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Inspiration through Self-Motivation

As high school students graduate in the spring, they find themselves searching for the next steps in life. Many of these brave young adults chose to utilize their futures, furthering their education by attending college in the fall. However, high school doesn’t fully prepare students for college. So these freshmen are already set up for failure. They are seemingly waiting for their professors to spoon feed them the answers. The students wish to use a cookie cutter formula for all their homework that they are unable to think for themselves. Instead of find motivation within themselves these students will struggle and my even fail out of college. In multiple articles, scholars explain their own personal beliefs for the personal limitations lack of self-motivation causes. They discuss boundaries and limitations students are imposing on themselves because of the ways they've been taught to cope with challenges. Others would speculate the problem with students lies within their own personal lack of self-discipline, which comes from failure to consistently resist peer-pressure. Students desire to conform and fit in as well as incompetency to rise to the occasion and demonstrate inner strength and self-satisfaction because of the terrorizing fear of failure. There’s even the issue that students are taught by their professors to memorize instead of learn. It unmistakably becomes quantitative learning vs. qualitative learning. The full potential of students are not being fully utilized by students and professors alike. Academia fails to aid and encourage students to find their own self-motivation, therefore leaving students to conform to self-destructive ways. Unless student and teacher can strive to spark self-motivation students will continue to struggle with self-motivation.

Some students struggle over a long period of time before they find their own self-motivation, with the assistance of their instructors. There can be many reasons for lack of self-motivation, and variety of different solutions. Gerald Graff, author of “Disliking Books at an Early Age,” says despite studying and teaching literature, he avoided books growing up and struggled because of his fear of reading and writing. A reason he gives for not caring about books while he was young is that “Literature and history had no apparent application to my experience” (112). To simply put it, there was no reason to read or understand something because it didn’t relate to his interests in anyway what so ever. In college he found it hard to connect with his assigned reading in class and was unable to discuss the material in class. Graff struggled through most of his college career until a teacher had exposed him to critical debate. Graff then found his self-motivation; he had a purpose for reading. Gerald Graff suggests the problem students face is limiting themselves with personal boundaries because that’s the only way they have been taught to cope with challenges they would regularly face. Many struggling students are taught to accept that quitting, giving up, going with the flow, doing the bare minimum is a choice they should opt for. Where does this leave college students and who is truly responsible for lack of self-motivation? David Bartholomae author of, "Inventing the University," would agree with Gerald Graff, saying students aren’t equipped to imagine and conform to the goals of an academic audience. Struggling with a problem for a while without quitting can successfully transform your way of learning and continuously encourage self-motivation.

The lack of academic preparation and feeling of inequality leave students unprepared for college; however with vital assistance from educators these barriers can be overcome. Some academic scholars would argue the problem of self-motivation is the lack of self-discipline and oppression. This problem comes from the direct failure of student’s inability to resist peer-pressure. These students have a desire to conform and fit in as well as the inability to rise to the occasion and demonstrate self-confidence and self-worth because of fear and intimidation. Colleges can make students feel unintelligent when they are entered into a conversation with new jargon and foreign logic. This is particularly demonstrated in "Entering the Conversation," an academic article written by Mike Rose. Rose questions the existing methods of colleges teaching literacy to unprepared students. The courses for incoming college freshman have traditionally served to exclude working-class people from the classroom. However it doesn’t necessarily have to be that way. Rose indicates that education in humanities doesn’t have to be exclusive. He has a deep understanding that these unprepared students lack self-motivation not because of their shortage of intelligence but rather their background of poor education and overall lack of support. Rose’s parents, unlike Graff’s intellectual parents, were poor Italian immigrants who lacked educated. Rose grew up in a poverty stricken city known as South Los Angeles. With his circumstantial upbringing, Rose entered high school thinking he could just float though. When he entered college he found himself unprepared for the high demands his courses offered. Like Graff, Rose would agree that high school students entering colleges are unprepared and unable to meet the demands the colleges strive for. Rose feared his teachers, believing they would view him as a less then equal, because of his educational background. Instead of treating him as inferior, Rose’s teachers began looking out for him and encouraged him to seek out self-motivation. With his newfound perspective, Rose found self-motivation and he went on to earn his bachelor’s degree from Loyola University. Mike Rose demonstrated in his article that it’s possible for students and teachers to come together to solve this problem. Being unable to meet college expectation academically can be daunting and freighting when unprepared, leaving student unable to reach full academic performance. Mike Roes offers a solution of self-motivation to his readers as an important way to effective learning.

In addition scholars would say that the problem with self-motivation is that students are taught to memorize and comply with the norm of studying. This promotes conformity, inhibits creativity, it resists college dialogue therefore, requiring students to be passive and adapt thereby serving the purposes of oppression. Paulo Freire author of “The Banking Concept of Education,” exploits those ideas in his academic article. The banking concept is where students resemble empty boxes and teachers fill them to the top with information. The students simply memorize the information then repeat it, only to have it forgotten after a test. The issue with this type of education is that students are unable to critically think about the information they are receiving. In the banking concept of education students merely accept the system without rebellion. Dissecting Freire’s banking concept further, anyone outside the education system can see it is characterized by multiple practices of oppressive attitudes and behaviors. Freire would say that the banking concept degrades students, assuming all students are ignorant and only teachers’ possess any form of real knowledge. Barry Alford, a college professor at Mid-Michigan Community College, offers the same insight as Freire in his article “Freirean Voices, Student Choices.” Alford states they “should earn their way to into academic voices instead of merely learn how to imitate one” (116). Freire offers a solution for the banking concept of education through problem-posing concept. This concept is where the students and teachers can come together and learn from each other. Freire explains:

They (students and teachers) become jointly responsible for the process in which all grow. In this process, arguments based on “authority” are no longer valid; in order to function, authority must be *on the side of* freedom, not *against* it. Here, no one teaches another, nor is anyone self-taught. People teach each other, mediated by the world, by the cognizable objects which in banking education are “owned” by the teacher. (246)

Students need to step up to the plate and accept the courses they’re taking and all the homework that comes with it. As for teachers, they need to take initiative through their teachings to allow students to seek their own self-motivation. Teachers are limited by time and curriculum guidelines; whereas students are limited by their own inhibitions. Often this goes unseen due to lack of communication on both students and teachers. Where is the middle ground? Rose would declare the problem lies within the students due to constraints previous teachers have imposed upon them. In addition to Rose’s former belief, he too conforms to his idea of memorization along with of Paulo Freire, stating “I went to school and sat in class and memorized more than understood and whistled past the academic graveyard” (97). Freire would further elaborate “Education is suffering from narration sickness…(this) leads the students to memorize mechanically the narrated content” (240). Education is limited by social injustice and creativity deprivation. Students are forced to into compliance and the conformity of the flawed educational system. Students are unfortunately coming to a loss of passion through dehumanization and endless routines. Until there is a wider barrier free communication between students and teachers, the problems within the educational system will be sustained.

Students and teachers need to keep in mind that true knowledge is powerful. Coming together on level terms in a learning involvement is ideal. Learning takes place in a classroom and so can self-motivation. Teachers have the ability to reach out to their students, teaching them academic discourse when they are underprepared for the college curriculum. There’s no point of struggling with memorization and never learning, and students are more inclined to succeed when teachers are willing to assist them. Unity and encouragement goes a long way in the lives of students in order to further their education, especially considering this is a major part of their influential lives. Without this students may run the risk of never accomplishing their educational goals. This alliance between students and teachers is required to enhance the capabilities of students.

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