Cultivating Sustainable Motivation to Learn in Rural Students: Teachers' Strategies for Long-Term Educational Empowerment

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Abstract

This study examines the motivational strategies employed by rural secondary school teachers to foster students' motivation to learn. This study substantiates the findings from rural public secondary schools in the province of Punjab, Pakistan. Data were taken from four science subject secondary school teachers through a snowball sampling technique. The present study's findings corroborate the research questions that seven motivational strategies make learning fascinating, thereby cultivating motivation to learn. Moreover, the strategies, mainly life inspiration and encouragement, were being used as a crucial tool to cultivate motivation to learn and motivate students for higher education. The present study contributes to the cultivation of motivation to learn by elaborating motivational strategies used by rural teachers to enrich the motivation to learn in the life endeavors of rural students.

Keywords: learning motivation, motivational strategies, cultivation of motivation, rural education

1. Introduction

In Pakistan, the literacy rate of the overall rural population is 51%. The growth in literacy is at a slow pace compared to the growth of the urban population, according to the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Government of Pakistan. According to the National Education Policy 2017 of Pakistan, only 27% of adolescents in the Punjab province are enrolled in secondary classes (Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training). In Pakistan, the bulk of the illiterates are born poor and live in underdeveloped and far-flung rural areas and urban slums. The majority of the illiterates are women. Hence, motivation to learn can remove illiteracy, which is more pronounced among peasants, laborers, ethnic, linguistic, religious minorities, nomads, disabled people, prisoners, etc. It is not poverty in some pockets of the country but illiteracy and demotivation to learn, specifically among rural students. Hence, motivation can overcome the illiteracy of new generations.

Teachers play a remarkable role in attracting adolescents to embrace themselves with education. Engagement in Education does not only increase subject matter learning; however, it also promises erudition. Motivation is the ignition to start the learning process, and even it sustain learning of those who are already in the process to cope with the hardships while learning (Palmer, 2009).

A key source of motivation to learn is a teacher who cultivates or suppresses a student's learning interest. Highly motivated students were discovered to have a higher interest in learning than those who have a lower motivation. Teachers design learning activities according to the students' internal interest to foster intrinsic motivation, and consequently, extrinsic motivation comes in the form of outcome (Vibulphol, 2016). The outcome could be a prize and/or distinguished academic achievement.

"Amotivation" is another state of motivation; in this situation, a student lacks learning activities and does not feel excited for the meaningful learning activities and efforts (Vibulphol, 2016). The effects of motivation yield are different from the learning of students. Students with a high degree of intrinsic motivation are better process-oriented (Garn & Jolly, 2014), and more persistent for self-development and learning, compared to the low level of intrinsic motivation. Ultimately, they become better learners. On the other hand, external motivation serves as a springboard when educational learning activities are not gratifying and intriguing novelties. By designing the learning activities, teachers can engage students in learning by pointing out the significant role of the activity in their real-life and linking it with their interests and goals. Consequently, students with high amotivation engage themselves in learning (Noels, Pelletier, Clément, & Vallerand, 2000). However, the question is how to put these subjects into practice primarily in the rural context, where awareness about education's importance is dissatisfied.

The games and activities help students learn the stuff, mainly complicated subject matters, effectively and simply. Game-based learning has a positive effect and relationship with students' learning achievement (So & Seo, 2018; Sung, Chang, & Liu, 2016). Such learning games and activities are beneficial to form constructive competitions among students. Students learn to deal with challenges, cooperation, teamwork by helping each other. Hayat, Hasan, Ali, and Kaleem (2017) stated that the activity-based learning process enhances critical thinking, logical reasoning, self-direction, and cooperation among the students.

Thusly, the teachers can reinforce students to positively develop their skills and knowledge, uplifting students' academic achievements. Good grades in group activities, admiration, and prizes come under the positive reinforcement, and ignorance of nasty occurring accounts for the negative, however pleasant reinforcement (Slavin, 2019). The positive reinforcement should be preferable over the negative reinforcement, particularly praising words that cultivate learning motivation and increase students' academic achievements.

Constructive class competitions in an achievement orientation environment stimulate winning aspiration and uplift the performance. Improperly planned class or/and overall school competitions may

provoke jealousy and conflict among the students. Therefore, well organized and fair competitions add spirit and motivation to win as individuals and teams.

Teamwork develops a sense of collaboration for common goals' achievement and mutual learning. It spurs the confidence of students, mainly when students are creative. The creativity motivates students to take an interest in new concept learning and idea-sharing. To learn and explain the same concept or lesson in a new way is an advantage of novelty, which fosters knowledge expansion passion for a successful future (Liu, Horton, Olmanson, & Toprac, 2011; Moos & Honkomp, 2011; Stipek, 2002).

Fewer teachers encompass collaboration for common learning goals' accomplishment as a learning strategy to enhance motivation and add interest to learning. Educational learning components are sociocultural factors, constructivist, and learner-centered (Bonk & King, 2012). Explicitly, it is a process that maximizes the success, performance and brightens the future of individuals and teams.

Environment and Methodology are the central sources of collaborative learning that cultivate novelty and talent. These central sources incorporate teachers' and students' relationships, face to face conversations and debates, teamwork and consultation, group study, projects, and more. In simple words, collaborative learning gives the sense of responsibility, performance, and academic achievement multiplication of an individual and a team. Likewise, it adds motivation and passion for learning. Teacher and student interaction, community, and school culture and context dramatically influence the learning passion and motivation of students in and outside class experiences. Specifically, in the rural context, student motivation is a shared obligation of parents, teachers, community, and more; however, teachers have direct significant and inspirational affiliation with student motivation. Therefore, a dire need to explore comprehensively motivational strategies used by rural teachers to cultivate motivation to learn in the students is required.

Abbas and Khurshid (2013) reported the impact of motivational techniques employed by primary school teachers, on student academic achievements of five male and five female primary schools of Islamabad, Pakistan. Fifty male and fifty female teachers participated in the research. Stratified sampling was adopted to approach the teachers: eleven multiple-choice and twelve open-ended questions comprised 21 items of a positive reinforcement questionnaire. Furthermore, B-Ed training, the grade of a teacher, demographics, and income level were accounted for as questionnaire indicators. Findings depict that high academic qualified teachers mostly used positive reinforcement strategies compared to B-Ed training program holders. Knowledge grading strategy was likely to be used by those teachers who had a high percentage in results rivaling to the lowers. Moreover, federal teachers were habituated to adopt negative reinforcement as a motivational strategy contrasting to others.

Hardre, Sullivan, and Roberts (2008) verified effective motivational strategies employed by secondary teachers of public high schools of U.S.A. southwestern rural states. The data was generated through mixed methods in two years. A total of 75 teachers and 625 students participated in the survey. Likewise, 66 teachers appeared in interview sessions from 19 rural schools. The study blended the perspective of students and teachers of the same rural high schools. A particular study finding was that

rural students' motivation is a shared responsibility of the society and community. The study suggested the most successful strategies informed by both teachers and students, i.e., (a) support for learning and future goals; (b) establish the relevance of the content, connecting it to students' interests; (c) treat students as uniquely valued individuals; and (d) foster student valuing and perceived competence.

Whether these studies and other related studies conducted on learning motivation, generally reported the relationship and/or effects of teacher motivational strategies on student learning. Moreover, they were conducted in different contexts and/or level. Notably, prior researches ignore the cultivation of motivation to learn in the rural educational context. Thus, it is unclear from the previous studies to understand the cultivation of motivation to learn in students by rural education, which serves as a critical gap in knowledge.

In response to this dire need, this study was conducted to explore the cultivation of motivation to learn under rural education. The strategies used to cultivate motivation present a new perspective to cultivate and enhance the motivation in rural adolescent students to learn, including in what ways teachers can cultivate motivation to learn in rural students.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Study Design

A phenomenology research approach was used in this study. This study design suggests the understanding of phenomenon exclusive experience and viewpoints of study participants. The phenomenological study reflects the perception and experience of participants on phenomena in certain situations. (Lester, 1999; Van Manen, 2016). Therefore, this research design was enormously fine to approach the study aim.

2.2 Ethics

As for ethics, the pseudonyms were used for all four participants' place of their real names (Table 1). The pseudonyms ensured personal privacy. Data encryption tackled information privacy encompasses audio recording and transcribes. Additionally, the participants voluntarily took part in the present study; they were free to withdraw their viewpoints at any stage of the present study before write-up; all the collected and generated information, including an analysis of the extracts, were used only for the academic purpose.

2.3 Participants

A sample of four rural secondary school science teachers was drawn through a snowball technique, and this investigation is centered on four rural teachers' experiences and viewpoints. The first teacher,

"Teacher A," was pointed out two further participants. They had served in the rural public secondary schools as science subject teachers. The snowball sampling procedure was adopted to get the pure viewpoint of rural teachers and to follow the present study purpose. Teacher A helped voluntarily to recruit two more rural SST teachers, and Teacher B provided the contact detail of his colleague who also had served as a rural SST in a rural secondary school. All the four study participants had served earlier from 3 to 4.5 years as SST in different rural public secondary schools of the Lahore region in the province of Punjab, Pakistan.

Table 1. Teacher Pseudonyms

Teacher	Pseudonyms
First Teacher	Teacher A
Second Teacher	Teacher B
Third Teacher	Teacher C
Fourth Teacher	Teacher D

2.4 Instrument

A semi-structured interview guide was used to collect the data. The interview guideline is as follow; (i) teaching to rural kids is not an easy task, how did you motivate your students, (ii) what techniques you were using to develop their interest in learning, and (iii) if a student is not performing well then how do you tackle and motivate him. The interview guide was checked by two senior professors of the faculty and three doctoral candidates. After their comments and recommendations, the guide's final version was edited accordingly, and later used in the study.

2.5 Data collection

All four interviews were conducted through WhatsApp/Skype during May 2020, and all interview sessions were recorded with the interviewees' permission. During sessions, key points were noted by the author. There was no time limit set for interviews. However, each interview session took fifty to ninety minutes.

2.6 Analysis

All recorded interviews were transcribed and rechecked by the authors. Later all transcriptions were sent to interviewees for confirmation to maintain validity. As we received their replies with confirmations and very few minor changes, we started further analyses of the data. Key ideas were classified and coded interviews first individually and then collectively. Through this process, investigator triangulation was used to ensure the validity of inter-observer reliability. Ma, Yin, Tang, and Liu (2009) has substantiated this procedure for qualitative data analysis.

3. Explanation of Findings

As a teenager, student moves from the middle section into the secondary section to get a systematic formal education. The school, and an individual personality, i.e., teachers, transform a teenager into a brilliant learner. If a student has a slight spark of learning aptitude and gets the right motivation softly, then a teacher can frame learning willingness and shifts the overall paradigm of an adolescent in the education and schooling period. This transformation even can turn an average student into a brilliant learner (Merchie & Van Keer, 2016; Wisner & Starzec, 2016).

Motivation plays a vital role in heightening the learning process. Numerous publications have been recorded on learning motivation and/or rural education (Abbas & Khurshid, 2013; Ghazi, Ali, Shahzad, & Khan, 2010; Hardre et al., 2008). However, the available data about motivation to learn in particularly rural education is still limited. Rural schoolchildren are unique in learning aptitude, awareness, and more. Therefore, the motivational strategies used by a public secondary school teacher are required to cultivate motivation to learn in rural students.

Finally, following seven themes incorporating several categories and sub-categories were developed: (1) fostering reading and art atmosphere, (2) ownership and reflection, (3) open communication and sharing encouragement, (4) learning styles of individuals, (5) Game-based Learning, (6) life inspiration and encouragement, and (7) teaching methods. The selected examples are illustrated in the following table from two themes in the refined coding system.

Table 2. Refined coding system: themes, categories, and subcategories

Themes	Categories	Subcategories
Learning Enhancement	Individual learning styles	Make the concept clear Take an interest in learning
Involvement in learning	Design activities	Foster cognitive and not-cognitive abilities Demonstrating new ideas by doing or visually

3.1 Fostering Reading and Art Atmosphere

Reading is an instrumenting success (Bus, Van Ijzendoorn, & Pellegrini, 1995; Kassow, 2006). Some people are in favor of this argument, while some may not. The teachers claimed that learning comes through minimum reading (Houle, 1981; Richardson, Morgan, & Fleener, 2012). Learning is a triumph key to life. The reading habit of children nurtures a love for learning. It fancies students to learn new knowledge or modern technological concepts as reading boosts learning capacity.

The brainstorming and development of mental maps guide them to deal with novelty. Furthermore, these components train children to process new ideas and concepts. Students learn to handle all their

academic and life affairs due to reading conflagration informal education. Eventually, this habit boosts children's brain beyond the limits and further their lives and academic performance. Art and language curricula provide an opportunity to develop this habit in children. Teachers trust that reading enriches the ability to teach all subjects, especially technical subjects, i.e., science, mathematics, etc.

"Logically and commonsensical, the reading enables children to transform and communicate the ideas and concepts into words" (Teacher A).

Additionally, with the collaboration of teachers, the schools were struggling to create an atmosphere that encourages reading. Teachers furnish personal demonstrations through reading participation. There were also some prizes to reinforce the reading and embrace it as a hobby or fun. There was a poster reading competition twice a year; the winner becomes a class monitor and receives the prize money. If s/he wins two competitions continually, later s/he gets a new school kit that encompasses uniform and shoes and a certificate.

On the other hand, if a student does not like to participate in a reading activity, then s/he may participate in art activities. In the art period, the art teacher teaches them sketching and painting. The students need to paint or sketch different things they see in their daily lives or think about or inspire.

"Generally, science *major students draw modern technological stuff or gadgets. Furthermore, major art students draw natural sceneries or some gorgeous designs" (Teacher B).*

Teacher C mentioned an alumnus who was good at house drawing. He is doing a bachelor's in architecture from a prestigious university. He won many art competitions in the school. The art winner is awarded the same prize as the readers. Notwithstanding these motivational activities, the academic drawing and readings are part of the irregular curriculum. There is no particular class for it. It is an essential part of the corresponding course.

3.2 Ownership and Reflection

External and third person (parents and teachers) control over childhood experiences may lead to learning withdrawal. However, gentle guidance and a friendly environment can cultivate learning motivation. Proper motivation leads to a moderate personality. This kind of personality gives control to children over the physical and psychological state. For instance, a teacher's words were.

"We have friendship with our *students…. and adore them the same as our kids" (Teacher C).*

The students have to reflect on their experiences and control their learning experience by themselves, whether they are in and outside the classrooms or at home. By keeping eyes on this purpose, the school provides opportunities to paint different sketches with proper guidelines. These sketches were increasingly involved with the level of class. The painting activity specifies physical control and uplift creativity. Likewise, freedom in choosing writing topics gives control over the thinking. Students are free to select their writing projects freely while assigning the projects. Similarly, the students have the

liberty to pick up extracurricular activities on their own. Ultimately, students, especially adolescent students, get control over their affairs and own their choices. It was explored in interviews as

"Each student explores a minimum of five topics according to their own choice and interest. Later, gives reasons why s/he chose the topics and which one is the most favorite and why. This empowerment cultivates motivation to learn, which engages students in learning" (Teacher B).

3.3 Open Communication and Sharing Encouragement

The open and flexible environment creates comfort for sharing. The students can share their opinion openly in a friendly and relaxed environment. The positive discussion on their interests stimulates student motivation. A teacher mentioned it as

"It is the nature of young students to follow that person who listens to them attentively and leaves positive comments" (Teacher C).

The teachers build up friendly relationships with our students and sustain the open and respective environment. Therefore, the students remain comfortable sharing their opinions about their lives, study matters, and learning processes. Teachers were reassuring students' opinions for correction through discussion and other methods politely in the studied schools.

"Definitely… we do not judge them over their opinion because they are rural kids. They do not have much experience as metropolitans. They are sensitive and easy to bully by others. Therefore, we also have some private spaces … if required for them" (Teacher D).

3.4 Learning Styles of Individuals

Unquestionably, there are different learning methods and styles. These styles keep the children engage in learning. Teachers motivate children to adopt their favorite best-suited learning styles.

"A student with a science major…. he always draws pictures to memorize the stories and essays" (Teacher B).

A teacher can help a student to identify the best-fitted style of learning. The style could be one or a mixture of more than one style, i.e., logical, physical, verbal, audio, and visual learning styles. For instance, the explanation of concepts is suitable *for* auditory learners because they are good at memorization by listening. Enthusiasm for learning, especially for new things, catches the interest of students. A teacher stated as

"We teachers, enhanced learning with enthusiasm for science, mathematics, and social subjects specifically for the concept building of subject matters to sustain students' interest in learning. A mixture… Alternatively, a specific learning style with enthusiasm makes learning enjoyable. We motivate students to learn complicated subject matters, particularly new concepts in their way and techniques" (Teacher B).

Interview findings show that teachers' primary job is to polish the learning style and put the students on the right learning track for lifelong learning. Teachers were personally enthusiastic about students' learning styles. Sometimes, even teachers learn new teaching techniques from them because they are rural youngsters and, occasionally, teachers' techniques were not working in studied schools. A teacher's words were

"I prefer to adapt student learning styles *to teach them, which cultivate motivation to learn" (Teacher D).*

3.5 Game-based Learning

In the 21st century, Game-based Learning is a famous learning tool and strategy (Plass, Homer, & Kinzer, 2015; Qian & Clark, 2016). It develops students' cognitive and non-cognitive abilities and a deeper understanding of learning (Anguera & Gazzaley, 2015; Chee, 2011). It especially nurtures students' interest and motivates them for learning. The students and youngsters get pleasure through Game-based Learning. The games engage a student's mind to learn newness while experiencing amusement, the amusement supplements students' motivation. Therefore, rural students have a strong desire for Game-based Learning because it entertains them along with learning. Findings revealed that classes were routinely divided into two to three teams for Game-based Learning activity in studied schools. This division of class makes learning fascinating, particularly in terms of imperceptible absorbability. It arouses motivation along with competition. Teachers were found to conduct healthy learning competitions among the students.

"The competition among students intensifies individual and team achievements… specifically, academic achievements. Additionally, students learn collaboration, success, and failure… that makes their nerves efficacious" (Teacher D).

"My students endeavor to compete with their companions… they celebrate their achievements and support ordinary mates" (Teacher C).

One student's strength may overcome the weak points of another one, i.e., the student who is competent in mathematics may help those who are inefficient in it. Findings reveal that teachers focus on their promises, especially motivating them to share their endowments for slow learners' cognitive capacity building.

3.6 Life Inspiration and Encouragement

Life ambition and bright future envisaging make life glowing. Generally, rural students and youngsters have limited acquaintances about education. Teachers knowledge them with an educational expedient and prosperous future life. The findings revealed that teachers develop students' mental maps by demonstrating a luxurious life. For instance, the army lieutenant has a luxurious life. The distinguished Faculty of Science (FSc) is the only approach to be the lieutenant. Likewise, the distinctive FA (Faculty

of Arts) and BA (Bachelor of Arts) subsequently are the road map toward the CSS (Central Superior Service) exam for executive or white color career commencement.

"Generally, I draft the sketch of valuable parents' struggle for their most exceptional education and learning, especially the schooling… Moreover, extracurricular activities related subject matters accelerate motivations i.e., shower soap making activity" (Teacher A).

Furthermore, self-responsibility is an enigma among rural adolescents. A teacher's contribution to the realization of students' responsibilities plays a central and pivotal role in the cultivation of motivation to learn.

3.7 Teaching Methods

Alluring pedagogical methods foster learning enthusiasm in students (Council, 2003). Interactivity magnetizes the pupils to acquire knowledge mainly, diverse dynamics of subject matters. The novelty in teaching methods and mystery catch students' attention and trigger the exciting environment in a class. The praise in the mates' presence or in front of other teachers motivates teachers. Admiration in the response of class participation precisely, questioning the confidence of student forwards.

"I deliver the lessons in a conversation form, and students enjoy witticisms… lessons outside the classroom, lesson relatedness with the routine circadian life, making tactful mistakes while teaching, and smart moves make the lesson delightful and motivate students to learn by grabbing their interest" (Teacher D).

The pleasant conversation is a charismatic tactic to nourish the attentiveness. To ask an interesting question of common sense or general knowledge in a lesson startup makes youngsters' minds active, present, and entice the learning motivation.

4. Conclusion

Motivation plays a significant role to heighten knowledge and eradiation enhancement. Therefore, this study was designed to narrate the inclusive experience of rural teachers about the cultivation of motivation to learn, which are brightening the present and future of rural students. In a rural educational context, motivation to learn was being cultivated using seven strategies; fostering reading and art atmosphere, ownership and reflection, open communication and sharing encouragement, learning styles of individuals, Game-based Learning, life inspiration and encouragement, and teaching methods. Furthermore, these strategies were playing a dynamic and central role in the lives of students and the future. Life inspiration and encouragement strategy are playing a vital role in cultivating motivation to learn. Additionally, rural students realized the value of education due to these strategies. Notably, the cultivation of motivation to learn was enhancing their erudition as learning for life in rural students' endeavors.

Primarily, the current investigation is restricted to four teachers' limited resources. Secondarily, the inclusive interviews were the only source of the data. Large-scale research should be conducted in the future, and multiple data collection methods should be used for comprehensive understanding. Similar research should also be carried out in different contexts, areas, cultures, and levels, especially to have a comparative study.

Conflicts

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Ethics Approval and Informed Consent

Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. Data were anonymized to ensure confidentiality.

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