Literature, happiness, and learning in the utilization of literary texts to stimulate students' learning

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Abstract: The proliferation of digital media in our educational practices has made knowledge accessible to students, who obtain it from diverse sources other than the traditional source, which is the teacher. They engage with it based on their aesthetic conditions rather than the teacher's scientific and ethical conditions, finding pleasure and happiness in digital reception that they did not find in their teachers' in-person lectures. This has posed an educational problem that calls for a pedagogical reconsideration of the act of teaching and its content. This research has chosen to focus descriptively and analytically on demonstrating that motivation (or incentive) is a factor that can enhance students' desire for the teacher's lessons. Since motivation is a force that drives its possessor to achieve their goals, it is certain that when a student is aroused with cognitive desire and possesses intrinsic or extrinsic motivation, they engage in learning with all their effort and achieve their goal. In this context, the research proposes the reading of literary texts as a means to motivate students to learn humanities subjects.

Keywords: Education, Happiness, Impulse, Learning, Literature, Motivation.

1. Introduction

The abundance of knowledge in new media, the ease of accessing it, and its free availability are all factors that have made students[1] study not only to acquire knowledge but also to gain the pleasure of learning that knowledge. Thus, the student becomes happy while learning what they need, in the manner they love, and at the time they want, not in the manner imposed by the teacher and with the materials chosen for them. It appears that this has led most students to refrain from attending in-person lectures for humanities courses in many governmental universities around the world. Because university education is specialized education needed by society, it is necessary to have a specialized teacher to design the student's learning program, its cognitive content, and its assessment methods to ensure the unity of that scientific content, control the duration of its completion, monitor the extent of the student's mastery, and achieve the outcomes expected by the educational institution and society from every educational act. Between students' reluctance to attend the teacher's lectures on the one hand, and the necessity of having a specialized teacher overseeing the students' formation on the other, cognitive happiness has become a pedagogical requirement for university educational systems and an institutional and societal issue that warrants consideration. Thus, the teacher is left only to care about the students' cognitive happiness, as much as they care about their knowledge. In this context, it is necessary to seek a solution that achieves integration between the students' educational conditions and the teacher's instructional educational conditions, and the nature of the subjects taught. This is summarized in the following question: What is the path that the teacher and the university institution must follow to

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[1] The research uses the term "student" to mean university student.

ensure that the method of presenting knowledge does not constitute a barrier to acquiring the knowledge itself?

In an attempt to answer this question, our work is divided into three chapters, based on a descriptive-analytical methodology. In the first chapter, we define motivation, mention its types, and methods of achieving it. In the second chapter, we propose literary texts as an aesthetic and moral incentive to stimulate the desire for learning. In the third chapter, we attempt to determine the role of the teacher and the educational institution in motivating students to learn through literary texts.

2. Definition of Motivation

The linguistic meaning of motivation is encouragement and drive; in the Arabic language, "الحافز" (al-hafiz) is a noun of the active participle from "حفز" (to motivate), meaning: "something that encourages you from behind, either through incentive or non-incentive. He motivated him; he motivates him with incentive... and he motivated him, i.e., drove him from behind." [2] It is apparent here that Ibn Manzur distinguishes between incentive and motivation, which we found to have research and cognitive validity, so we adopted it in this research. In terms of terminology, definitions of motivation vary according to its type (external/internal) and according to the nature of the field in which it is used. In terms of type, it can be either external or internal (self-motivated). In terms of field, motivation can be psychological, which is what causes the transition from an initial undesired state to a second desired state. This transition is fraught with psychological tension and some fear of possible frustration. In general, motivation in the psychological field stimulates the latent force for action within each individual. It is also "a stimulus that moves human behavior and helps guide performance when obtaining incentives becomes important for the individual.[3] In the social field, motivation is defined as "the material and moral compensation provided to individuals as a reward for their outstanding performance."[4] Thus, incentives are embodied in "individuals gaining enthusiasm, initiative, and pleasure in their work, and gaining confidence in themselves, which drives them to perform the required work in the best possible way without complaint or grumbling."[5] We found a similarity in the dictionary meaning of motivation in Ibn Manzur's "Lisan al-Arab" and Nicole Oresme (1320-1380) in his translation of the book "Ethics," where motivation is defined as "a force that drives a person to do something," [6] Which is the same meaning we found for the term "الحافز" in Ibn Manzur's "Lisan al-Arab."

Since many researches use "الدافع" (dafe'a) and "الحافز" (al-hafiz) interchangeably, and both refer to a beneficial desire to achieve a certain goal, it is necessary to quickly distinguish between the two terms here. What we establish in this regard is that "الدافع" (the impulse) is nothing but an external desire imposed on a person, pushing them towards something they might not have naturally inclined towards, while "الحافز" (motivation) stems from an intrinsic desire and does not always mean creating a new desire for something; rather, it may enhance an existing desire and give it the energy to pursue and achieve its goals. However, once a person adopts and believes in the impulse, and it is realized in their behavior, it becomes a motivation for them. Thus, the philosophy of motivation or incentive in the cognitive field is the philosophy of beneficial desire in learning. Researcher Rolland Viau encapsulated the essence of these definitions by stating that motivation in the context of education is "a dynamic state that arises from the learner's perceptions of themselves and their environment, which motivates them to choose an activity, participate in it, and persist in achieving its completion." .[7]"In light of this

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[2] Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-Arab*, entries (ح،ف،ز).

[3] Al-Salmi, Ali, Human Resources Management, Al-Ghareeb Library, Cairo, 1992, Vol.2, p.209.

[4] Maher, Ahmed, Wage and Compensation Systems, University House, Alexandria, 2010, p.148.

[5] Abu Al-Nasr, Medhat Muhammad, Management with Incentives: Methods of Job Motivation, Arab Group for Training and Publishing, Cairo, 2009, p.151.

[6] Oresme, Nicole : Le Livre d'Ethiques d'ARISTOTE, éd. Albert Douglas Menut, III, 20, p. 215.

[7] Viau, Rolland : La motivation à apprendre en milieu scolaire. Montréal, Canada, 2009, p.7.

definition, it is possible to find a common implication of motivation in all its definitions, covering the following three needs:

- The individual's need to be the master of themselves and their behavior.
- The individual's need to engage positively with the challenges of their social environment.
- The individual's need to communicate with their society and to be the focus of others' attention.

Motivation can also be categorized, based on its source, into three types:

2.1. A- External Motivation

External motivation is what is granted to the student by their family, educational institution, or teachers, such as material rewards or additional marks in evaluations, a free trip, or praise for their effort in a general social occasion. The purpose of all these types of external incentives is to encourage the student to exert effort and complete the tasks assigned to them, and to do all that happily, because "all people strive to be happy; without exception; no matter the different means they use, they all tend towards this goal [...] It is the motivation behind all human actions, even those who will eventually commit suicide."[8].

Researchers Joseph Tranquillo and Mona Stecker, in their study titled "The Use of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation in Continuing Professional Education," examined the matter of motivation and its functions.[9] They concluded by affirming the fact that people "wish to feel that their actions are the result of their own free personal choice. The relationship between the desire to work and the work itself is akin to an iceberg; the part that we can see and measure, called participation, is what appears above the surface. It is multidimensional and consists of a set of interrelated behavioral, emotional, and cognitive actions. What remains hidden beneath the iceberg is the motivation that gives the individual's work its strength, density, and perseverance."[10]

In this vein, it is noteworthy that external motivation may become habitual over time, meaning it becomes truly acquired by the student, or even a condition for their acceptance of study. If it disappears even once, the student's zeal for performing their academic work weakens. We believe that the process of motivating the student will not succeed unless the teacher or the educational institution takes into account the students' methods and learning strategies. We can refer to the identification of these strategies as outlined in the research by Zahra Bushkawa and Latifa Mukhlis,[11] in which they identified four strategies that a student follows to accomplish their cognitive tasks, which the teacher and educational institution must consider:

- **Cognitive Strategies:** Related to the intellectual, emotional, and social components of the student's personality, manifested in cognitive processes that include regulation, review, and updating.
- **Metacognitive Strategies:** Represented by the learner's ability to evaluate the feasibility of the tasks to be accomplished, overcome the obstacles encountered during the process, and set appropriate goals for their task.
- **Emotional Strategies:** Manifested in the ability to adapt emotions to learning conditions, such as concentration and anxiety control.
- **Control Strategies:** Aimed at developing time management skills and appropriate work and resource management.

Pascal, Blaise, Pensées B, fragment 425, Pinguin Classics, p. 394. [8]

S197-9. Tranquillo J, Stecker M.: *Using intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in continuing professional education.* Surg Neurol Int. 2016;7(Suppl 7):[9] doi:10.4103/2152-7806.179231.

Ibid.[10]

Zahra Bouchkioua, Latifa Mokhlesse, *Motivation to Learning: Toward Achievement*, Psychology, Vol.12 No.3, March 2021.[11]

B- Internal Motivation: Internal (self or intrinsic) motivation arises from within the individual, due to an intrinsic need to achieve a specific goal, such as "solving complex crosswords solely to satisfy oneself by being able to solve a problem."[12]

Internal motivation often arises from the student's feeling of a mismatch between their exerted effort and the result obtained from that effort, and from completing educational tasks mechanically and devoid of any pleasure or self-presence, not to mention the lack of appreciation from others for their self-driven efforts. A large body of psychological research has indicated that internal motivation is not always fixed; it is dynamic and interacts with real-life events, governed by the individual's self-esteem and its valuation. "We have recently begun to realize who is more likely to achieve this self-esteem and create their personal incentives. It is true that we have found that people have greatly misjudged their performance and abilities. However, most of these are those who are characterized by a fixed mindset, and they are responsible for most cases of inaccuracy. In contrast, individuals with a growth mindset have been remarkably able to motivate themselves."[13] The result of motivation, which our research attempts to encompass in its implications and conditions of realization, is nothing but the student's feeling of happiness in their educational environment, enjoying knowledge, being independent in making their educational decisions, "meaning that they are able to experience their educational behavior as emanating from themselves and supporting it at the same time.[14]"

3. Literary Texts as Incentives for Learning

Edgar Morin mentions in an interview conducted with Tréma magazine, which specializes in didactic research, that the intellectual revolution is nothing but an educational revolution because education is what disciplines our minds from an early age. He states in this regard: "To teach, there must be pleasure (Éros) in what you teach. I have revived this formula from Plato. A teacher who does not engage with love and passion is not only indifferent to what they teach but also to their students. A teacher who merely delivers lectures and is nothing more than an employee in the field of knowledge is not a true teacher. There is an educational mission that requires dedication, much like how preachers dedicate themselves to the religious aspect, meaning that there must be something in education that wholly possesses you. In reality, what is this mission? Perhaps it is the most important of all, [...] which is for the teacher to extract the best in their students both emotionally and intellectually simultaneously. The second matter, which I also understood thanks to the work of António Rosa Damásio, is that there is no weak or strong reason to learn knowledge; rather, there is a reason that has a weak or strong connection to emotion. I have always believed that the most important thing is to create a dialogue between reason and emotion." [15] We believe that this dialogue that Edgar Morin speaks of, when well managed in the classroom, generates students' happiness as they engage with their new knowledge.

3.1. A- Literature Creates Happiness

It is difficult to agree with the formalists and structuralists that literature is an intellectual activity isolated from its reality. The main difficulty in this is that literature is the result of a confrontation that the writer conducts with reality. We do not write except about reality and for reality. If some hastily opposed this by arguing that literature is a product of imagination, we hastened to confirm that imagination is no more than a simulation or a new artistic composition of realistic elements. For even the winged horse, which is an imaginary element, consists of two real elements: the horse and the wing.

Tranquillo J, Stecker M.: *Using intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in continuing professional education,* Ibid.[12]

Dweck Carol, Mindset: The New Psychology of Success, Ballantine Books, New York, 2007, p.9.[13]

Tranquillo J, Stecker M.: *Using intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in continuing professional education.* Ibid.[14]

[15] Guy Berger, Augustin Mutuale, Fabienne Serina-Karsky et Séverine Parayre, «L'éducation complexe: entretien avec Edgar Morin », Tréma [En ligne], 54 | 2020, mis en ligne le 18 novembre 2020, consulté le 06 décembre 2024. URL: http://journals.openedition.org/trema/6193; DOI : https://doi.org/10.4000/trema.6193.

Due to literature's connection with reality, it has the ability to give aesthetic dimension to the narratives of life. It has a revealing value for the spirit of the writer, the spirit of the reader, the spirit of the era in which it was written, and the spirit of the era in which it is read. It can serve as a means for the reader to explore their self and to establish a new and happy existence in the world. This seems to be one of the reasons that draw a person to literature and make them immerse themselves in it, as everything new entices discovery, and every discovery frees us from intellectual and emotional constraints, creating within us the desire for further exploration of the world. In this context, perhaps reading has served as our path to that liberation, or even to that enhancement of the desire to discover what literature says as a world that needs to be uncovered, or to discover that every subject has literature as its aesthetic background.

Our view is that reading literature can assist in students' happy engagement with humanities courses such as history, philosophy, psychology, sociology, and education sciences because it prepares their emotional presence during the lesson, creates a camaraderie between them and the knowledge, and even fosters a love for the lesson, the classroom, and the university. For me, reading means exactly loving: reading is a daily exercise in love just as love is a constant exercise in reading. And happiness on earth is nothing but a rare and intense moment of joy: its image is that I read and love what I read at the same time; the lover is a reader, and every beloved in the world is a book. What are the possible ways for a teacher to utilize literary texts to enhance students' attendance in their lectures?

3.2. B- Literature as an Educational Support or Background for the History of the Studied Knowledge Subject

The dramatic elements of narratives cause an increase in the emotional strength of texts, which actively affects the reader, knowing that understanding the subject of those narratives "is not merely about projecting the textual structures into the reader's mind but includes many activities that begin with the active comprehension of sensory information, such as identifying the minor units of the text's superficial structure, up to the semantic integration of the information carried by the text with the individual's prior knowledge. This integration occurs thanks to the activation of the individual's knowledge that directs and controls the processes of understanding the text. This knowledge, referred to as schematic representations, is organized at different levels in the individual's semantic memory, such as implications, propositions (actions, arguments), and schemas, which are groupings of several propositions together.".[16]"

In this regard, a teacher can benefit from literary texts to successfully conduct their lessons by conducting an exploratory activity at the beginning of the academic term to determine their students' literary inclinations: whether they are poetic or prose-oriented. Then, the teacher can group the students in the classroom according to their literary inclinations: the poetry group and the prose group. The teacher selects texts from either poetic or prose anthologies (whether local or foreign) to serve as appropriate starting points for their lessons. For example, if the lesson is in psychology and its subject is the history of the emergence of psychology, the teacher can rely on the biographies of Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, and others as starting points for the lesson, narrating stories about these individuals to the students or assigning a student to research their biographies and present them to classmates, explaining and interpreting their meanings. These biographies become educational stories because any story is memorable. The same applies to the fields of history, sociology, literature, education, and philosophy, knowing that understanding the subject of those narratives "is not merely about projecting the textual structures into the reader's mind but includes many activities that begin with the active comprehension of sensory information, such as identifying the minor units of the text's superficial structure, up to the semantic integration of the information carried by the text with the individual's prior knowledge. This integration occurs thanks to the activation of the individual's knowledge that directs and controls the processes of understanding the text. This cognitive knowledge, referred to as schematic representations (Baudet and Denhière, 1988; Le Ny, 1985), is organized at different levels in the individual's semantic

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Legros, Denis, Rôle d'un procédé de dramatisation sur la mémorisation d'un récit, l'Année Psychologique, 88, p.198.[16]

memory, such as implications, propositions (actions, arguments), and schemas, which are groupings of several propositions together.[17]"

4. Methods for Teachers and Educational Institutions to Motivate Students and Create Their Drive through Literature

Emphasizing the role of the teacher and the university institution in enhancing the educational process does not mean that they will strip the student of elements of initiative, thinking, and innovation, causing them to resort to passive reception of knowledge. Rather, the goal is to motivate them to make their personal effort central to building their scientific and artistic knowledge. This motivation manifests, as will be discussed, in providing pedagogical conditions for the educational task, meaning establishing a literary climate that serves as an aesthetic background for scientific knowledge, facilitating the enhancement of self-confidence, fostering innovation, and allowing for the student's autonomous choice of educational tasks. This motivation can be detailed in the following points:[18]

- Providing the student with the opportunity to choose a task from the educational activity tasks that align with their cognitive skills.
- Encouraging the student to diversify their efforts, initiatives, and innovations, and to set a personal challenge that they work to overcome.
- Valuing every plan, the student completes in performing their cognitive task.
- Viewing the mistakes, the student makes as new opportunities for learning.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this research draws a set of results and recommendations:

- **Results** Incentives have numerous functions. In the field of university education, three of them are:
  - Satisfying students' cognitive needs.
  - Opening an aesthetic literary horizon that enhances students' feeling of happiness in all scientific knowledge they engage with.
  - Developing students' spirit of initiative and their openness to scientific knowledge in relation to reality.
  - Valuing students' creative abilities, which contributes to the quality of their academic achievement.
- **Recommendations**
  - Teachers should utilize literature as aesthetic backgrounds for scientific knowledge.
  - Harness students' literary and aesthetic inclinations to strengthen their connection to scientific knowledge.
  - Respect the student's educational pace by enabling them to have the appropriate time to complete their tasks.
  - Enhance the student's desire for knowledge by establishing a positive cognitive relationship with them, which the teacher or educational institution may express by celebrating their success.
  - Externalize scientific knowledge: create a narrative for it.
  - Propose appropriate educational activities suitable for the student's level so that they feel capable of accomplishing them.
  - Deliver lessons in a participatory manner.
  - Enhance the student's critical skills.

Legros, Denis, Rôle d'un procédé de dramatisation sur la mémorisation d'un récit, l'Année Psychologique, 88, p.198.[17]
Philippe Sarrazin, Damien Tessier et David Trouilloud, Climat motivationnel instauré par l'enseignant et implication des élèves en classe : [18]
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