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Investigating students' learning motivation in Indonesian higher institution: A study from Musamus University of Merauke, Papua

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Abstract

This study aimed at to investigate lecturers' perception of students' learning motivation at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Musamus University of Merauke, Papua, Indonesia. This study asked "what are lecturers' perception of the students' learning motivation?" I employed a quantitative approach, using survey research design. A purposive sampling technique was used to obtain 40 respondents drawn from amongst lecturers at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Musamus University of Merauke. Data were analysed quantitatively using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 for Windows™. The descriptive data analysis was conducted by calculating means and standard deviations scores to describe lecturers' perception of students' learning motivation. The general mean of the data is 1.1300 with a standard deviation of 13.66957, where the present study indicated that students' learning motivation were lowly perceived by the lecturers. This finding might be worthwhile for the head of all departments and the dean at the faculty level as well to make an effort of creating strategies to enhance students' learning motivation in order to address the need of having qualified graduates.

Keywords: Students; Learning Motivation; Lecturers' Perception

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1. Introduction

Learning motivation is one of the most important factors to students' learning achievement. A few months ago I heard some uncomfortable comments among lecturers about students' learning motivation. In the following day I had an opportunity to discuss with several lecturers, out of those who have commented in a day before, on the topic of students' learning motivation. Surprisingly, most of them agreed with the comments I have previously heard. These facts motivate me much to the effort of investigating students' learning motivation at the faculty of teacher training and education from the perspectives of lecturers.

A vary of studies have been conducted on motivation and students' learning motivation (e.g. Alexander et al., 2007; Ayub, 2010; Brophy, 1987; Christophel, 1990; Cocea and Weibelzahl, 2007; Colquitt and Simmering, 1998; Cordova and Lepper, 1996; Corpus et al., 2009; Deci, 1975; Farmer, 2007; Fehr and Sassenberg, 2010; Fejes, 2008; Haller, 2014; Harackiewicz and Hidi, 2000; Harter, 1981; Lee et al., 2010; Lepper et al., 2005; Linnenbrink, 2005; Locke and Baum, 2006; Mayer, 2011; McDonough, 2007; Meece et al., 2006; Musika and Bukaliya, 2015; Nguyen, 2008; Oudeyer and Kaplan, 2008; Potter and Ware, 1987; Resnick, 2007; Saeed and Zyngier, 2012; Stipek, 1993; Tella, 2007; Tella et al., 2007; Whitaker et al., 2012), but the absent of studies investigating empirically the effect of students' learning motivation on their learning achievement at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Musamus University, makes the study theoretically and practically robust.

The study focused on the effort of investigating students' learning motivation at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Musamus University of Merauke, Papua, Indonesia. To investigate students' learning motivation, I employed a quantitative approach using survey research design. Data were analyzed quantitatively using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 for windows. The descriptive data analysis was conducted by calculating means and standard deviations scores to describe lecturers' perception of students' learning motivation.

2. Review of Literature

Motivation is a very complex phenomenon and, therefore, it is very hard to define (Al-Tamimi and Shuib, 2009). Gardner (2006, p. 242) stated, "motivation is a very complex phenomenon with many facets. [...] Thus it is not possible to give a simple definition". This is because the term motivation itself has been defined differently by scholars and experts. Gredler et al. (2004) defined motivation as the drives that move us to do or not to do something, while Johnson and Johnson (2003) defined motivation as the degree to which individuals commit effort to attain goals that they perceive as being meaningful and worthwhile. Whereas Rakes and Dunn (2010) defined motivation as a process to which an individual's needs and desires are set in motion.

Adequate motivation does not only set in motion the activity which results in learning, but also sustains and directs it (Mondal, n/d.). In this point of view, the learner must be motivated in order that his or her interest will be directed towards a definitive objective. Ryan and Deci (2000, p. 54) asserted as follows,

To be motivated means to be moved to do something. A person who feels no impetus or inspiration to act is thus characterized as unmotivated, whereas someone who is energized or activated toward an end is considered motivated.

Despite the differences, motivation has been seen as a very significant factor for students' academic learning and achievement (Elliot and Dweck, 2005). Deci and Ryan (1985) asserted that motivation is closely related to various outcomes such as curiosity, persistence, learning, and performance.

In the 1970's, Edward Deci (1971; 1972) defined different types of motivation as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation means that the individual's motivational stimuli are coming from within. The individuals have the desire to accomplish specific tasks, because its results are in accordance with his or her belief system or fulfills a desire and therefore importance is attached to it (Anonymous, n/d). Meanwhile, extrinsic motivation means that the individual's motivational stimuli are coming from outside. In other words, the desires to accomplish a task are controlled by an outside source (Anonymous, n/d.).

The term 'motivation here' refers directly to students' learning motivation or students' academic motivation. Stenberg (Andrew and Carol, 2005) viewed students' learning motivation as the most important factor for their success and, therefore, in its absent, the students will never make an effort to learn. While Bomia et al. (1997) defined students learning motivation as what drives students to actively engage in academic activities, keeps them trying when things get difficult, and determines how much time they provide to learn. Whereas Karim (2012) regarded students' learning motivation as the inherent beliefs that guide students learning goal, induce learning behavior to make continuous effort, reinforce cognition history, strengthen and improve learning outcome.

Okoye (1985) posited that motivation is of the key to understand human behavior. Students' attitudes towards learning are vary. Omrod (2014, p. 1) described these vary as follows:

Virtually all students are motivated in one way or another. One student may be keenly interested in classroom subject matter and seek out challenging course work, participate actively in class discussions, and earn high marks on assigned projects. Another student may be more concerned with the social side of school, interacting with classmates frequently, attending extracurricular activities almost every day, and perhaps running for a student government office. Still another may be focused on athletics, excelling in physical education classes, playing or watching sports most afternoons and weekends, and faithfully following a physical fitness regimen. Yet another student—perhaps because of an undetected learning disability, a shy temperament, or a seemingly uncoordinated body—may be motivated to avoid academics, social situations, or athletic activities.

McClelland (1962 as cited in Pardee, 1990) proposed a theory of motivation that is closely related with the concept of learning and, therefore, is sometimes referred to as the learned needs theory. McClelland (as cited in Weinbach, 1998) hypothesized that people are motivated by three needs, that are need for achievement (n-Ach), need for affiliation (n-Aff), and need for power (n-Pow).

- 1- Need for Achievement (n-Ach): The need for achievement involves the desire to prove something and to seek recognition. Students with high need for achievement tend to demonstrate excel. Students with high-need for achievement also tend to avoid low-risk because, for them, the easily attained success is not a genuine achievement. Students with this type of need also tend to avoid high-risk situations because, in high-risk situation, they see the outcomes as one of chance rather than one's own effort.
- 2- Need for Affiliation: The need for affiliation involves the desire to belong somewhere and to be the part of some social group. Students with high need for affiliation tend to develop relationships, need harmonious relationship with other people, and need to feel accepted by others. Students with high need for achievement also tend to conform the norms of their own groups.
- 3- Need for Power: The need for power involves the desire to dominate, to influence others, and even have power over them. Students who are motivated by power need for reputation and self-esteem. They tend to influence and direct other students behavior as they wish.

McClelland's achievement motivation refers directly to a pattern of actions and feelings related to the effort of achieving some internalized standards of excellence in performance (Gesinde, 2000). Students' attitudes towards learning are influenced by the all of these three needs, but in fact, they are usually strongly motivated by one of these three types. In this context of view, effective lecturers need to be aware of what type of need most strongly motivates their individual students (Lewis et al., 2001) because different students want various things from their learning. Since students' learning motivation gives direction and intensity to their attitude (Frymier, 1974), students will be motivated when they believe that: (a) their attitude will lead to certain rewards; (b) these rewards are worthwhile and valuable; and (c) they are able to perform at a level that will result in the attainment of the rewards (Burk, 1987, p. 34).

3. Method of the Study

In this study, I employed a quantitative approach using a survey design due to the following considerations: (a) high representativeness; (b) low cost; (c) convenient data gathering; (d) good statistical significance; (e) little researchers subjectivity; and (f) precise results [Sincero as cited in Werang and Agung, 2017]. One questionnaire administered to 40 lecturers of the faculty of teacher training and education who has been purposively drawn from amongst 58 lecturers. Samples were drawn purposively because some lecturers were out when the time of data collection. Employing a quantitative approach with a survey design, lecturers' perceptions were explored and measured based the questionnaires.

Students' learning motivation was measured by developing McClelland (1962) descriptors into 15 positive statements which are distributed over three needs, namely need for achievement (n-Ach), need for affiliation (n-Aff), and need for power (n-Pow). Response option for these items were on a four point Likert's scale, namely 'Strongly Disagree' (SD = 1); 'Disagree' (D = 2), 'Agree' (A = 3) and 'Strongly Agree' (SA = 4). A sample of items included: "Students regularly attend the class", "Students attend the class enthusiastically", "Students feel challenged when given a difficult assignment", "Students help each other", "Students enjoy working

together in completing the assignments”, “Students explore learning materials in group”, “Students compete to be the best in their class/group”, “Students are happy to be the winner in academic events”.

Data were analysed quantitatively using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 for Windows. The descriptive data analysis was conducted by calculating means and standard deviations scores to describe lecturers’ perception of students’ learning motivation. I employed a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient to test the internal reliability of this instrument. The internal consistency estimate of the students’ learning motivation was considered adequate as the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was 0.851.

4. Results of the Study

This study was aimed at investigating students’ learning motivation at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Musamus University of Merauke, Papua, Indonesia. As aforementioned, quantitative data were analysed descriptively using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 for Windows™. The means and standard deviations of the students’ learning motivation at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Musamus University of Musamus, are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Students’ Learning Motivation Scores

Aspects	N	Item Number	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum Score	Maximum Score
Need for Achievement	40	6	1.0500	9.57079	96	119
Need for Affiliation	40	4	1.1200	5.47723	105	118
Need for Power	40	5	1.2340	16.87602	105	143
General students’ learning motivation	40	15	1.1300	13.66957	96	143

The results of data analysis as it was reflected in Table 1 revealed of how lecturers perceive their students’ learning motivation. As seen in Table 1, four different scores of means and standard deviations are calculated: general students’ learning motivation, students’ need of achievement, students’ need of affiliation, and students’ need of power. The highest mean score is of the need of power that is 1.2340 with the standard deviation of 16.87602. Whereas, the lowest mean score is of the need of achievement that is 1.0500 with the standard deviation of 9.57079. Meanwhile, lecturers’ response to students’ need of affiliation, which has a mean score of 1.1200 and the standard deviation of 5.47723, is at the second position. General mean of lecturers’ response to students’ learning motivation under consideration of this study is 1.1300, with a standard deviation of 13.66957.

5. Discussion

The issues of students' motivation in education and how it may impact on their academic achievement have been considered as one important aspect of effective learning. How students react to the process of learning determines the extent to which he or she will go in the process of learning itself. In this context of view, students' learning motivation during instructional process is of vital in ensuring students persist adequately to successfully completing the task and acquiring content knowledge and skills.

The important of students' learning motivation in enhancing their learning achievement is undeniable. Uguroglu and Walbert (1979) referred to motivation as an important contributor to students' learning achievement. Stipek (1993) stated that when students are sufficiently motivated, they tend to approach challenging task, persist in difficult situations, and take pleasure in their achievement. In the similar way, Lifrieri (2005, p. 4) also stated that "when asked about what the factors which influence individual levels of success in any activity, [...] most people would certainly mention motivation among them".

Results of this study shows that students' learning motivation at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Musamus University of Merauke, was perceived low by the lecturers as the general mean is only 1.1300 with the standard deviation of 13.66957. Unsurprisingly if only a few students were really struggling to stand for the triumph of the faculty of teacher training and education in various academic events, both nationally and internationally. As the mean score of students need for achievement is the lowest (1.0500) in this study, students at the faculty of teacher training and education seem not believe that their efforts are likely to improve their performance. As Csikszentmihalyi and Nakamura (1989) asserted that motivation increases the amount of effort and energy that students expend in activities that directly related to their academic achievements. Similarly, Gardner (2006) posited that if students are motivated, they have reasons or motives that move them to engage in relevant activities, expend efforts, persist in the activities, attend to the tasks, show desire to attain the goal, enjoys the activities, et cetera.

6. Conclusion, Implications, and Recommendations

This study provides a closer look on the effort of investigating students' learning motivation at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Musamus University of Merauke, Papua. conclusions depicted from the results of data analysis is that students' learning motivation was perceived low by the lecturers at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Musamus University of Merauke, Papua, as the general mean of research data is 1.1300 with the standard deviation of 13.66957.

Finding of this study may be worthwhile for the head of all departments and the dean at the faculty level as well to make an effort of creating strategies to enhance students' learning motivation in order to address the need of having qualified graduates. Since the study on this topic is still absent in Merauke context, findings of this study may theoretically add the existing literature on the topic of students' learning motivation in higher education institution.

This study is limited on the effort of investigating students' learning motivation at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Musamus University of Merauke. Therefore, a more study on the topic of both contributing factors to students' learning motivation and the effect of students' learning motivation on students' academic achievement is fully recommended.

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