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Interest Divergence: The Root of Losing a Passion for Teaching and Learning.



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Interest Divergence: The Root of Losing a Passion for Teaching and Learning.

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Contemporary education aims to provide society with competent workers. Becoming productive citizens is a common altruistic interest that teachers and learners seek, which theoretically results in teachers' passion for sharing knowledge and learners' desire to become professionals. Surprisingly, teachers progressively fell out of love with teaching, and learners encountered a gradual erosion in their passion for learning. This paper presents the authors' viewpoint on the origin of this psychological paradox and discusses possible prevention and remedial measures.

Methodology: This narrative review is grounded in available educational literature on passion and interests. 'Interest', 'Passion for teaching', and 'Passion for learning' are primary keywords for searching literature on education. The authors review available papers, present an overall summary and narrate their viewpoint on this psychological paradox.

Findings and discussions: Teaching and learning impact each other. Bilateral contributions are primary requirements for successful training. Exemplary teaching behaviours nourish the desire to learn, and responsible learning attitudes breed a passion for teaching. Policymakers should consider egoistic perspectives and utilitarian thinking as potential psychological characteristics that destabilise the original altruistic interest and can ignite interest divergence. Social factors, including financial burdens/dissatisfaction and heavy workload, ignite and widen interest divergence. Those factors influence teachers and learners in their interests in different ways and cause the split between trainers' and trainees' interests. Progressively and irreversibly, they no longer share the original altruistic goal. As the interest divergence widens, trainers consciously cease prioritising teaching, and learning becomes gradually dispassionate to students. It becomes a vicious circle.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: Policymakers should develop measures to prevent interest divergence rather than try to escape from the established vicious circle. Due to the complex origin of the divergence, prevention strategies should be holistic and involve multiple stakeholders from different levels. Taking account of egoism and utilitarianism, satisfying financial needs and ensuring curriculum appropriateness are effective prevention measures. Rescuing efforts should be systematic rather than fragmented. Policymakers should consider and respect human weaknesses when dealing with personal characteristics and laying financial burdens down. Minor course corrections are temporary solutions to cease the widening interest divergence.

Key words: *Psychology of interest; Passion for learning; Passion for teaching; Utilitarian education*

BACKGROUND

Teaching and learning are two activities which are inseparable and impact each other. In olden times, academicism dominated teaching in Early universities. Medieval and Renaissance universities had academic freedom, designed their educational activities around sophisticated liberal arts, and did not interest themselves in practical science. In this historical context, students had to pay for their teachers, and teachers had to please their students to assure themselves of a livelihood [Encyclopaedia Britannica]. So, excellence was the feature of a person who teaches, and a firm desire to become an intellectual characterised an individual who decides to register for Early universities.

Centuries later, the Protestant Reformation and Industrial Revolutions completely transformed nineteenth-century society. In an industrialised society, the labour market needed massive supplies of skilled workers. This immense demand urged policymakers to execute mass education, which consecutively resulted in a profound impact on the educational ecosystem. De novo requirements became new standards, redefined the educational philosophy, reconfigured the pedagogical practice, and inaugurated the era of utilitarian education [Villar Notario & Calo-Blanco, 2009] [Yarkova, 2016].

Outcome-Based Education (OBE) models the utilitarian perspective on education. Being introduced in the 1990s to satisfy the demands of the labour market for competent workers, it immediately becomes a basis for contemporary professional training. Its philosophy features the learner-centred approach, which builds educational activities around learners' interests and assigns professionals to do double duty as professionals and tutors. This configuration profoundly changed the teachers' and learners' mindsets. Implementing OBE requires proactive and responsible contributions of teachers and learners. In OBE, the common goal for which teachers and learners are looking is to serve the community as productive citizens, so teachers passionately train future community service providers whilst learners responsibly and attentively learn to become professionals [Spady, 1994].

Surprisingly, every one of us experiences the following psychological phenomenon: over time, teachers progressively and consciously disengage themselves from teaching, and learners encounter a gradual erosion in their passion for learning.

This paper presents the authors' viewpoint on the origin of this psychological paradox and discusses possible prevention and remedial measures. This narrative review is grounded in available educational literature on passion and interests. 'Interest', 'Passion for teaching', and 'Passion for learning' are primary keywords for searching literature on education. The authors review available papers, present an overall summary and narrate their viewpoint on this psychological paradox, which includes exploring its origins and discussing possible prevention and remedial measures.

TRAINING IS AN ACT THAT REQUIRES BILATERAL CONTRIBUTIONS

In old educational models, training was a passive teacher-to-student transmission of knowledge. Those models featured the unilateral contribution of talented teachers, in which the primary teaching tasks were to share wisdom. In olden approaches, excellence in professional performance nourished the passion for learning, while students' contribution to the teaching-learning process was limited in digesting what they received from their teachers.

In the contemporary mindset, bilateral contributions are primary requirements for successful training. The reciprocal relationship between proper teaching behaviours and full learning responsibility forms the basis of fruitful training [Spady, 1994]. Concerning trainers, they should metamorphose from emitters of knowledge into tutors. Exemplary teaching behaviours nourish the desire to learn, while improper teaching behaviours destroy the desire to learn [Ali, 2023]. Regarding the learners, there is a conversion from passive receivers to responsible contributors. Positive attitudes and responsibility breed a passion for teaching, while passive and irresponsible learning attitudes corrode the passion for teaching [Spady, 1994].

SOCIAL FACTORS SEPARATE TRAINERS' AND TRAINEES' INTERESTS

The fragile altruistic interest

In the beginning, trainers and trainees shared the same altruistic interest, which is being productive citizens. Teachers looked to provide society with competent workers, and learners looked for the ability to serve society as skilful workers [Elster, 2015]. This altruistic attitude is somewhat fragile and easily collapses.

Numerous intrinsic and extrinsic factors, such as psychological character, occupational attractions, financial burdens, financial dissatisfactions, and heavier workloads, influenced teachers and learners in their interests in different ways. Those influences resulted in the establishment of new personal needs, which destabilised teaching and learning processes and corroded the trainer-trainee relationship. The altruistic interest collapsed whilst interest divergence appeared.

Over time, serving the community was no longer the goal that trainers and trainees looked for. They irreversibly discontinued sharing the original interest and looked for new targets. Trainers consciously ceased prioritising teaching, and learning became gradually dispassionate to students. Interest divergence widened and aggravated the corrosion of the passion for teaching and learning, leading people to target new objectives. It became a vicious circle.

The egoistic teacher and the egoistic student

In philosophy, egoism is concerned with the role of the self as the motivation and goal of one's action. Egoism is a fundamental psychological driving force in our daily lives and should be

considered a necessary factor in all human affairs. Fueled by self-interest, egoistic people act only in their perceived self-interest and do things because they hope to gain something.

The human being is egoist. No one can deny the existence of egoism in education. Educators should consider the difference in teachers' and learners' self-interests rather than consider egoism an evil that negatively impacts educational activities. Extremely egotistic teachers disregard the works of others, prioritise acts indicating that they are outstanding professionals and worthy leaders and fight against colleagues for higher social positions or better professional recognition [Dahlbeck, 2017]. Extremely egoistic students are likely to learn for themselves, disregard the interest of classmates and deny teamwork [Shao, 2023].

Egoistic attitudes and behaviours inevitably separate the personal interests of trainers and trainees and widen interest divergence. At worst, mismanaged egoistic compartments lead to the total separation of teachers' and learners' interests, followed by the total collapse of the passion for teaching and learning [Dahlbeck, 2017] [Shao, 2023].

The utilitarian education

In psychology, utilitarianism means the view that the morally right action is the action that produces the most good. The utilitarian perspective of education has been used widely during the last decades. It focuses on training students who can fit into society at an elite level and contribute as productive citizens [Gamson, 1966].

There are several debates on the strategic implementation of utilitarian education. The pros focus on the ability to perform assigned tasks and direct educational activities toward efficient planning, while the cons criticise the superficiality of the training. Nowadays, no one denies implementing utilitarian education, but nobody can say how deep the teaching-learning should dive in [Cekić, 2018].

The utilitarian teachers and the utilitarian students

Utilitarian people are likely in favour of the action plan that satisfies the self the most. Educators should consider the utilitarian mindset a driving factor that widens interest divergence and aggravates the corrosion of the passion for teaching and learning.

It is unlikely that utilitarian teachers accept pedagogical changes and prioritise spending time on teaching. Over time, they consciously cease prioritising education and tirelessly work for better socio-political positions and professional recognition [Cekić, 2018].

It is unlikely that utilitarian learners prioritise spending time working in a team and diving into in-depth learning. They frequently take the easiest and shortest way to complete assigned tasks without mastering them. Moreover, they prioritise passing exams or courses at all prices, whether or not achieving learning goals.

Financial burdens and financial dissatisfaction

Financial-related issues consist of financial burdens and financial dissatisfaction. Financial burdens express inadequate income, which can not cover expenditures on basic needs such as living costs, tuition fees, and learning equipment. Financial dissatisfaction means the feeling that people are not pleased or satisfied with their actual financial status. Those issues negatively impact both learners and teachers and are a pivot that controls their motivations [Russo, 2013].

Financial burdens mainly affect learners. High tuition fees and expensive learning equipment, exceeding learners' financial capabilities, lead to prioritising their time budget on part-time extra jobs and expenditure on daily living needs that discourage full integration into learning.

On the other side, financial dissatisfaction strongly influences the trainers. As mentioned, in OBE, teachers do double duty as professionals and trainers. Compared to full-time professionals' income, that of teachers is much lower. It leads them to disengage themselves from teaching and adhere to professional activities that provide them with higher salaries and nobler social ranks [UNESCO International Institute For Educational Planning, 2022].

The heavy workload

Executing mass education leads to an increase in student intake and consequently requires appropriate adaptations in pedagogical approaches. Contemporary teachers should master recently added tasks, including familiarising themselves with new teaching skills, crafting adapted instructional materials, conducting repeatedly performance-based assessments, and self-preparing for the 4.0 educational era. On the other hand, attending outcome-based training requires students to learn proactively and responsibly and be able to self-direct their learning plans [UNESCO International Centre For Technical And Vocational Education And Training].

For trainers, the exceeded workload negatively impacts their mindset, which results in irresponsible attitudes, resistance to changes, and disengagement from education.

For learners, the heavy workload nurtures utilitarian thinking, leads to prioritising passing exams instead of mastering performances, and prevents them from attending classes responsibly and proactively. At worst, an exceeded workload leads them to total disengagement from learning.

PREVENTING INTEREST DIVERGENCE

As mentioned, an established vicious circle of interest divergence has shown to be progressive and irreversible. Correction efforts can not help relevant people escape from the installed vicious circle. Therefore, it would be better to develop measures to prevent detachment rather than try to recover from the split. Due to the complex origin of the divergence, prevention strategies should be holistic and involve multiple stakeholders, from the national through the institutional level, from the community through individuals.

Taking account of egoism and utilitarianism

Egoism and utilitarianism are the nature of the human mindset. It is impossible to eradicate them from the daily practice. Even though egoistic and utilitarian thinking is the root of interest divergence, people should admit the coexistence of egoistic and altruistic attitudes, utilitarianism and perfectionism within educational activities. Therefore, prevention measures should take account of personal interests and be able to direct utilitarian thinking toward desired learning outcomes [Jweid, 2022].

At the global level, international associations on education should provide the educators community with an integrated viewpoint on preventing and managing egoistic and utilitarian thinking within the context of training workers for the globalised labour market.

At the national level, the government should establish and promulgate synchronised legislation regulating training, licensing, career development, graduation system, and professorship to support the professional development of teachers and future service providers.

At the institutional level, the school's internal management rules should target identifying and prioritising personal needs and supporting a personalised development plan. It consists of surveys focusing on interests and internal regulations governing leadership appointments, professional recognition, and meetings on career orientation [Jweid, 2022].

Satisfying financial demands

Financial burdens and dissatisfactions negatively impact teachers' and learners' engagement in education. Effective prevention measures consist of activities that promote engagement in teaching and learning, support educational professional development and satisfy financial demands.

To students, prevention measures mainly focus on financial burdens. At the national level, the government should consider lending students bank loans with low interest rates and long-term repayment. At the institutional level, the school should deploy synchronised measures targeting reducing expenditures on living costs and learning equipment, including affordable housing, digitalising learning resources, offering internet access, sharing instructional materials, and dealing with publishers about book copyright [Zhou, 2023].

To teachers, prevention measures mainly target financial dissatisfaction. At the national level, the government should establish a regulation system that gives institutions a financially independent status. At the institutional level, the school should implement a synchronised system targeting income increase through money from academic activities such as research, technology transmission, intellectual rights transfer, co-curricular academic activities, and publications of instructional materials [UNESCO International Institute For Educational Planning, 2022].

Ensuring curriculum appropriateness

At the programme level, ensuring the appropriateness of the curriculum is the pivot of effective workload management. In curriculum development, a proper backward design results in a reduced workload. It is imperative to determine comprehensively relevant learning outcomes and their performance indicators. These elements serve as a basis for developing course syllabi. Deploying interdisciplinary approaches and ensuring constructive alignment are primary requirements, which avoid unnecessary repetitions, prevent overlaps between courses and reduce workload. At the course level, it would be better for educators to prioritise pedagogical approaches that allow integrated delivery of academic content [Joyce, 2016].

Concerning assessments, an appropriately designed exam agenda can reduce assessment burdens. Educators should consider replacing the final exam system with the continuous assessment approach, which can prevent learners from utilitarian thinking and improper learning behaviours [Shumway, 2003].

Concerning learners, workload burdens originate from improper planning manners. It would be better for educators to promote self-directed learning instead of directed self-learning. Orientation meetings should target helping learners create personal plans around their interests rather than suggest a learning direction.

RESCUING FROM INTEREST DIVERGENCE

As mentioned, interest separation is progressive and irreversible. Even though prevention is a primary task, we still need measures for rescuing from such divergence. Due to the reciprocal features of the split, remedial efforts should be systematic rather than fragmented.

Dealing with egoistic and utilitarian thinking

It is impossible to find general solutions for egoistic and utilitarian thinking. The institution should deal with them rather than try to eradicate them [Jweid]. There are short-term and long-term measures.

The short-term strategy consists of personal deals that should focus on identifying primary and immediate individual interests and providing reasonable suggestions. Managers should not forget that the nature of dealing with egoistic and utilitarian thinking is assisting people in escaping from their human weaknesses rather than judging them administratively.

The long-term strategy targets systemic measures based on quality assurance activities. It is crucial to conduct problem-root analysis and self-assessment on educational quality assurance. Such findings are helpful for managers to deploy synchronised and simultaneous interventions to break the vicious circle of separation.

Dealing with financial-related issues

Concerning laying financial burdens down, immediate financial aid, such as salary increase or offering scholarships, can be considered a temporary solution to cease the widening of interest divergence. Salary adjustment can reduce financial burdens and physically keep educators working for the institution. However, this measure is likely unable to help dispassionate teachers escape from disengagement [UNESCO International Institute For Educational Planning, 2022]. Scholarships can help students continue learning. However, this measure can not restore their passion for learning [Zhou, 2023]. Therefore, the institution should consider other solutions, including revising priorities within the budget and increasing non-monetary compensation instead of salaries.

Concerning satisfying financial demands, there is no short-term solution. Giving institutions financially independent status seems to be the radical solution for this issue.

Adjusting workload

In mass education, work overload is inevitable. Effective workload management requires systemic strategies. Conducting systemic revision is a primary task. Besides, educators should perform minor adjustments, allowing making provisory correction measures to reduce work overload. Such measures target removing repetitions, overlaps, and unnecessary concepts, adjusting exam frequency, and revising existing exam toolkits. Minor revision does not focus on revising constructive alignment and pedagogical approaches. Therefore, it can be considered a temporary solution to cease the widening interest divergence.

CONCLUSION

In modern societies, there is no place for idealism. No one can deny the coexistence of egoism and altruism, utilitarianism and academicism within the human mindset. Such psychological factors are potential elements ready to ignite interest divergence. Social factors, including financial-related issues and work overload, trigger and widen interest divergence. Over time, personal characters and social factors lead to the total collapse of passion for teaching and learning. Once triggered, the separation is progressive and irreversible.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It would be better for policymakers and educators to act before the split happens. Conceiving prevention measures is more reasonable than deploying corrective interventions. It should be holistic and involve multiple stakeholders, from the national through the institutional level, from the community through individuals.

Concerning measures to rescue from interest divergence, managers should consider and respect human weaknesses when dealing with egoistic and utilitarian thinking and laying financial burdens down. Finally, ensuring the appropriateness of the curriculum and systemic management policy are radical solutions for reducing workload.

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