THE ROLE OF ANTHROPOCENTRIC TEACHING IN ENHANCING STUDENT AND TEACHER MOTIVATION AT THE UNIVERSITY LEVEL

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the pivotal role of anthropocentric teaching in enhancing both student and teacher motivation at the university level. Rooted in humanistic educational theories and supported by frameworks such as Self-Determination Theory and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, anthropocentric teaching emphasizes learner-centeredness, emotional engagement, and the personalization of instruction. The approach fosters intrinsic motivation by fulfilling psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness among students while also revitalizing teacher motivation through reflective practice and meaningful interactions. The article discusses how anthropocentric teaching promotes reciprocal motivation between students and educators, leading to deeper engagement, increased satisfaction, and improved academic outcomes.

Keywords: anthropocentric teaching, student motivation, teacher motivation, higher education, learner-centered pedagogy, self-determination theory, intrinsic motivation, humanistic education.

Motivation serves as the cornerstone of effective teaching and learning, especially in higher education, where autonomy, critical thinking, and individual aspirations are paramount. Traditional teacher-centered pedagogies, though historically dominant, often fail to fully engage students or address the diverse motivational drivers of both learners and educators. In response, anthropocentric teaching—an approach grounded in human-centeredness and the prioritization of learner individuality—has gained prominence. At its core, anthropocentric teaching aligns pedagogy with students' personal development, emotional well-being, social context, and cognitive needs. This article explores the role of anthropocentric teaching in enhancing both student and teacher motivation at the university level, drawing from educational psychology, humanistic theories, and recent empirical findings.

Anthropocentric teaching places the human being—specifically the learner—at the center of the educational process. Rooted in humanistic educational theories advanced by scholars such as Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, this approach

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emphasizes empathy, individual growth, and intrinsic motivation (Rogers, 1969; Maslow, 1943). In contrast to content-centered or institution-centered paradigms, anthropocentric teaching adapts educational methods to the needs, interests, and aspirations of the learners. It prioritizes meaningful interactions, emotional engagement, and contextualized learning experiences, thus fostering an inclusive and dynamic educational environment.

This philosophy also extends to the role of the teacher, who is not merely a transmitter of knowledge but a facilitator, mentor, and co-learner. In this reciprocal relationship, the teacher's own motivation and professional fulfillment are equally nurtured, creating a symbiotic system where both student and teacher benefit from shared engagement and mutual respect (Cornelius-White, 2007).

To appreciate how anthropocentric teaching influences motivation, it is essential to contextualize the concept of motivation within theoretical frameworks. Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Deci and Ryan (1985), posits that motivation is driven by three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. These needs must be satisfied for individuals to experience optimal motivation and well-being. Anthropocentric teaching directly supports these needs by promoting student choice (autonomy), encouraging mastery through supportive feedback (competence), and fostering strong interpersonal relationships in the learning environment (relatedness).

Similarly, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) emphasizes the importance of fulfilling basic and psychological needs before achieving self-actualization. Within a university setting, students and teachers who feel safe, respected, and emotionally supported are more likely to engage deeply in academic activities. Anthropocentric methods, with their focus on emotional intelligence and social context, contribute to fulfilling these hierarchical needs, thereby enhancing motivation on both ends of the learning spectrum.

Student motivation at the university level is increasingly influenced by students' perceptions of relevance, autonomy, and personal meaning in their education. Anthropocentric teaching addresses these dimensions by tailoring educational experiences to individual learner profiles. When students see that their interests, goals, and cultural backgrounds are recognized and valued, their intrinsic motivation increases (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009).

Empirical studies have shown that when students are given greater responsibility over their learning process through project-based learning, real-world problem-solving tasks, and collaborative discussions, they demonstrate higher engagement and sustained motivation (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). Anthropocentric

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teaching integrates these methods by design, promoting not just academic achievement but also emotional resilience and a sense of purpose.

Furthermore, the personalization of feedback and the cultivation of a safe learning space help reduce academic anxiety and foster a growth mindset among students. This is particularly critical in diverse university settings, where students come from various socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Anthropocentric teaching, by acknowledging and adapting to these differences, enables equitable learning experiences and boosts motivation across the board (Gay, 2010).

While student motivation is often the focus of educational discourse, teacher motivation is equally critical. Motivated teachers are more likely to invest effort in lesson planning, adopt innovative practices, and develop meaningful relationships with students. Anthropocentric teaching can rejuvenate teacher motivation by aligning instructional practices with personal values, professional goals, and the desire to make a positive impact (Day & Gu, 2007).

Teachers often enter the profession with intrinsic motivations rooted in care, altruism, and the pursuit of knowledge. However, rigid curricula, high-stakes assessments, and administrative burdens can erode this initial enthusiasm. Anthropocentric teaching restores this intrinsic drive by providing educators with autonomy, opportunities for creative expression, and meaningful interactions with students (Korthagen, 2004). When teachers witness the tangible effects of their efforts on student growth, it reinforces their sense of efficacy and job satisfaction.

Moreover, anthropocentric teaching encourages reflective practice. Teachers engaged in such pedagogy regularly assess not only what they teach but how and why they teach it. This self-reflection contributes to continuous professional growth and the development of pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986), further reinforcing their commitment and motivation.

A key feature of anthropocentric teaching is its recognition of the interdependent relationship between student and teacher motivation. Motivation is not a static individual trait but a dynamic, socially constructed phenomenon. The teacher's enthusiasm and commitment can directly influence student engagement, while student responsiveness and growth can, in turn, invigorate the teacher's sense of purpose (Wentzel, 1998).

In an anthropocentric classroom, the boundary between teaching and learning becomes fluid. Students are encouraged to voice opinions, co-create knowledge, and contribute to classroom norms, which empowers them and fosters a democratic learning environment. Simultaneously, teachers receive feedback—not only through

assessments but also via student engagement and participation—which allows them to adapt and improve their practice.

This reciprocal influence fosters a culture of mutual respect and emotional investment. Both parties become co-constructors of knowledge and meaning, leading to a virtuous cycle of motivation and satisfaction (Reeve & Jang, 2006). Such a climate can be particularly transformative in higher education, where traditional hierarchies and depersonalized instruction often hinder authentic engagement.

Despite its numerous advantages, the implementation of anthropocentric teaching faces several challenges. Institutional constraints, such as rigid curricula, large class sizes, and limited resources, can impede the personalization of learning. Faculty members may also lack the training or confidence to adopt such pedagogical shifts, especially if their professional development has focused on content mastery rather than student-centered methods (Fullan, 2001).

Additionally, cultural attitudes towards education may influence the acceptance of anthropocentric methods. In some contexts, teacher authority and rote learning are deeply ingrained, making it difficult to shift towards a more participatory model. Therefore, successful adoption requires not only individual initiative but also systemic support, including policy reform, professional development, and institutional commitment to pedagogical innovation.

To mitigate these challenges, universities can invest in collaborative learning environments, promote interdisciplinary teaching, and provide faculty development programs focused on emotional intelligence, active listening, and inclusive teaching practices. Peer mentoring, reflective teaching journals, and classroom action research can also empower educators to gradually integrate anthropocentric principles into their practice.

Anthropocentric teaching represents a transformative approach in higher education, one that transcends the traditional boundaries of instruction and redefines the educational experience as a shared human journey. By centering education on the needs, emotions, and aspirations of both students and teachers, this approach fosters intrinsic motivation, emotional engagement, and intellectual curiosity.

For students, anthropocentric teaching creates an environment where learning is meaningful, relevant, and empowering. For teachers, it revitalizes professional purpose, encourages reflective practice, and nurtures a deeper connection with learners. Ultimately, by enhancing motivation on both sides of the classroom, anthropocentric teaching contributes to a more vibrant, inclusive, and effective higher education landscape.

As global education systems continue to evolve in response to technological, cultural, and social changes, adopting human-centered pedagogies will be essential. Anthropocentric teaching not only addresses the motivational challenges of the modern university but also prepares learners and educators for lifelong growth and civic engagement.

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