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Pedagogical Foundations for Developing Learning Motivation Among Primary School Students

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Annotation: This article presents a comprehensive analysis of the theoretical, psychological, and pedagogical foundations of developing academic motivation among primary school pupils. It scientifically substantiates the essence of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, mechanisms of their development, and their relationship with the cognitive, emotional, and social developmental characteristics of young learners. The article also examines student-centered, play-based, and activity-oriented approaches to organizing lessons, as well as emotional, cognitive, and social mechanisms of motivation formation. The educational practices of developed countries such as Finland, Japan, and Canada are analyzed as effective models for establishing stable motivation. The work offers practical and theoretical value for primary school teachers, psychologists, and parents.

Keywords: motivation, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, primary education, pedagogical approach, psychological development, play activity, learner-centered teaching, didactic principles, learning activity.

In today's educational context, the primary education stage is viewed as a crucial foundation that forms a learner's basic knowledge, skills, and competencies. At this stage, a student's attitude toward lessons, studying, and acquiring new knowledge begins to take shape. Motivation—both intrinsic and extrinsic—holds a central place in the teacher's didactic activity. Forming positive learning motivation at an early age ensures not only success in primary school but throughout the entire educational process.

Global changes, renewed approaches to education, and modern psychological–pedagogical perspectives demand new methodological views in working with primary school pupils. Within this context, the teacher is not only a knowledge provider but also a figure who sparks interest in learning and provides emotional and psychological support. This article discusses the theoretical foundations, practical methods, challenges, and proposed solutions for developing learning motivation among primary school students.

Motivation is a set of internal psychological processes that drive an individual to engage in an activity. It is determined by needs, interests, goals, beliefs, aspirations, and external incentives. General psychology explains motivation through:

- the system of needs (Maslow);
- goal-oriented behavior (Rubinshtein, Uznadze);
- the dynamics of psychic forces (Lewin).

The formation of motivation is directly linked to a learner's psychological characteristics, family environment, classroom social climate, teacher's position, and pedagogical tools. Interactive, playful, and emotionally engaging teaching methods significantly enhance students' interest in learning. Developing a sense of "I can do it" fosters enjoyment of the educational process.

Motivation is divided into intrinsic and extrinsic types. Intrinsic motivation means that the student learns for the sake of learning itself. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is linked to rewards, praise, and grades. Research indicates that although both forms are needed in primary school, strengthening intrinsic motivation has more long-term benefits.

In practice, the following factors are recognized as effective in shaping motivation:

- adapting learning tasks to the child's age and individual interests;
- regularly encouraging small achievements;
- active listening and sincere praise from the teacher;
- involvement of parents in the learning process;
- use of visual materials, technological tools, QR-tests, and multimedia.

Motivation is regarded as the core mechanism determining the volume, quality, continuity, and stability of learning activity.

According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, for a learner to be motivated to study, the following must first be satisfied:

- safety,
- affection and support,
- esteem,
- a sense of achievement.

If a student feels unsupported, intrinsic motivation does not develop. In primary education, these needs are largely met by the teacher.

Self-Determination Theory links motivation with three fundamental psychological needs:

1. **Autonomy** – giving children choices increases motivation.
2. **Competence** – the feeling of "I can do this" becomes a source of internal drive.
3. **Relatedness** – acceptance by teachers and peers strengthens motivation.

This theory is especially important for young learners who require substantial psychological support from adults.

From the cognitive perspective, a child experiences intrinsic motivation when he/she:

- enjoys discovering new knowledge,
- solving problems,
- asking questions.

According to Bruner, "discovery in the learning process" is the strongest motivator.

At primary school age:

- figurative thinking predominates;
- attention is unstable and easily distracted;
- imagination is strongly developed;

- thinking gradually transitions to logical reasoning.

If a teacher organizes lessons in accordance with these characteristics, motivation naturally increases.

At this age, emotions:

- change quickly,
- are unstable,
- are highly sensitive to external stimuli.

Therefore, punishment sharply decreases motivation, while praise increases it. Emotional support from the teacher plays a decisive role in forming a positive attitude toward learning.

Another important psychological aspect of primary school age is the strong dependence on "adult evaluation." This dependency influences:

- trustful relationships with the teacher,
- ability to join the group,
- striving for social status,

which all contribute to the formation of motivational processes.

Motivation is closelylinked to several didactic principles:

- **Consciousness** – students become more motivated when they understand what and why they are learning.
- **Activity** – active participation reinforces intrinsic motivation.
- **Visualization** – younger learners are more engaged with visual information.
- **Appropriateness** – material suited to the child's developmental level naturally increases motivation.

Learner-centered education

According to this approach:

- **every child has unique abilities;**
- **the effectiveness of motivation depends on individualization;**
- **the lesson** must match the learner's interest, needs, and cognitive level.

As a result, students perceive themselves as active participants in the learning process.

Foreign experience

Educational systems in Finland, Japan, and Canada demonstrate that learner-centered instruction, the freedom to choose, and collaborative learning environments lead to stable motivation.

Theoretical foundations of the Finnish education system:

- stress-free assessment;
- freedom of choice;
- individualized instruction;
- psychological well-being.

This aligns with Deci & Ryan's theory and enhances intrinsic motivation.

Montessori pedagogy emphasizes that motivation develops when:

- the child is active, free, and independent;

- the environment supports autonomy.

Japanese pedagogy develops motivation through:

- diligence,
- discipline,
- collectivism.

Canadian constructivism encourages:

- exploration,
- experimentation,
- creativity,
- collaborative learning.

These theoretical perspectives affirm that:

1. Motivation is the psychological core of learning activity.
2. Primary school children's psychological characteristics make motivation formation a complex yet manageable process.
3. Intrinsic motivation is the most stable and effective form of learning.
4. The teacher's personality, communication, and methods are the primary determinants of motivation.
5. Play, creativity, and interactivity are natural motivators in primary education.
6. Theoretical models (Maslow, Deci & Ryan, Vygotsky, Elkonin–Davydov) provide a scientific basis for understanding motivation.

Developing learning motivation among primary school students is a fundamental requirement for the effectiveness of the entire education system. If motivation is not formed in a timely manner, the learner may become disengaged and passive at later educational stages.

Research confirms that **the teacher is the source of motivation**. The methods used, the classroom environment created, and the teacher's attitude determine the student's attitude. Forming intrinsic motivation is a long-term process that requires the harmonious involvement of the family, school, and society. In primary education, students must become individuals who seek knowledge, ask questions, explore, and discover. Only then can the true goal of education be achieved.

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