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HOW TO COMBINE INTRINSIC TASK-MOTIVATION WITH THE MOTIVATIONAL EFFECTS OF THE INSTRUMENTALITY OF PRESENT TASKS FOR FUTURE GOALS

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Learning, performing and achieving in school and elsewhere (e.g., in sport, on the job, in the kitchen, or garden) are intentional, goal-oriented activities. This intentionality can vary from very simple (e.g., one single goal) to very complex. Motivated students, for example, have many and very different reasons for studying. They do it to develop their cognitive abilities. They want to know more and to master difficult and complex problems. They do their best because they want to please the teachers and/or their parents and they also want to be rewarded by them. They want to be successful and not to fail. They are motivated to outperform themselves, a brother, a sister, or a friend. Many pupils and students are highly motivated for their studies because they want to have a particular type of job or profession as adults. It is not unreasonable to assume that for most (if not all) pupils and students school learning is “multi-determined”. It is instigated and sustained by different types of motivation. The same is true for many employees, sportsmen, etc. The total motivation for present actions derives from the several goals that are strived for.

The individual goals that are strived for and which determine students’ motivation can be situated on two dimensions: intrinsic versus extrinsic goals and immediate versus future goals. The total motivation to learn is a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Children are intrinsically motivated when learning or performing is a goal in itself. They are extrinsically motivated when the activity is done for the sake of material or other rewards that are not intrinsically
related to school learning. Learning and doing well in tests and exams are then instrumental activities to earn those rewards. Most students (even those with a strong intrinsic motivation) are also motivated by extrinsic rewards and goals. Parents, teachers and employers offer many different types of extrinsic rewards and fringe benefits to increase the strength of the total motivation to study or to work. For students and workers without any intrinsic interest, these are the only reasons for studying or working.

The behavioural effects of extrinsic rewards were mostly studied in learning psychology (e.g., operant conditioning) and work motivation, a field in which intrinsic motivation is strongly neglected. Research on student motivation concerns predominantly the different types of intrinsic motivation, even to the neglect of the extrinsic motivation (Malone & Lepper, 1987).

A student can also be highly motivated for her maths course because it is an important subject matter for her. Indeed, she intends to become a brilliant engineer who makes a lot of money so that she can go on early retirement on a Greek island. In general, she has very near or immediate intrinsic and extrinsic goals, but also many extrinsic and professional goals in the intermediate and even very distant future, for which schooling has a high instrumental value or utility.

The main problem to be discussed in this contribution is to know how to combine the different types of intrinsic motivation (for learning and achievement tasks) with the motivation that derives from the utility or instrumentality of those tasks for goals in the near and/or distant future. How is the present intrinsic task-motivation affected by the future orientation or future time perspective of, for example, a student, who is not only intrinsically motivated for school tasks but also because they are important for achieving (different types of) other goals in the future? This is an elaboration of the research on the mutual interaction of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Lepper & Greene, 1978; Rigby, Deci, Patrick, & Ryan, 1992).

Before doing this we will first discuss a few other instances of how different types of motivation are combined.

**Historical antecedents of the problem of combining motivational tendencies**

**Drive theory.** The problem of how to combine different types of motivation, underlying a given action, is not new in psychology. Hull (1943) added all specific drives (hunger, thirst, sex) up into one general drive instigating that reaction for which the habit is strongest. Drive is conceived of as a pooled, undirected energy.

When Hull introduced the concept of incentive motivation as a pull-force, while drive is a push-force, he assumed that the total motivation is a function of the product of drive, incentive and habit. Spence (1956), however, adds drive and incentive and then multiplies the sum with the habit-strength. For Spence, either a drive or an incentive can motivate action. Following Hull’s formula you need drive and incentive to have motivation. If one of the two motivational sources is absent, the product is of course zero.