

## *Original Paper*

# A Review of the Research on Teachers' Motivating Style

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### **Abstract**

*With the deepening and development of the application of self-determination theory, the research enthusiasm for teachers' motivating style is increasing at home and abroad. Teachers' motivating style refers to the way that teachers motivate students. This paper starts with the theory of self-determination, and on the basis of in-depth elaboration of the connotation and measurement of teachers' motivating style, reviews the relevant research on teachers' motivating style at home and abroad. The results show that there are many factors influencing the formation of teachers' different motivating styles. Meanwhile, different motivating styles also affect students' learning motivation and learning engagement.*

### **Keywords**

*self-determination theory, teachers' motivating style, learning motivation, learning engagement*

## **1. Introduction**

The whole educational process is the interaction between students, teachers and the environment. Teachers' teaching behavior is an important external factor that affects students' learning process and effect: improper teaching behavior will reduce students' enthusiasm for learning, while reasonable teaching behavior is conducive to stimulating students' learning motivation and keeping them in a positive state of learning. In classroom teaching, teachers can use some specific ways to stimulate students' learning motivation, such as praise, encouragement, competition and demonstration (Chen & Qie, 2011). The use of different incentive methods reflects the different motivating styles of teachers. Motivating style reflects a teacher's strategic tendency to mobilize and maintain students' learning enthusiasm in the teaching process (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The first systematic definition and research of "motivation style" is the self-determination theory (1985).

Self-determination theory is a comprehensive learning motivation theory proposed by two American professors, Deci and Ryan. It explores the effect of students' motivation on students' classroom involvement through empirical research (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which is the main theoretical

background for scholars to conduct research on motivating style. Since the first International Conference on Self-determination Theory was held in 1999, the influence of self-determination theory has expanded rapidly in the world and attracted the attention of more and more researchers in various fields (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Zhang et al., 2011), widely used in Teaching and Psychology (Li, 2022; Jocelyn, 2023), Sports (Liu, 2022; Martyn, 2023), Medical and Health (Shi, 2022; Rashmi, 2023), Business Management (Li, 2009; Ujjal & Thupili, 2022) and other fields.

## **2. Connotation and Measurement of Teachers' Motivating Style**

### *2.1 Connotation of Teachers' Motivating Style*

Teachers' motivating style refers to a series of behaviors of teachers in the process of teaching to mobilize and maintain students' learning enthusiasm, and is a unique way for teachers to try to motivate students and let them participate in learning activities (Deci & Ryan, 2002). In an educational context, completing a learning task can be either an enjoyable process or a stressful one for the students.

All teachers face the challenge of motivating students to participate in and benefit from the classroom. At present, there have been researches at home and abroad that divide teachers' motivating styles into two categories, namely controlling motivating style and autonomy support motivating style, and according to the degree of control and autonomy support, the teachers' motivating style is further divided into highly controlling (HC), moderately controlling (MC), moderately autonomous (MA) and highly autonomous (HA), showing a continuous distribution of poles (Deci et al., 1981). Among them, highly controlling teachers tend to ask questions and make decisions for students; moderately controlling teachers tend to ask students questions, make decisions for students, and let students do what the teacher wants; moderately autonomous support teachers encourage students to learn from their peers how to pose and solve problems; highly autonomous teachers encourage students to ask questions, develop solutions, and try to solve problems on their own. Some teachers prefer to use the controlling motivating style, while others prefer to use the autonomy support motivating style.

Autonomy support motivating style means that teachers help students find, stimulate and cultivate students' intrinsic learning motivation through emotion or behavior (Assor et al., 2002; Reeve et al., 2004). Teachers who prefer autonomy support motivating style are usually student-centered, stimulate students' intrinsic learning motivation, provide students with "reasons", be more patient with students, let students have time to learn in their own way and at their own natural pace, do not use controlling language in the teaching process, and acknowledge and accept the expression of students' negative emotions (Reeve, 2009). Scholars Han Jiantao et al. (2011) defined teacher autonomy support as: teachers satisfy students' autonomy needs and improve their internal motivation by providing a series of supportive behaviors. In general, autonomy support teachers integrate students' perspectives into the teaching process, pay more attention to students' emotions and interests, provide students with more choice opportunities, and encourage students to identify problems and ask questions. Autonomy support teachers can make students' learning more interesting and classroom more creative.

At the same time, many scholars have also described controlling motivating style. Controlling motivating style refers to the way that teachers force students to think, experience or act in a specific way by exerting pressure on them during the teaching process (Assor et al., 2005; Reeve et al., 2004). Reeve (2009) pointed out that the controlling motivating style has the following characteristics: ignoring the learner's point of view, interfering and exerting pressure. In other words, controlling motivating behavior is manifested as: (1) prioritizing one's own views to the point of ignoring or surpassing the learner's views and goals; (2) have an explicit attempt to change the learner's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors; (3) apply pressure until the learner changes his thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to conform to the teacher's wishes. In contrast, autonomy support motivating behaviors include: (1) adopting the learner's ideas and goals; (2) welcoming and encouraging learners to express their thoughts, feelings and behaviors during the learning process; (3) stimulate learners' intrinsic motivation in the whole teaching task participation, and support learners' self-direction and self-regulation.

### *2.2 Measurement of Teachers' Motivating Style*

In the present, researchers' study mainly from the perspective of teachers' self-evaluation (Cai et al., 2002; Flink et al., 1990; Lachini, 2013; Pelletier et al., 2002; Pierro et al., 2009; Reeve, 1998; Robertson & Jones, 2013), student evaluation (Talor & Ntoumanis, 2007; Taylor et al., 2008; Van den Berghe et al., 2014) and expert evaluation to investigate teachers' motivating style. Among them, the main research tool used in the first type of teachers' self-evaluation is The Problems in Schools Questionnaire (PSQ) compiled by Deci et al. (1981). The second type of measurement tool for student evaluation include the Perceptions of Teachers' Autonomy-Support & Control Questionnaire, prepared by Wellborn et al. (1988). The Learning Climate Questionnaire (LCQ) compiled by Williams h and Deci (1996) uses six items to measure students' perceived level of teachers' autonomous support in the classroom, which is widely used in classroom-based empirical research to investigate teacher autonomy support (Black & Deci 2000; Jang, Kim, & Reeve, 2012; Jang et al., 2009). The first type is to use a series of questionnaires to conduct teacher self-assessment. Due to various factors, teachers cannot objectively conduct self-evaluation, and the final data is inconsistent with the real situation. The second type is evaluated from the perspective of students. The data is easy to collect, but students will inevitably suffer from external interference (such as emotional preference, etc.) in the process of evaluation, resulting in low validity of the final data. The third type of expert evaluation is less because of poor practical operation. To sum up, the three research perspectives have their own strengths, so they can be combined in future studies to improve the authenticity and validity of the overall data. In addition, the motivating style of teachers can also be studied through qualitative interview and text analysis.

### 3. Influencing Factors of the Formation of Teachers' Motivating Style

In the teaching process, there are many factors that affect teachers' tendency to different motivating styles: classroom time limitation, teachers' goal performance (Pelletier & Sharp, 2009; Taylor et al., 2009), classroom structure constraints (e.g., There are many uncontrollable factors in large class teaching, which lead to pressure such as teachers' increasingly strict control over students (Stockard & Mayberry, 1992) and teachers' sense of responsibility for students' achievements (Pelletier et al., 2002; Taylor et al., 2008).

Whether teachers use motivating styles of autonomous support is related to students' subjective and behavioral engagement (Michou et al., 2021). The country in which teachers live and teach will influence the choice of teachers' motivating style (Downie et al., 2004; Reeve et al., 2014). For example, teachers in collectivist countries are more inclined to controlling motivating style than teachers in individualistic countries. In the process of classroom observation, Flink et al. (1990) found that raters gave higher grades to teachers who used the controlling motivating style and believed that the controlling teachers had higher teaching level than the autonomy support teachers. The misdirection in teacher training process, the complexity of teacher's professional environment, the wrong belief in motivation in culture, the traditional expectation of society on the role of teachers and students, and the misunderstanding that "management equals control, indulgence equals autonomy", etc. (Deci et al., 1981; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

In addition, teachers themselves are also one of the influential factors in the formation of their motivating styles. Studies have shown that there is a strong relationship between teachers' personality and their motivating style tendency (Reeve et al., 2018). Teachers' views on students' classroom motivation will influence their choice of motivating style (Pelletier et al. 2002). Teachers' motivating beliefs - that is, teachers' sense of self-efficacy and responsibility for educational outcomes - can shape their professional decisions and teaching methods (Lauermann et al., 2020). Teachers' subjective pleasure is closely related to their use of motivating styles (Burel et al., 2021). The more teachers feel empowered, the more their teaching supports autonomy (Bennett et al., 2017). The degree of satisfaction or frustration of teachers' own psychological needs in the process of teaching is also a factor that affects teachers' motivating style. For example, the study of Taylor et al. (2008) shows that teachers with independent support have higher satisfaction of psychological needs. Teachers' personal beliefs are also one of the influencing factors, such as belief in traditional family values (Nachtsheim & Hoy, 1976), evangelical Protestant beliefs (Ellison & Sherkat, 1993) and conservative political orientation (Reeve et al., 1999) teachers tend to have relatively controlling ideology and relatively controlling interpersonal relationship (teacher-student relationship). Cai et al. (2002) compared the differences in teachers' motivating styles between US tutors and public school teachers, and found that religiously motivated tutors were more likely to use controlling motivating styles. In addition, experienced teachers tend to adopt a more strict regulatory approach or authoritarian orientation than inexperienced teachers (Hoy & Rees, 1977; Packard, 1988; Weiss, 1991).

To sum up, the influencing factors of teachers' motivating style can be divided into two aspects. One is external influencing factors, such as classroom time limit, whether teachers achieve performance, teachers' life and teaching environment, the complexity of teachers' professional environment, and classroom structure (e.g., These influences exert pressure on teachers to varying degrees, leading teachers to be more inclined to use controlling motivating methods; Second, internal influencing factors, such as teachers' personality, teachers' views on students' classroom motivation, teachers' motivation belief, teachers' satisfaction with psychological needs, teachers' ability and teachers' personal belief, etc. These subjective factors from teachers themselves will also affect the development of teachers' motivating style.

#### **4. The Influence of Teacher's Motivating Style on Students**

Self-determination theory states that teachers' motivating style, as a social factor in the educational environment, affects students' motivation and engagement (Skinner et al., 2008). We pay attention to the motivating style as an important educational construction because the students educated by teachers who prefer the autonomy support motivating style (compared with the controlling motivating style) will obtain better learning results and development opportunities (Deci & Ryan, 1987; Deci et al., 1991; Reeve, 1996). More specifically, students with autonomy support teacher education have relatively higher perceptual abilities (Deci et al., 1981), stronger intrinsic motivation (Deci et al., 1981), and more positive learning emotions (Patrick et al., 1981). 1993), more creativity (Koestner et al., 1984), greater appetite for challenges (Shapira, 1976), lower dropout rates (Vallerand et al., 1997), stronger conceptual understanding (Benware & Deci, 1984; Grolnick & Ryan, 1987), better academic performance (Boggiano et al., 1993). The findings of Reeve and Tseng (2011) prove that students show biological stress responses when faced with a teacher with a controlling motivating style, while students show biological calm when faced with a teacher with an autonomy support motivating style. Ye and Chen (2009) found that the teacher's motivating style has a significant moderating effect on the relationship between academic self-efficacy and test anxiety of high school students. Students can benefit from teacher autonomy in a wide range of ways. However, the controlling motivating style directly harms students, because it cannot meet their psychological needs (especially their autonomy needs), and at the same time will cause negative emotions such as anger and anxiety (Assor et al., 2002; Reeve & Tseng, 2011). Other relevant studies also show that teachers' motivating styles have an impact on students' learning results, and in the long run, teachers' improper motivating styles have a negative impact on students' emotional experience and mental health (Guo, 2018). The influence of teacher's motivating style on students is multifaceted. This paper will elaborate from the aspects of learning motivation, learning engagement and basic psychological needs.

##### *4.1 Influence of Teachers' Motivating Style on Students' Learning Motivation*

Self-determination theory proposes that teachers' motivating style affects students' motivation development. Self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) is a social psychological theoretical

framework on the determinants of classroom motivation change. Cognitive evaluation theory under the framework of self-determination theory, which mainly explains the influence of social or environmental events introduced by teachers on students' motivation, has been used to predict rewards (Deci et al., 1999), praise (Henderlong & Lepper, 2002), rules (Koestner et al., 2002), feedback (Vallerand & Reid, 1984) and competition (Reeve & Deci, 1996) on student motivation. The theory points out that what inspires or weakens motivation is not the teaching event itself (e.g., rewards, praise, and rules), but why the teacher provides the teaching event, and points out what motivating styles the teacher uses to motivate students.

Cheon et al. (2013), based on experimental design, showed that teacher autonomy support and students' learning motivation are a directional causal promotion relationship. Researchers conducted 30 classroom observations in different STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) courses and used an online questionnaire to assess students' motivation at the end of the school year, and found that teachers' motivating styles positively predicted students' motivation (De Loof et al., 2021). Studies by Wentzel et al. (2017) and Akintola and Abiodun (2013) all showed the same results, namely that teachers can influence students' motivation through their motivating style. Li (2005) took 193 middle school teachers in Baoding (Hebei province) as research objects by questionnaire survey, and found that the autonomy motivating style was positively correlated with students' internal motivation, while the controlling motivating style was negatively correlated with it. Yin (2007) took two English teachers from Sichuan University (Sichuan province) as research objects and conducted a study using the method of questionnaire survey and classroom observation. The study found that teachers' autonomy motivating style was positively correlated with students' learning motivation. Jin (2009) found that the motivating style of autonomy support was positively correlated with students' internal motivation. Zhao (2022) found that students' internal and external motivation positively moderated the influence of different teachers' motivating styles on classroom learning engagement.

In general, teachers' motivating style will affect students' learning motivation, and teachers' autonomy motivating style is positively correlated with students' learning motivation.

#### *4.2 Influence of Teachers' Motivating Style on Students' Learning Engagement*

Learning engagement can be divided into four dimensions: behavioral engagement, cognitive engagement, emotional engagement (Fredricks, 2004) and active engagement (Reeve, 2011). Behavioral engagement refers to the degree to which students are engaged in learning activities in terms of attention, effort, and persistence (Skinner et al., 2009). Cognitive engagement refers to the strategic degree to which students attempt to learn using complex rather than superficial learning strategies, e.g., elaboration rather than rote memorization (Walker et al., 2006). Emotional engagement refers to the presence of positive emotions, such as enjoyment, and the absence of negative emotions (anxiety, etc.) during task participation (Skinner et al., 2009). Active engagement, the fourth dimension of student engagement, aims to understand how students contribute constructively and involves the expression of students' ideas, interests and opinions (Reeve, 2011).

Skinner et al. (2008) examined the link between teacher motivating styles and student engagement. They found that students who felt external or internal stress (low autonomy) at the beginning of the school year were less emotionally and behaviorally engaged. On the other hand, students who felt highly autonomous and competent, and who developed a good relationship with their teachers at the beginning of the school year, saw an increase in engagement throughout the school year. Reeve et al. (2004) conducted a study using the Autonomy-supportive Intervention Program (ASIP) in the classroom. The results showed that the more teachers were inclined to use autonomous support in the teaching process, the higher the level of students' learning engagement. Reeve and Jang (2004), Birch (1997), Abderrahim et al. (2021) found that autonomy motivating style promote student engagement in learning activities. Rahmanpanah and Mohseni(2017) conducted an experimental study on the relationship between autonomy support teaching and student learning outcomes, proving that the teachers' motivating style of autonomy support has a substantial impact on promoting the behavioral, emotional and cognitive engagement of Iranian adult English learners.

Other scholars like Jiang et al. (2015) show that teachers' motivating style (a good teacher-student relationship) can significantly affect learners' learning engagement. He (2014) found that teachers' teaching input can improve students' learning input: On the one hand, students will be driven by teachers' input to improve their learning input after perceiving teachers' teaching input (time, emotion and energy invested in teaching activities); On the other hand, teachers' teaching input will optimize their own teaching level, attract students' attention and promote students' learning input. To sum up, teachers' motivating style can affect students' learning engagement, and teachers' autonomy motivating style can promote students' learning engagement.

#### *4.3 Teachers' Motivating Style and Students' Basic Psychological Needs*

According to the self-determination theory, the reason why teachers' motivating style has an impact on students is that the motivating style greatly affects the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs of individuals, namely autonomy, competence and relatedness. The theory of basic psychological needs is the core of self-determination theory. According to the theory of basic psychological needs, the satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs of autonomy, ability and relationship is indispensable for individual growth, otherwise the survival and development of individuals in social life will be hindered (Lu, 2021). The basic psychological needs theory regards autonomy, competence and relatedness as the internal motivation source for students to seek innovation, pursue the best challenge, exercise and expand their ability, explore and actively learn. In the context of education, when students perceive their participation in learning as their own choice, reflecting their own interests and values, they experience the satisfaction of autonomy needs (Stroet et al., 2013). When students experience personal growth by exercising and expanding their abilities and skills while attempting challenges, their competence needs are met (Clifford, 1990). Relatedness needs are met when students are able to connect themselves to another person in an authentic, caring, reciprocal, and emotionally meaningful way (La Guardia & Patrick, 2008; Ryan, 1993).

Studies have shown that the autonomy support provided by teachers is beneficial to students because it promotes the satisfaction of students' psychological needs (Cheon et al., 2012), especially the satisfaction of their autonomy needs (Reeve & Jang, 2006). The results of Reeve and Cheon (2014) show that teachers who participate in an autonomous support intervention plan correspond to students with greater satisfaction of psychological needs. Juan Antonio (2021) observed that basic psychological needs have a positive predictive effect on teacher styles of autonomy support. Students' perception of autonomy support teaching style is positively correlated with their satisfaction of competence needs (Nuria et al., 2020). Learners' perceptions of teachers' autonomy support in the classroom predict their psychological needs satisfaction (Dincer et al., 2019). Research by Doris et al. (2016) suggests that the degree to which coaches employ autonomy support or controlling motivating styles determines the degree of psychological need satisfaction experienced by the athletes they interact with. Alberto et al. (2021) showed that physical education teachers' autonomy support positively predicted students' satisfaction with psychological needs. Self-determined motivation is positively predicted by the satisfaction of psychological needs (Trigueros et al., 2019). Leen et al. (2015) studied the mediating role of students' need satisfaction between perceived teaching style and students' motivation in the context of physical education. The results show that perceived autonomy support is mainly related to autonomy motivating, and students' need satisfaction mediates this association. The study of Jotie et al. (2016), mediated by the satisfaction of students' psychological needs, found that the moderating role of students' motivation in the effect of teaching style is limited. The three basic psychological needs, autonomy, competence and relatedness, are indispensable mediators of the influence of teachers' motivating style on students. When the basic psychological needs of the individual are satisfied, the individual will develop in a positive direction; Otherwise, it will have a negative impact on individual mental health and performance (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

## 5. Conclusion

Based on the relevant research of teachers' motivating style at home and abroad, this paper expounds and explores the connotation, measurement, forming factors of teachers' motivating style, as well as its effects on students' learning and development. From the above review, it can be seen that the autonomy support motivating strategy can be appropriately used to stimulate students' interest in the teaching process, so as to achieve the purpose of independent learning. However, there is no research on how students are motivated to learn, so this issue can be paid attention to in future research. In addition, in the past, scholars mostly used questionnaires to conduct research, and in the future, comparative experiments can be used to compare the different effects produced by different motivating styles.

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