Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy

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Motivation for Learning

Abstract: This is a position paper that is intended to describe motivation for learning. Although motivation is generally agreed to be the phenomenon that causes behaviour, there is a lack of consensus as to the exact nature or characteristics of this phenomenon. In recent research in science education, different authors have interpreted the term "motivation" in different ways, and this argues a need to clarify the nature of motivation. In this paper, it is proposed that motivation is not an enduring predisposition or a transient state of mind, and nor is it a collection of beliefs. Instead, it is best viewed as an executive process in which internal and external factors are continually monitored to determine when learning behaviours will be switched on and switched off. The internal and external factors include attitudes, self-efficacy beliefs, achievement goals, expectations, values, attributions, psychological needs, basic physical needs, emotions, teacher characteristics, pedagogical techniques, peers and distractions. When an appropriate combination of factors is present, then learning behaviours such as focussing attention, concentrating, thinking and persisting are activated. To support these arguments, evidence is provided from studies in education as well as recent advances in neurobiology.

Thursday, September 23rd, 1:00 - 2:00 p.m.
SCARFE Room 310