Language to Motivate Learning: The Power of Inspirational Quotes

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Abstract: Intrinsic motivation is complicated to instill in students and yet presents benefits to learners that extrinsic motivation does not. Classroom design adds to classroom culture and nurtures students to benefit their educational experience, yet remains subjective. In this study I addressed if student choice of inspirational quotes on education displayed would increase student perception of autonomy, competence, and intrinsic motivation in the classroom. I displayed student-selected quotes with inspirational messages on education and evaluated student perception of autonomy, competence, and intrinsic motivation before and after the quotes were displayed. Students chose a quote weekly from the hanging wall display and explained what it meant to them as a student. There was no significant difference in average student perception of autonomy, competence, and intrinsic motivation before and after the quotes were displayed. Instead of inspirational quotes, teachers should display accomplished student work to enhance student competence and intrinsic motivation.

Introduction

Pointless tasks are viewed as such because the process neither provides something to gain nor aligns with an individual's passions or interests. "I don't care", "This is boring", and "When am I actually going to use this?" are familiar student comments to teachers who try to inspire students to do their school work, but receive the same responses as would any adult enforcing household chores. Education, of the utmost benefit to young people and the nation, can often seem to students as an obstruction to time spent doing more interesting tasks. Due to the fact that such disinterest from students can lead to off-task and disruptive student behaviors, solutions to a lack of motivation for academic tasks should be sought from research on student motivation.

Cordova (2006) noted that existing research points to a direct relationship between grades completed in school and a lack of student motivation for academics. Modern day student disinterest in learning is occasionally attributed to perceived bland national standards and ominous high stakes testing. Teachers cognizant of this issue sometimes attempt to motivate students academically with reward systems only to receive variant success. Unfortunately, due to the current day assessments and objective learning measures, extrinsic incentives are proving futile for encouraging positive attitudes towards education (Bowman, 2007).

Teachers who wish to ensure a functioning classroom are urged to encourage students to locate their own interests and how concepts can be learned using those favored or stronger skills (Bowman, 2007). Students' interests and passions, once discovered, provide opportunities that teachers can use to encourage student enjoyment while

completing academic tasks. More specifically, decreased student motivation may also come from neglecting the student's intrinsic motivation due to a lack of contextualized learning, including accessibility and relevance for students, in the classroom (Cordova, 2006).

Attention to intrinsic motivation of students by teachers would require satisfying three psychological needs of students including autonomy, competence, and relatedness according to self-determination theory researchers Ryan & Deci (2000). Autonomy or choice in the classroom gives students the opportunity to act upon their inherent interests or passions. Student competence or ability can grow in classrooms where academic tasks are accessible and students are encouraged to persevere and maintain a strong work ethic. Relatedness for students with academic tasks is possible when teachers present information that is relevant to students' lives.

Inspirational quotes can persuade students to see a new perspective of education as advantageous, not tedious, and to view academic success as attainable. People who are quoted for inspiration on education may share similar identities with students, which can introduce relevance to education that students may not be exposed to outside of school. Students in the $21^{\rm st}$ century can also locate and choose a variety of inspirational thoughts by role models through the Internet and media based on personal interest. I plan to address student disinterest in academic tasks by focusing on intrinsic motivation and I will investigate if daily exposure to personally chosen inspirational quotes promotes students' intrinsic motivation to participate in school.

The tactic of displaying inspirational quotes for student accessibility in the classroom is common in classroom management and yet there is a lack of research on how motivational quotes improve students' intrinsic motivation. This study proves useful to the average classroom teacher in that its findings either support or refute the popular belief that decorating the classroom with inspirational quotes will be beneficial for students.

My study addressed (1) whether student perceptions of autonomy, competence, and intrinsic motivation will change from pre to post implementation of inspirational quotes on education and (2) whether or not that is reflected in students' behaviors and their written opinion of education. In the proceeding section I present an extensive review of existing literature on intrinsic motivation as well as inspirational language and how the two will influence my research; following the literature review I describe my investigation and the qualitative data I collected.

Theoretical Framework

Autonomy, competence, and relatedness are the three psychological needs presented in self-determination theory that sustain intrinsic motivation and thus predict academic performance (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Components of competence or self-efficacy, as identified in social cognitive theory by Bandura (1977), are also related to enhanced student intrinsic motivation toward academic performance. I based my theoretical framework on both theories to guide how I attempted to increase intrinsic motivation of students in my intervention. I also reviewed research on inspirational language to propose that positive messages enhance affective feelings and performance of individuals, in the hopes that intrinsic motivation would flourish through avenues described in my theoretical framework.

Self-determination Theory

Deci et al. (1991) postulated that students must perform self-determined or autonomous tasks, gain competence to perform actions and achieve outcomes, and relate to others through social connection in order to obtain maximum motivation, development, and performance. This is because individuals who satisfied those psychological needs will be more likely to be intrinsically motivated to complete tasks than those with lower levels or autonomy, competence, or relatedness (Deci et al., 1991; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Of all three psychological needs, intrinsic motivation cannot be present in the absence of autonomy, or in an environment that lacks inherent ownership of the task at hand. Individuals with intrinsic motivation completed tasks of higher quality and grew to appreciate learning associated with certain tasks (Deci, Koestner & Ryan, 2001; Taylor et al., 2014).

Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive theory (SCT) was used in a study with self-determination theory where both theories were accurate predictors of school dropouts (Alivernini & Lucidi, 2011). Findings from the study indicated that both theories can deliver long-term learning goals and intrinsic motivation for students.

Bandura (1977, 2004) theorized in SCT that an individual's self-efficacy or belief in how well a task could be completed relied on performance accomplishments, vicarious experiences, social persuasions, and emotional arousal. Performance accomplishments or mastery experiences refer to a series of successes an individual achieved and therefore associates with confidence (Pajares et al., 2005). Vicarious experiences model the potential success that individuals could have if they are socially comparable to the successors. Social or verbal persuasions instill support and suggest achievement while high emotional arousal predicts unhealthy levels of stress and anxiety which worsens individual performance (Bandura, 1977, 2004).

Individuals with high self-efficacy tended to be proactive and persevere through difficult tasks, and it is mastery experiences that strongly improved an individual's self-efficacy (Pajares et al., 2005).

Literature Review

Autonomy

Recent literature as analyzed by Niemiec & Ryan (2009) supports the theoretical notion that intrinsic motivation occurs when students are allowed autonomy in the classroom. Specifically, teachers who supported their students' autonomy both satisfy and stay conscious of psychological necessities in the classroom, most commonly by providing students choice (Cordova & Lepper, 1996; Reeve et al., 2004; Urdan & Schoenfelder, 2006). Students benefit from this autonomous support even when they undergo transitions such as adolescence. Soenens and Vansteenkiste (2005) administered surveys to 328 Belgian adolescent students to analyze the relationship between parent autonomy support, teacher autonomy support, and student self-determination related to domains such as academics. Academic self-determination was related to teacher autonomy support, as well as positively associated with students' GPAs. Moreover, teachers who supported autonomy were predictors of autonomously driven self-determination when students are job searching after high school (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2005). This suggests that teachers'

autonomy support can be beneficial to students even after primary school, which is supported by studies conducted with students in higher education.

Black and Deci (2000) studied 137 undergraduates taking a chemistry course for initial reasons with varying degrees of autonomy. Based on students' self-reports, leaders who offered autonomy support in workshops led not only to an increase in student autonomy over the semester but predicted higher student performance than students whose autonomy stayed stagnant. Students of leaders who were perceived to give less autonomy support during the workshop performed significantly worse in the course than students who reported higher leader autonomy support (Black & Deci, 2000). Therein lies justification that (1) student autonomy, if not already high, is predictive of course performance and (2) that leader or teacher autonomy support can have a positive effect on the performance of students with low autonomy in a course.

In an observational study, Reeve et al. (2004) exposed 20 teachers in the Midwest to informational sessions on how to be autonomously supportive. Using pre, ongoing, and post observations of teachers, the researchers examined how engaged students were in their classes. The experimental group of teachers who attended informational sessions on how to elicit autonomy supportive behaviors used those behaviors significantly more than teachers in a control group. In addition, student engagement improved after teachers attended the informational session, and the autonomy support behaviors better predicted student engagement than the student engagement observed before teachers attended the autonomy support session (Reeve et al., 2004).

Competence

Competence is affected by both external and internal factors. Bowman (2007) suggested that teachers can foster intrinsic motivation by focusing on feedback and ensuring it highlights specific skills related to learning in general such as perseverance and focus. Also important while considering competence is the degree to which individuals care about their performance on certain tasks. Sansone (1986) conducted a study of 55 Columbia University students in which he/she explored the relationship between competence and the enjoyment of tasks. Students' personal competence values predicted their enjoyment of tasks when feedback on task competence was not given. Normative feedback influenced students' perceived competence at the task more than task-oriented feedback, and was associated with enjoyment for students with high competence valuation (Sansone, 1986). Intrinsic motivation is represented by enjoyment, which is influenced by feedback based on students' initial perception of the task at hand.

Black & Deci (2000) also measured competence as related to autonomy support. Students in the chemistry course workshop reported higher perceived competence regardless of initial autonomy level if and only if their leaders provided high autonomy support, which was associated with high course performance. The same relationship between academic performance and competence level is supported by findings from a study by Gottfried (1985) on elementary and middle school students. Students who had more positive perspectives of their educational competence and significantly higher academic performance reported higher academic intrinsic motivation than their peers.

Pintrich & De Groot (1990) also found an association between academic performance and intrinsic motivation in a study that focused on self-regulated learning of 173 seventh grade students in Michigan. Higher levels of intrinsic academic value based on

student report were correlated with higher levels of cognitive thinking such as self-regulation, and cognitive thinking strategies predicted academic performance. This suggests that if teachers encouraged student intrinsic motivation in the classroom, potential benefits include persistence for and acquisition of higher order thinking skills associated with conceptual understanding (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990).

Vicarious Experience. Inspirational quotes can be influential due to the success of the author and aligns with vicarious experiences in SCT. To expose students to more vicarious experiences with a variety of successful role models would boost student self-efficacy or competence. Students can be motivated to work hard and take pride in their work when they observe others achieve and perform academic tasks (Phan & Bing, 2014). In the elementary school setting, students are unsure about their academic performance as they have little experience. Elementary students are impressionable and are likely to learn from modeling, which they may receive from specific references to educational strategies in inspirational quotes (Pajares, 2007).

Social Persuasion. Inspirational quotes also send positive messages that individuals utilize to achieve success which can be considered social persuasions of SCT. The presence of inspirational quotes on education could provide students with positive messages about struggle and perseverance in education which would also enhance student competence. Froiland et al. (2012) recognized that praise can communicate positive messages about competence to students, and perhaps quotes in the classroom can also send empowering messages.

Relatedness

Davidson, Gest, and Welsh (2010) performed a relatedness longitudinal study in a rural community of the United States on 383 students in either third, fourth, and fifth grade until all students reached seventh grade. Teacher and peer relatedness were reported by teachers and peers respectively during students' time in elementary and middle school, to investigate the impact of relatedness on adjusting to school transitions. Students who reported high relatedness to both teachers and peers post-transition to middle school were strongly correlated with reports of prosocial behavior in elementary school (Davidson, Gest, & Welsh, 2010). In contrast, reports of less-social student behavior in elementary school were associated with lower relatedness to teachers and peers in middle school. Aggression in elementary school was strongly correlated with the lower relatedness as opposed to higher relatedness category in middle school. Similarly important was the fact that students with high relatedness to teachers and peers had higher self-worth and were at less risk for academic maladjustment to middle school than those with lower relatedness (Davidson, Gest, & Welsh, 2010).

This follows the literature that supported intrinsic motivation as a better predictor of high academic performance than extrinsic motivation. Students who felt a lack of relatedness to their teachers tend to perform academic tasks only if they were extrinsically motivated (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009). This is because students internally desired belonging, acceptance, and a claim to be valued in their educational experiences (Bowman, 2007). The relevance of classroom activities also helps students feel related to their tasks. Cordova and Lepper (1996) conducted a study with 72 fourth and fifth graders exposed to the same

computer program but with different degrees of relatedness. Students exhibited significantly higher levels of learning due to the program that had personalized fantasy conditions for the students than those who took the standard conditions in the program. Those students also showed significantly more motivation and involvement towards the program activities (Cordova & Lepper, 1996).

Inspirational Language

Inspiration is an outside stimulus, such as quotes, that encourages motivation or the desire for previously overlooked outcomes from within (Bowman, 2011). Scholars suggested that teachers can inspire their students through understanding what powerful resources students already possess such as a desire for respect and pride in their work (Bowman, 2007). Student interests and passions are also suggested routes of access for teachers to use to help drive students where they can find rewarding activities in the academic context (Bowman, 2011). More specifically, relevance can bridge connections between students' perceptions of what their purpose is in education compared to the way in which they live their lives.

Teachers aware of student interests can appropriately connect academic material to such factors in order to motivate students to pursue their lifelong education. Brown (2004) identified the second position in neuro linguistic programming as teachers' understanding of students' interests albeit separate from a teacher's own reality. Teachers are essential for communicating understanding to students, just enough to tempt their curiosity and encourage the desire to learn. The same communication strategy is outlined in three portions for managerial effectiveness that clarify misconceptions, locate relevance, and promote camaraderie (Sullivan, 1988). To improve motivation, language must be clear, direct, and limit the number of misconceptions listeners can make. Overarching importance and realization of purpose within a group setting promotes motivation as listeners find comfort in explicitly stated purpose (Sullivan, 1988).

Akin to the relatedness section above as described in self-determination theory, there is research that suggested individuals receive powerful motivation from inspirational language when they relate to the source of the language (Lockwood and Kunda, 1997). Fortunately, teachers can draw inspirational quotes from famous figures who were at one time students themselves. Lockwood and Kunda (1997) worked with undergraduate students from University of Waterloo who were either interested in teaching or accounting as a career and examined their perceptions of their future careers. In the first study, 50 students that were either in accounting or teaching programs read faux inspirational articles written about successful professionals in either field. When the students rated the relevance of the inspirational articles, aspiring accountants rated the article on a successful accountant more relevant than the article on a successful teacher and vice-versa was true for the aspiring teachers (Lockwood and Kunda, 1997).

The second study also conducted by Lockwood and Kunda (1997) consisted of 60 accounting students, who were either first or fourth years. These students read a faux article about a successful graduate student who completed the same accounting program at University of Waterloo. The fourth year students reported lower success ratings for how successful the graduate student was than first year students, as well as lower self-evaluations which Lockwood and Kunda (1997) related to the graduate student's success being unattainable. This suggests that despite the fact that words from a relatable role

model can be truly inspirational, competence cannot be achieved when the readers realize their own distance from the role model's status.

The final study of 58 students of many different majors, none of whom were fourth years, involved participants reading faux stories related to a well-rounded and successful student tailored to each undergraduate program. After reading about the star pupil, students were required to rate their academic success as well as the student in the stories. Self-rating on the same success scale was significantly higher for students with malleable intelligences than those with fixed, as was the relevance scale of the star student to each student (Lockwood & Kunda, 1997). Due to the final study it was clear that students must have enough initial confidence to realize their relatedness to an inspirational figure and translate that to perceived future success. However, the use of inspirational figures, such as star students, or the words they say can have a depreciative effect on students' perception of competence if the inspirational figure attributes success to something elusive for students in search of inspiration (Lockwood & Kunda, 1997).

Research Questions

After reviewing the research mentioned above, I created the following research questions to answer with my project:

- (1) Will student choice of what quotes are displayed in the classroom increase student perception of autonomy in the classroom?
- (2) Will student choice of what quotes are displayed in the classroom increase student perception of competence in the classroom?
- (3) Will student choice of what quotes are displayed in the classroom increase students' intrinsic motivation towards learning?

Methods

Intervention (for action research)

To increase autonomy, competence, and intrinsic motivation in the classroom, I gave students the chance to choose what quotes on education to display in the classroom that had positive messages towards learning. On Monday of the first week of my intervention, I asked students to complete an anonymous nine item affective Likert-type survey (see Appendix B). This survey served as the pre-questionnaire, with three statements that each pertain to the students' feelings of autonomy, competence, and intrinsic motivation in the classroom. Students then had to rate, on a scale from 1-5 with 1 listed as "not true at all" to 5 listed as "very true", how correct they found the statements to be. For instance a statement focused on autonomy was "My teacher listens to how I would like to do things" whereas a competence statement was "I am able to achieve my goals in class." After collecting the questionnaires, I introduced the students to quotes they could select from a pool that encouraged efforts towards academic work, recounted vicarious educational experiences and came from a variety of authors with different ethnicities, genders, and socioeconomic statuses. Due to Bandura's (1977) description of vicarious experiences, Ryan & Deci's (2001) definition of relatedness, and the significance of role model similarity in the Lockwood & Kunda's (1997) study it was important to provide the students with quotes from people with whom they identified and had something in common.

Students also received the option to bring in inspirational quotes they found on academic work as long as the quotes either (1) represented an educational experience of

someone else or (2) provided a positive message about achieving academic success. For five weeks, the quotes that students chose on the first day were hung in the middle of a chalkboard at the back of the classroom. This display ensured that all students had a chance to act autonomously by adding something they had a stake in to the classroom environment. Students also chose what quotes they responded to in their journals every Friday, which did not have to be the same quotes they chose to display on the first day (see Appendix A). After choosing a quote, students explained "What does it mean to you as a student?" The response journals were kept in previously used journals labeled with students' numbers. Those numbers were integrated at the beginning of the year and are known to the resident teacher but were not revealed to myself. On Friday of the fifth week, I issued the same anonymous nine item affective survey measuring autonomy, competence, and intrinsic motivation to students to be completed as the post-questionnaire.

My action research took place in a fourth grade public school classroom in St. Mary's County, Maryland and involved 25 students. The class student demographic, as documented by the school, was predominately White, with one student who identified as Asian/Hawaiian/Filipino and another who identified as African American. Seven of the twenty-five students had individualized education programs all of which include preferential seating, as well as some pull out services for math. The classroom culture revolved around a pirate theme which the students respond positively to, and their teacher acknowledged positive and proactive behavior with rewards during and at the end of each school day. The affective survey and quote response journal used in my intervention mimicked the same pirate theme to appear fitting in the daily academic activities of this sample population of students. The resident teacher also kept open and constant communication with parents of the students in this sample population, so I informed parents in the teacher's weekly newsletter of quotes displayed in the classroom. The resident teacher enjoyed the quotes so much that she kept them displayed after my intervention period was over. She also incorporated an individual student's quote choice and explanation for the choice in each weekly newsletter until the end of the 2014-15 school year.

Data collection

I administered and collected completed surveys outside of instructional time at the end of the day for the pre questionnaire on Monday of week one and the end of the day for the post questionnaire on Friday of week five. Student response journals were checked every Friday afternoon for completion. I wrote and compiled a collection of daily journal entries over the course of this project on student behavior.

Table 1: Research questions and data sources

Will student choice of what quotes are displayed in the classroom increase student perception of	Pre-Post Affective Questionnaire ✓	Quote Response Journals ✓	Daily Observation Journal ✓
autonomy in the classroom?			
Will student choice of what quotes are displayed in the classroom increase student perception of competence in the classroom?	✓	✓	✓
Will student choice of what quotes are displayed in the classroom increase students' intrinsic motivation towards learning?	✓	✓	✓

Data analysis

After gathering all completed pre and post questionnaires, I scored each by numerical value using the Likert-scale method. I totaled student scores, as well as item scores, and divided student scores for a class average pretest value for autonomy, competence, and intrinsic motivation questions respectively on the survey.

I performed a paired two-tailed t-test of the class averages for the pre and post questionnaires for each affective measure, as well as the questionnaire overall, in Excel (2010). Those t-test p-values indicated whether a significant difference occurred in the average class rating of autonomy, competence, or intrinsic motivation due to my intervention with quotes.

I collected student quote response journals and analyzed all for any specific examples of statements indicating low or high autonomy, competence, and intrinsic motivation in the classroom. Student response journals provided narratives that supported the existence or lack of significant differences in any of the class' average affective statuses. As suggested by Creswell (2012), I coded the journal responses to look for examples of

autonomy, competence, and intrinsic motivation within them. My coding was not limited to those three themes to ensure that I noted any other popular topics that arose within the students' writing.

Validity concerns

I debriefed my mentor teacher with all gathered quotes was necessary to provide students with enough quote options. It was likely that one person could bias the quote pool that students have to collect from. I worried that I did not cover a wide range of quotes by authors I thought varied in socioeconomic status, ethnicity, or gender as well as quotes that I thought provided encouraging messages towards academics. It was valuable to have an experienced educator who verified that I identified truly encouraging quotes by an acceptable number of authors of varying demographics.

Findings and interpretations

Overall, my intervention did not yield significant results for my research questions. The average student Likert scale totals for the pre- and post-questionnaire were not statistically different from one another. In fact, in considering this quantitative data source of my project I found that my students exhibited the ceiling effect. To be more precise, if each student answered all nine questions with a Likert scale 4 value, the class average would be 36. The class average for the pre-questionnaire was a 37.8 and 36.84 for the post-questionnaire. This suggests that both before and after my intervention, the students felt it was "more true than false" that they are autonomous, competent, and intrinsically motivated in the classroom.

From my qualitative data sources I gathered whether or not students had changes in their displays or perceptions of autonomy, competence, and intrinsic motivation. In analyzing the weekly journal responses I found that most students alluded to themselves in the first person, as are displayed in tables below. Important to mention is the free responses students wrote to answer Item 10 on the pre- and post-questionnaire. I did not include these in the qualitative data sample tables below as they commonly included allusions to teachers, family, and sports outside of the classroom, which had nothing to do with their autonomy, competence, or intrinsic motivation in the classroom.

When I reviewed my daily journal data source, I realized that I repeatedly mentioned students 3, 9, and 10. None of these students had the observable internal drive initially to participate in class. They only responded to feedback their teacher gave after they failed to complete tasks as opposed to attempting tasks autonomously. I found that these students started to truly participate and volunteer in class. Students 3 and 9 are students with individualized education programs who received preferential seating as well as pull out services in the afternoons for math. Over the course of my intervention, students 3 and 9 volunteered to share aloud their attempted answers to math problems. Student 10 had a parent-teacher conference on the second day of my quotes intervention due to his lack of motivation in the classroom. As days passed, he progressed into raising his hand to read directions aloud, as well as volunteering his math problem answers. He was also in an afternoon fluency group which led me to be surprised when he started volunteering to read aloud. I thought he might have found the fluency practice stigmatizing, but it appeared he was willing and confident to volunteer.

Table 1.

t-test Results Comparing Mean Pre- and Post-Questionnaire Likert Scale Values.

Measure	n	M	SD	р	
Pre	25	37.80	5.26	0.12	
Post	25	36.84	4.81		

As mentioned previously, my results using the pre- and post-affective Likert scale questionnaire were not significant. The mean total questionnaire values suggested a decrease in overall student perception of autonomy, competence, and intrinsic motivation as noted in Table 1 above.

However, individual pre and post scores in Figure 1 below show that not all students reported less autonomy, competence, or intrinsic motivation cumulative values in the post-questionnaire. Twelve, or about half of the student population reported lower Likert scale scores on the post- than pre-questionnaire while eight students reported higher Likert scale scores. Five students reported the same Likert scores for autonomy, competence, and intrinsic motivation on the pre- and post-questionnaires.

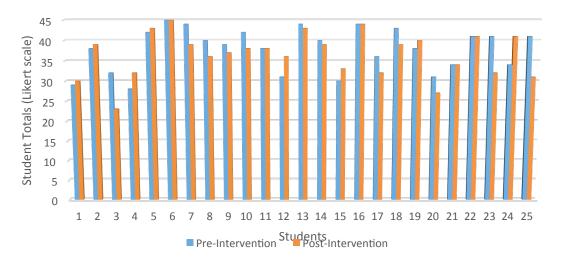


Figure 1. Pre- and post-Likert scale questionnaire totals for students with no significant difference between class means (p > 0.05).

I analyzed the average student scores for autonomy and competence, as well as intrinsic motivation statements on the pre- and post-questionnaires as seen in Figure 2 below. Interestingly all statements related to those three affective measures averaged between a 3 and 4 on the Likert scale. Students felt that it was anywhere from "somewhat true" to "more true than false" that they were autonomous, competent, and intrinsically motivated in the classroom.

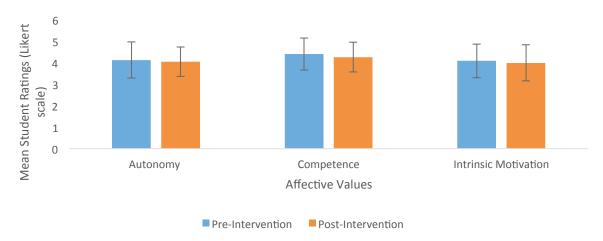


Figure 2. Mean pre- and post-Likert scale questionnaire values for autonomy, competence, and intrinsic motivation with no signification difference (p > 0.05).

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Will student choice of what quotes are displayed in the classroom increase student perception of autonomy in the classroom?

Student choice of inspirational quotes on education in the classroom did not significantly increase students' perception of autonomy in the classroom. The t-test I performed in Excel (2010) resulted in a p > 0.05 as seen in Table 2 below. Students' perceptions of autonomy in the classroom stayed relatively high between the pre- and post-questionnaire.

t-test Results Comparing Mean Pre- and Post-Autonomy Likert Scale Question Values.

Measure	n	M	SD	р	
Pre	25	4.12	0.84	0.29	
Post	25	4.04	0.68		

There was, however, evidence that students considered their autonomy in the classroom throughout the five week intervention as seen below in Table 3. Students wrote responses to quotes of their choice in the first person and narrated what that quote meant to them personally.

Journal responses from students exemplifying thoughts of autonomy.

	Example 1	Example 2	Example 3
Autonomy	"No one can control	"It means a lot to	"It means that I have
	me with my	me. I think it is my	the power to change
	education."	own quote to me. I	my work."
		help me with stuff	
		and try my hardest.	
		And I'm not afraid of	
		no one even if they	
		get in my way so	
		this is my quote."	

Table 2.

Table 3.

Will student choice of what quotes are displayed in the classroom increase student perception of competence in the classroom?

Student choice of inspirational quotes on education in the classroom did not significantly increase students' perception of competence in the classroom. The t-test I performed in Excel (2010) resulted in a p > 0.05 as seen in Table 2 below. Students' perceptions of competence in the classroom stayed relatively high between the pre- and post-questionnaire.

Table 4.

t-test Results Comparing Mean Pre- and Post-Competence Likert Scale Question Values.

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Measure	n	M	SD	р	
Pre	25	4.40	0.75	0.16	
Post	25	4.25	0.69		

There was, however, evidence that students considered their competence in the classroom throughout the five week intervention as seen below in Table 5. Again, the students wrote what a quote they chose meant to them personally, and how they could apply it to themselves.

Journal responses from students exemplifying thoughts of competence.

	Example 1	Example 2	Example 3
Competence	"It means to me as a student is to not back down when you don't understand the question. Just try your best and always believe in yourself! It may not always be easy but I can do it!"	"I like a challenge because if I get it wrong eventually I will get it right."	"This quote gives me self-confidence that I can achieve great things no matter how tough it may be."

Table 5.

Will student choice of what quotes are displayed in the classroom increase students' intrinsic motivation towards learning?

Student choice of inspirational quotes on education in the classroom did not significantly increase students' perception of how intrinsically motivated they were in the classroom. The t-test I performed in Excel (2010) resulted in a p > 0.05 as seen in Table 6 below. Students' perceptions of intrinsic motivation in the classroom stayed relatively high between the pre- and post-questionnaire.

Table 6.

t-test Results Comparing Mean Pre and Post Intrinsic Motivation Likert Scale Question Values.

Measure	n	M	SD	р	
Pre	25	4.08	0.78	0.25	
Post	25	3.99	0.84		

There was, however, evidence that students considered their intrinsic motivation in the classroom throughout the five week intervention as seen below in Table 7. Students wrote in the first person about beliefs, love, and happiness towards learning which suggested intrinsic motivation towards their education.

Journal responses from students exemplifying thoughts of intrinsic motivation.

	Example 1	Example 2	Example 3
Intrinsic Motivation	"This quote means	"I loved this quote	"It feels perfect and
	much to me because	because it tells me	makes me feel
	I don't believe in	that I can learn and	happy for all that I
	many things but I	no one can tell me I	have done on that
	believe in learning."	can't. I also like it	day."
		because I do love to	
		learn new things. I	
		just love, love, love	
		it. What was your	
		quote?"	

Table 7.

Discussion of results

Display of and mediated responses to students' chosen inspirational quotes on education for five weeks did not appear to increase students' intrinsic motivation, autonomy, or competence. Though I have much qualitative data to support the fact that students actively considered each affective measure for themselves, the Likert scale questionnaire was answered honestly before and after my quotes intervention. The students reported scores showed they felt autonomous, competent, and intrinsically motivated in the classroom before the quotes were introduced to the classroom.

Conclusion

Autonomy and competence are essential needs that must be fulfilled in order for individuals to be intrinsically motivated to perform a task. Student choice of inspirational quotes on education in the classroom did not make students feel particularly intrinsically motivated towards learning, and neither did the presence of the inspirational quotes themselves.

Limitations

My participants were 25 fourth graders, ages nine and ten who, based on previous observation, struggled with abstract thinking tasks such as inference or paraphrasing. It is possible that they did not grasp the meaning of some quotes I chose for the pool, and therefore neither connected with nor internalized the inspirational messages about education. They were also a small sample size for my study, which affected the implications I can state moving forward from this research project.

The students were already part of a classroom culture with an extrinsic motivation system through the reward of classroom currency for participation and student performance. In a way, students may have felt that they were competent or had choices in class based on the amount of money they earned or the fact that they could spend their money as they pleased. Their relationship with their resident teacher for the year or their families' views towards education may have fostered the students' intrinsic motivation previously. In this case, the students may have had high existing intrinsic motivation which made my pre and post questionnaire data source ineffective.

Standardized testing occurred during the time in which the quotes were displayed and before the students took the post questionnaire. Despite all attempts to comfort students during such a stressful time, the students may have internalized negative attitudes during testing and translated those feelings to their overall perspective of self.

Most quotes chosen for the pool were authored by older, accomplished adults. To a certain extent, the students might not have internalized the quotes in such a way as they would have were the author their age or also currently in school. For example, the only quote I provided in the quote pool that was authored by someone close to the students' age was Malala Yousafzai. The students may have found it difficult to relate to the authors of the quotes and benefit from others' experiences, yet positive experiences of other peers is known to boost the confidence of students towards academic tasks (Phan & Bing, 2014).

Implications

Displays of inspirational language in the classroom were too indirect of an avenue to manipulate student autonomy and competence, but classroom display more directly related to students may influence student intrinsic motivation. Specifically, displays of accomplished student work might remind students of their mastery experiences and foster positive feelings of competence towards future intrinsic motivation (Bandura, 1977). Though inspirational quotes on education are related to students' situations in the classroom, students would find their own work more relevant in the classroom. Even if teachers displayed the successful tasks completed by peers, students could view someone in the same class who succeeded with the same task and develop an optimistic attitude sure to encourage perseverance for the next academic task (Pajares, 2005).

As the school year progresses, students learn about a variety of topics for which resource charts are made and displayed in the classroom to refresh students' memories. In future research, I would be interested to see how well students performed on content knowledge tests of a unit in which synthetic resource posters versus student-generated resource posters were hung. It is likely that student attention would not direct towards resources hung about the classroom unless prompted by a teacher, but perhaps engagement and utilization of the resource materials would occur more often towards student-generated resources. Students would feel related to the work that hung on the walls even if it was generated by their peers, and find confidence in their relatedness and belonging with someone their age in their class could perform well (Bowman, 2007).

Overall inspirational quotes on education do not appear to affect students' intrinsic motivation. The extent to which quotes can increase students' autonomy, competence, and therefore intrinsic motivation in the classroom is minimal to nonexistent. That is not to say a teacher's display of inspirational quotes on education in the classroom would be detrimental to students. Teachers should direct their attention and resources towards exemplifying student successes to nurture student feelings of competence and intrinsic motivation.

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Appendix A

Quote Response Journal Prompt

Date

- 1. Pick a quote that you like best and write it down.
- 2. What does it mean to you as a student?

Appendix B

How do YE feel about it, Matey?

Pirate Opinions Survey

First things first, ye Captain demands ye be honest on all accounts. We'll start ye off with a pirate-specific question...please circle the answer that best says how ye feel... I feel that our class hamster, Scully, has a good name for a pirate hamster!

1	2	3	4	5
Not true	More false	Somewhat	More true	Very
at all	than true	true	than false	true

Now that ye've answered, think about how honest ye were. Ye answered that Scully question and it has **NOTHING** to do with ye grade in class! The same is true of the questions down yonder... so be mindful that ye answer with the same honesty, as is stated in pirate code!

1. I do not feel that my teacher provides me choices and options.

1. 1401.	iot reer that my teach	iter provides me enon	ces and options.	
1	2	3	4	5
Not true	More false	Somewhat	More true	Very
at all	than true	true	than false	true
2. I do n	ot like learning.			
1	2	3	4	5
Not true	More false	Somewhat	More true	Very
at all	than true	true	than false	true
3. I am	capable of learning r	naterial in class.		
1	2	3	4	5
Not true	More false	Somewhat	More true	Very
at all	than true	true	than false	true
4. My te	eacher listens to how	I would like to do th	ings.	
1	2	3	4	5
Maria	M C-1	C 1 i	M 1	T7

1	2	3	4	5
Not true	More false	Somewhat	More true	Very
at all	than true	true	than false	true

5. I am able to achieve my goals in class.

1	2	3	4	5
Not true	More false	Somewhat	More true	Very
at all	than true	true	than false	true

6. I do not learn when I am outside of the classroom.

1 Not true	2 More false	3 Somewhat	4 More true	5 Vory
at all	than true	true	than false	Very true
7. My tea		stand how I see thing	s before suggesting a n	ew way to do
1	2	3	4	5
Not true at all	More false than true	Somewhat true	More true than false	Very true
8. Learn	ing does not interes	st me a lot.		
1	2	3	4	5
Not true at all	More false than true	Somewhat true	More true than false	Very true
9. I feel o	confident in my abil	ity to learn in class.		
1 Not true at all	2 More false than true	3 Somewhat true	4 More true than false	5 Very true
10. How o	lo you feel about yo	ur education? Please	write complete senten	ces below.