

Chapter 2

Motivation Framework

The method for analyzing the interviews has been explained in the previous chapter. The first set of interviews examined were those of the undergraduate students. The first parts fully analysed were those related to the students' motivation to study. As this was the initial part of the analysis, the approach was inductive, with an exploratory perspective, in an effort to derive grounded theory in a formulation consistent with the expressed views on motivation.

This analysis revealed six major and distinct themes referring to aspects of motivation. Several or all of these aspects of motivation were commonly referred to by individual interviewees. It was, therefore, clear that these should be interpreted as compatible facets or aspects of motivation, rather than alternative types or forms of motivation.

A construct which seemed to be useful in tying together the outcomes of the analysis was that of an 'orientation', which Taylor et al. (1981) used to describe the aims, expectations and attitudes with which students embark on a new course of study. The authors described the concept as:

By orientation we mean all those attitudes and aims that express the student's individual relationship with a course and the University. It is the collection of purposes which orientates the student to a course in a particular way. Orientation, unlike the concept of motivation, does not assume any psychological trait or state belonging to the student. It is a quality of the relationship between student and course rather than a quality inherent in the student. (p. 3)

In each of these respects the construct of an orientation matched the initial reading of the analysed data. Taylor et al. used the concept of an orientation to categorise the motivations which led to students choosing to enrol in United Kingdom Open University courses. The classifications they derived were vocational, academic, personal and social orientations, with sub-components of; interest, aim and concerns. Our studies showed more and different facets and it was parsimonious to have six elements rather than orientations and sub-components.

Another aspect which was consistent with our work was that Taylor et al. had set out to identify and classify orientations rather than to type students. This was compatible with our finding that motivation was influenced by the context, rather than a reasonably stable attribute.

The analysis of the data had revealed six facets of a motivational orientation. An adequate representation of motivation, therefore, needed to allow for multiple motivating forces capable of acting in concert. A representation which was consistent with the data was a set of six continua or spectra, each representing a motivational factor. This visualisation would represent students holding varying degrees of multiple facets of motivation. Motivation was, therefore, a complex construct with multiple facets. The complex nature was further heightened by the possibility of students holding multiple goals or primary and secondary motivations. The concept of an orientation was applied through the degree, rather than just for enrolment. This was compatible with findings that motivation was influenced by the context, rather than a reasonably stable attribute. This implied representation of the facets of the orientation as continua and changes in motivation as the degree progressed as shifts along the continua.

The motivational orientation framework is shown in Fig. 2.1. The orientation framework has six motivational facets. Each is represented as a continuum from a low to a high motivational pole, consistent with motivation being contextually dependent. There was evidence of motivation, and particularly the interest and career facets being influenced by the teaching and learning environment, rather than an intrinsic quality of the student. In the interviews students commonly talked of their level of motivation varying as they proceeded through their degree. For example, first year courses concentrating on basic theory could be quite tedious, particularly if the relevance of content was not made clear. Whereas final year options or projects were often found more interesting. Changes in the level of motivation during a degree would be consistent with shifts along one or more of the continua.

There was evidence of mutual reinforcement between the continua, which are represented in Fig. 2.1 by the vertical double headed arrows between continua. High levels on some of the continua might affect perceptions of another; so the student adopts a higher position on the continuum than they might otherwise have done. Conversely, students with low positions on several facets might feel sufficiently de-motivated that they adopt a negative perception towards other facets.

The positive poles of the six continua are given labels: individual goal setting, university lifestyle, sense of belonging, interest, career and compliance. The continua represent elements of motivation; so collectively can be used as a model for a multi-faceted portrayal of motivation. The framework can also be used as a representation of the motivation of individual students at a point in time. A student will have a position on each continua which will shift according to prevailing circumstances and the nature of teaching and learning.

The nature of each of the facets is examined in detail in the following chapters. They are introduced briefly here to give an idea of the formulation and scope of the motivational orientation framework.

The co-existence of the interest and career facets, as positive poles of the framework is quite different to the common formulation of extrinsic motivation as either dichotomous from or a detractor from intrinsic interest. The inclusion of both continua reflects evidence of career prospects being a positive motivator, which

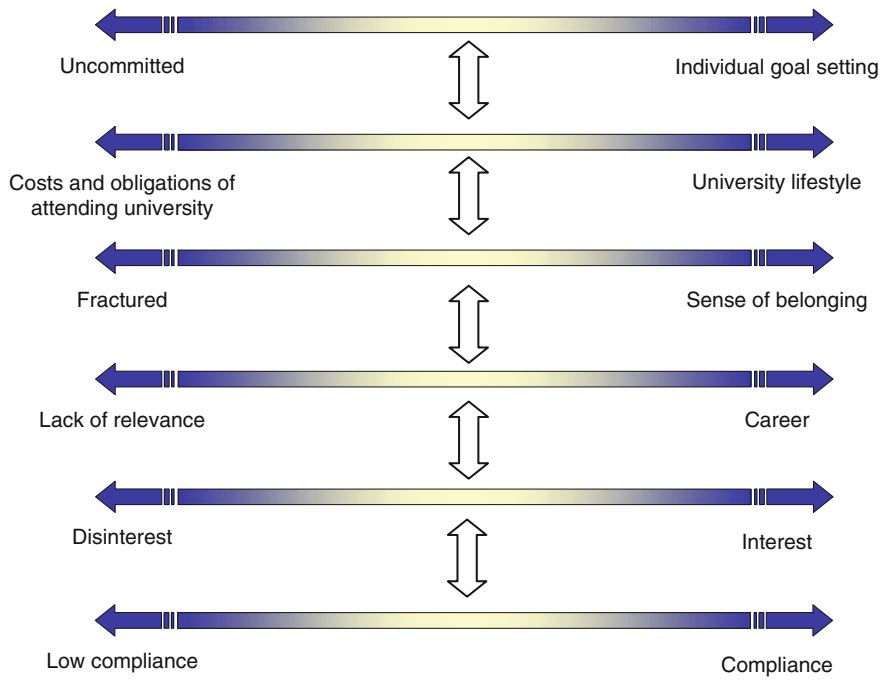


Fig. 2.1 The motivational orientation framework

commonly co-existed with expressions of interest. In well designed courses the two facets clearly acted as mutual reinforcers.

The inclusion of both the individual goal and sense of belonging facets in the framework was consistent with students having personal targets and benefiting from a social form of motivation when there were strong interpersonal links between students in a class. The inclusion of both facets resolves a division in the literature between achievement motive as an individual or social drive. Our data suggested that students possessed individual goals as well as enjoying the benefits of social forms of motivation if a sense of belonging was established. The interviews with most of the undergraduate students suggested that the individual goals were set against grades or degree classes, rather than being competitive.

Compliance arises because students become conditioned to doing assignments and set study tasks. Each student has a level up to which set work will be completed without question. Levels of compliance appeared to be influenced by long term positions on the facets of the framework through unconscious conditioning.

That teaching was influenced by the teaching and learning environment means that our findings were consistent with social-cognitive models of motivation, which stress the changeable and contextual nature of motivation (Pintrich and Schunk 2002). Another aspect of the findings which could be interpreted in line with

social-cognitive theory was the multi-faceted nature of motivation (Pintrich 2003). The theory recognises that students normally have multiple goals, which may be related in a complex manner.

Preview

The next chapter relates the motivational orientation framework to other theories of motivation. The framework will be used to interpret data from the three types of student on motivations to enrol (Chap. 4). It will then (Chap. 5) provide a framework for motivation to study, which will characterise in detail the six facets of motivation in the framework.

The framework is then used to interpret systemic issues from the expansion of higher education in Hong Kong (Chap. 8). Finally cultural issues come under the lens, particularly in relationship to differences in motivation and study approaches between East Asian and Western students (Chap. 9). There is clearly a major advantage to having a holistic framework which can be used to examine, interpret and predict wide-ranging aspects of motivation and applicable to all the main groups of students in higher education.

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