

On Motivation to Actionable Steps

How does motivation lead to action (or taking actionable steps)? One may be extremely motivated, but lack the follow-through to "convert" that motivation into action.

Engagement seems to be the construct or "missing link" that I was looking for.

Engagement is a difficult construct to define as its components/characteristics may vary somewhat per demographic or situation. Maslach and Leiter (as cited in Podlog et al., 2015, p. 415) defined engagement as "an energetic state of involvement with personally fulfilling activities that enhances one's sense of professional efficacy". Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (as cited in Kim, Park, Cozart, & Lee, 2015, p. 262) described three types of engagement: behavioral (involvement in learning tasks, time-on-tasks, attendance), cognitive (psychological investment in learning and learning strategies), and emotional (affective reactions towards learning tasks/environments).

Curran, Hill, Hall, and Jowett (2015) noted that engagement arose from high quality motivation, when people perceived high levels of autonomy and personal control. Dawes and Larson (2011) noted that psychological engagement seemed to be demonstrated by an individual being motivated to such an extent that the individual became absorbed in the tasks/challenges in an activity; high interest levels, intrinsic motivation/engagement were found to be indicators of greater and deeper levels of learning.

Dawes and Larson (2011) described three motivation theories that related best to youth engagement in organized youth programs: flow theory (deep engagement when the balance of challenge-skill is optimal); interest theory (defined as "focused attention, increased cognitive functioning, persistence and affective involvement") where participants need to have a personal stake/investment in the tasks/activities to cultivate the greatest amount of engagement; and self-determination theory or SDT (activity must be integrated into self) (p. 260). Dawes and Larson (2011) found that developing "personal meaning" or "personal connection" were the most important factors in engagement (the internalization which follows SDT). Extrinsic motivation may initially encourage individuals to try something new or become more open-minded in participation. However, when it comes to participation/dedication/engagement longevity, the more intrinsic constructs are more valuable.

References

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