



## Motivation in the Intellectual Formation of the Seminarians

**Francis Ezhakunnel SJ**

*Vidyajyoti College of Theology, New Delhi 11054*

There are thousands of educational institutions all over the world. These institutions are divided into various types and categories. They are owned and managed by Government, individuals and trusts, religious and non-religious. History shows that modern day seminary educational system came to exist because of the Church. The Church runs many educational institutions, secular and ecclesiastical. The main objective of the ecclesiastical institutions is to equip young men and women to serve the Church. It is a difficult task but a privileged responsibility. These institutions face many challenges. One of the challenges that both students and instructors face in the academic circle is motivation. How can we motivate someone to do something which he/she would not have done otherwise? The instructors on their part want to generate a desire in the students to do well in their studies. The management or administration wants to make sure that motivated staffs are bringing changes in the lives of the students. There are intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence the individuals. This motivation could be integrative or instrumental or both. In any case, one cannot undermine the role of the instructors who play an important role in the

motivation of the students. The article explores how and what they are.

## **Origin and Development of Priestly Formation**

One could trace the beginning of priestly formation in the Gospel when Jesus called the twelve disciples to be with him and to be sent out to preach (Mk.3:14-15). These disciples remained with Jesus and were formed for three years. Later on, the apostle Paul followed the same method of personal accompaniment. For example, Timothy accompanied Paul on his missionary journey and received training from Paul (Acts 16:3). Though there is no evidence of existence of seminary for training priests, very early in the Church, one finds traces of sacerdotal apprenticeship. For example, St. Polycarp who was a disciple of St. John the apostle, writes: “The presbytery must be tender-hearted, merciful toward all, turning back the sheep that has gone astray, visiting the sick, not neglecting the widow or orphan or poor man...” (Hartog, 2013). Here the idea is that one must be a prophet and bear witness to the prophetic aspects in one’s life. The priests must be authentic disciples of the Lord before they are assigned for the ministries.

The priests must be authentic disciples of the Lord before they are assigned for the ministries.

The monastic life suggests an important dimension of formation of the clergy. St Augustine, the bishop of Hippo accommodated in the bishop’s house the superiors of various monastic houses and of diocesan bishops. Their living together under one roof opened up the way for clerical training in community. St. Augustine made the experience of community life mandatory to get ordained as a priest. Later on, an in-depth study of philosophy and theology became compulsory to get ordained as priests. Toward the end of the eighth century, the Church insisted that all the priests must have sufficient knowledge to

fulfill professorial duties as priests and those who lacked sufficient knowledge were deprived of the office.

In 1536, Pope Paul III appointed a commission to study the formation of priests in the Church. On the basis of the report, in 1547 during the Council of Trent, the issue of priestly formation was discussed and a few years later the Roman College was opened. Gradually, the initiatives that holy men such as St. Ignatius of Loyola introduced to train his men became the model of seminary formation that we are familiar with today. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> council of Baltimore (1884) the topic of seminaries were discussed and on the basis of the directives more attention was given to the intellectual formation of seminarians. Further, on the eve of Vatican II, there was a greater need to find a balance between the spiritual and intellectual dimensions of formation. The spiritual tended to be fostered at the expense of the intellectual. While it was necessary for the seminarian to have time to assimilate his formation within the confines of the seminary, the importance of sufficient exposure to the pastoral life which would be the locus of his future ministry was accorded. Even today, the Seminaries are still searching for ways to integrate the academic and pastoral programs in the priestly formation.

The initiatives that holy men such as St. Ignatius of Loyola introduced to train his men became the model of seminary formation that we are familiar with today.

Pope St. John Paul II, through his post-synodal apostolic exhortation, *Pastores dabo vobis* (I Will Give You Shepherds) gave a solid dogmatic foundation to the formation and the identity of the priest. He says that the priesthood is founded on the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, the person of Jesus Christ and the mystery of the Church, and the formation flows from

these principal truths of the faith. Our present Holy Father, Pope Francis has sought to renew the formation and life of Priests. Towards this objective, he returns to the fundamental pastoral charity, which springs from a life of prayer, adoration and an openness to the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church. It seems Seminary formation is one of the most challenging responsibilities in the Church today. With ears attuned to the needs of the universal Church and dioceses in Asia, many ecclesiastical institutions strive to make solid progress in this difficult but privileged responsibility of forming future priests and religious. (<http://sck.ca/priestly-formation>)

Taking the challenges into account, the researcher has conducted a scientific study on the seminarians who are in formation to find out their perception on the intellectual formation. The study was limited to Bachelor in Philosophy (BPh) and Bachelor in Theology (BTh). The respondents of the study consisted of six hundred and seven (607) students in formation. The content of the study comprised five dimensions: (1) motivation, (2) interest in lecture, (3) interest in [extra] reading, (4) performance (grades), and (5) integrity in exams/ assignments. However, in this article, the researcher has included only one dimension, ‘motivation’. In order to interpret the dimension of motivation from various perspectives, the researcher analyzed aspects such as goal, value, usefulness, interest, classroom climate, and so on. According to experts, these factors affect the students’ motivation.

## **Motivation and Engagement**

The term motivation is derived from the Latin word ‘*movere*’ which means ‘to move’. So, in this context, to move means to motivate someone to do something which he/she would not have done otherwise. In other words, motivation means generating the desire and developing willingness to do something productive (Anderson, Rourke, Garrison, & Archer, 2001). The students’ motivation shows the direction and magnitude of their

behavior, how hard they will pursue in their studies and how long they will sustain in the activity. Barbara Gross says that one of the biggest challenges the professors in general face in a classroom set up is motivating the students.

According to Gardner and Lambert the orientations to motivation are two types: Integrative and Instrumental. The integrative orientation influences students to have positive disposition and desire to interact with and become valued members of the group. The instrumental orientation influences the students to look for the potential gains, such as attaining an academic degree or getting a better job. Therefore, Anderson et al. (2001) say that in order to increase the students' motivation the instructors must design the learning activities thoughtfully.

There are many internal and external factors or intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence the students' behavior and motivation. The internal factors consist of the students' attitudes, goal, expectation, anxiety, intelligence, learning styles, aptitude, self-confidence, and self-efficacy. The external factors consist of the professors' personality, instructional strategies, learning conditions, relevance, feedback, reward and success, socio-economic status, cultural background, parents' interest, parents' job and education.

All of us know that there are many internal and external factors or intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence the students' behavior and motivation. The internal factors consist of the

students' attitudes, goal, expectation, anxiety, intelligence, learning styles, aptitude, self-confidence, and self-efficacy. The external factors consist of the professors' personality, instructional strategies, learning conditions, relevance, feedback, reward and success, socio-economic status, cultural background, parents' interest, parents' job and education (Zhao, 2012).

The instructors could influence the students through motivation stimulus such as modeling, communication of expectations and instruction.

Goal setting plays an exceptional role in stimulating learning motivation. The goals affect the students' behavior, which depend on specificity, proximity, and difficulty. The students' motivation to study depends on their expectation of success in the course and the degree program, and the values they attach to it. Anxiety is the subjective feeling of pressure or stress that one experience in the nervous system and it affects one's performance. Self-confidence refers to one's ability to achieve the expected results. The students grow in self-confidence when they engage in their own learning to achieve the goals and believe about themselves as learners they can and they want. Therefore, the instructors must give the students some control over learning processes to help them develop the confidence and commitment to learning. Self-efficacy refers to students' understanding of their capabilities to complete the course/ the degree program, the choice of the activities they undertake, the aggregate of effort and the diligence displayed. When instructors provide opportunities for students to learn both autonomously and with others and develop their competence, the students get motivated and passionately engage in the

activity. Motivation to study is an aptitude that is developed over a period of time through experiences (Zhao, 2012).

The professors' personality and instructional strategies will undoubtedly affect the students' motivation to study. The instructors could influence the students through motivation stimulus such as modeling, communication of expectations and instruction (Brophy, 1987). Researches show that when the students perceive the professors are approachable, well prepared, and sensitive to the students' needs, the students show commitment. They work harder, try to get more out of the session, and are willing to express their

The students must find out favorable environmental conditions that are conducive to learning. Among all these, the intrinsic and integrative motivation allows students exert more efforts and persist longer in the learning activity. The context in which the students grow and develop also has a significant impact on their learning and motivation

opinion. The relevance refers to how the students sense and perceive the link between their personal goals and needs. Relevance is a prerequisite for sustained motivation and the students might enhance it by analyzing and addressing the needs such as achievement, affiliation and power. Feedback affects the students either positively or negatively depending on the responses, praise or criticism. Studies show that learning conditions influence learning. Therefore, the students must find out favorable environmental conditions that are conducive to learning. Among all these, the intrinsic and integrative motivation allows students exert more efforts and persist longer in the learning activity. The context in which the students grow

and develop also has a significant impact on their learning and motivation (Zhao, 2012).

The expectancy value theory says that the degree of motivation is determined by the students' expected success and the value they attach to the study. Therefore, the instructors must create a milieu that is conducive to learning. In order to create the atmosphere, the instructors must design the courses accordingly and create conducive instructional behaviors. Researches show that students, in general, will respond certainly to a well-organized course. In other words, the role of the professors in the students' motivation is non-negotiable (Davis, 1993).

### **The Findings**

The attitude of the students of BPh and BTh seem to be very high. Among the respondents, more than ninety-four (94.1) percent agree that there is a great value attached to the study of philosophy and theology. Similarly their expectation from the degree is also very good. Nearly ninety-five (94.6) percent of the respondents agree that the courses help them in their future ministry as priests and religious. More than eighty-four (84.2) percent of the respondents agree that they are interested in the courses taught. More than seventy-eight (78.4) percent of the respondents say that the classroom climate is conducive for learning. Only twenty-four (23.7) percent of the respondents consider that, during the time of philosophy and theology, the study is the most important thing. Finally, just twenty-one (21.4) percent of the respondents say that they are not overwhelmed by community and non-academic activities.

### **The Data Analysis**

Nearly twenty-two (21.6) percent of the respondents are either not sure or disagree with the statement that the classroom climate is conducive for learning. Studies conducted over the past thirty years show that quality of classroom environment significantly affect students learning (Dorman, 2002). Our

general understanding of a good classroom climate for study includes good lighting arrangement, enough ventilation, audibility of the lectures, seating arrangement, number of students in the class, emotional involvement, and so on. Research shows that one of the most important features is the physical environment. As soon the students enter the classroom, they will notice the physical environment. The initial positive or negative impression they receive would affect motivation (Ryan, 2013).

Nearly sixty-one (60.6) percent of the respondents say that, during the time of philosophy and theology, the study is only one of the goals and not the most important thing. This

Among the respondents, more than ninety-four (94.1) percent agree that there is a great value attached to the study of philosophy and theology. Similarly their expectation from the degree is also very good. Nearly ninety-five (94.6) percent of the respondents agree that the courses help them in their future ministry as priests and religious.

figure is quite alarming for the professors who are responsible for imparting knowledge and it might even challenge them. The spontaneous question is why the students consider so. What makes them to think so? According to the teachings of the Church, there are four dimensions of priestly formation: (1) spiritual, (2) human, (3) intellectual, (4) pastoral (Pope John, 1992). The study of philosophy and theology comes under the intellectual formation, which is one of the four pillars of formation. In other words, the understanding is that ecclesiastical study is only one of the important aspects of the priestly formation and not the only thing.

More than forty-four (44.3) percent of the respondents say that they are overwhelmed by community and non-academic activities. What are the community and non-academic activities in which the students are involved in that affect their studies? It is clear from the analysis that the seminary formation includes besides intellectual dimension, spiritual, human and pastoral dimensions. Therefore, seminarians in formation will have, as part of their formation, community activities to equip them in their spiritual formation. The community aspect of spiritual formation will be daily liturgies, office of the hour and various types of devotions. In some religious houses these activities are non-negotiable. Besides this, there will be various pastoral activities on a day-to-day basis to equip them pastorally. Above all else, there will be community activities to equip them with human aspect of formation. Therefore, there is a chance for the seminarians to feel uncomfortable with the activities other than studies. In such situations, the formators play an important role in forming and motivating the seminarians.

### **The Role of the Instructor**

One might ask what the instructors must do or can do to increase the students' motivation. Researchers such as Brophy (1987), Cashin (1979), Davis (1993), Forsyth and McMillian (1991), Svinicki (2005) proposes the following strategies.

(1) The instructors must set the tone on the first day of the course in the class through various activities. The activities are: (a) invite the students to express their expectations, (b) clearly articulate the learning objectives of the course, (c) explain how the course is going to help them in future and thus capitalize on the students' interest, (d) encourage the students to share their understanding of the course.

(2) The professors must bring changes in their teaching methods. For example, the instructors must incorporate various academic activities that encourage students' active involvement in the class. As part of the course content, include current issues

that would allow the students interaction and encourage their participation.

(3) Create student friendly learning atmosphere and empower them by giving autonomy. The autonomy aids them develop skills that are needed for self-directed learning. The students' motivation, in general, increases when they have control of their learning outcomes.

Create student friendly learning atmosphere and empower them by giving autonomy. The autonomy aids them develop skills that are needed for self-directed learning. The students' motivation, in general, increases when they have control of their learning outcomes.

(4) The management needs to ensure that the institutional cultures are conducive for students from diverse backgrounds and feel welcomed and accepted. The students who experience belongingness become engaged and motivated.

(5) The professors must include issues that are relevant. Students display greater zeal and attention in the course when they recognize its application in their daily lives. Enable the students to become active by engaging them beyond strategies, techniques, behaviours, to the level of participation and dialogue.

(6) The instructors must fashion assignments and modes of valuation relatively challenging. They must create educational experiences that are challenging and enriching. Initial success would bring joy and satisfaction on the part of the students. The professors need to create rich learning experiences that might challenge students' ideas and stretch them as far as they can go.

(7) The professors must model the behavior they want the students to display. The instructors being the major source of

stimulation for the course must show enthusiasm. Therefore, be enthusiastic about the subject matter and present the course content in such a way that generates interest in the students. Above all, showing a genuine interest in the students and in teaching retain the students' attention.

Recognize the students' hard work and effort by providing productive and timely feedback. Many students view grades as the key motivation for their academic efforts.

(8) Create among the students an environment that enables a healthy competition. Though students in general

need opportunities to interact with their peers, try to avoid creating an environment that leads to comparison, divisions, derisive dialogue, and so on.

(9) The professors must articulate their expectations clearly and show that the success is at their doorsteps. Students in general will rise to the instructor's expectations if there is congruence at the level of engagement and interaction with the students. Subtle forms of behavior, though unintentional, influence the students' performance.

(10) Recognize the students' hard work and effort by providing productive and timely feedback. Many students view grades as the key motivation for their academic efforts. Therefore, the instructors must return the students' assignments with constructive feedback and thus acknowledge their hard work while encouraging them to strive for more. In doing this, the ultimate aim of the professors must be development and formation of the students (Gedera, Williams, & Wright, 2015; Ryan, 2013).

## Conclusion

The Church runs many educational institutions to equip young men to serve the Church and the nation. Though it is a privileged responsibility, the institutions face many challenges. One of the challenges is how to motivate the students to do something which they would not have done otherwise. The instructors on their part want to generate a desire in the students to do well in their studies. The students' motivation depends on intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The factors such as the students' attitudes, goal, expectation, intelligence, aptitude, self-confidence, and self-efficacy affect them intrinsically. Similarly, the external factors such as the instructional strategies, learning conditions, relevance, feedback, reward and success affect their motivation externally. The majority of the students attaches value to the study (philosophy and theology) and agree that the courses would help them in future. A vast majority of the students do not consider the study as the most important one during the degree program (philosophy and theology). Among other factors, community and non-academic activities affect their motivation. 🌸

## Citations

- Anderson, T., Rourke, L., Garrison, R., & Archer, W. (2001). Assessing teaching presence in a computer conferencing context. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*, 5(2), 1-17.
- Brophy, J. (1987). Synthesis of Research on Strategies for Motivating Students to Learn. *Educational Leadership*, 45(2), 40-48.
- Davis, B. G. (1993). *Motivating Students: Tools for Teaching*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Dorman, J. (2002). Classroom Environment Research: Progress and Possibilities. *Queensland Journal of Educational Research*, 18(2), 112 - 140.
- Gedera, D., Williams, J., & Wright, N. (2015). Identifying Factors Influencing Students' Motivation and Engagement in Online

Courses. In K. C. (Ed.), *Motivation, Leadership and Curriculum Design Engaging the Net Generation and 21st Century Learners*: Springer Retrieved from <http://www.springer.com/978-981-287-229-6>.

Hartog, P. (2013). *Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians and the Martyrdom of Polycarp*. United Kingdom: Oxford

Pope John, P. I. (1992). *Pastores Dabo Vobis. Post Synod Apostolic Exhortation on the Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day*.

Ryan, H. L. (2013). The Effect of Classroom Environment on Student Learning. *Western Michigan University ScholarWorks*.

Zhao, L. (2012). Investigation into Motivation Types and Influences on Motivation: The Case of Chinese Non-English Majors. *English Language Teaching*, 5(3).