

Intrinsic Motivational Strategy: Charlie the Soccer Player

Michael Bucata, Kevin Cataldo, Talitha Gentry, and Heather Turney

Michigan State University

CEP 832-730

November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2013

Will power. It is a simple phrase that can often be overshadowed by other's attempts to control a particular reaction, especially within educational confines. Most students already possess an innate ability to perform tasks from their own free will; but unfortunately, some educators do not incorporate this element into their teaching strategies. Classroom lesson plans are often confined to a rigid curriculum; however, intrinsic approaches can actually increase a student's aptitude to learn. Today we will examine implementing this type of approach in the case of Charlie. He is a 16-year-old boy from a remote slum community in Kampala, Uganda, and he is currently experiencing difficulty learning in formal school settings. Charlie is part of an education through soccer model; where a highly motivational sport, such as soccer, is used to reach the youth who have little access to education. Praised and adored for his prowess, unwavering dedication, and leadership on the field, Charlie has great potential to succeed, but his learned values and beliefs about the validity of classroom learning plagues his ability to learn in the classroom. When he is in the classroom he immediately shuts down and prefers to be socially removed from his peers and teacher. In order to help Charlie develop value of classroom learning we will create an intrinsic motivational strategy based around a specific learning assignment, explore the basis of why this strategy will be effective, and how these efforts will benefit Charlie's mentality in the long-term.

### Performance Goal

Since Charlie has difficulty ascertaining the value of learning in the classroom as opposed to the field, we have decided to incorporate elements of his own passion to facilitate a motivation to learn. Our goal is to have Charlie change his current classroom behaviors (being socially withdrawn and not participating) to mimic those that he exhibits on the field (teamwork, leadership, and dedication). According to Deborah Stipek students who engage in activities due

to their own intrinsic reasons often exhibit more “involvement, persistence, participation, and curiosity along with less boredom in school activities than those who are extrinsically motivated” (pg. 129, 2002). Charlie will have a higher likelihood of achieving success if we use elements of an intrinsic strategy because his own motivations and preferences are incorporated in the learning goal. Creating a lesson plan that integrates the elements of sports will be highly beneficial for Charlie because it is already a passion that he has, and he will have a higher aptitude to enjoy the assignment.

### The Strategy

We have decided to create an interactive group activity that brings the field to the classroom, and also allows Charlie to become more engaged in learning in the classroom. According to Jere Brophy a definitive strategy to increase intrinsic motivation is to create activities that are engaging and enjoyable, but also motivating (pg. 153, 2010). They should also focus on establishing competence, autonomy, and should be related to a student’s pre-established interests and goals (Brophy, 2010). A major component of soccer (and many other sports) is the challenge of motivating a team to work cohesively together to achieve a collective goal of scoring and winning a match. So, we have devised a learning activity where students are grouped together to complete an indoor class obstacle course, but they will have to work as a team to solve the questions at each checkpoint prior to making it to the finish line. The six questions at the checkpoints are about the local sports history of soccer in the Kampala village. Our sixteen person class will be split in teams of four, and each team will have at least one current soccer team member for an “added advantage.” The team that completes the obstacle course in the fastest time will be the winner of the challenge. The teacher will serve as the

“coach” to encourage teams to finish the obstacle course, and will also provide support and praise for their efforts as it often increases intrinsic motivation for students (Stipek, 2002).

### Rationale

Using the intrinsic-based approach for Charlie was the most advantageous strategy because he already possessed innate, goal-oriented behaviors in other areas. Other strategies (like those that are cognitive or behavioral based) focus on rebuilding specific traits, establishing a motivation to change behavior, and utilize extrinsic rewards to condition changes. In this case, rewards are unnecessary because they have been shown to diminish a student’s intrinsic motivation if a student already had prior interest in completing (Stipek, 2002). Charlie already has an intrinsic motivation outside of class to be a leader and excel when engaged, so we just needed to apply some of the principles of sports into the classroom so he would be able to assimilate the validity of being successful there as well. He will now be able to translate his proactive behaviors on the field into the classroom, and will be able to find motivation to be engaged in his studies.

### References

- Brophy, J. (2010). *Motivating students to learn* (3rd ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Stipek, D. (2002). *Motivation to learn: Integrating theory and practice* (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.