

Factors Affecting Learning Motivation of Ethnic Minority High School Students in Ratanakiri, Cambodia*

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Abstract

The purposes of this study were: 1) to investigate the factors of home environment, peer support, teacher support, school administration and background of study of the students, 2) to evaluate learning motivation of ethnic minority high school students, 3) to study correlation between each factor and learning motivation of ethnic minority students, and 4) to construct equation of factors predicting learning motivation of ethnic minority students. The sample of this study was 254 ethnic minority high school students in Ratanakiri. They were selected by using stratified random sampling. The research instruments were questionnaires. The statistics which employed to analyze the data were mean, standard deviation, Pearson product moment correlation coefficient, and hierarchical multiple regression analysis.

The research findings were as follows:

1. The factor of home environment was rated at low level. The factors of peer support and background of study were rated at moderate level, the factors of teacher support and school administration were rated at high level.

2. Motivation by task, motivation by feedback, and motivation by achievement were rated at high level. Motivation by reward and social motivation (the influence of peer groups) were rated at moderate level.

3. All predictors had a positive correlation with learning motivation of ethnic minority high school students in Ratanakiri at the .05 level of significance.

4. All predictors could approximately account for 50% of learning motivation of ethnic minority high school students in Ratanakiri.

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Background of the Study

Education is very important for changing and developing students' livelihood, increasing human resources, and reducing poverty in society. MoEYS vision is to establish and develop human resources of the highest quality and ethics in order to develop a knowledge-based society within Cambodia. Motivation also plays an important role in boosting and improving the students' education quality to be better. Without motivation they cannot achieve their learning in the future. The education levels, particularly among Khmer Loeu, are very low. The repetition and dropout rates are high at primary level with very low transition rates to the post primary education. Nearly all ethnic minority females and males were illiterate and most children had never attended school (Chap et al., 2003).

Therefore, the researcher is interesting in conducting a research concerning the factors affecting learning motivation of ethnic minority high school students in Ratanakiri province. The results of this research are significant information for administrators as well as school principals to successfully apply in their school.

Purposes of the Study

1. To investigate the factors of home environment, peer support, teacher support, school administration and background of study of the students.

2. To evaluate learning motivation of ethnic minority high school students in Ratanakiri.

3. To study correlation between each factor and learning motivation of ethnic minority high school students in Ratanakiri.

4. To construct equation of factors predicting learning motivation of ethnic minority high school students in Ratanakiri.

Research Hypothesis

1. There is correlation between each factor and learning motivation of ethnic minority students in Ratanakiri.

2. The factors of home environment, peer support, teacher support, school administration, and background of study can explain learning motivation of ethnic minority students in Ratanakiri.

Significance of the Study

1. It is crucial for teachers as well as families to know about what the students need to improve their studies.

2. It is beneficial for school principals and teachers to find the way out to strengthen the learning quality of ethnic minority students.

3. It is beneficial for concerned organizations to exactly know regarding the ethnic minority students' learning and support them in diverse means.

Variables

The main elements which are used to study learning motivation of ethnic minority high school students in Ratanakiri are the five motivations that derived from Reid (2007). They

are including: motivation by task, motivation by reward, Social motivation (the influence of peer groups), motivation by feedback, and motivation by achievement

The factors which propose to predict the learning motivation in this study were drawn from many previous research results. They are consisting of home environment (Iltus, 2006), peer support (Hamjah et al., 2011), teacher support (Hamjah et al., 2011), school administration (Jamian & Baharom, 2012), and background of study (Hachfeld et al., 2010; Sloan, 2008).

Population and sample

The population in this study was 734 ethnic minority students from two high schools in Ratanakiri in academic year 2012-2013. In order to ensure the selected sample is representative to the whole population of ethnic minority high school students, the current researcher followed the table of Krejcie and Morgan (1970, p.607-610). The researcher planned to be at the 95% confidence level, with a margin of error of 5%. Therefore, the sample size from the population of 734 in the current study is 254, employed by stratified random sampling.

Research Instrument Construction

The research instrument used to collect data in this study was questionnaire which divided into three parts such as background information, Factors affecting learning motivation of ethnic minority students which consisted of 20

items, and Students' learning motivation which consisted of 40 items.

Validity and reliability

To ensure content validity of the questionnaire, five panels were asked to validate the contents of the questionnaire. The IOC values were ranged from 0.80 to 1.00. The reliability of the questionnaires was measured in terms of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The questionnaires were tried out with thirty students who were not the sample. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient values ranged from .61 to .93. The discrimination values of factors affecting learning motivation ranged from .25 to .63. The discrimination values of students' learning motivation ranged from .22 to .76.

Data Collection Procedure

1. The researcher asked for formal letter from Chair of Innovative Administration and Educational Leadership Center, Faculty of Education, Burapha University to Head of Department of Education, Youth, and Sport, Ratanakiri to obtain permission for the pilot study and data collection.

2. The researcher distributed and collected 254 survey questionnaires by himself. Then, 100% the returned survey questionnaires were collected.

Data Analysis

Mean and Standard Deviation were used to analyze the level of home environment, peer

support, teacher support, school administration and background of study and learning motivation of ethnic minority high school students in Ratanakiri province. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to find out the correlation between each factor and learning motivation. Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis was employed to investigate the contribution of predictors and selected best predictors to construct the equation of prediction.

Discussion

1. Factors affecting learning motivation

1.1 The factor of home environment was rated at low level. As we have mentioned, the home environment had a low supporting due to their parental education level, poor living condition and lack of education material at home. Additionally, their parents are mostly farmers so they want their children to contribute to their work and they don't pay much attention to their children's education. This was consistent with Sloan (2008) who argued that the factors that hinder the student learning motivation comprise of a single parent household, parental education level, language, incomes, psychological indicators such as locus of control. In line with Ormrod (2006) who stated that students' school performance is correlated with their socioeconomic status: higher-SES students tend to have higher academic achievement, and low-SES students tend to be at greater risk for dropping out school.

1.2 The factor of peer support was rated at moderate level because of their

relationship are not good enough between ethnic minority and general students. However, peer support is the best way for learning because peers or friends can help when we cannot do exercises, homework or assignment. Moreover, peers also provide support by forming study groups, tutoring, sharing notes and experiences, and giving advice about class. In line with Razak & See's (2010) study, peer learning also promotes the development of learning outcomes, teamwork, critical enquiry and reflection, communication skills, and learning meaningfully. It also illustrated the success of peer learning in enhancing students' academic achievement and facilitating their motivation.

1.3 The factor of teacher support was rated at high level because the policy of Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport has encouraged ethnic minorities to join school so the most important factor which enables to motivate students in learning is teachers. Teachers are capable to advise students concerning the important of learning, provide them with cognitive support, persuade them to study until finishing secondary school, and guide them about scholarship programs and English language in order to nurture them in the future. The finding was consistent with the research of Hamjah et al. (2011) regarding methods of increasing learning motivation among students. The results of the study showed that the method that could be implemented to improve learning motivation were the students' personality development, lecturers' career awareness, choice of peers, students' spiritual connection

with Allah, family's encouragement, students' financial aid and learning facilities at school.

1.4 The factor of school administration was rated at high level because school principal has provided good services for students such as accessing dormitory, safety, security and comfort in the school's campus. Moreover, scholarship program, computer courses, and English language were manipulated in order to nurture students' learning skills. Therefore, students can have chances to enhance their self-development. This finding was consistent with McLean (2003) who stated that school should pay attention in preparing some programs that offer to solve the students' motivational problems with simple system. The study of Wang & Eccles (2013) also revealed that students must be engaged in every school activities in order to acquire the knowledge and skills required for a successful transition into postsecondary and careers.

1.5 The factor of background of study was rated at moderate level. Even though, ethnic minority students can speak, read and write Khmer, but they have less understanding in comparison to general students. Most of them have studied in bilingual education in primary school in the village and they gradually improve their Khmer language in order to enroll in lower and upper secondary school. Some students who can do exercises, homework and assignment for teacher they can find school interesting and facilitating for study. In turn, those who cannot may feel overwhelmed and want to drop out. Language background and linguistic complexity are taken into account as a main

issue for bilingual students. Bittin-Pearson et al. (2000) revealed that students' background play an important role in their chances of staying in school. Students with linguistically diverse backgrounds were more likely to drop out than native speakers.

2. Learning motivation

2.1 The dimension of motivation by task was rated at high level because teacher has provided homework regularly for students in order to improve their abilities. It is a way that teacher can follow up on students' learning activities. Teacher also pays attention to students' work such as correcting it accurately before distributes to them. In addition, teacher can help explain more detail and persuade them to fulfill the incomplete tasks by reading additional books in order to be successful learners. The finding was consistent with Murphy & Alexandra (2000) who revealed that task motivation has been shown to be associated with high level of academic performance and achievement. Seo & Taherbhai (2009) also demonstrated that students who were able to implement a certain task were more likely to find their class interesting, important and useful.

2.2 The dimension of motivation by reward was rated at moderate level because ethnic minority students rarely get reward from teachers or schools in comparison to general students due to teachers and school administrators provide reward for the top five students in the class. Additionally, they rarely get reward from their parents because most of them are farmers and have low education

so they don't pay attention to their children's rewards. Reward itself is used only for a short term strategy in order to motivate students. It was consistent with Reid (2007) who revealed that rewards are a short term strategy or a step toward self-motivation. It helps students who need a boost while they are seeking for a challenging task and being achievable learners.

2.3 The dimension of social motivation (the influence of peer groups) was rated at moderate level because ethnic minority students living in the uncondusive environment for learning. Most of their neighbors cannot access higher education so it affects to their learning motivation. However, supporting and motivating from brothers and sisters can improve their learning outcome. Having good relationship with teachers and classmates also can enhance their academic performance. The study of Reid (2007) revealed that social motivation enable to develop important social skill, such as turn taking and sharing and listening to other people's opinion; pull the resources of all the members of the groups together and a strong motivating force. Sloan's (2008) study revealed that social support has a crucial influence on student learning motivation especially student's neighborhood and home life. The study of Wentzel et al. (2010) also demonstrated that social support from teachers and peers were critical factors contributing student to behave appropriate behavior, academic outcomes, safety and emotional nurturing.

2.4 The dimension of motivation by feedback was rated at high level because ethnic

minority students have learned from their mistakes and adjusted them accordingly. They may know clearly about strength and weakness from teacher's feedback so they are able fulfill the inadequate gaps in order to overcome in their study. Moreover, teacher has also provided with the accurate feedback by applying two-way communication with students in term of better understanding to reduce pressures. Stracke & Kumar (2010) revealed that feedback in the form of comments could assist students to identify the strong and weak points of their work and learn from the revision process. Moylan (2009) also demonstrated that feedback is an outcome of learning efforts, and its self-reflective roles to understand, motivate, and improve students' efforts to learn.

2.5 The dimension of motivation by achievement was rated at high level because ethnic minority students may want to build up their capacities to get an opportunity as general students. Moreover, they may want to get a good job after secondary school or a chance to pursue their study in university. This finding was consistent with Reid (2007) who argued that motivation by achievement is an achievement depending on the learners and their readiness of the tasks; aware of their own success; need to be revised the task until it is acceptable. Similarly, Bakhtiarvand et al. (2010) revealed that academic achievement was a significant issue that has reflected on students' effort. In line with McClelland (1961), the need for achievement is characterized by the wish to take responsibility for finding solutions to

problems, master complex tasks, set goals, and get feedback on level of success.

3. The relationship between predictor variables and learning motivation of ethnic minority students at high school in Ratanakiri.

3.1 Home environment had a positive correlation with learning motivation at the .05 level of significance. It can identify that home environment has positive influence on learning motivation of ethnic minority students because home environment especially their parents provide them with the warmth and motivation in learning. The home which contain of learning materials enables to motivate their children in learning. In contrast, the home that doesn't have any education materials and supporting from parents; children are rarely achieve their learning. The current finding was consistent with the research of Ilus (2006) and Dearing & Taylor (2007) who revealed that home environment is a crucial factor that influence on the overall development of the children. The home that rich of play objects, reading books, musical instrument, picture decorations, and other education materials was found to be a significant predictor for stimulating children in order to elicit the cognitive attainment. It also revealed that home environment with more stimulating and well-organized, children had better vocabularies, advanced attention, memory skill and got along well with peers. Maslow's theory of human motivation (1943) also identified that humans can survive unless they have water, food, sleep, warmth, air, exercise, etc. which can motivate them to next level. The

main factor takes part in physiological needs is socioeconomic status which including family income, parents' occupations, and parents' education levels. Similarly, home environment which has provided children with warmth, education materials, good atmosphere, and sufficient nutrition can motivate them to learn.

3.2 Peer support had a positive correlation with learning motivation at the .05 level of significance. It means that peer support has influence on learning motivation of ethnic minority students. Students who can help each other in learning, facilitating cooperative learning, and figure out the rules of relationship mostly achieve their academic outcome and facilitate the motivation. It is consistent with the finding of Loke & Chow (2007) who revealed that the influence of peer in school setting has provided positive aspects including enhancement of learning skill, intellectual gains and personal growth. It was also in compliance with Dinnis et al. (2005) who revealed that peer also provide support by forming study groups, sharing notes and experiences, and giving advice about classes. The third step of Maslow's theory of human motivation (1943) identified that humans need to be part of group, relationship, friendly and identification of team after they have met the basic needs which can motivate them to the next level. Similarly, peer support in this study is taken into account as a factor which can motivate each peer to learn.

3.3 Teacher support had a strong positive correlation with learning motivation at the .05 level of significance. It means that

teacher support has strong influence on students' learning motivation because teachers are able to encourage and guide students in learning. They play an important role in generating basic motivational condition, maintaining students' motivation, enhancing positive self-evaluation, self-confidence and self-esteem. Additionally, they can also motivate students by providing cognitive support and using more motivating instructional practices. The result of this study was consistent with Yunus et al. (2011) in term of teacher-student relationship factor affecting motivation and academic achievement in ESL classroom. The finding showed that positive teacher-student relationship improved students' behavior and motivation to learn as well as academic achievement. The fifth step of Maslow's theory of human motivation (1943) identified that humans need opportunities for innovation and creativity, learning and creating at high level. Similarly, if students want to get the opportunities for innovation and creativity, teacher has an important role in guiding and motivating them to achieve their future goal.

3.4 School administration also had a positive correlation with learning motivation at the .05 level of significance. It reflected that school administration has influence on learning motivation of ethnic minority high school students in Ratanakiri because school has scholarship program for student especially ethnic minority students. Moreover, school also has provided computer program and English language for students in order to use in their daily life. The top five students are given

certificate and tangible rewards at the end of the year in order to motivate them to learn. This finding was consistent with the research of Jamian&Baharom (2012) who revealed that the school administration and the supportive factors assisting in improving the achievement of reading skill. The research of Jordan &Porath (2006) also revealed that the schools that encourage parental involvement mostly have a positive influence on student achievement. The second step of Maslow's theory of human motivation (1943) identified that humans need physical safety, economic security, health, well-being, and freedom from threats. When humans have sufficient physiological needs, they are motivated to the safety level in term of better living condition. Likewise, school that was prepared with safety services, security, and conducive environment can motivate students to learn.

3.5 Background of study had a positive correlation with learning motivation at the .05 level of significance. So we can infer that background of study has positive effect on learning motivation of ethnic minority high school students in Ratanakiri because they can understand what the teachers have taught, they can do homework for teacher, they can read the textbooks in Khmer language so that they may feel delighted and want to learn, in turn, those who cannot they may scare and feel want to drop out of school. This finding was consistent with the research of Hachfeld et al. (2010) who showed that teachers overestimated the performance of bilingual students more than the

performance of monolingual immigrant students on a linguistically complex problem.

4. All predictor variables can approximately account for 50% of learning motivation of ethnic minority high school students in Ratanakiri. The predictive equation in the form of raw score and standardized score was as follows:

Raw score:

$$\hat{Y}_{LM} = 1.402 + .224^x Z_{TS} + .186^x Z_{BS} - .008^x Z_{HE} + .109^x Z_{SA} + .119^x Z_{PS}$$

Standardized score

$$\hat{Z}_{LM} = .361^x Z_{TS} + .236^x Z_{BS} - .009^x Z_{HE} + .179^x Z_{SA} + .179^x Z_{PS}$$

The findings revealed that teacher support was the first variable which predicted students' leaning motivation. The principles support this finding was Dornyei (2001) who revealed that teachers have a significant influence on student motivation. They are responsible for creating the basic motivational conditions, for generating and maintaining student motivation, and for encouraging positive self-evaluation.

In addition, background of study was the second variable which predicted students' leaning motivation. The principles support this finding was Bittin-Pearson et al. (2000) who revealed that students' background plays a major role in their chances of staying in school. A number of studies demonstrated that student with linguistically diverse backgrounds were more likely to drop out than native speakers.

Furthermore, peer support was the third variable which predicted students' leaning motivation. The principles support this finding was Loke & Chow (2007) who revealed that peer can facilitate cooperative learning and provides

opportunities for students to discover their inadequacies and to correct misunderstanding.

Besides, school administration was the fourth variable which predicted students' leaning motivation. The principles support this finding was Jordan & Porath (2006) who revealed that the schools that encourage parental involvement mostly have a positive influence on student achievement.

Finally, home environment was considered not to predict learning motivation of ethnic minority students due to their parents' education, poor living condition and lack of education material at home. Moreover, their parents are mostly farmers so that they want their children to contribute to their work and they don't concentrate much on their children's learning. The principles support this finding was Sloan (2008) who argued that the factors that hinder the students' learning motivation comprise of a single parent household, parental education level, language, incomes, and psychological indicators such as locus of control. Iltus (2006) also revealed that the children who are assisted regularly by their parents normally make the most progress in reading, however, those who came from homes where were given little help and where there were few books mostly made the least progress.

Recommendation

Implication for teacher

Teachers play an important role in motivating students to learn. They should continue to create delighted atmosphere in the

classroom while teaching in order to reduce the students' tension. They should have close and friendly relationship with students so that students can feel confident and dare to discuss some problems in which they have confronted. Moreover, teacher should pay attention to students' learning in order to improve their capacities by giving praises or rewards. Even though reward is just a short term incentive it can encourage students to learn. Additionally, teachers should use a new teaching method which can interest students in learning and also guide them about the important of study. Teachers should provide accurate feedback by applying two-way communication with other students for better understanding. Any homework should be corrected very strictly with supplementary comments.

Implication for students

Learning enables to change the students' living condition to be better so that students should encourage themselves to learn by improving their reading, writing and understanding Khmer language. Even though their livelihood is difficult, they should attempt to finish at least secondary school. After secondary school, they should be able to apply for a job in organizations or to pursue their studies at university. Some organizations have provided opportunity for ethnic minority students to apply for jobs if they have sufficient knowledge.

Implication for schools

Schools should seek out other development partners, non-governmental organizations in order to support ethnic minority students in

learning such as providing computer training and English language so that students can improve their skills. Moreover, schools should encourage parental involvement and students' engagement in schools activities in order to make relationship. Besides, rewards provision should be prepared for ethnic minority students when they can complete their task.

Implication for parents

Parents also play an important role in fostering their children's learning so they should organize a suitable place for reading books for their children and provide them to access many books and education materials in the house in order to improve their learning. Moreover, parents should provide gifts or praise to their children when they pass the exam or get good result in their study.

Implication for peers

Peers or friends should help each other friends when they cannot do their homework, encourage them to present in front of the class to get rid of tension such as shy, scare or frighten. Moreover, peers should teach others to work in group to share knowledge and guide them to be successful learners. Relatives and neighbors should help the ethnic minority students to learn the social skills in order to apply for a job when they graduated from high school.

Limitations and suggestions for further studies

The findings of current study identified not only factors affecting learning motivation of ethnic minority students but also addressed

some limitations regarding statistical analysis. The limitation and recommendation for further studies were as follows:

First, the study conducted only 254 ethnic minority students from two high schools, the findings in this study may not be generalized to the whole population in the province. Therefore, further researchers should be considered to conduct in the larger samples from all high schools in the whole province to see the differences between factors affecting learning motivation of ethnic minority students in the sake of applying in school.

Second, the instruments used in quantitative approach were two sets of questionnaire. The survey questionnaire in this study was used in order to measure the factors

affecting learning motivation of ethnic minority students. For further research, the researcher suggests using qualitative method in order to get more details from in-depth interviews.

Third, further researchers should study other variables which influence on learning motivation of ethnic minority high school students in Ratanakiri in the sake of improving their study.

Fourth, further researchers should study correlation between learning achievement and motivation of ethnic minority high school students in Ratanakiri in order to find solutions to nurture their learning.

Fifth, further researchers should study the requirements which can help develop ethnic minority students' learning.

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