) finds that Serbian students are mostly extrinsically motivated and proposes that his may be due to the values promoted in the society. Money, a concept of extrinsic motivation is considered to be the indicator of success in the society rather than love of your job or professionalism. In their research with Vietnamese primary school students, Thoa & Anh (2014) reports that they are mostly extrinsically motivated, which is of no surprise considering the developmental level of the participants of the study. However other than age factor, the researchers put forward family values, exam-centric education system and the teaching method as the factors behind extrinsic motivation of Vietnamese students in general.

Intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation are found to be correlated for an ethnically diverse American student sample (Young et al, 2011a) as well as a Singaporean sample (Caleon et al, 2015), unlike the findings with the European/American samples. In Asia, family pressure over student's academic achievement is very common, which would lead to prevalence of extrinsic motivation among Asian students (Chong & Ahmed, 2012). It might be the case that in Asia not only instrinsic motivation but also extrinsic motivation, due to the importance attached to the family values would be predictive of positive academic performance. Consistent with this explanation, Chong & Ahmed (2012) finds that Malaysian students are mostly extrinsically motivated. Likewise, King & Ganotice Jr (2015) concludes that in case of

collectivistic societies, extrinsic motivation is not necessarily maladaptive. Furthermore, socio-economic status (SES) needs to be studied in detail as it can be a major source of the differences in types of motivation, although Young et al (2011b) fails to find an overall effect of SES on motivation in an ethnically diverse population:

"(...)*it is possible that SES affects whether a sense of duty to one's family will be beneficial or detrimental for academic outcomes. For those who need to support their family financially in an urgent manner, dropping out of school in order to find employment may be more likely for those who have a strong sense of duty to the family.*" (King & Ganotice Jr, 2015, p.248).

Likewise, Guiffrida et al (2013) proposes that

"*Student affairs professionals must recognize that some students, especially those from low-income households, can also derive motivation to succeed at college from the desire to obtain a well-paying job upon graduation. These low-income students are likely to benefit from a system of student support that fosters intrinsic motivation while also acknowledging their desire to improve their financial situations through their academic success*" (Guiffrida et al, 2013, p.136).

Furthermore, Guiffrida et al (2013) notes the following:

"*In particular, the results indicate that students of color, perhaps most especially those who have internalized more collectivist cultural orientations, may derive their most powerful motivation for succeeding in college based on a desire to give back to their home communities as a way to fulfill their relatedness needs, although this assertion needs to be investigated more thoroughly. Student affairs professionals and faculty members who are aware of this powerful means of academic motivation can provide advising and counseling that seeks to reinforce this altruistic value as a means of facilitating academic success*" (Guiffrida et al, 2013, p.137).

Htoo's (2014) research with a marginalized population, Karen refugee students at Thailand-Burma border fails to find any significant relationship between academic achievement and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation while amotivation and achievement are negatively correlated as expected. Reflecting on these findings, Htoo (2014) questions the universal applicability of Western-oriented understandings of individualism and autonomy and proposes that the situation can be different for politically oppressed and social marginalized populations such as Karen refugees:

"*There may be some problem in applying the concept of autonomy to these populations. Marginalized and oppressed populations have less autonomy than people who are free from persecution. This is particularly true for students living in an environment as controlled and*

restricted as a refugee camp. They are far less likely to see themselves as free agents, making independent, self-guided choices.

The opposite of autonomous, self-guided motivation is controlled motivation. With regard to the current study, the researcher believes that controlled motivation may be a key factor that affected the students' academic achievement in this study. Not only do students live in a refugee camp environment, but in Karen refugee education, traditional teaching methods are still practiced. Teachers are regarded as the authoritative figures who control the learning environment and make decisions about which activities to use and assignments to give. This is not consistent with the assumptions of self-determination theory. This exact scenario (the authoritarian teacher) is applied in these two postsecondary schools where the current research study was conducted. In this setting learning materials, classroom exercises, assignments and teaching methods are still not framed from student autonomy perspectives. We must consider the possibility that autonomy, a central component of self-determination theory and the survey instrument, does not operate for Karen students in the same way as students in the other studies." (Htoo, 2014, p.45)

Although Chirkov et al (2003) warns that the notion of autonomy is not identical with the notions of individualism and independence, more research is needed to empirically support this idea. The theoretical discussions and empirical findings are far from satisfactory or convincing. Although intrinsic motivation is generally expected and found to be associated with higher GPAs (Baker, 2003; Guiffrida et al., 2013), that may only be applicable for Western student samples. In their discussion of a likely East Asian model of motivation based on their data analysis, Zhu & Leung (2011) claims that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (operationalized as 'pleasure-oriented' vs. 'productivity-oriented' motivation respectively) contribute positively to educational outcomes while extrinsic motivation brings negative results for Western students. According to Zhu & Leung (2011) which compared 8th grade mathematics scores of 5 East Asian (Hong Kong Special Autonomous Region, Japan, Republic of Korea (South Korea), Singapore, Chinese Taipei (Taiwan)) and 4 Western samples (Australia, England, the Netherlands and the USA), this explains why Asian students outperform Western counterparts on standard tests which are administered for international comparisons. In Asia, extrinsic motivation can bring out positive educational outcomes as effectively as intrinsic motivation. This discussion has implications for higher educational practitioners in Asia and for those working in non-Asian institutions with sizeable Asian student bodies which will be briefly delienated in the next section.

Discussion

A number of interventions are discussed in the relevant literature. Jeno, Grytnes & Vandvik (2017) reports the use of a mobile application for learning as a factor that contributes to higher levels of student motivation, specifically intrinsic motivation, while Sung et al. (2017) recommends the use of computer games to enhance motivation based on their experiment. Jeno, Grytnes & Vandvik (2017) explains the increase in academic performance and levels of intrinsic motivation by the fact that the mobile application provides options to choose which fosters student autonomy and competence (via immediate feedback), in contrast to the fixed and non-interactive structure of the textbook. This shows that activities that foster student autonomy and competence (mobile apps, various class activities and other educational tasks) would support both intrinsic motivation and academic performance. Converging with this line of research and set of recommendations, Griffin (2016) finds that perceived student autonomy manifested in in-class activities are closely related with intrinsic motivation and positive student evaluations of instruction. Recommended activities involve providing students options to choose class activities, and opting for activities that support self-learning as well as self-paced learning.

Guay et al (2010) concludes that autonomous academic motivation is a mediator between academic self-concept and academic achievement which brings about recommendations for school administrations to provide a more positive educational space where students will feel more competent. Young (2005) suggests that "*active application-oriented experience delivered by enthusiastic faculty, who provide high interaction, supportive feedback, and clear goals that emphasize learning over grades, will increase intrinsic motivation and the use of self-regulated learning strategies*" (p.25). Classroom activities need to be more personally relevant for students (Sungur & Senler, 2010).

The whole idea of motivation in educational settings is to make educational activities more meaningful for students. Research on academic motivation can shed a light on student psychology which can help reduce university dropout rates (Hill, 2013). Likewise, academic motivation is found to be a predictor of academic procrastination (Cerino, 2014), thus for procrastinators, modification of motivational strategies is recommended. Following Donche et al. (2013)'s finding showing that learning strategies is an often overlooked mediator between academic motivation and academic performance, active learning strategies appear to be vital for motivating students. Following the findings by Doron et al., (2011) and Oguz & Ataseven (2016), coping strategies, learning strategies and metacognitive skills need to be developed among students.

Academic success is no longer conceived to be a matter of intelligence only, student motivation does matter (Murayama et al, 2013). Smart students are not always academically successful. Motivation makes a difference (Hegarty, 2010). The fact that academic success is not only a matter of intelligence, knowledge, skills or a combination of both, but also a matter of motivation can help us to come up with a set of recommendations to support student motivation and especially intrinsic motivation which would significantly contribute to the level of academic performance:

1. In the introductory lecture and onwards or at orientation program, the faculty can list the most typical extrinsically motivating reasons such as family pressure, focus on grades etc. and explain in what ways intrinsic motivation can be helpful for students. E.g. "Even if you prefer to study art rather than economics, all artists need to have some idea about economic issues to survive both as artists and as citizens." This can be a first week class activity. The students can list why they study this particular major and/or subject. After they come up with a detailed list, the faculty can classify the reasons as intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivators.

2. Assessment policies can be realigned to take account of the contributing factor of the type of motivation.

3. Final year modules could be more practical to support students' transition to work life. A more practical revamping of the final year modules would help students to develop more useful motivational habits.

4. As informal student-faculty interactions are found to positively influence both intrinsic and extrinsics motivation (Komarraju, Musulkin & Bhattacharya, 2010), more informal opportunities need to be provided to foster the student-faculty liaison.

5. Let us also note that families in non-Western institutions do not always contribute positively to student's academic performance. In some cases, family not only exerts pressure over student, but also decides what s/he would study which brings about a group of students who are enrolled to majors that they are not willing to pursue. This needs further discussion.

Conclusion

Based on the literature review offered in this work, it can be concluded that higher education practitioners in Asia may reconsider the widespread principle that intrinsic motivation would always bring superior educational outcomes compared to extrinsic motivation. Studying for others may be as justified as studying for one's self. Cultural assumptions of the notion of academic motivation need to be questioned through empirical studies and theoretical works refering to non-Western students and institutions. The

methodological individualism of the notion of academic motivation that can be traced backed to Cartesian epistemic and ontological reasoning and French and Kantian understandings of enlightenment need to reconsidered in the claim to be universal. Finally, more research is needed on motivation with a class-conscious understanding of motivation that doesn't treat other ethnicities as a single homogeneous category. Educational reform attempts need to realigned based on a critical review of the notion of academic motivation.

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