

Teaching Tips

A Forum for discussion and tips for advancing teaching and learning at Mona

Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, The UWI Mona



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Special points of interest:

- The Teaching Tips Newsletter is a publication of the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) at the UWI, Mona.
- The Newsletter is published once per month and provides tips for improving teaching and learning in higher education. It is available online (<http://myspot.mona.uwi.edu/CETL/>) as well as in the office of the CETL.
- If you have an area that you would like us to explore in this newsletter, do not hesitate to contact us at the CETL.

Incorporate motivational strategies into your teaching

What is Motivation?

There is much evidence to support the notion that motivation is a prerequisite for learning. Mayer (2011) points out that “motivation is an internal state that initiates and maintains goal directed behaviour” (p.39). When we talk about motivation in relation to our students, we are really concerned about the internal state of our students. We are concerned about them possessing that ability to engage in goal directed behaviour. Motivation activates behaviour and the motivated student will usually work hard to make sense of the subject matter content and to demonstrate thoroughgoing understanding of the material.

Deep learning is about the student making certain decisions to learn in meaningful ways. It does not occur in a vacuum. Highly motivated students will decide to make the effort to learn. However, the commitment of you, the classroom teacher to motivate students in your classroom could make a difference, in fact, it is very important.

What motivational strategies do you incorporate in your teaching?

Motivation based on knowledge of students

Getting to know your students is very important in any classroom. The psycho social environment of a classroom will promote learning when students feel safe and are supported to learn. So, getting to know your students should be one of the ways you seek to demonstrate to them how interested you are in their wellbeing and welfare. Further, as you interact with your students, display strong faith in their abilities. Your personal interest in them will inspire their personal loyalty to you.

Do you consider the entry characteristics of your students? Considering the entry characteristics is a really good place to begin as you think about introducing strategies to motivate the learners in your classes. Think about ways in which you can adapt the instructional strategies to respond to the learning needs of these students. When an effort is made to reach the learner, where he or she is, it is usually appreciated and the student is inspired to work hard and learn.

Motivation based on students' interest in the subject

Help your students to understand the relevance of the content you are teaching to their lives and to their career goals etc. In fact, many students need help in understanding how some of the content they are learning will relate to the world they are being prepared to enter. When you provide motivational strategies based on your students interests, they are more likely to work harder.

Students who are intrinsically motivated will definitely work hard and find fulfillment from tasks that they do in pursuit of their larger goals. This kind of motivation will be related to the processes of the brain and thus, personal effort on the part of the learner. Successful execution of the task based on personal effort is a powerful emotional force and will inspire intensity on the part of the learner.

Motivation is usually intensified when a student is able to declare unequivocally “I did it myself.” Therefore, it is important to create activities that allow students to find information, organise it in meaningful ways and use it. Motivated students work hard to understand course content, they are persistent and certainly their efforts are characterized by intensity.

Motivation based on your passion and ability to inspire

When presenting, deliver with energy and much enthusiasm. When you demonstrate vigour and vitality in your teaching, students will notice your passion, this is one way by which you will be able to motivate your students.

Motivation based on goals

It is very important that you set realistic performance goals and always encourage students to work on achieving these goals. Indicate the pathway to success in your course and challenge your students to set their

own reasonable performance goals. You might even think about establishing a learning contract between your students and you, the teacher. They work hard to learn when there is conviction that hard work will pay off. If they attribute success to their effort, they will work hard. If they believe effort trumps ability then, they usually will be prepared to put out the effort however, if success is understood to be the result of ability and the student thinks he or she does not possess the ability, the student will not work hard since, effort won't make a difference.

In the quest to help students achieve their learning goals and to demonstrate the value of effort, you can design assignments that call for the expending of great effort. These assignments should have grading schemes that clearly indicate that effort will be rewarded. In this way, you might be able to communicate to the students the value of effort over ability. There is also the opportunity to develop goals that are focused on mastery in various ways and at the same time communicate the likelihood of success in clear and unequivocal ways. In fact, you can establish a partnership with your students, for instance, with the use of a learning contract. This would indicate in a very strong way, your belief in their ability to learn and your availability to assist them in their quest to learn.

Motivation based on feedback

Seek always to offer praise and constructive criticism as you interact with your students. When there is need to make negative comments, please ensure that this is done in relation to student performances and not the performer. In fact, when offering feedback on students work, special care should be taken to ensure that it is done in nonjudgmental ways. Always look for opportunities to communicate ways by which improvements might be done to advance the students and avoid any action that could be seen as dividing students into sheep and goats.

Motivation based on social partnership

Mayer makes the point that "students work harder to learn when they view the instructor as a social partner" (p. 41). This understanding is related to what we know about social agency theory. There is research that supports this perspective. In fact, the research suggests that when instructors are conversational, less formal and willing to reveal some personal information to their students, a sense of partnership is created and this becomes a motivational force that promotes learning.

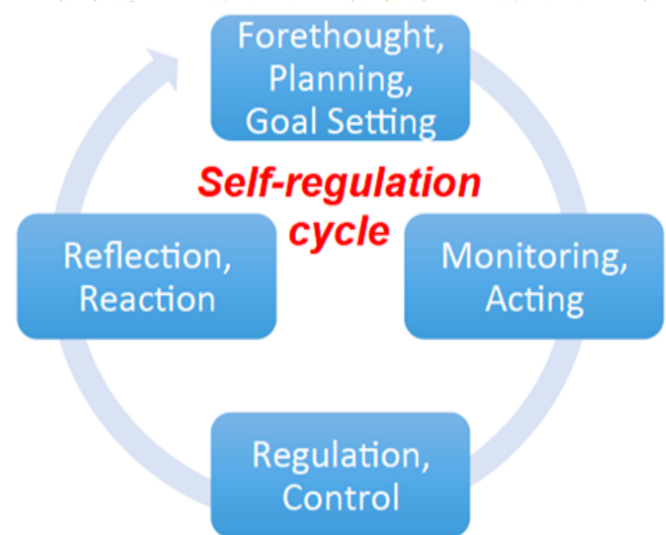
Reference
Mayer, R. E. (2011). *Applying the science of learning*. Boston: Pearson.

Metacognition and Self-Regulation

Metacognition and self-regulation are important buzzwords in teaching and learning in higher education today. We desperately want our students to become self-regulated

learners and we will have to help them to develop the facility of paying attention to what they are learning, how they are learning and how they know they have learned. The self-regulated learning cycle (Zimmerman, 2001) offers some help.

- Metacognition - literally "beyond knowing", knowing what one knows and doesn't know - promoting a student's ability to self-monitor levels of understanding and predict how well (s) he will do on a particular task.
- Self-regulation - students monitoring their own comprehension and assessing their own abilities without teacher help.



Zimmerman, B. J. (2001)

References

- Zimmerman, B. J. (2002). Becoming a self-regulated learner. *Theory Into Practice* 41, 2, 65-70.
- Zimmerman, B.J. (2001). Theories of self-regulated learning and academic achievement: An overview and analysis. In B.J. Zimmerman & D.H. Schunk (Eds.), *Self-regulated learning and academic achievement: Theoretical perspectives* (2nd ed., pp. 1-37). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

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