

Research Agenda  
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Motivation to Learn

What makes a human want to learn? Why do some look at learning as a chore, while others see it as an opportunity? Do motivated learners learn more and better? How can the design of instruction influence an individual's desire to learn? These are some of the questions that define the area of Learner Motivation.

Schunk (1990) defines motivation as “the process whereby goal-directed behavior is instigated and sustained” (p. 3). Keller (1997) refers to motivation as the choice of initiating an action, the direction of the action, and the amount of effort given to the action.

Keller (1983, 1997) has organized the various psychological constructs of motivation, such as curiosity, self-efficacy, attributions, expectancies, and self-regulation, into a model of instructional design. The ARCS Model is named for the four basic questions of motivational design: (1) How do we get and hold the learner's *attention*? (2) How can the instruction be made *relevant* to the learner? (3) How can the learner get a sense of *confidence* of success in learning? (4) How can the learner get a sense of *satisfaction* of having successfully learned?

My specific area of research interest is the sources of motivation. The ARCS Model proposes two sources of influence on the process of instruction: person inputs and environmental inputs. The person inputs are those internal to the individual, which the learner brings to the situation. The environmental inputs are external to the individual; these are the inputs that can most easily be managed or manipulated. Some questions of interest in this area are:

- What is the relationship between internal and external motivation?
- How can a lack of self-motivation be ameliorated by external sources of motivation?
- Can an individual's level of motivation be so high that it would get in the way of effective learning?
- How can we analyze the motivational aspects of existing or proposed instructional products?

#### References

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