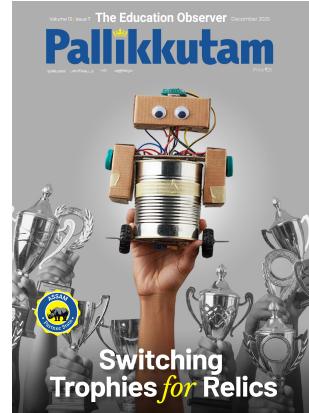


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Cover Story

Intrinsic + Extrinsic or Intrinsic Vs Extrinsic



An emphasis on extrinsic over intrinsic motivation can have negative effects on learning outcomes. They may be considered additive rather than conflicting.



The designing of competitions, rewards, and trophies has been a controversial topic in educational psychology. Extrinsic motivation vs. intrinsic motivation has dominated discussions among researchers and practitioners in education and psychology for more than two decades.

Alfie Kohn, American Author and lecturer in education, psychology, parenting, and human behaviour, has advocated intrinsic motivation in learning. The constructivist approaches of John Dewey and Jean Piaget influenced him. The learner is an active participant, creating knowledge rather than passively absorbing information.

Alfie Kohn argued that societies based on extrinsic motivation always become inefficient. Positive reinforcement only encourages students to seek out more positive reinforcement, where learning doesn't take place.

Does Intrinsic Motivation exist?

In May 2005, Steven Reiss, Professor of Psychology at Ohio State University said that there was no such thing as intrinsic motivation. He argued that a diverse range of human motivations can't be forced into categories of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations.

Intrinsic motivations are those that arise within the learner and come from a desire to learn or excel rather than rewards, grades or trophies. Steven Reiss pointed out that there was no real evidence that intrinsic motivation exists. He argued that competitions, per se will not sabotage natural desire, and people are motivated in different ways. Reiss has developed and tested a theory of motivation that states 16 basic desires guide nearly all meaningful behaviour, including power, independence, curiosity, and acceptance.

Another way of defining intrinsic motivation is the means-end definition, which says intrinsic motivation is doing what we want, whereas extrinsic motivation is doing something to get something else. For example, some might argue that children playing baseball are intrinsically motivated by the joy of playing, while a professional baseball player is extrinsically motivated, by money and championships.

But Reiss said this definition confuses means and ends. A child playing baseball may be satisfying his need for physical exercise, while the professional player is satisfying his parental instinct by providing a good income for his family. For children and professionals, baseball is a means to two different ends.

Best of Both Worlds

Can our education system combine the merits of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, guiding students to excel and perform, setting benchmarks against themselves rather than others?

In recent research articles, Suzanne E Hidi of Applied Psychology and Human Development, OISE, University of Toronto, Canada, has argued that competence can be attained through both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards. She has pointed out that the education system shouldn't just focus on extrinsic motivation in terms of grades and rewards, but also promote curiosity, interest, and information seeking.

According to her, both types of rewards are related to dopamine-fueled activation of the reward circuitry.

She has drawn examples from birds and non-human mammals to conclude that both extrinsic and intrinsic motivations can be crucial for a species' survival. Birds and mammals track cues and extrinsic rewards in their environment (such as food and shelter) and are also involved in intrinsically motivated activities such as information seeking and play.

Both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards are necessary to acquire competence and optimally manage real-life settings, including school environments. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are additive

and not conflicting processes, according to Suzanne Hidi.

References:

[Intrinsic Motivation Doesn't Exist, Researcher Says](#)

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